

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS (NAPE)

*“Deepening grassroots women rights, participation and economic livelihood opportunities in the era of expanding oil and gas extraction and the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda”,
the case of oil affected districts of*

Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa - Western Uganda

End of Project Evaluation Report



12TH NOVEMBER, 2023



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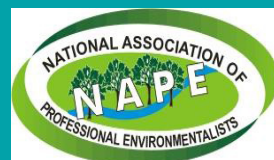


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Acknowledgements

The evaluator wishes to put on record his heartfelt gratitude to all the grassroot women, local leaders, special interest groups and district representatives across the project operational districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube as well as staff of Community Green Radio who volunteered their valuable time to participate in this evaluation process. Special thanks go to the Project Staff of the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) for their critical role in ensuring a smooth field mission by organizing meetings with an array of key stakeholders in Bunyoro oil region of Western Uganda.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of EU, NAPE or any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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Acronyms

CAOs:	Chief Administrative Officers
CBOs :	Community Based Organizations
CDOs:	Community Development Officers
CFPU :	Children and Family Protection Unit
CGR :	Community Green Radio
EU :	European Union
FGDs:	Focus Group Discussions
GBV :	Gender Based Violence
HRBA :	Human Rights -based Approach
KII:	Key Informant Interviews
LC :	Local Council
MOUs :	Memoranda of understanding
MPs:	Members of Parliament
NAPE:	National Association of Professional Environmentalists
NFA:	National Forest Authority
SDGs :	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC:	Theory of Change (ToC)
UHRC:	Uganda Human Rights Commission
UPF:	Uganda Police Force
UWA :	Uganda Wildlife Authority

SECTION 1: OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND METHODOLOGY

Executive Summary

From December 2021 to November 2023, the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) implemented a project to strengthen grassroots women in regard to deepening their human rights, participation and economic livelihood opportunities in the era of expanding oil and gas extraction and the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda. The project operational areas were the key oil affected districts of Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa in Western Uganda.

Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation sought to assess the extent to which the project had achieved its intended objectives and to identify broader lessons to inform future programming.

Specifically, the evaluation sought to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the project in achieving the desired change and results
- Ascertain the extent to which the project design and its objectives were relevant to the intended beneficiaries
- Analyze the project's financial management and value for money
- Provide recommendations premised on lessons learnt

In order to respond to the above assessment questions, five separate yet interlinked areas of review were identified namely: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. The key findings under each are summarized below:

Relevance

Testimonies from project beneficiaries and other stakeholders show that the project built grassroots farmers' capacity through establishment of mother gardens, provision of farm equipment such as hoes and wheelbarrows and succeeded in building sustainable agro-ecological farming skills and small business management with locally based knowledge that is appropriate, affordable, readily available and environmentally friendly. This helped to boost mainly food production among targeted project beneficiaries to offset the negative impacts of oil and gas fossils and the covid-19 pandemic that had created starvation in the area and hence the beneficiaries feel that the project addressed the core of their livelihood challenges in this regard.

The project also empowered local women on advocacy against GBV and other women rights abuses. Prominent here was establishment of community based safe spaces for counseling and provision of care services to GBV and other human rights violations victims. The project also provided a media platform to the grass root women listener clubs by supporting them to use the Community Green Radio to continuously air out their concerns on the faced challenges. This solved the lack of a voice by grass root women who are often skipped during

key development processes and are the core victims in the face of both the covid pandemic and oil and gas developments.

Drawing from stakeholder interviews, literature review and observations, the evaluator established that the project implementation was well aligned to the needs of target beneficiaries as exemplified above, which had been mapped during consultations at the time of developing the project proposal. Key to note is that at the commencement of the project, NAPE conducted a baseline survey to inform the project of the prevailing situation in regard to project objectives. Community testimonies show that the findings in the baseline survey were adequately reflected in the project implementation.

Further to this, the evaluator obtained testimonies of appreciation of the project by the grass root women farmers and traders operating in open community markets, local leaders, representatives of special interest groups and heads of households. Others include district leaders such as the District Community Development Officers (CDOs), and local councilors of project operational districts of Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube.

Therefore, the evaluator is persuaded to put on record that the project relevance was great and appreciated by all stakeholders.

Effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of the project formed yet another core success pointer of all the project interventions. This is because the trainings and technical support were well delivered, and in fact conversations with direct beneficiaries, were on the whole very positive. The evaluator established that there was adequate documentation and record keeping supporting the stated results in the narrative reporting and financial accountabilities. This makes it easy to comprehensively assess the extent to which the outputs had an effect on the achievement of the project's stated outcomes, objectives and mission. The evaluators' interactions with beneficiaries and other key stakeholders at local and district levels confirmed the contents of the project reports. In short, the project exhibits robust results that concur with all monitoring reports that have been on-going throughout the project. The presence of dedicated individual staff both at NAPE headquarters and the Hoima based field office as well as the visible dedication by grass root women activists in the beneficiary women groups in the 3 project operational districts of Buliisa, Kikuube and Hoima were good enough to effectively implement and capture insights that could demonstrate achievements of key targeted indicators. Without any reservation, this significantly impacted positively on the project's ability to demonstrate effectiveness.

