UN WOMEN
Independent
Evaluation Office

TRANSF(O)RM

The meta-analysis issue

Dear Readers,

Meta-analysis offers a unique opportunity for learning and provides useful feedback for influencing positive change. The knowledge created and the lessons learned through this exercise subsequently provides a basis to continuously reflect on what works and what does not work to improve future programming and implementation.

As part of its continuous effort to promote learning and accountability, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office undertakes an annual meta-analysis to ensure that the body of evidence produced by corporate and decentralized evaluations are synthetized and used to inform corporate-level and decentralized policies and strategies.

To serve the dual purpose of accountability and learning, annual meta-analyses alternate between a focus on accountability and learning. This way the exercise is more robust and relevant, serving better the organization.

This meta-analysis constitutes the second synthesis of UN Women commissioned evaluations since the adoption of the current Strategic Plan (2014–2017). Since the focus of last year was on accountability, this year's focus was on learning. Evidence from a total of 21 evaluations managed by UN Women in 2014 were included in the analysis, representing at least 51 countries. Additional corroborating lessons were also included from 23 evaluation reports completed in 2013.

We hope you find the synthesis useful to further reflect on what works and what does not in accelerating efforts towards achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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Think Beyond.
Stay Ahead.

A meta-analysis of
UN Women evaluations in 2014

We learn, therefore we are

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Why meta-analysis?

PAGE 4

ON THE COVER: This photo, by Fitria Rifkii, is part of the 2014 United Nations Day Asia Pacific Photo Contest on gender equality referring to the historic Beijing +20 conference, which marks the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

We learn, therefore we are

The ultimate success of evaluation depends on the extent to which it is used by the organization to contribute to organizational accountability, informed decision-making, and learning to improve performance and achievement of results. An evaluation function does not operate in a vacuum. Its success as a tool to enhance results-driven work lies in organizational capabilities to reflect, absorb and continuously learn from evaluations.

In this respect, UN Women Independent Evaluation Office, Programme Division and regional offices are joining forces to ensure that evaluations are used to inform ongoing and new programming. The programme approach that UN Women uses defines a programme as "an integrated set of activities implemented over a period of time to produce a number of inter-connected outputs and outcomes". These contribute to the achievement of the goals and outcomes articulated in the UN Women Strategic Plan. Compared with projects, programmes take a wider view, aim for higher level results and bring together more and inter-related elements in the pursuit of those results.

This enables more holistic and cross-thematic responses that are necessary to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

Programme formulation involves many steps including: context and situation analysis for gender equality and women's empowerment; socioeconomic context for UN Women's work and latest political trends; expected results; contribution of results to international norms and standards; national

goals; UN Development Assistance Framework outcomes, and the UN Women Strategic Plan; baselines and indicators; implementing partners; financial and human resources; and potential risks. To ensure relevance and effectiveness, it is very important for UN Women programming to reflect on lessons learned and good practices from current and past programmes validated by evaluations. This is why UN Women, as a knowledge-led and learning organization, is striving to conduct evaluations not only to comply with its policies, but also, and more importantly, to

Reflect on lessons and good practices from past evaluations to improve programming

promote organizational accountability and learning to support efforts geared towards the accelerated achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

ACCO**U**NTABILITY
S
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/

UN WOMEN Independent Evaluation Office

Why meta-analysis?

Although the term "meta-evaluation" has been traditionally used for both the evaluation of evaluations and the synthesis of the results of various evaluations, the UN Women Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System considers meta-evaluation to be a systematic and formal assessment of the quality of evaluations report against UN Evaluation Group evaluation standards, and meta-analysis to be an instrument to synthesize evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations from a series of evaluations that meet UN Evaluation Group quality standards.

In the current Corporate Evaluation Plan (2014-2017), annual meta-analyses are scheduled to ensure that the body of evidence produced by evaluations, including those managed by field offices, can be synthetized and inform corporate-level policies and strategies. There are two main purposes to evaluation in UN Women: learning and accountability. To enhance utilization, annual meta-analyses alternate between a focus on accountability and a focus on learning. The focus of this year's meta-analysis was learning.

The purpose of this meta-analysis is to share the key insights from evaluation reports in order to develop constructive lessons for future systemic strengthening of programming, organizational effectiveness and the evaluation function. This meta-analysis mainly assessed evaluation reports from 2014 that were submitted to UN Women's Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System.

