



1.1 BACKGROUND

RUNELD KENYA is a not for profit organization registered in Kenya with the aim of Empower healthy sustainable and productive lifestyles of rural Families and works with key populations in Homa Bay County in Kenya. RUNELD seeks to change the reality and perception of grassroots women from vulnerable victimized recipients of goods and services to empowered and effective leaders through movement building, leadership and advocacy. RUNELD supports several themes and programs geared towards women empowerment, among them, Women leadership and Governance, Women Property, Community Responses to HIV/AIDS and, Community Resilience to Climate Change and ensuring economic empowerment. It uses a combination of strategies to achieve its objectives, including Advocating, Capacity Building, Networking, Rallying and Amplifying, all geared towards bringing women together and strengthening their voices.

“**Descent Care Program**” is a project implemented by RUNELD from Sep 2016 until now, to generate knowledge on implementation of programs that bridge gaps in gender equality. The project seeks to equip participating women with knowledge and skills that enhance their leadership and organizational capabilities and ultimately enable them to become drivers of their own transformation. The overall objective of the project is “**to contribute to women’s economic empowerment and improved livelihoods through enhanced entrepreneurial and social**”. The project had an initial target of 200 Households that are headed by women living with HIV and is funded by Egmont Trust.

The project was implemented in three locations (Kodera, Gem and Kabondo) in Homa Bay County. **The project sought to expand on concepts and models for women empowerment and gender equality.** Lessons from the project were to be documented for dissemination, replication and intensification in similar situations. Although its core objective was women empowerment, the project recognized the central place of men in the gender equality efforts and therefore purposely worked to influence shifts in gender power relations, and especially to positively impact changes in men’s attitudes towards women empowerment.

1.1.1 The Project Context

In rural areas, women contribute most of the agricultural labor force and produce much of the food. They are major players in the development of communities and their contribution has profound impact on the wellbeing of families. They, however, face persistent obstacles and economic constraints that limit their potential and full inclusion in society more so for those that live with HIV. The project evaluation report ending December 2018 identified some of these constraints in the three project areas, among them: limited access to start up capitals, few productive assets such as land, inadequate labor, limited entrepreneurial skills, poor infrastructure, and lack of extension services and markets. The project was designed to promote gender equality by strengthening rural women's effective representation in the economy and society in a setting where men typically own and control most assets of production. Further it intended to promote positive living while creating a safe space for the target population to share personal life experiences.

1.2 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THE END-TERM EVALUATION

The objective of the evaluation was to assess performance of the project over the entire implementation period, draw lessons and give recommendations for future program planning and design. The evaluation assessed the various project elements including implementation of project activities, results and linkages with other public institutions and private sector service providers.

The evaluation further documented lessons learnt from the project and profiled human-interest stories to demonstrate and highlight the project impact. It also assessed the "model" of implementation and gives recommendations for replication. The evaluation applied the Human Rights Based Approach in reviewing progress, essentially assessing the project against the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment. The evaluation thus assessed intrinsic changes in the empowerment of the beneficiaries, their capacity to claim and access public services, and shifts in gender relations, in addition to changes in attitudes of duty bearers and capacity of project beneficiaries to claim rights and live happily.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. STUDY AREA

The project was implemented in three locations in Homa Bay County among the 47 counties in Kenya. The project areas are predominantly rural and derive their economic and social services from agricultural activities, limited small scale businesses and forest activities. The criterion for selecting this County was premised on the degree of vulnerability of women to economic and social development.

2.2. EVALUATION DESIGN AND APPROACH

The evaluation had three components:

- **First**, was the assessment of results in relation to set goals and objectives;
- **Second**, was the measurement of key performance elements, i.e., relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, and;
- **Third**, was the documentation of key lessons learnt and formulation of recommendations for strengthening future interventions and/or potential follow-on activities.

The evaluation employed participatory methodologies to understand the respective value chains, participation of the different actors and the critical opportunities and constraints that facilitate or limit growth of production and competitiveness. Further, it used the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria to assess the changes, if any, that have been occasioned by the project, both at an individual level.

