

# TRANSFORM

## The economic empowerment issue

Is UN Women relevant,  
effective and efficient?

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5 steps to improve UN Women  
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Mastering innovative  
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## Dear Readers,

A few months ago, we launched *Transform*, the Magazine for Gender Responsive Evaluation. Today, we are pleased to present you our second issue of *Transform*, addressing another critical topic: women's economic empowerment. This subject is important not only for achieving gender equality but also for overall development and poverty reduction. Improving the economic status of women can lead to better outcomes at the individual, family and community level, and has ripple effects across society. Economic empowerment of women affects not only the economic health of countries, but also the overall health and well-being of future generations.

UN Women Independent Evaluation Office undertook a corporate evaluation to learn from progress made so far and inform future work in the area. The evaluation covered all dimensions of women's economic empowerment work in UN Women. It identified strengths and weaknesses and developed five recommendations intended to enhance UN Women work in women's economic empowerment at both the national and global level. Highlights of its findings and next steps are included in this issue. To read more detailed versions of the report, you can access the full report at <http://bit.ly/WEEevaluationreport>.

We hope you find this new format engaging and the information within useful in strengthening the work of UN Women and its partners worldwide.

**Marco Segone**

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## *Think Beyond. Stay Ahead.*

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## An empowered future through women's economic empowerment

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Increasing empowerment of women,  
increasing prosperity for all

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# **Increasing empowerment of women, increasing prosperity *for all***

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*Women who control assets and productive resources acquire more power and autonomy in their families and communities, as well as in their economic and political relationships. Ensuring women's rights to use land and productive resources significantly improves household productivity, welfare and nutrition, as well as women's enjoyment of a broad range of rights.*

However, women face a number of burdens in addition to limited access to resources. Worldwide, the responsibility for unpaid care work falls disproportionately on women and young girls, leaving them less time for education, leisure, self-care, political participation, paid work, and other economic activities. Women living in poverty who are burdened by care responsibilities face multiple obstacles to their enjoyment of rights, and often these obstacles and poverty are passed on to future generations. Furthermore, women continue to be concentrated in poorly paid and informal work with little or no social or legal protections. This limits their financial prospects and economic resources necessary for their own wellbeing and that of their families.

There is a need to recognize, reduce, and redistribute the burden of unpaid care work and promote decent work and sustainable livelihoods. UN Women does so in part through technical support to

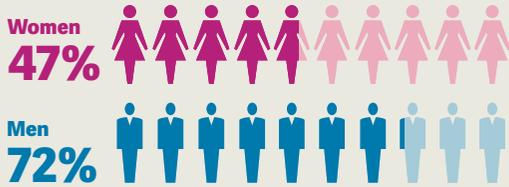
governments to undertake time use surveys and social policy to promote parental leave, sick leave, and affordable or free childcare. It also promotes adequate social protection measures that can be used as key policy instruments to address poverty, reduce class and gender inequality, and accelerate economic development.

In September 2013, UN Women's Executive Board approved the Strategic Plan for 2014–2017, which lays out six priority areas of work, among them women's economic empowerment, especially for the poorest and most excluded. Subsequently, the Economic Empowerment Section undertook several thematic consultations, which provided the opportunity for UN Women staff in the Policy Division and country and regional offices to share their thinking to advance strategic planning on women's economic empowerment and to be effective in implementing the Strategic Plan. The thematic

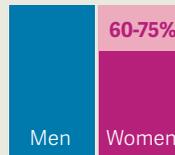
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## The Wage, Work & Asset Gap

Employment-to-population ratio:



Average Wages in most countries:



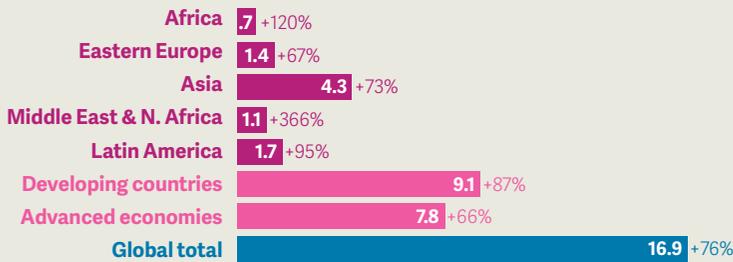
## The cost of inequality

USD **\$9 trillion**

Cost that women in developing countries bear each year due to unequal wages and the fact that women have less access than men to paid jobs

## Benefits of Economic Empowerment

If the wage and employment gap were closed, women's income would increase by the following (USD in trillions):



If women had the same access as men to productive assets in 34 developing countries...

**+7%** Agricultural output

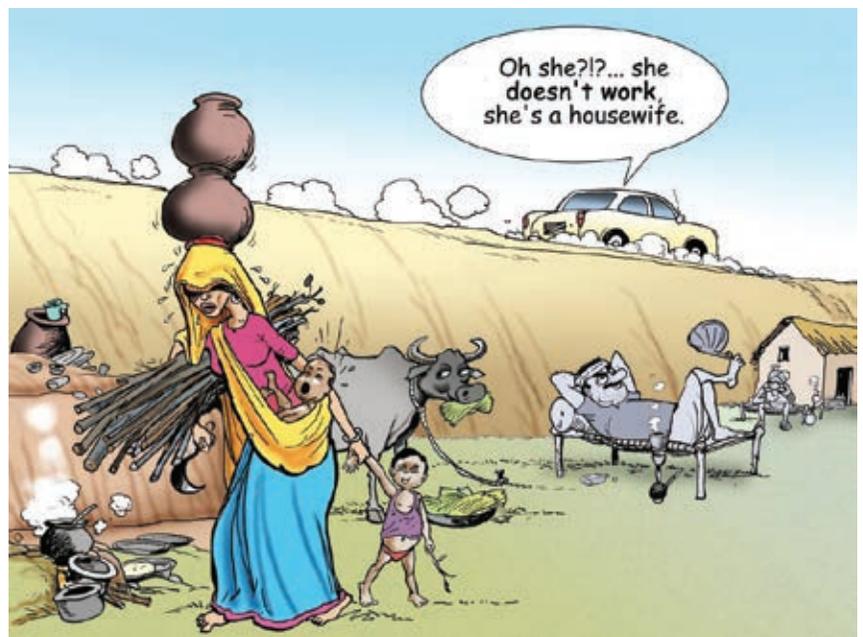
**-17%** Undernourished people

**+150 million** overall estimated decrease in hungry people

consultations helped reorient UN Women strategy to be more focused on poverty, namely:

- Women's access to and control over land and other productive assets and resources
- Women's employment and livelihoods, spanning the continuum of work from unpaid care work to decent work

With these goals in mind, UN Women works with governments, civil society organizations, UN system partners and grassroots organizations around the world to increase education and incomes, improve access to and control over resources, increase security, and encourage global poverty eradication and development.



Leading cartoonist Neelabh Banerjee made this cartoon for UN Women.

# The movement for women's economic empowerment



So that women everywhere  
can achieve their full economic  
potential, creating a world with  
more opportunities, security  
and prosperity for everyone.

Connect and join [empowerwomen.org](https://empowerwomen.org) to  
create & innovate, share & learn, inspire & get inspired.





