

Evaluation of Government of Liberia/United Nations Joint Programme against Sexual and Gender- based Violence and Harmful Traditional Practices in Liberia



1. EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The Government of Liberia (GoL)/ United Nations (UN) Joint Programme against Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) and harmful traditional practices (HTPs) in Liberia (JP on SGBV/HTPs) is an initiative of the GoL with support from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The programme was intended to strengthen mechanisms for the prevention of SGBV and HTPs and to mitigate their impact on women, girls and boys in Liberia by delivering on five outcomes:

- ▶ Ensuring Liberians actively participate in preventing and responding to SGBV and HTPs by 2020
- ▶ Establishing and strengthening required services for survivors of SGBV/HTPs
- ▶ Improving policies and mechanisms to support SGBV prevention and response
- ▶ Enhancing awareness, participation and accountability
- ▶ Improving coordination mechanisms at national and subnational levels for inclusive and effective service delivery by 2020.

To assess the programme's performance and impact, UN Women, Liberia hired an Evaluation Team (ET) that was responsible for the following evaluation phases: inception, data collection, data analysis and synthesis, and validation. The evaluation covers the actual implementation period of the JP on SGBV/HTPs: January 2017–March 2020.

The main purpose of this evaluation was to examine the extent to which the joint programme addressed the gaps in tackling gender inequalities, SGBV and HTPs in Liberia. The evaluation was also intended to inform the implementation of phase II of the GoL's Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, the creation of new strategic documents, such as the *Liberia United Nations Partnership Framework*, and future programming activities of participating UN agencies, including the EU/UN Spotlight Initiative, which aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

The evaluation employed an exploratory and multipronged approach, and in line with the norms and standards of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG), a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach was applied throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation utilized mixed methods to gather and integrate data from multiple sources and methods. Standard qualitative and

quantitative evaluation methodologies were used, and qualitative data was derived from key informant interviews, focus group discussions and case studies. The data, both qualitative and quantitative was derived from programme documents, monitoring and progress reports highlighting the joint programme's approach, various activities, expenditure informed the literature of the overall report. A structured questionnaire was developed for the quantitative part of the evaluation. The ET visited seven counties: Montserrado, Cape Mount, Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Margibi and Grand Bassa. A total of 92 persons were interviewed, 65 women and 27 men.

The **overall score (B)** indicates that the programme performed well but some changes were required. The findings of the evaluation are structured according to the analysis and assessment of the following criteria: design, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, gender equality (GE)/human rights (HR) and innovation. Despite the multitude of gaps and deficiencies, limited resources available and challenges in monitoring and implementing coordination mechanisms in the district and communities, the JP on SGBV/HTPs managed to achieve some good results that can serve as a base in the fight against SGBV in the country.

It is expected that the evaluation findings will be used by the UN to further refine its approaches in promoting its agenda to end violence against women and girls and to inform the development of strategic documents. Main evaluation users include UN Women, UN Development Programme, UN Population Fund, UN Children's Fund and UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as national stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and other line ministries responsible for implementation of the JP on SGBV/HTPs.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

2.1 Design (Score B/C)

STRENGTHS: The evaluation found that the programme was very well designed, the objectives were clearly defined and the intervention logic was appropriate. The JP on SGBV/HTPs addressed in its design the concerns explicitly formulated by UNMIL within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 2190, which expresses grave concerns that women and girls continue to face a high incidence of SGBV and calls for combating SGBV by focusing on sexual violence against children, addressing impunity and providing redress, while also giving support and protection to victims. Findings from previous phases, results from baseline surveys, community dialogues conducted in 10 counties and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) were also used to design the third phase of this programme. **(Scoring B)**

WEAKNESSES: The programme was designed as a community-based intervention with an initial budget of US\$36 million but was implemented with only \$3 million, of which 26 percent (almost one-third) of the total budget was allocated to staff & personnel and contractual services only. Even if three joint monitoring visits were organized in three years, this was not sufficient to track implementation of the planned activities. Too few funds were allocated to consistent monitoring of activities and the JP on SGBV/HTPs failed to make best use of synergies at district and community levels. The yearly work plans, which partly derived from the logical framework (logframe) of the joint programme lacked baseline/target values (years 1 and 2) and activities did not match with the outputs of the logframe. The design of monitoring reports was mostly activity-based rather than results-based. The JP on SGBV/HTPs did not design a sustainability strategy, a financial sustainability plan or an exit strategy plan. (Scoring C)

