

**GUIDANCE ON  
COUNTRY PORTFOLIO  
EVALUATIONS  
IN UN WOMEN**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Foreword

Evaluation is central to the achievement of the mission of the [United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women \(UN Women\)](#) and in supporting fulfilment of its transformational role within the framework of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). A key principle that guides the gender-responsive evaluation is national ownership and leadership. In other words, evaluations should be country-driven and ensure leadership of evaluation processes by both rights holders and duty bearers. In this context, country-level strategic evaluations are particularly essential to generate contextually relevant evidence to improve performance and accountability for results on gender equality and women's empowerment.

## Why is country portfolio evaluation important?

The country portfolio evaluation (CPE) approach is designed to be one of the mechanisms to provide an in-depth and independent assessment of UN Women contribution to development effectiveness with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level.

CPE is intended to help the organization by improving accountability for country-level development results on gender equality and women's empowerment, promoting programmatic and operational effectiveness and efficiency, and fostering learning on how to achieve gender equality results in different contexts. In particular, CPE increases our understanding of why some programmes and initiatives work, why others do not, and in what context and country typologies. This assists managers and partners in making necessary improvements and adjustments to programme management and implementation, and in making informed decision on alternatives on the next Strategic Note and programme cycle. CPE uses Strategic Notes as main point of reference.

## What does the Guidance provides?

CPEs respond directly to the UN Women triple mandate, its modality of programming, and the specific need for accountability, learning and decision-making on gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level. This Guidance aims to ensure greater rigor, consistency and well-suited methodology in CPEs while providing flexibility to cater for varied contexts and country typologies. The Guidance covers an array of important issues including: why (we conduct CPEs), what (is to be evaluated), who (will manage, conduct and participate in CPEs), how (will they be done), and when (should they be initiated and finalized). The Guidance provides concepts, tools, tips, examples and references on specific topics and issues for every step in the CPE process. It further defines roles and responsibilities for CPEs in UN Women and the minimum resource requirements for effective CPEs.

### How should the Guidance be used?

The Guidance includes [three sets of model documents](#) that provide a series of default options for the design of CPEs: a model evaluation for multi-country portfolios, a model evaluation for CPEs, and a model evaluation for minimum viable CPEs. These have been selected based on the nature of UN Women Strategic Notes, the likely resource envelope available to CPEs, and emerging consensus on best practice for gender-responsive evaluation. For a comprehensive understanding of how to manage gender-responsive evaluations, this Guidance should be read and used in conjunction with the “UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation.”

The Guidance is primarily aimed at Evaluation Managers in UN Women field offices in view of planning for and managing CPEs. However, it also provides independent evaluators with practical guidance and methodological rigor for the assessment of UN Women CPEs. The Guidance is also useful for country representatives and other staff members in UN Women and partner organizations who are involved in CPE, as it clarifies overall approach to CPEs and the respective roles and responsibilities during the process.

The Guidance was developed in a participatory manner, which entailed wide-ranging discussions among Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) staff—both at Headquarters and in the field—and selected experienced consultants who have collaborated with IEO in the past. The Guidance also greatly benefited from field office perspectives and UN Women’s past experience in managing and conducting country-level gender-responsive evaluations. It also draws upon the good practices of several UN agencies and development partners. The draft methodology was tested with the conduct of three CPEs in the Kazakhstan (multi-)country office, and Mozambique and El Salvador country offices.

We hope you find this Guidance useful to further bolster evaluation culture and build your capacity to conduct a high-quality, credible and impartial country-level evaluation that provides contextually relevant evidence to facilitate achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Therefore, all staff and evaluators involved in commissioning and managing UN Women CPEs should familiarize themselves with this Guidance.

Marco Segone  
*Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UN Women*

## LEGEND

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| CORT     | Collaborative Outcomes Reporting Technique                             |
| CPE      | Country Portfolio Evaluation   |
| DRF      | Development Results Framework  |
| GATE     | Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation                       |
| GERAAS   | Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System               |
| IEO      | Independent Evaluation Office  |
| (M)CPE   | Multi-country Portfolio Evaluation                                     |
| OEEF     | Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework                  |
| RES      | Regional Evaluation Specialist   |
| ToR      | Terms of Reference   |
| UNDAF    | United Nations Development Assistance Framework                        |
| UNEG     | United Nations Evaluation Group  |
| UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |

# 1

## **INTRODUCTION TO COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATIONS**



# Introduction

This Guidance is intended for use during all stages of a (multi-)country portfolio evaluation [(M)CPE] or country portfolio evaluation (CPE). It has been mainly written for:

- UN Women Evaluation Managers
- Evaluation consultants
- UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialists (RES)
- UN Women country or (multi-)country office representatives

It provides a reference guide to the main ideas behind CPEs and is intended to be used in combination with:

- [UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation](#)
- [UN Women Evaluation Policy](#)
- Evaluation Section of the Programme and Operations Manual
- [All United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\) guidance](#)

The main purpose of the Guidance is to provide a framework for planning and managing (M)CPEs, along with practical guidance and methodological rigor for the assessment of Strategic Notes. [The Guidance is accessible online.](#)

The Guidance is arranged according to the five stages of evaluation in UN Women.

## Key stages of an evaluation process





At each stage of CPEs and (M)CPEs, the process provides an opportunity for UN Women decentralized offices to further the aims for gender-responsive evaluation articulated by the [EvalGender+](#) network, which was launched at the culmination of EvalYear 2015. These are focused on supporting a gender-responsive and equity-focused framework for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Priority aims include:

- Encouraging demand from national governments for mainstreaming gender and for gender-responsive and equity focused evaluation
- Supporting the capacity of equity-focused and gender-responsive national evaluation systems
- Listening to the voice of the communities and taking action accordingly
- Informing gender-responsive national policies with evidence from gender-responsive and equity focused evaluations
- Ensuring local evaluators have developed the capacities and are conducting gender-responsive and equity focused evaluations

# 2

## PLANNING



## UN Women Strategic Plan and multi-country office Strategic Notes

The UN Women **Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan)** emphasizes country-level programming as the bedrock of the entity's work and underlines the importance of increased country-level capacity for effective and efficient programme delivery and achievement of development results.

The **Strategic Note** is a forward-looking high-level strategic document that translates the Global Strategic Plan to the country, multi-country and regional level and adapts it to the local context and priorities, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)/CCPD/One UN Programme. It lays out the strategy and key elements of the overall programme (including the flagship programmes<sup>1</sup>, Fund for Gender Equality and other regional or global programme activities in the country).

Strategic Notes include a **Development Results Framework (DRF)** with expected impacts, outcomes, outputs, indicators, baselines and targets (in line with Strategic Plan).

They also include an **Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework (OEEF)** that describes the management and operations results for the period.

## Gender-responsive evaluation in UN Women

In UN Women, evaluation is conducted for three main and equally important purposes:

1. To assess progress towards results and **accountability to stakeholders**
2. To provide credible and reliable evidence for **decision-making** and evidence-based advocacy

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<sup>1</sup> The Flagship Programming Initiatives are high-impact, scalable programmes that will carry the bulk of UN Women's growth. Each Flagship Programming Initiative is based on a comprehensive theory of change, which articulates the causal linkages and actions required by national, civil society organizations, United Nations, official development assistance and private partners in order to achieve transformative change in the lives of women and girls. Flagship Programming Initiatives will contribute towards achieving the outcomes and goals articulated in UN Women's Strategic Plan in close partnership with civil society and partner governments. In terms of purpose, the Flagship Programming Initiative will enable UN Women to: fully align and leverage its unique composite mandate (normative, coordination and operational); provide substantive coordination for results and champion delivery-as-one; develop synergies across the crisis-development continuum; and support universal sustainable development goals.



### TIP

The Strategic Note Development Results Framework and Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework form the basis of the multi-country portfolio evaluation.



## TIP

Unlike other decentralized evaluations, multi-country portfolio evaluations are commissioned and managed jointly with the Independent Evaluation Office through the involvement of the regional evaluation specialists.

### 3. To contribute important **lessons learned about normative, operational and coordination work in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women**

(M)CPEs are decentralized evaluations that are conducted by independent external evaluators but commissioned and managed by country offices and (multi-)country offices jointly with the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) through the involvement of the RES.

It is a priority for UN Women that the (M)CPEs are gender-responsive and will actively support the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. (M)CPE evaluators are expected to take a **transformative** approach to evaluation—using the evaluation process as an opportunity to empower marginalized groups and their advocates and further advocate for gender equality.

To achieve this, the evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods should be responsive to gender equality and human rights, and appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues by:

- **Considering** the structures that contribute to gender inequalities, especially those experienced by women who also belong to groups subject to discrimination
- **Challenging** these structures by developing the capacities of women to claim their rights and duty bearers to fulfil their obligations
- **Contributing** to progress or results related to the realization of women's empowerment, gender equality and women's human rights

The key principles for evaluation in UN Women are:

- **National ownership and leadership:** Evaluations should be country driven and respond to the need for national ownership and leadership by rights holders and duty bearers.
- **UN system coordination and coherence with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women:** Whenever possible, evaluations should be conducted system-wide and jointly with UN sister agencies as a means to promote coordination and coherence regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women.



- **Innovation:** Evaluations should seek to identify and illuminate innovative methods and approaches with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- **Fair power relations and empowerment:** Evaluations should be conducted with an analysis and understanding of contextual power and gender relations, as well as a commitment to unveil the underlying causes of discrimination and advocate for gender equality.
- **Participation and inclusion:** Evaluations should promote participation of stakeholders and inclusiveness.
- **Independence and impartiality:** The evaluation function should be carried out independently of other management functions in order to ensure that it is credible and free from undue influence and that it results in unbiased and transparent reports.
- **Transparency:** Evaluations should be conducted in a transparent and consultative manner with key stakeholders and the commitment to make evaluation reports publicly available.
- **Quality and credibility:** Evaluations should be conducted in a systematic manner, applying sound approaches and methods.
- **Intentionality and use of evaluation:** Planning for evaluations should demonstrate a clear intent regarding the purpose and use of findings to improve the work of UN Women or the UN system in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- **Ethics:** Evaluators should have personal and professional integrity and abide by the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation and the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the UN system to ensure that the rights of individuals involved in an evaluation are respected. Evaluators must act with cultural sensitivity and pay particular attention to protocols, codes and recommendations that may be relevant to their interactions with women.



## TIP

(Multi-)country portfolio evaluations are managed by UN Women offices and the Independent Evaluation Office through the regional evaluation specialists. A UNDAF evaluation can serve in lieu of a country portfolio evaluation, provided that it adequately addresses the specific evaluation needs of UN Women. This includes considering normative and coordination work.

## TOOL

- Use the (multi-)country portfolio evaluation **decision tree** to assess whether or not commissioning a portfolio evaluation is appropriate and to identify relevant designs.
- Use the Excel (multi-)country portfolio evaluation budgeting sheet to identify a minimum planned budget for your multi-country portfolio evaluation in terms of person-days and/or United States Dollars.

## Country portfolio evaluation

CPE is a systematic assessment of the contributions made by UN Women to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level. It focuses on a set of interventions and their overall success in advancing gender equality in the country. It uses the Strategic Note (including the DRF and OEEF) as the main point of reference.

CPEs and (M)CPEs are the primary means to validate results and assess UN Women's contribution to development results. This is in response to the need to provide a comprehensive evidence-based picture of UN Women's contributions to development results by moving away from project-level evaluations towards a more strategic country-level evaluation.

(M)CPEs are expected to consider all aspects of the UN Women integrated mandate:

- Informing and implementing global, regional and national norms
- Enabling UN coordination in support of gender equality and women's empowerment
- Operational (programmatic) work to advance gender equality and women's empowerment
- Synergies between the three mandate areas

### The UN Women Evaluation Policy recommends:

- At least **one country-level evaluation** per Strategic Note lifecycle
- At least **one cluster/thematic evaluation** in each of the six regions during the strategic plan life cycle
- **Align with or be integrated into the UNDAF** where feasible
- **One third of the office portfolio should be evaluated during the Strategic Note cycle**

CPE is one option available to country and multi-country offices to deliver this requirement. Thus, field offices are expected to initiate and manage other evaluations (thematic, programme, project, joint and UNDAF evaluation) in sync with their Strategic Note priorities and commitments they entered into with donors.



All planned evaluations including CPEs with their corresponding budget should be included in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan and approved together with the Strategic Note, and Annual Work Plan.

(M)CPEs in UN Women have been recommended by the UNEG Peer Review and the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network assessment due to:

- The decentralized nature of the entity
- The increased focus on results-based management, multi-year Strategic Notes, delegation of authority and increased field level capacity
- The need to demonstrate development effectiveness
- Importance of assessing higher-level results (outcomes) and impacts in the long run when UN Women programmes mature
- The value of an in-depth and independent strategic evaluation

The UNEG evaluation criterion (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and gender equality and human rights) guides the conduct of (M)CPEs to inform decisions on the next Strategic Note cycle and contribute to organizational learning and good practices.

(M)CPEs cover the entirety of UN Women’s programmes and operations during a given time frame; analyze the internal coherence of the full spectrum of work, including strategic choices and programme synergies; and determine ways in which UN Women can operate in the context of ‘Delivering as One’ and other UN reform and harmonization initiatives including the UNDAF.

The scope of the (M)CPE also covers regional or global programme activities in the country as well as the flagship initiatives, Fund for Gender Equality and other “non-project” activities often crucial for the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women<sup>2</sup>. (M)CPEs should be completed near to (but before) the end of a Strategic Note and cover either one Strategic Note period (i.e., the current Strategic Note) or a combination of two cycles (i.e., the current Strategic Note and the previous Strategic Note).

(M)CPEs should be treated as an integral part of country office programme management. CPEs can provide considerable utility to the organization by improving accountability for country-level development results on gender equality and the empowerment of women, providing recommendations to promote programmatic and operational effectiveness and efficiency, and

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<sup>2</sup> These include the strategic plan principles and approaches such as advocacy; knowledge brokerage (including convening such as supporting national stakeholder consultation processes), partnerships and networking, capacity development, resource mobilization and efforts geared towards national ownership.



fostering learning on how to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women results in country.

