



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

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Evaluation

**What can we learn from UN-Women evaluations?
A meta-synthesis of evaluations managed by UN-Women**

Summary

This report is the first synthesis for the current UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021. It draws on the evaluation of programmes and interventions designed and implemented during the previous UN-Women Strategic Plan 2014–2017 cycle. The results achieved and reported contribute to the current strategic plan outcomes and are expected to provide insights for its implementation and the forthcoming mid-term review.

This meta-synthesis reviewed and aggregated insights and lessons from 39 evaluation reports against selected development and organizational effectiveness and efficiency criteria. The synthesis also captured internal and external enablers that are reported to drive or impede progress.

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

I. Purpose and scope

1. The purpose of this meta-synthesis is to contribute to organizational learning and effective knowledge management through the aggregation of recurring findings, lessons learned and evidence on the key areas of work of UN-Women.
2. The meta-synthesis is based on 39 evaluation reports (31 evaluations completed in 2018 and eight country portfolio evaluations completed in 2017). All evaluations included in the synthesis were externally rated as satisfactory or better quality according to UN-Women evaluation quality standards. The eight country portfolio evaluations completed in 2017 were included to broaden the evidence base for meaningful analysis of UN-Women's integrated mandate. The evaluations largely covered programming supported by UN-Women between 2014 and 2018. The evaluation reports covered UN-Women programming in 80 countries. The range of evaluations helps to provide insights about various contexts and the scale of UN-Women's normative, coordination and operational responses.

II. Approach and methodology

3. The approach to this synthesis builds on previous meta-analyses, though the analytical framework has been revised by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS). The revised framework seeks to reflect UN-Women's institutional growth and maturity, and current strategic plan priorities.
4. The synthesis involved both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative assessment analysed the frequency of which evaluation findings referred to positive or negative performance with reference to relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency, the culture of results and the respective subcriteria. The findings of 15 subcriteria were rated using the following scale: "highly satisfactory", "satisfactory", "unsatisfactory" and "highly unsatisfactory". The qualitative analysis included a structured synthesis of high-level drivers, both internal and external, that are reported to enable or hinder UN-Women performance.
5. However, the depth of the analysis on certain themes was contingent upon coverage, clarity and the strength of evidence available in the body of the evaluation reports. The frequency with which issues are mentioned in the body of evaluations is reflected in the use of the terms "most", "many", "some" and "few".

Frequency of observations

Most	Over 75 per cent of the evaluation for which the subcriterion was covered
Many	Between 51 and 75 per cent
Some	Between 20 and 50 per cent
Few	Less than 20 per cent

III. Limitations

6. As with any meta-synthesis, there were some methodological challenges. Specific limitations included: a) that the synthesis was based solely on a desk review of evaluation reports; b) the retrospective nature of the meta-synthesis and the fact that all programmes and/or projects evaluated were designed and

implemented before the current strategic plan came into force; c) the challenges of aggregating results for diverse programming and evaluations; and d) more representation of some regions due to the higher number of evaluations completed in those regions during the period under review.

7. Nonetheless, the meta-synthesis covers a substantial number of evaluations of UN-Women programming (39) and reflects a consistent application of a common set of assessment criteria and subcriteria and the judgment of the original evaluation report. In recognition of these judgments, the report aims to be transparent about the prevalence of particular issues and identifies where there is a higher or lower degree of certainty in the findings.

IV. Main insights

Overarching conclusion

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

8. Notwithstanding constraining financial and human resources, UN-Women has been able to leverage its institutional expertise and integrated mandate to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. Despite relatively limited resources, there is growing recognition that UN-Women has contributed to a stronger enabling environment to support both issues. UN-Women’s strategic partnerships have, to a great extent, led to important results particularly in its normative work. Although they are not of a large scale, programmatic interventions supported by UN-Women have yielded positive changes in many women’s lives. UN-Women has also achieved key results in greater prioritization and coordination of gender equality and women’s empowerment related issues in the United Nations development system.

Table 1: Coverage and performance of development effectiveness criteria¹

Criteria	n*	Coverage Level†	Satisfactory Ratings (%)‡
Relevance	37	Strong	97%
Effectiveness	34	Strong	90%
Efficiency	32	Strong	70%
Results-based management/Culture of results	34	Strong	48%
Sustainability	37	Strong	87%

¹ The level of coverage for each criterion is qualified based on the proportion of reports that included findings that relate to the specific criterion. The percentage of satisfactory ratings is based on what those findings say about UN-Women’s performance according to the standard rubric presented.

* n = number of evaluations addressing the given criterion.

† Strong: n = 31–39; Moderate: n = 16–30; Weak: n = <15.

‡ The percentage of satisfactory rating is based on positive findings reported in the evaluations.

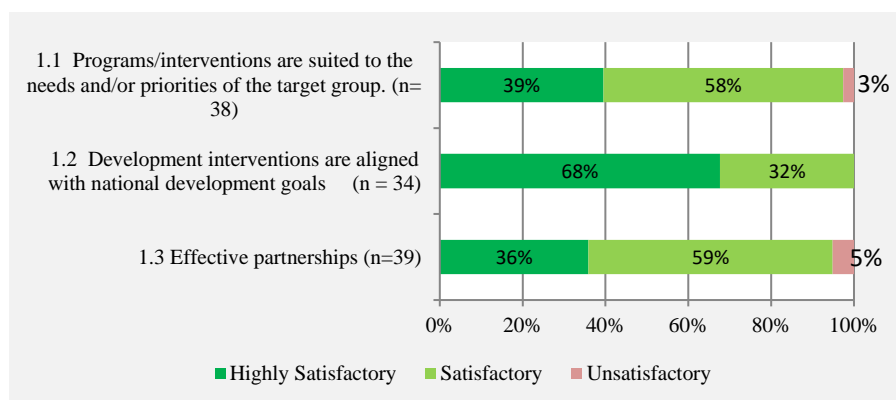
9. However, evaluations stressed the need for increased attention to protecting and sustaining policy gains and further transforming normative gains into operational results. Evaluations have also made a strong case to expand and deepen the focus on social norm change more coherently and consistently within programmes and Strategic Notes. The relative efficiency and fitness for purpose of the results-based and knowledge management mechanisms and processes could be further improved to better gather evidence on results and impacts and to use the information for decision-making.
10. Through UN-Women’s convening role, it is important to create a broader platform by bringing together civil society for joint advocacy efforts and to advocate with national governments and United Nation Country Teams (UNCTs) for the establishment of pooled funds to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. UN-Women should engage with donors and seek multiple avenues to secure multi-year resource commitments to produce tangible and lasting results. Evaluations in general called for UN-Women to strike an appropriate balance between its scarce resources (human and financial) and the most relevant and effective interventions where its comparative and collaborative advantage is best enhanced to yield greater impact.

