



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

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Evaluation

Insights on organizational effectiveness and efficiency: A meta-synthesis of UN-Women evaluations

Summary

This report brings together evidence on the organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs of UN-Women based on 68 corporate and decentralized evaluations conducted between 2017 and 2019. In line with the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 the synthesis focuses on issues related to the Entity's United Nations coordination efforts, strategic partnerships, knowledge management, innovation, results-based management, streamlining of business processes and improvements in the management of financial and human resources. In addition to highlighting progress, the synthesis also captures commonly identified drivers of change in the form of good practices and innovation, as well as impediments.

The primary intended users of this meta-synthesis are the management of UN-Women, its Executive Board and its personnel at the global, regional and country levels.

¹ UNW/2020/L.4

Note: the present document was processed in its entirety by UN-Women.

I. Introduction

A. Purpose and scope

1. This synthesis contributes to the knowledge base and learning on organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs for the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021. It uses insights from UN-Women corporate and decentralized evaluations to highlight evidence-based results and drivers of change.
2. Given the specialized focus of this synthesis, a broad sample of evaluations was selected to provide sufficient context and capture any changes in approach during the period covered by the Strategic Plan. The scope of this synthesis covers all evaluations commissioned by UN-Women between 2018 and 2019, as well as corporate evaluations from 2017. Evaluations with a GERAAS² rating of fair and above were included, resulting in a total sample of 68 reports, with three evaluations conducted in 2017, 32 in 2018 and 33 in 2019 (see annex 1 for details).³
3. The sample comprises 53 country evaluations, nine global evaluations and six regional evaluations. It includes a broad range of evaluation types, the majority of which are programme or project evaluations (33). The sample also includes nine country portfolio evaluations, eight corporate evaluations, seven country thematic or policy evaluations, six regional thematic or programme evaluations and five joint evaluations.
4. The geographic coverage of the evaluation sample is well distributed. The highest number of evaluations are for the East and Southern Africa (ESA) and Arab States (AS) regions, each making up 19 per cent of the sample. This is followed by evaluations from the Americas and the Caribbean (AC) region (16 per cent), corporate evaluations (15 per cent), and evaluations from the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region (11 per cent). Finally, the Asia and the Pacific (AP), and West and Central Africa (WCA) regions each make up 10 per cent.

B. Approach and methodology

5. This meta-synthesis is theory-based and used an analytical framework to map the pathways of progress on organizational effectiveness and efficiency. It began by constructing a theory of implementation describing the approach of UN-Women using elements from the Strategic Plan and the accompanying Integrated Results and Resources Framework (see annex 2). This was then used to design a coding structure to analyse and map evaluation evidence.⁴
6. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to identify emerging trends and highlight good practices and impediments. The quantitative analysis assessed the strength of evidence on emerging insights and lessons by mapping relative frequencies and geographic coverage. The qualitative analysis used a structured synthesis with a view to refining trends, identifying common lessons and

² The Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) is a retrospective external assessment of UN-Women evaluation reports.

³ The language of most evaluation reports was English (50), followed by Spanish (11) and French (7).

⁴ The analysis used the NVivo qualitative and mixed methods data analysis software.

highlighting any innovative approaches to achieving the outputs. Given the focus on organizational effectiveness and efficiency, the analysis and findings were organized around the related four outputs of the UN-Women Strategic Plan.

C. Limitations

7. The analysis presented in this synthesis is based solely on a desk review of evidence from completed corporate and decentralized evaluations rated as good quality using the UN-Women evaluation quality standards. This limitation affects the composition and quality of the sample, although this is the same for previous evaluation syntheses. The broad scope of this exercise and its quality assurance process may mitigate this concern to some extent.

8. The focused nature of this synthesis also creates a risk in terms of the depth (or lack thereof) of evidence in the area of organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Additionally, the four outputs in this area may not be equally or sufficiently referenced in the evaluations, leading to further variations in the body of evidence. In light of this concern, the evaluation was designed to be as broad as possible and the final sample includes 68 evaluations, which are representative of all regions. The synthesis aims to be transparent about the depth of evidence, while also providing illustrative examples.

