

GOOD PRACTICES *in Gender-Responsive Evaluations*

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PRODUCED BY

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How to use this book

The best way to navigate this book is as a PDF. There are links and interactive elements that provide enhanced functionality and enable readers to quickly access cited reports and websites.

Acknowledgements

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Foreword



In 2020 women's rights take centre stage, beginning with the 25th landmark anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Adopted unanimously by 189 governments, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action set out a progressive

and comprehensive global blueprint for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in 12 critical areas of concern.

Since 1995, profound improvements in women and girls' lives have been made in many areas, including in the law, in politics and the economy, and in health and education. Inter-governmental, normative advances and commitments have been instrumental in bringing about these changes; but the pace and scale of progress remains uneven and inexorably slow, with no country on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. What's more, in recent years we have seen sustained attacks on women's rights that threaten to erode and reverse gender equality gains in many parts of the world.

2020 is also a year in which the Secretary-General has launched the next Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for bolder commitments and even bolder actions by all development actors to realize the full promise of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development for people, planet and prosperity.

As a force multiplier, accelerating progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women is fundamental to this effort. More than ever, systematic evidence and knowledge on what works for gender equality, why, for whom and in what circumstances is needed to catalyse equitable, inclusive, sustainable progress and amplify our impact.

UN Women has promoted gender-responsive evaluation to ensure that *we are doing things right* as well as *doing the right things* to achieve GEWE. This knowledge product is the outcome of a good practice review commissioned by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service. It identifies trends and features some of the ways in which UNEG partners have integrated gender-responsive approaches and methods in their evaluation processes to assess gender equality results and to inform subsequent policy and programme interventions.

In looking towards the next decade, we hope it inspires evaluation commissioners and practitioners to enhance their evaluation practices and to enlist gender-responsive evaluation as a transformative driver of change for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by 2030.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Inga Sniukaite'.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction



1.1. Background

In March 2020, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-fourth session launched a global review and appraisal of progress made in implementation of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(BPfA\)](#), including the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000).

To this day, the BPfA remains a blueprint for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE). It sets out 12 inter-related and mutually reinforcing areas of critical concern that are at the heart of transforming unequal gender relations and generating substantive and progressive change across the economic, political, social and environmental dimensions of women and girls’ lives.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) has also adopted a comprehensive approach to the achievement of gender equality by creating a stand-alone goal (Sustainable Development Goal 5 [SDG 5]) and mainstreaming gender-related targets across all SDGs. These targets, including those under SDG 5, resonate strongly with the BPfA critical areas of concern as Figure 1 on the next page highlights.

Over the years, political commitment to GEWE has steadily gained visibility, strength and traction in international, regional and national level norms and discourse. However, progress in closing gender gaps in politics; the economy and the world of work; violence against women; and unpaid care work to name a few, has lagged considerably behind the rhetoric. In June 2019, the inaugural [SDG Index](#), developed by the [Equal Measures 2030](#) partnership, found that not one country was likely to achieve gender equality by 2030 and even more worrying was that more than half of the 129 countries included in the index scored poorly on efforts to achieve SDG5.¹

Although there is no panacea for gender inequality, there is both scope and an urgent need to harness the catalytic role of evaluation and the use of evaluative evidence to bridge the disconnect between robust normative commitments

SDG Gender Index

The SDG Gender Index provides a snapshot of where the world stands on gender equality linked to the vision set forth by the 2030 Agenda.

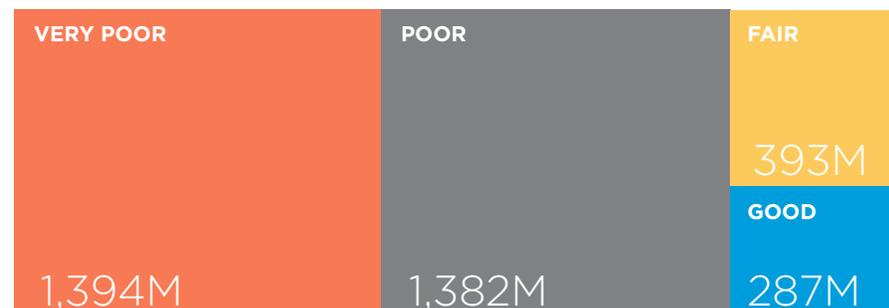
‘Not one country is likely to achieve gender equality by 2030’²

62/100

global average 2019 SDG Gender Index score

SCORING SYSTEM*
Excellent: 90 & above
Good: 80-89
Fair: 70-79
Poor: 60-69
Very poor: 59 & below

Number of girls and women living in countries by 2019 SDG Index Score grouping



* A score of 100 reflects the achievement of gender equality in relation to the targets set for each indicator in the index
Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019

and the lack of progress on gender equality. The elevated importance which the 2030 Agenda places on GEWE for achieving inclusive and sustainable development, and on monitoring and evaluation in national and global review and follow-up processes, strategically positions gender-responsive evaluation to drive implementation of gender equality commitments across the BPfA and 2030 Agenda with UN system and national partners.



FIGURE 1: Inter-linkages between the Beijing Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda targets*

2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

(12 critical areas of concern)

- Women and the [environment](#)
- Women in [power and decision-making](#)
- The [girl child](#)
- Women and [the economy](#)
- Women and [poverty](#)
- [Violence](#) against women
- [Human rights](#) of women
- [Education and training](#) of women
- [Institutional mechanisms](#) for the advancement of women
- Women and [health](#)
- Women and [the media](#)
- Women and [armed conflict](#)



SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

(targets under SDG 5)

- TARGET 5.1**
End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- TARGET 5.2**
Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls
- TARGET 5.3**
Eliminate all harmful practices
- TARGET 5.4**
Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work
- TARGET 5.5**
Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels
- TARGET 5.6**
Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
- TARGET 5a**
Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources
- TARGET 5b**
Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology
- TARGET 5c**
Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality

GENDER-SPECIFIC TARGETS UNDER OTHER SDGS**

- SDG 1: No Poverty**
Targets 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1b
- SDG 2: Zero Hunger**
Target 2.3
- SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being**
Targets 3.7, 3.8
- SDG 4: Quality Education**
Targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4a
- SDG 8: Decent Work**
Targets 8.3, 8.5, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**
Target 10.2
- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities**
Target 11.7
- SDG 13: Climate Action**
Target 13b
- SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**
Target 16.1, 16.2, 16.7
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals**
Target 17.18

* [Guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews, Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(1995\).](#)

** This list is illustrative and not comprehensive. Targets were only included if the related indicator(s) explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For further information, please consult chapter 2 in UN Women (2018) [Turning promises into action: gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), New York.



1.2. Gender-Responsive Evaluation

Gender-responsive evaluation can crucially influence and direct policies, programmes and investments to have greater impact on the lives of women and girls by generating knowledge and evidence of what works (or what doesn't), why and for whom. It can support progress that is equitable, inclusive, sustainable and deep enough to transform structural inequalities that entrench gender and other inequalities.

UN Women defines gender-responsive evaluation as *a systematic and impartial assessment that provides credible and reliable evidence-based information about the extent to which an intervention has resulted in progress (or the lack thereof) towards intended and/or unintended results regarding GEWE.*³

A gender-responsive evaluation consists of two main components:

- First, it assesses the “*degree to which gender and power relationships – including structural and other causes that give rise to inequities, discrimination and unfair power relations – change as a result of an intervention.*”⁴ This means providing information on the ways in which projects and programmes affect men and women differently, and the extent to which programmes are contributing towards gender equality, human rights and women’s empowerment.
- Second, a gender-responsive evaluation entails a process that is inclusive, participatory and respectful of all stakeholders, especially in ensuring that women’s voices, including different groups, are prevalent throughout the evaluation.

1.3. Purpose and objectives

To deepen gender-responsive evaluation practice among UN system entities, national partners and broader evaluation communities, this knowledge product showcases good and promising gender-responsive evaluation approaches and methods that have been used to assess and interpret gender equality outcomes

of policies, programmes or a portfolio of interventions. The objectives of this knowledge product are three-fold and were designed to:

- I. broadly examine trends in gender-responsive evaluation practice;
- II. identify good practices in gender-responsive evaluation approaches, methods and tools; and
- III. highlight gender equality results captured by evaluation reports.

1.4. Approach and methodology

The knowledge product is based primarily on a desk review of 35 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) partner evaluations, which were procured through a “Call for Gender-Responsive Evaluations” issued by UN Women’s Independent Evaluation and Audit Services.⁵ UN Women also drew on its population of evaluation reports in the [Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use \(GATE\) System](#) to broaden the mix of evaluations by type, including country-led evaluations, by region, and by the BPfA’s 12 critical areas of concern. The review focused on evaluations completed between 2014 and 2019. Each evaluation was screened against a set of criteria to identify general trends and good, innovative practices. These criteria were collated from the UNEG Quality Checklist and the requirements of the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator (See Annex 1 for the Gender-Responsive Evaluation Checklist).

In addition, three impact evaluations illustrating different evaluation designs have been included and were identified through the UNEG Evaluation Practice Exchange and a targeted web search. The knowledge product highlights the important role of gender-responsive, country-led evaluations in fostering greater national ownership of and accountability for driving more substantive progress on achieving GEWE for all women and girls in support of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda.

CHAPTER 2

Good practice in gender-responsive evaluation approaches

Among UNEG partners, good practice in gender-responsive evaluation approaches tends to take three forms. The first and most common approach, especially in project-level evaluations, incorporates gender equality and human rights as a stand-alone criterion or mainstreamed across the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Another approach combines theory-based approaches with the use of one or a combination of gender analytical frameworks, including sector-specific gender frameworks. These frameworks facilitate a more nuanced assessment of the type, effectiveness and the quality of gender equality results achieved. Finally, recent gender-responsive evaluation approaches, especially corporate-level and thematic evaluations, are adopting more systems thinking and complexity-responsive designs including the use of multiple evaluation approaches to assess and interpret the gender equality outcomes of policies, programmes or a portfolio of interventions. This chapter highlights five good practice gender-responsive approaches illustrative of the above trends.





