



**Executive Board of the
United Nations Entity for Gender
Equality and the Empowerment
of Women**

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Evaluation

**Thematic Evaluation on the Contribution of UN-Women to
Prevent Violence against Women and Expand Access to
Services**

Summary

During 2012-2013, the UN-Women Evaluation Office undertook a corporate thematic evaluation of UN-Women contribution to preventing violence against women (VAW) and expanding access to related services. The evaluation objectives were to capture key results and lessons learned from the contributions of UN-Women's four predecessor entities that could inform UN-Women's current and future work, and to analyze the extent that UN-Women strategically positioned itself to implement its mandate of normative, operational and coordination work in the area of VAW. The scope of this evaluation covered all dimensions of UN-Women's work addressing VAW from 2008 to 2013. The evaluation makes six strategic recommendations to UN-Women aimed at strengthening its work in this thematic area. The intended primary users of the evaluation findings are the UN-Women Executive Board and leadership, as well as staff at headquarters and, regional and country levels. The intended uses of the evaluation are to inform future programming and management decisions.

Purpose and Scope

This corporate thematic evaluation examined the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and its predecessor entities¹ in preventing violence against women (VAW) and expanding access to related services. VAW is one of the most widespread violations of human rights and includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse. It also cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography. The United Nations defines VAW as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”²

The scope of the evaluation covered all dimensions of UN-Women’s work addressing violence against women and girls from 2008 to 2013. It included UN-Women’s normative, operational and coordination mandates. The scope also included intergovernmental support, global, regional and country programmes, UN-Women’s contributions to the Secretary-General’s UNiTE to End Violence against Women 2008-2015 campaign and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UN Trust Fund). It did not cover UN-Women’s nor its predecessor entities’ work on violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict contexts as these were the subject of a separate evaluation.

The objectives of the evaluation were to capture key results and lessons learned from the contributions of UN-Women’s predecessor entities between 2008 and 2011 to inform UN-Women’s current and future work and analyze the extent to which UN-Women has strategically positioned itself to implement its mandate of normative, operational and coordination work in the area of VAW.

As per the evaluation’s Terms of Reference and inception report, the standard set of evaluation criteria were used, namely: relevance/coherence, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency/organizational performance. The evaluation was also based on the concept of future strategic positioning. The intended primary users of the evaluation findings are the UN-Women Executive Board and leadership, as well as staff at headquarters and, regional and country levels. The intended uses of the evaluation are to inform future programming and management decisions.

Context

UN-Women was established in July 2010 under General Assembly resolution 64/289. The new entity consolidates the mandates and functions of its predecessor entities with the “additional role of leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.” The mandate and functions of UN-Women therefore encompass intergovernmental normative support; operational work to assist Member States implement global standards and norms; efforts to convene and forge partnerships with Member States, civil society, United Nations entities and other global, regional and country level partners; and coordination to hold the United Nations system accountable for its commitments on gender equality.

These functions apply broadly within the entity and specifically to the work of ending violence against women (EVAW). As reflected in its strategic plans, EVAW is a priority for UN-Women and, as such, is one of its key corporate goals. Five Divisions/Sections in two UN-Women bureaux, namely the Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnership Bureau and the Policy and Programming Bureau, contribute to, manage and coordinate its work in EVAW. This includes the administration of the UN Trust Fund and serving as Secretariat for the Secretary-

¹ UN-Women’s four predecessor entities were: the Division of the Advancement of Women (DAW), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI).

² General Assembly resolution 48/104, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, 1993.

General's UNiTE campaign. UN-Women invests significantly in EVAW and, in 2010 and 2011, expenditure totaled \$21 million and \$24 million respectively.³

Methodology

The evaluation was managed by the UN-Women Evaluation Office and conducted by a private firm. The Evaluation Office also engaged peer/expert reviewers to provide advice and convened a reference group at headquarters in New York to inform the evaluation process. Reference groups in each country visited were provided with draft deliverables, and the opportunity to validate and provide comments. The evaluation was conducted in three phases: inception (August-October 2012); data collection (October-April 2012); and reporting (May-June 2013).

