Response to the Midterm Review Report (1 November 2023) of the LEAP4Peace Programme

LEAP4Peace Consortium

Introduction

This document contains the formal response of the LEAP4Peace (L4P) consortium to the recommendations of the mid-term review (MTR) conducted in 2023. This is a consolidated document that reflects the views of the consortium partners: the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) including its offices in Colombia and Myanmar, the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP), the Gender Equality Network Myanmar (GEN), and Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS). In line with the two objectives of the MTR and the evaluation questions, the evaluation focused on three dimensions of the LEAP4Peace:

i)   Relevance of Design;
ii)   Programme Achievements; and
iii)   Partnership Collaboration.

The review was done through a desk study for all L4P country projects and a partnership survey for all of the partners and country offices involved in the L4P programme. The desk study was supplemented by interviews with both beneficiaries of the country programme as well as programme staff and data collection in both Burundi and Colombia. This included also a substantiation of the harvested outcomes. Unfortunately, due to the political and security context, it was not possible to do interviews and data collection directly in Myanmar, but remote interviews were conducted.

The MTR was commissioned to the Canadian-based Just Governance Group and a final MTR report was delivered to the MFA on 1 November 2023. This document comprises a table listing all the recommendations from the final MTR report, including an assessment of the validity and usefulness by the L4P consortium partners. Next to it is a listing of the concrete follow-up actions to be taken per Consortium Partner.

Table of Recommendations and Responses

Recommendations	Response and motivation	Proposed Follow-up action, as consortium and per consortium member, indicating where possible the timing
R1. In relation to the alignment between the programme and country ToCs and challenges with reporting on outcomes in the L4P ToC, it is recommended that steps be taken to simplify the linkages between initiatives at the country or component level and the L4P ToC. (C1, C6): a. Map current country initiatives against L4P intermediate outcomes to visualize the country or component contribution to each L4P intermediate outcome. This will also allow the consortium to identify programming gaps that need to be filled. b. In the L4P programme ToC, update intervention strategies to include "engaging men" in pathways other than pathway 1.	R1a. The Consortium appreciates this suggestion. We are aware that some country specific ToCs are more aligned than others. We continuously seek ways to improve our monitoring and reporting. 1b. The recommendation is valid, but also raises some questions. We do recognize the importance of engaging men, especially as we work with political actors across all the first three pathways, and especially NIMD Colombia and BLTP work with male allies. As an example, NIMD Colombia has involved men in activities such as the Training in the Schools for Democracy, in the accompaniment of the Legal Commission for Women's Equity and in awareness-raising actions on Violence against Women in Politics. This might not be too visible, as the programme's indicators ask for a majority of women to be reported, which may mean that activities in which men participate are not visible.	R1a. Secretariat: We will aim to better collect initiatives from the annual plans and annual reports and map them to identify gaps, including better visualization. It must be noted though that some gaps are due not to oversight from the consortium, but to lack of opportunity/opening of the context. Also, in the most recent annual report for 2023, the results were split already by LTO, already improving the monitoring of the programme against the programme ToC. 1b. Secretariat: The Consortium will continue engaging men, and keep the focus on this specifically as part of the first Pathway. Where we do also work with male allies in other activities we will endeavour to make this more explicit in reports and in the country TOCs.

	At the same time, we need to keep in mind that working with male allies, or male champions is a double edged strategy and also requires specific strategies and needs to be grounded in feminist principles and values in order to prevent perpetuating the harmful gender norms or inequalities we are seeking to address.	
c. In this programme or a subsequent initiative, consider engaging allies specializing in women's economic empowerment to complement the consortium's efforts towards removing barriers to women's political participation.	1c. We recognize that finance/access to finance and financial independency is a barrier to women's political participation. It was however not identified as one of the key barriers in the design of the LEAP4Peace programme, and therefore it is not one of the key barriers the programme is addressing, except for Burundi. At this point we don't feel there is sufficient space in the budget to also focus on this barrier. Country specific responses: _NIMD Colombia:_ With regard to the economic empowerment of women for their political participation, although we are aware of the importance of this obstacle, it is necessary to bear in mind that the programme does not aim to resolve this problem, as working to contribute to the economic autonomy of women requires concrete strategies in relation to entrepreneurship, productive projects, among others, which are not contemplated by the programme. _BLTP_ is already engaging in economic empowerment of women through its activities with the VSLA's. Though it is not shown in the ToC, BLTP engages with VSLA groups on economic empowerment and women political participation.	1c. Secretariat: BLTP already has specific economic empowerment activities as part of their interventions and has the experience and mandate to do so. In the other country programmes, it is not part of the interventions, but in further initiatives we can explore engaging more with organizations that do have the experience in addressing this specific barrier for women's political participation.