Relevance

UN-Women supported programmes and interventions remain highly relevant. They are suited to the needs of target groups and are aligned with national priorities and international normative frameworks.

11. The evaluation reports of UN-Women supported programmes and interventions show a strong coverage of relevance across the three subcriteria.
12. Overall, findings from the evaluation reports indicate that UN-Women supported programmes and interventions are highly relevant. Most of the evaluations reported satisfactory or higher for “suitability of UN-Women programmes to the needs of the target group” (97 per cent) and “effective partnerships” (95 per cent), while all evaluations that addressed “alignment with national development goals” indicated satisfactory and higher findings.

Figure 1: Performance of UN-Women interventions in terms of relevance



13. Most evaluations provide strong evidence that UN-Women supported interventions are aligned with national development goals and/or plans and policies. These included alignment to national strategies and frameworks promoting women’s social, economic and political empowerment.

Furthermore, most evaluation reports highlighted how UN-Women's programming is aligned to international normative instruments which provide the foundation of gender equality and women's empowerment. UN-Women's partnerships have, to a great extent, led to the strategic positioning of gender issues in national agendas, debates and localized implementation. UN-Women has also risen to the challenge of working in humanitarian contexts – despite this not being an area of traditional core competence – and has made a positive contribution to strengthening the voices of vulnerable women through programmatic interventions, advocacy and partnerships.

14. While participatory approaches have been used in programme design, there is scope for more systematic needs assessments, mapping and gender analyses for better targeted assistance to fulfilling the commitment to “leave no one behind”. There is also scope to improve partnerships with local civil society organizations (CSOs) and youth organizations.

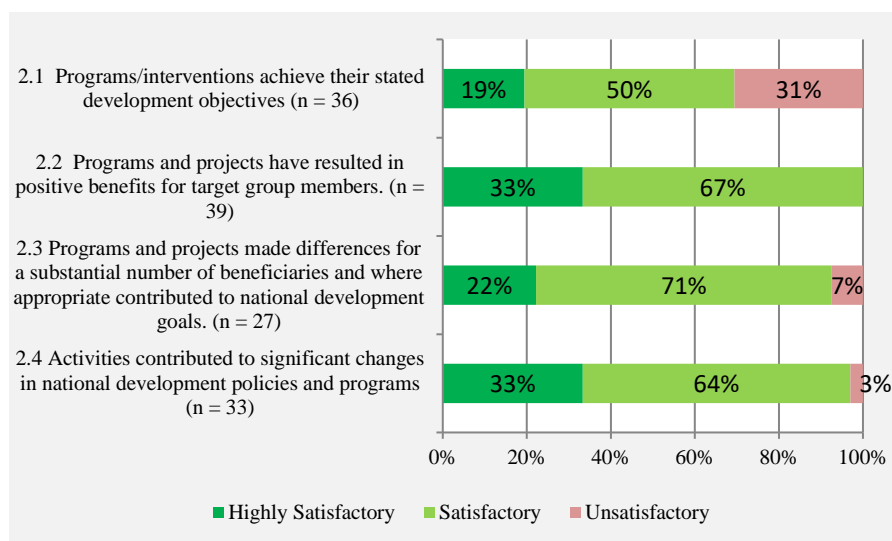
Effectiveness

UN-Women supported programmes and interventions have been effective in achieving their objectives and have contributed towards the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment. Nonetheless, the relatively small-scale interventions, limited human and financial resources, weak partner capacity and monitoring systems have at times affected performance. The level of success also varies across countries.

15. Overall, there is strong coverage of the effectiveness criteria in the evaluation reports covered for this meta-synthesis. However, the coverage was moderate for the subcriteria related to the “differences made for a substantial number of beneficiaries and/or contribution to national development goals”, with only 27 of 39 evaluations reporting relevant findings.
16. In general, evaluation findings were positive for UN-Women supported programmes and interventions achieving their objectives and expected results. Many evaluations (69 per cent – 25/36) reported findings of satisfactory or higher in terms of “programmes and interventions achieving their stated objectives”. Very strong satisfactory or higher findings were found in almost all evaluation reports on the “ability of UN-Women supported projects and interventions to result in positive benefits for target group members”, and “changes made to national policies and programmes”. Despite moderate coverage, most evaluations addressing “positive differences made for a substantial number of beneficiaries and where appropriate contributed to national development goals” reported satisfactory or higher findings (93 per cent – 25/27).²
17. The objectives achieved by UN-Women supported programmes and interventions focus on and contribute to one or more of the strategic plan outcomes. The results achieved were made possible by partnerships with a diverse range of partners.

² The relatively lower coverage for this subcriterion is explained by the fact that some evaluations did not provide a quantitative or qualitative estimate of the beneficiaries reached and/or did not compare against any achievement target when quantitative evidence was provided. It must also be noted that beneficiaries ranged from a few hundred to more than a million depending on whether it was a project or a campaign. Ratings for this subcriterion also include direct and indirect beneficiaries as compared against targets and/or a significant percentage increase from established benchmarks.

Figure 2: Performance of UN-Women interventions in terms of effectiveness



18. UN-Women has contributed to strengthening normative frameworks at the country level. Many evaluation reports, including country portfolio evaluations, highlighted UN-Women's influence and notable contributions in engendering national and legal frameworks, policies and strategies. Some evaluations also highlighted UN-Women's support having contributed to progress in the development of gender-sensitive policies and practices at the subnational and/or local levels.
19. Many evaluations highlighted the notable contributions that UN-Women has made in enhancing women's leadership through a combination of mainstreaming gender in laws and frameworks and supporting women in political participation and leadership. Lack of empowerment and exposure to decision-making, frequent and long-term exposure to gender unfriendly attitudes and stereotypes in the structure of political parties, and domestic tasks and responsibilities were reported as factors that inhibit leadership and management capacity among women. A few evaluations highlighted the need to improve support and focus more on the subnational level (instead of the national level) to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of women's leadership and political participation.
20. Some evaluations, including country portfolio evaluations, highlighted positive outcomes of women's economic empowerment interventions. Social cohesion spaces and women's economic centres were noted to be particularly effective mechanisms for providing access to services, safe spaces for women to discuss issues concerning their rights, protection for survivors, as well as assistance to early economic recovery, especially in humanitarian settings. The linkages created between women-owned businesses and/or women-led groups and microfinance institutions and banks, institutionalization of gender-responsive policies and practices, a gender equality seal by private sector firms, and promotion of women obtaining a national identification card have facilitated their access to finance and public services.
21. Nevertheless, some women's economic empowerment interventions were reported to be small in scale and their effects confined to specific localities without a clear strategy to scale them up. Country portfolio evaluations also indicated that some UN-Women supported interventions tend to place more

emphasis on individual economic gain rather than on other mechanisms with a potential larger (and national) reach. Evaluations have suggested implementing a holistic approach that focuses on supporting policy and regulatory frameworks, corporate social responsibility and the expansion of successful cases to influence UN-Women's programming, while simultaneously leveraging increased investments for women's economic empowerment.