The following table summarizes the key considerations for the (M)CPEs:

| Consideration  | (M)CPE   |
|--|--|
| <b>What is the evaluation purpose?</b>   | Decision-making and learning for improving the Strategic Note design<br>Accountability for development effectiveness at the country level  |
| <b>Who is the target audience for the information from the evaluation?</b>                   | Primary intended users: UN Women (multi-) country office staff, national government and civil society organizations<br>Secondary intended users: rights-holders representatives, development partners, implementing partners, regional offices and headquarter divisions, other UN entities working on gender equality   |
| <b>What kinds of information are needed to make decisions and/or contribute to learning?</b> | Secondary (existing) data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Activity and output monitoring</li> <li>· Financial records/Atlas1</li> <li>· Data from RMS</li> <li>· Periodic and annual reports</li> <li>· DRF baseline (ideal)</li> <li>· Mid-term reviews</li> <li>· Other programme or projects evaluations</li> </ul> Primary (new) data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Outcome data (including unexpected effects)</li> <li>· Organizational data</li> <li>· Stakeholder perceptions</li> </ul> |
| <b>What is the scope of the evaluation?</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 3-6 years (i.e., 1-2 Strategic Note periods)</li> <li>· Country level or multi-country level</li> <li>· Strategic Note portfolio-wide (DRF and OEEF)</li> <li>· Normative, coordination and operational</li> <li>· Outcome-level</li> </ul>   |
| <b>What are the resources available to collect the information?</b>                          | Requires approximately 12 months from initiation to finalization and dissemination of the Final Report<br>Requires an evaluation team including senior gender-responsive evaluation experience<br>Minimum budget \$50,000 United States dollars  |
| <b>When is the information needed?</b>   | Preparation stage should start 12 months before the end of the ongoing Strategic Note period (to allow for sufficient evidence of results to feed into preparation of the next Strategic Note).  |

## The purpose of country portfolio evaluations

CPEs are meant to ensure both the **accountability** of UN Women to its donors, partners and other stakeholders and to facilitate **learning** about what works in different contexts with a view to improving the relevance and performance of interventions over time.

As a high-level strategic evaluation, the CPE is primarily intended to be a formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support (multi-) country offices and national stakeholders' strategic **learning and decision-making, including evidence based advocacy, when developing a new Strategic Note**. The evaluation is also expected to include a summative (backwards looking) element to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience.



### CHECKLIST

- The Evaluation Manager assigned by the office with the technical assistance of the Regional Evaluation Specialist lead development of the evaluation's terms of reference.
- The draft terms of reference is sent to the Evaluation Reference Group for comments
  - Final terms of reference is approved by the Evaluation Management Group, i.e., the country representative and Regional Evaluation Specialist. In event of disagreement, the Final Report should be approved by the regional evaluation specialist.
- The country portfolio evaluation must be undertaken in a manner that

## The objectives of (multi-)country portfolio evaluations

(M)CPEs have seven default objectives:

1. Assess the **relevance of UN Women contributions to national priorities and alignment with international agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment**
2. Assess **effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the Strategic Note including testing the validity of theories of change, especially corporate theories of change for flagship programmes**
3. Enable the UN Women (multi-)country offices to improve their strategic positioning to better support the achievement of **sustained gender equality and women's empowerment**
4. Analyse how **human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note**



## TIP

Reviews of country portfolio evaluations by other entities have shown that having too many objectives has proven to dilute the focus (and usefulness) of evaluators' work. Thus, country portfolio evaluations should not necessarily aim to cover all objectives, but rather focus on those that are feasible to achieve and most useful to the office and key stakeholders given the country portfolio evaluation budget and country context.

## CHECKLIST

- Objectives should ensure that evaluators:
  - Take stock of achievements, challenges and opportunities;
  - Verify the continued relevance of the portfolio;
    - Assess the Strategic Note design, objectives, strategies and implementation arrangements; and
      - Draw lessons learned and provide forward-looking options to inform management to strengthen the Strategic Note.
- Refining the results and indicators for the DRF and OEEF in the next Strategic Note
- Serve as an input to corporate evaluations and annual reporting to the Board on Strategic Plan
- Enhancing the culture of evaluation in UN Women offices and strengthening national evaluation capacity

5 Identify and validate **lessons learned, good practices and examples of innovation that support gender equality and human rights**

6. Provide insights into the extent to which the UN Women has realized **synergies between its three mandates (normative, coordination and operations) and on how to leverage the UN system to increase development results on gender equality**

7. Provide **forward-looking recommendations with respect to the development of the next Strategic Note**

In addition, the CPEs are expected to contribute to the following specific activities:

- (Multi-)country office corporate reporting requirements for DRF and OEEF outcomes of the current (and former) Strategic Note(s)
- Drafting the Context and Situation Analysis section of the next Strategic Note, including identifying trends and gaps relevant to UN Women's mandate towards achieving goals and objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Beijing Platform for Action, and SCR 1325
- Drafting the Lessons Learned section of the next Strategic Note, including reflecting on what is working and not working in terms of delivering outcome level change



## Evaluation criteria

Judgment on UN Women contributions is made using the set of evaluation criteria focused on two purposes of the CPE: assessing development effectiveness (accountability); and assessing UN Women's strategic positioning (learning). The CPE will apply five evaluation criteria.

- 1. Relevance:** the extent to which strategic choices have maximized UN Women's comparative advantages in addressing priorities for gender equality and women's empowerment
- 2. Efficiency:** the extent to which resources, organizational structures and management processes add to UN Women's productive capacity
- 3. Effectiveness:** the extent to which UN Women has contributed to achieving planned outcomes and mitigating negative externalities
- 4. Sustainability:** the extent to which positive outcomes can be maintained and advanced independently by local actors
- 5. Human rights and gender equality:** the extent to which the principles and standards of global human rights norms on gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed in UN Women's country portfolio

## The model approach to country portfolio evaluations

To assist (multi-) country offices in commissioning and managing CPEs, [model documents](#) have been developed. Use the documents that are most appropriate to your situation.

### Set 1: A model evaluation for multi-country portfolios

Use this set of model documents if you are commissioning a (M)CPE. The documents are based on cluster analysis of interventions in several countries and can be scaled up or down in terms of design to accommodate different budgets.



### TIP

**Strategic positioning:** At the strategic level, an assumed factor in UN Women performance is its positioning within the national policy arena, response to changing priorities, comparative advantage/added value of UN Women vis-à-vis other development partners and balance of support between short-term requests for assistance with long-term development needs.



### TIP

This Guidance draws on the [UN Women Evaluation Handbook](#) and should be read jointly with the Tools provided in the annexes of the Handbook.



### **Set 2: A model evaluation for standard CPEs**

Use this set of model documents if you are commissioning a CPE that:

- Covers a large or complex Strategic Note (applies to most country offices in low income countries)
- Is required to provide an in-depth participatory process

### **Set 3: A model evaluation for minimum viable CPEs**

Use this set of model documents if you are commissioning a CPE in a highly resource-constrained context and cannot commit more than the 50,000 USD minimum budget.

All three sets of model documents include adapted versions of the following components:

- Model Terms of Reference
- Model Inception Workshop
- Model Inception Report
- Model Final Evaluation Report
- Model Management Response



## Intended users and uses of country portfolio evaluations

| Primary intended users  | Primary intended uses   |
|---|---|
| UN Women (multi-) country office staff<br><br>National government/ women's machinery, civil society                     | Learning and improved decision-making to support the development of the next Strategic Note<br><br>Accountability for the development effectiveness of the existing Strategic Note in terms of UN Women's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment<br><br>Capacity development and mobilization of national stakeholders to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women |
| Secondary intended users  | Secondary intended uses   |
| Rights-holders representatives<br>Development partners<br>UN country team<br>UN Women regional offices and headquarters | Support accountability for development effectiveness in terms of UN Women's strategic contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment<br><br>Learning on effective, promising and innovative strategies and practices   |
| Responsible parties/ implementing partners<br>Women's movement<br>Private sector/unions                                 | Learning on effective, promising and innovative strategies and practices<br><br>Better understanding the mission and vision of UN Women at the country level  |



## Governance

CPEs are co-managed by (multi-)country office and the IEO (through the RES).

| (Multi-)country office  | RES   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decides to commission (M)CPE</li> <li>• Forms Evaluation Management Group (see below)</li> <li>• Forms Evaluation Reference Group (see below)</li> <li>• Assumes full responsibility for CPE budget</li> <li>• Country representative jointly with RES approves the evaluation products; in case of any dispute or disagreement on the Final Evaluation Report, the RES will approve the final product</li> <li>• Prepares and uploads Management Response to Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE)</li> <li>• Uses results and recommendations of CPEs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-manages the CPE jointly with the concerned office</li> <li>• Advises on appropriateness and design of CPE</li> <li>• Sits on Evaluation Management Group</li> <li>• Sits on Evaluation Reference Group</li> <li>• Participates in data collection process</li> <li>• Provides quality assurance based on Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) standards</li> <li>• RES can approve evaluation products (including Final Report) jointly or separately with country representative</li> </ul> |

## Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES)

The CPE requires the close involvement of the RES, including co-managing the process with the local Evaluation Manager.

### Planning

- Introduces the CPE to (multi-)country offices and country offices approaching the last year of their Strategic Notes
- Explains the purpose, minimum requirements and process of the CPE to the multi-country and country office representative and outlines potential benefits, likely costs, and the required commitments
- Provides copies of evaluation guidance
- Advises on the appointment of the evaluation manager
- Advises on the appointment of the evaluation reference group(s) and provides draft terms of reference (ToR) for group members
- Advises and quality assures the initial evaluability review



## Preparation

- Advises on and agrees the ToR with the (multi-)country office
- Advises on the requirements for evaluation team members and participates in selection of the evaluation team
- Ensures mechanisms for communication, consultation and presentation of the report have been established
- Ensures that the evaluation management and reference groups are convened at appropriate points in the process
- Advises on the draft field visit agenda
- Ensures adequate communication between the evaluation team and the (multi-)country office is established

## Conduct

- Reviews and approves the Inception Report
- Supports the evaluation manager to manage logistics for the field mission
- Participates in the country visit including data collection in an active advisory and quality assurance role, ensuring that learning stays within the organization
- Ensures professional and ethical conduct by the evaluation team, and addresses any concerns in real time
- Conducts a preliminary assessment of the quality of reports and comments for action by the evaluation team
- Provides substantive comments on the conceptual and methodological approach and other aspects of the evaluation design
- Supports the evaluation manager to ensure timely payment of the evaluation team

## Reporting

- Makes sure feedback on the draft and Final Report from the management and reference groups is coordinated by the evaluation manager
- Reviews the audit trail of comments on the evaluation products to ensure high quality in how the evaluation team is responding to the comments
- Reviews and approves the Final Evaluation Report



### TIP

Use the [UN Women Evaluation Handbook Tool 11. Management group terms of reference template](#); and [Tool 12. Reference group terms of reference template](#).

### INFO

The arrangement of roles and responsibilities in this Guidance, including the ability of the regional evaluation specialist to approve evaluation products jointly with or independently of the country representative, is based on specific UNEG recommendations to ensure the impartiality, credibility and quality of the country portfolio evaluation.

### TIP

The evaluation manager should use [Tool 7 of the UN Women Evaluation Handbook](#) to maintain an evaluation comment audit trail.



## Use

- Supports the evaluation manager to upload the Final Report to GATE within six weeks of finalization
- Supports the (multi-)country office to complete a management response within six weeks of finalization

## Evaluation Manager

The (multi-)country office will appoint an evaluation manager for the duration of the evaluation, who will co-manage the process jointly with the RES.

## Planning

- Co-manages the evaluation
- Forms the evaluation management and reference groups and provides ToR for members
- Undertakes an initial evaluability review, portfolio analysis, stakeholder analysis and document trawl (assembling a body of existing evidence)

## Preparation

- Launches the evaluation (drafts the ToR, establishes Evaluation Management and Reference Groups, prepares initial documentation)
- Supports recruitment of the evaluation team in accordance with UN Women procurement guidelines
- Establishes mechanisms for communication, consultation and presentation of the report (Skype, phone, video-conference, e-mail, and where possible, workshops or meetings)
- Convenes the evaluation management and reference groups at appropriate points in the process

## Conduct

- Conducts a preliminary assessment of the quality of reports and comments for action by the evaluation team
- Provides substantive comments on the conceptual and methodological approach and other aspects of the evaluation design
- Manages logistics for the field mission
- Initiates timely payment of the evaluation team
- Keeps reference group members informed via e-mail or conference call (as necessary) as the evaluation proceeds



## Reporting

- Coordinates feedback on the draft and Final Report from the RES, management and reference groups
- Maintains an audit trail of comments on the evaluation products so that there is transparency in how the evaluation team is responding to the comments

## Use

- Uploads the Final Report to GATE within six weeks of finalization
- Uploads the management response to GATE within six weeks of finalization

## Evaluation Management Group

|   |
|---|
| <b>Formed and coordinated by:</b>   |
| <b>Evaluation Manager</b>   |
| <b>Chaired by:</b>  |
| <b>Country representative or RES</b>  |
| <b>Members:</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Country representative or deputy country representative</b></li><li>• <b>Evaluation Manager</b></li><li>• <b>RES</b></li></ul>                                 |
| <b>Main responsibilities:</b>   |
| <b>PLANNING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying key stakeholders for the reference group as early as possible in the evaluation process</li></ul>                                     |
| <b>PREPARATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviewing and approving Terms of Reference</li><li>• Selecting and procuring evaluation team in line with UN Women procurement rules</li></ul> |
| <b>CONDUCT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviewing and approving Inception Report</li></ul>   |
| <b>REPORTING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviewing and approving Final Report</li></ul>   |
| <b>USE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensuring timely development of management response and implementation of recommendations</li></ul>   |



## Evaluation Reference Group

|   |
|---|
| <b>Formed and coordinated by:</b>   |
| <b>Evaluation Manager</b>   |
| <b>Chaired by:</b>  |
| <b>Evaluation Manager and/or representative from national government or civil society organization</b>  |
| <b>Members:</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UN Women programme staff</li><li>• National government partners</li><li>• Development partners/donors</li><li>• UN country team representatives</li><li>• Civil society advisory group</li><li>• Evaluation Manager</li><li>• RES</li></ul> |
| <b>Main responsibilities:</b>   |
| <b>Planning</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sounding board for feedback and decisions on the evaluation</li><li>• Enable stakeholders to express their information needs</li></ul>  |
| <b>Preparation</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review and agree evaluation criteria</li><li>• Review and agree evaluation questions</li><li>• Review and agree priority thematic areas</li></ul>   |
| <b>Conduct</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participate in inception interviews</li><li>• Review and comment on Inception Report</li></ul>  |
| <b>Reporting</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participate in recommendations workshop</li><li>• Review and comment on draft report</li></ul>  |
| <b>Use</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participate in process review</li></ul>   |



## Evaluation team

To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, the members of the evaluation team need to be independent, implying that they must not have been directly responsible for the design or overall management of the subject of the evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future. Evaluators must have no vested interest and must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially. They must be able to express their opinion in a free manner. The evaluation team prepares all evaluation reports, which should reflect an agreed-upon approach and design for the evaluation from the perspective of the evaluation team, the Evaluation Manager and RES.