2.2 Relevance (Score B)

STRENGTHS: The evaluation found that in addressing areas such as SGBV prevention, response to survivor needs, capacity-building and development of institutions, advocacy and communication, the strategic content and objectives of the JP on SGBV/HTPs were very relevant for the context. The programme addressed in its design the concerns explicitly formulated by UNMIL within the framework of UNSCR 2190, which expresses grave concerns that women and girls continue to face a high incidence of SGBV and calls for combating SGBV by focusing on sexual violence against children, addressing impunity and providing redress, while also giving support and protection to victims. The findings from previous phases of the joint programme, results from baseline surveys, community dialogues conducted in 10 counties and the UNDAF were also used to design a community-based third phase of the programme to address the needs and priorities in the fight against SGBV in Liberia. The prevention strategies and active involvement of the local media, coupled with alignment with international, regional and national instruments and plans to fight SGBV, illustrated the relevance of the JP on SGBV/HTPs.

WEAKNESSES: Addressing gaps such as the following would have further enhanced the relevance of the joint programme:

- ▶ Absence of juvenile courts in some counties
- ▶ Limited capacity of prosecutors to adequately address cases of SGBV/HTPs
- ▶ The very limited understanding and knowledge of SGBV victims and families of their rights
- ▶ Limited access to information related to existing referral pathways in the counties

- ▶ The very fragile economic conditions of families, which effectively excluded their follow-up in cases where trials could last up to six months (reported by 59 percent of interviewees)
- ▶ The fact that most Liberian women, girls, boys and men lack means of identification (identification documents and/or birth certificates) which is a basic requirement in criminal investigations
- ▶ Non-effective implementation of already existing legal frameworks on GE, women, peace and security and instruments addressing SGBV in the country.

The lack of a detailed stakeholder mapping and analysis of actors involved at various levels, and the absence of a needs assessment on SGBV victims and survivors with disabilities in accessing justice and health challenged the relevance of the JP on SGBV/HTPs.

2.3 Efficiency (Score B/C)

STRENGTHS: The JP on SGBV/HTPs managed within a limited timeframe to make best use of existing synergies and expertise at the national level and achieved some good results, which are still fragile and need to be consolidated. (Scoring B)

WEAKNESSES: The joint programme was designed as a community-based intervention but failed to make best use of synergies at district and community levels. The budget was disbursed in a timely manner by the Swedish Embassy but some delays in years 2 and 3 in disbursing funds to the implementing partners were observed, impacting implementation of some activities. Twenty-six percent (almost one-third) of the total budget was allocated to staff & personnel and contractual services and no budget was allocated to monitoring the JP on SGBV/HTPs. These gaps, coupled with inconsistent follow-up of the implemented activities in the communities and the limited use of synergies in the districts and communities, highly challenged the efficiency of the programme. (Scoring C)

2.4 Effectiveness (Score C)

STRENGTHS: Sixty-nine percent of the involved UN entities are satisfied with the appropriateness of the strategies used by the JP on SGBV/HTPs and its achieved results. Advocacy, communications, social mobilization and various capacity-building activities in SGBV provided to journalists, media professionals, national institutions and local non-governmental organizations/civil society organizations contributed to the achievement of good results, which need to be further consolidated. Coordination mechanisms and inter-ministerial coordination at county level supported the delivery of the programme.

WEAKNESSES: Only 47 percent of implementing partners and beneficiaries in the counties and communities expressed their satisfaction with the results of the JP on SGBV/HTPs. Some planned activities with community members were not implemented due to a budget shortage and poor planning of results-based management (RBM). Other activities that were not planned were implemented but did not systematically match the outputs from the logframe. The yearly work plans of the joint programme derived partly from the logframe but lacked baseline/target values (years 1 and 2). Some deficiencies in the coordination mechanisms at district and community level were also identified. Also, through its lifecycle the programme applied mostly an activity-based management approach and failed to systematically apply RBM. In addition, under pillar 1, the temporary suspension of bush schools did not completely prevent girls and women from being secretly initiated in some communities. Under pillar 2, the limited capacities of clinics and hospitals in the counties initially targeted by the intervention but not reached, the limited equipment available to gather evidence in cases of rape, the challenges of some One-stop Centres in providing appropriate medical support to SGBV survivors, as well as the limited funds or direct cash made available for SGBV survivors, challenged the effectiveness of the response provided to survivors. Under pillar 3, there are concerning gaps in the justice system that were not addressed by the joint programme as impunity continued to grow in the country.

