

Refugee Crisis in Cameroon: The Contribution of UN Women and MINPROFF to the Empowerment of Women in the Refugee Site of Ngam

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Abstract

The history of the world has been marked by violence and wars. These situations push people to be displaced from one place to another and from one country to the other to seek for refuge. Today more than ever before, the number of people leaving one region to the other is increasing, and among these are women and children. According to the UN high commissioner for refugees, in 2017, 65.6 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide, with nearly 20 people being displaced every minute as a result of conflict or persecution. Reports from UNHCR (2017) Cameroon, shows that Cameroon has more than 600,000 refugees mostly coming from the Central African Republic and Nigeria. The Government of Cameroon works with partners like the UNHCR, the World Food Programme, UNICEF, UN Women and other national institutions like the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) to improve the lives of these refugees. UN Women and MINPROFF work particularly with women and girls. This study uses mainly the qualitative method of data collection to evaluate the contributions made by UN Women and MINPROFF to empower women in the refugee site of Ngam.

Key words: Refugees, Asylum, Empowerment

Introduction and Problem

The history of the world has always been marked by violence and wars. These wars pushed population to displace from one place to another, from one country to the other to seek for a better life. Today more than before, the number of people quitting a region to another is increasing. According to Care.org, there are 65million refugees worldwide and 20 people are forcibly displaced every minute as a result of conflict or persecution (www.care.org/emergency/global-refugee-crisis). Sizeable populations have left their homes to escape from persecution, armed conflict or violence resulting in mass displacement around the world.

A refugee crisis refers to large groups of displaced people, who could either be internally displaced persons, refugees, or other migrants. Many reasons have been advanced for this. According to the UN refugee agency, reasons for the increase in refugee crises include wars, persecutions of people precisely because of their race, their religion, their political belief, human-rights violation, environment and climate change resulting in climate disorder or natural disasters such as floods and economic hardship causing poverty and hunger. When fleeing their homes and seeking refuge, people lose their means of livelihoods (Krause, 2014). As reported by Jabbar and Zaza (2015:310)

'Many of those people lost their homes and belongings; their education was interrupted and their human rights were violated. They witnessed war first-hand and were forced to leave their country to find a safe haven elsewhere. Men, women and children have since been exposed to traumas and psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, neurosis and stress disorders.'

According to UNHCR (2013:12 – 13), almost 81% of all refugees are caused in developing countries with mainly patriarchal and male-dominated society and structures in which women traditionally possess fewer rights thus making the refugee experience and status of women different from that of men.

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As posited by the UN Secretary General (2016), women represent almost half of the 244 million migrants and half of the 19.6million refugees worldwide. Due to their specific sex and gender roles and given the socio-cultural structure of the society, women refugees' needs, priorities and voices have to be given special attention.

Refugees generally face enormous challenges as they struggle for survival but the challenges faced by women refugees are gender specific. These challenges include among others, sexual violence, access to health care, physical abuse and even human trafficking. Friedman (2016), reports that women refugees are more vulnerable to abuses because of their gender specificity. The lack of access to appropriate resources compounds the lives of female refugees. Displacement is usually a very disempowering exercise for women. Being traditionally responsible for children, the elderly and domestic work, women are often overburdened by the realities of displacement (UNHCR, 2001b). Relegated to the domestic sphere, refugee women often depend on male relatives for access to basic necessities provided in camps. They are often excluded from decision-making over issues that affect the running of the camps.

Cameroon is one of the countries in Central and West Africa that has been hit of late by the refugee crisis. According to a report from UNHCR Cameroon Factsheet (June, 2018), Cameroon is host to more than 688,824 people of concern with 259,775 Central African Republic refugees and 97,085 Nigerian refugees. As host country, Cameroon is expected to create refugee camps and refugee sites under the supervision of the United Nation, in order to provide shelter and protection to refugees. Cameroon has one refugee camp in Minawao in the Far North and refugee sites in the East, Adamawa, North and Far-North regions.

