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Evaluation

Review of policies and practices to promote gender-responsive evaluation systems

Summary

The international community is calling for the acceleration of progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. An important component of this involves strengthening the capacity of evaluation systems to inform the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the gender-related goals in the post-2015 agenda.

This review takes stock of the current gender-responsiveness of evaluation systems in place within the United Nations and among national governments and stakeholders. It focuses particularly on the role of the United Nations in national evaluation capacity development as a means of enhancing its fit-for-purpose in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

The review found that gender-responsive evaluation has been integrated into the normative frameworks, institutional systems and individual capacity-building initiatives within the United Nations, but identified gaps and opportunities for improvement. At the national level, gender-responsive evaluation is at a nascent stage and more advocacy and partnerships are needed to capitalize on the current attention on gender equality.

The review concludes that the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women has a specific role to play in promoting gender-responsive evaluation within the United Nations and in its work with national governments and international evaluation partnerships.

A. Background and objective

1. The year 2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Considered the most comprehensive blueprint on advancing women's rights, the 1995 Beijing road map was adopted by 189 governments. But 20 years on, a review of its implementation found that the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration have only been partially fulfilled.

2. In the report *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20*,¹ Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director and Under Secretary-General of the United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) made the following declaration:

Creating a world with greater equality for generations to come is the defining and most urgent challenge of this century. Gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights are fundamental for achieving human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development, and must be central to the post-2015 development agenda. We have set 2030 as the expiry date for gender inequality. Achieving this will require unprecedented political leadership, dedicated and vastly increased resources, and new partnerships across the whole of society. I urge all our partners to give close attention to the recommendations of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform, as we turn now to develop and then implement the new post-2015 development agenda.

3. One of the findings of the above-mentioned Beijing review was that implementation has been hampered by, among other issues, the absence of strong accountability mechanisms. As a result, the review called for enhancing accountability, one of the main purposes of evaluation, as a means to accelerate progress.

4. The proposal to include gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda as a stand-alone goal, as well as to integrate them across all other goals, further elevates the strategic importance of establishing gender-responsive evaluation systems.

5. The recent United Nations General Assembly resolution (2014/A/69/473) also underscored the importance of building national capacity for the evaluation of development activities and invited United Nations entities—with the collaboration of national and international stakeholders—to support, upon request, efforts to further strengthen the capacity of Member States for evaluation, in alignment with their national policies and priorities.

6. The call from the international community to strengthen the capacity of evaluation systems to inform the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the gender-related goals in the post-2015 agenda, raises a number of important questions specific to the role of the United Nations:

¹ UN-Women, 2015

- To what extent are existing evaluation systems—within the United Nations and national governments—gender-responsive?
- Is the United Nations prepared to further strengthen the gender-responsiveness of its evaluation systems?
- When requested to do so, how can the United Nations best engage with national governments and stakeholders to strengthen capacity for gender-responsive evaluation systems?
- What have we learned from developing and implementing gender-responsive evaluation systems to date?

7. To address these questions, UN-Women, in partnership with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), EvalPartners, EvalGender+ and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), has commissioned this review of the policies, systems and practices in place to promote gender-responsive evaluation. By taking stock of existing gender-responsive evaluation systems within the United Nations and Member States, it provides information on the opportunities that can be addressed to strengthen these systems in the future, both individually and collectively.

B. Methodology and expected use

8. The methodology consisted of a desk review and analysis of relevant and available documents, including: (i) information publicly available on the UNEG website; (ii) reporting data for the UN System-wide Action Plan for the Implementation of the Chief Executives Board United Nations System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Evaluation Performance Indicator (UN-SWAP EPI); (iii) EvalPartners publications related to national evaluation policies and voluntary organizations for professional evaluations (VOPEs), which in turn draw on the desk review of almost 100 documents;² and (iv) additional documents publicly available either through entity or organizational websites.

9. The review process was led by the UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office. A management group was constituted to quality assure the review process and reference groups composed of a wide range of stakeholders from within UN-Women, UNEG, EvalPartners, EvalGender+ and national governments were engaged and consulted throughout the process.

10. This report is expected to be used to inform continuing and emerging efforts to develop and strengthen gender-responsive evaluation systems. It is expected to be of use to UNEG collectively; the UN Interim Coordination Mechanism for System-wide Evaluation; UN entities individually (e.g., evaluation offices) and UN-Women specifically; international, regional and national VOPEs; parliamentary forums for evaluation; national evaluation systems and offices; and international, regional and national knowledge management networks focusing on gender and/or evaluation (e.g., the Gender and Evaluation Network).

² For example: EvalPartners, UN-Women and IOCE in partnership with UNEG, *National evaluation policies for sustainable and equitable development: How to integrate gender equality and social equity in national evaluation policies and systems* (2015); and EvalPartners, United Nations Children Fund and IOCE, in partnership with UNEG and UN-Women, *Voluntary organizations for professional evaluations [VOPEs]: Learning from Africa, Americas, Asia, Australasia, Europe and Middle East*, (2013).

