

End Term Evaluation of the Strategic Partnership between the Women's Leadership and Participation for Peace (LEAP4Peace) Consortium

Evaluation Report

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List of Acronyms

BLTP	Burundi Leadership Training Programme
CICB	Conseil Inter-Confessionnel du Burundi
CSO / CSOs	Civil Society Organisation(s)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
EAG	Ethic Armed Groups
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAPS	Gender Action for Peace and Security
GEN	Gender Equality Network
HQ	Headquarters
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEAP4Peace	Leadership, Empowerment, Advocacy and Participation for Peace
LTO	Long-Term Outcome
LTO1	Long-Term Outcome 1
LTO2	Long-Term Outcome 2
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands)
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands)
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAP	National Action Plan
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNIPROBA	Unissons-Nous Pour la Promotion des Batwa
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association (also known as Nawe Nuza)
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Executive Summary

Background

LEAP4Peace (Leadership, Empowerment, Advocacy and Participation for Peace) is a multi-country programme (2021–2025) funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework. The programme aims to increase women's meaningful participation in political decision-making and peacebuilding processes in contexts where formal commitments to gender equality coexist with persistent structural barriers, including political violence, restricted civic space, and institutional exclusion.

The programme is implemented by a consortium led by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), in partnership with Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS). Country-level implementation is carried out by NIMD Colombia, NIMD Myanmar, the Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLTP), and the Gender Equality Network (GEN) in Myanmar. GAPS leads the global advocacy component, linking country-level experience to bilateral and multilateral policy spaces.

Guided by a shared Theory of Change (ToC), LEAP4Peace combines leadership and agency strengthening, institutional engagement, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and civil society advocacy. While the overarching objectives are consistent across contexts, implementation was explicitly designed to be context-sensitive and adaptive to political volatility. This evaluation, commissioned by NIMD as part of its contractual obligations with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), assesses programme effectiveness, contribution and learning across Burundi, Colombia, Myanmar and the global advocacy stream, with the dual purpose of accountability and strategic reflection for future WPS programming.

Methodology

The evaluation applied a primarily qualitative, theory-based approach grounded in feminist principles. Feminist concepts such as structural inequality, intersectionality, collective action, risk awareness and do no harm were used as analytical benchmarks to assess not only outcomes but also how power and agency were addressed in programme design and implementation. The evaluation combined desk review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions, drawing on consultations with over 75 stakeholders across Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar, including programme staff, elected and aspiring women leaders, civil society actors, advocacy focal points, women peacebuilders and women peace ambassadors.

Rather than assessing progress solely against predefined indicators, the evaluation examined how change unfolded in practice across different political contexts and how this aligned with, adapted or diverged from the programme's overarching ToC. Given security and access constraints, particularly in Myanmar, remote methods and enhanced safeguarding measures were

applied. Findings are contribution focused and interpretive rather than attribution based, reflecting the complex political environments in which the programme operated and the qualitative design of the evaluation

Limitations: The evaluation relied predominantly on qualitative interviews, which limited opportunities for extensive external triangulation and independent verification of reported results. Variations in the quality, consistency, and completeness of monitoring data across country programmes further constrained cross-country comparability and depth of analysis. The extended implementation period also affected recall accuracy and continuity of documentation in some cases.

Burundi Case Study

Burundi's political environment during the programme period was characterised by authoritarian consolidation, shrinking civic space and entrenched patriarchal norms. While constitutional quotas for women exist, real power remains concentrated within ruling party hierarchies, and political participation is closely tied to financial contribution and loyalty. Women face structural barriers including limited access to household resources, restrictive gender norms, partisan marginalisation and heightened risk for opposition-affiliated actors.

Programme Strategy. LEAP4Peace did not seek to challenge the political settlement directly. Instead, it worked within tolerated political and social spaces to reduce the risks and material costs of participation. Women-only savings groups functioned as socially legitimate entry points, combining economic activity with cross-party interaction. These spaces reduced fear, lowered exposure to political sanction, and enabled political discussion without visible opposition. Complementary capacity-building and limited financial support strengthened women's ability to meet participation costs and navigate party structures.

Results. The evaluation finds that in Burundi the programme played a protective and enabling role for women's political engagement in a context of sustained political closure. While it did not lead to significant changes in formal decision-making power or national policy frameworks, it helped women remain active in political life by strengthening confidence, reducing fear and self-censorship, and fostering cross-party networks that countered isolation and discouragement. Modest procedural shifts occurred within some parties, including greater inclusion of women in meetings, mobilisation activities, and internal structures, though these changes remained uneven and dependent on individual leaders. Progress was strongest at the relational and behavioural level, where women sustained participation, built solidarity, and continued political engagement despite increasing pressure and shrinking civic space. Institutional change was more limited: party gatekeeping, financial barriers, and male-dominated leadership structures persisted, and advocacy efforts did not translate into broader policy reform. The ToC therefore held only partially, functioning more effectively in supporting participation and networks than in driving structural transformation.

The evaluation also highlights the importance of economic and social enablers not explicitly captured in the ToC, including improved access to income, greater ability to meet the financial costs of participation, increased household acceptance, and peer support systems that helped women manage political pressure. External verification of harvested outcomes confirmed leadership, grassroots mobilisation, and replication effects, strengthening confidence that the programme made a meaningful contribution to sustaining women's political presence under highly constrained conditions.

Limits and Structural Constraints. Formal decision-making power and domestic policy influence remained largely unchanged. Gains were modest, uneven, and dependent on individual party gatekeepers rather than sustained institutional reform. Although some opposition parties introduced limited procedural adjustments and more gender-inclusive language, these changes did not affect control over candidate selection or strategic decision-making. Engagement with state institutions did not result in broader policy or legislative change. Intersectional reach remained uneven. While the programme helped reduce economic barriers linked to the financial costs of participation and made deliberate efforts to include marginalised groups, including outreach to Batwa women, it was less able to address overlapping forms of exclusion related to household power relations, geography, and political risk.

Sustainability: Outcomes linked to economic activity and relational networks show strong prospects for sustainability, as they are embedded in everyday practice rather than dependent on political reform. Cross-party relationships and strengthened political identity may endure beyond the programme period, although they remain vulnerable to further repression.

Colombia Case Study

In Colombia, women's political participation takes place in a context where formal democratic rights and WPS commitments coexist with persistent territorial insecurity and entrenched machismo. In many regions, political space remains shaped by intimidation and, in some cases, by the continued influence of armed actors, meaning participation is experienced as a risk calculation rather than a neutral civic choice. While the post 2016 peace agreement created formal commitments on inclusion and gender equality, implementation has been uneven, and protection remains highly differentiated across territories. Legal and policy frameworks, including quota provisions and the current National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325, provide an enabling architecture, but they do not offset party gatekeeping, unequal access to resources, or the high personal cost of political visibility, especially outside major urban centres.

Programme Strategy. LEAP4Peace in Colombia combined individual, collective and institutional entry points to strengthen women's participation in a setting where engagement is frequently interrupted by risk. The programme created sustained learning and reflection spaces for women already active in politics and peacebuilding, while also providing mentoring and technical accompaniment during high exposure periods, particularly around elections. In parallel, it invested in collective spaces that connected women across political trajectories and territories, enabling ex-

change, reassurance and informal networking beyond party structures. Alongside this, the programme engaged electoral authorities and other institutional actors on recognising and responding to violence against women in politics, focusing on the application of existing legal and policy frameworks and on practical improvements in institutional understanding and procedures.

Results: The evaluation finds that in Colombia the programme contributed to strengthening women's political agency and institutional responsiveness within a formally democratic but uneven and security-constrained environment. Results were strongest at the level of women's confidence, practical political capacity, and sustained engagement, with participants reporting greater ability to navigate hostile political spaces, recognise and respond to political violence, and remain active despite intimidation and electoral setbacks. Collective learning spaces and peer networks reduced isolation, supported persistence, and enabled continued participation across parties and territories. Institutional engagement yielded incremental gains, particularly on violence against women in politics, where collaboration with electoral and oversight bodies contributed to increased recognition of the issue and emerging procedural responses within existing legal frameworks.

External verification of harvested outcomes further confirms the programme's contribution to advocacy and policy processes, including legislative developments, strengthened collaboration with electoral authorities, and civil society participation in national action planning. However, structural change remained limited. Party gatekeeping, unequal access to campaign resources, territorial insecurity, and entrenched informal power hierarchies constrained how far strengthened readiness translated into durable representation and influence. Cross-party collaboration and internal party reform were uneven, and progress in formal representation and policy change was gradual and issue-specific rather than systemic. Overall, the programme functioned largely as intended, reinforcing women's political resilience, strengthening networks and capacity, and contributing to incremental institutional responsiveness, while deeper transformation of party systems and representation pathways remained contingent on broader political and structural conditions.

Limits and Structural Constraints. Party gatekeeping continued to determine access to resources, protection and visibility, and women's influence remained uneven across territories. Programme gains were real but contingent, often depending on political will and informal power dynamics, and were less able to mitigate deeper structural barriers for rural, Indigenous, Afro descendant and LGBTQI+ women.

Sustainability. Participants are likely to retain a stronger sense of political entitlement, confidence, and clarity about how to engage in political processes. Informal peer networks formed through the programme are expected to endure, continuing to provide practical advice, reassurance, and solidarity beyond formal activities. These relationships support ongoing engagement in parties, councils, and advocacy spaces and help women manage political pressure and uncertainty. Institutional effects are more uneven; however, knowledge and procedural reference points related to addressing political violence are likely to continue informing practice among engaged officials and institutions. Overall, sustainability is most visible in strengthened political agency, durable peer support structures, and women's continued readiness to engage in political life.

Myanmar Case Study

Myanmar's political environment during the programme period was defined by extreme rupture following the February 2021 military coup. Formal democratic institutions were dismantled, political parties deregistered or paralysed, and civic space violently closed. Engagement with state institutions became either meaningless or dangerous for pro-democracy actors. Authority fragmented across the military regime, ethnic armed organisations, interim federal actors and exile-based structures. For women, political participation became inseparable from security risk, displacement, surveillance and the threat of arrest. Visibility itself carried danger, and formal representation was no longer a viable pathway.

Programme Strategy. LEAP4Peace adapted rapidly to this collapse of formal political space. Rather than withdrawing its participation objective, the programme reoriented towards low-profile, collective and transnational modalities that enabled women to remain politically engaged under repression. Capacity development focused on political analysis, WPS knowledge, federalism and operating safely in highly securitised environments. Sustained accompaniment and peer exchange replaced linear progression models, recognising that participation would fluctuate with security conditions. The programme invested in women peace ambassadors, women-led networks and coalitions as alternative sites of legitimacy and coordination, and supported cross-border and international advocacy to preserve political voice when domestic avenues were closed. Engagement with de facto authorities and ethnic armed actors occurred selectively and locally, particularly on issues affecting women's protection.

Results: The evaluation finds that in Myanmar the programme operated in a context of extreme repression following the 2021 coup, where formal political pathways largely collapsed. As a result, progress did not take the form of increased representation or institutional reform, and the programme's Theory of Change held only in adapted and partial ways. Outcomes were strongest along relational and behavioural pathways: women sustained political orientation, collective identity, and adaptive forms of engagement despite severe contraction of political space. Peer networks and coalitions became the primary infrastructure for participation, enabling women to coordinate positions, share information, sustain legitimacy, and remain politically connected through low-profile, humanitarian, collective, and cross-border activities.

Limited but meaningful practice-level influence occurred through collective advocacy, localised engagement with de facto and ethnic governance actors, and protection-related mediation, though these did not translate into formal policy change. External verification of harvested outcomes confirms strengthened dialogue platforms, trust-building, collective advocacy, women's leadership in community engagement, and international recognition of coalition efforts, reinforcing confidence in the programme's contribution. Overall, the programme functioned primarily as a stabilising and enabling mechanism, preserving women's political agency, collective functioning, and readiness to engage under highly constrained conditions, while structural change in representation and governance remained beyond its feasible sphere of influence.

Limits and Structural Constraints. Formal representation and domestic policy reform were not realistic pathways during the evaluation period. National legal and policy influence was effectively foreclosed, and engagement with the junta-controlled state was both inaccessible and unsafe. Policy-adjacent outcomes emerged only in fragmented and contingent forms, including localised dialogue with ethnic or interim authorities and collective advocacy reflected in joint statements or international materials. These gains were uneven and dependent on personal relationships rather than institutionalised protections.

Sustainability. Sustainability in Myanmar lies in the persistence of adaptive practices rather than in institutional consolidation. Networked relationships, collective modes of engagement, humanitarian action and selective dialogue with de facto authorities are embedded in ongoing political realities and are likely to continue as long as repression persists. While scope and visibility may fluctuate with security conditions, the forms of participation supported by the programme are durable because they respond to structural necessity rather than to time-bound project incentives.

Global Advocacy Component

The global advocacy component operated in an increasingly contested international Women, Peace and Security environment marked by geopolitical fragmentation, funding volatility and organised backlash against gender equality. Although the normative WPS framework remains formally intact, multilateral negotiations became more polarised and defensive in character, with considerable effort directed towards preserving previously agreed language rather than advancing new commitments.

Overall Assessment. The evaluation finds that the global advocacy stream generated substantive knowledge outputs and facilitated access for consortium partners to multilateral and bilateral stakeholders. WPS priorities from programme countries were articulated in global forums, and the consortium strengthened its positioning within key policy debates. However, while visibility and engagement can be substantiated, robust and attributable evidence of sustained global policy uptake remains limited. The depth of influence is difficult to assess due to limited tracking of audience reach, follow-up engagement or policy response, and the absence of a clearly articulated ToC specifying defined influence pathways and expected outcomes.

Strategy and Modalities. The component combined four main strands: production of global and country-level knowledge products; convening and engagement around key WPS policy moments; accompaniment and technical support to country partners for international advocacy; and strategic communications, including a dedicated podcast series. These activities positioned the consortium as a credible interlocutor and created platforms through which country experience could inform global discourse. However, linkages between global advocacy and country-level processes were not always clearly articulated or systematically followed through, resulting in a degree of disjointedness between international positioning and domestic advocacy trajectories.

Observed Results and Limits. At output level, the component delivered a global report, country papers and communications products, and enabled access to high-level advocacy spaces. At

intermediate level, it contributed to increased agenda visibility for women's participation and may have supported policy-adjacent developments, including parliamentary discussions and reported funding continuity for women-led initiatives such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. In Myanmar, the clearest evidence of policy influence related to domestic and transitional governance processes shaped by women's coalitions, though the specific contribution of the GAPS-led global stream to these outcomes is difficult to isolate. In Colombia, reported linkages to UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan processes remain indicative but not independently verified. In Burundi, structural constraints and coordination challenges limited integration into global advocacy efforts.

Across contexts, the principal limitation lies in evidencing uptake. The evaluation did not have access to systematic analytics on readership, audience profile, policy citations or structured follow-up with duty bearers. As a result, while participation and agenda-setting are documented, the added value of the global lobbying strategy beyond convening and knowledge production remains difficult to evidence in a robust and attributable manner.

Cross-Cutting Findings

Relevance. Across all three contexts, the programme's relevance stemmed from its ability to align with the real constraints shaping women's political participation rather than from implementing a standardised model. In Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar alike, participation was conditioned by risk, economic dependency, informal power and, in Myanmar, institutional collapse. The programme remained relevant as it adapted to these structural realities, whether by working through socially legitimate economic spaces, pairing political education with accompaniment in insecure environments, or shifting towards network-based and transnational engagement when domestic political space closed. The evaluation finds that divergence from the original programme-level ToC reflected contextual necessity rather than weak design, underscoring the limits of a single causal framework across sharply different political regimes.

Effectiveness. Effectiveness was uneven and strongly shaped by institutional openness and political authority. In Colombia, where formal structures retained some permeability, the programme contributed to women sustaining or entering decision-making roles and to incremental institutional responsiveness on violence against women in politics. In Burundi and Myanmar, where formal influence pathways were constrained or foreclosed, effectiveness lay less in visible institutional gains and more in sustaining women's political agency, networks and readiness under pressure. Across cases, collective and relational approaches proved robust, and capacity-building was most effective when paired with accompaniment and political judgement rather than treated as technical training alone.

Partnership and Collaboration. Consortium coherence was grounded more in shared feminist principles and political orientation than in intensive cross-country coordination. Implementation was highly decentralised, with strong localised leadership and context-driven adaptation at country level. This autonomy appears to have supported effectiveness in volatile environments, where responsiveness to political shifts outweighed the benefits of standardisation. Engagement with

the Dutch MFA provided political signalling and legitimacy rather than operational integration, with interaction varying by context.

Design and Inclusion. Gender was consistently and centrally integrated across the programme, while youth engagement emerged more implicitly through participation of younger women rather than through distinct strategic targeting. The programme primarily reached women already connected to political or civic structures, reflecting trade-offs between safety, feasibility and influence. While this focus supported depth and continuity, it limited reach among the most marginalised women.

Lessons and Good Practices. A central lesson is that participation under political constraint must be assessed through endurance, adaptation and risk management rather than through linear progression into formal power. Collective approaches proved useful, economic autonomy functioned as a stabilising precondition for engagement, and interpretive tools, particularly around political violence, were often as important as material outputs. The programme demonstrated that flexibility, relational work and context-sensitive judgement are critical to sustaining women's political agency in volatile and authoritarian environments, even where structural transformation remains beyond immediate reach.

Recommendations

Key Recommendations for the Consortium

Future programming should more clearly differentiate country-level ToC, explicitly grounding them in political realities rather than applying a single progression model across diverse contexts. Endurance, preparedness and sustained engagement should be articulated as legitimate outcomes where institutional reform is unlikely.

If retained, the global advocacy component should be refocused around clearly defined influence pathways and concrete policy windows, tightly linked to country-level priorities. The consortium should clarify whether the global partner's comparative advantage lies in targeted donor engagement, technical WPS expertise, or strategic accompaniment in specific international processes. Diffuse global visibility efforts without clear pathways to influence should be avoided.

The consortium should also strengthen its approach to intersectionality by explicitly identifying who is likely to remain excluded from core pathways and why, and by designing feasible alternative or indirect strategies where direct engagement is not safe.

Recommendations for Future Feminist Peacebuilding Initiatives

Future initiatives should reframe success to include endurance, preparedness and sustained engagement, particularly in politically constrained environments. Political risk and violence should be treated as core design parameters rather than contextual add-ons. Collective and relational approaches should be prioritised alongside individual capacity-building. Gender-transformative

ambition should be aligned with feasibility and safety, and intersectional strategies should be explicit about both potential and limits. Finally, monitoring approaches should reflect the non-linear and politically contingent nature of feminist change, supporting learning rather than incentivising overclaiming.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to LEAP4Peace Programme

LEAP4Peace (Leadership, Empowerment, Advocacy and Participation for Peace) is a multi-country programme implemented between 2021 and 2025 with the objective of increasing women's meaningful participation in political decision-making and peacebuilding processes. Funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) under its Women, Peace and Security (WPS) policy framework, the programme was developed in response to the persistent gap between international commitments to women's participation and the continued exclusion of women from formal and informal political spaces. Despite normative advances associated with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and related policy frameworks, women in many contexts continue to face structural barriers to participation, including gendered political violence, restricted civic space, party gatekeeping, and unequal access to political, economic, and protection resources.

LEAP4Peace was designed and implemented as a consortium programme in order to combine complementary expertise across political participation, dialogue facilitation, institutional engagement, and feminist advocacy. The consortium is led by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), in collaboration with Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS). Country-level implementation is carried out by NIMD Colombia, NIMD Myanmar, the Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLTP), and the Gender Equality Network (GEN) in Myanmar, with each partner responsible for contextualised strategies aligned with national political and civic realities. GAPS leads the programme's global advocacy component, linking country-level experience to international policy spaces.

The programme is underpinned by a shared Theory of Change (ToC), which assumes that strengthening women's political agency and leadership, combined with engagement with political institutions and collective advocacy, can contribute to more inclusive and gender-responsive political and peacebuilding processes. While the overall causal logic is consistent across the programme, LEAP4Peace was explicitly designed to be context-sensitive. It recognises that pathways to participation vary significantly depending on political systems, conflict dynamics, levels of civic space, and the distribution of power at national and sub-national levels. As a result, the balance between different strategies and entry points differs across contexts.

Implementation took place in three country contexts — Burundi, Colombia, and Myanmar — alongside a cross-cutting global advocacy component. Each country intervention was shaped by distinct political, institutional, and security environments, requiring differentiated approaches and ongoing adaptation over the course of implementation. The programme was delivered during a period of considerable political volatility, including electoral cycles, democratic backsliding, armed conflict, and shrinking civic space, all of which influenced both the opportunities for women's participation and the risks associated with political engagement.

Across these diverse contexts, LEAP4Peace worked through four interlinked pathways of change:

- Strengthening the leadership and agency of aspiring and established women leaders and politicians;
- Supporting political institutions and actors to become more inclusive and gender-responsive;
- Fostering multi-stakeholder platforms for dialogue and inclusive policy-making; and
- Equipping civil society organisations and women's movements to advocate for women's rights and gender-inclusive peacebuilding.

These pathways were not implemented uniformly but were emphasised to varying degrees depending on contextual opportunities and constraints. Together, these pathways were intended to contribute to two long-term outcomes articulated in the programme's overarching Theory of Change: LTO1, women are represented in decision-making roles for the implementation of peacebuilding agendas; and LTO2, a supportive policy environment for women's rights and women's political participation in peacebuilding exists and is strengthened.

Theory of Change

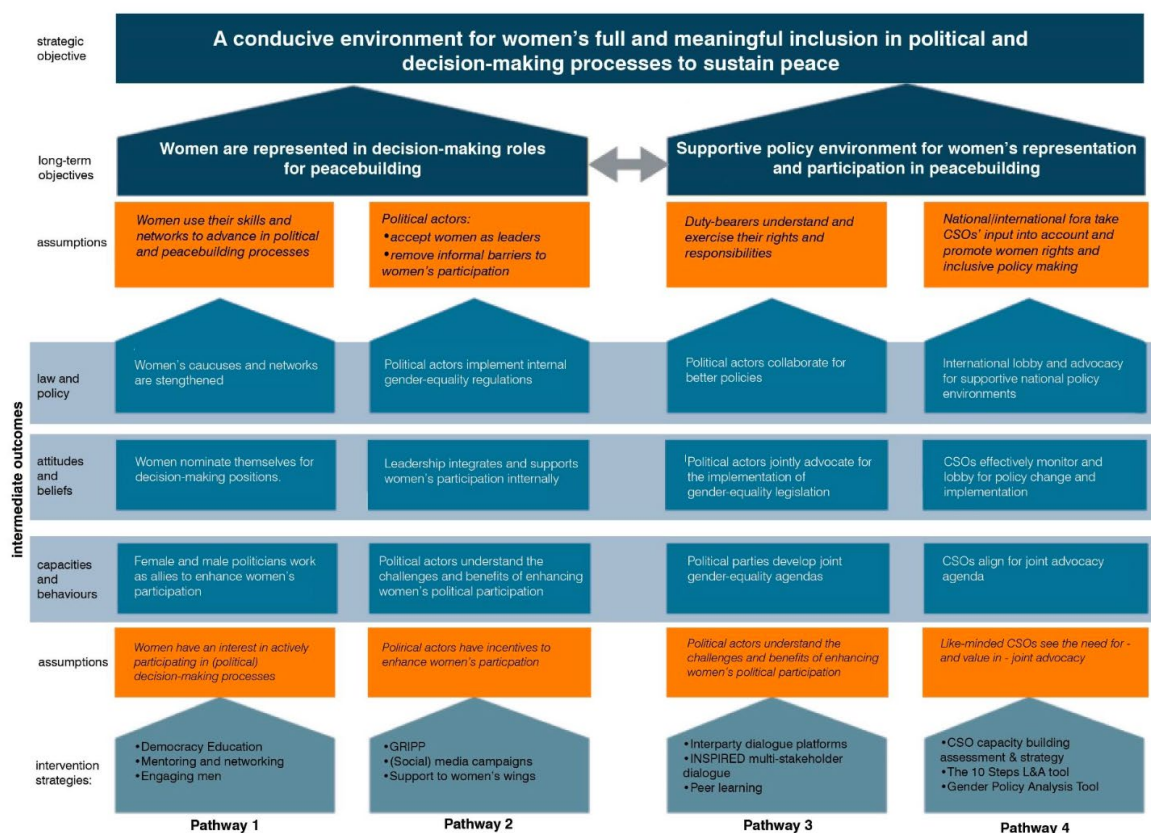


Figure 1: LEAP4Peace programme Theory of Change visual

The LEAP4Peace Theory of Change is centred on the strategic objective of creating a conducive environment for women's full and meaningful inclusion in political and decision-making processes as a foundation for sustaining peace. It links individual empowerment with institutional and policy reform, recognising that durable inclusion requires both strengthened agency and enabling political structures. The programme therefore pursues two mutually reinforcing long-term outcomes: women are represented in decision-making roles for peacebuilding, and the policy environment supports women's representation and participation. Representation increases the legitimacy and visibility of women's leadership, while supportive policies make participation more accessible and sustainable.

The model assumes that women possess skills, experience, and networks that can be mobilised when structural and institutional barriers are reduced. It further assumes that political actors and institutions will respond to sustained engagement by recognising women as legitimate leaders and addressing formal and informal constraints to participation. Change also depends on duty-bearers understanding and exercising their responsibilities and on civil society organisations contributing to inclusive policymaking and advocacy. Together, these assumptions frame change as requiring shifts in incentives, norms, and accountability across both political institutions and civic actors.

At the intermediate level, the programme works across legal and policy frameworks, attitudes and beliefs, and capacities and behaviours. Efforts to strengthen representation include reinforcing women's caucuses and networks, supporting women to put themselves forward for leadership roles, and fostering collaboration between female and male political actors. Political institutions are supported to implement internal gender-equality regulations and to integrate women's participation into leadership structures. In parallel, the programme promotes a supportive policy environment by encouraging joint political advocacy for gender-equality legislation, supporting political parties to develop shared gender agendas, and strengthening civil society capacity to monitor implementation and coordinate advocacy. International engagement complements national efforts by reinforcing accountability and policy coherence.

The Theory of Change also recognises that participation is shaped by motivation and incentives. Women are more likely to engage when participation is meaningful and supported by networks, while political actors are more likely to promote inclusion when institutional incentives align with gender-equality objectives and the benefits of inclusive governance are recognised. Similarly, civil society collaboration depends on shared recognition of the value of coordinated advocacy.

These changes are advanced through four complementary pathways: empowering women through education, mentoring, and networking; supporting reform and inclusion within political institutions and parties; promoting cross-party dialogue and collaborative platforms; and strengthening civil society organisations through capacity building, strategy development, and policy analysis. Together, these pathways reinforce one another to create the conditions for sustained and meaningful participation of women in political and peacebuilding processes.

1.2 Purpose, Scope and Intended Audience

This evaluation is intended for a range of audiences with different but complementary interests in the LEAP4Peace programme and in feminist peacebuilding and political participation more broadly. The primary audience is the Netherlands MoFA, which commissioned the evaluation and will use the findings to inform accountability for the use of public funds, strategic reflection on the effectiveness of current approaches, and future funding and policy decisions within its WPS portfolio. At the same time, the evaluation is designed to support learning within the LEAP4Peace consortium by providing an independent assessment of how programme design, implementation choices, and adaptations played out across diverse political and institutional contexts.

The evaluation is also intended for international and national implementing partners involved in LEAP4Peace, as well as for a wider community of practitioners and policymakers working on women's political participation and peacebuilding. For implementing organisations, the evaluation offers evidence and reflection on how feminist principles were operationalised in practice, how partnerships functioned under conditions of political risk and constraint, and what types of outcomes are feasible in volatile environments. For external audiences, including other donors and policy actors, the evaluation seeks to contribute to broader learning on feminist approaches to political participation, particularly in contexts characterised by violence, polarisation, and shrinking civic space. By documenting experiences from Burundi, Colombia, and Myanmar alongside a global advocacy component, the evaluation aims to provide insights that are relevant beyond the LEAP4Peace programme itself.

2. Methodology

2.1 Overarching Evaluation Approach

Feminist Principles as an Evaluation Benchmark

The evaluation approach was explicitly anchored in feminist principles, which were used as an analytical benchmark throughout the assessment. These principles informed how evidence was interpreted across all evaluation questions, shaping judgements about relevance, outcomes, partnership dynamics, and sustainability. Rather than treating feminism as an aspirational or normative framing, the evaluation examined whether and how feminist principles were operationalised in practice, including how power and risk were understood, whose perspectives were prioritised, and what kinds of change were considered meaningful within different contexts. Drawing on feminist theory and feminist evaluation literature, the evaluation understands inequality as structurally produced and maintained through power relations embedded in political, social, and institutional systems. From this perspective, women's exclusion from political and public life is not the result of deficits in skills or ambition, but of entrenched systems of patriarchy and social norms that

regulate access to power (hooks, 2000; Federici, 2012). At the same time, these structural systems also shape unequal access to education, resources, and opportunities for skills and knowledge development. As a result, differences in capacity are often themselves products of structural inequality rather than independent causes of exclusion. The evaluation therefore recognises that skills and capacity gaps may be real and consequential, while situating them within the broader political and social conditions that produce and sustain them.

A core feature of feminist approaches is the recognition of agency and lived experience as legitimate sources of knowledge. Feminist epistemology emphasises that knowledge is situated, and that marginalised perspectives provide critical insight into how power operates and how change is experienced (Harding, 1987; Collins, 2000). In evaluative terms, this challenges positivist approaches that privilege externally defined indicators and instead legitimises narrative, relational, and participatory forms of evidence. Feminist evaluation therefore prioritises methods that allow participants to articulate change in their own terms and that recognise shifts in collective capacity, legitimacy, and solidarity as meaningful outcomes, even where structural change is slow or contested (Podems, 2010). At the same time, feminist principles require explicit engagement with power, conflict, and harm. Feminist peacebuilding literature highlights that political participation can expose women to violence, particularly in polarised or unequal contexts (True, 2012; Ní Aoláin et al., 2018). As an evaluative benchmark, this entails assessing whether programmes acknowledge political risk, incorporate do no harm principles, and adapt to volatile environments, rather than placing the burden of resilience solely on women participants. Finally, feminist theory consistently emphasises collective action and relational change as drivers of sustainable transformation, arguing that durable change rarely occurs through individual advancement alone but through networked forms of action that redistribute power and provide mutual protection (Batliwala, 2007; hooks, 2000). Feminist evaluation therefore examines relational and collective outcomes alongside individual trajectories or formal representation.

Table 2: Feminist Principles as an Applied Evaluation Criteria

Feminist principle	How it is understood in this evaluation	What the evaluation assesses in practice
Structural understanding of inequality	Gender inequality is produced by political, economic, and institutional power relations rather than individual deficits	Whether the programme addressed structural barriers such as party gatekeeping, informal power, violence, and access to resources, rather than focusing solely on individual skills or confidence
Gender-transformative intent	Change is understood as shifting norms and power relations, not only increasing participation	Whether interventions sought to challenge exclusionary norms and practices within political institutions and parties, and not only prepare women to adapt to them
Intersectionality	Women's experiences are shaped by overlapping forms of marginalisation such as class, geography, ethnicity, and political position	Whether the programme recognised differentiated risks, access, and outcomes among women, and avoided treating women as a homogenous group
Agency and voice	Lived experience and participant perspectives are legitimate	Whether participants' own interpretations of change, risk, and relevance were centred in programme design and evaluation evidence

Feminist principle	How it is understood in this evaluation	What the evaluation assesses in practice
	sources of knowledge and evidence	
Power awareness and reflexivity	Power relations shape participation, knowledge production, and evaluation itself	Whether the programme acknowledged power dynamics between institutions, parties, and participants, and whether risks and trade-offs were made visible rather than obscured
Do no harm and risk sensitivity	Political participation can expose women to backlash and violence	Whether the programme explicitly recognised political risk, addressed violence against women in politics, and avoided placing responsibility for safety solely on participants
Collective action and relational change	Sustainable change is driven by networks, solidarity, and collective strategies	Whether the programme strengthened relationships, peer support, and collective capacity, rather than only individual advancement
Sustainability of feminist gains	Empowerment is meaningful only if it can be sustained beyond programme support	Whether changes in agency, networks, or institutional practices showed signs of durability beyond immediate programme activities

Theory-based Evaluation Approach

The evaluation also applied elements of a **theory-based approach** by using the programme's overarching ToC as a guiding analytical structure, while explicitly examining how and to what extent it reflected the realities of implementation across different country contexts. Building on the 2023 Mid-Term Review (MTR), which had already highlighted challenges in aligning the Burundi and Myanmar experiences with the programme-level ToC, the final evaluation treated this misalignment as an object of analysis rather than a methodological problem to be resolved. The evaluation therefore examined how the programme's intended pathways of change were reconfigured in practice, drawing on evidence from both the mid-term and endline phases.

Rather than assessing progress solely against predefined outcome categories, the evaluation reconstructed observed sequences of change at country level, mapping activities, outputs, and outcomes as they unfolded over time and comparing these empirically observed pathways with the assumptions embedded in the overarching ToC. This involved identifying where expected pathways did not materialise, where alternative pathways emerged, and how contextual constraints shaped the form and pace of change. By doing so, the evaluation was able to surface more realistic accounts of how change occurred within the programme, and to inform subsequent analysis of the implications for refining and contextualising the ToCs in settings characterised by political constraint.

2.2 Evaluation framework and matrix

The evaluation is guided by the following overarching evaluation questions, which structure both the country case studies and the cross-cutting analysis:

- **EQ1.** How relevant was LEAP4Peace to the political, institutional, and socio-cultural contexts in which it was implemented?
- **EQ2.** To what extent was the programme design and Theory of Change appropriate and coherent?
- **EQ3.** What outcomes did LEAP4Peace contribute to, including intended and unintended outcomes?
- **EQ4.** How effective was collaboration within the consortium and with external partners?
- **EQ5.** To what extent did LEAP4Peace embody feminist principles, and what challenges, lessons learned, and good practices emerged?
- **EQ6.** What is the likelihood that LEAP4Peace outcomes will be sustained beyond the programme period?

