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Dear Readers,

We looked at a wide range of evaluations to identify recurring themes for this year's meta-synthesis, analysing information from 39 evaluations on selected organizational effectiveness and efficiency criteria. This is the first synthesis during the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021, but the insights contained in this issue are reflective of the performance of programmes and interventions designed and implemented mainly during the previous UN Women Strategic Plan. Nonetheless, the results achieved and reported contribute to the current Strategic Plan outcomes and are expected to provide insights for its implementation and the forthcoming midterm review of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

The synthesis highlights five insights, internal and external enablers that are reported to drive or impede organizational effectiveness and efficiency, as well as related opportunities and the way forward. Systematically addressing the insights from this meta-synthesis will support UN Women in further optimizing its performance to deliver better results and drive transformative changes in gender equality and women's empowerment.

I hope the information presented in this synthesis constitutes relevant and useful evidence-based insights particularly as UN Women prepares to undertake the midterm review of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

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Think Beyond. Stay Ahead.

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ON THE COVER Artist Delia Cumez paints scenes of indigenous cultural life on one of the murals adorning the “Center for the Historical Memory of Women” outside of Comapala.

Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Reflections on results, lessons and drivers of change

The meta-synthesis reviewed and aggregated insights from 39 UN Women evaluation reports against selected development and organizational effectiveness and efficiency criteria. The synthesis also captured internal and external enablers that are reported to drive or impede progress. While this is the first synthesis during the current UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021, the insights contained in this issue are reflective of the performance of programmes and interventions designed and implemented during the previous UN Women Strategic Plan 2014–2017.

What did the meta-synthesis conclude?

Evaluations indicated that UN Women has achieved and sustained its strategic positioning across its integrated mandate often under volatile, complex and resource-constrained settings. However, UN Women's continued effectiveness critically depends on its ability to protect and sustain policy gains and to establish clear and robust policy–practice linkages to influence social norm changes at community, household and individual levels.

Despite relatively limited resources, there is growing recognition that UN Women has contributed to a stronger enabling environment to support gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). In particular, the synthesis revealed important results achieved in UN Women's normative work through strategic partnerships. UN Women's partnerships have, to a great extent, led to strategically positioning gender issues in national agenda and debates, and localized implementation. Although not large scale, programmatic interventions have yielded positive changes in a number of women's lives. UN Women also achieved important results in greater prioritization and coordination of GEWE related issues in the United Nations Development System.

What needs to be improved?

While there have been many important achievements, several internal and external constraints

and challenges persist. In particular, evaluations stressed the need for increased attention to protecting and sustaining policy gains and further transforming normative gains into operational results. Evaluations have also made a strong case for expanding and deepening the focus on social norm change more coherently and consistently within programmes and Strategic Notes.

Despite gradual improvements, the relative efficiency and fitness for purpose of result-based management (RBM) culture needs to be further improved, including through stronger monitoring mechanisms to better gather evidence on medium and longer-term changes and to use the evidence to support mid and long-term course corrections.

UN WOMEN STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2021 OUTCOMES

- A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is strengthened and implemented
- Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems
- Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy
- All women and girls live free from all forms of violence
- Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters, conflicts and humanitarian action








UN Women could do more through the United Nations Development System (UNDS) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) to further promote the GEWE agenda by more forcefully highlighting gaps, suggesting areas of collaboration, joint advocacy, research, policy engagement and joint resource mobilization. UN Women

should also engage with donors to secure multi-year resource commitments to produce tangible and lasting results. In general, evaluations called for UN Women to strike an appropriate balance between its scarce resources and the most relevant and effective interventions where its comparative and collaborative advantage is best enhanced to yield greater impact.

ENABLING FACTORS

-  Ability to operate with limited resources and leverage funds
-  Committed personnel willing to over-stretch
-  Strategic partnerships with CSOs and women's groups/networks
-  Joint programming and UNCT coordination
-  Synergistic and holistic approaches
-  Multi-pronged advocacy and innovative approaches

HINDERING FACTORS

-  Challenging political environment and security situation
-  Deep-rooted cultural/social norms
-  Limitations in core resources and the unpredictability of non-core resources
-  Highly stretched human resources
-  Shifting priorities and limited capacity of partners
-  Inadequate monitoring/RBM practices and inadequate data on costs and outcomes
-  Small scale interventions and short duration of projects



PERSPECTIVE FROM MANAGEMENT

Maximizing evaluation insights to achieve programme excellence

Louise Nylin

Officer in Charge, Programme Division, UN Women

For years UN Women has been committed to leveraging its policy expertise, further improving its programmatic practices and outreach, and continuously improving its accountability mechanisms for a greater and more sustainable impact on GEWE.

In this light, the meta-synthesis of UN Women evaluations covering the 2014–2018 period offers a great opportunity to take stock of both progress made and remaining areas for improvement to achieve programme excellence.

Programme excellence is about delivering effective, efficient and sustainable results and is at the heart of UN Women's work globally. To be able to achieve this requires lean organization, rationalized processes, streamlined and adapted tools, and highly skilled teams.

Since the founding of UN Women, evaluation has been the key instrument to shape the path towards programme excellence. Building on the insights of the evaluation reports, and among them the meta-analysis

reports, the Programme Division has led and successfully implemented several workstreams.

First, a group of dynamically linked Programme Management Systems and processes have been developed and continuously improved to support programme design, implementation and monitoring.

In addition, an integrated capacity building programme has been rolled out to align the organization's skills and competencies with international standards in programme management knowing that the Project Management Institute (PMI) has named UN Women as a Registered Education Provider (REP) effective 01 May 2019.