22. Some evaluations, including country portfolio evaluations, highlighted positive outcomes from UN-Women's efforts to ensure that all women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence. Evaluations demonstrated UN-Women's paramount role in prioritizing and advancing gender-violence issues in national agendas and debates. UN-Women's efforts to address violence have been multi-pronged and tailored to countries' situations and needs, and include, for example, training judicial system officials, faith and religious leaders and police and law enforcement officials, supporting the development of national policies and strategies, and establishing and/or ensuring support systems. Similarly, most violence against women programmes show positive outcomes when integrated with women's economic empowerment interventions.
23. Many evaluations addressing women, peace and security reported successes that were achieved thanks to UN-Women supported interventions. UN-Women's efforts have contributed to increasing the capacity of women in mediation and negotiation. The results achieved in this area have helped position women with the knowledge and skills needed to advance conflict resolution at the community level. However, it will be crucial to deepen and sustain this engagement and link it to other advocacy and campaign efforts supported by UN-Women.
24. In addition to engendering national policies and frameworks, some evaluations highlighted UN-Women's support to gender-responsive budgeting and planning. However, further work in this area is needed. Advancing the integration of gender-responsive budgeting into the full budget cycle, including gender analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of expenditure, has been hindered by several structural and capacity constraints.
25. Overall, a holistic approach focusing on knowledge, attitudes, practices and policies at multi-levels (legislative, institutional, community and individual) has proven effective in addressing the barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment. However, this was not always translated and implemented across all thematic areas. Efforts to further reflect this approach in programme designs, results frameworks, results-based management and structures are needed to fully systematize and ensure better linkages across the integrated mandate.

Drivers of change

26. The recognition, ability and technical expertise of UN-Women to address various gender equality issues, implement multi-pronged advocacy and innovative approaches, build alliances and mobilize supportive constituencies and engage with less committed actors have enabled the entity to achieve results. Nevertheless, there is scope to leverage and build on these drivers for more long-term impact.

United Nations system coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment

27. UN-Women has been pivotal in seeking to mainstream gender in UNCT action and joint programming, the UNCT Interim Cooperation Framework and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. Leading a United Nations gender theme group has appeared a very valuable process for UN-Women in many countries and has evidently proved effective in achieving coordination and consensus on gender and women's empowerment issues. However, in some countries gender theme groups are less active and it is sometimes difficult to have a strategic level of engagement or participation. Country portfolio evaluations acknowledged the need to revitalize such platforms as a way of mobilizing actions and resources for gender equality and women's empowerment. In terms of increased efficiency, there is also an acknowledged need to consider an amalgamation of the multiple gender groups that might exist in a country (including gender theme groups, donors and clusters) into a single extended gender theme group, especially in countries where there are relatively small communities of actors. In order to remain relevant and maintain its coordination position, some evaluation reports highlighted the need for UN-Women to be represented in those platforms at a senior level.
28. Positive findings were reported in country portfolio evaluations, including UN-Women's leadership role in the implementation of the gender scorecard (for example, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda and South Sudan). Although the full benefit has not yet been fully captured, the gender scorecard is used by UN-Women as a viable strategy to put gender equality at the heart of programmatic and operational aspects of the United Nations system. There were examples of instances where joint programmes were able to leverage resources within the United Nations system to advance and sustain gender equality gains.

Advocacy

29. Advocacy is integral to UN-Women programming at various levels and is often multi-pronged, with actions including policy advocacy, campaigns and/or support for advocates and networks to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Many evaluations highlight UN-Women's various advocacy efforts, including driving public and/or political support for gender equality and women's empowerment or specific aspects thereof, by raising awareness, building alliances, mobilizing supportive constituencies and engaging with less committed actors. A few evaluations highlighted social media activism as a powerful tool for social change.
30. In addition to the HeForShe initiative, different campaigns were pursued by offices. For example, the #NoEsDeHombres campaign in Mexico was considered innovative and received a Sol De Bronco award at the Ibero-American Festival of Advertising Communication. As well as involving a multitude of actors from different fields and sectors, the campaign reportedly had a significant reach among an estimated 1,812,701 people (895,239 men and 917,462 women). Additionally, UN-Women has been instrumental in supporting and/or developing gender equality advocates, gender focal points, gender equality champions and gender cafés, as highlighted in some evaluations. A few evaluations pointed out that investment in advocacy and communication should be timely.

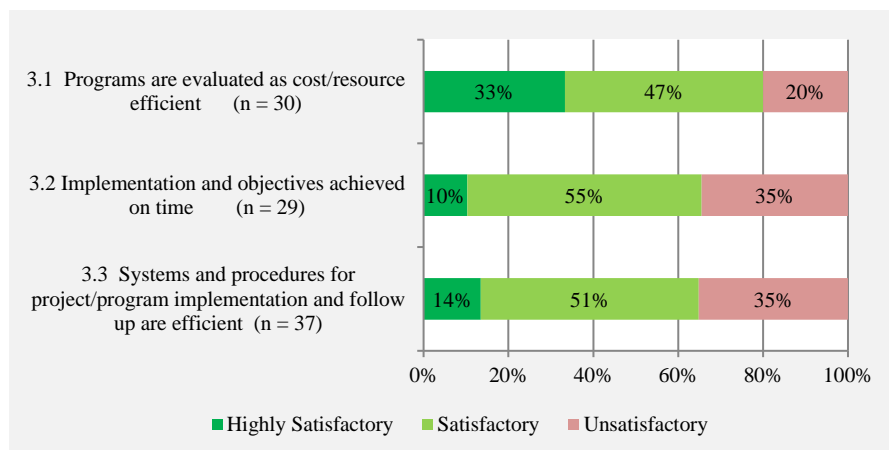
Male engagement in changing social norms