The full evaluation framework, including sub-questions, indicators, and sources of evidence, is presented in **Annex A.1**. Findings are presented through country case studies and a synthesis of cross-cutting themes, with conclusions and recommendations intended to inform both consortium partners and future initiatives seeking to support women's political participation and peacebuilding in volatile and high-risk environments.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

The evaluation team employed a primarily qualitative design combining primary and secondary data to capture evidence of change at the overarching programme and country levels. Primary data were collected between August 2025 and January 2026, from three main sources: (i) a desk-based review of programme documentation and relevant external literature, (ii) key informant interviews with programme staff and relevant stakeholders involved in implementation, and (iii) focus group discussions with individuals that participated in programme activities.

Initial Finding Briefing: The L4P consortium held an in-person project closure event in Bogota in mid-July 2025. Over the course of several days, representatives from L4P partners from Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar met to discuss the results of the project, share experiences and challenges. During the event, a member of the evaluation team conducted initial group interviews with each of the country teams to obtain some initial insights into outcomes that the teams had observed from their work over the past five years. These were used to help frame the interview guides and the evaluation approach.

The **desk review** included analysis of the LEAP4Peace integrated proposal, annual reports at the programme and country-level for each year of implementation, the global papers produced as part of the global advocacy component, the programme outcome harvest database, as well as the project completion report. In addition to these documents, the evaluation team also conducted a rapid literature review of external literature and datasets relevant to women's representation in political and peacebuilding processes, as well as the wider WPS agenda both globally, and within each of the three focus countries to provide greater context to the country reports and evaluation findings. Insights from the desk review were presented as part of the inception report approved by NIMD and the MFA in October 2025.

Key informant interviews and focus group discussions constituted the main components of the data collection strategy for this evaluation, providing essential insights into programme outcomes and lessons from a broad range of programme stakeholders at the overarching programme and country-level. Qualitative data collection was conducted with individuals involved in the design and implementation of the programme, including representatives from NIMD HQ, the three country-level implementing partners - NIMD Colombia, NIMD Myanmar, GEN Myanmar and the Burundi Leadership Training Programme. In addition, focus group discussions were also conducted with participants to capture first-hand perspectives on the outcomes of LEAP4Peace interventions. The key informant interview and focus group discussions were semi-structured to allow researchers to discuss both predefined themes and emergent issues with interview respondents. Where possible, interviews and discussions conducted in respondents' native/preferred language to allow for unguarded expression.

Participatory validation workshops: The initial evaluation design included participatory validation workshops intended to bring together programme participants and implementers, with the aim of ensuring that emerging findings were grounded in lived experience, credible to stakeholders, and resonant with those involved in delivery and participation. In practice, this approach could not be fully implemented. Following NIMD's organisational restructuring and the departure of a significant number of staff, including those closely involved in the programme, a formal validation workshop was no longer feasible. Instead, an initial finding briefing was conducted with the programme manager and MEL officer prior to their departure, in order to test emerging interpretations, clarify programme processes, and capture institutional knowledge that would otherwise have been lost. A smaller, more informal validation workshop was also conducted with stakeholders in Colombia, providing an opportunity to discuss preliminary findings in a more limited setting. While this did not replace the originally envisaged participatory validation approach, it allowed for some contextual sense-checking of findings and contributed to refining the analysis. For example, stakeholders helped contextualise preliminary findings by emphasising how territorial insecurity, political violence, party gatekeeping, and unequal access to campaign resources continued to shape women's opportunities for political participation and influence in practice. Discussions also reinforced the importance of interpreting uneven programme outcomes in light of differing local political conditions and varying levels of institutional responsiveness across territories. While this did not replace the originally envisaged participatory validation approach, it allowed for some contextual sense-checking of findings and contributed to refining the analysis.

In addition to interviews and focus group discussions, the inception report outlined a number of complementary qualitative approaches, including accessibility audits, process reviews, and visibility scans. Not all of these were implemented as standalone methods. Instead, selected elements were incorporated into the evaluation in an integrated and retrospective manner, reflecting feasibility considerations and the highly constrained contexts in which the programme operated.

No formal accessibility audit was conducted. However, issues of accessibility, inclusion, and exclusion were examined through an intersectional lens within interviews, focus group discussions, and document review. This included attention to structural, social, and material barriers affecting different groups of women's ability to participate, such as security risks, care responsibilities, economic precarity, geographic location, and ethnicity. These insights informed the analysis of programme reach and limitations but should not be understood as a systematic accessibility assessment. Elements of process review were incorporated through analysis of programme documentation, monitoring data, and interviews with consortium members and implementing partners. This focused on how the programme was designed and adapted over time, how decisions were taken under changing political and security conditions, and how roles and coordination within the consortium evolved. This approach supported assessment of implementation dynamics and adaptive practice without constituting a formal process-tracing exercise. Finally, the evaluation explored patterns across identity categories in a descriptive manner where data allowed, drawing on basic cross-tabulation of respondent characteristics to support an intersectional reading of findings. Given the small, non-representative sample and the qualitative orientation of the evaluation, this analysis was exploratory and interpretive rather than inferential, and served to complement qualitative insights rather than generate standalone quantitative findings.

In addition to the data collection approaches outlined above, the evaluation team developed four in-depth case studies to understand how LEAP4Peace interventions contributed to the changes outlined in the country-level ToCs and outcome harvest. Each case study combines document analysis and a rapid literature review of each country's political and conflict context with primary data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions, as well as outcome harvesting validation.

2.4 Sampling Strategy

The evaluation used a purposive convenience sampling approach. Sampling began with the identification of initial respondent lists in collaboration with LEAP4Peace country implementing partners and consortium members. These lists were developed based on stakeholder mapping conducted during the inception phase and included individuals with direct experience of programme activities, implementation processes, advocacy efforts, or relevant institutional engagement. Respondents were selected across different stakeholder categories, including programme participants, implementing partners, institutional stakeholders, civil society actors, coalition members, and external stakeholders with knowledge of women's political participation and programme-related processes. Within these categories, the evaluation team sought to capture variation across factors relevant to each context, including age, rural and urban location, political affiliation, level

of political experience, and, in Myanmar, ethnic identity. Where access constraints, security concerns, availability, or logistical limitations affected recruitment, convenience sampling was used within these purposively identified stakeholder groups based on willingness and feasibility of participation.

Initial contact with prospective respondents was generally facilitated by programme teams or implementing partners, who informed participants about the evaluation and advised that members of the evaluation team would subsequently reach out directly. Following this introduction, the evaluation team contacted respondents directly to provide further information about the evaluation, confirm willingness to participate, and arrange KIIs or FGDs. The number of participants within each stakeholder category was determined pragmatically based on the need to ensure adequate coverage of key perspectives, capture diversity of experience across the three country contexts, and achieve sufficient thematic saturation within the practical and security constraints of the evaluation. As the evaluation was qualitative in nature and aimed to generate contextual understanding and triangulated contribution claims rather than population-level estimates, sample sizes were not determined through statistical power calculations. The evaluation team monitored the recurrence and consistency of themes during data collection and analysis, and additional interviews were prioritised where findings remained unclear, contested, or insufficiently triangulated.

The evaluation broadly achieved the intended stakeholder coverage, although final sample sizes varied by country and respondent category due to security constraints, availability, programme closure, staff turnover, and partner-mediated access. In Myanmar, FGDs originally envisaged during the design phase were replaced by a higher number of individual KIIs because group discussions were not considered safe or feasible under the prevailing political and security conditions. This reduced opportunities to observe collective interaction and group-level dynamics directly, but allowed respondents to speak more openly about sensitive experiences, political risks, adaptation strategies, and relationships with de facto authorities. In Burundi and Colombia, FGDs were feasible with programme participants, but coverage of some institutional and external stakeholders remained more limited than initially envisaged. As a result, findings related to institutional change, party dynamics, and policy influence were assessed with greater caution where evidence relied on a smaller number of respondents or where independent verification remained limited. By contrast, findings related to participant experiences, peer networks, confidence, and adaptive participation strategies were generally supported by stronger triangulation across KIIs, FGDs, and programme documentation.

Table 3: Overview of Key Informants

Country	Stakeholder category	Method	Number consulted (n)
Burundi	Women parliamentarians (current and former)	KII	3
	Programme staff (BLTP)	FGD	3
	VSLA members	FGD	18 (3 FGDs)
	Civil society actors	KII	2
	Women leaders trained	KII	6

Country	Stakeholder category	Method	Number consulted (n)
Colombia	Women political leaders (elected officials and candidates)	KII	5
	Programme participants (Democracy & Empowerment School graduates)	KII	4
	Institutional actors (public institutions)	KII	2
	Programme staff (NIMD Colombia)	Group interview	5
	Programme participants and elected women (including Bogotá multiparty Women's Board)	FGD	6
	External stakeholders (UN Women, GIZ)	KII	2
Myanmar	Women Peace Ambassadors / Women Peace Builders	KII	17
	Civil society peacebuilders	KII	4
	Programme staff	KII	5
	Advocacy focal points engaging with NUG & EROs	KII	6
	External stakeholders (Deutsche Welle, Heinrich Böll Foundation)	KII	2

2.5 Analysis

Thematic Analysis Approach

Qualitative data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions were analysed using a structured thematic analysis approach combining deductive and inductive strategies. The evaluation questions, the programme ToC, and the applied feminist principles outlined in Section 2.1 provided the primary analytical structure for the initial coding framework, ensuring alignment between data analysis and the evaluation's conceptual foundations. All interviews and discussions were recorded where consent was provided and transcribed in full. Where data collection took place in local languages, transcripts were translated into English prior to analysis. The unit of analysis consisted of meaningful text segments, typically a sentence or short paragraph expressing a coherent idea, experience, or perception relevant to programme processes or outcomes.

Coding proceeded iteratively in three stages. An initial coding framework was developed based on the six overarching evaluation questions, key ToC domains (including agency, institutional change, collective action, policy environment, and pathways of change), and cross-cutting analytical lenses such as feminist principles, political context, risk, inclusion, and sustainability. This framework was piloted on a subset of transcripts to test clarity, coverage, and consistency of code definitions. During this stage, additional inductive codes were introduced to capture unanticipated themes emerging from the data, including unintended outcomes, adaptive implementation strategies, informal influence pathways, and context-specific political and institutional constraints.

Code definitions were refined iteratively to ensure conceptual distinctiveness and consistent application across the dataset.

Full coding was then conducted using Dedoose, which supported systematic organisation of transcripts, consistent application of codes, structured comparison across stakeholder groups and country contexts, and retrieval of coded material for synthesis.

Analytical attention focused on identifying convergence and divergence across stakeholder groups, variation across country contexts, relationships between intended and unintended outcomes, and participants' own descriptions of political context, risk, participation, and change processes.

Contribution Analysis Approach

The evaluation applied a contribution analysis approach to assess whether the programme made a plausible contribution to observed changes across the three country case studies and to examine the extent to which other contextual, political, or organisational factors may also have influenced these outcomes. The analysis was grounded in the programme TOC, while also recognising that pathways evolved differently across contexts and, in some cases, adapted substantially in response to political repression, insecurity, institutional constraints, and the collapse of formal political processes.

Across the country case studies, the evaluation tested pathways related to women's strengthened confidence, political knowledge, and sustained participation; peer exchange, networking, and collective support structures; women seeking candidacy, leadership roles, or other forms of political engagement; engagement with political parties, institutional actors, de facto authorities, or other decision-making actors; and advocacy or coordination around women's participation and political violence. In Myanmar, where formal political pathways collapsed after the coup, the analysis also examined adaptive forms of participation, low-profile engagement, transnational advocacy, and the role of collective spaces in sustaining political identity and legitimacy. For each pathway, the evaluation examined evidence of observed change alongside the potential role of contextual drivers and alternative influences, including electoral cycles, party recruitment dynamics, broader women's rights mobilisation, pre-existing networks, wider advocacy processes, support from other organisations, changing security conditions, and post-coup adaptation dynamics.

Contribution claims were assessed through triangulation across KIs, FGDs, programme documentation, monitoring data, advocacy materials, verification interviews, and external stakeholder perspectives where available. Stronger contribution claims were made where respondents consistently linked changes to programme-supported activities, where alternative explanations appeared less plausible, and where similar patterns emerged across multiple stakeholder groups and data sources. More cautious judgements were applied where outcomes reflected broader multi-actor processes, where evidence remained limited or contested, or where contextual factors outside programme influence were dominant.

2.6 Triangulation

The evaluation applied a systematic triangulation approach to strengthen the credibility and plausibility of findings and contribution claims. Evidence was cross-checked across multiple data sources, respondent groups, and methods in order to minimise reliance on single accounts and to assess consistency in reported outcomes and change pathways. Primary qualitative evidence from key informant interviews and focus group discussions was compared with programme documentation, monitoring data, and outcome harvesting records to verify reported activities, timelines, and observed changes.

Triangulation was also conducted across stakeholder perspectives, including programme staff, implementing partners, institutional actors, and programme participants. This enabled comparison between implementer accounts and participant experiences, as well as identification of areas of convergence and divergence in perceptions of programme relevance, effectiveness, and outcomes. Where discrepancies emerged, these were examined analytically rather than treated as inconsistencies to be resolved, recognising that differences in perspective may reflect positionality, power relations, and context-specific experience.

Weighting of Evidence

Findings were not derived from single interviews or isolated examples, but from assessment of patterns emerging across multiple data sources and stakeholder groups. Greater analytical weight was given to findings that were consistently reflected across KIIs, FGDs, programme documentation, verification interviews, and external stakeholder accounts where available. Isolated positive examples or individual success stories were not treated as sufficient evidence of broader programme-level change unless corroborated through additional sources or repeated across respondents.

2.7 Ethical Considerations and Safeguarding

Ethical considerations and safeguarding were central to the design and conduct of this evaluation, reflecting the sensitive nature of women's political participation and peacebuilding across all LEAP4Peace contexts. The evaluation was conducted in line with the ethical principles set out in the inception report, including respect for participants, voluntary and informed consent, confidentiality, and the avoidance of harm. These principles applied to all country contexts and guided decisions about engagement, data collection, and reporting throughout the evaluation process.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in interviews or focus group discussions. Participants were provided with clear information about the purpose of the evaluation, how data would be used, and their right to decline participation or withdraw at any point without consequence. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, consent was treated as an ongoing process, with evaluators remaining attentive to participants' comfort and willingness to continue discussions. Participants were not asked to disclose information that could expose them

to risk, and identifying details were minimised. Confidentiality and data protection were treated as core safeguarding measures. All data were anonymised during analysis and reporting, and quotations are presented without identifying information. Secure data handling procedures were applied consistently across contexts, with particular attention to the protection of digital records.

In Myanmar, where the security situation and political repression made in-person engagement unsafe, all data collection was conducted remotely by Signal. This approach reflected the safeguards set out in the inception report and was adopted to minimise risk to participants and evaluators. Remote engagement required additional precautions, including careful consideration of timing, as well as sensitivity to the possibility of surveillance or monitoring. Interviews were conducted only where participants indicated that they felt safe to speak. No focus group discussions were conducted in Myanmar, in line with risk mitigation measures.

2.8 Limitations and Mitigations

While the evaluation design was developed to ensure credibility, robustness, and contextual sensitivity, several methodological risks and limitations affect the scope, depth, and interpretation of findings. These arise both from the complexity of LEAP4Peace as a multi-country, politically embedded programme and from the operational and security realities under which the evaluation was conducted.

Small Sample Sizes: Coverage of external stakeholders remained more limited than originally envisaged, particularly in relation to institutional actors, political party representatives, and independent policy stakeholders. This was due to a combination of availability constraints, political sensitivities, security considerations, and the limited feasibility of securing participation from some actors during the evaluation period. As a result, findings related to institutional change, party dynamics, and policy influence relied more heavily on participant accounts and programme documentation, and were therefore assessed with greater caution where independent external verification remained limited

Dependence on retrospective accounts. Much of the evidence on outcomes relies on the recollections of programme participants, partners, and stakeholders, particularly for changes that occurred earlier in the five-year implementation period. This introduces risks of recall bias, selective memory, and retrospective rationalisation, especially in contexts marked by staff turnover, political disruption, or shifting institutional roles. Respondents may emphasise more recent or more visible developments, while earlier processes and incremental changes receive less attention. Mitigation measures included triangulating self-reported accounts with contemporaneous documentation, monitoring data, harvested outcomes, and external materials where available, as well as the use of timeline-based and reflective questioning to anchor recall.

Social desirability bias. Participants may provide responses they perceive as favourable to the programme, particularly where relationships with implementing organisations are ongoing or

where future support is anticipated. This can lead to overstatement of positive outcomes, understatement of implementation challenges, and cautious framing of politically sensitive experiences. To reduce this risk, interviews and discussions emphasised confidentiality and voluntary participation, questions were framed neutrally to encourage critical reflection, and reported outcomes were systematically cross-checked against documentary evidence, monitoring data, and alternative stakeholder perspectives.

Sampling and gatekeeper bias. The evaluation relied on purposive and convenience sampling, with recruitment frequently facilitated by implementing partners and consortium members. While necessary for feasibility and access, this introduces gatekeeper effects and sampling bias, potentially favouring individuals with positive engagement histories or higher visibility within programme networks. Harder-to-reach actors, dissenting voices, and individuals with limited institutional connections may therefore be underrepresented. Anticipated sample sizes prioritised breadth of stakeholder categories over representativeness. The evaluation mitigated this risk by documenting sampling pathways, applying transparent inclusion criteria, seeking variation across stakeholder roles and backgrounds, actively requesting counter-examples, and explicitly acknowledging areas where partner-mediated access may have influenced the perspectives captured.

Documentary evidence provenance. A substantial portion of the documentary corpus, including programme reports, plans, advocacy outputs, and outcome databases, was produced by consortium members. While these materials are essential for understanding programme design and implementation, their proximity to programme actors introduces potential institutional bias in framing achievements and challenges. Where feasible, documentary claims were contrasted with third-party materials such as policy records, public statements, media reporting, and independent analyses, as well as with interviews conducted with stakeholders not directly associated with programme delivery.

Restricted access and security constraints. Security risks, surveillance concerns, and political sensitivities constrained in-country engagement, particularly in Myanmar and, to a lesser extent, Burundi. In Myanmar, in-person data collection was not feasible and most interviews were conducted remotely through secure digital platforms. While this enabled continued engagement, remote modalities limited rapport-building, observation of non-verbal cues, informal contextual learning, and the feasibility of focus group discussions. These constraints may have affected the depth of insights and reduced opportunities to explore sensitive issues collectively. In Burundi, political sensitivities and administrative constraints limited access to some stakeholders and reduced opportunities for site visits and informal verification. Where coverage remained partial, findings are qualified accordingly and triangulated with available documentation and alternative credible sources.

Restricted civic space and sensitivity of political topics. Shrinking civic space and heightened political sensitivities limited freedom of expression and increased perceived risks associated with discussing political participation, advocacy, and institutional performance. Respondents, particularly those affiliated with political institutions, may have moderated their responses or avoided sensitive topics. This risk was mitigated through strengthened data protection and anonymisation

protocols, careful selection of safe interview settings, remote engagement where appropriate, and context-sensitive interviewing approaches designed to reduce perceived risk and power asymmetries.

Safety of participants and researchers. Women political leaders, civil society actors, and human rights defenders engaged in political processes may face harassment, surveillance, or retaliation linked to their work. Ethical and safeguarding obligations therefore required a cautious approach to recruitment, questioning, and documentation. This limited the depth of probing on politically sensitive issues and restricted the use of group-based methods in higher-risk contexts. Mitigation measures included strict adherence to conflict sensitivity and do-no-harm principles, iterative informed consent procedures, use of secure communication channels, minimisation of identifying information, and avoidance of collective methods where risks were elevated.

Language and interpretation challenges. The evaluation covered diverse linguistic contexts, including Kirundi, Spanish, Burmese, and minority languages, requiring translation and interpretation across multiple stages of data collection and analysis. Nuance and culturally embedded meanings may be partially lost in translation, affecting the precision and interpretive depth of qualitative evidence. To reduce this risk, the evaluation team included multilingual researchers with contextual familiarity, and key translated materials underwent back-checking to preserve meaning and intent.

Myanmar coup and post-coup disruption. The 2021 military coup fundamentally altered Myanmar's political and institutional landscape, rendering several pre-coup baselines, assumptions, and reform trajectories obsolete. Programme implementation occurred under conditions not anticipated in the original design, limiting linear assessment against initial planning frameworks. The evaluation therefore reframed analysis around post-coup realities, focusing on adaptive responses, resilience strategies, and emergent pathways of change under conditions of regime transformation and conflict escalation.

Attribution versus contribution. LEAP4Peace operated in complex, multi-actor political environments where observed outcomes (such as policy shifts, leadership gains, and coalition-building) are shaped by interacting national and international actors, evolving political conditions, and grassroots initiatives. Isolating programme-specific effects is therefore not feasible. The evaluation addressed this by applying a contribution analysis approach, mapping plausible pathways of influence between programme activities and observed results, testing these pathways against multiple evidence sources, and considering alternative explanations. External experts and stakeholders not directly associated with programme delivery provided additional contextual perspective. The analysis remains explicit about limits to causal inference and avoids overstating programme-specific effects where change reflects broader collective processes.

Indicator consistency and measurement drift. Monitoring data draw on MoFA basket indicators and partner reporting systems that were disaggregated where possible. Definitions, counting rules, and data capture practices evolved across implementation years and partners, limiting strict comparability over time and raising risks of inconsistent measurement or double-counting across

output and outcome layers. Where feasible, indicators were cross-checked against narrative reporting and outcome records, and quantitative trends were interpreted cautiously.

Heavy reliance on qualitative methods. Findings rely predominantly on qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, limiting opportunities for statistical analysis, quantitative generalisation, and independent numerical verification of certain reported outcomes. The qualitative emphasis also increases reliance on perception-based reporting. This limitation was mitigated through triangulation across stakeholder groups, systematic cross-checking with programme documentation and monitoring data, and transparent reporting of evidentiary limits.

Inconsistent MEL data quality. Monitoring and evaluation data varied across country contexts in completeness, quality, and verifiability due to differing MEL capacities, reporting practices, and contextual constraints. This limited cross-country comparability and reduced the ability to systematically track outcome trajectories. The evaluation addressed this through triangulation with qualitative evidence, selective verification of outcome harvesting material, and contribution analysis to assess plausible links between activities and outcomes.

Uneven stakeholder coverage. Some stakeholder groups, particularly government officials and certain institutional actors, were harder to reach due to access restrictions, political sensitivities, or availability constraints. This created perspective gaps in some thematic areas. Mitigation included purposive outreach through partner networks, inclusion of multiple stakeholder categories, transparent acknowledgement of coverage gaps, and cautious interpretation where evidence was limited.

Limited representativeness. The purposive and convenience sampling approach prioritised information-rich cases and feasibility under constrained conditions. The resulting sample is not statistically representative and findings cannot be generalised to wider populations. Results are therefore presented as contextual and interpretive, with analytical weight derived from depth of insight and triangulated evidence rather than numerical proportionality.

Limited participatory validation opportunities. Organisational restructuring, staff departures, and programme closure reduced opportunities for comprehensive participatory validation workshops across contexts. Validation inputs may also skew toward more engaged actors with the time, safety, and connectivity to participate. Mitigation measures included a findings briefing with departing programme staff, a targeted validation session in Colombia, and internal peer review and analytical sense-checking within the evaluation team.

3. Country Case Studies

3.1 Burundi Case Study

Headline Findings

In Burundi's restrictive political environment, women's political participation within parties and local political life is constrained by authoritarian control, patriarchal norms, and economic dependency, making disengagement a rational response for many. The programme responded by anchoring participation in officially tolerated spaces, particularly women-only savings groups that enabled regular political discussion, and cross-party contact without visible opposition, reducing fear and the practical costs of remaining active. This allowed women to sustain involvement in party activities and local political processes, strengthened confidence and informal support networks, and prompted limited internal party adjustments, while formal decision-making power, domestic policy influence, and reach to the most marginalised groups remained sharply constrained, pointing to endurance rather than transformation as the dominant pathway of change.

Context Background

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"Customs and religion require women to remain silent in the presence of men: there is even a saying that a hen does not crow in the presence of a rooster. The aim is to discourage women from speaking in the presence of men, let alone giving any guidance. I have been discouraged, and even my husband did not want me to do it until now. This is the only obstacle for me in politics." (KII, woman parliamentarian)

"Access to resources to actively participate in politics in Burundi: participation here involves various contributions to be accepted as a contributing member, as well as various travel expenses for campaigns. The man is the owner of the family property and he alone decides how to use it." (FGD, BLTP)

"Community stereotypes about female politicians: we are called whores, women who dominate their husbands, women who are power-hungry, etc." (Focus group discussion, VSLA member)

"Lack of financial resources: women do not have inheritance rights or free access to family finances." (KII, women leader trained)

Women's political participation in Burundi takes place within a highly constrained political and socio-economic environment shaped by entrenched gender norms, limited political pluralism, and significant material barriers to engagement. Although Burundi's constitutional framework provides for women's representation through quota systems introduced after the Arusha peace process, political power remains highly centralised and dominated by the ruling party. Opposition parties face shrinking operational space and, in some cases, active dismantling following recent electoral cycles. Across interviews and focus group discussions, politics was consistently described as an arena structured around financial contribution, patronage networks, and loyalty to party hierarchies. These dynamics disproportionately disadvantage women given prevailing norms around

asset ownership, unequal access to income, and expectations regarding household and caregiving responsibilities. Political engagement often takes place at times and in spaces that are incompatible with domestic roles, reinforcing exclusion even where formal rights to participation exist.

Gendered power relations emerged as a defining feature of political life. Interviewees described persistent stereotypes framing politics as a male domain, with women perceived primarily as supporters, mobilisers, or symbolic representatives rather than legitimate political actors. Fear, self-censorship, and lack of confidence were repeatedly linked to socialisation processes rather than individual capability. Women reported being discouraged from political ambition by family members, including spouses, and at times by other women, reflecting deeply embedded norms governing public leadership and authority. At the same time, important contextual variation was evident. Women affiliated with the ruling party described clearer, though tightly controlled, pathways to formal political positions within party structures. In contrast, women associated with opposition parties reported heightened marginalisation, loss of institutional access, and political discouragement, particularly following electoral defeats. Economic precarity cut across these divides. Women across the political spectrum emphasised that meaningful political engagement requires financial contributions, mobility, and sustained presence within party networks, making economic autonomy a precondition for participation. These conditions leave limited scope for formal advocacy or institutional reform and shape the forms of political engagement that are realistically available to women.

These dynamics unfold within a broader national context marked by fragile post-conflict recovery and progressive restrictions on civic space. Burundi has been navigating the legacy of its civil war since 2005. The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (2000) and the Burundi Power-sharing Agreement (2004) established the foundations for ethnic power-sharing, gender quotas, minority representation, and multiparty democracy. However, many of these commitments have weakened over time. The 2015 constitutional crisis, triggered by the President's decision to abandon term limits and followed by election-related violence, marked a turning point away from the principles embedded in the Arusha framework and towards authoritarian consolidation. Relations between the government, civil society actors, and parts of the international community deteriorated significantly. Civic space has remained constrained in the decade since, with limited tolerance for political dissent, restrictions on media, and reduced room for civil society engagement.

Decentralised governance structures continue to operate at local levels, yet women face persistent structural barriers to participation, particularly in rural areas where restrictive gender norms, lower levels of educational attainment, and economic dependency limit opportunities for leadership and public engagement. Burundi has ratified key international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and maintains a national gender policy framework. The country adopted its third National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2022, covering the period 2022–2027, with commitments to strengthen women's participation in peace and security decision-making, support transitional justice processes, and improve institutional responses to gender-based violence.

Women's numerical representation in national institutions has improved, supported by constitutional quota provisions. Women currently hold approximately one-third of seats in the National Assembly and over two-fifths in the Senate. However, increased representation has not translated into equivalent influence over core decision-making processes, particularly in peacebuilding and security governance. Civil society organisations continue to call for more substantive inclusion of women in conflict resolution and political dialogue processes, alongside stronger investment in local-level implementation of Women, Peace and Security commitments.

The broader peacebuilding landscape remains shaped by unresolved local tensions and structural inequalities. Land disputes, youth marginalisation, and gender-based violence remain widespread and intersect with socio-economic vulnerabilities that constrain women's agency in public and political life. These factors continue to undermine social cohesion and complicate efforts to promote inclusive governance, reconciliation, and sustainable peace.

Interventions

Against this backdrop, LEAP4Peace was designed not to challenge the political settlement directly, but to work within existing party structures and constraints. The programme focused on strengthening women's capacity to participate and sustain engagement across party lines, while also addressing material barriers that limited women's ability to remain politically active.

Core Programme Activities

1. **Women-only VSLAs.** The programme supported the establishment of women-only village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) that brought together women from different political parties. Through these groups, participants accessed savings and credit and engaged in income-generating activities. The VSLA model, which is recognised by the Ministry of Gender, provided an accepted framework for women from both ruling and opposition parties to meet regularly.
2. **Multiparty dialogue activities.** The VSLAs also functioned as spaces where women from ten political parties interacted on a regular basis. In addition to these groups, the programme facilitated multiparty dialogue groups that brought together women from five different VSLAs. These forums provided opportunities for discussion of shared issues and for engagement with women holding political representative roles.
3. **Targeted capacity-building.** The programme delivered training to women involved in political parties at different levels. Training topics included income-generating activities, leadership and communication, organisational management, and conflict resolution. Additional sessions focused on campaigning, including speechwriting, campaign strategy, and public speaking. Trainings were tailored to participants' roles and were generally conducted over several days.

4. **Direct financial support.** The programme provided limited financial support to participants. This included support to cover political party membership fees, contributions towards campaign-related costs for women candidates, and seed funding for VSLAs. Funds provided to VSLAs were repaid within the programme period.

Synthesis of Findings from the 2023 Mid-Term Review

In Burundi, the 2023 Mid-Term Review (MTR) found that the programme responded in a contextually grounded manner to the most immediate and binding constraints on women's political participation, while achieving more limited progress on institutional and policy-level change. The MTR identified women's lack of financial resources as a precondition for political participation in Burundi rather than a secondary barrier. In this context, programme support to VSLAs and related micro-financing mechanisms enabled women to meet the material costs of participation, including transport, party contributions, and campaign-related expenses, while reducing dependence on male household members. These economic gains were closely linked to increased confidence, visibility within party structures, and the practical ability to remain politically active. The MTR also highlighted the significance of the programme's focus on creating politically acceptable spaces for engagement across party lines. Bringing together women from ruling and opposition parties in a highly polarised and restrictive political environment reduced mistrust, enabled recognition of shared gender-based exclusion, and supported informal alliance-building, while maintaining awareness of unequal political risk across party affiliations.

At the same time, the 2023 MTR underscored clear limits to what was achieved in Burundi, many of which reflected structural and political constraints rather than implementation gaps. Progress towards policy reform and government-level change could not be substantiated, and advancement towards a supportive policy environment for women's political participation remained limited. Engagement with political actors was largely confined to awareness-raising, with little evidence of concrete institutional or legal change, compounded by restricted access to government stakeholders. The MTR further found that Burundi's country-level ToC was weakly aligned with the programme-level framework, particularly in relation to economic empowerment, which emerged as a central driver of participation in practice but was not articulated as an outcome. While the programme avoided treating women as a homogenous group and demonstrated sensitivity to political affiliation and political risk, its capacity to respond to deeper forms of intersectional exclusion was constrained. Women facing the highest levels of marginalisation, including Batwa women and LGBTQI+ individuals, were only marginally or not at all reached, reflecting the limits of what could be safely and realistically addressed within Burundi's restrictive political environment. Overall, the 2023 Mid-Term Review concluded that the Burundi component generated tangible and contextually relevant gains at the individual and relational level, but that these gains remained uneven and weakly institutionalised, with time, resources, and political space proving insufficient to support more durable structural change.

What the Final Evaluation Confirms and Extends

The final evaluation confirms these core findings, but adds important nuance regarding the nature and significance of change in Burundi over the remainder of the programme period. While the MTR framed outcomes primarily in terms of participation and engagement, the endline evidence suggests that the programme's contribution is better understood less as enabling advancement within political systems and more as preventing political disengagement under conditions of sustained closure. Since the MTR, political space has continued to contract, with limited prospects for institutional reform and heightened risks for opposition-affiliated actors. In this context, the programme's value lay not in producing visible institutional change, but in sustaining women's political presence and sense of agency in circumstances where withdrawal from political life was a highly likely outcome. At the same time, the endline evidence adds specificity on how women remained engaged within party structures under continued political closure. In a small number of cases, particularly among opposition parties, women reported limited adjustments in internal party practice.

The final evaluation also concurs with the MTR's assessment of limits and constraints. Progress towards domestic policy reform and government level change remained minimal and could not be substantiated, reflecting both restricted access to government stakeholders and the narrowing space for advocacy. The weak alignment between Burundi's country level Theory of Change and the programme level framework, identified in the MTR, continued to complicate the articulation of outcomes, particularly with regard to economic empowerment, which functioned in practice as a central driver of participation but remained insufficiently theorised as an outcome. The evaluation further confirms that, while the programme avoided treating women as a homogenous group and demonstrated sensitivity to political affiliation and political risk, its ability to address deeper forms of intersectional exclusion remained constrained. Some marginalised groups, such as Batwa and Muslim women were included in programme activities, including trainings and VSLAs. The programme implementation team also coordinated advocacy efforts with UNIPROBA, a Batwa organisation, to advocate for greater inclusion for Batwa women. Women facing the highest levels of marginalisation, including LGBTQI+ individuals, were not deliberately targeted, reflecting the limits of what could be safely and realistically addressed within Burundi's restrictive political environment. Overall, while the MTR characterised gains as uneven and weakly institutionalised, the endline evaluation situates these gains as deliberate, adaptive responses to prolonged political closure rather than transitional steps towards structural reform.

