TRANSFORM

What can we learn from UN Women evaluations?

Dear Readers,

Meta-analysis offers a unique opportunity for learning and provides useful feedback for influencing positive change. As part of its continuous effort to promote learning and accountability, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office undertakes an annual meta-analysis to ensure that the body of evidence produced by corporate and decentralized evaluations are synthetized and used to inform corporate-level and decentralized policies and strategies.

This year's meta-analysis aggregates and synthesizes information generated from 49 evaluations and transformed this evidence into accessible knowledge to help strengthen programming and organizational effectiveness. It will also help inform the new UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

To serve the dual propose of accountability and learning, annual meta-analyses alternate between a focus on accountability and learning. This way the exercise is more robust and relevant, serving better the organization.

This meta-analysis constitutes the third synthesis of UN Women commissioned evaluations since the adoption of the current Strategic Plan (2014–2017). Since the focus of last year was on learning, this year's focus is on accountability. The scope of the meta-analysis includes corporate and decentralized evaluation reports produced by UN Women in 2015 (28 reports) and 2014 (21 reports). For 2015, it includes three country portfolio evaluations for the first time.

We hope you find the synthesis useful to further reflect on what works and what does not in accelerating efforts towards achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Marco Segone
Director, Independent Evaluation Office
✉ marco.segone@unwomen.org
🐦 @msegone

A meta-analysis of UN Women evaluation in 2014 and 2015

Making an organization greater than the sum of its parts

Why meta-analysis?

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing insights from what worked and what needs improvement

RECOMMENDATIONS

Filling in the gaps: How UN Women can turn evaluation findings into real results

The meta-analysis approach: Synthetizing evidence

Making an organization greater than the sum of its parts

On a day-to-day basis we are focused on the tasks that help us get the job done. There are rarely opportunities to reflect on these experiences at an individual level, and even fewer opportunities for reflecting on experience across an organization. However, a comprehensive understanding of what factors at an organizational level are facilitating or hindering progress towards our common goals is critical to making the organization greater than the sum of its parts.

Organizations have a responsibility for facilitating learning by building it into the fabric of their operations. The UN Women evaluation policy identifies learning and accountability as the key purposes of evaluation, and it acknowledges that the production of evaluation reports is not enough – it is in how we use the findings and recommendations that the organization and individual staff will begin to take steps to act on the lessons learned.

The meta-analysis is a powerful tool for making sense of the common findings from individual evaluations conducted all over the world that are relevant to the organization as a whole. This year's meta-analysis points to the effectiveness of UN Women as a knowledge broker—a role that it in theory has the capacity to do and a role that is demanded by its stakeholders—which is being hindered by a lack of capacity and investment in systems and capacities for knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation. In this respect, hopefully this meta-analysis can serve as inspiration for UN Women on how to digest the large amounts of information generated by multiple evaluations and translate it into something relevant beyond "the parts".

Ultimately, the aim of evaluation is to help improve an organization's ability to drive transformational change—both within itself and in society—in order to achieve its goals in the most effective, efficient and sustainable manner.

ACCOUNTABILITY

&

LEARNING

GATE System:
The Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use

An on-line based Public Information Management System, which facilitates
UN Women's effort to strategically plan and effectively use evaluations
for accountability, management for results, and knowledge management.

>>>> **http://gate.unwomen.org/**

UN WOMEN Independent
Evaluation Office

Why meta-analysis?

The UN Women Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System considers meta-evaluation to be a systematic and formal assessment of the quality of evaluations report against UN Evaluation Group evaluation standards, and meta-analysis to be an instrument to synthesize evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations from a series of evaluations that meet UN Evaluation Group quality standards.

In the current Corporate Evaluation Plan (2014–2017), annual meta-analyses are scheduled to ensure that the body of evidence produced by evaluations, including those managed by field offices, can be synthetized and inform corporate-level policies and strategies. There are two main purposes to evaluation in UN Women: learning and accountability. To enhance utilization, annual meta-analyses alternate between a focus on accountability and a focus on learning. The focus of this year's meta-analysis was accountability.