II. Findings on organizational effectiveness and efficiency

9. Coverage of the four outputs varies within the sample of evaluations. Table 1 shows that output 2, relating to the increased engagement of partners, is the most extensively covered, with significant findings related to this area in 65 of the 68 evaluations. Output 3, relating to knowledge, innovation, results-based management (RBM) and evaluation, and output 4, related to financial and human resource management, are covered by 64 and 61 evaluations, respectively. Output 1, related to enhanced coordination, has the lowest coverage, with significant findings related to this area appearing in 43 evaluations.⁵

10. Table 1: Coverage of organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs.

Output	n*	Frequency (N=68)
1. Enhanced coordination, coherence and accountability of the United Nations system for commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment	43	63%
2. Increased engagement of partners in support of the UN-Women mandate	65	95%
3. High quality of programmes through knowledge management, innovation, results-based management and evaluation	64	94%
4. Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results	61	92%

n* = Number of evaluations addressing this output

⁵ When describing the frequency with which an observation was noted, the synthesis is consistent with previous reports in using the following metric: Most = over 75 per cent of the evaluations contributing to an observation/finding; Many = between 51 per cent and 75 per cent; Some/Several = between 20 per cent and 50 per cent; Few = less than 20 per cent.

A. Output 1: Enhanced coordination, coherence and accountability of the United Nations system for commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment

Key findings

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

12. Progress towards achieving successful coordination within the United Nations system, particularly at the country level and in joint programming, is highlighted in many evaluations. UN-Women has also succeeded in strengthening programmes by partnering with other United Nations agencies to harness relative comparative advantages. Examples include leveraging in-country links of partner United Nations agencies, effective United Nations country team (UNCT) coordination and knowledge-sharing. Evidence of the success of UN-Women in leading the United Nations Gender Theme Groups is weaker, although evaluations in Liberia and South Sudan have found that UN-Women has contributed significantly to the UNCT through these groups.

13. To strengthen accountability, UN-Women has worked with other agencies and partners to develop measurement indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 5 and monitor progress towards results. Some evaluation reports also highlighted UN-Women technical support through training on gender mainstreaming.

Strengthening programmes through partnerships

14. Through its convening power, UN-Women brings together diverse UN stakeholders. Several evaluations have highlighted its ability to work effectively with partners to deliver stronger and more comprehensive programmes for beneficiaries. Effective coordination between UN-Women and other United Nations entities is a key factor in the delivery of successful programmes, especially for United Nations joint programming, and this is also noted in many evaluations. For instance, the evaluation of the joint programme on women's economic empowerment in Kyrgyzstan found that experts from FAO, WFP and IFAD worked together to combine efforts on normative and community work. This facilitated change at multiple levels by improving the social context and the individual capacities of rural women. Evaluations of joint programmes in Georgia and Ethiopia also noted that strong collaboration between UN-Women and other United Nations agencies was highly instrumental to achieving programme objectives.

Good practices

15. Two common good practices emerged as contributing factors to successful coordination. The first is clear roles and governance structures when working across agencies, particularly in the context of joint programmes. Strong programmes had well-functioning management committees and clearly defined responsibilities.

Partnerships with established governance frameworks and clearly defined management functions were associated with better results. For instance, the Bangladesh country portfolio evaluation shows that collaboration between ILO, IOM and UN-Women helped leverage the specific expertise and mandate of UN-Women to promote the recognition of gender issues and responses to them across mandates managed by other UN agencies. The second good practice is harnessing implementation synergies and leveraging the comparative advantages of partners. This allows joint programmes to build on ongoing or complementary initiatives and reduce operational costs while improving implementation efficiency.

Impediments

16. The most frequently identified risks to United Nations system coordination relate to a lack of streamlining of communication and implementation. For instance, UNCTs can have multiple channels of communication and relationships with the same agency due to differences in priorities and operations at the country level, causing inefficiency. For joint programmes, implementation delays can be compounded when each United Nations agency involved independently approaches the government for approvals. Some evaluations have also highlighted issues with the management and implementation of joint programmes due to a lack of clearly defined responsibilities. One of the reasons identified is the inadequacy of resources (human, financial and technical) allocated to coordination work.

B. Output 2: Increased engagement of partners in support of UN-Women's mandate

Key findings

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

18. Several evaluations highlighted the importance of engagement at the community level to support the ownership and sustainability of projects. For instance, in the Arab States region, the evaluation of the Community Based Solutions and National Level Grants for Promoting Gender Equality and Engaging Men and Boys in the Arab States initiative found that the involvement of community leaders and gatekeepers had a critical impact on community-level change. In terms of engaging a diverse range of partners, evaluations found that UN-Women has successfully engaged with faith-based organizations (e.g. in Egypt and Ethiopia), men and boys (e.g. in Morocco and Palestine) and youth (e.g. in Albania, Malawi and Mozambique).

19. Several evaluations found that UN-Women played a key role in building synergies among advocates for gender equality. This was especially true where the UN-Women country and regional strategies aligned with existing programmes, allowing it to support and complement the work of government and civil society

partners. This strategy encouraged high levels of national and local ownership of programmes, which increases the likelihood that they will be sustained beyond the engagement of UN-Women.

