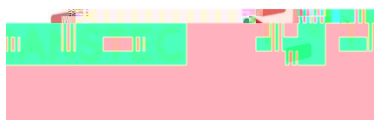**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND**
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10

EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-ZIM-11-432 *Ë*Promoting Human Rights through Providing Access to Information for Marginalized Women in Zimbabwe

Date: 17 November 2015

Acknowledgements

The evaluators would like to thank the management and staff of the Media Centre in Harare for their support in organizing the evaluation. Media Centre Director Earnest Mudzengi and Program Officer Linda Nyama Mujuru provided the evaluators with a wealth of documentation; Monitoring

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) Project data

This report is the evaluation of the project "Promoting human rights through providing access to information for marginalized women in Zimbabwe", implemented from May 2013 to April 2015 inclusive by the Zimbabwean non-governmental organization Media Centre, together with four implementing partners. The project budget was US$202,500. According to the project document, its expected outcomes were to:

"Increase and improve gender-sensitive media coverage of issues affecting women in marginalized communities, in traditional/mainstream media;

"Create tools and utilize non-traditional media to disseminate and exchange information;

"Increase capacity of marginalized women in using social media to access human rights information and freely express themselves on political, social, economic and cultural issues;

"Increase marginalized women's participation in policy dialogues and decision-making in target communities."

The project was implemented in 10 communities, spread around the country, and was designed to benefit over 7,000 women through activities including training of citizens journalists, and professional journalists in gender-sensitive reporting; production of phone-in radiorad044o72iramts

created as part of the project continued to be active at the time of the evaluation. The (relatively minor) task of moderating this group continued to be undertaken by Media Centre staff.

It is important to note that the project benefited from the perceived neutrality of **UNDEF** as a UN agency donor. In the sensitive context of Zimbabwe in relation to the media, the Media Centre managers noted that the fact that the project was funded by a UN agency helped local authority accept it and even buy into it.

(iii) Conclusions

The project was relevant.
The project design was over-ambitious, and included too many disparate activities.
The project was broadly in meeting its anticipated outcomes, though not all of those were directly relevant to the situation of marginalized women.
The project design included several indicators, but these did not always focus on assessing project outcomes.
The project was efficient and represented good value.
Project management was appropriate in terms of accountability to UNDEF, but partner NGOs were marginalized.
The project achieved some elements of impact, particularly on the self-confidence of rural women in relation to political debates.
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(iv) Recommendations

The Media Centre should make more rigorous use of the denomination Í a Uf[ ]bU]nYX´k ca YbÎ´".
When supporting the emergence of citizen journalists, the Media Centre should ensure that it takes a strategic approach.
The Media Centre should give further consideration to ways it can help enhance

II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The advent of new information technologies such as computers and cellphones has broadened access to information for many. These devices increase accessibility of information, and because they are very personal gadgets help to remove the fear and lack of confidence that some groups such as women, may have in terms of sharing information and in terms of accessing the same information in public settings. The NITs also facilitate the growth of citizen journalism so that ordinary citizens, men and women alike can share information stories and experiences from their communities faster and in an easier way than before. This promotes independent and community based generation of information

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

i.Project strategy and approach

Strategy

In essence, the project had a multi-pronged strategy to achieve its objective of enhancing access to information for marginalized women:

The project sought to address the conventional media (print and electronic) by raising awareness of the need to improve coverage of marginalized women, to give a voice to women, and more generally to report in a more gender-sensitive manner.

The project also sought to develop Internet-based information exchange to complement the range of information sources available to marginalized women. This approach was not only aimed at creating a new channel of inf   new chto 13(f)-40000912 0 612 792 reW*nBT/F1 11.0

That women in target communities would gain in empowerment by being able to report about issues of concern at local level, and would therefore strengthen their role as agent of change, including by demanding more accountability from government and elected officials.

This assumption too was justified, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. Indeed, the project's contribution to self-confidence among targeted women is one of its key impacts.

The project benefited from the fact that following the general election of July 2013 tensions in the country – which routinely become greater in pre-election periods – were relatively low by historical standards. This meant that, for most of the project's two-year period, NGOs and the media could operate with fewer threats of violence than in the recent past – even though

ii.Logical framework

The framework below aims to capture the project logic. In view of the focus placed by the project document on outcomes and indicators, these are set out in separate columns. There were different formulations of the long-

IV.   EVALUATION FINDINGS

This evaluation is based on questions formulated to meet the criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The questions and sub-questions are found in Annex 1 of this document.

