



UN Women Bangladesh Country Portfolio Evaluation Final Report



UN Women Bangladesh Country Portfolio Evaluation Final Report



UN WOMEN BANGLADESH
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BCAS	Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies
BCCT	Bangladesh Climate Change Trust
BCO	Bangladesh Country Office
BCPVAW	Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
BNPS	Bangladesh Nari Progati Songho
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CCA	Climate Change Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGBV	combatting gender-based violence
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CO	Country Office
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
CSO	civil society organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDM	Department of Disaster Management
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFID	Department for International Development
DRF	development results framework
DRR	disaster risk reduction
DWA	Department of Women's Affairs
EVAW	ending violence against women
FGD	focus group discussion
GBV	gender based violence
GDI	Gender Development Index
GED	General Economics Division

GEEW	gender equality and empowerment of women
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System
GETG	Gender Equality Theme Group
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
GNP	Governance and National Planning
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GRB	gender-responsive budgeting
GRG	gender-responsive governance
HA	humanitarian action
HCTT	Humanitarian Coordination Task Team
HQ	UN Women Headquarters
IB	Institutional Budget
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Service
IELD	inclusive and equitable local development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JP	joint programme
LCG-WAGE	Local Consultative Group - Women's Advancement and Gender Equality
LGI	Local government institution
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoDMR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriate, Welfare and Overseas Employment
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRP	National Resilience Programme
NWDP	National Women's Development Programme
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OEEF	organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PVE	preventing violent extremism
RAG	red/amber/green
RBM	results-based management
RMG	ready-made garment

ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SHCC	Sexual Harassment Complaint Cell
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation
SSSC	Safe School Safe Community
STOE	standard terms of employment
ToR	terms of reference
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPFD	United Nations Partnership Framework for Development
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNTF	United Nations Trust Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAW	violence against women
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WDF	Women's Development Forum
WEE	women's economic empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization
WLDM	women's leadership and decision making
WPS	women, peace and security

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Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) of the UN Women Bangladesh Country Office (BCO), carried out from February-July 2019. The purpose of the CPE was to conduct a systematic assessment of the contributions made by UN Women to development results for gender equality at the country level in order to inform decision-making for the development of the country's new Strategic Note (SN) during 2020, and to provide evaluative input to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluation later in 2019.

The CPE considered all activities undertaken during the period covered by the SNs for 2014-16 and 2017-2020 (up to Q1 2019), in order to analyse the internal coherence of the full spectrum of work, and help identify areas for strategic positioning of UN Women BCO. It covered the operational, normative and coordination roles of UN across the following portfolio elements: gender-responsive governance (GRG) and global policy norms; women's economic empowerment (WEE); ending violence against women (EVAW); women, peace and security (WPS); humanitarian action (HA)/disaster risk reduction (DRR); and climate change (CC).

UN Women BCO has grown into a fully-fledged country office since transitioning from a project office in 2012. The annual budget has increased by 118 percent, with expansion particularly in 2018 and 2019 mainly through budget increases in HA, EVAW and DRR thematic areas through the mobilization of non-core funds. Its staff has grown from 16 in 2014 to 42 by mid-2019, and a sub-office was established in 2018 in Cox's Bazar, prompted by the humanitarian crisis of the influx of refugees from neighbouring Myanmar. During this time, the country context has evolved. Gender equality has been enshrined in the constitution, and the situation of women in practice has improved. But a number of important challenges remain, including weak translation of constitutional equality into implemented policy and persistent patriarchal social norms. Violence against women and child marriage are widely tolerated, women are excluded from decision making and from controlling productive assets. They face limited access to education and formal work, and high employment vulnerability. They are also disproportionately at risk to the impacts of climate change, and a number of intersections including ethnicity, caste, sexuality, and disability, which all compound gender inequality.

The government has aligned its seventh five-year development plan with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN Agenda 2030, including many gender-equality targets, although gaps persist with regards to violence against women and women's unpaid work, among others. Bangladesh acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984 but continues to have reservations on articles 2 and 16(1) c.

UN Women BCO has engaged with stakeholders during the drafting and implementation of the two most recent SNs, including: government partners; civil society organizations (CSOs) acting as implementing partners; CSOs engaged with joint advocacy; donors; and UN partners. The recently initiated UN reform provides an important context for ongoing decision-making on UN Women's strategic positioning. Thus UN Women's engagement with the UNDAF, joint programmes, and coordination initiatives across the UN, as well as their stakeholders, are an important focus for the evaluation.

Overall, the evaluation took a theory-based approach. This used a portfolio-level theory of change reconstructed in consultation with BCO staff and through presentation and discussion with the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). Questions were designed to produce insights into four of the five criteria developed for international development evaluations by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC), namely relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. One criterion specific to UN Women's mandate was also examined, regarding gender equality and human rights. It was also utilization-focused, in the sense that in line with its primarily formative purpose, evaluation questions were prioritized to provide maximum utility to the BCO.

It also applied a gender perspective at the design, data collection and analysis stages, following the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation. The evaluation included opportunities for consultation in the design phase, during primary data collection, and during the development of findings and recommendations. Purposive sampling was used to select activities across the portfolio for closer review, as well as case studies on women's economic empowerment (WEE). Primary qualitative data was collected through key informant

interviews and focus group discussions, and quantitative data through a staff survey, in the course of a field visit and online during April 2019.

Through an iterative analysis process and consultation exercises, the following 18 **findings** were articulated:

Relevance

1. UN Women's relatively small size combined with the complexity of the Bangladesh context demands a strong, coherent vision for the BCO's work, which has been developing during this evaluation period. Operational work initiated more recently acknowledges the need for long-term vision and lays a foundation for further articulation of a programme-wide strategy.
2. UN Women has played a strong role in coordinating efforts on gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW) through the Gender Equality Theme Group (GETG) and made important contributions through several other mechanisms. These initiatives have not yet, however, translated into consistent programmatic coordination on GEEW across the UN system, probably reflecting broader coordination challenges in the UN.

Effectiveness

3. UN Women has provided technical support, policy influence, convening, and strengthening and supporting of implementing partners across programme areas. In several cases, a contribution to outcomes has been clear, but a systematic assessment is challenging, due to weak UN Women reporting against outcomes envisaged by the results frameworks laid out in the SNs. Achievements at outcome level are also not yet clear for some short-term and small-scale initiatives.

Across thematic areas:

- » Gender-responsive governance (GRG) and normative work has made distinct progress towards outcomes in institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) processes. This has enhanced the capacity of government structures to promote gender equality and facilitated civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in governance processes. However, there remain weak areas which require attention if institutions are to sustainably implement gender equality commitments.
- » The ERAW area of work has made a localised contribution towards promoting favourable social norms among young people around sexual harassment, and has made a policy-level contribution, alongside several other significant

CSO and UN actors, in supporting advocacy around the Child Marriage Act review.

- » DRR-CC work in the early period of this evaluation had made distinct outcome-level contributions to enhancing government and NGO sector mechanisms for addressing gender equality in DRR-CC interventions, and localized direct contributions to enhancing women's capacity to withstand disaster and climate change. Although hampered by a delayed start, building on these foundations through the National Resilience Programme stands to strengthen, extend and further institutionalise these gains.
 - » Engagement in the humanitarian space was a new and unplanned intervention in response to the large-scale crisis in Cox's Bazar. The involvement of UN Women has had some positive outcomes regarding policy, coordination and services for women. There are likely to be more substantive outcomes in the near future as UN Women is now better positioned to influence others, and as the response to the crisis focuses more on gender.
 - » Through the regional project on preventing violent extremism (PVE), evidence of outcome-level results is not yet strong as the work was short-term and recent. However, localized activity has been put in place and there are some prospects for sustainability there.
 - » In the WEE thematic area, a contribution to a clear set of outcome-level results in policy, services and to some extent awareness raising has been achieved through long-term collaborative work on migration. Other, short-term areas of work show only limited evidence of outcome-level results and at a small scale. As pilot areas of intervention, these were conceived with short timeframe not yet fully sufficient to 'prove' in what circumstances their methods work.
4. There is some evidence of changing power dynamics as a result of interventions in select locations, but sustained work and institutionalization is likely needed to fully establish this. There is growing awareness that working with men is also necessary in many interventions. There is an important role to play by women's-rights CSOs in changing power relations, supported by UN Women.
 5. Marginalized groups have been effectively reached both through project-based partnerships with NGOs, targeting marginalized women, and through a thematic focus on marginalized groups. There may be space for further systematic focus on select marginalized groups.

6. Programmes have been more effective when they are part of long-term, consistent initiatives where UN Women has been able to contribute specialist expertise. Making long-term initiatives possible is hampered by limited knowledge externally of UN Women's overall plan, and by limited resources with which to work closely with government.
7. The current UNDAF has mainstreamed gender issues in some respects but the absence of a stand-alone goal on gender may have contributed to weak coordination on GEEW at high or programmatic levels. Collaborative work and joint programmes include good examples of integrating a gender focus into wider programmes and maximizing the effects of gender expertise in key agencies.
8. There is wide appreciation of UN Women's growing visibility and leadership despite its small staff, but also a perception that expertise is not always sufficient for the task. There is also some internal perception of capacity and skills gaps, which impacts on programme implementation and credibility.
9. Several initiatives have run on time, but others have been delayed by organizational bottlenecks in internal approvals, procurement, recruitment and work overload.

Efficiency

10. UN Women's comparative advantage lies in part in its policy and advocacy work, and in its ability to convene interactions between CSOs and government. These are supported by its dedicated gender expertise, a focus on women and women's rights, and access to an international knowledge pool on gender issues. Some aspects of its potential comparative advantage are not yet being fully maximized. There is scope for: more systematically fostering relationships between CSOs and government; a more consistently long-term operational approach; and a clearer identification of strengths in relation to other UN agencies, including in women's economic empowerment.
11. There has been the observation that BCO's leadership is sometimes unable to give full attention to more strategic issues, and that UN Women's capacity has in the recent past been lower than its ambition. Such observations are likely generated in part by low staff numbers relative to programme activity in the middle-to-late part of this evaluation period. Bottlenecks associated with some organizational processes may have also contributed to this perception.
12. Real efforts have been made towards gaining an outcome focus and enabling results-based management (RBM) over the evaluation period, with some progress. Strengthening and periodically revisiting a programme-level vision and strategy would further support this journey.

Gender Equality and Human Rights

13. Several features of knowledge and learning are in place, suggesting good progress on some aspects of knowledge management systems internally, but there is room for improvement in generating and disseminating knowledge externally in accessible formats.
14. UN Women's policy and programme interventions have integrated a gender equality and human rights approach in line with international standards and generated important results in addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality. However, further efforts are needed to institutionalize CSO engagement.
15. UN Women has provided substantial support for CEDAW reporting, strengthening CSOs, SDGs action plan in line with the Agreed Conclusions of 60th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), SDG committee engagement, in Universal Periodic Review, Child Marriage Act revision, etc. There is some evidence that UN Women may be best positioned to promote a stronger government ownership and engagement with some of these processes, in particular for CEDAW.

Sustainability

16. Ownership and national champions have been established for different parts of the portfolio. Leadership for subsequent work has been taken over by Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MoWCA) for GRB, Ministry of Expatriate, Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) for WEE and the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) for DRR-CC.
17. UN Women's support to capacitate partners and key national stakeholders with the necessary skills to strengthen gender equality commitments for advancing GEEW have provided an important institutional foundation for future work. However, there are a number of challenges to sustainability of benefits.
18. UN Women has significantly contributed to strengthen institutional mechanisms' monitoring capacity and accountability to ensure the sustainability of the results of interventions. However, there remain challenges in promoting the sustainability of results/outcome because of low ownership, short-term programme, capacity gaps, etc.

The evaluation draws the following six **conclusions**, covering the need for a strong and widely recognized vision; the optimal roles of operational and coordination work; working to comparative advantage; maximizing

efficient organizational processes; and fine-tuning a focus on marginalised groups:

- » Strategic planning for the next SN will require a strong, coherent vision that can provide the basis for completing a transition from project orientation to programme thinking, and be a counterweight to the risks inherent in higher reliance on non-core resources.
- » The underlying expected role and objectives of operational work in particular needs clarification in this statement of intent, as the expected roles expressed to date do not consistently bear fruit. Clearer expectations would allow the selecting of projects and programmes that are more fit-for-purpose.
- » UN Women has taken an increasingly strong role in coordination on GEEW across the UN, but there remain some gaps, particularly in programme-level strategic coordination. UN Women could take stronger leadership in this, using the opportunity of the upcoming UNDAF formulation and gender scorecard, to bring the analytic power available across the agencies to bear on challenges in a coherent manner. This could include efforts to coordinate and rationalize ministry partnerships.
- » There is scope for working more effectively to BCO's comparative advantage. This means: a closer focus on policy influence and advocacy; more consistent convening of CSOs and government to institutionalize the role of CSOs in policy monitoring; and drawing on international experience for knowledge and expertise.
- » Alongside evidence of UN Women's increasing visibility, strong leadership and increasing efficiency in terms of budget delivery, there is some indication of areas for improvement. Work over the last few years has included a few incidences of delays and there is some evidence of lack of confidence both internally and externally in the office's ability to carry out its ongoing plans. While current recruitment may well resolve some of these issues, it will be important to strengthen systems for induction of new staff and training to bolster capacity and confidence.
- » Sharper and more consistent analysis of marginalized groups would increase understanding of the layered forms of marginalization in the country, and therefore would support more precise targeting. It would also draw attention to the need for

more systematic monitoring of the effects of operational and normative work on these groups.

The following recommendations have been developed on the basis of the evaluation's findings and conclusions. Articulating recommendations has included a consultative process involving BCO as well as the wider group of stakeholders represented by the ERG, with the intention of expressing these in ways which align realistically with BCO processes and structures.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Based on Conclusion 1 and Conclusion 2

Relevant to: senior management and broader team

Priority: high

Difficulty: medium

In preparation of the new SN, include a team-wide initiative to develop the current programme-level theory of change, and also develop impact-area theories of change that articulate with this. A statement of intent needs to describe both a vision of what is expected to change, and the steps required. This evaluation process has offered a provisional programme-level theory of change, developed from an external perspective to support the evaluation framework. Incorporating an internally owned and developed version of this would be an important process. Moving forwards, this framework could be used to periodically revisit the strategy and fine-tune ongoing programme decision-making.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Based on Conclusion 1

Relevant to: communications staff

Priority: medium

Difficulty: low

Following the development of the SN, consider combining this programme statement with the theory of change to produce an accessible communications brief for dissemination throughout the local UN system and among development partners.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Based on Conclusion 3

Relevant to: senior management and coordination staff

Priority: high

Difficulty: medium/high

Take steps in the UNDAF formulation process to ensure a gender-responsive evaluation that includes a strong analysis of the UN Systems' ability to coordinate on GEEW and promote a twin-track approach for GEEW across the UN, which includes high-level programmatic coordination

on gender. Explore the potential of the Strategic Plan-level Common Chapter for framing or guiding this process. Moving forward, seek out opportunities for consistent collaboration with key sister agencies, especially but not only through gender units and gender focal persons, but also with heads of agencies and through formally or informally arising technical support opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Based on Conclusion 4

Relevant to: senior management and project management staff

Urgency: medium

Difficulty: medium/high

Facilitate the reinstatement of a strong civil society umbrella and advisory group to BCO, either drawing on the experience of the Civil Society Advisory Group or facilitating a similar locally owned group. Seek ways to convene this and government on issues related to focus operational areas. Help institutionalize a sustained role for this group in policy consultation and monitoring, and in providing evidence for policy advancement. Make relationships with CSOs more consistent, with an emphasis on women's rights organizations, beyond the framework of required processes for normative frameworks, and including these in strengthening support to government to implement CEDAW commitments.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Based on Conclusion 4

Relevant to: senior management and WEE project staff in liaison with other UN agencies

Urgency: high

Difficulty: medium

A defined role for WEE – the operational area in which UN Women's role is currently least defined - should be pursued, bearing in mind that the SN programme selection guidance stated work areas should synergize the dimensions of: a) a major national challenge; b) UN Women comparative advantage; c) alignment of key national actors to support UN Women action. Promoting gender equality in employment and business as the economy expands continues to be a major national challenge. Working to the comparative advantage of UN Women would mean a focus on policy-level advocacy and synergises work across the mandate. Aligning with key national actors would mean liaising with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in seeking a defined role in WEE, and selecting issues where women's-rights CSOs already are or can be engaged. This might be in focusing on tackling gender segmentation in the labour market and improving the quality of work for

women, as UN Women has contributed to supporting in the context of migration. It might also be in advocating on including women's unpaid care work in initiatives targeting women's economic empowerment.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Based on Conclusion 5

Relevant to: all staff

Urgency: medium

Difficulty: medium

Use the proposed functional review process to further explore precise areas in which staff confidence could be enhanced and understanding of operational procedure amplified. Meanwhile, ensure that strong induction and support processes are in place for incoming staff, so that they can be facilitated as quickly as possible into full confidence of their thematic expertise as it aligns with BCO's programme of work, and into full understanding of how to manage and plan for operational procedures. Where possible, specifically link the definition and allocation of responsibilities to identified internal bottleneck processes and have regular review sessions to ensure that everyone is on the same page. This should form a part of deepening efforts for longer-term, sustained and targeted capacity building. Activities might include the following:

- continuing to strengthen strategies to engage colleagues in understanding any changes to operational policies;
- quarterly opportunities for knowledge exchange and critical progress review so that there is more programme thinking; and
- mock role-playing exercises to ensure that everyone (not just the programme leads) is confident in representing the organization in meetings.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Based on Conclusion 3

Relevant to: senior management and project staff

Urgency: medium

Difficulty: high

Consider addressing sustainability issues by: 1) involving relevant actors more substantially not only in pre-programme consultation but also in the design of programmes and in on-going decision making during implementation; and 2) by focusing on interventions which can contribute to sustaining capacity in institutionalized ways. In the case of interventions with government, the latter can mean establishing required gender-orientation course modules focused on gender equality in a particular sector. For intervention with other bodies, it can mean

establishing routine gender and sexual harassment orientation, for instance among university students and professors.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Based on Conclusion 6

Relevant to: senior management and monitoring and evaluation staff

Urgency: High

Difficulty: Medium/High

As part of strategic programme development, sharpen analysis of intersecting forms of inequality among women and base programme targeting on specific groups identified. In addition, enhance BCO's evidence on how far it reaches marginalized groups through operational work by ensuring that partners implementing projects are enabled and accountable to monitoring target populations in ways that disaggregate beyond sex.

In the longer term, continue to support government in the development of national monitoring and data collection processes (e.g. in Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) that disaggregate beyond sex so that layered marginalization becomes clearly visible. Integrate objectives for monitoring on this basis into Governance and National Planning (GNP) processes, such that the effects of gender-responsive budgeting can be reviewed and evaluated and policies modified on the basis of how far they address the needs of the most marginalized.



Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood

1 Background and purpose of the evaluation

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the UN Women Bangladesh Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE). The purpose of the CPE was to conduct a systematic assessment of the contributions made by UN Women to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level. The UN Women portfolio responds to its integrated mandate, which includes normative, operational and coordination work. The CPE focuses on the individual and combined success of these areas in advancing gender equality in Bangladesh. It uses the SN as the main point of reference. Given that this is the first CPE of UN Women Bangladesh CO, the evaluation team assessed the UN Women portfolio of work during the period of two UN Women SN cycles 2014-2016 and 2017-2020 (up to and including Q1 2019).

The CPE was commissioned by the Country Office (CO) primarily as a formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the CO and national stakeholders' strategic learning and decision-making for the development of the new SN, due to be developed in 2020, and to provide input to the UNDAF evaluation in the latter half of 2019. The evaluation had a secondary summative (backwards looking) perspective, to enhance learning and accountability for development effectiveness.

The evaluation was premised on a human rights-based and gender-responsive approach founded on the principles of inclusion, participation, and fair power relations.

The evaluation was carried out by two external consultants (one international consultant as team leader and one national consultant) and one UN Women evaluation analyst intern, from 12 February to 05 July 2019, and included a field visit in Bangladesh from 30 March to 09 April 2019. The regional evaluation specialist in UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific was consulted throughout the process and participated in the field visit in Bangladesh.

The CPE is primarily intended to support: a) learning and improved decision-making for the development of the next SN and UNDAF; b) accountability for the development effectiveness of the CO's two SN over the period; and c) capacity development and mobilization of national stakeholders to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The target audience and intended users of the CPE are: UN Women Bangladesh Country Office; UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; the UN system in Bangladesh; and key national stakeholders in Bangladesh including the government, civil society, women's movements actors, UN Women donors and private-sector partners.

TABLE 1.

Primary Intended Evaluation Users

Primary intended user	Primary intended use			
	Learning and generation of knowledge	Strategic decision-making	Accountability	Capacity development and mobilization
UN Women BCO	•	•	•	•
UN Women RO for Asia and the Pacific	•			
UN system in Bangladesh	•			
National and local governments	•	•	•	•
Civil society & women's movements actors	•		•	•
UN Women donors	•	•	•	
Private-sector partners	•	•	•	



Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood

2

Evaluation objectives and scope

2. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

2.1

Evaluation objectives

In accordance with the CPE Terms of Reference, the specific objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

1. Assess the relevance of UN Women contribution to the intervention at national levels, and alignment with international agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the SN.
3. Support the UN Women CO to improve its strategic positioning to better support the achievement of sustained gender equality and women's empowerment.
4. Analyse how a human-rights approach and gender-equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the SN.
5. Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices and examples of innovation that supports gender equality and human rights.
6. Provide insights into the extent to which the UN Women CO has realized synergies between its three mandates (normative, coordination and operations).
7. Provide actionable recommendations with respect to the development of the next UN Women CO SN.

2.2

Scope of Evaluation

The UN Women Evaluation Policy and the UN Women Evaluation Strategic Plan 2014-2017 are the main guiding documents that state the principles and organizational framework for evaluation planning, conduct and follow-up in UN Women. According to the UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation Guidance¹, these principles are aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) *Norms*

¹ <https://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en/evaluation-handbook/country-portfolio-evaluation-guidance>

*for Evaluation in the UN System, Standards for Evaluation in the UN System*² and *Ethical Guidelines*.³

The CPE considered two SN periods: 2014-16 and 2017-2020 (up to Q1 2019) focusing on all activities undertaken by the CO under these two SNs. It analysed the internal coherence of the full spectrum of work, including strategic choices and programme synergies, to draw out learning and findings that can support future decision making and help identify areas for strategic positioning of UN Women BCO. It covered the operational, normative and coordination roles of UN across the following portfolio elements: gender-responsive governance (GRG) and global policy norms; women's economic empowerment (WEE); ending violence against women (EVAW); women, peace and security (WPS); humanitarian action (HA)/disaster risk reduction (DRR); and climate change (CC).

In addition, the CPE looked into two case studies on WEE, namely decent work/migration and inclusive and equitable local development (IELD), to provide in-depth information on process, outcomes and causation. Case studies included rights-holder perspectives and more detailed insights into the roles and characteristics of partnerships. These provided the core material for assessing UN Women's contribution to outcomes, and for identifying further work required in the on-going evolution of the theory of change.

Joint programmes and programming were included within the scope of the evaluation. Where joint programmes are included in the analysis, the evaluation considered both the specific contribution of UN Women, and the additional benefits and costs from working through a joint modality.