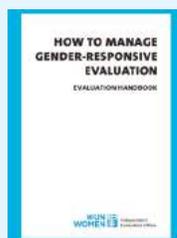
2.1 Integrating human rights and gender equality into evaluation approaches and processes

Strengthened evaluation norms and standards on human rights and gender equality,⁶ together with updated and comprehensive technical guidance on [Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#) (2014) have facilitated greater operationalization of gender-responsive evaluations as well as the “Leaving No One Behind” principle within the 2030 Agenda in the evaluations of UN entities. Evaluations that address human rights and gender equality aim to be transformative, participatory and culturally sensitive⁷ by:

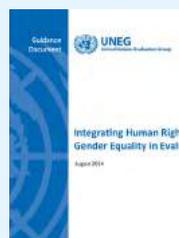
- Fostering the inclusion and participation of different stakeholders, particularly of women and men at more risk of having their rights violated⁸ and further disaggregating stakeholders by their human rights roles as either duty bearers or rights holders.
- Addressing and making the power dynamics that entrench underlying causes of exclusion, discrimination and inequality more explicit and by assessing whether and how an intervention might have contributed or led to changes in these root causes, including whether such changes are likely to lead to improved enjoyment of human rights and gender equality.⁹

The guidance provides suggestions on evaluation approaches that are human rights-based and gender responsive (See Table 1) and offers tools and examples of integrating human rights and gender equality into evaluation processes, including evaluation objectives, evaluation criteria,¹⁰ stakeholder identification and analysis,¹¹ and key evaluation questions.¹²

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UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation



Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations (UNEG Guidance)

TABLE 1: Approaches for fostering participation and inclusiveness¹³

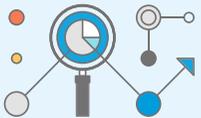
IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEGRATING HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY	
<p>Utilization-focused¹⁴</p> <p>Promotes intended use by intended users.</p>	<p>Strong focus on participation of users throughout the evaluation process.</p>
<p>Appreciative inquiry¹⁵</p> <p>Highlights good practice in association with evaluation.</p>	<p>Promotes a high level of stakeholder participation.</p>
<p>Feminist¹⁶</p> <p>Addresses the gender inequities that lead to social injustice and examines opportunities for reversing gender inequities.</p>	<p>Prioritizes women’s experience and voices, including women from groups discriminated against and/or marginalized.</p>
<p>Empowerment¹⁷</p> <p>Programme participants conduct their own evaluations. An outside evaluator often serves as a coach or additional facilitator.</p>	<p>Most appropriate where the goals of the intervention include helping participants become more self-sufficient and personally effective; could therefore support capacity building of rights holders and duty bearers.</p>
<p>Most significant change¹⁸</p> <p>Sharing stories of lived experiences and selecting those most representative of the type of change being sought.</p>	<p>Project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded and in analysing the data.</p>

2.2. Linking theory-based approaches and gender analysis frameworks

UNEG partners complemented theory-based evaluation approaches¹⁹ with one, or a combination of gender analytical frameworks to ensure that gender-responsive methods were applied throughout the evaluation and to support evaluators not only to assess the contributions of an intervention(s) to GEWE but also to better understand the context which shapes the relationships and dynamics of any situation. Gender analytical frameworks, such as the Longwe

Women’s Empowerment Framework; the Harvard Gender Analytical Framework (Gender Roles Framework); and the Social Relations Framework help to further understand the type and quality of gender equality results. Each framework has its strengths and weaknesses; however, when used in combination, they can mitigate the shortcomings of the other (See Table 2).

TABLE 2: Gender analytical frameworks

	 Longwe Women’s Empowerment Framework²⁰	 Harvard Analytical Framework²¹	 Social Relations Framework²²
STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables a feminist context analysis highlighting the political dimensions of gender inequality. • Allows negative impacts to be located and analysed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful for mapping and identifying the gendered division of work as well as access and control over community resources. • Highlights the need for gender disaggregation in measuring programme impact to identify if there are differential outcomes for men and women receiving the same programme intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights the systemic causes and structures of gender inequalities. • Useful for mapping actors/stakeholders involved in gender power dynamics to understand the importance of social relations to systemic inequalities. • Helps pinpoint the places where structural catalysts to inequality can be disrupted.
LIMITATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes that women’s empowerment follows a linear process. • Treats women as a homogenous group. • Excludes men and institutions from the framework. • May lead to a de-contextualized perspective of women’s empowerment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As resources, not power, are seen as central, it does not identify the source of power or inequality nor challenge existing gender relations. • No mechanism for assessing pathways of change thereby limiting understanding of why an intervention works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This approach uses an institutional lens to assess and improve policies, which may not include multiple voices or fully account for grassroots’ experiences or the contextual specificities of particular minority groups within an institution.



UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluations integrated one or more of these gender analysis frameworks as part of theory-based approaches to assess the performance of Strategic Notes.²³ The [UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation of Malawi](#) (2017) used all three frameworks, for example. The Social Relations Framework was used to explore the social structural constraints underpinning roles and responsibilities of men and women, as well as their access to, control over and use of resources. The Harvard Analytical Framework and the Longwe Women’s Empowerment Framework helped to assess adaptive capacities within households and how UN Women Country Office (CO) interventions have empowered women. Together, the frameworks acknowledge the importance of individual and group agency as well as the effects of UN Women CO interventions on gender relations.

Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)

Other evaluations combined theory-based approaches with sector-specific, gender analytical frameworks. The [Evaluation of the Joint Programme on Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment in Kyrgyzstan](#) (2018) applied the [Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index \(WEAI\)](#)²⁴ to analyse and measure the programme’s impact on the empowerment, agency and inclusion of rural women in the agriculture sector in five domains: 1) decisions about agricultural production; 2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources; 3) control over use of income; 4) leadership in the community; and 5) time use/ allocation.

Through this lens, the evaluation found that the programme had improved the status of rural women within their families and in their communities. Rural women reported exercising greater decision-making power over how household income was used and greater participation in productive decisions and in public decision-making as community leaders. At the same time, the evaluation found that rural women’s increased participation in income-generating activities crowded out their opportunities for leisure time. While the WEAI considers this a negative result, rural women considered the increase in income as a positive trade-off.²⁵

UNESCO Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM)

The [Gender Evaluation of the Work of the Department of Global Communications \(DGC\)](#) 2019 drew on UNESCO’s Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM) to measure the gender sensitivity of the DGC’s media content and communications products. By using the media indicators highlighted in Table 3 to respond to key evaluation questions,²⁶ the evaluation found, *inter alia*, that the majority of the DGC’s content was not balanced and tended to reinforce gender stereotypes. Men, for example, were more likely to be featured and cited in positions of expertise and high-level leadership, even when excluding statements made by the Secretary-General; while women were often represented as beneficiaries, survivors and victims. Approximately 9 per cent of the DGC’s content was dedicated to GEWE specifically, with social media having the highest percentage.²⁷

TABLE 3: Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM)

Visibility of balanced inclusion of women and men in communications products



Is there a balanced inclusion of women and men in the products?

Representation of gender portrayals



To what extent is DGC challenging gender stereotypes through its portrayal of women, men, girls and boys?

Focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE)



How many products and activities focus specifically on GEWE?

2.3. Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices

In collaboration with the University of Hull (UK) and James Cook University (Australia), UN Women initiated development of the [Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices \(ISE4GEMS\)](#)²⁸ as an innovative, evaluation approach for the SDG era. It addresses complexity in development and integrates an intersectional analysis of three cross-cutting dimensions relevant for achieving the 2030 Agenda: gender equality, marginalized voices (e.g. the leave no one behind principle) and the environment. It is an approach that emphasizes boundary analysis throughout the evaluation process and the inclusion of marginalized voices, including the natural environment.²⁹

In systems thinking, boundaries (as one of three central tenets) delineate between what is ‘in’ and what is ‘out’ and are restricted (or influenced) by knowledge, resources, perspectives, motivations and priorities.³⁰ It is incumbent on evaluators to understand the ethical, political and practical implications of the choices and decisions they make when establishing boundaries.

The [Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to Women’s Political Participation \(WPP\) and Leadership](#) (2018) adopted the ISE4GEMS approach to assess the strategic relevance, positioning and effectiveness of UN Women’s work in this thematic area within the broader development policy context and its role in progressing the SDGs.

To define the boundary story of UN Women’s political participation work, including emerging areas, the evaluation considered questions such as: *What is the boundary of UN Women’s WPP interventions and the contexts in which the organization is intervening? What other recent development activity has occurred in this space, if any? Who has been affected or will be affected by WPP interventions? How do intersectional structures and relationships interact?*³¹

Ultimately, the boundary story rested on three pillars (see Figure 2 below):

- I. how UN Women operates as an adaptive system across its own knowledge and delivery functions on WPP (within UN Women’s own sphere of control);
- II. how UN Women relates and adapts to the outside world through its partners, implementers and funders (in UN Women’s sphere of influence); and
- III. how these two spheres function together to contribute to desired change (within UN Women’s sphere of contribution towards impact).³²