How Change Unfolded in Burundi

Headline Finding

In Burundi, change unfolded through women remaining politically engaged despite the consolidation of authoritarian control and the contraction of political space. Political participation was sustained by shifting it into economically legitimate and socially acceptable forms, which reduced fear and made continued involvement possible without visible opposition, while cross-party relationships among women softened partisan isolation and provided informal support during periods of discouragement. Rather than expanding access to power, these dynamics

prevented withdrawal from political life and allowed women's political identity and connections to endure under pressure.

In Burundi, change unfolded not through visible political openings or institutional reform, but through the gradual reconstitution of women's political agency in a context of sustained political closure. Following the consolidation of power after the 2020 elections and the effective elimination of political competition in 2025, women's participation in politics became less a question of advancement and more one of survival within shrinking political space. Against this backdrop, the programme's most significant contribution was not enabling women to access power, but preventing their exit from political life altogether. Change therefore took the form of continuity under pressure: maintaining engagement and relationships in circumstances where disengagement was the more likely outcome.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"Women, especially those from opposition parties, were discouraged by the recent elections and needed to be re-energised." (KII, women parliamentarian)

Reframing participation to reduce political risk

One way continuity of engagement was sustained was by reframing political participation around socially and politically acceptable practices, a shift that had important effects on how women experienced politics and understood their own agency within it. In a context where overt political organising, particularly across party lines, is prohibited and widely perceived as dangerous, anchoring engagement in economic and social activity reduced both personal risk and the constant need for self-censorship. This reframing lowered the emotional and psychological cost of participation for women who associated politics with intimidation and the threat of sanction, making continued engagement feel feasible rather than reckless. For several participants, this marked a transition from viewing political involvement as something that inevitably exposed them to conflict and harm, to seeing it as an activity that could be sustained through everyday, legitimate practices without abandoning political purpose.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"Politics is very sensitive in Burundi. Several imprisonments and killings have been political actions for many years." (KII, women leader trained)

"We were all afraid of the repercussions... but we remembered the trainings we had received from BLTP and encouraged each other to face the challenge. We dared to continue." (FGD, VSLA members)

Several women described feeling less fear and less need to constantly assess whether their actions might attract negative attention. This made continued involvement feel manageable rather than dangerous.

Economic contribution as a pathway to empowerment and political continuity

Embedding political discussion and strategy within routine social and economic interactions reshaped women's political identities and sense of legitimacy. Politics was no longer experienced solely as confrontation within male-dominated party hierarchies, where women's voices are often marginalised or dismissed, but as a collective and relational process grounded in mutual support and shared problem-solving. This shift enabled women to sustain political awareness and solidarity under conditions of repression, preserving relationships that would otherwise have been eroded by prolonged political closure. In this sense, reframing participation functioned less as accommodation and more as a survival strategy, allowing women to remain politically connected and prepared in an environment where disengagement was often the safest and most rational response.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"The VSLAs are a source of income but also a meeting point with other women leaders. There we feel that the discussions have substance; sometimes people say women meet just to gossip, but in the group it is different – we discuss projects and the role of women." (FGD, trained women leaders)

"In the VSLA, we are women first before being members of different parties." (VSLA focus group)

Change also unfolded through a gradual and pragmatic rebalancing of power at the household and community level, rather than within formal political institutions where women's influence remained tightly constrained. In a context where political participation is closely linked to financial contribution and visibility, women's ability to generate even modest independent income had tangible implications for their bargaining power. Economic contribution did not overturn entrenched patriarchal norms or redistribute formal authority within households or parties. However, it altered everyday negotiations in ways that mattered for political continuity: women reported greater latitude to attend meetings, travel for political activities, and justify the time spent away from domestic responsibilities. In this sense, economic participation functioned less as empowerment in an abstract sense and more as a practical enabler of political presence.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"The small amount of money gave me independence." (KII, women parliamentarian)

"The lack of financial means: here, money is important in the exercise of power." (KII, woman parliamentarian)

These shifts were particularly significant given that political legitimacy at the local level is often assessed through contribution rather than representation. Women who contribute to party activities, or support community initiatives are more likely to be perceived as serious political actors rather than symbolic participants or dependents. This recognition extended beyond party structures into households and communities, where, at least in some cases, economic contribution

translated into increased respect and consultation, even if decision-making power remained gendered. However, these changes were uneven and contingent: women's autonomy expanded only insofar as economic contribution could be sustained, and gains remain vulnerable to reversal in the absence of continued income. Nevertheless, by easing immediate financial constraints and reshaping everyday power relations, these incremental shifts play a critical role in preventing women's withdrawal from political life in a context where participation without resources is largely untenable.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"In Burundi, it must be recognised that money also gives you a voice." (VSLA focus group)

"The project allowed us to regain our voice in the family, because now our husbands consult us on family projects since we can contribute." (VSLA focus group)

Capacity-building as a mechanism for political endurance

Capacity-building contributed to change less by expanding women's formal opportunities than by reshaping how they occupied and navigated roles that were already tightly constrained. In a political environment where access to decision-making arenas is limited and often symbolic, strengthened skills in public speaking and leadership did not open new spaces of influence. Instead, they altered how women behaved within the few spaces available to them, including party meetings and community gatherings. Women described feeling better prepared to speak and to intervene with greater assurance, even when their contributions did not translate into immediate influence. This matters because political participation in Burundi is not only restricted by formal rules, but also by norms that reward assertiveness and visibility; qualities from which women are often actively discouraged.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"Public speaking... it is true that I was a teacher, but I was afraid." (KII, women leader trained)

"The various training courses have been very beneficial, such as those on income-generating activities, women's leadership, non-violent communication and organisational management." (Focus group, VSLA member)

More importantly, capacity-building reshaped women's self-perception as political actors. Several participants described a shift away from seeing themselves as supporters, or symbolic representatives toward viewing themselves as legitimate participants with something to contribute. This internal reorientation is particularly significant in a context where women's presence in political structures often remains numerically visible but substantively marginal. While formal authority remained out of reach for most, the ability to speak with confidence and clarity reduced the sense

of futility that frequently accompanies participation in closed political systems. In this way, capacity-building functioned less as a pathway to advancement and more as a mechanism for sustaining motivation and political identity over time, helping women remain engaged despite the absence of tangible rewards or prospects for progression.

CROSS-PARTY SUPPORT NETWORKS AS A PATHWAY OF CHANGE

A further way in which change unfolded was through the gradual emergence of cross-party support networks among women political actors. This development is particularly significant in Burundi's highly polarised political environment, where partisan identity is commonly defined through exclusion and hostility rather than coexistence. Interviews and focus group discussions indicate a marked shift in how women related to political rivals over the course of the programme period. Women described moving away from entrenched mistrust towards more open interaction, driven by sustained engagement with women from other parties and by growing recognition of shared constraints within political structures.

For several participants, this engagement prompted reflection on the costs of strict partisan antagonism and the limited benefits it offered women operating in male-dominated party systems. Several women described reassessing long-held assumptions about political loyalty and rivalry, noting that sustained opposition to women from other parties had isolated them without improving their own political standing. Through interaction, women came to see that marginalisation within party hierarchies, limited influence over decision-making, and exposure to gendered stereotypes were common experiences across political affiliations. This recognition enabled a reframing of political difference, in which party competition remained, but no longer precluded dialogue or mutual respect among women.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"I used to see women from other parties as enemies... I realised that I was only creating enemies for myself, when politics changes all the time." (KII, women leader trained)

Over time, this shift in perspective translated into forms of solidarity that extended beyond structured dialogue spaces. Women described relationships characterised by regular exchange of advice and emotional support, including during election campaigns and periods of political pressure. These relationships were described using familial language, suggesting that they went beyond instrumental cooperation and became sources of trust and reassurance in an otherwise isolating political environment.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"I exchange experiences with women from different political parties. Especially meeting women from the ruling party helped me understand that the struggle of women is the same." (KII, women parliamentarian)

“The collaboration with other women who have become my new family.” (KII, women leader trained)

In a context where institutional protections are weak and partisan loyalty is closely policed, solidarity among women provided an alternative form of political resilience. Women reported feeling less isolated and more able to sustain engagement despite exclusion from decision-making and, in some cases, electoral defeat. While these networks did not translate into coordinated political action or formal alliances, they represented a meaningful reconfiguration of political interaction among women, enabling continued engagement in an environment otherwise characterised by division and discouragement. This pathway of change illustrates how, under conditions of political closure, informal and relational shifts can take on heightened significance. Rather than transforming power relations directly, cross-party solidarity functioned as a mechanism for sustaining women’s political presence and motivation, helping to prevent further withdrawal from political life in a context where disengagement was often the most rational response.

Overall, change in Burundi unfolded as a process of adaptation rather than transformation. LEAP4Peace did not alter the structural conditions of authoritarian rule, nor did it significantly expand political space for women. Instead, it enabled women to endure within that space: to remain organised, connected, and politically present despite systemic exclusion. In a context where withdrawal from politics is a rational response to risk, sustaining women’s engagement, and preventing further erosion of pluralism among women political actors, constitutes a meaningful, if necessarily limited, form of change.

Intersectionality and Differentiated Experiences

Evaluation Question:

- To what extent has the programme been effective in reaching the most marginalised rights holders?

Headline Finding

Women’s political participation in Burundi is unevenly shaped by poverty, household constraints, and party affiliation, creating markedly different risks among women. The programme was able to ease some material and political barriers but could not reach women facing the most entrenched and compounded forms of exclusion.

Women’s political participation in Burundi is shaped by overlapping and cumulative forms of exclusion rather than gender alone. Gender intersects most visibly with economic status, marital position, geography, and party affiliation, producing sharply differentiated risks and opportunities among women. Political participation is closely tied to financial contribution, which systematically disadvantages poorer women. Household power relations further compound these constraints, particularly for married women who face restrictions on mobility and time, even when they become

economically active. Party affiliation introduces an additional layer of risk, with women from opposition parties facing greater discouragement and political vulnerability than those affiliated with the ruling party. Age, education, and caregiving responsibilities also shape participation, with younger women and those with interrupted education encountering distinct barriers to advancement.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“There is a requirement to have at least a university degree to be placed on electoral lists, yet women do not pursue education in the same way as men.” (Focus group discussion, VSLA member)

“It is difficult for women who do not have financial means to appear on electoral lists, because visibility depends on financial contributions.” (Focus group discussion, VSLA member)

Ethnicity operates in more muted and indirect ways. While women rarely spoke explicitly about Hutu and Tutsi identity, reflecting the political sensitivity and historical suppression of ethnic discourse in Burundi, the absence of overt reference should not be read as absence of effect. The legacy of ethnic violence and state-enforced narratives of unity likely continue to shape political behaviour, particularly in cross-party and collective organising. In contrast, Batwa women were more clearly identified as facing compounded exclusion linked to ethnicity and geographic marginalisation, placing them largely outside existing pathways to political participation. LGBTQI+ women were not explicitly discussed in interviews or programme documentation. The evaluation cannot determine whether LGBTQI+ women were present among programme participants but not openly identified as such. The programme also did not include explicit outreach or targeting related to LGBTQI+ participation. In contexts characterised by high levels of stigma and risk, non-disclosure is common and may render LGBTQI+ participation socially invisible. The absence of explicit reference should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Programme Results

Evaluation Questions:

- What have been the main achievements on LTO1: Women are represented in decision-making roles for peacebuilding?
- What have been the main achievements on LTO2: Supportive policy environment for women’s representation and participation in peacebuilding?
- Which of the programme interventions have been particularly effective in producing outcomes and impact? Which interventions have been least effective?
- Did the programme achieve outcomes and impacts that were not foreseen in the Theory of Change? Have there been any other unintended and unexpected effects?
- Were the assumptions of the TOC valid?

Headline Finding

The final evaluation shows that in Burundi the programme supported women to remain politically engaged under conditions of sustained political closure, while contributing to modest and uneven adjustments in internal party practice. Programme support strengthened women's confidence, reduced fear and self-censorship within authorised spaces, and fostered cross party networks and solidarity that helped counter isolation and discouragement. It also enabled some women to meet the practical and social costs of participation, limiting withdrawal as political pressure increased. While formal decision-making power and policy influence remained largely unchanged, the programme contributed to small procedural shifts within some parties, including greater inclusion of women in meetings, mobilisation activities, and internal structures, sustaining women's political presence and readiness within a highly constrained political system.

Assessment Against the Programme TOC

This section presents progress against the programme ToC in Burundi, assessing developments across long-term and intermediate outcomes related to women's political participation and gender equality in political processes. It draws on evidence from key informant interviews, focus group discussions and programme documentation to examine the extent to which expected changes occurred and where progress remained limited, uneven or primarily procedural rather than substantive.

Table 4: Burundi – Assessment Against TOC

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Burundi	Evidence base	Assessment
Long-term outcome	Women are represented in decision-making roles for peacebuilding	Some women increased procedural participation within party structures, including inclusion on lists or committees and a small number of candidacies. These changes rarely translated into decision-making authority due to strong party gatekeeping and centralised leadership control.	KIIs with women leaders and parliamentarians; FGDs	Some progress
	Supportive policy environment for women's political participation exists and is strengthened	Some opposition parties reported revisions to internal statutes or guidelines to include gender-inclusive provisions. No broader policy or legislative change at national level occurred during the evaluation period.	KIIs and verification interviews; no independent review of statutes.	Minimal progress
Intermediate outcome	Women's caucuses and networks are strengthened	Cross-party relationships among women emerged through VSLAs and dialogue groups. Women reported ongoing	KIIs and FGDs describing networks and con-	Achieved

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Burundi	Evidence base	Assessment
		ing contact, advice-sharing, and emotional support across parties.	tinued interaction.	
	Political actors implement internal gender equality regulations	Some procedural adjustments reported within parties, including inviting women to meetings or placing them on internal lists or committees. These changes remained uneven and dependent on individual leaders.	KIIs with party actors	Some progress
	Political actors collaborate for better policies	Interaction among women from different parties increased, but this did not translate into coordinated policy initiatives or formal cross-party collaboration.	KIIs and FGDs; no documented joint policy action.	Minimal progress
	International advocacy supports supportive policy environments	No observable policy changes resulting from national or international advocacy during the evaluation period.	KIIs; absence of policy reform evidence.	No observable progress
	Women nominate themselves for decision-making positions	A limited number of women stood for election and ran campaigns. However, nomination processes remained controlled by party leadership and financial contribution requirements.	KIIs with candidates and parliamentarians; FGDs discussing barriers.	Some progress
	Party leadership supports women's participation internally	Some examples of supportive leaders were reported, but overall party leadership structures remained male-dominated and resistant to substantive change.	KIIs with women leaders and party members.	Minimal progress
	Political actors jointly advocate for gender equality legislation	Evidence points mainly to discussion and awareness-raising rather than coordinated advocacy efforts resulting in legislative change.	KIIs and FGDs.	Minimal progress
	Civil society actors monitor and advocate for policy change	Some advocacy efforts were reported, including coordination with organisations representing marginalised groups. These efforts did not result in measurable policy change during the programme period.	KIIs; programme narrative.	Minimal progress
	Female and male politicians work as allies to enhance women's participation	Some examples of supportive male actors exist, but overall party structures continue to limit women's influence.	KIIs and verification interview references.	Minimal progress
	Political actors understand challenges to	Interviews suggest increased awareness of structural barriers affecting women's participation within parties and	KIIs and FGDs discussing barriers.	Some progress

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Burundi	Evidence base	Assessment
	women's participation	communities.		
	Political parties develop joint gender equality agendas	Evidence of joint agendas across parties is weak; collaboration remained largely informal and relational.	KIIs and FGDs.	Minimal progress
	Civil society organisations align around joint advocacy agendas	Some coordination occurred but did not lead to sustained joint advocacy capable of influencing policy outcomes.	KIIs; programme documentation.	Minimal progress

Assessment of ToC Assumptions

This section assesses the extent to which the programme's underlying assumptions held in the Burundi context during the evaluation period. Drawing on evidence from key informant interviews, focus group discussions and programme documentation, it examines behavioural, institutional and political dynamics that shaped programme pathways, highlighting where assumptions were confirmed, only partially realised, or not supported in practice.

Table 5: Burundi – Assessment of ToC Assumptions

Assumption	What happened in Burundi	Evidence	Status
Women use strengthened skills and networks to advance their participation in politics	Women reported increased confidence, public speaking ability, and sustained engagement in party activities and campaigns despite political pressure.	KIIs and FGDs describing confidence, campaigning, and participation.	Holds
Political actors accept women as leaders and remove informal barriers	Informal barriers such as party gate-keeping, financial contribution requirements, and gender norms remained strong. Only limited adjustments were observed.	KIIs and FGDs on party dynamics and barriers.	Weakly holds
Duty-bearers recognise and exercise responsibilities to promote women's participation	Engagement with government actors remained limited and did not produce observable policy change.	KIIs; lack of evidence of government reform.	Does not hold
National and international actors incorporate civil society input and promote inclusive policy-making	Advocacy space remained restricted and policy influence through civil society engagement was minimal during the evaluation period.	KIIs; absence of policy change evidence.	Does not hold
Women have an interest in participating in political decision-making processes	Despite risks and discouragement, women continued to participate in political activities and remain engaged in party structures.	KIIs and FGDs reporting continued engagement.	Holds

Assumption	What happened in Burundi	Evidence	Status
Political actors have incentives to enhance women's participation	Incentives were limited; party loyalty, financial contribution, and hierarchical control remained stronger drivers of advancement.	KIIs with party actors and women leaders.	Weakly holds
Political actors recognise the benefits of women's political participation	Some increased awareness was observed, but this did not consistently translate into behavioural change or institutional reform.	KIIs and verification interviews.	Weakly holds
Like-minded CSOs see value in joint advocacy	Some collaboration among civil society actors occurred but remained limited in scale and impact.	KIIs; programme narrative.	Partially holds

Conclusion. Overall, the programme ToC held only partially in the Burundi context. Progress was strongest at the relational and behavioural level, where women strengthened cross-party networks, increased confidence, and sustained engagement in political activities despite a contracting political environment. These changes align with several intermediate outcomes and confirm key assumptions that women would use strengthened skills and networks to remain politically active and that they have a continued interest in participating in political processes. However, progress weakened along the institutional pathways of the ToC. The assumptions that political actors would remove informal barriers, that duty-bearers would promote women's participation, and that advocacy would influence policy environments did not hold in practice. As a result, improvements in participation and networks did not translate into greater decision-making authority or meaningful policy change. In Burundi's highly constrained political context, the programme therefore contributed primarily to sustaining women's political engagement rather than advancing institutional reform or representation, indicating that the ToC functions more effectively at the level of participation and relational change than at the level of structural transformation.

Outcome Harvesting Verification

An external verification exercise was undertaken to assess the validity of harvested outcomes reported by the programme from 2023 onwards. The process relied on independent verification interviews with outcome actors and knowledgeable stakeholders, using structured protocols to confirm whether the reported changes occurred and to assess the programme's plausible contribution to those changes. Interviewees were asked to describe events, roles, actions taken, and resulting changes in their own words, allowing for triangulation between reported outcomes and lived experience.

Four harvested outcomes were successfully verified through direct testimony from the individuals concerned or from independent respondents with first-hand knowledge of the events described. Accounts consistently confirmed that the reported changes took place and aligned closely with the outcome statements. Respondents provided concrete detail on the sequence of events, their specific roles, and the institutional or political contexts in which change occurred, enabling clear validation of both the substance and the timing of outcomes.

Verification confirms changes at multiple levels. At the leadership level, testimony substantiates a shift in elite attitudes, including a senior political leader's public advocacy for reforms enabling women's participation in party dialogue structures. It also confirms the role of a Muslim woman leader who served as a party focal point and subsequently assumed a senior national leadership position, where she actively influenced internal coordination and decision-making processes. At the grassroots level, interviews verified that a woman leader assumed responsibility for a newly formed dialogue group and expanded cross-party political participation locally. In addition, independent respondents confirmed that women replicated the programme's approach by establishing additional multi-party dialogue groups on their own initiative, demonstrating internalisation of programme methods and sustained collective mobilisation.

Table 6: Burundi Outcome Harvesting

Harvested outcome (2023 onwards)	Timing	Verification status	Verification basis
Local political leader publicly supported inclusion of women in party dialogue platforms, reflecting a shift in elite attitudes	2023	Successfully verified	Political leader confirmed publicly advocating for reforms to enable women's participation and described peer responses.
Muslim woman in a leadership position became an active focal point for party engagement with BLTP and influenced internal decision-making	2023	Successfully verified	Dady Nibigira confirmed her role as Muslim woman leader, party focal point, national Secretary General, and active influence on internal coordination and decisions.
Woman leader (Léonie) assumed leadership of a new dialogue group, broadening grassroots political participation	2024	Successfully verified	Léonie Ntihakose confirmed leadership role, group creation, and cross-party grassroots mobilisation.
Three new multi-party dialogue groups created at women's initiative, showing replication of programme strategies	2024	Successfully verified	Two independent respondents confirmed replication of the BLTP model and creation of additional groups.

Additional Outcomes Identified by the Evaluation

In addition to the outcomes captured in the programme TOC, the final evaluation identified several additional changes that emerged consistently across interviews and focus group discussions. These outcomes relate primarily to the economic and social conditions that enabled women to sustain political participation in a highly constrained environment. While not explicitly articulated in the programme ToC, they proved central to understanding how the programme supported continued engagement in political life. The table below summarises these additional outcomes and the strength of evidence supporting them.

Table 7: Additional Changes Identified in Burundi by the Final Evaluation

Level	Result (What changed)	Verification and Strength of Evidence
Intermediate outcome level	Women increased their access to income and financial resources.	Self-reported in FGDs and KIIs describing participation in VSLAs, income-generating activities, and perceived improvements in financial independence. The evaluation did not include baseline or endline income data, so changes in income levels could not be quantitatively verified. Evidence reflects consistent participant perceptions rather than measured economic outcomes; moderate qualitative evidence.
	Women were better able to meet the financial costs of political participation.	FGDs highlight the importance of financial contributions for political visibility and electoral participation. KIIs report increased ability to contribute financially to party activities and campaigns. Evidence triangulated across interviews and focus groups; moderate strength.
	Women experienced greater acceptance of their political engagement within households and communities.	FGDs report that women's financial contributions increased respect and consultation within households. KIIs also refer to greater recognition of women's political engagement. Evidence primarily self-reported but consistent across respondents; moderate strength.
	Informal peer support helped women manage discouragement and political pressure, including after elections and during campaigns.	KIIs and FGDs describe peer support through VSLA groups, dialogue platforms, and communication networks that provided encouragement and advice during periods of political pressure. Evidence consistent across respondents; moderate strength.
Longer-term outcome level	Women remained politically engaged despite heightened discouragement and shrinking political space.	FGDs and KIIs describe continued political engagement following electoral defeat and increasing political pressure. Evidence based on participant narratives across several interviews; moderate strength but largely perception-based.

Contribution Analysis

To assess the plausibility of programme contributions within the Burundi context, the evaluation tested a number of key pathways and assumptions derived from the programme Theory of Change. This involved examining whether reported changes were consistent with programme-supported activities and whether alternative explanations more plausibly accounted for observed outcomes. The analysis drew on evidence from KIIs, FGDs, programme documentation, and verification interviews, and assessed contribution claims in relation to both observed outcomes and the broader political and institutional context

Table 8: Burundi Contribution Analysis Across Key Pathways

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
Training, accompaniment, and VSLAs strengthened women's confidence and sustained political participation	Women consistently reported improved confidence in public speaking, greater willingness to engage in political activities, and sustained participation in party meetings and campaigns.	Broader party support, participation in other NGO-led training initiatives, and natural progression through longer-term political engagement may also have contributed to increased confidence and participation.	During KIIs and FGDs, participants were specifically asked whether they had received comparable support from other organisations or through party structures, and respondents generally indicated that they had not. Participants were also asked whether they believed these changes would likely have occurred without programme support, and most respondents explicitly linked increased confidence, speaking ability, and continued engagement to programme-supported training, accompaniment, and VSLAs. The consistency of responses across stakeholder groups therefore suggests that the programme plausibly played an important enabling role in strengthening confidence and sustaining political engagement.
Dialogue groups and VSLAs contributed to cross-party relationships and informal support networks	Women described ongoing contact, advice-sharing, emotional support, and reduced isolation across party lines through programme-supported spaces.	Existing local relationships or informal interactions between women across parties may also have contributed to some forms of contact and exchange.	During KIIs and FGDs, women consistently emphasised that meaningful cross-party interaction between women had been extremely limited prior to participation in programme-supported groups and activities. Respondents repeatedly described political divisions, mistrust, and limited opportunities for safe interaction across party lines before the establishment of dialogue groups and VSLAs. Participants linked continued exchange, mutual support, and ongoing communication directly to relationships formed through programme-supported spaces. Given the consistency and specificity of

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
			these accounts, alternative explanations based on pre-existing interaction appear less plausible, and the evidence strongly suggests that the programme contributed to strengthening cross-party networks and informal support structures.
Training, peer support, and financial assistance contributed to women seeking candidacy or internal party roles	Some women linked decisions to stand for election or engage more actively within party structures to programme-supported training, accompaniment, and financial support.	Electoral cycles, encouragement from communities or political parties, and pre-existing political ambitions may also have influenced women's decisions to seek candidacy or internal party roles.	During KILs, women who pursued candidacies or greater involvement within party structures consistently described programme support as helping them address practical barriers linked to campaigning, visibility, confidence, and participation costs. Respondents were specifically asked whether they believed they would have pursued these opportunities without programme support, and many indicated that they would have been less likely to do so. While broader political dynamics may also have played a role, the evidence suggests a plausible programme contribution to enabling greater political participation.
Advocacy and engagement contributed to procedural shifts within some political parties	Some participants reported women being invited to meetings, included on committees, or referenced in internal discussions on gender inclusion following engagement and advocacy activities involving programme participants.	Some parties may already have faced broader pressure from civil society actors, donors, or reform-oriented individuals to demonstrate greater inclusivity independently of the programme.	During KILs, respondents were specifically asked what had contributed to these procedural adjustments and generally linked them to programme-supported advocacy, dialogue, and engagement activities rather than to external pressure or parallel initiatives. Participants also did not identify other organisations or processes that had been actively engaging parties on women's participation in the same way during the

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
			evaluation period. While broader pressures around inclusivity may have formed part of the context, the available evidence suggests that the programme plausibly contributed to encouraging these limited procedural adjustments within some parties.
Programme-supported activities contributed to increased recognition among participants of structural barriers affecting women's participation	Interviews and FGDs suggested greater recognition among participants of barriers linked to gender norms, financial contribution requirements, exclusion from party decision-making, and unequal access to political opportunities.	Broader public debate on women's political participation and personal political experience may also have contributed to greater awareness of these barriers.	During KIs and FGDs, respondents frequently linked these reflections to discussions held within programme-supported trainings, dialogue groups, and collective spaces. Participants described these activities as creating opportunities to discuss experiences that had previously been normalised or discussed only privately. Respondents also generally did not identify other structured spaces where these issues were openly discussed across party lines. The evidence therefore suggests that the programme plausibly contributed to strengthening recognition and discussion of structural barriers affecting women's participation.

Implications for a Realistic Theory of Change in Burundi

Based on the evaluation findings, this section outlines considerations for refining the programme ToC in future interventions in Burundi. The suggestions reflect contextual constraints and observed pathways of change, indicating where expectations should be recalibrated and which mechanisms appear most realistic and meaningful for supporting women's political participation.

- In contexts of sustained political closure, the ToC should prioritise the preservation of women's political agency and participation rather than near-term institutional influence.

- Continued engagement in political life constitutes a meaningful outcome where formal authority and policy change remain unlikely in the short term.
- Interventions that combine politically acceptable spaces for interaction, access to savings and credit, targeted capacity-building, and modest financial support can enable women to remain politically active.
- Economic resources help women meet the financial costs of participation and support legitimacy within households and communities.
- Structured interaction across parties helps sustain trust and solidarity among women political actors in polarised environments.
- The programme's primary contribution lies in maintaining political readiness by sustaining networks, confidence, and practical capacity for future engagement.

Alignment of the Programme with Feminist Principles

Evaluation Question:

- How well does the programme address key aspects of feminist programming, such as being gender transformative and/or responsive to the priorities of women, aware of intersectionality, and related power dynamics and conflict sensitivity?

Headline Finding

The programme in Burundi reflects strong alignment with feminist principles by framing women's political exclusion as structurally produced rather than as a result of individual deficits. It centres safety and harm reduction as core conditions for participation, recognising withdrawal as a rational response to authoritarian and patriarchal constraints. While not explicitly transformative, the programme adopts a pragmatic feminist approach that prioritises sustaining women's agency within the limits of the political context.

The programme for Burundi aligns closely with feminist principles that conceptualise inequality as structurally produced rather than individually remediable. Rather than framing women's exclusion from political life as a deficit of skills or ambition, it explicitly situates women's participation within authoritarian political control, patriarchal household relations, and a political economy in which access to resources determines legitimacy. At the same time, these structural conditions also shape unequal access to education, training, and opportunities to develop skills and political experience. Differences in capacity therefore often reflect structurally produced constraints rather than individual shortcomings, even where practical skills gaps have real consequences for participation. Change is therefore understood as constrained by power relations embedded in parties, communities, and institutions, a framing that is consistent with feminist critiques of empowerment models that prioritise individual readiness while leaving exclusionary systems intact. By recognising that women's withdrawal from politics is often a rational response to risk, the programme avoids implicitly blaming women for disengagement and instead foregrounds the conditions under which participation becomes possible or untenable. This alignment is further reinforced through the programme's explicit engagement with power, risk, and harm. Feminist peacebuilding litera-

ture emphasises that political participation can expose women to intimidation, backlash, and violence, particularly in polarised and authoritarian contexts, and the programme treats risk reduction not as a secondary concern but as a central mechanism of change. By anchoring participation in socially and politically acceptable practices, the approach recognises that safety and emotional sustainability are prerequisites for continued engagement, reflecting a feminist do no harm orientation that avoids placing the burden of resilience solely on women and acknowledges that adaptation to hostile environments may be necessary for survival rather than a sign of political accommodation.

The emphasis on collective and relational change further strengthens this feminist alignment. Rather than privileging individual advancement as the primary pathway to empowerment, the programme highlights the role of cross-party solidarity and collective endurance in sustaining women's political engagement, treating these relational outcomes not as secondary by-products but as central to how women navigate political pressure and electoral defeat. This resonates with feminist scholarship that views collective action and networked forms of organising as critical to redistributing power and providing mutual protection, particularly where institutions are hostile or unresponsive. At the same time, the programme is more ambivalent in relation to intersectionality and gender-transformative intent. While it clearly recognises patriarchal norms and structural exclusion, it does not assume that these can be meaningfully transformed within the programme timeframe or political context. Instead, it foregrounds adaptation, endurance, and preparedness over direct norm change or institutional reform. From a feminist perspective, this represents a pragmatic rather than fully transformative approach: the programme acknowledges the limits of what is possible under authoritarian consolidation and prioritises sustaining women's agency within those limits. While this may fall short of feminist ambitions for structural transformation, it remains consistent with feminist principles that emphasise context sensitivity, ethical responsibility, and realism over aspirational but unattainable claims.

Seen from this perspective, engagement with male political actors becomes an important complementary pathway. In party systems where leadership structures and gatekeeping mechanisms remain male-dominated, sustaining women's agency alone is unlikely to influence institutional practices without at least some responsiveness from those who hold authority. Since the MTR, the programme engaged male party members through dialogue forums, joint discussions, and selected advocacy interactions that brought women leaders and male decision-makers into shared spaces, and some male actors acted as supportive interlocutors within party structures. Feminist approaches increasingly recognise that transforming gendered power relations requires engaging men not as substitutes for women's leadership but as power-holders and duty-bearers whose decisions shape access, rules, and norms within political institutions. While this engagement remained limited and uneven, it aligns with a pragmatic feminist strategy of working within existing power structures to widen space for women's participation, even where broader structural transformation remains out of reach.

Sustainability of Observed Outcomes

Evaluation Questions:

- Is it foreseen that the achievements of the programme can be maintained after the end of the programme? Which interventions or practices have contributed to this?
- Based on the achievements of the programme, what are recommendations for future programming?

Headline Finding

In Burundi, the sustainability of outcomes achieved under LEAP4Peace varies across different types of intervention and is closely tied to whether forms of engagement supported by the programme can continue under ongoing political restriction. Changes within political parties, including reported revisions to internal statutes and procedures, are likely to persist in formal terms; however, these adjustments were generally procedural rather than structural, and their practical implementation and durability remain uncertain. By contrast, the relationships and sense of solidarity built among women through multi-party dialogue platforms and VSLAs represent a more substantive shift with stronger prospects for continuity, particularly as these networks extend beyond formal programme activities and are embedded in routine social and economic interaction.

The sustainability of outcomes under LEAP4Peace must be understood in relation to Burundi's restrictive political environment, where formal political gains are difficult to secure and participation often carries personal and social risk. In this context, sustainability is less about institutional consolidation and more about whether the forms of engagement supported by the programme can be maintained under continued political pressure. Evidence to date suggests that outcomes rooted in everyday economic and social practices show potential for durability. Economic activities linked to VSLAs provide women with ongoing resources that enable participation in political and community life by reducing reliance on household finances and covering recurring costs such as transport and party fees. VSLAs are the most likely element to sustain, as they function as a self-reinforcing mechanism that does not depend on a formal political opening or external facilitation. Sustainability also depends on the degree to which supported groups can continue operating independently. While many VSLAs demonstrated capacity for self-management and routine operation, multiparty dialogue platforms were more reliant on programme-supported convening and coordination, which may be harder to sustain without external facilitation. Moreover, these gains remain uneven and vulnerable to market shocks, domestic pressures, and unpaid care responsibilities, meaning that economic sustainability cannot be assumed for all participants.