META-EVALUATION:

An assessment of the quality of evaluations

META-ANALYSIS:

A synthesis of findings, conclusions and recommendations from various evaluations

UN PHOTO/YOSTORN TRYOS

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO MANAGE OR CONDUCT AN EVALUATION AT UN WOMEN?

HOW CAN EVALUATION BE A DRIVER FOR CHANGE TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT?

HOW IS GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION DIFFERENT FROM OTHER EVALUATION?

HOW TO MANAGE GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

EVALUATION HANDBOOK

Find out how UN Women manages gender-responsive evaluation with the new UN Women Evaluation Handbook: *How to manage gender responsive evaluation*.

The Handbook is available at:
http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org

UN WOMEN   Independent Evaluation Office

MAKING GENDER EQUALITY A REALITY:

Learning from the past to inform the future

Focusing on the macro-level, enhancing the visibility of women's voices, keeping fund management arrangements simple, having a strong theory of change, having spaces for multi-sector dialogues, reaching the excluded—these are only some of the emergent insights distilled from 21 evaluations.

Relevance

OLGA SCHIKUNOV

💡 INSIGHT 1
Focus on macro level, while building links between micro, meso and macro levels

While normative and macro-level work enhance UN Women's impact, micro-level work is often necessary to gain the credibility that is associated with tangible results in different contexts. UN Women's operational work can thus make the greatest contribution where it identifies context-specific structural barriers to gender equality, draws linkages between work at the micro, meso and macro levels, and supports stakeholders to collectively address those barriers at the normative and policy level.

💡 INSIGHT 2
Focus the strategic scope of interventions and partnership, while conceptualizing them within a holistic understanding of the context

Multidisciplinary and integrated programme designs that facilitate active linkages between different thematic areas have emerged as good practice in ensuring relevance. Regional approaches can enhance this even further by also facilitating cross-country linkages and learning.

While holistic programme design is considered a good practice, UN Women's work has been particularly effective where it has taken a highly disciplined approach to focusing the strategic scope of interventions and partnership (within a holistic understanding of the context).

Integrated + focused approach for ending violence against women

The evaluation of the Ending Violence Against Women Programme in Ethiopia revealed that creating safe houses for survivors of violence and providing them with basic services (shelter, food, and psychosocial and medical support) and livelihood-related vocational skills training supplemented with the necessary means of production (equipment, hand tools and start-up capital) has enabled the survivors to recover from the trauma, engage in productive activities, and earn income and support themselves as well as their families. This integrated, but very focused, approach proved to be effective in empowering women economically and giving them another chance to restore their lives.

Source: Ending Violence Against Women Programme Evaluation

UN PHOTO/PAUL BANKS

Effectiveness
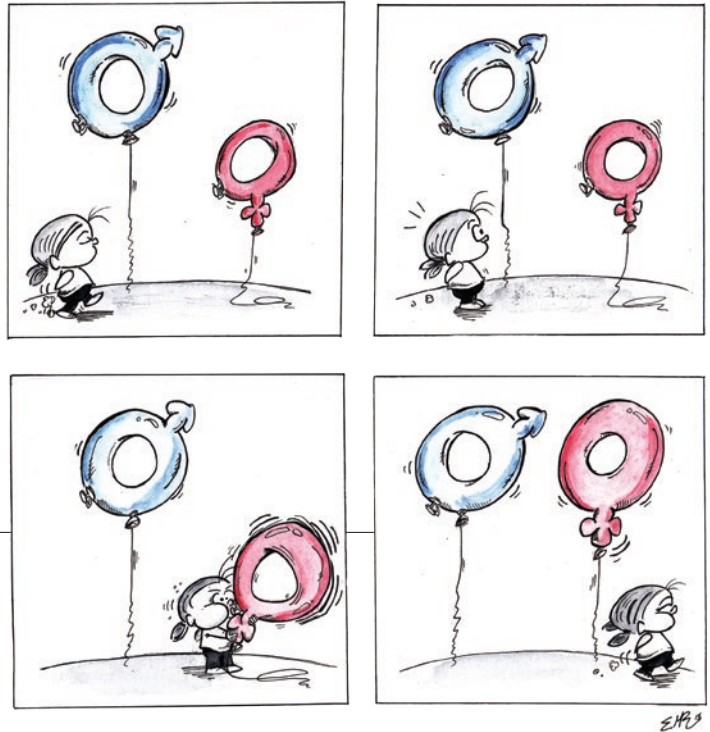
EMILIO MORALEZ RUIZ

💡 **INSIGHT 3**

Achieving gender equality requires long-term investments and flexible programming

The long-term process of women's empowerment and shifting attitudes at the societal level is a principal determinant of programming effectiveness. Short-duration interventions are associated with significant challenges to programme effectiveness and sustainability, in addition to practical challenges with delays to fund disbursement and implementation. By contrast, initiatives are most likely to succeed where there is long-term vision, continuous investment in capacity development, and plans and budgets developed with extended time horizons.