# Why do we evaluate?

**Are we doing the right things? Are we doing things right? Are we doing these things on a scale that makes a difference? To get better results, we need to know what works. We need to know what doesn't work and how to fix it.**

In 2014, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office undertook a corporate thematic evaluation of the UN Women contribution to women's economic empowerment. The main purpose of evaluation was to inform strategic policy and programmatic decision-making, organizational learning and accountability within UN Women, and contribute to wider knowledge on what works and what does not work in advancing women's economic empowerment.

The evaluation was forward-looking, focusing on organizational learning and improvement, while assessing progress towards results of the UN Women Strategic Plan Goal 2 on women's economic empowerment. The report provided five strategic recommendations that UN Women should consider in moving forward its work on women's economic empowerment.

The primary users of the evaluation findings and recommendations are UN Women Executive Board members, senior management and staff at headquarters, regional and country levels, as well as other global stakeholders working in the area of women's economic empowerment.



I have served as an independent external expert on the Advisory Group for this evaluation, drawing on my long experience of engagement with research and policy advice on women's economic empowerment. I advised on the design of the evaluation and commented on the draft synthesis report.

The team appointed to carry out the evaluation has a wealth of relevant experience and technical expertise. They have produced a very high quality report that is comprehensive, grounded in evidence, and well-balanced. It will assist UN Women in bringing about a needed shift of focus from micro projects (such as loan and/or grants to individual women) to influencing sectoral and national and international policies, finance, institutions and legislation to support women's economic empowerment.

This excellent evaluation should be widely circulated in UN Women and to partner organizations, and UN Women should take forward a programme of activities to discuss and implement the key recommendations of the evaluation.

*Diane Elson, Emeritus Professor, University of Essex, UK;  
Member of the UN Committee for Development Policy*

# WHAT WORKS TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT?

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Check out the **GENDER EQUALITY EVALUATION PORTAL** at  
> [Genderevaluation.unwomen.org](https://genderevaluation.unwomen.org)

The portal makes available more than 400 evaluations and helps promote the exchange of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations related to gender and development.

*Please share your evaluations by clicking 'join'!*

 **UN WOMEN**  Independent Evaluation Office



FINDINGS

# Is UN Women relevant, effective, and efficient?

AFFECTING GLOBAL CHANGE: VISION AND ACTION

*From focusing on strategy, to expanding and enhancing partnerships, to removing barriers and leveraging success, here are 10 critical findings of the evaluation.*



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## Relevance

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### 1 Look to the future: Forward-looking thinking for great achievement

In principle, UN Women is well placed to influence women's economic empowerment (WEE) at global, regional and country level. Recent efforts by the entity to redefine its vision may now provide the strategic and conceptual framework needed to maximize this advantage.

UN Women has recognized that a lack of strategic focus in WEE has, until now, hampered it from being fully recognized as a central actor on women's economic empowerment at the global, regional and national levels. An implicit and evolving theory of change has insufficiently shaped the organization's programming and results frameworks. It has also hindered the production of clear corporate guidance regarding UN Women's normative position and operational approach to WEE.

The main implication of having no definitive theory of change for WEE has been limited strategic

coherence across the organization and this has reduced the ability to expand and deepen partnerships. In overall terms, this has hindered UN Women in attempts to maximize its strengths and strategic position within the international arena.

Despite of the above, UN Women has been able to strategically position

focus on decent work and care work recognizes changes in labour markets and women's role in the economy, its strategic approach to WEE has largely been informed by analyses of the current situation, past trends, and known development pathways. Its work has also not focused on structural economic change, so much as helping women adapt to less than ideal economic conditions locally and globally.

There are some inspiring examples of forward-looking work, such as the support to the Information and

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### *In redefining its theory of change, there is considerable scope for the Entity to be more forward looking*

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itself to influence WEE at a global and country level through its normative and coordination work. The Entity's recent efforts to revise its strategic focus, and clarify an overarching theory of change for WEE, are extremely positive. These are likely to contribute to greater re-alignment of the Entity's operational and regional work with its implicit theories of change.

In redefining its theory of change for WEE, there is considerable scope for the Entity to be more forward looking. While UN Women's increased

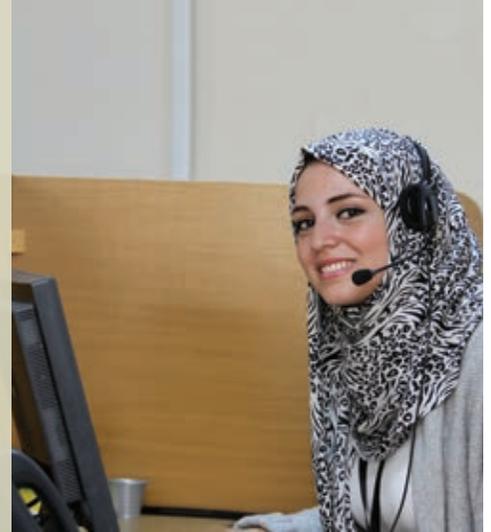
Communication Technology sectors, but – in total – UN Women lacks a future-looking narrative. There is a convincing case for the forthcoming theory of change to position UN Women more strongly in relation to global meta-trends, such as ubiquitous Internet connectivity, 500 million more women in the global middle class by 2020, climate change, rising global inequality, declining male access to employment and the resulting competition over jobs, and global financial instability.

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## GOOD PRACTICE

**Jordan: Alignment of WEE work with emerging labour market trends**

In **Jordan**, the partnership of UN Women with the Ministry of ICT, the Cisco Academy and Jordanian universities through the Achieving E-Quality in the ICT Sector Programme has been strategic in terms of targeting a sector of national importance, high potential for job growth, and with the prospect of flexible working conditions. The 10-year programme, which is now in its fourth and final stage, aims to increase women's participation in the ICT sector by providing them with the ICT skills to compete with their male counterparts. The programme has included four main components, the first a technical component to support ICT students (through reimbursing their educational fees) to take the Cisco course and exam. The second phase has involved supporting job placement of graduates by linking students with the ICT market. This has been achieved through the organization of a Technology Parade and Graduate Internship Programme. The other components have consisted of research efforts (aimed at establishing a baseline to measure progress) and public awareness raising efforts within the universities.



**2 Engender macro-economy: take a role in thought leadership and partnerships**  
UN Women's current comparative advantage in the area of WEE is its policy and normative work. It could potentially be a knowledge hub and thought-leader for human rights based and gender-responsive work on macroeconomic policy.

UN Women has made a significant contribution to global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE. Combined with its global reports, the Entity's normative function has added value through bringing a rights-based perspective and approach to intergovernmental dialogue. While UN Women's normative resources are limited, its coordination mandate and growing country-level presence can also be leveraged to help complete the task of effectively integrating WEE across all relevant Post-2015 development goals and indicators.

At both the country and global level, the Entity's triple mandate means it is well positioned to assist

agencies within the UN System (particularly at the country level) to engender sustainable development goals in areas relevant to WEE. There is considerable scope to leverage UN Women's normative mandate to advocate for inclusive macroeconomic policy, using a rights-based approach that addresses the structural barriers to WEE. UN Women's work on regional trade policies in East Africa is an example of such work. Meso-level policy advocacy (such as to promote women's access to agricultural credit and infrastructure investment in ways that reduce

work, although macroeconomics is a stated intention of current Policy Division thinking, and fits within UN Women's implicit theory of change to support the creation of the conditions required for sustainable inclusive growth. Expanding UN Women's work in this domain would require new partnerships (including additional funds to enable UN Women to influence and enter partnerships through joint programmes) and significant capacity development (in particular training and guidance tools for regional and country-level staff working on WEE).

