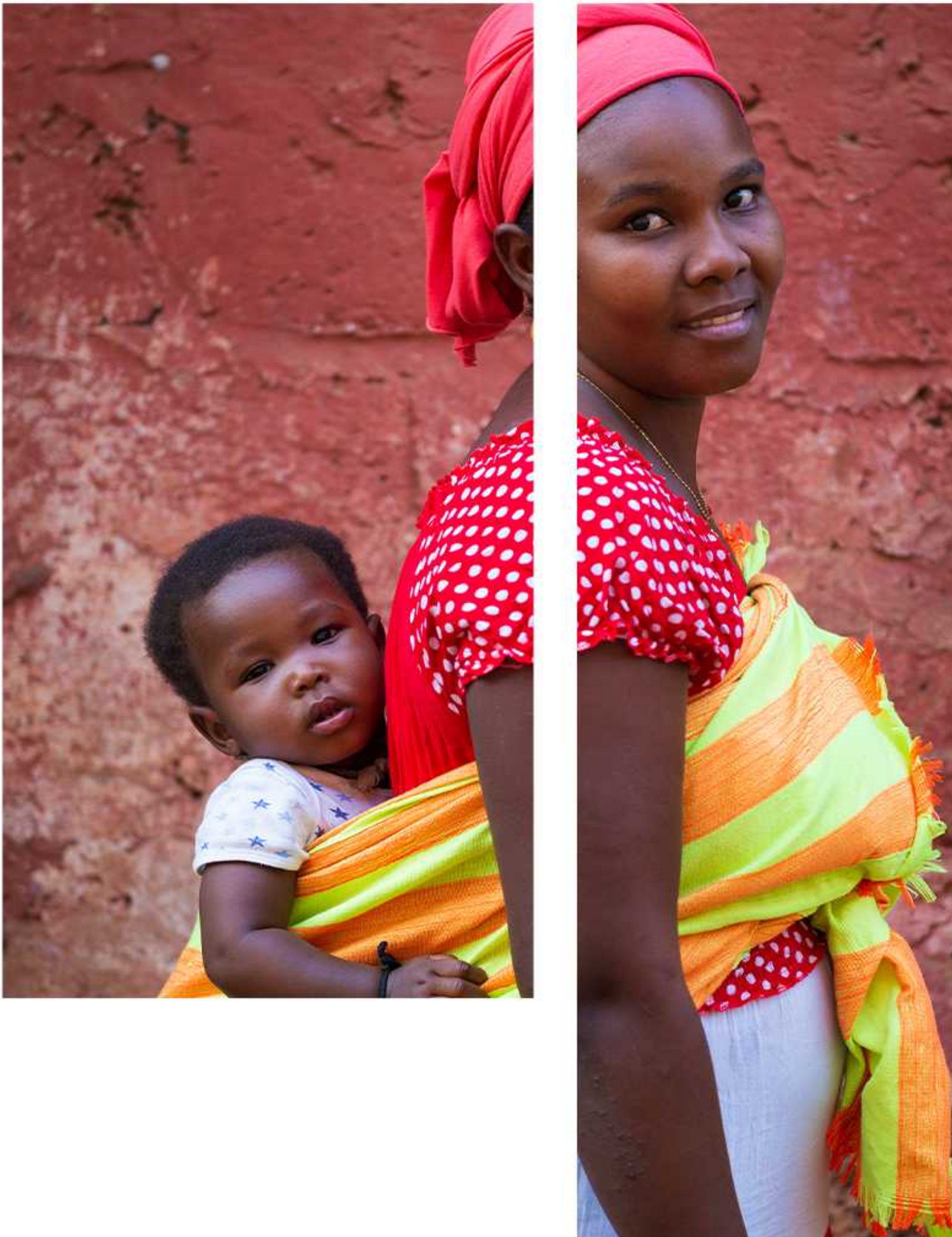




Final Evaluation Report | April 2021

PBF END OF PROJECT EVALUATION - INCREASED WOMEN AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCESSES AND AS AGENTS OF COMMUNITY CONFLICT PREVENTION IMPLEMENTED BY UNFPA AND UNICEF





United Nations
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The two year PBF funded project on, Increased Women and Youth participation in decision-making processes and as agents of community conflict prevention, is jointly implemented by UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with National partners in collaboration with the national and decentralized government structures, women and youth groups at the local and national level.

Contact information

UN House, 5 Kofi Annan Street, Cape point, Bakau, The Gambia

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCC	Banjul City Council
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDA	Conflict and Development Analysis
CRR	Central River Region
DP	Development Partner
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EPE	End of Project Evaluation
FAWEGAM	The Forum For African Women Educationalists, The Gambian Chapter
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GoTG	Government of The Gambia
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IPC	Inter Party Committee
KMC	Kanifing Municipal Council
LRR	Lower River Region
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MoH	Ministry of Health
MOWC&SW	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
NA	National Assembly
NAM	National Assembly Member
NBR	North Rank Region
NCCE	National Council for Civic Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NYC	National Youth Council
NYP	National Youth Parliament – The Gambia
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PHTG	Peace Hub, The Gambia
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TJ	Transitional Justice
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
URR	Upper River Region
VfM	Value for Money
VDC	Village Development Committee
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WCR	West Coast Region
WDC	Ward Development Committee
WHO	World Health Organization



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Ndella Faye Colley: PBF Program Coordinator, PBF Secretariat

Fatima Sonko: Program Manager, PBF

Lamin Camara: Program Analyst, UNFPA

Maimuna Denton: Program Analyst, UNFPA

Mamadou Bah: Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, PBF Secretariat

Hyujong Kim: Peace and Development Specialist, PBF Secretariat

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In The Gambia, under President Jammeh's regime of 22 years, democratic space was constricted and safe spaces for social engagement between accountable bodies, citizens, and right holders were extremely limited. The 2016 elections in which young people, women and marginalized groups had an important impact, led to the ousting of the former president and ushered in real expectations for greater democracy and a culture which would promote free speech. The transitional period, however, has not been easy. A legacy of human rights violations, institutional dysfunction, and manipulative tactics have continued to sow division, fear, and politicization, often along ethnic lines. The project, "Increased Women and Youth Participation in Decision-Making Processes and as Agents of Community Conflict Prevention", with its associated US\$ 1.3 million budget, was financed by the Peacebuilding-Fund and jointly implemented by UNFPA and UNICEF. Its implementation began in December 2018 and ended in December 2020. The project worked to ensure that young people and women participated in decision-making and early warning processes at national, regional and community levels, and to encourage national and local leaders to promote and support women and youth participation in decision-making and peacebuilding for social cohesion.

In line with the terms of reference, this End of Project Evaluation (EPE), has been conducted to measure and assess the project's results as well as its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impacts on the target beneficiaries and stakeholders. It will also document lessons learnt, make recommendations to sustain the project's results and inform ongoing and future Government of the Gambia (GoTG) and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) cooperation on similar interventions. This EPE used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection, and complemented them with a literature review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The Evaluator sought feedback from implementing partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. In order to meet the evaluation objectives, an Evaluation Matrix was developed at inception and cleared with the project team. The matrix focused on four key OECD/DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Despite logistical constraints associated with the Covid-19 pandemic which necessarily limited the movements of the evaluator, in total over 80 individuals provided inputs and opinions through these various instruments.

The evaluation concludes that the project was highly relevant at the local, national and international levels. Promoting "gender equity, equality and empowerment of women and girls for sustained socio-economic development" is a strategic priority of the National Development Plan (NDP 2018-2021), while empowering youth addresses the government's commitment to "leave no youth behind" as it recognizes that young people are the engines of growth and will be an essential pillar for national development. Additionally, the project was a relevant instrument tackling the numerous issues, effectively contributing to the peace building process.

Moreover, the EPE concludes that the project was coherent.

A review of the theory of change notes that the project design properly identified the problem, and the dynamics behind it and defined an intervention which appropriately addresses it. The outcomes and outputs were all well-defined and stakeholders were properly identified and adequately consulted.

The evaluator finds that overall the activities were adequately resourced. However, the evaluator concludes that the results framework should have been stronger, with more and better emphasis placed on identifying critical assumptions and risks and identifying mitigating measures. Accordingly, on the basis of this assessment, the evaluator concludes that project design and quality at entry were satisfactory

In terms of project implementation, while the pandemic resulted in delays and caused readjustments to the project planning and implementation, a significant number of the project outputs were nonetheless achieved with many exceeding the planned targets. Meanwhile, outcomes appear tangible at various levels: for example, at the national level, women-focused project activities are likely to impact the ongoing review of the Local Government Act – this should be considered a major achievement. Additionally, as a result of this project, District authorities pledged to include women and youth in critical tasks and in decision-making processes including in the District Tribunals.