Several national and international institutions work with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in the management of the refugee crisis in Cameroon. Among these institutions are UN Women and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family known by its French acronym as MINPROFF. Though the management of refugee crisis is often assumed to be gender neutral, it usually overlooks the different experiences of women and men refugees and thus unintentionally produces gender-blind and even gender-bias effects that disempower women refugees. However, some institutions do engage in gender-specific actions with the intention of empowering women refugees. Such was the case with UN WOMEN and MINPROFF at the refugee site of Ngam in the Adamawa region of Cameroon. This paper therefore sets out to analyse these actions and activities of UN WOMEN, an international institution and MINPROFF, a national institution, to determine whether their actions did actually contribute to the empowerment of women refugees in the refugee site of Ngam.

Research questions

The main research question is:

How do the activities of UN WOMEN and MINPROFF contribute to the empowerment of women in the refugee site of Ngam?

Specifically, the following research questions are answered in the paper

- What are the programmes and project (approaches and strategies) used by UN WOMEN and MINPROFF to empower women refugees in the refugee site of Ngam?
- How have the programmes and projects of UN Women and MINPROFF impacted the economic status of women in the refugee site of Ngam?
- How have the projects of UN Women and MINPROFF helped women refugees to gain self-confidence, self-esteem and fulfilment?
- What are the limitations of these projects and what can be done to improve women's situation?

Literature Review

The Concept of Empowerment

According to UNHCR (2001), empowerment "is a process through which women and men in disadvantaged positions increase their access to knowledge, resources and decision-making power, and raise awareness of participation in their communities in order to reach a level of control over their own environment". It refers to processes or measures that an individual or a people, uses to gain control of their lives and interest. Mandal (2013) sees empowerment as "a multi-dimensional social process and it helps people gain control over their lives" (2013: 18). The concept of empowerment thus captures the sense of gaining control over one's life and participating in decision-making. There are different types and forms of empowerment.

The different types of empowerment include: economic empowerment which seeks to ensure that people have the appropriate skills, capabilities and resources and access to secure and sustainable incomes and livelihoods; social empowerment which strengthens women’s position and social relations in social structures to help address the social discriminations that exist in the society; political empowerment that gives people the capacity to analyse, organise and mobilise so as to participate at all levels of governance structures; cultural empowerment which redefines the rules and norms of a community focussing on minority rights and using culture as entry and educational empowerment which gives an individual the intellectual potential for socio-economic and political wellbeing (Mandal, 2013; Piron and Watkins, 2004).

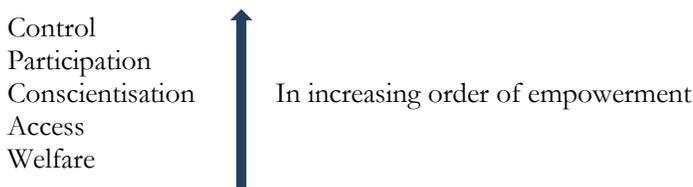
Empowerment can also be individual or collective. According to Rowlands (1997) individual empowerment refers to the process whereby the confidence and self-esteem of each individual is raised so as to enhance the individual’s ability to take charge of their own needs. Collective empowerment on the other hand has to do with the collective abilities of individuals to take charge of meeting not only their own needs but those of their households, communities, organisations, institutions and societies. The root of empowerment thus comes from the term ‘Power’ which is often contested in social and political theories. Women are a disadvantaged group, not equal to men, but are not powerless and could obtain Power (Edward-Jauch, 2014). Power can be possessed and women can obtain power. According to Rowlands (1997), power has 4 dimensions: power over (ability to influence and coerce) and power to (organise and change existing hierarchies), power with (power from collective action) and power within (power from individual consciousness).

Table 1: Types of power relation and implications for Empowerment

Type of power relation	Implications for empowerment
Power over	ability to influence and coerce changes in underlying resources and power to challenge constraints
Power to	organise and change existing hierarchies; increases individual capacity and opportunities for access
Power with	increased power from collective action; increased solidarity to challenge underlying assumptions
Power within	increased individual consciousness, awareness and desire for change

Source: Rowlands (1997).

