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Dear Readers,

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

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

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

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Think Beyond. Stay Ahead.

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

Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

A/HUELTA (PRESIDENTA)

Reflections on results, lessons and drivers of change

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

What did the meta-synthesis conclude?

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

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

What needs to be improved?

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

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

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

UN WOMEN STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2021 OUTCOMES

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

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

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

ENABLING FACTORS

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

HINDERING FACTORS

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



PERSPECTIVE FROM MANAGEMENT

Maximizing evaluation insights to achieve programme excellence

Louise Nylin

Officer in Charge, Programme Division, UN Women

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While a lot has already been

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

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

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

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

HOW IS GENDER-
RESPONSIVE
EVALUATION
DIFFERENT
FROM OTHER
EVALUATION?

HOW TO MANAGE GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

EVALUATION HANDBOOK



≥ <http://unwo.men/qFw750uZwao>

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