A review of project's achievement against the results framework indicates that project effectiveness is assessed as Satisfactory for Outcome 1, Highly satisfactory for Output 2 and Satisfactory for Outputs 1, and 3. Under outcome 1, the project contributed to the active participation of young people and women in peacebuilding, politics and decision-making, and therefore consolidated inclusion and ownership especially at the community level. The project has provided young people with the opportunity to create safe spaces and discuss issues of concern to them. One such example is the Peace Hub The Gambia (PHTG), a peace building and social cohesion network, established in 2020, that seeks to create a conducive environment for young people in peace building, social cohesion and reconciliation to support and strengthen the gains of The Gambia's Transitional Justice (TJ). The project has also built the capacities of young women and men to meaningfully participate in peace-building initiatives and other decision-making processes. Furthermore, the project has facilitated the shaping of the views of older generations towards young women and men. It has promoted dialogue among young men and women, and the involvement of young people in the VDCs and WDC at their community and ward level.

Project effectiveness is assessed as Satisfactory for Outcome 2, Satisfactory for Output 4 and Moderately Satisfactory for Output 5. Under outcome 2, Local leaders including Chairpersons of Area Councils, National Assembly Members, WDC and VDC have all been engaged. Given the review of the Local Government Act (among other things, to make adequate provisions for women at the grassroots level to participate in decision-making) and the opportunities offered by the draft 2020 constitution, it is hoped that this outcome will be achieved, in particular the 30% quota at both the national and local government levels.

The overall assessment is that the project has been efficient. Several of the project activities demonstrate value for money (VFM). For the relatively small cost, the majority of the project outputs have achieved very satisfactory VFM results. For instance, to comply with the guidelines and regulations relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, some items (including face masks and other sanitary material) were provided even though they were not in the original budget. The pandemic also provided an opportunity for the project to leverage the use of technology, by the use of e-platforms for outreach and also conducting activities virtually. It must also be recognised that the project team managed the completion of all the major project activities by November 2020, ahead of schedule, despite COVID. This is a significant achievement.

Overall, this evaluation assesses the likelihood of sustainability as moderately likely. The project has shown signs of having had an impact and the systems developed can be considered adequate. Partner organisations' performance improved moderately over the life of the project and the capacity developed by the project interventions is likely to be sustained. Further adoption and scaling up of the programs, innovations and successful activity results is possible. The commitment of the central Ministries, Agencies and Departments (MDAs) has been strong and steady. This commitment is best illustrated by the fact that, during implementation, the MOGCSW established and involved key structures like National Women's Council, the network of female farmers across the country, men and boys to advocate for the rights of women, Mother's Club, etc. The performance of IPs involved in the project varied and accordingly, is their capacity to scale up their financial and human resources to achieve the project results.

Key lessons learned include: (i) The fact that several of the implementing partners' mission, vision and strategies directly aligned with the project objectives was fundamental to the project's success. This was critical for effective implementation and is a critical factor for sustainability of project results as these organisations will continue to monitor and lobby government authorities to fulfil their promises according to their mandates; (ii) The involvement of key stakeholders from the very early stages of project design greatly enhanced ownership and contributed to successful implementation of project activities under very difficult circumstances. (iii) Religious leaders and traditional communicators are essential agents in the communities and should be considered agents of change. Their credibility facilitated the dissemination of information regarding the project and secured the buy-in of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The project supports the view that they need to be more systematically engaged in the Gambia's ongoing efforts at reconciliation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding; and, (iv) The lack of access to education opportunities is affecting most of the women taking up leadership roles as consultations with various beneficiaries confirmed that academic credentials are considered key attributes of a credible leader. This fact needs to be highlighted as part of any strategy to involve women in decision-making.

To consolidate gains made under the project, the following key recommendations should be considered: (i) Advocacy - Draft 2020 Gambian Constitution - women and youth groups should be mobilized beyond the project period to advocate on the progressive sections of the draft constitution; and, (ii) To consolidate institutional capacities and to mobilise the financial resources necessary for sustaining activities post implementation, project financial supporters should insist that a project sustainability plan be developed as part of project activities with the following aims: continuing key activities for the next 2-3 years after project closure; and, supporting implementing partners in developing strategic advocacy plans and other communication tools. To improve the quality of programming of similar interventions in the future, the following key recommendations should be considered: (i) given the strategic nature of the role expected to be played by Implementing Partners in sustaining project interventions, a significant proportion of project funds should be allocated to institutional capacity development; (ii) political leaders from the executive, the legislature and from the political parties, should be identified as champions and given key roles geared towards influencing project outcomes; and, (iii) successor projects should promote greater economic empowerment through investments and synergies with other youth and women interventions.

1.1 Project Context

In The Gambia, under President Jammeh's regime of 22 years, democratic space was constricted and safe spaces for social engagement between duty bearers and right holders was extremely limited. The 2016 elections, in which young people, women and marginalized groups had an important impact, led to the ouster of the former president and ushered in great expectations for increased democracy and a culture which would promote free speech. The transitional period, however, has not been easy. A legacy of human rights violations, institutional dysfunction, and influential tactics continue to sow division, fear, and politicization, often along ethnic lines. According to the 2019 Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA), The Gambia, there has been a surge of old and unresolved questions such as land disputes, coupled with the burdens of new ones (e.g., influx of migrant returnees), that has found many institutions unprepared, or simply outdated in terms of the policies, infrastructure, or instruments necessary to tackle these obstacles.

Almost four years after the change in government, the space for engagement is still limited. The political elite remains overwhelmingly male and relatively older, while the average age of the population is getting progressively lower, and women continue to make up a larger proportion of the population. Ensuring that younger people, women and other marginalized populations participate more effectively in the political life of the country is essential to ensuring democratic governance. Additionally, incorporating these population's viewpoints is essential to sustainable development over the long term.

The project "Increased Women and Youth participation in decision-making processes and as agents of community conflict prevention", with its associated US\$ 1.3 million budget, was financed by the Peacebuilding-Fund and its implementation was begun in December 2018 and ended in December 2020. The project was meant to address the issues outlined above by empowering young people and women's groups to participate in decision-making processes across the different tiers of government, and to engage with political leaders to promote and support women and young people in decision-making, early warning of issues, and peace-building processes.

Accordingly, the project worked to achieve two key outcomes:

1. Ensure that young people and women participated in decision-making and early warning processes at national, regional and community levels, to promote peace, inclusiveness and national ownership, and Encourage National and local leaders, including elected representatives, to promote and support women and youth participation in decision-making and peacebuilding for social cohesion.
2. The project was jointly implemented by UNFPA and UNICEF in partnership with national actors which included national and decentralized government structures, and women and youth groups at the local and national level.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 Rationale and Purpose of the Evaluation

This EPE is conducted to measure and assess progress in achieving the project's results, the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impacts on the target beneficiaries and stakeholders. It will also draw lessons learnt and recommendations for sustaining the project's results and informing ongoing and future Government of the Gambia (GoTG) - Peacebuilding fund (PBF) cooperation on peacebuilding and on similar interventions.

Specific objectives of this End of Project Evaluation (EPE) include:

- To assess the progress made towards achieving the project's goal and objectives based on the result framework, design and monitoring data;
- To assess whether the resources (financial, human and material) have been used efficiently and effectively for the desired impact on the target group/communities;
- To assess the operational implementation of the activity;
- To analyse the accomplishments against the set outputs and outcomes;
- To assess effectiveness and potential measurable impact on the target groups;
- To assess the challenges faced during implementation;
- To identify key lessons and make recommendations for ongoing and future GoTG-PBF-Development Partner (DP) programming.

1.3 Scope and Structure of the Report

This EPE covers Banjul, Kanifing (KMC), West Coast Region (WCR) and Upper River Region (URR), as the target Regions of the project.

The structure of the EPE report is outlined below. The next section describes the methodology used for the evaluation. It is followed by Section 3 which provides an analysis of the project results through a discussion on the different evaluation criteria, including relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability as well as cross-cutting issues such as gender. Lessons learned from this EPE are highlighted in Section 4. Finally, recommendations are produced in Section 5. The report is supported by a number of annexes to complete and provide evidence to the information presented.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this section we discuss the methodology that was followed in conducting this evaluation. Accordingly, we will discuss:

- Evaluation criteria
- Evaluation methods
- The limitations of the evaluation.