Successful engagement with government

20. Strong and inclusive partnerships between UN-Women and government institutions at the municipal and national levels are a key success factor in advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. UN-Women has shown its expertise in engaging and coordinating with relevant government bodies for capacity-building and enabling them to take ownership of projects. Several evaluations noted the success of UN-Women in bringing together different government entities to strengthen project implementation and reduce duplication of efforts. For instance, working closely with the National Council for Women in Egypt, UN-Women supported efforts to develop the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women and Girls and protocols to ensure the commitment of the Government of Egypt to "respect women's rights and encourage their effective and active participation in the development of their community."

Private sector engagement

21. While not as widely documented as CSO and government engagement, some evaluations found positive impacts from engagement with private sector partners. This was especially true for women's economic empowerment. Coordination with the private sector led to advocacy on women's economic issues, skills training based on private sector demand and improved access to lines of credit for women. For instance, successful engagement with the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry through a United Nations joint programme led to further advocacy for gender equality in lending practices and the implementation of reforms in investment and insurance policies affecting women entrepreneurs. Strategic partnerships with digital or media-based private sector institutions (e.g. in Sierra Leone) have also helped promote the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda, empowering media personnel to recognize and report on gender-related issues.

Good practices

22. The evaluation reports highlighted several good practices that enhance the recognition of UN-Women interventions and amplify impact. The identification and selection of strong local partners was found to make a significant contribution to the success of gender equality initiatives. These partners included economic entities such as cooperatives and community banks, government ministries with high levels of interest and commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, and active CSOs with extensive local connections. Strong partners from the public and private sectors add significant value by contributing their expertise in implementing women's social, political and economic empowerment activities. UN-Women can support these capacities with its own organizational strengths and use the local connections of partners to create spaces for dialogue and increase community-level engagement.

23. Several evaluations also noted the importance of efforts by UN-Women at capacity-building for partners. Examples included strengthening financial

management of CSOs, training partners on monitoring and report writing, training government officials on mainstreaming gender-responsive planning and budgeting, training on issues and standards for protection from gender-based violence and domestic abuse, and training women politicians to develop leadership and networking skills. Capacity-building by UN-Women fosters ownership and sustainability of project activities and increases the influence and credibility of implementing partners.

24. Another factor identified across the evaluation sample was strengthening multi-stakeholder networks of gender equality advocates. These networks, which encompass gender equality actors from government, civil society and, more recently, the private sector, expand the perspective and possible scope of actions for programmes. Alliances built through UN-Women encourage knowledge-sharing, programme coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders.

Impediments

25. While UN-Women partnership engagement has been relatively successful in achieving the objectives and expected results of interventions, many evaluations identified common risks to successful engagement with outside actors.

26. Inadequate outreach and weak coordination with partners were reported in several evaluation reports. Reasons for this included a lack of understanding among partners of overall programmatic strategies, limited participatory planning due to short time frames, lack of regular exchange of information and an absence of clarity in partners' roles and responsibilities.

27. Weak partner capacity was also identified as an impediment, with several evaluations recommending more support to build capacity, especially in knowledge management (disaggregation of data and timely and quality reporting), gender mainstreaming within organizations and monitoring and evaluation strategies. The staff turnover of partners at both the federal and regional levels was also reported as a limitation in some evaluations. CSOs remain vulnerable to knowledge gaps due to the loss of key staff and leaders, while staff turnover after changes of government and the lack of multi-year funding mechanisms can pose serious risks to programme sustainability.

C. Output 3: High quality of programmes through knowledge management, innovation, results-based management and evaluation

Key findings

28. Identifying key solutions that benefit women and girls requires developing and disseminating knowledge products, generating accurate gender-disaggregated data, using RBM and committing to the use of evaluation and other assessment findings. Several evaluation reports found evidence of well-designed, responsive programmes that supported adaptation and learning. To create programmes relevant to the needs of beneficiaries, UN-Women relies on situational analyses and field research conducted prior to programme implementation, as well as the incorporation of lessons learned from past evaluations and other assessments to improve performance. The Entity would benefit from requiring these success factors to be considered for all programmes and projects in its revised project cycle framework. This would make

UN-Women better able to identify data-related challenges in various contexts to guide planning, capacity-building and monitoring activities.

Generation and use of knowledge products

29. The UN-Women knowledge platform and products help to identify strategic priorities and provide updated gender statistics and data. Several evaluations highlighted success in strengthening gender data and disseminating evidence from knowledge products. Once made available to stakeholders and decision-making authorities, these products can inform national responses to gender-related issues, contribute to increased commitment from partners and provide a foundation for dialogue on issues affecting women and girls. For instance, knowledge products were developed and used from the initial phase for the Safe Cities programme in Ecuador. This facilitated co-learning through exchanges of experience between participating cities. An excellent example of co-learning was the establishment of the baseline survey and creation of the Index of Sexual Violence in Public Spaces, which provided important georeferenced data.