R2. In future programming link indicators to specific outcomes in a theory of change. In the current programme, link L4P objectives with the WRGE framework and cross reference L4P initiatives and the objectives.	R2. We have deliberately chosen to develop a menu of options of indicators consortium partners could use, so there is flexibility and room for Cos/partners to develop their own indicator framework. This was a way to give substance to leading from the south with regards to M&E, while still have some possibility of comparing and aggregating indicator values. In addition we have left the option open to monitor outcome level results through outcome harvesting. That is why indicators and specific outcomes are not fully linked. The L4P indicators, however, are cross-referenced with the WRGE framework in the indicator reference sheet. The L4P objectives/ToC are not cross-referenced with the WRGE objectives/ToC, that could indeed help to more fully demonstrate the alignment of L4P and WRGE	R2. *Secretariat*: The secretariat will see to cross-reference the LEAP4Peace objectives/ToC with the WRGE objectives/ToC to fully demonstrate the alignment.
R3. Consider using outcome harvesting for two purposes in the next two years of the L4P programme(C9): a. Adjust the instruction on outcome harvesting to capture observable changes in political or social actors' conduct or policies related to women's political participation where a contribution by a consortium partner is measurable. For example, changes subsequent to training or policy advocacy initiatives should be the focus of the outcomes harvested. b. Adopt the participatory outcome harvesting method, as originally designed by Ricardo Grau, with political actors in each of the three countries	R3a. The recommendation is valid and useful, as we recognize the variance in quality of outcome statements reported. Even though the most recent batch has seen improvements, there is a need for continuous coaching, training, and clear instructions. The most recent batch of OH has seen improvements, we are working on it. R3b. We recognize that the outcome harvesting is often done by the country teams themselves, for good reasons though, including tight reporting deadlines, the busy implementation	R3a. NIMD is working more closely with the individual offices, and the Consortium Partners to support in OH. This year 1-2 priority offices will be identified where to focus efforts to ensure good quality outcome harvesting. On January 18, 2024 the MEL unit of the L4P secretariat had a brainstorm retreat to conceptualize a coding system and dashboard. This was the kick-off of a continuous process to develop a tagging system and dashboard (also exploring the use of AI technology). In the meantime we have a dedicated person to develop the database and dashboard. By Q3 we intend to have a process and the

to query selected learning questions in an updated knowledge and learning agenda	schedule of the offices and the difficulty joining participants after the activity due to security risks. Therefore it is often a challenge to have a fully participatory approach. We also recognize that the OH approach is currently not clearly linked to the L4P learning agenda. For one the learning agenda itself was underdeveloped in the first two years and secondly we have been focusing a lot on the quality of the harvested outcomes, moreover so far the number of harvested outcomes was limited, therefor further analysis was underexplored. In any case, it is a great recommendation. The harvested outcomes are however linked to the monitoring question on 'progress made', in that they serve as evidence to that question in the country annual reports.	technologies in place to start exploring the potential of the dataset and dashboard. The *Secretariat (NIMD)* will organise on-line refresher training and there is continuous 1-1 coaching of the M&E focal points in improving the outcome statements and OH process
R4. In future programmes, design a monitoring, evaluation and learning system where outcomes and indicators contribute to a knowledge and learning agenda as well as outcome reporting. This will require qualitative and quantitative indicators. If feasible, review the current L4P indicators or harvested outcomes to identify measures that will provide learning opportunities across the three countries and international L&A.	R4. We recognize the use of linking monitoring data to a knowledge and learning agenda. See above for a further elaboration	The work on the various tools and dashboards has already started. There will be some follow-up with the various consortium partners to make sure the indicator measurements are in line with the indicator reference sheets that were designed at the beginning of the programme for effective comparative analysis and learning.
R5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Review WRGE indicators related to enhanced capacity to ensure they measure change in capacity and not only the number of participants in training activities.	The WRGE indicators are indeed about # of individuals with strengthened capacity, we ourselves, however, have matched that/equalled it with the # of participants in training activities of our own indicator set. The recommendation then needs to be addressed to the L4P consortium and L4P framework and not to the MFA and the WRGE framework. We fully agree, however, strengthened capacity and being trained is not always 100% the same. It would have been useful if the recommendation included a workable suggestion on how to *measure* 'change in capacity'. There is a huge pushback from partners and country offices to do pre and post tests for instance, as it is found condescending and inappropriate for the type of actors they work with. We usually advise to do an	No follow up actions planned