The evaluation methodology was grounded in human rights and gender equality principles, and guided by contribution analysis. The evaluation team developed a reconstructed theory of change which provided a preliminary high-level results model and drove discussions on the interdependencies between the three dimensions of UN-Women's mandate, influencing factors and assumptions. For the evaluation both qualitative and quantitative data were used. A total of 472 stakeholders were consulted through interviews and focus groups. An electronic survey conducted of UN-Women staff in-country and in regional offices had a high response rate. The evaluation team reviewed relevant literature, 300 documents, databases and other types of written information. The evaluation team also conducted one-week country site visits to Brazil, Grenada, Guatemala, India, Jamaica, Morocco and Mozambique during which 340 stakeholders were consulted.

Challenges

While UN-Women was formally created in July 2010, it only became operational in January 2011. Since its establishment, UN-Women has been undergoing a process of clarifying its mandate, procedures for operationalizing its goals and objectives, developing an appropriate organizational structure, securing resources, and building a results-based management (RBM) framework, all whilst trying to integrate its predecessor entities. The evaluation sought to draw on programming data from the past, across predecessor entities and over a five-year period that included the transition phase to the new entity, which presented challenges to the evaluation.

Lessons from the Past

The comparative advantage of UN-Women's predecessor entities lay in their substantive contributions to intergovernmental processes, their adoption of a partnership approach and their flexibility, which allowed them to make clear contributions to EVAW.⁴ Most of UN-Women's predecessor entities did not have a clearly defined and articulated niche concerning EVAW, either implicitly or explicitly outlined in their strategies. UN-Women's mandate has different dimensions and multiple themes related to its overall corporate goals (e.g. economic empowerment of women, peace and security and humanitarian response, women's economic empowerment, and political participation). It therefore has the potential to contribute to the design of integrative and holistic approaches to addressing EVAW. Adopting such an approach can help UN-Women coordinate and advise other organizations working in EVAW, allowing it to establish a niche for itself.

Key Findings

Contextual setting

³ Unless otherwise indicated refers to United States dollars.

⁴ See, for example, Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), *Evaluation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)*. (New York, 2011).

UN-Women's EVAW-related work takes place in a dynamic global, regional and national context where UN-Women is affected by multiple political, cultural and institutional factors. Such a context, and the entity's mandate, provide opportunities and give rise to continuing challenges to furthering the EVAW agenda. Globally, opportunities are arising from the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57), the central theme of which was elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, which provided an agreed-upon basis for moving forward on EVAW. Further impetus is generated by the potential importance of gender-based violence (GBV) within the post-2015 development agenda and the evidence of an increasingly favorable context for EVAW within the United Nations system. There are, however, significant challenges in this global context including limited resource availability, and political and social conservatism resistant to a progressive VAW agenda. The country visits underlined the diverse contexts in which EVAW operational work was implemented. Overall, findings highlighted the importance of tailoring EVAW strategies and approaches to the specific context of each country, and drawing on regional similarities in order to use regional partnerships, networks and intergovernmental processes to support work on EVAW.

Relevance of UN-Women's EVAW-related work

UN-Women's EVAW-related work has built upon that of its predecessor entities. It has therefore been relevant and responsive in the context, as evidenced by its congruence with global, regional and national commitments and priorities.

UN-Women has sought to operationalize the interlinkages of human rights issues which must be simultaneously addressed and ensure EVAW be treated as a cross-cutting theme incorporated in UN-Women's strategic plan and programming. As a new entity, UN-Women is still in the process of defining its niche in EVAW relative to other organizations, especially within the United Nations system, and thus determine how it will add value to, and provide leadership on EVAW related work.