Finally, the Programme Division has actively contributed to implementing UNDS reform within the organization, taking this unique opportunity to further strengthen its programmatic relevance and effectiveness through joint programming and common engagement towards the 2030 Agenda.

While a lot has already been

achieved, in the path towards programme excellence there are still areas to address which have been pointed out in the meta-synthesis of UN Women evaluations. These areas include an enhanced focus on efficiency through targeted planning, adapted systems and viable human resource and resource mobilization strategies while mainstreaming a strong results culture and practices within the organization.

Next year UN Women will be 10 years old. The Entity has matured into a strong organization with systems and practices in place to support transformative change in the lives of women and girls around the world; building on its success, scaling-up its approaches and providing its donors with tangible achievements. Next year, 2020, is a significant year with a number of anniversaries including Beijing +25, SDGs +5 and UN Women 10 years. UN Women is ready to support SDG 5 in particular, and to play a key role in UNDS reform ensuring that GEWE is at the heart of UN System work across the world.

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



≥ <http://unwo.men/qFw750uZwao>

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>





PHOTO: UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

Why meta-synthesis?

With the emphasis on promoting organizational learning and accountability through evaluative evidence, the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) conducted a series of meta-syntheses of evaluation findings.

The annual meta-synthesis examined insights and findings from evaluations to help inform corporate processes, policies and strategies. This is the first synthesis in the period covered by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN

Women) Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

The purpose of this meta-synthesis is to contribute to organizational learning and effective knowledge management through the aggregation of recurring findings, lessons learned and evidence of UN Women's key areas of work.

PURPOSE

- Evidence-based insights through aggregation and synthesis of evaluation findings
- Contribute to knowledge generation and organizational learning
- Inform the midterm review of the UN Women Strategic Plan (2018–2021) and country-level strategies and processes

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

META-SYNTHESIS:
A synthesis of findings, conclusions and recommendations from multiple evaluations.

FINDINGS

Priority issues and emerging areas

The meta-synthesis finds that UN Women has achieved and sustained its strategic positioning across its integrated mandate often under volatile, complex and resource-constrained settings. The continued effectiveness of UN Women depends critically on its ability to protect and sustain policy gains and to establish clear and robust policy-practice linkages to influence social norm changes at community, household and individual levels.



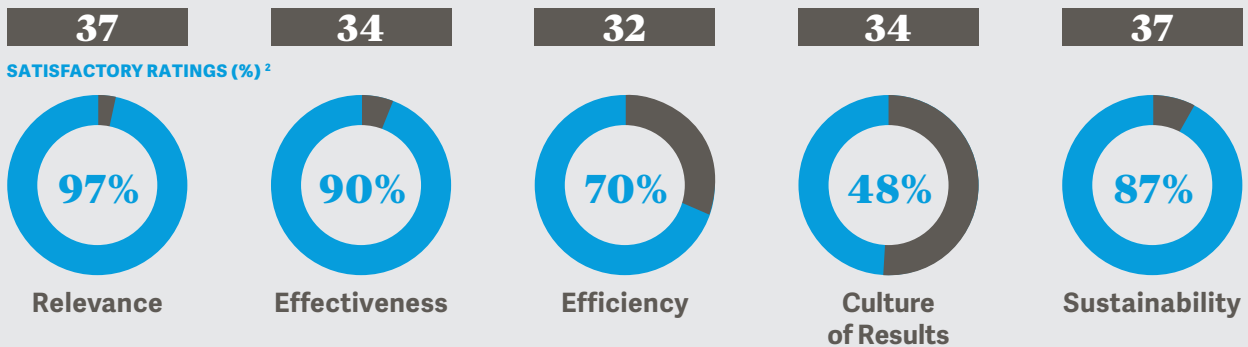


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OVERALL FINDINGS

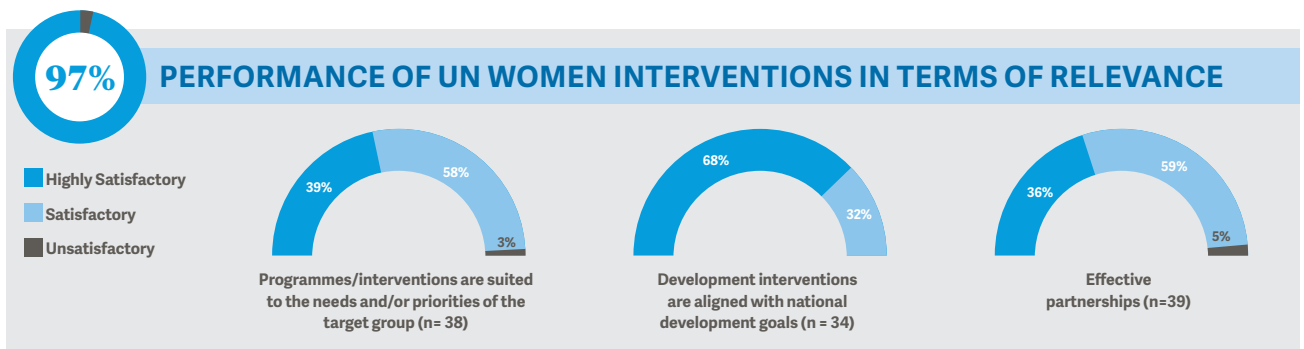
Coverage and performance of development effectiveness criteria¹

NUMBER OF EVALUATIONS ADDRESSING THE GIVEN CRITERION AND COVERAGE LEVEL



¹ The level of coverage for each criterion is based on the proportion of reports that included findings/evidence that relate to that criterion. The percentage of satisfactory ratings is based on what those findings say about UN Women's performance according to the standard rubrics.
² This includes "satisfactory" and "highly satisfactory" ratings based on positive findings reported in the evaluations.

