



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

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Evaluation

**Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations
Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of
Women, 2019**

Summary

This report summarizes the performance of the UN-Women evaluation function in the areas of corporate and decentralized evaluations. It provides an overview of measures undertaken to strengthen the contribution of UN-Women to United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation. In addition, the report presents the 2020 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service (IES).

The Executive Board may wish to: (i) take note of the report on the evaluation function of UN-Women in 2019, the IES programme of work and budget for 2020, and the revised Evaluation Policy; (ii) welcome the steps taken by UN-Women to maintain a credible and useful evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development; (iii) endorse the revised Evaluation Policy; and (iv) express continuing support for strengthening the independent evaluation function in UN-Women.

I. Evaluation at UN-Women

Introduction

1. This report provides an overview of the work and performance of the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN-Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) in 2019. The report covers two corporate thematic evaluations; one joint corporate evaluation activity; a meta-synthesis of UN-Women evaluations; and the first IES-led pilot country portfolio evaluation (CPE). In addition, in 2019 UN-Women completed four regional and five country portfolio evaluations and IES provided technical assistance to 26 decentralized evaluations. IES promoted a culture of evaluation in UN-Women through the Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) and advocated for gender-responsive evaluation in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) as well as globally with national partners.
2. The past year was important for the evaluation function as IES launched a pilot implementation modality in which IES staff assumed a greater role in leading strategic evaluations. IES also revised the Evaluation Policy.
3. Throughout 2019, IES continued to be operationally independent of UN-Women management and exercised freedom in determining and reporting on the scope of its work. The Director, IEAS reported to the Executive Director of UN-Women and presented corporate evaluation findings to the Executive Board. UN-Women maintained a separate budget line for evaluation and IES continued to receive stable funding as determined by the UN-Women Integrated Budget for the biennium 2018-2019.
4. This report is structured into seven sections. Section 1 explains the purpose of evaluation and its evolution in line with UN-Women's strategic and operational environment. It also provides an overview of the Evaluation Policy revision. Section 2 presents a synopsis of corporate evaluation findings in 2019 and highlights the evaluation evidence available to support UN-Women's strategic priorities and programming. Section 3 summarizes the performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women and includes a synopsis of 10 regional and country portfolio evaluations. Sections 4, 5 and 6 summarize the key activities in the areas of UN coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; national evaluation capacity development; and communication for evaluation use. Finally, Section 7 presents the IES work programme and budget for 2020.

Evaluation policy revision

5. UN-Women's Evaluation Policy ([UNW/2012/12](#)) became effective in January 2013. The policy governs the independent evaluation function and applies to all initiatives supported, and funds administered, by the Entity. It aligns with the UNEG Norms and Standards and is tailored specifically to UN-Women's unique mandate to conduct evaluations that are responsive to gender equality and women's empowerment.
6. In accordance with the policy, the evaluation function underwent an external assessment by UNEG in 2014 and the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations in 2015. Building on these assessments, the UN-Women Global Evaluation Advisory Committee (GEAC) assessed UN-Women's evaluation function and policy in 2015. The three assessments concluded that UN-Women's Evaluation Policy provided a sound framework for the evaluation function. The UN-Women Executive Board

subsequently requested that UN-Women carry out a review of the Evaluation Policy after three years.¹

7. These external reviews of UN-Women's evaluation function concluded that, generally, the UN-Women Evaluation Policy met UNEG Norms and Standards for independence, credibility and utility. Considering this conclusion, with the support of an external evaluation expert, IES undertook a light revision of the Evaluation Policy in 2019 based on a normative assessment of the document against recognized international standards; the needs of UN-Women stakeholders; and benchmarking with relevant policies of other UN agencies.
8. The revised Evaluation Policy document reflects three sets of changes: (i) contextual changes in UN-Women and the UN system that are relevant and applicable to the policy document such as UN reform and the establishment of IEAS; (ii) non-substantive changes to better reflect updated UNEG Norms and Standards, new evaluation practices and to improve readability; and (iii) the separation of evaluation management content to streamline the policy document.
9. Consistent with the recently updated evaluation policies of other UN agencies,² the revised policy recommends that the Entity-wide evaluation function's budget range from 2 to 3 per cent of UN-Women programme expenditure. This range provides flexibility to account for fluctuating programme budgets and time frames for implementation. The range is also helpful to inform the resource allocation process as a frame of reference rather than as a "target" by emphasizing the allocation of resources to the evaluation function commensurate with the value it provides to the Entity and its rights holders. IES will continue to monitor that appropriate attention is paid to evaluation throughout the Entity, including, *inter alia*, by monitoring the average level of expenditure related to evaluation to provide a basis for assessing its appropriateness. Moreover, to ensure that appropriate attention is placed on evaluation to promote learning and accountability, IES will continue to monitor and advocate to ensure that the right evaluations take place at the right time particularly at decentralized levels.
10. Another noteworthy change is the update to the policy document on streamlining evaluation governance in UN-Women, in which the Advisory Committee on Oversight (ACO) has taken a greater role in overseeing the performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women and replaces the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee. In 2019, the ACO terms of reference and membership were broadened to advise the Executive Director on: (i) UN-Women's overall Evaluation Policy; (ii) the strategy, evaluation plan and Annual Work Plan that relate to the UN-Women Evaluation Policy; (iii) relevant issues arising from evaluation reports to increase management attention of areas of concern; (iv) the quality assurance system for the evaluation function, including internal and external assessments; and (v) the status of management implementation of evaluation recommendations. The ACO presents an annual report to the Under-Secretary General/Executive Director of UN-Women and the Chair of the ACO presents the report to the Executive Board. The terms of reference of the ACO include provisions to help protect the independence of IES.
11. To further ensure the quality and credibility of evaluation in UN-Women, IES will establish an Evaluation Advisory Panel, which will advise remotely on specific

¹ Decision 16/2.