Resourcing and work planning need a longer time horizon if many of the envisaged outcomes are to be realized within the lifetime of interventions. Nonetheless, long-term programme planning, particularly in complex environments, requires frequent adaptation to align with ever-changing priorities to ensure interventions remain relevant to the evolving programme context.

The combination of UN Women's normative legitimacy and pragmatic flexibility in working with partners has emerged as a significant comparative advantage. UN Women's normative mandate provides it with the influence needed to convene, coordinate and advocate stakeholders around operational objectives. Since

About the artwork:

UN Women together with the European Commission, the Belgian Development Cooperation, and United Nations Regional Information Centre organized a Comic and Cartoon Competition on Gender Equality in 2015. The competition invited young European comic and cartoon artists and art students, aged 18 to 28 years, to picture their understanding of women's rights and gender equality through cartoons and comics. The comics and cartoons had to be without words. Finalists were selected by a jury composed of professional comic artists, gender equality experts and communication experts.

Initiatives are most likely to succeed when there is long-term vision, continuous investment in capacity development, and plans and budgets developed with extended time horizons

grounding programmes in local needs is critical to achieving relevance and effectiveness, this flexibility allows for national and sub-national adaptation of global and regional strategies. It also enables strategic capacity development through the provision of continuous support over multiple programming cycles.

The potential downsides of flexibility (such as fragmented programmes) have best been overcome through: establishing strong theories of change; grounding interventions clearly in women's rights; and organizing effective mechanisms for multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Learning from managing political risks in Sudan

One of the outcomes of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Programme is to strengthen political party structures and the National Elections Commission (NEC) to effectively influence women's representation and participation in leadership and decision-making at national and state levels in Sudan. The programme provided an opportunity for political parties and the National Elections Commission to understand and appreciate the need for women's representation and participation in leadership and decision-making. This—combined with the awareness and expansion of capacity of women leaders to demand representation and participation in leadership and decision-making—would in the long run transform local dynamics for more women to participate in political party structures.

In spite of the above, the evaluation of the programme found that the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Programme's strategy of targeting 10 most representative political parties out of 76 political parties unintentionally barred 66 others from Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Programme activities/interventions and risked being viewed as partisan. Programme interventions should thus be designed with the aim to reach all existing political parties to potentially minimize unintended outcomes of such sensitive programmes.

Source: Final Evaluation of the UN Women Sudan Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Programme

INSIGHT 4
Risk- and resilience-based programming minimize negative unintended outcomes

Evaluations highlighted that fragile and less egalitarian contexts carry particularly high levels of political and sociocultural risks. Adhering to the principle of "Do No Harm" requires interventions that are designed based on risk and resilience approaches that take into consideration: a detailed understanding of intra and inter group dynamics; a comprehensive risk analysis; the inclusion of specific protection and monitoring mechanisms for vulnerable groups of people; maximizing inclusion and dialogue between groups; and mechanisms that aim to enhance women's individual and collective resilience.

INSIGHT 5
Enhancing the visibility of women's voices increases the political will supporting programmes

Strategic communications capabilities—including the use of social media—increase the visibility of women's voices and political will behind thematic issues. More importantly, it can draw attention to sensitive issues by amplifying the voices of marginalized groups—an ability that aligns with UN Women's other comparative advantages around institutionalizing spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue (see insight 14).

Another complementary strategy to increase political will is to facilitate exposure and participation of key stakeholders to international forums and global programmes, including through South-South cooperation.

Enhancing political will in Asia Pacific by developing capacities of leaders from excluded women's groups

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women South East Asia Programme aims to promote, through continuous dialogues and capacity development, policy and programmatic measures to ensure compliance by state parties with the obligations set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

As demonstrated by the evaluation, an important achievement across the Asia Pacific Region has been the development of relevant tools, knowledge products, guidelines, protocols, and publications for improving understanding of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and undertaking Convention-compliant reviews. These materials have been produced both nationally in many instances in the language of the country and also regionally supported by UN Women materials and are currently used. Furthermore, several UN Women grantees in Asia Pacific are developing the capacities of leaders from excluded women's groups to use the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other human rights treaties to articulate and advance their rights. For example, governments in the Philippines and India are using and disseminating materials produced by Asia Indigenous People's Pact in developing their policies and procedures on women's human rights.