(i)   Relevance

The project was relevant in that it was based on a good analysis of the gender inequalities faced by marginalized women in relation the Organiz

the needs of marginalized women, it lacked focus and prioritization. For example, Media Centre staff knew full well (as interviews with them demonstrated) that marginalized women had virtually no access to the printed press or TV, since newspapers are relatively expensive and are distributed almost exclusively in urban centers, and TV coverage in Zimbabwe is reduced. As a result, it is questionable whether improving the gender sensitivity of such media was of significant benefit to marginalized women. It might have made more sense to focus the gender-

The partners clearly brought added value to the proposal, because they had long-standing experience working with women in the project areas. Indeed, most of the project beneficiaries interviewed by the evaluators were members or otherwise associated with the partner NGOs. By working with these partners, the Media Centre could help ensure that the project would "hit the ground running" in the selected areas, thanks to the partners' established links. It was also clear that the Media Centre and its partners had complementary skills – all the partners interviewed recognized that the training on reporting and use of social media brought new skills to the participants, which the partners could not have delivered on their own. In that sense, the project presented the partners with a

Some of the indicators related much more to activities than to outcomes, and were therefore inadequate for the purpose of assessing the achievement of outcomes;

Some of the activities bore little relevance to the achievement of outcomes;

The capacity-building activities lacked appropriate follow-up: skill development would have been more effective if some activities could have been repeated.

Effectiveness at outcome level

The degree of achievement of the anticipated outcomes can be summarized as follows:

To increase and improve gender-sensitive media coverage in mainstream media. The two indicators concerning this outcome were met (see below), and the project doubtless made progress towards its achievement by contributing to the production of relevant media stories. Nevertheless the activities of the project in this respect did not amount to a *durable* increase and improvement in gender sensitivity: stories and broadcasts produced were appropriate but only made a short-term difference, and the number of journalists trained in gender-sensitive reporting was too small to constitute a critical mass.

To create tools and utilize non-traditional media to disseminate and exchange information. This outcome was fully achieved, in the sense that the SMS platform was established, and above all that the participating women were trained in the use of WhatsApp, and used it to disseminate information, including concerning human rights.

Stembeni Rusike is a woman from Epworth, a town near Harare. She is a longstanding member of Zimrights, a major human rights defense NGO. She has also worked for the medical NGO Doctors without Borders. The Media Centre (MC) trained her as a citizen journalist. Here are excerpts of the statement she gave the evaluators (in Shona):

"Although I had known about human rights before, the project taught me how to report cases. For example, the case of a 15 year-old girl who was raped, then forced by her family to marry her rapist. We made the case public on the [Whatsapp] platform and on the radio, the girl could get help.

"Some people don't like us, you have to do things stealthily due to politicization. We faced some threats, but we have learned to make pictures and videos [to gather evidence]. That protects us.

"I observed the 2013 elections. Some politicians didn't distinguish between observers and opposition political party agents. I did the observing on behalf of Zimrights, but posted the findings on the MC platform, to get more impact.

"I want to continue to work with the MC. It helps making stories from Epworth appear in the mainstream media. We need the MC's support to talk to local officials. Some concilors are changing, they listen to us more, and we ask more of them."

To increase the capacity of marginalized women to use social media to access human rights information and express themselves. This was also achieved, at least in the case of those participating women who had access to smartphones – by all accounts a rapidly increasing proportion of women. While not all messages disseminated by participants on social media concerned human rights or economic, social or cultural issues, the evaluators could see that sustained strings of messages referred to such issues at several

points in time during the project, and that the SMS platform and WhatsApp continued to be in use at the time of the evaluators' visit, several months after the end of the project.

To increase marginalized women's participation in policy dialogues. This outcome was also achieved in the sense that meetings at community level between participating women and local decision makers were held twice in each project location. Participating women told the evaluators that these meetings had often constituted their first opportunity to debate with elected officials and other office holders. They also reported that the skills they acquired through training and as a result of the advocacy activities undertaken ahead of the roundtable helped enhance their self-confidence and sense of self-worth – an unforeseen an

stage, and partly because of usage costs: text messaging was significantly more expensive than the data subscription allowing access to the Internet and the use of WhatsApp and Facebook. The SMS platform was nevertheless used by many participants owning an ordinary phone, though contributions were necessarily shorter than those made through the social networks.

Internet platform and database. This was established (www.zimwomenspeak.com), though the domain name had expired by the time the evaluation took place. The intended database of cases of human rights abuses was not developed. Doing so would have required extensive human resources to verify the reports, and could have placed sources at risk.

Media monitoring reports. Monthly monitoring reports were compiled, and quarterly syntheses prepared – however these were quite simple and did not contain detailed analysis of media contents. The usefulness of this activity was debatable.

Women's radio listening clubs. Ten such groups were established (eaci494. reW*

Overview of outcome indicators

The project document provided eight outcome indicators, complemented with quantitative

Use of the SMS platform (target: 2,000 women receiving SMS messages each month).
This indicator was outcome-related, but was overtaken by technological developments, and specifically by the spread of smartphones and the wider-than-expected use of WhatsApp. At the time the project was written, it was perfectly reasonable to expect SMSs to be the main medium of information exchange, because text messages can be exchanged on ordinary (not "smart") phones. However, as the project was implemented, the availability and affordability of phones that can access the internet was growing fast, and the economics of phone use also changed: sending text messages became comparatively more expensive than using app-based messages such as WhatsApp, because phone service providers charge proportionately much less for data use than for texting. As a result, the use of text messages did not grow much, while the number of WhatsApp users grew well beyond the target of 2,000 women. However, the "quality" of the users was not always clear, in the sense that some users were merely reading/approving what others wrote, while only a minority actually contributed contents along the lines that were expected.