The purpose of this meta-analysis is to share the key insights from evaluation reports in order to develop constructive lessons for future systemic strengthening of programming, normative and coordination work. This meta-analysis assessed corporate and decentralized evaluation reports from 2014 and 2015 that were submitted to UN Women's Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System.

META-EVALUATION:
An assessment of the quality of evaluations.

META-ANALYSIS:
A synthesis of findings, conclusions and recommendations from various evaluations.

Drawing insights from what worked and what needs improvement

UN Women interventions are relevant and largely making positive contributions towards gender equality and women's empowerment, but there is scope to improve results-based management systems, efficiency and sustainability at the country level.

UN Women is strongest in terms of the relevance of its interventions to both national frameworks and the needs of women. UN Women interventions are increasingly making positive contributions towards gender equality and women's empowerment. However, challenges remained in terms of reaching substantial scale and reach. In addition, there is scope to improve results-based management systems, efficiency and sustainability at the country level.
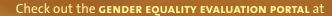
Development effectiveness

CRITERIA	N*	COVERAGE LEVEL‡	SATISFACTORY RATINGS (%) †
1. Relevance	49	Strong	**87%**
2. Effectiveness	49	Strong	**67%**
3. Sustainability	47	Strong	**61%**
4. Efficiency	45	Strong	**57%**
5. Culture of results	41	Strong	**33%**

* n = number of evaluations addressing the given sub-criterion.
‡ Strong: n=31–49; moderate: n=15–30; weak: n=<15.
† The percentage of satisfactory ratings is based on positive findings about UN Women's performance.

Rating development effectiveness as "satisfactory" or "highly satisfactory"

Projects and programs align with national development goals	**97%**
Programs and projects are suited to the needs and/or priorities of the target group	**92%**
Programs and projects achieve their stated objectives and attain expected results	**90%**
Effective partnerships with governments, bilateral and multilateral development and humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations	**72%**
Programs contributed to significant changes in development policies and programs and/or to needed system reforms	**70%**
Programs and projects have resulted in positive benefits for target group members and takes action to meet SDG commitment to "leave no-one behind"	**69%**
Project and programs are reported as sustainable in terms of institutional and/or community capacity	**66%**
Benefits continuing or likely to continue afterproject or program completion	**64%**
Systems and procedures for project/program implementation and follow up are efficient	**61%**
Program activities are evaluated as cost/resource efficient	**53%**
Implementation and objectives achieved on time (given the context)	**44%**
Programs and projects made differences for substantial number of beneficiaries and where appropriate contributed to national development goals	**37%**
Results based management systems are effective	**33%**
Systems and processes for monitoring and reporting on program results are effective.	**32%**

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

Check out the GENDER EQUALITY EVALUATION PORTAL at

> **Genderevaluation.unwomen.org**

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

Please share your evaluations by clicking 'join'!

UN WOMEN   Independent Evaluation Office

Overarching Conclusions

RELEVANCE

Evidence on relevance

SUB-CRITERIA	N*	COVERAGE LEVEL‡	SATISFACTORY RATINGS (%) †
1.1 Programmes and projects are suited to the needs and/or priorities of the target group	38	Strong	**92%**
1.2 Projects and programmes align with national development goals.	33	Strong	**97%**
1.3 Effective partnerships with governments, bilateral and multilateral development and humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations for planning, coordination and implementation of support to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.	32	Strong	**72%**

* n = number of evaluations addressing the given sub-criterion.
‡ Strong: n=31–49; moderate: n=15–30; weak: n=<15.
† The percentage of satisfactory ratings is based on positive findings about UN Women's performance.

CONCLUSION 1: The strongest aspect of UN Women's development effectiveness is the high level of relevance its interventions have to both the policy context and the assessed needs of women.