C. What is gender-responsive evaluation?

11. According to UNEG, gender-responsive evaluations:

... provide a holistic and meaningful assessment of how an intervention is guided by human rights and gender equality approaches... [It] draws upon established and well-known approaches, techniques and methods to design, implement and use evaluations. However, performing human rights and gender-responsive evaluations goes beyond technical issues. It is not about one design or set of methods, but [about the] lens or standpoint that influences choices made in design and methods... they align the work of the evaluators with binding international mandates directed at ... advancing GE [gender equality].³

12. In most cases, gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW) is not the direct focus of an intervention and it is often overlooked in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring phases. It is therefore not surprising that it is often omitted from the evaluation phase as well.

13. However, evaluation plays an important role as an agent of change. It can bring attention to this common oversight so that corrections can be made or future interventions improved. Evaluation can provide important learning and accountability for mainstreaming GEEW that supports strengthened implementation.

14. Gender-responsive evaluations are geared not only towards assessing GEEW results but also pay attention to processes. They assess the extent to which: (i) the intervention design is guided by GEEW objectives; (ii) the intervention has achieved results related to these objectives; and (iii) GEEW is mainstreamed in the intervention's programming process. Finally, gender-responsive evaluations also aim to integrate GEEW principles within the evaluation process itself.⁴

15. Evaluations that neglect or omit considerations of GEEW risk depriving stakeholders of evidence about who benefits (and who does not) from interventions, may contribute to perpetuating discriminatory structures and practices, and may miss opportunities for demonstrating how to implement effective interventions.⁵ Furthermore, an evaluation that overlooks GEEW dimensions may lack credibility since it fails to take into account this crucial aspect relevant to all development interventions and ignores potential differential effects related to gender.⁶

³ UNEG, *Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation* (2014).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

D. Policies, systems and practices to promote gender-responsive evaluation in the United Nations

16. Within the UN system, there has been increased focus on the need for conducting gender-responsive evaluation since 2005. In response, a threefold approach has been implemented at both the system-wide and individual entity level: strengthening normative frameworks, institutional systems and individual capacities.

Normative frameworks to promote gender-responsive evaluation

17. At the system-wide level, the normative framework has been strengthened through the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review Resolution A/67/276; the recently constituted Independent System-wide Evaluation Policy; and the foundational documents of UNEG—an inter-agency professional network that brings together the evaluation units of 46 UN entities.⁷

18. The 2012 **Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review** resulted in General Assembly Resolution 67/226 that included specific provisions explicitly calling for the UN system to strengthen gender-responsive evaluation by:

- i) Instituting greater accountability for gender equality in evaluations conducted by country teams by including gender perspectives in their evaluations⁸
- ii) Continuing to work collaboratively to enhance gender mainstreaming within the UN system, by ensuring that the various existing accountability mechanisms of the UN system provide for more coherent, accurate and effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting on gender equality results⁹
- iii) Encouraging the use of the UNEG norms and standards (including those related to gender-responsive evaluation) in the evaluation functions of UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies, as well as in system-wide evaluations of operational activities for development¹⁰
- iv) Fully implementing the UN-SWAP, including its EPI¹¹

19. General Assembly Resolution 67/226 also called for the development of a **policy for independent system-wide evaluation** of operational activities for development of the UN system. Developed in 2013, the policy not only commits to an evaluation of UN system efforts to mainstream human rights and gender equality, but it also states that all system-wide evaluations will adhere to the UNEG norms and standards and make use of UNEG guidance

⁷ For more information on UNEG, please see: <http://www.uneval.org>.

⁸ General Assembly Resolution 67/226, para. 84.

⁹ Ibid, para. 89.

¹⁰ Ibid, para. 180.

¹¹ Ibid, para. 86 and more specifically, para 87: “Requests the Joint Inspection Unit to undertake a system-wide evaluation of the effectiveness, value-added and impact of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women as a tool for performance monitoring and accountability for submission to the General Assembly following its full implementation.”

and tools, including the specific guidance related to integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation.

20. The **UNEG norms and standards** for evaluation in the UN system constitute the key normative framework for evaluation within the United Nations.¹² An issues paper on the revision of the UNEG norms and standards developed in 2013, found that the absence of a stand-alone norm on gender equality was the most recurrently referred gap, and concluded that “there is a clear and justified need for a norm on gender equality and UNEG should consider developing such a norm”. While there are fairly substantive provisions for gender-responsive evaluation in the UNEG standards, the UNEG norms contain only one gender-responsive provision related to evaluation ethics. It is not included as a key principle for overall evaluation processes.

21. At the individual level, UN entities have translated the UNEG norms and standards for evaluation into **evaluation policies** that are tailored to each entity’s specific mandate and context. A review of 30 evaluation policies developed from 2005 to 2014¹³ revealed that 57 per cent include at least one reference related to gender equality (or related principles).¹⁴ Almost one third of these entities with evaluation policies have included GEEW as a central guiding principle for evaluation. Provisions in ethics (26 per cent) and design and methodology (23 per cent) were also more prevalent in the reviewed sample. Also of note, some policies explicitly reference the UNEG guidance documents related to integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation and the UN-SWAP EPI technical note and scorecard.

Institutional systems to promote gender-responsive evaluation

22. To be able to operationalize the above-mentioned normative frameworks, the United Nations has developed systems informed by clear operational guidance, the implementation of which is quality-assured and reported back through accountability systems.