## Independent Evaluation Office

IEO provides methodological guidance and co-manages CPEs, including participating in data collection and quality assuring the entire CPE exercise through its **RESs** based in the regional offices. Once the Final Report is approved, the IEO through an independent external reviewer assesses the quality of the Final Report using the GERAAS methodology and provides executive feedback to the concerned office. This quality rating and synthesis of the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the CPE will be reported to the UN Women SMT and the Executive Board annually to promote credibility and learning.

## Planning for country portfolio evaluations

Preparation for a CPE should begin one year before the ongoing UN Women country programme/Strategic Note is ending. The time frame should be realistic to ensure integration of the CPE findings into the process of developing the new Strategic Note. As in the case with other decentralized evaluations, CPEs should be included and approved with their corresponding proposed budget in the evaluation section of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan.

(Multi-)country offices are responsible for timely planning and implementing of CPEs. The RESs provide guidance and substantive inputs to support the process.

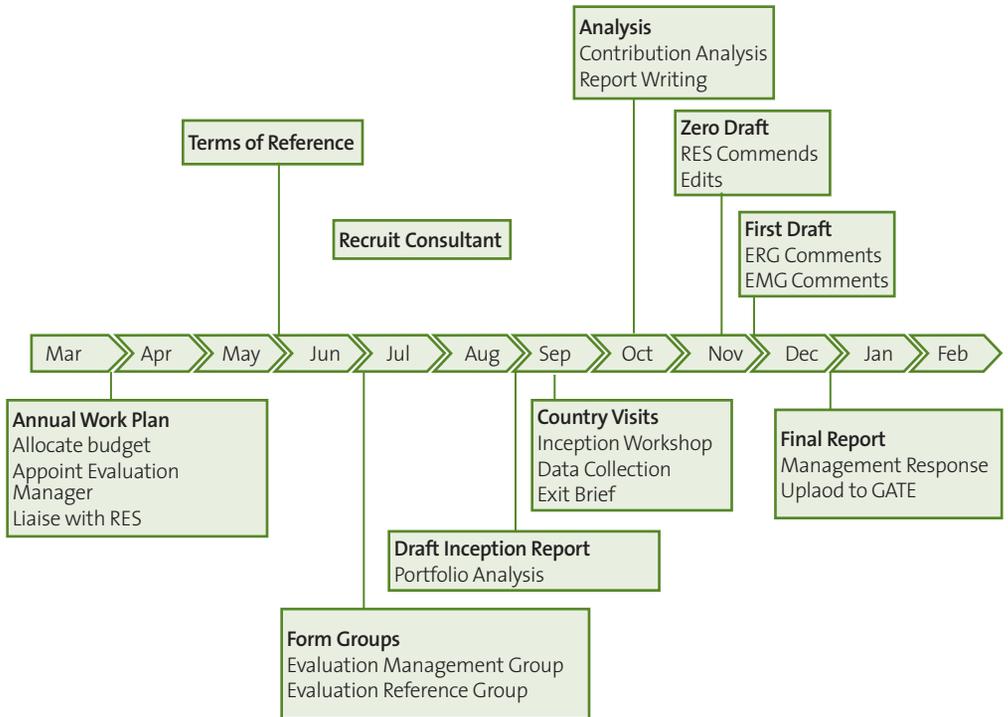
Altogether, 12 months are required from the stage of launching the evaluation process to finalization of the report. Offices should allocate two months for the planning preparation stages, two months for development of the ToR, two months for recruitment of a team of consultants, one month for formation of the Evaluation Management Group and Evaluation Reference Group (including mapping and stakeholders analysis), one month for the inception phase, one month for



data collection, one month for analysis and reporting writing, and two months for review and finalization of the Evaluation Report.

The reporting stage of the (M)CPE should be completed in time to inform the development of the next Strategic Note.

### (Multi-)country portfolio evaluation calendar of key milestones





## Indicative time requirements for selected country portfolio evaluation processes

| Task   | Time frame  | Responsible party                   |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Final ToR (after consultations with reference group and management group)</b> | 4 weeks   | UN Women Evaluation Manager and RES |
| <b>Recruitment of evaluator(s)</b>   | 8 weeks post circulation  | UN Women Evaluation Manager and RES |
| <b>Portfolio analysis and Inception Report</b>                                   | 4 weeks (post contract signing)   | Evaluator                           |
| <b>Inception workshop</b>  | 1 or 2 days   | Evaluator                           |
| <b>Conduct stage (data collection)</b>   | At least 1 week per country plus 1 week for (multi-)country office (post Inception Report submission) | Evaluator and RES                   |
| <b>Reporting stage (analysis and presentation of preliminary findings)</b>       | 4 weeks (post final data collection)  | Evaluator                           |
| <b>Evaluation Reference Group and Evaluation Management Group comments</b>       | 2 weeks   | UN Women Evaluation Manager         |
| <b>Final Report</b>  | 2 week  | Evaluator                           |
| <b>Use and follow-up</b>   | 6 weeks post Final Report   | UN Women Evaluation Manager         |

## Resource requirements and budgeting

UN Women policy states that a minimum of 3 per cent of resources should be allocated to evaluation.

The recommended minimum viable budget allocation is:

- (M)CPE: \$60,000-\$70,000 (USD)
- CPE: \$50,000-\$60,000 (USD)
- More advanced and participatory designs may require substantially more, up to or beyond \$100,000 (USD)

The IEO will assume the co-management role of (M)CPE only if the minimum budget is earmarked by the concerned office.

In situations where this and other minimum requirements have not complied, the evaluation will not be regarded as a CPE.



### TOOL

Use the country portfolio evaluation [Excel budget calculator](#) to estimate a minimum viable budget allocation for different evaluation designs.

# 3

**PREPARATION**



## Preparation

There are 5 main tasks during the preparation stage:

1. Confirm the Evaluation Manager
2. Conduct an evaluability assessment
3. Undertake a stakeholder analysis and engagement
4. Develop and issue the terms of reference
5. Select the evaluation team

## Checking evaluability

An evaluability assessment is a systematic process intended to determine whether or not an intervention is: in a condition to be evaluated, justified, feasible and likely to provide useful information. The UN Women Handbook provides detailed guidance on evaluability assessment for decentralized evaluations, which should be followed for the CPE.

The Evaluation Manager is responsible for coordinating the evaluability assessment. This is expected to review:

- The design features of the Strategic Note, including the explicit or implicit theories of change (to inform the selection of evaluation methods)
- Availability of relevant monitoring information and data
- Conduciveness of the context for evaluation (including demand from stakeholders and any politically sensitive issues)

The Evaluation Manager should create a file of documents and other evaluation evidence to hand over to the evaluation team. An initial qualitative assessment of the availability of secondary data necessary for the evaluation should be undertaken to help refine the scope and design of the evaluation:



### TIP

The [UN Women Evaluation Handbook](#) provides detailed guidance on all of these tasks and should be consulted

### TOOL

The sets of [model guidance for country portfolio evaluations](#) include a model terms of reference

### TIP

Refer to [UN Women Evaluation Handbook Tool 5. How to conduct an evaluability assessment.](#)



| Data                       | Availability      |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Baseline data              | [High/Medium/Low] |
| Activity reports           | [High/Medium/Low] |
| Output results monitoring  | [High/Medium/Low] |
| Outcome results monitoring | [High/Medium/Low] |
| Financial records          | [High/Medium/Low] |
| Management reports         | [High/Medium/Low] |
| Communications products    | [High/Medium/Low] |

The evaluation team is expected to strengthen this evaluability assessment at the inception stage. This should include the following:

- An assessment of the relevance, appropriateness and coherence of the existing theory of change, strengthening or reconstructing it where necessary through a stakeholder workshop
- An assessment of the accessibility and adequacy of relevant documents and secondary data in light of the proposed evaluation design
- A review of the conduciveness of the context for the evaluation
- Ensuring familiarity with accountability and management structures for the evaluation

To assist the evaluation team in understanding and sampling the portfolio, the Evaluation Manager should map the main interventions undertaken by the (multi-) country office into a sample frame. List the main activities from the annual work plans in the following table, ensuring that normative and coordination activities are also captured. Country offices only need to complete one column of the table.



| Areas of work                 | (Multi-) country office programming | Country 1 | Country 2 | Country 3 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Women's leadership            |                                     |           |           |           |
| Women's economic empowerment  |                                     |           |           |           |
| Ending violence against women |                                     |           |           |           |
| Peace and security            |                                     |           |           |           |
| Governance                    |                                     |           |           |           |
| UN coordination               |                                     |           |           |           |
| Normative support             |                                     |           |           |           |
| Resource mobilization         |                                     |           |           |           |
| Partnership                   |                                     |           |           |           |
| Results-based management      |                                     |           |           |           |
| Knowledge management          |                                     |           |           |           |

## Stakeholder analysis and engagement

A defining characteristic of gender-responsive evaluations is including stakeholders. This includes both women and men, as well as vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, people living with HIV and AIDS, and differently-abled persons.

**Engagement of national governments and civil society representatives in the design and commission on the evaluation is an important opportunity to strengthen national ownership, demand and capacity for gender-responsive evaluation.**

The Evaluation Management Group should ensure that the process of the evaluation recognizes the contributions of all groups, results in a useful evaluation for



### TIP

See also UN  
[Women Evaluation Handbook Tool 9.](#)  
Stakeholder analysis  
template



key stakeholders, engages and develops the capacities of target groups, ensures multi-dimensional accountability, and empowers marginalized groups.

Key questions for identifying stakeholders include:

- **Who:** Stakeholders, disaggregated as appropriate
- **What:** Their role in the intervention
- **Why:** Gains from involvement in the evaluation
- **Priority:** Importance of involvement in the evaluation process
- **When:** Stage of the evaluation to engage them (design, consultation, as data collectors, analysis, reporting)
- **How:** Ways and capacities in which stakeholders will participate

**Stakeholders can include:**

- Target groups, their households and community members
- Programme and project partners
- National government institutions
- Internal UN Women stakeholders
- Civil society representatives
- [Private sector and trade unions representatives]
- [Political leaders and representatives]
- Donors and development partners
- UN country team and others

The Evaluation Manager and RES should clearly define the management structure for the evaluation that establishes the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders. Key stakeholders can be involved in the evaluation process through the establishment of the evaluation reference group.



Edit the following table to map out roles and responsibilities for CPE. This can be included in the terms of reference.

| Area of work                                | Key stakeholders   | Target groups (outcomes) |   | Inclusion in the evaluation |
|---|--|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
|   |  | Duty bearers             | Rights holders  |                             |
| Programme (operational)                     | Responsible parties<br>Joint programming partners<br>Government      |                          |   |                             |
| UN coordination                             | Resident Coordinators Office<br>UN country team<br>Gender team group |                          |   |                             |
| Normative                                   | Government<br>National women's machinery                             |                          |   |                             |
| Organizational effectiveness and efficiency | UN Women staff   |                          |   |                             |
| Resource mobilization                       | Donors<br>Government<br>(Private sector)                             |                          |   |                             |
| Knowledge management                        | Civil society advisory group<br>Extended gender team group           |                          |   |                             |
| Inclusion                                   |  |                          | Representatives of groups excluded from UN Women Strategic Note |                             |



During the inception phase, the evaluation team can be guided to further analyse stakeholders according to the following characteristics:

- System roles (target groups, programme controllers, sources of expertise, and representatives of excluded groups)
- Gender roles (intersections of sex, age, household roles, community roles)
- Human rights roles (rights holders, principal duty bearers, primary, secondary and tertiary duty bearers)
- Intended users and uses of the evaluation
- Relationships and power dynamics between stakeholders over time

## Scope of the (multi-)country portfolio evaluation

The scope of the (M)CPE is based on assessing a Strategic Note that is near completion.

Where a Strategic Note is less than three years in duration, it is recommended that the (M)CPE is timed to include two Strategic Note cycles (the ongoing and previous country programme/Strategic Note<sup>3</sup>). However, inclusion of previous cycle is contingent upon the availability of primary and secondary data and the ability to learn.

Where a mid-term review has been undertaken according to UN Women Programme Division guidance, it is recommended to use the findings as appropriate to inform the CPE. Considerations should also be taken when determining the timing of the CPE, notably regarding upcoming evaluations including UNDAF evaluations. Evaluations planned in a given year should be subsumed into the CPE to potentially avoid overlaps, unnecessary burden on national stakeholders and inefficient use of resources.