Impact

Stakeholders' testimonies and reviewed literature show that the impact of the project met the projected expectations. In terms of figures, the project empowered 9937 women to collectively campaign against GBV and other human rights abuses. This accounts for 82% success rate because the project target was to establish a grassroots women movement of 12,000 members.

In terms of boosting household food and incomes, the project aimed at capacity building of 30 locally based women groups and this was achieved. The project established a total of 30 mother gardens, one for each grassroots farmer women-led group to help boost food and household incomes for the group members in various villages such as Kabaale, Kigaaga, Kyakatemba, Kisimo, Kyabigambire, Ngwedo, Butiimba, Kakindo, Kigwera to mention but a few. The 30 beneficiary grass root farmer women led groups were comprised of 1,831 members. A total of 929 households were able to show improved home gardens grown using the groecological knowledge acquired from the project according to reviewed records and interviews.

The evaluator observed that the economic and livelihood activities in which the grassroots women were empowered by the project include piggery, goat raring, apiary, making handcrafts, millet value addition, making soap and growing a variety indigenous foods such as maize, vegetables, sweet potatoes, yams, cassava and so many others. In the evaluator's assessment, the project objective of boosting household food and incomes was impressively achieved. The NAPE project implementation staff disclosed that the numbers of beneficiaries could have even been more if the project was not limited in terms of farm tools and equipment that were given to the farmers.

The project further succeeded to establish 20 community based safe spaces operated by 40 trained caretakers as planned. The safe spaces are operational providing care, psychosocial support and other services. According to reviewed records, the established safe spaces had towards close of the project resolved 953 cases out of the 1,186 cases recorded. This implies that the resolution success rate of cases in the safe spaces is 80.3%. The evaluator finds that this success rate is good and commendable.

Therefore, numerically, the project overall met most of its targets. The evaluator believes that this performance was made possible by the passion, teamwork and community driven approach, which the grantee applied. All interviewed beneficiaries and other stakeholders such as local leaders and district authorities are very appreciative of the project performance.

Sustainability

A critical look at the project approach that ensured collaboration and ownership of the project by the community and local leaders, and further analyzing the extent to which the impacts made by the project are long lasting, there is evidence that the project is well anchored on strong pillars of sustainability. The project design formula and intervention logic involved a fair mix of both software capacity building (knowledge and skills) and hard ware support (tools and equipment). These attributes made the intervention highly attractive to target beneficiaries thus cementing full ownership and high chances for after project sustainability. The grass root women groups and networks, community based safe spaces, listener clubs and Community Green Radio, mother gardens have all been embraced by the grass root women and they are in position to continue making use of them. Nevertheless, whereas many men have welcomed these milestones, there is still need for sensitization of more men because some of them still think that empowering women implies contesting their authority yet their cooperation is critical in ensuring the success of the women empowerment initiatives and achieving stability in homes.

Efficiency

Efficiency was another area where the project excelled. In spite of some challenges posed by Covid-19 and the multitude of activities taking place in a significant number of geographic rural hard-to-reach locations, the project was delivered on time and met most of the targets. From interaction with project staff spearheading project implementation at NAPE, Other challenges faced by the project emanated from the inflexible budget in regard to unforeseen or simply under budgeted aspects yet inevitable in project execution such as the mandatory withholding tax, inflation, securing MOUs with District Local Government Authorities and losses suffered in unstable exchange rates. The fact that the project navigated through the emerging budget challenges during implementation without substantially affecting the results is commendable on the part of the implementers. The questions of value for money have been addressed by many of the issues raised in the sub-sections on relevance, impact and sustainability.

Project Description, Context and Strategy

Project Description

The project was a two-year initiative, implemented by NAPE in 3 key oil affected districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube in Western Uganda between December 2021 to November 2023. The project title was “Deepening Grassroots Women Rights, Participation and Economic Livelihood Opportunities in the Era of Expanding Oil and Gas Extraction Developments and the Covid 19 Pandemic in Uganda”. The project budget was 444,529.49 Euros and it was funded by European Union.

The overall goal of the project was strengthening the capacity of women to protect their rights in the era of Oil, Agro commodities and Covid 19 by boosting their economic livelihoods; majorly food and income generation as well as addressing gender-based violence through establishment of safe spaces. The project had four specific objectives:

1. To mobilize, strengthen and support grassroots women to collectively campaign against gender based violence (GBV) and other forms of women rights abuse perpetuated by both oil discovery and extraction, and the Covid-19 pandemic with one strong and united voice.
2. To boost food security and incomes options of identified grassroots women farmers and their groups in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and oil and gas impacts
3. To adopt a holistic approach of identifying and building knowledge and engagement capacity of locally based engagement structures i.e. GBV listeners clubs who will form the nucleus of change champions by amplifying voices of women on GBV and oil impacts on the Community Green Radio (CGR) of NAPE
4. To establish /form community based safe spaces where GBV victims faced with stigma and corporate induced land evictions like those related with oil can safely air out their concerns, get counseling, help lines, referrals and legal support to secure justice or conflict resolution

Project Context

Long-standing inequalities in the gender distribution of economic and financial resources have placed women at a disadvantage relative to men in their capacity to participate in, contribute to and benefit from broader processes of development in Uganda. This project came at a time when gender based suffering of women had been worsened by oil developments and the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, According to a research by NAPE and Woman Kind Worldwide-UK in 2018, oil and gas developments have accelerated abuse of women rights. The research pointed out systematic exclusion of women in decision making on land matters by the convergence of patriarchal social norms and commercial pressures exacerbated by oil developments leaving more than 1000 people displaced in camps in Kyangwali, Butimba, Buseruka, kaseta, Rwamutonga, Kijayo, Kyakaboga, villages to mention but a few.