Source: Mid-Term Evaluation of the CEDAW [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women] South East Asia Programme II

INSIGHT 6
Reducing reliance on short-term contracts for staff will enhance UN Women's capability to deliver high-quality technical support

One comparative advantage of UN Women in country-level operations and coordination is its substantive technical knowledge on gender, especially given UN Women's financial constraints. While having skilled, knowledgeable, passionate and committed staff members is an organizational asset for UN Women, capability to deliver relevant and high-quality technical advice and assistance and reducing reliance on short-term human resources solutions will enhance the effectiveness of this capability.

INSIGHT 7
Include explicit strategies to engage men as champions of women's empowerment

Social norms that hamper women's empowerment and gender equality are best addressed through creating collective social responses, based on community-owned and led initiatives. Such community cohesion has been more effectively achieved where programmes have opened up to men, both allowing them to participate as beneficiaries of services as well as engaging them as champions of women's empowerment.

Promoting women's rights through engaging men in Jordan

The UN Women project Empowering Youth to Advocate for Women's Human Rights Through Volunteerism was designed as a pilot initiative to address the challenges of gender inequality as they exist in the Arab States Region. The core strength of the project lays in the success with which it mobilized youth, specifically male, encouraging voluntarism and creating advocates for women's rights.

"I didn't know all of these details about women's rights, I am now an active advocator and already was able to change some close people around me" (Male Volunteer, Madaba).

It was found that such an approach can ultimately contribute to the creation of potential leaders and active agents for women's rights. By including both young males and females at every stage, the project conforms to good practice in gender-sensitive work, acknowledging that both men and women must be engaged if positive social change towards increased gender equality is to be sustainable. As a male youth from Madaba mentioned, "This is not only a cause for women, men should also be involved." Another participant from Irbid stated that "The engagement of both males and females in the project allowed for diversity, and provided more than one message to the community".

Source: End of Project Evaluation Empowering Youth to Advocate for Women's Human Rights Through Volunteerism 2014

Efficiency

AGATA HOP

💡 **INSIGHT 8**

Making the time available to get details right at the planning phase pays dividends later

Time spent planning programme details at the outset of interventions—such as the synchronisation (timing) of different activities, and explicitly addressing capacity gaps in national gender machinery, among

Focusing on better planning at the beginning of interventions pays dividends in terms of improved implementation.

others—have paid dividends in terms of improved implementation.

Being realistic about expected

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON RBM (RESULT BASED MANAGEMENT)

results, financial disbursement mechanisms, and implementation scheduling is key to preventing implementation delays. The most frequently cited factors that inhibit efficiency included under-estimating multitudes of challenges—cultural, political, financial, capacity, etc.; setting unrealistic programme objectives relative to the level of funding available; and short life span of interventions.

These factors reportedly led to reprogramming, no-cost extension requests, return of unspent funds to donors and reduced the quality of some outputs as there was insufficient time to carry out the activities which had been designed for a longer period of time. In line with this, multi-year funding arrangements were cited as one facilitating factor to ensure achievement of a more sustained and empirically demonstrable impact.

INSIGHT 9
Having a strong theory of change is central to ensuring a common shared vision and effective implementation

When interventions do not establish a clear theory of change and performance monitoring system because of cost, time or other resources constraints, a much higher price is paid later on in terms of ineffective implementation, missed opportunities to adjust programme implementation or identifying chances to leverage opportunities. The absence of a clear theory of change brought to programmes that they were either very ambitious or unclear in terms of what they seek to achieve and how.

Another useful lesson arising is that even when there is a coherent corporate theory of change, it is essential to develop country-level versions to ensure that the intended results are relevant in that specific context. Developing explicit country-level theories of change (even as part of regional or global programmes) helps to ensure that different levels of expected results (outputs, outcomes, impacts) are logically and strategically aligned.

INSIGHT 10
Keep fund management arrangements as simple as possible while ensuring accountability

The simplest possible arrangements for managing funds and approving disbursements should be adopted by programmes in order to avoid delays and ensure a high implementation rate. Arrangements for managing and approving disbursements should be as decentralized as possible. Every additional approval requirement appears to have a disproportionate effect on delays experienced in fund utilization.