The process of the final evaluation entailed:

1. Assessment of the program activities implemented by RUNELD and partners during the project life against the evaluation criteria for; efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and impact.
2. Assessment for the theory of change against project performance.
3. Documentation of the project's learning and best practices that include, strategic models, gender integration, and accountability to partners, beneficiaries, communities and donors.
4. Identification and location of human-interest stories to showcase project impact.

2.3. GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS) MAPPING

The evaluation utilized GIS technology to locate project beneficiaries for the purpose of capturing successes stories and/or human-impact stories, to illustrate impact. Examples were located and selected through primary and secondary data sources. The stories will

serve to provide a holistic picture of the impact of the various project interventions, and give a local perspective to the project impact.

2.4. METHODS AND TOOLS

The evaluation adopted mixed methodologies to gather quantitative and qualitative data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through a randomly administered survey questionnaire on beneficiaries, and interviews of selected representatives of key project stakeholders, including RUNELD and CHWs who worked with the various beneficiaries; community groups and individual group members. Identification of stakeholder/stakeholder groups to participate in the evaluation was discussed and agreed at inception. Secondary data was analyzed from various sources such as project reports, frameworks and reports.

2.5. SAMPLING

2.5.1. House Hold Survey

The study covered proportionately the targeted rural populations in Homa Bay County. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select beneficiary households for interviews. The beneficiaries were randomly sampled from all the project sites. Considering a target population of 93 households, a confidence level of 95%, a confidence interval of 5%, the sample size was calculated as **72** (using an online sample size calculator - www.macorr.com). An additional 10% insurance factor was considered bringing the total questionnaires to 82.

This number was proportionately distributed to the three locations based on the population sizes.

Specifically, the sample size for each location was further distributed per the number of members in each of the beneficiaries' groups, and taking into consideration the respective businesses. A beneficiary list was used to randomize the required number of households. A household questionnaire transcribed into an Android based software (Teamscope) was used to gather data from the sampled households.

2.5.2. Focused Group Discussions (FGDs)

A total of 2 focus group discussions were held, distributed evenly across the types of businesses. The selection of the participants considered the different capacities and skills.

The target groups for FGDs comprised of Women who have received support from DCP program, farmers and, advocacy champions, coaches, market champions, and Seed Fund committees.

3.0 FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of the evaluation study and provides analytical perspectives on the extent to which intended outcomes have been achieved.

3.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

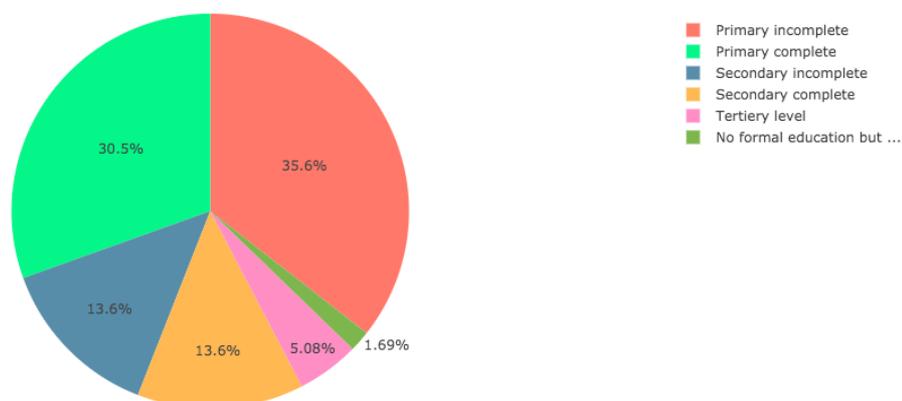
3.1.1. Age of Respondents

84.75% of the respondents interviewed for the household survey were women. The age of the respondents varied from 18 to over 45 years (as indicated in the figure 1 below) with the majority (77.97%) falling between 24 to 45 years. The most represented age bracket was 24 to 35 years (47.46%). There were no respondents below 18 years. The fair distribution of beneficiaries in terms of age is an indicator of continuity of the project outcomes.