² "Allocation of 1 per cent of combined programmatic (core and non-core) resources to the evaluation function; with no less than 0.3 per cent reserved for the work of IEO." (UNDP); "At least 1 per cent of its overall programme expenditure to evaluation, gathered via a pooled fund established by the Executive Director." (UNICEF); "Minimum of 1.4 per cent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function, up to a maximum of 3 per cent." (UNFPA).

evaluation methodologies and contribute to independent quality assurance for certain IES-led evaluations.

II. Corporate evaluations and studies

12. In 2019, IES presented two corporate evaluation reports, and one meta-synthesis report to the Executive Board as follows:
 - (a) Evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to governance and national planning.
 - (b) Evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to humanitarian action.
 - (c) Meta-synthesis of evaluations managed by UN-Women.
13. In late 2019, IES launched a corporate evaluation of UN-Women's support to national action plans on women, peace and security. This is on track to be finalized in 2020.
14. In addition, IES joined the Steering Committee and Evaluation Management Group leading the Joint Evaluation of the Common Chapter of the Strategic Plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women. The first phase consists of an evaluability assessment that will be finalized in 2020.

Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to governance and national planning

15. The corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to governance and national planning (GNP) was finalized and presented to the Executive Board in June 2019. The evaluation found that from 2011 to 2017, UN-Women contributed significantly in setting the global agenda to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment commitments are considered in partner government GNP priorities.
16. Strategic partnerships with other UN entities are a key strength of UN-Women's approach in this area and GNP work itself is well placed to spearhead coordinated UN support. Significant achievements included: enhanced capacity of governments to recognize and respond to gender inequality; increased budgets for gender equality related policies and programmes; and a strengthened role and influence of women in governance. The evaluation also found that investing in stronger partnerships with civil society, and increased involvement in the implementation, monitoring and review phases of the GNP cycle are required to ensure the sustainability of results. The report concluded that progress is inhibited by gaps in knowledge systems related to GNP; insufficient budget resources; and the heavy reliance on non-core funding. Of 10 recommendations made by the evaluation, UN-Women management agreed with nine and partially accepted one recommendation.

Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to humanitarian action

17. In 2019, the evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to humanitarian action was finalized and presented to the Executive Board in September. The evaluation found that from 2014 to 2019, UN-Women demonstrated positive results in ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment remain central to

humanitarian action. UN-Women's programme design and approach show a good understanding of how the dynamics of a crisis undermine the ability of women and girls to benefit from humanitarian action. If UN-Women is to continue its work in this area, it needs to invest in a consistent, early and strategic presence in country-level coordination mechanisms to ensure the needs of women and girls are appropriately addressed.

18. The evaluation highlighted that UN-Women should strengthen the humanitarian–development nexus through investment in partnerships to ensure that UN-Women makes contributions at sufficient scale and increases opportunities for funding. UN-Women's capacity and expertise in humanitarian action vary across offices, risking the Entity's ability to deliver consistently. Programming is also affected by the heavy reliance on non-core resources, which tends to make it more reactive and less strategic, and thus less efficient overall. Of the four recommendations made by the evaluation, UN-Women management agreed with three and partially accepted one recommendation.

Meta-synthesis of evaluations managed by UN-Women

19. With the aim of fostering organizational learning and effective knowledge management, IES commissioned a meta-synthesis of 39 mainly decentralized evaluations that were mainly completed in 2017 and 2018. The report highlighted common insights from these evaluations and captured internal and external enablers that are reported to drive or impede progress towards achievement of results.
20. The synthesis broadly concluded that UN-Women has achieved and sustained its strategic positioning across its integrated mandate, often in volatile, complex and resource-constrained settings. UN-Women's partnerships have led to the strategic positioning of gender issues in national agendas and debates, and localized implementation. UN-Women also achieved important results in greater prioritization and coordination of gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Nations Development System.
21. In terms of a way forward, the synthesis recommended to 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. Evaluations also advocated to boost the achievement of results through multi-pronged advocacy, capacity building and strategic partnerships to support sustained social norm change. It emphasised the need to increase efforts to improve the efficiency of UN-Women supported programmes and interventions as well as to intensify investments to strengthen the culture of results. Finally, the synthesis report suggested to enhance the sustainability of UN-Women supported programmes and interventions through exit strategies and sustainability plans.

Evidence gap mapping analysis

22. In 2019, IES carried out an evidence gap mapping analysis to identify significant evaluative evidence gaps in areas that are strategically important to UN-Women. Using NVivo software, a qualitative data analysis tool, a sample of 103 UN-Women mainly decentralized evaluation reports completed between 2016 and the third quarter of 2019, were coded and analysed according to a framework based on the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

23. The evidence gap mapping analysis resulted in several conclusions and a proposed way forward. The analysis found a need for more in-depth analysis of UN-Women's operating, administration and delivery models at the institutional level. The analysis identified a need for evaluations that are forward-looking, considering the emerging areas of UN-Women's interventions, such as advocacy through social media, and the intersection of gender and climate change. In addition, the analysis identified areas with higher coverage in findings, such as UN-Women's work in coordination and partnerships, that can offer an opportunity for synthesizing existing evidence to provide further insight and lessons learned. The analysis also advocated for more rigorous examination of the integration of the Leaving No One Behind principle into UN-Women's strategy and programming; and the need to assess the Entity's longer-term contributions and results at the outcome and impact levels; as well as its internal preparedness and suitability to deliver results.

