



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO RECOGNIZE, REDUCE AND REDISTRIBUTE UNPAID CARE WORK IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMING

Photo: UN Women/Seynabou Sarr

Summary

A final independent evaluation of the “Transformative Approaches to Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work in Women’s Economic Empowerment Programming” (3R Programme), commissioned by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), was conducted between December 2022 and April 2023. This executive summary of the evaluation report provides findings and recommendations derived from an integrated analysis of data from stakeholder consultations and field visits, as well as from a desk review of programme documents.

Programme rationale

Care work is essential for human well-being as well as for a vibrant, sustainable economy with a productive labour force. The centrality of care to sustainable development and its relevance for gender equality are now widely recognized by the global community, including as a target under Sustainable Development Goal 5.1. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, –which intensified and increased care work– women already did three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men.¹ To address the inequities in unpaid care work, UN Women developed the 3R Programme, which was implemented in Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa with funding from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) in 2021-2023. The overarching goal of the programme was to remove the structural barriers to women’s full and equal participation in the economy by recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work.

The **3R Programme Theory of Change** contributed to this overarching goal and programme impact through the following two intended outcomes:

1. National and local governments develop/strengthen laws, policies and services that recognize and address the disproportionate share of unpaid care work by women and girls.
2. Women’s cooperatives and other organizations provide transformative care services in rural and/or urban areas to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.

1. UN Women. 2019. [Progress of the World’s Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World](#).

The Theory of Change framed the programme as follows:

1. If national and local laws, policies and services recognize and address the disproportionate share of unpaid care work by women and girls; and
2. Transformative care services in rural and urban areas reduce and redistribute unpaid care work; then
3. Women's and girls' unpaid care work in Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa is reduced, freeing up their time to equally contribute to and benefit from sustainable livelihoods; because
4. Structural gender inequalities that prevent women and girls from realizing their economic rights and empowerment were removed.

Overview of the 3R Programme

A literature review and interviews affirmed that the 3R Programme was built on UN Women's expertise at the global, regional and country level as well as on UN Women's existing strong partnerships with women's cooperatives and other women's rights organizations, traditional leaders, communities, men and boys, and the private and public sectors to address unequal power relations, systemic discrimination and harmful norms and practices that underpin inequities in unpaid care work across the three countries. Tables 1 and 2 provide summaries of the programme that was implemented.

TABLE 1

Summary of the 3R Programme: Transformative Approaches to Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work in Women's Economic Empowerment Programming

Objectives of the programme	<p>Goal: Structural barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economies of Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa are removed by recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work.</p> <p>Outcome 1: National and local governments develop/strengthen laws, policies and services that recognize and address the disproportionate share of unpaid care work by women and girls.</p> <p>Outcome 2: Women's cooperatives and other organizations provide transformative care services in rural and/or urban areas to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.</p>
Target groups	National and local governments, including traditional and community leaders; national, provincial and women-led organizations, associations and cooperatives; women farmers and smallholder farmer organizations; civil society organizations; men and boys; private sector providers of microinsurance.
Locations of the programme	<p>Global implementation included normative support, knowledge management, monitoring and reporting, and overall coordination.</p> <p>Country implementation was carried out in Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa.</p>

Evaluation purpose, objectives and intended users

The purpose of the final evaluation was to assess programme results and how and why they were achieved or not; the assessment can inform decisions such as whether to continue, improve, scale up or replicate the programme elsewhere. The evaluation aimed to assess the programme's effectiveness, record evidence on the results, and highlight

the strategies that have contributed to, or hindered, their achievement. In addition, the evaluation team assessed the project's contribution to increased national capacity, ownership and transparency.

The primary and secondary users of this evaluation report are outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2**Primary and secondary users of the independent evaluation report**

Primary users	Secondary users
UN Women	Cooperatives and associations
UN system	Civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in unpaid care work
National and local governments, particularly entities working in care services and insurance services	Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres
Donors	Local authorities and community leaders
Programme staff	Traditional and religious leaders
Implementing partners involved in the design, implementation and oversight of the 3R Programme, and who executed programme activities on the ground	Academia and research institutions
	The private sector, including companies providing care services; climate-resilient, time-saving technologies; insurance; and digital products

Evaluation process

The evaluation was carried out between December 2022 and April 2023 by an evaluation team comprised of one senior evaluation consultant and one national expert. Evaluators visited all three countries and collected data using stakeholder maps of the three country programmes.