Relational and capacity-related outcomes also show potential for persistence, though they remain exposed to political risk. Cross-party relationships among women appear to have moved beyond purely programme-facilitated interaction, with participants reporting continued contact and shared problem-solving, particularly during elections and periods of discouragement. Similarly, shifts in confidence and political self-perception are likely to endure beyond project activities, shaping how women approach participation even when influence remains limited. However, the extent to which these gains can be sustained also depends on the continued availability of safe spaces for interaction and socially acceptable forms of engagement.

3.2 Colombia Case Study

Headline Findings

In Colombia, LEAP4Peace operated in a context where formal democratic rights and WPS commitments coexist with persistent territorial insecurity and entrenched machismo that shapes who can participate and at what cost. The programme was comparatively well aligned with its intended pathways because it could work through existing institutions and legal frameworks while also responding to the lived reality that women's participation is episodic and continuously conditioned by risk. The evaluation confirms that results were not primarily about rapid gains in representation, but about strengthening women's political judgement, legitimacy, and staying power through sustained learning spaces and peer networks, alongside modest institutional responsiveness on violence against women in politics. At the same time, evidence underscores that party gatekeeping, uneven protection across territories, and resource constraints continued to structure the limits of women's influence, meaning programme gains were real but uneven and often dependent on local political will and informal power dynamics.

Context Background

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"Some time ago I received a threat, they tried to kill me. That left a mark on me, and because of that I don't want to be at the front anymore, but rather to support others." (KII, women political leaders)

"Here you don't just decide to participate. You calculate the risk all the time, because participation can cost you your life." (KII, woman political leader)

"There are territories where politics is not civilian. Armed actors still decide who can speak and who cannot." (KII, woman political leaders)

"Machismo cannot be denied, because it exists even within the home. I lived it, and I still live it." (KII, civil society programme partner representatives)

Women's political participation in Colombia takes place in an environment where formal democratic guarantees coexist with persistent insecurity, territorial violence, and deeply gendered social expectations. For many women, entering or remaining in political space is not a neutral civic choice but a constant calculation shaped by exposure to threat and the risk of violence. Interviewees described how political engagement is frequently accompanied by intimidation, surveillance, and direct attacks, particularly in territories where armed actors continue to exert control over public life. In these areas, politics is not fully civilian and decisions about who may speak, organise, or lead remain influenced by coercion. Several participants emphasised that this climate has

long-term personal and political effects, leading some women to withdraw from visible leadership roles while continuing to contribute through less exposed forms of support and organising.

Across interviews and focus group discussions, insecurity was described as inseparable from women's political trajectories. Participants referred to threats, attempted attacks, and the normalisation of risk as part of political life, underscoring that participation can carry life-threatening consequences. Territorial dynamics were central to these accounts, with certain regions characterised by ongoing control by non-state armed actors that restrict civic space and shape local political authority. Alongside insecurity, machismo emerged as a pervasive feature of both political and social life. Gender norms continue to frame politics as a male domain, questioning women's authority and legitimacy and placing additional scrutiny on those who seek public roles. These dynamics operate not only within political parties and institutions but also within households and communities, where women reported continued resistance to their public leadership and decision-making roles.

This lived reality unfolds within Colombia's ongoing post-conflict transition following the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The agreement represented a landmark accord, incorporating provisions on political participation, rural reform, victims' rights, illicit crop substitution, and gender equality. Commitments on women's rights were shaped in part through the work of the Gender Sub-commission during the peace negotiations. However, implementation has been uneven. Assessments indicate that just over one-third of gender-related commitments have been fully implemented, with notable delays in measures linked to political participation and protection guarantees for women human rights defenders.

The security landscape remains complex and volatile. Following the demobilisation of the FARC, power vacuums in several regions have been filled by dissident FARC factions, the National Liberation Army, and criminal networks. These dynamics have sustained patterns of violence, forced displacement, targeted killings, and territorial control, particularly in rural and historically marginalised areas. Women leaders and peacebuilders have been disproportionately affected, including indigenous and Afro-Colombian women who face intersecting forms of marginalisation. Monitoring bodies have documented a rise in attacks against women human rights defenders in recent years, reinforcing the perception that political and civic engagement carries significant personal risk.

At the same time, Colombia has made progress in institutionalising the Women, Peace and Security agenda and strengthening formal frameworks for women's political inclusion. The government adopted its second National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for the period 2022–2025, identifying priorities such as women's participation in transitional justice mechanisms, political decision-making, and security sector reform. Legal frameworks also support women's representation, including quota legislation requiring minimum levels of women's participation in senior public administration roles and recent legislation addressing violence against women in politics. Women's representation in national parliament has reached approximately one-third of seats, and women hold several senior government positions.

Yet these advances have not removed the structural and contextual barriers shaping participation in practice. Economic inequality, gender-based violence, and uneven territorial protection continue to constrain women's ability to engage on equal terms, particularly for women in rural areas and those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Regional implementation of gender-related peace agreement commitments remains inconsistent, and civil society organisations continue to highlight gaps between national commitments and local realities. Limited state presence, weak protection guarantees, and persistent insecurity in historically marginalised territories continue to restrict meaningful and sustained political participation by women.

Interventions

Against this backdrop, LEAP4Peace in Colombia was implemented to support women's political participation in a setting where formal democratic rights coexist with insecurity and uneven protection. The programme worked primarily with women who were already active in political or peacebuilding roles, as well as those considering entry, reflecting an understanding that participation is often intermittent and shaped by risk rather than by formal eligibility alone.

Core Programme Activities

1. **Democracy and Empowerment Schools for women political leaders and aspirants.** The Democracy and Empowerment Schools formed the central delivery modality of LEAP4Peace in Colombia. These were sustained learning spaces rather than short-term training events and brought together women who were already politically active, as well as those considering entry into political or peacebuilding roles. The schools combined political education on electoral systems, institutional pathways, and legal frameworks with reflection on rights and political practice in Colombia. They also provided space to discuss lived experiences of political participation, including fear and violence, allowing women to collectively examine how power operates in formal and informal political arenas.
2. **Mentoring and technical accompaniment during electoral and high-risk periods.** In addition to structured learning spaces, the programme provided mentoring and technical accompaniment to women during periods of heightened political exposure, particularly around electoral cycles. This included support related to campaigning, public engagement, navigating party structures, and responding to political violence and harassment. Accompaniment was designed to be responsive to women's political trajectories and to recognise that participation is often episodic, shaped by risk and changing conditions rather than by linear progression.
3. **Facilitation of collective spaces and informal networks across political trajectories.** LEAP4Peace supported collective spaces that brought together women with diverse political affiliations and roles, including party-affiliated actors, independents, and community leaders. These spaces were not designed as formal coalitions or coordinated platforms, but as forums for exchange and mutual recognition. By enabling women to share experience and strategies across party lines and territorial contexts, the programme supported informal networks that could persist beyond individual activities and provide reassurance and political orientation in a fragmented environment.

4. **Institutional engagement on violence against women in politics and gender-responsive practice.** At the institutional level, LEAP4Peace engaged with electoral authorities and related state actors around the recognition and response to violence against women in politics. This work focused on dialogue, awareness-raising, and the application of existing legal and policy frameworks rather than on formal reform alone. Engagement took place within an evolving national context, contributing to improved understanding of political violence affecting women and to more differentiated approaches to identifying and addressing such cases within institutional procedures.

Synthesis of Findings from the 2023 Mid-Term Review

In Colombia, the 2023 Mid-Term Review found that the LEAP4Peace programme was comparatively well aligned with the overarching programme ToC and demonstrated clearer progress along intended pathways. This alignment was facilitated by a more permissive civic environment and by the existence of formal institutional commitments to gender equality at national and subnational levels. The MTR documented consistent gains in women's knowledge, confidence, and technical capacity, supported by an implementation model that combined training with follow up accompaniment rather than one off capacity building. This sequencing enabled participants to apply skills within real decision-making processes, particularly at the municipal level, and to engage more effectively with existing institutional mechanisms. The programme's engagement with women's rights organisations and local authorities supported the operationalisation of legally mandated gender equality bodies, including municipal gender equality commissions, and strengthened coordination between civil society and local government actors.

The MTR identified Colombia as the context in which the programme made the most visible progress at the institutional and policy adjacent level. Evidence pointed to programme contributions to multi actor platforms addressing women's political participation and to collective advocacy processes related to violence against women in politics, including technical support and coordination that formed part of the broader pathway leading to the adoption of Law 06 of 2023. These outcomes reflected the programme's ability to work within formal governance structures, engage duty bearers, and support collective action over time. At the same time, the MTR highlighted important limitations. Progress was uneven and concentrated in locations where political will already existed, and changes within political parties remained partial. Engagement with men and resistant actors was limited, constraining the depth of normative change and the sustainability of institutional shifts. Women's networks and coalitions were active but remained dependent on continued facilitation and resources to sustain advocacy.

What the Final Evaluation Confirms and Extends

The final evaluation broadly confirms the 2023 Mid-Term Review's assessment that Colombia was the context in which LEAP4Peace showed the clearest early progress along its intended pathways, particularly in relation to institutional engagement and policy-adjacent work. The MTR accurately captured gains in women's knowledge of political processes, confidence in navigating institutions, and familiarity with legal frameworks, as well as the value of combining training with

follow-up accompaniment. It also correctly identified the programme's contribution to collective advocacy on violence against women in politics, which formed part of the longer pathway leading to the adoption of Law 06 of 2023, and noted that progress was uneven and concentrated where political will already existed. These findings remain valid. The final evaluation confirms that engagement with electoral authorities contributed to increased recognition of violence against women in politics and to emerging procedural practices, while also reinforcing the MTR's caution that institutional change remained fragile and dependent on individual actors rather than firmly embedded systems. This reading was also broadly echoed by two external stakeholders interviewed for the final evaluation. A representative from UN Women agreed that the programme had contributed to stronger recognition of violence against women in politics and had usefully reinforced wider efforts already being advanced by Colombian women's organisations and institutional actors. At the same time, the respondent stressed that these gains remained uneven in practice, particularly outside better-connected institutional settings. A representative from GIZ similarly concurred that LEAP4Peace was well aligned with the Colombian context and added value through technical accompaniment and multi-actor engagement, while also noting that deeper change within party structures and local political systems remained limited.

Where the final evaluation extends the MTR is in its analysis of how change was experienced, and sustained by women themselves under conditions of risk. While the MTR focused primarily on capacity gains and institutional outputs, the final evaluation documents deeper shifts in how women understood political participation. It shows that programme effects operated less through linear movement towards office-holding and more through changes in political judgement, interpretation of harm, and decisions about visibility. The evaluation also offers a more explicit account of constraint, demonstrating how party structures mediated exposure to retaliation, how political violence shaped behaviour rather than simply forcing exit, and how participation was often conditional on restraint. Taken together, these findings deepen the MTR by showing not only what changed, but how power continued to shape the terms of women's participation and the limits within which programme-supported engagement could be sustained.

How Change Unfolded

Headline Finding

In Colombia, change unfolded primarily through shifts in how women understood and positioned themselves in relation to politics, moving from moral distancing and fear towards a rights-based sense of legitimacy and entitlement to participate. By reframing political engagement as distinct from clientelism and corruption, and by building confidence through collective learning spaces, the programme enabled women to remain politically active, including through candidacy, advocacy, and continued engagement after electoral loss. These changes were reinforced by peer support and modest institutional responsiveness.

Reframing Political Participation as Legitimate

For many women interviewed in Colombia, political participation prior to LEAP4Peace was experienced as morally compromised and risky, rather than as a stable or legitimate civic role. Politics was commonly associated with *politiquería*: a set of transactional, clientelist, and often corrupt practices linked to patronage networks and self-interest. In a context marked by persistent violence against social leaders, weak territorial protection, and entrenched party hierarchies, this understanding of politics acted as a powerful deterrent. Several participants described having actively distanced themselves from political engagement, not due to a lack of interest or concern for public affairs, but because participation was perceived as incompatible with their values or as exposing them to unacceptable personal and professional risk.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“Before, I rejected politics completely because I thought it was all corruption and favors. Here I learned that participating is a right, not the same as doing politiquería.” (FGD, woman community leader)

“Before, I used to say that politics was not for me, that I did not want to get dirty. Now I understand that participating is also a way of defending rights.” (FGD, woman community leader)

“It is not about asking for permission to be there. It is a right, even when the space is hostile.” (KII, woman political leader and elected councillor)

LEAP4Peace intervened at this symbolic level of exclusion by reframing political participation as a legitimate and rights-based practice rather than as complicity in morally compromised systems. Rather than attempting to reconfigure formal political hierarchies directly, the programme worked to redefine how legitimacy and belonging were understood by women navigating political space. By explicitly distinguishing between transactional political practices and political participation as a democratic right, LEAP4Peace challenged the idea that engagement required moral compromise or exceptional justification. Participants’ accounts suggest that this reframing altered how women positioned themselves politically, shifting participation from something conditional or permission-based to something grounded in entitlement and citizenship. In this sense, the programme’s orientation operated primarily through changes in interpretation and self-positioning, laying the groundwork for sustained engagement even where institutional barriers remained intact.

Building Political Confidence and Staying Power

The Democracy and Empowerment Schools were a central entry point for the programme’s engagement with women navigating these contradictions. Rather than focusing narrowly on electoral mechanics, these spaces combined political education with reflection on rights and power, creating room to interrogate dominant narratives about who politics is for and how it is practised. Participants described this as a turning point in how they understood their own relationship to politics. Learning to distinguish corrupt political practices from political participation as a democratic right reduced moral resistance to engagement and allowed women to reframe participation as an extension of citizenship and rights defence rather than complicity in exclusionary systems.

Participants consistently described these interventions as closely aligned with their lived political realities, particularly because they addressed not only formal rules of participation but also self-doubt and exposure to political violence at moments when many were deciding whether to step forward or withdraw.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“The school gave me confidence and language. That changed everything for me.” (FGD participant, woman community leader)

“The school arrived at a moment when many of us were thinking about whether to step forward or step back. It helped me understand the rules of the game and also the risks, especially the violence.” (KII, woman political leader)

“I decided to be a candidate. I did not win, but I stayed. I am still involved and that already feels like a victory.” (KII, woman political candidate)

“We learned that politics is not only elections. It is also organising, demanding, and staying.” (FGD, woman community leader)

This shift in understanding was closely linked to changes in confidence and political aspiration. Women described feeling more able to speak publicly and to engage with institutions, and several reported seriously considering candidacy or leadership roles even when success was uncertain. Some participants stood as candidates in local elections, while others took on roles within parties or advocacy spaces, or chose to remain politically active after electoral loss. In these accounts, progress was rarely defined by winning office. Instead, it was described as the ability to stay engaged, to remain visible in political space, and to resist pressures to withdraw in the face of hostility.

Reducing Isolation Through Collective Engagement

Collective spaces played an important role in sustaining these changes. Participants repeatedly emphasised the value of learning alongside other women with diverse political trajectories, including party-affiliated actors, independents, and community leaders. Project activities brought together women with varied political affiliations, socio-economic backgrounds, and geographic origins, which participants themselves identified as a strength, particularly for those operating outside traditional party elites. In a context where women face both symbolic exclusion and direct threats, these spaces functioned as sites of mutual recognition and reassurance. They normalised women’s political ambition and provided a forum in which experiences of fear and violence could be named and discussed collectively rather than internalised as individual failure. This mix reflected a deliberate focus on women who were already engaged or actively considering engagement, rather than on party leadership structures that control resources and candidate selection. This collective dimension helped reduce isolation and strengthened women’s ability to remain politically oriented even during periods of withdrawal or reduced visibility.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“What really worked was listening to other women who had already gone through this.” (FGD, woman community leader)

“Now I know other women I can call when something happens.” (FGD participant, woman community leader)

“We may not win every fight, but we are more visible and more connected than before.” (KII, woman political leader and elected councillor)

“We were women from different backgrounds, some from parties, some independent, some from communities. That made it more real, because politics does not look the same for everyone.” (FGD participant, woman community leader)

Incremental Institutional Responsiveness

Engagement with institutions formed another strand of change. LEAP4Peace’s work with electoral authorities and related actors intersected with an evolving legal and policy landscape, including growing recognition of violence against women in politics. Institutional stakeholders described increased awareness, procedural adjustments, and more differentiated approaches to identifying and responding to such violence following programme engagement. These developments suggest that technical dialogue and accompaniment contributed to institutional responsiveness at a moment when legal frameworks and political discourse made the issue harder to ignore. LEAP4Peace was perceived as reinforcing issues already being advanced by women’s organisations and reform-oriented institutional actors, lending technical input and legitimacy to ongoing efforts. However, participants and stakeholders alike emphasised that these shifts were fragile, unevenly applied, and often dependent on individual champions rather than systemic transformation.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“Violence against women in politics was always there, but now there is more clarity and more tools to identify it and respond.” (KII, institutional stakeholder)

“There is now more awareness that violence against women in politics is not normal politics. It has a name and it needs a response.” (KII, institutional stakeholder)

In this context, political participation remained conditional and uneven. Women’s engagement was shaped not only by individual readiness or institutional frameworks, but also by informal power relations and access to protection within local political economies. LEAP4Peace contributed to expanding women’s political capacity and orientation, but party-level gatekeeping continued to structure how far and for how long that engagement could be sustained.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“The training strengthened us as women, but the parties still decide who gets resources and visibility. That part is harder to change.” (KII, elected woman councillor)

“You can be very prepared, but if the party leadership does not support you, there are limits.” (KII, woman community leader)

“What is hardest is changing the parties. Training women is easier than changing those structures.” (KII, woman political leader and elected councillor)

Intersectionality and Differentiated Experiences

Evaluation Question:

- To what extent has the programme been effective in reaching the most marginalised rights holders?

Headline Findings

Women’s political participation in Colombia is shaped by intersecting inequalities, with age and economic resources strongly influencing exposure to exclusion and political violence. Young women, particularly those without financial backing or party protection, faced heightened dismissal and harassment, while territorial context and political positioning further differentiated risk. Programme support helped mitigate some age- and gender-based barriers, especially for young women entering local politics, but had more limited reach in addressing deeper structural and intersectional constraints affecting rural, Indigenous, and LGBTQI+ women.

Women’s political participation in Colombia is shaped by intersecting inequalities related to age, gender, economic resources, political positioning, and territorial context, producing highly differentiated experiences among women in local politics. Across interviews, youth emerged as a particularly salient axis of exclusion: young women councillors were routinely infantilised, dismissed as inexperienced, and subjected to forms of political violence that combined gendered and age-based power hierarchies. These dynamics were especially pronounced in male-dominated municipal councils, where young women who spoke assertively or challenged established practices faced ridicule, silencing, and personalised attacks, while women who remained compliant or aligned with dominant political blocs experienced fewer overt sanctions.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“You are very young, they tell you all the time: niña, mamita, usted qué viene a enseñarnos’.” (KII, project participant)

“They treated me like a little girl because I was young and because I was a woman. They assumed I wasn’t prepared.” (KII, project participant)

“I arrived in a council where most of them were men, between 40 and 60 years old, and a young woman coming to speak firmly with arguments really bothered them.” (KII, project participant)

Economic status further intersects with gender and age to constrain political participation, particularly during electoral campaigns. Limited access to personal or family resources shapes candidates’ ability to fund transport, visibility, and basic campaign infrastructure, with young women without established political networks relying on informal fundraising or personal debt. Territorial factors compounded these constraints, especially in rural or semi-rural municipalities, where long distances, security concerns, and weak digital connectivity increased the cost and risk of political engagement for women without party backing or institutional protection.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“The first obstacle was economic resources. I didn’t have money. I had just finished university and I wasn’t working.” (KII, woman candidate)

“My parents are independent workers. What they earn is for the household. There was no money for a campaign.” (KII, woman candidate)

Political affiliation and positionality within local power structures introduced an additional layer of differentiated risk. Women who positioned themselves as oppositional or committed to rigorous oversight described heightened exposure to political harassment, particularly when their actions disrupt clientelist practices or challenged executive authority. In contrast, women aligned with governing majorities or who limited their participation to procedural voting reported fewer confrontations, underscoring how gendered political violence in Colombia is unevenly distributed rather than uniform. While ethnicity and sexual orientation were largely absent from explicit discussion, this silence itself reflects differentiated visibility and risk: Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and LGBTQI+ women remain underrepresented or absent from these political spaces, suggesting that intersecting exclusions may preclude participation altogether rather than merely shaping its form.

Within this context, programme support addressed some intersectional barriers, but its reach and effects varied across different groups of women. The programme was most clearly responsive to the needs of young women entering local politics, strengthening technical skills and the ability to recognise and name political violence, thereby partially countering age- and gender-based marginalisation in male-dominated councils. Women operating in rural and semi-rural municipalities were also included among participants; however, while training enhanced individual confidence and strategic capacity, it did not substantially mitigate structural constraints linked to territorial dispersion, transport costs, security risks, and limited access to campaign resources.

Programme Results

Evaluation Questions:

- What have been the main achievements on LTO1: Women are represented in decision-making roles for peacebuilding?
- What have been the main achievements on LTO2: Supportive policy environment for women's representation and participation in peacebuilding?
- Which of the programme interventions have been particularly effective in producing outcomes and impact? Which interventions have been least effective?
- Did the programme achieve outcomes and impacts that were not foreseen in the Theory of Change? Have there been any other unintended and unexpected effects?
- Were the assumptions of the TOC valid?

Headline Findings

The final evaluation shows that in Colombia the programme's results extended beyond policy-level influence to shifts in how women navigate political space and how institutions respond to political violence. Women reported greater confidence to remain engaged in hostile settings, improved ability to recognise and respond to political violence, and stronger persistence in political roles despite intimidation, while institutional actors demonstrated emerging procedural responses following new legislation. These gains supported continued presence and limited downstream action rather than rapid increases in representation or uniform policy change, reflecting resilience and adaptive capacity more than structural transformation.

Assessment Against the Programme TOC

This section presents progress against the programme Theory of Change in Colombia, assessing developments across long-term and intermediate outcomes related to women's political participation and gender equality in political processes. It draws on evidence from key informant interviews, focus group discussions and programme documentation to examine the extent to which expected changes occurred and where progress remained limited, uneven or primarily procedural rather than substantive.

Table 9: Colombia – TOC Assessment

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Colombia	Evidence base	Assessment
Long-term outcome	Women are represented in decision-making roles for peacebuilding	Some women sustained political presence through candidacy, leadership roles, and continued engagement after electoral loss. Gains relate more to persistence, visibility, and readiness than to large increases in formal office-holding. Party gatekeeping and unequal campaign resources continued to limit con-	KIIs with women leaders and candidates; programme documentation	Some progress

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Colombia	Evidence base	Assessment
		version of readiness into durable decision-making roles.		
	Supportive policy environment for women's political participation exists and is strengthened	Institutional responsiveness improved primarily in relation to violence against women in politics. Engagement with electoral authorities contributed to increased recognition of the issue and emerging procedural responses within existing legal frameworks. Changes remain incremental, unevenly embedded, and dependent on individual champions.	KIIs with institutional stakeholders; KIIs with participants; programme documentation	Some progress
Inter-mediate outcome	Women's caucuses and networks are strengthened	Collective learning spaces and informal networks connected women across parties, roles, and territories. Participants reported ongoing exchange, reassurance, and mutual learning that reduced isolation and supported continued engagement during high-risk periods. Networks remain largely informal and resource-dependent.	KIIs and FGDs describing peer exchange and continued contact	Achieved
	Political actors implement internal gender equality regulations	Limited evidence of internal party reform. Some actors reported greater sensitivity to gender equality and political violence, but formal internal rule changes within parties were not widely documented.	KIIs with participants and party actors	Minimal progress
	Political actors collaborate for better policies	Collaboration occurred primarily through issue-based, multi-actor processes, particularly around violence against women in politics. Programme-supported convening and technical engagement contributed to collective advocacy and institutional dialogue forming part of broader policy pathways. Collaboration was stronger on specific issues than as sustained cross-party platforms.	KIIs and FGDs; absence of documented joint policy initiatives	Some progress
	International advocacy supports supportive policy environments	Programme-linked actors contributed to broader advocacy ecosystems, particularly around violence against women in politics, but policy shifts were the result of multi-actor processes. International and national advocacy created an enabling environment rather than discrete attributable change.	KIIs; programme documentation; stakeholder accounts	Some progress
	Women nominate themselves for decision-making positions	A number of women pursued candidacy and leadership roles despite insecurity and resource constraints. Decisions to run were linked to strengthened confi-	KIIs with candidates and political leaders; FGDs	Some progress

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Colombia	Evidence base	Assessment
		dence, political clarity, and accompaniment, though nomination and list placement remained shaped by party structures.		
	Party leadership supports women's participation internally	Support varied by territory and party. Some leaders facilitated women's participation and visibility, while others maintained restrictive gatekeeping practices. Inclusion remained uneven and dependent on local political will.	KIIs with participants and elected officials	Minimal progress
	Political actors jointly advocate for gender equality legislation	Programme actors contributed to collective processes addressing violence against women in politics, forming part of wider advocacy that culminated in Law 06 of 2023. Joint advocacy occurred through multi-actor platforms rather than formal party coalitions.	KIIs; programme documentation; stakeholder accounts	Some progress
	Civil society actors monitor and advocate for policy change	Women's organisations and civil society actors engaged in monitoring and advocacy, including on political violence. Programme support strengthened technical engagement and coordination, though advocacy capacity remained resource-dependent.	KIIs; programme documentation	Some progress
	Female and male politicians work as allies to enhance women's participation	Some examples of male allies were reported, particularly in institutional settings and local councils, but alliance-building remained inconsistent and context-specific. Gendered resistance persisted within party structures.	KIIs with participants and elected officials	Minimal progress
	Political actors understand challenges to women's participation	Increased awareness of political violence, gendered exclusion, and structural barriers was widely reported among both women participants and institutional stakeholders. This translated into improved recognition and framing of the problem, though behavioural change was uneven.	KIIs with participants and institutional actors; FGDs	Achieved
	Political parties develop joint gender equality agendas	Evidence of formal cross-party gender agendas is limited. Cooperation occurred through informal spaces and issue-based coordination rather than structured joint platforms.	KIIs and FGDs	Minimal progress
	Civil society organisations align around joint advocacy agendas	Coordination among civil society actors strengthened around political violence and women's participation, supported by convening and technical engagement.	KIIs; programme documentation	Some progress

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Colombia	Evidence base	Assessment
		Alignment improved but remained project- and resource-dependent.		

Assessment of TOC Assumptions

This section assesses the extent to which the programme's underlying Theory of Change assumptions held in the Colombia context during the evaluation period. Drawing on interviews, focus group discussions, stakeholder accounts, and programme documentation, it examines behavioural, institutional, and political dynamics shaping women's participation in politics and peacebuilding, highlighting where assumptions were confirmed, partially realised, or constrained by structural and contextual factors.

Table 10: Colombia – Assessment of Assumption Validity

Assumption	What happened in Colombia	Evidence base	Status
Women use strengthened skills and networks to advance their participation in politics and peacebuilding processes	Women reported increased confidence, political clarity, and practical capacity to engage institutions, run for office, undertake advocacy, and remain active after electoral loss. Skills and networks supported persistence and strategic engagement rather than linear advancement.	KIIs with participants and candidates; FGDs; programme documentation	Holds
Political actors accept women as leaders and remove informal barriers to participation	Acceptance improved unevenly. Some supportive leaders and institutional actors enabled women's participation, but party gate-keeping, resource control, and informal power hierarchies continued to restrict advancement.	KIIs with participants, elected officials, and stakeholders	Partially holds
Duty-bearers recognise and exercise responsibilities to promote women's participation	Institutional actors demonstrated increased recognition of violence against women in politics and emerging procedural responses within existing legal frameworks. Responsibility was exercised incrementally and unevenly across territories.	KIIs with institutional stakeholders; programme documentation	Partially holds
National and international actors incorporate civil society input and promote inclusive policy-making	Civil society advocacy fed into broader policy processes, particularly on violence against women in politics, with programme actors contributing to multi-actor platforms and technical dialogue. Influence was shared and issue-specific rather than comprehensive.	KIIs; stakeholder accounts; programme documentation	Holds
Women have an interest in participating in political decision-making processes	Women consistently expressed motivation to remain politically engaged despite risk, hostility, and electoral defeat, framing participation as a right and form of civic responsibility.	KIIs and FGDs with participants	Holds
Political actors have incentives to enhance	Incentives existed in some institutional and reform-oriented settings, particularly where	KIIs with institutional actors and	Partially

Assumption	What happened in Colombia	Evidence base	Status
women's participation	gender equality frameworks and legal mandates applied. However, party-level incentives remained mixed and often secondary to patronage and power dynamics.	party-affiliated participants	holds
Political actors recognise the benefits of women's political participation	Increased awareness of gendered political violence and barriers to participation was widely reported among institutional stakeholders and participants. Recognition translated into improved framing and procedural responses, though systemic change remained limited.	KIIs with institutional stakeholders; KIIs and FGDs with participants	Holds
Like-minded civil society organisations see value in joint advocacy	Civil society coordination strengthened around political violence and women's participation, supported by programme convening and technical engagement. Collaboration was active but resource-dependent and issue-focused.	KIIs; programme documentation; stakeholder accounts	Holds

Conclusion. Overall, the programme ToC largely held in the Colombian context. Progress was strongest along pathways related to women's confidence, political capacity, sustained engagement, and collective networking, confirming key assumptions that women would use strengthened skills and peer support to remain active in political life and that they have a continued interest in political participation despite risk. The ToC also held at the institutional interface, where engagement with duty-bearers and civil society actors contributed to increased recognition of violence against women in politics and incremental procedural responsiveness within existing legal frameworks. However, progress was more uneven along pathways requiring deeper transformation of party structures and informal power dynamics. Party gatekeeping, unequal access to resources, and territorial insecurity continued to constrain how far individual readiness translated into durable representation and influence. In Colombia's context of formal democratic frameworks coexisting with persistent structural and security barriers, the programme therefore functioned largely as intended, strengthening women's political agency and contributing to issue-specific institutional responsiveness, while structural change in representation and party systems remained gradual and contingent.

Verification of Harvested Outcomes

An external verification exercise was conducted to assess harvested outcomes in Colombia through interviews with programme stakeholders, government counterparts, and civil society actors. Verification focused on confirming whether the reported changes occurred and whether the programme plausibly contributed to those changes.

Five outcomes were fully verified. Interviews consistently confirmed the Observatory on Violence Against Women in Politics' role in shaping legislative processes, including coordinated advocacy, development of draft provisions, and recognised engagement with state institutions and the Constitutional Court. Respondents also substantiated that L4P established a trusted and sustained

working relationship with the National Electoral Council, contributing to institutional strengthening and closer cooperation on gender and electoral inclusion. In addition, interviewees confirmed that L4P and GAPS contributed meaningfully to the participatory development of Colombia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security through advocacy engagement and recognised involvement in national consultation forums. Closely related to this, stakeholders verified NIMD Colombia's active participation in national WPS forums and its contribution of technical inputs and recommendations within coordination spaces. Finally, institutional respondents confirmed that the Immediate Reception Unit for Electoral Transparency (URIEL) recognised the need to strengthen its internal response and initiated steps to improve procedures for identifying and managing cases of violence against women in politics following capacity-building processes.

Two outcomes were partially verified. Interviews confirmed broad civil society participation and structured dialogue spaces in the NAP process, including engagement by NIMD and partner organisations. However, respondents did not explicitly confirm that the government formally expanded invitations to civil society actors as a distinct decision.

Table 11: Colombia – Outcome Harvesting Verification

Harvested outcome	Timing	Verifi- cation status	Verification basis
Observatory on Violence Against Women in Politics influenced adoption of legislative provisions to prevent and eradicate political violence	Aug 2022 onward	Suc- cess- fully verified	Multiple respondents described coordinated advocacy around the law on violence against women in politics, articulation of draft provisions, and the Observatory's recognised role, including engagement with state entities and the Constitutional Court.
L4P strengthened trusted working relationship with the National Electoral Council (CNE) to promote women's political participation	Jul 2023	Suc- cess- fully verified	CNE official confirmed sustained collaboration, institutional strengthening, and value of cooperation with civil society and international partners in advancing gender and electoral inclusion work.
L4P and GAPS conducted advocacy week contributing to participatory development of Colombia's UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan	Sep 2023	Suc- cess- fully verified	Interviewees confirmed participation and influence in the NAP process, including involvement in national forums and recognised contributions to plan development spaces.
NIMD Colombia contributed to the WPS NAP process through national forum participation and recommendations	Sep 2023	Suc- cess- fully verified	Respondents confirmed participation in national WPS forums and contribution of inputs, positioning within coordination spaces, and recognised engagement in NAP discussions.
Government widened invitations to civil society, including NIMD, to provide input into	Sep 2023	Partially verified	Interviews confirm civil society participation and structured dialogue spaces but do not explicitly confirm expansion of invitations by government as

Harvested outcome	Timing	Verifi- cation status	Verification basis
the NAP			a discrete decision.
Colombia published its first NAP following extensive civil society consultation; NIMD and GAPS contributed	Nov 2024	Partially verified	Strong confirmation of civil society and NIMD/GAPS contributions to development and consultation processes
URIEL recognised need to design internal protocol for identifying cases of violence against women in politics	Early 2024	Suc- cess- fully verified	Government official confirmed institutional steps to improve identification, internal procedures, and regulatory responses to cases of political violence against women following capacity-building processes.