The deadly COVID 19 pandemic and its counter measures placed more suffering on women by leading to loss of jobs but men were as well affected. This forced women and girls to stay longer at home with their abusers hence increasing gender based violence against them. According to the Mid-year Uganda police annual crime report January to June 2020, the emergency of the covid 19 pandemic led to a high spike of sexual and gender based violence with a total of 2,707 cases being reported monthly. The police report released on 14th September 2020 indicated that up to 6,888 cases of defilement had been reported in the country between March and August 2020 while in April 2021, 418 murder cases reported to police were a result of domestic violence.

Therefore, the evaluation is informed by the fact that the project was in response to the above situation, which necessitated urgent action if Uganda is to achieve her 2040 vision and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Poverty, zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, reduced inequality and environmental sustainability.

Project strategy

The project strategy involved working with communities and local leaders to ensure ownership and long lasting impact. It was informed by the desire to create a knowledge base for the affected communities, structures identification for collaboration during implementation and sustainability beyond the project period, forming and strengthening grassroots women groups about human and environmental rights, GBV and ensuring their resilience. The project provided locally based platforms for protecting women rights and amplifying their voices on negative impacts of both oil and the Covid 19 pandemic on their rights, environment and livelihoods.

Methodology Overview

This evaluation was conducted using a desk-based document review, key informant interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and field visits starting from 26th October to 12th November, 2023. The details of how these methodologies were implemented are as follows:

Desk Review: A document map, linking key documents to the main areas of review for the evaluation was drafted. Consequently, information was obtained from documents and mapped against the areas of review and key data was extracted to inform analysis.

Key Informant Interviews: A structured questionnaire was developed for the quantitative part of the evaluation. The Evaluator adopted an inclusive Gender Equality and Human Rights- based Approach (HRBA) by examining processes and results as well as by designing an appropriate system-based methodology to understand the various linkages in the Results Chain Strategies, Outcome and Theory of Change (ToC) and verifying the assumptions behind the main outcome of this programme.

Respondents included NAPE project implementing staff both at headquarter and field level in districts, sub counties and Community Green Radio. Others were district officials particularly the CAOs, CDOs, District and Sub County Councilors, local leaders, heads of households, representatives of special interest groups and project beneficiaries most of whom were women.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): a total of 13 Focus Group Discussions were carried out in the project intervention areas in Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube districts. Of these, 4 were in Kikuube district, 5 were in Hoima district and another 4 took place in Buliisa district. Whereas NAPE staff helped to arrange the FGDs, they did not attend in person in order to enable the participants to express their opinions and experiences more freely.

For both the KIIs and FGDs with local stakeholders, the local language known as the Runyakitara was the language of instruction. This was possible because the evaluator is fluent in the local language.

The evaluator applied a strategy of combination of qualitative and quantitative data to ensure that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of another.

Ethics

The evaluator exercised independent judgment and provided a comprehensive and balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the project being evaluated, taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders. We also ensured that the evaluation is based on reliable data and observations. All confidential information obtained by any means was treated in confidence. Personal, confidential and sensitive information was not discussed with, or disclosed to unauthorized persons knowingly or unknowingly.

Limitations

Although all efforts were made to meet with and talk to as many relevant respondents as possible during the course of this evaluation, some unforeseen factors prevented this from being entirely successful. Some of the limitations of this evaluation include:

- External events such as market days whereby some respondents needed to go to market places to sell some goods could not allow the evaluator to keep some field respondents for long.
- Practically, it did not become possible to visit all the project implementation sites in form of gardens, women groups, safe spaces and other beneficiaries due to time, weather, and terrain among others. Therefore, the evaluator used the strategy of representatives and sampling method to be able to fit within the time and resources available.
- Related to the above, natural factors especially bad weather caused delays for some scheduled meetings both on the side of the evaluator and many respondents. On few occasions, the meetings were postponed due to prolonged downpour / heavy rains.
- We also had specified duration the field vehicle was to spend in the field due to cost issues so that could not allow us be everywhere.

SECTION 2: EVALUATION RESULTS

In this section, the evaluator presents the findings of the evaluation. The section is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section covers the achievements of the project. The second sub-section examines the relevance and contribution of the project to the desired change in women rights and livelihood empowerment while the third sub-section provides a description of the strengths and limitations of the project.

Key Project Achievements

Achievement 1: Empowered 9,937 women to collectively campaign against GBV and other human rights abuses

Objective 1:

To mobilize, strengthen and support grassroots women to collectively campaign against gender based violence (GBV) and other forms of women rights abuse perpetuated by both oil discovery and extraction, and the Covid-19 pandemic with one strong and united voice.