The CPE also assessed organizational performance using an organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework (OEEF) under the two SNs.

In addition, the following three corporate, five country-level and one global-level evaluations were analysed and drawn on as secondary material:

² UNEG, "Norms and standards for evaluation", 2016, available online at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

³ UNEG, "Ethical guidelines", 2008, available online at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>.

- Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to Governance and National Planning (finalized for publication June 2019)
- Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s contribution to Women’s Political Participation and Leadership (published 2018)
- Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to Humanitarian Action (Bangladesh case study completed in February 2019; publication forthcoming)
- Bangladesh CO: Final Evaluation of the Project titled ‘Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women’ (published 2019)
- Bangladesh CO: Final Evaluation of ‘Safe School Safe Community’ Project, Bangladesh (published 2017)
- Bangladesh CO: Final Project Evaluation - Reducing Vulnerability of Women Affected by Climate Change through Viable Livelihood Options (published 2016)
- Bangladesh CO: Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its application in Bangladesh (MTE & Final Evaluation) (ILO -DW) (published 2015)
- Bangladesh CO: Research on Empowering women for peaceful communities - Evidence from Bangladesh (Monash Research) (published 2018)

- Evaluation by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN): 2017-18 Assessment of UN WOMEN (Global level) (published 2019)

The evaluation considered the cultural, religious, social and economic context when analysing the contributions of UN Women.

During evaluation inception phase, the team, in collaboration with BCO and the wider stakeholders, established the boundaries for the evaluation, in terms of which were the key questions that would provide maximum guidance for the BCO, and which stakeholders and relationships would be included or excluded from the evaluation. These decisions were discussed in an Inception Workshop with the ERG and with evaluation management group on 18 March 2019 (See Sections 4.4.1 and 4.3).

As per the TOR, the evaluation does not include a systematic assessment of the impact of the interventions on their beneficiaries (as defined by UNEG), as this is premature. In addition, UN Women organizational structures and systems outside of the CO (such as regional architecture) are not within the scope of this evaluation and were referenced only where there was a clear implication for the design and implementation of the CO SN.



Project site visit: Women Development Forum members in Rangpur. Photo: Julaiikha Hossain



Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaizer

3

Programme description, context and stakeholder analysis

3. PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION, CONTEXT AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

3.1

Overview of the portfolio

UN WOMEN BCO'S STRATEGIC NOTES

The Bangladesh Country Office (BCO) SN is the main planning tool for UN Women's support to normative, coordination and operational work in Bangladesh. The SN is grounded in the standards, principles and obligations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security, Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, and the Committee and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Recommendations (2011).

As mentioned above, the evaluation covers two SN periods: the 2014-16 SN and the current SN up to early 2019 (See Table 2). Across these two periods, there has been learning and adjustment, and the focus has adapted both during the transition between SNs, and to some extent within these as they have evolved. The SN was implemented through partnerships with government, civil society, the UN Country Team (UNCT) and development partners. Some operational work was conducted within the framework of global, regional and joint UN programmes.

In line with the UN Women Global Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and 2018-2021, and Bangladesh's UNDAF for 2012-2016 and for 2017-2020, the SN contains a development results framework (DRF) contributing to the following UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-2016 and 2017-2020 Thematic Areas (See Table 2).

TABLE 2.

UN Women BCO's SNs

	Targeted outcome area	Main focus of work
SN 2014-16	Women's leadership and decision making (WLDM)	Women Leadership and Political Participation (2015-2016)
	Women's economic empowerment (WEE)	Promoting Decent work through Improved Migration Policy and its application in Bangladesh (Oct 2012 - Sept 2015) The Empowerment of Women Migrant Workers in South Asia through Implementation of Standard Terms of Employment (May 2015 to June 2019) Career, Capital and Confidence: Empowering women garment workers through career mobility, financial literacy and reduced violence against women (June 2016 - March 2018)
	Eliminating violence against women (EVAW)	1) Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women (BCPVAW) (Dec 2014 - Dec 2018) 2) Safe School Safe Community (SSSC) (Jan 2014 - Dec 2016)

	Targeted outcome area	Main focus of work
	Women' peace and security and humanitarian action (WPS/HA)	Gender and Climate Change project: Reducing Vulnerability of Women affected by Climate Change through livelihood options (Dec 2011 - Jun 2017)
	Governance and national planning (GRB)	Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Strengthening Gender Responsive Budgeting in South Asia (March - Nov 2014)
	Global Norms, Policies and Standards	Normative
SN 2017-20	Gender-responsive governance (GRG) and normative	Strengthening Gender Responsive Budgeting in Bangladesh (including normative interventions) (Jul 2017 - Jun 2020) Support to Bangladesh Parliamentary Election (Jan 2018 – Apr 2019) Making Every Women and Girls Count in Bangladesh (Flagship programme on Gender Statistics) (2018-2020) Normative work
	WEE (with EVAW at some points)	Identification and introduction of sustainable approaches for pre-departure and pre-decision trainings in Bangladesh (May 2017 to Oct 2018) The Empowerment of Women Migrant Workers in South Asia through Implementation of Standard Terms of Employment (May 2015 to June 2019) Inclusive and Equitable Local Development (IELD) – Pilot Phase (Jul 2017 – Dec 2019) Towards a Sustainable and Ethical Tea sector (Nov 2018 – Jun 2019) Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women (BCPVAW) (Dec 2014 – Dec 2018) Combating Gender-Based Violence (Apr 2018 – Sept 2022)
	Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and HA	National Resilience Programme - JP (Jan 2018 - Mar 2021)
	New outcomes added through Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2018: HA	Rohingya response Projects (Aug 2017 to 2022)
	New outcome added in April 2017 revisions: WPS	Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities: Preventing Violent Extremism in Asia (part of regional programme) – 2 Phase (Apr 2017 – Mar 2018; Apr 2018 – Mar 2019).

Strategic Note (SN) 2014-16

The SN 2014-16 targeted results in all five Impact Areas of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-17:

Women's leadership and decision making was targeted via the following:

- Enhancing the enabling environment for women to exercise leadership in political parties and demanding mechanisms to increase women's representation in political parties and parliament.
- Attention to local government level – developing innovative methods to strengthen women's influence in areas where UN Women already has significant engagement, to create possibility for synergies to increase impact.
- Contributing to knowledge about increasing women's leadership at local levels to influence local governance.

Women’s economic empowerment was targeted via enhancing economic security for vulnerable groups of women, especially migrant women workers, Chittagong Hill Tracts women and poor women affected by climate change. The focus was on:

- emphasizing higher value work for women, which can contribute to confidence and improved status;
- working towards the removal of discriminatory policy provisions;
- supporting development and CSO partners to focus on women as citizens, economic actors and leaders; and
- expanding joint programmes, in particular with UNDP.

Eliminating violence against women was targeted via a planned joint programme with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which did not in fact take place, but objectives were carried through into the Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women (BCPVAW) programme, which started in 2014 and focused on:

- preventing sexual harassment in Universities;
- ensuring that the University Grants Commission (UGC) and selected universities had the capacity to monitor; and
- implementing the High Court Division Guidelines on sexual harassment.

Women, peace and security, and humanitarian action was targeted through:

- support to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to address violence against women (VAW) in refugee camps and to support women’s participation in decision making; and
- greater participation of women in peace keeping and building awareness of gender issues among peace-keeping troops.

Governance and national planning was targeted via:

- increasing accountability for implementing gender equality commitments;
- strengthening MoWCA’s credibility and influence;
- an integrated approach to engendering national policy in other work themes, such as WEE; and
- identifying and supporting priority areas for gender mainstreaming.

Global norms, policies and standards were targeted via:

- support to CSO and UN engagement in normative framework for gender equality and human rights;
- supporting advocacy and spaces for discussion;
- convening dialogues between CSOs and government;
- support the government in its engagement in the CSW, the government’s gender-equality goal in the post-2015 agenda, and the Beijing+ 20 processes;
- capacity support to civil society to hold government accountable for the implementation of CEDAW, and to UNCT responsibility to contribute to its implementation.

SN 2017-20

The SN also set out to be aligned with priorities of the government of Bangladesh (GoB) as reflected in the 7th five-year plan (2015), including SDG gender equality targets as adopted by the GoB and the National Action Plan for the National Women’s Development Policy (which is grounded in CEDAW and the BPfA), and the UNDAF (2017-2020). National Action Plan for the National Women’s Development Policy (which is grounded in CEDAW and the BPfA), and the UNDAF (2017-2020).

TABLE 3.
Linkages between the UN Women’s global Strategic Plan and BCO focus outcome areas (SN 2017-20)

Global level Strategic Plan outcome areas	BCO outcome areas, SN 2017-20
Outcome 1. A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is strengthened and implemented.	Strengthening institutional capacity to implement gender equality commitments , with a strong focus on supporting the implementation of government’s commitments to gender equality and human rights, including public finance planning. Government investment and accountability mechanisms enable the achievement of national gender-equality priorities, in line with international normative standards.
Outcome 2. Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems.	Women’s leadership and decision making is considered a cross-cutting theme across all impact areas.

Global level Strategic Plan outcome areas	BCO outcome areas, SN 2017-20
<p>Outcome 3. Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy.</p> <p>Outcome 4. All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence.</p>	<p>Women’s economic empowerment enhanced through removing structural barriers, including violence against women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: National and local level laws and policies that support economic empowerment of women, including those that prevent VAW, are implemented. • Outcome 2: Women, particularly the most marginalized, benefit from innovative practices that promote their economic empowerment. • Outcome 3: Favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours are promoted to prevent VAW and enhance women’s economic empowerment.
<p>Outcome 5. Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action.</p>	<p>Enhancing women’s and girls’ resilience to climate change and disasters, targeting two outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Climate and disaster vulnerable women have enhanced capacity to withstand the effects of disaster and climate change. • Outcome 2: DRR-CCA-HA mechanisms (public, private and NGO sectors) contribute to gender equality.

The SN for 2017-2020 includes a theory of change for each impact area, but several changes have been made to the SN since these were developed. These include the addition of three outcomes related to women, peace and security, and humanitarian response during revisions to the SN in April 2017 and the development of the 2018 Annual Work Plan (AWP). These developments were in response to the securing a country project as part of the regional PVE programme, and the evolution of UN Women’s humanitarian response to the Rohingya crisis. The EVAW and WEE outcomes, initially merged into one impact area, were separated into two when the combatting gender-based violence (CGBV) project was secured in 2018, while still retaining synergies between them.

Organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework (OEEF) goals

The BCO’s partnerships and the coordination function are covered through the OEEF. This sees UN Women’s coordination mandate as a critical resource to make sure that Agenda 2030 is implemented in a way that furthers women’s rights. The aims of BCO’s coordination strategy include: (1) increasing the results achieved for women and girls in impact areas; (2) supporting UNCT accountability for achieving gender-equality results and contributing to national implementation of CEDAW and the gender equality targets of Agenda 2030; and (3) strengthening capacity of UN agencies for mainstreaming gender equality. Important structures for coordination include the UN Gender Equality Theme Group, the UNDAF, and joint programmes.

Through literature review, the evaluation team has identified several partnerships drawn on through different dimensions of the SN. These are set out in Section 6 below.

The SN states an intention to continue to invest in capacity for RBM and ongoing capacity building for BCO personnel and partners. While the BCO’s ability at the beginning of the 2017-20 SN to generate evidence-based knowledge was seen as having grown significantly, maximizing this function was seen as a critical role by stakeholders, and the monitoring, evaluation and research plan for 2017-20 includes a number of research components in an effort to meet this demand and fully step into the role.

For the 2018-20 Strategic Plan, UN Women developed an integrated framework bringing together development results and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results. The integrated nature of the framework emphasizes the interconnection between UN Women’s internal capacity, institutional enablers and necessary inputs, including financial resources, with the changes that UN Women seeks to make towards achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment.⁴

BUDGETARY RESOURCES FOR THE PORTFOLIO

UN Women BCO has grown its financial resources by 118 percent overall from 2014 to 2019. The total budget of the BCO 2014-2019 (development results and organizational efficiency) was USD 19.2 million. Figure 1 captures the total budgeted and disbursed funds and delivery rate from 2015 to 2018 by budgetary source. In 2014 the total budget was USD 2,347,902, while the total budget in 2019 (as of March) is USD 5,128,827. However, there was actually a fall in budget in 2016. In both 2016 and 2017 less budget was

⁴ 2018 AWP Guidance Note for Field Offices and HQ units Available from file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/2018%20AWP%20Guidance%20Note%20final_UNBoA.pdf

delivered than in 2015 because of drop in non-core income, combined with a reduction in the other budget.⁵

In 2018 the budget expanded, mainly resulting from the response to the humanitarian crisis, new funding for EVAW programme from Canada (more than USD 300,000 for 2018) and approval of the National Resilience Programme (around USD 400,000 for 2018). While institutional budgets (IB) and Core budgets have been relatively stable over the period, the contribution from non-core resources constitutes most of this expansion, rising from 54 percent of the overall budget of USD 2.4 million in 2017, to 69 percent of the USD \$4 million budget in 2018. The delivery rate has also increased from 81 percent in 2015 to 95 percent in 2018, after a slight rise and fall in between.

FIGURE 1.
Financial analysis - UN Women BCO budgeted vs. disbursed funds 2015-2018

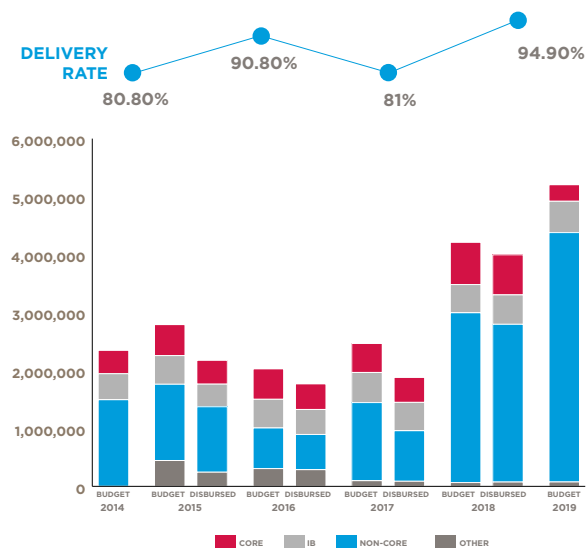
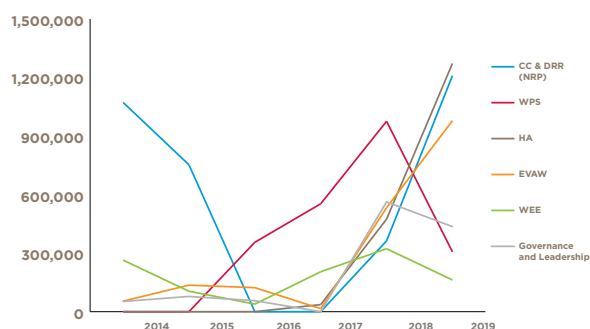


FIGURE 2.
UN Women BCO thematic trends (AWP) 2014-2019



5 Source: UN Women BCO.

Figure 2 captures the total budget by year and thematic area, and reflects this recent budget increases in the HA, EVAW and DRR thematic areas through non-core funds. The DRR-CC interventions were also relatively large before 2015, under a comprehensive “Gender and Climate Change” project with a high budget (2012-2015), then fell between 2015 and 2017 BCO as government approval was awaited the NRP joint programme with UNDP and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). Funds in the WPS work stream have fallen off during 2019 with the tailing off of the regional PVE programme.

Funding for the WEE workstream has fluctuated less, and remained at a medium level through most of the period. The migration programmes under WEE consist of two funding streams. One from ILO was completed at the end of 2018, while the regional programme runs until end of June 2019. The IELD programme under WEE was recently extended until December 2019.

It should be noted that at the time of the SN 2017-2020 formulation, non-core funding for the EVAW work stream was not secured; therefore, for SN 2017-18, this outcome area was merged with WEE until 2018 when sufficient funds became available to separate these work streams.

Under gender-responsive governance (GRG), more than 80 percent of the funding over five years was allocated by GoB directly to MoWCA, and UN Women’s main contributions were to provide technical expertise and capacity building.

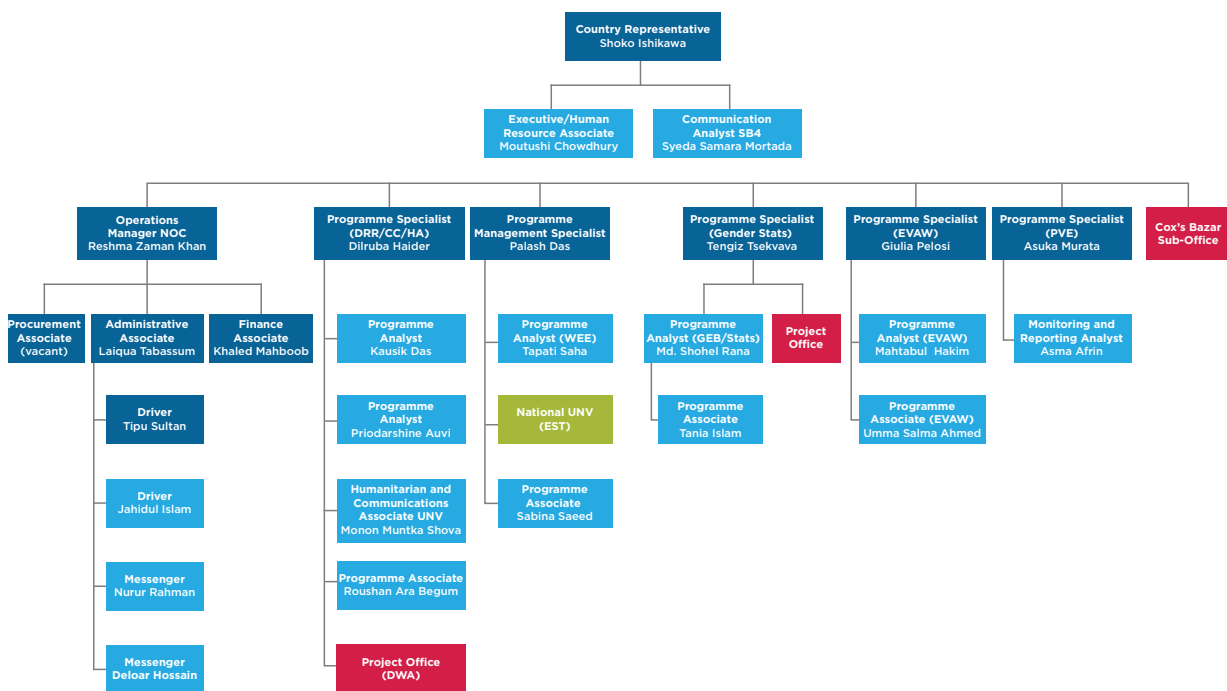
HUMAN RESOURCES FOR THE PORTFOLIO

Since 2012 UN Women BCO has transitioned from a small project office to a fully-fledged country office delivering multiple projects in addition to addressing the normative and coordination mandates. It has gradually expanded over this time, moving from 16 staff in 2014 to 35 by the end of 2018, and 42 by mid-2019. Through 2017 and 2018, the increase in operational work in Cox’s Bazar with the humanitarian crisis prompted BCO to open a sub-office by 2018, currently staffed by six project staff. Currently, five project staff are also based in ministries.

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BCO management framework is broadly structured according to thematic areas of work and led by the country representative (See Figure 3a). The position was initiated in 2013, and under normal UN Women rotation a new country representative was appointed in 2017, broadly coinciding with the new 2017-20 SN. There was no approved position for deputy country representative when the office was initially established. In 2015, the Executive Board approved a deputy country representative position for the office at P4 level,⁶ but no funding was allocated from headquarters, and hence the position was never filled. Aside from the CR position, two further positions of Operations Manager and Finance Associate are approved by the Executive Board and funded through the IB budget. These organisational core staff positions are augmented by positions funded through the XB budget of Admin Associate, Driver and Human Resources Associate.

FIGURE 3A.
BCO Organigram



Most new recruitment has been resourced mainly through non-core funds and is designed to support the management and implementation of specific projects – such as the EVAW programme specialist, WPS Programme Specialist, Gender Statistics programme specialist. However, expansion has included some core staff expansion for programme management oversight, including M&E and Communications and a Programme Management Specialist. The office now also hosts 6 UN Volunteers. Overall, although staff numbers have significantly increased especially during 2018 and 2019, the ratio of ‘staff’ to ‘non-staff’ (employees contracted to provide services directly related to the delivery of projects)⁷ has decreased from about 37 percent in 2014 to 28 percent in 2019.

6 See <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/executive%20board/2015/as%202015/draft%20ib%202016-2017-en.pdf?la=en&vs=238>

7 Non-staff personnel are defined as individuals who have a binding contractual arrangement with the organization for the provision of functions directly related to the execution of development projects and non-core services for a determined period and whose conditions of service are governed by the terms of their contracts only.

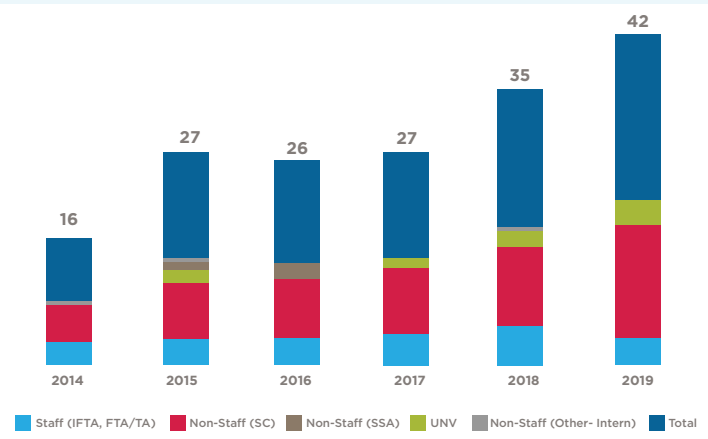
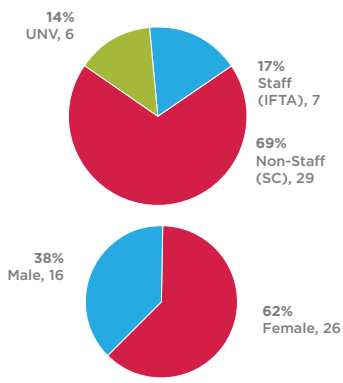
Source: https://www.unjuu.org/sites/www.unjuu.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2014_8_Final.pdf

Staff are defined as (1) all persons participating in the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) in accordance with article 21 of the Pension Fund Regulations (i.e. six month contract or employment) and (2) all “staff members” according to common system definitions (i.e. persons with a contract or employment of one year or more), whether or not they are Pension Fund participants.

