



INSIGHTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY:
A META-SYNTHESIS OF UN WOMEN EVALUATIONS



Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women (IEAS)

Director of IEAS: **Lisa Sutton**

Chief of IES: **Inga Sniukaite**

Report lead: **Tara Kaul**

Report authors: **Tara Kaul, Christina Sollito**

Research Assistance: **Lou Akusua De Giuli**

Design: **Yamrote Alemu Haileselassie**

Copy editor: **Catherine Simes**

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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS)

Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

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ACRONYMS

AC	Americas and the Caribbean
AS	Arab States
AP	Asia and the Pacific
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ESA	East and Southern Africa
GATE	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LEAP	UN Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access, and Protection in Crisis Response Flagship Program
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OEEF	Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency
RMS	Results Management System
RBM	Results-Based Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCA	West and Central Africa
WFP	Women, Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This meta-synthesis brings together evidence on UN Women's organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs. In alignment with UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2022, the synthesis focusses on issues related to UN coordination efforts, strategic partnerships, knowledge management, innovation, results-based management, resource mobilization, streamlining business processes and improvements in the management of financial and human resources. In addition to highlighting progress, the synthesis captures commonly identified drivers of change in the form of good practices, innovations and impediments.

The purpose of this synthesis is to contribute to UN Women's knowledge base and learning on the organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs of the Strategic Plan. The findings are also intended to inform the forthcoming evaluation of Flagship Programme Initiatives and thematic priorities, and other corporate processes.

Given the specialized focus of this synthesis, a wide sample of evaluations was selected to provide sufficient context and capture any changes in approach during the current Strategic Plan period. The scope of this synthesis covers all evaluations conducted by UN Women between 2018 and 2019, as well as corporate evaluations from 2017. Evaluations with a GERAAS rating of fair and above were included, bringing the total sample to 68 reports.

Approach and methodology

This meta-synthesis is theory-based and used an analytical framework to map the pathways of progress on organizational effectiveness and efficiency. It began by constructing a theory of implementation describing the approach of UN Women using elements from the Strategic Plan and the accompanying Integrated Results and Resources Framework (see annex 2). This was then used to design a coding structure to analyse and map evaluation evidence.

68
evaluations
2017-2019

Scope

53 country-level evaluations

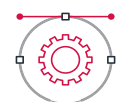
9 global evaluations

6 regional evaluations

Methodology



- Combination of quantitative and qualitative methods
- Coding structure to analyse and map evaluation evidence



- Theory-based analytical framework
- Reconstructed theory of implementation

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to identify emerging trends and highlight good practices and impediments. The quantitative analysis assessed the strength of evidence on emerging insights and lessons by mapping relative frequencies and geographic coverage. The qualitative analysis used a structured synthesis with a view to refining trends, identifying common lessons and highlighting any innovative approaches to achieving the outputs. Given the focus on organizational effectiveness and efficiency, the analysis and findings were organized around the related four outputs of the UN Women Strategic Plan.

Key Insights

OUTPUT 1

Enhanced coordination, coherence, and accountability of the UN System for commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment

UN Women plays a pivotal role in the United Nations system to enhance coherence on issues related to gender mainstreaming, gender parity and system-wide accountability in these areas. The achievements of UN Women in UN coordination efforts are acknowledged and well documented in most evaluation reports covering this area. Many evaluations also highlighted the established role of UN Women as a technical expert on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Through its convening power, UN Women brings together diverse UN stakeholders. Several evaluations highlighted UN Women's ability to work effectively with partners to deliver stronger and more comprehensive programmes. Effective coordination between UN Women and other UN entities is a key contributor to the delivery of successful programmes, especially for UN joint programming. UN Women has succeeded in strengthening programmes by partnering with other UN agencies to harness relative comparative advantages.

To strengthen accountability, UN Women has worked with partner agencies to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) measurement indicators and monitor progress towards results. Some evaluation reports also highlighted UN Women's technical support through training on gender mainstreaming.

Establishing clarity on roles and governance structure, harnessing implementation synergies and leveraging the comparative advantages of partners are some of the good practices that UN Women employs. These have implications for joint programmes to build on ongoing or complementary initiatives and reduce operational costs while improving implementation efficiency.

When examining factors that negatively affect UN system coordination, the most frequently identified risks related to a lack of streamlining in terms of communication and implementation. Some evaluations also highlighted issues with the management and implementation of joint programmes, resulting from a lack of clarity around responsibilities. Another impediment was the inadequacy of resources (human, financial and technical) allocated to coordination work.

GOOD PRACTICES



CLEAR GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Establishing clarity on roles and governance structure

IMPEDIMENTS



LACK OF STREAMLINED COMMUNICATION

Lack of streamlined communication and implementation (e.g. in Country Teams)



HARNESSING SYNERGIES

Harnessing implementation synergies and leveraging comparative advantages of partners



INADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

Inadequacy of resources (human, financial and technical) allocated to coordination

OUTPUT 2

Increased engagement of partners in support of UN Women's mandate

UN Women has shown its expertise in bringing together diverse stakeholders to comprehensively and efficiently address issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Approximately one third of the evaluations in the sample noted its success in identifying and engaging with a wide range of partners, including national gender machineries, government ministries, the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs). Each of these partners is important for bringing about change, contributing unique strengths and local and international connections to

facilitate successful programme implementation on the ground.

UN Women has played a key role in building synergies amongst gender equality advocates. This is especially true in cases where UN Women's country and regional strategies align with existing programmes. Alignment encourages high levels of national and local ownership of programmes, which increases the likelihood that they will be sustained beyond UN Women's established timeframes.

UN Women has demonstrated expertise in engaging and coordinating with relevant government bodies in order to build their capacities and enable them to take ownership of projects. Several evaluations highlighted the support UN Women has provided to CSOs on capacity development, innovative methods of advocacy and networking opportunities. There is strong evidence of UN Women's commitment to ensuring the participation of CSOs in decision-making processes and ensuring inclusion and participation of marginalized groups of women and gender equality champions at the grassroots level. Strategic partnerships with digital or media based private sector institutions have also proved beneficial in socializing the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda, and empowering media personnel to recognize and report on gender-related issues.

The identification and selection of strong local partners was found to significantly contribute to the success of gender equality initiatives. Strong partners from the public and private sectors add significant value by contributing their expertise in implementing women's social, political, and economic empowerment activities. UN Women can support these capacities with its own organizational strengths and utilize their local connections to create spaces for dialogue and improve community-level engagement.

mainstreaming within organizations, and monitoring and evaluation strategies.

GOOD PRACTICES



IMPEDIMENTS



OUTPUT 3

High quality of programmes through knowledge management, innovation, results-based management, and evaluation

Many evaluation reports found that UN Women has been engaged in various efforts to develop internal and external monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity. There is evidence that UN Women has worked to improve M&E of interventions by clarifying definitions of outcomes and outputs, and explicitly defining measurable indicators and targets. The integration of

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