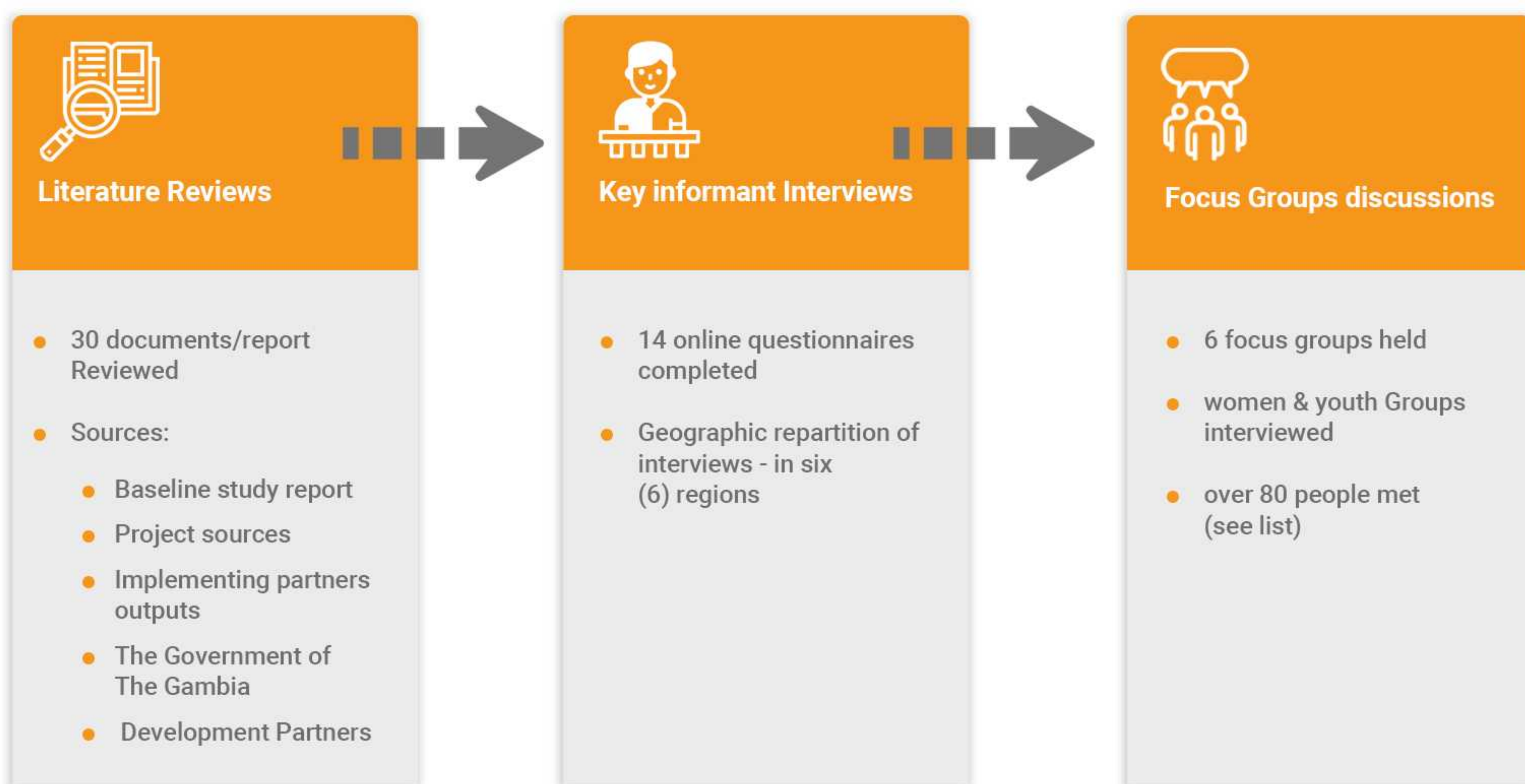
The evaluation methodology was described in detail in the inception report, the previous deliverable for this assignment.

2.1 Evaluation Criteria

In order to meet the evaluation objectives, an Evaluation Matrix was discussed and cleared with the project team at inception. The matrix focuses on four key criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Within each of these evaluation criteria, the matrix details key issues to be addressed: what to look for; data and information sources; data collection methods, etc. In looking at the evaluation issues to be addressed, a series of questions were developed which guided the work during the assessment (The evaluation matrix is included in the Annex). Additionally, project effectiveness was measured with reference to the harmonized evaluation criteria for ICR and OED Evaluations (the rating scale is included in the Annex).

2.2 Evaluation Methods

Methods used for this EPE were a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection, with complementarities from literature reviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with implementing partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The baseline study report dated April 2020, was also a useful source of information for this EPE. Figure 1 below gives a description of the process and highlights how the evaluation was conducted



¹ The evaluation matrix follows the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria for the evaluation of development interventions

² <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/reports/harmonizeevalcriteria.pdf>

At the beginning of the evaluation, emphasis was made on reviewing key documents made available by the project office, which included: project work plans; quarterly and annual reports; outputs and reports from the project's activities; baseline study report; GoTG policy documents and reports; reports and analysis from UNFPA, PBF and other DPs; project field visit reports; and various outputs and reports from each of the Implementing Partners (IPs). Consultation with stakeholders and beneficiaries was organized at both the national and regional levels. At the national level, interview questions were completed by UNFPA, UNICEF, PBF, Implementing Partners, CSOs and GoTG ministry representatives closely involved with the project. Follow-up telephone interviews were also carried out with key stakeholders. The EPE team also visited six regions: Greater Banjul, WCR, CRR South and North, LRR and URR. The selection of these regions was discussed with the project team.

It was useful to have a geographical spread of the regions and also to be able to focus on regions where substantial project activities were carried out. Additionally, the team endeavoured to systematically include women and young people's representatives in each region to ensure that the gender and youth perspectives were taken into account. A detailed list of people interviewed is

2.3 *Limitations for the Evaluation*

In spite of recent progress made in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic (vaccine and slowdown in the rate of infections), WHO guidelines and GoTG regulations were still in force. Therefore, even though FGDs were successfully held in the six regions visited, meeting with the project team and interviews with IPs were exclusively virtual and through the completion of an online questionnaire. It is also noted that the project was multifaceted and involved a number of activities spread across many different stakeholders, IPs and target beneficiaries. The project activities were also very different in scope, ranging from high-level legal and policy influencing of the NA and GoTG ministries at the national level, to women and youth empowerment and peace-building initiatives at the regional and community levels. The project has also generated a considerable number of documents of different types.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

Evaluation of the Women and Youth project using the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) evaluation criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability is presented in this section.

3.1 Relevance

The project is perceived as highly relevant at the local, national and international levels.

Empowering the Gambian woman to realize her full potential is one of the seven critical enablers of The Gambia's development blueprint. *The goal is to promote gender equity, equality and empowerment of women and girls for sustained socio-economic development.* Embedded within the strategic priorities of the NDP, women's empowerment will result in multiplier effects with wide-ranging impacts across all sectors. Efforts under outcome 2 of the project - National and local leaders including elected representatives promote women and youth participation in decision-making and peacebuilding for social cohesion - contributed to the key NDP priorities and to the strategic objectives of the MOWC&SW in respect of women's participation in peace and conflict prevention in NBR, CRR and URR.

In terms of young people in leadership, decision-making and peacebuilding: The National Development Plan (NDP 2018-2021), in its strategic priority 7 – reaping the demographic dividend through an empowered youth – outlined the government's resolve to fulfil its commitment to “leave no youth behind” as it recognizes that young people are the engines of growth and will be an essential pillar for national development.

One of the fundamental principles of The National Youth Policy is that “The Gambia shall commit to young people's participation in the democratic process, as well as in community and civic decision-making and development processes” (National Youth Policy, 2019-2028). The government has further committed to creating an enabling environment that would generate opportunities for youth involvement in the decision-making process. Additionally, the national policy framework highlights the civic responsibility of young people to subscribe to the national, community and family values for the benefit of peace and peaceful co-existence. Gambian young people have an obligation and responsibility to develop leadership values, participate in policy development and decision-making as well as to promote peace, security and development. Furthermore, and given the need for alignment with national development priorities, the project also draws its relevance from The Gambia United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017-2021 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDAF Outcome 2.5: Youth and Gender, seeks to promote women and young people's empowerment to reduce gender disparities, gender-based violence, access to decent employment opportunities and ensure effective participation in national development. SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and SGD 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, and contribute to the high relevance of the women and youth project.

At the local level, the project is equally perceived as extremely relevant, particularly in communities with a deep-rooted caste system. A case in point was the 2020 incidents in Garawol and other Serehuleh communities in URR. The project mobilized youth in the communities and facilitated effective dialogue in discussing critical issues such as sharing communal facilities including mosques, cemeteries, etc.

The project is expected to positively impact the resolution of certain ongoing drivers of fragility. The Gambia Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA, updated 2019), reports that the intensification of unresolved questions such as land disputes, coupled with the influx of migrant returnees, pose serious institutional challenges, ranging from unpreparedness to the lack of appropriate policy instruments. The Women and Youth project was a key instrument tackling the numerous relevant issues, effectively contributing to the peacebuilding process.

³ <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/reports/harmonizeevalcriteria.pdf>

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.2 Effectiveness

Overall the evaluator concludes that the project's implementation was moderately satisfactory³. In spite of the negative consequences of Covid-19 on project planning and implementation, a significant number of the project outputs have been achieved with many exceeding the planned targets. Evidence gathered by the EPE team, noted that one of the main factors that contributed to achieving project targets was the active participation of young people and women's groups both as activity implementers and as beneficiaries. These groups were conscious of the need to participate in decision-making and were willing to engage.

The sub-sections below present the effectiveness of the two project outcomes and the five outputs in terms of their progress towards achieving the end project targets.