*Advocate for inclusive macroeconomic policy using a rights-based approach that addresses the structural barriers to WEE*

women's care burden) would be an important corollary of this work.

To date, UN Women has put in place only very limited human resources capacity or guidance in relation to macroeconomic policy

It also represents a more promising comparative advantage for long-term sustainable impact than isolated micro-level interventions.

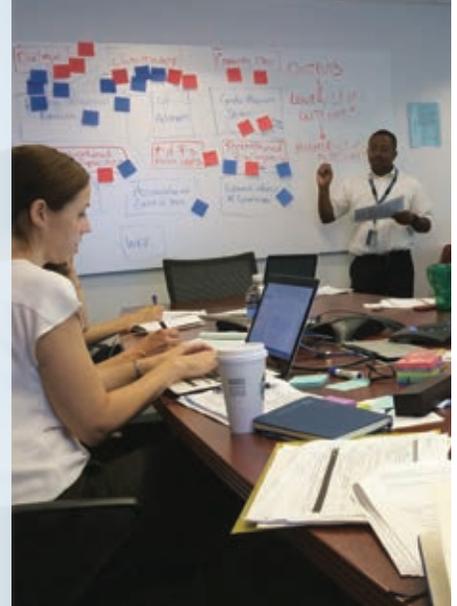
Even within its existing capacity, there is proven scope for

**GOOD PRACTICE****UN Women in Albania, Rwanda and Mexico: Advancing gender statistics**

In **Rwanda**, UN Women along with other UN agencies provided support to the National Statistics Institute in producing and disseminating sex-disaggregated data. As a result, gender statistics have been integrated into the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda strategic plan for 2012–2015.

UN Women in **Albania** contributed to advancements in gender statistics including efforts to amend the Law on Official Statistics (in collaboration with UNFPA), which has since made the collection and provision of sex-disaggregated data mandatory. Support has also been provided to the National Institute of Statistics to successfully mainstream gender into its statistical policy framework and five-year statistical programme for 2012–2016.

In **Mexico**, gender statistics is a clear niche for UN Women, and strong partnerships have been forged between UN Women, NGOs and the European Commission through providing technical assistance to NGOs, facilitating South-South cooperation and organizing exchange forums, such as the International Time-Use Expert Meeting and the International Gender Statistics Meeting carried out annually in Mexico during the last decade.



UN Women to contribute to gender-responsive macroeconomic evidence. For example, UN Women is working in partnership with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to undertake national statistical strengthening, including professional communications products that have been used by policy makers to interpret and incorporate time-use data; and at the global level through the work with UN Statistics Division on the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) indicator set.

### **3 2+2=8: Partnerships as a way to increase impact**

*With the right alliances, UN Women could reinvigorate the quest for future economic models, bringing gender-responsive empirical evidence and action research into mainstream economic debates.*

UN Women's current strategic approach results in a close link between its effectiveness and the

### *Ensure that knowledge, experiences and good practices from the field are used to inform global processes*

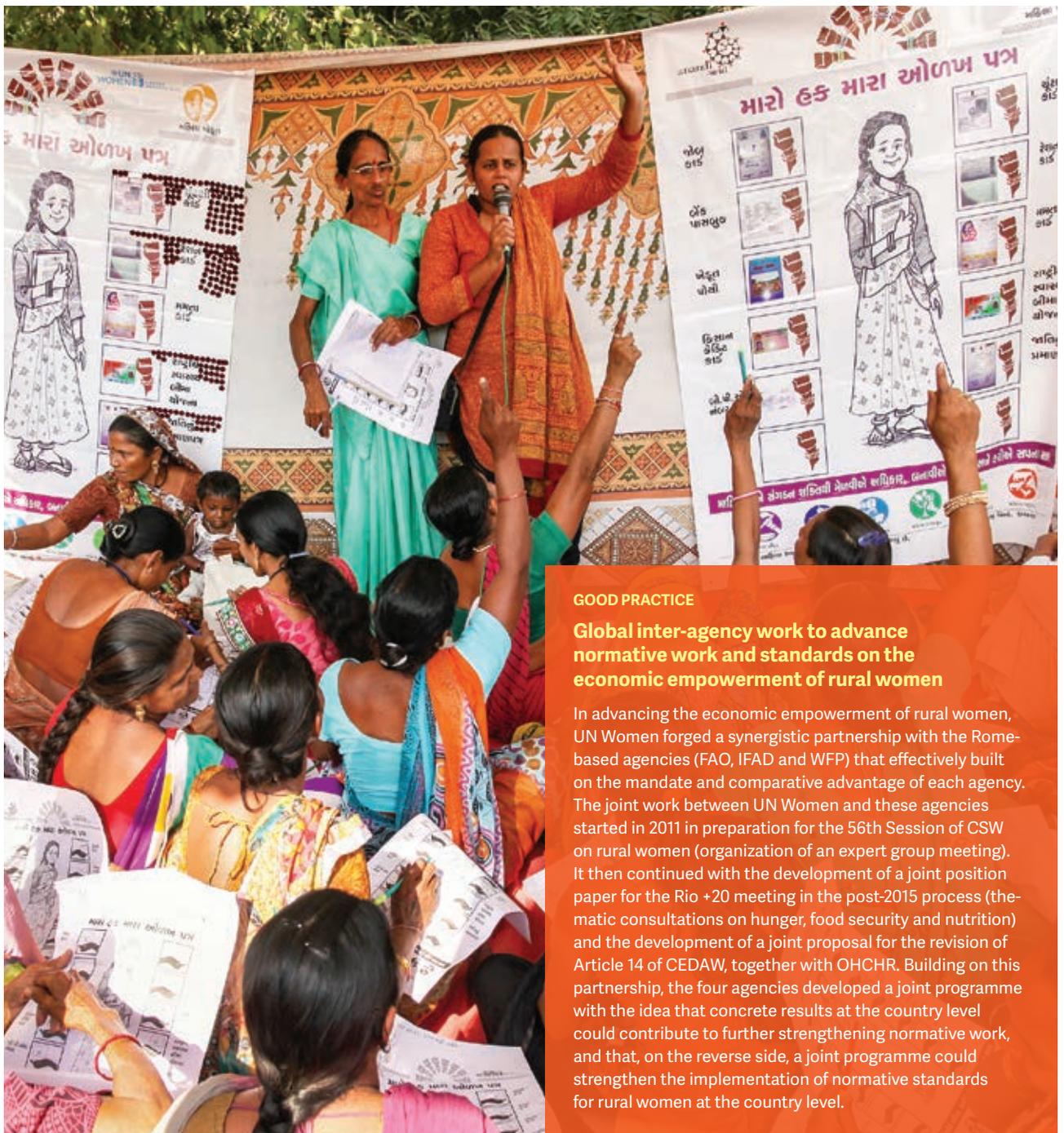
resource base it can mobilize. This limits the Entity's scope for scaling up impact and achieving critical mass behind policy positions. While the structural funding gap creates real challenges, a strong organizational focus on levels of funding is obscuring other options for leveraging impact and creating several negative narratives.

At the core of UN Women's future ability to effect change, regardless of the amount of resources that it can mobilize, is the set of partnerships and alliances that it can forge. Operationally, UN Women will, for the foreseeable future, have limited resources and capacity to lead large programmes. Its impact will depend on working in concert with other partners through joint programming and providing high quality technical

inputs to engender economic models and economic empowerment programmes.