Findings**Relevance**

The evaluation team found that the 3R Programme specifically responded to the need for more programmatic interventions on recognizing, reducing and redistributing (3Rs) women's unpaid care and domestic work, as well as overall time poverty. In Rwanda and Senegal, the evaluation team observed and confirmed the application of a holistic package of solutions, i.e. transformative care services, including the provision of childcare services, early childhood education, and access to time-saving infrastructure and services that enable and/or strengthen women's effective participation in economic empowerment programmes and interventions.

Though programme implementation largely fell short in South Africa, its design was clearly mapped out and actively involved the participation of the programme participants, implementing partners and government partners. With support from Global Affairs Canada, the 3R Programme successfully integrated a stand-alone care component into existing UN Women programmes on climate-resilient agriculture and rural women's economic empowerment in the three target countries.

The programme design responded to the aspirations of Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa to achieve inclusive economic growth and nationalized SDGs (mainly targets under SDGs 5, 8 and 4) by creating a more enabling environment for women's economic participation. Using the integration of the Women's Empowerment Principles² (WEPs) as leverage, the 3R Programme promoted positive transformation in relation to several key drivers for women's social and economic empowerment, which contributed to the achievement of the three countries' international obligations and UN Women global and country-level strategic plans.

2. The Women's Empowerment Principles are a tool meant to guide the private sector to improve gender equality.

Effectiveness

The programme design and implementation clearly integrated key entry points and strategic partnerships to promote women's economic empowerment at the policy, institutional and grassroots levels. Governments, implementing partners and UN Women worked collaboratively to address 3R priorities. After time-saving technologies were provided to women at the grassroots level, the evaluation team observed a dramatic reallocation of women's and girls' time to support their economic empowerment and the inclusion of women-owned enterprises into value chains. In Rwanda and Senegal, and marginally in South Africa, programme implementation contributed to immediate improvement in early childhood development and saw the redeployment of time to achieve more active participation of women in the economy as one of the most effective strategies to remove discrimination against women and achieve more inclusive economic growth (SDG 1 and SDG 10).

To review the Theory of Change, evaluators inspected and observed the high quality of the time-saving and climate-resilient technologies and equipment, services and infrastructure, along with capacity-building activities, and that they were relevant to women's interests and needs across the three countries. The training programmes were described as very effective by trainees in focus groups, but the effectiveness could be improved through standardization, longer training duration and better sequencing of training activities. The advocacy and policy interventions were positively applied at local levels but suffered from the short duration of the programme (18 months) at national levels to coordinate and advocate with governments and stakeholders, which required more time to internalize the programme.

Efficiency

Guided by the principle of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), the programme emphasized the needs of women in vulnerable situations, which was evident in the allocation of the budget to promote their employability and the inclusion of women-led cooperatives into the market. Allocation of resources was done strategically and with sustainability in mind, taking into account the strategic position of the partners to contribute to the achievement of outputs, as well as their capacities to take over assets and infrastructure developed under the programme after programme closure.

The implementation of the 3R Programme was cost-effective and presented good value for money in Rwanda and Senegal. For Rwanda, the programme design, onboarding, implementation and reporting all worked according to plan and by the time of the evaluation, 100 per cent of deliverables by implementing partners and 97 per cent of the activities by the UN Women Country Office had been completed.

For Senegal and South Africa, the concentration of activities in the second part of the financial year can be attributed to the late operational start of the programme. The initial months beginning in October 2021 were mainly dedicated to the onboarding of programme staff, whereas the early months of 2022 were mostly employed for the selection of the main implementing partners in charge of supporting the various components of the project.

For Senegal, lengthy selection and administrative processes resulted in the signature of the agreement with the Regional Development Agency (ARD) in April 2022 with funds being transferred to the implementing partner only in May. ARD resorted to pre-financing the first activities to partially mitigate the late start, but the delays nonetheless significantly reduced the overall implementation period. An extension to the initial implementation period up to December 2022 proved necessary to ensure the finalization of programme activities, followed by a further extension to finalize specific activities in the first trimester of 2023.

For Senegal, good practices emerged in the use of human resources, which leveraged available technical capacities across UN Women. The UN Women West and Central Africa Regional Office strongly participated in programme implementation, with two personally leading the policy and innovation components of the 3R Programme. Interviewed UN Women personnel regarded this practice as a valuable means to enhance internal capacity-building, and external stakeholders appreciated the support of thematic experts on specific components, in addition to the overall project management and coordination functions assumed by UN Women.

Concerning South Africa, apart from the Azali Health Care component, no significant programmatic implementation took place to allow evaluation. Between January and December 2022, the 3R Programme implemented by the UN Women South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO) worked with Azali Health Care as an implementing partner, pursuing outputs under the two outcomes and specifically undertaking advocacy activities through the Men's Parliament

on laws and policies that seek to recognize and reduce unpaid care work among men, women, boys and girls for women's economic empowerment; the capacity-building of national and local authorities to develop and implement laws; policies and services that address unpaid care work through mapping of care services; evidence from commissioned studies to identify gaps in laws and policies related to unpaid care work; and awareness-raising activities with community members.



