TRANSFORM

Gender-Responsive Evaluations: good practice approaches and methods

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Gender-Responsive Evaluations: Good practice approaches and methods

IFAD
Raising the bar for gender-transformative approaches at IFAD

UNECE
Assessing gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNFPA
Accelerating the abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
Evaluative evidence on gender mainstreaming from the Beijing Declaration to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present this special edition of Transform, *Gender-Responsive Evaluations: good practice approaches and methods*. In 2020, women's rights take centre stage, beginning with the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and marking five years since the adoption of the Substantiable Development Goals. More than ever, systematic evidence and knowledge on what works for gender equality, why, for whom, and in what circumstances is needed to catalyse equitable, inclusive, sustainable progress and to amplify our impact.

In 2019, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service initiated a good practice review to identify trends and feature some of the ways in which United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) partners have integrated gender-responsive approaches and methods in their evaluation processes to assess gender equality results. This resulted in a recent publication, Good Practices in Gender-Responsive Evaluations. In addition, we invited our partners to share their insights and perspectives in this special edition of the Transform magazine. We warmly welcome our contributors from IFAD, UNECE, UNFPA and African Development Bank.

Exchanging knowledge and practice among UN agencies provided us with an opportunity to learn from our partners about how they integrate gender perspectives into evaluation practices, and also to step back and review our own evaluation approach. This inevitably reveals existing challenges and what more needs to be done. As a leading agency for Gender-Responsive Evaluation, it reminds us of the need to continually update our evaluation practices with more innovative thinking, to provide a truly valuable contribution to this constantly changing work with socio-economic dynamics at the local and international level.

We hope that our readers enjoy this special edition of Transform and find it useful and engaging. More importantly, we hope it inspires you to join our endeavours in enhancing and establishing evaluation practices that further advance the status of women and girls.

Inga Sniukaite
Chief, Independent Evaluation Service
Email: inga.sniukaite@unwomen.org
@IngaSniukaite

ON THE COVER: Journée de la femme en Centrafrique « Bâtir intelligemment, innover pour le changement »

UN/MINUSCA - HERVE SEREFIO

Gender-Responsive Evaluations: good practice approaches and methods

25 years on, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) remains a visionary and progressive blueprint for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. It sets out 12 areas of critical concern that are at the heart of transforming unequal gender relations and has generating substantive and progressive change across the economic, political, social and environmental dimensions of women and girls' lives.

Building and reinforcing the inter-linkages and indivisibility of women's rights and the 12 critical areas of concern, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) has similarly adopted a comprehensive approach to the achievement of gender equality by creating a stand-alone goal (Sustainable Development Goal 5 [SDG 5]) and mainstreaming gender-related targets across all other goal areas.

While political commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) has steadily gained visibility, strength and traction in international, regional and national level norms and discourse, progress in closing gender gaps in areas such as politics; the economy and the world of work, including the gender wage gap; violence against women; and unpaid care and domestic work has been uneven and much too slow. No country in the world today is on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.

Bridging the disconnect between robust normative commitments and the lack of progress on gender equality presents a strategic opportunity to harness the catalytic role of gender-responsive evaluation and the use of evaluative evidence to drive and accelerate progress across the SDGs. By generating knowledge and evidence of what works (or not) for GEWE, why, for whom, and in what circumstances, gender-responsive evaluation can crucially influence and shape policies, programmes and investments to ensure that outcomes are equitable, inclusive and reach women and girls at risk of being left further behind.

The 2030 Agenda places elevated importance on GEWE for achieving inclusive and sustainable development and on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in national and global review and follow-up processes. This strategically positions gender-responsive evaluation as a transformative agent of change for achieving the gender equality commitments across the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda in collaboration with UN system and national partners. To promote and deepen gender-responsive evaluation praxis, this special edition of Transform on the occasion of the 25th anniversary and review of the BPfA showcases good and promising gender-responsive evaluation approaches and methods used by UNEG partners to assess the contributions of policies, programmes or a portfolio of interventions to the achievement of gender equality results.

Gender-Responsive Evaluation

Gender-responsive evaluation is a systematic and impartial assessment that provides credible and reliable evidence-based information about the extent to which an intervention has resulted in progress (or the lack thereof) towards intended and/or unintended results regarding GEWE. It consists of two main components:

↘ First, it assesses the "degree to which gender and power relationships – including structural and other causes that give rise to inequities, discrimination and unfair power relations – change as a result of an intervention."

↘ Second, it entails a process that is inclusive, participatory and respectful of all stakeholders, especially in ensuring that women's voices, including different groups, are prevalent throughout the evaluation.

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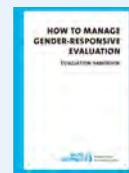
UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation

Good practices in gender-responsive evaluations

GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION APPROACHES

Among UNEG partners, good practice gender-responsive evaluation approaches tend to take three forms. The first and most common approach, especially in project-level evaluations, incorporates gender equality and human rights as a stand-alone criterion or as mainstreamed across the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Another method combines theory-based approaches with the use of one, or a combination of gender-analytical frameworks, including sector-specific gender frameworks. This approach facilitates a more nuanced assessment of the type, effectiveness and quality of gender equality results achieved.

Finally, recent gender-responsive evaluation approaches, especially corporate-level evaluations of gender-targeted programming, are adopting more systems thinking and complexity-responsive designs, including the use of multiple evaluation approaches to assess and interpret gender equality outcomes of policies, programmes or a portfolio of interventions.

The following table summarizes these good practice approaches and identifies some of the evaluations which have applied them.

Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations

Fosters **the inclusion and participation of different stakeholders**, particularly of women and men at a higher risk of having their rights violated and further disaggregating stakeholders by their human rights roles as either duty bearers or rights holders.

Makes power dynamics that entrench underlying causes of exclusion, discrimination and inequality more explicit and **assesses whether and how an intervention might have contributed or led to changes in these root causes.**

Evaluations: *UN Joint Programme on Advancing and Sustaining Gender Equality Gains in Rwanda; UN Women Corporate Evaluation of Women's Economic Empowerment*

Feminist

Examines issues of power, specifically identifying where and with whom power resides and how it is exercised.

Seeks opportunities for reversing gender inequalities and prioritizes women and girls' experiences and voices, including women and girls in vulnerable situations.