As a consequence of its coordination mandate, UN Women is already strategically placed to focus on the partnerships that it has with UNDP, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs so that their programmes truly address structural bottlenecks to WEE. The Entity's operational relationships with academic institutions, Officer of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and civil society advisory groups are promising avenues for bringing increased levels and quality of human rights based economic analysis and evidence.

*At the core of UN Women's future ability to effect change is the set of partnerships and alliances that it can forge.*



#### GOOD PRACTICE

#### Global inter-agency work to advance normative work and standards on the economic empowerment of rural women

In advancing the economic empowerment of rural women, UN Women forged a synergistic partnership with the Rome-based agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP) that effectively built on the mandate and comparative advantage of each agency. The joint work between UN Women and these agencies started in 2011 in preparation for the 56th Session of CSW on rural women (organization of an expert group meeting). It then continued with the development of a joint position paper for the Rio +20 meeting in the post-2015 process (thematic consultations on hunger, food security and nutrition) and the development of a joint proposal for the revision of Article 14 of CEDAW, together with OHCHR. Building on this partnership, the four agencies developed a joint programme with the idea that concrete results at the country level could contribute to further strengthening normative work, and that, on the reverse side, a joint programme could strengthen the implementation of normative standards for rural women at the country level.



## Effectiveness

**4 Close the loop: link norms to actions**  
UN Women's normative mandate has enabled it to effectively influence international discourse and standards, as well as a range of national policies despite having limited resources.

By implementing lessons learnt from supporting the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women has successfully intensified its involvement at the normative level, enabling it to effectively influence international discourse around issues such as unpaid care work, domestic workers, home-based workers, women migrant workers, and rural women. As a priority, this

approach can continue to support inclusion of WEE in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Progress has also been made in supporting countries to embed normative standards into national laws. Scope now remains for translating more of the global normative results into positive changes at the country level and to ensure that knowledge, experiences and good practices from the field are used to inform global processes.

While examples of using evidence from the field in intergovernmental normative work do exist, these have been limited and ad hoc. Similarly, while many UN Women field staff are knowledgeable about normative standards for economic

empowerment at the international level, they require more guidance and technical support to translate this into concrete policy action and implementation at the country level.

**5 Coordinating WEE in UN system: build on strengths**  
Coordination and joint programming have made a cautious but important contribution to advancing WEE within the UN System, especially at country level. There is both demand and opportunity for UN Women to leverage this into leadership of convening and facilitating the WEE community.

UN Women has rightly approached its coordination mandate at both the global and country level with a degree of caution, based on its appreciation of its own emerging capacity and acknowledgement of

## GOOD PRACTICE

**Jordan, Bangladesh and Mexico: Designing country-level interventions and indicators to support and measure implementation of international standards and treaty-body recommendations**

UN Women **Jordan** has been effective in linking its operational work to normative standards and treaty-body recommendations in its planning and programme documents and annual reports. Examples of this include the country office's programme Increasing Women's Economic Participation in Poverty Pockets in Jordan, which was designed to support the latest CEDAW committee recommendations (from March 2012) underlining the need for a greater focus on young women living in marginal areas, widows and elderly women. The Achieving E-Quality in the ICT Sector Programme in Jordan has supported implementation of CEDAW's recommendations for women's greater access to vocational training.

The country office in **Bangladesh** also identified linkages in its operational and normative work by including a specific section at the beginning of its strategic note linking its planned interventions (related to ending child marriage) to specific CEDAW recommendation and conclusions (including the 2010 report which found that dowry increased women's vulnerability to domestic violence and that child marriage was another risk factor).

In **Mexico**, the country office included a specific results indicator within its strategic note related to level of alignment between the national legal and policy frameworks on migration and the gender equality and women's human rights commitments ratified by Mexico.



the roles that have previously been played by other UN entities.

At the global and country level, the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) is recognized by other UN entities as a major contribution to coordination. While no specific mechanism exists for coordinating WEE at the global level, there is also a strong case for avoiding additional layers of coordination

mechanisms. A more promising approach looks to be a combination of existing forums, a WEE community of practice, and guidance on using the gender scorecards to promote accountability in relation to WEE.

UN Women's leadership and role in existing coordination forums (such as the Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) at the headquarters level and the UN Resident coordinator

## GOOD PRACTICE

**Jordan: Using system-wide coordination as a means to advance normative and operational work**

UN Women in **Jordan** has prioritized its system-wide coordination work and used this to strategically position itself within the UNCT and leverage partnerships to advance its normative and operational work. According to the country office, 80 per cent of its work relates to coordination and it has devoted significant attention and resources to support work in this mandate area, including the establishment of a Coordination Specialist position. The country office is universally recognized among its UN peers for having successfully used coordination to exert effective influence within the UNCT through its active participation in the UNDAF Task Forces and its key role in leading the largest number of joint programmes within the UNCT (two of which have clear WEE linkages). UN Women effectiveness in supporting system-wide coordination was acknowledged in the annual report on UNDAF progress for 2013, which noted that UN Women has been the most effective UN agency in promoting joint programmes and their insights and experience should be drawn upon for other UN agencies moving forwards. UN Women has also initiated new and innovative partnerships with non-typical UN partners such as UNESCO in the area of cultural preservation.

UN Women Jordan has also used coordination as a means to advance normative work related to WEE by adopting a joint programming approach to its operational work. An example of this is the joint programme that the country office developed and is now implementing together with seven other UN agencies including UNFPA, UNDP, UNESCO and UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East aimed at supporting the government and civil society in the Beijing +20 national review process. Another illustration is the joint programme that UN Women is implementing with UNFPA and UNICEF to support the Jordanian National Commission for the Status of Women to develop their sixth periodic CEDAW report.

system and UNDAF working groups at the country level) is already producing important results in terms of an increased number of joint programmes and initiatives and UNDAFs that are effectively gender-responsive. UN Women staff see the Entity's results in engendering UNDAFs, including in the area of WEE, as one of its organizational strengths.

The evaluation found that, at the country level, UN Women staff

have to prioritize their coordination efforts between the UN country team and the wider national WEE space (normally through the ministries of gender). There tends to be few synergies between these forums. Thus, while UN Women's disciplined interpretation of its coordination mandate to focus on the UN System has contributed to its effectiveness

*A model for strategically disaggregating and prioritizing partnerships in relation to WEE*

in terms of UNDAF, the wider principle of coordination is not yet being fully realized.

Analysis of UN Women's comparative advantages finds that it has significant expertise in convening and facilitating multi-stakeholder groups. Combined with a strong demand for it to assume a leadership position in relation to broader coordination of WEE efforts, there is a strong case for the Entity to take a more inclusive approach to its coordination role by creating platforms for participatory dialogue and collaboration.

## 6 Make partnerships work: analyse, plan, contribute

The principal means by which UN Women can enhance its effectiveness is through its partnerships. Becoming more strategic and selective will be critical.

The effectiveness of UN Women's operational work is correlated with the level of resources that it has. In reality, however, there is very limited scope for planning based on raising large increases in financial resources, especially within the structurally underfunded gender equality sector. Doing so also places UN Women in competition with the organizations that it is seeking to build alliances with.

For these reasons, partnerships offer a more sustainable and more scalable route to extending UN Women's capacity. They can also help towards building the capacity of the sector overall. While it is promising to see increased instances of partnerships in support of WEE (particularly through the Knowledge Gateway and the Post-2015 process), UN Women also needs to be more strategic and selective in ensuring that the parameters, expectations

and contributions of its partnerships are clearly defined.