Photo: UN Women Rwanda

Sustainability

Across the three programme countries, the choice of partners and entities involved in programme implementation stands out as a key enabler of sustainability. Key stakeholders, including governments and implementing partners, expressed full appreciation, commitment and expertise for continuing to work to remove structural barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economies of Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa after programme closure. For Senegal, the key implementing partner, ARD, has been working in the territory for 25 years and is strongly established on the ground where it will continue operating following the end of the 3R Programme. This will allow the organization to continue nurturing their partnership with the Women's Rice Producers Network of the North (REFAN) and other programme participants who will provide post-programme information, allowing ARD to monitor the evolution of 3R Programme benefits during future field missions in the area.

The capacity-building component represented a hallmark of the 3R Programme's contribution to sustainability across the three countries, targeting the government, local authorities, implementing partners and civil society organizations. A key success in Senegal was the training provided to ARD's Regional Technical Committee members who were empowered on the various dimensions of unpaid care work, their implications for women's empowerment, and on approaches to address related inequalities.

In Rwanda, the Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC) significantly contributed to challenging cultural gender norms that prevent men and boys from being involved in care work, which is a major barrier to women's economic empowerment, in the Kirehe, Ngoma and Nyaruguru districts. A partnership with ActionAid contributed to raising awareness through policy dialogues and capacity-development initiatives on women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work, targeting local leaders, religious leaders, women's organizations and development partners in the Gasabo and Musanze districts. UN Women Rwanda also partnered with three national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) —the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI) and Help a Child—to assess the capacity of women's cooperatives in terms of care service provision in the three districts. The NGOs selected four cooperatives in total to implement care solutions. The evaluator observed high-quality Early Childhood Development centres and listened to the testimony of teachers and parents about how the 3R Programme has changed the lives of hundreds of households and that thousands of women are now able to engage in agricultural cooperatives.

Through the partnerships with the Rwanda Development Organization (RDO) and the Institut Africain pour le Développement Économique et Social (INADES), UN Women Rwanda also provided women's cooperatives and other organizations access to time-saving, climate-resilient technologies and equipment needed to complement transformative care services. These included rainwater harvesting storage facilities, improved cooking stoves that are fuel-efficient, drying sheds, plastic silos, solar powered/manual irrigation pumps, shellers, grinders, sprayers and cleaning tools.

The policy implementation and advocacy work done through the 3R Programme represents another factor holding promise for sustainability. Across the three countries, strong advocacy work leveraged the National Gender Policies, protocols and legal provisions and, by simultaneously acting at the local and national levels, the 3R Programme contributed to sparking policy-level conversations on unpaid care work, as well as making tangible steps towards its mainstreaming.

At the local level, the inclusion of unpaid care work in six Local Development Plans in Senegal marks a landmark in dismantling structural gender inequalities that prevent

women and girls from realizing their economic rights and empowerment. For South Africa, the evaluation team assessed that UN Women SAMCO's work succeeded in implementing policy-related work that fulfils the normative, coordination and operational mandates of UN Women. The partnership with Azali Health Care allowed for greater reach to communities and platforms nationally to raise awareness on the 3Rs of unpaid care work and enable behaviour change among men and boys to act as HeForShe advocates.³

Gender, human rights and disability inclusion

The 3R Programme was designed and implemented based on the principles of human rights and gender equality. It directly targeted root causes of gender-based inequalities, including harmful cultural norms and perceptions of social and economic participation of women, by integrating the WEPs into implementing partners' programme outputs, and strengthening the capacities of key duty-bearing institutions to prevent discrimination against women in the economic sphere. The programme thereby promoted sustainable solutions to gender-based inequalities that hamper women's participation in the economy, removing structural barriers and addressing unpaid care work.

The overarching approach of the 3R Programme was to identify and tackle the root causes of gender inequality. Its transformative nature lies in its questioning of existing norms and dynamics that regulate unpaid care work and contribute to perpetuating gender inequalities. The recognition of unpaid care as a key obstacle to women's economic empowerment constitutes the innovative basis around which efforts to engage other actors to take responsibility for this work and redistribute it are conceived. To achieve its objectives, the programme strongly invested in the participation and promoted the involvement of programme participants in danger of being left behind.