FIGURE 2: Framework for analysis of boundary story

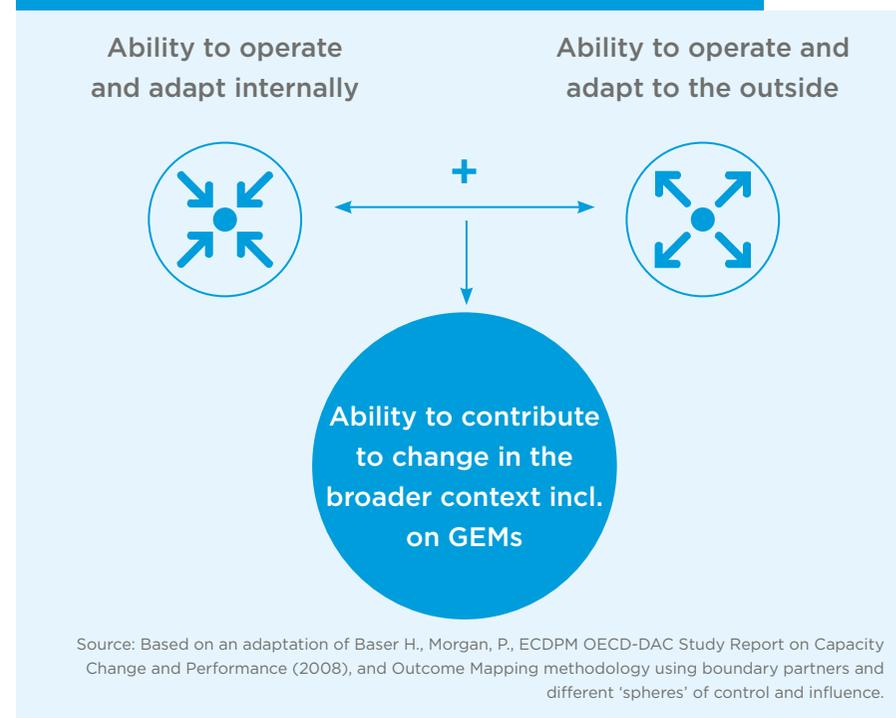


FIGURE 3: ISE4GEMS Visualized

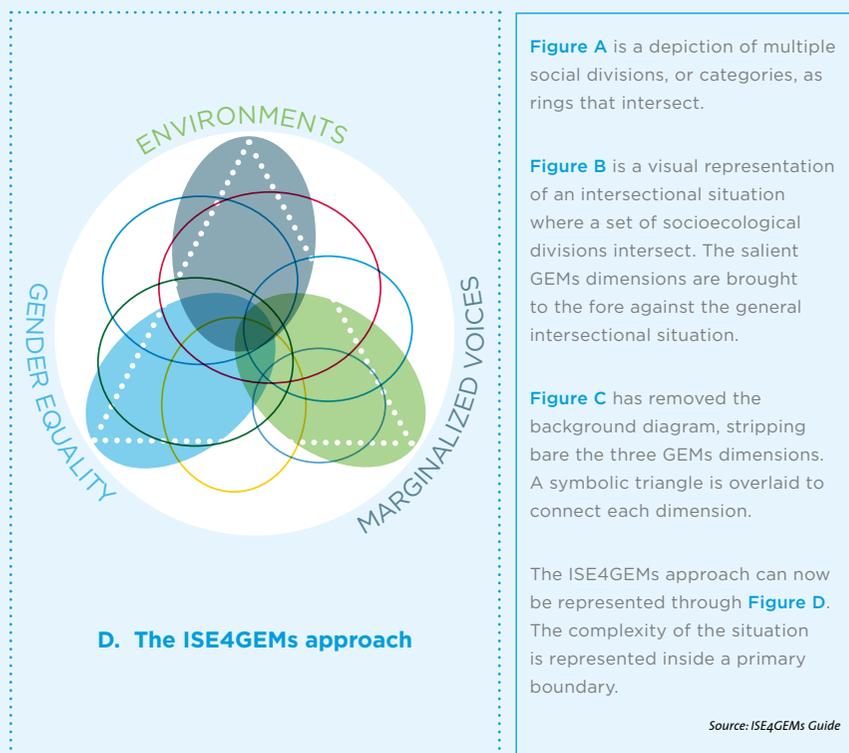
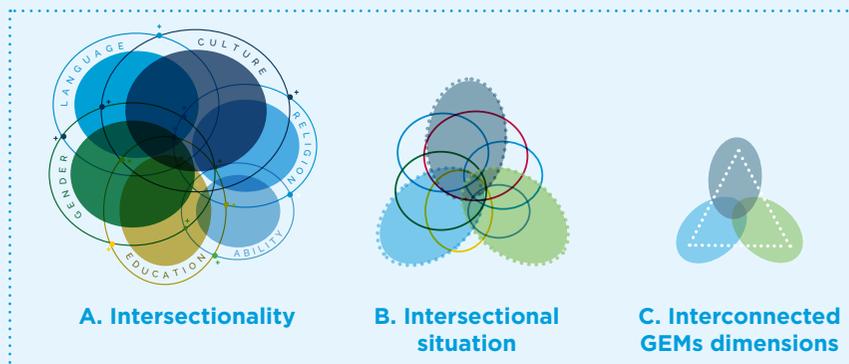


Figure A is a depiction of multiple social divisions, or categories, as rings that intersect.

Figure B is a visual representation of an intersectional situation where a set of socioecological divisions intersect. The salient GEMs dimensions are brought to the fore against the general intersectional situation.

Figure C has removed the background diagram, stripping bare the three GEMs dimensions. A symbolic triangle is overlaid to connect each dimension.

The ISE4GEMS approach can now be represented through **Figure D**. The complexity of the situation is represented inside a primary boundary.

Source: ISE4GEMS Guide

The evaluation also made deliberate efforts to identify and disaggregate groups of women and men in vulnerable situations, especially those who are typically excluded from political participation processes. This included youth, rural women, indigenous groups, religious minorities, men and women with disabilities or albinism and LGBTQI groups. Human rights-based evaluation methods and data collection processes were then tailored to mitigate potential barriers and sources of exclusion.³³ In this particular evaluation, the team made sure that they either travelled to where groups in vulnerable situations were, or facilitated the group’s travel to the evaluation team’s location. Evaluators also focused on creating ‘safe’ spaces to provide opportunities for group members to participate and contribute.

By using the ISE4GEMS approach, the evaluation found that UN Women programming in women’s political participation needs to strengthen consideration of and response to the interests and needs of women in vulnerable situations. Increased prioritization of communities in vulnerable situations and social norm change in broader institutional responses are needed to address structural barriers underpinning women’s under-representation in political life. The evaluation also proposed further exploration of the connection between women’s political participation and the environment given the disproportionate impact of climate change and environmental threats on women and the importance of women’s leadership in environmental governance and decision-making.

download



Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices (ISE4GEMS): A New Approach for the SDG Era.

2.4. Applying feminist approaches to identify levers for transformative change

Transforming unequal gender relations between women and men is a process of fundamentally altering the distribution of power at all levels of society and in both the public and private spheres.³⁴ UN Women was created to accelerate global progress on achieving internationally agreed commitments on GEWE in a coherent and synergistic manner. Part of the Entity's mandate is to lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality. Institutions, especially those traditionally dominated by men, tend to reproduce and be shaped by gender inequalities.

To assess the relevance, effectiveness and organizational efficiency of UN Women's coordination mandate, the [Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's contribution to UN system coordination on GEWE](#) (2016) drew on systems thinking and feminist approaches. Feminist approaches were used to evaluate how UN Women, through its coordination mandate, had attempted to 'open' the UN system in ways that enable transformative change in gender power relations within a hierarchical context.³⁵ These approaches are particularly relevant for examining issues of power, specifically in identifying where and with whom power resides and how it is exercised.³⁶ Table 4 provides examples of some of the key evaluation questions that a feminist approach explored under this evaluation.

Overall, the evaluation determined that gendered structures and organizational cultures have limited the extent to which gender equality principles can be understood, embraced and implemented by the UN system. Further, "a more purposeful approach to coordination" to influence gender power relations and results for GEWE both within the UN system and in country and regional settings is needed.³⁷ In addition to refining its corporate theory of change on coordination, the evaluation recommended greater strategic engagement by UN Women in existing system-wide mechanisms such as the Chief Executives Board, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Reviews and through the demands that Member States place on UN entities as a way of mobilizing the UN system around a transformative agenda for GEWE.³⁸

TABLE 4: Applying a feminist lens to key evaluation questions



- What aspects of the UN Women approach to UN coordination are considered innovative, particularly in the provision of feminist transformative leadership?
- To what extent is UN Women strategically positioned to influence the deep structures of UN system/agencies through its UN system coordination mandate?⁴⁰



- How do formal structures and informal mechanisms (inter-relationships and power dynamics) affect UN Women's ability to contribute to UN system coherence in each of the areas?
- How, and to what extent, has UN Women, through its UN-system coordination efforts, mobilized the UN system to open up spaces for rights holders' participation (e.g. feminist organizations, organizations of women with disabilities, human rights organizations) and influence on GEWE related decision-making)? What factors have affected this?



- To what extent has UN Women's coordination mandate contributed to addressing the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination?
- To what extent has UN Women promoted a more holistic and profound understanding of gender equality in its efforts to coordinate other entities in the UN system?

2.5 Participatory democratic evaluation and outcomes harvesting to empower rights-holders

The [Independent Global Programme Evaluation of UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality](#) (2009–2017) adopted a participatory democratic evaluation and outcomes harvesting approach to assess, *inter alia*, the achievements and overall performance of the Fund and to extract lessons for women's political and economic empowerment through working with civil society. This approach was in keeping with the Fund's feminist principles and its focus on and prioritization of reaching women and girls left furthest behind. Over the period 2009–2017, the Fund awarded US\$ 64 million to women-led civil society organizations in 80 countries through 121 grants in support of women's economic and political empowerment and the achievement of the SDGs.

Participatory democratic evaluation approaches engaged grantee communities (e.g. rights holders) in processes of dialogue and action⁴³ and empowered them to monitor and evaluate their own performance. Through self-reviews, grantees reflected on five key areas: (i) impact of their work; (ii) strengthening the capacity of women's civil society; (iii) connecting with others; (iv) transformational support; and (v) the leaving no one behind principle.⁴⁴ Instructions and video tutorials on completing self-reviews in writing, through audio, video, or recorded Skype interviews were made available in English, French and Spanish. Evaluators also convened online global discussions with women-led global civil society to explore emerging themes in more depth and to further leverage learning from what has and has not worked, particularly around reaching rights holders in vulnerable situations and ways to ensure that these voices are heard in national and inter-governmental spaces. [Outcomes harvesting](#) and [realist meta synthesis](#) were used to analyse grantee submissions.⁴⁵

According to the evaluation, grantee projects demonstrated comparative strength in translating high-level laws and policy commitments into social norms which improved the daily lives of women and girls and positioned them

as equal agents of change.⁴⁶ It noted three main contributions to changing social norms in households, communities, institutions and public discourse:⁴⁷

- Connecting elected local leaders with women's networks and representatives resulted in more gender-responsive and participatory governance structures and decision-making processes.
- Empowering women and building their capacity in skills, knowledge and confidence to participate effectively in decision-making processes led to an increased positive perception towards women's political and economic participation at the local level.
- Engaging men and local opinion leaders succeeded in overcoming resistance to women's participation and building champions to influence change in communities at the local level.