31. Various initiatives in different countries have laid the foundation to deepen and sustain the engagement of men and boys in changing discriminatory practices and social norms. For instance, projects supported through the Fund for Gender Equality were reportedly having positive results in translating high-level laws and policy commitments into services and opportunities, and were successfully addressing social norms. Several examples of successes were also captured in relation to involving young men in efforts to tackle gender-based violence, early marriage and female genital mutilation and to promote gender equality in Cameroon, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, Rwanda and South Sudan. The HeForShe initiative was highlighted by several country portfolio evaluations as a promising strategy with early successes in mobilizing a critical mass to challenge deeply rooted traditional attitudes and practices.
32. Equally, many country portfolio evaluations highlighted gaps in systematically mapping the specific needs of young boys and men in relation to advancing gender equality and meaningfully engaging them beyond their usual involvement in general awareness. Some evaluations recommended that UN-Women and its partners should capitalize on the HeForShe campaign momentum and devise strategies not only through engaging men as champions, but also as beneficiaries of different interventions to speed up changes in social norms. Attention to interventions (coordination and programmatic) that actively promote and support social norm change were stressed as central to the design of Strategic Notes and the accompanying theories of change.

Efficiency

UN-Women has reportedly improved its programme and management efficiency, but the entity's success largely hinges on its ability to operate with limited resources and to leverage funds, partner capacity, predictability of resources and other internal and external factors.

33. Overall, coverage of evaluations on efficiency has been strong. However, for two of the subcriteria, “programmes are cost/resource efficient” (30/39) and “implementation and objectives achieved on time” (29/39), the coverage was moderate.
34. Although gaps were noted in evaluations being able to appropriately assess the cost efficiency of results obtained vis-à-vis expenditure, most evaluations (80 per cent – 24/30) reported satisfactory or better findings on cost resource efficiency for UN-Women supported programmes and interventions. As noted in the evaluations, this was largely because of UN-Women’s ability to achieve or exceed targets with limited budgets and resources, and, at times, its leveraging of resources through partnerships.
35. Despite varying coverage, many evaluations (65 per cent) reported satisfactory or higher findings regarding UN-Women “systems and procedures for project/programme implementation and follow-up”. Nonetheless, performance varied across countries and thematic areas, and was dependent on contextual factors, particularly in humanitarian operations.

Figure 3: Performance of UN-Women interventions in terms of efficiency

36. The range of factors making a positive contribution to efficiency was diverse and included: lean management structures and committed and competent staff willing to over-stretch; the ability to operate with limited resources and leverage funds; implementation of programmes and projects through CSOs, local community organizations and women's groups and/or networks; the use of campaigns and radio for wider reach; and avoiding duplication and overlaps, especially among different agencies (including through joint delivery, joint programming and UNCT coordination). A few evaluation reports highlighted that the use of integrated, synergistic and/or holistic approaches to programming have enhanced efficiency and sustainability.
37. The range of factors negatively affecting efficiency covered by evaluations include: delays in start-up and implementation; reduction or lack of funding leading to activities being cancelled; challenges in human resources including processes or delays in hiring staff, under-staffing and staff contracts linked to specific donor funding; inadequate data on costs and outcomes to allow effective management or monitoring of programme efficiency; and direct implementation of some activities by UN-Women.
38. In addition, areas for improvement noted by some evaluations to enhance efficiency include: synchronizing initiatives that are implemented simultaneously in each of the mandated and thematic areas; better staff resourcing to ensure that staff have the time and space for information-sharing, advice and effective monitoring and reporting; appropriate management structure and staffing to avoid delays in implementation, procurement, disbursement of funds and monitoring processes; realistic resource mobilization targets; and retention of staff who are currently on service contracts linked to donor funding. A further key area for improving efficiency and effectiveness is to avoid spreading limited resources too thinly.

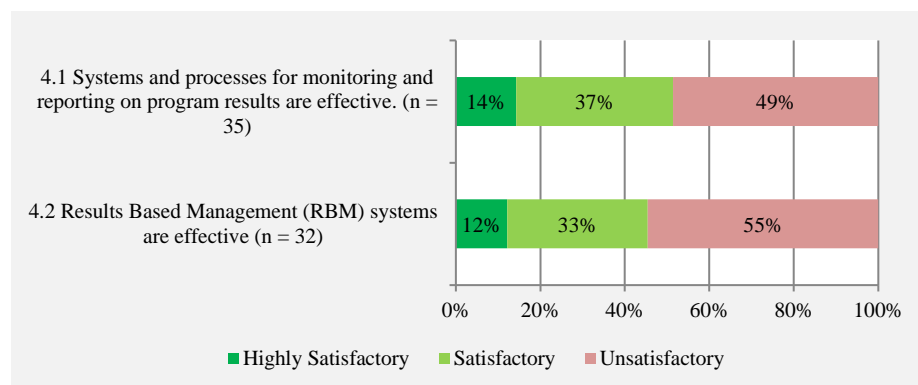
Culture of results

Although notable progressive efforts have been made to improve monitoring and the use of results-based management systems, country offices' capacity varied and constraints in establishing functional and useful results-based management systems at the country level remained.

39. Overall, coverage of evaluations on the culture of results is strong.
40. The findings on the culture of results and the effectiveness of results-based management systems are mixed, reflecting a work-in-progress situation. An

almost equal number of evaluations reported satisfactory or unsatisfactory findings for “systems and processes for monitoring and reporting on programme results are effective” (51 per cent – 18/35) and “results-based management systems are effective” (45 per cent – 15/32).

Figure 4: Performance of UN-Women interventions in terms of culture of results



41. While the findings are reflective of UN-Women’s progressive efforts to strengthen the culture of results, they also highlight challenges in establishing and implementing a functional and useful results-based management system at the country level. This means that results-based management systems have not been optimally used for strategic management and informed decision-making, which includes adjusting strategies and supporting mid- and long-term course corrections in response to contextual changes.
42. The following areas were reported as hindering factors to instituting a culture of results: weak/unclear theory of change; inadequately defined indicators (no baseline or targets); gaps in monitoring and evaluation staffing; lack of standardized means to verify partner data and inconsistencies in tracking and reporting on the number of beneficiaries; and lack of reliable data and inability to measure progress. This is in part linked to partner capacities. At times, even when theories of change or results frameworks existed, their depth and quality varied and were of limited use to guide or monitor programme results. Monitoring and evaluation systems were sometimes overdesigned and did not fully take into account partner capacities, implementation periods and human and financial resources. Knowledge management, including capturing and reporting longer-term results and lessons learned, needs further systematic and institutionalized support and efforts.

