



IN BRIEF

EVALUATION OF THE UN WOMEN CARIBBEAN MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE (2011-2019)

Photo: UN Women Caribbean Multi-Country Office

This brief presents the main evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the portfolio evaluation of the UN Women Caribbean Multi-Country Office (MCO) led by the Independent Evaluation Service. This evaluation was a systematic assessment of the normative, coordination and operational aspects of UN Women’s contribution to development results relating to gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

While there are distinct challenges at the country level across the Caribbean region for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, common trends continue to present obstacles to sustainable development across several key dimensions such as:

- **High levels of citizen insecurity**, with some of the world’s highest per capita murder rates, organized crime and gang violence, high rates of gender-based violence, and trafficking in persons
- **Low levels of economic growth** in some countries compounded by high levels of inequality, particularly affecting those in lower socio-economic classes
- **Increasing fundamentalism**, including targeting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (LGBTQI) rights more broadly
- **Gender-based labour segregation** remains marked, in addition to extreme wage gaps among women and men in lower socio-economic classes
- **Labour migration trends** characterised by high outflows of skilled workers and regional inflows from surrounding Latin American countries
- **High levels of exposure to natural hazards**, including hurricanes causing significant economic losses and damages
- **High rates of gender-based violence (GBV)** with low levels of access to justice and rule of law as exacerbating factors

Additionally, structural social inequalities have led to the marginalization of many groups across countries in the region, including persons with disabilities, LGBTQI persons, youth, elderly, persons living in urban and rural poverty, indigenous and minority groups, female-headed households, and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, AND USE

The purpose of the evaluation was to foster accountability and learning as well as support decision-making of the UN Women Caribbean MCO in the context of UN Development System reform, corporate change management and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its key objectives were to:

- **synthesize the evidence** collected to develop credible findings on the Caribbean MCO’s strategic positioning and delivery of results
- **assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency** in progressing towards the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment results as defined in the Strategic Note
- **demonstrate where/how the Caribbean MCO can integrate a more intersectional approach** to its work on gender equality, environments, and marginalized voices
- **offer good practices, lessons learned**, and reflections derived from the specific experiences of the Caribbean MCO
- **develop conclusions on the contribution of the overall work** of the Caribbean MCO to the countries it serves
- **provide forward-looking and actionable recommendations** to improve the overall work of the Caribbean MCO

The evaluation results are meant to feed into: Caribbean MCO’s overall strategic planning and implementation; ACRO and UN Women headquarters oversight and strategic reflection; United Nations system in the Caribbean for supporting coherence; as well as national stakeholders from the countries and territories covered by the office.

METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION APPROACH



METHODOLOGY

- Mixed methods approach
- Theory-based analysis
- Gender-responsive evaluation
- Web and social media analytics
- Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMs)
- Observation of relevant meetings and events



182 STAKEHOLDERS SURVEYED

- UN Women: 32
- Civil society: 55
- Government: 34
- United Nations: 31
- Other stakeholders: 30



130+ DOCUMENTS ANALYSED

- Programme and project documentation
- Annual reporting
- Evaluations and other literature



EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Relevance and coherence
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Sustainability
- Human rights and gender equality



SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

- Interviews conducted from a sample of 123 stakeholders and coded with NVIVO software



MULTI-FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

- Evaluation incorporates strategic frameworks from three periods, namely 2011-2013, 2014-2017 and 2018-2021

BACKGROUND OF UN WOMEN IN THE CARIBBEAN

UN Women has been present in the Caribbean region since the organization's establishment in 2011 as a sub-regional office then a multi-country office covering 22 countries since 2013. The Caribbean MCO articulated its strategic objectives and intended activities in three strategic frameworks over 2011-2013, 2014-2017 and 2018-2021 implemented through the organization's integrated triple mandate of normative, coordination and operational work. The office had a core team of eleven staff located in Barbados, which was supplemented by service contractors and consultants with a small programme presence in Jamaica beginning in 2014.

Over the three strategic periods, the Caribbean MCO's total available budget was \$22.6 million. The office had a consistent programmatic portfolio in the thematic areas of Women's Economic Empowerment and Elimination of Violence against Women. The office employed a wide range of programmatic and operational strategies, including advocacy, capacity building, communications, knowledge generation, partnerships, social norms change, South-South Cooperation; and United Nations coordination, among others.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION 1.

The UN Women portfolio and response to emerging events and crises in the Caribbean region demonstrated its strong relevance. The “sub-regional” approach also allowed for its wide reach with relatively limited resources. There was potential to further strengthen intersectional and “multi-country” approaches as well as linkages to the Americas and Caribbean Regional Office.