Evaluations fostering corporate change

24. Evaluation continued to serve as an important foundation for organizational learning and strategic decision-making. Findings and recommendations from corporate and decentralized evaluations were being extensively drawn upon to inform organizational processes such as UN-Women Change Management and the mid-term review of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan.
25. Throughout 2019 IES participated as an observer in working groups related to Change Management and the pilot portfolio review. Corporate evaluations were presented and discussed at Senior Management Team meetings and the Director, IEAS met periodically with the Executive Director of UN-Women to brief on the results of evaluations. In addition, the Director, IEAS participated in the peer review process of Country and Regional Strategic Note and Annual Work Plans.
26. To commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, IES developed a knowledge product to promote gender-responsive evaluation as one of the key drivers of change for supporting enhanced implementation and delivery of gender equality commitments. The publication, *Good Practices in Gender-Responsive Evaluation*, was developed through a desk review and screening of recent evaluations and is intended for UN system and national partners as well as broader evaluation communities who may wish to incorporate a gender-responsive lens in their evaluation practices.

Use of recently completed corporate evaluations

27. IES continued to track the use of recently completed corporate evaluation findings and recommendations. Management reported that the 2018 corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's leadership and political participation (WPP) continues to contribute to positive changes within the Entity. In the context of change management and UN reform, considerable progress was reported on WPP since the evaluation was completed with 7 (of 12) management response actions completed.
28. Overall, the Women's Political Participation team reported that the evaluation was useful in framing policy and programming strategies; prioritization; and in serving as a reminder to maintain focus on integrating broader corporate priorities such as the Leave No One Behind agenda. The team has also played an

active role in supporting the use of the evaluation results across UN-Women through supporting field offices programme design; and providing policy inputs to the corporate change management processes.

29. To address the gap in knowledge management and capacity building, a dedicated knowledge management and capacity building specialist was recruited at headquarters. Regional Advisers were more involved and relevant staff were specifically targeted for initiatives such as in-person induction workshops. Thematic webinars and a community of practice also created spaces for cross-regional knowledge sharing. Key corporate guidance on WPP (e.g. violence against women in politics, local government) and practical tools for country-level implementation were developed. A corporate training curriculum for women political aspirants was developed and translated into three languages. At the country level, there were also positive signs of strengthened collaboration and resource mobilization.
30. In the area of UN co-ordination, collaboration with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division was fortified and expanded, particularly around the sub-thematic area of violence against women in politics (VAWP), where UN-Women has received enhanced recognition of its leadership role. The Entity has been invited to provide inputs to UN corporate training and country briefings, convened an expert group meeting on data and VAWP, and led in developing key messages on VAWP for use by the UN system.

III. Decentralized evaluation systems

31. IES supports the quality and credibility of decentralized evaluations through several initiatives. These include technical advisory and quality assurance support to the management and conduct of regional thematic evaluations and CPEs. IES also participated in regional and corporate strategic programme review mechanisms, which facilitated the integration of key lessons and evidence into new project documents and Strategic Notes. This served as an opportunity to support the development of integrated and costed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans. This support is valued by field offices and helps to enhance the quality, coverage and utility of evaluations.
32. In 2019, six CPEs were completed³ and seven had been initiated⁴. With the first full year of a new Regional Evaluation Specialist in post, the Asia and Pacific Region saw an increase in the number of CPEs. UN-Women CPEs provided evidence on priority issues and emerging areas that intersect thematic and organizational effectiveness and efficiency elements. Some regions lag behind in terms of CPE coverage. IES will intensify efforts to ensure that offices commission at least one CPE within every two Strategic Note cycles.

Performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women

33. IES uses a set of systems to promote the transparency and accountability of the evaluation function. GEOS is used to periodically track and inform managers of the progress on selected evaluation key performance indicators (KPIs). The Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system also functions as an online repository of evaluation reports with corresponding report

³ Guatemala, Mexico, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Mali, and Programme Presence Portfolio Evaluation in the Asia and the Pacific region.

⁴ Colombia, El Salvador, MCO Barbados, Paraguay, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan and Nigeria.

quality ratings and management response actions. Table 1 below presents the results for 2019, targets and historical trends.

Table 1: Trends in key performance indicators 2015–2019

Key performance indicator	Description	UN-Women SP 2014–2017			UN-Women SP 2018–2021		Target (by 2021)
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Evaluation expenditure over UN-Women programme expenditure	2.0 ⁵	2.9	2.7	2.2	2.0	3.0
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Offices that appointed an M&E focal point or officer	100.0	100.0	100.0	95.0	98.0	100.0
Evaluation coverage	At least one evaluation per Strategic Note cycle	71.0	84.0	89.0	84.0	86.0	100.0
Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of evaluations being implemented	76.0	84.0	84.0	90.0	77.0	85.0
Quality of evaluation reports	Percentage of evaluation reports rated “Good and above” ⁶	100.0	100.0	100.0	88.0	68.0 ⁷	100.0
Management response submission to GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports submitted with management response to GATE	86.0	94.0	100.0	97.0	95.0	100.0
Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response key actions being implemented	85.0	94.0	86.0	87.0	85.0	80.0
Use of evaluations	Percentage of offices that reported using evaluation	75.0	– ⁸	86.0	86.0	86.0	90.0

34. In 2019, UN-Women’s total spending on evaluation was US\$ 6.36 million. This figure is based on expenditure data provided by the Division of Management and Administration that has been reviewed for completeness and consistency, to the extent possible, by IES. In 2019, while overall spending on evaluation remained roughly similar to that of 2018 (2019: US\$ 6.36 million; 2018: US\$ 6.25 million), the ratio of evaluation expenditure to UN-Women programme expenditure decreased to 2 per cent from 2.2 per cent. This is accounted for, mainly, by a 14 per cent increase in total UN Women’s programme expenditure, up from US\$ 286 million in 2018 to US\$ 326 million in 2019. At the same time, the increase in evaluation expense at the decentralized level reflects UN-Women’s continued commitment to evaluation in the field.