23. UNEG has developed a series of issue-specific **guidance documents** that explain how to implement the UNEG norms and standards. The recent guidance, *Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation*,¹⁵ is a major contribution towards operationalizing gender-responsive evaluations. In addition, other UNEG guidance documents include sections addressing methods for integrating GEEW in specific types of evaluations (e.g., impact evaluations, evaluations of normative work, etc.). UN entities have also developed entity-specific evaluation guidance that incorporates GEEW. These are normally aligned with, and drawn from, UNEG resources, and tailored to the specific context and needs of individual entities.

¹² The UNEG norms and standards were developed in response to General Assembly TCPR Resolution A/RES/59/250. They have also been recognized by the Economic and Social Council and the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, among others.

¹³ The review examined the 30 individual entity evaluation policies available in the online UNEG website document library.

¹⁴ Related principles include, but are not limited to, those pertaining to human rights, equity, and participation and inclusion for marginalized or vulnerable groups.

¹⁵ UNEG, 2014. This builds on previous guidance developed in 2010.

24. To further guide entities in the implementation of the UNEG norms and standards, gender equality was integrated in the UNEG **quality checklist** for evaluation reports. Not only is gender equality a stand-alone parameter (consisting of five criteria), but two additional parameters also include gender equality criteria.

25. A number of UN entities have also incorporated similar parameters or criteria in their own quality assessments. While some UN entities may not have integrated GEEW explicitly in their quality assessment criteria, meta-evaluation reports nevertheless may still include sections related to the assessment of both GEEW performance and its integration in evaluation practice.

26. In the future, quality criteria may be developed for other aspects of the evaluation process beyond the report phase. For example, a UNEG-endorsed quality checklist for evaluation terms of reference and inception reports includes a specific parameter on gender equality and human rights. Although this review found only a few examples of formal quality assessment criteria for evaluation terms of reference and inception reports at the entity level, if momentum to develop such systems grows in the future, inclusion of gender equality as a specific parameter and/or as cross-cutting criteria would further support and ensure integration of GEEW in evaluations at both the design and the reporting stages.

27. While quality checklists are necessary, they alone are not sufficient to ensure full integration of GEEW in evaluation systems. The endorsement of the UN-SWAP **reporting mechanism** and **EPI** in 2012 provided further impetus to institutionalize GEEW in UN evaluation systems. The benchmarks used for the UN-SWAP EPI are the gender-related UNEG norms and standards, and UNEG guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation. UN entities are required to assess progress against the indicator and report on an annual basis; to support this UNEG has developed a technical note and scorecard to harmonize reporting criteria among its members.

28. In 2014, UN entities reported against the UN-SWAP EPI for the second time. Out of 69 entities that were required to report, a total of 62 reported on their performance. Of the 62 entities, 28 (45 per cent) had utilized the UNEG-endorsed UN-SWAP EPI technical note and scorecard (compared to 21 entities—or 34 per cent—in 2013), demonstrating a progressive shift from self-perception reporting to more systematic and harmonized reporting. Though encouraging, the use of the UNEG-endorsed UN-SWAP EPI scorecard should be further promoted to improve comparability across UN entities.

29. Out of the 62 UN entities that submitted a report, 16 reported that the indicator was not applicable to them, either because no evaluations were conducted or they did not have an evaluation function. Of the 46 entities that reported against this indicator, 22 entities (48 per cent) reported ‘meeting requirements’, 18 entities (41 per cent) reported ‘approaching requirements’ and four entities (9 per cent) reported ‘missing requirements’. Only one entity (2 per cent) reported ‘exceeding requirements’. Overall, the UN-SWAP EPI was perceived as a powerful tool for raising the importance of integrating GEEW in the evaluations conducted by the different UN entities.

30. In addition, entities have also reported on internal steps and remedial actions taken to further incorporate the gender-related UNEG norms, standards and guidance within their

evaluation practice, with the aim of improving performance within the next and future years. While the reporting from 2014 is still being analysed, some major trends and good practices have been identified:

i) At the policy level, several UN entities are improving their evaluation frameworks to strengthen their capacity to conduct gender-responsive evaluations. Some have adopted gender-responsive evaluation provisions into their evaluation policies, strategies and guidance in the past year, with several other entities indicating their plan to do so for upcoming policy revisions.

ii) When it comes to quality assurance mechanisms, some entities have identified promising practices such as: developing peer review mechanisms for evaluations that engage their gender units/teams in the review of evaluation terms of reference and reports; committing to assess the extent to which integrating a gender perspective in all evaluation activities and products supports GEEW overall in a specific region; and conducting regular spot-checks of evaluations to ensure GEEW is integrated.

iii) At the capacity-building level, some entities delivered training on gender-responsive evaluation, not only for evaluation officers but also for project managers involved in evaluation. In one instance, several entities conducted a joint training for their evaluation staff.

31. Finally, there is some limited evidence of the UN-SWAP EPI reporting process—and the initiatives it prompts for strengthening gender-responsive evaluation—being leveraged to engage internal stakeholders (such as gender units, strategic planning units, executive offices, etc.) in ways that can build support for gender mainstreaming in other areas of work. Examples include: development of gender-responsive monitoring systems, investments in strengthening the gender-related evidence base, and development of an organizational gender equality strategy.