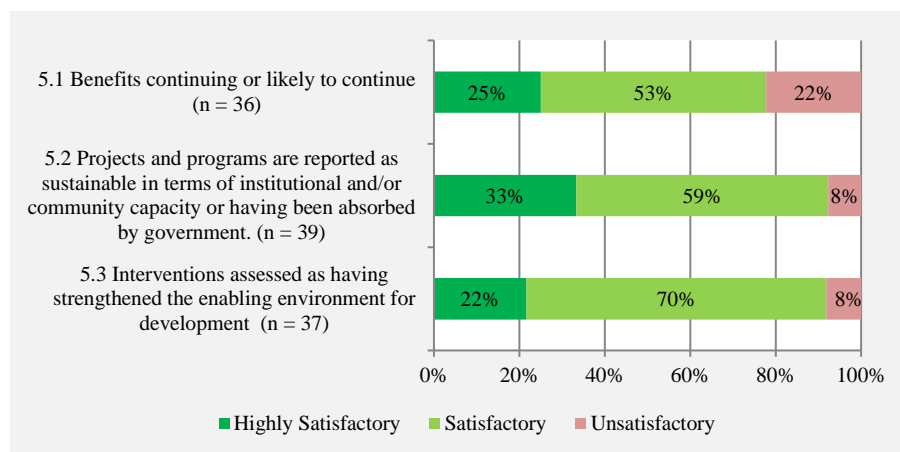
Sustainability

Sustainability of UN-Women supported programmes and results are mixed and highly influenced by the different contexts and complex situations in which UN-Women operates.

43. Overall, the coverage of evaluations on sustainability was very strong in the evaluation reports reviewed for this synthesis.
44. Most evaluations (78 per cent – 28/36) reported satisfactory findings or higher in terms of the “likelihood of continued benefits for the target group after the programme/project completion”. Satisfactory or better findings were seen in most evaluation reports on the “ability of UN-Women supported projects and programmes to contribute to institutional and/or community capacity” (92 per

cent – 36/39)³ and “strengthened safe and enabling environments for gender-responsive development” (92 per cent – 34/37).⁴

Figure 5: Performance of UN-Women interventions in terms of sustainability



45. Investments to strengthen legislative frameworks and national capacity in order to implement policies, plans and international normative commitments for gender equality and women’s empowerment have been enablers for sustainability. UN-Women supported programmes and interventions have enhanced the capacities of diverse (and relevant) individuals, institutions and communities to address gender equality and women’s empowerment aspects and issues. Furthermore, the establishment of mechanisms and gender units in different line ministries and the provision of support to gender advocates and gender focal persons, as well as the engendering of national policies, all indicate a strengthened enabling environment for gender-responsive development.
46. Evaluations highlighted the implementation of approaches that enhance sustainability through synergy, combining support for economic empowerment with social empowerment, and the prevention of and protection against gender-based violence, as well as community mobilization in both development and humanitarian contexts. Most country portfolio evaluations commented positively on the approach to preventing gender-based violence with the perspective of achieving sustainable results. In the area of women’s economic empowerment, sustainable impacts are likely to be achieved at the individual and group level, but the approach has not sufficiently facilitated sustainability for a critical mass of women. This is even more so in the humanitarian context due to the short duration of projects and some protracted emergency situations.
47. Issues affecting the continuity of benefits as highlighted by some evaluation reports include: insufficient resources; no exit strategy or sustainability plan;

³ A “satisfactory” rating is provided when the evaluation finding indicates, as per the pre-defined rubric, that “UN-Women programmes and projects may have contributed to strengthening institutional and/or community capacity but with limited success”.

⁴ A “satisfactory” rating is provided when the evaluation finding indicates, as per the pre-defined rubric, that “UN-Women interventions have made more notable contributions to strengthen the enabling environment and safe civic space for gender-responsive national development planning, policies, systems, strategies and other interventions related to gender equality and women’s rights”.

deep-rooted cultural norms; a lack of political will; and turnover of staff in participating and implementing organizations. Furthermore, assessments and tracking of the various capacity development activities have not always been undertaken systematically and interventions have missed out on follow-up, coaching and mentoring. The limited practice of sharing and transferring knowledge and skills among trainees and the frequent turnover of staff and officials also pose a threat to the development of sustained institutional capacity.

48. Another area for improvement cited in evaluations is the need to support interventions that promote and sustain social norm change at the household, community and local levels. A more strategic and thoughtful focus on increasing the meaningful engagement of men and boys is essential to achieve sustainable outcomes on gender equality. This, however, requires a long-term approach and sustained funding to facilitate a long-term sustainable impact. Strategic partnerships with CSOs can also be helpful to hold governments accountable in delivering legal framework commitments and policies on gender equality and women's empowerment.
49. In general, sustainability should be considered as a work in progress and moving in a positive direction, given UN-Women's nature of work.

V. Opportunities and the way forward

50. The following broad opportunities have been compiled by bringing together and synthesizing the recommendations included in the evaluation reports.

Further strengthen the strategic positioning of UN-Women and its participation in broader system-wide initiatives through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), including joint programmes.

51. This includes strengthening the implementation of UN-Women's mandate by establishing a clearer division of labour with other organizations at the country level and continuing to strengthen and revitalize gender theme groups. UN-Women could do more through the United Nations development system and the UNSDCF to further promote the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda by more forcefully highlighting gaps and suggesting areas of collaboration, joint advocacy, research, policy engagement and joint resource mobilization. To more strategically influence gender equality and women's empowerment changes at the national level, evaluations call for an increase in coordination with line ministries beyond the gender machinery, with which UN-Women works in joint programmes and joint programming.

Boost the achievement of results through multi-pronged advocacy, capacity-building and strategic and diverse partnerships to support sustained changes in social norms.

52. This includes⁵ promoting interventions for effective and sustainable changes in social norms at the household, community and individual levels, through engaging men and boys more meaningfully, incorporating integrated and holistic approaches and continuing to incorporate innovative approaches and models. Establishing effective results-based management systems, tracking progress on long-term changes and measuring impact in terms of attitudinal,

⁵ These also contribute to enhanced sustainability and efficiency of UN-Women supported programmes and interventions.

behavioural and social norm changes on a wider scale are critical enabling factors. It is necessary to situate UN-Women's assisted programmes in the broader institutional and policy environment as well as the interventions of other actors (including United Nations organizations) for longer-term and more significant change. It is also important for UN-Women to ensure that there is continued integration of a human rights-based approach to the commitment to leave no one behind.