The Women Empowerment Framework (WEF) developed by Sara Longwe provides some useful distinctions between different levels of empowerment from welfare through access, conscientisation, participation and control in increasing order of empowerment (Jones, 2011). The welfare level is where basic needs are satisfied. This does not necessarily require structural causes to be addressed and tends to view those involved as passive recipients. Access level guarantees equal access to resources like education, land, credit etc. while the level of conscientisation is awareness-raising to situation of self and conscious efforts made to address discriminations. Participation in decision-making, leadership roles and control of resources and decisions are important steps of empowerment.



Empowerment of female refugees

Women and girls make up more than half of the world’s forcibly displaced people. Due to the different difficult situations in which they find themselves, they try to struggle for survival for them and their families.

This exposes them to a lot of risk as sometimes they have to sacrifice their safety and their livelihood. Therefore, ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls must be a major part of every humanitarian package for refugees. According to www.womensrefugee.org, women should be empowered to be able to make ‘informed decisions about their own wellbeing and that of their families’. This can be done by getting women refugees involved with the humanitarian agencies that are running livelihood programmes as they can best advise on the scale and size of their risks and suggest ways to manage them.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) acknowledges that women and girls displaced by war and unrest, face serious challenges on a daily basis. They are more likely to become victims of sexual violence and many of them forego their education to care for younger siblings. This leaves them with little or no means to make a living. Empowerment of women refugee has thus become imperative (www.unhcr.org). In the case of Syrian women refugees in Jordan, UN Women in 2012 opened its first Oasis where it created a centre for women and girls to access emergency aid and specialised gender-based violence services at Za’atari refugee camp in northern Jordan. The Oasis has, over the years, grown to comprise multi-sectoral services that build women’s resilience and empowerment (www.unwomen.org).

Furthermore, for empowerment of women to be achieved, projects have to look at women’s gender-related barriers which limit their access to knowledge and resources as well as their participation in decision-making and economic life (UNHCR, 2001b). It is important that any strategy towards empowerment should take care of the multiple dimensions (social, economic, political, cultural etc.) of barriers that women face in order to yield results. It is therefore important according to the UNHCR (2001b) that gender analysis be integrated into refugee packages to facilitate gender equality in the empowerment process. That is why, in relation to the Longwe Framework, the UNHCR illustrates good practices to achieving empowerment of refugees as follows:

- “Provide equality of access for all to knowledge and resources, and devise strategies to address any barriers that women and men, girls and boys may encounter;
- Actively challenge biases based on sex and gender roles rooted in the daily beliefs of refugees, internally displaced populations and returnees, as well as those who work to assist and support them;
- Develop strategies to raise community awareness of the value of women’s resources and labour as well as women’s rights;
- Promote the participation of women and men in decision-making centres with a focus on influencing and impacting decisions;
- Build the capacity of local women’s organisations and networks to function locally to advance the rights of women and girls;
- Realize equality of control over the environments displaced and returnee women and men, girls and boys live in” etc. (2001:8).

The New York Declaration (2016) goes further to provide a gender-responsive action agenda for addressing large movements of migrants and refugees. The Declaration commits UN Member States, among other things, to “recognize the need to address the special situation and vulnerability of migrant women and girls by, inter alia, incorporating a gender perspective into migration policies and strengthening national laws, institutions and programmes to combat gender-based violence, including trafficking in persons and discrimination against women and girls (UN 2018 :11). The Declaration further vows to take into consideration the different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of women, girls, boys, and men, and commits to tackling the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against refugee and migrant women and girls. More importantly, it commits to ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in the development of local solutions and opportunities (UN, 2018).

Different projects have been carried out in different camps and refugee sites in different parts of the world to empower female refugees. Sometimes these projects are women-specific and other times women are part of larger gender neutral or engendered projects. The Hashoo Foundation, a non-profit organisation in Pakistan since 1988 provides services to underprivileged members in society and in 1999 through a funded project entitled ‘Skills training and income generation for Urban Afghan refugees’ equipped male and female refugees with vocational skills tailored to their needs. The training included among others, tailoring, cooking and beauty skills to help Afghan women refugees gain access into the labour market and so increase their household income (www.hashoofoundation.org/projects).

Furthermore, the Hashoo Foundation empowered in the northern areas of Pakistan economically through a Honey Bee Farming Project, initiated in 2007. The aim was to expand on their entrepreneurship opportunities to compete in the labour market, and thus improve their status in the community as well as giving them a voice in the decision-making process in a male-dominant society (HashooFoundation.org).