32. As a result, the UN-SWAP EPI reporting process is strengthening compliance and accountability by creating an environment that challenges UN entities to further strengthen their gender-responsive evaluation practice, and in some cases gender mainstreaming in general, at the organizational level.

33. Finally, UNEG has also developed and implemented a **professional peer review** framework for evaluation functions within the UN system that acts as both an external quality assessment and accountability mechanism for evaluation functions. While the framework is meant to provide an independent and professional assessment on the extent to which the UNEG norms and standards have been adopted, it is not fully comprehensive and the gender-related norms and standards are not included as an area of assessment.

Initiatives to strengthen individual capacities to promote gender-responsive evaluation

34. While normative frameworks and institutional systems to strengthen the gender-responsiveness of evaluation systems are paramount, they are likely to fail if individual capacities to implement them are not in place. This is why gender-responsive evaluation has not only been mainstreamed within UNEG evaluation capacity development efforts, but also addressed through separate initiatives.

35. At the system-wide level, UNEG promotes the professionalization of evaluation through the **UNEG ethical guidelines** and **code of conduct**, which include requirements for considering gender roles within cultural context, and experience and competency with gender issues, and gender balance among evaluators. Critically, however, they do not address gender-related ethical issues that may arise. For example, evaluators should look at ways of identifying and minimizing the risks and barriers that may arise to participants taking part in evaluations specifically as a result of their gender.

36. UNEG has also developed **core competencies** and **job descriptions** for the heads and staff of evaluation offices. While these include knowledge of gender equality as part of the overall UN context requirement, they do not include specific reference to training or experience in gender-responsive evaluation.

37. UNEG has also undertaken different capacity development initiatives that have incorporated gender equality. The UNEG course, ‘What a UN evaluator should know’, includes a specific module on gender-responsive evaluation. In collaboration with EvalPartners, UN-Women and UNICEF, a free e-learning series on equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations was developed as part of an extensive open online course. A cumulative total of 22,000 participants from 178 countries registered for the course, including UN staff, government officials and civil society representatives.¹⁶ An e-learning course is also being developed as part of the roll out of the UNEG guidance on human rights and gender equality.

Conclusions on gender-responsiveness of evaluation systems in the United Nations

38. At the system-wide level, normative frameworks, institutional systems and initiatives to strengthen individual capacities to implement gender-responsive evaluation are in place. They have benefited from the convergence of simultaneous system-wide efforts to improve evaluation practice and increase accountability on GEEW.

39. The existing system-wide frameworks and guidance provide a foundation for guiding and harmonizing UN entities’ initiatives in this area. However, at present, the systems in place at entity level are not as robust or consistent.

40. There is however, strong potential for improvement: the UN-SWAP EPI reporting process is providing much needed impetus and there are a number of upcoming opportunities to further strengthen gender-responsive evaluation within the UN system:

41. **First**, several UNEG products are slated for forthcoming review and revision, including the UNEG norms and standards. The inclusion of GEEW as a specific norm, and the strengthening of GEEW in the standards to reflect current thinking and practice, were recommended by the issues paper on the revision of the UNEG norms and standards developed in 2013. This has been further supported by a survey among UNEG members conducted in 2015. Such a norm would provide further impetus for strengthening gender-responsive evaluation in both system-wide and entity-level evaluation documents. More specific or further guidance on how to integrate GEEW in different types of evaluations (e.g.,

¹⁶ The e-learning series can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.mymande.org/elearning/course-details/1>.

humanitarian, institutional, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, system-wide, environmental impact, etc.) would also be welcome.

42. **Second**, the UNEG framework for professional peer review of evaluation functions is also slated for revision, providing an important opportunity to incorporate GEEW in the assessment of UN evaluation functions. This would provide a more comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the full UNEG norms and standards, and could complement and provide triangulation for UN-SWAP EPI reporting. More importantly, it would also provide an important avenue for learning and exchange of practice on gender-responsive evaluation among UN entities.

43. **Third**, the integration of gender-responsive evaluation in quality assurance and accountability systems for evaluation requires a specific set of competencies. Therefore, explicit requirements regarding knowledge of gender-responsive evaluation could be included in the planned revision of the core competencies and job descriptions for UN evaluators. This requirement is supported by the development of gender-responsive evaluation guidance and e-learning courses, which provide a means for evaluators to gain the necessary competencies.

44. **Fourth**, a more comprehensive and consistent assessment of evaluation quality should be pursued that includes an assessment beyond the reporting phase. Quality assessments that focus on integration of GEEW at the design and conduct phases of evaluation can uncover the key bottlenecks in gender-responsive evaluation practice. This could potentially lead to significant improvements in overall evaluation quality.

45. **Fifth**, at the entity level there should be a focus on continued internalization of system-wide gender-responsive evaluation policies and guidance to strengthen entity-specific systems. The UN-SWAP EPI reporting process provides a key opportunity for reporting on advancements, and sharing lessons learned, challenges and good practice, that should be fully exploited and fed back into UN-wide and entity-level systems.

46. **Finally**, while there is a necessary focus at present on institutionalizing and strengthening gender-responsive evaluation within the UN system, as practice builds and gender-responsive evaluations are increasingly conducted, efforts to track the results of employing these approaches should also be undertaken to analyse how they support progress towards GEEW.