RELEVANCE



The meta-evaluation concludes that notwithstanding constraining financial and human resources, UN Women has been able to leverage its institutional expertise and integrated mandate to advance GEWE. Despite relatively limited resources, there is growing recognition that UN Women has contributed to a stronger enabling environment to support GEWE. UN Women's strategic partnerships have to a great extent led to important results particularly in its normative work. Although not on a large scale, programmatic interventions supported by UN Women have yielded positive changes in a number of women's lives. UN Women has also achieved key results in greater prioritization and coordination around GEWE related issues in the UNDS.

Evaluations, however, stressed the need for increased attention to protecting, entrenching and sustaining policy gains and further transforming normative gains into operational results. A strong case is emerging from evaluations of the need to expand and deepen the focus on social norm change more coherently and consistently within programmes and Strategic Notes. The relative efficiency and fitness for purpose of the results based and knowledge management mechanisms and processes could be further improved to better gather evidence on results and

impacts and to use the information for decision-making.

Moreover, UN Women could do more through the UNDS and the UNSDCF to further promote the GEWE agenda by more forcefully highlighting gaps, suggesting areas of collaboration, joint advocacy, research, policy engagement and joint resource mobilization. UN Women should engage with donors and seek multiple avenues to secure multi-year resource commitments to produce tangible and lasting results. Evaluations, in general, called for UN Women to strike an appropriate balance between its scarce resources (human and financial) and the most relevant and effective interventions where its comparative and collaborative advantage is best enhanced to yield greatest impact.

UN Women supported programmes and interventions remain highly relevant. They are suited to the needs of target groups and are aligned with national priorities and international normative frameworks.

Nearly all evaluations reported satisfactory or higher findings for the suitability of UN Women programmes to the needs of the target group and for its ability to develop effective partnerships; and two thirds of evaluation reports demonstrated highly satisfactory findings on interventions being

aligned with national development goals and GEWE priorities.

Most evaluations provide strong evidence that the UN Women supported interventions are aligned with national development goals/plans and policies. These included the alignment to national strategies and frameworks promoting the social, economic and political empowerment of women. Furthermore, most evaluation reports highlighted how UN Women's programming is aligned to international normative instruments which provide the foundation of GEWE. UN Women's partnerships have, to a great extent, led to strategic positioning of gender issues in national agenda and debates, and localized implementation. Although not an area of traditional core competence, UN Women has also risen to the challenge of working in humanitarian contexts and made a positive contribution in reaching out to and raising the voices of vulnerable women through programmatic interventions, advocacy and partnership.

While participatory approaches have been used in programme design, there is scope to have a more systematic needs assessment, mapping and gender analysis for better-targeted assistance to fulfilling the commitment to the "leave no one behind" principle. There is also scope to improve partnerships with local civil society organizations (CSOs) and youth organizations.



UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

EFFECTIVENESS

UN Women supported programmes and interventions have been effective in achieving their objectives and contributed towards the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment. Nonetheless, the relatively small-scale interventions, limited human and financial resources, weak partner capacity and monitoring systems have at times affected performance. The extent of success also varied across countries.

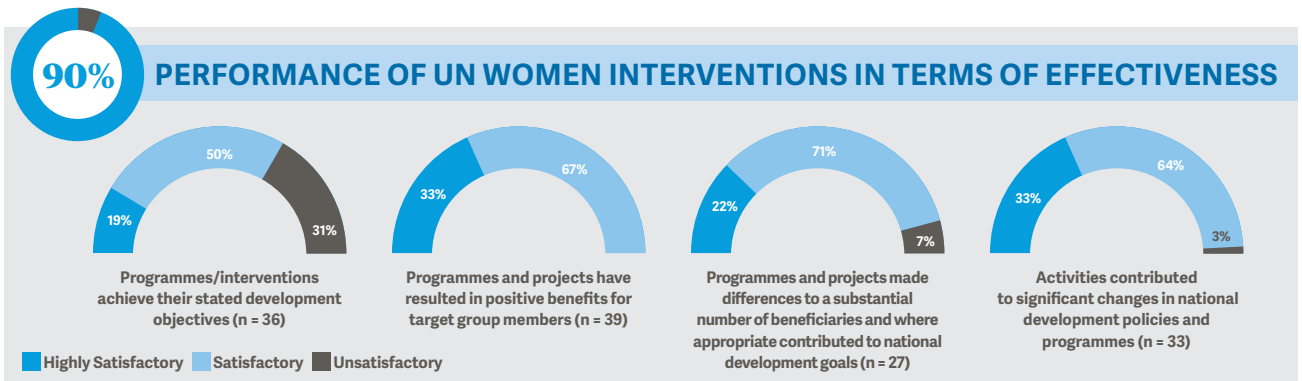
UN Women has contributed to the strengthening of normative frameworks at the country level. Evaluations highlighted UN Women's influence and notable contributions in engendering national and legal frameworks, policies and strategies.

Many evaluations highlighted the notable contributions made by UN Women in enhancing women's

leadership through a combination of mainstreaming gender in laws and frameworks and by supporting women in political participation and leadership. Lack of empowerment and exposure to decision-making, frequent and long-term exposure to gender unfriendly attitudes and stereotypes in the structure of political parties, domestic tasks and responsibilities were reported as factors inhibiting leadership

and management capacity among women. A few evaluations highlighted the need to step up the support and focus to subnational levels (instead of mainly national level) to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of women's leadership and political participation.