In Thailand on the other hand, the international NGO, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), carried out a vocational training of refugees mostly from Myanmar in Ban Mae NaiSoi and Ban Mae Surin refugee camp in 2013. These vocational training courses were complemented by practical learnings, including communication and decision-making skills, as well as counselling and information on the current situation in Myanmar. The aim of the project was to equip the refugees with the needed skills to find a job when they return back home safely. The skills include hairdressing, beauty therapy, office management, hotel management and repair of small electronic gadgets (<https://www.acted.org/en/countries/Thailand/>).

Methodology

This study was carried out between May and June, 2018 at the refugee site of Ngam which is one of the two refugee camps in the Adamawa region of Cameroon. Ngam is a village in the Mbere division of Adamawa region and is located at about 45 km from Central African Republic. The study is mainly qualitative and uses the non-probability sampling technique of data collection to evaluate the contributions made by UN Women and MINPROFF to empower women in the refugee site of Ngam. Since empowerment is a personal process, the qualitative research design was adopted to do an in-depth analysis and give respondents the opportunity to express their feelings, attitudes and their experiences.

The population of this study is made up of all the women in the refugee site of Ngam who are part of the UN Women and MINPROFF empowerment projects. The UN Women /MINPROFF data base was huge and for a qualitative study the researcher decided to use the non-probability sampling technique and in particular, the snowball. This was due to the fact that the refugees are many and are involved in many projects and activities. Although UN Women and MINPROFF had the list of beneficiaries, the women were difficult to locate and so the snow-ball technique was very appropriate to identify respondents. This chain referral process allowed the researcher to identify respondents who were otherwise difficult to reach. Female refugees who had benefitted from the projects of UN Women and MINPROFF were identified and through them other respondents of the same group were identified and studied. By the time we got to 28 women, the data was already on saturation point. This means that no new information was coming from the data. This therefore gave us a sample size of 28 women.

The main instrument for data collection was the interview. Apart from the refugee women, representatives of UN Women and MINPROFF were also interviewed on the different Programmes, approaches and strategies that they use to empower women at the site. For the female refugees, the interview guide covered demographic information in terms of age, socio-economic status, marital status, education and number of years spent at the site. The second part of the interview investigated into the different projects that they have been involved in and how these projects have impacted them economically and socially. The last part of the interview sought information about the participants' opinions and appreciation of the programmes and projects.

The interviews were conducted in French since most of the refugees were from the Central African Republic (CAR) and spoke mostly French. The interviews were later transcribed and the non-numerical data was organised by putting the research questions into tables and assigning data according to each research question. The data was later coded descriptively by categories and analysed using the deductive approach whereby data is analysed with the research questions as guide for grouping and analysis. Findings are presented thematically.

Findings/Discussions

The refugee site of Ngam, Adamawa Region of Cameroon was created on the 14th of July 2014 and it covers a total area of 36 hectares of land although for the moment only 20 hectares is being used. As of June, 2018, updates from the UNHCR sub-office revealed that the total population on the site was 6900 with 62% of them are under 18 years and 53% of them female. The site is made up of 17 blocks and these blocks have leaders who are men with women are vice leaders. The three types of houses in the camp include thatch, ground and wood.