⁵ The figure for 2015 was calculated using a different methodology; therefore, it is not comparable to figures for later years.

⁶ To further advance the quality of evaluation in UN-Women the target for this KPI was raised in 2018 to reflect the higher rating “Good and above” (over 2014–2017 the KPI was “Satisfactory and above”) therefore it is not fully comparable to previous years.

⁷ This figure refers to 26 of 38 evaluation reports, rated as “Good and above”. In 2019, 95 per cent (36 of 38 reports) were rated as “Fair and above”.

⁸ Due to glitches in the Results Management System, data on evaluation use for 2016 was not captured in annual reporting by offices.

Table 2: Evaluation function expenditure 2015–2019 (US\$)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total UN-Women programme expenditure	315 101 084	254 413 520	249 447 953	285 670 628	326,069,512
Total expenditure on evaluation	6 272 545	7 391 573	6 714 506	6 253 679	6,359,651
IES/IEAS	4 621 818	5 377 637	4 208 814	3 787 888	3,433,020
Decentralized evaluations ⁹	1 650 727	2 013 936	2 505 691	2 465 791	2,926,630
Total evaluation expenditure (percentage) ¹⁰	2.0	2.9	2.7	2.2	2.0

Source: “Total UN-Women programme expenditure” and “IES expenditure” figures were generated from ATLAS by the Division of Management and Administration (DMA). Figures for decentralized evaluations were calculated based on figures by DMA and supplemented by data obtained from field offices.

35. In 2019, 98 per cent of Country and Regional Offices had appointed at least one M&E officer or focal point. Of these, 31 Country and Regional Offices (50 per cent) reported having at least one M&E Officer. While geographical representation still varies, this reflects improvement in overall M&E capacity at the country level, which had been relatively stagnant in previous years at a rate of less than 45 per cent.
36. In terms of evaluation coverage, 86 per cent of field offices have completed at least one evaluation during the period 2015–2019. Of the eight field offices that did not complete any evaluation in the given period, five had initiated at least one evaluation in 2019. In 2019, six CPEs were completed and seven CPEs were initiated. In 2019, of the 81 planned evaluations, 77 per cent were implemented with 38 (47 per cent) completed and 24 (30 per cent) initiated in 2019. Of the remaining 19 planned evaluations (23 per cent), 14 were postponed/deferred and 5 were cancelled. Reasons for the deferral of evaluations included an extension of programme and project agreements and realignment with the planning cycle. Some evaluations were cancelled because they had been converted or subsumed into other strategic or thematic evaluations.
37. Of the 38 evaluations completed in 2019, 95 per cent of their reports were externally assessed using the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) standards as ‘Fair and above’ in terms of meeting quality standards, with a majority of strategic evaluations falling within the bounds of ‘Very Good’ and ‘Good’ on the rating scale. The GERAAS is an organization-wide system established by IES to assess the quality of evaluation reports in UN-Women. In 2018 IES raised the GERAAS quality standards which led to a slight decrease in the percentage of evaluations meeting the standard. This was done in response to the organization having reached a solid degree of quality in evaluation and the pursuit to take it to a higher level. Moreover, in 2019, IES changed the external quality assessment provider, which renders it challenging to compare the 2019 figures against previous years. Regional Evaluation Specialists are working to ensure and maintain high quality decentralized evaluations. All completed evaluations were uploaded and made

⁹ Estimated costs for decentralized evaluations included a broad range of categories: conduct of evaluation, capacity development on evaluation, M&E staff costs, and communication and dissemination of evaluation products.

¹⁰ The figure for 2015 was calculated using a different methodology; therefore, it is not comparable to figures for later years.

publicly available in the GATE system. The submission of management responses reached 95 per cent at the time of reporting.

38. The implementation of agreed management actions for evaluations completed in 2018 reached 85 per cent. Based on data collated from UN-Women's Results Management System, 86 per cent of field offices reported that they have used evidence and lessons from recent evaluations to inform their interventions and programming. On this note, IES also takes steps to ensure the use of evaluations through its participation in strategic planning discussions both at the regional and headquarters level.

Synopsis of key strategic decentralized evaluations

39. IES has taken steps to increase the influence and uptake of evaluation insights. In view of this, the 2019 annual report presents a synopsis of evaluation findings from 10 regional and country portfolio evaluations, including the first IES-led CPE in Papua New Guinea.

Regional evaluation of community and national level actions for promoting gender equality and engaging men and boys Arab States Regional Office

40. The evaluation found that the use of innovative techniques, including positive deviance, arts-based activities, peer groups, and engaging men and boys proved successful in influencing individual-level changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours towards more gender-equitable practices. There were also reports of emerging changes in behaviour and power dynamics among family members of direct beneficiaries across the target countries. Projects that target change-makers within their communities, particularly youth and community gatekeepers, saw the highest potential for change in social relations and power structures. At the same time, engaging men and boys needs careful consideration in capacity building, coaching and mentoring to ensure that messages conveyed through grant and project activities do not give more power to men over women's rights, voices or space. To amplify impact, the evaluation made five recommendations related to the expansion of UN-Women's partnership engagement strategy and the extension of community-based grants to support more sustained social change.