Increase efforts to improve the efficiency of UN-Women supported programmes and interventions.

53. This includes strengthening programme design and monitoring systems to better track and monitor programme costs, leveraging resources through diverse partnerships to ensure a multiplier effect, and having a viable human resource strategy and resource mobilization strategy that can be delivered across UN-Women's integrated mandate. Additionally, UN-Women should consider reducing its direct implementation of activities and focusing more on coordination, oversight, monitoring and technical advice to implementing partners with proven track records. Optimizing staffing and financial resources by not spreading efforts too thinly and narrowing the geographical focus of interventions through identifying and concentrating on activities that are most relevant and achievable and would complement initiatives of other actors will also help enhance efficiency.

Intensify efforts and continue investments to strengthen the culture of results.

54. This includes improving the quality of programme and project design, specifically related to developing realistic and explicit theories of change in line with resources available (and likelihood of being mobilized), in addition to defining realistic indicators with baselines and targets and monitoring progress against targets. Enhancing capacities of UN-Women staff in country offices and, in particular, of implementing partners to track, capture and report results including systems for monitoring unexpected outcomes is critical to better gather evidence on outcomes and impacts. Furthermore, systematic and institutionalized support to improve knowledge management, including capturing and reporting longer-term results, good practices and lessons learned will also help to improve the culture of results.

Enhance the sustainability of UN-Women supported programmes and interventions through exit strategies and sustainability plans.

55. This includes⁶ ensuring linkages with other initiatives within and outside the United Nations system and linking small projects with larger programmes to ensure better scaling-up and continued benefits. Strategies that empower and equip national partners with expertise and tools to advance change, and the cascading effect this has on transferring skills and knowledge to a wider range of stakeholders will enhance the likelihood of sustainability. In addition, continuing to strengthen the enabling environment for gender-responsive development, including creating "safe and social cohesion spaces", will help facilitate the continuity of results.

⁶ These also enhance effectiveness of UN-Women supported programmes and interventions.

ANNEX I

List of 2017/2018 evaluations covered by the meta-synthesis

Region		Office/division	Title of evaluation	Quality rating
West and Central Africa	1.	Mali	<i>L'évaluation finale du 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</i> [Final evaluation of the project to “Improve the access of female victims of sexual and gender-based violence to justice and security in the peacebuilding process in Mali”]	Fair
	2.	Regional Office for West and Central Africa (Senegal)	End-term evaluation of the joint programme on gender, menstrual hygiene and sanitation	Very Good
	3.	Cameroon	<i>Prise en charge adéquate des femmes victimes de violences dans la Région de l'Extrême Nord</i> [Adequate care for female victims of violence in the Far North Region]	Good
East and Southern Africa	4.	Liberia	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	5.	Burundi	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	6.	Kenya	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	7.	Kenya	Evaluation of “Countering violent extremism” project in Kenya	Good
	8.	Rwanda	Final evaluation of the joint programme “Advancing and sustaining gender equality gains in Rwanda”	Very Good
	9.	Rwanda	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	10.	South Sudan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	11.	Ethiopia	Evaluation of “Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in Ethiopia” programme	Good
	12.	Mozambique	Mid-term evaluation of the women’s economic empowerment (WEE) project in Gaza, Mozambique	Good
	Asia and the Pacific	13.	Bangladesh	Evaluation of “Building capacity to prevent violence against women (BCPVAW)”
14.		Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Thailand)	Final evaluation of regional project “Preventing exploitation of women migrant workers”	Good
15.		Regional Office for Arab States (Egypt)	Evaluation of “UN-Women’s economic interventions under LEAP/HA programming in the Arab States Region”	Good
16.		Jordan	Evaluation of UN-Women’s “Peace and security in the Arab States” regional project	Good
17.		Egypt	Evaluation of “Securing rights and improving livelihoods of women (SRILW)” Action	Good

	18.	Egypt	Final evaluation of UN-Women's "Promoting women's employment by creating safe and women-friendly workplaces" programme	Good
	19.	Morocco Multi-Country Office	<i>L'évaluation finale du projet de l'opérationnalisation de l'entente de partenariat pour la promotion de la participation des femmes à la gestion des affaires locales et le renforcement de la gouvernance territoriale sensible au genre (2014–2017)</i> [Final evaluation of the project to "Implement partnership agreements to promote women's participation in local governance and to strengthen gender-responsive territorial governance" (2014–2017)]	Very Good
Europe and Central Asia	20.	Albania	UN-Women Albania outcome evaluation on "Women's leadership and political participation"	Good
	21.	Kyrgyzstan	Joint programme on "Accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women"	Very Good
	22.	Kyrgyzstan	Livelihoods through participation and equal access to water	Good
Americas and the Caribbean	23.	El Salvador	<i>Evaluación Final del Proyecto "Ciudad Mujer/Onu Mujeres"</i> [Final evaluation of the project "Women City/UN-Women"]	Good
	24.	Mexico	Evaluation of "The safe cities campaign #NoEsDeHombres"	Very Good
	25.	Ecuador	<i>Evaluación del Proyecto "Mujeres Liderando el Desarrollo Inclusivo Sostenible de la Provincia de Loja"</i> [Evaluation of the project "Women leading inclusive sustainable development in the Province of Loja"]	Good
	26.	Colombia	Final evaluation of the "Women's citizenship for peace, justice and development"	Good
	27.	Colombia	Mid-term evaluation of the programme "Overcoming gender-based violence to ensure women's full enjoyment of rights"	Very Good
	28.	Regional Office for Americas and the Caribbean (Panama)	Regional evaluation on normative frameworks	Very Good
	29.	Ecuador	Mid-term evaluation of "Sustainability of the wasteland from a gender perspective"	Fair
Corporate	30.	Independent Evaluation Service (IES)	UN-Women's contribution to women's political participation and leadership	Very Good
Headquarters	31.	Fund for Gender Equality	Independent evaluation of "UN-Women's Fund for Gender Equality" (2009–2017)	Very Good