3.2.1 Outcome 1: Youth & Women participate in decision-making and early warning processes at national, regional and community levels that promote peace, inclusiveness and national ownership

The project baseline study (2020) revealed that males outnumber females in the VDC and the WDC membership by more than a ratio of 2:1 respectively. Overall, the youth constitute 22.8 per cent of the VDC/WDC membership with 14.2 per cent and 8.6 per cent respectively for males and females. Twice more male youth than female youth reported having leadership role in the VDC. By contrast, 40.0 per cent of women aged 15 and above reported having leadership role in the WDC; compared to 20.0 per cent for male youth. Baseline data was collected in the middle of the project and only once making any comparison and conclusion on progress a challenge.

Notwithstanding the above challenge, under outcome 1, the project contributed to the active participation of young people and women in peace building, politics and decision-making, hence the project consolidated inclusion and ownership especially at the community level (see table 1 below). The project has provided young people with the opportunity to create safe spaces and discussed issues of concern to them. The Peace Hub The Gambia (PHTG), a peace building and social cohesion network, established in 2020, that seeks to create a conducive environment for young people in peace building, social cohesion and reconciliation to support and strengthen the gains of The Gambia's Transitional Justice (TJ), is an excellent illustration of this, as widely reported in the local newspapers. The project has facilitated learning through mentorship on leadership and decision-making. It has built the capacities of young women and men to meaningfully participate in peace-building initiatives and other decision-making processes. Furthermore, evidence gathered during FGDs, point to the fact that the project has facilitated the shaping of the views of older generations towards young women and men. It has promoted dialogue among young men and women, and the involvement of young people in the VDCs and WDC at their community and ward level.

FGDs with women in BCC, WCR, CRR North, LRR and URR has revealed that women believe that they should be given equal opportunities to participate in politics. Gibril Manneh - VDC Youth Representative-Basse Manneh Kunda *"We are very grateful to our community elders who have given us all the opportunities to participate in the decision-making process of the community and this is evident in the number of youths (both male and female) included in the VDC. Out of 19 members of the VDC, we have 11 youths (6 males and 5 female)"*.

With the ongoing review of the Local Government Act (empowering local structures and enabling women's participation in elective positions) and the training and support provided by the project, it is expected that the quota provisions will be included in the revised Act. District authorities pledged to include women in critical tasks and in decision-making processes including in the District Tribunals. The fourteen decentralised structures pledged to give women and young people decision-making positions after they go through the restructuring exercise supported by UNICEF and the Department of Community Development.

The project further enhanced the capacities of the VDC and WDC to continue managing communal conflicts such as land and other family disputes. In terms of sustaining the project outcome, political parties have pledged to unite and work with the NCCE through the Inter Party Committee to promote peace, especially in the upcoming election.

Project effectiveness is assessed as Satisfactory for Outcome 1. Table 1 below is a summary of the EPE assessment of outcome 1 indicators compared to the baseline and targets.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

TABLE 1: ASSESSMENT OF TARGETS UNDER OUTCOME 1

INDICATOR	Baseline	Target	End Project	EPE ASSESSMENT
1.1 % VDC/WDCs that meet the 30% quota for women's representation	0	N/A	0	<p>Overall Assessment: Moderately Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with IRI, opportunities and gaps for the creation of a participatory and inclusive governance system from a gender and youth perspective, were identified in the draft 2020 constitution. Despite the innovative clauses on women and young people's representation, the draft 2020 constitution was not passed by the NA. Sensitisation activities led to local authorities being open to discussions on this subject and provided information on the existing structures of the WDC & VDCs. The political will is manifest to include marginal groups (women and young people) in VDC following restructuring. Despite efforts under the project, local structures (VDC & WDC) remain dysfunctional, limiting young people and women's participation in local governance. The decentralisation process (outside the project) is meant to strengthen these structures.
1.2 # of women & youth trained on early warning systems who also serve as community monitors	0	10	13	<p>Overall Assessment: Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 women from mother's club engaged in promoting peace. Early warning tools developed. Capacity building of a pool of trainers on early warning, peacebuilding and dispute management processes. 'Peace hub, The Gambia' established by a youth beneficiary from the Trainer of Trainers (ToT).
1.3 % of women who believe women should be given equal opportunities to participate in politics	0	30%	80%	<p>Overall Assessment: Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building for fifty (50) aspiring female candidates ahead of the 2021-2023 electoral cycle. Strong network of women and mentors (former & current female NA members). FGD provided evidence that the only female councillor in LRR was voted in by the majority of the women because they believe there should be more women representatives in decision-making. FGDs in Banjul lamented the fact that NAMs rarely attend or participate in the community activities organized by the women and young people. "The only time we see them is when elections are near". The only NAM that consults them in any decision-making process is the only Female NAM in Banjul, which is the reason why they want more women in the NA.
1.4 % of women and young people who feel they are able to participate in decision-making (a) in their communities and (b) in the country	0	30%	75%	<p>Overall Assessment: Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized platforms including the Children NA, with bi-annual meetings in the chambers of the NA. Community and school-based engagement by children to increase awareness on critical issues such as promoting peace, human rights and girls' education. All the participants at the FGD in BCC advanced that women have the capacity to participate in decision-making – both at the community and at national level. Politicians engage them as a source of mobilizing party supporters due to their influence in the communities. They feel critical in the political decision-making processes, often with the title women mobiliser. Women in Banjul lamented that the Women's Bureau had not been providing adequate support in terms of the welfare of women. In addition, for capacity building and training activities, preference is given to "educated women". A particular case (which cannot be generalised at this point) was cited by Youth beneficiaries of the PBF project in Banjul. They do not seem to be aware of the construction of a "Centre for Youth" project currently undertaken by the GoTG.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.2.2 *Output 1: Women and Youth engaged, equipped and supported to participate in political decision-making processes at all levels*

Statistics gleaned from the 2020 project baseline survey reveal that only small proportions of women aged 15 and above (32.5%), male youth 15-35 years (35.2 %) and female youth 15-35 years (27.7%) participate in or are members of any social, political or religious organizations at community levels. Overall, only 29.1% reported to participate or being members of any social, political or religious organizations in their community; compared to 70.9 per cent who do not participate or are members of any organizations.

For output 1, the number of youths mobilized and sensitized on the importance of participation in decision-making processes was below the target (1565/2000). Among other things, this is principally due to Covid-19 restrictions on face-to-face meetings. Technology was used to achieve appreciable results under the circumstances.

Through various capacity building initiatives, the National Youth Parliament (NYP) members' understanding of the organization's mandate increased. The NYP - The Gambia, trained its members on the mandate of the parliament as well as on good governance and leadership. Members across the regions were equipped with communication and advocacy skills and trained on the proper use of social media. During the FGDs, the Deputy Speaker, Sainabou Sambou, informed the team that she has established a Peace Club at her school to promote the importance of peacebuilding in communities. The FGD was further informed that the NYP members are planning on visiting all the districts to educate them on the importance of obtaining a voter's card and why they should vote, especially for young people who are voting for the first time in this upcoming election.

The NYP's secretariat and three (3) regional offices were equipped with furniture and computers enhancing its operational efficiency, in terms of the frequency of consultations held, the increase in their presence on social media from a conducive working environment, etc. Advocacy and use of social media increased due to support provided by the project. The NYP-URR members created a WhatsApp group where all activities and urgent issues are communicated, and they have sittings every 3 months to talk about matters affecting their communities. This has improved their level of participation and community development.

An Inter Party Youth capacity building on policy advocacy, conducted between September and October 2020, strengthened and enhanced the understanding of young people and women from different political parties on policy advocacy. Three hundred and fifty (350) youth and women politicians were trained in all the seven (7) regions of The Gambia. Young, and women, politicians understood policy advocacy and are influencing decision-making in their respective political parties. Members of the Inter Party Youth Group took part in constitutional debate processes.

Project effectiveness is assessed as Satisfactory for Output 1. Table 2 below is a summary of the EPE assessment of output 1 indicators compared to the baseline and targets.