Applying higher standards of accounting also leads to delays in funding and raises the bar for organizations seeking to access UN Women grants (many of whom are community based). Decentralization of authority—combined with an efficient knowledge-management link to Headquarters—appears to be one approach to mitigating this. However, the greatest efficiency has been achieved where UN Women fund management has been combined with deliberate efforts to

Greater efficiency has been achieved where UN Women fund management is combined with efforts to strengthen the capacity of partner and government systems

Shaping shared vision in Anti-Human Trafficking Programme in India

The UN Women Anti-Human Trafficking Programme aims to address the vulnerabilities of women and children to trafficking in identified programme sites through enhanced accountability of local state actors and mobilizing community action towards prevention.

The Anti-Human Trafficking Programme was designed and rolled out under a specific and defined theory of change. The programme was built on a holistic concept that seeks to address the various factors that contribute to or lead to the vulnerability of women and girls in each of the sites. Understanding the range of variation in the sociocultural and economic landscape prevailing in the sites, UN Women chose to implement the programme as a set of principally uniform, yet practically distinct projects.

The implementing partners were noted to be highly appreciative of the presence of a well-defined theory of change and credited it for much of the ease with which they were able to develop an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They were also appreciative of the fact that UN Women provided them with the freedom to customize and prioritize the activities in the programme logical framework. They said that these changes were necessary in order to ensure that the envisioned theory of change can be customized to suit the local sociocultural context.

Source: UN Women's Anti Human Trafficking Programme Evaluation

assess and strengthen the capacity of partner and government systems.

The pace of implementation and the effectiveness of joint programmes varies considerably across evaluated programmes. A common theme, however, is that programmes that require complex pass-through funding arrangements or extended chains of approvals for disbursements experience greater delays in implementation.

INSIGHT 11
Knowledge management offers the greatest value when it's mainstreamed across thematic boundaries

Knowledge management has been found to best support results when it works across thematic boundaries, both within and beyond UN Women. Particular success has been found with specialized studies that help to understand and 'unpack' the underlying causes of disempowerment and inequality. Successful examples include: Progress of the World's Women Report, viewed as a seminal contribution to the rights-based approach to women economic empowerment; Evidence and Data for Gender Equality statistics, considered by the UN Statistical Development as a major contribution and driving force behind moves to consolidate and unify gender statistics; and country-level time-use surveys and engendering modules of demographic and labour force surveys.

Supporting the generation of, and access to, gender-responsive statistics—at the national, regional and global level—is already helping UN Women influence public policies and plans. Effective programme

Supporting generation and access to gender-responsive statistics is helping UN Women influence public policies and plans

design is associated with knowledge generation around the local and regional socio-political contexts.

INSIGHT 12
Joint programmes are promising in the long-term, but they do not automatically lead to "quick wins"

UN Women's combination of coordination, normative, and operational mandates enables it to leverage joint programmes to create new forms of cooperation. While joint programmes have emerged as a long-term investment, and they can potentially realize both economies of scale and help establish important alliances, they do not appear to automatically lead to 'quick wins'. Joint programmes appear to be most effective when they: are designed together from the 'ground-up', fully integrate both management and funding into joint mechanisms, promote horizontal accountability between partners, and align with government systems and promote national ownership.

Joint programmes are promising when seen in the long term

The evaluation of Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment showed notable achievements in relation to improving the legal and policy framework and institutional capacity in gender equality and women's empowerment. However, the evaluation highlighted that an effective and efficiently implemented joint programme requires a programme that is jointly conceptualized, logically coherent, and clearly articulated and understood, with one fund/budget, and effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Parallel funding arrangements resulted in weak shared accountability for fundraising, coordination and reporting. Delays in delivering planned funds and activities frequently resulted from this approach because mechanisms for horizontal, mutual and downward accountability had not been clearly defined and practiced by all entities in the programme. Effective joint programmes require management arrangements and responsibilities that promote horizontal accountability between partners. Parallel funding arrangements maintain traditional vertical accountability for fundraising and fund management, and entrench agency-specific interests.