Table 1: Project achievements for Objective 1

Indicators	Target	Achieved	Performance
Grassroot women movement formed	12,000 members	9,937 members	82%
Trained leaders of the grass root movement	300	300	100%

In the 24 months of project implementation, 9,937 grass root women were mobilized into a grass root women movement. This figure includes the 300 that were trained and equipped with knowledge of movement building, civic rights and advocacy.

The project was kick-started with carrying out a baseline survey followed by executing 3 recruitment missions for the movement, training the recruited women on movement building, lobby and advocacy and finally mobilizing members for the formed movement.

Impact

The evaluation finds that the women movement's collective advocacy interventions were amplified by the Community Green Radio and this enabled them to have impact on their issues of concern mainly on Gender based violence, environmental rights abuses, and human rights abuses. They managed to make petitions to relevant authorities namely the CAOs, District Councilors, LC5 Chairpersons, National Forest Authority (NFA), Uganda Police

Force, District Councils through the District Speakers, Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), Area Members of Parliament, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) to mention but a few. These authorities to a large extent responded to the raised women concerns.

Achievement 2: Boosted food security and income options for 30 locally based women led farmer groups comprised of 1,831 members

Objective 2:

To boost food security and incomes options of identified grassroots women farmers and their groups in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and oil and gas impacts

Table 2: Project achievements for Objective 2

Indicators	Target	Achieved	Performance
Identified farmer groups	30	30	100%
Trained farmer groups leaders	60	60	100%
Distributed bicycles to women groups leaders	60	60	100%
Establishment of mother gardens	30	30	100%
Distributed hoes to farmers	450	450	100%
Distributed wheelbarrows to farmers	450	418	93%

The evaluation finds that the project identified and built capacity on agro ecological farming practices of all the 30 target farmer groups. Each group was represented by 2 people in the trainings. Consequently, the beneficiary farmer groups set up 30 mother gardens with support from the project. The evaluator visited 6 sample mother gardens.

Impact

According to the farmers, the acquired farming equipment enabled them to set up mother gardens where household farmers are getting seeds to start their household gardens to boost household food. According to reviewed field reports, 929 households have shown improved gardens of a variety organic foods that have been grown using the agroecological farming skills from the project. The 30 mother gardens were in place by close of March 2023 fulfilling the set time target. The farmers reported that this approach has helped them to overcome some of the food challenges they faced caused by oil developments and covid-19 pandemic disruption. The field bicycles given to group leaders enabled them to easily reach out to their members and offer the needed guidance.

The beneficiary farmers are thankful of the better livelihoods they have acquired as a result of the project. Therefore, the evaluator finds that the project made commendable success in the 2nd objective.

Achievement 3: Empowered 21 community based radio listener clubs with 420 members to act as change champions on GBV and other human and environmental rights abuses

Objective 3:

To adopt a holistic approach of identifying and building knowledge and engagement capacity of locally based engagement structures i.e. GBV listeners clubs who will form the nucleus of change champions by amplifying voices of women on GBV and oil impacts on the Community Green Radio (CGR) of NAPE

Table 3: Project achievements for Objective 3

Indicators	Target	Achieved	Performance
Strengthening listener clubs	21	21	100%
Training members of listeners clubs	420	420	100%
Furnished and equipped community green radio	1	1	100%

The evaluator finds that the project identified 21 radio listener clubs with 420 members and trained them in communication, community mobilization, equipped them with presentation skills and news collection. The trainings and hosting on the radio went on as planned throughout the two-year project period. A community Green radio was fully furnished with painting. It was also equipped with furniture, improved lighting, microphones and computers and other studio equipment.

Impact

The empowered members of the 21 listener clubs have become influential champions of community voices against human rights violations. They were hosted 6 times in engagement radio talk shows on community green radio in which they received positive responses from the public according to sms' and phone call-ins during the radio talk show programmes.

Overall, 20 engagement radio talk shows were hosted on the more formidable Community Green Radio and discussed issues of GBV, Human and Environmental Right. The radio is said to have a listenership of more than 3 million people many of whom are the target grass root communities in the 3 project operational districts of Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube. The success in the empowerment of the listener clubs was attested to by the radio station manager and District leaders who rated their performance in the radio talk shows as excellent.

Achievement 4: Established 20 community based safe spaces with 40 trained caretakers and resolved 953 cases of GBV and other human rights violation

Objective 4:

To establish /form community based safe spaces where GBV victims faced with stigma and corporate induced land evictions like those related with oil can safely air out their concerns, get counseling, help lines, referrals and legal support to secure justice or conflict resolution

Table 4: Project achievements for Objective 4

Indicators	Target	Achieved	Performance
Established community based safe spaces	20	20	100%
Distribution of sets of hand washing sanitary equipment / washing stations to all the established safe space sites	20	20	100%
Trained caretakers	40	40	100%
Resolved GBV and human rights violations cases	600	953	Over 100%

The project established 20 functional safe spaces also known as shelters each comprised of 2 trained local care takers. The project linked the safe spaces with the departments of children and family protection unit (CFPU) of the Uganda Police and this has enhanced collaboration for case referrals for law enforcement against GBV perpetrators where need be.