Some evaluations highlighted positive outcomes through women's economic empowerment interventions. In particular, social cohesion spaces and women's economic centres were noted to be an effective mechanism to provide access to services, safe space for women to discuss issues concerning their rights, protection of survivors as well as assistance to early economic recovery, particularly in humanitarian



settings. The linkages created between women-owned businesses/women's groups and micro-finance institutions/banks; institutionalization of gender-responsive policies and practices; gender equality seal by private sector firms; and ensuring women obtain national ID cards have facilitated access to finance and public services for women.

Nevertheless, women's economic empowerment interventions were reported to be small in scale and their effects confined to specific localities without a clear strategy for scale-up. Country portfolio evaluations also indicated that some UN Women supported interventions tend to place more emphasis on individual economic gain rather than other mechanisms with a potential larger (and national) reach. A holistic approach focusing on support to policy and regulatory frameworks, corporate social responsibility and expansion of successful cases is suggested by evaluations to influence UN Women's programming and simultaneously increase investment for women's economic empowerment.

Some evaluations highlighted positive outcomes from UN Women's efforts to ensure

that all women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence. Evaluations demonstrated UN Women's paramount role in prioritizing and advancing issues of gender-violence in national agendas and debates. UN Women's efforts in terms of combatting violence have been tailored and multi-pronged to situations and needs in the country, including training of judicial system officials, faith and religious leaders and police/law enforcement officials, supporting development of national policies and strategies, and establishing /ensuring support systems. Similarly, most violence against women programmes show positive outcomes when integrated with women's economic empowerment interventions.

Many evaluations addressing women, peace and security reported success due to UN Women supported interventions. UN Women's efforts have contributed to improving the capacities of women in mediation and negotiation. The results achieved in this area have contributed to positioning women with knowledge and skills to advance conflict resolution at the community level; however, it is

crucial to deepen and sustain their engagement and to link it to other advocacy and campaign efforts supported by UN Women.

In addition to engendering national policies and frameworks, a few evaluations highlighted UN Women's support to gender-responsive budgeting and planning. However, further work needs to be done to show this support leads to change. Advancing the integration of gender-responsive budgeting into the full budget cycle, including gender analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of expenditure, has been hindered by a number of structural and capacity constraints.

Overall, a holistic approach focusing on knowledge, attitudes, practices and policies at multi-levels (legislative, institutional, community and individual) has proven effective in addressing the barriers to GEWE. However, this was not always translated and implemented across all thematic areas. Efforts to further reflect this approach in the design, results frameworks, RBM and structures are needed to fully systematize and ensure better linkages across the integrated mandate.

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Key drivers of change, such as UN Women's comparative advantage in its coordination role on gender equality and women's empowerment; the recognition, ability and technical expertise of UN Women to address various issues of gender equality; multi-pronged advocacy; innovative approaches; building alliances and mobilizing supportive constituencies; and engaging with less committed actors have enabled UN Women to achieve results. Nevertheless, there is scope to leverage and build on these drivers for more long-term impact.

UN SYSTEMS COORDINATION ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

UN Women has been pivotal in seeking to mainstream gender in United Nations Country Team (UNCT) action and joint programming, the UNCT Interim Cooperation Framework, and UNDAF. Leading a UN Gender Theme Group appears to be a very valuable process for UN Women in many countries and has evidently proved effective in achieving coordination and consensus on GEWE. However, Gender Theme Groups have been reported as being less active in some countries and it is sometimes difficult to have a strategic level of engagement or participation. Country portfolio evaluations acknowledged the need to revitalize such platforms as a means to mobilize actions and resources on GEWE. To enable greater efficiency, there is also an acknowledged need to consider the amalgamation of multiple gender

groups that might exist in a country (including Gender Theme Groups, donors and clusters) into a single Extended Gender Theme Group, especially in countries where there are relatively small communities of actors. In order to remain relevant and maintain its position in coordination, some evaluation reports highlighted the need for UN Women to be represented on those platforms at senior level.

Positive findings were reported in country portfolio evaluations, including UN Women's leadership role in the execution of the gender scorecard (e.g. Rwanda, Liberia, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and South Sudan). Although the full benefit is not fully captured, the gender scorecard is used by UN Women as a viable strategy to put gender equality at the heart of the programmatic and operational aspects of the UN system. There were examples where working through joint programmes leveraged resources within the UN system to advance and sustain gender equality gains.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is integral to UN Women programming at various levels and is often multi-pronged; this could be through policy advocacy, campaigns, and/or supporting advocates and networks to achieve GEWE. Many evaluations highlighted UN Women's various advocacy efforts, including driving public and/or political support for GEWE or specific aspects thereof, by raising awareness, building alliances, mobilizing supportive constituencies and engaging with less committed actors. A few evaluations highlighted social media activism as a powerful tool for social change.

In addition to the HeforShe initiative, different campaigns were pursued by offices. For instance, the #NoEsDeHombres campaign in Mexico was considered innovative and received a Sol De Bronco Award at the Ibero-American Festival of Advertising Communication. As well as bringing together a multitude of actors from different fields and sectors, the campaign reportedly had a significant reach with approximately 1,812,701 persons exposed to the campaign (895,239 men and 917,462 women). UN Women has also been instrumental in supporting and/or developing Gender Equality Advocates/Gender Focal Points/gender equality champions and Gender Cafes, as highlighted in some evaluations. A few evaluations pointed out that investment in advocacy and communication has to be timely.



were successfully addressing social norms. Several examples of success were also captured in relation to involving young men in the fight against gender-based violence, early marriage, female genital mutilation and promotion of gender equality in Palestine, Kyrgyzstan, Cameroon, South Sudan, Kenya and Rwanda. The HeForShe initiative was highlighted by several country portfolio evaluations as a promising strategy with early successes in mobilizing a critical mass to challenge deeply rooted ‘traditional’ attitudes and practices.