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Evaluating the SDGs: With a “no one left behind” lens through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations



Independent Global Programme Evaluation of UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality (2009–2017)

CHAPTER 3

Good practice in gender-responsive evaluation methods and tools

UNEG partner evaluations relied on mixed methods and used triangulation to validate the various sources of information. Mixed-method evaluations recognize the importance of listening to multiple voices, each with a different perspective on the programme(s) and processes being evaluated.⁴⁸ Typically, these methods have consisted of a desk/portfolio review; analysis of data-sets; interviews with key informants; focus groups with stakeholders; participant observation; and surveys (i.e. organizational or stakeholder/user). However, as this chapter highlights, recent evaluations have developed or employed more enhanced evaluation methods and tools to better capture the quality of gender equality results and the complexities of gender equality interventions related to power, voice, participation and access - essential dimensions of advancing human rights and gender equality.





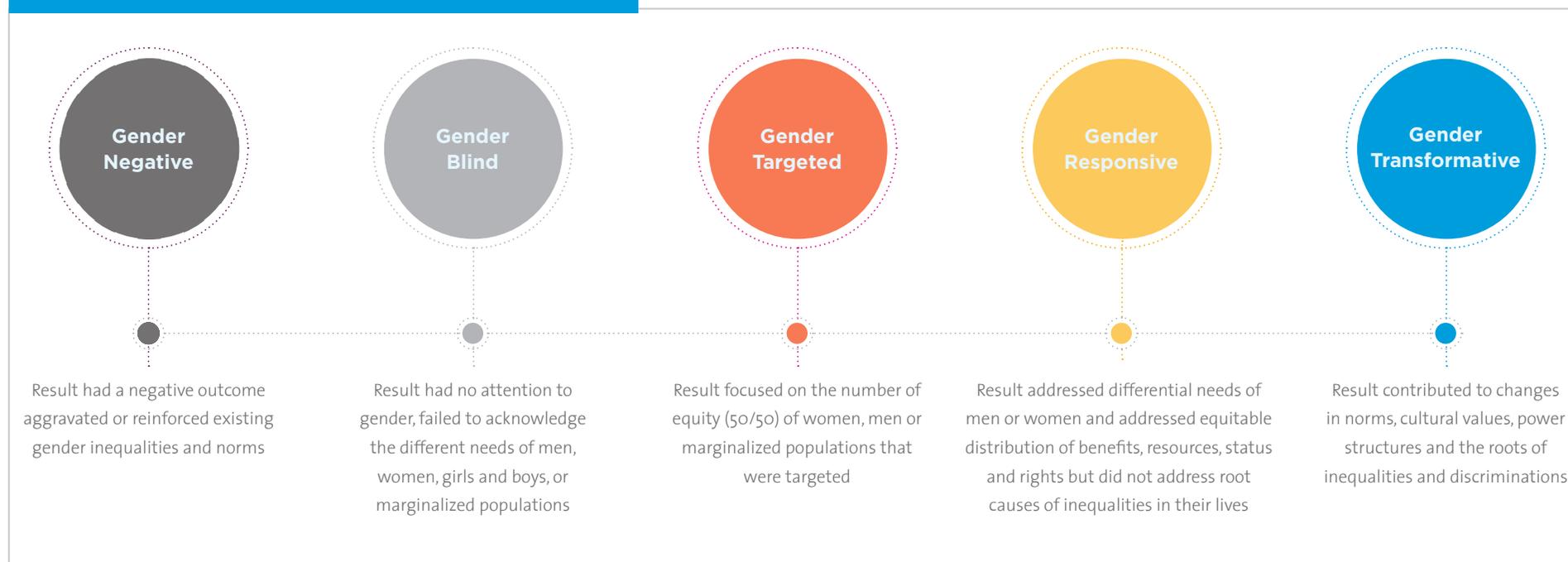
3.1. Developing a Gender Results Effectiveness Scale

In the [evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\) contribution to GEWE](#) (2015), the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office created a database of 260 gender equality results across different thematic areas: poverty; democratic governance; crisis prevention and recovery; and energy and environment and collected from 62 Assessment of Development Results and 14 country visits. Gender equality results included outputs and outcomes that were assessed to have contributed, either positively or negatively, to GEWE in UNDP interventions.

The effectiveness or quality of these results was measured against a common framework, the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES), developed by UNDP, using a five-point rating scale. The GRES helped make the quality issues that are often absent in accountability and reporting systems more visible.⁴⁹

As Figure 4 indicates, the ratings progressively move from *gender negative* to *gender transformative*, with gender transformative defined as results that contribute to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discrimination. The evaluation found that gender results were overwhelmingly gender-targeted across most thematic areas, meaning they were limited to counting the numbers of women and men involved. The only exception was in the thematic area of democratic governance where gender results were assessed as “gender-responsive” because they addressed the different needs of women and men. It is also worth noting that the evaluation documented instances of backlash against gender equality progress across all thematic areas.

FIGURE 4: Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES)⁵⁰

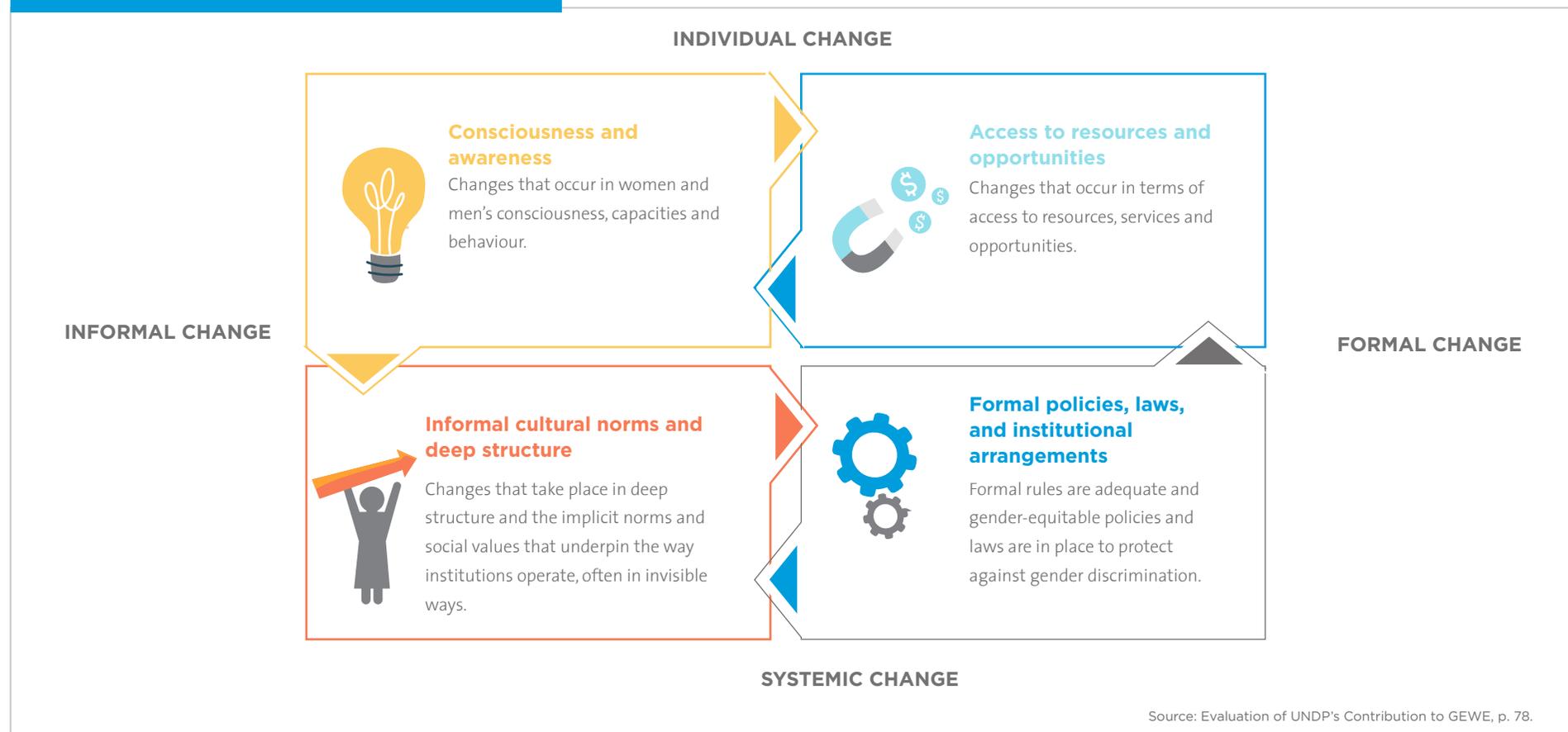


The UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) also applied the [Gender@work](#) framework to better understand the types of changes to which UNDP contributes.⁵¹ The framework identifies four, interlinked domains of change needed to make sustainable progress on GEWE: individual change, formal change, systemic change and informal change. Most UNDP outcomes contributed to improved access to resources and opportunities, changed laws and policies and

strengthened awareness. Very few outcomes resulted in systemic changes in informal cultural norms, which is essential for bringing about transformative change for women and girls.⁵²

Together, the use of these two frameworks not only produces a more comprehensive picture of the quality and type of gender results, but can also aid in mapping a strategy for achieving transformative change.