Trained caretakers organize dialogue sessions between the parties and offer counseling services. Where necessary, family protection personnel of the police are invited at the safe spaces to backup dialogue, mediation and follow-ups.

The project equipped each of the 20 safe spaces with a set of hand washing sanitary equipment including water containers. The established safe spaces are well organized with proper case registration books, furniture, information materials, contacts and referral information.

NB: The community green radio also currently acts as one of the safe space where various Victims of GBV convene ,meet stakeholders including family protection units of the Uganda police, local councilors, access the radio studio, get counseling by a designated radio staff especially victims from Kiboga district.

Impact

The community based safe spaces are offering care and psychosocial support to those experiencing stigma, stress and or harm due to GBV and other human rights abuses. In addition, they offer legal advice, hope, counseling, contacts, referrals and others.

The washing stations established in every community based safe space have helped the communities to maintain the required Hygiene standards set by the Ministry of Health to avoid contracting diseases.

Officers of the children and family protection units of the Uganda police have developed more interest in visiting established safe spaces to follow up recorded cases to ensure justice for the victims in close collaboration with the caretakers who encourage witnesses to present themselves to ensure successful conclusion of the cases in the justice system.

The Performance rate in resolving GBV and other human rights abuses cases in the safe spaces is about 8.3% success rate (i.e 953 resolved cases out of 1,186 registered cases). This computation was premised on the data extracted from Case field registration books at each of the 20 Safe spaces. Given the nature of these cases, this success level can be scored as very good. The reason for this good performance is believed to be premised on well-trained caretakers who are full time available at all the safe space stations.

SECTION 4: RELEVANCE, EFFICIENCY, STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Relevance

Overall, the project interventions were relevant and appropriate in the context of the GBV and other human rights violations experienced mostly by women, girls and children in the project operational districts of Kikuube, Buliisa and Hoima. A close analysis shows that there is proper alignment between the project activities and the needs assessment in the baseline report documented just prior to the commencement of the project implementation.

The continued relevance of all the assumptions in the log frame is a strong indicator that the project was well conceptualized but more so appropriately and effectively implemented. For example, the project secured the cooperation of the local leadership, obtained MOUs with operational districts while the grass root women beneficiary fully embraced the project. This is shown in nearly 100% responses to invitations to participate in all project activities including trainings, radio talkshows, monitoring and evaluation meetings to mention but a few. The identified and trained grassroots women were very willing to engage and continue mobilizing more members into the women movement because they understood and appreciated that the project was for the good of the women and the community altogether.

The project remained relevant throughout the implementation process because it fairly mainstreamed key crosscutting issues. The biggest attention was on Gender Based Violence but other aspects fairly performed well too. The women movement was established at a numerical strength of 9,937 members while local structures were put in place such as the safe

spaces, the community Green radio, the sanitary sets of water containers and the mother gardens.

The women got a whole new experience in some instances and felt more confident to assert their rights than ever before. For example, many women confessed that for the first time in their life, they appeared on radio talkshows live to share their experiences on issues of their rights, which they consider dear to them. The indicator of confidence building is shown in the several successful attempts where upon being introduced to the radio stations, the women started going there alone seeking the opportunity to explain to the public other violations that were taking place. This is something that hitherto was unthinkable to them according to various testimonies from the women themselves.

About 72 % of the cases registered at the established safe spaces concerned issues of girls, women and children while the 28% were about men issues. Even in talkshows, some men participated alongside the women. This comforted the men who had thought that the project was about women against men's authority.

In the above regard, serious cross-cutting topical issues were deliberated upon in the radio talkshows supported by the project ranging from issues of Gender based violence, food security for all, community land rights, and access to natural resource such as parks, forests and L. Albert. The other contentious topical issue was the degradation of Bugoma forest by Hoima sugar limited which the local communities appreciate has made a big impact in fueling climate change which has negatively impacted on agriculture hence seriously affecting their livelihoods. In a nutshell, the project was relevant to the extent that every topical issue propelled by the project was unanimously embraced by the community.

It should be noted that though the beneficiary 30 farmer groups are women led, it comprises of some few men as members. These men too benefited directly from the project such as acquiring agroecological farming skills through project trainings.

Important days on the calendar of activism were utilized by the project to intensify activism. For example, the project supported grassroot women movement activists to engage in a series of advocacy activities across all project operational districts of Kikuube, Hoima and Biliisa during the annual 16 days of activism against GBV, deprivation of land rights, destruction of ecosystems especially focusing on Bugoma forest, Lake Albert, and other wetlands. In short, all matters commonly known as crosscutting issues relevant to the livelihood, survival and dignity and prosperity of human beings were touched in one way or the other by the project including having a safe space site at people living with disabilities.

The project's focus on grassroots women, individuals and groups, in an effort to boost their livelihoods and human rights was a good attempt to empower a segment of society too often omitted from wider development issues. Though the project was about women, the

integration of a few especially who are local leaders helped to enhance the transformative impact of the project.

The documentation of how outputs, particularly training, contributed towards envisaged outcomes was sufficient and evident. The project rightly appreciated that fact that the act of holding the training is only one component, there is a secondary element of application of that learning in practice. The mother gardens provide one of the examples where the knowledge and skills learnt were put to practice.