Effectiveness and Sustainability

Contributions to EVAW under UN-Women's Three Mandate Areas

Intergovernmental normative support

UN-Women has given continuity to the significant contributions made by DAW and OSAGI in supporting the normative role of United Nations intergovernmental processes and mechanisms related to EVAW, particularly the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Security Council.⁵ UN-Women effectively builds and expands upon the work of its predecessor entities to enhance VAW normative frameworks by giving substantive guidance on good practices and standards, developing an evidence base, and using its capacity to mobilize various key actors in support of intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms. UN-Women's effectiveness in this area was demonstrated at the CSW57, where its contributions facilitated agreed conclusions on EVAW for the first time in 15 years. These agreed conclusions called on Member States to take a broad range of measures to tackle violence against women and girls around the world. CSW57 also illustrated how UN-Women has built on its predecessors entities' capacities to convene stakeholders in support of intergovernmental processes and encourage Member States to take action through the COMMIT initiative, which asked governments to announce specific new measures to end VAW and resulted in responses from 54 governments.

Operational work

A considerable proportion of UN-Women's operational work aims to align national legal frameworks with international agreements regarding women's human rights. UN-Women and its predecessor entities provided technical support and funding to governments and civil society

⁵ The contributions of DAW and OSAGI are documented in the OIOS evaluation (ibid).

partners which resulted in new or strengthened VAW-related national legal frameworks, policies and action plans. For example, between 2008 and 2011, an increased number of governments adopted laws targeting VAW⁶ and, as of 2012, 125 countries are reported to have laws penalizing domestic violence.⁷ Although these achievements cannot be attributed to UN-Women or its predecessor entities alone, the evaluation confirmed that UN-Women made substantial contributions in this area. Nevertheless, appropriate support to accompany the policy and legal process from design and approval to implementation was often missing. For example, several staff related issues were identified in Brazil and India pertaining to both staff turnover and contract limitations which had implications for retaining staff with both the expertise and network of contacts required at a strategic level of government, and in Mozambique support in the development of strategies or action plans did not include costing of strategies or accountability mechanisms to foster effective implementation of those plans and strategies. Moreover, the adoption of project approaches in several countries did not allow a timeframe long enough to see through policy and implementation.

UN-Women's support has also contributed to expanding the type, quality and access to services for VAW survivors, including the most excluded and vulnerable, at the country level. UN-Women and UNIFEM before it have engaged in a large number of relevant and effective efforts to strengthen the capacity of national actors to address VAW-related issues with traditional partners such as women's organizations and machineries, but also with relevant actors in the justice, police and health sectors, parliamentarians, media, and religious and traditional community leaders. The country case studies provide examples of specific efforts and achievements at the country and regional level. At the global level, the Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence Against Women and Girls, an online resource aimed to encourage and support evidence-based programming to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, had over 270,000 users from 221 countries and territories since its launch in 2010 until the end of 2011, the majority of which were affiliated with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Due to the lack of data on long-term and cumulative effects of efforts to build capacity, the evaluation found little evidence of sustained capacity improvements. Training was one of the primary means of building capacity. However, training events often lacked the follow-up needed to support and better understand the extent of institutionalization of such work. External factors also affected the potential for sustained capacity improvements. For example, government and non-government organization (NGO) partners faced challenges generating the financial resources required to sustain the improvements.

UN-Women has also been active in raising public awareness and/or commitment to ending VAW, and in engaging key actors (including men and boys) who have the potential to influence perceptions and related behaviors in preventing VAW. 'Say NO - UNiTE' is an example of an innovative online platform showcasing advocacy efforts around the world. Heads of State and Ministers from 73 governments, and almost 700 parliamentarians, and 1000 CSOs had signed-up to 'Say No - UNiTE' at the time of the evaluation. However, UN-Women has not systematically monitored or evaluated the effectiveness of such efforts in contributing to changes in attitudes and behaviors related to VAW. The global Safe Cities Free of Violence Against Women and Girls initiative, which uses a variety of strategies to prevent VAW, is a laudable exception in that every city programme includes collection of evidence at every step of programme design, implementation and evaluation.

⁶ United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, "Eliminating Violence against Women: 15 Years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", in *Words to Action: Newsletter on Violence against Women*, Issue No. 8. (July 2010).