30. UN-Women has successfully provided technical support to partners for the development of digital databases and information management systems, particularly for violence against women and girls and women's empowerment (e.g. in Colombia, Ethiopia, Malawi and Serbia). Prioritizing and scaling up this practice presents an opportunity to address existing knowledge gaps related to gender-disaggregated data.

Results-based management

31. Improving capacities on gender-responsive RBM continues to be a priority area for UN-Women. While several evaluations indicated a strengthening of UN-Women RBM systems over time, there is room for improvement. Implementation of these systems is most successful when accompanied by a logical framework or theory of change that is closely aligned with the objectives, expected results and outputs. Evaluations highlighted the importance of developing a strong theory of change by engaging multiple stakeholders and using a participatory process (e.g. in Liberia, South Sudan and Syria).

32. A few evaluation reports highlighted that UN-Women country offices are committed to applying RBM systems at an early stage of project development and in all phases of project implementation. There is consistent effort to ensure offices have sufficient RBM capacity and systems. However, capacities are stretched and not all personnel use or interpret RBM correctly. Evaluations also indicate that while the RBM training provided to partners is seen as valuable and useful, it requires continuous follow-up for partners to fully adopt RBM systems and approaches. Partners were found to take greater ownership of the RBM approach when it was applied in an adaptive manner, allowing them to make adjustments in response to challenges and new priorities. However, as part of effective risk management, these adjustments should be agreed between all stakeholders to ensure interventions remain accountable and cost-effective.

33. Regarding the UN-Women Results Management System, some evaluations highlighted challenges in using the system to retrieve and report accurate information on expenditure and outcome-level results. For instance, the Corporate Evaluation of

Humanitarian Action found the system was unable to fully capture the overall contribution of UN-Women in this area due to a misalignment of reporting categories. Similarly, the Asia Pacific Programme Presence Portfolio Evaluation found the system was not effectively capturing the results achieved by programme presence offices.

Monitoring and evaluation

34. Many evaluation reports found that UN-Women has been engaged in efforts to build internal and external monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity. There is evidence that UN-Women has worked to improve M&E by clarifying definitions of outcomes and outputs, and explicitly defining measurable indicators and targets. As highlighted in the evaluation of the joint programme on women's economic empowerment in Ethiopia, clear and understandable indicators and targets facilitate effective M&E by stakeholders and encourage compliance with reporting standards. The integration of specialized personnel, the use of in-house experts from regional offices and headquarters and the hiring of external M&E consultants have also proven beneficial in developing monitoring strategies.

35. Another successful strategy used by UN-Women is the establishment of accountability mechanisms and the strengthening of project oversight bodies. Project oversight bodies with representatives from different groups of stakeholders support monitoring by meeting regularly to discuss strategic partnerships for improving efficiency. Stakeholders also share information on gender data, plan activities such as field missions and disseminate reports and knowledge products. For instance, evaluations in El Salvador (the UN-Women Ciudad Mujer project) and Kyrgyzstan (the Livelihoods project) highlighted the critical importance of regular technical committee and council meetings to discuss progress and activities.

Good practices

36. Several evaluations highlighted good practices for monitoring and knowledge management. The first is the contribution of UN-Women to the development of innovative knowledge platforms which, for example, have facilitated South–South exchange and dialogue between CSOs and government. UN-Women knowledge management platforms provide a safe space to exchange lessons learned and good practices for advancing gender equality. The evaluation of the Inclusive Security project in Liberia found that UN-Women facilitated South–South exchange with a delegation from Mali, which was reported as being useful and having an impact on women operating in the security and justice sectors in Liberia.

37. Another good practice that emerged is the innovative approaches to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of monitoring mechanisms. These included the implementation of an adaptive approach to M&E. This allows responsive management, which helps to address the challenges of operating in complex institutional and political environments. These adaptations included online/real-time monitoring mechanisms (e.g. peace support operations in Kenya), gender-specific early warning and elections monitoring tools (e.g. in Sierra Leone), learning-oriented M&E (e.g. the Safe Cities programme in Papua New Guinea) and the use of the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system as a knowledge management platform to facilitate the use of evaluation findings.

Impediments

38. Many evaluations highlighted risks and impediments related to knowledge management and RBM. These fell into three main categories: inadequate M&E, limited availability and validation of monitoring data, and inadequate use of results management frameworks.

39. Inadequate M&E is often a result of weak output-level indicators. Some evaluations (e.g. in Colombia, Ecuador and Serbia) highlighted issues such as too many indicators leading to technical complications, the use of incomplete indicators and a lack of identification of measurable indicators. Weaknesses in the design and use of M&E systems can also be attributed to low budget allocations for these activities and inadequate human and financial resources. Offices may not always have designated M&E personnel or effective monitoring frameworks to ensure that progress on indicators is captured, validated and reported in a timely way.