	evaluation form at the end of a capacity development activity which includes questions around 'did you learn something new' and 'likelihood to apply new knowledge and skill', typically these are answered 100% positively. Anyhow, we give less weight to 'measuring' capacity, but rely on OH to capture real and significant change in behaviour as a result of a training. This also seems more appropriate as observable change as a result of increased capacity typically happens a while after the training.	
R6. L4P, in the next 2.5 years, use outcome harvesting methodology consistently to capture higher level changes generated by participants following trainings.	R6. We recognize the variance in quality of the OH statements and application of the OH approach. See also appreciation of R3 above .	R6. See follow up actions R3
R7. For future programmes, update the PEA guide to ensure it provides NIMD and programme partners with a practical tool to analyze political context and actors through a gender transformative lens. The guide should provide tools for application by programme personnel rather than consultants.	R7. Even though the position of women has been part and parcel of the PEAs, we recognize the short coming of not having an integrated gender transformative lens is in the design of the PEA.	R7. _NIMD_ is currently updating its PEA guide to ensure a gendered perspective. This should be done before the end of the year.
R8. In pathways 1 and 2 of the L4P ToC, follow training workshops with additional support, such as mentoring, accompaniment or technical assistance, so that new capacities are further developed and the participants generate further changes in other political actors, political party policies, national or local democratic mechanisms or civil society advocacy networks. This recommendation may require fewer but more concentrated capacity building activities with select political actors.	_NIMD Colombia:_ We value this recommendation very much. A lot of our work evolves around capacity strengthening activities, however much we understand this is a prerequisite for more transformative and systemic change, it is not always evident how to get there. Additional support, such as mentoring and technical assistance will deepen the outcomes of capacity strengthening and have a stronger contribution to the systemic and transformative change that the programme is after. _BLTP_: This is a useful and valid recommendation. Mentoring is essential as a support strategy, as women involved in politics need to find role models to inspire and stimulate their political commitment. In particular, women former	_NIMD Colombia_ has already made progress in responding to this request, providing training support to new electors. This is done in conjunction with another of NIMD Colombia's projects and includes teaching a specific module on gender. In this process, the information is focused on key elements for the development of the position of those who come to occupy these positions in the new governments, in a much more practical way, with real cases and offering tools such as models of project agreements. _BLTP_: As we approach the elections, women who have played a role in the country's politics will be called upon from time to time to lead exchange sessions and share their experiences in women's workshops on the electoral process.

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Commented [JW2R1]: Would say: Even though the position of women has been part and parcel of the PEAs, we recognize the short coming of not having an integrated gender transformative lens is in the design of the PEA.