CPEs focus on outcome level results. They are not expected to:

- Collect output monitoring data (ensuring this is available should be part of the evaluability assessment)

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<sup>3</sup> Evaluability assessment should, however, be undertaken to determine whether to include or not to include the previous Strategic Note cycle as part of the scope of the (M)CPE (this includes checking availability of data or records owing to poor monitoring or limited institutional memory, ability to learn—national context may have changed considerably that lessons from the earlier cycle would not be relevant for future programming, etc.)



- Analyse the achievement of impacts as defined by UNEG (this should be achieved through a dedicated impact evaluation)
- Focus on evaluating UN Women's corporate management or systems outside of the country context

The scope of a CPE is expected to include normative, coordination and operational work in all thematic areas prioritized in the Strategic Note.

The scope of a (M)CPE is expected to include all countries covered by a (multi-) country office in terms of normative and coordination work. Operational work should be considered through cluster sampling of priority themes in all countries where there is a permanent presence of UN Women programme staff or significant investment including by the flagship programme(s) and Fund for Gender Equality.

The evaluation team is expected to establish detailed boundaries for the evaluation, especially in terms of which stakeholders and relationships will be included or excluded from the evaluation. These will need to be clearly described and justified in the Inception Report.

The limitations of the evaluation will depend on the selected design and the sample. In general, findings about overall development effectiveness should not be extrapolated from the sample to the overall performance of the Strategic Note unless two conditions are met:

- The sample of Strategic Note projects included in the CPE is random or 100 per cent
- The sample taken within each project is statistically reliable and valid



## CHECKLIST

- The Evaluation Manager provides assistance in the selection of the consultant/evaluation team used for the evaluation in consultation with Regional Evaluation Specialist.
- The final selection of the consultant is approved by the country representative/deputy representative and the regional evaluation specialist.

## Selecting an evaluation team

It is recommended that the (M)CPE be conducted by a team of evaluators that includes a diversity of perspectives and experience. This should include different gender identities, experience with gender-responsive evaluation and subject-matter expertise.

The composition of evaluation teams, whenever possible, should also include professionals from the countries or regions concerned, in order, *inter alia*, to ensure that national and local knowledge and information is adequately taken into account in evaluations and to support national evaluation capacity.

The recommended minimum size of an evaluation team is two external persons in addition to the participation of the RES:

- One senior evaluator (team leader)—national, regional or international
- One evaluator with specific local knowledge—local

Team selection is an opportunity to support national evaluation capacity for gender-responsive and equality focused evaluation by pairing experienced gender evaluators with local evaluators and including scope for capacity development.

The team should be recruited using a transparent process according to the UN Women Procurement Guidelines and led by the Evaluation Management Group. Situations should be avoided in which evaluators are assessing interventions in which they have had a design, advisory or implementation role in order to prevent conflicts of interest. Any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest should be clearly stated in the Inception Report (evaluability assessment), with agreed mitigation strategies.

The following core competencies are recommended for the evaluation team:

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modeling UN values and ethical standards
- Demonstrates professional competence and is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results



- High sense of relational skills, including cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability, with a demonstrated ability to work in a multidisciplinary team

The following functional competencies are recommended for the evaluation team:

- Ability to manage and supervise evaluation teams and ensure timely submission of quality evaluation reports
- Good knowledge and understanding of the UN system, familiarity with UN Women mandate an asset
- Knowledge of issues concerning governance, women's rights and gender equality
- Specific knowledge in the subject area (e.g., leadership and political participation, economic empowerment, violence against women, peace and security, and gender mainstreaming)
- Wide experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analysis including surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, etc.
- Thorough knowledge of results-based management and strategic planning processes
- Excellent facilitation and communication skills
- Ability to deal with multi-stakeholder groups
- Ability to write focused evaluation reports
- Willingness and ability to travel to the different project's sites in the country

**Education:**

- Master's degree or equivalent in social science, development studies, gender studies, or equivalent



### Experience:

- At least 10 years of professional experiences in conducting gender-responsive evaluations with minimum of five years as Evaluation Team Leader
- A reliable and effective Evaluation Manager with extensive experience in conducting evaluations and a proven record delivering professional results
- Fully acquainted with UNEG evaluation norms and standards
- A proficient practitioner in gender equity and equality policies
- Experienced in the region an added advantage

### Language:

- Fluency in relevant UN language and local language for the national consultant

UN Women has developed a [UN Women Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form](#) for evaluators that must be signed as part of the contracting process, which is based on the [UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct](#). These documents should be annexed to the contract. The UNEG guidelines note the importance of ethical conduct for the following reasons:

- **Responsible use of power:** All those engaged in evaluation processes are responsible for upholding the proper conduct of the evaluation.
- **Ensuring credibility:** With a fair, impartial and complete assessment, stakeholders are more likely to have faith in the results of an evaluation and to take note of the recommendations.
- **Responsible use of resources:** Ethical conduct in evaluation increases the chances of acceptance by the parties to the evaluation and therefore the likelihood that the investment in the evaluation will result in improved outcomes.



## Quality assurance of the terms of reference

The evaluation ToR is a critically important document in preparing for CPE evaluation. The ToR defines why the CPE is being undertaken (purpose and objectives), what it will examine (scope), how (design and methods), when it will be conducted (time frame), who will use it (intended users) and how it will be used when completed.

The ToR should be jointly produced by the Evaluation Manager and the RES, and agreed upon by the Evaluation Management Group.

The ToR should be shared with the Evaluation Reference Group for comment.

The final ToR should be uploaded to GATE and annexed to the Final Evaluation Report when completed.



### TOOL

**Model terms of reference** are provided for each of the three country portfolio evaluation scenarios and have default options that can be adapted by commissioning offices.

### CHECKLIST

- Did the office appoint an Evaluation Manager who is not involved in programme management?
- Was the draft terms of reference developed jointly with the Regional Evaluation Specialist?
- Was the draft terms of reference shared with the evaluation reference and management groups?
- Was the final terms of reference approved by the Management Group?
- Did the monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point upload the final terms of reference to the **GATE** website?

# 4

**CONDUCT**



## Evaluation framework

The evaluation framework is the heart of a CPE. It states what questions will be asked and how evaluative judgements will be made when answering them.

The following example questions have been provided based on the purpose of the CPE. The default questions also balance learning, decision-making and accountability.

These default questions can be edited, added to or deleted as appropriate. If different questions are used, care should be taken to ensure that a strong focus remains on mainstreaming gender equality and human rights.



### TIP

- A substantial part of the country portfolio evaluation is about answering evaluation questions in a credible and evidence-based manner. Focus the evaluation on a limited number of priority evaluation questions to ensure greatest utility of the exercise. Too many questions may render the evaluation unmanageable, while too few may not allow the evaluation to fulfil its accountability and learning objectives.
- Make questions as concrete as possible – very broad questions are hard to answer in a way that is useful for decision-making.

### TOOL

The sets of **model documents** include an outline evaluation framework that can be used to help plan which stakeholders are asked which questions using which tools.

### TIP

- Ideally all indicators should aim to include the following elements:
  - A pre-defined rubric for evaluative judgement in the form of a definition of success, a benchmark, or a minimum standard
  - Mainstreaming gender-responsiveness (where appropriate): gender-disaggregated, gender-specific (relating to one gender group), gender-redistributive (balance between different gender groups)
  - Mainstreaming a human rights based approach (where appropriate): reference to specific human rights norms and standards (including Commission on the Status of Women concluding observations), maximizing the participation of marginalized groups in the definition, collection and analysis of indicators



| Key criteria | Sub criteria                      | Sub questions   |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Relevance    | Strategic positioning             | <p>How has UN Women positioned itself within the national development/policy space, and what strategies has it taken in assisting efforts on gender equality and the empowerment of women?</p> <p>Are the interventions achieving synergies within the UN Women portfolio and the work of the UN country team?</p> <p>What is UN Women's comparative advantage compared with other UN entities and key partners?</p> <p>Was UN Women responsive to the evolution of development challenges and the priorities in national strategies, or significant shifts due to external conditions?</p> <p>How are the short-term requests for assistance balanced against long-term development needs?</p> |
|              | Alignment                         | Is the portfolio aligned with national policies and international human rights norms?   |
|              | Context                           | Is the choice of interventions most relevant to the situation in the target thematic areas?   |
|              | Partnerships                      | <p>Is the choice of partners most relevant to the situation of women and marginalized groups?</p> <p>Are existing partnerships working?</p>   |
| Efficiency   | Organizational efficiency         | <p>To what extent does the UN Women (multi-)country office management structure support efficiency for implementation?</p> <p>Does the organization have access to the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities needed to deliver the portfolio?</p>  |
|              | Mobilizing and managing resources | <p>How well positioned is UN Women to mobilize resources to support the Strategic Note?</p> <p>How well have resources and risks been managed to ensure results?</p>  |



|                      |  |   |
|----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Efficiency</b>    | Culture of results                     | <p>Has a results-based management system been established and implemented?</p> <p>To what extent has UN Women supported national ownership and demand for gender-responsive policy and evaluation evidence?</p> <p>Have national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive evaluation been addressed and strengthened?</p>  |
|                      | Knowledge management and communication | <p>Are UN Women's knowledge management and communications capabilities and practices relevant to the needs of the portfolio and partners</p>  |
| <b>Effectiveness</b> | Programme                              | <p>To what extent have planned outputs been achieved on time?</p> <p>Are interventions contributing to the expected outcomes? For whom?</p> <p>What unexpected outcomes (positive and negative) have been achieved? For whom?</p> <p>What has UN Women's contribution been to the progress of the achievement of outcomes?</p> <p>What are the main enabling and hindering factors to achieving planned outcomes?</p> <p>Is the balance and coherence between programming operational coordination and policy-normative work optimal?</p> |
| <b>Effectiveness</b> | UN coordination                        | <p>What contribution is UN Women making to UN coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women? Which roles is UN Women playing in this field?</p> <p>To what extent has gender equality and women's empowerment been mainstreamed in UN joint programming such as UNDAF?</p> <p>To what extent has UN Women coordination contributed to achieving results on gender equality and the empowerment of women?</p>   |



|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Effective-ness</b>                   | Normative   | <p>To what extent have lessons learned been shared with or informed global and national normative work?</p> <p>What contribution is UN Women making to implementing global and national norms and standards for gender equality and the empowerment of women?</p>   |
| <b>Sustain-ability</b>                  | Capacity development                              | <p>To what extent was capacity developed in order to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?</p>   |
|   | National ownership                                | <p>Is there national ownership and are there national champions for different parts of the portfolio?</p> <p>What local accountability and oversight systems have been established to support the continuation of activities?</p> <p>How did UN Women design to scale-up coverage and effects of its interventions?</p> <p>Did UN Women use and capitalize upon pilot/catalytic initiatives?</p>  |
| <b>Human rights and gender equality</b> | Addressing structural causes of gender inequality | <p>Is the portfolio addressing the root causes of gender inequality?</p> <p>To what extent is the portfolio changing the dynamics of power in relationships between different groups?</p> <p>Has the portfolio been implemented according to human rights and development effectiveness principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participation/empowerment</li><li>• Inclusion/non-discrimination</li><li>• National accountability/transparency</li></ul> <p>Which groups is the portfolio reaching the most, and which are being excluded?</p> |

As part of the inception phase, the evaluation team should be required to develop agreed indicators for answering each evaluation question (a model evaluation framework is included in the Inception Report).

Figure: Elaborating the evaluation framework

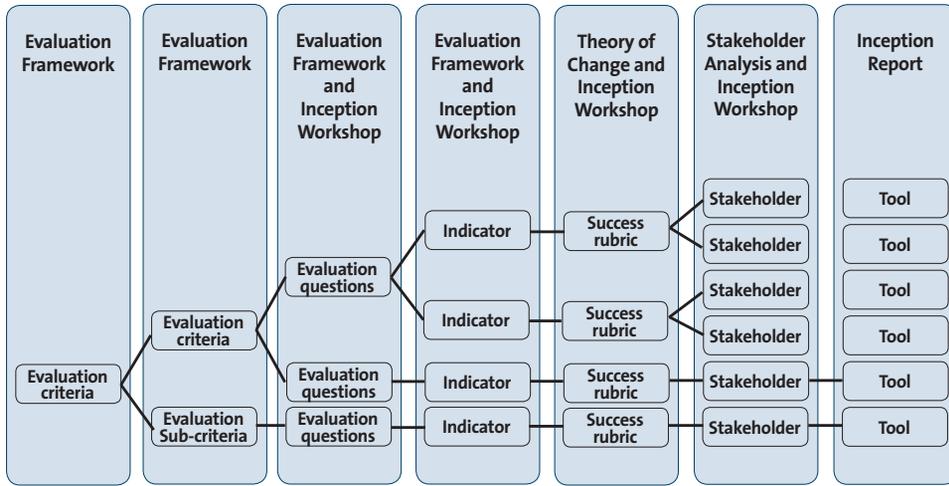
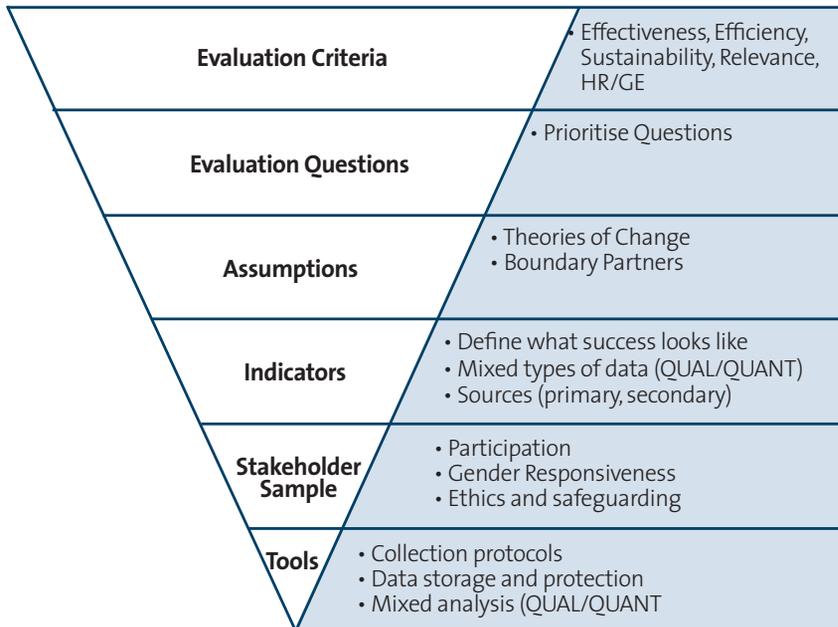


Figure: Identifying the priority data required by the evaluation





### TIP

- Make sure that the design fits the context and not the evaluator's preferences (evaluation specific methodology).
- Ensure the methods include looking for unintended outcomes – both positive and negative.