The organization is already learning that different types of partnerships require different approaches, including when they relate to different thematic areas. For example, a private sector partnership in relation to economic empowerment carries with it different characteristics and considerations than when it relates to ending violence against women. Developing a model for strategically disaggregating and prioritizing partnerships in relation to WEE will be an important step for the organization to take.

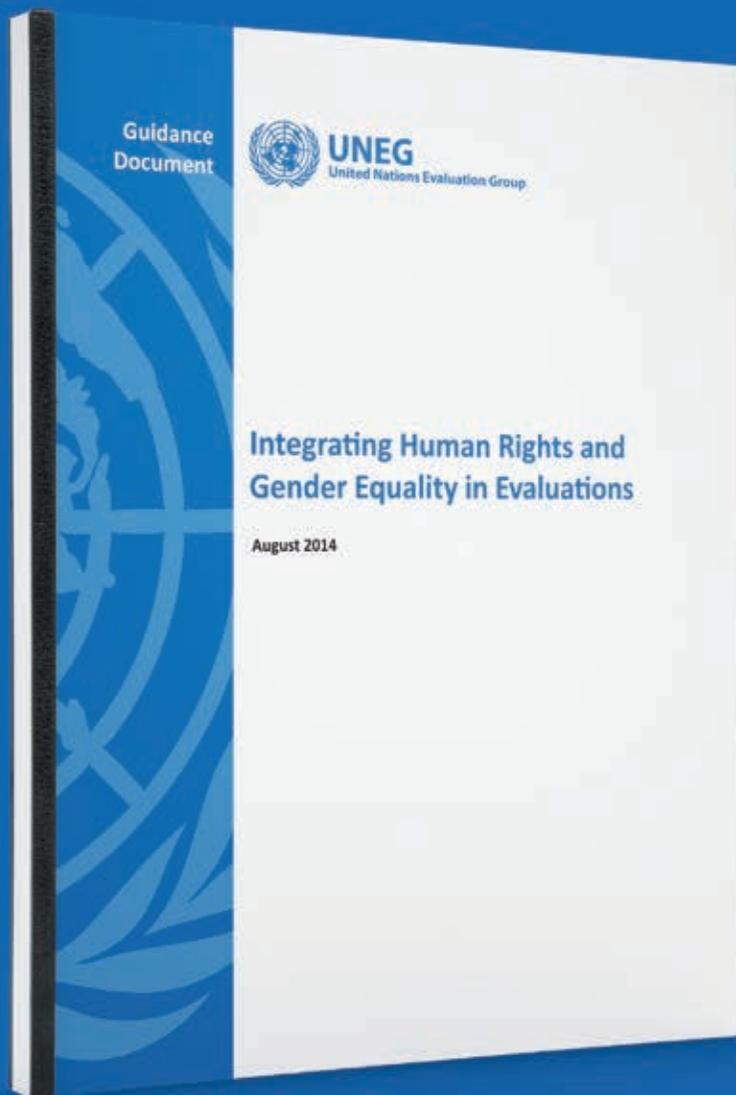
### GOOD PRACTICE

#### Fiji: Using private sector partnerships to facilitate women's access to credit

In an effort to build the capacity of women market vendors at the Honiara Central Market, UN Women facilitated a partnership between Bank South Pacific and Honiara City Council. In August 2013, rather than requiring vendors to come into the branch, UN Women negotiated for the bank to take its services to the market. The council then facilitated the issuing of papers that allowed the bank to waive identification and other requirements. This partnership led to more than 150 market vendors opening bank accounts.



# How can the evaluation community improve human rights and gender equality responsive evaluation within the UN system and beyond?



The latest guidance from the United Nations Evaluation Group can help you navigate the process to integrate human rights and gender equality into evaluation. Read *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations*—A guidance document to improve human rights and gender equality responsive evaluation throughout the UN system.

Available at [www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616](http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616)



**UNEG**  
United Nations Evaluation Group

## 7 Make way for progress: Address (structural) barriers and bottlenecks

UN Women's operational work makes the most effective contribution where it identifies and addresses structural barriers and bottlenecks to women's realization of their economic rights.

A great deal of UN Women's micro-level work is currently designed to solve economic problems faced by women – provide direct access to

better skills, credit products, market opportunities, information and other services. This has provided some inspiring examples of women gaining confidence, assets and a sense of control over their lives. However, this approach is limited in terms of the scale it can reach, the dimensions of empowerment that can be effected, and the extent to which it differentiates UN Women (or not) from other actors.

Much has been learnt from this work, including through the Fund for Gender Equality. But the limited

scope for impact in comparison to operational work at the meso- and macro-levels suggest that the time has come to revise the approach: micro-level work needs to sit within a bigger picture and contribute evidence towards shifting structural bottlenecks to women's economic empowerment.

This suggests that UN Women should be highly selective in its micro-level work and focus strongly on how it will provide evidence and data about structural barriers to women's realization of their economic rights. For example, shifting away from using funds to support individual women's access to finance and focusing instead on supporting women at the collective level to address bottlenecks that deny women economic opportunities, independent decision-making or control of assets.

*Micro-level work needs to sit within a bigger picture and contribute evidence towards shifting structural bottlenecks to women's economic empowerment.*



### GOOD PRACTICE

#### **Viet Nam and Moldova: Addressing structural barriers to women's access to credit**

In **Viet Nam**, UN Women supported the development of evidenced-based knowledge on gender aspects of women's savings and credit and on women's micro-finance institutions and is now planning, in collaboration with other UN agencies, to support the Viet Nam's Women's Union and State Bank of Viet Nam to advocate for national regulations and guidance on supporting access to finance and credit of women in rural areas.

In **Moldova**, future work is focused on improving women's access to financial and other productive resources to deliver higher returns. Partnerships are planned with commercial banks, microfinance institutions, National Commission for Financial Market, National Bank of Moldova, vocational education and training schools, and the Ministry of Education with the view to provide better access to financial services and entrepreneurship support to women, especially from vulnerable groups.



## Gender Equality

### 8 **Involve all: Inclusive approaches to economic empowerment**

Women's economic, social and cultural rights, stand in a disadvantaged position to the dominant political economic paradigm. In this context, UN Women needs to mobilize and give voice to all the allies it can – including men, civil society, and the private sector – from the position of legal authority that human rights frameworks provide.

To a certain degree, a dilemma exists within UN Women about whether or not to explicitly use human rights-based approaches in trying to gain traction within the global economic

system. The evaluation has found that UN Women's recent shift towards a rights-based approach for its work on WEE (which approaches WEE in terms of constraints and discrimination) positions the entity well to add value to other existing efforts in this area.

Evidence within lessons learnt from UN Women country offices indicate how important it is to articulate rights-based approaches as a contribution to economic by advocating change explicitly through the lens of women's economic rights, but accompanying this

with data on the economic effects of such policies.

Given the commitment to human rights-based approaches in the UN System, it may be useful for the Entity to reframe its work in terms of women's economic rights. Evidence from UN Women's operational work suggests that the realization of women's economic rights needs to include strengthening rights-holding groups to better organize, document and voice their positions in national processes (and by supporting the collection of data that can verify the effects of various policies on WEE). UN Women has also recognized that increased engagement with men and boys is needed at a country level in order to increase understanding and cultural support for women's economic rights.