Evaluations: *Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to UN system coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women; Independent Global Programme Evaluation of UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality*

Participatory democratic evaluation

Engages grantee communities (e.g. rights holders) in processes of dialogue and action and empowers them to monitor and evaluate their own performance through self-reviews.

Evaluations: *Independent Global Programme Evaluation of UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality (2009–2017)*

ISE4GEMS

Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices (ISE4GEMS): an innovative, complexity-responsive evaluation approach which integrates an intersectional analysis of gender equality, marginalized voices and the environment - three cross-cutting dimensions relevant for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Evaluations: *Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Women's Political Participation and Leadership*

Linking theory-based evaluation and gender-analysis frameworks, including sector-specific frameworks

Ensures gender-responsive methods are applied throughout the evaluation and supports evaluators not only to assess the contributions of intervention(s) for GEWE but also **to better understand the context which shapes the relationships and dynamics of any situation**. Common gender-analytical frameworks include: Longwe Women's Empowerment Framework; Harvard Gender Roles; and Social Relations Framework. Sector-specific gender-analytical frameworks include: Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI); and UNESCO Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM).

Evaluations: *UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation (Malawi); UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation (Palestine 2014–2017); Gender Evaluation of the Work of the Department of Global Communications*

GOOD PRACTICE EVALUATION METHODS AND TOOLS

UNEG partner evaluations relied on mixed methods and used triangulation to validate the various sources of information. Mixed-method evaluations recognize the importance of listening to multiple voices, each with a different perspective on the programme(s) and processes being evaluated. Typically, these methods have consisted of a desk/portfolio review; analysis of datasets; interviews with key stakeholders; focus groups with stakeholders; participant observation and surveys (i.e. organizational or stakeholder/user). However, recent evaluations have developed or employed more enhanced evaluation methods and tools to better capture the quality of gender equality results as well as the complexities of gender equality interventions related to power, voice, participation and access – essential dimensions in advancing human rights and gender equality.

Outcome mapping

Helps generate learning about a programme's influence on the progression of change in its direct partners, and therefore helps evaluators think more systematically and pragmatically about what they are doing and to adaptively manage variations in strategies to bring about desired outcomes.

UN Women used outcome mapping to measure partnership effectiveness along a continuum of pre-identified expected results: basic, good or advanced that worked towards the achievement of a hypothesized partnership outcome and to understand the contributions of strategic partnerships to GEWE.

Evaluations: *Corporate Evaluation on Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*

Critical Systems Heuristics (CSH)

Rooted in systems thinking, CSH **brings together multiple perspectives** to reach a way of framing value judgements.

It can be used to map and further disaggregate key categories of stakeholders by their human rights roles (e.g. rights holders, principal duty bearers, primary, secondary and tertiary duty bearers) in order to make the relational power dynamics between groups more explicit. It is also a method to ensure that the voices and perspectives of women are heard.

Evaluations: *Evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence, including harmful practices (2012–2017)*

Contribution analysis

Because gender equality results are seldom attributable to one organization, contribution analysis helps to determine **the influence of an intervention or a portfolio of interventions on gender equality outcomes** in one or across different thematic areas. It also reduces uncertainty about the contribution to outcome-level changes.

Evaluations: *Country Portfolio Evaluation of Kyrgyzstan; Regional Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Gender-responsive Budgeting; Evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of GBV, including harmful practices (2012–2017)*

Gender Results Effectiveness Scale

Elaborates a common framework to measure the effectiveness of **gender equality results based on a five-point ratings scale**. The ratings progressively move from gender negative to gender transformative, with gender transformative defined as results that contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discrimination.
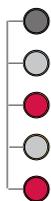
Evaluations: *Evaluation of UNDP's Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2008–2013)*

Collaborative Outcomes Reporting Technique

Builds stakeholder ownership of the evaluation process through the active participation of rights holders and other key stakeholders in the analysis of evidence and generation of a "performance story" about how a programme contributed to outcome(s) and/or impact(s).

Evaluations: *Country Portfolio Evaluation of Kyrgyzstan (2015–2017); Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Gender-responsive Budgeting in the Europe and Central Asia Region; Evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence, including harmful practices (2012–2017)*

Spotlight on country-led evaluations

In recent years, UN Women has supported national mechanisms for gender equality in countries such as Colombia, Jordan, Nepal and Serbia to lead and undertake evaluations of National Action Plans (NAPs) on GEWE to further inform priorities on gender equality, including strengthening the institutional and coordination arrangements for delivering gender equality results.

These country-led, gender-responsive evaluations are in line with UN system efforts to enhance national evaluation capacity for the follow-up and review of national-level SDG progress, which the 2030 Agenda requires to be rigorous and evidence-based. While each NAP responds to gender inequalities specific to each national context, the table on the following page summarizes some of the common findings and lessons learned among gender-responsive, country-led evaluations, especially around the mechanisms and processes needed to support more effective implementation and sustainability of such strategies.

As nationally-driven processes, gender-responsive, country-led evaluations can foster greater national ownership of and accountability for realizing commitments to gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls as well as increase the likelihood that evaluative evidence will be used to inform and enhance gender-responsive policymaking across all sectors. In so doing, gender responsive, country-led evaluations can drive more substantive progress on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Assessing and measuring progress towards the achievement of GEWE needs to be understood as an inherently political, complex, non-linear and unpredictable process. Gender inequality and discriminatory norms are rooted in entrenched and overlapping systems of unequal social, cultural, economic and political power relations between women and men. As the BPfA so presciently saw twenty-five years ago, achieving transformative change for women and girls hinges on addressing gender inequalities from multiple points in integrated and synergistic ways and in coordination and partnership with a range of development actors, from the local to the global level.

Evaluation in the SDG era

Evaluations in the SDG era must move further upstream to inform and transform strategies, policies and systems through robust evidence and innovation.

Gender-responsive evaluations can support the imperative shift to more systemic, complexity-responsive and adaptive evaluations needed to bring about the bold and transformative changes for all as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.

In this context, supporting gender-responsive, country-led evaluations can not only foster greater national ownership of and accountability for realizing commitments to GEWE, but also increase the likelihood that evaluative evidence will be used to inform and enhance gender-responsive policymaking across all sectors.