⁷ UN-Women press release, *UN-Women Executive Director launches new initiative to spotlight national commitments to end violence against women*, 20 November 2012. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/2012/11/un-women-executive-director-launches-new-initiative-to-spotlight-national-commitments-to-end-violence-against-women/>

Coordination

At the global, regional and national levels, UN-Women has facilitated joint action among partners on EVAW. Its larger mandate for convening partners and, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system requires clarification, especially in terms of approaches for enhancing key inter-agency coordination, both globally and at country-level, and building upon mechanisms such as the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-SWAP).

UN-Women and its predecessor entities have formed, maintained and expanded networks and partnerships to increase coherence and coordination of efforts with a wide range of actors at global, regional and national levels. It has been effective at taking advantage of partnerships with multiple actors at various levels, for instance in helping to ensure the success of CSW57.

In terms of inter-agency coordination at the country level, UN-Women and its predecessor entities have furthered the work on EVAW through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), joint programmes, gender theme groups and specialized working groups. The country case studies showed gender equality to be either a specific objective or mainstreamed across different components of the UNDAFs reviewed, and that leadership by UN-Women on EVAW in the United Nations country team (UNCT) was only recently taking shape. They also illustrated the potential and the demand for UN-Women to play a greater coordination role, but it was unclear both internally and externally, what this role would look like given the current resourcing and capacity of the country offices. In general, the effectiveness of UN-Women's efforts at country-level coordination through formal mechanisms is not yet clear. At the regional level, UN-Women's predecessor entities often took a lead role in organizing and reporting on the UNiTE campaign, especially via sub-regional offices. UN-Women's regional architecture provides a means to enhance inter-agency coordination at the regional level. At the global level, there are formal coordination mechanisms, such as the Inter-Agency Network on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (IANGWE) Task Force on EVAW, which promote joint action on EVAW, although their credibility and momentum have been difficult to sustain.

UN-Women and its predecessor entities have also introduced tools to keep track of EVAW-related activities of the United Nations system and Member States. In general, there is a view that mechanisms for understanding, coordinating and tracking the efforts of United Nations entities in the area of EVAW need to be strengthened. Evaluation data indicated that UNiTE contributed to coordinating VAW-related efforts inside and outside the United Nations by outlining a set of commonly agreed upon, broad priorities for VAW-related work to which efforts of different actors could contribute.

Efficiency/Organizational Performance

As a new entity, UN-Women faces challenges in determining its structure, division of labour, communications and strategy to support EVAW. Evaluation data indicated that UN-Women's current EVAW-related efforts continue to be fragmented due to these challenges. Furthermore, UN-Women's practices and systems did not support managing for results.

UN-Women is strengthening a number of inherited practices and systems to help institutionalize a culture of RBM. As outlined in the strategic plan, such efforts include internal knowledge management, results-based planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting, and evaluation. These practices were at different stages of development at the time of the evaluation and, unsurprisingly, evidence pointed to gaps in these systems and practices and their ability to meet the organizational needs of UN-Women. These gaps limit UN-Women's ability to easily access and report on EVAW-related initiatives/projects and resources; understand progress in EVAW and UN-Women's contributions to that progress; and, internally share and learn from good practices.

UN-Women is experiencing the same resourcing dilemmas faced by its predecessor entities. Financial contributions have fallen far short of the resource requirements which has affected its ability to fulfill its mandate, implement workplans, sustain global EVAW initiatives, and improve

organizational practices and systems that would enhance delivery and learning on EAW. UN-Women is also expected to live-up to some very high expectations. The financial situation highlights the need for the international community to step-up and provide the resources required by UN-Women. It also increases the need for UN-Women to adopt catalytic approaches and make stronger use of partnerships, joint programming and other forms of coordination in order to materialize EAW programme expectations.

Strategic positioning

There is a sense, both internally and externally, that UN-Women's approach to implementing aspects of its EAW mandate – particularly with regards to coordination– and the synergies between the normative, operational and coordination dimensions of its mandate could be clearer. While external stakeholders understand the broad areas of UN-Women's mandate, they are not clear on how it is being operationalized. Moreover, external stakeholders in the countries visited were aware of the intentions to expand the emphasis on operations, but were not yet clear on how UN-Women would go about it differently to its predecessor entities.