The choice of a community radio station as the means to amplify the community voices was appropriate. This is because, since the project targeted grass root communities, such people are known to listen to radios than any other media because of broad cast focus, accessibility and affordability. The community Green Radio itself is a popular station in the project operational districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube and hence the messages passed through the station reached the intended audience.

Efficiency

Overall, the project was efficiently implemented, with the significant number of activities delivered on time and in accordance with the proposed budget. “To manage implementation during Covid-19 we respected the standard operating procedures introduced by the government, we had masks and sanitizers at meetings and hired bigger halls to allow for safe participation,” explained a NAPE staff member, highlighting that the covid challenges effectively navigated.

According to NAPE finance team and financial reports reviewed, the grantee managed to work within the proposed budget despite a fluid operating environment. This meant that the grantee worked only with service providers within the proposed budget, thereby ensuring it spent exactly the amounts budgeted. This was also made more possible by the project’s extensive use of per diems and salaries/consultancy fees, which are set amounts that did not fluctuate. However, it was acknowledged that for items with a set price, notably fuel which increased during the project’s implementation period, the amount budgeted was stretched up, but that this translated into a small volume and hence was not significant to disrupt project implementation plans. The grantee had an added advantage that the organisation had received and managed huge sums of grants many times before and therefore had the experience, efficient and robust financial systems in place to ensure good accountability.

The district officials reported that they received timely updates on the progress of the project in complete fulfillment of the signed MOUs. The districts authorities led by the CAOs expressed satisfaction that the project was efficiently implemented and followed the agreed terms and conditions.

Nevertheless, the district authorities believe that this project has activated other aspects that would require project extension building on the successes already registered. Their wish therefore is that the grantee will find means and be kind enough to figure out those aspects that need extension and rollout a follow-up project.

Drawing from the above, the evaluator finds that, the project in general should be commended for the value for money offered in undertaking a huge number of activities under this project in a vast area of 3 rural districts in the countryside comprised of villages many of which are hard to reach. This implementing structure designed by the project was effective with competent leadership.

Strengths and Limitations of the Project

Strengths: The project has four main areas of strength, these include:

- **Community-led approach and involvement of local leaders:** The grantee ensured that the project was coined around identifying and strengthening local community structures and this made the intervention embraced and owned by the community especially grassroots women and their local leaders. A baseline research and a study on alternative livelihoods were executed by the identified and trained grassroots women and hence they got firsthand knowledge of the issues involved. This added to the various trainings implies that this knowledge will remain with them beyond the project period. The local leaders participated in all project activities and they are proud to associate themselves with the success of the project. In addition, the mother gardens were linked to local farmer groups and hence they will be sustainable because these local farmer groups will remain in existence as long as they have the knowledge and inputs they acquired from the project.
- **Design, monitoring and Evaluation approach:** The project was developed based on complete logical framework with detailed indicators of processes, results and impact. In addition, sufficient information to document the entire project cycle was generated.
- **Involvement of the media;** the project had a media base called the Community Green Radio. This became a key media platform for the target project beneficiaries and key stakeholders to amplify the voice of the marginalized grassroots women and hence deepened the project impact.

- **Involvement of government and state agencies:** Active steps were taken to bring on board the children and family protection unit (CFPU) of the Uganda Police Force, which is charged with the responsibility of fighting Gender-based Violence. The CFPU was involved at the different stages of the Project especially in the community based safe spaces and on radio talkshows to supplement the GBV experiences which were being explained by the selected grassroots women activists. In addition, District leaders including especially the CAOs and CDOs, were actively involved in the assessment and follow-up of project implementation. These follow-ups were mainly intended to ensure that the MOUs signed by the grantee and the District authorities were fulfilled. Other authorities such as District L.C 5 chairpersons, RDCs, and institution heads of UWA, NFA and UHRC received various petitions from the grassroots women activists with support from the project. The authorities made some steps to address the concerns of the petitioners.

Limitations:

- The safe spaces are scattered over a large area and the evaluator's findings show that some GBV victims find it hard to reach them due to transport costs involved yet the fact that the police stations are far away from communities, the safe spaces are the ones trying to fill the gap.
- The 2 volunteer caretakers assigned per safe space is a small number since they keep alternating in order to attend to their economic needs because in the safe spaces, they are volunteers with no pay. The caretakers suggested that additional of other two would give them ample alternating intervals.
- The project budget did not provide for any financial facilitation for caretakers operating the community based safe spaces yet they sometimes spend the whole day handling GBV and other human rights violations cases without finding time to work for their personal needs. In addition, the caretakers find themselves in need of some money for like say making phone calls to police, which they sometimes struggle to get during the process of handling or referring cases they can't handle.
- Whereas the project supported 2 legal cases for special interest groups against human rights violations, it was like a drop in the Ocean because many more vulnerable persons remained unattended to yet in dire need of the same support. It should be noted that the project itself had identified such people in more areas such as Kyakabooga resettlement camp, Kijyao village and these people included the blind, people living with HIV/AIDS, widows, orphans to mention but a few. Most of these remained unattended to due to budget constraints.
- Related to the above, the project intervened in majorly 3 oil nucleus districts but the issues handled are the same in now more than 12 oil affected districts a pointer that more work still lie ahead to address these issues.