Source: <https://www.unsystem.org/content/definition-staff-categories>



PERSONNEL CATEGORY (JUNE 2019)



3.2

Context of gender equality and women’s human rights

Bangladesh has been globally recognized for the progress made in improving the situation of women and girls. The most notable achievements are gender parity in primary and secondary education and a decline in maternal mortality of 5.5 percent every year for last few decades.⁸ Bangladesh’s Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) values for 2017 were 0.881 and 0.542 respectively. The country ranked 134 out of 189 countries in the 2017 GII index.⁹

Bangladesh ranks highest in the Gender Gap Index in South Asia achieving the position of 48 out of 145 countries, recording progress on closing its political gender gap, despite a sizable gender gap in terms of labour force participation.¹⁰ With women in the positions of the prime minister, the leader of the opposition in parliament, and the speaker, Bangladesh is the fifth most gender equal

country in the world in terms of political empowerment with 0.526 points.¹¹

Women’s participation in the labour force has increased recently (35.6 percent in 2016) mainly due to their predominance in the export-oriented ready-made garment (RMG) sector and informal sector. There is also high number of women in vulnerable employment such as unpaid family work and own-account work. Such work is frequently situated in the family and an extension of their reproductive roles. On the other hand, women’s access to formal work is very limited.¹² So, approaches are needed to extend some of the advantages of formal work to informal workers. A National Job Strategy is being developed where skills development is one of the key pillars. Advocacy for gender-sensitive approaches that do not segregate women in traditional/formal occupations is needed to ensure that skills development contributes to economic empowerment for women. Research¹³ found that women in formal work felt more empowered and

8 <https://www.thedailystar.net/maternal-mortality-affects-development-of-a-country-44215>

9 Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update. Available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/BGD.pdf

10 The Global Gender Gap Report 2018. World Economic Forum, Switzerland, 2018. Available at wef.ch/gggr18

11 “Bangladesh retains second place in Asia on World Economic Forum gender gap index”, bdnews24.com, 18 Dec 2018. Available at <https://bdnews24.com/economy/2018/12/18/bangladesh-retains-second-place-in-asia-on-world-economic-forum-gender-gap-index>

12 “Women’s participation in the job market”, The Daily Star, 24 June 2019. Available on: <https://www.thedailystar.net/supplements/womens-participation-the-job-market-1545181>

13 Naila Kabeer, Simeen Mahmud, Sakiba Tasneem. Does Paid Work Provide a Pathway to Women’s Empowerment? Empirical Findings from Bangladesh. BRAC Development Institute. October 2011

experienced greater improvement in their status in the family compared to own-account workers.

Social norms and attitudes that tolerate violence against women significantly impede women and girl's empowerment and gender equality, despite the government signing international commitments to end discrimination and violence against women. According to Violence against Women (VAW) Survey 2015, almost two thirds (72.6 percent) of ever-married women experienced one or more such forms of violence by their husband at least once in their lifetime, and 54.7 percent had experienced violence during the preceding 12 months.¹⁴ There is also a good legal framework for addressing diverse forms of gendered violence and exploitation, including the Domestic Violence Act 2010 and the Bangladesh High Court Directive to Prevent Sexual Harassment, although the latter has not been translated into law despite the Court's recommendation. In all cases, however, implementation is poor. The revised law on child marriage was adopted in early 2017, which has raised considerable concern as it includes a clause allowing marriage of girls aged 16 with the consent of either parents or a court.

Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as flooding, cyclones and drought. Women in Bangladesh are disproportionately affected due to the nature of their livelihoods, their social status and restrictions imposed on them. Women's lack of ownership or control over productive assets, lower levels of education, lower incomes and exclusion from decision making increase their vulnerability compared to men. To date, however, very few of the many climate change interventions by government, I/NGOs or other UN agencies address these gendered impacts.

A rising incidence of extremist violence culminated in a well-organized attack on a popular restaurant in the diplomatic zone in July 2016. While measures to counter terrorism and violent extremism often focus almost exclusively on judicial provisions for law and order, border control and law enforcement, it is increasingly recognized that there is a need to engage directly with marginalized communities including from a gender perspective, and to do this not from the perspective of law enforcement but with the aim of building social cohesion and resilience to prevent violence extremism.

The most protracted humanitarian situation in Bangladesh since 1948 is that of the Rohingya refugees, with several waves of new refugees entering Bangladesh following

14 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2016) "Report on Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey 2015", Bangladesh. August. Available from: https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Bangladesh_VAW_survey_report_2015_compressed.pdf

upsurges in violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar.¹⁵ In August 2017, an upsurge of extreme human rights violations against Rohingya communities in Rakhine State forced more than 700,000 people, 52 percent of which were women, to flee their homes. A significant number of women and girls reported witnessing or experiencing gender-based violence, including severe forms of sexual violence.¹⁶

Main marginalized and vulnerable groups in Bangladesh:

At least 30 million marginalized people are living in Bangladesh with diverse cultural identities, races and ethnicities. The 15 poorest districts include the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where most indigenous peoples live, and districts significantly affected by climate change and disaster in the south-west. These groups are victims of rights violations such as discrimination, vandalism, threats and physical violence. They are also victims of hostile socio-political conditions. Their employment opportunities are limited, livelihoods are fragile and social status is low. Institutions mandated to protect the rights of citizens do not operate in the same way for them. Although certain positive changes have occurred recently, their demands are often ignored by policy makers, politicians and even by the general population. Women in these groups face additional marginalization and have few recourses to access education, economic opportunities or justice.¹⁷ Other groups of marginalized people such as members of the low-ranked Dalit caste, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI), sex workers, traditional fisher-folk, persons with disability and religious minorities are also excluded because of both entitlement failures (they have rights but no access) and governance failures (services are not available for them nor targeted to them).¹⁸

Developments in the policy context

Bangladesh acceded to CEDAW in 1984 but continues to have reservations on Articles 2 and 16(1)c. The country was internationally recognized for strong achievements on the Millennium Development Goals, including on girls' education and maternal health. The government aligned its 7th Five-year Development Plan with the SDGs, and

15 UNHCR, "Bangladesh: Analysis of Gaps in the Protection of Rohingya Refugees," May 2007; access at: <http://www.unhcr.org/46fa1af32.pdf#zoom=95>

16 UN Women, Gender Brief on Rohingya Refugee Crisis Response in Bangladesh, January 2018; access at: <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/10/gender-brief-on-rohingya-refugee-crisis>

17 "State of the Marginalised Communities in Bangladesh, 2016". <http://bdplatform4sdgs.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/State-of-the-Marginalised-Communities-in-Bangladesh-2016.pdf>

18 Ibid.

the plan includes many gender equality results. However, gaps persist with regards to violence against women and women's unpaid work. Government processes have been completed to contextualize SDG targets and indicators, including identifying data gaps, and set priorities for implementation. An SDG data gap analysis and a monitoring and evaluation framework are available.

Although the Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes equal rights for women and men in the public sphere, it also recognizes religious laws, which are unequal to women. Personal laws are based on religious and social value systems, and these personal laws often discriminate against women. Moreover, despite the existence of a number of laws addressing gender issues (e.g. violence), they are still inadequate and weak enforcement is common.¹⁹ However, the National Women's Development Policy 2011, and linked National Action Plan, provide a good base for government action to promote gender equality. The 7th Five-year Plan integrates gender equality issues across a number of sectors, and some of the newer sectoral policies address gender issues effectively.

3.3

The UN Context: UN reform and gender responsiveness in the UN system and the UNDAF

Growth of the UN Women Bangladesh Country Office has taken place in the emerging context of significant UN reform processes. UN Women fully supports a strong, mutually accountable and effective resident coordinator system in strengthening its effectiveness in Bangladesh.

In line with Executive Board Decision 2018/5, UN Women globally has doubled its cost-sharing contribution to support the functioning of the resident coordinator system from USD 1.3 to 2.6 million in 2019. For 2019, this contribution did not come with additional financial support to UN Women from its donors, resulting in reduced core resources available for UN Women programmes. Until now, UN Women has absorbed any change related to change management within existing resources.²⁰

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)²¹ is the UN system's collective response for addressing inequalities in Bangladesh and to support the country to achieve internationally agreed development goals. The 2012–2016 UNDAF emphasized gender mainstreaming through seven outcome pillars, each led by a pillar working group. UN Women led the UNDAF working group for Pillar Seven, which addresses gender equality and women's advancement, and until 2016 co-chaired, with MoWCA, the Local Consultative Group (LCG) that brings government and development partners together to coordinate work on women's advancement and gender equality (WAGE). In 2016 UN Women's co-chair was passed to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), while MoWCA remains the other.²²

The 2017-2020 UNDAF provides the strategic guidance for enhancing the coherence of the UN System's response to assist the GoB in achieving its national priorities as articulated in the 7th Five-Year Plan, and Agenda 2030 including the SDGs. UN Women participates in all UNDAF Outcome Groups with the aim of ensuring that each outcome identifies and addresses gender equality priorities.

A UN Gender Equality Theme Group (GETG) has been established for the 2017-2020 UNDAF to support mainstreaming of gender equality and advocacy for women's and girls' rights. UN Women chairs the GETG with UNFPA as co-chair. The GETG was envisioned to play a key role in inter-agency coordination for coherent joint UN action and support to UNCT in ensuring accountability, to promote and advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. UN Women is a member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) and continued its leadership role to promote effective integration of gender equality in UNDAF outcomes,²³ indicators and ways of working.

19 Partners for Law and Development, "Bangladesh Ratification Status", CEDAW South Asia, 2014

20 <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/executive%20board/2019/first%20regularhttp://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/executive%20board/2019/first%20regular%20session/an%20update%20on%20the%20implementation%20of%20resolut72-279.pdf?la=en&vs=430120session/an%20update%20on%20the%20implementation%20of%20resolut72-279.pdf?la=en&vs=4301>

21 The UNDAF elaborates what and how results of the UN system will be achieved over the next five years for the people of Bangladesh, particularly for the most vulnerable, deprived and marginalized.

22 The Local Consultative Groups on women's advancement and gender equality in Bangladesh was established in the early 1990s, composed of 32 Bangladesh-based representatives of bilateral and multilateral donors of the BDF and the Secretary, Economic Relations Division (ERD), representing the Government.

23 The UNDAF Outcome areas: 1) Develop and implement improved social policies and programmes that focus on good governance, reduction of structural inequalities and advancement of vulnerable individuals and groups. (2) Enhance effective management of the natural and manmade environment focusing on improved sustainability and increased resilience of vulnerable individuals and groups (3) Increase opportunities, especially for women and disadvantaged groups to contribute to and benefit from economic progress.

In terms of joint programming, UN Women is engaged in a number of inter-agency groups, and is thus well positioned to help shape joint programmes (see Table 4).

TABLE 4.
UN Women joint programmes²⁴

Joint programmes	Thematic area	Duration	Total budget	Partner UN agencies	Ongoing/ pipeline
Promoting decent work through Improved Migration Policy and its application in Bangladesh (not formally a JP but with some JP elements including separate responsibility for outcomes for UN Women, ILO and the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in Phase 1)	WEE	Oct 2012 to Sept 2015	USD 302,502	ILO	Completed
National Resilience Programme	DRR/HA	2018-July 2020	USD 3,266,527	UNDP, UNOPS	Ongoing
Strengthening Human Rights and Gender Equality through Climate Change Action and Disaster Risk Reduction (regional multi-country project)	DRR/HA	2018-Dec 2022	USD 522,320 (for Bangladesh)	UN Environment Programme	Ongoing
Inclusive Equitable Local Development Programme	WEE	2017-2019	USD 60,000 USD 24,000 USD 46,000	UNDP, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	Ongoing
Towards a Sustainable and Ethical Tea Sector in Bangladesh	WEE	Nov 2018 – Jun 2019	USD 51,000	UNDP	Ongoing
Election support programme	GEG	Aug 2018-April 2019	USD 218,815	UNDP	Completed
Community cohesion in Cox's Bazar	DRR/HA	2019-2022	USD 1,149,552	UNDP	ongoing
Support to community stabilization and resilience	DRR/HA	Sept 2018-Sept 2019	USD 314,107	UNDP	Ongoing
Providing life-saving emergency health services, including reproductive, maternal, new-born, child and adolescent health to Rohingya refugees	DRR/HA	Oct 2019-June 2020	USD 199,897	WHO, IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF	Ongoing

3.4

Other aspects of organizational context

In 2018, BCO adopted steps to streamline business processes and clarify roles and responsibilities to improve efficiency and quality of work. The office mapped out business processes which clarified roles and responsibilities and introduced quality assurance check points for key business processes. A programme management specialist was designated as office expert on programme management matters and the focal point for guidance to colleagues. This was intended to standardize procedures and ensure compliance with rules and regulations and quality assurance. The office also created a dedicated communication officer position.

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3.5

Stakeholder analysis

The evaluation team has engaged with a number of stakeholders during the inception phase and has deepened and extended this engagement during the data-collection phase. Stakeholders were identified drawing on initial information provided by BCO and set out in the ToR, as a result of key documentation review, and after a validation process with the ERG during the inception meeting. The mapping has revealed that BCO has worked with a wide variety of stakeholders across the two SNs of this evaluation, including:

- rights-holder beneficiary groups;
- primary duty bearers who make decisions and implement the SN;
- donors and wider development partners;
- project based non-governmental stakeholders; and

- UN stakeholders through formal coordination roles and formal JPs, as well as through collaborative project-based partnerships.

Since the SN began, UN Women BCO has been working closely with the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MoWCA) to strengthen overall coordination capacity of MoWCA on gender equality and empowerment of women, and also to enhance MoWCA's technical expertise and policy implementation capacity. UN Women has been working with MoWCA and the Ministry of Finance on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and MoWCA has always been engaged on this. Recently, a dedicated technical assistance project was initiated on GRB to strengthen MoWCA's coordination and technical capacity, and to support the institutionalization of the GRB process within the government systems.

TABLE 5.
Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder role	Specific groups	Impact area	Project
Target groups of rights holders	Migrant women workers	WEE	Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers / Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy
	Ready-made garment factory workers	WEE/EVAW	Career, Capital and Confidence, Benetton Group
	Rural women small and medium enterprises	WEE	Inclusive Equitable Local Development JP
	Women's Development Forum (WDF) members	WEE	Inclusive Equitable Local Development JP
	Rohingya refugee women and girls	HA	Humanitarian Response Programme (Rohingya Communities)
	Women and girls at risk of violence against women	EVAW (and WEE)	Building Capacity to prevent Violence Against Women (BCPVAW)
	Women in disaster-prone areas	WPS/HA (and WEE)	Gender and Climate Change project: Reducing Vulnerability of Women Affected by Climate Change through Livelihood Options;
	All women / excluded women	GRB/GNP	Strengthening Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting Making Every Women and Girls Count in Bangladesh
	Women in leadership	WHO, IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF	BRIDGE training adaptations Partner to implement temporary special measures under RPO, received training 2015, 2016

Stakeholder role	Specific groups	Impact area	Project
Principle and primary duty bearers who BCO has engaged with to implement the SN	UN Women CO		
	MoWCA (DWA)	GRB/GNP DRR+CCA	2016 MoWCA SDG Action Plan in line with Agreed Conclusions CSW60; Strengthening Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting in Bangladesh; Gender-Sensitive National Resilience Programme JP.
	MoEWOE	WEE	Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers / Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy
	Bureau of Manpower, Employment And Training	WEE	Decent work for Women Migrant Workers / Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy
	General Economic Division, Ministry of Planning	GRB/GNP DRR+CCA	Support to 7 th Five-Year Plan
	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) Department of Disaster Management (DDM)	DRR+CCA	Gender-Sensitive National Resilience Programme JP 2015 – gender mainstreaming in review of the existing and formulation of the new National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM)
	Ministry Environment and Forests and Climate Change (MoEF);	DRR+CCA	
	Ministry of Finance	GRB/GNP	
	University Grants Commission	EVAW	Building Capacity to prevent Violence Against Women (BCPVAW)
	Election Commission	SBPE	Election support
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	WPS	Support on formulation of NAP on WPS (PVE)
Donor duty bearers	DFAT Canada	EVAW HA	CGBV project Rohingya response
	Norwegian Embassy	CCA-DDR	Climate Change through Livelihood Options 2011-15
	Govt of Japan	WPS/PVE	Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities: “Prevention of radicalization and violent extremism through empowered women’s influence in building resilient communities in Muslim-majority Asian countries” 2017-20
	Department for International Development (DFID) (UK)	CCA-DDR HA	National Resilience Programme Rohingya response
	Government of Australia		Gender Statistics

Stakeholder role	Specific groups	Impact area	Project
	Government of Germany	HA	Support to Community Stabilization and Resilience
	Government of Switzerland	SBPE	Election support
	Swiss Development Corporation	WEE	Decent work for Women Migrant Workers / Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh Mid 2012-Oct 2015
	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	DDR-CCA EVAW HA	National Resilience Programme BCGBV Rohingya response
UN Joint Programme Stakeholders	UNDP	WEE DDR-CCA Support to the Bangladesh Parliamentary Elections 2018-2019 HA	Inclusive Equitable Local Development JP 2017 National Resilience Programme Partnership to support 11th National Election 2018 Rohingya response
	United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	HA	Inclusive Equitable Local Development JP 2017
	ILO	WEE	Identification and introduction of sustainable approaches for pre-departure and pre-decision trainings in Bangladesh 2017-18
	ILO IOM	WEE	Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh 2012-15
	UNOPS	DRR-CCA	National Resilience Programme
UN Partners – Collaborative (Collaborations not under joint programme mechanism)	UNFPA	EVAW	GETG co-chair Advocacy partner on GBV issues
	UNHCR	HA	Improving camp authority's response to GBV Establishing network of shelters and safe spaces Co-chairing working group on gender in humanitarian action (GiHA) for Rohingya response
	WFP	HA	Rohingya response - livelihood support project
	UNDP	WEE WPS WEE	1) Joint research 'Evidence-Based Foundation of Women's Economic Empowerment Opportunities Analysis under Women's Economic Empowerment Initiation Plan (2016) 2) Chittagong - indigenous women and police together to strengthen capacity of police to provide inclusive, responsive and gender sensitive security services grounded in the provisions of UN SCR 1325 3) 2016 – Progetti, joint initiative on WEE
UN Coordination related stakeholders	Seven UN agencies	Normative	2016 a confidential UNCT report on CEDAW
	UN Data Group	Normative / GNP	2017 technical inputs to data gaps assessment

Stakeholder role	Specific groups	Impact area	Project
	GETG	Coordination	
	SDG Task Team	Coordination	SDG Task Team Co-Chair
	UN RCO	Normative	
	Inter-Cluster Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group		BCO facilitated establishing under the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT) as an advocacy and leadership platform
Project based non-government stakeholders	CARE Bangladesh	WEE/EVAW	Career, Capital and Confidence, Benetton Group
	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)	WEE (migration) DRR WPS/PVE HA	Collaboration to pilot returnee and reintegration centres. Partner in the UN Women project 'Reducing vulnerability of women to climate change through viable livelihood options'. UNW capacity strengthening for gender. AR 2015 PVE project implementing partner Rohingya response implementing partner
	BCAS	DRR-CC	Partner on Disaster Risk Reduction work
	Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS)	WPS/PVE	Partner for PVE
	Rangpur University	WPS/PVE	PVE
	Bangladesh National Woman's Lawyers Association	EVAW	Building Capacity to prevent Violence Against Women (BCPVAW)
	Bangladesh Mahila Parishad	GRG	
	Action Aid Bangladesh	HA	Implementing partner for Rohingya Response
	STEPS	Normative	As coordinator for Citizens Initiative on CEDAW – Coordination of CSOs for CEDAW monitoring and reporting
	BNSK	WEE (migration)	
	Sexual Harassment Prevention Committees in four universities	EVAW	Building Capacity to prevent Violence Against Women (BCPVAW)
	The Hunger Project	WLDM	Partner BRIDGE workshops Training of Facilitators 2016
	BRAC University	WPS/PVE	Partner for PVE
	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Service Trust	Normative/ EVAW	https://www.blast.org.bd/content/publications/CEDAW-Report-Securing-Justice-for-VAW-2014.pdf



Photo: UN Women

4

Evaluation methodology and limitations

4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

To assess the BCO's contribution to results in GEEW, and in line with the ToR, the evaluation took a **theory-based approach**. This used a portfolio-level theory of change (Figure 4) reconstructed in consultation with BCO staff and through presentation and discussion with the ERG. It was reconstructed on the basis of documentation for the SNs during the inception period, alongside impact area theories of change for WEE, EVAW, DRR-CC, and GRG/Normative work as articulated in the SN 2017-20. The theories of change provided a framework for establishing evidence around how change was expected to happen, testing and validating the logic of interventions at the portfolio level. Applying this approach meant emphasizing context and accommodating complexity, and focusing on seeking out causal pathways as experienced by respondents in question design for interviews and focus groups.

The evaluation also took a **utilization-focused approach**, supporting its formative purpose. In this, evaluation questions were prioritized to provide maximum utility to the BCO, providing insights into the central questions founding the development of the next SN. A collaborative process was also part of this approach, in which the BCO was consulted for sense-checking findings and the formulation of recommendations at different points in the evaluation process.

It also set out to be a **gender-responsive** process in purpose, approach and method, following the UNEG guidance on *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation* at the design, data collection and analysis stages.²⁵ This meant taking a participatory approach wherever possible, engaging the ERG at key stages of design and the development of findings, maintaining a collaborative relationship with the BCO, and explicitly consulting rights holders in semi-structured focus groups.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND MATRIX

In line with the ToR, evaluation questions were designed to produce insights in four of the five OECD/DAC criteria, namely relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability, and using one criterion specific to UN

Women's mandate on gender equality and human rights. Consultations with the BCO team in four Skype inception meetings drew up the specific priority questions in each of these dimensions. On the basis of these 10 questions and sub-questions, an evaluation matrix (see Annex 5) was constructed explaining how answers would be collected, and the influencing factors which would guide an assessment of BCO's position in relation to each question.

Relevance

1. Is the thematic focus across the portfolio appropriate and relevant for advancing GEEW in Bangladesh?
2. What contribution is UN Women making to UN coordination on GEEW? Which roles is UN Women playing in this field?

Effectiveness

3. What has UN Women's contribution been to the outcomes? For whom? What unexpected outcomes (positive and negative) have been achieved? For whom?
4. To what extent have gender equality and empowerment of women been mainstreamed in UN joint programming and UNDAF?
5. What are the main enabling and hindering factors to achieving planned outcomes?
 - » To what extent is the portfolio changing the dynamics of power in relationships between different groups?
 - » Is the choice of partners relevant to the situation of women and marginalized groups in the country?
 - » To what extent have planned outputs been achieved on time?
 - » Does the organization have access to the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities needed to deliver the portfolio?

Organizational efficiency

6. What is UN Women's comparative advantage over other UN entities and key partners?
7. To what extent does the UN Women management structure support efficiency for implementation?