E. Policies, systems and practices for gender-responsive national evaluation

47. This section examines the extent to which gender-responsive evaluation is currently integrated within the three key components normally engaged in the successful conduct of national evaluation: (i) national evaluation policies and systems (NEPSs); (ii) VOPEs; and (iii) parliamentarians' forums for evaluation.

48. A review of the most recent documentation shows a promising trend towards promoting gender-responsive evaluation within all three elements listed above. The analysis below provides some illustrative examples and highlights challenges and opportunities to strengthen gender-responsive evaluation at the national level.

National evaluation policies and systems (NEPSs)

49. National evaluation policies (NEP) refer to formal policies that define the purpose, responsibilities, functions and organization of public-sector evaluation in a particular country. In some cases, NEP is legislated, while in other cases, it may be defined in documents issued by central government agencies such as the ministry of finance or the ministry of planning.

50. National evaluation systems (NES) are systems put in place to implement NEPs. NEPs provide the normative framework, while NESs provide the mechanisms that operationalize the principles dictated in NEP. NEPS refer to the entire normative and operational framework that guides the evaluation of major national development strategies, policies and programmes in a given country.

51. While some countries have a comprehensive and well-established NEPS that covers all sectors, in many countries the NEPS is still at a relatively early stage of development or currently only covers certain sectors.¹⁷ With the recent impetus to develop more formal NEPSs, a number of studies have highlighted the need for and opportunity to integrate gender-responsive evaluation within such systems from their inception. However, at present, only a small minority of NEPSs include direct reference to GEEW. This is in contrast to the near universal ratification of the key international normative framework on GEEW—the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women—and the presence of GEEW policies and action plans in many countries.¹⁸

52. Some factors that may be contributing to this scenario include:

- i) The focus of many NEPSs on the overall structure and organization of evaluation systems (e.g., organizational structures, roles and responsibilities, high-level coordination mechanisms, etc.), rather than on the overall principles that are intended to guide the NEPS
- ii) The difficulty of mainstreaming GEEW in non-gender-specific national policies and systems in general (i.e., the perception of GEEW as a sector-specific issue, rather than a cross-cutting issue central to public policies in all sectors)

53. The recent EvalPartners, IOCE and UN-Women publication on NEPSs¹⁹ describes three potential scenarios that could provide a stronger enabling environment, and in turn, opportunities for facilitating the inclusion of gender-responsive evaluation in NEPSs: (i) the presence of a national gender equality policy; (ii) the integration of GEEW as a core aspect of national development strategies and their monitoring and evaluation frameworks; and (iii) the conduct of *ad hoc* or sector-specific gender-responsive evaluations.

¹⁷ EvalPartners, UN-Women, IOCE, UNEG, *National evaluation policies for sustainable and equitable development: How to integrate gender equality and social equity in national evaluation policies and systems* (2015). Available online at: [http://mymande.org/sites/default/files/files/NationalEvaluationPolicies_web-single-color\(1\).pdf](http://mymande.org/sites/default/files/files/NationalEvaluationPolicies_web-single-color(1).pdf).

¹⁸ 187 (out of 194) countries have ratified the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In addition, many countries have national policies or action plans specifically devoted to GEEW.

¹⁹ EvalPartners, UN-Women, IOCE, UNEG, *National evaluation policies for sustainable and equitable development: How to integrate gender equality and social equity in national evaluation policies and systems* (2015). Available online at: [http://mymande.org/sites/default/files/files/NationalEvaluationPolicies_web-single-color\(1\).pdf](http://mymande.org/sites/default/files/files/NationalEvaluationPolicies_web-single-color(1).pdf).

54. However, the existence of one or more of the above supportive scenarios may not automatically translate into the development of more formal gender-responsive NEPSs. The documentation indicates a number of reasons for this:

- i) Emphasis placed on monitoring and reporting against GEEW specific indicators, but more limited prioritization of and follow through to the evaluation stage
- ii) Limited communication or coordination between national GEEW machineries and NESs
- iii) Limited development of whole-of-government NEPs within which gender-responsive evaluation can be integrated systematically across all government sectors,

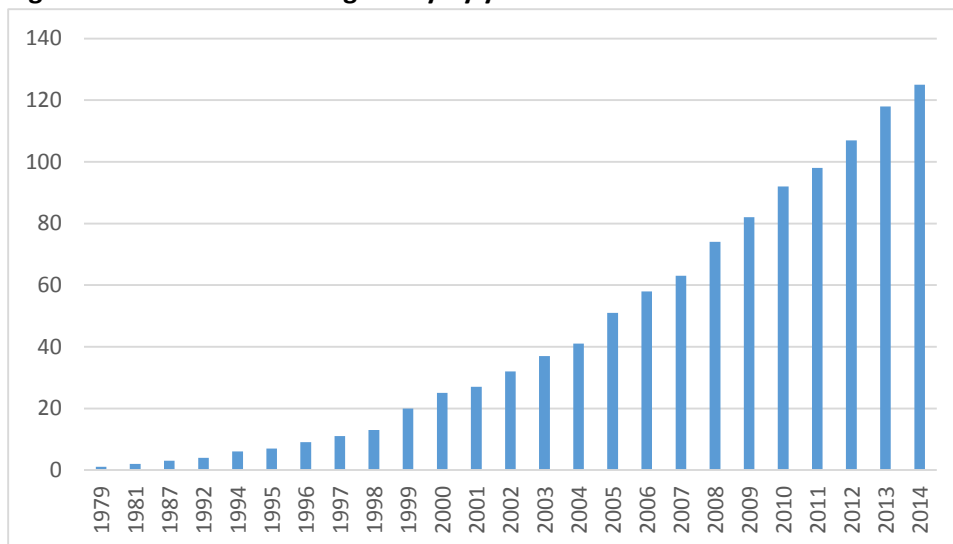
55. While addressing these challenges may help to facilitate the development of gender-responsive NEPSs, additional support may still be needed, particularly through advocacy, awareness-raising and strengthening of national evaluation capacity to undertake such evaluations. The engagement of VOPEs and parliamentarians' forums for evaluation could be instrumental in providing this.

Voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPEs)

56. VOPEs are defined as, “formally organized societies or associations, or, in some cases, informal networks; some at global and regional levels, many at national levels. Their members come from a variety of perspectives and organizations (including government, UN entities, academia, non-governmental organizations, private firms, etc.) that have a common interest in promoting the production and utilization of evaluation.”²⁰

57. In recent years, the number of VOPEs has increased significantly (see Figure 1), and collaboration and coordination between them has improved. They are strategic actors for national evaluation practice because they include such a wide range of evaluation professionals, constituting both the demand (evaluation commissioners) and supply (evaluators) side of the evaluation equation. This makes them crucial forums for dialogue, debate and action. VOPEs are becoming important stakeholders in gender-responsive NEPSs, and a number of VOPEs have begun to play a consultative role, both in providing technical expertise and in generating demand for evaluations.

²⁰ UNICEF, EvalPartners, IOCE in partnership with Cooperación Española, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, UNEG, and UN-Women, *Voluntary organizations for professional evaluation: Learning from Africa, Americas, Asia, Australasia, Europe and Middle East* (2013). Available online at: http://www.mymande.org/voluntary_organizations_for_professional_evaluation.

Figure 1. Number of VOPEs globally by year

Source: IOCE, 2015.

58. The review of documentation on VOPEs demonstrates a trend towards greater inclusion of gender-responsive evaluation as a priority issue within VOPEs at the global and regional level, evidenced by the increasing number of dedicated and active sub-groups focusing specifically on this issue. At the national level, however, information on the extent to which VOPEs have prioritized gender-responsive evaluation was more limited. There was no discernible trend, despite strong integration in some national VOPEs.

59. In the past, VOPE sub-groups dedicated to gender-responsive evaluation have concentrated their efforts mainly in the following three areas: (i) mainstreaming gender-responsive evaluation within VOPEs; (ii) gender-responsive evaluation capacity development; and (iii) advocacy for gender-responsive evaluation among evaluation commissioners.

60. As professional evaluation networks that reflect larger society, VOPEs themselves often require specialized efforts to **mainstream GEEW within their structures and operations**. In 2015, a *Guide to including a gender+ perspective in VOPEs* was developed through a collaboration facilitated by EvalPartners, between the Monitoring and Evaluation Network in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the European Evaluation Society. The guide provides VOPEs with a structured and comprehensive tool for conducting gender self-assessments organized around a set of questions related to three key areas: organizational structures, professionalization initiatives and advocacy initiatives. The assessment is meant to identify and prioritize areas of actions for individual VOPEs. Use of the guide can assist VOPEs in refining efforts in this area and also help to raise awareness among their membership through participation in the self-assessment process.

61. The majority of VOPEs manage **evaluation capacity development activities** and develop guidance and tools to improve the evaluation practice of their membership, including

gender-responsive evaluation. Many also have the added benefit of being tailored to regional or national contexts. A few examples of such initiatives include:

- i) The African Gender and Development Evaluators Network,²¹ which works to enhance the capacity of its members through the delivery of trainings and workshops, and the development of tools and guidance. It developed a toolkit on gender and human rights responsive monitoring and evaluation in 2012, and has organized training workshops in Anglophone and Francophone Africa.
- ii) The Community of Evaluators South Asia, which developed guidelines for gender-responsive evaluation and, most importantly, for gender-responsive NEPs that are cognizant of local contexts.
- iii) The EvalGender+ global online community of practice,²² managed by the Institute of Social Studies based in India, which unites 1,478 evaluators from all over the world to facilitate collective and individual learning and collaborations on gender-responsive evaluation.

62. With a growing interest in increasing the demand side for gender-responsive evaluation, a number of VOPEs have shifted their attention to **advocacy efforts** with commissioners of evaluation. The experience of the International Programme Evaluation Network is an illustrative example of the need for greater advocacy in this area. The network—a regional VOPE covering the Commonwealth of Independent States region—implemented an initiative to enhance the conduct of gender-responsive evaluation in nine countries. However, their efforts were mostly met with a lack of interest from evaluation commissioners. The experience highlighted the fact that initiatives that target evaluators alone are insufficient; they also need to target commissioners of evaluation in order for gender-responsive evaluation to be adopted in practice. The Community of Evaluators South Asia is now taking this approach forward and is working in close cooperation with parliamentarians and governments in the region to promote awareness on the need for gender-responsive evaluation. Such efforts will complement initiatives targeted towards evaluators.