FIGURE 5: Gender@work quadrants of change



3.2. Leveraging the evidence base to achieve gender-transformative impact

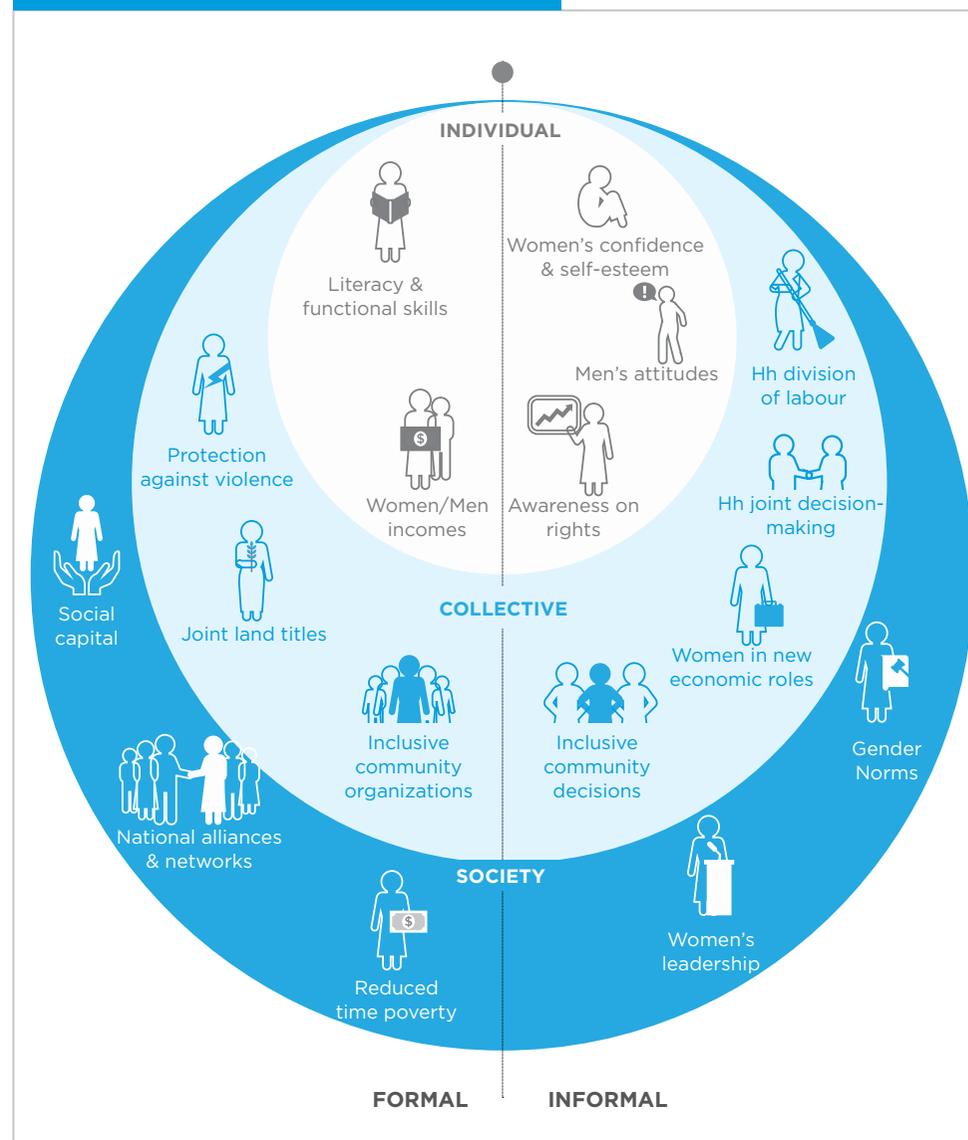
To improve gender equality outcomes in operations and align the level of ambition of future interventions with the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda, the IFAD Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) undertook a synthesis review of its evaluations to identify gender-transformative practices. Using a representative sample of 57 evaluations,⁵³ the evaluation synthesis review, [What works for gender equality and women's empowerment – a review of practices and results](#) (2017), identified 121 gender equality practices and classified them within IFAD's four pathways of transformational change for GEWE: (i) improved access to resources, services and opportunities; (ii) reduction in women's time poverty; (iii) creation of an enabling environment; and (iv) enhanced women and men's awareness and confidence. IOE further assessed these practices by distinguishing those which were found to be more effective for gender equality.

Figure 6 presents the most significant impacts of GEWE interventions. Based on the sample, the evaluation synthesis review found that IFAD interventions tended to support more significant changes at the individual, intra-household and/or community level.⁵⁴ Examples of these changes include:

- Addressing women's unpaid care and domestic work freed up their time, enabling them to engage in income generation activities and/or participate in public decision-making platforms.
- Protecting women from violence enabled them to claim public spaces, such as markets, which in some cases was among the enabling factors transforming women's lives.
- Enhancing women's literacy improved their access to information, education and training opportunities which led to more informed decision-making.
- Securing women's land rights increased their bargaining power within the household; improved their chances of accessing extension services and credit; and lessened their reliance on male partners or relatives for such assets.

Fewer examples of formal systemic change on laws, policies and government capacities were documented.⁵⁵

FIGURE 6: Spheres of GEWE Impact⁵⁶





3.3 Using outcome mapping to assess the contribution of partnerships to gender equality results

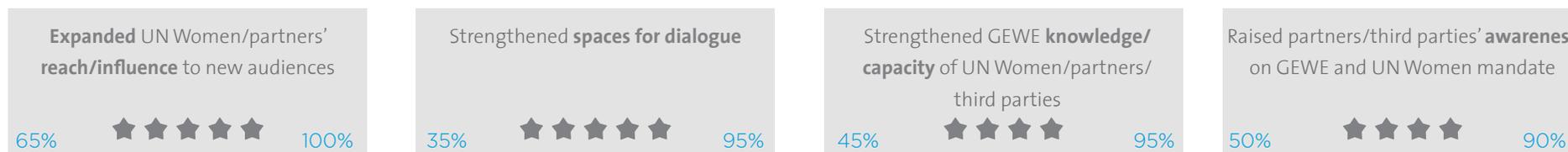
Outcome mapping was used to assess how UN Women’s strategic partnerships contributed to GEWE results (normative, operational and coordination) at global, regional and national levels, including the type of results achieved in the [UN Women Corporate Evaluation on Strategic Partnerships for GEWE](#) (2017).

As an evaluation approach, outcome mapping supported the development of a framework that pre-identified the key changes that UN Women and partners wanted to achieve through strategic partnerships along a continuum of expected results in the short (basic), medium (good) and long term (advanced).

The evaluation undertook a qualitative analysis of results from each of the 30 sampled strategic partnerships at country, regional and corporate level. As Table 5 indicates, “basic” expected results were met or partially met in nearly all cases; “good” results were at least partially achieved in the majority of cases; and “advanced” results were achieved to some extent in approximately half of the partnerships.⁵⁷ In general, the evaluation found that UN Women strategic partnerships have contributed significantly to advancing GEWE in the framework of the Strategic Plan. At their most effective, strategic partnerships have extended the reach, credibility and influence of UN Women and its partners.

TABLE 5: Detailed level of evidence for contributions to partnership results

BASIC OUTCOME RESULTS



GOOD OUTCOME RESULTS



ADVANCED OUTCOME RESULTS



SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE



3.4. Applying critical systems heuristics to understand relational power dynamics

Greater attention to the influence and power dynamics among diverse actors, both duty bearers and rights holders, is needed to gain more nuanced insights of their “stakes” (who gains? who loses?) in any given development intervention, especially those aimed at transforming gender relations. **Critical Systems Heuristics (CSH)** was used in the **Evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence, including harmful practices** (2018), to bring together multiple perspectives in order to reach a way of

framing value judgements.⁵⁸ Through CSH, the evaluation mapped and further disaggregated key categories of stakeholders by their human rights roles (rights holders, principal duty bearers and primary, secondary and tertiary duty bearers [see Table 6]). This is especially important for making the power dynamics between groups explicit. Disaggregating stakeholders by their roles can also better ensure that the voices and perspectives of women are heard.

TABLE 6: Stakeholder identification through critical systems heuristics⁵⁹

	TARGET POPULATIONS	DECISION MAKERS	PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE	WITNESSES
Rights holders	 Women across the life cycle, men across the life cycle, the Girl Child	 Local government, judiciary, lawyers, police	 National institutions	 Women across the life cycle, men across the life cycle, security forces, perpetrators
Principal duty bearers		 Legislature, central government		 National human rights commissions
Primary duty bearers	 Women across the life cycle, men across the life cycle	 Local government, judiciary, lawyers and police	 National institutions	 Women across the life cycle, men across the life cycle, security forces
Secondary & tertiary duty bearers		 UNFPA, UN system donors, implementing partners	 UN system civil society, HR supervisory bodies, knowledge communities, individual specialists/experts	 Civil society UNFPA, populist and reactionary politics/media/institutions, non-protection humanitarian clusters

3.5. Utilizing collaborative outcomes reporting to maximize rights holder participation

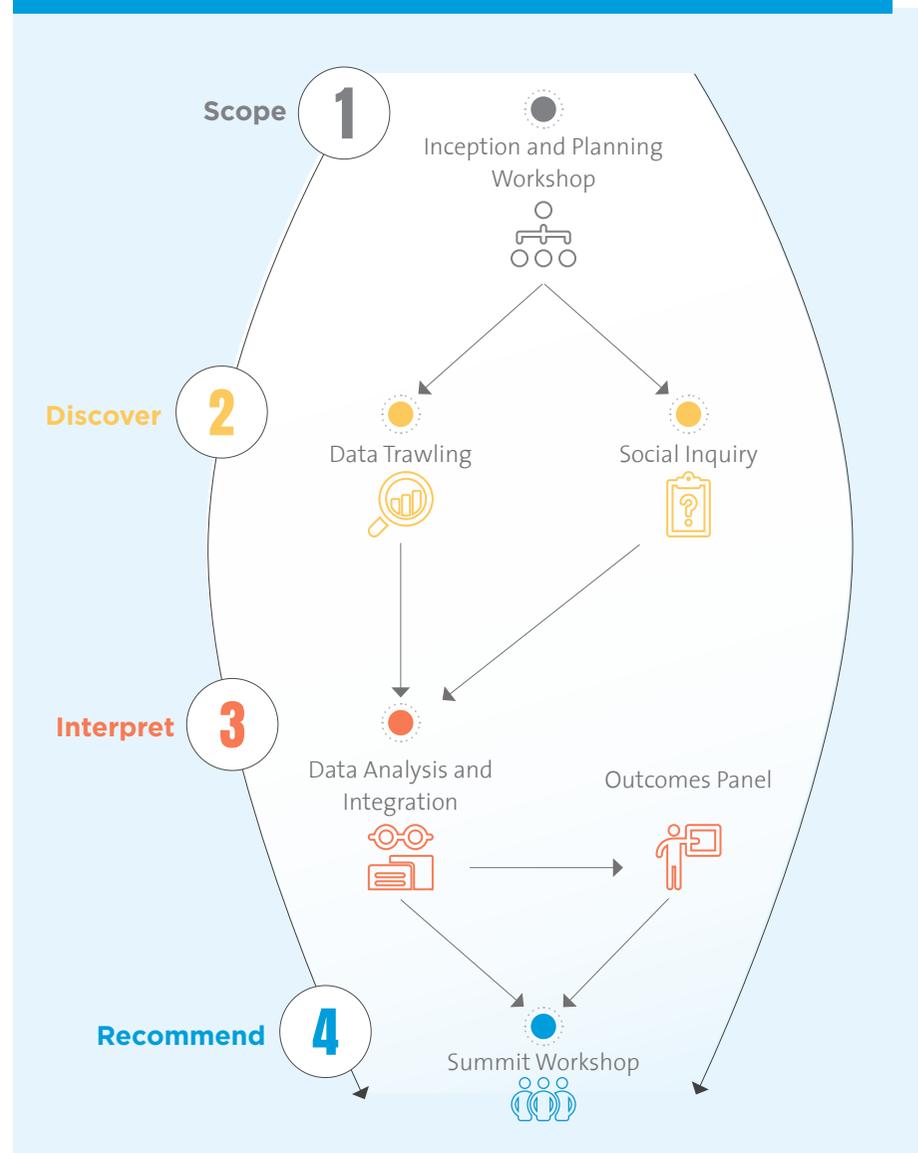
Collaborative Outcomes Reporting Technique (CORT)⁶⁰ is another method that prioritizes stakeholders and their ownership of the evaluation process, thereby lending itself to gender-responsive and human rights-based evaluations. Consistent with systems thinking, CORT is particularly appropriate for contexts where outcomes are diffuse and complex. In addition, its qualitative nature can be useful in revealing an intervention’s unexpected or unintended outcomes.