40. Limited availability and validation of monitoring data also emerged as a recurring issue. Some evaluations cited a lack of capacity among partners to establish mechanisms to systematically capture and validate data. A lack of good baseline data was also reported in some evaluations. In some cases, implementation delays also contributed to the limited availability of monitoring data and gender-disaggregated data was underused.

41. Inadequate use of monitoring frameworks was cited in several evaluation reports. This could stem from a lack of clear roles and accountability for data collection and validation. Moreover, monitoring frameworks are not always detailed enough to integrate and coordinate stakeholders' monitoring efforts. For instance, the evaluation of the Preventing Violence against Women and Girls initiative in Ethiopia found that, despite the inclusion of a results framework in the programme document, this was not used to guide monitoring and evaluation. Many of the accompanying indicators were not measured due to a lack of data. The evaluation of the #NoEsDeHombres campaign against sexual harassment in Mexico noted that the programme would have benefited from a results framework with quantitative and qualitative indicators tailored to the different implementation methods and phases of the programme.

D. Output 4: Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results**Key findings**

42. Many evaluations reported efficiency in the use and management of funds to be satisfactory. UN-Women offices were found to allocate resources responsively and efficiently. In some cases, projects were able to reach more beneficiaries than originally planned. For instance, the Livelihoods through Participation and Equal Access to Water programme in Kyrgyzstan was able to learn from other successful models in the country and strategically allocate resources to exceed targets.

43. In terms of human resources, many evaluations highlighted the value of the experienced and committed personnel of UN-Women in managing demanding workloads. Other factors such as the supportive and responsive management of UN-

Women and efforts to remove operational bottlenecks were also identified as contributing to overall improvements. For instance, the Preventing and Responding to Violence against Women and Girls programme in Ethiopia achieved its outputs as a result of a well-managed implementation. This is especially significant because the targets were ambitious relative to the available funding and staffing.

44. Key evidence gaps for this output emerged around fundraising and donor management, with very few evaluations referencing these issues.

Efficient use and management of funds

45. Several evaluations highlighted the efficient use of limited funds to achieve intended outcomes. UN Women improved operational efficiency by streamlining systems and leveraging the operational capacities of other United Nations agencies, where possible. For instance, the reporting model of the Fund for Gender Equality lowered reporting costs by coordinating annual reports for multiple donors. This method could be used more widely to efficiently channel multiple, smaller contributions. UN-Women was also able to co-locate with United Nations partners in some countries (e.g. in Bhutan, Burundi and Maldives) to save on operational costs.

Good practices

46. Two good practices emerged as commonly contributing to the improved management of human and financial resources. The first is the creation of multi-donor coalitions and pooled funding to support UN-Women interventions. For instance, UN Women was able to establish a multi-donor pooled fund to support the development and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security programme in the Arab States through advocacy and engagement with a diverse group of donors. The pooled fund allowed for increased collaboration among donors, highlighting the effectiveness of UN-Women in securing funds and generating donor support. Pooled funds also allow for the participation of non-traditional donors by attracting and accepting smaller contributions that can be combined with a larger pool.

47. Providing financial training to implementing partners was highlighted as another good practice in several evaluations. Training helps ensure the efficient management of resources through the entire life cycle of interventions. Manuals were also developed to help partners understand UN-Women policies, procedures and guidelines. In addition to training, providing continuous oversight and support to partners in financial management strengthens partner relationships and facilitates open and frequent communication. It also serves as an accountability mechanism to ensure financial resources are used efficiently. This capacity strengthening could be conducted either online or via in-person training (where appropriate given current conditions) for partner staff.

Impediments

48. The most commonly highlighted risk was insufficient financial resources, limiting the scope, effectiveness and impact of UN-Women interventions. Another factor that impedes the efficient management of financial resources was uncoordinated resource mobilization efforts. For instance, a few evaluations

highlighted inconsistency in the mechanisms used by partners to mobilize resources. Some evaluations raised concerns about sustainability due to short funding cycles (e.g. the peacebuilding fund in Papua New Guinea and the Hemayati programme in Jordan). Evaluations also highlighted delays from tranche payments and internal processes (e.g. in Bangladesh, Iraq and Mozambique).

49. Risks related to human resources were predominantly linked to inadequate staffing and in-country expertise. Evaluations highlighted high turnover rates for technical personnel, the lack of continuity in management, delays in recruitment and vacancies in key positions, all leading to staff overload. Some evaluations also noted that programmes lacked any form of cost–benefit or cost-efficiency analysis, either due to data constraints or insufficient resources.

