



WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM UN WOMEN EVALUATIONS?

A meta-analysis of evaluations
managed by UN Women in 2016



Independent
Evaluation Office

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REPORT

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2017

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| EVAW | Ending Violence Against Women |
| GBV | Gender-based Violence |
| GEEW | Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| GERAAS | Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| IEO | Independent Evaluation Office |
| JPGBV | Joint Programme on Prevention of Gender Based Violence |
| OECD-DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—Development Assistance Committee |
| RBM | Results-based Management |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNEG | United Nations Evaluation Group |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |
| UN-SWAP | UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |

FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

As part of its continuous effort to promote learning and accountability, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) undertakes an annual meta-analysis to ensure that the body of evidence produced by corporate and decentralized evaluations are synthesized to help strengthen programming and organizational effectiveness.

This year's meta-analysis contributes to this effort by synthesizing insights and drivers of change from multiple evaluations. The analysis transformed evaluative evidences into accessible knowledge for future systematic strengthening of programming, organizational effectiveness and the evaluation function. The analysis will help contribute to better understanding of the context in which ongoing and new initiatives will be implemented.

We hope you find the synthesis useful to further reflect and feed the learning into future thinking and practices to drive transformative change on gender equality and the empowerment of women.



Inga Sniukaite,

Director a.i., Independent Evaluation Office

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Inga Sniukaite', with a stylized flourish at the end.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to aggregate and synthesize information generated from 2016 evaluations and transform it into accessible knowledge for future systematic strengthening of programming, organizational effectiveness and the evaluation function. This is intended to help inform the implementation of the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

The meta-analysis was based on 36 evaluation reports independently rated as satisfactory or above according to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and UN Women evaluation criteria. It used a process of realist synthesis that built on similar analyses undertaken in 2013 and 2015. In addition to qualitative analysis of evaluation findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons, the meta-analysis applied a quantitative assessment of development effectiveness based on widely accepted Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) specified methods for assessing development effectiveness of multilateral organizations.

Within the results framework of the draft UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021, six drivers of change were identified: (1) innovation and technology, (2) alliance-building and movement for change, (3) youth engagement, (4) South-South cooperation, (5) knowledge hub, and (6) evidence, data and statistics. Looking through the lens of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria for development effectiveness (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and culture of results), this meta-analysis also responded to these drivers of change where there was sufficient evidence to do so.

The analysis finds that UN Women interventions are consistently delivering relevant and effective development contributions towards gender equality outcomes and policy changes, although scope remains for enhancing both efficiency and sustainability. Broadly, evaluations confirmed the decentralized

capacity as central to strengthening UN Women's leadership on gender equality and facilitating meaningful relations and dialogue between diverse stakeholders in improving effectiveness across all country contexts.

Sustainability across UN Women's operational portfolio was found to be mixed, with evidence that achievements are likely to continue increasing when they have been supported through longer programming cycles. In all scenarios, however, using participatory approaches and co-creating interventions supported the development of local assets that enable sustainable development.

There was also new evidence of substantive improvement in results-based management (RBM) systems, while also noting that this area still has the potential for continued improvement in the future. At the country level, evidence and data is an emerging strength for UN Women, but transitioning current examples into a corporate asset is a significant challenge that requires both new systems and work on specific technical areas. While data-orientated projects have made sustainable contributions in the space of a single programme cycle, the sustainability of evidence-based knowledge systems requires longer term commitments.

UN Women's role as a knowledge hub is the centrepiece of its global effectiveness, especially regarding applied knowledge in low-capacity contexts and building knowledge networks everywhere. The regional level is emerging as a strong candidate for organizing this knowledge hub function.

Successful alliance-building is also found to be a long-term endeavour grounded in nurturing social cohesion and local ownership. In this regard, developing national pools of gender equality expertise is seen to be an efficient approach for UN Women, and this needs to be done jointly with other UN (United Nations) entities, particularly in low-capacity contexts.

Finally, examples of innovative programming are found across all of UN Women's operational contexts and impact areas. Extending the use of communications technology is seen by evaluations as central to ensuring this innovation reaches new and previously isolated constituencies.

Future strategies to augment UN Women's existing achievements can include nurturing gender equality expertise in national systems, investing in UN Women's own expertise in resource mobilization and data systems, and deeper integration of programming and coordination through country-level strategic notes.

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