63. Last but not least, there is a growing trend for VOPEs to implement initiatives in **partnership**. One such example is EvalPartners—the global partnership co-led by UN-Women and IOCE—that aims to “enhance the capacities of civil society organizations to engage in a strategic and meaningful manner in national evaluation processes, contributing to improved national evaluation systems and policies that are equity-focused and gender-responsive”.²³ Furthermore, in an effort to enhance partnerships and leverage the array of existing initiatives addressing gender-responsive evaluations undertaken by VOPEs and other actors, a new global partnership, EvalGender+, is being launched under the umbrella of EvalPartners. Its aim is to further strengthen the movement for gender-responsive evaluation by providing a platform for coordination, knowledge-sharing, networking and the development of common global initiatives among the 36 organizations that currently make up the network, which includes regional VOPEs, 16 UN entities and 2 multilateral banks.²⁴

²¹ Available online at: <http://www.agdenworld.org/>.

²² Available online at: <http://gendereval.ning.com/>.

²³ EvalPartners website: <http://mymande.org/evalpartners>.

²⁴ EvalGender+ website: <http://mymande.org/evalgender>.

Parliamentarians' forums for development evaluation

64. There has been growing recognition that increasing the conduct of national evaluation and its utility requires an increase in the demand for evaluative evidence by policymakers. To this end, a number of regional parliamentarians' forums for development evaluation have arisen. As the newest actors in national evaluation, such forums engage parliamentarians directly to strengthen demand for credible national evaluation and their use in policymaking.

65. These forums focus mainly on strengthening parliamentarians' understanding of, and role in, evaluation, as well as increasing country-driven demand for evaluation. They bring members together for discussion and dialogue. They are often organized in partnership with VOPEs, international organizations (including UN entities) and other similar regional forums, with the aim of promoting South-South exchange.

66. While most parliamentarians' forums are in their nascent stages, they have shown remarkable openness and engagement with gender-responsive evaluation issues. Further engagement with these groups by VOPEs and other interested parties could provide an important opportunity to strengthen their understanding of the need for: gender-responsive evaluation, the development of gender-responsive NEPSs, and the use of gender-responsive evaluation results to improve progress towards GEEW and broader sustainable development.

67. To date, there is one global and three regional forums, which are at different stages of development and vary in the extent to which they prioritize gender-responsive evaluation: the Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation in South Asia (PFDE),²⁵ launched in Sri Lanka in 2012; the African Parliamentarians Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE), launched in Cameroon in 2014; the Linking Evaluation to Decision-Making—Arab States Regional Parliamentarians' Initiative, launched in Jordan in 2014; and the Global Parliamentarian Forum for Evaluation, to be launched at the Parliament of Nepal in November 2015. These forums have focused on the following key activities to promote gender-responsive evaluation:

68. **Commitments in formal declarations and statements.** Parliamentarians' forums can create formal declarations and statements that explicitly include commitments to develop gender-responsive NEPs. In 2014, APNODE developed the Yaoundé Declaration of African Parliamentarians on Evaluation²⁶ that was signed by parliamentarians from seven countries (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda). The declaration committed them to developing a NEPS that ensures evaluations are “responsive to social, political, economic, gender equality, minorities and environmental concerns, in support of inclusive growth and greater development effectiveness” and that “both men and women parliamentarians are committed and engaged in this debate, and are demanding and making use of evaluative evidence”.

²⁵ Available online at: <http://www.pfde.net/>.

²⁶ EvalPartners, UN-Women, IOCE, UNEG, *National evaluation policies for sustainable and equitable development: How to integrate gender equality and social equity in national evaluation policies and systems* (2015). Available online at: [http://mymande.org/sites/default/files/files/NationalEvaluationPolicies_web-single-color\(1\).pdf](http://mymande.org/sites/default/files/files/NationalEvaluationPolicies_web-single-color(1).pdf).

69. **Integration in constitutional documents.** Inclusion of gender-responsive evaluation as a key objective or mission within forum constitutions or similar documents is another way to keep the commitment to gender-responsive evaluation central to their work. For example, the APNODE draft constitution contains not only a specific objective to “support parliaments in ensuring that evaluations at country level are responsive to concerns of gender equality, vulnerable groups, and equitable development results”, but also that its Executive Committee is gender balanced.

70. **Developing tailored resources.** The development of gender-responsive evaluation resources tailored to the specific needs of parliamentarians is a key opportunity provided by the creation of parliamentarians’ forums. For example, PFDE has developed case studies on gender-responsive NEPSs and a guidance note recommending concrete commitment from election candidates to demonstrate their support for developing a gender-responsive NEPS.

71. **South-South cooperation and knowledge-sharing.** Organizing regional consultations to facilitate South-South cooperation and knowledge-sharing among parliamentarians has been effective in raising the priority of gender-responsive evaluation on their agendas. In 2014, three such meetings took place: two at the regional level²⁷ and one at the global level. For example, a regional workshop brought together female parliamentarians from six countries in the Middle East and North Africa region to increase their commitment to engage in advocacy for advancing the institutionalization of evaluation in their countries. The workshop had a specific focus on the importance of ensuring that evaluations are equity-focused and gender-responsive as a means to determine if development outcomes reach vulnerable/disadvantaged groups. Another regional consultation on NEPs was organized by PFDE, focusing on how to integrate gender equality and social equity in NEPSs using a model gender-responsive NEP developed by EvalPartners and UN-Women.