### TOOL

An example table for the portfolio analysis is included in the model Inception Report.

### TIP

- The use of participatory analysis, video, photography or other methods are particularly encouraged as means to include rights holders as data collectors and interpreters. Surveys are challenging to implement using participatory techniques while maintaining consistency and reliability.
- A detailed list of approaches and methods can be found at [www.betterevaluation.org](http://www.betterevaluation.org)

## Evaluation design

The three sets of model documents provide a series of default options for the design of CPEs. These have been selected based on the nature of UN Women Strategic Notes, the likely resource envelope available to (M)CPEs, and emerging consensus on best practice for gender-responsive evaluation.

**The default design for an (M)CPE should have all three of the following features:**

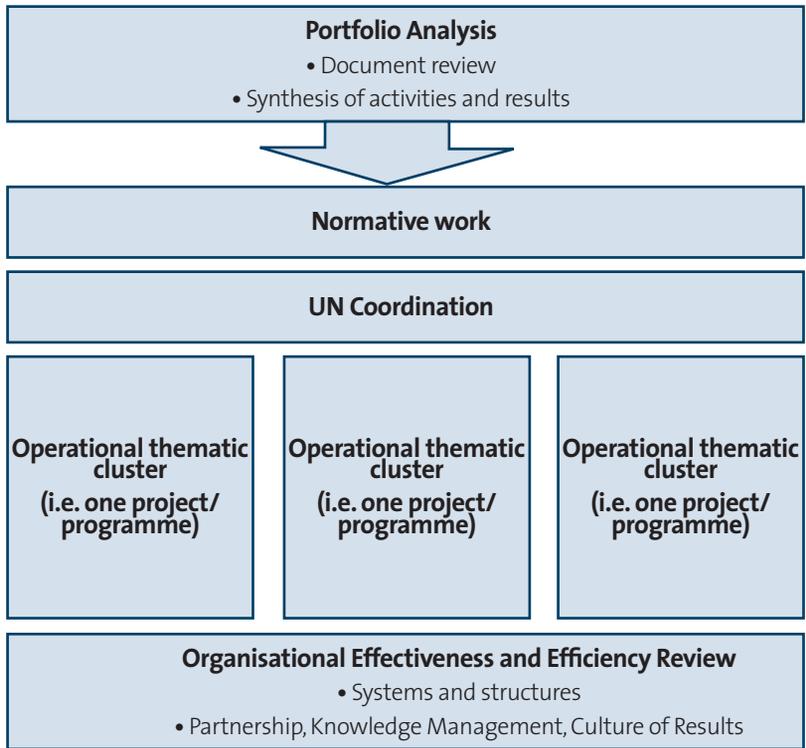
- 1. (M)CPEs are theory-based:** A theory based-design assesses the performance of the Strategic Note based upon its stated assumptions about how change happens. These assumptions can be challenged, validated or expanded upon by the evaluation.
- 2. (M)CPEs use cluster evaluation designs:** Cluster evaluation assess a large number of interventions by grouping similar interventions together into “clusters”, and evaluating only a representative sample of these in depth. In the case of (M)CPEs, these clusters are the Strategic Plan thematic areas in each country or the flagship programmes. In the case of CPEs, clusters are the projects that sit under each thematic area from the Strategic Note.
- 3. (M)CPEs start with a broad portfolio analysis:** This includes a synthesis of secondary results data for the DRF and the OEEF of the Strategic Note. This will cover all activities undertaken by the (multi-) country office.

An initial **portfolio analysis** during the Inception Phase should be triangulated through a mixed methods approach that will include:

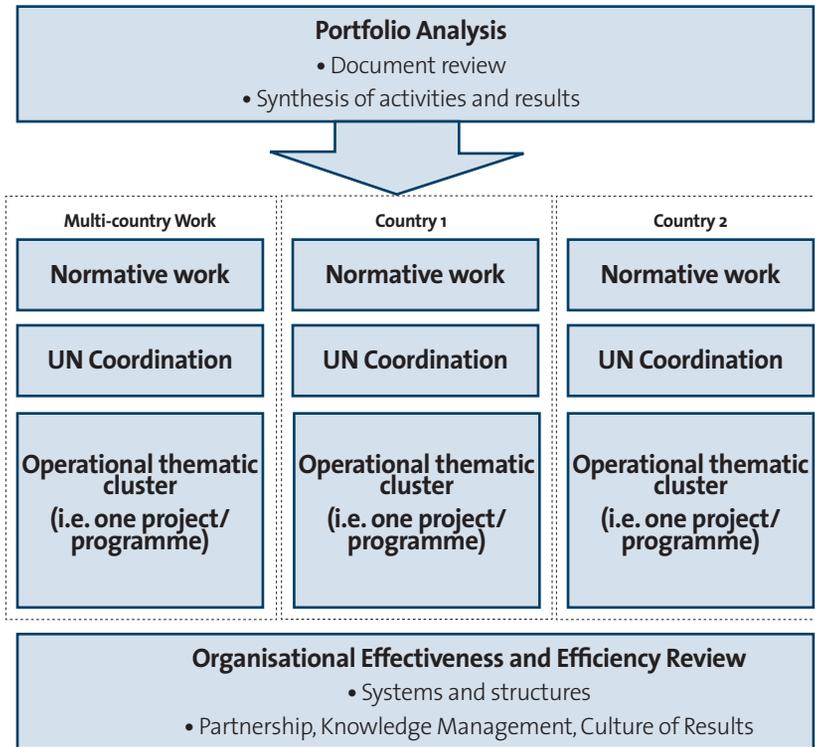
- Desk review of additional documentary evidence
- Consultation with all main stakeholder groups
- An independent assessment of development effectiveness
- An independent assessment of organizational effectiveness and efficiency



**Figure: Overall design of a country portfolio evaluation**



**Figure: Overall design for a (multi-)country portfolio evaluation**



In addition to the broad portfolio analysis, an assessment of outcomes will be undertaken for a sample of clusters.

- The cluster sample for an (M)CPE could be one thematic area/flagship programme per country
- The cluster sample for a standard CPE could be one project from each thematic area/flagship programme
- Minimum viable CPEs for small country portfolios are not expected to undertake any sampling: they should consider all activities

CPEs can use different combinations of approaches and methods, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, participatory rural appraisal, most significant change, and so on. The evaluation is particularly encouraged to use participatory methods to ensure that all stakeholders are consulted as part of the evaluation process. At a minimum, this should include participatory tools for consultation with



stakeholder groups and a plan for inclusion of women and individuals and groups who are vulnerable and/or discriminated against in the consultation process.

The CPE should include a wide range of data sources including documents, field information, institutional information systems, financial records, beneficiaries, staff, development partners, experts, government officials and community groups.

**The default approach to evaluative analysis in an (M)CPE is “contribution analysis”.** Contribution analysis is an approach for inferring causality in real-life evaluations. It offers a four-step approach designed to help managers, researchers, and policymakers arrive at conclusions about the contribution the portfolio has made (or is currently making) to the DRF outcomes.

Contribution analysis offers an approach designed to reduce uncertainty about the contribution the portfolio is making to the observed results through an increased understanding of why the observed results have occurred (or not), and the roles played by the intervention and other internal and external factors.

The four steps to contribution analysis are based on the theory of change that the evaluators should present in the Inception Report:

- Gather existing evidence on the theory of change (that supports or challenges it)
- Use the portfolio analysis and the cluster analysis to assemble and assess the contribution story, or performance story, of the overall portfolio—and any challenges to it
- Seek out additional evidence to fill gaps in the performance story
- Revise and, where additional evidence permits, strengthen the performance story to determine the probable contribution of UN Women

## Standard (default) design

The standard design for an (M)CPE is based on the **dual purpose of learning and accountability**: to develop an evidence-based view on how well UN Women at the country level is strategically positioned to create results for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the future.

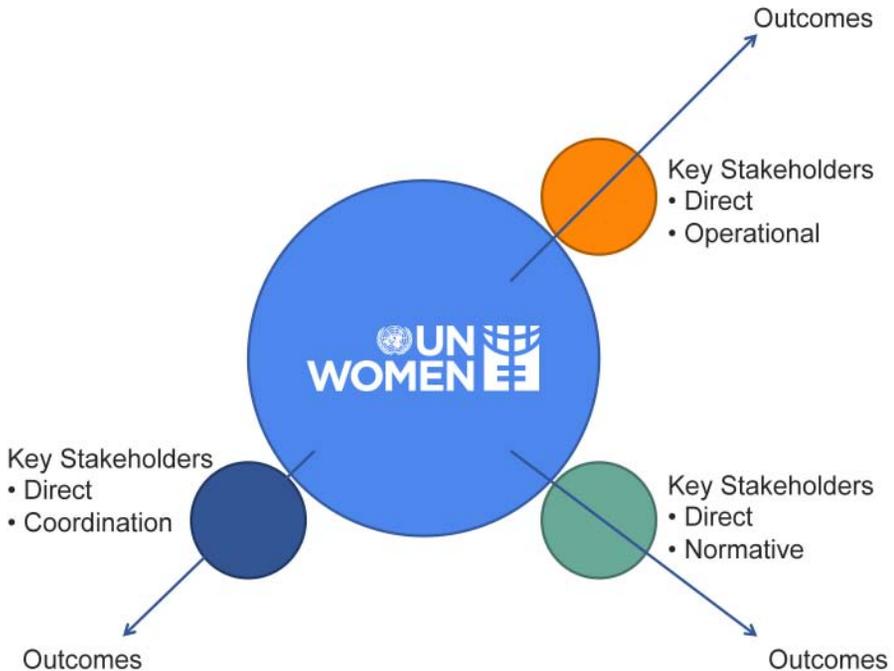


### TIP

Collaborative outcomes reporting technique (CORT) was developed by Dr. Jess Dart to assess effectiveness. It needs to be adapted and combined with other techniques to also assess efficiency, sustainability and relevance.

This approach is heavily influenced by work on outcomes mapping, outcomes harvesting and collaborative outcomes reporting technique (CORT). In particular, the design emphasizes that UN Women does not create results directly but does so through its key partners. These partners can include responsible parties (implementing partners) for programmatic work (under the operational mandate). UN Women also has to consider its influence through the normative and coordination mandates. In these areas, key partners are likely to include a wide range of UN entities, governmental and parastatal bodies, civil society, development partners and private sector organizations.

**Figure: Underlying assumptions about how UN Women influences gender equality and women’s empowerment outcomes through its partnerships.**



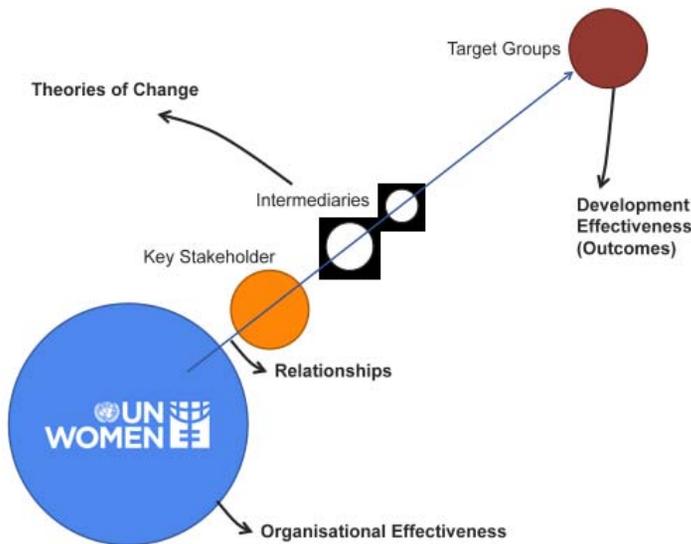


These assumptions – about how change happens through partners – forms the basis for the evaluation of UN Women strategic positioning:

- How well UN Women is functioning in terms of organizational effectiveness and efficiency
- How well this organizational performance enables UN Women to develop and maintain effective relationships with key partners
- To what extent these key partners were able to influence outcomes for gender equality and women’s empowerment
- Thus, whether or not the assumptions about how change happens made in the Strategic Note are relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable

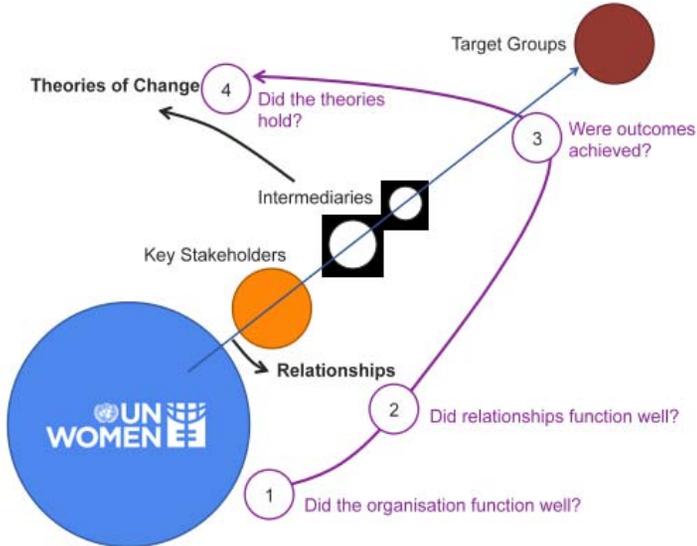
**Figure: The logic of the forward-looking evaluation design—assessing organizational effectiveness, relationships, development effectiveness, and theories of change**

1.