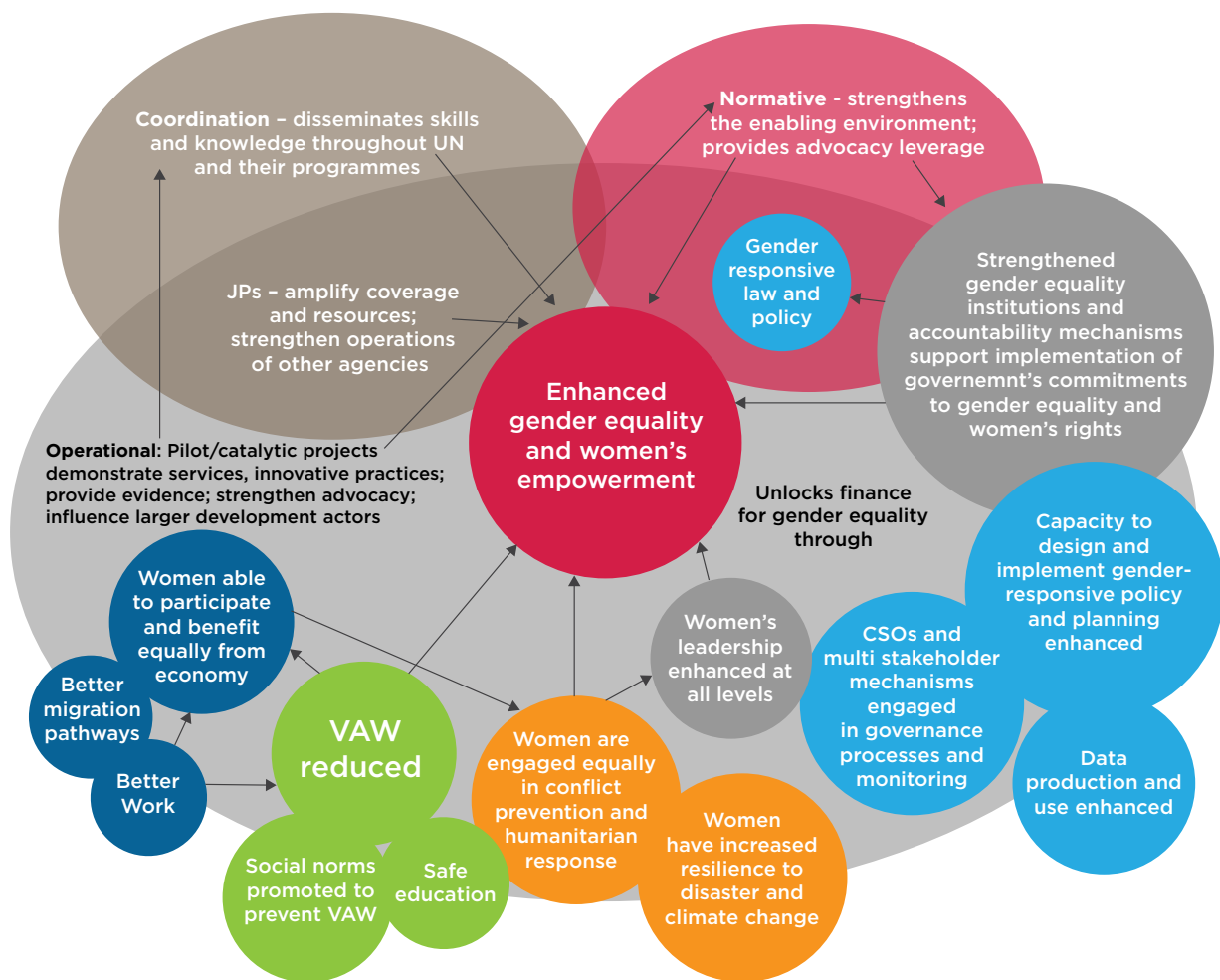
25 UNEG, *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation*, 2016, available online at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>

- » Has a results-based management system been established and implemented?
- » To what extent is knowledge management employed and implemented effectively to facilitate uptake of programming lessons?

Sustainability

8. Is there national ownership and are there national champions for different parts of the portfolio?
 - » To what extent has capacity of partners been developed to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?
 - » What local accountability and oversight systems have been established to support the continuation of activities?
 - » Human rights and gender equality
9. Have the design and implementation of the portfolio followed the principles of human rights and development effectiveness, namely: participation and empowerment; inclusion and non-discrimination; national accountability and transparency.
10. What contribution is UN Women making to implementing global norms and standards for GEEW?

FIGURE 4.
Reconstructed theory of change



4.1

Sampling

For the selection of focus areas of investigation and the case study, a purposive sampling frame was constructed using criteria derived from the CPE guidance, alongside criteria identified with BCO staff through scoping consultations during the inception period (See Annex 4). These included criteria that the focus areas for the evaluation should offer information across thematic clusters of operational work; should include strategically important projects; and should offer new learning. This latter criterion meant avoiding work that had already been evaluated in EAW, Humanitarian Action, and DRR-CC. Through these criteria, the following areas of focus for the evaluation were selected:

Governance and normative:	Activity in the governance impact area closely associated with the global normative policy framework
Women's economic empowerment:	CASE STUDY: 1) Decent work for women migrant workers and 2) Inclusive Equitable Local Development (IELD)
Ending violence against women:	Activities under the EAW thematic area NOT included under the project Combating Gender-Based Violence and Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women, including Career and Capacity Building for Women Workers in the RMG Sector, which was a synergized WEE/EAW project
Women peace and security and humanitarian action:	Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities: Preventing Violent Extremism in Asia

Sampling of individual respondents for primary data collection was therefore carried out using these focus areas as a guideline, and selecting respondents for broad coverage of different types of stakeholders, as shown in Figure 5 (below).

4.2

Process

Management of the evaluation was carried out by the following:

- An evaluation management group (EMG) for administrative support and accountability, consisting of the country representative, monitoring and evaluation focal person, and the regional evaluation specialist (RES).
- A RES functioning as a member of the EMG as well as an evaluation team member, providing coordination and quality assurance.

- An ERG for substantive technical support consisting of 14 members drawn from government partners, UNCT and civil society.

The EMG and the RES were contributed to each step of the evaluation, and the ERG was consulted at key stages including concerning the theory of change and the evaluation design, in a presentation of preliminary findings, and in the review process of the draft report. During the inception phase, the EMG and BCO staff more widely were consulted in online meetings on their priorities for the evaluation and identification of key evaluation questions. Subsequently, staff were also consulted in the identification of respondents, site visits, and data collection processes. Furthermore, a debriefing session following the field visit, and staff also provided feedback on preliminary findings and reviewed the draft report.

The evaluation was thus carried out interspersing data review and collection with collaborative sessions to steer key steps in the process:

TABLE 6.
Evaluation process: evaluator tasks and collaborative steps

Evaluator tasks	Collaborative step
Portfolio/secondary data review	
	Consultation and discussion of theory of change with BCO
Evaluation design	
	Consultation with ERG; presentation of theory of change for consideration
Primary data collection and project site visits	
	Face-to-face field visit debriefing with BCO
Parallel analysis processes and triangulation	
	Preliminary findings presentation and feedback with ERG and BCO
Draft report development	
	Review and feedback – BCO and ERG
Final report development	

4.3

Sources of data and collection methods

To ensure that evaluation findings were based on multiple layers and levels of evidence, a mixed-methods approach was used. Tools employed generated mainly qualitative data, alongside quantitative data from a staff survey and analysis of financial information. These multiple layers were then scrutinized for triangulation across the different methods, as well as across the responses of different types of stakeholder-respondents.

- **Document review and portfolio analysis** were carried out initially during the inception process to inform the design, and strengthened with further analysis in the post-data collection period. More than 60 documents were reviewed, with a focus on documentation related to the SN cycle such as: Annual Work Plans and Reports; mid-term reviews; and project documentation related to the case study into the WEE thematic area of work. Also included were the reports of eight evaluations and research studies related to the thematic areas of work and organization effectiveness; six of these were specific to BCO, while two were global-level studies with direct relevance to the BCO.
- **Key informant interviews** were carried out with respondents following question guides organized around themes of the evaluation questions and tailored to stakeholder types. A range of stakeholder types was consulted, including UN Women staff, government stakeholders, UN family stakeholders, CSO implementing partners, development partners and CSOs involved in advocacy and normative processes. 63 people (39 women, 24 men) were consulted through interviews.
- **Focus group discussions** using participatory methodologies were carried out with four rights-holder groups involving 26 women. These used flexible guidance templates based around the key evaluation questions for each group and adapted to each situation. The focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in Bangla.
- **Site visits** were carried out at two locations in Rangpur District. First was an implementation site for the IELD project over a one-day visit, and second was a factory site in Dhaka, an implementation site for the RMG project titled Career, Capital, Confidence. These gave opportunity for using **observation methods** alongside conducting FGDs.
- **An online survey** was carried out among UN Women staff at the Dhaka and Cox's Bazar offices. All staff were consulted through the survey, excluding cleaning and driving staff and messengers. The survey attracted 26 responses from 19 women and 7 men, a response rate of 72 percent.²⁶

26 The survey was sent to 40 potential respondents, but this by mistake included four staff in maintenance positions. When these recipients are excluded, the response rate was 72 percent.

FIGURE 5.

Breakdown by type of stakeholders consulted for the CPE



- Members of the Women's Development Forum in Pirganj, Rangpur
- An entrepreneur of a small/medium enterprise and her women staff in Pirganj
- Women workers preparing for and with experience of migration
- Workers and management staff of an RMG factory in Dhaka

FIGURE 6.

Overview of data sources and resource people



4.4

Analysis

Both primary and secondary data were analysed, to generate potential for triangulation and to include a range of diverse source material:

Analysis of primary data

- Key word and coding and RAG rating of interview material against the Evaluation Questions
- Analysis of survey results
- Contribution analysis using case study material
- Survey analysis

Document analysis:

- Preliminary review of AWP documentation to generate timeline overviews and information on stakeholders
- Portfolio analysis of annual reports and case study project documentation
- Analysis of prior evaluations against the Evaluation Questions, as seen above in Section 2.2,
- Gender analysis of current and previous UNDAF
- Analysis of financial and human resources data

4.5

Limitations

- The selection of focus areas for study presented here relies strongly on information already available through prior evaluation processes. This means that the current evaluation will be subject to the limitations of the prior evaluations from which it will draw key information on findings and conclusions. This was mitigated by using information from prior evaluations which was also triangulated at a reasonable level with primary and secondary data for this evaluation.
- The time available for primary data collection was relatively short relative to the broad portfolio and allowed only one day-long case study site visit, plus a site visit meeting in Dhaka concerning a second project. The small sample made it difficult to extrapolate extensive conclusions, but this was mitigated by using the case study to illustrate limited points, and by additional meetings with rights holders at UN Women offices.
- Survey data was difficult to analyse in depth because cross-tabulations were extremely complex given the range of questions. Survey software that may have enabled more depth would have required further

costs that were not possible. Instead, additional time for analysis was dedicated from the UN Women evaluation intern.

- Although several attempts were made, due to a technological glitch in the Result Management System a fully complete Annual Report for 2018 was not available to the evaluation team. This to some degree limited the information available on recently initiated areas of work. This was mitigated by inviting corrections and commentary from the BCO team throughout the analysis and report finalization process.
- As is often the case in broad, programme-level evaluations, the breadth of scope meant that it was only possible to generate depth in a few specific areas, which were from the outset unlikely to provide depth across all issues. This means that in some cases, the findings generated here are indicative or suggestive, with insufficient detail to clearly reveal the cause or precise location of bottlenecks and challenges. They do, however, provide pointers to where further inquiry or organizational thinking may be able provide more precision.
- Similarly, while considerable efforts have been made to minimize any bias, there is always a process of interpretation of data – or selecting the issues where evidence seems strongest, clearest, or most pertinent, and in deciding and articulating what this means. Here, the experience, knowledge and motivation of individual evaluators play a role. This is an intrinsic limitation of qualitative evaluations, and possibly quantitative ones as well. Findings should therefore always be weighed against the insights or perspectives of the programme team, who are often much more deeply embedded in the local context. Nonetheless, the risk of subjective bias was mitigated by including key collaborative steps in the process, as outlined in Section 4.2, allowing guidance, perspectives and prioritization to be informed by a wider range of people and especially by staff and stakeholders fully informed of UN Women's work and context.



Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood

5 Findings

5. FINDINGS

5.1

Relevance

Guiding questions:

1. Is the thematic focus across the portfolio appropriate and relevant for advancing GEEW in Bangladesh?
2. What contribution is UN Women making to UN coordination on GEEW? Which roles is UN Women playing in this field?

FINDING 1:

UN Women's relatively small size combined with the complexity of the Bangladesh context demands a strong, coherent vision for the BCO's work. Recently initiated operational work acknowledges this and lays a foundation for further articulation of a programme-wide strategy.

The context of Bangladesh, despite relatively rapid progress over the last two decades, continues to present a wide range of development challenges shaping the appropriateness and relevance of UN Women's interventions. These include climate change vulnerability, humanitarian crisis in the form of the Rohingya refugee influx, persistent high levels of poverty, and high levels of VAW. At the same time, relatively strong economic growth and high levels of ambition for economic development offer an urgent need to steer equitable growth, especially as the government aims for middle-income country status by 2021 and upper middle-income status by 2031.

This environment gives a sense that there are many areas and levels at which it is appropriate to work, alongside broad consensus that all the BCO's thematic focus areas are fully appropriate action areas for advancing GEEW in Bangladesh.²⁷ The two SNs are informed by analysis which presents an overview of these issues and makes a strong case for focusing on the selected areas based on identifying these as key issues. The SN is also aligned with the 7th Five-Year Plan of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), including SDG gender equality targets as adopted by the GoB and the National Action Plan for the National Women's Development Policy, as well as the country-level United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017-2020.

The consensus that the range of issues addressed is appropriate includes recognition from stakeholders working in particular sectors that within UN Women's broad impact areas, there are a number of sub-themes which demand and deserve more attention, including: facilitating gender-responsive macro-economic policy; more attention at both policy and advocacy levels to the issue of unpaid care work under the WEE impact area; finding ways to effectively reach local government institutions; and, under EAW, sustained and wide-scale intervention facilitating social norm change at local levels. At the same time, a broad range of stakeholder respondents including CSOs, UN agencies and donors were not aware of UN Women's strategy and areas of focus aside from their respective area of interaction.

In addition, while the SNs include an awareness of the need to reach and address the needs of vulnerable groups, they do not include strong, consistent analysis of the intersections of different kinds of inequality, which might support strategic targeting of issues affecting the most marginalized women and girls (see also Finding 5).

This breadth of potentially relevant areas of work has presented a clear challenge for a small and relatively new UN agency, established as a Country Office only seven years ago in 2012. Over the evaluation period, while there is some progress still to make, good progress has been made in establishing a country presence, legitimacy and visibility (See also Finding 8), while also broadening the possible scope of work through substantial budget increases in 2018-19 via non-core resource mobilization. Nevertheless, it remains a relatively small UN agency, with an average budget of just under USD 4 million²⁸ over the last three years, compared with UNDP at approximately USD 40 million²⁹ and UNFPA averaging USD 13 million.³⁰ This limited scope means that strong coherence across the

28 UNW 2017-19 average budget \$3,934617

29 See <http://www.bd.undp.org/content/bangladesh/en/home/about-us/funding-and-delivery.html> ; According to the SN 2014-16, UNDP's budget at that time was \$250 million annually, indicating that the issue identified here facing UN Women has lessened over the evaluation period.

30 \$52.6 million over 4 years 2017-20. United Nations Population Fund, Country programme document for Bangladesh, available at https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/portal-document/Bangladesh_CPD_2017-2020.pdf



Student of the University of Rajshahi during 16 Days of Activism 2018, Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaizer

portfolio and strategic programming are both imperative to maximize impact.

Progress has been made towards developing a programme-focused outlook that could support this strategic operational action. During the transition from the 2014-16 to the 2017-20 SNs, review processes highlighted this need for strategic focus,³¹ and the response in the later SN was to select a more limited set of three focus impact areas. This did not however translate into a programme framework until late in the current SN, and in relation to work that will carry over into the new SN.

For example, average budget size for operational work was USD 408,349 for the seven projects implemented during the first SN. For operational work started and completed during the current SN (i.e. that did not start before, or end after), the average project budget was USD 617,205 (13 projects). For operational work starting in the later part of the current SN and due to carry over to the next SN, the average project budget was USD 1,732,142 (seven projects). Operational work established during this SN period that will extend into the next SN period therefore suggests both a longer-term outlook and enhanced focus. This includes the National Resilience Programme, Combating Gender Based Violence, and a package of Rohingya response actions. These follow a period during the middle years of this evaluation timeframe in which relatively small-budget

and short-term projects under WEE, WPS and HA have supported UN Women's accumulation of operational experience but only gradually supported the development of a strategic programme focus. This suggests that BCO's aim to achieve focus alongside increased non-core resources did not gain traction until late in the current SN period.

FINDING 2:

UN Women has played a strong role in GEEW coordination through the GETG and made important contributions through several other mechanisms. These initiatives have not yet, however, translated into consistent programmatic coordination on GEEW across the UN system, probably reflecting broader coordination challenges in the UN.

UN Women has taken an increasingly strong role in UN coordination on GEEW over the evaluation period, taking on both long term and short-term functions and in different roles. These include leadership roles in formal mechanisms such as the GETG, the two UNDAFs spanning the evaluation period, and the SDG Task Team, as well as informal advisory or technical support roles in collaboration with sister agencies.

In the complex development landscape of Bangladesh, coordination in gender-related intervention is also necessary beyond the UN, among the wider development stakeholder community. UN Women has taken a role in this

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through the Local Consultative Group – Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality (LCG-WAGE), co-chaired by MoWCA with UN Women until 2016, and since then with UNICEF.³²

The functions of coordination activities include: a UN gender mainstreaming function through the GETG and the Humanitarian Task Team; a role in bringing coherence to gender approaches in UN operations through mechanisms such as the UNDAF and the SDG Task Team and beyond the UN through the LCG-WAGE; and a role in advocacy through bringing organizations together around specific issues such as the Child Marriage Act, Sexual Harassment legislation, or 16 Days of Activism.

Coordination roles include the following:

Period	Coordination locus	Role / function	Type
Pre 2014-2016/17	LCG-WAGE (Local Consultative Group – Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality)	Co-chair in revolving system until 2016, chair handed to UNICEF	Broad development partner gender coordination
2017-	LCG-WAGE	Active participant	As above, Broad development partner gender coordination
2014-16	UNDAF Gender Equality Pillar Group	Lead	UNCT programme coordination – gender pillar
2014-17	Child Marriage Act advocacy	Active in coordinating joint advocacy around Act	Critical issue advocacy coordination
2016	Confidential UNCT report on CEDAW	Lead	Technical, short term
2016	Human Rights Technical Working group	Member	UNDAF cross-cutting theme group
2017-	UN Data group	Member	Supports General Economic Division of the GoB and working alongside the SDG task team.
2017-	Humanitarian Coordination Task Team/ Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group	Member Co-Chair with MoWCA	Mainstreaming gender
2017	Inter-Sector Coordination Group for Rohingya refugee response/ Gender in Humanitarian Action Working group	Co-Chair with UNHCR	Facilitating gender responsiveness in HA in Cox’s Bazar.
2017-19	UNDAF Gender Equality Theme Group	Participant of all 3 Outcome Groups GETG co-lead with UNFPA	UNCT programme coordination
2018-2019	Programme Management Team (PMT) of UNCT SDG Task Team Conflict Prevention Task Team Joint UN advocacy group on Sexual Harassment Law	Participation in the PMT Co-chair with UNDP Lead actor in developing UN collaborative framework for SDGs Co-lead of Financing Pillar Participant	Mainstreaming gender and technical support to overall framework Facilitating gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention discussion or initiative

Coordination work through the GETG is supported by 50 percent of the time of one junior staff for secretariat work. Despite this resource limitation, coordination work through the GETG has been effective in beginning to raise issues of sexual

harassment and abuse of authority in the workplace within the UN, and externally during 2018. It has also been an information-sharing mechanism on agencies' areas of work, and fulfilled a supportive function for gender focal points. But it has not yet taken a strong role in clear programmatic coordination on gender across the UN, in part because it is a relatively new mechanism.

These combined coordination initiatives have therefore not yet translated into consistently strong overall UN coordination on GEEW at a programme level. Some steps have been taken towards programmatic coordination on advocacy for a sexual harassment law since late 2018, and there are further plans for advancing coordination based on mappings of UNCT agencies' existing and planned gender equality programmes, and donors for UN GEEW initiatives and in preparation for the next UNDAF.³³ However, currently this remains a gap.

There are indications that this limited high-level coordination is not specific to GEEW but a broader issue for the UN system, which at times struggles to bring the analytic power available across the agencies to bear on challenges in a coherent manner. Wider co-ordination challenges identified by multiple respondents include:

- UN relationships with government ministries are not strongly coordinated or coherent. Especially relevant to GEEW coordination is the lack of coordinated strategy in relation to MoWCA, but also relevant are the multiple agency relationships at play in the Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Planning and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.
- UN relationships with CSO gender-related advocacy and implementing partners, who often deal separately with a number of UN agencies on similar areas of work.
- Remaining lack of clarity on the division of roles and comparative advantage of UNFPA and UN Women in the area of EAW/GBV, reflected in global mandates and including to some degree within the framework of humanitarian action.³⁴ Recent work with UNFPA to coordinate interventions with complementarity, including a joint-initiative brief, are promising, but have not yet been operational long enough to illustrate effectiveness.

33 UNCT Bangladesh Gender Equality Theme Group Annual Work Plan: 2018 & 2019

34 Interviews UN Family; Humanitarian Action Case Study, Bangladesh for the Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action, due for publication 2019.

- Weak programme coordination work in some aspects of UN activity beyond joint programmes as evident in limited sharing of annual work plans and activity calendars.

5.2

Effectiveness

Guiding questions:

1. What has UN Women's contribution been to the progress of the achievement of outcomes?
2. To what extent is the portfolio changing the dynamics of power in relationships between different groups?
3. Is the choice of partners relevant to the situation of women and marginalized groups in the country?
What are the main enabling and hindering factors to achieving planned outcomes?
4. To what extent has gender equality and empowerment of women been mainstreamed in UN joint programming and UNDAF?
5. Does the organization have access to the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities needed to deliver the portfolio?
6. To what extent have planned outputs been achieved on time?

FINDING 3:

UN Women has made verifiable contributions across the programme areas through technical support, policy influence, convening, and strengthening and supporting implementing partners. In several cases, the contribution is clear, but weak UN Women reporting against outcomes envisaged by the results frameworks for SNs makes systematic assessment challenging. Achievements at outcome level are also not yet clear for some short-term and small-scale initiatives.

The SN 2014-16 targeted results in all five impact areas of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-17. Following a review, the SN 2017-20 narrowed attention to three impact areas in ways that sought synergies with others. UN Women reporting frameworks and cycles against outcomes envisaged by SNs makes systematic assessment challenging in the following ways:

- Reporting frameworks in Annual Reports do not map clearly onto the outcome statements and indicators as set out in the overall SN DRF (See Annex 6 for analysis).³⁵
- New indicators can be added to accommodate emerging opportunities and activity focus, but there is no clear way of tracking when or why these were added; baselines for new outcome and output targets are also unclear in this situation.³⁶
- There is no reporting that synthesizes progress against the overall period of the SN. Annual reporting gives no indication of overall progress since the start of the SN.
- technical support to the defined CEDAW and CSW reporting processes, with MoWCA in a coordination role; and
- support of the UPR reporting processes.

Nevertheless, analysis of Annual Reports and evidence from other evaluations, combined with triangulation from primary data, indicates that over the period contributions to outcomes have been made to each area to different degrees. As shown in Table 6, these contributions have been made through a number of different strategies or modalities, including: technical support; capacity building in government; advocacy and awareness raising in government and more widely; and supporting partners to implement specific projects in defined locations.

Sub-finding: GRG and normative work has made distinct progress towards outcomes in: institutionalizing GRB processes; enhancing the capacity of government structures to promote gender equality; and facilitating CSOs to engage in governance processes. However, there remain weak areas that require attention if institutions are to improve the implementation of their gender-equality commitments.