3. MAIN FINDINGS - 3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

TABLE 2: ASSESSMENT OF TARGETS UNDER OUTPUT 1

INDICATOR	Baseline	Target	End Project	EPE ASSESSMENT
1.1.1 # of surveys and needs assessments conducted	0	2	1	<p>Overall Assessment: Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity of implementing partners assessed, relevant training was identified and conducted for efficient and effective programme implementation and management. Participation of women and young people’s representatives in coordination & community project monitoring meetings, development of strategic instruments at regional level, etc. At the FGD in Banjul, the deputy speaker of the national youth parliament said, “the youth parliament is a way of giving us a platform to talk about the issues affecting youth development, educating youths on the mandates of the parliament and good governance”. She emphasized that “youths can only be represented by their fellow youths because they know what they want and the issues affecting their development”. At project closure, 78% (1565/2000) of the target youth were mobilized and sensitized. There have been multiple advocacies on women and young people’s participation in politics by youth and women groups in target regions.
1.1.2 # of youth mobilized and sensitized on the importance of participation in decision-making processes	0	2 000	1 565	
1.1.3 # of youth engaged in a mentorship programme with village development committees/ward development committees in target regions	0	50	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth leaders at community level have benefited from mentorship programmes – VDCs – on leadership skills and involved in decision-making processes (Activista, The Gambia – Key Informant).
1.1.4 # of youth trained and participating in decision-making processes	0	20	77	<p>Overall Assessment: Highly Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NYC provided evidence that the project was very successful in encouraging youth leadership and political participation. The Youth Parliament was fully involved in the project design was given the space to design an activity at their level which was reviewed by UNFPA-The Gambia and approval granted. In terms of implementation, the National Youth Parliament was given the leeway to implement the project with little or no interference from UNFPA. A case in point: NYP: Interparty Youths - trained in total, 350 youth and women politicians in all the seven (7) regions of The Gambia. Members of the Inter Party Youth Group took part in constitutional debate processes peacefully Because of the project, members of the NYP are now intensely engaged in advocacy using social media and other online platforms (reference KII, NYP). The NYP trained its members on the mandate of the parliament as well as on good governance and leadership. Members across the regions were equipped with communication and advocacy skills and trained on the proper use of social media. The project provided office equipment to the NYP secretariat – three (3) laptops and 3 desktops. During the FGDs, members have confirmed that this has enhanced their operational efficiency in terms of more frequent engagement and online activities.
1.1.5 # of women trained and participating in decision-making processes	0	50	111	

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.2.3 Output 2: Women are engaged, equipped and supported to participate in political decision-making processes

FAWEGAM conducted training for Mothers' Clubs across Lower River Region. The twelve days' activity brought together 300 Mothers' Clubs members from 30 different Mothers' Clubs in the region. The following results were achieved – 300 Mothers' Club members': (i) capacities strengthened on conflict resolution through dialogue (ii) knowledge and skills were improved on strategies for conflict management (ii) capacities enhanced in addressing the issues and challenges affecting women's involvement in decision-making. **A quarterly reflection and follow-up of recommendations from communities was conducted in LRR in March 2020**, to find out how the skills and knowledge acquired are being utilized in promoting and maintaining peace in the communities. As the report of the quarterly reflection concluded, the training undoubtedly has increased the participants' understanding on peacebuilding, conflict resolution and social cohesion as important determinants for women's empowerment in decision-making through political participation. Below are just few extracts from quotes of a significant number of women beneficiaries:

- **Kaddy Darboe – Soma Proper Lower Basic School** - narrated that the training broadened her understanding of conflict: "Before the training, I never pay particular attention to children bullying each other but after the training I was very sensitive to any violence act around me.
- **Hulay Jallow – Foroyaa Lower Basic School** also explained how the training helped her to reconcile a couple. "Just shortly after the training in my community, one day a couple had a conflict, and the man pronounced a divorce to the wife accusing her of unfaithfulness. When I was told about it, I thought of the skills I was taught during the training and rushed to intervene.
- **Arabiadou Fofana from Soma Upper Basic School** explained how she used the knowledge and skills gained from the conflict resolution training to address a dramatic scenario at a Soma Upper Basic School. She said through persistence, patience, bridging – making best use of the positive qualities of others and communicating assertively she was able to address the conflict.

A national early warning training manual was developed by WANEP. This was the outcome of a 14-day training of trainers on early warning, peacebuilding and mechanisms for effective dispute resolution. A pool of 25 national trainers have been enabled with the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct and facilitate trainings on early warning, peacebuilding and effective conflict resolution.

- **Neneh Darboe and Musa Sanneh of URR**, who participated in the training, informed the FGD that they have mobilized other influential women leaders in Basse to share the knowledge and skills they have gained from the WANEP training as advocates of Women in Leadership and Peace-building in the communities. Together with these women, they carried out sensitization in local communities to encourage and foster the right mind-set of women in leadership and peace-building.
- **Musukebba**, who also participated in the training, said that in her village, Kembujeh, WCR, the number of women that believe in taking up leadership roles is not convincing. After the training, she organized a sensitization program using the women-only groups to build their confidence, and create safe spaces for discussion on women in leadership. During our FGD with these women group leaders, they have revealed that "the sensitization program has opened their eyes on the leadership roles they need to take up".

Furthermore, the capacity of 50 aspiring female candidates has been built ahead of the 2021-2023 electoral cycle to increase women's participation in decision-making processes and also to serve as agents of community conflict prevention. A strong network of women has been built nationwide and women have pledged to support each other regardless of their political affiliation through mentorship programs.

Targets have been largely surpassed for this output. Beneficiaries have also expressed total satisfaction (see training report and summary of EPE FGDs) with the delivery of the capacity building and dialogue sessions.

Project effectiveness is assessed as highly Satisfactory for Output 2. Table 3 below is a summary of the EPE assessment of output 2 indicators compared to the baseline and targets.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

TABLE 3: ASSESSMENT OF TARGETS UNDER OUTPUT 2

INDICATOR	Baseline	Target	End Project	EPE ASSESSMENT
1.2.1 # of functional community based early warning system in target regions	0	4	4	<p>Overall Assessment: Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WANEP conducted training for women and young people from the three targeted regions on early warning and conflict prevention. ● National stakeholders consultative meeting was conducted to develop and validate early warning tools to promote early response. ● In LRR, Radio talk shows on youth and women participating in politics and peacebuilding had a visible impact in the region ● In LRR, the Interparty tournament was useful in promoting peace and social cohesion particularly amongst the young people’s representatives of the political parties. ● Young people and women in all regions were reached with messages on the importance of peaceful coexistence and harmony (NYC). ● FGDs in BCC confirmed that the inter-party tournament and moonlight story telling united the youth of Banjul and they look forward to similar interventions. Attendance by the football legend (late Biri-Biri) and a traditional artist (Mbaye Gaye) was inspiring.
1.2.2 # of WIPNET established and promoting peace in target regions	0	4	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In LRR, the women created a group called “NO TO TRIBALISM”. This initiative, also supported by the project, has helped reduced tribal conflicts. A cultural event took place where all the tribes shared stories. Young people and mostly women participated in this event. ● The FGD in LRR informed the team of the habit of bullying and humiliating contestants for political positions, based on their tribe. An example was cited: a young lady who contested for councilor position. We were further informed that the MoU⁴ signed by the political parties has contributed to providing guidance in complying with the law during elections, political gatherings and other activities. Political representatives have been sensitizing their members on peacebuilding and conflict resolution to avoid political and tribal conflict. ● In CRR South, parties like UDP, APRC and NPP have political representatives from different tribes. ● FAWEGAM conducted training for Mothers’ clubs across Lower River Region. The activity brought together 300 Mothers’ Clubs members from 30 different Mothers’ Clubs in the region. In a quarterly reflection facilitated by FAWEGAM in March 2020, the women narrated success stories ranging from resolving conflict in schools: Kaddy Darboe – Soma Proper Lower Basic School - narrated that the training broadened her understanding of conflict: “Before the training, I never pay particular attention to children bullying each other but after the training I was very sensitive to any violence act around me. <p>Additionally, Hulay Jallow – Foroyaa Lower Basic School also explained how the training helped her to reconcile a couple. “Just shortly after the training in my community, one day a couple had a conflict, and the man pronounced a divorce to the wife accusing her of unfaithfulness. When I was told about it, I thought of the skills I was taught during the training and rushed to intervene.</p>

⁴ Please note that the signing of the MoU between political parties is not a direct effort of the project but the intervention of several partners including the UNDP

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.2.4 Output 3: Women and youth participate in ongoing national processes including legal, legislative, Constitutional and other Transition reforms at all levels (Transitional Justice, Land and Constitutional Reform)

In partnership with the International Republican Institute (IRI), a consultancy for the review of the 2020 draft constitution was carried out. In particular, opportunities were identified for a more inclusive governance system from a gender and youth perspective. Even though the draft constitution was not passed by the National Assembly, the final project report provided evidence that women and young people will be mobilized beyond the project closure to advocate for the progressive sections of the draft constitution, such as the mandatory 14 seat quota for women's representation at the National Assembly.

The highlight of this output is activities relating to supporting the production of youth and child-friendly educative materials. The U-report platform is empowering and connecting young people to speak out on issues that matter to them. Over 12,000 u-reporters in The Gambia are partnering with 13,959,989 u-reporters in 79 countries worldwide, to carry out polls relating to constitutional and electoral reforms.

Project effectiveness is assessed as Highly Satisfactory for Output 3. Table 4 below is a summary of the EPE assessment of output 3 indicators compared to the baseline and targets.