By elucidating context and country-specific systems of power that entrench discriminatory gender norms, both formal and informal; engaging duty bearers and rights holders, including those directly impacted by rights violations; and by generating strategic evidence, knowledge and learning, gender-responsive evaluations can facilitate more comprehensive analyses of the pathways of change at multiple levels to crucially direct policies, programmes and investments towards achieving gender equality and leaving no woman and girl behind.

What worked

Addressing issues of **intersectionality** within the evaluation process was critical for analysing and understanding how class, race, age or religion intersect with gender and determine different levels of inequality (Serbia, Colombia).
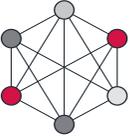
Addressing gender equality challenges through a combination of different, **cross-sectoral interventions** was found to be more effective for addressing root causes of gender inequality.
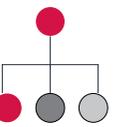
Working through **multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms** created important synergies by mobilizing and leveraging the collective knowledge, expertise and financial resources of both national and international development actors in the development, implementation and M&E of gender equality interventions (Colombia, Nepal, Serbia).

What did not work

While there was broad commitment to and recognition of GEWE, a **lack of clarity among line ministries** of their role in contributing to the implementation of national gender equality strategies resulted in **no earmarked human and financial resources** from their budgets (Jordan, Serbia).

Inadequate resource allocations and chronic underfunding hampered both the effective implementation and potential impact of NAPs (Colombia, Jordan, Serbia).

Small-scale and fragmented interventions do not lend themselves to facilitating the transformative change needed to eliminate deeply entrenched social and structural barriers to gender equality.

Weak or inadequate (inter and intra) **institutional mechanisms** of coordination linking national and local levels affected both implementation and monitoring of progress (Colombia, Jordan, Serbia). In Colombia, one of the least advanced areas of progress related to the transversalization of the gender approach into planning and budgeting processes: only 41.9 per cent of the entities had incorporated the gender approach into their planning and budgeting processes.

Lessons learned

↘ To support greater institutionalization and sustainability, **NAPs need to be aligned** not only with international and regional gender equality norms but even more so **with national and sectoral strategies and priorities**. Where alignment is lacking, there is a risk that gender equality priorities will be marginalized or over-looked in policy-making spaces.

↘ **Developing a theory of change for GEWE** through participatory processes provides a shared and comprehensive framework to support coherent programming, effective implementation and resource mobilization at national/local levels. At the same time, a theory of change should be sufficiently flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances.

↘ **NAPs must be underpinned by implementation and M&E frameworks** that assign clear roles and responsibilities to key stakeholders and be costed and adequately financed.

↘ Addressing multiple and intersecting causes of discrimination and exclusion remains constrained by the lack or absence of **disaggregated data on different groups of women in vulnerable situations**. The Evaluation of the NAP for Gender Equality (2016–2018) in Serbia found that data on key dimensions was missing for key groups of women.

↘ **Ensuring a greater role for partnerships with civil society**, especially women's organizations, in priority-setting as well as the design, implementation and M&E of NAPs can enhance accountability for achieving GEWE.

↘ By **shifting to more multi-year funding**, programme approaches can support the realization of tangible, social change and sustainable impact.

What methods and tools are available to advance gender-responsive evaluation?

How can we empower rights holders and maximize their participation?

What can we learn from successful gender-responsive evaluation approaches?

GOOD PRACTICES IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATIONS

Download the interactive PDF here

GOOD PRACTICES in Gender-Responsive Evaluations

UN WOMEN

Johanna Pennarz
Lead Evaluation Officer
IFAD Independent Office of Evaluation

Eoghan Molloy
Evaluation Specialist
IFAD Independent Office of Evaluation

Raising the bar for gender-transformative approaches at IFAD

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At the IFAD Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE), evaluation synthesis and meta-evaluations have helped to refine the approach to evaluating gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), thus raising the bar for gender-transformative approaches in IFAD programmes. This article outlines the process of an evaluation synthesis review and its continuing impact at IFAD.

In 2017, IOE published an evaluation synthesis review "*What works for gender equality and women's empowerment − a review of practices and results*". This evaluation synthesis provided valuable lessons for IFAD on what GEWE practices work and under what conditions, and identified transformative practices that should be further promoted and scaled up in the near future under the 2030 Agenda. The evaluation defined transformative approaches as those that aim to overcome the root causes of inequality and discrimination through promoting sustainable, inclusive and far-reaching social change. The common factor in transformative approaches is that they challenge existing social norms and the distribution of power and resources.

Evaluation approach

The review comprised a detailed analysis of gender practices and results documented in IOE evaluations since 2010, drawing from a sample of 57 IOE reports. A major milestone in the process was a participatory workshop led by IOE and IFAD's Policy and Technical Advisory Division, which discussed the theory of change for gender-transformative approaches and developed detailed pathways for transformative change using specific case study examples identified by IOE's synthesis review. This highly participatory process generated a better understanding of the key assumptions that tend to inform the design of interventions, as well as the key factors enabling or hindering achievement of gender-transformative results. The discussion also highlighted the "gaps" in terms of missing links or actions.

Findings

In total, 121 distinct practices relating to GEWE were identified, and subsequently classified into four main areas: access to resources and opportunities; reducing time poverty; creating an enabling environment; and enhancing women and men's awareness, consciousness and confidence. The evaluation synthesis review found that most of the changes supported by IFAD interventions were at the individual level, e.g. individual women improved their access to resources or acquired new skills.

Yet transformation requires change beyond individual capabilities. There were only a very few examples where IFAD interventions enabled formal systemic change with regard to GEWE, e.g. laws, policies and government capacities.

One of the key lessons for IFAD was that empowering and gender-transformative approaches need to be integrated into project design. It was evident from the review that multiple and complementary practices are more likely to facilitate changes in gender roles and relations. Crucially, working with men as gatekeepers of customary practices is critical for transformative change. In this regard, participatory approaches can facilitate gender-inclusive outcomes, but should be combined with specific strategies to target women. With regard to cultural and social norms, the review found that promoting unconventional and new roles for women helps shift mindsets and commonly held beliefs.

The lessons from the synthesis review have prompted IFAD management to conceptualize and integrate a gender-transformative approach for use throughout the organization. In 2019, IFAD's Executive Board approved the organization's first action plan for mainstreaming gender-transformative approaches at IFAD for the period 2019–2025.

IOE has identified practices in IFAD-supported projects that have delivered GEWE results.