3.1.2. Level of Education

The target group had a relatively some level of education with 66.1% having completed primary school. The respondents without formal education were a mere 1.69% as shown in figure below. The relatively high level of education amongst the respondents could have contributed to quality of responses. Further, education is a key component in women economic empowerment and a clear path towards increased and efficient productivity of the farmers. RUNELD reports had identified low levels of adult literacy and education in the communities living in Homa Bay County, however arising from the projects' training of coaches and their subsequent mandate to train the women, the capacities of women (regardless of their education) had greatly improved.

Level of education



3.1.3. Marital Status and Household Size

The evaluation established that a majority (77.97%) of the respondents are married followed by those widowed at 18.64%. See graph below.



That the findings indicate a bigger percentage of the beneficiaries are married, is proof of the importance of including the whole family in decision making, and further justifies a case for the need for including both men and women in business enterprises. The inclusion of men champions (men-for-women) in the project was an important factor in improving gender relations in social economic empowerment.

3.2. EFFECTIVENESS

The project achieved its objectives as demonstrated in this section. Below is a summary of achievements specific to the outcome indicators.

3.2.1. Objective 1: To improve psycho-social coping with HIV infection and positivetest result among 200 young women in East gem and East Kabondo locations in Rangwe sub-county

The project mobilized 3 groups in the three Locations of Gem East location, Kabondo and Koderia villages' with 93 households and a total of 228 beneficiaries. The identified household representatives (mostly women living with HIV) were organized into psychosocial support groups that provided an opportunity for them to share personal stories and encourage one another. When asked whether they are organized in to groups, 86.2% indicated they are members of a women group; 9.4% belong to a merry go round (whose composition consists of men); 3.1% to a farmers' group and 1% to a produce marketing group.

All the respondents during the household interview confirmed that they had attended at least three meeting. Further, during the FGD one of the respondents said that "*this is the only place I feel free to share my personal issues without being judged. I can talk about anything and even if I report my success in the business I started no one will be jealous*" The support groups plays an important role in the lives of the target group and when asked how the support groups had changed their lives, the respondents mentioned that it had helped them know how to live positively without any fears and they feel encouraged and confident to share their status with people they trust

3.2.2. Objective 2: To improve quality of lives and survival with HIV infection for 200 young women living with HIV in East gem and East Kabondo locations in Rangwe Sub-county.

There were significant efforts to sensitize the women groups on the role they can play in ensuring that they live positively with the highest attainable quality of health. Distribution of nutritional supplements was one of the activities conducted by RUNELD to contribute to this.

During the FGDs the respondents were quick to appreciate the efforts RUNELD made to ensure they received the nutritional supplements. They went further to mention that they had received nutritional trainings that has since changed how they eat and cope with HIV. During the household interview, when the respondents were asked if they had received any nutritional support 94.83% confirmed this as depicted by the graph below. However, there is need to continue doing this as some of the respondents still have low levels of income if compared to their respective household needs.

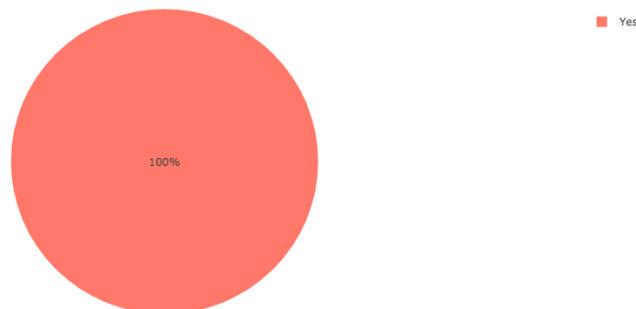
Respondents who have received nutritional supplements



Improved appetite, improved strength and improved health were some of the changes that had been realized by the respondents who reported to have received the nutritional supplements.