Since 2013, UN Women has been able to maintain high performance with regard to the relevance of its interventions to both policy frameworks (national and international) and the needs of women. In a few cases, evaluations questioned whether or not UN Women's selected approach was the most relevant or efficient to achieve its aims, but the overall body of evaluations also noted that country offices were working within a wide range of external constraints. While the relevance of intervention designs has remained high, the relevance of UN Women's choice of partners has increased. In combination, these aspects of relevance are correlated with evaluations finding strong levels of delivery for outputs—continuing the trend seen in previous years.

UN Women has been able to maintain high performance with regard to the relevance of its interventions to both policy frameworks (national and international) and the needs of women.

EFFECTIVENESS

Evidence on effectiveness

SUB-CRITERIA	N*	COVERAGE LEVEL‡	SATISFACTORY RATINGS (%) †
2.1 Programmes and projects achieve their stated objectives and attain expected results.	42	Strong	**90%**
2.2 Programmes and projects have resulted in positive benefits for target group members.	39	Strong	**69%**
2.3 Programmes and projects made differences for a substantial number of beneficiaries and, where appropriate, contributed to national development goals.	30	Moderate	**37%**
2.4 Programmes contributed to significant changes in development policies and programmes (including for disaster preparedness, emergency response and rehabilitation) policy impacts and/or to needed system reforms.	33	Strong	**70%**

* n = number of evaluations addressing the given sub-criterion.

‡ Strong: n=31–49; moderate: n=15–30; weak: n=<15.

† The percentage of satisfactory ratings is based on positive findings about UN Women's performance.

CONCLUSION 2: UN Women achieves stated outputs. However, increasing levels of evidence on UN Women's contributions to outcomes highlights the need to expand the reach of interventions (to benefit more substantial numbers of people) and expand the time frame of projects (to address root causes of marginalization and inequality).

Evaluations continued to find that UN Women is delivering strongly in terms of outputs. Unlike the 2013 meta-analysis, however, many evaluations have also started to report on evidence of outcomes. While UN Women is found to be contributing to its intended outcomes, these often require more time, are localized (rather than large scale), and would often benefit from stronger monitoring of smarter indicators.

Many evaluations identified specific national policies that UN Women has helped advocate for, advise upon and influence. This is a promising approach in terms of scale. At the same time, evidence on sustainability suggests that work to implement these policies is often unlikely to continue unless specific financial contributions are secured from governments. The three country portfolio evaluations undertaken for the first time in 2015 indicated that this is partly an issue of strategic focus and positioning of UN Women at the country level—focusing capabilities where they can lead to transformational changes. It is also, however, a consequence of one-year projects that have insufficient time to connect programming, normative and coordination efforts because of a need to deliver planned activities.
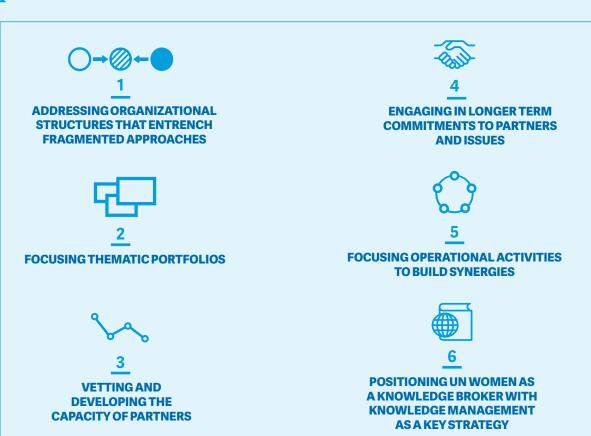
CONCLUSION 3: Major determinants of outcome performance are the design and length of interventions, fragmentation of thematic areas and mandates, and the positive relationships maintained by UN Women staff members.