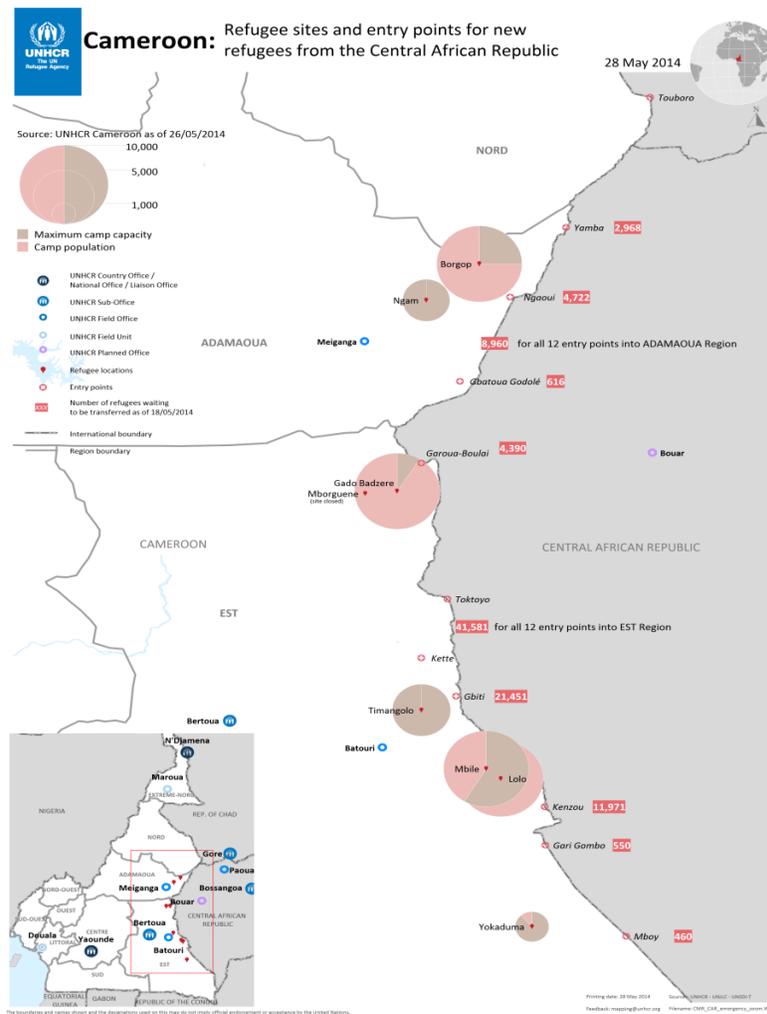


Figure 1: Map of refugee sites in Cameroon (source: UNHCR)

Demographics

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by demographic characteristics

Age group	N	Marital status	N	Level of Education	N	Time spent in refugee site	N
≤ 20yrs	4	Married	17	No Education	23	3 years	2
21-30yrs	3	Widow	8	Primary Education	4	4 years	10
31-40yrs	9	Single	2	Secondary Education	1	5 years	10
41-50yrs	8	Divorced	1			2 years	6
51-60yrs	4						
Total	28	Total	28	Total	28	Total	28

Of the twenty-eight (28) respondents studied, the majority of them (24) were middle age. That is between 21 and 60 years of age. The remaining 4 were twenty years and below. In relation to marital status, 17 respondents were married, 8 were widows, 2 singles and 1 divorced. Twenty-three respondents had no formal education, while 4 had primary education and just 1 had post primary education. Of the 28 respondents, 10 had lived in the refugee site for five years, another 10 for 4 years, 2 for three years and 6 for two years.

Projects by UN Women and MINPROFF to empower women in the Refugee Site of Ngam

UN Women and MINPROFF have been working in the refugee site of Ngam since July 2017. Following interviews with staff of UN Women and MINPROFF, it was revealed that, a Space for social cohesion for women has been built at the site for the socio-psychological wellbeing and the economic empowerment of women refugees. This centre has two workers and a Guard, who works as translator and mediator to the refugee community. Our research focuses on the economic and social empowerment of women refugees.

To empower women refugees, UN Women works with the Cameroonian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the family, better known by its French acronym, MINPROFF. Together, the two institutions created a project for the empowerment of female refugees at Ngam. The staff in charge of economic empowerment revealed that 'as we came to the refugee site of Ngam we started with a programme for the economic empowerment of refugee women with the means available at the time'. First, they did an assessment of the market; an economic profiling. The programme had as goal to help women to raise money and be autonomous through income-generating activities. The programme had three domains; the first was to get refugee women to start doing petty trading, the second was the provision of grinding machines to refugee women groups and the third, to promote agriculture among refugee women by providing them with healthy seeds.

After the assessment was done, project staff had to identify the most vulnerable refugee women at the site. "What we did was to register the women while taking note of their socio-economic and bio data" reported one staff. "We also shared alongside a package made up of rice, soap, salt, oil, sugar and other provisions. With the information gathered, we were able to determine who was vulnerable and who wasn't. We were looking out especially for women who were not part of any other empowerment project by other institutions operating at the site". Once the list had been established, it was time to launch the programme. The women were able to choose the different projects that they wanted to join and the different activities they wanted to carry out.