20 countries

57 evaluations

121 practices

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICES

Changing power relations

Challenging social norms

Leaving no one behind

TRANSFORMATIVE RESULTS

Access to resources, services and opportunities

Use of time - sharing of productive and reproductive responsibilities

Creating an enabling environment for gender equality

Enhancing awareness, consciousness and confidence

download

What works for gender equality and women's empowerment – a review of practices and results

Lessons for IFAD's Independent Office of Evaluation

The evaluation synthesis review also offered a moment of self-reflection for IOE concerning the extent to which IFAD evaluations capture outcomes related to GEWE. GEWE is systematically covered in all IOE evaluation products; however, the most significant constraint for the 2016 evaluation synthesis was the limited depth of the analysis included in IOE evaluations on GEWE outcomes and impacts. The level of detail and analysis of gender-specific interventions, and the quality of evidence, varied considerably across the evaluations included in the review depending on the approach and methodology of the evaluations; the methods used for data collection; and the expertise of the evaluation teams.

Recognising this constraint, the evaluation synthesis review included a recommendation to the IOE to report consistently on GEWE outcomes and impacts in its evaluations and include sound contextual analysis to explain the results observed. Actions to address this recommendation have already been taken by IOE and, since publication of the evaluation synthesis review in 2017, IOE has consistently 'exceeded requirements' in the annual meta-assessment against the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) evaluation performance indicator. Methodologically, IOE has piloted innovative gender-sensitive evaluation techniques. For example, the 2016 evaluation of the Community-based Agricultural and Rural Development Programme in Nigeria was included as a good practice in a UNEG publication.

The 2019 impact evaluation of the Food Security and Development Support Project in the Maradi Region of Niger used 'storytelling surveys' to measure the project's impact on women's involvement in decision-making within the household, which helped contextualize and explain the data gathered by the evaluation, while giving a stronger voice to the people targeted by the project. Similarly, the 2019 project performance evaluation of the Tejaswini Rural Women's Empowerment Programme in India developed and validated a theory of change which included pathways to transformative change for GEWE, referencing social norms, attitudes and practices that were expected to be transformed. The evaluation also included a detailed analysis of intersectional disadvantage among the targeted women.

Capitalising on the momentum generated by the 2017 evaluation synthesis review, IOE has continued to play an active role in training events on GEWE, inside and outside of IFAD.* IOE continues to apply rigorous standards of quality assurance and peer review for all evaluations, and has committed to institutionalize the lessons from the evaluation synthesis review and the annual UN-SWAP meta-assessments. In this regard, the forthcoming third edition of IFAD's evaluation manual will provide detailed guidance to evaluators on gender-sensitive methodologies and evaluation techniques, while IOE's commitment to conducting gender and socially transformative evaluations is to be articulated in the currently ongoing revision to IFAD's Evaluation Policy.

* For example, IOE has conducted several webinars and hosted a series of high-level learning events held at IFAD headquarters in Rome on the theme of 'What works for gender equality and women's empowerment'; contributed to the 2017 Evaluation Cooperation Group Gender Practitioner Workshop in Washington D.C. organized by the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank; and organized an event with the Gender Team of the World Food Programme (WFP) on lessons learned from IOE's experience held at WFP headquarters in Rome.

Assessing gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

© Photo: UN Women

UNECE

Nicolas Dath-Baron
Programme Management Officer in the
Programme Management Unit (PMU),
Office of the Executive Secretary of the
United Nations Economic Commission for
Europe (UNECE)

Evaluation in UNECE

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was set up in 1947 by ECOSOC. It is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations. UNECE's major aim is to promote pan-European economic integration. UNECE includes 56 Member States in Europe, North America and Asia.

UNECE has a lean evaluation team with only two professional staff dedicated to evaluation and audit inside the broader Programme Management Unit. Except for a programme-level evaluation conducted every two years, evaluations are decentralized and conducted by the divisions under the guidance and oversight of the Programme Management Unit.

The meta-evaluations conducted in 2018–2019 by OIOS (for the period 2016–2017)* and UN Women in the context of UN-SWAP 2.0 reporting, highlighted that integration of gender and human rights dimensions remains uneven across UNECE subprogrammes. It should be noted that in UNECE there is only one professional staff member working on mainstreaming gender in the organization. Four years after the issuance of a gender-sensitive evaluation policy (May 2014), the degree to which gender is reflected in projects, publications and other activities varies significantly. Since 2017, the integration of gender perspectives in extra-budgetary project proposals has been added to the UNECE template and project managers are required to incorporate gender issues both at the project planning and reporting stages.

* United Nations Evaluation Dashboard 2016-17, OIOS, April 2019.

To ensure that gender is mainstreamed more systematically in all subprogrammes, in October 2018, the Programme Management Unit began a process of improving gender equality aspects in evaluation findings through: (a) strengthening gender requirements in evaluation terms of reference; (b) systematically requiring gender analysis and gender recommendations in evaluation reports at the quality assurance stage; and (c) highlighting best recommendations during evaluation lessons learned discussions. However, there is still evidence of some resistance to the acceptance of basic gender recommendations in evaluation reports, including at the level of division and section management.

Terms of reference for 2019 evaluations reflect that the following UNEG gender-related norms and standards are integrated: (a) identification of relevant gender equality instruments or policies to guide the evaluation, such as UNEG's revised gender-related norms and standards; (b) assessment of gender equality aspects through selection of evaluation criteria and questions, such as inclusion of gender questions in evaluation questions (relevance and impact); (c) requirement of a gender-sensitive evaluation approach and data collection/analysis; (d) requirement that evaluations are sensitive to and address gender inequality; and (e) requirement that evaluation methodology addresses gender issues.

Thanks to these innovations, UNECE achieved a rating of Exceeds Requirements for the inclusion of gender in evaluations in 2019 in the UN-SWAP 2.0 report. This represents a significant improvement compared with 2018, when UNECE was only Approaching Requirements.

In UNECE, programme-level evaluations are mandated by the Executive Committee (EXCOM), acting on behalf of the Commission. The subject of the programme evaluation for the 2018–2019 biennium (Gender mainstreaming in UNECE) was approved by EXCOM during its eighty-sixth meeting in September 2016. At the time, the evaluation was foreseen to measure the progress, extent and influence of the UNECE Gender Equality Policy (2016), and the UNECE Gender Action Plans for 2016–2017 and 2018–2019 in all areas of work in the eight subprogrammes.