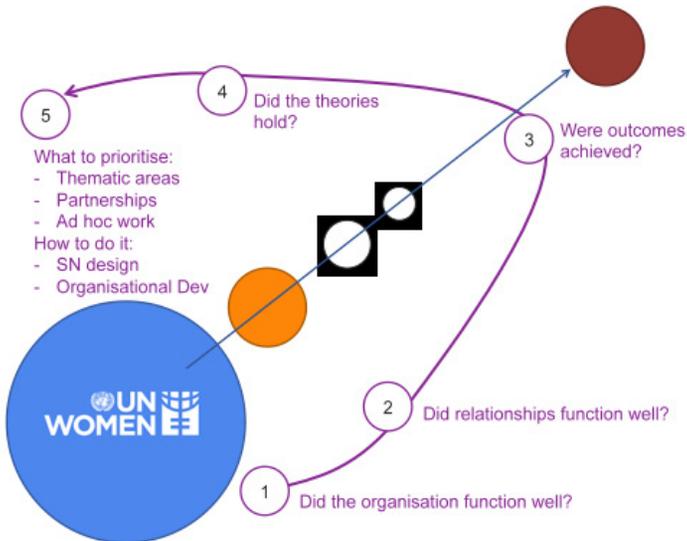




## 2.



## 3.



The evaluation is required to generate both primary and secondary evidence to assess each of the first three steps in this process (organizational effectiveness, relationships with boundary partners, and development effectiveness).



## Inception phase: Portfolio analysis

The inception phase should include meetings with the Evaluation Manager and management and reference groups, as appropriate. These can take place over the phone, via Skype, or in person, resources allowing.

Inception meetings are an opportunity for the evaluators to introduce themselves and to gain further clarity on the portfolio and context in which the evaluation will take place.

They also allow stakeholders to have preliminary contact with the evaluators, introduce the purpose and approach of the evaluation, better understand users and uses, and facilitate further exchange during data collection.

For larger evaluations, a visit by the evaluation team to a project site may be undertaken in advance of the data collection. The information gathered during the visit will be used to make final decisions on the evaluation approach and to pilot test the data collection instruments and validate or modify stakeholder analysis.

Prior to conducting any site visits, the evaluators should meet with the Evaluation Manager and RES to discuss the process, methodology and questions or issues to be addressed in the visit.

**A portfolio analysis should begin before the country visit, and should scope out and explore all interventions undertaken under the Strategic Note, including normative, coordination and operations work.**

The portfolio analysis serves two main purposes:

1. It synthesizes data on expenditure, activities, target groups, theories of change, and output level results.
2. It acts as a sample frame for the detailed cluster analysis.

The portfolio analysis should include the following information on each (multi-) country office intervention:

- Mandate (normative, coordination, operational)
- Thematic areas covered



### TIP

The reporting chapter of this Guidance provides example infographics of data from the portfolio analysis.



- Target group
- Time frame
- Stakeholders involved and their contributions
- Expenditure or other UN Women contribution
- Main theory of change
- Related DRF indicators and output results data
- (Multi-)country office activity
- Related OEEF indicators and performance data
- Documented lessons learned
- Contextual factors
- Sources of evidence

In addition to scoping the interventions of the (multi-)country office, the portfolio analysis is an opportunity to review other programmatic and operational aspects of UN Women's presence. This should start with an analysis of the Strategic Note and supporting documentation, including:

- The lessons learned from previous Strategic Notes and reflected in the technical design of the current Strategic Note
- The underlying theories of change used across the Strategic Note, including the synergies between thematic areas, links between mandates, and the intended use of operational priorities (such as knowledge management, communications, and results-based management)
- The current UNDAF and any forthcoming UNDAF drafts to assess the extent to which these documents are gender-responsive
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women reports (State Party Report, Shadow Report, Concluding Observations) to assess the extent to which the Strategic Note (and UNDAF) is aligned with these, and to allow for further analysis of UN Women's strategic positioning in relation to specific concluding observations
- UN Women's staffing complement to understand what capacities exist, how these are funded, and how resilient the current capacity is (i.e., do key capabilities rely on particular projects or short-term contracts). The staff members can be listed in a table, including:
  - Duty station
  - Gender



- Name
  - Functional title
  - Post level
  - Contract type
  - Funding source
  - Core project #
  - Cost-sharing project #
- Financial data from ATLAS to understand the main focus of the Strategic Note in cost terms, in addition to analyzing the balance between thematic areas, mandates and DRF/OEEF. The following information can be inserted into Excel pivot tables to allow for analysis:
    - Year
    - Impact (area)
    - Country
    - Project ID
    - Project (title)
    - Funds
    - Budget (amount)
    - Expenses plus full asset cost (amount);
- Analysis of budget data can include:
    - For each **year, each country** and each strategic plan **goal**:
      - What was the amount of money actually mobilized (received and firm commitments)?
      - What was the amount of money actually spent (or budgeted in the final year of the Strategic Note)?
      - Was any money returned to donors? Why?
      - Who were the biggest donors by value?
      - What percentage of the overall (multi-)country office core budget was spent on each country/impact/thematic area?
      - What percentage of other resources were spent on each country/impact/thematic area?
      - What percentage of the core budget supported (multi-)country office capacity and operations?
      - What percentage of the core budget supported programming?
      - Who were the biggest responsible parties by value for each impact/outcome/thematic area by country?

## INCEPTION PHASE: SAMPLING

Considering the level of investment that is expected for each (M)CPE it is essential that a robust and justifiable approach is taken to sampling.

The evaluation is encouraged to apply a **purposive sampling of cases based on maximizing learning and insights for improved decision-making (the primary purpose of the (M)CPE)**.

The following minimum standards for sampling can be used:



### TIP

The Evaluation Reference Group members will be an important source to consult when prioritizing interventions and thematic areas to include in the sample.

| MCPE   | CPE  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All normative (macro-level policy work) in the DRF</li> <li>• All UN system coordination work in the OEEF</li> <li>• One thematic cluster of operational work per country</li> <li>• All countries covered by the (multi-)country office</li> <li>• One multi-country programme (where multi-country work exists)</li> <li>• The most strategically important thematic clusters to the (multi-) country office:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Relevance of the subject:</b> Is the thematic cluster a socioeconomic or political priority of the mandate and role of UN Women? Is it a key priority of the national plan, UN Women Strategic Note or the Annual Work Plan? Is it a geographic priority of UN Women, e.g., levels of gender inequality and the situation of women in the country?</li> <li>- <b>Risk associated with the thematic area:</b> Are there political, economic, funding, structural or organizational factors that present potential high risk for the non-achievement of results or for which further evidence is needed for management decision-making?</li> <li>- <b>Significant investment:</b> Is the intervention considered a significant investment in relation to the overall office portfolio (more than one-third)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All normative (macro-level policy work) in the DRF</li> <li>• All UN system coordination work in the OEEF</li> <li>• One project/programme for each thematic area included in the Strategic Note</li> <li>• All thematic areas covered by the country</li> <li>• At least one joint, regional or global programme (where these are present)</li> <li>• The most strategically important thematic interventions for the country office:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Relevance of the subject:</b> Is the intervention a socioeconomic or political priority of the mandate and role of UN Women? Is it a key priority of the national plan, UN Women Strategic Note or the Annual Work Plan? Is it a geographic priority of UN Women, e.g., levels of gender inequality and the situation of women in the country?</li> <li>- <b>Risk associated with the intervention:</b> Are there political, economic, funding, structural or organizational factors that present potential high risk for the non-achievement of results or for which further evidence is needed for management decision-making?</li> <li>- <b>Significant investment:</b> Is the intervention considered a significant investment in relation to the overall office portfolio (more than one-third)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The richest learning opportunities:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Demands for accountability from stakeholders:</b> Are stakeholders specifically requesting the evaluation of a thematic area (e.g., through donor requirements in direct financing and co-financing arrangements)?</li><li>- <b>Potential for replication and scaling-up:</b> Would the evaluation provide the information necessary to identify the factors required for the success in a thematic area and determine the feasibility of replication or scaling-up? Does the thematic area include a pilot and/or an innovative initiative?</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The richest learning opportunities:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Demands for accountability from stakeholders:</b> Are stakeholders specifically requesting the evaluation of an intervention (e.g., through donor requirements in direct financing and co-financing arrangements)?</li><li>- <b>Potential for replication and scaling-up:</b> Would the evaluation provide the information necessary to identify the factors required for the success in an intervention and determine the feasibility of replication or scaling-up? Is the intervention a pilot and/or an innovative initiative?</li></ul></li></ul> |
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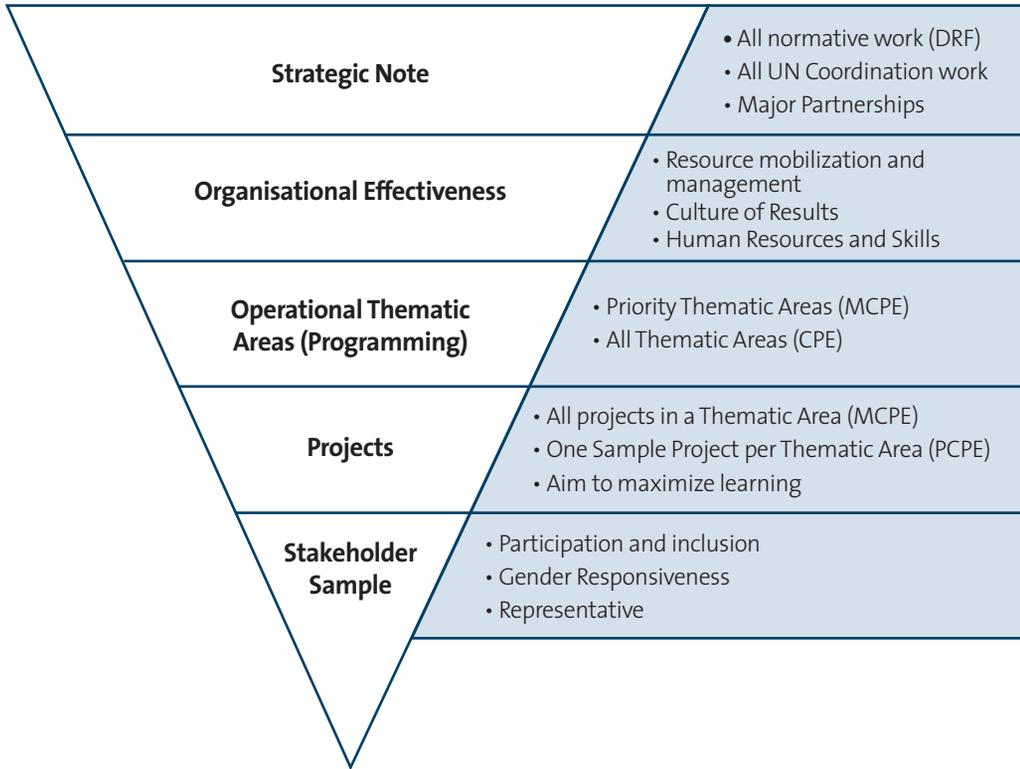
For the (M)CPE, each “case” is a thematic cluster/flagship programme in a single country, or a multi-country programme.

For the standard CPE, each “case” is a specific intervention (project/programme) within a thematic area/flagship programme.

To evaluate each selected case, the evaluation team is required to propose a sampling approach that maximizes: inclusion, reliability and validity. The appropriate sampling approach will depend on the nature of the interventions.



Figure: Evaluation sampling



## Field visit: Participatory inception workshop

The beginning of an (M)CPE field mission begins with a **participatory inception workshop**. For CPEs, this should include multiple stakeholders, including UN Women staff, gender team group focal persons (UN), national women's machinery representatives (government) and civil society advisory group representatives (civil society). For (M)CPEs it is unlikely to be feasible to transport all stakeholders to a single country, therefore, a multi-country workshop for UN Women staff members should be held, followed by multi-stakeholder orientation-presentations at the opening of each country visit.

The agenda for the participatory inception workshop is as follows:

- Introduction/welcome by the UN Women representative
- Introduction by the representative of the national women's machinery, followed by quick introductions of all the people at the table



- Introduction to the evaluation and purpose of the CPE by the evaluation team
- **Activity 1:** Split into three groups (normative, coordination, operational) and draw a timeline on a flipchart. Map the major activities/projects that were undertaken by UN Women during the Strategic Note. If time allows, also note any important contextual events (e.g. elections).
- **Activity 2:** In the same groups, draw the theories of change table from the Model Inception Report (also see below) on a flip chart and start working through the columns (it is easier to introduce the columns one-by-one rather than all at the same time).
  - **Key partners:** The organizations that the country office works with directly
  - **Partnership indicators:** These need to come from a discussion about what a healthy and effective partnership should look like (how should the evaluators judge whether the partnerships are functional)
  - **Target groups:** Divide this into two lists of the groups that the work is trying to reach: 1) duty bearers, and 2) rights holders
  - **Target changes:** The outcomes (not outputs) that UN Women is seeking to create for the groups listed in the previous column (how the evaluators should judge success)
  - **Theories of change:** List the processes by which changes are expected to happen (e.g., capacity building, or advocacy, or policy change, or knowledge, etc.)
  - **Links to other activities:** Highlight where different activities link together (not so important if time is limited).
- **Activity 3:** Come together into plenary and present the work of the groups. Discuss any additions/clarifications.
- **Activity 4:** As a group, work through the list of priority questions (Inception report, page 5) – highlight the primary and secondary questions of interest to the group under each cluster. This is where the evaluators will focus their attention.



### TIP

- Time should be provided for the evaluation team to clarify the object and learn as much as they possibly can about it. Time spent orientating the team at this stage helps prevent costly misunderstandings later in the process.
- Ensure that the evaluation team reviews and refers to previous evaluation reports and mid-term reviews in order to develop a longer-term perspective.