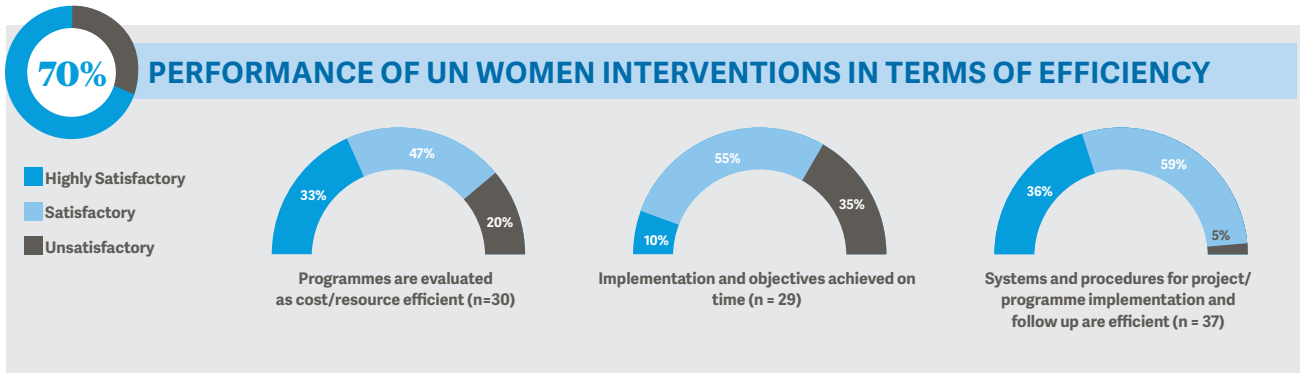
Equally, many country portfolio evaluations highlighted gaps in systematically mapping the specific needs of young boys and men in relation to advancing gender equality and meaningfully engaging them beyond their usual involvement in general awareness. Some evaluations recommended that UN Women and its partners capitalize on the HeForShe campaign momentum and devise strategies not only through engaging men as champions but also beneficiaries of different interventions to speed up social norm change. Attention to interventions (coordination and programmatic) that actively promote and support social norm change was stressed as central to the design of Strategic Notes and the accompanying theories of change.

MALE ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL NORM CHANGE

Various initiatives in different countries have laid the foundation to deepen and sustain the engagement of men and boys towards changing

discriminatory practices and social norms. For instance, projects supported through the Fund for Gender Equality were reportedly having positive results in translating high-level laws and policy commitments into services and opportunities and

EFFICIENCY



UN Women has reportedly improved its programme and management efficiency, but its success largely hinges on its ability to operate with limited resources and to leverage funds, capacity of partners, predictability of resources, and other internal and external factors.

While gaps were noted in evaluations being able to appropriately assess the cost-efficiency of results, to a large extent there is a high level of delivery both in substantive programmatic areas and resources. Limitations in core resources, shifting priorities of partners and the lack of predictable resources sometimes led UN Women to be unfocused, inhibiting its substantive contributions and impacting the quality of outputs and progress towards planned targets. Competent and committed UN Women staff, joint delivery/joint programming, UNCT coordination, implementation through local CSOs and NGOs, and ability to leverage resources and funds are reported to have contributed to the efficiency of UN Women supported programmes.

It is vital for UN Women to adapt to evolving country priorities and interventions such as the focus on youth,

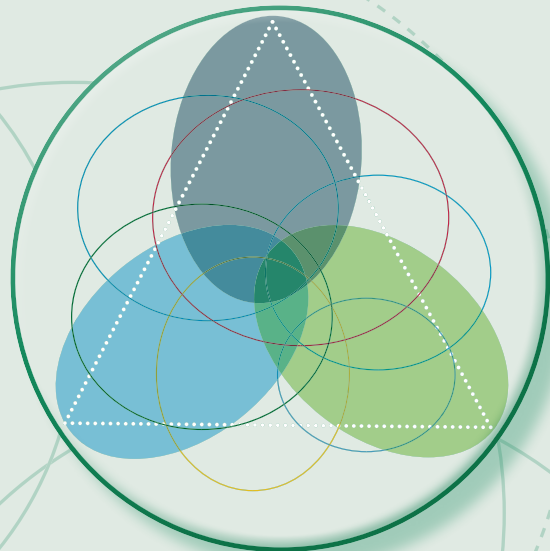
broader economic transformation, climate-resilient agricultural production and value chain utilization to maximize the value of its investments while addressing GEWE. In addition to gaps in staffing, inadequate data on costs linked to results and weak monitoring systems also affected efficiency and the Entity's ability to

effectively measure it. Furthermore, balancing and/or creating linkages between projects of short duration (less than one year) and longer-term programmes should help to enhance operational efficiency and the long-term sustainability of results. Integrated approaches applied to the design and implementation of a few UN Women programmes are reported to have enabled the Entity to achieve greater results with fewer resources and have helped to ensure that interventions address multidimensional aspects of gender equality.



UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

What is systems thinking and how is it applied to evaluations?



How can we bring "nature's perception" into our analysis?

How can we include marginalized voices in evaluations?

ISE4GEMs: A NEW APPROACH FOR THE SDG ERA

Evaluation Guide Book



The Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMs) guide is written in two parts:

Part A presents the theoretical background on systems thinking and Part B provides practical steps and tools to conduct an Inclusive

Systemic Evaluation.