The evaluation was undertaken during the first semester of 2019, following the roll-out of UN-SWAP 2.0 in November 2018, designed to focus on results for gender-related SDG results. The evaluation terms of reference were prepared using UNEG and UN Women guidance. The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of gender mainstreaming in UNECE, and the related GEWE results.

Evaluation findings

The evaluation found that UNECE's gender mainstreaming was relevant in terms of its role and mandate, and that most progress had been made in elaboration of gender equality policies and plans.

Areas for improvement included:

↘ **mainstreaming gender** in the nine SDGs relevant to UNECE's work;

↘ the extent to which **detailed contextual analysis** of gender equality informs policy and programme development;

↘ **organizational culture**; and

↘ **capacity development** for UNECE staff.

Thirty concrete and actionable recommendations were formulated based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, with reference to the UN-SWAP 2.0 17 performance indicators. UNECE's management response was signed by the Executive Secretary on 22 November 2019 and subsequently presented to EXCOM, which took note of it during its 108th session. UNECE will report progress on this evaluation every six months until the closure of all recommendations. As with all UNECE evaluations, evaluation reports, management responses and progress reports are available on the Open UNECE website.

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Alexandra Chambel

Lead Evaluation Manager,
UNFPA Evaluation Office

Accelerating the abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation

© Photo: UN FPA

Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA–UNICEF Joint Programme on the Abandonment of FGM (2008–2018)

KEY FIGURES

200M

Estimated 200 million girls and women affected by FGM.

3.9M

Estimated 3.9 million girls at risk of being subject to FGM.

4.6M

Predicted to rise to 4.6 million girls at risk per year by 2030 given high population growth rates in countries with high prevalence of FGM.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

"Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a harmful practice, a form of violence against women and girls inherently linked to deep-rooted negative norms, stereo-types, perceptions and customs. It negatively affects women and girls' physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health and their right to self-determination, and making their own life choices."*

A UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Programme to accelerate the abandonment of FGM was initi-ated in 2008 following a global consultation, which concluded that the abandonment of FGM was urgent and that commitment and action were needed.

*UN Report of the Secretary General: Intensifying Global Efforts for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, 2018.

download

Evaluation Report

Watch key highlights of the evaluation

@unfpa_eval #FGMEval

The evaluation assessed the extent to which, and under what circumstances, UNFPA and UNICEF joint support contributed to accelerating the abandonment of FGM over the last 10 years. The evaluation also identified lessons learned and provided cor-rective actions on the gaps and opportunities to shape UNFPA and UNICEF's work until 2021 and beyond. In addition, the evaluative evidence captured in this evalu-ation is central to achieving SDG Target 5.3 that relates to FGM.

The evaluation highlighted the degree to which the Joint Programme embraced a gen-der-responsive approach in plan-ning, design, implementation and M&E at all levels.

The evaluation expanded the standard definitions of the cri-teria to better reflect equity and gender equality. In line with a human rights-based approach to evaluation, a systems-based method was used to map the key categories of stakeholders, disaggregated by human rights roles and gender where relevant.

Overall, there was a strong focus on gender and human rights throughout the analytical process at multiple levels but with some limitations:

↘ Gender and human rights issues were mainstreamed into the evaluation frame-work with explicit questions, assumptions and indicators. However, disaggregation was limited to binary sexes and main institutional identities.

↘ Mixed quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and participatory data-collec-tion methods were used for exploring gender and "diverse voices". However, consultation with rights holders was limited to country case studies.

↘ Contribution analysis responded directly to gender and human rights assump-tions in the evaluation matrix. Nonetheless, intersectional analysis was restricted to gender and geographic groups.

DATA COLLECTED

1,436 people consulted *(60 per cent women) through interviews and focus group discussions*
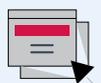
Over 500 documents reviewed *and extended desk review*

Global and regional interviews *with key stakeholders*

4 country case studies *and remote interviews in 12 countries*

Analysis *of financial and programme monitoring data*

Global survey *of 113 representatives from implementing partners*

EVALUATION DESIGN

Mixed methods

Gender-responsive

Utilization-focused

Inclusive consultation

Theory-based

Multiple lines and levels of evidence

Key lessons

In short, the evaluation provided four key lessons:

First, the Joint Programme's strategic position at the global level contributed to raising the profile of FGM within the international development agenda and galvanized the support of emerging actors around the issue at national and regional levels. It contributed to important achievements, namely: inclusion of FGM as a target within the 2030 Agenda gender goal; the development of legislative frameworks to outlaw the practice; improved coordination among national and subnational actors; increased awareness around health risks; changes in discourse related to FGM; and the final abandonment of the practice by meaningful proportions of communities within intervention areas. Furthermore, the Joint Programme also strengthened its alignment with both human rights and gender equality principles, and increased stakeholder participation in planning by shifting planning to the country level.

Second, the Joint Programme placed stronger emphasis on explicitly situating its FGM work within a gender equality perspective. Its comparative strengths on gender equality appear to lie in promoting equitable, effective and positive gender interpersonal communications. Improvements in communication and understanding between women and men stemming from community dialogues had a positive indirect effect on other gender equality elements when combined with broader gender equality interventions, for instance a reduction in gender-based violence; increased women's economic empowerment; and a reduction in other harmful practices such as child marriage, etc.

Third, changes in FGM practice for example; executing FGM in secret; changing the ceremonial element of the practice; and medicalization have presented unexpected and evolving challenges for the Joint Programme. While these challenges were for the most part acknowledged, evidence is lacking to fully understand their characteristics, the magnitude of the problem and potential consequences.

Fourth, the sustained commitment of the Joint Programme to social norm change around FGM abandonment is appropriate as actual behaviour change requires a long-term investment. However, the aspirational goals of the Programme, while useful for FGM abandonment advocacy, set unrealistic expectations around what can be achieved within a relatively short time frame.

Recommendations

Among several recommendations, the following points should be highlighted:

- The evaluation considered the continuous engagement of UNFPA/UNICEF vital to further sustain the existing positive momentum for change towards FGM abandonment within a long-term vision, given that actual behaviour change may take one or two generations.

- The evaluation recommended that UNFPA/UNICEF further invest in training to contribute towards reducing evidence gaps in key areas pertaining to FGM. As a recognized global leader with strong grassroots support, the Joint Programme is well placed to advance this agenda.