Knowledge management evaluation Western and Central Africa Regional Office

41. The evaluation found promising knowledge management practices and products within the West and Central Africa region despite resource constraints. The region invested significantly in capacity building and the development of information management systems and digital platforms, yet gaps were noted in ensuring overall utility. This was attributed to the use of English in production of some products for francophone countries; weaknesses in the accessibility of some knowledge products; and an inefficient process of approving knowledge products. Gaps in human and financial resources also had an adverse impact on effectiveness. The evaluation made eight recommendations which highlighted the need for increased engagement of partners in the generation and dissemination of knowledge; mitigation of institutional memory loss; and the standardization of quality assurance indicators in national gender equality and human rights knowledge creation systems.

**Regional evaluation of the third phase of the regional gender-responsive budgeting programme
Europe and Central Asia Regional Office**

42. The evaluation confirmed that the programme activities have strengthened the foundation of gender-responsive budgeting in target countries. The programme's influence reportedly resulted in the reallocation of funds based on gender equality principles in several jurisdictions, with direct links to the improvement of the lives of women and girls in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. The regional nature of the programme created synergies and a supportive network between target countries. However, gender-responsive budgeting is complex and requires sustained effort and management of risks such as political cycles and the structure and influence of existing gender mechanisms. These factors are unavoidable, but foreseeable, and stronger mitigation strategies may have achieved greater results. The evaluation made eight recommendations aimed at re-framing gender-responsive budgeting as a long-term effort, with clear steps and progress markers. It also noted that it is critical to portray gender-responsive budgeting as a tool for advocacy and programme improvement across all sectors.

**Regional evaluation on Syrian women's engagement in the Syrian political process
Arab States Regional Office**

43. The evaluation found that UN-Women was able to deliver the programme in a timely and flexible manner within a challenging and evolving environment. The programme convened diverse political groups and reportedly increased the participation and integration of Syrian women's perspectives in the peace process. However, personnel changes, office moves, outsourcing work to independent contractors and de-prioritizing certain activities had an impact on delivery. Stakeholders felt that the programme would have been strengthened by UN-Women delivering more of the work itself, rather than it being delivered via contractors, as many said that they had more trust in the quality of UN-Women's work and insight into the context than that of the contractors. Challenges also included securing engagement with grassroots individuals and difficulty uniting participants around a common agenda. The evaluation made five recommendations to enhance long-term sustainability through increased investment in capacity building to prepare women at all levels to participate in decision-making arenas, and building better networks and constituencies to avoid duplication of efforts, ensure relevance, and build relationships and trust with actors beyond the programme.

**Programme presence portfolio evaluation
Asia and the Pacific Regional Office**

44. The nine Programme Presence Offices (PPOs) overseen by the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) expanded their original focus on operational work to deliver on UN-Women's integrated mandate, despite very limited budgets, reliance on unpredictable core funds and short-term personnel. The evaluation found that PPOs made valuable contributions towards UN-Women's strategic priorities and the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Nevertheless, lack of clarity around decision-making authority and gaps in strategic planning mechanisms limited the PPOs' full ability to build on results and achieve synergies between thematic areas. The evaluation made

four recommendations aimed at clarifying the mandate and strategic identification of PPOs and to enable the regional office to align its time and resources towards its core functions.

Country portfolio evaluation

Mali country office

45. The Mali country office Strategic Note 2014–2017, and its 2018–2019 extension, allowed the office to focus its interventions on the country’s development priorities in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment and to achieve thematic synergies with other UN entities and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). While the country office’s systems and procedures for planning, monitoring and implementation were adequate, indicators for some projects/programmes were not fully aligned with those of the development results framework. Furthermore, the evaluation identified challenges regarding the availability of data, noting that baseline studies had not been completed for some flagship programmes. The country office worked to ensure the sustainability of its projects through building the capacities of government ministries; however, mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women needed to be strengthened and supported over time to withstand resource and security constraints. The evaluation made four recommendations and highlighted seven lessons learned to inform future programming.

Country portfolio evaluation

Bangladesh country office

46. The evaluation found that policy and advocacy work and the ability to convene civil society and government were key elements of UN-Women’s comparative advantage. These actions were supported by the Entity’s expertise and access to an international pool of knowledge and experts. UN-Women had also taken a strong role in coordination across the UN system, but programme-level strategic coordination could be enhanced. The evaluation concluded that there was scope for more systematic fostering of relationships between civil society and government; a more consistent long-term operational approach; and a clearer identification of strengths in relation to other UN agencies. The evaluation made eight recommendations that seek to support the office in better defining and communicating its work, further staff development and in strategically engaging stakeholders.

Country portfolio evaluation

Mexico country office

47. The evaluation concluded that UN-Women was well-positioned and enjoyed high legitimacy among stakeholders, who value its expertise, quality knowledge products and ability to convene diverse groups. The evaluation highlighted that the implementation of global projects had contributed significantly to the office’s growing portfolio. However, some heavy internal administrative and management procedures were reported to steer the focus away from building a culture of results and knowledge sharing within the office and among partners. The evaluation made seven recommendations aimed at strengthening strategic and integrated planning; reinforcing mechanisms to contribute to the continuity and sustainability of initiatives; and fortifying partnerships with the private sector in light of resource mobilization challenges in the country.