*Evidence within lessons learnt from UN Women country offices indicate how important it is to articulate rights-based approaches*



## Organizational efficiency

### 9 Strengthen WEE capacity at all levels

During its transition phase, UN Women undertook intentional efforts to focus outwards and engage with and begin influencing its wider network and environment. To enhance its institutional ability to contribute to WEE, there is now a need to consolidate inwards and strengthen a consistent approach to WEE-related leadership at all levels within the organization.

It has taken UN Women close to four years to begin the process of inclusively mapping out a comprehensive theory of change for WEE. This is due to several factors, including internal transition, constrained human resources (including time), and a challenging external context (including resistance to a rights-based approach and competing economic approaches). As a consequence, UN Women's capacity and experience in WEE is now distributed across the organization, but not yet joined up into a cohesive whole. Nevertheless, there is positive movement with recent processes, including the internal and external consultations to develop a string theory of change.

The evaluation found that one of UN Women's comparative advantages is its motivated and passionate staff, who are technical experts in their area. There is now a need for the increased priority given to WEE to be matched by resources to build up capacity of UN Women staff in this area (at all levels of the organization); and to develop corporate guidance through inclusive and open internal processes. UN Women's work at the policy and normative level provides a good example of how strong technical staff can contribute effectively to WEE in a resource-constrained environment.

The new regional architecture, particularly the new WEE regional advisors (once in place in all regions), provides a valuable in-house resource for the organization to address capacity gaps (particularly in terms of providing substantive expertise on WEE,



#### GOOD PRACTICE

### **Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu: Effective linkages between WEE and ending violence against women**

Marketplaces are key sites for economic activity in Pacific Island countries and territories and while they may initially seem small scale, they are not only central to the livelihoods of many households, but they also make a significant contribution to individual countries' gross domestic product. Vendors, especially women, face numerous day-to-day challenges in their workplaces: the hours are long, the profits are low and violence against women is widely reported. In response, UN Women has been implementing Markets for Change, a six-year multi-country initiative.

The goal of the project is to ensure that marketplaces in rural and urban areas in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are safe, inclusive and promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Through the project, UN Women is working with stakeholders, service providers and the market vendors themselves to: build and support inclusive, effective and representative advocacy groups; deliver appropriate services, training and interventions; ensure women's voices are heard and taken into account at the decision-making level; and improve physical infrastructure and operating systems.

including to country offices that lack such expertise) and support efforts to achieve greater strategic coherence. They can also play an important role in supporting increased linkages between normative and operational work on WEE, in particular by channelling up to HQ areas where country offices need further guidance and support to implement norms and standards and in transmitting evidence/examples where country offices have supported the implementation of norms and standards.

To make the most of this human resource capacity, the organization

*Need for the increased priority given to WEE to be matched by resources to build up capacity of UN Women staff in this area; and to develop corporate guidance through inclusive and open internal processes.*

requires a shared leadership culture at all levels of the organization in order to further advance its work on WEE: providing strong overall direction for work on WEE while enabling technical autonomy for experts. At the same time, mechanisms are

required to allow multidisciplinary teams to form and work across the thematic areas as WEE programming works best when it is holistic and integrated with other areas of women's lives.



## Lessons learned in knowledge management

**10** **From research to practice**  
UN Women has generated a wealth of evidence and multiple knowledge management initiatives. The time has come to integrate these efforts into a systemic approach that enables the organization to realize the promise of its three mandates.

UN Women has created some strong research and knowledge products for the external audience in relation to WEE. Furthermore, the Knowledge Gateway has played an important role in providing a global platform to facilitate experience-based knowledge exchange about WEE between international organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and women entrepreneurs seeking to enhance WEE. It has also enabled UN Women to expand and diversify its network of partners.

### GOOD PRACTICE

#### Knowledge Gateway

In 2012, UN Women launched the global project, "Knowledge Gateway on Women's Economic Empowerment" with funding from Canada toward the overall development goal that "Women, in particular the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development". In December 2013, the gateway was awarded the Sitecore site of the Year Award 2013, which recognizes winning organizations for outstanding websites that create top-notch digital experiences for their users. In its first six months, the Knowledge Gateway had 50,000 visitors and 2,000 women and men from 160 developed and developing countries registered to contribute to this global community.

WHAT DO I NEED  
TO KNOW TO  
MANAGE OR  
CONDUCT AN  
EVALUATION AT  
UN WOMEN?

HOW CAN  
EVALUATION BE  
A DRIVER FOR  
CHANGE TOWARDS  
GENDER EQUALITY  
AND WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT?

HOW IS GENDER-  
RESPONSIVE  
EVALUATION  
DIFFERENT  
FROM OTHER  
EVALUATION?

# HOW TO MANAGE GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

## EVALUATION HANDBOOK



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with the new UN Women Evaluation Handbook:  
*How to manage gender responsive evaluation.*

The Handbook is available at:  
<http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org>



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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## MOVING FORWARD

# 5 steps to improve UN Women contributions to WEE

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*The evaluation identified five recommendations that are critical for UN Women's future contribution to women's economic empowerment. These recommendations call for significant decisions that require input and involvement across all levels of the organization.*

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To support UN Women in implementing the five recommendations, the evaluation broke down recommendations into two categories:

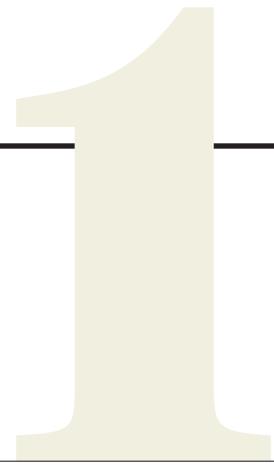
**Short-term actions:**

These are immediate actions that will help UN Women improve in the path that it is already on; recommendations target the global, regional and country levels.

**Mid-term actions:**

These are transformative, corporate-level actions that should be considered as part of the mid-term review of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan.

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## RECOMMENDATION ONE

## Think big: engage with macro

UN Women's mission is best served by moving decisively into the macroeconomic space.

UN Women needs to determine the extent to which it plans to move into and equip itself to engage with debate, dialogue, advising, action and advocacy in the macroeconomic space. The process of making this decision should be an inclusive one, involving all levels of the organization, as staff will need to get behind such a strategic direction to make it effective.

on the macroeconomic conditions and policies required to promote decent work, and include increased efforts by UN Women to align its work on WEE with emerging labour market trends and to promote institutional change, such as in the rules on land titling, and women's access to credit. Over time, UN Women country offices need to receive the necessary policy guidance and

and community partners around the world, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the women's movement, UN Women could advocate for and technically support medium and large-scale projects that generate decent employment in rural areas, and promote the growth of medium- and large-scale women's enterprises, helping to transform the lending practices of International Finance Institutions. In support of headquarters's work to influence macroeconomic and macro-level policies, UN Women country offices can identify relevant and appropriate areas to engage with governments through meso-level interventions aimed at promoting the conditions required for women to improve their economic condition – whether it is through access to productive and financial resources, social insurance, or work conditions.