- The evaluation recommended that the Programme clearly define its strategic placement within the broader universe of gender equality stakeholders and define its particular gender-responsive approach, drawing on its comparative advantages. This would entail establishing clearly marked boundaries and strategic entry points.

- The evaluation also recommended that the Programme place stronger focus on using targets and indicators that capture important intermediate progress towards full FGM abandonment.

- Finally, the evaluation recommended that both agencies continue using a systems-strengthening approach to encourage long-term change and national ownership, focusing on effective law enforcement, service provision, educational awareness and data collection.

Moving from evaluation insights to its uptake

Utilization-Focused Evaluation
Effective participatory involvement of key stakeholders throughout the evaluation:

- ↘ wider consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including final beneficiaries (which represented 59 per cent of people consulted);

- ↘ thorough engagement of donors and key partners; and

- ↘ facilitation of a working session on the uptake of the evaluation results and recommendations with key stakeholders at regional and country levels.

The outcome of this session informed implementation of the recommendations.

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What is systems thinking and how is it applied to evaluations?
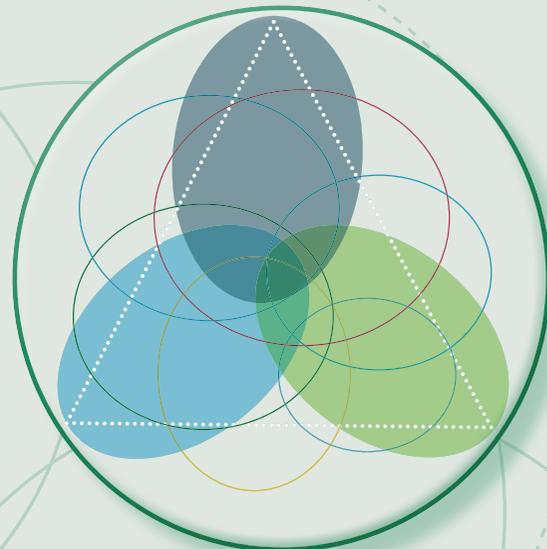
How can we bring "nature's perception" into our analysis?

How can we include marginalized voices in evaluations?

ISE4GEMs: A NEW APPROACH FOR THE SDG ERA

Evaluation Guide Book

The Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMs) guide is written in two parts:

Part A presents the theoretical background on systems thinking and Part B provides practical steps and tools to conduct an Inclusive Systemic Evaluation.

Find the guide here: http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/9/ise4gems-a-new-approach-for-the-sdg-era

IDEV
Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank

Svetlana Negroustoueva
Principal Evaluation Specialist,
Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV), African Development Bank

Evaluative evidence on gender mainstreaming from the Beijing Declaration to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

What are the lessons on what works (or doesn't) to promote gender equality and support implementation of the SDGs?

© Photo: AfDB Projects -The PAHABO project has enriched the income of women, who represent nearly 57% of the population of the zone, and empowered them.

1. Context: AfDB Institutional Guidance since the Beijing Platform for Action

In 2014, the African Union (AU) elaborated on gender mainstreaming in its implementation plan for Agenda 2063 entitled "The Africa We Want" (2014–2023): "*Africa shall be an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man will be left behind or excluded, on the basis of gender, political affiliation, religion, ethnic affiliation, locality, age or other factors.*" The next year, the SDGs, in particular SDG 5, committed to eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination in all its forms and to ensuring that women enjoy equal rights and opportunities in economic participation, voice and agency at all levels.

The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) has aligned with these regional and global priorities as shown by the following frameworks:

- The 2001 Gender Policy of the AfDB and the two Gender Action Plans (2004–2009 and 2009–2011).

- The Gender Strategy: '*Investing in Gender Equality for Africa's Transformation*' (2014–2020) and Plan of Action for Operationalizing Gender Mainstreaming (2015).

- The Ten Year Strategy: At the Center of Africa's Transformation (2013–2022), where gender is an area of special interest.

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Investing in Gender Equality for Africa's Transformation

2. Scoping for evidence of gender mainstreaming from 2000 to 2018

The Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) at the AfDB is tasked with enhancing the effectiveness of the Bank, through ensuring that the Bank and its stakeholders learn from past experience to deliver development activities to the highest possible standards. IDEV's evaluation work programme is approved by the AfDB Board of Directors.

In 2012, IDEV conducted an evaluation synthesis of gender mainstreaming, which the Board asked it to update in 2019. The main purpose of the two exercises was to extract strong evidence and knowledge on the status of gender mainstreaming from comparator organizations using robust techniques. The 2019 synthesis was complemented with an analysis of internal evidence on gender mainstreaming at the AfDB, which attempted to validate lessons and recommendations from the 2017 Mid-Term Review of the Gender Strategy, conducted by the Gender Team at the AfDB. The Mid-Term Review included fieldwork in five countries and a direct assessment of beneficiary perceptions.

In 2015, the evaluation department at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) conducted a similar synthesis exercise, building on the 2012 AfDB Gender Synthesis Review and others. The time frame and range of organizations whose evidence was used in the three key synthesis studies are important in the discussion of achievements from the Beijing Declaration through to the 2030 Agenda.

As the table shows, the time frame (1990s–2018) and the large number of studies across 1990–2018 allows for an in-depth look at developments and shifts in gender mainstreaming thinking, by distilling insights; identifying good practices and notable challenges; and highlighting critical progress points for further attention.

Synthesis study	Time scope	No. of studies	Organizations	Primary data collection
IDEV 2012 synthesis	1990–2010	26	Two International Financial Institutions (IFIs), nine bilateral and six UN agencies	Not conducted
EBRD 2015 review	2000–2015	19	Eight IFIs, three bilateral, two UN agencies, including UN Women	External survey of comparators
IDEV 2019 synthesis	2013–2018	19	Six IFIs, UN Women, EU, two facilities and one NGO	Internal AfDB survey

3. Between Beijing and implementation of the 2030 Agenda: A bridge or road to results

3.1 Content: Main lessons on what works for gender equality

Lessons on progress towards gender equality and related gender mainstreaming mechanisms identified across the multilateral development banks (MDBs), UN and bilateral agencies are essential in assessing progress made since the BPfA in implementing the SDGs.