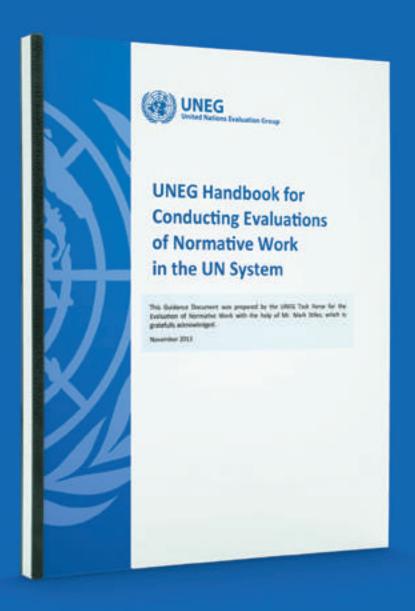Achieving outcomes was found to be subject to both internal and external factors that affect performance. Most external factors—according to evaluations—have a hindering effect on UN Women's performance. These include the low capacity of many civil society organizations and structural underfunding of the gender space, conflict, and cultural resistance to gender equality and women's empowerment. Even the positive external factors—such as the UN brand, UN capacity and the women's movement—only contribute where UN Women actively marshals these drivers of change (for example, by making relevant partnerships).

Positive drivers of performance are thus primarily driven by internal factors to UN Women. Some of these factors are prevalent—such as the rapport that UN Women staff members hold with partners—and others are less so—such as early involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in programme design.

The main priorities identified to enhance positive internal factors within UN Women

1

ADDRESSING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES THAT ENTRENCH FRAGMENTED APPROACHES

2

FOCUSING THEMATIC PORTFOLIOS

3

VETTING AND DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF PARTNERS

4

ENGAGING IN LONGER TERM COMMITMENTS TO PARTNERS AND ISSUES

5

FOCUSING OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES TO BUILD SYNERGIES

6

POSITIONING UN WOMEN AS A KNOWLEDGE BROKER WITH KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AS A KEY STRATEGY

How to evaluate normative work?

UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group

UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System

This Guidance Document was prepared by the UNEG Task Force for the Evaluation of Normative Work with the help of Mr. Mark Stiles, which is gratefully acknowledged.

November 2013

The latest guidance from the United Nations Evaluation Group will provide you with an integrated approach to the evaluation of normative work in the UN along with hands-on methodological guidance, concise practical examples and tools for conducting evaluations of normative work.

Available at http://www.uneval.org/document/download/2014 in English, French and Spanish

UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group

EFFICIENCY

Evidence on efficiency

SUB-CRITERIA	N*	COVERAGE LEVEL‡	SATISFACTORY RATINGS (%) †
4.1 Programme activities are evaluated as cost/resource efficient.	32	**Strong**	**53%**
4.2 Implementation and objectives achieved on time (given the context).	16	**Moderate**	**44%**
4.3 Systems and procedures for project/programme implementation and follow up are efficient (including managing its operations and programme, financial resource issues, human resource issues, risk management, coordination, oversight/governance, project/programme design, coordination, logistical arrangements etc.).	28	**Moderate**	**61%**

* n = number of evaluations addressing the given sub-criterion.
‡ Strong: n=31–49; moderate: n=15–30; weak: n=<15.
† The percentage of satisfactory ratings is based on positive findings about UN Women's performance.

CONCLUSION 4: Organizational priorities to improve development effectiveness should be to shift towards a programmatic approach, better leverage the UN coordination mandate at the country level, and streamline systems of decision-making.

The greatest scope for enhanced development effectiveness in UN Women relates to efficiency and sustainability—issues where evaluations found that UN Women can build on existing performance improvements in operations. These issues are also interconnected—more efficient approaches are easier to continue and are thus more likely to be maintained.

The body of evidence in evaluations points towards the need for UN Women to consider some of the mechanisms adopted by other UN entities to address efficient and sustainable performance. These include: replacing the project-based approach with a programmatic approach that builds synergies between areas and levels of work, involving government in the development of joint programmes of work at the country level, and establishing a mechanism to make multi-year funding commitments. The Flagship Programming Initiatives speaks to some of these issues as it has the potential to substantively improve programmatic coherence.