### TOOL

Model Inception Reports are provided

### CHECKLIST

- The Evaluation Manager and RES take the primarily responsibility for quality assuring and approving the Inception Report.
- Was the draft and final Inception Report shared with the evaluation reference and management groups for quality review?
- Was the final Inception Report approved by the country representative and RES?



- **Activity 5:** Double check with the whole group that if the evaluators talk to the people that are identified then they will adequately capture the work of the country office.
  - Wrap-up and give thanks to participants.

**Figure: Theories of change table**

|   | Work | Key partners | Partnership indicators | Target groups | Target changes | Theories of change | Links to other activities |
|---|------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| # |      |              |                        |               | 1)             |                    |                           |
| # |      |              |                        |               | 2)             |                    |                           |
| # |      |              |                        |               | 3)             |                    |                           |
| # |      |              |                        |               | 4)             |                    |                           |

After the workshop, the team should sit with the Evaluation Manager and review the field visit agenda. Make sure that all of the right stakeholders are included for interviews given the work done in the inception workshop.

#### Stakeholder selection criteria<sup>4</sup>

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | The sample should include stakeholders involved in seemingly good performing and poor performing interventions of the Strategic Note.  |
| 2 | The sample should include different type of stakeholders for each given output/outcome, i.e., implementing partners, other partners, direct and indirect beneficiaries and donors. |
| 3 | For each output/outcome, the sample should include both stakeholders associated to on-going activities and with activities (Annual Work Plan) that have already been completed.    |
| 4 | The sample should include both stakeholders associated with financial large and financially modest Annual Work Plan.   |
| 5 | The sample should include both stakeholders associated to regular actions and pilot interventions.   |
| 6 | The sample should include stakeholders associated with soft-aid activities carried out by the (multi- country office).   |
| 7 | The sample should include stakeholders associated to regional/geographic interventions.  |
| 8 | The sample should include—whenever relevant—stakeholders that have been involved with interagency programmes/projects.   |

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from United Nations Population Fund Country Programme Evaluation Handbook.



The evaluation team can then refine the interview questionnaires. One questionnaire should be prepared for each of the following types of interviewee:

- UN Women staff
- Gender team group and joint programmes – UN staff
- Resident Coordinator/heads of agencies
- Ministries and government agencies
- Implementing partners
- Donors
- Civil society organizations and rights holders groups
- Private sector and trade unions
- Local government
- Target groups

## Inception workshop

The evaluation field visit will typically start with a one-day (CPE) or two-day (M)CPE inception workshop. For an (M)CPE, the inception workshop will most likely be for UN Women staff only (because of the cost of travel). For a CPE, the inception workshop can also include the reference group members.

The inception workshop includes the following activities facilitated by the evaluation team and the RES:

- Introduction to the evaluation purpose and process
- Creating a timeline of major activities from the course of Strategic Note implementation
- For each major group of activities, mapping the key partners, target groups and intended outcomes (with reference to the DRF)
- For each key partner, identifying indicators of what a positive relationship would look like
- For each intended outcome, identifying the underlying assumptions of how change happens (the theories of change)
- Prioritizing the questions from the evaluation matrix

During the participatory inception workshop, the evaluation team should facilitate the mapping of Strategic Note interventions on a timeline, and agreeing on the intended outcomes of these with a broad group of stakeholders. During the social enquiry process, these stakeholders can also be engaged to help with data collection—such as additional community interviews, site visits and document research—where independence is not a relevant consideration.



### TIP

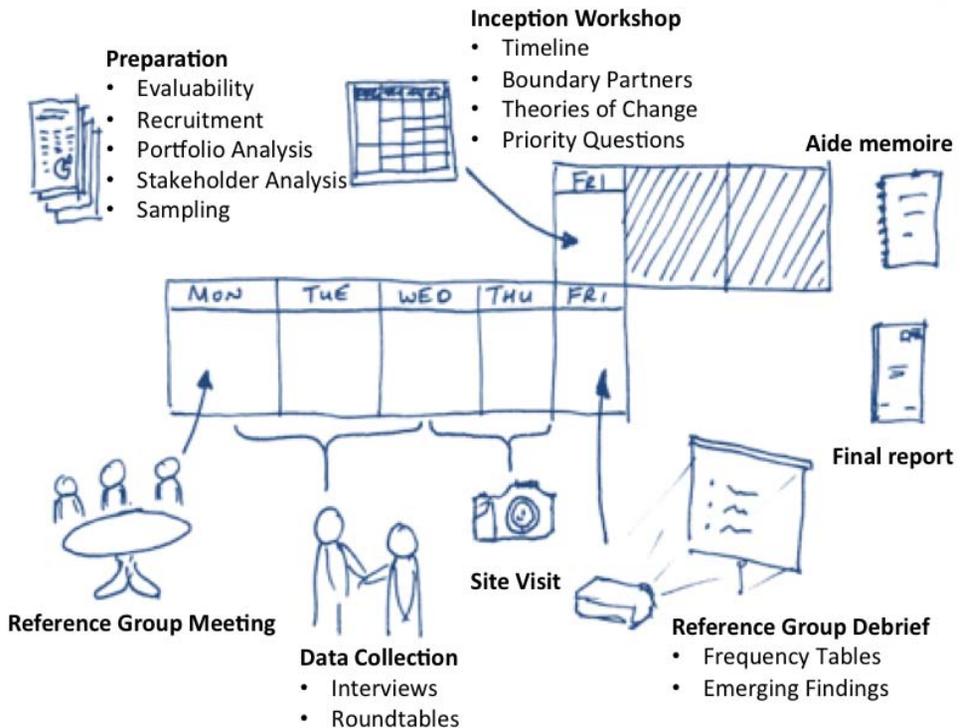
Example timelines, partnership maps and evaluation questions are included in the model Inception Report

All of the evidence is pulled into frequency tables. An expert panel, including the evaluation team, can review this evidence. A series of draft findings are developed. These should cover all three mandates (normative, coordination and operational/ programmatic).

The country visit concludes with an exit brief or a participatory summit workshop that includes a wider range of stakeholders. This participatory process reviews all of the evidence, validates and updates the draft findings, and results in a series of participatory recommendations to improve the achievement of outcomes in the future.

Following the country visit, the evaluation team helps by sourcing additional evidence and analysis in order to refine the participatory recommendations and to outline the implications of these for UN Women decision makers.

**Figure: Typical country portfolio evaluation country visit process for the default evaluation approach.**



## Assessing organizational effectiveness

The evaluation should generate and synthesize evidence based on indicators and targets contained in the organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework included as part of the Strategic Note. This integrates UN Women's Strategic Plan principles and operational priorities, which include: leveraging and managing resources, culture of results, UN system coordination, partnership, promoting inclusiveness, national ownership and supporting capacity development.

The evaluation team should:

- Gather and synthesize secondary evidence against the OEEF in frequency tables (provided in the model documents)
- Triangulate with primary evidence from key informant interviews
- Develop draft findings and validate with the (multi-)country office

## Assessing relationships with key partners

The evaluation process starts with an inception workshop. During this workshop, the evaluation team should map out major activities, key partners, and the underlying theories of how change happens. As part of this process, participants in the inception workshop should define what they expect effective partnerships to look like. This can include qualitative descriptions of:

- Behaviors that they would like see expressed by boundary partners
- Capacities that they would expect boundary partners to have
- Institutional structures, process and policies that they would like to see in place
- Networks that they would hope to see boundary partners develop

### ! TIP

As clearly indicated in the Strategic Plan issues that need to be factored while assessing the Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework include how well UN Women strengthened and maintained cost-effective and transparent systems of financial management and accountability; supported results-based budgeting of resources; timely allocated and distributed budgets; and managed and reported on financial transactions that led to the delivery of high quality outputs, goods and services.

It should also include managerial and operational efficiency such as human resources, knowledge management and geographic and thematic focus of interventions.

The evaluation team should:

- Gather and synthesize primary evidence against these participatory indicators of effective relationships in frequency tables (provided in the model documents) through interviews and observations
- Triangulate with documentary evidence
- Develop draft findings and validate with the (multi-)country office



## TOOL

A table for undertaking a contribution analysis is included in the model evaluation report.

## Assessing development effectiveness

The evaluation should generate and synthesize evidence based on **outcome indicators and targets contained in the DRF** included as part of the Strategic Note. This integrates UN Women's Strategic Plan principles, which include: promoting inclusiveness, national ownership and supporting capacity development.

It should be noted, that outcomes may be at the level of changes in the lives of target groups, or in changes in target institutions. While UN Women cannot be directly and solely responsible for these changes, the overarching purpose of UN Women's work at the country level is to support the government and the counterparts in taking actions that will, ultimately, have the impact of improving the lives of women and advancing their equality and empowerment. How plausible is it that positive changes brought about by the key partners resulted, at least in part, from efforts by UN Women?

There are two central concerns that should be noted when assessing effectiveness. First, the intended results may be expressed as long-term development objectives, while evaluators may come at an earlier stage when such objectives cannot be observed. In theory, a UN Women programme or project activity generates direct outputs that foster intermediate results and change processes, which may lead to the achievement of the intended results. Whenever possible, the evaluators should assess the final results and the extent of UN Women's contribution in achieving them. However, in many cases, the evaluation's time frame will only allow to observe intermediate results and change processes.

Thus, the evaluation is required to summarize existing data on the achievement of outputs, but should primarily focus on assessing outcomes (the existence of data on outputs should have been checked during the evaluability assessment). It is in



the assessment of development effectiveness that the multi-country portfolio evaluation and the standard country portfolio evaluation are expected to apply cluster sampling. In the case of an (M)CPE, the evaluation will assess one thematic area/flagship programme per country. In the case of a standard CPE, the evaluation will assess one or more projects per thematic area/flagship programme.

The evaluation team should:

- Gather and synthesize monitoring and evaluation data relating to the achievement of DRF **outputs**
- Gather and synthesize secondary evidence against the DRF **outcomes** in frequency tables (provided in the model documents)
- Triangulate with key informant interviews, focus groups and field visits
- Undertake a contribution analysis
- Develop draft findings and validate with the (multi-)country office

## Assessing the theories of change and future strategies

As part of the inception workshop, the evaluation team will help to reconstruct the theories of change that support the Strategic Note. Using the evidence about organizational effectiveness, relationships with key partners, and development effectiveness, the evaluation team can now assess the extent to which these theories of change have worked in reality:

- To what extent has each assumption in the theories of change worked out in reality? Are the right ingredients for change present?
- To what extent has the chain of assumptions and changes influenced each other as expected? Does change work the way we think it does?
- To what extent are the final outcomes expected, unexpected, positive and negative?
- What other influences and assumptions are likely to be relevant in this situation?



Depending on the time and facilitation skills available in-country, the evaluation team can undertake this analysis either internally or through a participatory workshop with stakeholders.

Based on the answers to these questions, recommendations can be developed about how the theories of change are best adjusted for the future. These recommendations can be in terms of which thematic areas and partnerships should be prioritized. They can also be in terms of the technical design of interventions and UN Women's organization development.



## TIP

See [UN Women Evaluation Handbook Tool 13](#). Advantages and disadvantages of data collection methods.

## RESOURCE

BetterEvaluation.org provides many examples of evaluation methods under five clusters: 1) information from individuals; 2) information from groups; 3) observation; 4) physical measurements; 5) reviewing existing records and data.  
[http://betterevaluation.org/plan/describe/collect\\_retrieve\\_data](http://betterevaluation.org/plan/describe/collect_retrieve_data)

## Field visit: Methods for data collection

Gender-responsive evaluation applies mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analytical approaches) to account for complexity of gender relations and to ensure participatory and inclusive processes that are culturally appropriate.

Gender-responsive evaluation methods:

- Use gender analysis frameworks (e.g., Harvard analytical framework, gender planning framework, social relations framework, women's empowerment framework)
- Draw upon feminist theory and methodologies
- Are appropriate and relevant to both women and men
- Are participatory
- Ensure collection of disaggregated data
- Understand the constraints and challenges of informants
- Explore gender roles and power relations
- Emphasize mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative)



Many evaluations in UN Women use very similar methods of data collection. These include:

- Desk review of documents (synthesis and analysis)
- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders
- Group interviews (often referred to as focus group discussions)
- Online surveys

These methods are generally low cost and well-known, helping to explain their extensive use. Whilst these are valid methods of data collection within the context of the (M)CPE, complementing these with the use of a broader range of methods is highly encouraged.

Some examples of methods that can be used in UN Women (M) CPEs are listed here.

#### INFORMATION FROM INDIVIDUALS

- **In-depth interviews:** using probing and multiple interview sessions to collect detailed responses from participants beyond initial answers to questions.
- **Key informant interviews:** interviewing people who have particularly informed perspectives.
- **PhotoVoice:** promoting participatory photography as an empowering option of digital storytelling for vulnerable populations.
- **Email questionnaires:** distributing questionnaires online via email.
- **Stories:** providing a glimpse into how people experience their lives and the impact of specific projects/programmes.

#### INTERVIEWS WITH GROUPS

- **Focus group discussions:** discovering the issues that are of most concern for a community or group when little or no information is available.



### CHECKLIST

- A plan is in place to protect the rights of the respondent, including privacy and confidentiality.
- The interviewer or data collector is trained in collecting sensitive information, and if the topic of the evaluation is focused on violence against women, they should have previous experience in this area.
- Data collection tools are designed in a way that are culturally appropriate and do not create distress for respondents.
- Data collection visits are organized at the appropriate time and place so as to minimize risk to respondents.
- The interviewer or data collector is able to provide information on how individuals in situations of risk can seek support.



- **Q-methodology:** investigating the different perspectives of participants on an issue by ranking and sorting a series of statements (also known as Q-sort).
- **SWOT analysis:** reflecting on and assessing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of a particular strategy.

## **OBSERVATION**

- **Field trips:** organizing trips where participants visit physical sites.