III. Opportunities and the way forward

50. This meta-synthesis summarizes evidence on issues related to organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Future assessments by the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service, including the forthcoming evaluation of flagship programme initiatives, country portfolio evaluations and internal audits will continue to analyse these aspects in more detail. The following opportunities related to organizational effectiveness and efficiency have been identified based on current evidence from the analysis of evaluation reports.

Strengthen organization-wide learning and ensure a broader application of lessons from previous successes with United Nations coordination

51. The ability of UN-Women to coordinate and mainstream gender within the United Nations system is widely acknowledged as one of its key strengths. UN-Women has experience successfully collaborating with partner agencies and has helped smooth the implementation of joint programmes (and other collaborative projects) in many countries and contexts. This is a good opportunity for organization-wide learning and a broader application of lessons from previous engagements, including fostering effective and consultative management systems, strengthening effective and participatory stakeholder engagement, leveraging in-country links with partner agencies to garner local support, reducing operational costs through coordination on complementary interventions, ensuring sufficient resources for coordination work and strengthening the culture of collaborative work. UN-Women should continue to draw on its key assets for United Nations coordination, including its unique mandate focused on gender equality and women’s empowerment and its access to networks (such as women’s groups and national gender machineries). At the UNCT level, UN Women should continue to strengthen coordination and contribute to the coherence of programmes (particularly joint programming), avoid duplication of efforts by multiple United Nations agencies, improve integration with flagship programme initiatives and the thematic priorities of the strategic plan, and ensure better articulation of the roles and contributions of different gender working groups including the Gender Theme Groups.

Enhance partnership governance and engagement frameworks to foster strong partnerships and build on existing local relationships

52. UN Women aims to foster diverse strategic and catalytic partnerships in support of its mandate. One of the key risks to successful partnerships is a lack of coordination among partners. Partnerships with less engaged actors lead to issues such as overlapping activities, weak accountability and implementation delays that require time and resources from UN Women to resolve. This suggests an opportunity to develop partnership strategies that avoid these pitfalls by explicitly defining roles and responsibilities, using participatory consultative approaches and aligning with existing programmes where possible. UN Women should continue to use a flexible approach to engagement when working with strong local partners and build on existing relationships.

Further strengthen partner networks and expand outreach to include diverse actors and donors

53. UN-Women has shown its expertise in bringing together diverse stakeholders to comprehensively and efficiently address issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The capacity to coordinate between partners such as government ministries, CSOs, and, more recently, the private sector, is widely recognized as one of the key comparative advantages of UN-Women. It can build effective alliances that bring stakeholders together and encourage knowledge-sharing, coordination and cooperation among partners. UN-Women has also successfully brought together donors by encouraging pooled or joint funding mechanisms. Pooled funds increase collaboration among donors and allow a wider range of smaller donors to contribute and engage with programming. Pooled funds can also support programmes that are longer, more sustainable and more flexible, increasing their potential to have transformational effects.

Improve the effectiveness of monitoring systems and strengthen institutional mechanisms for results-based management, learning and planning

54. UN-Women should continue to work on enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and application of its M&E systems. This includes initiatives such as improving the clarity and measurability of project indicators, standardizing indicators and monitoring where possible, ensuring development of clear theories of change, establishing project management principles, embedding risk management, establishing clear guidelines for project closures and incorporating innovative monitoring approaches that are responsive to institutional and political environments. Accountability mechanisms for RBM, including comprehensive project management systems and improved data quality, should be strengthened to encourage regular M&E of project activities. The dedicated personnel of UN-Women are recognized as one of its key assets and it should continue to foster internal sharing of knowledge and experiences. There is also an opportunity to adapt reporting systems (including the Results Management System) to improve alignment with outcome and country-level results and enhance learning by fully capturing progress and challenges.

Intensify efforts to strengthen gender databases and knowledge platforms

55. The UN-Women website is a point of entry for external organizations to gather data and develop awareness-raising materials to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. UN-Women can augment and leverage the development of digital databases of gender-disaggregated data (including Women Count) at the global

and local levels. UN-Women should continue to provide technical support to external partners to develop gender-disaggregated databases and encourage gender-disaggregated baseline data collection. The UN-Women knowledge management platforms provide a space to share lessons and best practices to advance gender equality and should be strengthened to support knowledge-sharing and evidence-based advocacy on issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Continue to address key constraints on financial and human resources through prioritization, resource mobilization and improved efficacy of business processes

56. Lack of funds remains a key challenge for UN-Women. The Entity should continue to strategically prioritize and protect key work areas from vulnerabilities caused by reliance on non-core funding, changes in donor priorities and short funding cycles. In terms of resource mobilization, UN-Women should build on its efforts to improve coordination and strengthen mechanisms such as pooled funding, multi-year funding, partnerships with the private sector and flagship programming initiatives. Flagship programming initiatives, which seek funding at a strategic level, have contributed to UN-Women unearmarked funds, and should be developed further.