At the same time, there are a number of strategic issues that are specific to UN Women. One of which includes preserving the flexibility in project implementation that has proven to be a major contributor to effectiveness, while streamlining the multi-layered systems of decision-making and clearances that currently slow down this flexibility (without losing accountability). Entirely unique to UN Women is the strategic question of how to support country offices to better leverage the UN coordination mandate as a means to enhance the synergies and efficiency of operational and normative work.

The greatest scope for enhanced development effectiveness in UN Women relates to efficiency and sustainability—issues where evaluations found that UN Women can build on existing performance improvements in operations.

SUSTAINABILITY

Evidence on sustainability

SUB-CRITERIA	N*	COVERAGE LEVEL‡	SATISFACTORY RATINGS (%) †
3.1 Benefits continuing or likely to continue after project or programme completion.	36	Strong	**64%**
3.2 Projects and programmes are reported as sustainable in terms of institutional and/or community capacity.	35	Strong	**66%**

* n = number of evaluations addressing the given sub-criterion.
‡ Strong: n=31–49; moderate: n=15–30; weak: n=<15.
† The percentage of satisfactory ratings is based on positive findings about UN Women's performance.

CONCLUSION 5: Sustainability across UN Women's operational portfolio is mixed, although the level of evidence that achievements are likely to continue with longer programming cycles is increasing.

By comparison with relevance and effectiveness, evidence on sustainability reveals a mixed performance, but suggests small but steady gains since 2013. In most cases, evaluations recommended that sustainability requires an extension of project implementation beyond the standard one-year duration of project cooperation agreements (a factor that also hinders efficiency). Some evaluations identified a need to link to government sources of finance to ensure that the results of interventions started by UN Women are continued. The strongest level of sustainability was reported where there was the highest level of participation. Some evaluations reported that capacity development as a core focus of UN Women strategies needs more attention placed on sustainability and follow-up in context of government turnover and low resources. The major drivers of sustainability were found to be participatory design processes, high-level political support and securing national financial commitments.

Evaluations recommended that sustainability requires an extension of project implementation beyond the standard one-year duration of project cooperation agreements

A new **global partnership** for **gender-responsive** **evaluation**

EVAL**G**ENDER**+**

Join EvalGender+, a partnership of 37 organizations with the intent of promoting gender-responsive evaluation through:

- **SOCIAL MOBILIZATION**
- **PROMOTION OF PRACTICAL INNOVATION**
- **FACILITATION OF LEARNING AND SHARING EXPERIENCES**

Learn more: www.mymande.org/evalgender

CULTURE OF RESULTS

Development effectiveness

SUB-CRITERIA	N*	COVERAGE LEVEL‡	SATISFACTORY RATINGS (%) †
5.2 Systems and processes for monitoring and reporting on programme results are effective.	34	Strong	**32%**
5.3 Results-based management systems are effective.	21	Moderate	**33%**

* n = number of evaluations addressing the given sub-criterion.
‡ Strong: n=31–49; moderate: n=15–30; weak: n=<15.
† The percentage of satisfactory ratings is based on positive findings about UN Women's performance.

CONCLUSION 6: Improvements in the instigation of results-based management systems at the country level continue to be held back by severe resource constraints, low capacity for monitoring and the need to strengthen project results indicators.

Evaluations identified the culture of results—in particular, the building of strong results-based management and monitoring systems at the country level—as a strategically important area requiring attention. Constraints on specialist knowledge in monitoring and reporting was a concern at the country level, leading to insufficient monitoring that was inadequate to either capture learning or report on the results that UN Women is contributing to.

While evaluations found that country offices were establishing results-based management systems (linked to the global results-based management system), they also reported that these were rarely able to provide timely feedback or analysis for decision-making, accountability and learning. UN Women is mostly relying on the monitoring capacity of partners, but this remains a major capability gap in the civil society organizations that UN Women needs to work with. Identifying alternative means to attaining good quality data for results-based management systems is therefore a critical issue.

Identifying alternative means to attaining good quality data for results-based management systems is therefore a critical issue.