Additional Outcomes Identified by the Evaluation

In addition to the outcomes captured under the programme ToC, the final evaluation identified several further changes that emerged consistently from interviews and focus group discussions in Colombia. These outcomes relate to the practical quality of political engagement, women's capacity to manage risk and political violence, and locally driven actions that extend beyond formal programme pathways. While not explicitly articulated in the ToC, they provide important insight into how programme support translated into everyday political practice and localised forms of influence. The table below summarises these additional outcomes.

Additional Outcomes Identified in Colombia

Table 12: Colombia – Additional Outcomes Identified

Level	Result (What changed)	Source	Strength of evidence
Output level	Women strengthened practical technical capacity for day-to-day political work, including reviewing projects, exercising oversight (control político), and communicating with constituents, including via social media during campaigns.	KIIs with councilors and candidates; FGDs with programme participants	Moderate qualitative evidence based on consistent self-reporting across multiple respondents
Output level	Women increased their ability to recognise and name political violence and identify response options and early risk “alarm signals”.	KIIs with participants; FGDs discussing experiences of political violence	Moderate qualitative evidence with triangulation across interviews and group discussions
Output level	Programme-linked spaces enabled women to discuss political violence and exclusion more openly, functioning as supportive environments during periods of stress and exposure.	FGDs and KIIs describing peer exchange and collective reflection spaces	Moderate qualitative evidence; consistent participant testimony but perception-based

Level	Result (What changed)	Source	Strength of evidence
Longer-term outcome level	Some women reported concrete downstream local actions to support women's participation, such as strengthening or activating women's commissions and consultative spaces, and initiating related local proposals.	KIIs with local women leaders and councillors	Limited to moderate evidence; examples documented but small number of cases and largely self-reported

Contribution Analysis

To assess the plausibility of programme contributions within the Colombia context, the evaluation tested a number of key pathways and assumptions derived from the programme Theory of Change. This involved examining whether reported changes aligned with programme-supported activities and whether alternative explanations more plausibly accounted for observed outcomes. The analysis drew on evidence from KIIs, FGDs, programme documentation, stakeholder accounts, and institutional interviews, including external stakeholders, and assessed contribution claims in relation to the broader political, institutional, and security context shaping women's political participation

Table 13: Colombia – Contribution Analysis of Key Pathways

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
Democracy and Empowerment Schools, mentoring, and accompaniment strengthened women's confidence and political participation	Women reported increased confidence, stronger political knowledge, greater readiness to engage institutions, and continued political engagement during and after electoral periods.	Prior political experience, broader women's rights mobilisation, and learning through political participation itself may also have contributed to increased confidence and political engagement.	During KIIs and FGDs, participants consistently linked increased confidence, political clarity, and practical readiness to programme-supported schools, mentoring, and accompaniment. Respondents were specifically asked whether they had received comparable support elsewhere and generally did not identify other initiatives providing sustained accompaniment and political mentoring in similar ways. Participants also frequently stated that remaining politically engaged following electoral setbacks or periods of political violence would have

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
			been less likely without programme support. The consistency and specificity of these accounts suggest a plausible programme contribution to strengthening women's political participation and persistence.
Collective learning spaces and networking strengthened women's causes and informal support structures	Participants described ongoing peer exchange, reassurance, mutual learning, and continued contact across territories and political trajectories.	Existing women's movements, prior activist networks, and informal political relationships may also have contributed to networking and peer support independently of the programme.	During KIs and FGDs, participants repeatedly distinguished programme-supported spaces from broader activist or political networks by emphasising the continuity of engagement, structured exchange, and accompaniment they provided during electoral and high-risk periods. Respondents frequently linked sustained peer support and continued collaboration to relationships formed or strengthened through programme activities. The evidence therefore suggests a plausible programme contribution to strengthening women's networks and support structures.
Programme-supported accompaniment and political training contributed to women pursuing candidacy and leadership roles	Women reported pursuing candidacies, leadership roles, and advocacy engagement despite insecurity, electoral pressure, and resource constraints.	Electoral cycles, party recruitment dynamics, personal ambition, and broader feminist mobilisation may also have encouraged women to pursue political roles.	During KIs, women who pursued candidacies or leadership roles consistently linked these decisions to programme-supported mentoring, accompaniment, political training, and peer support. Participants were specifically asked whether they believed they would have pursued these opportunities without programme support, and many indicated that they would have been less likely to do so. While party recruitment dynamics and electoral cycles formed part of

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
			the broader political context, respondents frequently described party structures as reactive rather than actively supportive of women's advancement, with candidate selection and visibility continuing to be shaped by gatekeeping and unequal access to resources. Participants also did not identify other organisations providing comparable forms of sustained political accompaniment during electoral processes. The evidence therefore suggests that the programme plausibly played an important enabling role in supporting women to pursue candidacy and leadership opportunities.
Programme-supported engagement contributed to increased institutional recognition of violence against women in politics	Institutional actors and participants described greater recognition of political violence against women and emerging procedural responses within electoral and oversight institutions.	Broader national advocacy efforts, women's rights movements, legal reforms, and international pressure around violence against women in politics may also have contributed to increased institutional attention to the issue.	During KILs, institutional stakeholders, programme participants, and external stakeholders, including a representative from UN Women, frequently linked LEAP4Peace-supported technical engagement, convening, and dialogue to increased discussion and recognition of political violence within institutional settings. Respondents generally described the programme as contributing to coordination, technical exchange, and sustained engagement around the issue rather than acting independently of wider advocacy processes. External stakeholders also highlighted the programme's role in maintaining dialogue and connecting

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
			institutional and civil society actors working on violence against women in politics. The evidence therefore suggests a plausible programme contribution as part of a broader multi-actor pathway leading to increased institutional responsiveness.
Programme-supported advocacy and convening contributed to collaboration around violence against women in politics	Collaboration occurred through multi-actor platforms, institutional dialogue, and issue-based advocacy processes related to violence against women in politics.	Existing advocacy coalitions, national women's rights organisations, and ongoing legislative and policy processes may also have contributed to collaboration and policy engagement independently of the programme.	During KIIIs, stakeholders consistently described LEAP4Peace as contributing to coordination, technical dialogue, and convening around violence against women in politics. Respondents frequently referred to the programme's role in connecting actors, sustaining engagement, and supporting collective discussion during key advocacy processes. At the same time, participants recognised that observed policy developments reflected broader multi-actor processes rather than programme activities alone. The evidence therefore suggests a plausible programme contribution to strengthening collaboration and advocacy processes linked to violence against women in politics.
Programme-supported activities contributed to increased understanding among political and institutional actors of barriers affecting	Participants and institutional stakeholders reported greater recognition of political violence, exclusionary practices, and structural barriers affecting	Broader public debate, national gender equality frameworks, and wider advocacy efforts may also have contributed to increased awareness of these issues.	During KIIIs and FGDs, respondents frequently linked increased understanding of barriers affecting women's participation to programme-supported discussions, trainings, technical exchanges, and collective reflection spaces. Participants also generally described these

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
women's participation	women's political participation.		spaces as helping them interpret personal experiences within broader structural and political patterns. While broader gender equality debates also shaped awareness, the evidence suggests that the programme plausibly contributed to strengthening understanding and recognition of barriers affecting women's participation.

Sustainability of Outcomes

Evaluation Questions:

- Is it foreseen that the achievements of the programme can be maintained after the end of the programme? Which interventions or practices have contributed to this?
- Based on the achievements of the programme, what are recommendations for future programming?

Headline Findings

In Colombia, sustainability is reflected less in uninterrupted participation or consolidated reform than in lasting shifts in how women relate to political life and assess their place within it. Participants are likely to retain a sense of political connection, and entitlement to participate, allowing engagement to pause and resume in response to risk without abandoning political identity or longer-term aspiration. Rather than depending on continuous visibility or formal roles, sustainability rests on women's capacity to remain connected and ready to re-engage when conditions permit. Informal peer networks established through the programme show particular potential for persistence, as they are maintained through shared experience and ongoing practical need rather than formal structures.

Interview evidence suggests that several effects of LEAP4Peace in Colombia are likely to endure beyond the programme period, even in the absence of uninterrupted participation or consolidated institutional reform. Women are likely to retain a stronger sense of entitlement to political participation and clearer reference points for navigating risk, which shape how future engagement is

approached. Rather than disengaging entirely when conditions become unsafe, participants described being better positioned to pause, reassess, and re-enter political space when feasible. In a context where participation is routinely disrupted by insecurity, this capacity to modulate engagement without abandoning political trajectories constitutes a plausible and durable form of continuity.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“Even when you step back, you do not stop being political. You stay alert, you keep watching what happens, and you think about when and how to return.” (FGD participant, woman community leader)

Relational outcomes appear particularly likely to persist. Informal peer connections established through LEAP4Peace were described as ongoing sources of reassurance, and practical advice, and are expected to remain available beyond the life of the programme. Participants reported maintaining contact outside formal programme activities, including calling peers for advice during moments of political pressure and continuing exchanges through informal communication channels. Several women also described remaining politically active after electoral loss and continuing engagement in councils, parties, or advocacy spaces despite hostility, drawing on peer relationships formed through the programme. Although these networks are not formalised, their durability rests on continued interaction, and mutual reliance rather than on external facilitation, though the scale and frequency of interaction may decline over time without convening resources, particularly in remote territories where travel costs, security concerns, and limited connectivity constrain sustained engagement.

Institutional effects related to violence against women in politics show more uneven prospects. However, the concepts, definitions, and procedural reference points introduced through programme engagement, such as shared criteria for identifying political violence, awareness of reporting and referral routes, and familiarity with existing response mechanisms, are likely to continue informing practice among individual officials and institutions already engaged with these issues, even as consistency of application remains sensitive to political change and leadership turnover.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“What stays are the contacts. Knowing who to call, who understands what you are going through, that does not disappear when the workshops end.” (FGD participant, woman community leader)

Alignment with Feminist Principles

Evaluation Question:

- How well does the programme address key aspects of feminist programming, such as being gender transformative and/or responsive to the priorities of women, aware of intersectionality, and related power dynamics and conflict sensitivity?

Headline Finding

The LEAP4Peace programme in Colombia aligns with feminist principles by treating women's political participation as shaped by gendered power and violence rather than individual readiness. It recognises withdrawal from visibility as a rational response to harm, reframes participation as a democratic right, and centres women's lived experience and differentiated risk. While not transformative in dismantling entrenched power structures, the programme adopts a pragmatic feminist approach that sustains legitimacy, connection, and agency under conditions of ongoing threat.

In Colombia, LEAP4Peace aligns with feminist principles through how it understands women's political participation as shaped by gendered power relations, violence, and unequal protection, rather than by individual readiness or aspiration. This includes recognising that what appears as "readiness" is itself shaped by unequal access to education, resources, political networks, and prior opportunities to develop skills and experience. The programme starts from the recognition that political space is not neutral and that women's engagement is structured by threat and deeply embedded norms that continue to frame politics as a male domain. This framing is particularly relevant in territories where armed actors still influence public life and where participation can carry severe personal consequences. By acknowledging that stepping back from visible political roles may be a necessary response to harm, the programme avoids equating empowerment with constant presence or advancement. It also reflects a gender-transformative orientation in how it challenges symbolic exclusion, especially the association of politics with *politiquería* that led many women to self-exclude on moral or safety grounds. By reframing participation as a democratic right rather than a morally compromised activity, LEAP4Peace contests prevailing norms about who belongs in political space and under what conditions, even where formal power relations remain resistant to change.

The programme's feminist alignment is further reflected in how it centres lived experience and differentiated risk. Women's own interpretations are treated as valid sources of political knowledge, shaping how participation is understood and sustained. At the same time, the programme recognises that women do not experience political space in the same way. Age, access to resources, territorial location, and political positioning all shape exposure to harassment and violence, with young women, rural actors, and those challenging dominant party interests facing particular constraints. LEAP4Peace responds to these differences through flexible accompaniment and collective spaces that allow women to situate their experiences relationally rather than in isolation, although the limits of this approach are also visible in the more uneven reach. Violence against women in politics is addressed as a structural condition rather than an individual burden, and institutional engagement seeks to redistribute responsibility for recognition and response without assuming protection can be guaranteed. From a feminist perspective, the programme's contribution is therefore not transformative in the sense of rupturing entrenched power

relations, but in creating conditions that prevent further exclusion and attrition while modestly expanding the space in which women can contest norms, claim legitimacy, and remain positioned for future political openings.

3.3 Myanmar Case Study

Headline Finding

In Myanmar, LEAP4Peace was implemented through a period of extreme political rupture that closed formal avenues for women's political participation and made visibility itself a source of risk. The programme adapted by maintaining its participation objective while working through low-profile, collective, and transnational modalities that supported women to remain politically oriented and engaged despite repression. The final evaluation confirms the MTR's finding that outcomes were concentrated at the level of continuity of engagement rather than institutional influence, and extends it by documenting practice-level and policy-adjacent results that became clearer over time, including collective advocacy, localised engagement with de facto authorities and armed actors, and solidarity actions to support protection and the release of detained women. Overall, change in Myanmar is best understood as sustained agency through adaptation and alternative forms of participation in a fragmented governance environment where national policy reform was not a realistic pathway.

Context Background

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"The judiciary has been completely hijacked and is controlled by the military." (KII, woman political actor, ethnic minority)

"Since the coup, our party has not renewed its registration, so we cannot engage politically." (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador and political party member)

"Due to security challenges, my house was seized and confiscated twice, forcing me to relocate to a safer area since February 2021, I have not been able to actively participate in all activities." (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador and political actor, ethnic minority)

"Since the coup, opportunities for in-person events and networking have been limited, and we have had to maintain a low profile for security reasons." (KII, woman political actor)

Women's political participation in Myanmar has been shaped by a profound rupture in the country's political trajectory following the military coup of February 2021. Prior to the coup, Myanmar was undergoing a fragile and uneven political transition after a decade of partial liberalisation. The 2010 and 2015 elections opened limited space for democratic participation, and the civilian-led government initiated reforms including engagement in a nationwide peace process with Ethnic

Armed Organisations. However, progress remained uneven and exclusionary. Women's participation in formal political institutions and peace negotiations was limited, with fewer than one-sixth of parliamentary seats held by women and minimal representation in key peace architecture. The 2020 general elections, which resulted in a landslide victory for the National League for Democracy, were themselves marked by the disenfranchisement of minority groups, including the cancellation of voting in several ethnic areas. Civic space remained constrained through restrictive legislation and surveillance, limiting the ability of women's organisations to influence national-level processes. This pre-coup environment shaped programme strategies that sought to expand women's political participation and strengthen their role in peace negotiations while anticipating risks of backlash and instability that subsequently materialised.

The military takeover brought an abrupt end to this limited political opening and triggered a severe deterioration in Myanmar's political and security landscape. The coup overthrew the elected civilian government, dismantled formal governance and justice mechanisms, and plunged the country into protracted and fragmented conflict marked by widespread repression and armed resistance. Political parties were de-registered or rendered inactive, civic space narrowed sharply, and engagement with formal state institutions became both dangerous and largely meaningless for pro-democracy actors. Armed clashes between the military and resistance forces escalated across the country, leading to mass displacement and civilian casualties and creating a pervasive climate of insecurity and surveillance.

In this context, women's political participation and peacebuilding efforts no longer centre on engagement with a recognised state but instead take place through fragmented, informal, and frequently transnational structures. These include engagement with the National Unity Government and its affiliated consultative bodies, Ethnic Revolutionary Organisations, interim federal governance arrangements, and exile- or border-based advocacy platforms. Participation is often conducted remotely or clandestinely and shaped by acute security risks, digital surveillance, and the constant threat of arrest. Interviewees consistently described the absence of meaningful judicial protection, noting that the justice system is fully controlled by the military and inaccessible to women experiencing violence or intimidation.

The conflict has had a particularly severe impact on women and girls. Human rights organisations have documented widespread gender-based violence, including sexual violence committed by both state and non-state actors, alongside the collapse of protection mechanisms in conflict-affected areas. The space for civil society, including women-led organisations, has narrowed significantly, forcing many activists into hiding, displacement, or exile. At the same time, women have played a visible and sustained role in the resistance movement. From leading protests and civil disobedience campaigns to organising humanitarian assistance and contributing to emerging political alternatives, women have asserted political agency across both formal and informal spheres despite escalating risks.

Structural barriers to participation have intensified under post-coup conditions. Longstanding patriarchal norms continue to position women primarily as caregivers and supporters rather than

decision-makers, reinforcing both explicit and implicit exclusions from leadership roles across political, armed, and governance structures. The absence of institutional safeguards, combined with insecurity and displacement, further constrains sustained engagement. Participation is highly differentiated and shaped by intersecting factors including ethnicity, geography, displacement status, age, and political affiliation. While a small number of women have reached visible leadership positions within resistance and parallel governance structures, these cases are widely regarded as exceptions rather than indicators of systemic inclusion, often reflecting pre-existing privilege or access to influential networks.

Despite these constraints, the post-coup period has generated limited and precarious openings for collective action. The collapse of centralised authority and the emergence of parallel governance arrangements have created contested political spaces in which women's organisations and coalitions seek to influence the foundations of a future federal democratic system. Women's networks have played an active role in shaping debates on federalism and inclusion, advocating for gender-responsive provisions in draft charters, policy frameworks, and transitional governance documents developed by pro-democracy actors. Grassroots women's organisations continue to operate transnationally, sustaining advocacy efforts and engaging international policy processes in support of democratic transformation and gender justice.

Myanmar ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1997 but has not adopted a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The 2016–2021 National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women identified peace and security as a priority area, though implementation was limited and has since stalled. Women's participation in formal peace negotiations prior to the coup remained minimal, and representation in political institutions was low. However, parallel governance actors formed in opposition to military rule have articulated stronger formal commitments to gender equality, signalling a symbolic departure from earlier state practices even as implementation remains uncertain.

Interventions

LEAP4Peace in Myanmar was initially designed to support women's participation in formal political and peacebuilding structures, but was fundamentally adapted as these spaces closed. Implementation shifted towards sustaining women's political agency, collective organising, and advocacy through informal, remote, and transnational modalities, with a strong emphasis on continuity of engagement and risk mitigation.

Core Programme Activities

1. **Capacity development for women peacebuilders, women peace ambassadors, and political actors under repressive conditions.** LEAP4Peace provided targeted capacity development to women peacebuilders, women peace ambassadors, women human rights defenders, and politically active women, delivered through low-profile, remote, and/or

cross-border formats. Training focused on WPS, federalism, dialogue facilitation, legal awareness, and political analysis, alongside practical skills related to operating safely in a highly surveilled environment. Capacity development was framed not as preparation for formal office, but as support for continued political engagement under conditions of fragmentation, displacement, and risk.

2. **Sustained accompaniment, peer learning, and psychosocial support.** In recognition of the prolonged pressure faced by women activists following the coup, the programme placed particular emphasis on accompaniment rather than one-off training. This included peer learning spaces, regular dialogue sessions, and psychosocial support addressing stress and trauma. Accompaniment was designed to respond to women's evolving political trajectories, acknowledging that participation often fluctuated due to security incidents, displacement, or changing personal circumstances.
3. **Support to collective spaces and women-led networks across fragmented political landscapes.** LEAP4Peace supported the strengthening of women-led networks and collective platforms that brought together women from different ethnic, geographic, and political backgrounds. These included peace ambassador initiatives and broader coalition spaces that enabled coordination, information sharing, and joint reflection. Rather than formal alliances, these spaces functioned as flexible forums for mutual support and collective positioning, helping women remain politically connected despite fragmentation and isolation.
4. **Transnational and international advocacy to sustain visibility and influence.** Given the closure of domestic policy spaces, the programme supported women's organisations to engage in advocacy beyond Myanmar's borders. This included support for evidence generation, joint statements, and engagement with regional and international platforms linked to the WPS agenda. Advocacy aimed to maintain international attention on Myanmar, amplify women's perspectives on democratic futures and peace, and create channels through which women could influence emerging political alternatives despite exclusion from formal national processes.

Synthesis of Findings from the 2023 Mid-Term Review

In Myanmar, the 2023 Mid-Term Review found that progress was concentrated at the individual and relational level, with limited evidence of advancement along institutional or policy pathways. While participants demonstrated increased readiness to engage and, in some cases, heightened political ambition, these gains were not consistently translated into coordinated advocacy or sustained participation in peace-related decision-making. The review highlighted gaps in programme sequencing, noting that training was not systematically followed by technical accompaniment, or structured opportunities to apply learning, which limited consolidation of outcomes. Weak alignment between the Myanmar country Theory of Change and the programme-level framework further constrained outcome articulation, and engagement with power-holders remained minimal. As a result, the MTR concluded that while LEAP4Peace generated relevant and contextually appropriate gains, these outcomes remained uneven and weakly institutionalised, with few clear pathways towards durable political influence.

What the Final Evaluation Confirms and Extends

The final evaluation confirms the MTR's finding that outcomes in Myanmar were primarily characterised by continuity of political orientation rather than expansion of formal participation, reflecting the sustained closure of political space after the 2021 coup. Women remained engaged through low-profile, collective, and humanitarian forms of participation, and these patterns persisted over time rather than representing short-term adaptation. This overall reading was also broadly echoed by two external stakeholders interviewed for the final evaluation. A representative from the Heinrich Böll Foundation agreed that, in Myanmar's post-coup context, the programme's relevance lay less in pursuing formal institutional gains than in helping women remain politically connected, visible through collective channels, and able to contribute under conditions of acute repression. At the same time, the respondent emphasised that such gains were necessarily fragile, uneven, and highly dependent on security conditions and access to trusted networks. A representative from Deutsche Welle similarly concurred that LEAP4Peace had adapted credibly to the closure of political space, particularly by supporting collective voice, cross-border engagement, and low-profile forms of participation, while noting that these efforts could not realistically be expected to produce broader institutional or policy change inside Myanmar under current conditions.

The evaluation also extends the MTR by documenting a wider set of practice-level and policy-adjacent outcomes that became more visible later, including the relocation of political legitimacy into networks and coalitions, limited engagement with de facto authorities on women's protection and detention, and women's perspectives being reflected in joint advocacy statements and international materials. While these outcomes did not translate into domestic policy change and remained localised and contingent, they demonstrate primarily visibility, solidarity, and collective voice, alongside a small number of localised and situational instances of influence, that were not fully captured at mid-term.

How Change Unfolded

Headline Finding

Change in Myanmar unfolded through a reworking of how women understood and sustained political participation under repression. As formal roles and public visibility became unsafe or meaningless, women adapted by withdrawing from visible engagement while remaining politically oriented through quieter practices. Political agency was sustained through peer support, networks, humanitarian and community-based action, and, for some, transnational engagement, allowing women to preserve purpose and connection despite prolonged closure of formal political space. These adjustments allowed women to continue participating in political life in constrained ways, even as formal political space remained closed and risk levels stayed high.

Redefining Political Participation Under Repression

The period following the 2021 military coup marked a decisive break in how political engagement could be sustained in everyday life. What shifted was not women's political commitment, but the practical and symbolic conditions that had previously made participation intelligible. Engagement that had once taken place within constrained but recognisable political arenas was rapidly stripped of reference points as institutions were militarised, and visible affiliation became grounds for arrest. Interviewees described a sudden collapse of the frameworks through which they had previously understood their political roles. In this context, withdrawal from public activity was widely framed as a necessary response to threat rather than a retreat from politics. Women spoke of stepping back from visible positions, limiting communication, or suspending activity in order to assess risk and protect others, often while continuing to follow political developments closely.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"Even though I cannot speak out openly these days, I do not want to disappear. I want to remain on the political path, and I recognize the importance of building networks." (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador)

"For me, political involvement is no longer just about confronting opposition; it is about contributing to development in every way possible." (KII, woman political actor, ethnic minority group)

"Even if we cannot act publicly, we continue to exchange ideas and support each other quietly." (KII, civil society actor)

This initial withdrawal produced a period of uncertainty in the months following the 2021 coup, in which women struggled to locate themselves politically without the markers that had previously structured participation. Several interviewees described a sense of political disorientation linked to the loss of formal roles and organisational identities. What counted as political action became unclear, particularly for women whose earlier engagement had relied on recognised mandates or institutional legitimacy. Change began to unfold when women started to separate the idea of political participation from formal position and public presence. This shift did not happen immediately, but emerged over time as repression became prolonged and women remained connected through trusted peer relationships, including programme-supported dialogue and accompaniment spaces, where they continued to exchange information and analysis. Through these interactions, interviewees began to describe political agency as something that could persist even when it could not be publicly expressed. Participation came to be understood as remaining engaged in political thinking and support, rather than occupying visible roles.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"Now, I cannot participate in the same way, but I stay connected through discussions and sharing information with others." (KII, project participant)

As women adjusted their understanding of what it meant to be politically active, they also reassessed their own actions. Interviewees described a gradual re-evaluation of everyday practices

that had previously felt insufficient or insignificant. Sharing information discreetly, contributing to collective analysis, supporting others behind the scenes, or documenting events anonymously were increasingly recognised as meaningful ways of staying politically involved. This re-evaluation reduced the sense of failure associated with reduced visibility and allowed women to remain engaged without exposing themselves unnecessarily. Rather than aiming to return to pre-coup forms of participation, women described learning to engage selectively, choosing moments and modes of action that could be sustained over time. Engagement became more episodic and indirect, shaped by security considerations and personal circumstances, but remained oriented towards collective political goals.

Sustaining Agency Through Accompaniment and Peer Support

As women recalibrated what political participation could look like under conditions of repression, the ability to sustain engagement over time emerged as a central challenge. Interviewees consistently described the post-coup period as one of prolonged strain rather than acute crisis, marked by fear, exhaustion, displacement, and uncertainty about the future. In this context, political agency was not primarily undermined by a lack of motivation or commitment, but by isolation and attrition. Many women spoke of the cumulative effects of operating alone, without reference points or reassurance that their continued engagement still mattered. The risk was not only withdrawal from visible political roles, but gradual disengagement through fatigue and the erosion of political identity over time.

Change unfolded as women remained connected to others navigating similar conditions. Rather than functioning as sites of mobilisation or collective action in a conventional sense, peer spaces operated as mechanisms of political endurance. Interviewees described how regular contact with trusted peers helped stabilise their sense of political self, particularly when organisational identities or public platforms were no longer available. These interactions allowed women to test ideas, share assessments of risk, and make sense of rapidly shifting conditions. Importantly, they also provided a space in which uncertainty and fear could be articulated without being interpreted as weakness or failure. This collective processing helped women normalise episodic engagement and withdrawal as rational responses to repression, reducing the pressure to perform constant activity or visibility.

Over time, this peer-based accompaniment contributed to sustaining agency by anchoring political engagement in relationships rather than positions. Women described how staying connected to others enabled them to remain oriented towards collective political goals even during periods of reduced activity. Political participation was increasingly understood as something that could be paused and resumed, rather than something that required continuous presence. This reframing allowed women to navigate fluctuating levels of risk without severing their political ties entirely. Engagement took the form of discussion, quiet coordination, and shared analysis, rather than public leadership or formal representation. Through these processes, political agency became less individualised and less dependent on personal visibility, and more embedded in ongoing relational work.

This form of accompaniment also mitigated the psychological and political costs of repression. Interviewees emphasised that knowing others were still thinking and acting, even quietly, made it easier to remain engaged themselves. Peer support functioned as a counterweight to the isolating effects of surveillance and fragmentation, helping women resist the internalisation of withdrawal as defeat. While these spaces did not eliminate risk or restore formal opportunities for participation, they enabled women to sustain a sense of purpose and political relevance under conditions designed to erode both. In this sense, change unfolded not through escalation of action, but through the maintenance of political agency over time, supported by relationships that made continued engagement thinkable and legitimate.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“Without WoPA, I would not feel motivated to continue; the initiative has provided us with a safe space for women to engage.” (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador)

“Even with limited resources, this support enabled us to reconnect with like-minded women’s organisations and to share information and experiences with them.” (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador)

“This training is highly relevant to our needs because it enables us to connect with other groups and build networks of support.” (KII, woman political actor, ethnic minority group)

Collective Legitimacy Through Networks and Coalitions

As formal political mandates collapsed following the coup, many women interviewed described losing not only access to political space, but also the basis on which their participation had previously been recognised as legitimate. Party membership and organisational positions that had once conferred authority no longer provided either protection or standing, and in some cases became sources of risk. This produced uncertainty not only about how to act safely, but about whether it was still possible to act politically without an identifiable mandate, particularly when engaging beyond immediate communities or addressing issues framed as national in scope. Interviewees reflected on the difficulty of speaking or acting in the absence of institutional affiliation, noting that earlier markers of legitimacy could no longer be invoked to justify participation or to protect against challenge and delegitimisation.

Change unfolded as women increasingly located political legitimacy in collective rather than individual representation. Networks and coalitions enabled women to articulate political claims as part of a shared constituency, allowing engagement to continue even without formal authorisation or public visibility. Acting through collective platforms was described as conferring credibility grounded in aggregation and mutual recognition, rather than appointment or status. Through joint positions and shared advocacy, women were able to reconstruct a sense of mandate that did not depend on holding office or occupying recognised roles. Collective structures also redistributed responsibility and risk, enabling participation to be mediated according to security and capacity,

and allowing women facing higher exposure to contribute indirectly or anonymously. This did not eliminate risk or make public advocacy uniformly safe; rather, collective affiliation enabled women to mediate visibility and speak through umbrella positions, intermediaries, or delegated representatives, reducing individual exposure without removing danger. In a context marked by displacement and fragmentation, networks connected women inside and outside the country, sustaining political voice across disrupted communities. These collectives were largely cross-cutting rather than party-based, bringing together women from political parties, civil society organisations, ethnic structures, and exile platforms, and thereby substituting for institutional mandates that had collapsed. By relocating legitimacy from institutional position to collective recognition, these networks allowed women to continue engaging in agenda-setting and advocacy in an environment designed to strip them of both authority and standing.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“When we speak as a group, our voice carries more weight than when we speak as individuals.” (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador)

“For security reasons, some groups carry out activities under different names, but they are still connected to the same network.” (KII, woman political actor)

“Being part of a network allows us to continue engaging even when individuals cannot be visible.” (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador, ethnic minority group)

“We may not have formal positions anymore, but through the coalition we can still raise issues collectively.” (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador)

“Some women can act openly, others cannot, but the network allows everyone to contribute in different ways.” (KII, Woman Peace Ambassador)

Pivoting Political Agency Through Humanitarian Action

As formal political engagement became untenable following the coup, many women described redirecting their energies towards humanitarian and community-based responses to crisis. This shift was not framed by interviewees as a withdrawal from political engagement, but as a pragmatic and morally grounded adaptation to rapidly changing conditions. With livelihoods collapsing, and displacement increasing, humanitarian needs became immediate and visible, while overt political action carried extreme risk.

Importantly, across interviews with women peace ambassadors, CSO actors, and programme staff, this pivot was not described as apolitical. Rather, humanitarian work was understood as continuous with earlier commitments to social responsibility, albeit expressed through different means. Providing assistance or contributing to local development initiatives were seen as ways of maintaining political values under repression, even when explicit advocacy was not possible.

In this sense, humanitarian engagement functioned as a bridge between political participation and survival, enabling women to remain engaged in shaping community responses to crisis while avoiding direct confrontation with the regime. However, interviewees' accounts suggest that this work also carried political significance, as it preserved women's leadership and influence at community level, and maintained a foundation for future engagement should political space reopen.

At the same time, women were clear about the limits and risks of this shift. Humanitarian engagement did not replace political participation, nor did it resolve the structural exclusions created by the coup. Several interviewees noted the danger that women's contributions would be reframed as purely charitable or care-oriented, reinforcing gendered expectations and obscuring the political choices involved in sustaining communities under violence. Nonetheless, for many, humanitarian action represented a viable and meaningful way to continue exercising agency when other forms of participation were foreclosed. Change, in this pathway, unfolded through the redirection of political commitment into recovery-oriented action that was locally grounded, socially recognised, and capable of sustaining women's public roles under extreme constraint.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

"Due to the crisis, many people lost their livelihoods, so our work shifted towards providing basic support rather than political activities." (KII, civil society actor)

"In the current situation, doing humanitarian work is one of the few ways we can still serve our communities." (KII, woman political actor, ethnic minority group)

Transnational Advocacy and the Preservation of Political Voice

As domestic political space closed and public engagement became increasingly dangerous, some women described relocating elements of their political engagement beyond Myanmar's borders. This shift did not represent a wholesale move into international advocacy for all participants, but rather a differentiated pathway taken by women who had access to cross-border networks, digital infrastructure, language skills, and comparatively safer operating conditions, including exile-based or internationally connected actors. For many others, particularly those in highly securitised or rural settings, engagement remained locally grounded or shifted towards humanitarian and community-based roles, reflecting constraints and risk rather than strategic preference..

For women who were connected to cross-border networks, international and regional arenas offered one of the few remaining contexts in which collective positioning could be articulated openly. Interviewees emphasised that this was less about gaining influence abroad than about preserving the ability to speak at all, particularly on issues that could no longer be raised safely within the country. These transnational efforts were directed primarily towards international policy actors, donors, multilateral institutions, and advocacy networks, as well as diaspora communities, with the expectation that international visibility and pressure could indirectly shape political narratives

and accountability related to Myanmar. Participants did not describe these platforms as substitutes for domestic political engagement, but as provisional channels for maintaining political voice when national space was closed.

Change unfolded as women began to use transnational connections to maintain continuity between local experiences and broader political conversations. Participants described contributing information, analysis, and perspectives drawn from inside Myanmar to networks operating across borders, often through intermediaries or collective platforms. This allowed political voice to be projected outward without requiring individual visibility or public leadership. For some women, particularly those in exile, these spaces became primary sites of engagement; for others inside the country, they functioned as indirect channels through which local realities could still be articulated. In this sense, transnational advocacy operated as a form of political preservation, enabling women to remain connected to political discourse even as domestic avenues closed.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“When we cannot speak inside the country, it becomes important that our perspectives are shared through networks outside.” (KII, project participant)

Importantly, interviewees did not frame transnational engagement as a replacement for domestic political participation. Rather, it was described as provisional and constrained, shaped by access, language, security, and resources. Several participants noted the risk that international advocacy could become disconnected from local realities, particularly when those most affected by violence and displacement were least able to participate directly. At the same time, women emphasised the importance of maintaining links between those inside and outside the country, seeing this relational continuity as politically meaningful in its own right. Through these cross-border connections, women sought to ensure that political narratives about Myanmar did not become detached from lived experience, even when direct participation was impossible.