57. UN-Women is currently carrying out a change management process and functional analysis of various offices. Given the varying needs by region and country, the Entity should ensure resourcing is responsive to individual contexts and maintain staff continuity insofar as possible at the country level. UN-Women should also continue to streamline internal business processes and take steps towards addressing commonly identified causes of delays and risks.

IV. Annex 1: List of evaluations covered by the meta-synthesis

Region	Office/ Division	Title of Evaluation	Year of Publication	Report Quality Rating
Americas and the Caribbean (AC)	Colombia	Mid Term Evaluation of the Programme: Overcoming Gender-Based Violence to Ensure Women’s Full Enjoyment of Rights	2018	Very good
	Colombia	Final Evaluation Sweden Project: Women’s Citizenship for Peace, Justice and Development	2018	Good
	Ecuador	Evaluación de proceso del proyecto “Fortalecimiento de la capacidad de resiliencia en paramo y el mejoramiento de la posición y condición de las mujeres”	2018	Fair
	Ecuador	Evaluación del proyecto “Mujeres liderando el desarrollo inclusivo sostenible de la provincia de Loja”	2018	Good
	El Salvador	Evaluación final del proyecto: “Ciudad Mujer/ONU Mujeres”	2018	Good
	Mexico	Evaluation of the Safe Cities Campaign #noesdehombres	2018	Very good
	Panama	Regional evaluation on norms and standards for gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE)	2018	Very good
	Bolivia	Alianzas estratégicas para la igualdad de género y el empoderamiento de las mujeres en Bolivia 2014–2017	2019	Good
	Ecuador	Evaluación de impacto del programa: “Quito ciudad segura para las mujeres y las niñas”	2019	Fair
	Guatemala	Country Portfolio Evaluation	2019	Very good
	Mexico	Final Evaluation of the Mexico Strategic Note 2014–2019	2019	Good
Arab States (AS)	Egypt	Evaluation of UN-Women Economic Opportunities Work under LEAP/HA	2018	Good
	Egypt	Final Evaluation of the Securing Rights and Improving Livelihoods of Women Project	2018	Good

Region	Office/ Division	Title of Evaluation	Year of Publication	Report Quality Rating
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	Egypt	Final Evaluation of Promoting Women's Employment by Creating Safe and Women-Friendly Workplaces Programme (Women's Employment Promotion Programme – WEPP)	2018	Good
	Jordan	Women, Peace and Security in the Arab States – Final Independent Evaluation	2018	Good
	Morocco	Evaluation of the Partnership between Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Local Governments and UN-Women	2018	Very good
	Egypt	Formative Evaluation of Community and National Level Actions for Promoting Gender Equality and Engaging Men and Boys	2019	Very good
	Jordan	Final Project Evaluation for Eid bi Eid Project Phase I and II	2019	Good
	Jordan	Hemayati: promoting women and girls' health and well-being	2019	Very good
	Jordan	Evaluation of the National Strategy for Women and a Situational Analysis of Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Jordan (2013–2017)	2019	Fair
	Morocco	Appui à l'autonomisation économique des femmes à travers la promotion de la chaîne de valeur agro écologique pour une meilleure résilience au changement climatique	2019	Good
	Multi-Country Office for the Maghreb (Morocco)	Accès aux services judiciaires pour des femmes et des enfants victimes de la traite des êtres humains au Maroc II	2019	Fair
	Palestine	Final Evaluation of the “Advancing the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the oPt”	2019	Good
	Regional Office for the Arab States (Egypt)	Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process – Building a Homegrown Constituency for Peace Programme	2019	Good
	Bangladesh	Final Evaluation of the Project Titled “Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women”	2018	Good
	Thailand	Final Evaluation – Regional Project “Preventing Exploitation of Women Migrant Workers”	2018	Good

Region	Office/ Division	Title of Evaluation	Year of Publication	Report Quality Rating
East and Southern Africa (ESA)	Bangladesh	Country Portfolio Evaluation	2019	Very good
	Nepal	Thematic Evaluation of Women's Economic Empowerment (AWEE and FWW) Programme	2019	Very good
	Papua New Guinea	Impact Evaluation of the Safe Cities and Safe Public Transport Programme	2019	Very good
	Papua New Guinea	PNG Country Portfolio Evaluation	2019	Good
	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Thailand)	Regional Office Programme Presence Portfolio Evaluation	2019	Very good
	Burundi	Burundi Country Portfolio Evaluation	2018	Very good
	Ethiopia	End Evaluation of "Preventing and Responding to Violence against Women and Girls in Ethiopia" Programme	2018	Good
	Kenya	Final Project Evaluation – Engaging Women in Preventing and Countering Extremist Violence in Kenya	2018	Good
	Kenya	Kenya Country Strategy Final Evaluation	2018	Good
	Mozambique	Mid Term Evaluation of the WEE BE Funded Project in Gaza Province	2018	Good
	Rwanda	Final Evaluation of the Joint Programme "Advancing and Sustaining Gender Equality Gains in Rwanda"	2018	Very good
	Rwanda	UN-Women Rwanda Country Portfolio Evaluation 2014–2018	2018	Good
	South Sudan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	2018	Very good