In **GRG and Normative work**, as synergised in the SN 2017-20, UN Women has made distinct and credible contributions to strengthening the institutional framework for influencing government to implement gender equality commitments through:

- significant supporting inputs to the government's 7th Five-Year Plan;
- contributing to the UN SDG task force supporting the embedding of the SDGs;

Achievements in GRG include the establishment of a MoWCA-led, government-funded initiative to strengthen and monitor GRB processes and outcomes across ministries. During 2018, a contribution was also made to strengthening gender awareness in the Bangladesh Election Commission and among political parties in the run-up to the 2018 general elections. Recently initiated work under the global flagship programme Making Every Women and Girl Count in partnership with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is too early in its implementation to be a part of this assessment.

Achievements have been reached through a combination of technical support, particularly to MoWCA, supporting CSOs to take a role in CEDAW processes, advocacy, and taking a role in UN coordination on the SDGs.

UN Women has been supporting MoWCA in ways that enhance its leadership and visibility,³⁷ but **opportunities still exist to further strengthen this ministry**, in particular as it assumes responsibility for strengthening the monitoring and evaluation mechanism for GRB across ministries, thus taking a key step in establishing the full cycle of gender responsive governance and national planning. It may be necessary to review strategies in this, as MoWCA's institutional weakness is persistent and the preferred strategy of recruiting consultants to provide technical support for specific processes has left some difficulties untouched. These include MoWCA's technical low status as a Ministry and a lack of ownership or consistent responsiveness to CEDAW, including the issue of the Bangladesh government's enduring reservations.³⁸

Sub-finding: The EVAW area of work has made a localized contribution towards promoting favourable social norms among young people around sexual harassment. It has made a policy-level contribution, alongside several other significant CSO and UN actors, in a coordination and CSO-support role in the advocacy around the Child Marriage Act review.

For **EVAW**-related outcomes, the BCO has made good progress in establishing a role among UN agencies that focuses on violence prevention and on social norm change. With this focus, the agency has technically supported the revision of the NAP GBV so that it has a stronger focus

³⁵ There are indications that the mapping of results directly against SN Outcomes has improved in the course of the 2nd SN (See Annex 6) but this cannot be fully confirmed due to the missing Impact Area sections of the 2018 Annual Report.

³⁶ SN-AWP cover Note Reports for 2018 and 2019 do outline changes to the DRF in progress, but are not available for previous years and do not address the issue of baselines for new outcome measuring.

³⁷ Interviews, UNW; government stakeholders

³⁸ Annual Report 2018; CSO stakeholders; UN Women interviews.

on prevention, in line with the agreed conclusions on elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls from the 2013 CSW 57 [E/2013/27]. Through the BCPVAW project it has also contributed substantially to localized outcomes in promoting favourable social norms, introducing the beginnings of systemic change in addressing and responding prevention of sexual harassment, and expanding alliances for violence-free campuses. Technical support was provided to UGC to draw up minimum standards and actions needed to implement the High Court Directive, but the BCPVAW evaluation and respondents to this evaluation suggested that this institutionalization of the work could have taken place earlier – even at the design stage – which would have supported ownership of the work by UGC and enhanced the prospects of sustainability (see Finding 16).³⁹

New work through the Combating Gender Based Violence programme begun in 2018 cannot be assessed for outcomes at this point. However, the programme builds on the experience of working in education institutions under BCPVAW, and expands this to local government institutions and private sector workplaces in three districts. It therefore stands to more firmly establish UN Women's niche role in exploring and expanding methodologies for social-norm change and prevention of VAW, and linking these to national policy frameworks such as the NAP-VAW and the monitoring initiatives by MoWCA and CSOs.⁴⁰ Current work also includes a focus on the NAP-VAW at national and institutional levels, aiming to strengthen normative frameworks addressing EVAW.

Sub-finding: DRR-CC work in the early period of this evaluation had made distinct outcome-level contributions to enhancing government and NGO sector mechanisms for addressing gender equality in DRR-CC interventions, and localized direct contributions to enhancing women's capacity to withstand disaster and climate change. Although hampered by a delayed start, building on these foundations through the National Resilience Programme stands to strengthen, extend and further institutionalize these gains.

In the DRR-CC area of work, achieving outcomes envisaged in the second SN for enhancing women's and girls' resilience to climate change and disasters through enhancing their capacity and strengthening gender responsiveness of public, private and NGO sector DRR-CCA-HA mechanisms was hampered by substantial delays to government approval for the National Resilience Programme JP, which was eventually initiated in late 2018. Nevertheless, this current work stands on the back of significant and identifiable outcomes achieved during the previous SN through the Reducing Vulnerability of Women

Affected by Climate Change through Livelihood Options project. In this, BCO played a clear role in:

- developing a gender responsive framework and promoting this at policy level;
- ensuring the inclusion of gender aspects in the chapter on Environment and Climate Change of the 7th Five-Year Plan;
- indirectly supporting the targeting groups of marginalized women for livelihood strengthening in select locations through partnerships;
- supporting the sustained expertise of partners, notably the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS).

A cost-effectiveness study, one output of this study, has also generated wider interest in scaled-up cost benefit analysis research on GR-CCA.

The project also undertook substantial levels of capacity building within government for gender responsive DRR-CC: A total of 140 government officials across 32 government ministries and departments have strengthened knowledge on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction. Capacity-building strategies are often vulnerable to government staff turnover cycles – a vulnerability which may have been exacerbated by the delay to the start of the NRP. Nonetheless it is possible that the cross-ministry nature of these trainings and DRR-CC work have enhanced the prospects of these trained officials, offering a substantial resource for further work through the NRP.

Sub-finding: Engagement in the humanitarian space was a new and unplanned intervention in response to the large-scale crisis in Cox's Bazar. While there is evidence of some outcome-type results in policy, coordination and services for women, these are only now on the point of consolidation into more substantive outcomes as UN Women is positioned to influence others and the response focuses more on gender.

Humanitarian action was not envisaged as an outcome area in the first SN, although it was part of an outcome on DRR from 2015, which began a process of engagement in the HCTT for contributing to post-disaster needs assessments. Through this, and through the beginnings of the Rohingya crisis during 2014-15,⁴¹ and the response to crises such as the landslide in May 2017 in Chittagong Hill Tracts, BCO was able to build its own and its partners' capacity to engage in gender-responsive humanitarian action.

39 BCPVAW evaluation, draft report; CSO interviews.

40 CGBV Programme Document, 17 March.

41 Timelines analysis/ Annual Reports



Meeting of evaluation team with migrant women workers, UN Women Office, Dhaka, April 2019

A scaled-up response, however, was precipitated by the large scale influx of Rohingya refugees in August 2017. BCO initially struggled to establish a role in this as GoB approval was required and UN Women was not among the initially recognized agencies. Once approval was granted, initiatives in gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action advocacy and coordination were quickly established. But an operational role for UN Women took longer to establish because it is a relatively new actor in the humanitarian space and therefore without at-hand organizational capacity to respond substantially with fast-track procedures, as well as entering the humanitarian response relatively late. However, UN Women has now earned a presence in the Rohingya response and a sub-office in Cox's Bazar,⁴² and is credited by one respondent with putting women's issues on the agenda.

At policy level, the BCO contributed to the Joint Response Plan formulation process in 2018, for which sector-by-sector gender analysis was provided, thereby filling an important gap in a space in which gender is still poorly understood.⁴³ It has also played a role in the work of the HCTT and the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) on coordinating over gender, through the establishment of the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group

42 Humanitarian Action Corporate Thematic Evaluation, Case Study Bangladesh, Debriefing document.

43 Ibid.

as part of these. Through these coordination mechanisms it has contributed to, and stands to contribute further to, improving the responsiveness of humanitarian interventions for example, through GiHA, arranging for the strategic executive co-chairs to issue a document on key action for GEEWG in humanitarian action. With partners and through strong relationships, it has also established two Multi-Purpose Women's Centres that can model good practice and develop standards for other women's centres in the response.⁴⁴

Sub-finding: Evidence of outcome-level results through the PVE regional project is not yet strong as the work was short-term and recent, although localized activity intended to lead to these results has been put in place and there are prospects for sustainability in some parts of these.

Under the WPS thematic area, although this was not originally envisaged as an outcome for the second SN, the BCO has been part of three short-term one-year funding projects on PVE from 2017-2020. Through work with 35 communities in three districts, the project has contributed to localized results in economic empowerment of women, and to enhancing the communities' capacities and awareness for promoting peace and social cohesion. At two district public universities in the second year, the

44 Humanitarian Action Corporate Thematic Evaluation, p40.

project has contributed to localized results in enhancing the confidence and leadership of groups of women to identify and act to prevent extremism, and highlighted the role of women’s leadership and social entrepreneurship as mechanisms for resilience on campus.⁴⁵ Although both types of intervention have aimed at sustainability by building and working with networks and action groups, it is not clear how far these results will translate into sustained economic empowerment that can contribute to action to promote peace. Testimony for this evaluation suggests that by creating champions in the form of mentors for the university campus work, there are some prospects that the work will be taken on by the university authorities, but this cannot be tested at this point.

Work through the PVE has also led on opportunities for BCO to take on stronger work on the WPS-NAP at policy level as the GoB committed to finalize this NAP by 2020.

TABLE 7.
Types of contribution and associated areas of progress, BCO thematic areas

	GRG and normative	EVAW	DRR+CC/HA	WPS
Type of contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical support • UN collaboration • Supporting CSOs • Facilitating MoWCA • Advocacy • Support to training (BRIDGE) • Capacity building and awareness raising women’s participation and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical inputs to NAP • Advocacy on Child Marriage Act • BCPVAW • Intervention – 4 campuses • Technical support UGC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical support • Policy influence • Partner support • Technical support standard operating procedures • Coordination with HCTT • Established MPWCs 	<p>PVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor training • Facilitating training • Community level via partners • Knowledge and evidence generation
Areas of the contribution / progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th 5-Year Plan • SDG embedding • CEDAW process • CSW process • UPR process • GRB – monitoring and evaluation framework for GRB (MoWCA) • Update of NAP-NWDP (MoWCA, ongoing) • Strengthening gender in Bangladesh Election Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAP prevention outlook • Child Marriage ordinances (alongside CSOs) <p>BCPVAW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding alliances • Systemic change for prevention and response to SH • Minimum standards articulated – UGC 	<p>DRR+CC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th 5-Year Plan • Framework on gender responsive DRR in policy • Marginalized livelihoods strengthened • Strengthened partners • Cost effectiveness study generated interest in cost benefit analysis research on GR-CCA • Gov. officials in 32 ministries/ depts. Have higher gender equality knowledge <p>HA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of gender equality in HA • Gender coordination • Good practice for MPWCs demonstrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select groups confidence and leadership enhanced • Peace café functioning • Links btw cohesion + resilience + livelihoods / entrepreneurship demonstrated • Draft National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security

45 Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities: Preventing Violent Extremism in Asia; Six-Month Progress Report, September 2018.

	GRG and normative	EVAW	DRR+CC/HA	WPS
Outcomes – National Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Planning • Capacity in government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Legislation • UGC minimum standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Planning • Capacity in government • Improved knowledge Partners strengthened 	
Outcomes – localized		<p>Four campuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness • Prevention and response 	<p>Select locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginal livelihoods strengthened • MPWC good → practice 	<p>Select locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's confidence and leadership • Women's (social) entrepreneurship

Sub-finding: In the WEE thematic area, a contribution to a clear set of outcome-level results in policy, services and to some extent awareness raising has been achieved through long-term collaborative work on migration. Other, short-term areas of work do not yet show evidence of outcome-level results except to some extent at small scale. As pilot areas of intervention, these were conceived with a short timeframe not yet fully sufficient to demonstrate conclusively in what circumstances their methods work.

In the WEE thematic area, case-study analysis for this evaluation shows that the longer-term focus on women migrant workers through the Decent Work initiatives, mainly in collaboration with ILO and the International Organization of Migration (IOM), has produced a clear set of outcome level results in which UN Women has made a distinctive contribution. These have made clear progress to outcomes envisaged in the second SN at all three levels (national- and local-level laws and policy supporting WEE are in place; marginalized women's economic empowerment is promoted; favourable social norms are promoted). These achievements have been made both through raising community awareness and through government partnerships for tailoring services and influencing policy. The provision of both formally planned and informally offered technical support has been consistent.⁴⁶ (See Table 7 and Box 1).

However, there is also some evidence that the negative status of migrant women workers when they return to their communities has not changed much over the period, due to enduring community-level stigma and prejudice. While women preparing for migration in our study mentioned that their families, and sometimes husbands (several of

the women were divorced or separated) were supportive, other testimony suggests that there is still widespread stigma around women migrating for work. Such women often face particular difficulties reintegrating into their communities on their return due to the associations of migrant work with sex work and trafficking. This suggests more work is needed at local levels and engaging with social norms.

The Inclusive Equitable Local Development programme (IELD), a JP with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and UNDP, was a much shorter and more recent initiative. It was intended as a pilot project to demonstrate methods for leveraging existing funds to support women entrepreneurs at subdistrict levels. Recently extended until December 2019, it has demonstrated a small-scale contribution to the economic empowerment of marginalized women, as well as progress in making select local government institution budgeting mechanisms more gender-responsive. The project worked through the Women's Development Forums in three districts to establish their engagement in women's economic empowerment and to enhance their capacities, and the capacities of the local government institutions (LGIs) to which they are connected, to attract funds to local women's entrepreneurship initiatives. Although engaging WDFs and LGIs was a strategy to enhance sustainability of the initiative, the sustainability of these outcomes is not currently clear: there is some evidence from interviews that WDF members in one intervention location were not sufficiently involved in project decision making to achieve full ownership of the approach, although the WDF may have been more positively engaged in other locations.⁴⁷ Reasons for this differentiation are not currently clear. In the interest of potential upscaling of the approach through

46 Interviews UN Family; government stakeholders

47 IELD Concept Note (Draft), UN Women, UNCDF, UNDP, 2019.

extension beyond this pilot phase, work is ongoing to consolidate the learning from this initiative. It is likely that there has not been enough time, and further work will be needed to create and double-check effective methodologies for working with WDFs to source funds for promoting WEE through LGIs and other potential fund mechanisms.

BCO also initiated work in the ready-made garment sector partnering with CARE Bangladesh to implement training on women’s leadership and career advancement. The project duration was cut to one year from two through donor priority changes beyond the control of UN Women. While progress towards stronger economic empowerment is evident at a small scale in the two factory locations, there is little evidence that attention to sexual harassment in the workplace gained much traction. No wider-scale or policy-level work beyond the factories was undertaken within the project.⁴⁸ At the same time, knowledge and experience from the project has led to the initiation of research with ILO on retention of women in the RMG sector, intended to generate policy recommendations. It has also helped establish UN Women’s credibility for coordinating advocacy on a Sexual Harassment Law.

Overall it is clear that despite this being a moderate budget area over the evaluation period, effective work has been achieved through long-term and well-focused work. Going forward, the theme needs to decide on coherent and strategic intervention, and plan objectives and funding streams for long-term focus.

TABLE 8.
Contribution to results in the WEE impact area

	Decent work / migration	IED
Type of contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent and long-term contribution formal collaboration in shared programmes leveraging UNW comparative advantage to gain traction on gender issues and response. community awareness raising; partnerships for tailoring services; policy influence; formal and informal technical support Training materials and knowledge products developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HeForshe campaign @ district level Gender training @ districts Enterprise assessment scorecard used Training manual – GRB local govt
Areas of the contribution / progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women migrant workers recognized in government policy making and service provision as a distinct category requiring policy provision and tailored services, e.g. recruitment agency procedures Awareness in the government of potential to open new / more transformative sectors for women that offer transitions away from gender segregation; some new sectors opening up. The UN Women template for standard terms of employment (STOE) has contributed to DWs being better protected in principle through bilateral migration agreements (such as the standard employment contract between GoB and Saudi Arabia), though implementation of these provisions still faces challenges. Indirect contribution via improved awareness and policy to migration being (usually) much cheaper for women migrant workers, so financial outcomes for them are better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing local gov contributions via WDF Only small-scale outcomes visible at this point in a few women entrepreneurs with more profitable business and bigger vision. While likely to serve as role models to some degree, it is not clear how far their presence as successful economic agents in the local economy will encourage sustained resources for women locally. Outcomes in terms of WDF as a vehicle for supporting WEE in partnership with local government not yet clear. Experience in working to comparative advantage, with clear areas of specialization with each of the 3 agencies.

48 CSO stakeholders; rights holder FGDs.



Project site visit: focus group discussion with women RMG workers in Dhaka, 9 April 2019

FINDING 4:

There is some evidence of changing power dynamics as a result of interventions in select locations, but sustained work and institutionalization is likely needed to fully establish this. There is growing awareness that working with men is also necessary in many interventions. Women’s rights CSOs have an important role to play, supported by UN Women, in changing power relations.

There is some evidence that the portfolio has contributed to beginning to change gender power dynamics in some respects, and at least in select locations where interventions have worked directly with rights holders. While this evidence has not been triangulated for individual cases, there is more than one example, and also evidence from elsewhere.

There is some evidence also that work on university campuses has in some circumstances softened power dynamics based on age or seniority: The BCPVAW evaluation noted that “interactive awareness building campaign activities / events also created a non-hierarchical relationship between students and teachers who were involved.”

However, the evidence is mixed. As mentioned, respondents suggest the stigma around returnee migrant women at community level has not changed much, suggesting that ideas about the correct behaviour for respectable women do not include migrating for work. This is supported by the observation that women choosing to migrate are often in particularly difficult circumstances, e.g. separated, widowed, or with dependents with disabilities. The DRR-CC project evaluation also found that the increased income that accrued to women through the livelihoods-upskilling

Good practice: gradually shifting power relations on campuses, in workplaces and among refugees

The PVE project on university campuses has supported groups of young women to challenge gender norms and one respondent testified that “the campus is already shaking”. Similarly, evaluation of campus work on sexual harassment through BCPVAW found that the project has made significant progress in increasing knowledge and confidence of female students in breaking the culture of silence, and some evidence of a reduction of incidence of sexual harassment on campuses at the end of the project period. A rights holder responding in the IELD project, working for one female entrepreneur whose business had expanded through the project, talked of the changes their income had brought in their personal lives: “I can now chew paan if I like; my husband didn’t like but I said if I earn the money I will buy, if not I will not”. In the Rohingya camps, there are similar examples. One respondent said: “The men didn’t want women to fly kites, they said they could make the kites; but then on International Women’s Day, the women just ran out to fly the kites, and they did it.”⁴⁹

interventions had not changed household decision making power much. One respondent said: “Most beneficiary women hand over their earnings to male members of their family.”⁵⁰

49 CSO interview

50 DRR-CC Evaluation.

Wider research on behaviour change and gendered social-norm change suggests that for consistent and sustained change in gender related power dynamics, interventions need to be longer-term and include efforts to

“But what happens after we got awareness? After we go home, we lose all energy fighting with men. So we started working with men”

CSO respondent.

institutionalize the systems that allow these changes to flourish.⁵¹ This understanding is reflected in the BCPVAW evaluation, which recommended a strengthened focus on establishing mechanisms for sustained attention to campus sexual harassment by university authorities.⁵²

There are several examples of BCO interventions engaging with men in the interests of shifting power, including in the BCPVAW campus intervention, drawing on support from the regional Partners for Prevention programme: a HeForShe campaign as part of IELD to engage male local government officials; and events for 16 Days of Activism and International Women’s Day, also using HeForShe. However, more consistent work with men may be necessary to achieve change in the power hierarchies underpinning gender relations. Implementers of the DRR-CCA project, for example, found that enabling elected women representatives at district level to attend Upazila meetings on disaster resilience meant working with the male members of their families to convince them of the benefits of involving women in decision making on this issue.⁵³ There was some consensus among respondents involved in work across humanitarian action, WEE and WPS thematic areas that more focus on working with men in BCO’s interventions would increase effectiveness.⁵⁴ For example, not all components of the PVE intervention included working with men, and respondents saw this as a dimension to be further developed.

There is some testimony from respondents suggesting that women’s rights CSOs are potentially key allies in shifting power relations both at community and at national levels: at community level because they are often more embedded in communities and able to represent rights holders directly; and at national level because they can take more confrontational roles in relation to government and policy change.⁵⁵ The testimony implies that CSOs have not always been used to the full extent possible by BCO and that the

consistency of BCO’s relationships with organizations could be secured to play a stronger role in addressing power relations. For example, in the recently initiated Combating Gender-Based Violence project, CSOs such as Bangladesh Mahila Parishad are important implementing partners and are also seen as actors able to reach a wider network of CSOs and women’s rights advocates.⁵⁶ It will be important to ensure that the second of these roles is fully supported (see also Finding 10).

FINDING 5:

Marginalized groups have been effectively reached both through project-based partnerships with NGOs targeting marginalized women, and through a thematic focus on marginalized groups. There may be space for further systematic focus on select marginalized groups.

Good practice: using partner networks to identify and reach marginalized groups

Project-based partnerships with CSOs have allowed the BCO to reach marginalized groups. Examples include the partnership on the PVE project with the BRAC, which used its broad community-level network and outreach to work with 600 women to expand or start businesses using loans using selection criteria which sought out the most marginalized.⁵⁷ In the DDR-CC project, BCAS used information held by Upazila level Departments of Women Affairs to identify vulnerable women for the livelihoods enhancement component of the project – a list which included a “very vulnerable” category of elderly and widowed women and women living with disabilities.⁵⁸

Under the IELD, 200 marginalized Dalit women were identified through the networks of the WDF of elected representatives facilitating women’s associations in their local areas, and received technical training, marketing, distribution and sales training. In the case of one project site, Bhramanbaria, the WDF president decided to locate the project focus where women were known to be particularly isolated and marginalized.⁵⁹

BCO has reached marginalized women through at least two modalities. In some cases, the thematic focus of work targets women who are likely to be marginalized. For example, working on migration was intended to benefit marginalized women because women opting for migration are likely to be socially and economically marginal, as

51 See for example lessons from a social-norms project in Nigeria <http://www.v4c-nigeria.com/resources/v4c-legacy-papers/>

52 BCPVAW evaluation

migrant work is not a desirable option. Women tend to be led to consider it through difficult circumstances such as extreme poverty, separation from husband, divorce or widowhood. This perception is supported by the limited evidence from women migrant workers in primary data for this evaluation.

However, **systematic monitoring or disaggregation by social group is not available in project documents, in the SN, nor in AWP Annual Reports. If available, this** would provide details of the kinds of rights holders that BCO actually reaches, which might confirm or refute the assumptions embedded in these strategies.⁶⁰ In addition, given the different types of social, economic and sometimes ethnic marginalization patterns at play in Bangladesh, some clear statement on the types of marginalization being targeted would enhance understanding of how this issues fits into its overall strategy for GEEW. It is possible that the current partnership to improve the availability of gender statistics with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics will eventually support the feasibility of this level of disaggregation by social group and constitute a step on the journey of documenting UN Women's contribution to supporting key marginalized groups. However, in the more immediate term, attention to disaggregation beyond sex in partner project reporting would enhance understanding of types of marginalized groups reached.

FINDING 6:

Programmes have been more effective when they are part of long-term, consistent initiatives in which UN Women been able to contribute its specialist expertise. Making long-term initiatives possible is hampered by limited knowledge externally of UN Women's overall plan, and by limited resources with which to work closely with government.