Source: Final evaluation of the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Sustainability
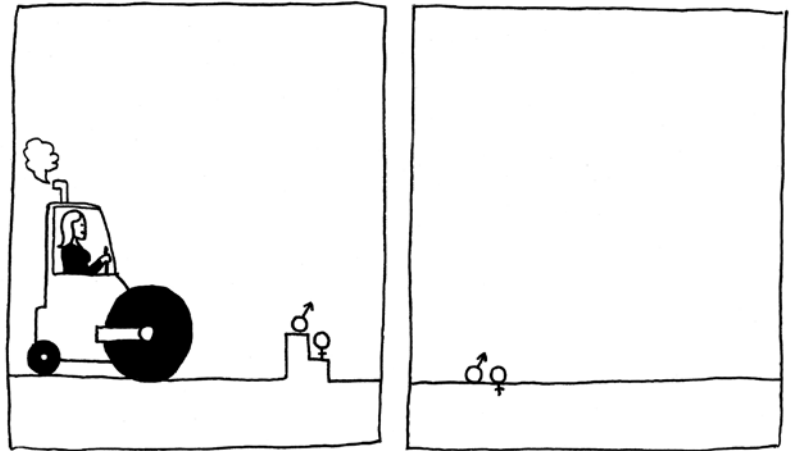
MARIOLA STACHNIK

💡 INSIGHT 13
National ownership is key to sustainable policy implementation

Securing political support at the highest level of government has been found to not only help foster national and sub-national ownership of the gender equality agenda, but also to act as an important attractor for other strategic partners. Nurturing national ownership has worked best in terms of enabling policy implementation when:

- The awareness and capacity of responsible state parties is strongest, particularly when there are respected gender advocates with capacity inside national institutions
- Interventions are anchored in existing national laws and priorities, and international commitments
- The prominence of the ministry of gender enables ministry-to-ministry advocacy
- Capacity of parliamentarians is combined with cross-party coordination of the women's caucus on strategic issues

- UN Women aligns to national systems while preserving its independence, integrity, universality and diverse relationships with civil society

💡 INSIGHT 14
Spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue enable local problem solving and emergence of locally driven initiatives

There is a strong indication that supporting the institutionalization of fora for multi-stakeholder dialogue between rights holders and duty bearers is a crucial role for UN Women. These platforms have been shown to enhance the understanding and appreciation of women's priorities in policy making and promoting social cohesion by addressing the fear of losing real or perceived privileges. Engaging civil society in such dialogue is particularly important given that many of them also have their own direct links with influential actors in domestic politics.

Sustainability is most enhanced by multi-stakeholders platforms as they provide a forum for local problem solving, emergence of locally driven initiatives, and scaling up

"WE WILL ASSIST IN ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND MAKE OUR STREETS SAFER," SUVA WHEELBARROW BOYS. A PROJECT FUNDED BY PACIFIC ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FACILITY FUND

Reaching inclusiveness in the Pacific

The Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women Facility Fund is administered by UN Women, with financial support from the Australian Aid Programme and is implemented in eight countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu). UN Women efforts to respond to gender inequality, including with the Pacific Fund, includes advancing women's empowerment, addressing violence against women, promoting gender-responsive approaches, and supporting services for survivors of violence against women.

As demonstrated by the formative evaluation, the nature of the Pacific Fund approach, as a grant mechanism that includes civil society organizations, has yielded important results in terms of inclusiveness. Over the years of implementation, the Pacific Fund has been able to reach a variety of hard-to-reach groups, including commercial sex workers, lesbians, trans-gender persons, street workers, people living in informal settlements, people who are illiterate, and persons living with disabilities.

Overall, the Pacific Fund has been quite successful in terms of stakeholder engagement and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders in a meaningful manner. The majority of grant recipients did actively engage with a variety of stakeholders, including both traditional and local leaders, civil society organizations, opinion leaders and political authorities. In smaller countries, engagement with policymakers was especially common.

In some cases, the Pacific Fund is, as one key informant in Kiribati put it, "the only option in the Pacific that gets to the very local quickly." Organizations in these countries rarely secure financing from international calls because of size constraints. Thus, there appears to be a particular cost effectiveness advantage in supporting viable civil society organizations and government departments in these smaller countries, with the Pacific Fund filling a niche that many other projects cannot cater for. However, the evaluation also highlighted that achievement of desired impacts was challenged by gaps in actors' capacities—when programmes target support to civil society organizations, they end up dealing with both their weaknesses and their strengths, thus continuous capacity enhancement approaches should be in place to ensure sustained impact.

Source: Formative evaluation of the Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women Facility Fund, the Pacific Fund

Networks improve collaboration, provide peer-support and sustain motivation

what is proven to work best in a given context. Multi-stakeholder spaces also help create trust between UN Women and its partners, and UN Women gains significant political capital from its convening role.