The creation of UN-Women enhanced the possibility of a more coordinated and coherent approach to EAW by bringing together different types of gender and EAW-related expertise and experience under one roof. However, the current set of strategic documents does not provide sufficient guidance in this regard. The recent CSW demonstrated how UN-Women's three mandate areas can come together around a particular event in such a way that the whole becomes more than its parts. The question then is how can UN-Women achieve similar synergy in its day-to-day operations?

Conclusions

As a new entity in the United Nations system, UN-Women has given continuity to the important EAW-related work of its predecessor entities, in particular through the UN Trust Fund. The broad range of initiatives to support EAW are, in general, enhancing the global level normative frameworks, and supporting national capacity to prevent VAW and provide services to survivors. Initiatives and campaigns focusing on prevention have helped raise the visibility of VAW, increasing the awareness of and public support for EAW among decision makers, leaders and community members. UN-Women has also given substantive guidance on good practices and contributed to the development of an evidence base. In addition, through formal inter-agency coordination mechanisms, joint programmes, convening and collaborative efforts, UN-Women has used its capacity to mobilize key actors in support of intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms, and has helped to effectively promote joint EAW-related action. Data collected through the evaluation process provide positive feedback with regard to UN-Women and its predecessor entities' contributions in these areas, despite the lack of data on actual mid- and long-term results.

The creation of UN-Women and its recent successes have created high expectations which should be tempered in recognition of it still being a new entity. UN-Women's broad mandate is still being defined, and gaps in the operationalization of this mandate as they relate to EAW at the global and country level are being filled. UN-Women can do more to strategically manage its mandate areas by seeking synergies and taking advantage of expanded roles, particularly with regard to coordination. It is still defining its niche and ways of working at a time when it has still not received initial financial commitments. In EAW, as in other thematic areas, it is still in the process of defining what it is best positioned to do, what it is most able to do and how it will do it. Although UN-Women has incorporated successful components of EAW (such as the UN Trust Fund and the UNiTE campaign) it still lacks a coherent approach to managing these components so as to maximize synergies and learning from the various mechanisms.

UN-Women lacks the appropriate systems that allow it to manage for results, ascertain its performance, capitalize on learning and make evidence-based programming choices. UN-Women is conscious of the absence of systematic processes for the storage, tracking and reporting on

programmes and projects. Furthermore, M&E practices and systems are not yet robust enough to provide the evidence required for accountability and learning purposes.

The present level of resourcing of UN-Women presents a reputational risk because the resources do not match the expectations and this should be reflected in UN-Women's EAW strategy. Strategic and careful choices need to be made about how UN-Women engages in the different mandate areas in order to maximize the effectiveness of EAW efforts. There is, however, cautious optimism following the agreed conclusions of CSW57 and UN-Women should seize the opportunity to build on the momentum in the international community, while recognizing the enormous impact particular national and regional contexts will have.

Recommendations

The recommendations focus on maximizing UN-Women's efforts and contributions in its three mandate areas. While the recommendations are listed by mandate area, the evaluation emphasized the importance of better synergy across the areas.

Strengthening normative support for EAW

Recommendation 1: UN-Women should continue its substantive inputs and evidenced-based work in support of enhanced normative frameworks. It should also provide more guidance at the regional and country level on how to translate normative work into operational work.

Strengthening operational/programmatic support for EAW

Recommendation 2: UN-Women's country-level activities should be more strategic. It must maximize the benefits of its limited resources, work with partners, be selective in terms of where to engage, work to maximize buy-in of others, and use the leverage and legitimacy that it has.

Strengthening coordination of and accountability for EAW

Recommendation 3: UN-Women should further clarify, operationalize and enhance its coordination mandate, including the accountability dimension, at global, regional and national levels in order to further EAW.