## **EXISTING DOCUMENTS AND DATA**

- **Official statistics:** obtaining statistics published by government agencies or other public bodies such as international organizations. These include quantitative or qualitative information on all major areas of citizens' lives such as economic and social development, living conditions, health, education, the environment.
- **Previous evaluations and research:** using the findings from evaluation and research studies that were previously conducted on the same or closely related areas.
- **Project records:** retrieving relevant information from a range of documents related to the management of a project such as the project description, strategic and work plans, budget and procurement documents, official correspondence, minutes of meetings, description and follow-up of project participants, progress reports.

The UNEG Ethical Guidelines should be applied to the selection of methods for the evaluation and throughout the evaluation process. Following these principles is essential to ensure the inclusion of women, individuals and groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against.

In particular a gender-responsive evaluation must adhere to the obligations to participants:

- Respect for dignity and diversity
- Right to self-determination
- Fair representation
- Compliance with codes for vulnerable groups (e.g., ethics of research involving young children or vulnerable groups)
- Redress
- Confidentiality
- Avoidance of harm

## Field visit: Validating the findings in exit meetings

The performance story of UN Women Strategic Notes will be strengthened through the use of multiple and participatory validation processes.

These should include, as a minimum standard:

- Field exit meetings with UN Women programme staff to present emerging evidence and to help identify any gaps
- Triangulation of all findings in the draft report with two or more sources of evidence
- Integration of comments from the Evaluation Reference Group into the Final Report, with an audit trail of responses

In real-world evaluation processes, there is often little time to prepare or deliver exit meetings. Thus it is crucial to focus on sharing and discussing the most important issues and information. Plan to create a presentation for a two to three hour session clearly outlining the initial thoughts of the evaluation team on emerging findings. Follow this presentation by responses from the group and any discussion. Seek to identify issues where more evidence or different perspectives are required.

Within the presentation you can cover the following issues:

- **Contextual:** This is a chance at the beginning of the presentation to establish common ground with the audience—demonstrating that the evaluation team has listened to and understood their world. Highlight any contextual factors that you think are important or interesting in terms of influencing UN Women's outcomes.
- **Normative, coordination and operational (1 slide each or 2 slides for operational):** Here you can refer back to the tables that were created at the beginning in the inception workshop. Talk to the definitions of success for the key partnerships



### TIP

- Ensure that the evaluation process explores alternative explanations until they can be discarded, or include them in the contribution analysis.
  - Use the [UN Women Evaluation Handbook Tool 7. Evaluation product comment template](#).
- Alternatives to a presentation in an exit workshop are to show participatory videos, explore photo stories, or undertake a Q-sort exercise.
- Exit meetings work well when there is a group of about 10-12 people, including: UN Women, civil society advisory groups, gender team groups and government representatives.



that stakeholders identified themselves. You can also speak to ideas around whether the theories of change have worked out in reality (i.e., have they created intended results and why).

- **Organizational:** Here you can cover issues from OEEF—focusing on management capacity, resources, results-based management, partnerships, etc.
- **Future directions:** This slide is a chance to encourage discussion on what some overarching recommendations could be in terms of strategic focus and position—your chance to sense how much enthusiasm or resistance there will be towards your potential conclusions and recommendations.

All of your exit briefings should seek to be positive and constructive (even around critique). This is not the time to defend the initial analysis of the evaluation team, but rather to listen and facilitate reflection: position the evaluation team as coaches rather than judges.

Where time and resources allow, the evaluation should include a summit workshop with UN Women (multi-)country office staff and key stakeholders to present evidence, discuss draft findings, and to develop shared recommendations. More information on summit workshops (a part of Collaborative Outcomes Reporting Technique) is available from:

[http://betterevaluation.org/resources/overview/collaborative\\_outcomes\\_reporting](http://betterevaluation.org/resources/overview/collaborative_outcomes_reporting).

## Mitigating limitations

All evaluation designs have inherent limitations. In addition, real-world constraints (such as resources, logistics or evaluator skills) create additional limitations.

Both methodological limitations and evaluation constraints have implications for decision-makers in terms of the confidence they can place in evaluation findings, conclusions and evidence. It is essential that these limitations and implications are communicated clearly, honestly and transparently.

The main methodological limitations of the default evaluation design include:

- Reliability is limited by the lack of detailed baseline data and performance monitoring systems for most UN Women interventions. Missing data on indicators will hinder the ability of evaluators to answer evaluation questions. It also reflects the complex “upstream” nature of UN Women’s work at the policy and macro level. Reliability can be enhanced through primary data collection and



the application of robust contribution analysis and applying approaches such as qualitative comparative analysis to the (M)CPE case studies.

- Internal validity is limited by the complex nature of transformative social, economic and cultural interventions. There are few clear and agreed-upon indicators for capturing many of the outcomes that UN Women is seeking to affect, meaning that evaluations have to rely on the perceptions of stakeholders (who have their own agendas). Further, the timing of the evaluation may have implications with regard to the observation of actual effects—it may be too early to observe the effects generated by some of the results of Strategic Note. Internal validity can be enhanced through triangulation of multiple sources of evidence using multiple methods to identify and explore differences in versions of the “performance story”.
- The model ToR, default designs and model budgeting tool do not take into account the participation of stakeholders in the design of the evaluation, or their active participation as co-evaluators (i.e., collecting and analysing evidence). Participation can be enhanced through the inclusion of additional resources and trained personnel for engaging, mobilizing, training and facilitating stakeholders to participate in all stages of the evaluation process. It can also be enhanced through the use of approaches such as collaborative outcomes reporting technique (CORT), Participatory Video, or PhotoStories.

# 5

## REPORTING



## Reporting

The draft and final evaluation reports are the main products to be produced by an (M)CPE. Other products, such as a presentation, video, or brief can be specified in order to communicate with specific groups, but these should be based on the Final Evaluation Report.

Ensuring a high quality Evaluation Report is thus an important role of the Evaluation Management Group. This should meet—and attempt to exceed—UN Women standards for evaluation reports, as codified in the GERAAS checklist. GERAAS is based on UNEG standards for evaluation reports and the UN System-wide Action Plan Evaluation Performance Indicator<sup>5</sup>.

The GERAAS standards should be used by the Evaluation Manager and the RES to inform evaluation consultants and to assess the quality of reports.

In order to fulfill the stated purpose of (M)CPEs, it is recommended that particular care is taken to ensure that reports include:

- Findings that are illustrated with concrete examples, clearly state which evidence was used to develop them, and are honest about the limitations of this evidence
- Conclusions that clearly state the implications of findings for the future Strategic Note and the main options that face decision-makers to address these implications
- A clear list of justified recommendations that have been developed with stakeholders and are prioritized using stated criteria (e.g., priority, feasibility, cost, potential impact)



### TOOL

The model guidance includes an outline evaluation report with prompts and headings to help (multi-)country portfolio evaluations meet [Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System standards](#).

### CHECKLIST

- The Evaluation Manager and regional evaluation specialist play the role of assuring the quality of the draft and Final Evaluation Report.
- The Final Report is approved by the country representative/deputy representative and/or the regional evaluation specialist.
- The Evaluation Manager uploads the Final Evaluation Report within six months of finalization to the GATE.

### TIP

See [UN Women Evaluation Handbook Tool 14](#). GERAAS evaluation quality assessment checklist.

<sup>5</sup>The oversight element of the UN System-wide Action Plan is composed of three performance indicators, including one dedicated to evaluation that is linked to meeting the gender-related UNEG Norms & Standards and demonstrating effective use of the UNEG guidance on integrating gender equality in evaluation.

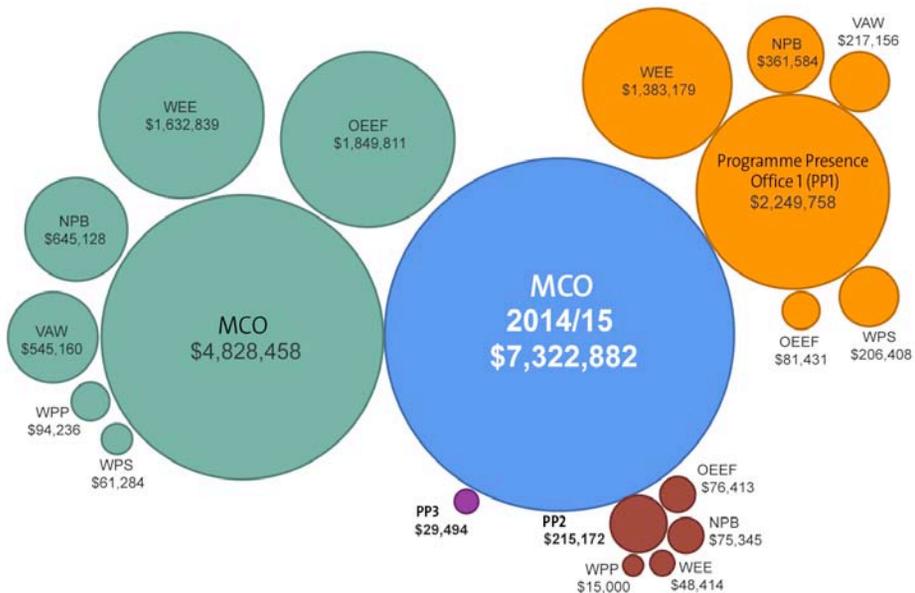


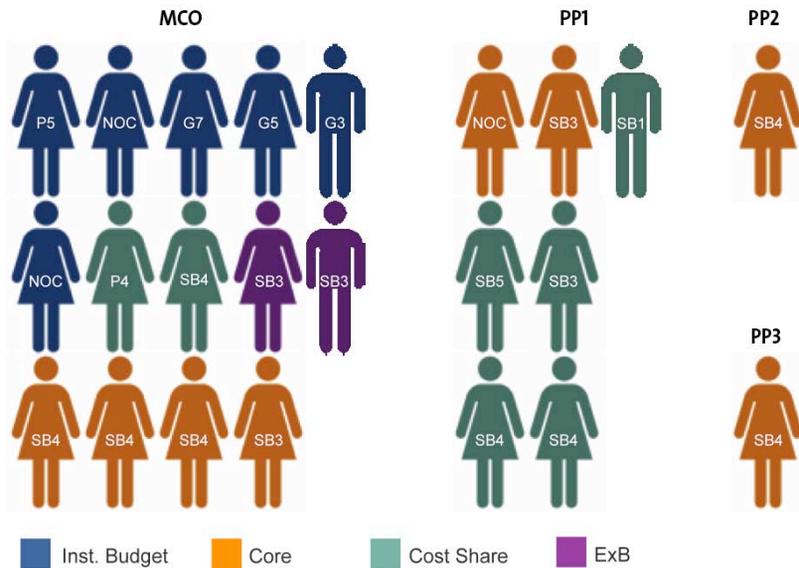
- Generalizable lessons learned, examples of replicable good practices, and details about innovations that can be used by partners and other parts of the entity

Utilization of the report is likely to be higher where:

- A participatory process has been used and key stakeholders are already familiar with the main messages
- The report uses clear and accessible language
- The report is visually appealing—making use of design principles, infographics, highlighting, illustrations, graphs and other visual tools
- Time is invested in making an executive summary that meets the informational needs of decision-makers
- The report emphasizes new information, analysis and insights and uses the annexes to reference details that are already known by primary intended users

**Figure: Examples of infographics developed in the (multi-)country portfolio evaluation**





The draft report should be reviewed and commented on by the Evaluation Management Group and the Evaluation Reference Group. An audit trail of comments and the responses of the evaluation team should be coordinated by the Evaluation Manager.

The Final Evaluation Report should be approved by the Evaluation Management Group. In any event of disagreement, the Final Evaluation Report should be approved by the RES. This is mainly to ensure the independence and impartiality of the evaluation products.

The Evaluation Manager should upload the report to GATE within six weeks of finalization.

# 6

**USE AND FOLLOW UP**



## Using evaluation for managing results

An evaluation dissemination strategy should be developed by the Evaluation Manager for the (M)CPE to ensure wider dissemination of results through diverse and effective channels.

As a first step, all evaluation reports should be posted and made publicly available in the GATE system.

The Evaluation Report should be used to inform:

- The development of the Strategic Note (context, lessons, DRF, OEEF, monitoring, evaluation and research plan)
- The development of UN Women Annual Work Plans
- UNDAF and/or Delivering as One review processes
- UN Women internal learning (normative, policy, coordination, programme, partnerships, management, funds)
- The GERAAS meta evaluation and meta analysis

## Management response and action plan

The purpose of the management response is to strengthen the use of evaluation by UN Women management and, to the maximum extent possible, its partners, thus fostering greater ownership of the process of change and ultimately ensuring accountability for results.

The country representative/deputy representative leads the development of the management response and ensures timely implementation of key actions.



### CHECKLIST

- Did the country representative or deputy representative lead the development of the management response?
- Did the monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point upload the management response in the GATE system within six weeks of finalization?
- Did the country representative approve the management response in the GATE website?
- Is the country representative or deputy representative ensuring timely implementation of key actions of the management response?
- Is the monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point updating the status of the implementation of the management response key actions on a quarterly basis?
- Did the monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point implement the evaluation dissemination strategy to ensure access to evaluation results and to facilitate learning?



### TOOL

The sets of **model guidance** provide an outline management response to assist (multi-) country offices.

### TIP

The management response is mandatory for all evaluations.

The monitoring and evaluation officer/focal point uploads the management response in the GATE system within six weeks of finalization of the Evaluation Report. If the management response is not available within six weeks, the Final Report should still be disclosed.

The country representative approves the management response in the GATE system.

The country representative or deputy should ensure timely implementation of the key actions.

## Communicating evaluation reports

The (multi-)country office should actively communicate the evaluation findings and report to stakeholders identified in the report.

Utilization-focused evaluation good practice suggests that evaluation products should be shaped to the specific informational needs and demands of specific groups. Therefore, multiple strategies for communicating key contents from the report will be necessary.

These could include:

- Policy briefs—written or presentations
- Video summaries or photo essays
- Social media posts and conversations
- Blog posts on Knowledge Gateway, LinkedIn Groups, or other online fora
- Tailored presentations at existing meetings, conferences and workshops
- Mini feedback workshops or a roadshow with evaluation participants (e.g., interviewees, focus group participants)



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