2013–2015 Trends

A brief synthesis of changes on some emergent insights captured in previous meta-analysis reports.

RELEVANCE

CONCLUSION 7: Relevance remains high, with noted improvement with regard to the selection of effective partnerships.

The 2013 meta-analysis found that programmes and normative work were relevant to international policy frameworks and the needs of women but suffered from over-optimism about capacity and some design problems. While programmes integrated gender equality into the fabric of their design, challenges were found in translating norms into effective operational work.

Whereas previous meta-analyses revealed a need to engage more with men, some 2015 evaluations focused on a need for greater ownership of UN Women interventions within ministries, as political will and prioritization by the government is necessary to advance the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment. It was also suggested across some reports that being more inclusive at the design stage of UN Women strategic notes allows the early formation of strategic alliances and ensures relevance of both interventions and the partnerships that support them.

In 2013, UN Women was found to have established a track record of convening coalitions and initiating partnerships, however it was facing challenges with establishing coordination mechanisms at the country level. By 2015, some of the coordination challenges remained—especially with joint programmes taking time to begin working efficiently. However, effective partnerships were found to be central to UN Women's overall ability to deliver results. This was caveated with the observation that working with partners capable of reaching marginalized groups implied working with their capacity gaps and constraints, which is an important consideration. The overall trend in the quantitative analysis suggests that UN Women's partnerships are becoming more relevant.

> *Being more inclusive at the design stage of UN Women strategic notes allows the early formation of strategic alliances and ensures relevance of both interventions and the partnerships that support them.*

EFFECTIVENESS

CONCLUSION 8: Evaluations are finding more evidence of UN Women's contribution to outcomes, but the problem of scaling impact is still a challenge reported in many evaluations.

Development effectiveness data for 2013 and 2014–2015 is not directly comparable because the "story" of evaluations has changed with the improvement in the quality of the evaluation function. In 2013, the meta-analysis basically stated that evaluations were examining and finding evidence of activities and outputs, and UN Women was delivering these despite concern about operations performance. It was noted at the time that progression from outputs to higher-level results was not measureable in UN Women programmes

Evaluations have increased in quality and are examining a higher level of change (outcomes), for which some evidence in some interventions is starting to emerge.

due to gaps in data and absence of systems to capture impacts.

By 2015, the main message of evaluations was radically different. Evaluations have increased in quality and are examining a higher level of change (outcomes), for which some evidence in some interventions is starting to emerge. However, because the unit of change has moved from outputs to outcomes, evaluations have naturally become more critical in this time (even though outputs are still being achieved). Unlike 2013, many 2015 evaluations were able to identify contributions being made to

outcomes, but most found that interventions are too short in duration to fully realize these.

Many evaluations found evidence of good implementation rates except where the context was challenging.

EFFICIENCY

CONCLUSION 9: Evaluation evidence indicates an improvement in the operations efficiency of UN Women, although scope remains for enhancing both organizational and programmatic efficiency.

Efficiency was found to be mixed in 2013, with some evaluations identifying fund disbursement delays, personnel appointment delays and gaps in knowledge management systems. Weak knowledge management and financing constraints were found to be mitigated to some extent by the dedication of UN Women staff and strong understanding of context. The 2014 meta-analysis found increasing levels of knowledge production but with a need to enhance knowledge transfers across organizational boundaries.

Within the body of 2015 evaluations, there is a higher level of evidence regarding whether or not objectives are being achieved on time, with this being the case in approximately half of the evaluations where the issue was analysed. Indeed, many evaluations found evidence of good implementation rates except where the context was challenging, with some evaluations reporting implementation rates between 80 per cent and 100 per cent. There were even a few examples of projects exceeding some of their key targets.

According to quantitative analysis, organizational operations and systems have improved since 2013. Most reports stated that they found evidence of good cost control and efficiency, but few provided clear details of how this was achieved.

Despite these improvements, some evaluations found that project cooperation agreements continue to be associated with delays in disbursements.