- Whereas the total project budget at a tune of 444,529.49 Euros is a big budget, the project operated in a big landscape with very distant and hard to reach rural areas characterized by a hard terrain. For example, a village located at the shores of Lake Albert like Kaiso, Tonya, sebagoro, mbegu etc is between 60 to 80 kilometers away from Hoima town. Rural roads are in bad shape full of potholes; they easily cause mechanical breakdowns and sometimes are impassable during the rainy seasons. Therefore, whereas the budget was big, the realities of implementation in such an area may actually necessitate an even higher budget. For example, the project distributed almost 450 farming equipment but when shared among the 3 districts of the project area, many vulnerable needy grass root women did not get.
- The project was planned to cover the key oil-affected districts of Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts and left out other districts yet they have also emerged as key oil districts especially Amuru and Nwoya in Northern Uganda. Other districts along the EACOP are suffering similar or related oil impacts namely Mubende, Rakai, Kakumiro, Kyankwanzi, Gomba, Lwengo, Sembabule and Kyotera and hence they have almost equal need for such model project that focuses on the grassroot vulnerable communities.
- Whereas the grantee delivered commendable achievements on time as evidenced in the assessed records, interviews and field observations, financially, the project faced challenges. Key include losses in exchange rates. Whereas the projected exchange rate was UGX 4,200 for a Euro at the time of budgeting, the first year installment came at a time when the exchange rate had fallen to UGX 3,925. The second year installment arrived when the exchange rate had even worsened to UGX 3,850. In addition, the project incurred a 6% mandatory withholding tax, which was not catered for in the project budget. Worse still, there was stiff inflation instigated by the effects of covid-19 hence the prices of farming equipment, fuel and other project input commodities were hiked up. The NAPE project implementers revealed that the mandatory MOUs as per the new NGO Act regulations of 2016, which they obtained from District Local Governments in the project operational areas involved a tedious, time consuming and expensive process. Hence, NAPE ended up using some of its institutional resources to fill the gap.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Overall, the project registered a number of achievements. For example, the project succeeded in building a massive movement of grassroots women activists empowered in advocacy skills to promote women rights. In addition, the project established community based safe spaces fully operational and positioned them to collaborate with the police unit in-charge of children and family issues. Several radio talkshows were conducted to amplify the project impact. Mother gardens were established, local structures for continued women engagement strengthened and a radio station furnished, equipped and made accessible to empowered listener clubs to continue the project impact. Various key stakeholders were involved such as community members, local leaders and District authorities. The interviewed stakeholders are highly appreciative of the project. Precisely, the project fulfilled its aims and objectives, documented and completed all activities on schedule, enabled conditions for verifiability of its work and ensured that the project impact is commendable and sustainable.

Lessons Learned

A number of lessons can be drawn from the project; which can be of value for other future interventions, organizations, the government and other women rights actors in the country.

Lesson 1: Women rights campaigns should be designed as a gradual and supervised process, accompanied by follow-up and support measures premised on the context of researched and evidence based women reality conditions, needs and environmental factors in which they live. For GBV survivors, sufficient resources should also be dedicated to follow up. The frequency of follow-up interventions by caretakers and other relevant stakeholders should be determined on case by case basis. Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on bringing men on board to support women rights and empowerment initiatives. The leave no body behind principle should be embraced while designing a formula that works.

Lesson 2: Advocacy for women rights is a long term and very complex process that requires effective collaboration of multiple partners, strong political commitment and strategic planning. The partnership relations of the project with grassroots women groups, local leaders, district authorities / local governments, the media and other stakeholders were a big plus for the successful implementation of this project.

Lesson 3: Building structures, institutions and systems is key for sustainable results. For example, this project's sustainability is strongly anchored in the safe spaces that were established, the grassroots women movement, listener clubs and training women group leaders in advocacy and sustainability strategies. This approach of strengthening groups rather than a narrow focus on building capacity of individuals is critical for continuity of

project impact beyond the project period. The approach also helped the project to ensure effective implementation of the planned activities.

Lesson 4: Transformation of women lives for better livelihoods and a more dignified life is possible. In all project operational districts of Kikuube, Buliisa and Hoima, the project idea that women should be supported to be better was vigorously embraced at all stakeholders such as district authorities, the police force particularly the children and family protection unit, and religious leaders. Others were elected leaders including councilors, L.C 5 Chairpersons, area Members of Parliament, local leaders, local CBOs and community members. This notwithstanding, there is still insufficient resource allocation to women affirmative action projects at the central government level. This may imply that the level of political commitment to women empowerment is still inadequate. This calls for a budget allocation campaign to women empowerment agenda in the national assembly / parliament of Uganda.