Through a series of process steps corresponding to four stages: *Scope*, *Discover*, *Interpret* and *Recommend*, CORT engages the active participation of rights holders and other key stakeholders to analyse evidence and generate a “performance story” of how a programme contributed to outcome(s) and/or impact(s) (see Figure 7).

In the **Country Portfolio Evaluation of UN Women’s Kyrgyzstan Strategic Note** (2017), rights holders, such as community and youth leaders, were empowered as data collectors and interpreters as well as facilitators of community-level discussions with programme beneficiaries.⁶¹ Engaging communities as experts and creating participatory processes for them to conduct their own analysis and evaluation creates systemic changes in power relations within communities.⁶²

Stakeholders also participated in the CORT Participatory Summit, where the performance story was reviewed and validated with UN Women CO staff, and findings were developed jointly.

FIGURE 7: Collaborative Outcomes Reporting Technique (CORT)





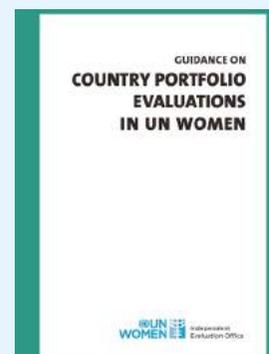
3.6 Employing contribution analysis to assess contributions to gender equality outcomes

UN Women’s Country Portfolio Evaluations rely on contribution analysis to respond to the overarching evaluation question of: How well is UN Women strategically positioned at country level to create results for GEWE?⁶³ Contribution analysis in the context of gender-responsive evaluations helps determine the influence that an intervention, or a portfolio of interventions, has made to particular gender equality outcomes in one or across different thematic areas.⁶⁴ As gender equality results are seldom attributable to one organization, contribution analysis also reduces uncertainty about UN Women’s contribution to outcome-level changes.

As with CORT, the **performance story** is at the heart of contribution analysis. A performance story assembles the evidence generated by different evaluation methods and documents why and through what mechanisms policy/programme

interventions influenced or contributed to observed outcomes, including other internal and external factors.⁶⁵ In putting together the performance story, UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluations generate evidence tables (see Table 7) which are then mapped to a contribution analysis table (see Table 8) plotting the relative and plausible degree of UN Women’s contribution. The performance story is then strengthened through multiple and participatory validation processes with rights holders and duty bearers. These tools have helped standardize and enhance the methodological and analytical rigour of Country Portfolio Evaluations and facilitate comparison across evaluation reports.⁶⁶

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Guidance on Country Portfolio Evaluations in UN Women



Assessing Gender Equality Results at Country Level: The Experience with UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluations in Eastern and Southern Africa



TABLE 7: Evidence table – Country Portfolio Evaluations

 EVALUATION QUESTIONS / SUBQUESTIONS	 A. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS	 B. COUNTRY VISITS, INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS	 OVERALL FINDING (ON BALANCE OF EVIDENCE)
1. On Relevance			
2. On Effectiveness			
3. On Efficiency			
4. On Sustainability			
5. On Human Rights and Gender Equality			

TABLE 8: Contribution analysis table

Changes found by the evaluation	Link to UN Women (performance story)	Other contributing factors	Likely contribution of other factors	Plausible contribution of UN Women to this change	Summary of evidence	Gender and human rights implications

CHAPTER 4

Impact Evaluations: What works for gender equality, women and girls?

Given the importance of determining causality in terms of upscaling interventions to realize the achievement of SDG-related targets and goals, this chapter distils three impact evaluations and highlights some of the ways in which they have advanced knowledge on what works, and under what circumstances, for GEWE. Two of the studies rely on experimental/quasi-experimental designs and the use of counterfactuals or comparison groups; while the third study implements a non-experimental, qualitative impact evaluation approach that relies on a “before-after” of the intervention itself.





Impact evaluations

The majority of UN system evaluations tend to focus on the achievement or contribution to outputs, and short and medium-term outcomes. Few evaluations assess or measure the impact criterion of the OECD-DAC standard evaluation criteria, in part because impact evaluations are concerned with attribution (i.e. cause and effect chains) to show if an intervention has worked primarily through the establishment of a counterfactual (“what would have happened in the absence of the intervention(s)?”).

Impact evaluations seek to address⁶⁷ the following questions:



Did the intervention make a difference?



What specific part of this difference can be attributed to the project?



How was the difference made?



Can the intervention be expected to produce similar results elsewhere?

4.1. What works to reduce child marriage and adolescent pregnancy

In partnership with the International Institute for Impact Evaluation (3ie) and leading universities, UNICEF is undertaking an impact evaluation of the **UNICEF–IKEA Foundation Programme on Improving Adolescent Lives in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan** to address the knowledge gap on what works to reduce child marriage in order to scale up effective actions.⁶⁸

Each year, 12 million girls are married before the age of 18.⁶⁹ Child marriage is deeply rooted in gender inequality; it denies girls their educational and economic rights and opportunities, further entrapping them and their families in intergenerational cycles of poverty.

The impact evaluation explored if and how increasing the likelihood of secondary school enrolment for adolescent girls could reduce the prevalence of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. Embedded within the programme design and integrating an equity and gender equality focus, the impact evaluation applied an experimental approach in India and Pakistan, where treatment and control districts were randomly selected; and a quasi-experimental design in Afghanistan, where propensity score matching and difference-in-difference analysis were used to compare changes over time in districts where the intervention had been implemented.

It is anticipated that the results of the impact evaluation will determine the effectiveness of introducing a basic package of interventions on adolescent lives and, the impact, positive and negative, on different population groups, disaggregated by sex and other factors including ethnicity, religion, income and language. The impact evaluation is also integrating supplementary qualitative analysis to better understand why and how approaches work in different contexts.



4.2 What works to promote women's economic empowerment

To increase knowledge on improving women's economic empowerment and enterprise development, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO) designed a randomized control trial (RCT) to measure the causal impact of the ILO Gender and Entrepreneurship Together (GET) Ahead training programme on the profitability, growth and survival of female-owned businesses. The study, [Unpacking the determinants of entrepreneurship development and economic empowerment for women in Kenya](#) (2019),⁷⁰ relied on a sample of 3,537 firms set in 157 rural markets in four counties in Kenya and included a women's economic empowerment framework to examine broader aspects of women's agency, control over resources and livelihoods.

The experimental design followed a two-stage randomization process, first randomizing at village/market level and then randomizing the training to individuals within markets in the treatment group. To avoid the perception of denying services to women in need, the study conducted the randomization process transparently so that it appeared as a fair allocation of the limited available training spots. Eighteen months after the training, a mentoring intervention

was randomly assigned to 446 women who had undergone the training and whose businesses were still in operation to test whether additional support strengthened the impact of training on intended outcomes. Four rounds of follow-up surveys were conducted to measure outcomes approximately one year and three years after the training.

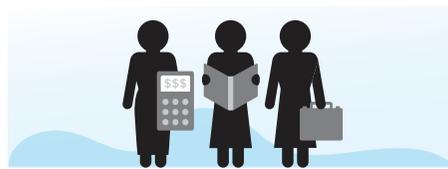
After three years, the study found that women who received training earned higher profits, were more likely to have surviving businesses, and enjoyed improved mental health and subjective well-being. It also found that mentoring did not result in a significantly different impact than training alone. In terms of programme implications, the study called on implementers to enhance their interventions by: (a) integrating gender perspectives and empowering women to participate in training opportunities; (b) targeting the development of an array of skills in a participatory manner; and (c) paying further attention to mechanisms to improve business survival, sales and profits as key triggers of individual well-being.⁷¹

Improving women's economic empowerment and enterprise development



Training opportunities

Integrating gender perspectives and empowering women to participate in training opportunities



Participation

Targeting the development of an array of skills in a participatory manner



Individual well-being

Paying further attention to mechanisms to improve business survival, sales and profits as key triggers of individual well-being



4.3. What works to reduce intimate partner violence against women

In 2016, Promundo, a global consortium that works with men and boys to transform harmful gender norms and unequal power dynamics in support of gender equality, [Living Peace](#) conducted an [impact evaluation](#) of a pilot intervention, focused on helping male partners of women survivors of conflict-related rape and intimate partner violence in eastern DRC to cope with trauma; reconstruct their identities in non-violent, gender-transformative ways; and reduce the stigma and social exclusion of women survivors. The study evaluated Living Peace's theory of change three years after the intervention had been implemented.

Through a qualitative time-series design, the impact evaluation assessed if changes in participants' behaviours and attitudes had been sustained after the end of the intervention; and whether those changes had a *radiating effect* on family and community members as well as on community-level norms. Two rounds of focus groups and in-depth individual interviews were held with male participants, their families and communities. The vast majority of male participants reported that Living Peace had helped them to adopt more equitable, non-violent attitudes and behaviours and had positively impacted their intimate and family relationships. Moreover, these changes continued to be sustained three years after the intervention.

As no studies to date have considered men's experiences with the conflict-related rape of their wives or female partners, the findings of this impact evaluation are relevant for:

- primary prevention in conflict and post-conflict settings;
- integrated interventions that include primary and secondary prevention together with survivor support; and
- primary prevention in non-conflict settings, in terms of how to incorporate an understanding of men's traumatic experiences into intimate partner violence prevention.⁷²

Randomized control trials (RCTs)

Experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluations, such as randomized control trials (RCTs) in the context of development evaluations, including gender-responsive evaluations, are not without controversy or challenges.