**Country portfolio evaluation
Papua New Guinea country office (IES-led)**

48. The evaluation showed that UN-Women has made important contributions in a challenging and complex operating environment. From the grassroots level to the national level platforms for women's voices have been institutionalized and key policies have been influenced. Successful initiatives like the Safe Cities Programme have driven transformative change. There were opportunities for optimizing synergy between programming efforts of UN agencies and enhancing joint programme management and oversight, particularly in the women, peace and security area. New programmes will help to facilitate a deepened focus on systemic social norm change and allow UN-Women to reach those left furthest behind. However, the risks involved in rapid expansion require careful consideration to ensure organizational readiness. The evaluation made four recommendations aimed at supporting the country office to achieve its objectives considering capacity challenges related to governance, implementing partners, and personnel (both numbers and capacity), and high local operating costs.

**Country portfolio evaluation
Guatemala country office**

49. The evaluation concluded that UN-Women's interventions were relevant in responding to gender equality needs and priorities in Guatemala. An adequate selection of partners and alignment with the National Plan for Development contributed to the achievement of most expected results, particularly women's access to justice and reparation to victims of violence. Similarly, the evaluation evidenced progress in women's empowerment and access to rights at an individual, family, organizational and community level. In terms of sustainability, changes within institutions where gender equality policies have been promoted endured over time when they received sustained monitoring and support from UN-Women. The evaluation made eleven recommendations urging UN-Women to take a more comprehensive role in UN system coordination; improve operational efficiency; and institutionalize capacities to guarantee sustainability of gains.

IV. Communication to improve the use of evaluations

50. In 2019, IES continued to invest in knowledge management and communication, with a focus on reaching relevant UN-Women personnel and stakeholders with the right information to maximize their use of evidence and recommendations from UN-Women evaluations.
51. IES developed a communications package for each corporate evaluation and IES-led evaluation, including a professionally designed evaluation report, brief and Transform magazine. The reports and the products are publicly available through the UN-Women website, the GATE system, and are also uploaded on the UNEG website and shared through social media. In 2019, the GATE system had more than 20,000 unique views and UN-Women's evaluation web page had over 21,000 views. These figures represent a stable level of audiences accessing the site.
52. IES has engaged in efforts to systematize organizational learning through the UN-Women Knowledge Management Strategy. This work aims to present

evaluation products and information through corporate channels and reach UN-Women personnel beyond those within monitoring and evaluation networks.

V. Strengthening gender-responsive evaluation within the United Nations

United Nations Evaluation Group and regional United Nations evaluation groups

53. UN-Women continued to promote UN system coordination and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment by contributing to joint evaluations and inter-agency evaluation group activities. In addition to its role as convener of the UNEG Human Rights and Gender Equality Working Group, IES contributed to the development of the design, monitoring and evaluation companion guide of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance and the UN System Wide Evaluation Policy. IES also continued to convene the UNEG Humanitarian Evaluation Interest Group and actively engaged in other task forces focusing on joint evaluations, evaluation use and partnership.
54. Through its role as co-convener of the Human Rights and Gender Equality Working Group, IES led the completion of the meta-synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations with a gender lens. In addition, IES continued serving as Secretariat for the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator and contributed to the development of technical guidance for the accountability framework of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy with a focus on the evaluation indicator.
55. At the regional level, IES continued to serve as co-chair of the UN Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP). In the Americas and the Caribbean, IES co-led the Regional Inter-Agency Working Group on Monitoring and Evaluation.
56. As part of UNEDAP efforts to support UNDAF evaluations, technical advice was offered to the Bangladesh UN Country Team (UNCT) and a workshop on gender-responsive evaluation was facilitated for the UNCT in Vietnam. In Europe and Central Asia, UN-Women supported quality assurance of several UNDAF evaluation processes and delivered tailored training to UNCTs in North Macedonia, Kosovo, Turkey and Ukraine. In the East and Southern Africa region, two UNDAF evaluations in Zimbabwe and Mozambique were supported.

United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women evaluation performance indicator

57. As the Secretariat for the UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicator, IES reviewed submissions by reporting entities and provided clarification on the application of the technical guidance and scorecard as it relates to the evaluation performance indicator.
58. In 2019, 48 of the 66 UN-SWAP reporting entities reported on the evaluation performance indicator. This represents a steady increase in the total number of entities reporting, as well as an increase in the proportion of entities that are meeting or exceeding the requirements. Twenty-four per cent reported exceeding requirements for the indicator, which is an increase of 3 percentage points from 2018. Twenty-nine per cent reported meeting requirements and 20 per cent reported approaching requirements. Eighteen entities (27 per cent) reported that

the indicator was not applicable because no evaluations were undertaken, or due to the technical nature of their work. As was the case last year, no entity reported missing the requirements.

59. IES commissioned an external assessment of UN-Women's performance against the UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicator. Based on the assessment, UN-Women exceeded the UN-SWAP evaluation gender requirements in terms of integrating gender equality in its respective evaluations. Nonetheless, the degree of integration and ratings varied across regions, calling for stronger quality assurance and continued capacity development support to decentralized evaluations.