Programme experience over the last five years suggests that effectiveness is increased by the following features: 1) an ability to work in relatively long-term formats; 2) an ability to include dedicated gender expertise as applied to a sector; and 3) working in mutually beneficial partnerships, whether with UN agencies, CSOs or government partners. Enabling fund sources and relationships for long-term initiatives is, however, hampered by shortcomings in articulating and communicating an overall statement of

60 For example, the Annual Report 2017 report reaching 1,200 ultra-poor women through BRAC, but BRAC project reports do not disaggregate people reached beyond by sex. The report highlights the PVE and IELD as projects focused on the principle "Leave No One Behind", but available documentation for IELD does not specify rights holders reached with any further disaggregation than sex.

intent in both medium and longer terms. The SN, which lays out areas of work over an envisaged four years, is an internal document, not widely or deliberately shared, and is perhaps not the correct format to do so. A number of respondents to this evaluation felt that they did not have a clear picture of what UN Women is planning to focus on beyond the work areas in which relationships were specifically established; nor what specialist expertise they might draw on in support of other programmes.⁶¹

Other challenges to establishing long-term initiatives include that UN Women is a relatively small-budget agency operating in a dense and relatively well resourced development sector, and in support of a government that is increasingly well resourced. Effects of this include that government responsiveness to small-budget initiatives is low⁶² so that, aside from in key counterpart government agencies, the provision of stand-alone technical support does not appear to be a viable basis for establishing or maintaining strong and consistent government relationships. Government agencies are more responsive to the provision of operational budgets alongside technical assistance.

This makes coordination with other UN agencies key, in order both to amplify budgets, and through these to open up new spaces for influence. However, as discussed in Finding 2, the conditions for effective coordinated strategies are not yet optimal, hampered by some areas of duplication and siloed ways of working with common government and CSO partners. Some of the duplication is around addressing VAW, which overlaps at times with UNFPA's work on GBV.

FINDING 7:

The current UNDAF has mainstreamed gender issues in some respects but the absence of a stand-alone goal on gender may have contributed to weak high-level and programmatic GEEW coordination. Collaborative work and joint programmes include good examples of integrating a gender focus into wider programmes and maximizing the effects of gender expertise in key agencies.

Mechanisms for collaboration with potential for UN women to amplify and optimize its impact and influence include the UNDAF, joint programmes, and collaborations beyond the framework of joint programmes.

Analysis of the current **UNDAF** for this evaluation using indicators from the UNCT-SWAP (System-Wide Action

61 UN Family interviews; donor stakeholders

62 Government stakeholders; UN Family stakeholders; UN Women

Plan) Gender Equality Scorecard (see Annex 7) identifies a good level of mainstreaming in terms of its indicators (exceeding requirements with a score of 63 percent - Indicator 1.3), but a lack of clear gender-related ambitions in all outcomes (misses minimum requirements – Indicator 1.2).

In addition, there is no gender-specific outcome which might bring together the expertise of other agencies on gender issues as relevant to particular sectors. It is also unclear how effective the UNDAF has been in recent years as UN coordination mechanism and focus of work.⁶³ A twin-track approach of mainstreaming combined with a stand-alone gender-related outcome would provide better foundation for GEEW focus and coordination.

Use of the **joint programme** modality has increased recently within UN Women, with the National Resilience Programme beginning in 2018 (with UNDP, UNOPS and the UN Environmental Programme) and programmes beginning in 2019 in the context of the Rohingya response (Support to Community Stabilization and Resilience with UNDP and UNOPS; Providing life-saving emergency health services, including reproductive, maternal, new-born, child and adolescent health to Rohingya refugees with WHO; IOM; UNFPA and UNICEF; and Community Cohesion in Cox's Bazar with UNDP). Together these joint programmes make

up 40 percent of the overall budget for 2019, exceeding UN Women targets of 30 percent of budget on JPs by 2021.^{64,65} The National Resilience Programme is a good example of how UN entities have come together at the preparation stage to integrate expertise, and the Humanitarian Action Evaluation found that the partnership at this stage has benefited from a clear division of roles and responsibilities, shared vision, common goals and objectives, and that UN Women's added value has been clearly articulated.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, it is too early in implementation to draw conclusions from these about how joint programmes can maximize effectiveness.

JPs implemented earlier in the period of this evaluation were the Election Support Programme with UNDP, and the IELD. The IELD is starting to show local-level results in enhancing women's status as entrepreneurs. It offers some insights into and good examples of operationalizing joint programming with clear areas of specialization contributing in different dimensions: UNCDF was responsible for identifying local-level small and medium enterprises; UN Women worked at the meso level to provide the capacity building and empowerment approach, including orientation on gender to the communities and LGIs; and UNDP worked at the policy level to identify bottlenecks hampering the raising of funds for women's entrepreneurship and gender-responsive investment.⁶⁷



Project site visit: focus group discussion with Women Development Forum members under IELD project in Rangpur, 7 April 2019. Photo: Julaikha Hossain

63 UN Family

64 Budget analysis needs verification.

65 See Strategic Plan Guidance Table 1

66 Humanitarian Action Corporate Thematic Evaluation, p39.

67 IELD progress report July 2018-Dec 2018

Commentators note that it was important to establish good communication and transparency in decision making regarding the programme across the agencies. There were challenges given that it was a headquarters driven project, however, in Bangladesh, the agencies seemed to overcome these through local communication mechanisms. The concept note developed for scaling up the pilot draws on the experience of the three agencies aiming to work in ways which maximized their comparative advantage and therefore amplified results. If the programme is scaled up according to the concept note, it stands to offer useful lessons on how wider-scale impact can be achieved, but these lessons on maximizing wide-scale impact through joint programming are not available yet.

Collaborative work on migration for women workers under the thematic area of decent work offers insights into effective modes of operation. As illustrated in Box 1, strong and sustained collaboration across UN agencies can bring together their comparative advantages including analytic expertise. While this work was never formally a joint programme, it has had some characteristics of a JP, for example in the sense of responsibility for discrete outputs for the 2014-15 period.

BOX 1: DECENT WORK – EFFECTIVE UN COLLABORATION BRINGS RESULTS

The enabling environment for women migrating for work from Bangladesh has made slow but steady improvements over the last decade. Improvements have taken place at three levels: in the policy and legal framework, in the availability and range of services for pre-departure preparation, and in attitudes towards migrant workers.

Some of this work has taken place in the context of broader initiatives on migration by the government supported by ILO and IOM, with **distinct and mostly identifiable contributions made by UN Women on the specific situation of women migrant workers.**

UN Women BCO has worked in this areas since 2005-6. In this evaluation period, the work included first a collaborative project with ILO and IOM until 2015 to establish and apply improved migration policy (budget: USD302,502), and a concurrent regional programme to strengthen labour migration management (2013-14) prior to this evaluation period (budget: EUR64,000). From May 2015 to 2019 it has also implemented the Bangladesh contribution of a regional programme developing and implementing standard terms of employment in migration (budget: USD171,979). From 2017-2018 it also worked with ILO to identify and introduce approaches for pre-departure and pre-decision trainings (budget: USD76,462).

There is clear evidence of outcomes resulting from UN Women's contribution to this work at the levels of policy, government service provision, and awareness. These include the following:

- Women migrant workers are recognized in government policy making and service provision as a distinct category requiring policy provision and tailored services.
- Migrant domestic workers are in principle better protected in bilateral migration agreements which better reflect the standard terms of employment (STOE), even while implementation of these protections remains challenging and there is as yet not monitoring mechanism to track effective implementation of STOE provisions.
- Awareness by government of women migrant workers' situation and contribution has simulated government-initiated research on the contribution of women migrant workers through remittances.
- Awareness in government of potential to open new / more transformative sectors for women, that offer transitions away from gender segregation which places women in low paid occupations.
- Evidence from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) that the proportion of complaints has reduced for men and women combined, although the overall number has increased as migration has increased.
- Migration should be zero cost for women migrant domestic workers, so that financial outcomes for them are better for them, as per the government's recruitment provision.
- Evidence that women migrant workers feel more empowered to provide for their families and that direct families are supportive of their migration pathways

Collaboration between ILO and UN Women and IOM is a good example of how UN Women's distinct expertise and mandate can be leveraged to gain traction on recognition of gender issues and responses to these across mandates managed by other UN agencies.

It has involved:

- Formal collaboration in shared programmes in ways that use the comparative advantage and distinct specializations of involved agencies: e.g. responsibility for specific output in Decent Work Phase II
 - » In an area of community awareness raising in which UN women can leverage its operational mandate.
 - » In tailoring service provision so that it responds to women's needs specifically and so that agencies delivering these services are aware of the logic driving this focus and tools developed to respond (e.g. training of trainers for recruitment agencies).
- Informal collaboration, including beyond the project framework, sharing technical expertise to fine-tune translation of policy into implementation so that the intent of gender-responsive policy can be fulfilled (e.g. Action Plans).
- Understanding of each other's comparative advantage and a desire to combine analytical weight to optimize mutual objectives.

5.2.1 Organizational issues inhibiting effectiveness

FINDING 8:

There is wide appreciation of UN Women's growing visibility and leadership despite small staff, but also a perception that expertise is not always sufficient for the task. This is echoed in some internal perception of capacity and skills gaps impacting on programme implementation and credibility.

UN Women Bangladesh was established as a Country Office in 2012. Before that, it was a project office under UNIFEM, the predecessor body to UN Women. Its budget in 2014 was USD2,347,902, growing to USD5,128,827 in 2019 (projected), representing 118-percent growth over a five-year period. Such a large increase in funding would require operations in place to support it.

Externally, there is widespread appreciation of UN Women's growing visibility and leadership despite small staff numbers, and of the short timescale within which this visibility has been achieved.⁶⁸ UN Women's technical

expertise is also often acknowledged. These external oral testimonies are echoed internally by survey results on some self-assessment questions. These suggest that the adequacy of skills and expertise for supporting country partners has improved over the period: 18 of 25 responses saw these as "moderately adequate" and five as "highly adequate" for 2017-19, while for 2014-16, nine of 13 respondents saw these as "moderately adequate" and four as "not adequate".⁶⁹ Current confidence levels in having the skills, knowledge and support in thematic areas to fulfil duties are quite high, with 61 percent "somewhat confident" and 23 percent "very confident".

At the same time there is also an external perception that available expertise and human resources are not always sufficient.⁷⁰ Among staff, 15 percent shared that they are insufficiently or not at all confident (four respondents) in having adequate skills, knowledge and support to fulfil their duties; and for operational knowledge 31 percent (eight respondents) said they are "insufficiently confident". Not surprisingly, insufficient confidence is more prevalent among newer staff, with three of these respondents being employed in the last six months and a further three within the last year (see Figure 7).

68 UN Family interviews; CSO interviews; government stakeholders

69 Nine people also replied 'don't know', most likely indicating those who were not at the office during this period.

70 UN Family; donor stakeholders; CSO interviews

FIGURE 7.

“How confident do you feel in fulfilling your duties, in terms of having adequate skills, knowledge, and being able to access support?”

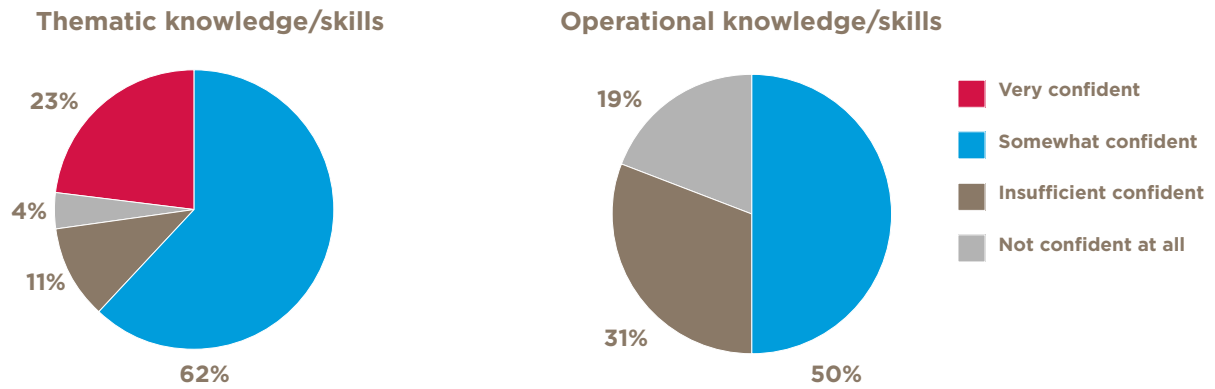


FIGURE 8.

“In your opinion, to what extent do capacity (skills and knowledge) gaps in BCO staffing inhibit credibility of UN Women’s work with external parties?”

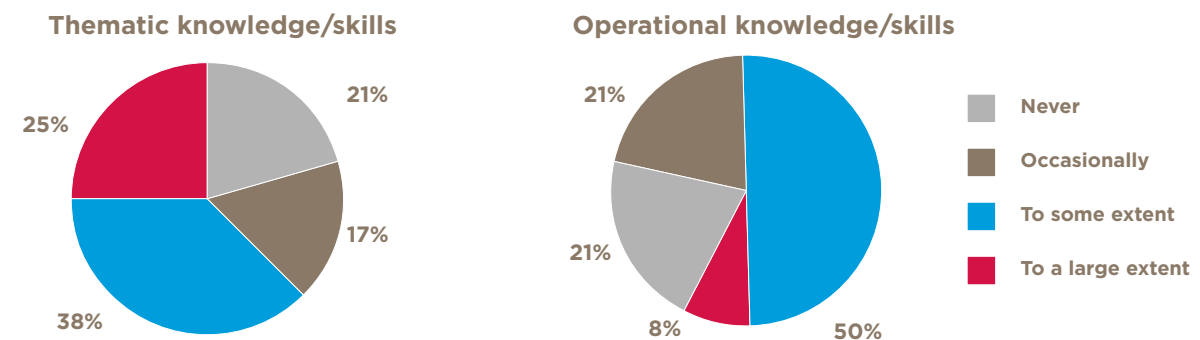
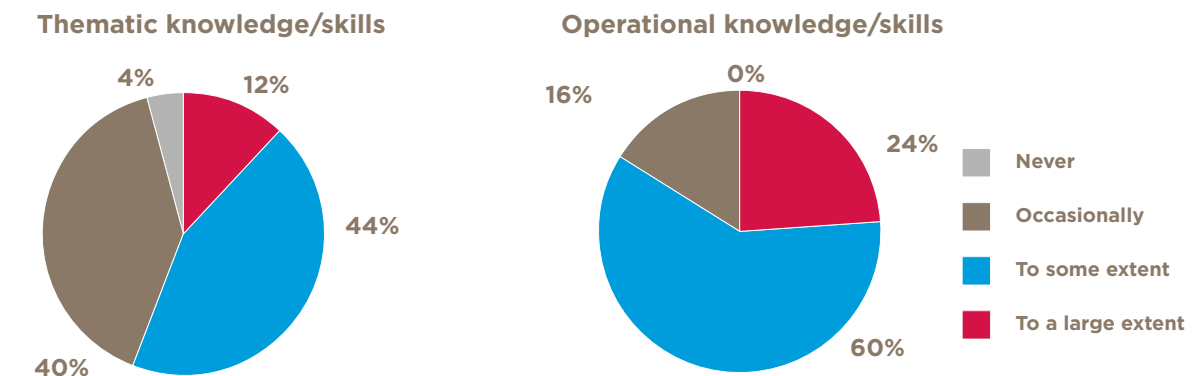


FIGURE 9.

“In your opinion, to what extent do capacity (skills and knowledge) gaps in BCO staffing inhibit progress in implementing UN Women’s programme of work?”



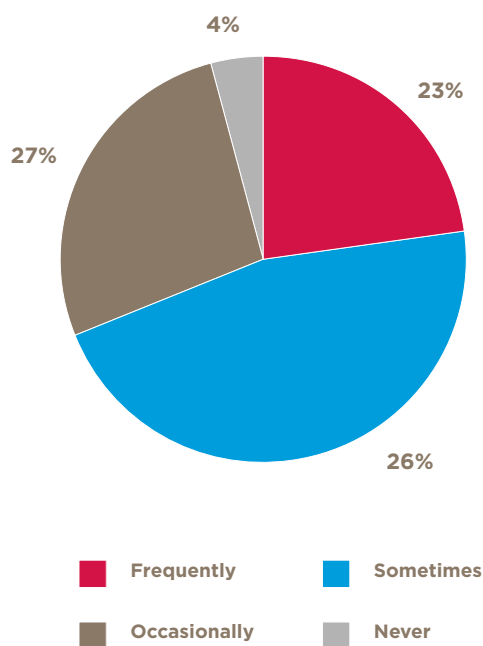
Despite these reasonable levels of confidence, staff perceptions of how gaps in skills and knowledge capacity (their own or those of colleagues) have negative programming and credibility effects for the organization are quite high: Skills and knowledge gaps in thematic areas are perceived to inhibit programme implementation “to some extent” or “to a large extent” by 56 percent of respondents, and external credibility of UN Women’s work “to a large extent” or “to some extent” by 63 percent of respondents. Similarly, operational skills and knowledge gaps regarding UN Women systems are perceived to inhibit programme implementation in the same categories by 84 percent of respondents and external credibility of UN Women’s work by 58 percent (See Figures 8 and 9).

FINDING 9:

Although several initiatives have run smoothly to timelines, examples of delays in UN Women’s control reflect organizational bottlenecks in internal approvals, procurement, recruitment and work overload.

Perceptions that programme implementation is inhibited by skills and knowledge gaps (particularly in UN Women systems/operations knowledge) (see Figure 9) are echoed by additional perceptions that process delays have affected project outputs “frequently” (23 percent) and “sometimes” (46 percent) (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10.
“How often have process delays affected project outputs?”



These perceptions are supported by some external evidence of project delays, such as to the second phase of PVE, and sequencing challenges in IELD.⁷¹ However, this evaluation has not been able to investigate the direct causes of these delays.

Internally, process delays are most commonly associated with waiting for internal approvals (58 percent of respondents) and waiting for consultants’ contracting (38.5 percent), although they are also associated with delays in fund disbursement, staff recruitment and external approvals (all at 35 percent).

Work overload is a significant issue in the office, and may explain some of the perceived process delays. It is experienced frequently by 58 percent of survey respondents and sometimes by a further 31 percent. Only 11 percent of staff experience work overload only occasionally.

Work overload may be related to staff numbers not keeping pace with rising budget (see Figure 11) through 2017 and 2018, despite recent recruitment. Although the relation between budget size and staff needs is not completely straightforward because large projects may require proportionately less staff time, between 2017 and 2018, for instance, disbursed budget rose from USD1,878,944 to USD3,994,867 (113 percent), while staff increased from 27 to 35 (30 percent). This was over the same period that a number of relatively small projects were in implementation, which usually require proportionately more time to manage, and have higher transaction costs (See Finding 1). The BCO is undergoing a process of recruitment, such that by December 2019 staff numbers are planned to increase to 51 (an increase of 89 percent from 2017), much more in line with budget increases, and therefore likely to address some work overload issues. The office has also requested support from the Regional Office for a functional review to optimize office structure, which would clearly be a positive step.

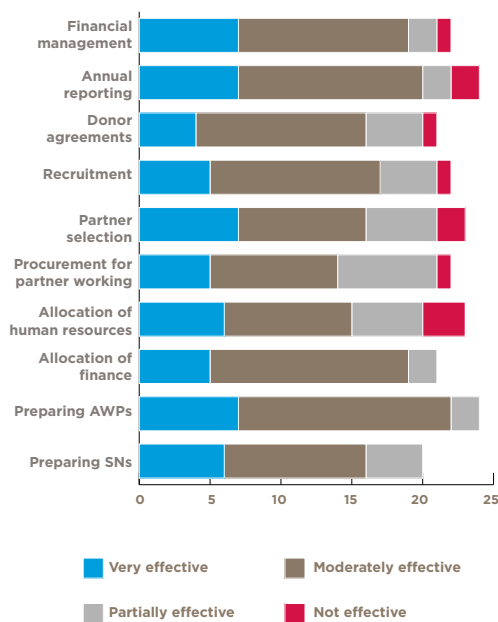
Work overload may also be related to inefficiencies associated with particular processes. As shown in Figure 12, while most survey respondents found most organizational process to be “very” or “moderately” effective, a few respondents also found some processes to be “not effective” or “partially effective”, with the highest levels in the areas of partner selection, procurement for working with partners, and allocation of human resources.

⁷¹ Interview testimony suggests that the GRB element of IELD was delayed until the final months of the project, affecting the sequencing of the process; further testimony suggests effectiveness could have been enhanced by an earlier GRB process, presumably because this may have made further funds available for WDF to secure for WEE.

FIGURE 11.
Budget increases against staff increases, 2014-19
(June)



FIGURE 12.
How effective were the following organizational processes to support your work with partners to enhance GEEW?⁷²



72 The chart excludes those who answered “don’t know” to the question

5.3 Efficiency

Guiding questions:

1. What is UN Women’s comparative advantage compared with other UN entities and key partners?
2. To what extent does the UN Women management structure support efficiency for implementation?
3. Has a results-based management system been established and implemented?
4. To what extent is knowledge management employed and implemented effectively to facilitate uptake of programming lessons?

FINDING 10:

UN Women’s comparative advantage lies in part in its policy and advocacy work, and in its ability to convene CSOs and government. These are supported by its dedicated gender expertise, a focus on women and women’s rights, and access to an international knowledge pool on gender issues. Some aspects of its potential comparative advantage are not yet being fully maximized: There is scope for: more systematically convening relationships between CSOs and government; a more consistently long-term operational approach; and a clearer identification of strengths in relation to other UN agencies, including in WEE.

Interviews with a range of stakeholders found that UN Women’s comparative advantage in Bangladesh has a number of dimensions. First, UN Women Bangladesh’s dedicated and unique focus on women and girls is found significant and helpful by government and donors as “no-one [else] is pinpointing on women except UN Women,” in the words of one government stakeholder. Technical support dedicated to this unique focus is welcomed by government and UN stakeholders, and a general sense of increasingly strong leadership, visibility and presence is seen as a positive asset in the UN system.

Second, from non-government perspectives, UN Women’s access to and positive relationships with government agencies is seen as a strong asset,⁷³ giving BCO a unique role in policy influence and advocacy, legitimized and strengthened by its access to knowledge and expertise from an international context and cumulative experience.^{74,75}

73 UN Family; CSOs; donor stakeholders

74 INGO; government stakeholders, UN Family

75 Government stakeholders;

These perspectives align with the MOPAN UN Women global Performance Assessment, carried out in 2018.⁷⁶ This states UN Women's global comparative advantage in the following areas: technical gender expertise; the ability to link global and national policies for gender equality and women's empowerment; relationships with women's organizations, and its integrated contribution across the three pillars of the UN.

However, there are some indications that BCO is **not yet fully maximizing this comparative advantage in the national context** in two dimensions.

'The women's movement is not talking about bread any more, but about rights. We want women's human rights. But if we want equal rights in decision making we need to talk to the power structure... When you are talking power relations you have to take risk ... we need to be ready to fight with the power structure, and work within the structure.'

CSO respondent

For CSOs and some donor stakeholders and UN family stakeholders, UN Women's comparative advantage is seen more specifically to be its focus on women's rights in the context of human rights. This perspective is related to a perception that broader aspirations towards women's empowerment in Bangladesh have sometimes been translated into initiatives that align with women's traditional roles in unpaid care and low paid economic engagement, and do not challenge structures of gender inequality. Some CSOs perceive that UN Women's relationships with CSOs and its ability to convene these and government on the normative agenda may be a particular comparative advantage in the current national context, in which there is some risk of government concessions to a religious hard-line at the expense of women's rights.⁷⁷ As suggested in Finding 4, UN Women's role in convening CSOs and government to facilitate the role of CSOs in this kind of advocacy and also in policy monitoring could be further strengthened, perhaps through addressing the fragmented nature of the CSO environment with some kind of formalized structure. Experience arising from the role of the Civil Society Advisory Group, appointed in 2014

but not re-convened since the end of its term 2016,⁷⁸ may offer some lessons learned.