*Engage with governments through meso-level interventions aimed at promoting conditions required for women to improve their economic conditions*

### Short-term actions

At global, regional and country level, UN Women is advised to forge a closer working partnership with UN economic actors in order to address structural barriers to women's economic rights through meso- and macro-level policy interventions, including efforts to build on joint work in statistics and human rights and gender-responsive macroeconomic policy research. At the country level this should largely be meso-level work focused on engendering national development plans and poverty reduction strategies, including the statistical and budget monitoring systems that support them. This could continue the focus

support from headquarters and the regional offices to enable micro-level work (including through the Fund for Gender Equality) to more directly link to meso-level interventions.

### Mid-term actions

Following a final decision as part of the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, UN Women would be advised to address the structural barriers to women's economic rights through situating meso- and macro-level policy influence as the centrepiece of UN Women's future WEE strategy. At the heart of this could be a concerted attempt to engender mainstream economic models and policies. Working with academic



## RECOMMENDATION TWO

## Maximize partnerships

UN Women should provide clarity on its commitment to taking up the mantle and responsibility of leading through partnership.

Increased efforts are needed to understand and maximize the value position of UN Women's partnerships, including through a well-articulated advocacy strategy for WEE that civil society can rally behind. Better leveraging of UN Women's convening role can further expand its influence in the WEE domain and solidly position the Entity as a representative, champion, and broker for other organizations that have comparative advantage in WEE.

### Short-term actions

UN Women is advised to focus and deepen its UN System-wide coordination and partnerships with organizations that can have a catalytic role in support of its work on WEE. Working together, the Strategic Partnerships Division and the Economic Empowerment Section should lead a participatory internal process to develop a disaggregated framework of different types of partners, and a model decision-making process for selecting which partnerships to focus on with different objectives. Regional and country offices will need to be supported to apply this tool to their own contexts. A participatory organizational review of UN Women's private sector engagement can inform the development of a holistic strategy which clearly articulates UN Women's objectives, priorities and value proposition connected with such partnerships, including how the

*One platform for dialogue bringing together civil society, private sector, trade unions convened by UN Women*

partnerships will be effectively leveraged to advance WEE. Instead of implementing programmes directly, UN Women should begin to focus on developing platforms and funding windows for donors where partners can come together in order to maximize their joint impact. IANWGE and UNDAF must increasingly be used to convene, coordinate and mobilize UN System-wide efforts in relation to WEE. UN Women at global, regional and country level can contribute expertise and knowledge to support the UN System (particularly economic agencies) to effectively engender their work on economic empowerment. At the country level, country teams need to be equipped with increased knowledge, resources and specific guidance to provide effective implementation of the system-wide coordination mandate, better positioning UN Women to exert greater influence in attracting and convening partners and actors working in the area of economic empowerment.

### Mid-term actions

Following a final decision as part of the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, UN Women would be advised at global and country level to identify major structural blockages within the

economic system where competing interests of major constituents are a barrier to making common progress on women's economic rights. The Entity can develop an intensive process that brings these competing stakeholders into dialogue with each other for a concentrated period of time to build relationships and a mutual plan of action. To address longer-term relationships UN Women could maximize its convening role at global, regional and country levels by bringing together its civil society, private sector, and trade union partners into a single platform for dialogue. Outcomes from these dialogue processes can be used to inform the development of new economic models and tools that can be shared more widely. This would enable UN Women to consider fundraising specifically for its technical services, facilitation and monitoring follow-up of commitments: both achieving WEE objectives and (potentially) generating an additional source of income. Examples of changed behaviour and practices emerging from these dialogues could be subjected to impact evaluation, with the evidence collected being used to advocate for stronger responses to WEE among other Member States and private stakeholders.



## RECOMMENDATION THREE

## Define and adopt a strong rights-based approach

UN Women's work on WEE should explicitly be based on, and guided by, a rights-based approach.

The evaluation recommends the establishment of a common approach that is institutionalized within UN Women, and forms the basis of all future knowledge generation. It is therefore recommended that a clear decision is made, and guidance provided, on what UN Women's core values are in relation to interpreting the world relating to WEE.

### Short-term action

At global, regional and country levels, UN Women is advised to continue applying a rights-based approach to

WEE internally (focused on economic rights), and openly in existing forums where it is the norm, such as intergovernmental work. At a country-level, UN Women staff members require increased knowledge and capacity to systematically apply a Human Rights Based Approach and ensure that operational work is designed to support implementation of normative commitments and recommendations emanating from relevant human rights treaty bodies, human rights experts and special rapporteurs. At the global and regional levels, there

should be greater engagement with a wider range of human rights treaty and inter-governmental bodies beyond CEDAW and CSW in order to advance application of a rights-based approach to WEE. UN Women can continue to scale up its normative and coordination efforts, with a shift towards a greater focus on a rights-based approach where it can exert more influence as a thought leader, advocate, and knowledge hub in advancing WEE. As part of an approach to becoming a thought-leader, UN Women should re-target its WEE programming in terms of Participatory Action Research – pioneering new approaches to reach forgotten groups while generating evidence in high risk and innovative areas.

### Mid-term actions

Following a final decision as part of the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, UN Women would be advised to reframe its work in terms of women's economic rights, and rename the thematic area accordingly. All the economic work of the organization could be framed and articulated in terms of human rights first. In adopting this approach, information and knowledge collected about structural barriers to women's economic rights and participation in the productive workforce should be used to inform the design and implementation of programming at a broader policy level within each country.



## RECOMMENDATION FOUR

# Strengthen organizational leadership

**UN Women needs to strengthen leadership across the organization in order to support work on WEE.**

The evaluation found different leadership styles, approaches and skills being applied to WEE throughout the organization. This inconsistency in leadership culture and skill, combined with a complex external situation, makes the boundaries of personal autonomy and accountability unclear for many staff members engaged in WEE. The evaluation recommends that a clear position is taken with regard to developing leadership culture and capacity in UN Women.



### Short-term actions

UN Women is advised that the values and standards of the Entity's leadership culture need to be communicated heavily within the organization, so that staff members come to reasonably expect that leaders at all levels are account-

able to respond to the needs of country and regional offices in relation to their economic empowerment programming (through a mechanism such as a helpdesk). The organization should provide the EE Section with sufficient time and

focus on responding to the needs of country and regional offices in relation to their economic empowerment programming (through a mechanism such as a helpdesk). The organization should provide the EE Section with sufficient time and of change for UN Women's work on WEE is needed to enable the Economic Empowerment Section to ensure that a common institutional direction is communicated throughout the organization.

### Mid-term actions

Following a final decision as part of the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, UN Women would be advised to move away from seeking 'programme models' that can be applied across its portfolio, and instead adopt a highly participatory and gender-responsive approach to its work. This should focus on enabling self-organizing local networks, both internally and externally. Space needs to be made for multidisciplinary teams to form and collaborate on shared tasks.

*Move away from seeking "programme models" and instead adopt a highly participatory and gender responsive approach*

able to a consistent organizational approach to leadership. Intellectual and executive leadership of WEE should steadily be returned to the Economic Empowerment Section within the Policy Division. This can be manifested in terms of increased

resources to develop practical and needs-based corporate guidance and knowledge-sharing tools based on the active participation of staff members at all levels of the organization. The establishment of a clear vision, strategic focus, and theory

## RECOMMENDATION FIVE

## Become a knowledge-led organization

UN Women needs to equip and organize itself in line with becoming a knowledge-led organization.

UN Women has recognized the potential value of knowledge management as a function, and has started several initiatives in an attempt to address this. How these different parts will be brought together into a unified system is a critical decision that needs to be made sooner rather than later.