Recommendation 4: UN-Women should develop a strategy or guidance document, for both internal and external use, outlining its EAW mandate and, key priorities and approaches in EAW to make its efforts more coherent.

Practices, systems and resources to support EAW

Recommendation 5: UN-Women should continue to strengthen RBM practices, encompassing improved monitoring and reporting, evaluation and knowledge management.

Recommendation 6: UN-Women should not only pursue and encourage Member State contributions to core resources, but develop creative ways of tapping into the resources of other partners so that there is a systemic approach to resourcing EAW at the global, regional and country levels.

Appendix I List of Findings

- Finding 1: UN-Women is facing many of the challenges new organizations often face pertaining to operationalization of its mandate, and establishing the systems and level of resources to support such operationalization. This is the lens through which progress made on EVAW must be assessed.
- Finding 2: EVAW-related work takes place in a dynamic global, regional and national context where UN-Women is affected by multiple political, cultural and institutional factors, including the impetus provided by CSW57 and the nascent post-2015 development agenda. Such a context, and the legitimacy of the organization's mandate, provide opportunities and give rise to continuing challenges to furthering the EVAW agenda.
- Finding 3: The EVAW work of UN-Women and its predecessor entities has been relevant and responsive in this context, as evidenced by its congruence with global, regional, and national commitments and priorities. This constitutes a strong foundation upon which to build and advance efforts to end VAW.
- Finding 4: UN-Women is still in the process of defining its niche within EVAW relative to other organizations (especially within the United Nations system) and how it will add value to, and lead the work being done in the area. This has implications for the effectiveness and impact of its work.
- Finding 5: UN-Women's work effectively builds and expands upon the work of its predecessor entities to enhance the normative frameworks of VAW. It does so by giving substantive guidance on good practices and standards, developing an evidence base, and using its capacity to mobilize various key actors in support of intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms.
- Finding 6: UN-Women and its predecessor entities provided technical inputs and funding to governments and civil society partners, resulting in new or strengthened VAW-related national legal frameworks, policies and action plans. While these frameworks constitute an important step in enhancing national capacities for addressing VAW, implementation remains a challenge in many countries due to various political, institutional and resource factors.
- Finding 7: UN-Women's funding and technical support has contributed to expanding access to services for VAW survivors at the country level. However, UN-Women has not tracked the long-term effects of interventions in terms of the number and/or quality of available services, or their actual use by and benefits for survivors of VAW.
- Finding 8: As a result of training, organizational strengthening and other capacity development efforts, UN-Women has contributed to strengthening the capacities of relevant national actors. Yet questions remain about the sustainability of these initiatives, particularly because capacity enhancements are often not institutionalized.
- Finding 9: UN-Women has supported initiatives and campaigns focusing on prevention. Field work suggests that these have raised the visibility of VAW at the country level, and have increased the awareness of and public support for EVAW among decision makers, leaders and community members. For the most part, however, UN-Women has not systematically monitored or evaluated the effect such efforts have in contributing to changes in attitudes and behaviors related to VAW.

- Finding 10: UN Trust Fund grantees have also made substantial and innovative contributions in preventing VAW, expanding survivor access to services and creating an institutional response to VAW at the country level. These activities have complemented UN-Women's operational EVAW-related work.
- Finding 11: At the global, regional and national levels, UN-Women has facilitated joint action by partners on EVAW. However, its larger mandate for coordination and promoting accountability of the United Nations system requires further clarification, especially in terms of approaches.
- Finding 12: UN-Women's approaches to implementing all aspects of its EVAW mandate, particularly its coordination mandate, and the synergies between the three dimensions of its mandate (normative, operational and coordination) could be clearer.
- Finding 13: UN-Women's systems and practices do not yet meet its needs with regards to managing for results in EVAW. There are several gaps in the information required to plan, monitor, report, evaluate and learn from programming experience.
- Finding 14: UN-Women is facing the resourcing dilemmas faced by its predecessor entities and yet simultaneously must live up to very high expectations requiring the strategic use of available resources while encouraging funding commitments be kept.