Stakeholders also perceive a level of operational involvement in relatively small, short-term projects, with consequent reduced capacity to work on more strategic issues leveraging the normative and coordination mandates.⁷⁹ This issue appears to be reaching resolution with increasingly long-term budget commitments to strategic programmes in the coming years (see also Finding 1) and an average project budget size which has increased more than four-fold since the early years covered by this evaluation.

Part of maximizing comparative advantage is in establishing operational roles among the UN agencies that draw on their respective strengths, to optimize overall effectiveness. Specific organization strengths in some sectors where other UN agencies also work have not yet been fully established. Some similar dimensions of global mandates can translate into overlap and duplication of activities, or beneficial synergies. As identified by the MOPAN assessment for the global level, these include potential synergies with UNFPA on violence against women and with UNDP on WEE principles. At country level, BCO has been making some efforts to establish a role on prevention and social norms in EAW (compared with the response and services role of UNFPA), and the recently begun CGBV (EAW) project has promise to more clearly map out more defined and synergised roles.

In WEE, as shown in Findings 3 and 7, an effective role and added-value have been forged in the work on migration, but efforts to define a niche strength in relation to the economic empowerment of in-country women have not yet borne fruit. Good coordination and consultation is needed with UNDP, whose related mandate at global level offers potential for combined analysis, resources and efforts. The framework of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/UN Women Common Chapter, which according to two respondents has not been effectively operationalized in Bangladesh,⁸⁰ may offer a forum for defining this role. In addition, a number of respondents mention a more coordinated approach between UN agencies to working with

76 MOPAN - 2017-18 ASSESSMENTS: UN Women; Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, February 2019

77 UN Family; CSO stakeholders

78 Annual Report 2018; The role of Civil Society Advisory Groups is intended to be consultative bodies for regular dialogue on policy, programming, normative, intergovernmental and operational activities (Guiding Principles, UN Women's Civil Society Advisory Groups <http://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/civil-society/civil-society-advisory-groups>).

79 UN Family;

80 Not strongly triangulated: UN Agency interviews

MoWCA. Such a move away from bilateral relationships with ministries may represent one strategic process.⁸¹

FINDING 11:

Observations that BCO’s leadership is sometimes unable to give full attention to more strategic issues, and that UN Women’s capacity has in the recent past been lower than its ambition, are likely generated in part by low staff numbers relative to programme activity in the middle to late part of this evaluation period. Bottlenecks associated with some organizational processes may have also contributed to these observations.

As mentioned in Finding 9, during 2017-18 staff levels have not kept pace with budget increases generated through non-core resource mobilization (Figure 11). In addition, UN Women’s Rohingya response and setting up the Cox’s Bazar office has diverted attention of some Dhaka-based staff in absence of adequate corporate surge capacity to support the humanitarian response efforts.⁸²

Plans to increase staff have been under way since 2018 and will continue until the end of 2019. Plans for recruitment until the end of 2019 aim to take the BCO and Cox’s Bazar sub-office to a combined strength of 51, from 35 at the time of data collection for this evaluation, and 39 at the time of analysis and reporting.

Nevertheless, the interim “staff deficit” over the last two years (see Figure 11) has most likely contributed to an internal and external perception that BCO objectives, particularly in operational work, have exceeded capacity at times. While UN Women leadership is widely credited for bringing more visibility to UN Women, there are concerns from inside UN Women and from some external partners that the need for senior management involvement in the detail of projects, to make up for staff deficit, constrains the office’s ability to focus on more strategic issues in ways that could maximize its comparative advantage.⁸³ At the same time, bottlenecks have made the office at times unable to operate on short, flexible schedules necessary for the implementation of some types of time-bound projects.⁸⁴

81 CSO and UN Agency interviews. Respondents also noted scope for policy-level advocacy on the connection between women’s unpaid care work and their potential economic engagement as a necessary part of the push to attain middle-income country status by 2030.

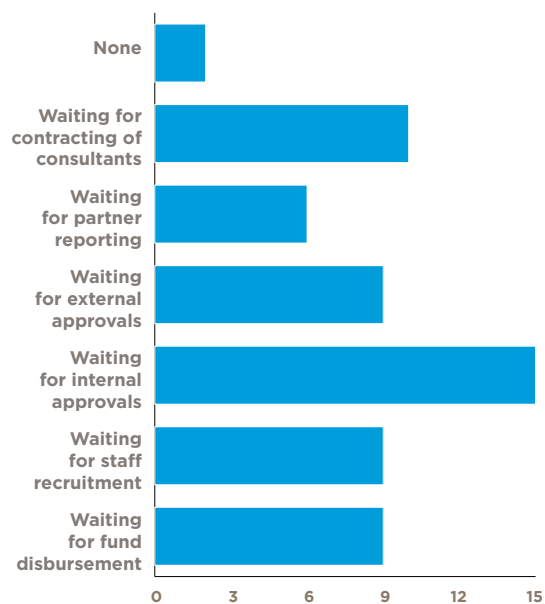
82 Corporate Evaluation on Humanitarian Action Case Study Bangladesh February 2019

83 UN family; UN Women; CSO stakeholders; Annual Report 2018

84 Such as the Election Support project; UN family; donor stakeholders.

FIGURE 13.

What types of bottlenecks have you experienced in progressing your work?



The survey identifies internal perceptions of organizational bottlenecks. In this, the system for internal approvals attracted the most responses as sources of bottlenecks (15 of 26). Waiting for contracting of consultants (10 of 26); external approvals, staff recruitment and fund disbursement (all 9 of 26) were also identified (See Figure 13). While each of these processes have many steps involving different staff roles and responsibilities, it is not unreasonable to assume that an over-stretched senior management plays some part in them. Knowing exactly where bottlenecks are would help solve them.

It should be noted, however, that BCO’s budget delivery rate has increased over the period from 80.8 percent in 2015 to 94.9 percent in 2018, suggesting that bottlenecks previously affecting implementation have been relieved to some extent recently, either locally, or more broadly within UN Women global systems.⁸⁵ It is possible, but not evidenced here, that attention to improving the efficiency of project delivery has a positive association with the time that senior management has devoted to guiding project management details.

Low staff numbers in the middle-late period covered by this evaluation may have contributed to bottlenecks, which may therefore have been relieved during staff recruitment started in 2017 and ongoing through 2019. The BCO has three HQ-approved core positions funded through the IB: country representative, operations manager and

85 As noted by the MOPAN Assessment 2017-18

finance associate. Their roles are complemented by further positions funded through the extra-budgetary resources: administration associate, driver, and human resources associate. Further positions supporting senior management are the programme management specialist, responsible for monitoring and evaluation, and the communications position, partially funded through core funds. Core funds also support an UN volunteer to work 50 percent of his or her time on coordination. Other management support is provided by project management staff recruited for particular projects through non-core funds.

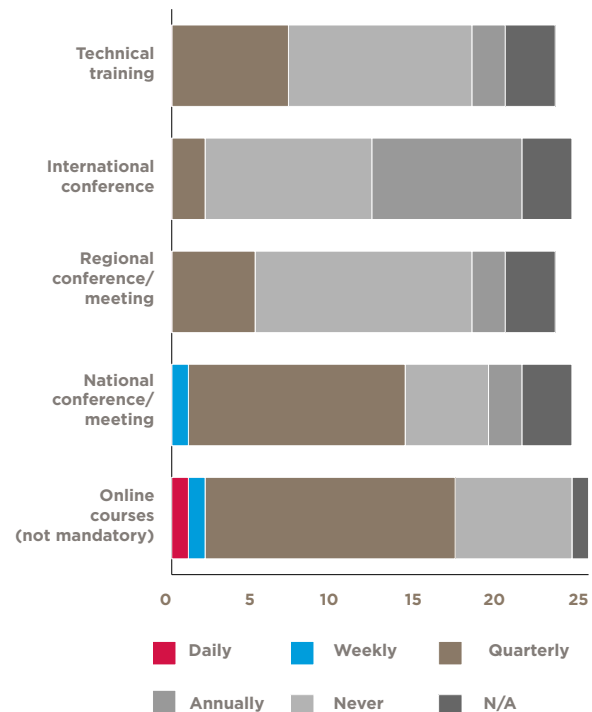
An application for the position of deputy country representative was made in 2016/17, and was approved, but no funding was allocated so the position was not filled. From 2017, HQ stated that the costs for any additional position should come out of cutting another, to achieve cost neutrality. Hence the application for deputy country representative was removed in 2017.⁸⁶

Filling a deputy post, and funding this by rearranging project management and core management positions, might relieve some bottlenecks and free up the senior management to take on a high-level strategic role more completely. This evaluation was not able to determine this for certain, but it could be possible in the context of an increasing non-core budget.

It is also possible that stronger internal training, particularly for new staff, could reduce perceived knowledge and skills gaps, and could be more clearly focused on providing knowledge aimed at relieving bottlenecks. There has clearly been some focus on internal training during 2017-18, for new and old staff. This has included training on procurement and other business processes. The 2017 annual report cites training received from the UN Women Regional Office and Headquarters in: partner selection and management; donor management and reporting; project closure; the new Delegation of Authority; Security Awareness; SharePoint Library; and Programme and Operations Manual revised travel chapter. The 2018 annual report states that mandatory training went well: Seventy percent of staff completed all courses and the remainder completed around 60 percent of courses. In addition, the office undertook training on RMB (see Finding 12) and effective public speaking. The survey also identifies learning opportunities accessed by staff, with 76 percent of respondents (representing nearly 60 percent of total staff at the time of the survey) accessing local, national or regional opportunities for learning at least annually (see Figure 14).

86 Regional Office communication.

FIGURE 14.
What kind of learning opportunities have you accessed?



Going forwards, strengthening training is needed to make sure new staff are quickly fully confident and functional in UN Women systems and procedures in ways specifically related to these bottlenecks. This will be important to rectify reputational risks. This suggests a need for rigorous and methodical induction processes including in issues which can relieve strained processes. In addition, facilitating opportunities to update and exchange experience and knowledge could support the thematic knowledge evolution of old and new staff so that all are fully able to confidently represent UN Women externally.

FINDING 12:
Real efforts have been made towards gaining an outcome focus and enabling RBM over the evaluation period, with some good progress. Strengthening and periodically revisiting a programme-level vision and strategy would further support this journey.

The SN stated an intention to continue to invest in capacity for RBM and ongoing capacity building for BCO personnel and partners. While the BCO's ability, at the beginning of the 2017-20 SN, to generate evidence-based knowledge

was seen as having grown significantly, maximizing this function was seen very important by stakeholders. An intention to invest in RBM was followed through with internal RBM training for all staff in September 2018.⁸⁷

Survey results indicate that internally there is confidence in a reasonably good degree of focus on outcomes that support RMB: Eighty-four percent of respondents gave a 3 (44%) or 4 (40%) out of 5 for the question “To what extent are you able to take a broader focus on achieving longer-term outcomes rather than implementing the daily activities that have been agreed upon?” However, the absence of any respondents with full confidence in this (no one gave a score of 5) suggests that there is still room for improvement.

As stated in Finding 3, this evaluation process has confirmed that global UN Women reporting systems and cycles against outcomes envisaged by SNs make a systematic understanding of progress towards outcomes challenging. The main narrative of the Annual Report does not link clearly with the outcome statements and indicators as set out in the overall SN DRF (e.g. for 2014-16), nor is there any clear sense of cumulative progress during the course of the SN. This hampers any real-time understanding of cumulative or recent achievements, although these would clearly support ongoing work of operationalizing programme (SN) objectives in between SN intervals.

Similarly, project monitoring and overall donor reporting systems show quite good levels of attention to outcomes in addition to outputs,⁸⁸ but linking these results to an overall set of BCO objectives depicting overall and cumulative progress is weak.

Although a programme-level reconstructed and provisional theory of change has been introduced for this evaluation, mechanisms for incorporating a developed version of this as a thinking tool in annual cycles would support cumulative learning on: a) what the causal steps towards outcomes actually are; b) the extent to which these steps are being achieved; and c) clarification of where synergies across mandate areas are being targeted and reached, and how far building linkages across these areas is effective in supporting operational results.

87 Annual report 2018

88 For example, Final narrative report to Benetton MB, Career, Capital, Confidence, March 2018; 3rd donor report to the Swiss Development Corporation, empowerment of Women Migrant Workers in South Asia through STOE, April 2018; UNW PVE Donor report, Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities, September 2018

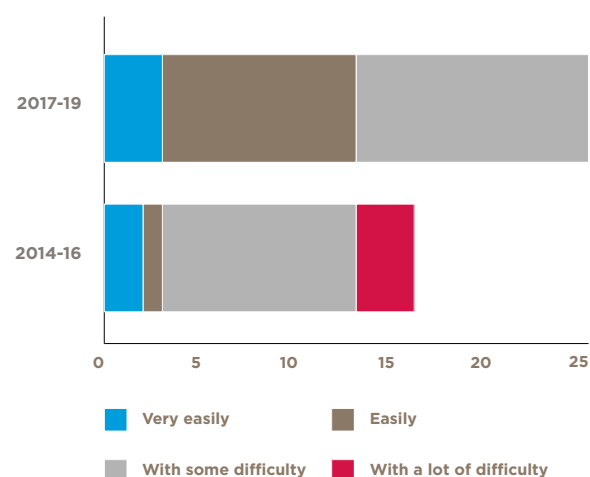
FINDING 13:

Several features of knowledge and learning are in place, suggesting good progress on some aspects of knowledge management systems internally, but there is room for improvement in generating and disseminating knowledge externally in accessible formats.

Survey results suggest there has been good improvement in **access to organizational knowledge** to support current work over the two SNs. As Figure 15 shows, for the later period most respondents found relevant documentation easily or very easily (60%), whereas this proportion in the earlier period was only 19 percent.⁸⁹ In the earlier period, a further 19 percent also experienced “a lot of difficulty” accessing documentation. This documentation is now most commonly accessed from the SharePoint system (96% of respondents) and OneDrive (64% of respondents). On the other hand, the “gap” in collated and cumulative knowledge of how project progress contributes to the achievement of overall portfolio-level objective means that some important overview knowledge is not available for access (See Finding 12).

FIGURE 15.

How easily are you able to access past UN Women/BCO documentation to support your current work?

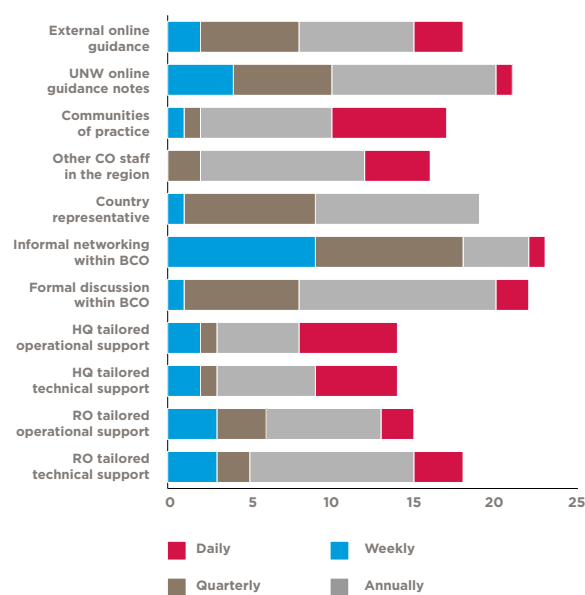


While improved documentation is a clear asset in improving knowledge management, **direct support enhancing knowledge flows** is also important. Figure 16 shows that knowledge development support is most commonly (by both frequency and user numbers) sourced through

89 The survey has less responses for the earlier period reflecting fewer current staff having knowledge of that period. Those answering N/A are excluded from the chart.

formal and informal local processes such as formal and informal discussion with BCO and through the Country Representative. The Regional Office and Headquarters also play a significant role, but, as intended, interactions with HQ tend to be less frequent. Satisfaction levels with the knowledge and technical support provided are good with 84 percent of responses scoring 3 or 4 on a 5-point scale, though only 4 percent scored 5, or “very good”.

FIGURE 16.
Where have you sought knowledge development / support?



Thematic work areas have also generated **knowledge products** to make learning available internally and externally, including: booklets and materials under BCPVAW;⁹⁰ policy briefs and knowledge products under the area of decent work;⁹¹ critical studies under DRR-CC;⁹² and regional knowledge products on PVE.⁹³ Although not yet available, recent projects such as IELD, conceived as a pilot exercise, also have a focus on extracting learning. The monitoring, evaluation and research plan for 2017-20 also includes a number of research components in an effort to meet knowledge needs.

90 BCPVAW evaluation

91 Decent Work evaluation

92 DRR-CC evaluation

93 E.g. <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/02/building-an-evidence-base-for-empowering-women-for-peaceful-communities>

Testimony from external stakeholders, however, suggests that **formats for knowledge dissemination could be more accessible**, and a **dissemination strategy could be more deliberate**. Several stakeholders noted a need for simple communication material that is clear on strategies for improving gender equality in a Bangladesh context⁹⁴ and actively distributed to local partners.⁹⁵ Similarly, a perceived gap in information on BCO’s overall programme strategy⁹⁶ suggests a need for summarized, accessible information and active dissemination. In line with recommendations on knowledge management from the global level,⁹⁷ there may be scope for focused work to translate select knowledge and communications products into Bangla.

5.4

Gender and human rights

Guiding questions:

1. Has the portfolio been implemented according to human rights and development effectiveness principles (in its design and implementation): participation/empowerment; inclusion/non-discrimination; national accountability/transparency?
2. What contribution is UN Women making to implementing global norms and standards for GEEW?

FINDING 14:

UN Women’s policy and programme interventions have integrated gender equality and human rights approach in line with international standards, and generated important results in addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality. However, further efforts are needed to institutionalize CSO engagement.

Overall, UN Women BCO’s work has integrated gender equality and human rights approach in line with international standards, e.g. by fostering the involvement of rights holders, the inclusion of minority groups, and fair power relations. A human-rights approach is embedded in the BCO’s theory of change, in particular for EVAW, WPS-PVE and humanitarian action thematic areas.

94 Government stakeholders; UN Family stakeholders

95 UN Family Stakeholders; donor stakeholders

96 Donor stakeholders; UN Family

97 Reflections on change. Meta-analysis: Findings and lessons from evaluations managed by UN Women in 2017

For instance, the theory of change of the PVE project runs as follows: *If* women's groups and networks working on social cohesion and de-radicalization are able to influence the development of more gender-responsive national counter radicalization policies, *then* women, including those who are the most marginalized and in particularly vulnerable situations, will be empowered to build more resilient, cohesive and peaceful societies.⁹⁸

UN Women's SN and the design of some programmes strategies and interventions have been informed by comprehensive gender analyses (e.g., WEE-Decent Work, EVAW-BCPVAW, WPS-PVE). For instance, prior to the design and implementation of the BCPVAW project, a baseline survey (gender analysis) was carried out, as the results of the project activities were considered very important contributions to the important youth involvement in battling the culture of VAW/G and sexual harassment at the academic institutions.⁹⁹ Through this analysis, UN Women has been able to ensure that its interventions address the root causes of gender inequality and identified gaps in implementation of international and national policies, laws and commitments. UN Women also identified the need for increased measures, such as strengthened anti-discrimination legislation, to address the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups such as rural poor women, youth, indigenous, refugees and stateless persons, and persons of ethnic minority background in their various interventions (e.g., BCPVAW, PVE, DRR/HA).¹⁰⁰

Likewise, under the WEE-Decent Work project, prior to design and implementation of the project activities (e.g., developing training modules and training), UN Women had conducted an external market analysis to identify particular skills required for Bangladeshi female migrant workers in current and emerging labour markets.¹⁰¹

Through UN Women programming, there is evidence of some progress in contributing towards changing power relations at a household and community level (women migrant workers, rural women entrepreneurs under PVE) in selected locations. UN Women has also engaged in work on social norm change at the national and community level, including at times with men and boys aimed at advancing a positive model of masculinity, non-violence, equality and respect (e.g., EVAW-BCPVAW, WPS-PVE programmes) (see

also Finding 4). Priority is also given to rural women with limited economic activities and to survivors of violence.

However, there is limited analysis of the effect of intersecting forms of discrimination among marginalized women. Also, as mentioned in Finding 5, there is no systematic monitoring or disaggregation by social group of the rights holders that BCO reaches. Furthermore, given the different types of social, economic and sometimes ethnic marginalization patterns at play in Bangladesh, some clear statement on the types of marginalization being targeted would enhance understanding of how this issue fits into its overall strategy for GEEW (see Finding 5).

Finding interventions that can engage a narrower target group of marginalized women based on an understanding of intersecting inequalities is therefore needed in future programming in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

There are indications that greater efforts are at times needed to heighten relevant stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of interventions. For instance there is some evidence from the IELD project that at one implementation site WDF members feel they were not sufficiently included in decision making for the project, e.g. for the selection of the supported small and medium enterprises, even though the project approach was discussed with them. Also, there is evidence from BCPVAW project that project on Sexual Harassment Complaint Cells (SHCC) was not able to create greater visibility, due to limited institutional linkages. Such visibility is necessary to strengthen the position and capacity of the SHCC within the university administration, and hold university authorities accountable to their obligations to create safe campuses (BCPVAW Evaluation report 2019). These findings are consistent with evaluations in this region and globally (See MOPAN Assessment of UN Women - accountability findings and the regional meta-analysis).¹⁰²

There is also some suggestion that institutionalizing CSO advocacy needs more attention. As mentioned in Finding 5, project-based partnerships with CSOs for implementation have assisted the BCO to reach marginalized groups in a general sense (e.g., PVE, DRR-CC project). Also, in some cases, CSOs helped in facilitating an oversight role for marginalized groups and communities regarding government delivery of services and investments (WEE – Decent Work project).¹⁰³ However, more systematic and continued engagement is needed in both operational and normative work. Recent co-ordinated work on advocacy

98 Final evaluation report of BCPVAW, Research Report of PVE, Project documents of PVE, HA

99 Situation Assessment Situational Analysis of Sexual Harassment at Tertiary Level Education Institutes in and around Dhaka, Abul Barkat et al, HDRC, 2013, Dhaka

100 Source: Through interviews with UN Women

101 ILO-Decent work evaluation report (final)

102 Evaluation by MOPAN: 2017-18 Assessment of UN WOMEN (Global level) (published in 2019)

103 Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its application in Bangladesh (MTE & Final Evaluation) (ILO -DW) (published in 2015)

around the Child Marriage Act Revision, in which UN Women facilitated the convening of a wide range of CSOs and other actors, is perhaps an example of how some systematic engagement can be supported.

FINDING 15:

UN Women has provided substantial support for CEDAW reporting, strengthening CSOs, SDGs action plan in line with the Agreed Conclusions of CSW60, SDG committee engagement, for the UPR, Child Marriage Act revision, etc. There is some evidence that UN Women may be best positioned to promote a stronger government ownership and engagement with some of these processes, in particular for CEDAW.