First and foremost, their experimental nature raises a set of ethical issues and concerns that must be mitigated transparently at the outset, especially for control group participants that do not receive any intervention.

Second, RCTs focus on a small number of outcomes and do not give adequate attention to the process of implementation or the context in which programmes are designed, implemented and evaluated.*

Third, because of their narrow focus, RCTs may not be as inclusive of multiple voices and diverse perspectives that are a hallmark of human rights and gender-responsive evaluations.

Finally, they are extremely expensive and require a high level of expertise.**

As with other evaluation design choices, the key evaluation questions will influence and determine the appropriate evaluation approach or combination of approaches used.

*Bamberger, Michael, Segone, Marco and Tateossian, Florencia (2016). Evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals: With a "no one left behind lens through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations. UN Women, p. 20.

**Ibid., p. 65.



CHAPTER 5

Spotlighting gender-responsive country-led evaluations



In recent years, UN Women has supported national mechanisms for gender equality in countries such as Colombia, Jordan, Nepal and Serbia to lead and undertake evaluations on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment National Actions Plans (NAPs), including on women, peace and security. These mechanisms further inform national priorities on gender equality including strengthening institutional and coordination arrangements for delivering on gender equality results. This is in line with UN system efforts to enhance national evaluation capacity for the follow up and review of national-level SDG progress, which the 2030 Agenda requires is rigorous and evidence-based.

NAPs on GEWE translate and localize global normative commitments, such as the BPfA and women’s human rights norms, into national strategies and plans. In the country-led, gender-responsive evaluations reviewed, all but one adopted a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the progress made by governments and key partners on implementation of NAPs and to provide recommendations for strengthening existing plans of action or inform the development of successor strategies. Evaluation processes in each country engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders – both rights holders and duty bearers – in a participatory, consultative way throughout, actively involving line ministries, civil society and other national stakeholders as well as UN COs and donor agencies.

While each NAP responds to gender inequalities specific to each national context, a review of the four, gender-responsive country-led evaluations revealed some common findings and lessons, especially around the mechanisms and processes needed to support more effective implementation and sustainability of such strategies (see Table 9).

As nationally-driven processes, gender-responsive, country-led evaluations can foster greater national ownership of and accountability for realizing commitments to gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls as well as increase the likelihood that evaluative evidence will be used to inform and enhance gender-responsive policymaking across all sectors and in national reporting processes.⁷³ By building an evidence base on the complex social or systemic mechanisms that exclude different groups of women and girls from having equal access to resources, services, labour markets/economic opportunities or participation in political or public decision-making, gender-responsive, country-led evaluations can drive more substantive progress on achieving GEWE.

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Briefing - Equity-focused, gender-responsive evidence: a blind spot in VNR reporting

A review of 46 voluntary national reports (VNR) submitted to the 2018 High-Level Political Forum found a glaring gap, across the board, in the use and incorporation of evaluative evidence in national reporting of progress and challenges. Evaluation evidence related to gender equality was no exception.



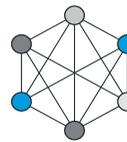
TABLE 9a:

Gender-responsive country-led evaluations - summary of common findings

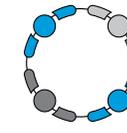
What worked



Addressing issues of **intersectionality** within the evaluation process was critical for analysing and understanding how class, race, age or religion intersect with gender and determine different levels of inequality (Serbia, Colombia).

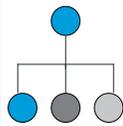


Addressing gender equality challenges through a combination of different, **cross-sectoral interventions** was found to be more effective for addressing root causes of gender inequality.



Working through **multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms** created important synergies by mobilizing and leveraging the collective knowledge, expertise and financial resources of both national and international development actors in the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of gender equality interventions (Colombia, Nepal, Serbia).

What did not work



While there was broad commitment to and recognition of GEWE, a **lack of clarity among line ministries** of their role in contributing to the implementation of national gender equality strategies resulted in **no earmarked human and financial resources** from their budgets (Jordan, Serbia).



Inadequate resource allocations and chronic underfunding hampered both the effective implementation and potential impact of NAPs (Colombia, Jordan, Serbia).



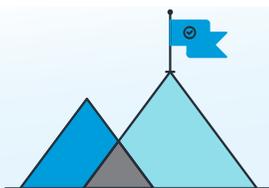
Small-scale and fragmented interventions do not lend themselves to facilitating the transformative change needed to eliminate deeply entrenched social and structural barriers to gender equality.



Weak or inadequate (inter and intra) **institutional mechanisms** of coordination linking national and local levels affected both implementation and monitoring of progress (Colombia, Jordan, Serbia). In Colombia, one of the least advanced areas of progress related to the transversalization of the gender approach into planning and budgeting processes: only 41.9 per cent of the entities had incorporated the gender approach into their planning and budgeting processes.

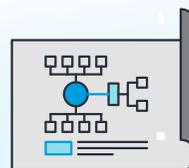


TABLE 9b: Summary of lessons learned



National strategies

To support greater institutionalization and sustainability, NAPs need to be aligned not only with international and regional gender equality norms but even more so with national and sectoral strategies and priorities. Where alignment is lacking, there is a risk that gender equality priorities will be marginalized or over-looked in policy making spaces.



Theory of change

Developing a theory of change for GEWE through participatory processes provides a shared and comprehensive framework to support coherent programming, effective implementation and resource mobilization at national/local levels. At the same time, the theory of change should be sufficiently flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances.



M&E frameworks

NAPs must be underpinned by implementation and M&E frameworks that assign clear roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and be costed and adequately financed.



Disaggregated data

Addressing multiple and intersecting causes of discrimination and exclusion remains constrained by the lack or absence of disaggregated data on different groups in vulnerable situations. The Evaluation of the NAP for Gender Equality (2016-2018) in Serbia found that data was missing for key groups of women (i.e. female-headed households, women in prisons, migrant women) on key dimensions, including poverty, labour force participation and political participation.



Partnerships

Ensuring a greater role for partnerships with civil society, especially women's organizations, in priority-setting as well as the design, implementation and M&E of NAPs can enhance national accountability for achieving GEWE.



Funding

By shifting to more multi-year funding, programme approaches can support the realization of tangible, social change and sustainable impact.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

As many of the evaluations in this review underscore, if any transformative changes were evidenced, they occurred at the level of the individual, household or in communities. Evaluations must move further upstream to inform and transform strategies, policies and systems through robust evidence and innovation.

Gender-responsive evaluations can support the imperative shift to more systemic, complexity-responsive and adaptive evaluations needed to bring about the bold and transformative changes for all as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.





This review has found a more consistent focus on mainstreaming gender equality and human rights in UN entity evaluations. The most common approach, especially in project-level evaluations, is the incorporation of gender equality and human rights as a stand-alone criterion or mainstreamed across the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Other UN entities used theory-based approaches together with one, or a combination of gender analytical frameworks. This approach facilitated a more nuanced assessment of the type and quality of the gender equality results achieved. Some entities have relied on existing gender analytical frameworks while others have devised their own rating scales or typologies based on a continuum of progress to interpret the quality of results.

In thematic and/or country portfolio evaluations, especially of interventions targeted at women and girls, there was greater evidence of UN entities using a mix of more diverse, gender-responsive evaluation approaches, methods and tools which placed more explicit emphasis on inclusion, participation and non-discrimination. These approaches, methods and tools demonstrated their advantages in better capturing the quality of gender equality results and issues of power and voice between and among rights holders and duty bearers, especially in relation to groups in vulnerable situations. These evaluations also marked a shift towards system-level approaches, including those developed by UN Women, with a greater focus on and acknowledgement of inter-relationships, multiple perspectives and boundaries. While the use of impact evaluations is varied in the UN system,⁷⁴ they hold the promise of generating more rigorous evidence on gender equality approaches to take to scale, especially in areas where structural barriers or catalysing social norm and behaviour change need to be addressed.

Fundamentally, assessing and measuring progress towards the achievement of GEWE needs to be understood as an inherently political, complex, non-linear and unpredictable process. Gender inequality and discriminatory norms are rooted in entrenched systems of unequal social/cultural, economic and political power relations between women and men. There is no one cause of gender inequality nor a single solution. As the BPfA so presciently saw twenty-five years ago, and

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes by having a stand-alone gender equality goal as well as gender-related targets mainstreamed across other goal areas, achieving transformative change for women and girls hinges on addressing the 12 critical areas of concern from multiple points in integrated and synergistic ways and in coordination with a range of development actors, from the local to the global level.

However, a preponderant focus on project or programme-level evaluations is insufficient to bring about far-reaching change on the scale needed to realize the SDGs. As many of the evaluations in this review underscore, if any transformative changes were evidenced, they occurred at the level of the individual, household or in communities. Evaluations must move further upstream to inform and transform strategies, policies and systems through robust evidence and innovation. Gender-responsive evaluations can support the imperative shift to more systemic, complexity-responsive and adaptive evaluations needed to bring about the bold and transformative changes for all as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this context, supporting gender-responsive, country-led evaluations can not only foster greater national ownership of and accountability for realizing commitments to GEWE, but also increase the likelihood that evaluative evidence will be used to inform and enhance gender-responsive policymaking across all sectors. By elucidating context and country-specific systems of power that entrench discriminatory gender norms, both formal and informal; engaging duty bearers and rights holders, including those directly impacted by rights violations; and by generating strategic evidence, knowledge and learning, gender-responsive evaluations can facilitate more comprehensive analyses of the pathways of change at multiple levels to crucially direct policies and investments towards achieving gender equality and leaving no woman or girl behind.