TABLE 4: ASSESSMENT OF TARGETS UNDER OUTPUT 3

INDICATOR	Baseline	Target	End Project	EPE ASSESSMENT
1.3.1 # of women and youth who participated in legal and transitional reforms	0	400	660	<p>Overall Assessment: Highly Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the partnership facilitated by the project, NYP and IRI engaged 660 youth and women participants in the review of the draft constitution, looking at it from the gender and youth perspective The U-report platform used to educate young people and adolescents about preventing COVID-19, Sustainable Development Goals and human rights. U-Report is an SMS based platform developed and under the project to gauge people's views and attitudes towards issues happening in their communities. More than 12,000 people are registered on the platform in The Gambia. In December, a poll measured people's perceptions of and behaviors towards COVID-19, the second such poll in less than five months. More than 5,000 U-Reporters of different age groups participated in both polls. In the two polls that UNICEF rolled out in August and December, U-Reporters were asked their views on COVID-19 and attitude towards prevention measures, including wearing of face mask, hand washing and social distancing. Amongst the principal results: Community talk shows proved useful during the COVID-19 lockdown and social distancing - advocacy for the use of e-learning alternatives, messages on peace, child abuse, domestic violence, etc.
1.3.2 # of child/youth friendly educative materials used by young people in their advocacy	0	3	2	

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.2.5 Outcome 2: National and local leaders, including elected representatives, promote women and youth participation in decision-making and peacebuilding for social cohesion

Under outcome 2, Local leaders including Chairpersons of Area Councils, National Assembly Members, WDC and VDC have been sensitised on the need for women and youth to participate in decision-making. Women (900) and young people (100) were fully mobilized to lead efforts relating to the Covid-19 response by working with local authorities to sensitize and mobilize communities. Given the review of the Local Government Act, the current efforts in the decentralisation process and the opportunities offered by the draft 2020 constitution, it is hoped that this outcome, in particular the 30% quota at both the national and local government levels, will be achieved. As we conclude this report, The National Gender Platform presented to the National Assembly, a copy of a draft Constitution Amendment Bill, 2021. The draft bill seeks among others to increase women representation in the Legislature. Activities under this outcome were largely affected by Covid-19 in terms of the restrictions to mass gatherings and social distancing. Engaging and sensitising national leaders was not possible virtually, given the obvious reasons of internet access and the feasibility at that level. However, and as discussed elsewhere in this report, management has been effective in leveraging on technology. Several of the project activities were conducted virtually with the use of e-platforms. The community dialogues among women, youth and community leaders, is a case in point.

Project effectiveness is assessed as Moderately Satisfactory for Outcome 2. Table 5 below is a summary of the EPE assessment of output 3 indicators compared to the baseline and targets. Table 5: Assessment of targets under Outcome 2

TABLE 5: ASSESSMENT OF TARGETS UNDER OUTCOME 2

INDICATOR	Baseline	Target	End Project	EPE ASSESSMENT
2.1 Legislation enacted that prescribes 30% quota of representation of women in electable offices (i.e., National Assembly, Area Councils and Municipal Councils)	No	Yes	No	<p>Overall Assessment: Moderately Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FGD in CRR South confirmed progress at the level of the political parties with two major political parties GDP & UDP, confirming > 50% & 40% respectively of women executive committee members. These are few of the most structured and organised political parties. The evidence points to the contrary: "Women are also underrepresented in relevant positions within political parties and the civil service. For instance, out of the 16 currently registered political parties, none has a woman party leader. What is more, most women are active in political parties as supporters, mobilizers, and voters – not decision-makers". https://www.wfd.org/2020/12/04/advancing-democracy-in-the-gambia-through-womens-leadership/ Passing of the draft 2020 constitution (with provisions for the representation of marginalised groups – women, youth and disabled) is critical in enabling the enactment of legislation for the 30% quota of representation.

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3.2.6 Output 4: National and local leaders recognize and accept the importance of young people and women's participation in decision-making

Local leaders have been engaged on the rights of women and young people to participate in decision-making processes. These included chairpersons of area councils, National Assembly Members, Councillors, Chiefs and Alkalolus including WDC and VDC. Most of the leaders have demonstrated the political will to promote the right of women and young people to participate in the decision-making processes. During the Inter-Face Dialogue, Local authorities were open to the discussion and participated willingly and provided information on the structure and composition of the VDC and WDC. The EPE was provided with a list of the members of about 15 VDC/WDC disaggregated by age and gender, which demonstrated efforts in the inclusion of young people and women in decision-making. Local authorities promised to be more consultative in the decision making process to facilitate women and youth participation.

Project effectiveness is assessed as Satisfactory for Output 4. Table 6 below is a summary of the EPE assessment of output 4 indicators compared to the baseline and targets.

TABLE 6: ASSESSMENT OF TARGETS UNDER OUTPUT 4

INDICATOR	Baseline	Target	End Project	EPE ASSESSMENT
2.1.1 # of local leaders mobilized and sensitized on the importance of women and youth participation in decision-making	0	400	755	<p>Overall Assessment: Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inter-Face Dialogue between Youth, Women and Local authorities: Local authorities were open to the discussion and participated willingly and provided information on the structure and composition of the VDC and WDC. ● Support facilitated intergenerational dialogue sessions between women, young people, returnees and influential elders in high returnee communities to promote shared values and encourage inclusion. ● Through "Bantaba Kaachas", community film productions & viewing, Activista facilitated community dialogue sessions – and in doing so promoted shared values, encouraged anti discriminatory/stereotyping behaviours and addressed exclusionary practices. ● Returnee migrants in communities were involved in the shared learning session. Returnees have expressed satisfaction on the reintegration processes. Binta Jallow – Councilor Bakau Ward: "Interesting stories have been shared which have changed my perception towards the returnees as such I'll do what I can in pushing youth issues at the council to push factors to migration". ● Civic engagement activities designed to promote dialogue on democratic participation of youth - service booths for information sharing & referrals - inter-regional cultural arts fair, inter-party football tournament, moonlight storytelling. ● NCCE conducted Civic Dialogue with Local and Traditional Authorities on Women and Young people's participation in decision-making and peacebuilding.
2.1.2 # of community dialogues/sessions supported	0	20	42	

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.2.7 Output 5: National and local leaders promote and facilitate the involvement of women and youth in ongoing national processes and reforms

Civic dialogue sessions on peacebuilding with national and regional political parties, brought together influential political party leaders. The party leaders committed to further enhancing the participation of women and young people, in particular upholding the 30% women representation. 300 VDC and WDC members were trained in all the project intervention regions. 570 community members were sensitized on the Local Government Act and on the role of women in the decentralization process.

During the FGD in CRR South with local leaders, they gave credit to the sensitization programs on the importance of women and young people's participation in politics implemented by Activista. They confirmed that these programs have led to political leaders appointing women to leadership roles in their parties evidenced by the fact that up to 50% of the executive committee for GDC are women, while 40% of the UDP Executive committee are women.

Project effectiveness is assessed as Moderately Satisfactory for Output 5. Table 7 below is a summary of the EPE assessment of output 5 indicators compared to the baseline and targets.

TABLE 7: ASSESSMENT OF TARGETS UNDER OUTPUT 5

INDICATOR	Baseline	Target	End Project	EPE ASSESSMENT
2.2.1 # of national leaders sensitized on the need for young people and women's inclusion in the ongoing legal reform processes	No	400	275	<p>Overall Assessment: Moderately Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 275 (68% of the target) national leaders sensitized on the need for youth and women inclusion in ongoing legal reform processes. NCCE conducted training of VDCs and WDCs on the Local Government Act and the Role of Women and Youths in the Decentralization process. The expected outcome of the sensitisation and training is to raise awareness at the highest political levels so that the need to include marginalised groups (Women, Youth) in political decision making would be promoted (see table 5). During the FGD in CRR South with local leaders, they gave credit to the sensitization programs on the importance of women and young people's participation in politics implemented by Activista. They said that these programs have led to political leaders appointing women to leadership roles in their parties as they confirmed that up to 50% of the executive committee for GDC are women, while 40% of the UDP Executive committee are women. The process of amending the legal instruments (e.g., constitution, LG Act, decentralisation, etc) is ongoing due to several other interventions during the transition period. Our assessment is that the project intervention at this level has contributed positively to this process, even though not yet concretised.



3.2.8 Management Effectiveness

Overall, management of the Women and Youth project is assessed as being effective. The project team has managed and coordinated the implementation of a large number of activities that have included the review of legal instruments and capacity building. In the final year of the project, collaboration between the implementing agencies has been strengthened with review meetings to identify lessons learned from 2019 implementation. Moreover, the project has achieved a disbursement rate of 98% at closure. This is a very satisfactory performance. It is common in The Gambia, that project implementation is slow over the first 12 months as the implementers become familiar with the project and its standard operating procedures. This is the case in this project too. The EPE team observed that timeliness of activity implementation improved, especially as the project team grappled with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Management effectiveness is also illustrated by the strong vertical and horizontal relationship developed, as well as the quality and type of structures put in place that guarantee effective implementation. In this regard, the EPE team for instance noted that the MOGCSW established and intensively involved the following structures during implementation: (i) the network of female farmers across the country, (ii) men and boys to advocate for the rights of women, (iii) National Women's Council, (iv) Mother's Club, (v) community child protection committees, etc. For the NYC, most of the activities were implemented through youth groups and regional youth structures to whom funds were transferred for onward transmission to the IPs.