2.5 Sustainability (Score A/C)

STRENGTHS: There is a very good likelihood that some programme results will endure after the JP on SGBV/HTPs ends, particularly results from institution strengthening, capacity-building and development of target groups. The development of the SGBV Roadmap 2020–2022 by the GoL at the end of the joint programme enhanced further the sustainability of its results. **(Scoring A)**

WEAKNESSES: The lack of a sustainability strategy, a financial sustainability plan or an exit strategy plan, the reported turnover of technical staff who received capacity-building and the fact that some achieved results require further technical and financial support in order to continue after the programme ends, challenged the sustainability of the results. **(Scoring C)**

2.6 Gender & human rights (Score B)

STRENGTHS: GE and HR were well incorporated in the programme design and implementation of the JP on SGBV/HTPs. The joint programme was designed, implemented and monitored to address gender inequalities, SGBV/HTPs and some gaps in the legal framework hindering the fulfilment of women's and children's rights in Liberia. The active involvement and engagement of men and traditional leaders in the prevention of SGBV/HTPs enhanced the promotion of GE and HR.

WEAKNESSES: The evaluation noted that some initially targeted communities in the counties were not actually involved in the JP on SGBV/HTPs due to accessibility and mobility issues. Also, some messages spread in the communities were not systematically translated into some local dialects to ensure the accessibility of vulnerable groups to the information. There is no indication of how people with disabilities/SGBV survivors with disabilities were involved in the joint programme.

2.7 Innovation (Score A)

The involvement of traditional leaders, men, boys and former male perpetrators of SGBV as change agents in the prevention of SGBV/HTPs was innovative in the context of Liberia. Another identified innovation was the establishment of contextualized referral pathways, which enabled improved reporting and handling of SGBV cases.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall JP on SGBV/HTPs (Score B)

Despite a multitude of gaps and deficiencies, limited resources available and challenges in monitoring and implementing coordination mechanisms in the districts and communities, the joint programme managed to achieve some good results that provide a base in the fight against SGBV in Liberia. However, it is very critical to consolidate these results by: a. strengthening accountability and oversight for performance, b. capacity-building and development of the justice system and referral pathways, c. capacity-building for effective implementation of legal instruments addressing SGBV, d. alignment of further interventions with the anti-SGBV roadmap of the GoL. While the evaluation report of the JP on SGBV/HTPs highlights several recommendations based on the challenges per UNEG category, key recommendations are highlighted below:

1. DESIGN: Ensure that: enough budget (three to five percent of the total budget) is allocated to M&E at the design stage of future programmes addressing SGBV/HTPs, including interventions addressing access to health and justice for SGBV victims/survivors; an M&E plan is also developed at the design stage of each programme and that there are mechanisms in place to ensure effective implementation of M&E plans; a sustainability plan and exit strategy plan are developed to ensure sustainability of the results.

2. RELEVANCE: Develop a specific needs assessment of vulnerable groups and SGBV victims and survivors living with disabilities who access health support and justice in the county and communities; ensure an appropriate strategy and action plan are developed to actively involve these groups in ongoing and future programmes addressing SGBV/HTPs, including access to health and justice in the country.

3. EFFICIENCY: Ensure that: RBM is effectively applied in programming, budgeting, monitoring and reporting; all joint interventions must meet RBM requirements; gender-responsive budgeting is incorporated within key line ministries for sustainability; a GBV taskforce or committee is established at district level, which will liaise between county and community to enhance monitoring and coordination mechanisms at community and district levels, and that it actively involves local NGOs and CBOs; a national campaign is raised in all 15 counties to share practical information about the existing referral pathways in the communities and to provide guidance and ensure accessibility.

4. EFFECTIVENESS: Ensure that there is a link between support to survivors and women's economic empowerment in the communities most affected by SGBV/rape and female genital mutilation (FGM) through developing specific entrepreneurial programmes targeting zoes and traditional practitioners of female FGM to support them finding and developing alternative livelihoods; support decentralization and expansion mechanisms of Criminal Court "E" across all counties. In the absence of courts, mobile courts could be established as a pilot intervention in the counties most affected by SGBV cases; enhance further skills and knowledge of service providers at national and subnational levels through coaching and networking programmes and encourage experience sharing to identify best practices.

5. SUSTAINABILITY: Ensure that a sustainability plan and exit strategy plan are developed and effectively implemented in all ongoing and future programming that addresses SGBV/HTPs. Implementation of these strategies and plans must be monitored by involved UN entities.

6. GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS: Ensure vulnerable groups and people living with disabilities are systematically involved at all stages of programmes; ensure messages spread in the communities are systematically translated into local dialects to ensure that vulnerable groups can access information on SGBV/HTPs and their rights.