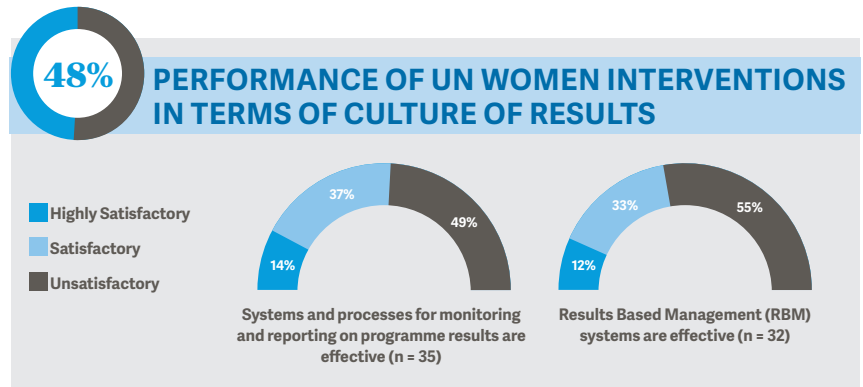
Find the guide here: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/9/ise4gems-a-new-approach-for-the-sdg-era>



While there have been notable progressive efforts to improve monitoring and the use of results-based management systems, capacity across Country Offices varied and constraints in establishing a functional and useful results-based management system at the country level still remain.

The findings on the culture of results and the effectiveness of RBM are mixed, reflecting a work-in-progress. While the findings are reflective of the progressive efforts by UN Women to strengthen the culture of results, they also highlight challenges in establishing and implementing functional and useful RBM systems at the country level. This means that RBM systems have not been optimally used for strategic management and informed decisions including making adjustments in strategy and to improve mid and long-term course corrections in response to contextual changes.

CULTURE OF RESULTS



The following areas were reported as hindering factors to instituting a culture of results: weak not explicit theory of change; inadequately defined indicators (no baseline/targets); gaps in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staffing; lack of standardized means of verification of partner data and inconsistencies in tracking and reporting the number of beneficiaries; and lack of reliable data and inability to measure progress. These factors are in part linked to partner capacities.

At times, even when theories of change/results frameworks existed, their depth and quality varied and were of limited use to guide or monitor programme results. M&E systems are also sometimes overdesigned, not fully taking into account partner capacities, implementation period and human and financial resources. Knowledge management, including capturing and reporting longer-term results and lessons learned needs further systematic/institutionalized support and efforts.





ACCOUNTABILITY S LEARNING

GATE System: The Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use

An online 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/>



SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of UN Women supported programmes and results is mixed and highly influenced by the different contexts and complex situations in which UN Women operates.

Investments to strengthen legislative frameworks and national capacity to implement policies/plans and international normative commitments for GEWE have been enablers for sustainability. UN Women supported programmes and interventions have enhanced the capacities of diverse (and relevant) individuals, institutions and communities to address GEWE aspects and issues. Furthermore, the establishment of mechanisms/gender units in different line ministries and support to gender advocates/gender focal points, in addition to engendering national policies, all indicate a strengthened enabling environment for gender-responsive development.

Evaluations highlighted approaches to enhancing sustainability through synergy, combining support to economic empowerment with social empowerment and prevention of and protection against gender-based violence as well as community mobilization in both development and humanitarian contexts. Most country

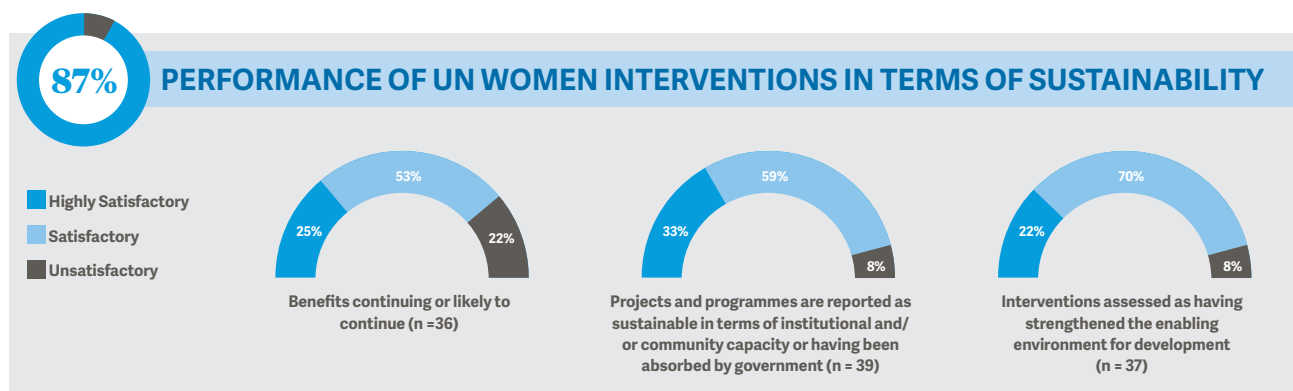
portfolio evaluations commented positively on the approach to preventing gender-based violence with the perspective of achieving sustainable results. In the area of women's economic empowerment, sustainable impacts are likely to be achieved at the individual and group level, but the approach has not sufficiently facilitated sustainability for a critical mass of women. This is even more so in humanitarian contexts due to the short duration of projects and some protracted emergency situations.

Issues affecting the continuity of benefits, as highlighted by some evaluation reports, include insufficient resources, no exit strategy or sustainability plan, deep-rooted cultural norms, lack of political will and turnover of staff in participating and implementing organizations. Further, assessment and tracking of the various capacity development activities has not always been undertaken systematically, and interventions have missed out on follow-up, coaching and mentoring. Limited practices of

sharing and transfer of knowledge and skills among trainees, as well as the frequent turnover of staff and officials, also pose a threat to the development of sustained institutional capacity.