Across thematic areas in terms of prioritization and focus, the overall UN Women Caribbean MCO portfolio was assessed as being relevant in its thematic orientation, and responsive to the region’s emerging priorities, for effectively supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment. There was consensus among stakeholders that its thematic portfolio was both relevant and high priority areas in which UN Women provided comparative advantage. UN Women showed in its planning efforts a focus on marginalized groups, which evidenced a broad programmatic portfolio. The office nonetheless faced challenges in operationalizing an intersectionality approach more broadly as well as translating the targeting of such groups to significant impact.

The office’s reach to 20 of 22 countries and territories over the period under evaluation indicated a significant effort to respond to the needs of the expansive geographic area of responsibility across the Caribbean, as evidenced by office’s effective response to COVID-19 in producing relevant knowledge products in close collaboration with United Nations partners and relevant stakeholders.

While UN Women’s “sub-regional” approach allowed the office to provide more generalized common support to more countries to implement its triple mandate, the “multi-country” approach also provided further opportunity for strengthening. Promising practices used by the office that could be further used included the piloting of work in one country where a strong implementing partner could be identified, then scaled to other countries/territories. Finally, there was significant scope to strengthen linkages between the Caribbean MCO and the Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (ACRO), constituting an area of internal consensus to address.

RECOMMENDATION 1.

UN Women should articulate a clear approach to enhance internal coherence between the Caribbean MCO and ACRO.

CONCLUSION 2.

UN Women’s work to address violence against women in the Caribbean was assessed as relevant, effective, sustainable, and recognized as a key contribution based on its integrated and innovative approaches, including social norms. The Caribbean MCO’s comparative advantage was also evident in its work on disaster risk reduction/recovery and climate mitigation/adaptation, while facing challenges in translating regional work on norms and governance to concrete results at the country level.

UN Women’s work on Ending Violence against Women was considered to have been effective in addressing the issue in the region. Indeed, the Caribbean MCO portfolio integrated the thematic area through the deployment of various strategies that helped to drive results, such as: data and statistics; awareness and social mobilization; crisis response and disaster risk reduction. The use of non-traditional and cultural spaces allowed for targeting harmful social norms and enhanced the potential of advocacy and outreach of the office. UN Women could further build on its track record of supporting the identification of women’s needs, as evidenced by the rapid assessment of small holder women farmers in Dominica and mapping of social services.

UN Women’s normative work made gains in the Caribbean at the outcome level in supporting development of international agreements and advancing national legislation. The Caribbean MCO also leveraged its convening role effectively to facilitate exchanges among National Gender Machineries. Nonetheless, it faced challenges in extending its normative support to the country level with its limited resourcing and could not fully participate in other United Nations interagency forums on Small Island Developing State (SIDS) issues where advocacy for gender equality could have provided an important advocacy pathway.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

Build on UN Women’s ample social norms experience in the Caribbean to further facilitate a shift in behaviours, and scale work on climate change as part of its ongoing Strategic Note implementation.

CONCLUSION 3.

UN Women’s approaches for programmatic integration showed strong results across the Caribbean MCO portfolio, in particularly data and statistics. These positive results would be enhanced through more concerted monitoring and evaluation efforts.

The UN Women Caribbean MCO demonstrated a consistent integration of programmatic strategies across its portfolio, including between thematic areas. The data and statistics area in particular was leveraged for effective advocacy efforts, including in the context of the pandemic. That said, monitoring and evaluation in the office was an area to be strengthened, in particular for core-funded activities that did not have donor-related stronger monitoring requirements. In fact, often the results of these core-funded activities were not captured despite the RBM systems in place in UN Women, therefore requiring a need to better integrate them into monitoring practices and reflect them in reporting.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

Enhance its monitoring, reporting, and evaluation capacities both internally and through mainstreamed practices with partners.

CONCLUSION 4.

UN Women mainstreamed capacity development approaches to enhance the sustainability of its work in a cross-cutting manner, notably with National Gender Mechanisms in the Caribbean. The Caribbean MCO also faced challenges with enabling CSO partners’ capacity development due in large part to organizational constraints. A more inclusive lens would drive greater sustainability of results.

Normative work to support National Gender Mechanisms was reported as an important contribution and the Caribbean MCO demonstrated adaptive management to increase the resilience and sustainability of results. Follow-up and continuity of short-term results needed to be further strengthened to drive medium and long-term outcomes and impact. While financial resources have been a factor, inclusive criteria for engaging in initiatives would help to guide decisions on where and how to engage with actors in capacity building efforts, and the office would benefit from a more targeted overarching strategy. Additionally, a focus on building capacities of national partners continues to provide an avenue for sustained results. In facing the challenge of staff turnover in National Gender Mechanisms and maintaining knowledge, UN Women will need to deploy novel sustainability strategies that target multi-stakeholder groups.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

Enhance capacity building and knowledge management to support long-term work and sustainability.