

## Final Evaluation

### Strategic Note 2014 – 2019, UN Women Mexico

**Evaluators:**

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### Executive Summary

The evaluation of the UN Women Mexico Strategic Note 2014-2019 used the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) approach, which involves a systematic assessment of the contributions made by the Country Office to development results concerning gender equality and women's empowerment at the national level. It considers the set of interventions that UN Women has carried out during the Strategic Note period, combining its triple mandate of normative, programmatic, and coordination work.

The specific objectives that guided this final evaluation were:

1. Assess the internal and external coherence of the 2014-2019 Strategic Note.
2. Assess the effectiveness and contribution of UN Women progressing towards the achievement of the results defined in the Strategic Note.
3. Provide information on the extent to which UN Women has synergized its three mandates (normative, coordination and operational).
4. Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices, examples and innovative effort that support gender equality and human rights.
5. Provide actionable recommendations for the development of the Strategic Note 2020-2025.

The main uses that UN Women has considered for this evaluation are:

1. Learning and improvement of decision-making to support the development of the next Strategic Note 2020-2025, support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2020-2025 Cooperation Framework, and the 2019-2024 National Development Plan.
2. Assessment of the 2014-2019 Strategic Note effectiveness, in terms of UN Women's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The scope of the evaluation covered the implementation period from 2014 to the first half of 2019. It covered the UN Women Country Portfolio in Mexico, which groups all the activities that are undertaken by the Country Office linked to its Strategic Note (2014-2019). Geographically, the evaluation focused on Mexico City, but it gathered the perspective of national/federal, state, and municipal (in one case) actors.

The review deepened into the details of two initiatives, Safe Cities and Moving Forward for Equality, both relevant to the Country Office portfolio for the resources involved, project duration, and continuity into the next period. This analysis allowed extending the geographical scope to the project localities.

The main users of this evaluation are UN Women Mexico Country Office, Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office (ACRO), government institutions, donors and development partners, implementing partners, civil society representatives, target population and their families, community members, and the United Nations team in the country.

This evaluation follows the principles of gender equality and human rights, as defined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy and the United Nations norms, standards, and ethical guidelines defined through the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), such as: the Evaluation Policy, the Country Evaluation Manual, the PPG Evaluation Chapter, the GERAAS evaluation report quality assessment checklist, and the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator (EPI).

The evaluation applied four OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability), incorporating human rights and gender equality as sub-criteria. The evaluation questions stated in the Terms of Reference (TOR) and others raised by the evaluation team were included for each criteria. They informed the evaluation matrix and the instruments for collecting and analyzing data.

Mixed techniques for data collecting were applied, including both qualitative and quantitative information. Regarding secondary information, a documentary review was carried out, analyzing 95 documents provided by UN Women according to the criteria and questions of the evaluation matrix.

The primary information was collected through 48 interviews (individual or group) in which 97 people participated. The participants were UN Women personnel, representatives of the current and former government (federal, state, and municipal), implementing partners, civil society organizations, United Nations System agencies in Mexico, and UN Women project participants.

Also, a virtual survey was sent to a base of 108 contacts, carried out by the Country Office with persons associated with the actions of UN Women during the period that were not interviewed. The survey was answered by 50 people. Along with this, the evaluation team participated as an observer in two activities organized by the Country Office, which intended to discuss the next Strategic Note 2020-2025 (one with the Civil Society Advisory Group -GASC- and another with the Gender Interagency Group -GIG).

At the same time, an initial workshop was held with representatives of the UN Women to discuss and collect their opinions about the Strategic Note design (Results Framework, Theory of Change, Indicators), as well as the implementation milestones during 2014-2019. Likewise, a preliminary findings presentation was held with the country team at the end of the field visit, which allowed collecting essential inputs for the data analysis.

The evaluation team considers in general terms, taking into account all the findings identified during the evaluation process, that during the period analyzed, UN Women in Mexico has made an important contribution to advancing of gender equality in the country. The initiatives carried out as part of the portfolio are relevant and pertinent to the situation in the country, and that the Country Office is highly positioned among the stakeholders, who highlight its added value to support the women's empowerment and respect for human rights. The main opportunities for improvement are the management processes and the sustainability of the initiatives that may affect the effectiveness of future actions. More specifically, the most relevant conclusions linked to each of the evaluation criteria are the following:

#### 1. Relevance and pertinence

The Strategic Note has a **high level of pertinence** concerning the country's gender equality context, international human rights commitments, public policy priorities expressed in the main national planning instruments, and the United Nations programming framework in the country. At the same time, it considers prime concerns to address gender gaps, and it has been linked and articulated with national

and state authorities, considering existing public policies, and offering initiatives aligned to that framework.