Across interviews, this pathway was characterised less by expansion of political opportunity than by containment of loss. Transnational advocacy allowed women to retain a degree of political voice under conditions designed to silence it, preserving continuity of engagement rather than generating new forms of power. Change therefore unfolded through relocation rather than transformation, with political voice sustained across borders when it could no longer be exercised openly at home.

Women Peace Ambassadors under Fragmented Governance

Under Myanmar’s fragmented political landscape, Women Peace Ambassadors (WoPAs) supported by NIMD Myanmar have continued to exercise locally grounded political influence despite the suspension of formal party activity and the deregistration of some political organisations. Their representative roles remain recognised within their communities, enabling them to act as intermediaries in situations where formal governance channels are absent or inaccessible. WoPAs reported negotiating, mediating, and facilitating referrals in cases linked to conscription pressures, local disputes, and gender-based violence. These functions positioned them as practical problem-

solvers and trusted actors within community-level governance arrangements shaped by de facto authorities and armed actors.

WoPAs also sustained political engagement through cascading trainings on women's leadership, gender equality, and Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Delivering these activities under the collective identity of "Women Peace Ambassadors" reduced individual exposure and helped mitigate security risks in a highly surveilled environment. This collective framing enabled continued public-facing engagement at a time when overt political affiliation could attract retaliation.

Two key effects emerged from this approach. First, women leaders were able to maintain active relationships with their constituencies despite post-coup political sensitivities. Although WPS themes remained central, issues related to democracy and governance were carefully integrated into broader community discussions, allowing political substance to be retained within socially legitimate formats. Second, the collective WoPA identity strengthened women's legitimacy and protection when engaging ethnic leaders and political party actors. Presenting themselves as a unified network, rather than as individually affiliated political figures, enhanced their standing and reduced contestation of their role, improving their ability to advocate for women's inclusion in local decision-making processes.

Advocacy directed at stakeholders inside Myanmar remained particularly significant. In a context where local authorities and armed actors exercise immediate decision-making power over security, protection, and community affairs, engagement at subnational level constituted a primary pathway for influence. Through sustained constituency relationships, mediation roles, and network-based legitimacy, WoPAs preserved women's political presence and representative function in settings where formal institutional participation was no longer viable.

Intersectionality and Differentiated Experiences

Evaluation Question:

- To what extent has the programme been effective in reaching the most marginalised rights holders?

Headline Findings

Women's political participation in Myanmar was unevenly constrained by intersecting factors including ethnicity, location, displacement, prior visibility, and care responsibilities. The programme's flexible and low-profile engagement approaches enabled some women to remain involved despite high risk, but structural inequalities related to displacement, economic precarity, and access to networks continued to shape who could participate and with what degree of influence.

Women's political participation in Myanmar is shaped by intersecting factors that condition both exposure to risk and access to political space following the coup. Interviewees' experiences differed markedly depending on ethnicity, geographic location, displacement status, organisational affiliation, and prior political visibility. Women from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly those in conflict-affected or peripheral areas, described operating in environments where militarisation, and long-standing marginalisation pre-dated the coup and intensified thereafter. For these women, political participation was shaped not only by gendered exclusion but also by ethnic hierarchies and differential access to protection and resources. Displacement further compounded these dynamics, with women in exile or internal displacement navigating fractured networks, loss of livelihood, and weakened ties to local constituencies, while those remaining inside the country faced acute surveillance and movement restrictions. Age and life stage also mattered, particularly where care responsibilities limited mobility or increased the cost of risk-taking. Across interviews, women with prior formal roles or higher visibility described greater immediate exposure following the coup, while those operating at community level or through informal structures experienced different constraints, including reduced reach and recognition. These intersecting factors meant that women did not experience political closure uniformly; instead, participation was unevenly constrained and differently recalibrated, depending on how gender interacted with ethnicity, location, displacement, and political positioning.

The programme responded to this differentiated landscape with a degree of flexibility, though not all forms of intersectional exclusion could be fully addressed. Interviewees described how the programme's emphasis on networks, peer engagement, and adaptable modes of participation created entry points for women facing different levels of risk and constraint. The use of low-profile, remote, and collective forms of engagement enabled participation by women who could not safely engage publicly or consistently, including those in displacement or operating in highly securitised contexts. Network-based approaches also facilitated connections across ethnic and geographic divides, allowing women with more limited access to formal platforms to engage indirectly through collective processes. At the same time, transcripts suggest that some structural inequalities remained difficult to overcome. Women with stronger prior networks and access to digital infrastructure were better positioned to remain engaged, while those facing severe displacement, economic precarity, or language barriers were less consistently reached. While the programme did not eliminate these disparities, it mitigated some of their effects by avoiding rigid participation models and by recognising episodic and indirect engagement as legitimate forms of involvement. In this way, the programme partially accommodated intersectional differences in women's experiences, even as deeper structural inequalities continued to shape who could participate, how, and with what degree of influence.

Programme Results

Evaluation Questions:

- What have been the main achievements on LTO1: Women are represented in decision-making roles for peacebuilding?

- What have been the main achievements on LTO2: Supportive policy environment for women's representation and participation in peacebuilding?
- Which of the programme interventions have been particularly effective in producing outcomes and impact? Which interventions have been least effective?
- Did the programme achieve outcomes and impacts that were not foreseen in the Theory of Change? Have there been any other unintended and unexpected effects?
- Were the assumptions of the TOC valid?

Headline Findings

The final evaluation confirms the MTR's assessment that outcomes in Myanmar were primarily characterised by continuity of political orientation rather than expansion of formal participation, reflecting the collapse of political space following the 2021 coup. Women sustained engagement through low-profile, collective, humanitarian, and, for a smaller number, cross-border activities, demonstrating resilience rather than progression towards formal roles. In addition, the evaluation identifies limited but significant policy-adjacent and practice-level outcomes, including collective advocacy, engagement with de facto authorities and ethnic armed groups, and mutual support to secure protection or release of detained women. While these outcomes did not translate into domestic policy change, they reflect constrained forms of influence and agency exercised under conditions of repression.

Assessment Against the Programme TOC

This table assesses progress against the programme's ToC in Myanmar, examining how intended outcomes evolved under conditions of severe political repression following the 2021 coup. It distinguishes between long-term and intermediate outcomes and evaluates the extent to which each pathway remained viable when formal political institutions collapsed and political space contracted sharply. The assessment draws on interview evidence, coalition accounts, and programme documentation to identify where progress was achieved, where it remained limited or informal, and where core assumptions of the ToC no longer held in practice.

Table 14: Myanmar – Assessment Against TOC

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Myanmar	Evidence base	Assessment
Long-term outcome	Women are represented in decision-making roles for peacebuilding	Formal decision-making pathways largely collapsed after the coup. Women did not gain representation in recognised institutions. Instead, some women sustained political roles indirectly through networks, community leadership, humanitarian coordination, and coalition-based agenda-setting. These preserved	KIIIs with participants; coalition and network accounts; transcripts on post-coup withdrawal from formal roles	No observable progress in formal representation; indirect continuity achieved

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Myanmar	Evidence base	Assessment
		presence but did not constitute formal representation.		
	Supportive policy environment for women's political participation exists and is strengthened	National policy influence was not feasible under military rule. Limited policy-adjacent effects occurred through collective advocacy, transnational engagement, and localised dialogue with de facto authorities and ethnic governance actors. Outcomes were informal, contingent, and not codified in law.	KIIs; examples of advocacy statements; transcripts on engagement with ethnic authorities and detention cases	Minimal progress in formal policy environment; limited informal responsiveness by de facto authorities
Inter-mediate outcome	Women's networks and collective platforms are strengthened	Women relied heavily on peer networks and coalitions to sustain political engagement, share information, coordinate positions, and maintain legitimacy after loss of formal mandates. Collective identity substituted for institutional affiliation. Networks functioned as political anchors under fragmentation.	KIIs across participants; repeated references to networks, coalitions, WoPA platforms	Achieved
	Political actors collaborate for inclusive political processes	Collaboration occurred primarily through women-led networks and coalitions rather than formal political platforms. Joint positioning and shared advocacy emerged, but structured cross-actor political processes were largely absent.	KIIs; coalition examples; joint advocacy references	Some progress (informal and collective rather than institutional)
	Women engage with decision-making actors and influence processes	Engagement with formal state actors was largely impossible. A smaller number of women engaged informally with de facto authorities, ethnic armed organisations, and interim governance actors on protection and local decision-making issues. Influence remained localised and relationship-dependent.	KIIs citing negotiations, mediation, protection and release cases	Some progress (localised and contingent)
	Women sustain political participation and leadership trajectories	Women withdrew from visible roles but remained politically oriented through episodic, low-profile, humanitarian, collective, and transnational engagement. Participation became adaptive rather than continuous. Political identity was preserved despite institutional collapse.	KIIs describing withdrawal, adaptation, continued engagement; peer support narratives	Achieved
	Civil society actors advocate for inclusive policy change	Collective advocacy persisted through joint statements, international materials, and cross-border	KIIs; advocacy documentation; references to international	Some progress (visibility without domestic uptake)

ToC level	Outcome statement	Progress observed in Myanmar	Evidence base	Assessment
		platforms. Advocacy maintained visibility of women's perspectives but did not translate into domestic policy reform.	engagement	
	Duty-bearers respond to women's protection and participation concerns	Junta-controlled institutions were unresponsive. Some de facto authorities and local power-holders responded informally to women's advocacy, including detention-related interventions and protection measures. Responses were discretionary rather than institutionalised.	KIIs describing negotiated releases and local interventions	Minimal progress
	Political space enables women's safe participation	Political space contracted severely. Women adapted participation modes to manage risk, including low-profile engagement, collective identity, remote work, and indirect action. Safety depended on avoidance rather than protection.	KIIs describing risk management and security adaptation	Does not hold (space closed; adaptation substituted)

Assessment of Theory of Change Assumptions

This table assesses progress against the programme's ToC in Myanmar, examining how intended outcomes evolved under conditions of severe political repression following the 2021 coup. It distinguishes between long-term and intermediate outcomes and evaluates the extent to which each pathway remained viable when formal political institutions collapsed and political space contracted sharply. The assessment draws on interview evidence, coalition accounts, and programme documentation to identify where progress was achieved, where it remained limited or informal, and where core assumptions of the ToC no longer held in practice.

Table 15: Myanmar – Assessment of Assumption Validity

Assumption	What happened in Myanmar	Evidence	Status
Women use strengthened skills and networks to advance their participation in politics	Women used skills and networks to remain politically oriented and engaged through low-profile, collective, humanitarian, and transnational forms of participation. Engagement advanced in adaptive and indirect ways rather than through formal political roles.	KIIs describing continued engagement, adaptation, network use, humanitarian pivot, and cross-border links	Holds (in adapted form)
Political actors accept women as leaders and remove informal barriers	Formal political leadership spaces contracted sharply after the coup. Patriarchal norms and militarised control continued to restrict women's leadership. Some women exercised influence through networks and community roles,	KIIs on repression, party deregistration, gender norms, and constrained leadership space	Does not hold

Assumption	What happened in Myanmar	Evidence	Status
	but barriers remained largely intact.		
Duty-bearers recognise and exercise responsibilities to promote women's participation	Junta-controlled state institutions were inaccessible and unresponsive. However, some de facto authorities and ethnic governance actors engaged informally on protection issues and local concerns raised by women's networks.	KIIs describing negotiations with ethnic authorities, detention cases, and local problem-solving	Partially holds (informal and local only)
National and international actors incorporate civil society input and promote inclusive policy-making	Domestic policy-making was largely closed. Some women's perspectives were reflected in joint advocacy statements and international materials through transnational engagement and coalition work.	KIIs on international advocacy, joint statements, cross-border platforms	Partially holds (internationally; not domestically)
Women have an interest in participating in political decision-making processes	Despite extreme repression, women remained politically oriented and sought ways to stay engaged, including through indirect, collective, and episodic participation.	KIIs describing continued commitment, political identity, and adaptive engagement	Holds
Political actors have incentives to enhance women's participation	Incentives for inclusion were weak. Militarised governance, survival priorities, and fragmented authority limited motivation to expand women's political roles. Some ethnic and local actors engaged pragmatically on specific issues.	KIIs on governance fragmentation, limited leverage, selective local engagement	Weakly holds
Political actors recognise the benefits of women's political participation	Recognition was uneven. Some non-state and community-level actors acknowledged women's roles in mediation, protection, and community support, but this did not translate into systematic inclusion.	KIIs referencing local engagement, mediation roles, and humanitarian leadership	Weakly holds
Like-minded CSOs see value in joint advocacy	Women's organisations and networks collaborated extensively through coalitions, peer platforms, and joint advocacy, including transnational engagement. Collective positioning became a key mechanism for legitimacy and voice.	KIIs describing coalition work, networks, joint statements, WoPA and platform references	Holds

Implications for a Realistic Theory of Change

- A realistic ToC cannot assume that participation and influence occur through formal state institutions. After the 2021 coup, state structures became inaccessible and dangerous, and authority fragmented across military, non-state, and de facto actors. Change therefore unfolds outside formal institutional pathways.
- Political participation under repression is episodic, adaptive, and risk-managed rather than continuous and role-based. It consists of staying politically connected and purposeful

through low-profile, collective, and indirect forms of engagement, including discreet coordination, network-based organising, humanitarian and community leadership, selective visibility, and cross-border voice. Interruption, invisibility, and substitution are normal expressions of agency, not failure.

- The programme's contribution lies in sustaining women's political orientation and legitimacy in the absence of formal pathways. Support focused on how participation could be exercised safely and meaningfully rather than expanding where it could occur, strengthening political judgement and risk assessment rather than preparing women for institutional advancement.
- Collective networks functioned as the core infrastructure of participation. They provided legitimacy, protection, reassurance, and political grounding when individual visibility carried high risk, while enabling women to contribute indirectly or anonymously according to exposure and capacity.
- Humanitarian and community-based engagement enabled women to maintain public roles, social relevance, and leadership without overt political exposure, preserving a foundation for future engagement if space reopens.
- Longer-term change is best understood as the preservation of political readiness rather than redistribution of power or institutional reform. Sustained connection through networks and practical engagement reduces the likelihood of complete disengagement and prevents political erasure.
- Limited engagement with transnational arenas and de facto authorities created occasional opportunities for recognition and protection, but remained fragile, uneven, and highly contingent on context.
- In a setting where withdrawal is often the safest and most rational response, sustaining women's capacity to remain politically oriented and prepared to act when conditions shift represents realistic and strategically meaningful progress.

Outcome Harvesting Verification

This table summarises the harvested outcomes identified by the programme and indicates the extent to which the evaluation was able to verify them. It shows the timing of each outcome, its verification status, and the basis on which verification was assessed, distinguishing between outcomes that were successfully verified and those that could only be partially confirmed.

Table 16_ Myanmar – Outcome Harvesting Verification

Harvested outcome	Timing	Verification status	Verification basis
Eight dialogue meetings (plus one additional session) were held with consistent participation and active engagement from Myanmar participants.	2023	Partially verified	Regular dialogue processes and strong engagement confirmed by respondents; exact number of meetings and attendance figures not independently verified.
Participants expressed strong de-	2023	Successfully verified	Multiple participants confirmed demand for sustained dialogue

Harvested outcome	Timing	Verifica- tion status	Verification basis
mand for continued dialogue platforms and valued them as spaces for collective discussion. Knowledge gained through NIMD support improved confidence and participation in state-level discussions.			and attributed improved participation and confidence to NIMD-supported learning.
Eight senior women leaders attended an in-person and hybrid meeting in Chiang Mai, strengthening trust, relationships, and mutual understanding.	2023	Successfully verified	Interviewees confirmed in-person and hybrid engagement that deepened trust and productive exchange among women leaders.
One woman ambassador led community mobilisation to secure electricity access for approximately 450 households through engagement with township and district authorities.	2023	Partially verified	Women leaders confirmed applying leadership and engagement skills with authorities; the specific number of households was not independently verified.
Women peace ambassadors from different parties and CSOs engaged in open dialogue, sharing challenges and strategies on WPS issues and providing peer support.	2023	Successfully verified	Respondents consistently described open exchanges, peer learning, and mutual encouragement across party and organisational lines.
Democracy training for prospective women ambassadors in Shan State was delivered, with strong engagement and discussions on political participation and gender issues.	2023	Partially verified	Training delivery, active participation, and thematic discussions confirmed; precise participant numbers not independently verified.
Coalition members participated in the ASEAN People's Forum and contributed to a joint statement on the Myanmar crisis reflecting their advocacy messages.	Sep 2023	Successfully verified	Interviewees confirmed ASEAN-level advocacy engagement and inclusion of coalition messaging in regional civil society statements.
The NUCC publicly announced its Gender Equality Position Paper drafted by GEN and WAC members.	Aug 2023	Successfully verified	Respondents confirmed coalition drafting role and recognition within national consultative processes.
GEN obtained ECOSOC Special Consultative Status, enabling fuller participation in UN policy processes.	Aug 2023	Successfully verified	Multiple respondents confirmed consultative status and expanded access to UN policy spaces.
Women peace ambassadors strengthened networks and trust through in-person and online engagement, improving collaboration across regions and organisations.	2023	Successfully verified	Participants described stronger networks, trust-building, and improved collaboration.
Women peace ambassadors facilitated community-level discussions and knowledge sharing on WPS and women's leadership.	2023	Successfully verified	Respondents described local awareness sessions, informal dialogues, and community engagement led by ambassadors.

Additional Outcomes Identified by the Evaluation

Beyond the results assessed against the formal ToC, the evaluation identified additional outcomes that reflect how women adapted political engagement under conditions of repression and institutional collapse. These changes relate primarily to how participation was practised, sustained, and reinterpreted in everyday contexts rather than to formal representation or policy processes. They provide further insight into the programme's influence on women's political agency, resilience, and collective functioning in a fragmented governance environment.

Table 17: Myanmar – Additional Outcomes Identified

Level	Result (What changed)	Verification and Strength of Evidence
Output level	Women developed practical strategies for managing political risk, including selective visibility, episodic engagement, and role adjustment in response to security conditions.	Consistently described in KIIs with women activists and peacebuilders explaining decisions to reduce exposure, step back from visible roles, and engage selectively. Evidence based on detailed participant narratives; moderate qualitative strength.
Output level	Women recognised discreet activities such as information-sharing, quiet coordination, and anonymous documentation as meaningful forms of political participation.	KIIs describe reframing everyday and low-visibility practices as legitimate political engagement. Evidence drawn from reflective participant accounts across multiple interviews; moderate qualitative strength.
Output level	Peer spaces functioned as mechanisms for political endurance, enabling women to process fear, uncertainty, and risk collectively.	KIIs consistently reference peer discussions, dialogue sessions, and network exchanges as sources of reassurance and collective sense-making. Evidence triangulated across respondents; moderate strength.
Intermediate outcome level	Political legitimacy shifted from individual mandates and formal roles towards collective recognition within networks and coalitions.	KIIs describe loss of formal roles and increased reliance on networks and coalitions for voice and mandate. Evidence consistent across interviews but perception-based; moderate strength.
Intermediate outcome level	Collective platforms enabled women to distribute risk and contribute indirectly or anonymously according to exposure and capacity.	KIIs provide examples of women engaging through collective identities, shared statements, and indirect participation where visibility posed risk. Evidence based on reported practices; moderate strength.
Intermediate outcome level	Humanitarian and community-based engagement sustained women's public roles and social relevance when overt political action was unsafe.	KIIs describe shifts toward humanitarian and community support as alternative forms of civic engagement. Evidence consistent across interviews

Contribution Analysis

To assess the plausibility of programme contributions within the Myanmar context, the evaluation tested a number of key pathways and assumptions derived from the programme Theory of

Change, while recognising that the coup fundamentally disrupted the institutional and political conditions under which the original ToC had been developed. The analysis examined whether observed forms of adaptive, collective, and low-profile political engagement aligned with programme-supported activities and whether alternative explanations more plausibly accounted for these outcomes. The assessment drew on evidence from KIIs, coalition accounts, advocacy materials, and programme documentation, and evaluated contribution claims in relation to the broader context of repression, displacement, fragmented authority, and the involvement of multiple actors supporting women's participation and protection after the coup.

Table 18: Myanmar - Assessment of Programme Contribution Across Key Pathways

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
Programme-supported reflection, peer exchange, and political education contributed to women adapting participation strategies under repression	Participants described adapting participation through selective visibility, episodic engagement, humanitarian work, remote coordination, and low-profile political activity following the coup.	Adaptation was also shaped by lived experience, survival needs, broader political repression, and support from other civil society and international actors providing training, protection, or political education after the coup.	During KIIs, participants frequently linked programme-supported reflection spaces, peer exchange, and political education to their ability to interpret risks, make strategic decisions about engagement, and remain politically active in adaptive ways. Respondents generally described the programme as helping structure and reinforce adaptation processes that were also shaped by broader contextual pressures rather than initiating adaptation independently. The evidence therefore suggests a plausible programme contribution to strengthening women's adaptive participation strategies under conditions of repression.
Programme-supported activities contributed to sustaining women's networks and collective functioning during fragmentation and displacement	Participants repeatedly described maintaining contact, exchanging information, coordinating positions, and relying on peer support through networks and coalition spaces during periods of displacement and insecurity.	Many peer relationships and coalitions pre-dated the programme and were also supported through other initiatives, funding streams, and longstanding civil society ties.	During KIIs, participants consistently linked continuity of engagement, regular exchange, and ongoing coordination to programme-supported spaces and activities. Respondents generally acknowledged that networks existed prior to the programme but emphasised that maintaining regular interaction and collective functioning became significantly more difficult after the coup. Participants frequently described the

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
			programme as helping sustain continuity, coordination, and exchange during a period of fragmentation and disruption. The evidence therefore suggests a plausible programme contribution to strengthening continuity and collective functioning within existing networks and coalitions.
Programme-supported collective spaces contributed to women sustaining political engagement and leadership trajectories in indirect and adaptive forms	Women remained politically oriented and engaged through humanitarian action, coalition work, transnational advocacy, community engagement, and low-profile political activity despite withdrawal from formal roles.	Continued engagement was also driven by personal political commitment, contextual necessity, and support from multiple civil society and international actors operating after the coup.	During KILs, participants frequently linked sustained engagement and continued political orientation to programme-supported peer networks, collective spaces, and accompaniment. Respondents were specifically asked whether they believed they would have remained connected and politically engaged without these forms of support, and many indicated that isolation, insecurity, and fragmentation would likely have reduced their ability to continue engagement. While continued participation was shaped by multiple factors, the programme plausibly contributed to helping women remain collectively connected and politically engaged during prolonged disruption.
Programme-supported advocacy and coordination contributed to transnational engagement and international advocacy	Women's organisations and coalitions engaged in joint advocacy, international platforms, cross-border engagement, and production of joint statements and advocacy materials.	Some organisations already had prior advocacy experience, international contacts, and relationships with external actors before programme implementation.	During KILs, participants frequently linked the continuity, coordination, and scale of transnational advocacy activities to programme-supported funding, facilitation, and coordination. Respondents generally acknowledged that some advocacy capacity and relationships pre-dated the programme, but described LEAP4Peace as helping sustain collective positioning, structure joint inputs, and maintain engagement with

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
			international actors during the post-coup period. The evidence therefore suggests a plausible programme contribution to strengthening transnational advocacy and coordination efforts.
Programme-supported activities contributed to women engaging with de facto authorities and local decision-making actors	Some participants described engagement with ethnic authorities, local power-holders, and de facto actors on protection concerns, detention cases, and local problem-solving.	Engagement with de facto authorities depended heavily on pre-existing local legitimacy, personal relationships, security conditions, and shifting local power dynamics outside programme control.	During KILs, participants generally described these forms of engagement as rooted primarily in local relationships, legitimacy, and contextual access rather than directly initiated by programme activities. At the same time, some respondents linked programme-supported confidence-building, networking, and peer exchange to increased preparedness for engaging in these interactions. The evidence therefore suggests that the programme may have indirectly supported women's readiness and confidence to engage local actors, although contribution to the engagement processes themselves appears more limited and context-dependent.
Programme-supported collective spaces contributed to sustaining women's sense of political identity and collective legitimacy	Participants repeatedly described networks, coalitions, and collective spaces as helping preserve political identity, legitimacy, and shared purpose following the collapse of formal institutions.	Continued political identity and commitment were also shaped by personal conviction, longstanding activism, and broader resistance dynamics following the coup.	During KILs, participants frequently described programme-supported collective spaces as important for maintaining connection, morale, mutual recognition, and a sense of collective political purpose during periods of isolation and repression. Respondents often linked these spaces to sustaining confidence and reducing political isolation. While political commitment clearly extended beyond the programme itself, the consistency of these accounts suggests a plausible programme contribution to sustaining collective political identity

Pathway/results chain tested	Evidence observed	Alternative explanations considered	Assessment of plausibility of programme contribution
			and legitimacy during institutional collapse.

Sustainability of Outcomes

Evaluation Questions:

- Is it foreseen that the achievements of the programme can be maintained after the end of the programme? Which interventions or practices have contributed to this?
- Based on the achievements of the programme, what are recommendations for future programming?

Headline Findings

The ways in which women adapted political participation under repression are likely to continue beyond the programme, as they are rooted in ongoing political realities rather than programme-specific support. Networks, collective action, humanitarian engagement, and dialogue with de facto authorities remain necessary and relevant forms of participation in the absence of formal political space.

In Myanmar, the changes observed through LEAP4Peace are likely to continue beyond the programme because they are embedded in how women navigate political life under repression, rather than being dependent on formal structures or time-bound activities. Interview evidence indicates that women's recalibrated understanding of political participation, their reliance on networks and peer relationships, and their engagement through humanitarian action, collective advocacy, and dialogue with de facto authorities have become established ways of operating in a constrained environment. These practices are not programme-specific adaptations, but responses to enduring political realities, and are therefore likely to persist as long as those conditions remain unchanged.

Relationships with networks and de facto authorities are likely to endure because they are embedded in political necessity, trust, and ongoing local governance dynamics rather than dependent on programme facilitation alone. Women described continuing to negotiate access and community-level concerns through these channels because few viable alternatives exist and because these relationships are integral to how communities function under fragmented authority. Similarly, collective advocacy and transnational engagement are likely to continue as essential mechanisms for maintaining political voice when domestic space remains closed. These forms of participation are sustained primarily by commitment, shared purpose, and political relevance rather than by external resources. While funding and facilitation can expand reach, coordination, and visibility, the underlying activities would likely continue even without programme support, albeit at

smaller scale and with greater personal burden. From an evaluative perspective, sustainability in Myanmar lies less in institutionalisation and more in the persistence of adaptive political practices that women view as necessary, legitimate, and inseparable from their roles in community and political life under repression.

Alignment with Feminist Principles

Evaluation Question:

- How well does the programme address key aspects of feminist programming, such as being gender transformative and/or responsive to the priorities of women, aware of intersectionality, and related power dynamics and conflict sensitivity?

Headline Findings

LEAP4Peace in Myanmar aligned closely with feminist principles by maintaining its participation objective while interpreting it flexibly under conditions of violent repression. Barriers to engagement were understood as structurally produced by militarised governance and patriarchal norms, rather than as deficits in women's capacity, and participation was assessed in ways that prioritised women's own judgements about risk and feasibility. The programme supported forms of engagement that allowed women to exercise agency in contested spaces, including collective advocacy, humanitarian action, and, in some cases, negotiation with de facto authorities and armed actors on issues affecting women's protection. While these engagements did not result in systemic shifts in power relations, they did involve women occupying roles that challenged gendered expectations and asserted political voice under conditions of high risk. Overall, feminist alignment in Myanmar is reflected in the programme's willingness to recognise and support these forms of situated, non-institutional challenge as meaningful political action.

Across the Myanmar case, LEAP4Peace showed strong alignment with feminist principles in how it interpreted and pursued its participation-related long-term outcomes under conditions of violent repression. Rather than discarding the objective of women's political participation following the 2021 coup, the programme maintained this outcome while applying a flexible and context-sensitive understanding of what participation could realistically entail. Barriers to engagement were not framed as deficits in women's skills or commitment, but as products of militarised governance, and entrenched patriarchal norms operating across both state and non-state structures. At the same time, these structural conditions also shaped unequal access to education, resources, and opportunities to build political skills and experience, meaning that differences in capacity were often themselves outcomes of systemic exclusion rather than independent causes of disengagement. This structural reading informed programme adaptation after the coup, particularly in how participation was assessed and supported. Interview evidence indicates that women were not encouraged to remain visible or continuously active where this would increase exposure to harm, nor were they measured against rigid indicators of continuity that no longer reflected political reality. Instead, the programme accepted intermittent, low-profile, and indirect engagement as valid expressions of participation, grounded in women's own assessments of risk. In this way,

LEAP4Peace upheld its participation objective while operationalising feminist commitments to agency and lived experience, treating women's judgement about what was possible and safe as central to both programme practice and evaluative interpretation.

The programme also aligned strongly with feminist principles related to collective action and relational change, while producing more uneven results on intersectionality and gender-transformative ambition. Interview evidence suggests that LEAP4Peace was attentive to political risk and did not place responsibility for safety solely on participants, particularly in a context where violence against women activists and leaders was widespread and unpredictable. The emphasis on peer exchange and networked engagement strengthened relational capacity and reduced isolation, reflecting a feminist understanding that change under repression is more likely to be sustained through solidarity than through individual advancement alone. Importantly, women's engagement did not merely preserve agency, but in some cases involved actively challenging gendered power relations in constrained and non-institutional ways, including negotiating with de facto authorities and armed actors on issues of protection and community-level decision-making. While these actions did not result in systemic or durable shifts in power structures, they nonetheless placed women in roles that contested prevailing gender norms and asserted political authority in high-risk environments. At the same time, the evaluation indicates that intersectional differences shaped who could remain engaged and how, with displacement, economic precarity, ethnicity, and access to digital infrastructure influencing participation. Although the programme accommodated these differences through flexible participation models, it could not fully overcome the structural inequalities that limited reach and depth for some groups. From a feminist evaluation perspective, LEAP4Peace performed well in aligning its practice with context, power, and risk, while pursuing gender-transformative intent in ways that were necessarily situational, uneven, and bounded by political realities beyond the programme's control.

3.4 UK / Global Advocacy Case Study

Evaluation Question

- How have members of the consortium contributed to wider Lobby and Advocacy efforts?

Headline Findings

The Final Evaluation finds that the advocacy component generated repeated engagement in regional and international policy spaces, produced substantive knowledge outputs, and facilitated access for partners to multilateral and bilateral actors. It confirms that WPS priorities from programme countries were articulated in international forums. However, while participation and agenda-setting efforts can be documented, robust and attributable evidence of sustained policy uptake or influence at the global level remains limited. The evaluation also notes a degree of disjointedness between global advocacy activities and country-level processes, with linkages not always clearly articulated or systematically followed through. Stronger tracking of audience reach, follow-up engagement and policy response would have been necessary to substantiate claims of deeper or longer-term influence.

Political and Policy Context

The global policy environment for WPS over the programme period was shaped by increasing geopolitical instability, intensifying armed conflicts and deepening fragmentation within multilateral institutions. While the normative framework for WPS remained formally intact, negotiations became more contested and politically sensitive, particularly where language on gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights, or protection of LGBTQI+ communities was concerned. In this context, the preservation of previously agreed language and standards often became as significant as advancing new commitments.

At the same time, the international landscape was marked by overlapping crises that reshaped political attention and funding priorities. Large-scale armed conflicts, protracted humanitarian emergencies, climate-related shocks and the long-term socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic placed extraordinary pressure on multilateral systems and national governments. Global military expenditure increased substantially, while humanitarian needs reached record levels. Development and peacebuilding budgets were frequently redirected to immediate crisis response, contributing to volatility and uncertainty in funding streams. Although rhetorical support for women's participation and locally led peacebuilding remained visible in international statements and strategies, financial commitments often lagged behind, with women-led organisations in conflict-affected contexts continuing to face chronic underfunding and limited access to core, flexible support.

The global civic space for gender equality advocacy also became more constrained and polarised. Organised anti-gender movements gained visibility and influence across multiple regions, affecting both domestic political debates and multilateral negotiations. Backlash against women's rights, feminist foreign policy agendas and inclusive interpretations of gender equality shaped the tone and content of international discussions. In parallel, women human rights defenders and civil society representatives engaging in peace and security processes faced reprisals, intimidation and security risks, including in UN-linked spaces. While global milestones and anniversaries related to UNSCR 1325 generated periodic attention, progress on women's meaningful participation in formal peace processes remained limited, and implementation of National Action Plans on WPS varied significantly in quality, resourcing and accountability.

Interventions

The Global Advocacy component focused on sustaining visibility for women's participation in peacebuilding, strengthening accountability for existing commitments, and connecting national experience to global policy processes. Implementation combined evidence generation, high-level engagement and strategic communications, while supporting consortium partners to engage more effectively in international advocacy spaces.