Another area for improvement cited in evaluations is the need to support interventions that promote and sustain social norm change at household, community and local levels. A more strategic and thoughtful focus to increase meaningful engagement of men and boys is essential to achieve sustainable outcomes on gender equality. This, however, requires a long-term approach and sustained funding to facilitate long-term sustainable impacts. Strategic partnerships with CSOs should also be expanded to hold governments accountable for delivering the commitments of legal frameworks and policies on GEWE.

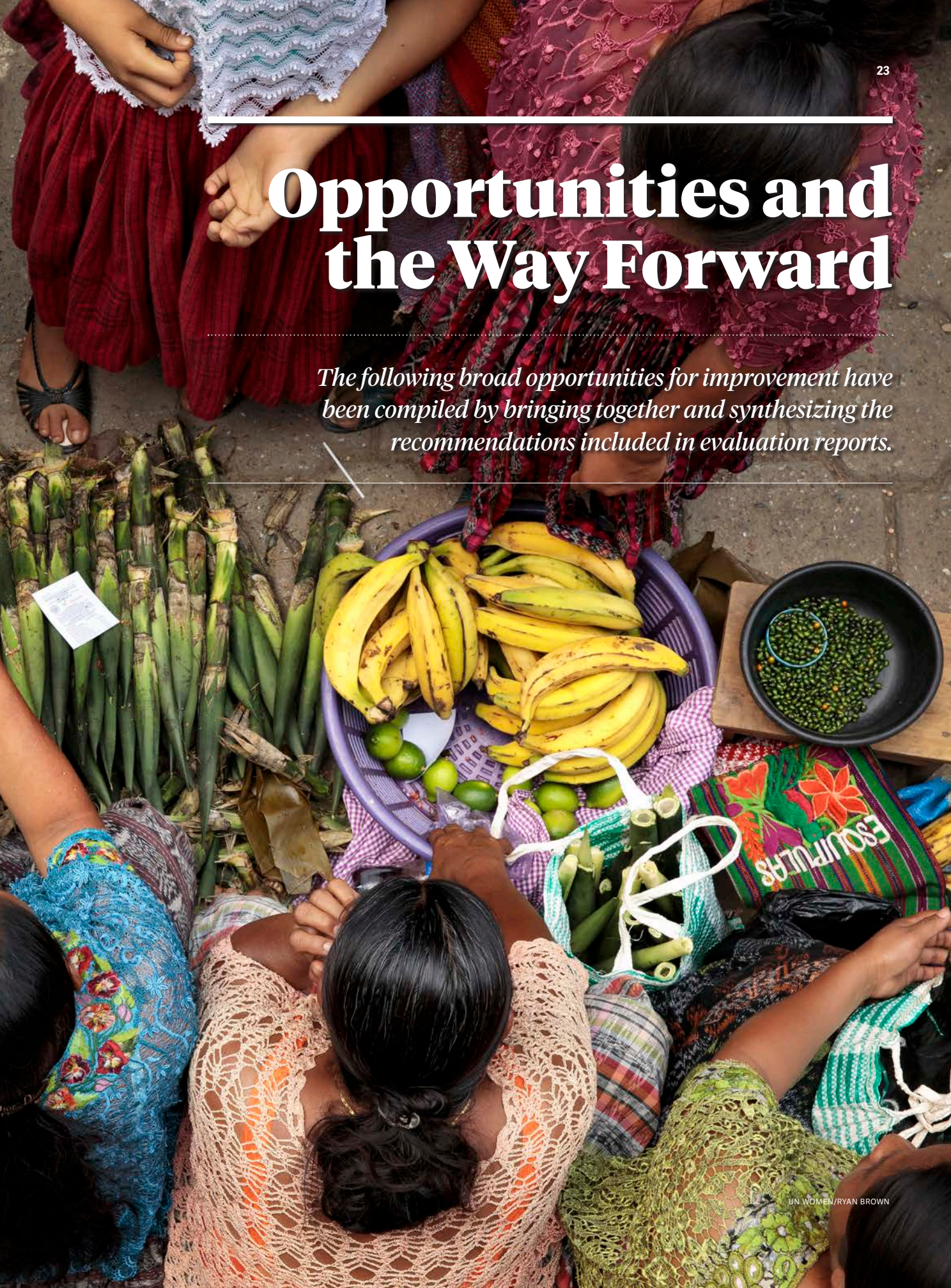
In general, sustainability should be considered as a work-in-progress moving in a positive direction for the long-term, given the nature of UN Women's work in addressing cultural/social norms, humanitarian situations and political will, among others.





Opportunities and the Way Forward

The following broad opportunities for improvement have been compiled by bringing together and synthesizing the recommendations included in evaluation reports.





UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

Boost the achievement of results through multi-pronged advocacy, capacity building, and strategic and diverse partnerships to support sustained social norm change.

This includes promoting interventions for effective and sustainable social norm changes at the household, community and individual levels, incorporating integrated and holistic approaches and continuing to incorporate innovative approaches and models. Effective RBM systems and tracking progress on long-term changes and measurement of real impact in terms of attitudinal, behavioural and social norm change on a wider scale is a critical enabling factor. It is also important for UN Women to ensure the continued integration of Human Rights-Based Approach to Development (HRBA). At the same time, it is necessary to situate UN Women's assisted programmes in broader institutional and policy environments and interventions of other actors (including UN agencies) for longer-term and greater change.