### Short-term actions

UN Women is advised to prioritize the knowledge actions that it has already identified, including rolling out a global roster of experts, the Knowledge Gateway, and the UN Women Training Centre WEE courses to UN country teams around the world. The WEE regional advisors should begin to play a greater role in the knowledge system. Planning and Programme and Guidance Unit and Research and Data section can support the development of a set of rights-based key performance indicators for UN Women contributions to WEE. These allow country office monitoring and decentralized evaluations to capture the full range of WEE impacts. At the country level, country offices need to begin designing projects and programmes so as to generate evidence for specific normative and policy work, ensuring that strategies (such as impact evaluations) to capture and communicate these findings are included in the design and budget. These communication products

should be 'pushed up' to headquarters teams (including FGE and the Knowledge Gateway) and 'pushed out' to other country teams through the WEE regional advisors.

### Mid-term actions

Following a final decision as part of the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, UN Women would be advised to elevate the Knowledge Gateway into a Global Gateway – increasing the 'felt presence' of the Knowledge Gateway activities, Fund for Gender Equality activities and selected UN Women Training Centre courses by making them available through a single website. This could include the addition of opportunity

an incentive for more WEE activists and organizations to regularly visit the site. As a whole, UN Women is advised to embrace a more open approach to data and knowledge, encouraging and incentivizing its staff to participate in gateway discussions. UN Women could use the proposed internal helpdesk/intranet site to embrace and openly acknowledge and discuss failure (as well as success) within the organization in relation to innovative approaches. Staff members need to be encouraged to post examples of things that have not worked, with their explanations for what unforeseen factors caused these problems so that they can be learnt from.

### *Embrace a more open approach to data and knowledge*

brokerage: helping to match donors such as private foundations with NGOs who can meet their needs and, at the same time, advance UN Women's mission. Future rounds of the Fund for Gender Equality should also be channelled through this global gateway. As the centrepiece of UN Women's knowledge strategy, Knowledge Gateway must work with the UN Women Training Centre to make its free knowledge products available on the site. This will create



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EVALUATION APPROACH

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# Mastering innovative evaluation methodology

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## EVALUATION APPROACH

**The UN Women Independent Evaluation Office**  
*worked with a 12 person evaluation team*  
*to undertake this corporate evaluation of the UN Women*  
*contribution to women's economic empowerment. A comprehensive*  
*and multi-faceted approach was designed for the evaluation that:*  
*corresponded to the purpose and objective of the evaluation;*  
*was informed by discussions with key evaluation stakeholders;*  
*and aligned with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)*  
*standards for evaluation in the UN system.*

The team used a theory-based approach (what makes change happen) as the starting point for its investigation and human rights and gender-responsive approaches were applied in the design and conduct of the evaluation.

The evaluation team used advanced participatory approaches to engage more than 500 stakeholders throughout all phases of the evaluation. During the inception phase, evaluation stakeholders participated in interviews and focus group discussions. Online surveys were also designed and administered to reach an extended number of internal and external stakeholders. During the data collection phases at the country level, stakeholders were actively involved in contributing to the findings and recommendations of the case study through a participatory and innovative collaborative outcomes reporting technique (CORT). The use of a participatory

video during one of the country case studies also supported the integration of a gender equality and human rights by ensuring that the views of excluded groups of women were represented and actively involved in the evaluation and learning activities.

In the analysis, a mixed-methods approach was applied, involving a blend of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis methods through triangulation.

During the desk phase, the evaluation team conducted a comprehensive desk review of more than 300 documents and a portfolio analysis of a representative sample of 27 UN Women country offices. Reviews focused on the results logic and achievements of UN Women programmes and initiatives related to its normative, coordination and operational mandates.

As part of a fieldwork phase, six case studies were completed: one at the global level and six at the

country level (Bolivia, Jordan, Moldova, Nepal, Zimbabwe and South Africa.)

Data for 100 indicators was collected from all 27 portfolio countries and processed using a technique called fuzzy sets qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). Similar to statistical methods, fsQCA identifies which variables, and combinations of variables, are most frequently associated with UN Women being effective in a country.

The results of the fsQCA were combined with other analyses (including organizational capacity assessment, social network mapping, and task/role analysis) in a technique called contribution analysis. Contribution analysis systematically considers all the alternative explanations for the changes that have been observed and attempts to exclude these to build a case for the contribution that UN Women has made.



EXPERT'S VIEW

Evaluating the effectiveness of programs to promote women's economic empowerment has proved challenging. These programs operate in complex environments, with multiple actors with different objectives and approaches and frequently the evaluation only has limited access to critical data.

Another set of challenges are related to the fact that the interventions are usually relatively small, and it is difficult to isolate their effects from the many larger public and private programs that are operating in the same space.

The present evaluation was able to address these challenges. Due to a very flexible terms of reference and a more realistic time-line than is often the case, the evaluation team was able to conduct an in-depth stakeholder consultation and to carefully formulate the key evaluation questions to address the priority concerns of different stakeholders. The evaluation timeline also made it possible to use techniques such as portfolio analysis to generate the broad data base required for this comprehensive analysis.

The evaluation creatively combined contribution analysis with a comparative case study design using fuzzy set analysis to identify configurations of factors contributing to intended outcomes rather than the conventional and narrower analysis of single variables. While using this relatively sophisticated design, the evaluation never lost sight of the rights based focus that is the centerpiece of UN Women's approach to gender equality and the evaluation was also able to experiment with innovative participatory techniques such as participatory video.

Michael Bamberger  
 Independent development evaluation consultant



*“Give a woman a fish and you feed her for a day;  
teach a woman to fish and you feed her for a lifetime.”*

REPHRASING OF AN ANCIENT PROVERB

PERSONAL VOICE: ELLEN MLALAZI

## Empowerment in action

Ellen Mlalazi, a widow and mother of five children and several grandchildren, lives in rural Zimbabwe and is just one of the women whose lives have been helped by UN Women.

“For a long time I was poor,” says Ellen. “I didn’t know how to fend for my family.” However, in 2010, a women-led civil society group Zubo, which is supported by UN Women, came to her rescue.

Through Zubo’s economic empowerment project, Ellen received training on practical issues such as savings and lending practices. After the training, she and 9 other women formed their own Village and Saving Lending group. Through the group Ellen was able to

access enough money to start selling slippers. That project earned her enough to buy her first goat. Now, she has a herd of goats that provides not only cash for herself, her children, and grandchildren, but also meat and milk for the family. Next up: Ellen plans to travel to a neighbouring city to buy clothes for resale and continue to build her savings and financial security for her family.

Ellen is just one of the many women that Zubo has helped in this area that is one of the poorest in Zimbabwe. Through the UN Women supported Fund for Gender Equity and the UN Women Zimbabwe Gender Support Programme, Zubo has helped local women reclaim their

traditional role of fishers, including designing and launching a unique women-friendly fishing craft that is operated by 22 local women. Dried fish have been marketed by these women through linkages with other UN Women project work on trade fairs and cross-border trading.

Other women in the region, such as Ellen, have also been involved in a village-lending micro-finance scheme and with the opening of a women’s micro-finance bank. The Zubo women are now exploring new opportunities higher up the value chain, including developing a fish farm to provide a more efficient return on investment and ensure greater sustainability.

“I thank Zubo for all its efforts in uplifting our lives as rural women,” says Ellen. “It has bought a change in our lives. If it was not for the trainings from Zubo, I do not know where I would be with my grandchildren.”

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