Core Programme Activities

- **Production and strategic use of global knowledge products.** The advocacy component centred on the development of global and country-level knowledge products on women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding and politics, which served as the backbone of international influencing efforts. These products synthesised learning from consortium countries and translated it into targeted, policy-relevant recommendations for governments, multilateral institutions and donors. They were conceived not as stand-alone research outputs but as practical advocacy tools, accompanied by structured launch events, translations, tailored dissemination strategies and follow-up engagement with priority stakeholders. Accessible summary formats and country-specific papers were developed to ensure that evidence could be used flexibly across different policy and advocacy contexts.
- **Convening and engagement with multilateral and government stakeholders.** A core activity was the convening of policy dialogues, side events and workshops linked to key WPS moments, alongside bilateral engagement with UK and Dutch officials and UN actors. These activities created opportunities for consortium partners and women peacebuilders to present evidence, share lived experience and articulate policy recommendations directly to decision-makers. The advocacy strategy prioritised actors with the capacity to shape global WPS commitments, funding allocations and policy frameworks, positioning the consortium as a credible interlocutor and reinforcing the link between national realities and international policy processes.
- **Capacity strengthening and accompaniment on international advocacy.** The component also included structured support to consortium partners to strengthen their engagement in international lobbying and advocacy. This combined technical briefings on WPS frameworks and mechanisms with practical guidance on advocacy strategy, messaging and positioning. Support was delivered through workshops, peer exchange and ongoing accompaniment, enabling partners to connect national-level work with global policy processes and to participate more confidently and strategically in international advocacy spaces.
- **Strategic communications and amplification.** Strategic communications were integrated as a core element of the advocacy approach. This included the development of a dedicated podcast and other communications outputs to amplify women peacebuilders' perspectives, disseminate key findings from knowledge products and sustain engagement beyond formal policy events. Communications activities were aligned with major advocacy moments and used to reinforce policy messaging, strengthen networks and maintain visibility for the consortium's work within global WPS debates.

Synthesis of Findings from the 2023 Mid-Term Review

The Mid-Term Review found that the GAPS-led international lobbying and advocacy component has added clear value to the LEAP4Peace consortium, particularly by strengthening partners' engagement with the WPS agenda and facilitating access to global policy spaces. GAPS provided technical expertise on UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions and supported partners' participation in international events. However, awareness and uptake of the product at national level were

limited, and its usefulness for influencing domestic advocacy processes was not clearly demonstrated. The MTR also identified important weaknesses in the strategic orientation of the global advocacy work. The initial global influencing strategy was described as brief and insufficiently linked to expected programme outcomes or to national-level advocacy efforts. While events created opportunities for exchange, external stakeholders noted that advocacy messages were often not formulated as clear, actionable recommendations directed at duty bearers. The report concluded that although collective advocacy was taking place, greater precision in messaging, stronger alignment between global and national work, and clearer pathways to policy influence are required in order to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the GAPS-led advocacy component.

What the Final Evaluation Confirms and Extends

The Final Evaluation broadly confirms the Mid-Term Review's assessment that, while participation and visibility in international policy spaces can be substantiated, evidence of concrete policy uptake and influence remains limited. There is documentation of engagement in international events, regional platforms and UN-linked processes, and indications that advocacy may have contributed to continued or renewed funding for women-led initiatives, including support channelled through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF). However, attribution is challenging given the multiplicity of actors involved and the absence of systematic evidence linking advocacy inputs directly to funding or policy decisions. The evaluation did not have access to systematic metrics on publication readership, podcast reach, audience profile, policy citations, or structured follow-up with international duty bearers. For example, while GAPS reporting describes the *Mind the GAPS: A Women, Peace and Security Podcast* as "well received," notes "positive feedback," refers to a "growing audience," and highlights certain episodes as the "most listened to," these claims are presented narratively and are not accompanied by concrete analytics or comparable data over time.

As a result, while visibility and access to global forums can be substantiated, the depth of engagement and the degree of uptake by targeted actors remain difficult to assess. This challenge is compounded by the absence of a clearly articulated Theory of Change for the advocacy component, setting out defined influence pathways and expected policy outcomes. The specific added value of the GAPS-led global lobbying strategy, beyond convening and participation, therefore continues to be difficult to evidence in a robust and attributable manner. It is important to note, however, that the global advocacy stream represented a relatively small proportion of the overall programme budget, and that documenting causal links between advocacy efforts and policy change is widely recognised as methodologically challenging.

Colombia

In Colombia, reported links between the global advocacy component and national-level policy engagement relate primarily to the National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security. GAPS and NIMD Colombia report that support was provided to strengthen civil society participation in the NAP consultation process, including convening and formulating recommendations for

civil society engagement. According to reporting, this contributed to raising the profile of NIMD Colombia within national WPS discussions.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“...we didn’t expect to end up being involved in the launch and to provide direct input to the Action Plan... that was really nice.” (KII, civil society representative)

However, despite repeated attempts, the evaluators were not able to interview additional CSOs directly involved in the NAP consultation process to further triangulate these claims or gather further independent evidence of influence. As such, while there are indications of enhanced positioning and visibility, robust evidence of attributable policy influence through the global advocacy stream in Colombia remains limited.

Beyond the NAP process, evidence of direct global policy influence linked to Colombia remains limited. While there is mention of an oral update to the British Parliament calling for Colombia to be added as a UK focus country for NAP support, echoing GAPS’ advocacy priorities, the evaluation concludes that it is unclear whether LEAP4Peace directly influenced this decision.

Myanmar

A. Advocacy through NIMD Myanmar-supported actors

Interviews with advocacy focal points connected to NIMD Myanmar indicate that programme-supported engagement contributed to policy-adjacent influence within emerging governance structures and collective advocacy platforms operating outside the formal state. Respondents described sustained involvement in constitution drafting processes, party policy development, and consultative governance forums involving pro-democracy actors, ethnic political organisations and civil society groups. Women’s advocacy actors supported the development of gender policy frameworks within their parties and organisations, promoted minimum participation thresholds for women in leadership structures, and advocated for women’s inclusion across political parties, ethnic resistance organisations, consultative mechanisms and civil society platforms.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“As we are working to establish territorial control with our own administration, I have consistently advocated for the inclusion of women’s roles in this process.” (Advocacy focal point engaging with EROs)

“As a committee member in Shan State, I advocated for the policy of 30% women’s participation.” (Advocacy focal point engaging with EROs)

Interviewees emphasised that advocacy extended beyond document development to continued engagement aimed at influencing the practices, norms and behaviour of political actors and powerholders, positioning women’s organisations as technical and strategic contributors rather than

symbolic participants. Programme-linked advocacy was also associated with efforts to integrate gender-sensitive provisions into emerging federal discussions, governance processes and constitutional debates. Respondents described participation in joint forums and coalition platforms bringing together pro-democracy actors, ethnic political organisations and civil society groups, where women's advocates engaged as resource actors and contributors on equality provisions, governance design and institutional development. Although these processes did not constitute formal policy reform in a conventional state setting, they represented incremental influence within alternative and transitional governance arrangements that currently shape political authority and agenda-setting in Myanmar.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“Although our party previously had no gender policy, it is now in the drafting stage. I personally advocated and contributed to discussions that pushed this forward.” (Advocacy focal point, political chairperson)

Advocacy engagement was further linked to service coordination and protection-related work, including referral mechanisms for survivors of violence, legal support initiatives, and efforts to address the needs of internally displaced women and vulnerable communities. Coalition platforms strengthened coordination across organisations and facilitated knowledge-sharing, joint messaging and mutual support among women leaders operating in constrained political environments. Advocacy was also associated with shifts in perceptions of women's legitimacy in peacebuilding and governance arenas. Interviewees described how women's involvement in discussions on constitutional development, political representation, community governance and mediation challenged prevailing norms that confined women to social or community roles. Women's visible participation in leadership, facilitation and negotiation roles was reported to strengthen respect for women's expertise among political actors and ethnic organisations, even where recognition was not always publicly expressed. Respondents consistently framed these outcomes as the result of sustained collective advocacy within a broader pro-democracy movement, with programme support reinforcing coalition capacity, coordination, confidence and technical skills rather than acting as a standalone driver of change.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“Over time, people began to accept this perspective, and EROs also came to understand the importance of women's involvement.” (Advocacy focal point engaging with EROs)

B. Advocacy through GEN-supported actors

Interviews with advocacy focal points connected to GEN highlight contributions to structured policy processes and institutional dialogue within alternative governance frameworks. Respondents described involvement in drafting and formulation of a Women, Peace and Security framework endorsed by the NUCC in 2024, as well as contributions to strategic planning processes within

the National Unity Government. Advocacy actors participated in Women, Peace and Security dialogue series involving women's civil society organisations, parliamentary networks, and interim governance councils, through which policy gaps were identified and recommendations developed. These recommendations were subsequently presented in diplomatic briefings to international stakeholders, reflecting engagement across policy development and advocacy interfaces. Respondents emphasised that these processes helped embed gender perspectives into evolving governance agendas, even where implementation remained uncertain.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“WAC members also serve in representative roles within the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), ensuring that grassroots voices are carried into national-level coordination platforms.” (Advocacy focal point, WAC volunteer)

GEN-linked advocacy was also associated with strengthening gender policy integration within governance processes. Interviewees described engagement in drafting gender equality position papers aligned with provisions in the Federal Democracy Charter, including support for women's participation quotas and structured policy commitments. Advocacy actors reported conducting gender and CEDAW trainings for NUCC members, which were perceived to shift institutional understanding from symbolic policy acceptance toward deeper recognition of gender integration as a governance requirement. Coalition-based approaches were central to this work. Respondents highlighted alliance structures linking women's organisations, ethnic networks, and civil society platforms, enabling coordinated advocacy across local, regional, and international arenas. Alliance members supported young women's leadership development and facilitated participation in regional and global forums, including ASEAN-related processes, expanding women's visibility and engagement in policy dialogue spaces beyond national constraints.

Quotes from the Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

“WAC was involved in drafting and formulating core group of WPS framework, which was endorsed by the NUCC in 2024.” (Advocacy focal point, WAC advisor)

“Women CSOs, the Karenni State Interim Consultative Council (KIEC), and MWPN convened to hold a series of WPS dialogues. Through these dialogues, we identified gaps and developed recommendations...” (Advocacy focal point, WAC advisor)

“We are now able to directly present realtime situations during the UN's WPS week, which has strengthened international support...” (Advocacy focal point, WAC volunteer)

Advocacy engagement also included interaction with international stakeholders and multilateral actors. Respondents reported engagement with UN Women, the UN Special Rapporteur, and international policymakers, as well as coordinated messaging on recognition of the National Unity Government, accountability mechanisms, and support for women's rights organisations and women human rights defenders. Advocacy aimed to shape international responses and ensure

Myanmar-related positions reflected gender and Women, Peace and Security priorities articulated by women’s coalitions. At the same time, interviewees noted that outcomes remained constrained by limited political openings, security risks, and resource challenges. Programme support was viewed as strengthening coordination platforms and advocacy coherence, while broader political change remained dependent on structural and geopolitical factors beyond programme control.

Burundi

Contributions to national-level policy discussions were not possible in Burundi due to the closed political environment and shrinking civic space, which significantly limited opportunities for civil society engagement with national authorities. Structural constraints limited both direct policy dialogue and broader participation in national governance processes, reducing the scope for advocacy engagement at the domestic level.

In addition to these contextual barriers, collaboration with the Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLTP) proved more challenging for GAPS than partnerships in other countries. While coordination was maintained, partners described a degree of misalignment in the understanding of core concepts underpinning the programme. In particular, interpretations of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and of gender were described as narrower in scope than those applied across the wider consortium, creating differences in framing, priorities, and approaches to advocacy. These conceptual differences limited the extent to which advocacy objectives, messaging, and areas of focus could be jointly developed and pursued, and contributed to a more fragmented collaboration than observed in other country partnerships.

Language barriers were reported to be pronounced, as few stakeholders spoke English, and translation costs had not been budgeted within the programme. This created additional coordination demands on NIMD staff and constrained more consistent integration of Burundi-based experience into the global advocacy component. Limited shared working language, combined with differing conceptual frameworks, also made it more difficult for GAPS to develop a detailed understanding of BLTP’s work and areas of comparative strength. As a result, identifying and advancing advocacy opportunities grounded in Burundi-based experience proved more constrained than in other contexts, particularly when compared to collaboration with partners in Colombia and Myanmar, where conceptual alignment and communication channels were stronger. Greater alignment on core concepts and shared advocacy framing across partners would support more coherent collaboration and strengthen future advocacy outcomes.

Synthesis of Observed and Reported Results

Table 19: Global Advocacy – Reported Results

Level	Result (What changed)
Output level	Global knowledge products (one global report, three country papers and a pod-

Level	Result (What changed)
	cast series) were produced and disseminated, consolidating cross-country learning on women's participation in peacebuilding and political processes.
	Consortium partners accessed high-level bilateral and multilateral advocacy spaces, including UN-adjacent fora and direct engagement with UK and Dutch government stakeholders.
	Collaboration between GAPS and country partners (particularly in Colombia and Myanmar) enabled joint articulation of policy messages, although evidence of sustained lobbying and advocacy capacity strengthening was limited and uneven.
Intermediate outcome level	Women's participation and WPS priorities from the three focus countries were elevated in international advocacy spaces, increasing agenda visibility even where domestic policy uptake was not feasible.
	Advocacy engagement aligned with and may have contributed to policy-adjacent developments, including parliamentary discussions on NAP focus countries and the reported renewal of UK funding to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, although attribution remains based on second-hand evidence.
	Channels were created through which country-level evidence informed donor narratives and multilateral discussions, partially strengthening the linkage between implementation experience and global policy discourse.
Longer-term outcome level	No independently verified evidence of sustained policy reform or structural shifts in national WPS implementation attributable to the global advocacy component was identified during the evaluation period.

4. Cross-Cutting Findings

This chapter synthesises cross-cutting findings in relation to the evaluation questions on relevance, effectiveness, partnership collaboration, and project design. It brings together evidence across the three country contexts to assess how the programme responded to different political environments, how far it achieved its intended outcomes, how collaboration within the consortium and with external actors functioned in practice, and what lessons can inform future programming. Rather than repeating country-level findings, the chapter draws out comparative patterns and structural factors that shaped results across contexts.

4.1 Relevance

Evaluation Questions:

- How appropriate were the programme interventions and ensuing adaptations in achieving the desired outcomes and impact?
- To what extent did the programme target the right audiences and populations to achieve its intended outcomes?

Relevance Through Contextual Adaptation

The relevance of LEAP4Peace across the three country contexts derived from its capacity to adjust interventions to the specific constraints shaping women's political participation in each setting, rather than from the uniform application of a standard participation model. In Burundi, where authoritarian consolidation and economic dependency made overt political organising both risky and inaccessible, the programme responded by anchoring participation in economically and socially legitimate spaces that reduced material dependence and political exposure, allowing women to remain engaged without visible confrontation. In Colombia, where formal democratic guarantees coexist with persistent territorial violence and informal power exercised by armed actors and party gatekeepers, relevance lay in combining political education with accompaniment and peer support that reflected the episodic and risk-laden nature of participation, particularly during electoral periods and in contested territories. In Myanmar, following the military coup and the collapse of civic and institutional space, the programme's relevance depended on abandoning assumptions of domestic political engagement altogether and reorienting support towards safety, continuity of networks, and exile-based and international advocacy. Across contexts, relevance was therefore not a function of expanding participation per se, but of aligning support with the political, economic, and security conditions that determine whether participation is possible in the first place.

Applicability of the Programme Theory of Change

The Mid-Term Review identified challenges in the coherence and feasibility of applying the programme-level ToC uniformly across the three country contexts, particularly in relation to alignment between the overarching ToC and country-level frameworks. While the programme ToC was assessed as conceptually sound and logically sequenced, the MTR found that Colombia's country ToC was the most complete and coherent in relation to programme pathways and intermediate outcomes, allowing contribution to be plausibly assessed within the programme framework. In contrast, the Burundi and Myanmar country ToCs reflected partial coverage of programme pathways and outcomes, making it difficult to map results to the programme-level ToC. In Burundi, this was most evident in the prominence of economic empowerment strategies that addressed a binding constraint on participation but were not captured within the programme ToC. In Myanmar, the post-coup context necessitated significant adaptation of objectives and activities, further complicating alignment with the original causal framework.

The final evaluation builds on these findings by showing that the observed misalignment was not primarily a technical design issue to be resolved through tighter ToC harmonisation, but a structural feature of operating across markedly different political environments. In practice, relevance and effectiveness were achieved where country teams adapted beyond programme-level assumptions in response to authoritarian constraint, violent repression, or institutional collapse. This suggests that the challenge lay less in the execution of the ToC than in the premise that a single causal framework could meaningfully encompass democratic, authoritarian, and post-coup contexts. As a lesson, the evaluation points to the value of explicitly differentiated or modular Theories

of Change in multi-country programmes, enabling distinct pathways of contribution to be articulated and assessed without treating context-driven divergence as underperformance.

Targeting of Audiences and Populations

Across the three country contexts, the programme broadly targeted constituencies that were relevant to its intended outcomes, but the degree to which this targeting enabled progress varied significantly depending on political conditions and access to power. In all contexts, LEAP4Peace prioritised women who were already politically engaged or adjacent to political processes, including aspiring candidates, women within political parties, and women active in civil society and advocacy networks. This focus was appropriate given the programme's objectives and the risks associated with wider mobilisation in constrained environments. In Colombia, where institutional access remained possible, targeting women political actors alongside selected duty bearers and institutional allies created credible entry points for influence and policy engagement. In Burundi and Myanmar, by contrast, the programme's emphasis on women participants was appropriate for safety and feasibility reasons, but targeting of decision-makers and power-holders was necessarily limited, reducing the scope for institutional or structural change.

At the same time, the evaluation suggests that the programme's targeting implicitly reflected a trade-off between reach, safety, and influence. In Burundi, targeting women through economically and socially legitimate structures enabled participation under authoritarian constraint, but limited engagement with actors able to effect formal change. In Myanmar, the post-coup environment sharply constrained who could be safely targeted, resulting in a necessary shift towards networks, and international advocacy constituencies. Across contexts, the programme's focus on women already connected to political or civic life supported depth and continuity, but constrained inclusion of more marginalised groups and limited direct engagement with male-dominated centres of power. This indicates that targeting choices were largely appropriate to context, but that outcomes related to institutional transformation were structurally bounded by who it was possible, rather than desirable, to engage.

Contribution to Local Agendas and Priorities

Evaluation Question

- To what extent has the consortium facilitated exchange, collaboration and localised leadership amongst its members?

Evidence from interviews across all three country contexts indicates that LEAP4Peace aligned with local agendas and priorities insofar as participants recognised programme activities as responding to constraints and objectives they already considered politically salient. In Colombia, women repeatedly described the programme as relevant because it addressed the practical and political challenges they faced in electoral and institutional settings, particularly exposure to political violence, and lack of guidance on navigating formal decision-making spaces. Interviewees

emphasised that training and accompaniment were useful not because they redirected their political goals, but because they helped them pursue agendas they were already committed to, including participation in municipal councils, policy oversight, and advocacy on issues affecting youth and women at local level. Several respondents explicitly linked programme support to their ability to remain engaged despite pressure, suggesting alignment with lived priorities around safety and endurance rather than abstract policy influence

In Burundi, interview testimonies point to alignment of a different nature. Women consistently identified economic insecurity as primary constraint on political engagement, and described programme support to VSLAs, cross-party interaction, and low-visibility leadership as directly addressing their realities. Rather than framing political participation in terms of formal representation or policy change, respondents emphasised the importance of financial autonomy and the ability to remain politically connected without attracting sanction. The programme's contribution aligned with these priorities by supporting strategies women themselves viewed as viable under authoritarian conditions, even as such strategies sat outside formal national agendas or legislative processes.

In Myanmar, alignment is most clearly evidenced by the programme's post-coup reorientation, which mirrors the priorities articulated by women activists and advocates in interviews. Respondents described a decisive shift away from institutional participation towards survival, network preservation, and international advocacy following the military takeover, and repeatedly stressed that continued engagement within domestic political structures was unsafe or meaningless. Programme support was described as relevant because it facilitated collective advocacy engagement with the NUG and ethnic armed organisations, and international platforms, reflecting women's own assessment that dismantling military rule and maintaining feminist political voice constituted the most urgent priorities. Interviewees explicitly cautioned against support that assumed electoral or party-based participation under these conditions, reinforcing that alignment depended on recognising the political rupture created by the coup rather than maintaining pre-existing programme logics.

Alignment with Other Actors and Themes

Evaluation Question:

- To what extent were the interventions compatible with the interventions by other partnerships and actors active on similar themes in the same context?

Colombia. Interview evidence indicates that the programme operated within an ecosystem of actors working on women's political participation, WPS, and violence against women in politics. Participants and institutional stakeholders referred to coordination with women's organisations, local authorities, and national advocacy platforms, particularly in relation to the National Action Plan process and institutional responses to political violence. The programme's activities appear to have complemented existing civil society and institutional efforts rather than duplicating them, contributing technical input, convening support, and continuity across processes that involved

multiple actors. At the same time, evidence on the depth and structure of this alignment is limited. Interviews suggest thematic complementarity and occasional collaboration, but provide little detail on formal coordination mechanisms, division of labour, or joint planning arrangements with other implementing organisations.

Myanmar. Interviewees consistently described operating within dense networks of women's organisations, coalitions, and advocacy alliances working on WPS, federalism, protection, and gender equality. Programme-supported actors engaged through collective platforms rather than standalone initiatives, indicating alignment with broader civil society efforts in a highly fragmented political environment. Several respondents also noted receiving complementary funding from other donors alongside programme support. However, no further detail was provided on the nature, scope, or objectives of these additional programmes. This limited disclosure likely reflects the sensitivity of operating under conditions of repression, where financial flows, partnerships, and organisational affiliations can carry security risks. As a result, while alignment and complementarity with other actors is evident at the level of networks and shared agendas, the extent of operational coordination and programme integration cannot be fully assessed.

Burundi. Evidence from interviews and focus groups suggests that the programme engaged with an existing landscape of civil society organisations and political actors working on women's participation and community-level engagement. Participants referred to interactions with political parties, local associations, and women's groups, and programme modalities such as VSLAs and dialogue platforms operated within socially recognised community structures. This indicates contextual alignment and embeddedness rather than parallel implementation. However, there is limited explicit evidence of structured coordination with other donor-funded programmes or formal multi-actor initiatives on similar themes.

4.2 Effectiveness

Cross-Case Synthesis: Achievements on LTO1

Across the three country contexts, LEAP4Peace contributed to women's representation in decision-making roles for peacebuilding in ways that were uneven and often indirect, reflecting structural constraints rather than programme ambition. In Colombia, achievements on LTO1 were most visible in formal and semi-formal decision-making spaces. Women supported through the programme entered or sustained roles in municipal councils, political parties, and local policy processes, and several interviewees described increased confidence and legitimacy in exercising these roles, particularly in environments marked by political violence and gender-based intimidation.

In Burundi and Myanmar, achievements related to LTO1 took different forms, shaped by authoritarianism and repression. In Burundi, women's representation in formal decision-making remained highly constrained, but the programme contributed to sustaining women's political presence through cross-party networks, economically grounded leadership, and collective spaces that enabled women to continue engaging despite fear and material dependency. Representation in

this context was less about occupying formal roles and more about maintaining political agency and recognition within party and community structures. In Myanmar, following the military coup, representation within domestic decision-making spaces became largely untenable. Programme achievements instead lay in enabling women to exercise political influence through alternative arenas, including advocacy with the National Unity Government, ethnic organisations, and international platforms, as well as through sustained constituency engagement and locally embedded leadership. Interview evidence indicates that women maintained political legitimacy by remaining connected to communities, networks, and collective platforms, preserving their representative role through trust, dialogue, and visible contribution despite the collapse of formal institutions. Women's collective voice and technical contributions to peace and WPS frameworks were strengthened, even as formal representation within the state was no longer possible.

Cross-Case Synthesis: Achievements on LTO2

Across the three country contexts, LEAP4Peace contributed to a more supportive policy environment for women's representation and participation in peacebuilding in uneven and context-specific ways, shaped by the degree of institutional openness and political authority. In Colombia, achievements on LTO2 were most tangible within formal and semi-formal policy spaces. The programme supported engagement with electoral authorities, local governments, and policy discussions related to violence against women in politics and women's political participation. Interview and document evidence indicates that these efforts helped reinforce existing policy commitments, improve awareness of gendered political violence among duty bearers, and legitimise women's claims within recognised governance frameworks. While these contributions did not fundamentally alter entrenched party dynamics or power relations, they strengthened the visibility and salience of women's participation within policy debates that already had institutional traction.

In Burundi, the scope for influencing a formal policy environment was significantly constrained by authoritarian governance and centralised party control. Under these conditions, achievements related to LTO2 were limited and indirect. Rather than contributing to national policy reform, the programme supported normative shifts at the level of parties, communities, and women's political networks, including greater acceptance of women's leadership, increased cross-party interaction, and the normalisation of women's collective political action. These changes did not translate into a demonstrably more supportive formal policy environment, but they contributed to sustaining informal norms and practices that enable women's participation within tightly controlled political space.

In Myanmar, the military coup fundamentally disrupted any meaningful notion of a domestic policy environment supportive of women's participation. Following the collapse of formal governance structures, programme achievements related to LTO2 were realised largely outside the state. The programme contributed to the development and promotion of alternative policy frameworks through engagement with the National Unity Government, ethnic governance structures, and international actors. Interview evidence highlights women's substantive involvement in drafting and advocating for WPS and gender equality frameworks, as well as in shaping international advocacy positions. While these efforts did not influence state policy under military rule, they strengthened

women's role in articulating political alternatives and preserving policy commitments relevant to a future political settlement.

Effectiveness in Reaching the Most Marginalised Rights Holders

The evaluation finds that LEAP4Peace had mixed effectiveness in reaching the most marginalised rights holders, shaped by trade-offs between safety, feasibility, and political influence rather than by lack of intent. Across all three contexts, the programme primarily engaged women who were already connected to political parties, civil society organisations, or advocacy networks. This focus was appropriate given the programme's objectives and the risks associated with broader mobilisation, but it also limited reach among women facing intersecting forms of exclusion related to poverty, geography, displacement, ethnicity, age, and caregiving responsibilities. As a result, the programme tended to work at the margins of political systems rather than at the margins of society.

In Colombia, the programme reached young women, first-time candidates, and women operating in insecure or rural areas, including those exposed to political violence. Interview evidence suggests that training and accompaniment helped some of these women overcome barriers related to confidence and legitimacy, particularly where local partners had established territorial presence. However, participation remained constrained by economic barriers, security risks, and party gatekeeping, which disproportionately affected women without prior political capital or organisational backing. While the programme mitigated some of these constraints, it did not fundamentally alter patterns of exclusion for the most marginalised women, particularly those outside organised political or civic structures.

In Burundi, effectiveness in reaching marginalised women was mediated by authoritarian governance and economic dependency. The programme reached women across party lines and supported participation through economically grounded and socially legitimate structures, which enabled engagement by women who might otherwise have been excluded due to lack of resources or fear of reprisal. At the same time, women facing the most severe constraints, particularly those in remote areas, those without party affiliation, or those subject to household control, remained difficult to reach. Interview testimonies indicate that while economic and collective approaches lowered barriers for some, others remained beyond the programme's effective reach due to poverty and social norms that the programme could not safely confront.

In Myanmar, the post-coup context imposed severe limits on who could be reached and how engagement could take place. While the programme expanded work with exile-based networks, advocacy coalitions, and international platforms, it also supported in-country women peace ambassadors and locally embedded actors who operated through low-profile and community-based modalities. These women exercised political influence through discreet engagement with local stakeholders, sustained dialogue with constituencies, mediation and referral roles, and continued participation in networked initiatives conducted under collective identities that reduced security risks. This approach enabled women inside the country to maintain public trust, preserve networks, and sustain political legitimacy and representative roles despite repression. At the same

time, access remained uneven. Women in highly securitised, rural, or conflict-affected areas were often engaged indirectly through network structures rather than direct programme contact, highlighting both the necessity and the limitations of mediated participation under extreme political constraint.

Effectiveness of Programme Interventions

Capacity-Building Interventions: Capacity-building interventions, including leadership training, political education, and mentoring, were effective in strengthening confidence, and political judgement across all three contexts, and contributed to women's ability to navigate participation under pressure. In Colombia, these interventions translated most clearly into outcomes, supporting women to assume or sustain roles in municipal councils and local decision-making processes. Their effectiveness was enhanced where training was paired with accompaniment and guidance on managing political violence, party dynamics, and public visibility. In Burundi and Myanmar, capacity-building contributed to individual and collective readiness rather than formal advancement. While these outcomes were less visible, interview evidence suggests they were critical for sustaining engagement under authoritarian and repressive conditions.

Collective and Network-Based Interventions: Collective and network-based interventions contributed to outcomes by strengthening enabling conditions for women's political participation across contexts, rather than by directly producing formal decision-making gains. Cross-party platforms and advocacy coalitions reduced isolation, supported mutual recognition, and facilitated coordination in environments characterised by fear and fragmentation. In Burundi, cross-party interaction and economically grounded collective structures enabled women to remain politically connected without escalating risk, sustaining engagement in contexts where individual participation carried high costs. In Myanmar, following the military coup, representation within domestic decision-making spaces became largely untenable. Programme achievements instead lay in enabling women to exercise political influence through alternative arenas, including advocacy with the National Unity Government, ethnic organisations, and international platforms, as well as through sustained constituency engagement and locally embedded leadership. Interview evidence indicates that women maintained political legitimacy by remaining connected to communities, networks, and collective platforms, preserving their representative role through trust, dialogue, and visible contribution despite the collapse of formal institutions. Women's collective voice and technical contributions to peace and WPS frameworks were strengthened, even as formal representation within the state was no longer possible.

Institutional Engagement and Policy Change: Interventions aimed at institutional engagement and policy influence were effective only where institutional authority and permeability existed. In Colombia, engagement with electoral authorities, municipal governments, and policy processes related to violence against women in politics contributed to greater recognition of women's participation and, in some cases, to procedural or normative change. In Burundi and Myanmar, comparable interventions were least effective, not due to weak implementation but because political institutions were either closed or lacked legitimacy. In Myanmar, institutional engagement became

untenable after the coup, and continued effectiveness depended on abandoning domestic policy influence in favour of alternative governance and international advocacy spaces.

Economic support and livelihood-linked interventions Economic support and livelihood-linked interventions were implemented only in Burundi and played an enabling role by addressing material dependency as a barrier to women's political participation. Support linked to savings groups and modest financial resources reduced economic constraints and increased the legitimacy of women's engagement within households and party structures. These interventions did not directly produce policy change or formal representation outcomes, but they underpinned other forms of participation and leadership by lowering personal and social risk. Their contribution to effectiveness therefore lay in stabilising conditions for engagement, rather than in generating direct political influence.

Unforeseen outcomes and unintended effects

Several outcomes valued by participants sat outside, or only loosely within, the programme ToC, particularly in Burundi and Myanmar. In Burundi, interviews consistently point to economic support and savings groups as a political enabler rather than a peripheral activity. Women described reduced financial dependence, greater ability to contribute to party activities, and increased legitimacy within households and communities as shifts that made continued political engagement more feasible, even though these changes are not articulated as core causal pathways in the programme ToC. Participants also emphasised the durability of cross-party relationships developed through programme-supported spaces, noting that these relationships altered how political "opponents" were perceived and made collaboration possible in ways that had previously felt too risky or socially unacceptable.

In Myanmar, the programme's post-coup adaptation led to engagement across multiple arenas of influence. While exile-based and international advocacy became one channel, in-country Women Peace Ambassadors continued exercising political influence through community-level mediation, protection work, and dialogue with local power-holders, thereby sustaining representation under conditions of repression. Participants described contributions to alternative WPS and gender equality frameworks linked to NUCC/NUG processes, as well as the consolidation of coalitions able to operate across local, regional, and global advocacy spaces. These shifts effectively redefined what representation and policy influence meant in a context where the state could no longer function as a credible interlocutor. Colombia shows fewer outcomes outside the programme framework, reflecting closer alignment between the ToC and an operating institutional environment, but interviews still point to unplanned effects. Several participants described how programme engagement enabled them to recognise gendered political pressure and intimidation as violence, and to adopt coping strategies and boundaries in response. At the same time, interview evidence across contexts highlights unintended negative effects that warrant acknowledgement. Increased participation and visibility sometimes heightened exposure to backlash and intimidation, particularly in Colombia, while in Myanmar participants cautioned that support framed around conventional electoral participation under authoritarian rule risked misreading political reality and inadvertently increasing vulnerability.

Contribution of Collective Action to the Broader WPS Agenda

Evaluation Question:

- How have the collective efforts of CSOs, women-led organizations, women human rights defenders, women peace ambassadors and women peacebuilders in addressing needs at a community level also contributed to the broader Women, Peace, and Security agenda?

Collective action by CSOs, women-led organisations, women human rights defenders, women peace ambassadors, and women peacebuilders contributed to the WPS agenda by keeping it relevant at community level in very different political settings. Rather than driving policy change directly, these actors responded to needs that women themselves identified as urgent, and in doing so sustained women's political presence and legitimacy. In Colombia, women's organisations linked everyday concerns such as political violence, local governance, and participation of young people to recognised WPS commitments through engagement with municipal authorities, electoral bodies, and advocacy spaces. Work on documenting violence against women in politics, supporting women candidates and councillors, and maintaining dialogue between communities and institutions helped anchor WPS issues in lived experience, even when formal uptake by institutions remained uneven.

In Burundi and Myanmar, contribution to the WPS agenda looked different because political space was tightly constrained. In Burundi, women's organisations and cross-party networks focused on economic security and trust-building, which women consistently described as necessary conditions for staying politically engaged. These efforts did not translate into national policy change, but they helped prevent withdrawal and normalised women's collective political activity under authoritarian conditions. In Myanmar, following the military coup, collective action by women's organisations, women peace ambassadors (WoPAs) and peacebuilders shifted towards humanitarian response and recovery. Community-level support to displaced and affected populations, documentation of abuses, and coordination across ethnic and political lines addressed immediate survival needs while maintaining women's leadership within broader recovery and resistance efforts. This work sustained core WPS principles in practice at a time when formal policy engagement was no longer possible.