SUSTAINABILITY

CONCLUSION 10: Despite signs of improvement, substantive challenges to sustainability continued to be identified by most evaluations.

The level of evidence on sustainability has increased since 2013 and suggests an overall slight improvement, notably in terms of national capacity development. As in 2013, most 2014 and 2015 evaluations recommended the continuation of interventions to provide an opportunity for sustainability. Interventions are, on the whole, not sustainable within the short time frames that they are being programmed.

The 2013 meta-analysis noted examples of participatory processes contributing to strong local ownership. Overall, however, major threats to sustainability were identified in

> *Many evaluations found that results-based management systems were being put in place, but gaps were found in the capacity to feed, analyse and use data.*

most evaluations, including political context, financial constraints and national capacity gaps. These factors remained unchanged in 2015.

CULTURE OF RESULTS

CONCLUSION 11: A positive trend in the deployment of results-based management systems continues to be held-back by weak monitoring capacity.

The 2013 meta-analysis found that results-based management was a systemic weakness at all levels—with a gap in terms of theories of change, measurable results frameworks and adequate monitoring systems. In 2014 and 2015, this was still the case with regard to monitoring, but the quantitative analysis suggested a positive trend (although there is still a long way to go, with 70 per cent of evaluations finding it to be less than satisfactory). Many evaluations found that results-based management systems were being put in place, but gaps were found in the capacity to feed, analyse and use data. Overall, in 2015, most evaluations found that country-level monitoring systems were still weak, in need of being set up for some projects, or were under-resourced and relied too much on partners' data.

The organization recently completed the roll-out of its regional architecture and developed a strategy to strengthen results-based management in the organization, including roll-out of a corporate results-based management system to better manage country programmes and ensure strong linkage between country and regional results to the Strategic Plan. The launch of the Flagship Programming Initiatives in 2015 was a further important step to ensure focus and scale of programmes. However, it is still too early to assess the extent to which these measures will lead to more effective results-based management systems and more effective systems for monitoring and reporting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Filling in the gaps: How UN Women can turn evaluation findings into results

The meta-analysis presents 6 overall recommendations based on the 11 conclusions extracted from 49 evaluations. These recommendations can potentially play an important role in informing UN Women's next strategic plan (2018–2021).

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1
Address the fragmentation of thematic areas and mandates

The most pressing need—given its negative impacts on both effectiveness and efficiency—is addressing the fragmentation of project work between different thematic areas and different aspects of the integrated mandate. According to evaluations, this is currently entrenched by a combination of organizational structures, capacities at the country level, and a need for more strategic prioritization of issues during programme design. The future strategic plan and the rollout of the Flagship Programming Initiatives should thus give particular attention to maximizing country and regional-level synergies in very practical ways.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Boost country-level UN coordination as a means to drive synergies and efficiency

The evidence from evaluations suggests that UN coordination is relatively underexplored as a mechanism for realizing the synergies identified in Recommendation 1. It is considered relevant, therefore, to give particular attention to strengthening the UN coordination function of UN Women at the country level as a means to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of its operations and normative work. The main space in which cross-links between thematic areas have been realized has been within joint programmes. However, even without joint programming, there is considerable scope for boosting political buy-in, access to relevant partners, and support to the implementation of gender norms at scale.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Examine the case for multi-year country programme modalities to address concerns with short project cooperation agreements and sustainability

Many of the sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency issues now being faced by UN Women, according to evaluations, have also affected other UN entities. Chief among these is the short duration and unreliability of funding to project cooperation agreements and the challenge of securing national ownership and building capacity. Evaluations specifically recommend shifting from a project to a programmatic approach, and to some extent, the Flagship Programming Initiatives have already begun to do this. However, given the opportunity of the development of a new strategic plan, it is recommended that the case is examined for adopting a multi-year country programme jointly developed with governments or alternative approaches to addressing the underlying challenges.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Expand and innovate the core value proposition of capacity development and technical assistance so as to include knowledge management and brokerage

UN Women's country-level and global programme strategies are strongly focused on capacity development, which is found to be a largely relevant and necessary—but not sufficient—approach to ensuring development effectiveness. Given the demand and opportunity identified by evaluations, it is recommended that an explicit strategy be explored to complement the capacity development approach with a core organizational competency in knowledge management and brokerage. Furthermore, there is scope to innovate both the current approaches to capacity development and knowledge management as the core value propositions of UN Women alongside technical excellence in gender.