However, management is considered less effective in two aspects. This assessment is justified by the fact that (i) Evidence provided during stakeholder consultations confirmed that there was insufficient communication, coordination and collaboration between UNFPA and UNICEF; the UN agencies charged with managing the project. Each of the agencies focused more on their individual activities and the corresponding IPs, as opposed to collaborating and creating synergies as a project team and (ii) Further evidence provided by the NYP key informant asserted that formal meetings that included the UN agencies and both IPs and sub-IPs to discuss critical project implementation issues were limited in both length and number. A baseline study was completed in the second quarter of 2020. Even though the conclusions helped strengthen project operational planning for the rest of the period, they came too late to serve as any useful benchmark to measure the project's success or otherwise.



3.2.9 Communication

Communication is considered satisfactory. Despite inadequate communication between implementing agencies (described in the paragraph above), the EPE team ascertained that communication between IPs and project beneficiaries was adequate; the reporting and community linkages were very effective and the feedback mechanism from the project to the beneficiaries was efficient. Communication between IPs and the direct beneficiaries was quite effective. The structures have had experience of previous working relationships and the project activities further strengthened the collaboration. *The communication between the NCCE and the UNFPA and NYC (the main IP) was very effective as there was an open-door policy where partners communicated to each other on project implementation at any time even outside working hours (NCCE, stakeholder consultations).*

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3.2.10 Reporting

Reporting on the project activities through activity reports submitted by the various implementing partners and through the Annual Reports is assessed as highly effective. Monitoring and reporting have, however, been affected by Covid-19 restrictions. The EPE team confirmed that remote monitoring and virtual meetings were used as alternatives. The annual reports concentrate on presenting what has been done in the five output areas and the related activities. It is our assessment that the annual reports reviewed, in particular the final year 2020 report, provide an accurate description of what has been done over each year of the project. The annual report also has appendixes that have meticulous details for every project activity. The EPE team substantiated the above from the activity reports provided by the IPs and from information gathered during the FGDs. Although the Annual Reports provide an adequate description of project activities it is considered that they provide limited analysis and sections that present Lessons Learned, Limitations and Recommendations.



3.2.11 Partnership

The women and youth project was designed to complement other PBF projects such as the reintegration of returnee migrants by virtue of its target who are mostly young people, collaboration with the UN youth and gender group and to complement UNDP support to the Women's Bureau to review and revalidate the National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325. To further buttress this point, the NDP (Outcome 7.3) recognizes that the solutions for many of the challenges besetting Gambian young people reside outside the purview of the sector. It is therefore imperative to build partnerships to promote the youth development agenda both at the national and international level. Except for the positive collaboration facilitated with the IRI on the constitutional review process, the EPE team has not received any evidence which suggests that the project has developed a diversified partnership that contributed significantly to the project achievements. Consultations held with the IOM (see attached completed questionnaire) has revealed that no role was played in the design and/or implementation of the project. It further suggested that the project should have liaised with other UN agencies working on similar PBF projects for possible synergies, particularly at the project design phase.



3.3 Efficiency

The project experienced initial delays. Substantive implementation started in May instead of January 2019. The project team explained that the initial delay was mainly due to administrative hurdles. Most of the IPs were engaged with the UN system for the first time and they needed time to understand the procedures and guidelines for project implementation through UN agencies. In the second year of the project, the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing guidelines and social distancing restrictions, posed further challenges to project implementation. At the beginning of the pandemic, all project activities were halted and reprogrammed.

However, the project team caught up with the delays and managed the completion of all the major project activities by November of 2020. This is quite an achievement. The overall assessment is that the project has been efficient.

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3.3.1 Efficiency of Process

There is no evidence that the Covid-19 outbreak has significantly affected the project budget and project activities. Some items (including face masks and other sanitary material) were provided even though they were not in the original budget.

The pandemic also provided an opportunity for the project to leverage the use of technology as activity reports and key informants reveal that some activities, including the international peace day celebrations, were conducted virtually, demonstrating adaptability on the part of all concerned.



3.3.2 Timeliness

There were delays in the disbursement of funds to Implementing Partners particularly in the first quarter of the project, due to the late approval of work plans. Evidence advanced by the NYC was substantiated by the NCCE. Partners also complained of the late request for information, coupled with short timelines for actions.



3.3.3 Value for Money (VfM)

Several of the project activities demonstrate value for money. No cost efficiency benchmarks exist for formal measurement of value for money but the EPE assessment is that for the relatively small cost, the majority of the project outputs have achieved very satisfactory value for money results. The EPE highlights the fact that the Implementing Partners used part of the funds for approved project activity to purchase face masks and hand sanitizers in order to adhere to WHO and Covid-19 precautionary measures as an excellent illustration of this.



3.4 Sustainability

Overall, this evaluation assesses the likelihood of sustainability as moderately likely. The project has shown signs of impact and the systems developed overall can be considered adequate. Partner organisations' performance improved moderately over the life of the project and the capacity developed by the project interventions is likely to be sustained. Further adoption and scaling up of the programs, innovations and successful activity results is possible. The commitment of the central Ministries, Agencies and Departments (MDAs) has been strong and steady, the performance of IPs involved in the project varies and accordingly so is their capacity to scale up their financial and human resources to achieve the project results.



3.4.1 Programs and systems in place

This project has become a flagship project in terms of the number of important programs, systems and other infrastructure that were supported. The names of these programs have been featured at different places across this EPE report. Amongst others, the project interventions strengthened the mentorship programme and early warning systems, which are expected to continue even after project closure. These were implemented by WANEP as part of its core mandate. Significant progress was made in strengthening platforms and mechanisms that facilitate dialogue and the coordination of project activities and achievement of results. It is in this regard that the National Youth Parliament (NYP), The Children's National Assembly of The Gambia (CNAG), The Gambia National, the National Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace, and Security, were established and strengthened.



3.4.2 *Organisational Capacity*

One of the criticisms of the donor-funded Project Coordination Unit (PCU) model with largely contracted staff, is that the counterpart government and other implementing partners' teams had limited opportunities to learn skills and gain relevant project management experience.

For this project, sustainability of organisational capacity has been influenced by the role of the project team and the implementation modalities deployed. In that regard, WANEP, Activista and NYC are key implementing partners and they will continue to exist and will be supporting relevant areas of the project as implemented.

EPE confirmed that currently Activista is implementing a project that supports youth participation in party politics and in peacebuilding. This is building up on the gains made on the women and youth project currently being evaluated. The network's approach is to create synergies with existing projects that will allow for continuity. However, the implementing partner, Activista, observed that there are limited resources at the level of the network to scale up activities post-project implementation. In the same vein, WANEP advised that the conflict monitors need support in terms of data for reporting and that grants should be provided to young people and women to support sustainable peacebuilding initiatives in the communities.



3.4.3 *Capacity Building*

The project through UNFPA, supported a capacity assessment of some partners to guide the specific support needed. The capacities of the implementing partners were built to be able to implement similar activities in the future. This is a key sustainability factor. Members of the National Youth Parliament – The Gambia, benefited from several capacity-building activities. Members were trained on the mandate of the NYP, on communication and advocacy as well as on the peaceful usage of social media. These activities were conducted across the seven regions. Training of Trainers was provided for the Inter Party Youth Groups on peaceful political and Constitutional debate processes.

Conducted in 2019, this activity trained young people and women from different political parties on how to engage in peaceful and constructive debates especially as regards matters relating to the constitution and politics. Inter Party Youth were also trained on policy advocacy. Given that the training of trainers (ToT) was part of the capacity building delivery model, sustainability is considered to be high in this respect.



3.4.4 *Community Participation*

Community participation in planning and management has been a feature in some regions, as is highlighted in previous sections of this report. The EPE team confirmed that Activista collaborated with other community-based organisations in the implementation of the activities. The CBOs have always been informed of the project development objectives and their role in the implementation of the activities. The direct beneficiaries in the communities were equally involved. These are critical success factors for buy-in, ownership and the sustainability of the resulting project outcomes.



3.4.5 *Financial resources*

Sustaining project achievements is very dependent upon government funding in the post project phase as well as other factors such as the institutional capacity developed by the project. The UNDP-supported governance project is building on the gains of the project in many areas.

Additionally, the new youth project expected to commence in 2021, will continue to support some of the project interventions such as the Youth Interparty Committee, the mentorship programme for aspiring female candidates and expansion of the dialogue platforms at both levels.

Despite the many useful achievements, our assessment indicates that sustainability of some successful project outputs is at risk. Evidence provided by the National Youth Council undoubtedly revealed that there are insufficient resources to sustain the project.