Commented [JW4]: Again I would put the actions in the next column, but start with an appreciation/validation of the recommendation. Could be:
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	members of parliament, former ministers, former provincial governors, and women communal administrators who have played a role in the life of the nation. In terms of technical support for the training courses organized, the women trained were encouraged to create solidarity groups for savings and credit activities, with regular meetings where the women could discuss their lives as women involved in politics. These groups form solidarity chains supported by the programme.	The programme has also added 5 other political parties led by women to its target audience, which was made up of 10 political parties. To provide technical support for the training already given, BLTP is continuing to supervise the solidarity groups, which initially numbered 12 and were set up in 2022, but which are expected to grow to 34 groups by the end of 2025.
	NIMD Myanmar: We greatly appreciate this recommendation. Additional support, especially tailored support, will not only help further develop the new capacities of women peace ambassadors but also boost their confidence and enhance their recognition within the community. Regarding the provision of technical support, women peace ambassador networks are creating working groups for peace and security initiatives in their areas (Shan: North, East, and South). They will provide the necessary capacity-building to strengthen their work within the communities and sub-national level advocacy.	*NIMD Myanmar*: NIMD Myanmar will continue to mentor Women Peace Ambassadors' working groups on peace and security initiatives. Starting in 2023, these groups will receive mentoring and tailored capacity-building support based on their needs as they implement their initiatives in their communities and sub-national level advocacy.
R9. Clarify and enhance multi-actor initiatives with duty bearers in Burundi that contribute to intermediate outcomes in pathway 3 of the L4P ToC.	*BLTP*: It is essential to involve administrative officials in our multi-stakeholder interventions to guarantee a space for the various political parties and to encourage the appropriation process of the interventions' results. Some of these results concern innovations that could lead to changes and initiate changes in legislation, hence the need for a collective understanding.	*BLTP*: Involve the Ministry of the Interior in multi-party activities involving party leaders and the Ministry of Gender in implementing our advocacy strategy for the participation of women in decision-making bodies.
R10. In pathway 4 of the L4P ToC prepare targeted and actionable WPS advocacy messages/recommendations for dissemination internationally and among country-based	This is a great suggestion, and we are already working on this. We will develop country-based reports, that will feed into a global report with specific targeted WPS messages for the national as well as the international level. This paper will	In 2024, we will develop country-based reports as well as a global report with specific targeted WPS advocacy messages that can be disseminated in country and internationally. *GAPS* will be leading on this, but it will require action of *all Consortium Partners.*

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diplomats, including Dutch and other missions, by GAPS, NIMD, GEN-Myanmar, BLTP, and NIMD Colombia. The messages/recommendations should be tailored to specific duty bearers, including state officials and, in Myanmar de facto authorities in liberated areas. Track pronouncements or decisions of duty bearers (who received the recommendations) to assess the degree to which the recommendations were adopted.	be launched nationally as well as internationally and shared with the broader donor community. *GAPS*: We agree with the recommendation and agree that the advocacy messages created have not always been very targeted or specific to key audiences. We have attempted this, but the main knowledge product did not have much original research and tried to compile recommendations from many contexts and as a result the recommendations were numerous and broad. *NIMD Colombia:* We agree with this recommendation, from Colombia we have made suggestions on how to give greater visibility to key products such as the global paper; however, it is necessary that all countries work together on this task, that we define key moments of visibility as a consortium, not only at the global level but also at the country level and that this work can be accompanied. The experience of NIMD Colombia and its joint work with GAPS and NIMD HQ on the NAP in Colombia was positive in this regard. *GEN Myanmar:* Yes, we can't agree more with the recommendation. In fact, we've already adopted this approach. Typically, we craft overarching messages and recommendations for broader audiences, alongside tailored ones for specific stakeholders whom we aim to engage with at each event**.**	In addition, another follow up action is to consider this recommendation while writing the global advocacy recommendations and to spend more time discussing this, perhaps through an internal workshop focused solely on the recommendations. We will write them thinking about the need to track the degree that the recommendations were adopted, so that it will be possible to do this also. Also *GEN*, who is engaged a lot in international advocacy, is committed to maintaining the practice of tailoring messages and recommendations for specific stakeholders. Additionally, we will monitor the subsequent actions of these advocated stakeholders through follow-up meetings, messages, or by observing their activity on social media channels. This information will be continuously integrated into forthcoming outcome harvesting reports.
R11. Working with men to promote shifts in social norms related to gender was noted in the 2021 knowledge agenda. Enhance the engagement with men, especially in relation to adoption of gender equality regulations in political parties (pathway 2)	*BLTP*: Agreed. Among the socio-cultural barriers to women's political participation, specifically their role in running the household, men were seen as players and should also be involved in finding a solution.	*BLTP*: Training sessions soon to be planned should target both women and girls. Awareness-raising workshops for provincial women's leaders and their husbands on political rights and political participation rights have targeted couples with a view to strengthening positive masculinity.