The AfDB's Gender Synthesis Evaluation (2012) provided an update of the 'baseline review' carried out in 2003 by OECD-DAC of Gender and Evaluation, largely showing the persistence of selected issues. Since the 2012 synthesis, two areas have seen progress:
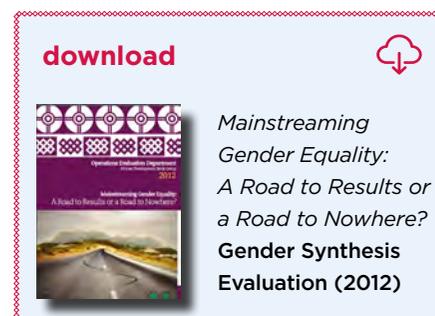
↘ The notion that an organizational gender agenda drives an operational gender agenda has partially addressed the issue of "Policy evaporation" due to inconsistent prioritization by leadership of gender mainstreaming and gender equality. There has been an increased appreciation and common understanding of the macro frameworks,

narratives and definitions of gender mainstreaming in facilitating 'planning-as-one' to 'delivery-as-one' on key gender mainstreaming commitments, especially in decentralized operations. The following strategies have been successful: linking institutional commitments to gender mainstreaming, often to a major mandate and institutional review, i.e. resource replenishment; narrowing the scope of ambitious strategies which negatively influence the sustainability of gender mainstreaming; and attention to internal (Bank) and external (beneficiaries in countries) priorities, when leading by example.

↘ Donors better address the challenges of integrating gender equality into new aid modalities. The gender-related Global Compact, and other international or government-level initiatives, facilitate engagement with the private sector (2015). The 2019 synthesis found that combined projects and policy-based loans/operations in sectors are effective modalities to

complement gender-related benefits of projects by policy and institutional systems with a gender perspective. Further, important legal and policy constraints can be effectively addressed through engagement with government and gender machineries, and other partnerships.

However, despite selected successes, between the 2012 and 2019 IDEV synthesis exercises, there is consensus between development partners across AfDB, EBRD and comparators on four key areas of persistent challenges. As shown in the figure below, many of these issues continue to be relevant today, although some do show progress and successes over time.

download ☁⤓

Mainstreaming Gender Equality: A Road to Results or a Road to Nowhere? **Gender Synthesis Evaluation (2012)**

	2012 IDEV *Findings/ Selected progress*	**2015 EBRD REVIEW**	2019 **IDEV**
1	**Many gender mainstreaming (GM) procedures and practices are actively pursued, before gradually declining after short-term use.**	• GM is the means to an end – meaningful progress towards gender equity goals. • An organization's gender architecture needs to reflect gender commitments. • Sound theories of change, based on a situational gender analysis, need to account for structural inequalities that cannot be addressed by surface interventions.	• Integration of gender in operational business processes aides GM. • At all levels, the combination of various GM approaches appears challenged by context and institutional specifics.
2	**Achievement and sustainability of results limited by absent accountability and incentive structures**	• Progress depends on committed and engaged senior management and accountability throughout project/HR systems. • Explicit gender responsibilities in operations staff job descriptions to enhance accountability.	• Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and reward systems foster motivation and accountability.
		• Gender focal points and/or gender specialists working within operations make a positive difference.	
3	**Financial and human resources have not been sufficient to enable effective GM within donor organizations and interventions.**	• Visibility in resource allocations to gender activities from management. • A gender action plan (GAP) allows the institution to fund additional resources in operations teams.	• Special initiatives and Trust Funds, and leveraging internal and partnerships to fill in the resource gaps. • Gender Equality Trust Fund to streamline funding.
4	**Results reporting and lessons have been seriously constrained by inconsistent approaches to M&E.**	• A disconnect between what is happening in operations, and what is being reported on. • Availability of sex disaggregated data and qualitative impact stories are equally important elements. • Evaluation has not given gender results consistent consideration.	• Quantified corporate commitments on gender results upon exit (as well as entry) make a difference.
		• Limited dissemination of results to inform gender-responsive investments internally with operations and externally with clients, in countries and with partners.	

IDEV 2012 FINDINGS

Key challenges and progress

A brief analysis shows a persistence of the following gender-mainstreaming related challenges across the three reviews:

↘ For sustainability of gender mainstreaming results, **organizations' gender architecture still needs to reflect gender commitments**, even though the focus among development partners has shifted from the formulation of 'gender architecture' to outward-looking initiatives.

↘ Although some progress is visible, successful internal gender mainstreaming has been consistently challenged by **institutional and cultural constraints**, and weak incentive structures.

↘ **Persistent gaps in financial and human resources** have been aided by Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and through leveraging various types of funding mechanisms and partnerships.

↘ While the importance of M&E continues to be relevant, **knowledge management and communication agendas** have become increasingly distinct as key facilitators of learning about and from gender mainstreaming.

Certain conclusions are particularly relevant for the IFI/MDB context. The difference is important to consider when comparing the UN and/or bilateral development partners with a rights-based approach to gender equality, emphasized in the "leave no one behind" principle outlined in the SDGs.

- IFIs increasingly seek gender results at the level of specific sectors rather than on gender mainstreaming across all operations, thus improving capacity and recognition of the added value of integrating gender into operations. The business case for gender mainstreaming is also important.

- Quantified corporate commitments to gender results upon exit (as well as entry) imply a continuum of M&E along the project cycle, i.e. gender markers applied at design, during implementation and gender-related outcomes at completion.

- Enhancing gender mainstreaming in private-sector operations and combining projects and policy-based loans are triggered through GEWE-related policy dialogue with governments.

- Systematic inclusion of gender issues in institutions' environmental and social safeguards frameworks has been noted to increase attention to vulnerable populations.

3.2 Leveraging the synthesis methodology for rich evaluative evidence

While content and lessons are particularly important, the following methodological considerations should be noted:

- Among IFIs and other partners, there is an appreciation of synthesis methodology and its ability to facilitate the internal conversations and strategic planning around gender.

- For organizations with an independent evaluation function, reliance on internally, self-collected evaluative evidence by programme/project teams forms a strong basis for analysis. Irrespective of the type of agencies, with often limited resources for fully-fledged organizational evaluations of gender mainstreaming, special consideration should be given to revisiting findings and recommendations of internally commissioned exercises to validate learning, celebrate progress and reflectively assess challenges through an independent lens.