RECOMMENDATION 5
Adopt special measures to address results-based management and monitoring at the country level

There is a clear gap in the availability and use of effective and appropriate monitoring systems at the country level, and this is affecting the ability of UN Women to implement results-based management systems. Given the constraints on staffing at the country level and the unmet need for specialist capabilities, it is recommended that the new strategic plan be viewed as an opportunity to undertake an intensive corporate-level initiative designed to address the gap in monitoring systems, practices and experience.

RECOMMENDATION 6
More high level and strategic country portfolio evaluations should be conducted

The body of decentralized evaluations included in the 2015 and 2014 meta-analyses are informative, but only a relatively small number (including country portfolio evaluations and some multi-country programme evaluations) give a broader picture on UN Women's strategic positioning, operations and synergies. As a result, the evidence available on particular issues is somewhat limited. This includes aspects of whether or not: interventions have "added-up" to achieve substantial scale, efficiencies have been realized through synergies, corporate systems have contributed to development effectiveness, and the most relevant strategies have been applied. There is a level of consistency with the findings on coverage of evidence between the meta-analyses in 2013 and 2015, suggesting that more high level and strategic country portfolio evaluations should be conducted.

The meta-analysis approach: Synthetizing evidence

The approach taken for this meta-analysis consists of five main stages:

1 Identifying evaluation reports to be included in the analysis using the results of the GERAAS meta-evaluation 2014 and 2015. Evaluation reports were read and the major findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations were individually extracted into an Excel database, with each statement linked to the evaluation report from which it was extracted and the labelling of that statement as a "finding", "conclusion", "recommendation" or "lesson".

2 Classifying each insight from a report according to dimensions provided by the UNEG evaluation criteria. Statements were coded using Nvivo qualitative analysis software.

3 Clustering statements under each classification and a qualitative analysis of the main issues. Where appropriate, an indication of the frequency of insights is given.

4 Analysing the frequency with which evaluation findings referred to positive or negative performance in relation to various aspects of development effectiveness specified by OECD-DAC. This was done via a quantitative assessment in Excel.

5 Undertaking a qualitative analysis of high-level drivers of UN Women's performance, areas of innovation and examples of positive practice.

The cumulative evidence from 2014 and 2015 covered all strategic goals, but the greatest emphasis was on women's economic empowerment, governance and women's political participation.

Political Participation
5 | 4

Economic Empowerment
8 | 16

Ending Violence
4 | 9

Peace and Security
7 | 14

Governance
10 | 19

Global Norms
8 | 15

■ 2014 ■ 2015

Source: Meta-Evaluation, 2014 and 2015

UN WOMEN/DAVID SNYDER

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

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

HOW IS GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION DIFFERENT FROM OTHER EVALUATION?

HOW TO MANAGE GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

EVALUATION HANDBOOK

Find out how UN Women manages gender-responsive evaluation with the new UN Women Evaluation Handbook: *How to manage gender responsive evaluation*.

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

UN WOMEN   Independent Evaluation Office

LEARN MORE ABOUT
GENDER-RESPONSIVE
EVALUATION

READ TRANSFORM

ISSUE 1
Promoting gender-responsive
evaluation systems

ISSUE 2
The economic empowerment issue

ISSUE 3
The normative support work issue

ISSUE 4
The meta-analysis issue

ISSUE 5
The gender mainstreaming issue

ISSUE 6
Gender Responsive Evaluation:
A call for action to leave no one behind

www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/evaluation/news

UN WOMEN Independent Evaluation Office