2017 Country Portfolio Evaluations

Region	Office/division	Title of evaluation	Quality rating
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Western and Central Africa	1.	Cameroon	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	2.	Côte d'Ivoire	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	3.	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
Eastern and Southern Africa	4.	Malawi	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	5.	Sudan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
Europe and Central Asia	6.	Kyrgyzstan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	7.	Moldova	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
Arab States	8.	Palestine	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good

ANNEX II

Guide to classify evaluation findings

Criteria	(1) Highly Unsatisfactory	(2) Unsatisfactory	(3) Satisfactory	(4) Highly Satisfactory
1. Relevance				
1.1 UN-Women supported programmes and other interventions are suited to the needs and/or priorities of the target group.	Substantial elements of programme or project activities and outputs are unsuited to the needs and priorities of the target group, especially vulnerable girls and women.	No systematic gender analysis of the needs and priorities of women and girls took place during the design phase of developmental or humanitarian response programming, or there is an evident mismatch between programme or project activities and outputs and the needs and priorities of the target group.	UN-Women supported interventions are designed taking into account the needs of the target group as identified through a process of gender-focused situation analysis (including a needs assessment for humanitarian operations) and the resulting activities are designed to meet the needs of the target group especially women, girls and other vulnerable groups.	UN-Women supported interventions are suited and responded well to the needs and/or priorities of women and girls, focusing, where appropriate, on the poorest and most excluded in line with the leave no one behind principle.
1.2 UN-Women supported development interventions are aligned with national development goals and responded to the centrality of national ownership and leadership.	Significant elements of UN-Women supported development programme and project activities run counter to national development priorities with a resulting loss of effectiveness.	A significant portion (25 per cent or more) of UN-Women programmes and projects are not aligned with national plans and priorities, but there is no evidence that they run counter to those priorities.	Most UN-Women supported development programmes and projects are aligned with national plans and priorities as expressed in national development and sector plans and priorities.	UN-Women supported development projects and programmes are fully aligned with national development goals and responded well to the centrality of national ownership and leadership and to the situation of women and marginalized groups.
1.3 UN-Women has developed effective partnerships with governments, bilateral and multilateral development and humanitarian organizations and women-based NGOs for planning, coordination and implementation of support to development and/or humanitarian responses.	UN-Women experiences significant divergence in priorities from those of its government, United Nations organization, nongovernmental organization (NGO) and donor partners and lacks a strategy or plan that will credibly address the divergence and that should strengthen partnerships over time.	UN-Women experiences significant difficulties in developing effective relationships with partners and there is significant divergence in the priorities of UN-Women and its partners.	UN-Women has improved the effectiveness of its partnerships over time, which were effective at the time of the evaluation or were demonstrably improved.	UN-Women has developed effective partnerships with relevant stakeholders (governments, United Nations organizations, bilateral and multilateral development and humanitarian organizations and women-based NGOs) for planning,

Criteria	(1) Highly Unsatisfactory	(2) Unsatisfactory	(3) Satisfactory	(4) Highly Satisfactory
				coordination and implementation of support to development and/or humanitarian responses.
2. Effectiveness				
2.1 UN-Women supported programmes and interventions achieved their stated development objectives and contributed to normative, coordination and operational results towards the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment.	Less than half of stated output and outcome objectives have been achieved, including one or more very important output and/or outcome level objectives.	Between 51 per cent and 75 per cent of stated output and outcome level objectives have been achieved.	UN-Women supported programmes and projects have achieved at least a majority of stated outputs and have contributed to outcome objectives (more than 75 per cent if stated) or have achieved the most important stated outputs and expected outcomes.	UN-Women supported programmes and projects have achieved all or almost all significant development and/or humanitarian objectives at the output level and have contributed to expected outcomes.
2.2 UN-Women supported programmes and projects have resulted in positive benefits for target group members.	Problems in the design or delivery of UN-Women supported activities mean that expected positive benefits for target group members have not occurred or are unlikely to occur.	UN-Women supported projects and programmes have resulted in no or very few positive changes for target group members. These benefits may include the avoidance or reduction of negative effects of a sudden onset or protracted emergency.	UN-Women supported projects and programmes have resulted in positive changes for target group members (at the individual, household or community levels). These benefits may include the avoidance or reduction of negative effects of a sudden onset or protracted emergency.	UN-Women supported projects and programmes have resulted in widespread and significant positive changes for target group members as measured using quantitative or qualitative methods. These benefits may include the avoidance or reduction of negative effects of a sudden onset or protracted emergency.
2.3 UN-Women programmes and projects made differences for a substantial number of beneficiaries and, where appropriate, contributed to national development goals.	UN-Women supported projects and programmes have not contributed to positive changes in the lives of beneficiaries as measured quantitatively or qualitatively.	UN-Women supported projects and programmes have contributed to positive changes in the lives of only a small number of beneficiaries (when compared against project or programme targets and local or national goals if established).	UN-Women supported projects and programmes have contributed to positive changes in the lives of substantial numbers of beneficiaries as measured quantitatively or qualitatively.	UN-Women supported projects and programmes have contributed to positive changes in the lives of substantial numbers of beneficiaries. Furthermore, they have contributed to the achievement of specific national development goals or have contributed to meeting development and humanitarian response objectives agreed with the national government and/or national and international development and relief organizations.
2.4 UN-Women activities contributed to significant changes in national development policies and programmes with specific provisions to improve the security and status of women and girls (including for disaster risk reduction,	National policies and programmes in a given sector or area of development (including disaster risk reduction, recovery, emergency and response) are deficient and require strengthening, but UN-Women	UN-Women activities did not make a significant contribution to the development of national policies and programmes in a given sector or area of development, disaster preparedness, emergency response or rehabilitation.	UN-Women activities made a substantial contribution to re-orienting or sustaining effective national policies or programmes in a given sector or area of development disaster preparedness, emergency response or rehabilitation.	UN-Women activities made a substantial contribution to re-orienting or sustaining effective gender-responsive national policies or programmes in a given sector or area of