Assessing gender-responsiveness of evaluations

- Evaluation includes a separate criterion on gender equality and human rights.
- Gender equality is considered under the standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.
- Evaluation questions/reports address how GEWE has been integrated into the design, planning, implementation of interventions as well as the results achieved.
- Evaluation questions address issues of “intersectionality”- how class, race, caste, age, or religion intersect with gender.
- Evaluation includes an analysis of extent to which internationally and nationally agreed norms on gender equality (i.e. CEDAW, SDGs, BPfA) are advanced by the policy/programme/project.
- Evaluation identifies duty bearers and rights holders (particularly women and other groups subject to discrimination) as primary users of the evaluation and indicates how they are to be involved in the evaluation process.
- Evaluation adopts a mixed-methods approach, appropriate to evaluating GEWE considerations.
- Evaluation data collection methods, including sampling frame and tools specify how gender equality issues are integrated and ensure data collected is disaggregated by sex.
- Evaluation uses participatory approaches/methods to engage a diversity of stakeholders. For example, good practices would entail measures put in place by the evaluation to maximize inclusion/participation of women and the most marginalized and discriminated against groups in the evaluation process, including addressing potential barriers to participation.
- Evaluation considers the gender mainstreaming approach of policy/programme/project. For example, is it guided by organizational/system-wide objectives on GEWE (i.e. UN-SWAP/Entity’s Gender Policy)?
- Evaluation examines the institutional requirements needed to effectively support gender mainstreaming in a given policy/programme/project (relevant to country programme evaluations/country-led evaluations/or evaluations of corporate gender policies?).
- Evaluation findings include data analysis/data sources that explicitly and transparently triangulate the voices of different social role groups, and/or disaggregate quantitative data, where applicable, to ensure inclusion, accuracy and credibility.
- Evaluation findings highlight innovative approaches to GEWE.
- Evaluation describes/documents unanticipated or unintended effects of the intervention on human rights and gender equality.
- Evaluation examines and documents any gender transformative impacts/changes of the policy/programme/project in terms of power relations, social/gender norms, structural inequalities.
- Evaluation recommendations take into account gender considerations. For example, does the evaluation report provide specific recommendations addressing GEWE issues and priorities for action to improve GEWE intervention or future initiatives in this area?



Endnotes

- 1 Liz Ford. [“Not one single country set to achieve gender equality by 2030.”](#) The Guardian. June 3, 2019.
- 2 (Ibid., p. 5)
- 3 [UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation](#), pg.4
- 4 (Ibid., p. 5)
- 5 Fifteen UNEG partners responded to the Call.
- 6 See United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#). New York: UNEG. Human rights and gender equality are considered a norm (Norm 8 on human rights and gender equality) and a standard (Standard 4.7, “The evaluation design should include considerations of the extent to which the United Nations system’s commitment to the human rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming strategy was incorporated in the design of the evaluation subject.”)
- 7 Ibid., pg. 74
- 8 Ibid., pg. 45
- 9 Ibid., pg. 49
- 10 Ibid., pgs. 77 - 80
- 11 Ibid., pgs. 60-65
- 12 Ibid., pgs. 81-85
- 13 Ibid., pg. 74
- 14 Patton (2008): Utilization-focused checklist, <www.wmich.edu/evalctr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UFE.pdf>.
- 15 https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/appreciative_inquiry
- 16 K.A. Sielbeck-Bowen, S. Brisolara, D. Seigart, C. Tischler and E. Whitmore, ‘Beginning the Conversation’, *New Directions for Evaluation* 96, 2002, pp. 109-113.
- 17 David M. Fetterman, and Abraham Wandersman (eds), *Empowerment Evaluation Principles in Practice*, Guilford Press, 2005.
- 18 Rick Davies and Jess Dart, ‘The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use’, United Kingdom and Australia, April 2005, <www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>
- 19 Theory based approaches to evaluation use an explicit theory of change to draw conclusions about whether and how an intervention contributed to observed results. In addition to explaining how an intervention is expected to produce results, a theory of change also outlines the mechanisms of change, as well as the assumptions, risks and context that support or hinder the theory from being manifested as observed outcomes. Source: Government of Canada: Theory-based Approaches to Evaluation: Concepts and Practices. See also: <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/centre-excellence-evaluation/theory-based-approaches-evaluation-concepts-practices.html>
- 20 By Sara Hlupekile Longwe; http://awidme.pbworks.com/w/page/36322701/Women's_20Empowerment_20Framework
- 21 See http://awidme.pbworks.com/w/page/36321576/Gender_20Roles_20Framework
- 22 See http://awidme.pbworks.com/w/page/36323005/Social_20Relations_20Approach
- 23 [Guidance on Country Portfolio Evaluations in UN Women](#), 2016.
- 24 The WEAI was launched by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and USAID’s Feed the Future in 2012.
- 25 Final evaluation of the Kyrgyzstan Joint UN Women/ FAO/ IFAD/ WFP Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women, pgs 52-53.
- 26 Gender Evaluation of the Work of the Department of Global Communications: Final Report, pg. 6
- 27 Ibid., pgs. 10-18.
- 28 Stephens, A., Lewis, E.D. and Reddy, S. M. 2018. *Inclusive Systemic Evaluation (ISE-4GEMs): A New Approach for the SDG Era*. New York: UN Women.
- 29 Marginalization is a social phenomenon that excludes and discriminates against minority or subgroups; it is a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in structural inequalities.
- 30 Bob Williams and Sjon van’t Hof. (2014). *Wicked Solutions: A Systems Approach to Complex Problems*. Pgs 8-9.
- 31 Stephens, A., Lewis, E.D. and Reddy, S. M. 2018. *Inclusive Systemic Evaluation (ISE-4GEMs): A New Approach for the SDG Era*. New York: UN Women; pgs. 21.
- 32 UN Women. 2018. *Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to Women’s Political Participation and Leadership: Annexes*, pg. 14.
- 33 Stephens, A., Lewis, E.D. and Reddy, S. M. 2018. *Inclusive Systemic Evaluation (ISE-4GEMs): A New Approach for the SDG Era*. New York: UN Women.
- 34 For more information, see <https://www.dlprog.org/opinions/gender-and-power-six-links-and-one-big-opportunity>
- 35 [Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to UN system coordination on GEWE](#). p. 10.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to UN system coordination on



- GEWE, p. 13.
- 38 Ibid., pg. 116.
 - 39 [Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to UN system coordination on GEWE. Volume II \(Appendices\)](#), pgs. 23-25.
 - 40 Ways in which feminist transformative leadership may be exercised include: using consultation, participation and consensus-building as modalities to exercise leadership; building consensus on the value of gender equality and gender justice; creating spaces for other or new leaders to emerge; influencing agendas even without the formal power or authority to do so; valuing collective and multi-layered leadership as opposed to individual leadership; valuing relationship-building. For more information, see: <https://justassociates.org/sites/justassociates.org/files/feminist-leadership-clearing-conceptual-cloud-srilatha-batliwala.pdf>
 - 41 See [Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to UN system coordination on GEWE. Volume II \(Appendices\)](#), pg. 36.
 - 42 Ibid., pgs 40.
 - 43 Ibid., p. 30.
 - 44 See Evaluation of the Fund for Gender Equality: Annexes.
 - 45 Outcomes Harvesting is an evaluation approach in which evaluators, grant makers, and/or programme managers and staff identify, formulate, verify, analyse and interpret 'outcomes' in programming contexts where relations of cause and effect are not fully understood. For more information, see: https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting
 - 46 Evaluation of the Fund for Gender Equality, p. 71
 - 47 Ibid., p. 41
 - 48 Bamberger, Michael, Segone, Marco and Tateossian, Florencia (2016). [Evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals: With a "no one left behind" lens through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations](#). UN Women, p. 25.
 - 49 IEO/UNDP. UNDP's Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2008–2013): Analytical Frameworks. Powerpoint presentation delivered at UNEG Evaluation Practice Exchange, April 2016.
 - 50 UNDP. (2015) Evaluation of UNDP's Contribution to GEWE: Illustrated Summary, p. 8
 - 51 The Gender@Work framework has been developed by Gender@Work, an international, feminist knowledge network that works to end discrimination against women and build cultures of change. For additional information, see: <https://genderatwork.org>.
 - 52 IEO/UNDP. UNDP's Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2008–2013): Analytical Frameworks. Powerpoint presentation delivered at UNEG Evaluation Practice Exchange, April 2016.
 - 53 These evaluations were selected through a five-step process, which included initial screening of the available evidence as a first step. For additional information, see: IFAD. 2017. What works for gender equality and women's empowerment – a review of practices and results. Evaluation Synthesis, p. 3.
 - 54 IFAD. 2017. What works for gender equality and women's empowerment – a review of practices and results. Evaluation Synthesis, pgs. 37-42.
 - 55 Ibid, p. 42.
 - 56 Ibid., p. 43.
 - 57 UN Women. (2017) [Corporate Evaluation on Strategic Partnerships on GEWE](#).
 - 58 Bamberger, Michael, Segone, Marco and Tateossian, Florencia (2016). [Evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals: With a "no one left behind" lens through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations](#). UN Women, p. 20.
 - 59 UNFPA. 2018. Evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention of, response to and elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices (2012-2017). Volume II, p. 37.
 - 60 Collaborative Outcome Reporting was developed by Jess Dart. It combines contribution analysis and multiple lines and levels of evidence, mapping existing data and additional data against the programme logic to produce a performance story. See also: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/cort>.
 - 61 [UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation](#) – Kyrgyzstan, pg. 36.
 - 62 Pittman, Alexandra (2014). [Fast-forwarding Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Reflections on Measuring Change for UNDP's Thematic Evaluation on Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality](#) (2008-2013). UNDP Occasional Series Paper, p. 32.
 - 63 See Country Portfolio Evaluations of [Kyrgyzstan](#) (2017), [Malawi](#) (2017), [Palestine](#) (2017), [South Sudan](#) (2018)
 - 64 Contribution analysis is heavily influenced by work on outcomes mapping, outcomes harvesting and collaborative outcomes reporting technique (CORT). [UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation – Kyrgyzstan](#), Pgs 45-46.
 - 65 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation Guidance, pg. 45.
 - 66 Caspar Merkle. (2019) [Assessing Gender Equality Results at Country Level: The Experience with UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluations in Eastern and Southern Africa](#). eVALUation Matters, First Quarter, pg. 10.
 - 67 Ibid., p. 9.
 - 68 UNICEF. Impact evaluations of the UNICEF-IKEA Foundation programme on Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan: Integrating an equity and gender equality focus ex-ante in programme and evaluation design. Powerpoint



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- 70 David McKenzie, Susana Puerto, Frank Odhiambo. Unpacking the determinants of entrepreneurship development and economic empowerment for women in Kenya. 3ie Impact Evaluation Report 95, 2019. See also: <https://www.3ieimpact.org/evidence-hub/publications/impact-evaluations/unpacking-determinants-entrepreneurship-development>
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