Programme participants were also directly involved in the definition of operational activities on the ground. At the local level, women farmers participated in the consultations for identifying the time-saving solutions that would be most relevant to their work, in contrast to having to accept predefined service packages. The strong use of research elements through context and needs assessment allowed the generation of valuable information to explain the various dimensions of unpaid care work, with the aim of finding relevant solutions that would directly respond

to the needs of women in vulnerable situations. Most importantly, the methodology adopted in this process across the three countries consisted of diverse groups of women, including those with low levels of formal education and literacy, ensuring their voices would also be part of the discourse on unpaid care work and shaping the nature of the 3R Programme.

Mainstreaming the LNOB principle in the 3R Programme was most evident in design and implementation: the criteria for inclusion were consistently applied by the programme participants and implementing partners, and interventions addressed the needs of women in vulnerable situations, i.e. rural, poor and otherwise excluded, in the most disadvantaged regions of Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa. Their feedback was regularly sought by the implementing partners to assist an informed selection and revision of strategies.

In Rwanda, the 3R Programme targeted a cooperative of women with disabilities who benefited from time-saving and climate resilient facilities that helped the members to easily access water for both domestic and productive use (mainly production of vegetables). Moreover, children with disabilities of women part of another cooperative benefitted by the ECDs and received equipment appropriate to their specific disability.



Photo: UN Women Rwanda

Lessons learned

The implementation of the programme resulted in the generation of lessons learned that confirm the validity and effectiveness of strategies employed by the programme. They also provide important insights for wider dissemination and replication of the benefits and expertise developed

³. HeForShe is the United Nations global solidarity movement for gender equality. It entails an invitation for men and people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible and united force for gender equality. <https://www.heforshe.org/en>

under the programme. Mainly, the lessons learned point out the importance of the full involvement of programme participants in the design, implementation and monitoring of the programme; the need for evidence-based gender, human rights and disability inclusion in the programme; the development of partnerships for solutions for gender-based inequality and for the empowerment of women; providing adequate time to implement capacity development and behaviour change activities; and the critical importance of the involvement of the private sector to promote women's economic empowerment, and building their resilience at the grassroots level.

Another key lesson was that mobilizing women, including the most vulnerable women, at the community level, including through self-help groups, and providing them with space boosts their social skills for leadership, communication, negotiation, teamwork, decision making and others that are critical for becoming employable and running a successful business. Across the three countries, the evaluation team observed Early Childhood Development Centres, cooperatives and community capacity development activities being effectively led by women.

Conclusions

The evaluation concluded that the 3R Programme filled a critical gap in alleviating structural barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economies of Rwanda and Senegal by recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work through developing a holistic package of transformative solutions, such as childcare services and time- and labour-saving equipment, including water pumps and tanks, environmentally friendly stoves and food warmers, and tri-motorcycles to transport production.

Across the three countries, the value of the UN Women 3R Programme is undisputed. It was transformational, innovative and highly relevant to support regional, national and community priorities. The programme responded in a context-sensitive manner to the basic needs of targeted groups and was successful at providing hard-to-reach women in vulnerable situations with comprehensive, time-saving technologies, employment opportunities and gender-based violence services, through the careful selection of locations and national and local implementing partners and involvement of local authorities and CSOs.

Across the three countries, sustainable impact on women's empowerment in communities was achieved through the programme's components that combined generation of local evidence and knowledge on unpaid care work, advocacy and policy work at the national and local level, access to transformative care services, capacity-building and awareness-raising for behaviour change, digital micro-insurance solutions, and access to time-saving, climate-resilient infrastructure and technologies.

Recommendations

Targeted policies and legal provisions are urgently needed to accelerate progress on women's economic empowerment. These should promote the equitable sharing of unpaid care and domestic work between men and women and create more paid jobs in the care economy, including through providing care services, better social protection for women, and climate-resilient and time-saving infrastructure, technologies and equipment contributing to the reduction of unpaid care work.

The evaluation recommends putting continued and deepened emphasis on getting data and evidence to fill knowledge gaps; strengthening capacities and dialogue around the 3Rs of unpaid care work; and strengthening the planning of exit strategies for the various components, by ensuring that specific actions contributing to the sustainability of results are implemented.

The pivotal role of the private sector in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of all women should be emphasized, while proactively using existing UN system opportunities to promote the development of innovative public and private partnerships and leveraging the catalytic role of SDG 17.

UN Women should plan for a standardized capacity development portfolio with a 5R framework (recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work, and representing and rewarding paid care work), focusing on improved knowledge generation and dissemination, longer training duration, and better sequencing of training activities.

Finally, UN Women Regional and Country Office Strategic Notes should profile care work as a central to UN Women's triple mandate, and clearly advocate for relevant national and local policies, programmes and budgetary allocations.