Despite the high relevance, the Strategic Note **did not explicitly incorporate** the consequences of the country's high levels of insecurity and violence on women and girls and in the exercise of their human rights, as recommended by the human rights mechanisms and CEDAW. In the same way, there has been no total alignment between the planning processes of the new government and the new Strategic Note. The new PROIGUALDAD 2019-2024 is still in the formulation and consultation phase, which has the risk of failing to include relevant areas of work of the new administration.

UN Women is **well-positioned** and enjoys high legitimacy among stakeholders, who value its expertise, ability to gather diverse stakeholders, to generate quality knowledge products, as well as to share good practices from other countries. The Country Office has contributed to making visible gender inequalities that were normalized in the country, not only during the period evaluated but historically, as well as facilitating the continuity of the international gender equality agenda through different administrations. In recent years, sustained and strong work in communications has strengthened this position.

The **partnership strategy has grown over time**, establishing links with other actors in addition to the consolidated and traditional partnership with INMUJERES and women's organizations. It has included other public actors such as the Judiciary and Parliament, embassies and state governments, and, more recently, the private sector. These new partnerships have initiated mainly due to the implementation of UN Women global projects, which allowed the Country Office to carry out initiatives that were not traditional and imply direct work with women and with the private sector. In this sense, the organization **has had to learn how to identify the relevant actors**, the local and sectoral dynamics, and the gender barriers in the labor market (in entrepreneurship and companies). This process is still developing, making it challenging to appreciate its results and entail risks of dispersing the agenda, which need to be mitigated.

UN Women has historically established alliances with civil society organizations to ensure gender equality in the country, recognizing that a significant part of the proposals and pressure for change comes from this sector. This link, on the one hand, has been institutionalized in the Civil Society Advisory Group, on the other, is stressed by the decrease in the economic support of their autonomous initiatives and the questioning they suffered from the current administration.

The **human rights and gender equality approach** is at the base of the project initiatives design, particularly with regard to the diagnoses that inform the project origin and the indicators built to verify its compliance. However, there are some limitations of incorporating the approach in an intersectional manner, which may hamper identifying women living with higher intensity of rights violations and who are being "left behind" on development. In the same way, the participation of the recipients in the entire project cycle is recognized as an opportunity for improvement.

The Strategic Note did not include **a Theory of Change** to guide the results framework in an integrated way among the different impact areas. The results framework was based on the institutional mandates and corporate priorities established at a global level, and the availability of specific projects. Despite this, the Country Office has over time consolidated an intervention strategy that acted as a theory of change. It identifies the need to articulate international commitments, knowledge production and data collection, partnership with the gender mechanism, and advocacy on public policies to achieve sustainable results over time.

In the last period, projects that have a global origin and a particular theory of change are being implemented in the country, which requires a design adjustment processes to make them more appropriate to national and local characteristics. At the same time, the country team is analyzing new work strategies to propose public policies based on the escalation of demonstrative experiences in specific territories, as intervention models to interested parties.

#### b. Effectiveness

Overall, the Country Office has been able to **contribute to significant progress in the improvement of gender equality** in the country, in all impact areas. Some of the highlights include the progress in achieving parity in representative positions, visibility and drafting of a national care work strategy, denaturation of violence against women in public spaces, the legal definition of femicide, and the development of tools and mechanisms for the development of gender-sensitive public policies.

The achievement of results is higher when the Office's action **integrates its triple mandate**. Incorporating the normative work for which it is particularly recognized and valued, the coordination with UN agencies for greater legitimacy and variety of thematic expertise, and the implementation of projects that ensure consistent action and continuity.

Regarding the **coordination mandate**, UN Women is recognized for its leadership in inter-agency groups such as the GIG, and in leading relevant processes of the international women's human rights agenda. However, barriers to the UN system functioning can limit the scope for greater synergy between agencies in the country. These difficulties in the articulation and collaborative work between agencies is not only an internal problem of the UN System, but is also noticed by other stakeholders, which can generate a loss of opportunities for cooperation.