Lesson 5: Economic empowerment can be a fundamental building block that enables women to go ahead and realize their human rights. When you talk about human rights and there is nothing in your pocket, or you are hungry you may not go far. Therefore, the example of a holistic approach integrating economic empowerment into rights-based focused initiative was a superior lesson to learn from this project. The need for this is clear, and the fact that this project was able to recognize the importance of economic activities for grassroots women, and hence support farmer groups focused primarily on livelihoods and small business management, is an important takeaway.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future programming;

1. There is a need to establish at least more 25 communities based safe spaces to supplement the existing 20 so as to shorten the distances that must be covered by grass root service seeking persons both in Buliisa, Kikuube and Hoima districts.
2. The human and financial capabilities of the existing safe spaces should be further strengthened to be in a better position to offer the required services to clients. The caretakers will need continuous refresher seminars atleast once or twice a year so as to keep growing their technical capabilities to resonate with any emerging dynamics and trends in GBV and other human rights violations in their communities.

3. There is need to upscale capacity building of District, Sub County, Parish and Village local government authorities to carry out their statutory responsibilities for overseeing and enforcement of human rights protection with emphasis on women since they are the majority victims of human rights violations. The key areas of engagement would be GBV, land rights, environmental rights, civic rights and other rights as envisaged in the laws of Uganda and other international instruments such as the UN Human Rights Charter building on the success accomplished through this project.
4. There is need to replicate this project in other oil-affected districts in Uganda such as Amuru, Nwoya in Northern Uganda and EACOP directly impacted districts in Western and Central Uganda drawing on the experience of this project. Further to this, a number of the recommendations above show that the huge success of this project has created new dimensions and in a way necessitated a follow up project to consolidate the gains accomplished.
5. Future projects should put into consideration some unforeseen costs in the budget lines arrangement in order to enable the implementers to strive for full realization of project objectives.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Evaluation Guide / Questionnaire

Effectiveness: Effectiveness of planned and implemented measures and activities

1. To what extent did the project deliver the expected results?
2. To what extent are the activities appropriate, practical and consistent with the objectives and expected results?
3. What changes have occurred as a result of the interventions?
4. What changes did the project bring about in;
 - a) the lives of women;
 - b) in the community;
 - c) in the capacity of women groups to do advocacy for women rights;
 - d) in the capacity and functionality of community based safe spaces;
 - e) other local CBOs?
5. Has the project contributed to reducing the number of GBV victims and other human rights violations in your community? If yes, in what ways?
6. Did the project bring about systemic changes at district, community and family levels that are enabling women and children to live free of human rights violations?
7. What internal and external factors are responsible for the changes?
8. Which factors affected the achievement or non-achievement of the Project objectives?

Relevance/Appropriateness:

9. To what extent are the Project design and its objectives relevant vis-à-vis the grassroots women and community needs, local policies and strategies?
10. How relevant were project interventions in responding to the rights needs in your community?
11. Do you think the project interventions were appropriate in responding to the women and girls concerns in your community? Why/why not?
12. What is the contribution of the project to women rights reform in your community?

Assessment of overall implementation approach:

13. Has working in collaboration with community members, local leaders, women groups, the police unit in-charge of children and family affairs, councilor and district authorities supported or affected the implementation of the project?
14. How did the project's approach to data collection, identification of beneficiaries, women groups and listener clubs, mobilization, training, movement building, radio talkshows, establishment of community based safe spaces and monitoring affect the overall impact of the project?
15. To what extent was learning from baseline incorporated into the project's implementation plan to achieve change?

16. How well have the relationships between the implementing organization (NAPE), the community, local leaders, the police, District Local government and others worked? What were the challenges of working together/ collaboration?

17. Are there alternative delivery methods that can achieve the project objectives more efficiently? What evidence is there to support such methods?

Promising Practices: *To identify and document any interesting practices and approaches generated by the project, which would benefit the overall women rights campaign if expanded or replicated.*

18. What are the main good practices which have emerged from the project and why?

19. What worked well? What did not work well? Why?

Lessons Learned:

20. What lessons have been learned during implementation?

Appendix B: Reviewed Literature

The following documents were reviewed in preparing this evaluation report:

- NDICI HR INTPA 2021/427-237 Project Document
- Project Logical framework and Activity matrix
- Project activity and financial utilization reports
- Progress Monitoring and Evaluation reports
- Case registration books at the established community based safe spaces
- Project Records at the Community Green Radio
- Project Baseline report
- Media Articles about the project work

Appendix C: Categories of persons interviewed

- Members of grass root women movement
- Beneficiary local farmer groups
- Radio listener clubs
- Caretakers of community based safe spaces
- Beneficiaries of community based safe spaces
- Police officers operating in the unit charged with children and family protection
- Area councilors
- District leaders
- Station Manager of Community Green Radio
- NAPE Staff in-charge project implementation

Appendix D: Field Photo Gallery



Left (above), a caretaker attends to a GBV survivor. On the Right, is a handwash station



In the photos above are some of the project mother gardens visited



The women (above) pose in their household gardens that benefited from the project



Left (above), a caretaker displays a case register. On the Right, are some of the project beneficiaries showcasing value added packaged millet in Kyabigambire village



Left (above), are some of the women project beneficiaries in their gardens. On the Right, is a beneficiary showcasing mushroom growing based on indigenous knowledge systems in Kabaale village



Left (above), one of the beneficiaries demonstrates sweetpotatoes grown using indigenous knowledge systems. On the Right, are harvested mushrooms grown with support from the project