In this regard, the evaluators noted that the notion of "marginalized women" was used without much rigor by the Media Centre. That notion had not been defined clearly in the project document. In effect, most of the women (other than professional journalists) who participated in activities were from rural areas, and as such might be considered marginalized. However, they were also, in the main, members of the partner organizations: many had therefore had some years of experience as activists, and to that extent were not personally "marginalized", even if they were in contact with much poorer and less educated women. On the whole, it can be said that the women who participated in the activities were intermediaries who could relay the views and concerns of more marginalized members of their communities, but were not themselves the worse off (almost all, for example, had a mobile phone).

Use of the Women Speak website to report abuses (target: 200 reports). This (mostly activity-based) indicator was also overtaken by the exponential rise in the use of WhatsApp. The website certainly did not gather as many as 200 reports of abuses, and it is difficult to say how many abuses were reported on WhatsApp: this is because many posts on WhatsApp were merely reproducing reports of abuses published elsewhere, or could not be clearly substantiated. This indicator, therefore, cannot be considered to have been met. However, as mentioned in the Launch Note, the indicator was perhaps inappropriate, in the sense that it was not clear what should be counted (for example, is a general WhatsApp entry complaining about early/forced marriage a "report of abuse"? The evaluators think not.)

Percentage of trained women able to use the Women Speak platform (target: 80%). As with the SMS platform, this indicator was overtaken by technology, in the sense that most posts appeared on WhatsApp and Facebook. It was clear that virtually all women who took part in the training (and had access to a smartphone) were able to use the social networks, irrespective of whether they also used the website.

Taken together, the above three

Number of women participants in roundtable discussions (target: 2,000). This indicator is also largely activity-based and provides a basic sense of the achievement of the fourth outcome (participation in policy debates).

In conclusion, it can be said that the requirement for grant applicants to provide indicators was a positive development, but that in this case the Media Centre should have exercised more rigor in formulating both the outcomes and the indicators – making sure in particular that the indicators focus on outcomes rather than activities.

It remains, however, that th

(v)   Sustainability

The key element of the project sustainability related to the use of social media. The project has ensured that a critical mass of women in the 10 communities across the country have acquired skills necessary to use social media, and the evaluators could see that the WhatsApp group created as part of the project continued to be active at the time of the evaluation. The (relatively minor) task of moderating this group continued to be undertaken by Media Centre staff.

Some of the women trained as citizen journalists have clearly gained experience, and have continued to post information on WhatsApp. A minority (mainly women based in Epworth, a community within bus riding distance of Harare) even started blogs, which they could work on using Media Centre computers.

The sustainability of the work on gender-sensitive journalism is less clear. It would appear that this work needs significant follow-up to achieve a durable influence on the mainstream media, and that editors/producers should be specifically targeted, rather than (mainly) journalists.

 Going forward, the Media Centre should also review its strategy concerning citizen journalists. If those are to be nurtured and mentored, it will be necessary to provide them with further training, including on basis reporting techniques. However, the sustainability of citizen journalism itself is a complex matter, because of the precarious economic situation of the country: in at least some cases, reports and photos posted on WhatsApp by citizen journalists have been reproduced in 4cdN 1(e u(w)13.26rTm0 g0 G[(y)] TJETQ0.00000912 0 612 792 reW*nBTF1 15 12 Tf1 0 0 1 145BT/F4 newspapers, without acknowledgement or payment (similarly, professional journalists have sometimes based stories on reports by citizen journalists, without necessarily quoting them as a source).

An Media Centre staff member with IT expertise noted that the project, if it was done today, should not use WhatsApp (and still less text sharing, for cost reasons), but should develop a dedicated "app" for users to share information, using Shona and Ndebele. Such an app could be developed for less than 5000US$ and, with sponsoring from a phone provider, its use could be free.

(vi)

V.   CONCLUSIONS

(i)   The project was relevant.

(ix) The project VYbYZ hYX Zca I B8 9: g dYf W dh cb Ug Ug   Jc dYb   "

VII.   ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

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Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

<u>Project documents UDF-ZIM-11-432:</u>

Summary of articles on gender issues
Project Document
Mid-Term Progress Report
Milestone Verification Reports
Sample workshop program
Final Narrative Report
Media Centre publications

<u>External sources:</u>

Reports on Zimbabwe by Amnesty International (annual reports 2013 to 2015) and Human Rights
Watch (news releases)

ANNEX 3: LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

21 September 2015

Harare

ANNEX 4: LIST OF ACRONYMS

MC   Media Centre

UNDP   United Nations Development Program

WiPSU   Women in Politics Suppot o0 g0 G[( )] TJET q0.00000912 0 612 792 reW*nBT/F1 11.04 Tf1 0 0 1