- Complementing synthesis of secondary evaluative and other types of evidence with limited primary data collection enriches synthesis reviews, including their validity internally and externally.

# 4. Conclusions and recommendations

Since before the BPfA, the amount and quality of evaluative evidence on gender equality and gender mainstreaming across development partners has evolved, considering a wide range of organizational set-ups and operational modalities, sectorial focus and gender mainstreaming implementation mechanisms. Documented trends show evidence of balancing formulation of 'gender architecture' and outward-looking initiatives that are seeking more transformative and far-reaching impacts. There is an increased recognition of the importance of knowledge management in enhancing the use of M&E evidence and learning about effective and impactful gender mainstreaming within and across organizations.

Despite a significant timespan and increased number of legally binding instruments and non-binding agreements by countries in Africa, and globally, including the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and related SDGs, progress has not been without challenges. Evidence collected and analysed using rigorous methods shows a persistence of the same challenges, and a short lifespan and marginal application of remedies despite recurring lessons and actionable recommendations.

Alignment of lessons on gender mainstreaming shows a high potential for learning and application. In light of the 25th Anniversary of the BPfA and with ten years left to fulfil the SDG commitments, the international development community has ample and transferable evidence of successful practices in gender mainstreaming to facilitate implementation of SDG 5 and others.

Using evaluation synthesis as a methodology has proven useful, as evidenced by consistent findings and conclusions across reviews. The lessons from the synthesis exercises can further support implementation of SDG 5 to promote gender equality and are applicable to all development partners, especially in the MDB context.

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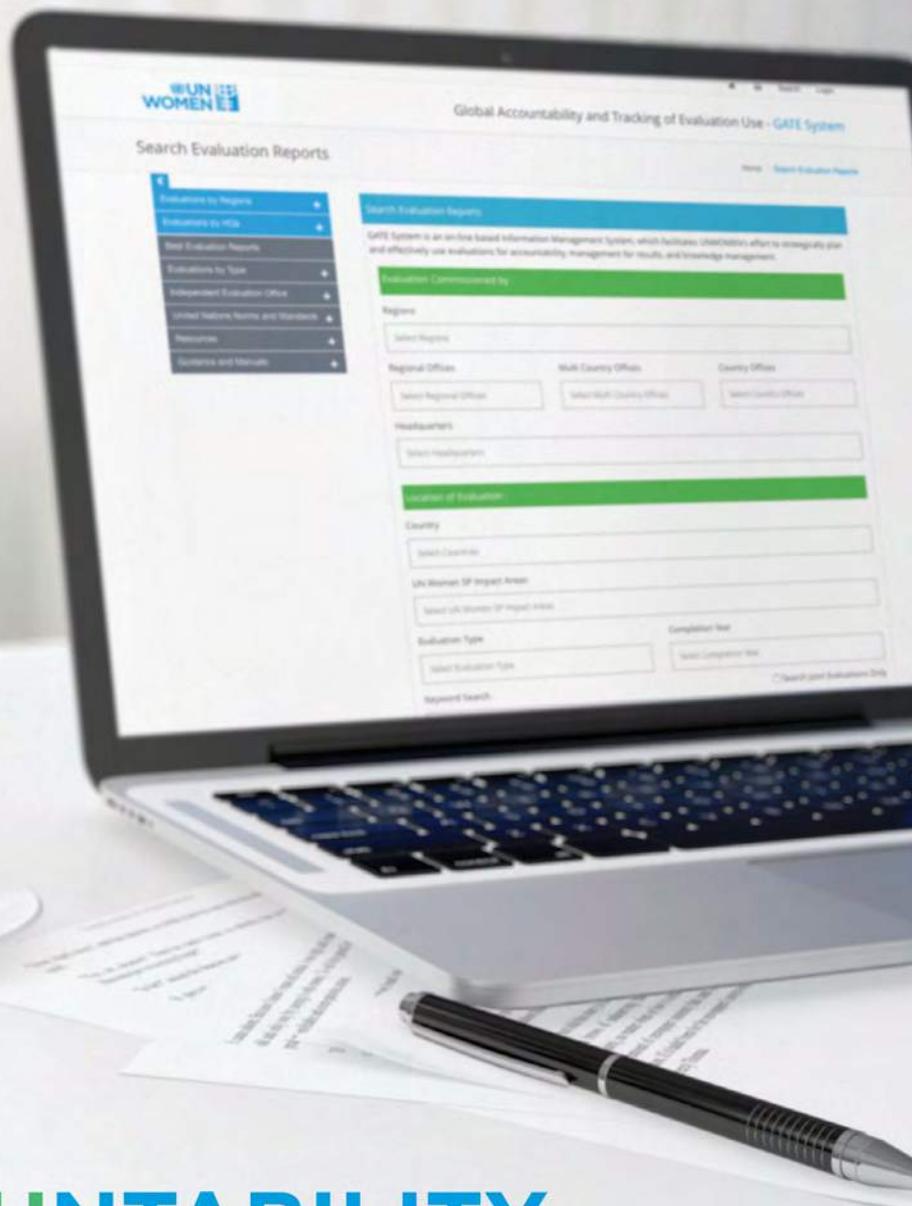
ACCOUNTABILITY
IS
LEARNING

GATE System:
The Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use

An on-line based Public Information Management System, which facilitates UN Women's effort to strategically plan and effectively use evaluations for accountability, management for results, and knowledge management.

>>>> **http://gate.unwomen.org/**

How can we effectively use big data in evaluations?

What are the risks and challenges in using big data for evaluations?

What is big data and why use it for evaluations?

CAN BIG DATA BE USED FOR EVALUATION?

A UN Women feasibility study

The objective of the study was to investigate the feasibility of leveraging big data sources—particularly Twitter, Facebook and radio data — to improve the evaluation of gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives.

Find the full report here: http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/4/can-big-data-be-used-for-evaluation

About TRANSFORM

Published by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service, Transform is the first magazine dedicated exclusively to gender-responsive evaluation. It aims to communicate good practices on gender-responsive evaluations, as well as evaluation findings on what works for gender equality.

About the Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit Service under the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS). The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service's main purpose is to enhance accountability, inform decision-making and contribute to learning about the best ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the organization's mandate, including its normative, operational and coordination work. The Independent Evaluation Service also works to strengthen capacities for gender-responsive evaluation within UN entities, governments and civil society organizations.

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