Region	Office/ Division	Title of Evaluation	Year of Publication	Report Quality Rating
Europe and Central Asia (ECA)	Ethiopia	Evaluation of Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE)	2019	Very good
	Kenya	Project Evaluation – Integrating Gender in Peace Support Operations	2019	Fair
	Malawi	Mid Term Evaluation for the Women Empowerment Programme	2019	Good
	Mozambique	Final Evaluation of the WEE Gaza Project	2019	Fair
	Zimbabwe	Final Evaluation Zimbabwe Gender Peace and Security Programme	2019	Fair
	Albania	Thematic Evaluation of Women’s Political Empowerment (SN Outcome 1)	2018	Good
	Kyrgyzstan	Joint Programme on: Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP-RWEE)	2018	Very good
	Kyrgyzstan	Livelihoods through Participation and Equal Access to Water	2018	Good
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Final Evaluation of the Project “Standards and Engagement for Ending Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2016–2019)”	2019	Fair
	Georgia	Mid-Term Evaluation of UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality	2019	Very good
	Serbia	Evaluation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016–2018	2019	Good
	Ukraine	Mid-Term Evaluation of the Project “Gender Equality at the Centre of Reforms, Peace and Security”, Funded by the Government of Sweden	2019	Good

Region	Office/ Division	Title of Evaluation	Year of Publication	Report Quality Rating	
Headquarters	Fund for Gender Equality	Independent evaluation of UN-Women's Fund for Gender Equality (2009–2017)	2018	Very good	
	Policy Division	Final Evaluation of the Knowledge Gateway on Women's Economic Empowerment Project (Empower Women)	2018	Very good	
Independent Evaluation Service (IES)	IES	What Can We Learn from UN-Women Evaluations? A Meta-Analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN-Women in 2016	2017	Not rated	
	IES	Evaluation of UN-Women Regional Architecture	2017	Very good	
	IES	Evaluation of UN-women Strategic Partnerships on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	2017	Very good	
	IES	UN-Women's Contribution to Women's Political Participation and Leadership	2018	Very good	
	IES	Reflections on Change. Meta-Analysis: Findings and Lessons from Evaluations Managed by UN-Women in 2017	2018	Not rated	
	IES	Meta-Synthesis of UN-Women Evaluations 2017/2018	2019	Not rated	
	IES	Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning	2019	Very good	
	IES	Corporate Thematic Evaluation: UN-Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action	2019	Very good	
	West and Central Africa (WCA)	Cameroon	Prise en charge adéquate des femmes victimes de violences dans la région de l'extrême nord	2018	Good
		Liberia	Country Portfolio Evaluation	2018	Very good
Mali		L'évaluation finale du projet « projet d'amélioration de l'accès des femmes victimes de violences sexuelles et basées à la justice et à la sécurité dans le processus de consolidation de la paix au Mali »	2018	Fair	
Liberia		Evaluation Inclusive Security Project	2019	Good	

Region	Office/ Division	Title of Evaluation	Year of Publication	Report Quality Rating
	Mali	Evaluation de la note stratégique d'ONU Femmes Mali 2014–2019	2019	Good
	Regional Office for West and Central Africa (Senegal)	Knowledge Management Evaluation	2019	Fair
	Sierra Leone	Improving Women Participation as Peacebuilding Ambassadors	2019	Good

V. Annex 2: Theory of implementation

As identified in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, the UN-Women key development outcomes are aligned with the Entity's three functions (normative support functions, United Nations coordination and operational activities). The five development outcomes are:

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

The Integrated Results and Resources Framework sets out the results and metrics for measuring progress made by UN-Women towards development outcomes and ultimately impact. The supportive organizational outputs are:

- Enhanced coordination, coherence and accountability of the United Nations system commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Increased engagement of partners in support of UN-Women's mandate.
- The high quality of programmes through knowledge management, innovation, RBM and evaluation.
- Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results.

UN-Women ensures implementation is faithful to these outputs by monitoring inputs that reinforce each other. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the implementation architecture and broader environment in which UN-Women operates.

Figure 1: Theory of implementation for the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 Integrated Results and Resources Framework