INSIGHT 15
Strengthening networks is a powerful step towards sustainability

Sustainability can be strengthened through supporting networks between people and organizations at different levels. These can be loose networks, self-help-groups, community funds, or formal cooperatives. Networks enhance collaboration, provide peer-support and sustain motivation. However, ongoing financial and facilitative support from UN Women is often required, as the value of networks is not always immediately obvious to participants.

It is important to highlight that a number of evaluations underlined that, rather than creating new networks, sustainability of results is found to be higher when supporting existing capacity and networks.

UN WOMEN/SALESHNI CHAUDHARY

UN WOMEN HAS PARTNERED WITH THE HUNGER PROJECT TO FORM THE MAHILA JAGRUK MANCHES – WOMEN'S AWARENESS PLATFORMS – IN INDIA. THESE BRING TOGETHER WOMEN CITIZENS AND OTHER WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE GRAM PANCHAYAT.

INSIGHT 16
Reaching the excluded requires working with the limitations of organizations on the ground

UN Women's roots in the women's movement and links to civil society have proven to be essential in establishing legitimacy in representing the rights of excluded groups. At the same time, excluded groups are highly diverse and frequently require individualized approaches to be successful. In many cases, these approaches need to address basic needs and offset the opportunity cost of participating in empowerment processes. This implies the use of bottom-up approaches, which have experienced some success through the use of carefully designed small grants mechanisms that reach community based organizations capable of reaching excluded, victimized and stigmatized women.

Such bottom-up approaches have been found to be most successful when combined with national-level support. Creating access to information and awareness for large numbers of women and girls about their rights and services they can access has been particularly successful in this regard. Identifying a specific but large vulnerable group to target with information campaigns enables them to reach sufficient scale to be relevant in addressing feminized poverty.

INSIGHT 17
Sustainable change comes through the capacity development of local agents.

Capacity development is a cornerstone for achieving sustainable long-term impact. Where sufficient time is available for long-term strategic support, capacity development has worked well in terms of influencing the structural barriers to gender equality and bringing about systemic change in favour of women. In time-constrained environments, however, sustainability of results is higher when interventions align with existing national capacities.

Increasing the awareness and capacity of state authorities responsible for the gender portfolio makes a significant contribution to enhancing the sustainability of strategies. By increasing the prominence of ministries of gender and helping strengthen their voice in government, UN Women can leverage the capacity of a much larger range of ministries and departments.

Given the centrality of capacity development to UN Women programmes, many evaluations highlighted the importance of capacity assessments and a clear plan for capacity development at the beginning of an intervention. While there is recognition that careful selection and capacity assessment of partners is central, it can, however, sometimes be a long and resource intensive process for both UN Women and the grant recipients.

Multi-stakeholders spaces help to create trust between UN Women and partners

CONCLUSIONS

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Four conclusions about UN Women interventions

The meta-analysis presents 4 overall conclusions based on the 17 insights extracted from 21 decentralized evaluations—food for thought to reflect on the past experience and improve the future.

Conclusions

1

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RELEVANCE

The continuing relevance of UN Women is grounded in its ability to maintain multidisciplinary and integrated approaches, with a particular focus at macro level, while ensuring linkages between the micro, meso and macro levels.

UN Women's technical capacity in regard to gender equality and women's empowerment is among its major comparative advantages, especially when it draws on multidisciplinary practice and helps to draw linkages between work at the micro, meso and macro levels that supports stakeholders to collectively address structural bottlenecks through normative and policy work. While interventions should be conceptualized within a holistic understanding of the context, UN Women has proven to be more relevant and effective when focusing the scope of its programmes.

2

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EFFECTIVENESS

UN Women's flexibility is a comparative advantage for long-term strategic interventions.

Gender equality and women's empowerment, including shifting attitudes at the societal level, are long-term objectives. Initiatives will be most likely to succeed when there are long-term, pragmatic and flexible approaches to programming. The legitimacy derived from UN Women's triple mandate should prove to be a comparative advantage in negotiating longer time horizons for future endeavours.

3

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EFFICIENCY

Significant investment in programming and knowledge management that cut across thematic boundaries facilitate a common shared vision among stakeholders and therefore efficient implementation.

Time spent planning programme details at the outset of interventions enhances efficiency in terms of implementation. Along with strong programming and monitoring systems, knowledge management best supports achievement of results where it works across thematic boundaries — both within and beyond UN Women.