The staff explained that "women who wanted to do agriculture, did agriculture; those who wanted petty trading went for it, and those who wanted a grinding machine had it. So, we organised them in groups and lunched the program with training". The women were trained according to their different areas of interest. Those for petty trade receive training in simplified accounting; those who chose agriculture receive training in vegetable cultural techniques and training in breeding of small ruminants. About 170 women were trained in the different domains. After the training the women were given the different items that they needed for their activities.



Officials pose for Family photograph with some beneficiaries receiving grinding machines.

Photo credit: Fajong Joseph-UN Women

Contribution of UN Women and MINPROFF to the Economic Empowerment of Women in the Refugee Site of Ngam

Of the 170 women who were part of the UN Women/MINPROFF women's empowerment project, 28 were interviewed for this study. This gives 15% of the population. Being a qualitative study, the chain referral system or snowball technique was used to identify respondents. In-depth interviews with respondents reveal that respondents are involved in different income-generating activities to achieve economic empowerment. Some of these activities include the production of cassava powder used for couscous, selling of eggs, using flour to do beignets, selling of groundnuts and other food items (salt, sugar, seasonings etc.) and agriculture. Some other women who formed groups were given grinding machines.

Of the 28 women studied, three confessed to having started their little businesses before UN Women and MINPROFF came along to support them while one has had a formal employment with one partner as a translator and so has stopped her business. Sixteen respondents out of the 28 attested that the support from UN Women and MINPROFF has contributed positively to them having a better life than before. Most of them said that their UN Women / MINPROFF sponsored businesses have contributed to their wellbeing because they are able to buy clothes and shoes for their children, and also to address the needs of their families. They are also able to buy basic daily necessities like soap, tea, etc. Many of them are able to save money and one of the respondents said 'I saved more than 150.000 XAF (about 256 USD) and I could travel to Batouri and come back to Ngam'. Three respondents were seen to be far better off economically than the rest and one was proud to say that "I do not suffer like the other women do. I make enough money to take care of my children and family and I have the UN Women and MINPROFF to thank for that. They have been very good to us, giving us money to do business. I have also been very lucky that I have grown up children who help me in my business". It should be noted that this woman runs a restaurant after receiving both start-up capital and training from UN Women and the others are part of the team managing some grinding machines

Eleven respondents testified that they can still live off their businesses but that they have not realised any growth in their finances. "I just struggle to recycle the capital so I don't fall out of business" said one woman. "The capital is small and my problems are many so I try to feed myself and my family and also stay in my food selling business". This story was almost identical with all eleven who said they never had any savings.

On the other hand, comparing her present economic condition with that before they received the help of UN Women/ MINPROFF, one respondent said that there has been no change in her economic situation. "Life is still very tough" she said, "even tougher I must say. My business cannot take care of me and my four children and life is getting more and more difficult by the day". This woman had four children, all below 10 years of age.

According to the staff in charge of women's economic empowerment at the refugee site, the greatest challenge in the process of empowering women economically is the follow-up and monitoring of women's activities. He has to monitor women's income and assess their activities. Follow up is done in two ways. Either the staff goes to the women or the women go to him. Each week women come to see him and give him money to keep. The money is the profit of their activities. "Those involved in petty trading meet every Wednesday and those who received grinding machines for corn or cassava business meet every Tuesday and those who received manual grinding machine for groundnuts meet on Thursday" explained the staff of UN Women. All these meetings take place in the Space. He further explained that "three days each week we follow up these group to assess how they are doing, if they are progressing, what are the difficulties, what we can do to solve these difficulties. There are 13 groups in total".

Looking at the results of our follow up, we can see that it is evolving. Among the 60 women who received the economic kit, 40 of them saved money. And these 40 women all together saved 320.000 FCFA (about 545 USD), the lazy ones saved less than 5000FCFA (9 USD) while the hardworking ones saved from 20.000 to 50.000 FCA (34 – 85 USD). So it works, however economic empowerment is a process. We cannot make a woman to be autonomous in few months. So we started with the second phase, which consists of taking their saving to develop their business and to gain more. Another thing that happened is that some women who did not work with us but worked, may be with other partners. Our work with these women has influence other women especially a group of 11 women who opened a restaurant".