Strengthen the strategic positioning of UN Women and its participation in broader development system-wide initiatives through increased joint programming and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

This includes strengthening the implementation of UN Women's mandate by establishing a clearer division of labour with other agencies at the country level and continuing to strengthen and revitalize Gender Theme Groups. Through UN Women's convening role, it is important to create a broader platform by bringing together civil society for joint advocacy efforts and to advocate

with national governments and UNCT for the establishment of pooled funds to advance GEWE. To more strategically influence GEWE changes at the national level, the observations across country portfolio evaluations also call for increased coordination with line ministries beyond the gender machinery with which UN Women works in joint programmes and joint programming.

3 Increase efforts to improve the efficiency of UN Women supported programmes and interventions.

This includes strengthening programme design and monitoring systems to better track and monitor programme costs; leveraging of resources through diverse partnerships to ensure a multiplier effect; and having a viable human resources strategy and resource mobilization strategy to deliver across UN Women's integrated mandate. Additionally, UN Women should consider reducing direct implementation of activities and focus more on coordination, oversight, monitoring and technical advice to implementing partners with proven track records. Optimizing staffing and financial resources by not spreading activities and resources too thinly and by narrowing the geographical focus of interventions through identifying and concentrating on activities that are most relevant and achievable and complement initiatives of other actors would also enhance efficiency.

4 Intensify efforts and continue investments to strengthen the culture of results.

This includes improving the quality of programme/project designs, specifically related to developing realistic and explicit theories of change in line with resources available (and likelihood of being mobilized), in addition to defining realistic indicators with baselines and targets and monitoring progress against targets. Enhancing capacities of UN Women staff in Country Offices and, in particular, implementing partners to track, capture and report results (including systems for monitoring unexpected outcomes) is critical to better gather evidence on outcomes and impacts. Furthermore, systematic and institutionalized support to improve knowledge management, including capturing and reporting longer-term results, good practices and lessons learned will facilitate improving the culture of results.

5 Enhance the sustainability of UN Women supported programmes and interventions through exit strategies and sustainability plan.

This includes ensuring linkages with other initiatives within and outside the UN system, and linking small projects with larger programmes to ensure better scaling-up and the likelihood of continuity of benefits. Strategies that empower and equip national partners with expertise and tools to advance change, and the cascading effect this is having on transferring skills and knowledge to a wider range of stakeholders and in building gender equality champions to support increased national ownership of GEWE results will enhance the likelihood of sustainability. Continuing to strengthen the enabling environment for gender-responsive development, including creating “safe and social cohesion spaces” to provide access to services, safe space for women to discuss issues concerning their rights, protection of survivors as well as assistance to early economic recovery including in humanitarian settings will facilitate the continuity of benefits.

THE META-ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY: Synthetizing evidence



UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

The approach of this meta-synthesis was consistent with the 2017 UN Women meta-analysis. It consisted of five main stages:

1 Identifying evaluation reports to be included in the analysis using the results of the GERAAS meta-synthesis 2018: 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”.

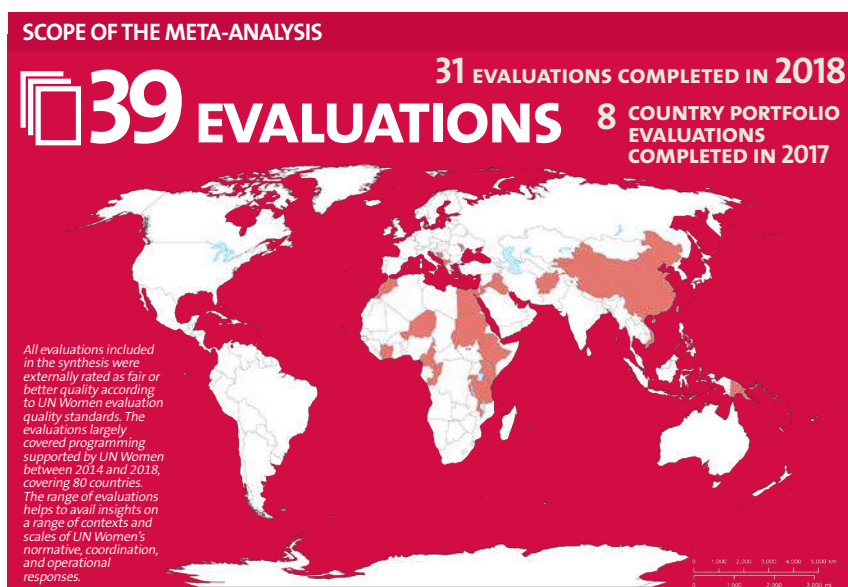
2 Classifying each insight from a report according to dimensions

provided by the UNEG evaluation criteria. Statements were synthesized and coded in Excel.

3 Undertaking a qualitative analysis of the main issues after clustering statements under each classification. Where appropriate, an indication of the frequency of insights was given.

4 Undertaking a quantitative assessment in Excel that analysed the frequency with which evaluation findings referred to positive or negative performance in relation to various aspects of development effectiveness specified by OECD-DAC.

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



ABOUT TRANSFORM

Published by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service, Transform is the first magazine dedicated exclusively to gender-responsive evaluation. It aims to communicate good practices on gender-responsive evaluations, as well as evaluation findings on what works for gender equality.

ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE (IES)

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit Service under the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS). The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service's main purpose is to enhance accountability, inform decision-making, and contribute to learning about the best ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the organization's mandate, including its normative, operational and coordination work. The Independent Evaluation Service also works to strengthen capacities for gender-responsive evaluation within UN entities, governments and civil society organizations.

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