4.3 Partnership Collaboration

Evaluation Question:

- What can be said about the coherence and complementarity of the work among consortium members and with the Dutch MFA (including embassies)?

Coherence and Complementarity within the Consortium and with the Dutch MFA

Coherence across the consortium was grounded in shared values and broad political orientation, rather than in close coordination or sustained interaction between country programmes. Consortium members shared a common feminist framing of political participation, a similar understanding of risk, and broadly aligned positions on the limits of engagement in constrained environments. This provided a degree of strategic alignment, even though country programmes unfolded largely independently from one another. Beyond one or two consortium-wide meetings, there was limited routine interface across countries, and little evidence of ongoing cross-country collaboration shaping implementation choices.

In practice, implementation was highly decentralised, with country programmes responding primarily to national political conditions and partner capacities. This resulted in divergent pathways and approaches, particularly after major contextual shifts in Burundi and Myanmar. Rather than reflecting fragmentation, this separation mirrored the limited scope for meaningful standardisation across contexts characterised by very different political regimes. The evaluation finds little evidence that closer cross-country coordination would have produced added value, given the degree to which programme effectiveness depended on context-specific judgement rather than transferable models or tools.

Complementarity with the Dutch MFA, including embassies, similarly operated at a limited and selective level. Engagement focused on political signalling and legitimacy, rather than joint planning or implementation. In Colombia, embassy engagement provided visibility and diplomatic backing in line with WPS commitments. In Myanmar, interaction with the MFA was most relevant in international advocacy spaces following the coup. In Burundi, engagement was cautious and necessarily limited. Across contexts, coherence with the MFA reflected alignment of principles rather than operational integration.

From an evaluative perspective, this pattern of engagement largely reflects what was feasible and contextually appropriate rather than a missed opportunity for deeper operational partnership. Given the political constraints in Burundi and Myanmar and the civil-society-led nature of programme delivery across all contexts, closer operational integration with embassies would likely have introduced political risk, slowed implementation, or reduced the flexibility that partners required. The relatively lean model of collaboration allowed embassies to provide strategic backing and legitimacy without compromising partners' access or perceived neutrality. At the same time, in more permissive settings such as Colombia, there may have been scope for somewhat more structured coordination or joint strategic planning, particularly around policy engagement under the WPS agenda.

Exchange, Collaboration, and Localised Leadership within the Consortium

Interview evidence indicates that collaboration within the consortium was limited in scope and largely concentrated at country level, with national partners exercising a high degree of autonomy in shaping implementation. Respondents consistently described country programmes as unfolding largely independently from one another, with only occasional consortium-wide meetings and

limited routine interaction across contexts. There is little evidence of sustained cross-country exchange shaping programme design or delivery. Instead, collaboration was strongest within country teams, where partners worked closely to interpret political conditions and decide how far activities could be adapted without increasing exposure or undermining legitimacy.

Localised leadership is strongly evidenced in the interviews, particularly in Burundi and Myanmar. National civil society partners described taking primary responsibility for assessing feasibility and safety, and for adjusting activities as contexts shifted. International partners were described less as coordinators than as sources of backing and access to external advocacy spaces when appropriate. Decision-making was not characterised by top-down direction or formalised consultation, but by trust-based relationships and shared judgement within country teams.

Contribution of Consortium Members to Wider Lobby and Advocacy Efforts

Interview evidence shows that advocacy under LEAP4Peace was articulated and experienced very differently across countries. In Myanmar, participants consistently described advocacy as coalition-based work directed at alternative governance structures and international arenas, including the NUG, NUCC, Ethnic Revolutionary Organisations, and regional and global advocacy spaces. This advocacy focused on sustaining WPS and gender equality priorities, accountability, and protection of women human rights defenders in a context where state-level policy engagement was no longer possible. In Colombia, advocacy was framed more narrowly as technical engagement with institutions, particularly around violence against women in politics, and was described as incremental, relational, and embedded in accompaniment rather than as visible lobbying. In Burundi, interviewees did not describe advocacy as a distinct activity; instead, they emphasised alliance building and cross-party dialogue, reflecting the limited space for formal advocacy.

4.4 Project Design

Evaluation Question:

- To what extent were the themes of gender, youth and climate included in the programme design and interventions?

Inclusion of Gender, Youth and Climate Change

Across the programme, gender was the primary and consistently articulated lens. Youth inclusion was present but not systematically framed as a distinct political constituency. In Colombia and Myanmar, younger women were visible within networks and advocacy spaces, and some respondents noted increased participation of younger activists. This occurred through existing organisational and movement dynamics rather than through explicit youth-focused strategies, targets, or outcomes.

Climate considerations were the least integrated and appeared indirectly rather than as an explicit thematic focus. In Myanmar, issues related to land, extractive industries, displacement, and humanitarian need surfaced in interview accounts, particularly among ethnic women's organisations, but these were framed in terms of rights and recovery rather than climate action. In Burundi and Colombia, climate did not feature in interview narratives related to political participation or advocacy.

4.5 Reported Challenges and Gaps

Programme duration and scope. A consistent theme across interviews is that the programme's time horizon and funding structure limited the consolidation of results. While small grants and capacity-building activities were widely valued, many respondents described support as short-term and activity-based rather than enabling sustained organisational or systemic change. Several participants felt that initiatives ended midway through advocacy processes, leaving momentum without the resources needed to translate skills, networks, and policy engagement into longer-term institutional gains. This concern was not framed as dissatisfaction with programme quality, but rather as a structural limitation of project design in a context where social norm change, coalition-building, and policy influence require extended engagement. The call for longer-term partnership reflects recognition that the programme successfully built foundations that now require continuity to yield durable outcomes.

Funding insecurity and sustainability risks. Financial precarity emerged as one of the most significant constraints affecting both organisations and individual women peacebuilders. Many local groups operate on short project cycles, rely heavily on volunteer labour, and in some cases absorb costs personally to sustain activities. Respondents expressed concern that improvements in leadership capacity, advocacy reach, and coalition coordination may not be maintained without continued financial and technical support. Sustainability was therefore framed less as a question of commitment or ownership, and more as a function of material constraints in a protracted crisis setting. Several participants emphasised that peacebuilding and women's political participation are not income-generating activities, creating tension between civic engagement and livelihood pressures. Requests for longer-term funding windows, more flexible support modalities, and continued partnership were frequent and framed as prerequisites for maintaining progress already achieved.

Donor requirements and administrative rigidity. A number of respondents identified tensions between donor compliance frameworks and the realities of operating in conflict-affected environments. Rigid registration requirements, standardised monitoring formats, and increasing procedural demands were described as difficult to meet under conditions of insecurity, displacement, and infrastructure disruption. Participants noted that programme adaptation to rapidly evolving political conditions was sometimes slowed by the need to secure approvals and comply with fixed planning frameworks. One senior partner raised more explicit concerns regarding consortium financial management, arguing that resource distribution appeared uneven relative to operational and consultancy expenditures. The retraction of unspent funds during periods of political disruption was perceived as insufficiently context-sensitive, particularly where implementation delays

were driven by security constraints rather than performance issues. At the same time, later coordination changes were viewed positively, suggesting that management flexibility can mitigate these tensions.

Access and inclusion constraints. Programme reach was shaped by structural barriers linked to conflict dynamics and infrastructure breakdown. Respondents described prolonged internet shutdowns, electricity outages, mobility restrictions, displacement, and the absence of safe public spaces for convening. These conditions limited both participation and continuity, particularly for rural groups and those in highly insecure areas. In politically sensitive contexts, some organisations reported being unable to disseminate certain materials widely due to safety concerns. As a result, inclusion challenges were less about programme intent and more about operating conditions that constrained who could safely engage, how consistently they could participate, and which forms of outreach were feasible.

Structural and social barriers. Entrenched gender norms remain a fundamental constraint on women's meaningful participation in politics and peacebuilding. Respondents described persistent male-dominated decision-making structures, expectations that women assume supportive rather than leadership roles, and the continued symbolic treatment of women's representation. Domestic care responsibilities and economic pressures further limited sustained engagement. Several participants emphasised that training and skills development alone cannot overcome these structural barriers; enabling environments, political space, and institutional openness are equally necessary. One respondent explicitly characterised training as only partially determinant of outcomes, noting that the ability to apply skills depends on opportunity structures that remain uneven.

Engagement and participation challenges. Women peacebuilders face practical constraints that affect both recruitment and retention. Displacement, family responsibilities, security risks, and livelihood demands frequently interrupted participation. Economic realities were particularly salient: engagement in peacebuilding requires time and resources without corresponding income, creating personal trade-offs that limit sustained involvement. Some respondents suggested that programme design could more explicitly account for these structural pressures, for example through flexible participation models or additional support mechanisms that reduce the personal cost of engagement.

Modality limitations. Security conditions necessitated greater reliance on remote engagement, which enabled continuity but introduced trade-offs. Participants noted unstable connectivity, reduced interaction quality, and difficulties maintaining engagement compared to in-person formats. While online modalities were widely accepted as necessary under current conditions, they were often viewed as a second-best alternative that constrained depth of learning, networking, and trust-building.

Risk and protection concerns. Operating in conflict-affected areas exposes women peacebuilders to significant personal risk. Participants described high-risk environments requiring careful

navigation of security, visibility, and mobility. One respondent explicitly called for dedicated emergency funding and relocation support for women leaders working in conflict zones, highlighting the gap between programme objectives and the protection infrastructure available to those implementing them on the ground.

4.6 Lessons Learned and Good Practices

Evaluation Question:

- What are the main challenges, lessons learned and good practices emerging regarding the implementation of programme interventions?

Participation under political constraint requires rethinking what counts as success

Lesson learned: Women's political participation under repression cannot be judged by whether engagement becomes more visible or leads to formal positions. In these contexts, participation is shaped by risk, and women often remain active by limiting exposure rather than expanding it. Treating persistence or public presence as indicators of success therefore misrepresents how agency is exercised.

Good practice: LEAP4Peace treated adaptation and flexibility as core features of implementation rather than as exceptions. Participation objectives were adjusted in response to political conditions, allowing the programme to remain relevant without forcing uniform pathways or exposing participants to unnecessary risk.

Collective and relational approaches are more sustainable than individualised participation models

Lesson learned: Individual participation models are fragile in environments where risk is unevenly distributed and protection is limited. Women acting alone are more exposed to backlash, and withdrawal, particularly where party structures or state institutions do not offer reliable protection.

Good practice: Across contexts, collective and relational forms of engagement reduced isolation and helped women remain politically connected. In Burundi, cross-party spaces and savings-group-based interaction enabled women to sustain political relationships without escalating risk. In Myanmar, collective advocacy and coalition-based work became the primary means of political engagement after the coup, alongside the efforts of in-country Women Peace Ambassadors who continued exercising political influence through community-level mediation, protection initiatives, and dialogue with local power-holders. . These approaches did not generate systemic change, but they supported continuity, mutual protection, and shared political analysis under constraint.

Economic autonomy is a precondition for sustained participation

Lesson learned: In the Burundi context, women's political participation is closely linked to economic dependency at household and party level. Without their own resources, women face repeated barriers to sustained engagement, particularly during periods of political pressure or economic shock.

Good practice: In Burundi, savings groups functioned as politically acceptable entry points that reduced material dependency and increased women's ability to participate consistently in party and community life. Economic autonomy enhanced legitimacy within households and parties and reduced the likelihood of withdrawal. While these interventions did not produce formal representation or policy change, they stabilised the conditions necessary for continued engagement.

Political parties shape risk, not only access

Lesson learned: Political parties function not only as gatekeepers to participation but as informal brokers of risk. Party backing influences whether women's political actions are protected, shaping behaviour long after formal entry has been achieved.

Good practice: In Colombia, LEAP4Peace did not treat party engagement as a technical inclusion problem. Instead, programme activities helped women understand how parties distribute risk and how political violence operates as a disciplining force. Tools on violence against women in politics supported interpretation rather than enforcement, enabling women to act with clearer boundaries in hostile environments. This shifted the focus from endurance to judgement as a measure of agency.

Women-only approaches are necessary but insufficient where power is male-dominated

Lesson learned: Women-only spaces provide safety, solidarity, and learning, but they cannot on their own shift power relations where authority and resources remain firmly controlled by men in households and political parties.

Good practice: The evaluation highlights the need for more politically informed engagement with male decision-makers, particularly in Burundi, where male control over resources and party hierarchies constrained how far women's participation could translate into influence. While LEAP4Peace prioritised women-only approaches for safety reasons, the findings suggest that sustained change will remain limited without complementary strategies that address male power directly.

Legitimacy and visibility do not move together under authoritarian conditions

Lesson learned: Official authorisation can reduce risk without enabling scale or influence. In authoritarian environments, legitimacy and visibility operate on different axes, and increased visibility may increase exposure rather than influence.

Good practice: In Burundi, engagement with authorities enabled activities to take place safely but within narrow boundaries. LEAP4Peace's use of low-profile, socially legitimate entry points

allowed women to build relationships and maintain political presence without provoking repression. Constrained scale should therefore be understood as a deliberate trade-off in favour of safety and continuity, not as implementation weakness.

Ruling parties shape legitimacy, not only competition

Lesson learned: In highly controlled political environments, multiparty engagement lacks legitimacy unless the ruling party is at least tacitly involved. When the ruling party dominates all formal political space, opposition actors disengage and advocacy routes narrow sharply.

Good practice: BLTP secured limited buy-in by working through a ruling party insider who was active in internal party processes and sympathetic to the programme's objectives. This indirect approach allowed multiparty dialogue to proceed without triggering questions of legitimacy or overt political confrontation.

Participation is shaped by risk management, not motivation

Lesson learned: Women's decisions to limit visibility, slow engagement, or withdraw temporarily were driven by risk assessment rather than lack of commitment. Persistence alone is not a reliable indicator of agency in contexts marked by violence or repression.

Good practice: Programme activities supported women to interpret political risk and make deliberate choices about engagement, rather than encouraging persistence as a default good. This was particularly evident in Colombia through tools on political violence, and in Myanmar through acceptance of intermittent and indirect participation.

Formal institutions are not always the primary site of political influence

Lesson learned: Institutional access does not guarantee influence, and in some contexts becomes irrelevant or unsafe. Treating institutions as the default target can misread political reality.

Good practice: LEAP4Peace adapted its understanding of "political engagement" when institutional pathways collapsed. In Myanmar, engagement shifted towards alternative governance and international arenas. In Colombia, institutional engagement was paired with strategies to manage exposure rather than maximise presence.

Interpretive tools can be as important as material outcomes

Lesson learned: In contexts of political violence, the inability to sanction or report abuse does not render support ineffective. How women understand and name harm shapes participation decisions.

Good practice: Tools addressing violence against women in politics helped women reframe experiences that had previously been normalised or internalised. This supported judgement, boundary-setting, and sustained engagement, even where protection remained weak.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Overall conclusions

LEAP4Peace delivered a contextually grounded and politically realistic contribution to women's political participation and peacebuilding across Burundi, Colombia, Myanmar, and global advocacy spaces. Implemented during a period marked by democratic backsliding, armed conflict, shrinking civic space, and heightened political risk, the programme operated under conditions that fundamentally constrained the scope for institutional reform or rapid gains in women's formal representation. Within these limits, LEAP4Peace demonstrated a consistent capacity to adapt its strategies, reconfigure pathways of change, and prioritise women's safety, agency, and collective endurance as meaningful outcomes in their own right.

In Burundi and Myanmar, the evaluation shows that women's political participation did not unfold as a linear progression towards office-holding or policy influence. Instead, participation was episodic, and continuously shaped by risk, resource constraints, and informal power dynamics. LEAP4Peace contributed most clearly by strengthening women's political judgement, confidence, and staying power, enabling them to remain engaged, connected, and politically oriented even when prospects for advancement were limited or when withdrawal appeared rational. In Burundi, this took the form of sustaining women's political presence under conditions of authoritarian consolidation; in Colombia, it involved reframing participation as a legitimate right rather than moral compromise, alongside modest institutional responsiveness on violence against women in politics; and in Myanmar, it centred on preserving networks, skills, and political identity amid extreme repression. These outcomes challenge narrow interpretations of effectiveness that prioritise formal representation alone and instead underscore the importance of endurance and preparedness in volatile political environments.

The cross-cutting global advocacy component generated visibility, convening opportunities, and knowledge outputs, but its added value in relation to country-level change pathways remained uneven and insufficiently articulated. While global products and events sustained presence within international WPS debates, the evaluation finds limited evidence that generic global reporting or communications products, including the podcast series, translated into measurable policy uptake or strengthened domestic advocacy trajectories in a systematic way. In Myanmar, advocacy with *de facto* authorities and ethnic armed organisations emerged as substantively promising, yet these processes were primarily driven by local actors. A UK-based advocacy organisation operating at distance was not optimally positioned to support highly contextual, politically sensitive negotiations within fragmented governance environments.

The evaluation also highlights the value and limits of LEAP4Peace's feminist orientation. The programme consistently framed women's exclusion as structurally produced rather than as an individual deficit, acknowledged political risk and harm as central to participation, and prioritised

collective and relational forms of change. This alignment is evident in its emphasis on safe spaces, peer support, accompaniment during high-risk periods, and strategies that reduced the material and psychological costs of engagement, enabling women to navigate and remain present within male-dominated and often hostile political systems. At the same time, the evaluation finds that the programme's ability to pursue more explicitly gender-transformative change by challenging entrenched power structures within political parties, institutions, and state actors was constrained by the realities of restricted security risks and limited institutional openness. Its capacity to address deeper forms of intersectional exclusion was therefore uneven and shaped by what could be safely and realistically pursued within each context. Women facing the most compounded forms of marginalisation, including those affected by extreme poverty, ethnicity-based exclusion, or severe political repression, remained difficult to reach through the programme's primary pathways, pointing to persistent gaps between feminist intent, including ambitions to shift power relations, and feasible action under conditions of constraint.

Finally, the evaluation underscores the importance of recalibrating ToCs for women's political participation in contexts characterised by sustained political closure or violence. Evidence from LEAP4Peace suggests that durability should be understood less as institutional consolidation and more as the maintenance of political agency, relationships, and readiness over time. In such settings, preventing disengagement, sustaining pluralism among women political actors, and preserving the capacity to act when conditions shift constitute substantive contributions. LEAP4Peace's experience demonstrates that programmes grounded in realism, reflexivity, and feminist ethics can generate meaningful outcomes even where structural transformation remains out of reach, while also offering critical lessons for future initiatives seeking to support women's participation in high-risk political environments.

At the same time, the strength of these conclusions is shaped by methodological constraints that affect the degree of confidence that can be placed in specific findings. The evaluation relied primarily on qualitative methods and purposive sampling, with participants selected largely through programme networks and partner referrals. This introduces potential sampling and response bias, as respondents may be more likely to have positive engagement histories or aligned perspectives. The absence of a comparison group limits the ability to attribute observed changes solely to programme interventions, particularly in fluid political environments where multiple actors operate simultaneously. Small sample sizes in several components, the use of convenience sampling in hard-to-reach settings, and the limited inclusion of external stakeholders beyond programme affiliates further constrain representativeness. In addition, politically sensitive contexts may have influenced how openly respondents expressed criticism or negative experiences.

These limitations do not invalidate the findings but suggest that they should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically generalisable. The evaluation's conclusions are therefore strongest where consistent patterns emerged across countries, respondent groups, and data sources, and where triangulation with documentary evidence was possible. Claims regarding institutional impact and policy influence should be treated with particular caution, whereas findings related to participant experience, perceived value, and programme processes are supported by richer and more consistent qualitative evidence.

5.2 Recommendations for the consortium

Refocus and differentiate the global advocacy function. If retained in any future follow-on programme, the cross-cutting advocacy component should be explicitly anchored in clearly defined influence pathways and tightly linked to country-level priorities. Rather than producing generic global reports or communications outputs as default deliverables, advocacy efforts should concentrate on clearly identified policy windows where country partners assess that external leverage is strategically useful, such as engagement around National Action Plans, donor funding cycles, or specific multilateral processes. In highly constrained environments, particularly where influence operates through de facto authorities, resistance structures, or ethnic armed actors, support should prioritise locally led advocacy strategies. The consortium should therefore clarify whether the comparative advantage of the global partner lies in targeted donor engagement, technical WPS expertise linked to defined policy processes, or strategic accompaniment of country actors in specific international forums. This clarification should guide resourcing, staffing profiles, MEL expectations, and the scale of ambition, avoiding diffuse global visibility efforts that are difficult to evidence and only loosely connected to domestic change trajectories.

Align theories of change more closely with political realities and constraints. Future programming would benefit from country-level theories of change that are more explicitly differentiated and less tightly bound to a single programme-wide progression model. The evaluation shows that pathways to change varied significantly across contexts, particularly in settings characterised by authoritarian consolidation, violent repression, or shrinking civic space. The consortium should treat divergence from an overarching ToC not as a weakness but as an expected outcome of context-sensitive programming, and articulate country-level ToCs that reflect realistic forms of change such as endurance, preparedness, and sustained engagement. This would strengthen coherence between design, implementation, and evaluation, and reduce pressure to overstate institutional or policy-level change where such outcomes are unlikely.

Strengthen mechanisms for addressing intersectional exclusion within feasible limits. While the programme avoided treating women as a homogenous group, its ability to reach women facing the most compounded forms of marginalisation remained limited. The consortium should consider more deliberate strategies for engaging with intersectionality at design stage, including clearer criteria for who is likely to remain excluded from primary pathways and why. Where direct engagement is not safe or feasible, this should be explicitly acknowledged, and alternative strategies such as indirect support through trusted intermediaries, alliance-building with specialised organisations, or advocacy-oriented documentation of exclusion should be considered as part of programme logic rather than as gaps in implementation.

Simplify and prioritise monitoring and learning for political and relational outcomes. The evaluation highlights the difficulty of capturing political, relational, and endurance-based outcomes using conventional results frameworks. The consortium should prioritise more meaningful indicators that reflect how change actually unfolds in constrained political environments, including

shifts in confidence, relationships, political judgement, and continued engagement over time. This may require lighter, more narrative-driven MEL approaches, and clearer guidance on outcome harvesting for advocacy and political change.

5.3 Recommendations for future feminist peacebuilding initiatives

Reframe success to include endurance, preparedness, and sustained engagement. Future feminist peacebuilding initiatives should move beyond linear assumptions that equate success primarily with formal representation, policy reform, or institutional access. The evaluation shows that in contexts characterised by political repression, violence, or shrinking civic space, women's continued presence, political orientation, and readiness to act constitute meaningful outcomes. Programmes should explicitly recognise preventing disengagement, sustaining networks, and preserving political agency under pressure as legitimate and necessary forms of progress, rather than treating them as interim or second-best results.

Provide more flexible, longer-term WPS funding to local women's organisations. Future programming should place greater emphasis on channelling flexible and sustained funding to local women-led organisations, networks, and coalitions, particularly those operating in conflict-affected and politically constrained settings. The evaluation shows that these actors often provide the relational infrastructure, political continuity, and contextual judgement on which meaningful participation depends, yet they are frequently underfunded, projectised, or treated primarily as implementers rather than strategic actors in their own right. Funding models should therefore move beyond short-term, tightly earmarked activity grants and allow for core functions such as convening, accompaniment, security adaptation, staff wellbeing, coalition maintenance, and rapid response to political developments. Where direct funding is difficult for compliance or fiduciary reasons, consortia should still seek intermediary arrangements that preserve local autonomy and minimise burdensome reporting requirements. More predictable and adaptable support would strengthen local ownership, reduce dependency on externally driven priorities, and better reflect the central role that local women's organisations play in sustaining WPS agendas under conditions where formal institutional pathways are weak, closed, or highly uneven

Design gender-transformative ambitions around risk and feasibility. Feminist peacebuilding initiatives should be explicit about how and where they intend to challenge power structures, and where such challenges are constrained by safety, access, or political closure. Rather than assuming that gender-transformative change necessarily occurs through institutional reform or norm change, programmes should articulate alternative pathways through which power is negotiated, or resisted, including collective protection and the redistribution of political risk. Making these trade-offs explicit strengthens ethical integrity and avoids placing unrealistic burdens on women participants.

Centre political risk and violence as core design parameters, not contextual add-ons. The evaluation underscores that violence against women in politics and peacebuilding is not episodic or exceptional but a structuring feature of participation in many contexts. Future initiatives should

treat risk analysis, safety, and psychosocial sustainability as central to programme design, resourcing, and monitoring. This includes designing flexible participation models, supporting episodic engagement, and recognising withdrawal or reduced visibility as rational responses rather than programme failure.

Prioritise collective and relational change over individual advancement alone. While individual capacity-building remains important, feminist peacebuilding initiatives should invest more deliberately in collective spaces, peer networks, and relational infrastructure that enable women to navigate political pressure over time. The evaluation shows that solidarity, cross-party or cross-movement connection, and mutual recognition play a critical role in sustaining participation where institutions are hostile or unreliable. These collective outcomes should be treated as central objectives rather than secondary by-products of individual empowerment.

Address intersectionality through realistic and differentiated strategies. Future initiatives should avoid both homogenising women's experiences and overpromising on inclusion where political or social constraints are severe. Intersectional analysis should be used not only to identify who is excluded, but to determine which forms of engagement are feasible, safe, or ethical in a given context. Where direct inclusion of highly marginalised groups is not possible, programmes should consider indirect strategies, partnerships with specialised actors, or advocacy and documentation approaches that make exclusion visible without increasing risk.

Invest in monitoring approaches suited to political and feminist change. Feminist peacebuilding initiatives require monitoring and learning frameworks that can capture non-linear, relational, and politically contingent forms of change. Future programmes should prioritise qualitative, narrative, and contribution-focused approaches that document how women interpret change, navigate power, and sustain engagement over time. Expectations around attribution and scale should be calibrated accordingly, particularly for advocacy and political outcomes, to support learning rather than incentivise overclaiming.

6. Annexes

6.1 Evaluation matrix

Evaluation Question	Lines of Inquiry	Data Sources	Analytical Approach	Stakeholder Groups & Focus
Programme Design				
1.1 Were the assumptions of the ToC valid?	Core assumptions; stakeholder views on assumption realism	Document and ToC review; KII; Validation workshop (Colombia)	Document review and ToC tracing to map stated assumptions and causal pathways; Thematic analysis of KII transcripts to assess perceived realism	Programme proposal, ToC, reports; Consortium leadership & MEL focal points; External

Evaluation Question	Lines of Inquiry	Data Sources	Analytical Approach	Stakeholder Groups & Focus
			and evolution of assumptions; Comparative synthesis across data sources; Participatory validation of findings	observers; Consortium partners (validation)
1.2 To what extent were gender, youth and climate included in design and interventions?	Reflection in strategy; objectives; indicators; intersectionality	Document review; Training and advocacy materials; KIs; Validation workshop (Colombia)	Structured document review using thematic coding framework; Principles-based qualitative content analysis of materials; Thematic coding of interview data; Triangulation across sources; Participatory validation	Consortium staff & MEL; Beneficiaries (all countries); External stakeholders; Consortium partners
1.3 Compatibility with other actors' interventions?	Alignment; coordination; duplication; complementarities	Document review; KIs; Validation workshop (Colombia)	Stakeholder mapping and document comparison; Thematic analysis of interview data; Cross-case comparison; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; External stakeholders; Beneficiaries; Consortium partners
Relevance				
2.1 Appropriateness of interventions and adaptations?	Needs alignment; responsiveness; timeliness; feedback loops	Document review; KIs; Validation workshop (Colombia)	Process tracing of programme adaptations; Thematic analysis of interview data; Timeline reconstruction; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Beneficiaries; External stakeholders; Consortium partners
2.2 Did the programme target the right audiences?	Targeting rationale; inclusion; reach; coverage	Document review; KIs; FGDs; Validation workshop (Colombia)	Review of targeting frameworks; Thematic analysis of KIs and FGD transcripts; Comparative analysis across demographic groups; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Beneficiaries; External stakeholders; Consortium partners
2.3 Contribution to local actors' agendas?	Alignment; added value; amplification; access to policy spaces	KIs; Document review; Outcome harvesting review; Validation workshop (Colombia)	Thematic coding of interviews; Principles-based assessment of locally led programming; Outcome harvesting synthesis; Contribution-focused qualitative analysis; Triangulation;	Consortium staff; Local CSOs; Beneficiaries; Consortium partners

Evaluation Question	Lines of Inquiry	Data Sources	Analytical Approach	Stakeholder Groups & Focus
			Participatory validation	
Outcomes				
3.1 Achievements on LTO1: Women's representation	Leadership roles; visibility; legitimacy; diversity	Document review; KIIs; FGDs; Outcome harvesting review; Validation workshop	Descriptive analysis of monitoring data; Thematic analysis of KIIs/FGDs; Outcome harvesting verification; Cross-case synthesis; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Beneficiaries; External stakeholders; Consortium partners
3.2 Achievements on LTO2: Supportive policy environment	Policy change; institutional shifts; political will	Document review; KIIs; FGDs; Outcome harvesting review; Validation workshop	Policy tracking through document review; Thematic analysis of interviews/FGDs; Outcome harvesting verification; Contribution-oriented qualitative analysis; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Policy actors; Beneficiaries; Consortium partners
3.3 Reaching marginalised rights holders	Identification; access; participation; inclusion	Document review; KIIs; FGDs; Validation workshop	Targeting framework analysis; Thematic coding of interviews/FGDs; Inclusion gap analysis; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Partners; Organisations of marginalised groups; Beneficiaries
3.4 Most/least effective interventions	What worked; why; contextual factors; cross-country comparison	Document review; KIIs; FGDs; Outcome harvesting; Validation workshop	Comparative thematic analysis; Cross-case comparison; Outcome harvesting synthesis; Pattern identification across interventions; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Partners; External stakeholders; Beneficiaries
3.5 Unintended outcomes	Spillovers; harms; emerging change areas; alignment with principles	Document review; KIIs; FGDs; Outcome harvesting; Principles-based review; Validation workshop	Thematic coding of qualitative data; Outcome harvesting for emergent effects; Principles-based assessment (feminist/do-no-harm/conflict sensitivity); Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Partners; External stakeholders; Beneficiaries
3.6 Community-level contributions to	Bottom-up influence; collective	Document review; KIIs;	Thematic analysis; Outcome harvesting synthesis; Contribution analysis to	Consortium staff; Women-led orgs; Peace

Evaluation Question	Lines of Inquiry	Data Sources	Analytical Approach	Stakeholder Groups & Focus
WPS	action; visibility	FGDs; Outcome harvesting; Validation workshop	map pathways of influence; Cross-level comparison; Triangulation; Participatory validation	ambassadors; External policy actors
Partnership Collaboration				
4.1 Consortium coherence and complementarity	Role clarity; coordination; joint mechanisms	Document review; KIs; Reflective workshop	Governance and process analysis; Thematic coding of interviews; Organisational network mapping; Triangulation; Participatory reflection	Consortium members; MFA & Embassies
4.2 Exchange, collaboration, localised leadership	Learning exchange; joint planning; decision-making power	Document review; KIs; Validation workshop	Thematic analysis; Organisational role analysis; Leadership distribution mapping; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium members
4.3 Contribution to wider advocacy	Roles; alignment; influence; stakeholder engagement	Document review; KIs; FGDs; Contribution analysis	Advocacy tracking; Thematic analysis; Contribution analysis to identify causal pathways and synergies; Triangulation	Consortium members; External stakeholders; Beneficiaries
Challenges, Lessons & Good Practices				
5.1 Feminist programming quality	Gender-transformative intent; intersectionality; power dynamics	Document review; KIs; FGDs; Outcome harvesting; Principles-based review; Validation workshop	Feminist principles assessment; Thematic coding; Outcome harvesting synthesis; Intersectional analysis; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Women's organisations; Beneficiaries
5.2 Implementation challenges and good practices	Operational challenges; adaptations; lessons; good practices	Document review; KIs; FGDs; Outcome harvesting; Validation workshop	Thematic analysis; Adaptation tracking; Outcome harvesting synthesis; Practice pattern identification; Triangulation; Participatory validation	Consortium staff; Partners; External stakeholders; Beneficiaries
Sustainability				
6.1 Sustainability of	Lasting change;	Document review; KIs;	Sustainability pathway analysis; Thematic coding;	Consortium staff; Partners;

Evaluation Question	Lines of Inquiry	Data Sources	Analytical Approach	Stakeholder Groups & Focus
achievements	ownership; institutionalisation; continuation	FGDs; Outcome harvesting; Validation workshop	Outcome harvesting for sustained effects; Institutionalisation assessment; Triangulation; Participatory validation	External stakeholders; Beneficiaries
6.2 Recommendations for future programming	Scalability; replication; design improvements	Document review; KIs; FGDs; Outcome harvesting; Validation workshop	Synthesis of evidence across EQs; Thematic analysis; Pattern identification of effective practices; Forward-looking scenario analysis; Participatory recommendation refinement	Consortium staff; Partners; External stakeholders; Beneficiaries

6.2 Work plan and timeline

Inception Phase

	Evaluation Activities	June				July				August				September				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	17	18
		9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29
Phase 1: Inception	1.1 Inception meeting																	
	1.2 Desk review																	
	1.3 Preliminary consultation																	
	1.4 Refine methodologies																	
	1.5 Develop data collection tools																	
	1.6 Drafting of inception report																	
	D1: Submission of inception report																	
	1.6 NIMD prepraration of feedback																	
	1.6 Integration of feedback																	
	D2: Submission of finalised inception report																	

Evaluation Phase

	Evaluation Activities	October				November				December				January				February				March				April					
		19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48
		6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	2	9	16	23	30	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27
Phase 2: Evaluation Phase	2.1 Field data collection																														
	2.2 Data analysis																														
	D2: Emerging findings presentation																														
	2.3 Drafting of evaluation report																														
	D3: Submission of draft report																														
	3.1 Feedback and revisions																														
	D4: Submission of final report																														
	3.2: Preparation of presentation																														
	D5: Presentation of findings																														
	D6: Submission to MFA																														