UN Women **has consistently contributed to the strengthening of gender institutions** in the country. It has added to the generation of mechanisms and instruments for mainstreaming the gender approach in public policies (regulatory framework aligned with international commitments, statistics, and planning and gender-sensitive budgets), mainly through its partnership with INMUJERES. Notwithstanding the provision of these tools, the country faces significant challenges in the effective mainstreaming of a gender equality approach in its public policies. The advances trigger new needs for action to consolidate what has been achieved (as in the case of parity in representative positions). At the same time, it is necessary to persist in the efforts for their effective incorporation (as is the case of labeled budgets).

#### c. Efficiency

The **administrative and management procedures applied by the Office are excessive** and lead to team overload and disaffection among stakeholders, which has effects on the project's effectiveness since they require a great deal of time and effort that are not necessarily compensated with the benefits obtained. Likewise, despite the unanimous recognition of the technical quality of the Country Office team and its representatives, there is limited space for the thematic and technical conversation between UN Women teams and their partners, due to excessive procedures noted.

The **implementation of global projects has become a relevant aspect of the Office's action**, particularly in recent years. They contribute significantly to the budget, knowledge, and links with good practices from other countries, as well as allowing the execution of initiatives on relevant issues. One aspect of its implementation that presents opportunities for improvement relates to the modality of hiring implementing partners (Program Cooperation Agreement, PCAs) in the perspective of enhancing the synergy between the capacities of organizations and UN Women.

The collected evidence shows **limitations in applying a results-based management approach**. The monitoring system includes a very high number of indicators, and several corporate tools focusing on monitoring coexist, resulting in little time for teams to which result in having insufficient time to reflect collectively on the results achieved and identify lessons learned to improve or enhance performance.

The own and mobilized **resources** are lower than those initially contemplated in the Strategic Note budget, especially in the first years of the period. However, they **have been increasing every year**, mainly due to the high amounts contributed by global projects towards the last years of the Note. Resources are low for an Office in a country of the size, relevance, and violation of women's rights such as Mexico, but this has not prevented the organization from achieving relevant results during the period. The fundraising goals are high and also pressure the team, which does not necessarily have the experience and time to develop such activities, especially in the context of declining resources for the UN agencies.

#### d. Sustainability

In terms of capacity building, the implementation of the Strategic Note **has contributed to institutionalize** relevant measures to gender equality, particularly with regard to legislation in the different impact areas, with a broad and recognized contribution to knowledge production and advocacy by the Country Office, as well as a contribution to cultural change through its communication campaigns.

However, there are **risks regarding the sustainability of the results** achieved and the processes initiated in most recent initiatives, due to the change of administrations and their priorities at the federal and state levels, and a lack of active involvement of the private sector. In the general context of declining UN agency funds, and the austerity policies for the current government, the organization has not yet managed to consolidate a fund mobilization strategy that is effective in raising enough resources, and at the same time, enhance institutional strengths and do not diverge its agenda.

Based on these conclusions, considering the mandate of UN Women in Mexico and the opportunities for improvement detected for each of the criteria applied, the recommendations propose specific actions around the following aspects:

- Incorporate in the new Strategic Note thematic issues that are relevant to the national situation of gender equality, such as:
  - a. strengthening the capacities of elected women in the framework of parity.
  - b. violence against women linked to insecurity, organized crime and the public policies that address these issues.
  - c. the strengthening of interagency initiatives to enrich the application of instruments aimed at closing gender gaps in the labor market.
  - d. more active participation at state and municipal levels.
- Maintain the concern for the strengthening of civil society organizations, expanding the activities of the Civil Society Advisory Group in terms of discussion of emerging issues and dialogue with civil society organizations that are not part of it.
- Strengthen the partnerships with the private sector based on the mandates, capabilities, and resources of UN Women and according to the sector's thematic and innovation interests, incorporating it into the discussion of the care system, closing gender gaps in the productive chain, and in general in promoting the women's economic autonomy..
- Strengthen the strategic design capacity of the Country Office to carry out integrated planning while being flexible to respond to context opportunities. That includes the formulation of theories of change by impact area, mainstreaming the intersectional and participatory approaches throughout the project cycle.
- Review the planning and monitoring system currently used to simplify it and guide it towards strengthening the results-based management; limiting the number of indicators, standardizing the criteria for assessing progress, develop annual meetings of the entire team to analyze the results achieved.
- Strengthen the capacities of the Country Office to contribute to the continuity and sustainability of the initiatives, identifying the necessary actions from the design and implementation of the projects, and prioritizing the accumulated institutional expertise to avoid the risk of scattering from the institutional agenda.