Criteria	(1) Highly Unsatisfactory	(2) Unsatisfactory	(3) Satisfactory	(4) Highly Satisfactory
recovery, preparedness, emergency response and rehabilitation) and/or to needed system reforms.	activities did not address these deficiencies.			development, disaster preparedness, emergency response or rehabilitation. Furthermore, the supported policies and programme implementation modalities are expected to result in (and already started showing) improved positive impacts for target group members.
3. Efficiency				
3.1 Programmes are evaluated as cost/resource efficient.	Credible evidence indicates that UN-Women supported programmes and projects are not cost/resource efficient.	UN-Women supported programmes and projects under evaluation either do not have credible, reliable information on the costs of activities and inputs, meaning the evaluation is not able to report on cost/resource efficiency, or present mixed findings on the cost/resource efficiency of the inputs.	Level of programme outputs achieved when compared with the cost of programme activities and inputs are appropriate even when the programme design process did not directly consider alternative programme delivery methods and their associated costs.	UN-Women supported programmes and projects are designed to include activities and inputs that produce outputs in the most cost/resource efficient manner and resources are used in an efficient way.
3.2 Evaluation indicates implementation and objectives achieved on time (given the context in the case of humanitarian responses), utilizing the most cost-effective intervention.	Less than half of stated output and outcome level objectives of UN-Women supported programmes and projects are achieved on time There is no credible plan or legitimate explanation found by the evaluation which would suggest significant improvement in on-time objectives achievement in the future.	Less than half of stated output and outcome level objectives of UN-Women supported programmes and projects are achieved on time, but the programme or project design was adjusted to take account of difficulties encountered and can be expected to improve the pace of objectives achievement in the future. In the case of humanitarian programming, there was a legitimate explanation for the delays.	More than half of stated output and outcome level results of UN-Women supported programmes and projects are achieved on time. This level is appropriate to the context faced by the programme during implementation, particularly for humanitarian programming.	Nearly all stated output and outcome level results of UN-Women supported programmes and projects are achieved on time or a legitimate explanation for delays in the achievement of some outputs/outcomes is provided in the case of humanitarian programming.
3.3 Evaluation indicates that UN-Women systems and procedures for project and programme implementation and follow-up are efficient and demonstrate efficiency in managing its operations and programme and investment choices (including systems for engaging staff, necessary skills, knowledge and capacities needed to deliver the portfolio, funds disbursement and stewardship of resources, etc.).	There are serious deficiencies in UN-Women systems and procedures for project and programme implementation that result in significant delays in project start-up, implementation or completion and/or significant cost increases.	There are some deficiencies in UN-Women systems and procedures for project and programme implementation, though there is no indication that these cause delays in achieving project and programme objectives.	UN-Women systems and procedures for project implementation are reasonably efficient and do not cause significant delays or increased costs.	The efficiency of UN-Women systems and procedures for project implementation represents an important organizational strength in the implementation of the programme under evaluation. Systems efficiency manage operations, risks and programme and investment choices.
4. Culture of results to improve development effectiveness				

Criteria	(1) Highly Unsatisfactory	(2) Unsatisfactory	(3) Satisfactory	(4) Highly Satisfactory
4.1 Systems and processes for monitoring and reporting on programme results are effective.	There is a lack of monitoring and reporting systems for programmes. This includes the absence of adequate monitoring of outputs during the implementation of programmes, including in a humanitarian setting.	While monitoring and reporting systems for programmes exist, they either do not report on a regular basis or are inadequate in frequency, coverage or reliability.	Appropriate monitoring and reporting systems for programmes are well established to measure results and report regularly to support better targeted interventions and learning. Corrective actions are carried out when differences are spotted.	Monitoring and reporting systems for programmes are well established, enable systematic capture of results beyond outputs and generate high quality and useful performance data.
4.2 Results-based management systems are effective.	No evidence that a results-based management system for programmes exists and no system is being developed.	While a results-based management system is in place or being developed, it is unreliable and does not produce regular reports on programme performance.	A results-based management system is in place and produces regular reports on programme performance beyond administration and financial compliance.	A results-based management system is in place and there is evidence noted in the evaluation that the system is used for strategic management and informed decision-making, including making adjustments in strategies and providing support to mid- and long-term course corrections in response to contextual changes.
5. Sustainability				
5.1 Benefits are continuing or are likely to continue after project or programme completion or there are effective measures to link the humanitarian response to longer-term developmental results.	There is a very low probability that the programme or project will result in continued intended benefits for the target group after project completion.	There is a low probability that the programme or project will result in continued benefits for the target group after completion.	It is likely that the programme or project will result in continued benefits for the target group after completion.	It is highly likely that the programme or project will result in continued benefits for the target group after completion. Furthermore, they are likely to succeed in securing continuing benefits for target group members, especially vulnerable women and girls.
5.2 The extent to which UN-Women supported projects and programmes are reported as sustainable in terms of institutional and/or community capacity or having been absorbed by the government.	The design of UN-Women supported programmes and projects failed to address the need to strengthen institutional and/or community capacity as required. In the case of humanitarian responses, the design of programmes and projects failed to take into account identified needs to strengthen local capacities for delivering relief operations and/or for managing the transition to rehabilitation and/or development.	UN-Women programmes and projects may have failed to contribute to strengthening institutional and/or community capacity or, where appropriate, to strengthening local capacities for delivering relief operations and/or for managing the transition to rehabilitation and/or development.	UN-Women programmes and projects may have contributed to strengthening institutional and/or community capacity but with limited success.	UN-Women programmes or projects contributed to significantly strengthen institutional and/or community capacity as required or institutional partners and communities already had the required capacity to sustain programme results.
5.3 Interventions assessed as having strengthened a safe and enabling environment for gender-responsive development.	For UN-Women initiatives, there were important weaknesses in the enabling environment for development (including the overall framework and process for national development planning; systems and processes for public consultations and participation of civil society for development planning;	UN-Women interventions have not made a notable contribution to strengthen the enabling environment for gender-responsive development.	UN-Women interventions have made a notable contribution to strengthening the enabling environment and safe civic space for gender-responsive national development planning, policies, systems, strategies and other interventions related to gender equality and women's rights.	UN-Women interventions have made a significant contribution to strengthening a safe and enabling environment for development including more than one of the following: overall framework and process for

Criteria	(1) Highly Unsatisfactory	(2) Unsatisfactory	(3) Satisfactory	(4) Highly Satisfactory
	<p>governance structure and rule of law; national and local mechanisms for public expenditure accountability; service delivery and quality; and necessary improvements for supporting structures such as capital and labour markets). Furthermore, UN-Women initiatives failed to address the identified weakness successfully, thereby limiting programme results.</p>			<p>gender-responsive national development planning; systems and processes for public consultations and participation of civil society with a component addressing social norms, attitudes and behaviour transformation, including of men and boys; governance structure and rule of law related to women's human rights and gender equality; national and local mechanisms for gender-responsive public expenditure accountability; service delivery and quality; and necessary improvements to supporting structures such as capital and labour markets. Furthermore, these improvements in the enabling environment are leading to improved gender equality outcomes.</p>