and new policies that advance gender equality (pathway 3) in Burundi and Colombia.	_NIMD Colombia:_ We consider that the programme contributes to cultural changes; however, these processes are long term, given that the programme is developed in countries with patriarchal societies in which discrimination, racism, sexism, and many other forms of exclusion are still in force. In this line, it is important to make visible the contributions to micro changes in which the programme works. In Colombia, we have managed to have an impact at the legislative level as a result of constant work over the last 10 years, in which male allies have been involved.	_NIMD Colombia:_ make more visible the contributions to micro changes in which the programme works (e.g. through outcome harvesting)
R12. As a consortium, merge the internal and external agendas for knowledge, learning and advocacy in a strategy that is aligned with the L4P strategic objective (a conducive environment for women's full and meaningful inclusion in political and decision-making processes to sustain peace).

a. Select one topic/learning question that can be interrogated in each country context and provide information related to women's participation in conflict-affected settings. For example, "To what extent and how are aspiring women political and civic leaders (engaged by L4P partners) becoming influential actors of change in the country context?"

b. Prepare a knowledge, learning and WPS advocacy strategy and a budgeted work plan with clear responsibilities for GAPS, NIMD Secretariat, and each partner.

c. Appoint a facilitator to support the implementation of the strategy. | R12. The inception of L4P was done during the COVID-19 pandemic, so it was difficult to really merge and align the internal agendas with the external ones. It is something that will improve in future programming. In the meantime, it warrants a revision for the way forward. Already, the conversations that happened during the 2 moments that the consortium partners were able to meet in person (first time in Nairobi and second time in 2023 in The Hague) gave them the opportunity to brainstorm, exchange ideas, and strategize around shared knowledge, and advocacy.

R12a. We have done this through the Pillars for Peace knowledge product. However, while this product was useful at the international level, it was not at the programme's country level. So we have shifted our approach for 2024.

R12b. We welcome this idea. It is now the role of GAPS in very close collaboration with the LEAP4Peace coordinator.

R12c. This should be the role of the LEAP4Peace coordinator and GAPS, mostly. | R12. As we are working on upcoming knowledge products, we need to make sure that there is an external-internal alignment. Now that there is better understanding within the consortium on how things work, this should come easier in the second half of the programme.

R12a: This is planned for 2024. In fact, country reports – each country with its own focus are currently being developed and these will feed into a global paper (with as theme Overall theme: Innovative and transformative approaches to systems and structures of peacebuilding, with a focus on a bottom-up approach from local and community women peacebuilders) which will be widely disseminated. _GAPS_ is leading this process in close collaboration with the LEAP4Peace coordinator and the Consortium Partners.

R12b. This is now the role of _GAPS_ in close collaboration with the L4P Coordinator.

R12c. This is the role of _GAPS_ now, supported by the grant coordinator |

R13. In relation to consortium decision-making: a. To the consortium: Review the "L4P Operating Guidance Note – Coordination and Cooperation" to ensure the operating principles and practices remain relevant. Make necessary adjustments to ensure information is shared prior to Steering Committee Meetings and partners have the opportunity to prepare and voice responses to proposals.	R13a. It is useful to have a review of the guidelines and see where the gaps are. As for the sharing of info prior to Steering Committee meetings, this is usually done at least a week in advance	R13a. After the validation of this MTR response, we can agree to a common revision and evaluation of the guidance notes and agree on how to keep working together in the way forward (e.g. Timeline for sharing info before meetings, frequency, and participation in meetings, etc.).
b. To NIMD Secretariat: Make proposals for changes to budgets and operational plans in writing in advance of Steering Committee meetings, so that members can prepare and have a fulsome discussion before making actual changes to relevant documents. For example, R11 will require consortium technical, operational, and financial decisions on the suggested knowledge, learning and advocacy strategy.34	R13b. This is something to consider. Some decisions need to be taken in the Steering Committee, others are being discussed (such as input for the knowledge, learning and advocacy strategy) at the program level.	R13b. The Consortium Secretariat will ensure that meetings are planned well in advance and with a clear agenda and documents shared well in advance. Already, some operational, financial decisions have been made in the SC on the knowledge product being developed by GAPS in collaboration with the consortium members.
c. Consider synchronous and asynchronous options to enhance communication among consortium partners.	R13c. Interesting suggestion. Communication is sometimes slower due to language constraints	R13c _The Secretariat_ will investigate more options to enhance communication.