Contribution of UN Women and MINPROFF to the self-confidence and self-esteem of Women in the Refugee Site of Ngam

To further empower female refugees at Ngam, UN Women and MINPROFF have not only focused on economic empowerment but also social empowerment, building the self-confidence and the self-esteem of these women. Interviews with respondents revealed that staff of UN Women and MINPROFF have been talking to young women and girls in the camp about menstruation and menstrual hygiene. This greatly helped to improve on their menstrual hygiene and gave them some level of self-esteem and self-confidence. According to one respondent "it was very embarrassing when I first arrived at the camp. I will hide myself when I was menstruating and be looking for pieces of cloth here and there to pad myself. Things changed when they started talking to us about menstrual hygiene and even gave us pads. I don't hide myself anymore and can move about freely even while menstruating". This experience was similar with almost all the women we talked to.

The space for social cohesion built by UN Women and MINPROFF at the refugee site of Ngam also plays a great role in the lives of the women. They meet there to discuss their lives, their business and other issues. This gives them the psychosocial support that they need to forge ahead with daily challenges. "Sometimes, when you have had a bad day" says one woman, "you just need to go to the space and meet other women and through conversations you feel better. Even when it has to do with issues of violence, the way the staff talk to you makes you feel better".

UN Women and MINPROFF give counselling and livelihood support to victims and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). Further investigations showed that the two institutions try to empower vulnerable women by sensitising women and men against gender-based violence and also on the importance of self-worth and building resilience. UN Women goes further to rehabilitate victims/survivors of GBV and vulnerable women both economically and socially. It was also realised that the refugee women have a women's committee that advocates for them when they are not satisfied with something and also many women are heads of block which gives them leadership roles and responsibilities in the site.

Limitations and Challenges

Despite the enormous efforts by UN Women and MINPROFF to empower women at the refugee site of Ngam, the project still faced some limitations and the women some challenges. Due to poverty and hunger, some women spend the money given to them as start-up capital for business on food and family. "This is a major challenge that we face" complained one staff, "because at the end of the day survival is utmost".

Furthermore, most of the women who were involved in agriculture, complained that their activities did not succeed like those of the women who did trading or those with grinding machines. "All six of us who did agriculture had negative experiences; the seeds were bad and it was not the appropriate season so heavy rains destroyed everything", they complained.

Talking about their daily lives in the camp, the women complained that they still do all the reproductive chores like cooking, collecting fuel woods from distant places. The women and girls spend long hours pumping and carrying heavy containers of water for home use and all these leaves them with little or no time for their businesses and even to attend meetings.

Another challenge the women talked about was the limited number of toilets or latrines in the site which were most of the time very messy. This was confirmed by the staff who said that one toilet served almost 50 persons. This is a major challenge for women whose biological needs requires that they always have clean and toilets available.

Empowerment

Relating the findings to the Longwe and Rolands frameworks, we realise that while some female refugees at Ngam showed signs of empowerment to the level of "control", others only got to the level of "access". As indicated, all 28 women were given start-up capital for petty-trading, agriculture or were given grinding machines for business. This gives them access to resource/capital and "power to" change their situations. Through sensitization, the women were also "conscientised" and empowered with "power within" to become aware and desire the change they need. the psycho-social support that the women receive from each other at the centre also shows some "power with" as it builds their resilience for collective change. It should be noted that the women who were involved in agriculture did not display empowerment beyond access as their crops perished and they were not able to realise any money from it.

Furthermore, with the women's committee and the head of block roles given to some women, they were able to have "power over" some decisions. The women's committee is able to articulate issues relating to women and advocate for better services. However, some of these services advocated for, may take a while to be addressed.

Also, no level or form of empowerment could challenge cultural and religious dictates that determine gender roles and so women are still totally in charge of reproductive chores at home which takes all their time and they can barely be there for important meetings in which decisions are taken. Even the businesses and profits that some women made could only address practical needs but did not empower them enough to challenge existing hierarchies and address their strategic needs

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