Conclusions on gender-responsiveness of national evaluation systems

72. Despite the growing interest and number of actors involved in developing and strengthening gender-responsive national evaluation, there is still much work to be done in this area before formal and more comprehensive gender-responsive NEPSs are in place. However, the recent emphasis on the importance of NEPSs provides a unique opportunity to introduce and prioritize gender-responsive evaluation when developing NEPSs. This is an opportunity that VOPEs, parliamentarians’ forums and UN entities working on national evaluation capacity development have recognized and have been acting on, capitalizing on a number of opportunities to strengthen gender-responsive evaluation:

73. **First**, given that most NEPSs are still in the early stages of development, case studies or mappings that analyse NEPSs and/or their development processes have the potential to provide very useful information on experiences, challenges, lessons learned and good practices. The recent focus on specifically analysing the integration of GEEW in existing and emerging NEPSs by the PFDE and others is a welcome change from past studies that were silent on this issue.

²⁷ Available online at: <http://www.pfde.net/images/pdf/rcrv1.pdf>.

74. **Second**, coordinated and multi-stakeholder strategies are developing to support the integration of GEEW in NEPSs. Such strategies need to target evaluators, parliamentarians, VOPEs and gender advocates who can all contribute in important ways to gender-responsive NEPS.

75. **Third**, evaluations of national gender policies, strategies and plans—if prioritized and undertaken—would likely help strengthen integration of GEEW across all sectors by providing important learning and accountability for progress. It would also likely strengthen awareness for the need to evaluate the GEEW aspects of all national policies and programmes, thereby improving the evidence base on progress towards GEEW.

76. **Fourth**, while global and regional VOPEs have become increasingly active on gender-responsive evaluation, more information is needed on the level of integration among national VOPEs, whose prospects of influencing NEPSs and national evaluation may be the most tangible. Support to national VOPEs in countries where a NEPS is being developed could be crucial for introducing gender-responsive evaluation in a sustainable manner. This would complement and support the enhanced coordination and collaboration taking place among international and regional VOPEs.

77. **Fifth**, the different parliamentarians' forums for evaluation that are currently coalescing also need to be made more robust with more clearly defined key deliverables and outcomes. They present an important opportunity to advocate, and increase the demand and funding needed, for gender-responsive NEPS.

E. Overall conclusions and ways forward to strengthen gender-responsiveness of evaluation systems

78. During 2014-2015, the international community has been reflecting on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals and is now on the verge of adopting a more comprehensive set of sustainable development goals that attempts to incorporate the lessons learned from the past.

79. Gender equality and women's empowerment is set to continue as both a central and cross-cutting development goal in recognition of the fact that both women and men must benefit equally from future development initiatives and that there can be no sustainable development without gender equality.

80. As the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has shown, there is still much to be done if we are to eradicate gender inequality by 2030. Furthermore, the UN system as a whole has been asked to ensure it is fit for purpose for supporting the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, including through evaluation and assistance to national evaluation capacity development efforts.

81. Achieving this will require strengthening gender-responsive evaluation systems within the United Nations and among national governments. In recent years, significant efforts to strengthen capacities to demand, supply and use gender-responsive evaluation to inform policymaking has produced important results. UNEG has been mainstreaming gender-responsive evaluation in its normative guidance, institutional systems and the individual

capacities of UN evaluators. At the national level, more and more countries are developing and implementing NEPSs in collaboration with VOPEs, parliamentarians and other key stakeholders.

82. The increased attention and interest in gender-responsive evaluation, coupled with a growing number of different actors working on this issue, is a welcome and much needed development. However, more needs to be done if evaluation is to support the Beijing Declaration and post-2015 agenda.

83. There are many possibilities for cross collaboration and learning on gender-responsive evaluation (e.g., between UN entities, between UN entities and VOPEs, between VOPEs and NEPSs, and between NEPSs) and these should be further tapped to reap benefits. Additional coordination and collaboration of efforts is also needed to avoid unnecessary duplications and maximize potential impacts. The limited resources and capacities available should also be utilized strategically and initiatives such as EvalGender+ may be able to play a vital role in this regard.

84. UN-Women has a specific role in promoting and supporting gender-responsive evaluation within the UN system and among national evaluation systems. Working in close collaboration with partners and helping to facilitate linkages (i.e., acting as a hub), it should continue to respond to challenges emerging from the UN-SWAP EPI reporting analysis and requests from countries, while facilitating South-South cooperation and synergies among different stakeholders.

85. The global evaluation community, led by EvalPartners, has declared 2015 the 'International Year of Evaluation', with the aim of strengthening the enabling environment for gender-responsive evaluation and mainstreaming evaluation in the post-2015 agenda. However, gender-responsive evaluation remains a nascent priority. All stakeholders need to partner, as appropriate, to accelerate the process of prioritizing GEEW in national and organizational evaluation policies and systems.