Meta-synthesis of UNDAF evaluations

60. Through its role as co-convenor of the UNEG Human Rights and Gender Equality Working Group, UN-Women promoted the integration of gender equality perspectives by leading the finalization of the inter-agency meta-synthesis of UNDAF evaluations (2015–2019) with a gender lens. The synthesis indicated that while there has been significant progress, the pace of change across UN systems is inadequate to attain an optimal level of quality and gender responsiveness in UNDAF evaluations – the predecessor of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). In particular, the assessment showed that only 4 of 50 evaluation reports (8 per cent) met the requirements of the UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicator, while a further 27 reports (54 per cent) approached requirements. The remaining 19 reports (38 per cent) missed requirements.
61. The synthesis showed that systematically addressing the bottlenecks will depend on the intensified efforts of various actors. These include the capacity and ability of UNCTs and Resident Coordinator Offices to design and monitor human rights and gender-responsive results matrices and relevant indicators; collection of disaggregated data and subsequent monitoring; enhanced system-wide capacity and coordination for Cooperation Framework evaluation processes and products with a gender lens; and adequate resource investment to engage gender-balanced and qualified evaluators.

VI. Leveraging partnership for national evaluation capacity development

62. IES works to enhance national evaluation capacities by collaborating with partners at the global and national levels to advance different approaches within gender-responsive evaluation and to strengthen gender-responsive evaluation of national gender action plans. IES also serves as the co-chair of EvalGender+, the global partnership to strengthen national capacities in gender-responsive evaluation.
63. As co-chair of EvalGender+, IES focused on disseminating the findings and results of the review of Voluntary National Reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on understanding how evaluative evidence related to gender has been used to inform development. The review of the 2019 Voluntary National Reviews and regional reviews was presented in five evaluation conferences to advance the gender-responsive evaluation and the SDG agenda.
64. At the global level, the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) partnered with IES to support national evaluation capacity development on the

Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMs) approach. This included three co-sponsored workshops on the ISE4GEMs approach and the translation of the ISE4GEMs guide from English to Spanish.

65. As part of the follow-up to methodological development work on Big Data and Evaluation, at a panel event at the Rockefeller Foundation in 2019 IES co-sponsored and presented “*The Role of Data Science and New Technologies for Evaluation in the SDG Era*”.
66. At the regional level, IES collaborated with the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) in the East and Southern Africa region to support the gender diagnostic of the national M&E system in Kenya, and the baseline study on M&E culture in the Kenyan Public Sector. In the Americas and the Caribbean, IES supported the Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation (AUCI) by providing guidance on integrating a gender-equality lens and gender indicators in evaluations and M&E frameworks.
67. As part of the IES national capacity development strategy, UN-Women supported mechanisms for Jordan and Serbia to lead and undertake evaluations on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment National Actions Plans (NAPs). These mechanisms further inform national priorities on gender equality through strengthening institutional and coordination arrangements for delivering on gender equality results. This is in line with UN system efforts to enhance national evaluation capacity for the follow-up and review of national-level SDG progress, required in the 2030 Agenda. This work was presented as part of the 2019 UNDP National Evaluation Capacities conference.

VII. The 2020 Independent Evaluation Service work programme

68. The 2020 IES work programme is derived from the Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit Services (IEAS) workplan for 2020. It is guided by the Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021 and Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021. The programme of work focuses on five key result areas discussed below. It considers the stronger engagement of IES staff in the conduct of corporate, regional and country portfolio evaluations.
69. At the time of preparation of this annual report, IES was in the process of adapting its 2020 plan of work to reflect the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The crisis will have an impact on IES’s ability to fully engage in its planned evaluation activities and is likely to result in the delay or deferral of some activities. IES will continue to monitor and adapt to the evolving situation to best ensure that it delivers relevant, useful and supportive evaluative evidence in a manner that does not compromise the ability of UN-Women, government authorities, civil society and beneficiaries to respond to the crisis.

Implementation of effective corporate evaluations

70. At the corporate level, IES will provide coverage of the key results areas of the UN-Women Strategic Plan as per the 2020 corporate evaluation work programme and the Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021.
71. Considering the COVID-19 crisis, in 2020 IES will aim to present to the

Executive Board the findings of two IES-led corporate evaluations on: (a) corporate evaluation of UN-Women's support to UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans on women, peace and security; and (b) a corporate meta-synthesis of UN-Women evaluations. IES will adapt the planned corporate evaluation of the UN-Women Strategic Plan to a desk-based study that will draw on the existing evaluative evidence and the mid-term review of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021. It will initiate a corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to Ending Violence Against Women. IES will continue to collaborate with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF on the joint evaluation of the Common Chapter. Additionally, IES will undertake two primarily desk-based studies, which include a real-time evaluation of programmatic innovations and a joint synthesis with the United Nations University on intersectionality in the SDGs.

Implementation of effective decentralized evaluation systems

72. IES will continue rolling out CPEs and regional evaluations that are directly conducted and managed by IES staff. Of 13 CPEs planned in 2020, at least seven were planned to be led by IES. The full implementation of the planned CPEs is, however, likely to be affected by the COVID-19 crisis.
73. IES Regional Evaluation Specialists will also provide technical assistance to decentralized evaluations managed by UN-Women programme staff, of which approximately 30–34 were planned to be completed in 2020. IES will track evaluation KPIs; implement the global evaluation reports assessment and analysis system; and maintain the GATE system.

Promotion of United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation

74. IES will actively participate in UNEG working groups and contribute to discussions regarding UN reform and system-wide evaluations. It will continue to co-chair the UNEG Human Rights and Gender Equality Working Group. Within this pillar, IES will lead SWAP reporting on the integration of a gender perspective in evaluation. IES will continue to co-chair the UNEG Humanitarian Evaluation Interest Group.

Strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive evaluation systems

75. UN-Women will continue to support targeted national evaluation capacity development initiatives providing targeted support to interventions on strengthening gender-responsive national evaluation systems in Timor Leste, Kosovo and Uruguay.
76. Activities under the partnership agreement with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) will be completed in 2020. This will include the issuance of a working paper on evaluating impact on gender equality and women's empowerment; guidance on gender-responsive evaluation approaches for humanitarian action; and good practices for gender-responsive evaluations in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs.

Strengthening gender-responsive evaluation use

77. IES will promote the use of evaluative evidence and recommendations in corporate strategic decision-making and performance appraisal through its participation in corporate governance structures.
78. In collaboration with the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division, IES will continue to provide updates on selected KPIs on the evaluation function

that are periodically reported through the corporate Country Office Assessment System. It will continue to participate as an active observer in corporate review processes relating to the review of new Strategic Notes and Annual Work Plans.

79. IES will continue to implement its evaluation use and communications strategy.

Budget for the Independent Evaluation Service 2020 work programme

80. The IES budget for 2020 is US\$ 3,467,300. The budget is comprised of three funding categories: institutional budget, core programmable and non-core resources.
81. The institutional budget of US\$ 2,281,000 covers the salaries of eight IES staff posts, as well as the key workplan activities: corporate evaluations; support to some IES-led CPEs; evaluation studies; communication products and knowledge management; support to decentralized evaluation systems; support to United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; and national evaluation capacity development on gender-responsive evaluation. In addition to the institutional budget, the salaries of five Regional Evaluation Specialists are covered through core resources in the amount of US\$ 1,150,000. IES has carried forward an available budget of US\$ 36,300 of non-core resources from NORAD for some specific evaluation activities to be finalized in 2020.

Annex I**Decentralized and corporate evaluations completed in 2019**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Office/division</i>	<i>Title of evaluation</i>	<i>Report quality rating</i>
Corporate	Independent Evaluation Service (IES)	1. Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning	Very Good
		2. Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action	Very Good
Americas and the Caribbean	Guatemala	3. Evaluation of UN-Women Guatemala Strategic Note 2015–2019	Very Good
	Ecuador	4. Impact Evaluation of the “Quito: Safe City for Women and Girls Programme”	Fair
	Mexico	5. Final Evaluation of the Strategic Note of UN-Women Mexico, 2014–2019	Good
	Bolivia	6. Evaluation of UN-Women's programme support (partnerships)	Good
Asia and the Pacific	Nepal	7. UN-Women's Contribution to Women's Economic Empowerment	Very Good
	Papua New Guinea	8. UN-Women Country Portfolio Evaluation Papua New Guinea	Good
		9. Evaluation of the ‘Port Moresby: A Safe City for Women and Girls Programme’	Very Good
	Bangladesh	10. Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Regional	11. Programme Presence Portfolio Evaluation in Asia and the Pacific	Very Good
Arab States	Algeria	12. Strengthening the effectiveness of equal rights between men and women in Algeria	Fair
	Morocco	13. Evaluation of the Project "Support for the economic empowerment of women through the promotion of the agro-ecological value chain for better resilience to climate change"	Good
		14. Evaluation of the project "Access to judicial services for women and children victims of human trafficking in Morocco"	Fair
	Palestine	15. Final Evaluation of UN-Women Project “Advancing the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the oPt”	Good
	Regional	16. UN-Women's Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process	Good
		17. Formative Evaluation of Community and National Level Actions for Promoting Gender Equality and Engaging Men and Boys	Very Good
	Jordan	18. UN-Women Programme Eid Bi Eid I & II Final Evaluation	Good

<i>Region</i>	<i>Office/division</i>	<i>Title of evaluation</i>	<i>Report quality rating</i>	
Europe and Central Asia	Georgia	19. Final evaluation for the National Strategy for Women	Fair	
		20. Final evaluation for the Hemayati: Promoting Women and Girls' health and wellbeing joint programme	Very Good	
		21. Mid-term evaluation of UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality	Very Good	
		22. Final evaluation of the EU supported EVAWG project "UNiTe to Fight Violence against Women in Georgia"	Fair	
		23. Evaluation of the third phase of the Promoting Gender Responsive Policies in South East Europe Programme	Very Good	
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	24. Final Evaluation of the project "Standards and Engagement for Ending Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina"	Fair	
	Serbia	25. Evaluation of the Serbia National Action Plan for GE	Good	
	Ukraine	26. Mid-Term Evaluation: Enhancing Accountability for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in National Reforms, Peace and Security	Good	
	East and Southern Africa	Zimbabwe	27. Final Evaluation of the Gender, Peace and Security Programme in Zimbabwe	Fair
		Ethiopia	28. Evaluation of JP Rural Women Economic Empowerment	Very Good
Kenya		29. Final Evaluation Integrating Gender into Peace Support Operations in Eastern Africa	Fair	
Mozambique		30. Final Evaluation of WEE Project in Gaza	Fair	
Malawi		31. End of Project Evaluation for the Advancing and Sustaining Gender Based Governance Project in Malawi	Good	
		32. Mid-term evaluation for the Women Empowerment Programme	Good	
West and Central Africa	Sierra Leone	33. Evaluation of the Improving Women's Participation in Political Processes as Peace building Ambassadors Project – Sierra Leone	Good	
	Cote d'Ivoire	34. Evaluation "Women and Young Girls, Actors in Conflict Prevention through Early Warning and Information Networks"	Unsatisfactory	
		35. Evaluation of the project Women Empowerment in the Shea Sector	Unsatisfactory	
	Regional	36. Knowledge Management Evaluation	Fair	
	Mali	37. Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good	
	Liberia	38. Final Project Evaluation: "Inclusive Security Nothing for Us Without Us"	Good	