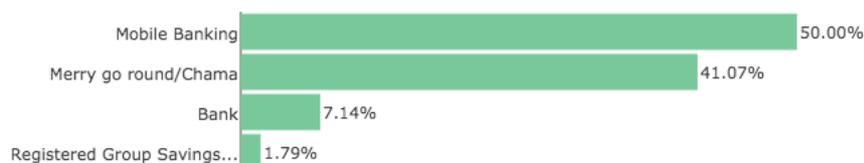
Coupled with the trainings and distribution of nutritional supplements, RUNELD also focused to increase household income for sustainability and ensuring that every household can afford a decent meal. With regards to this, when asked if any respondent had received any seed capital all the respondents said yes (see chart below) and that the amounts received (17500 USD) been had used to either start new businesses or improve existing small-scale businesses.

Respondents who had received financial support



Some of the businesses that the respondents mentioned they were involved in included; Cereals, Poultry, fish, Brick Making, Mobile Hotel, Farming among others. When asked where they keep the money earned from the business, 50% said they used Mobile banking with 41.07% saying they saved the profit in table banking and merry go rounds only 7.14% saved their money in the bank. (see graph below)

Where the respondents kept money



3.2.3. Objective 3: To enhance organizational development and programming capacity of RUNELD for more effective and efficient delivery of its services to the community in targeted areas of project management, monitoring and evaluation and documentation.

During the month of June 14-19th one staff attended a monitoring and Evaluation workshop on use of mobile network in conducting household surveys and nutritional deliveries, health referral and tracking client for linkages services near them. Runeld resolved to adopt and introduce the application device to its volunteers since it will reduce several gaps in service delivery and documentation.

1 staff and 1 volunteer went to 2days residential family planning update workshop which was focused on ensuring women and girls can voluntarily plan for safe pregnancies, improving their sexual Reproductive health and reduce maternal, and child mortality rate.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1. LESSONS LEARNT

4.1.1. Flexibility of Project Design

One of the most critical lessons from this project is the extent to which flexibility of implementation can contribute to effectiveness in achieving project results. This project was built to allow regular review of activities based on progressive experiences and feedback gathered during implementation. This cushioned the project from the challenges of “fidelity of implementation” which are often a characteristic challenge for many evidence-based projects. This approach made it easy to adjust implementation to emerging realities and allowed for measurement of results. It also allowed for resources to be invested where they were needed most.

This flexibility was achieved through the understanding arrived at during the project development – which was an extensive consultation process between RUNELD, and EGMONT TRUST.

Quite notable was the depth of thought that went into identifying the groups of beneficiaries and the specific entrepreneurs upon which to invest. In many programs of similar nature, the women are treated as recipients of services rather than drivers of change, yet this project deliberately purposed to utilize the ability of women to organize as impetus for economic and social growth. This aspect also took into account RUNELDS' core strength of mobilizing grassroots women, and built on experiences drawn from this approach (even though from a much smaller scale). Put differently, the project design allowed for organic integration of RUNELDS core approach to women empowerment.

The choice of entrepreneurship was informed by various economic activities prevalent in the three locations and sought to improve practices rather than introduce new/alien concepts which would have otherwise been slow to initiate.

The observations notwithstanding, the Risk Analysis did not adequately consider difficulties associated with reaching this specific target population and the time and resource investments required at the initial stages of the project.

4.1.2. Women Organizing

The overall delivery of the project was anchored on the women groups, and their ability to organize themselves as mechanisms for empowerment of rural poor women. Based upon this background, it was observed that the ability of the women to be organized was perhaps the strongest single factor that contributed to the success of the project.

Such impressive level of grassroots coordination led to; better ownership of the project, improved decision making, solidarity amongst beneficiaries, passion and motivation amongst the grassroots women, and it helped ground the project on principles of meaningful community participation.

4.1.3. Economic Outcomes

While there has been notable increase in the levels of income for the various targeted households, a question that lingers is whether the extent of change achieved is the best

there could have been - with a better combination of approaches. Put differently, could the project have achieved more? In addressing this concern, there's need to understand the multiplicity of factors that have a bearing on changes of income at the household level. In essence, to increase economic opportunities for women means addressing multiple and deep rooted and intractable constraints and thus requires a complex set of interventions cutting across the various disciplinary and sector focuses.