3.5 Cross Cutting Issues

3.5.1 Gender

Mainstreaming of gender into policies, development programs and projects consistently with the project design is considered satisfactory. The project activities are well aligned with the objectives pursued in the national development plan to promote gender equity, equality and empowerment of women and girls for sustained socio-economic development. The mainstreaming approach is reinforced through project activities focusing on sensitizing women on critical issues including preventing Covid-19, child marriage and gender-based violence (GBV), amongst others. The mentorship program and the training, provided opportunities for women to learn, motivate and share valuable experience in the area of peacebuilding and women in leadership. Additionally, project design and activities ensured that gender disaggregated information was generated for evidence-based decision-making. The Children National Assembly has a female speaker, with more than 50% female members. Platforms such as U-Report have generated more than 50% female registered members. **According to the 2020 end project report, the amount of US\$604,904 (46.5%) was allocated to activities focused on gender equality or women's empowerment. As at end December 2020, US\$451,589 had been expended on these activities.** This is in line with the principles of gender responsive budgeting.

3.5.2 Human Rights

Overall, the evaluation considers that human rights, a critical component of this program, have been satisfactorily addressed. Project activities have ensured that human rights have been addressed and have contributed to increased beneficiary inclusion, more equitable access to project resources and the involvement of community members in planning activities and in decision-making. A key informant, Activista, confirmed that the network utilised a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) in the design and implementation of project activities. This confirms that the target beneficiaries were consulted, involved and meaningfully participated in the implementation of key activities. The U-report platform which mobilized more than 10,000 youths in decision-making, was also used to educate on socio-economic and other human rights issues. Through organized platforms facilitated by the project, children and young people conducted school-based and community engagement to enhance awareness on human rights issues using the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children Act 2005. **This is probably one of the best illustrations of how the project has contributed to human rights awareness within the target beneficiaries.**

4. LESSONS LEARNED

- 1** The selection of implementing partners whose mission, vision and strategies are directly aligned with the project objectives, is critical both for effective implementation and sustainability. From the key informant interviews, the EPE team noted that prior to the commencement of the project, Activista was leading a “NotTooYoungToRun” campaign that was promoting young people’s participation in politics. This is an incentive for the IP, who implemented activities under outcome 1, to continue scaling up activities that aimed at sustaining project outcomes. Also, WANEP-The Gambia promotes peacebuilding and conflict prevention; hence the project activities are part of its core mandate. The inclusion of the National Youth Parliament, a youth organisation, to take a lead role in the design and implementation of project activities for the benefit of young people, was also perceived as best practice to be replicated in similar interventions.
- 2** Project ownership and implementation was greatly enhanced owing to the involvement of key stakeholders in the project design and implementation. At the concept note stage, consultations were held with key national stakeholders including the Women’s Bureau, NYC, Department of Community Development and CSOs including WANEP, Think Young Women, Peace Ambassadors and Activista. We also gathered evidence that Activista The Gambia, participated in the design of the project through consultative meetings with UNFPA and therefore contributed to drafting and reviewing the project concept paper. Additionally, the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE) confirmed that it had been fully involved in the formulation of activities, developing work plans and implementation. The National Youth Parliament also substantiated the above.
- 3** Religious leaders and traditional communicators are essential agents in the communities, particularly for the dissemination of information and securing buy-in. The project supports the view that they need to be more engaged in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- 4** Despite noticeable progress, there are still challenges in achieving the active participation of youth in policy and decision-making. In The Gambia, seniority is still associated with authority, and youth are not expected to speak out or voice their concerns, let alone have a role in policy development processes. Furthermore, in many developing countries, young women’s participation in policymaking is particularly challenging because of traditional beliefs about the suitability of women to hold decision-making positions and the persistence of gender inequalities at household level.
- 5** Girls’ education, or the lack thereof, is a hindrance for women to assume leadership roles in the community. FGDs in Banjul revealed that the lack of academic qualifications is affecting most of the women taking up leadership roles. They argued that “the most effective leaders are not determined by their academic qualification, but the love and concern they have for the development of their community”. This position is substantiated by the conclusions from the training of Mothers’ Clubs conducted in LRR by FAWEGAM. It also suggests that the lack of self-confidence, disunity and social structures hindered the active involvement and participation of women in decision-making processes in The Gambia....
...However, the report concludes that women are now clearly ready to pursue and work towards their active participation and involvement in decision-making with specific emphasis on the promotion of girls’ education.
- 6** Dialogue among different generations (intergenerational dialogue) among other things, facilitates (i) the closing of the information gap (ii) the building of “bridges” among generations (iii) reducing the apportioning of blame and (iv) building solidarity. The report notes and supports the ongoing promotion of intergenerational dialogue as something to be nurtured and encouraged.
- 7** Critical to ownership and project sustainability, the interventions supporting women and young people’s involvement in governance and peacebuilding should not only target women and young people, but also local authorities who are the major decision makers and hold positions of influence in the regions.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

- 8 The media (TV, Newspaper and Social media) played a decisive role in disseminating the messages as well as creating visibility for the project.
- 9 Most of the decentralized structures are not familiar with the Local Government Act, which is the main legal instrument that established them as well as stating their composition and mandate.
- 10 The misconception of democracy coupled with political polarization, youth unemployment, access to justice, etc. are the major threats to the country's peace & stability. There is need for a more sustained civic awareness.
- 11 Project funds flow and disbursement for activities is perceived to be slow and cumbersome. A more streamlined procedure for the request of funds, would have ensured speedy disbursement and implementation.
- 12 Visibility is vital for projects of this nature. There were some communication and branding challenges with instances where the PBF, the main funder, complained of not having been adequately featured in project activities.
- 13 The project leveraged the use of technology and seized the opportunities presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Community radios were used by children to sensitize and mobilize communities on the prevention of Covid-19, health and other child protection issues.
- 14 The report notes that Women typically have low control or ownership of the factors of production in agriculture - especially land and finances – which is cause for concern and this is despite their predominant role in farming and other economic activities. Women feel vulnerable and not economically empowered to take up leadership roles. In Banjul, one of the women complained that she is into farming but anytime a project about agriculture comes up for BCC, she applies but never gets a reply. She further said that these funds are given to other people who are just into business and not agriculture.
- 15 More women's representation in the National Assembly. FGDs in Banjul: The only National Assembly Member (NAM) that consults them in any decision-making process is the only Female NAM in Banjul, which is the reason why they want more women in the parliament.
- 16 It is important to note that the PBF does not usually fund extensive long-term interventions. The model used is one of engaging early, addressing key peacebuilding issues, starting processes and supporting champions, with the hope that the project's success will also enable longer term impact and potentially – where relevant – catalytic financial and programmatic results.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented here aim to enhance the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of future and on-going PBF-funded and other peacebuilding projects. The recommendations are also framed to recognize the dynamic and changing nature of youth and gender perspectives – with a particular emphasis on inclusiveness, and ownership - in decision-making and in Gambian politics. The recommendations are presented in two main parts. First part recommendations are made with the intention of enhancing and sustaining project outcomes. The second set relates to interventions that will improve the quality of programming of future peacebuilding efforts.

To consolidate gains made under the project and sustain outcomes, the following key recommendations should be considered:

- 1** **Advocacy - Draft 2020 Gambian Constitution** - Given the opportunities offered by the draft 2020 constitution - women and youth groups should be mobilized beyond the project period to advocate on the progressive sections of the draft constitution. Advocating for the mandatory 14-seat quota for women's representation at the National Assembly for instance, will consolidate gains made in achieving outcome 1 of the project and will further contribute to strengthening other legal instruments geared towards women and young people's inclusion in politics and high-level decision-making.
- 2** **Strengthen Implementing Partners:** national stakeholders, youth-led networks and organisations that were involved in the project, to consolidate institutional capacities and to mobilise the financial resources necessary for sustaining activities post implementation including through stronger collaborations and partnerships. In this regard, a **project sustainability plan** should be developed, with the following aims: continuing key activities for the next 2-3 years after project closure; and supporting implementing partners in developing strategic advocacy plans and other communication tools.
- 3** **Advocacy for the introduction of local languages in the National Assembly – Draft 2020 constitution.** The illiteracy rate among rural women is a hindrance to assume political leadership and other decision-making roles. The inclusion and acceptance of local languages by the National Assembly would further promote inclusion and equity for the voice of young people and women in the Gambia.

To improve the quality of programming of similar interventions in the future, the following key recommendations should be considered:

- 4** Given the strategic nature of the role expected to be played by IPs in sustaining project interventions in the design of similar projects, a significant proportion of project funds should be allocated to institutional capacity development...
...Funding of activities should be premised on the outcome of a comprehensive capacity needs assessment.
- 5** Political leaders from the executive, the legislature and from the political parties (party leaders), should be identified as champions and given key roles geared towards influencing project outcomes. Involving them early in the project lifecycle has the potential to enhance ownership and the impact on the decisions at both the executive, legislative and political party levels. Additional, increased representation among women and young people in government will strengthen their voice, and outcomes.
- 6** There is a clear correlation between poverty, illiteracy and peace, and the degree of economic empowerment of women and young people. Successor projects to this one should promote greater economic empowerment through investments and synergies with other youth and women interventions.
- 7** Establish a national mechanism that promotes peace and conflict prevention across the country.



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