Having strong theories of change adapted to country context and keeping funds management as simple as possible while ensuring accountability enhance efficiency of strategic partnerships. This is particularly the case for joint programmes, where fully integrated management and funding mechanisms can help promote horizontal accountability between agencies and drive performance. This lesson is particularly valuable given that wider partnerships have a central role to play in ensuring the reach, effectiveness and sustainability of UN Women's future interventions.

4

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SUSTAINABILITY

Striving to continually enhance the active and meaningful participation of rights holders and duty bearers in interventions is at the root of UN Women's chances for sustainability.

The greatest lessons for sustainability have been at the local level. At the root of these are the socialization of gender awareness and activism through the meaningful participation of women and men throughout UN Women interventions. This can range from supporting organized self-help groups, to opening up interventions to male inclusion, to strengthening the leadership skills of charismatic local personalities. Not only does participation help build trust, but it also enhances sustainability through local-level problem solving, enabling the emergence of locally driven initiatives and scaling up what is proven to work best in a given context.

Reaching excluded groups with capacity development support is a cornerstone for achieving sustainable long-term impact. These groups are highly diverse and require tailored approaches, in addition to specific protection mechanisms that are designed to detect and help avoid negative unintended consequences.

APPROACH

THE META-ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY:
Synthetizing evidence

The approach taken to conduct this meta-analysis is called "realist synthesis". A "realist synthesis" distills all relevant existing evidence in order to draw out relevant programmatic and operational evidence. Since all the reports included in the analysis met evaluation quality standards, all clearly stated findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons presented in the evaluation report have been analysed through three progressive rounds of text analysis using a thematic coding.

The analysis included evidence from the totality of 2014 evaluation reports that met UN Evaluation Group quality standards (a total of 21 evaluation reports) from across the UN Women regions and headquarters, covering 51 countries (some reports were multi-country, regional or corporate). Additional evidence was drawn from Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System 2013, which included 23 evaluation reports.

The analytical process resulted in 1,135 coded pieces of evidence (an average of 283 per criterion). These "clusters" of evidence were reviewed and synthesized into 17 major insights, presented according UN Evaluation Group evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability was then developed. Four conclusions were derived from these insights.

2014 evaluation reports that met UN Evaluation Group quality standards from across the UN Women regions and headquarters, covering 51 countries

UN Women meta-analysis 2014

21 REPORTS FROM 2014

23 REPORTS FROM 2013

1,135 CODED PIECES OF EVIDENCE

144 LESSONS

17 MAJOR INSIGHTS

4 CONCLUSIONS

Learning from evaluation for stronger programming and implementation

Now, more than ever, development organizations are assessed based on their ability to learn and the evaluation function is at the very heart of how a strong organization tries to understand how its programme is working, and not working, and why. For programme officers there is often a sense that they need to learn from evaluations of their own programmes, but for an organization as a whole there is a need to be constantly trying to identify trends and patterns across different evaluations to understand if there are areas that require attention across different kinds of interventions in different operating contexts. Large corporate thematic evaluations do this by focusing on a major area of work and really diving into the performance information and results to see what can be learned. But what about learning from the many decentralized evaluations that we conduct every year? If there is no analysis cutting across there and pulling out lessons for programming, then we're

missing a big opportunity to find out valuable insights about our programme and how we're set up to plan and deliver results.

The meta-analysis is a powerful tool for addressing this issue. By looking across a wide range of evaluations to identify common findings and conclusions, it gives us a strong basis for making informed decisions about programming. The focus this year on learning is most welcome from the prospective of planners like myself, as a big part of our job is ensuring that programming and the implementation of programmes continues to get stronger every year in UN-Women. We can only do this if we're learning a lot along the way.

One example of strengthened learning around programme effectiveness is the use of Theory of Change which is once again highlighted in this year's meta-analysis. During 2014, in keeping with the findings of previous evaluations and last year's report, the organization has greatly strengthened its approach

to Theory of Change, undertaking a major effort to develop explicit theories of change for the major areas of its work, developing a training module on Theory of Change, and requesting all offices to include Theories of Change as part of its programme plans from 2016 onwards.

There are many other insights in this year's report and each one will be methodically studied and incorporated into discussions around improvements to programme approaches, planning guidance and organizational processes. We also look at how other initiatives, such as UN-Women's new results management system and its strategy for strengthening RBM can utilize the findings for the meta-analysis to make the organization ever more effective in improving the lives of women and girls, and delivering value for our financial partners.

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