UN Women has played an integral role in terms of implementing global norms and standards for GEEW as follows:¹⁰⁴

Normative Intervention Area	UN Women's Contribution
CEDAW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical support to MoWCA for preparation of State party report for CEDAW in 2016 and support for inter-ministerial collaboration by involving seven ministries; • Supported CSO consultation, CEDAW shadow report preparation (where BCO took the lead), and follow-up monitoring process.
SDGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2018, the government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » endorsed the SDGs Collaboration Framework (SCF) developed by the UN SDG Task Team co-chaired by UNDP and UN Women as the framework for UN and Government's partnership for SDG implementation; » supported MoWCA to develop its SDGs action plan in line with the Agreed Conclusions of CSW60, which included 11 gender equality indicators, a coherent strategy for gender equality and gender equality commitments in sector; and » demonstrated women as valuable contributors to economic and social development in Bangladesh, rather than the earlier view of women as a vulnerable group to be protected. • In 2017, the government submitted the first SDGs Voluntary National Review (VNR) report to the UNDG. BCO supported the Planning Commission to take into account gender equality priorities in the VNR process and making the reporting system gender responsive.
Universal Periodic Review (PR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided input to the UNCT Report on gender equality and women's rights using CEDAW Concluding Observations as the reference to articulate recommendations raised in the UPR session in 2018.
CSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually support government in its engagement in the CSW. Support a multi-stakeholder consultation meeting for the government delegation to gather inputs on CSW thematic issue. Provided technical support to government delegations to reflect civil society voices in their official position. • UN Women effectively coordinated funding from development partners for facilitating a greater CSO participation.
Child Marriage Act, sexual harassment law and anti-discrimination law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued its visible role in advocacy and engagement on revision of Child Marriage Act, formulation of sexual harassment law and anti-discrimination law. • Act as an intermediary between civil society and the Government. • Currently coordinating UN partners to develop a joint strategy to advocate for the enactment of a Sexual Harassment Law.
Beijing + 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing to Beijing + 25 processes in coordination with MoWCA. • Beijing+20 national review and the government's review of the draft outcome document for the ESCAP Ministerial meeting were both influenced by civil society, led by BCO.
Security Council resolution 1325	Contributions towards implementing SCR 1325 through the NAP

¹⁰⁴ Annual reports; AWPR 2018

Whilst there is a recognition of UN Women’s important contribution towards state party reporting on CEDAW and support for inter-ministerial collaboration by involving seven ministries, which has set a precedent for a broad-based approach to reporting on CEDAW, there seems no evidence of a longer term strategy for supporting the government ownership of this process and using the outcomes as a means for advocacy.¹⁰⁵ In addition, a number of stakeholders during interviews pointed out that UN Women has the highest potential to stronger advocacy on removing Bangladesh reservations to CEDAW¹⁰⁶ (perhaps drawing on value added of international connection with other Muslim majority countries) and also for continued strengthening of the CEDAW platform with a focus particularly on consistent relationships with women’s rights organizations and CSOs.

It is also evident that UN Women has developed good relationships with CSOs in strengthening of the CEDAW platform to lead and participate in normative processes and policy advocacy, but is more consistent overall through relationships for project implementation. Consultations with civil society revealed a desire for increased engagement in contributing to UN Women’s planning and review processes. There was a strong call for UN Women to more actively increase its engagement with women’s groups and civil society organizations through its programmatically linked normative work (e.g. WEE- anti-discriminatory labour law and EAWW-sexual harassment law).

5.5 Sustainability

Guiding questions:

1. Is there national ownership and are there national champions for different parts of the portfolio?
2. To what extent was capacity of partners developed to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?
3. What local accountability and oversight systems have been established to support the continuation of activities?

¹⁰⁵ Interview with CSOs and development partners.

¹⁰⁶ Bangladesh acceded to CEDAW in 1984 but continues to have reservations on articles 2 and 16(1)c (UN Women AWP cover note 2018)

FINDING 16:

Ownership and national champions have been established for different parts of the portfolio. MoWCA for GRB, MoEWOE for WEE and BCAS for DRR-CC have taken leadership on subsequent work.

The BCO’s support to capacitate partners and key national stakeholders with the necessary skills to strengthen gender equality commitments for advancing GEEW provide an important institutional foundation for future work.

For example, through joint initiatives, UN Women in partnership with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) has over the last decade strengthened national legislation and policies on gender-responsive planning and budgeting. These represent a significant accomplishment in terms of government ownership. MoWCA, with the support of government financing, has now taken a clear leadership role, where local dimensions of GRB have been prioritized and incorporated. The programme, initially three years (2015 – 2017) but extended to five, was 87 percent funded by GoB, with UN Women providing small funds and technical expertise. This was the first time that GoB had self-funded an initiative to strengthen their own gender mainstreaming across ministries. Forty-four ministries are now accountable to report on GRB every year. The programme had specific activities to develop tools and knowledge products to monitor allocations and expenditures from a gender perspective, thus extending and deepening the GRB process, and establishing increasing accountability to it – both in terms of breadth across government, and in terms of depth of coverage of the GRB cycle of policy-planning-budgeting-monitoring and review.¹⁰⁷

Good practice: establishing ownership for sustainability in decent work and climate change

The programme titled Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh is another good example of establishing national ownership. Facilitated by UN Women, MoEWOE have taken a leadership role through national, regional and global processes of gender responsive migration governance. A template on standard terms of employment (STOE) for women migrant domestic workers, developed by UN Women under a regional initiative, serves as the basis for protecting the rights of women migrant workers. In 2016, MoEWOE issued a

¹⁰⁷ Project reports; Corporate Thematic Evaluation of Governance and National Planning, May 2019.

circular stating specific principles, based upon STOE elements, to be followed for the women migrant domestic workers to Oman. Following up on the approval of the Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy, the National Policy formulation and Action Plan developed by the GoB under ILO assistance, and with gender-equality inputs from UN Women. The national champions and government ownership are quite strong due to need-based partnerships with MoEWOE, Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), CSOs, UN agencies and donors in the programme.¹⁰⁸

Under the project titled Reducing Vulnerability of Women Affected by Climate Change through Livelihood Options, the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) has taken a leadership role in providing capacity-building training to 141 government officials, including planning focal points from 32 ministries and departments, to strengthen knowledge on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction. Subsequent to the project, BCAS has continued to play a role in advancing gender responsiveness in climate change interventions and research.¹⁰⁹

This degree of institutional ownership has not taken place with all interventions, however. In the EAW-BCPVAW programme, all four universities have established SHCCs and the intervention has strengthened university leadership. However, at an institutional level, there was low ownership due to absence of relevant stakeholders and duty bearers such as university authorities, the UGC or the SHCC itself in the planning and design phase of the project. For the IELD project, it is not yet clear whether the objective to establish sustainability by working through the WDF and LGIs as a pilot exercise has paid off. The WDFs appear to have identified the 3 percent LGI budget and taken ownership of the process to pursue it; however it seems unlikely this will be extended to other fund sources or that a more general ownership of the approach has yet taken place at all intervention sites. It will be important to continue working with WDFs to strengthen sustainability components.

108 ILO-Decent Work Evaluation report; Project reports

109 Final Project Evaluation - Reducing Vulnerability of Women Affected by Climate Change through Viable Livelihood Options (published in 2016); AWPR 2015

FINDING 17:

UN Women's support to capacitate partners and key national stakeholders with the necessary skills to strengthen gender equality commitments for advancing GEEW have provided an important institutional foundation for future work. However, there are a number of challenges to sustainability of benefits.

Capacity building is a central part of UN Women's activity, through support, engagement, and providing training to institutions, civil society and women's organizations. UN Women has made good progress in building capacity of partners and key national stakeholders in gender mainstreaming in various sectors. For instance, in **the DRR-CC** area of work, BCO played an integral role in supporting sustained expertise of partners and also in building capacity of some 141 government officials from 32 ministries and departments to mainstream gender equality in climate change adaptation policies and programmes within their respective Ministries and Departments.¹¹⁰

In the **WEE** thematic area, UN Women has made a distinctive contribution by providing capacity-building training to government officials including labour diplomats of the 41 destination countries for tailoring services and influencing gender-responsive migration policy. BCO also supported state parties (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), MoEWOE) to establish a Resource Centre at BMET that could provide: comprehensive information on overseas employment for women and men; pre-departure training of aspirant women migrant workers; and resources necessary to facilitate safe employment. Based on this progress to date, UN Women has continued its support to MoEWOE and other stakeholders, e.g. recruiting agencies, to promote and adopt gender equality and equity principles in their policies and practices.¹¹¹

Under the EAW-BCPVAW programme, UN Women has significantly contributed to capacity building of the project target groups, particularly students, teachers and administration in all four universities, to ensure effective and sustainable prevention of sexual harassment. Male and female teachers and students in all selected universities gained knowledge and skills to address gender equality and violence against women. Students organized campaigns, produced video documentaries

110 Final Project Evaluation - Reducing Vulnerability of Women Affected by Climate Change through Viable Livelihood Options (published in 2016); AWPR 2015

111 Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its application in Bangladesh (MTE & Final Evaluation) (ILO -DW) (published in 2015); AR 2016

and interactive events to build awareness among their peers and challenge myths and conventional thoughts around sexual harassment. BCO also provided technical support to UGC to draw up the minimum standards and monitoring mechanisms needed to implement the High Court Directive on Preventing Sexual Harassment on campus at the respective universities.¹¹²

Good practice: using training of trainer and mentor models for sustainable capacity in PVE

In WPS-PVE programme, one comprehensive module for the training of trainers has been developed to enhance the capacity of 21 women's groups at the grass-roots level to contribute to the NAP WPS drafting process. This training reported to enable them to educate and encourage women and youth in their communities with regards to the NAP WPS. In addition, 300 female students from two regional universities received mentoring through a comprehensive training to develop innovative social entrepreneurship models representing themes such as women's empowerment, social protection of women and a peaceful and cohesive society for all. These students have contributed to the research being carried out under the programme, and also established the Peace Café.¹¹³

Joint efforts by UN Women and UNDP are also reported as effective to some extent to bring indigenous women and police in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) together through strengthening the capacity of police officials on gender-responsive security services as articulated in the UN SCR 1325 and related resolutions.¹¹⁴

However, significant challenges remain in ensuring sustainability of these effects and benefits. In government contexts, the particular challenge is in the effects of staff turnover, and the resulting non-retention of trained individuals in positions in which they can use the training. For cross-ministry issues like DDR-CC perhaps this issue is less significant as trained officials may be able to use the training in different ministries. There may be a need to expand cooperation beyond usual stakeholders, and to build a new generation of gender equality champions,

112 Project Progress Reports; Final Evaluation of the Project titled 'Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women' (Published in 2019)

113 Interview with CSO stakeholders; Project progress report

114 AWPR 2016

including men and other non-traditional gender advocates. For instance, to strengthen institutional capacity UN Women can encourage partners to have more technical-level staff of line ministries and also can reach all civil servants through required course module in orientation with annual refresher opportunity, focused on gender equality and women's empowerment and analysis. In PVE, mentors who have received training in the approach are good potential champions for sustainability, but may need support to establish the context in which their capacity can be used.¹¹⁵

There are also challenges in sustaining results due to the short-term nature of UN Women support and reliance on external funding (e.g., BCPVAW, PVE). It is revealed in BCPVAW programme that to strengthen institutional capacity to sustain results, one university has taken initiatives to integrate a course requirement for all students to take on sexual harassment. Some stakeholders further suggested a VAW module for all faculties and student's orientation, which could reach many and be in place for a long time, instead of relying on champions to organize one-off events. One could also build on this, including for mentorship programmes.¹¹⁶

FINDING 18:

UN Women has significantly contributed to strengthening institutional mechanisms of monitoring capacity and accountability to ensure the sustainability of the results of interventions. However, challenges remain in promoting the sustainability of its results and outcome, because of low ownership, short-term programme, capacity gaps, etc.

UN Women works through partnerships and the engagement of internal and external stakeholders, including joint programmes and inter-agency co-ordination mechanisms, to ensure the sustainability of its interventions. For instance, in the EAWW-BCPVAW programme, UN Women provided technical support to establish the monitoring mechanism of UGC to ensure that the guidelines are being followed by the universities in their oversight. Henceforth, UGC will track the incremental changes in the functions of SH prevention committees and monitor on the functions of the new SHCC, through standard operating procedures, in all universities.¹¹⁷

115 Project progress reports; Interview UN Women, CSO stakeholders; AWPR 2018

116 Interview with CSO stakeholders

117 Project progress reports; Interview UN Women, CSO stakeholders; AWPR 2019; Final Evaluation of the Project titled 'Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women' (Published in 2019)

The WPS-PVE programme developed Community Action Groups involving various local stakeholders (e.g., women, adolescent girls, youth, Upazila chairman (community leader), local-level law enforcement, local government, civil society, political parties, media, religious institutions and leaders) as a watchdog mechanism to prevent and counter radicalization.¹¹⁸

National planning and budgeting, a priority area of work in Bangladesh, can potentially embed and sustain normative frameworks. The current MoWCA-led programme is directly contributing towards establishing a strong accountability mechanism to monitor the results of gender responsive budgeting in Bangladesh.¹¹⁹

However, not all attempts to institutionalize project objectives have been successful. Reasons for this include the challenges of sustaining capacity in specific, relevant organizations including government departments (discussed above) and in establishing ownership (see Finding 16). Uncertain ownership could, for example, reduce the sustainability of the BCPWAW project. In IELD, working with the WDF was intended to promote sustainability: the WDF as local government connected would allow it to continue requesting resourcing for women's empowerment. While the project has achieved some commitment from the WDFs in continuing to secure the 3 percent local government funding that is explicitly earmarked for women, and from LGIs to being responsive to this demand, some evidence from our primary data suggests that a lack of engagement of WDFs in some areas of decision making about the project mean that further work to engage the WDFs will be important to establish ownership of the intervention approach beyond this fund source.¹²⁰

118 Project progress reports; Interview with implementing partners.

119 Project progress reports; Interview UN Women, CSO stakeholders; AWPR 2019

120 FGD



Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce

6 Conclusions

6. CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1:

Strategic planning for the next SN will require a strong, coherent vision that can provide the basis for completing a transition from project-orientation to programme thinking, and counterweigh the risks inherent in higher exposure to non-core resources.

Based on: Finding 1; Finding 4; Finding 6; Finding 12, Finding 13

A number of findings suggest that, while there has been progress towards developing a programme outlook, the development of the new SN offers further opportunity to really strengthen BCO's position in this respect. [Finding 1]. This involves moving away from short-term operational work as far as possible, and securing a longer-term outlook for initiatives, as reflected in the newer programmes recently started under EVAW and DRR-CC. Finding 4 also suggests that achieving any sustained change in gender power relations, ultimately necessary for progress towards GEEW, requires a long-term outlook. Findings 1 and 3 suggest that the drive for non-core resource mobilization has, during the middle years of this evaluation, led to a series of short-term interventions that have had unclear outcome-level results and sustainability. While the demand for non-core resource mobilization clearly increases BCO's exposure to donor priorities and preferred timescales, a clear and accessible statement of intent, expressed in the medium and long term, would act as an important counterweight to these pressures.

New guidance for development of the SN makes consistent reference to a clear vision and strategy expressed in terms of a programme-level theory of change that articulates the synergies and linkages across the mandate areas.¹²¹ A clear, and accessible statement of intent, actively disseminated at local level along with the logic of steps and processes anticipated to reach it would meet the locally expressed perceptions of a gap in clear information on BCO's overall programme strategy (see Findings 6 and 13). As such, it could improve conditions for co-ordination across the UN by clarifying UN Women's medium-term objectives and roles. It would also likely improve internal confidence in knowledge and skills by clarifying what is expected to happen and how. Importantly, it could be used to leverage funding for the SN, guiding resource mobilization strategies so that these support focused, strategic work with clear objectives.

CONCLUSION 2:

The underlying expected role and objectives of operational work in particular needs clarification in the process of developing this statement of intent, as the expected roles as expressed to date do not consistently bear fruit. A clearer expectation of what this work sets out to achieve would provide a foundation for selecting of project or programmes that can be expected to be optimally fit-for-purpose.

Based on Finding 3; Finding 6; Finding 10

The provisional reconstructed programme-level theory of change, based on the text of the 2017-20 SN, suggests three underlying roles of operational work:

1. Creating direct impact in enhancing GEEW.
2. Creating pilot and catalytic projects demonstrating innovative or best practices and providing evidence of impact in order to influence larger development actors both within and beyond the UN family.
3. Creating evidence of causal processes to strengthen advocacy on specific issues and strengthen feedback loops with normative objectives.

Evidence from this evaluation suggests that, for a relatively small agency operating in a complex development sector among much larger actors, creating direct impact in enhancing GEEW (Role 1) is likely to remain localized unless accompanied by sustained policy advocacy in collaboration with others, as in the case of the decent work thematic area (see Findings 3 and 6).

Similarly, it suggests that the creation of pilot projects that can be used as models for other, more resourced, actors to scale up (Role 2) requires a long-term strategy. This is because making that model convincing requires time to generate clear results at an outcome level, to understand and verify results, and then to communicate these in the form of a model.

This means that the "GEEW impact" and "model" logics of operational work as suggested in the theory of change need qualifying to accommodate these insights. If feedback loops with normative objectives are to be strengthened, linkages with normative processes need also to be clear and integral to operational work.

121 UN Women Strategic Notes (SN) Guidance 2018

It is possible that the three logics of operational work expressed in the theory of change do not cover the whole spectrum of drivers. Increasing operational work has also been an important route for BCO growth over the last few years through the resource mobilization necessary to support it. This has also been an important factor in the BCO's increasing visibility and legitimacy among development actors in Bangladesh. It is also likely to have been a source of experience and learning among staff, which contributes to the legitimacy and reputation of the office and can act as an important foundation for securing and implementing future work, such as RMG (Finding 3).

If some or all of these factors also drive the selection of operational opportunities, then this should ideally be indicated in the overall theory of change. If not, then pilot initiatives should be treated with caution and only when there are long-term prospects for implementation, not least because they entail some risk in terms of effectiveness and particularly sustainability, especially when they only have short-term support. In addition, it suggests that strong and explicit integration of activities that draw on UN Women's comparative advantage should be a major component of operational activity. These comparative advantages are convening, policy and advocacy that draw on UN Women's access to government relationships and an international pool of knowledge (Finding 10).

CONCLUSION 3:

UN Women has taken an increasingly strong role in coordination on GEEW across the UN, but gaps remain, particularly in programme-level strategic coordination. UN Women could take stronger leadership in this, using the opportunity of the upcoming UNDAF formulation and gender scorecard, to bring the analytic power available across the agencies to bear on challenges in a coherent manner. This could include efforts to coordinate and rationalize ministry partnerships.

Based on Finding 2; Finding 6; Finding 7; Finding 16; Finding 18

Finding 2 suggests that UN Women's coordination initiatives have not yet translated into consistently strong overall UN coordination on GEEW at a thematic or programme level, with gaps especially in a coordinated strategy in relation to ministries, particularly: MoWCA; the Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Planning and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. This also applies to some CSOs involved in gender-related advocacy and in implementation. At the same time, Finding 6 suggests that for UN Women's overall effectiveness, coordination with other UN agencies is key, both in order to amplify budgets and to open up new spaces for influence on GEEW. Finding 7 suggests

that beyond formal joint programmes, consistently collaborative ways of working can also strongly support effectiveness for GEEW over the long term.

In combination these findings point to a clear rationale for UN Women to take a stronger lead in advocating for and creating new and stronger methods supporting high-level UN coordination, in line with ongoing UN reform initiatives. The upcoming UNDAF formulation offers a good initial focus for this and Finding 7 points towards promoting a twin-track approach of gender mainstreaming combined with a stand-alone gender related outcome to provide better foundation for GEEW focus and coordination. It might also be an opportunity to improve strategic coordination in relationships with key ministries, and perhaps also to develop joint strategies for managing the challenges caused by the persistent issue of staff turnover in ministries. This turnover tends to undermine the sustainability of current capacity building strategies, at least in the short term (Findings 16 and 18).

While this formal mechanism for coordination must be placed in the forefront of these efforts, other opportunities should also be maximized. This might include more focused attention to the potential of the Common Chapter mechanism in the Strategic Plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women to align country-level programme strategies. It will also be important to note that consistently collaborative relationships and interactions between UN agencies, whether formally embedded or not, have been an enabling factor for effectiveness in achieving results.

CONCLUSION 4:

There is scope for working more effectively to BCO's comparative advantage. This means: maximizing a focus on policy influence and advocacy; more consistent convening of CSOs and government in order to fully institutionalize the role of CSOs in policy monitoring; and drawing on international experience for knowledge and expertise.

Based on Finding 10, supported by Finding 3; Finding 8; Finding 9

Finding 10 suggests that while BCO's comparative advantage is quite well recognized, it is not currently fully maximized. Meanwhile, UN Women guidance for the preparation of SNs identifies internal capacity and comparative advantage as one of four key criteria that should all be fulfilled for the selection of focus areas for intervention. The other three are: international norms and standards call for the issue to be addressed; it is a major national challenge impacting women and girls; and

there is a favourable alignment of key actors to support UN Women.¹²²

A combination of relatively short project timeframes and the time lag between increasing budgets and staff recruitment during the mid-late part of this evaluation period have strained the capacity for more strategic issues that might leverage the normative and coordination mandates. At the same time, the absence of a Civil Society Advisory Group has perhaps hampered UN Women's ability to maintain consistent, productive relationships with CSOs, in particular women's rights CSOs, beyond the requirements for reporting on normative commitments and as implementing partners. This works against fulfilling the advantage of the BCO in convening CSOs and government and strengthening their institutional position in policy monitoring.

Working to the comparative advantage of UN Women also means establishing operational roles among other UN agencies in combinations that amplify strengths, especially where there is common ground between mandates.

The outlook in the BCO's EAW and DRR-CC/HA themes of work are promising. Longer-term programmes have started that draw on the agency's niche expertise in the case of EAW, and a joint UN approach in the case of NRP. However, in WEE an approach that draws on the comparative advantage has not yet been established (Finding 10).¹²³ Evidence from this evaluation suggests that doing so will involve: continuing close collaboration with ILO; close liaison with UNDP; and seeking an area of work which has current policy leverage and where women's rights CSOs are or can be engaged.

CONCLUSION 5:

Alongside UN Women's increasing visibility, strong leadership and increasing efficiency in terms of budget delivery, there are areas for improvement. Work over the last few years has included a few delays and there is some lack of confidence both internally and externally in the office's ability to carry out its plans. While ongoing staff recruitment may resolve some issues, it will be important to strengthen induction systems and continue training to bolster capacity and confidence.

Based on Finding 8, Finding 9, Finding 11

The period under evaluation here has included some challenging processes for the BCO. These include a

concerted effort that started during the first SN to step up to the Rohingya crisis and take a leading role in promoting and establishing gender-responsive humanitarian action in that complex environment. Later in the period, it also included a considerable, successful effort at increasing non-core resource mobilization to establish growth of the office and a consequent ability to work with more presence and effectiveness in the country context.

There are signs that these two processes have strained internal functioning to some extent. Work overload has been a significant issue, and there have been concerns about the BCO's ability to maintain its external reputation at current levels of capacity in both thematic and operational terms. At this point, the Cox's Bazar field office is now nearly fully resourced, and staff recruitment for both Dhaka and Cox's Bazar office to catch up with increasing programme demands are still under way. This may well resolve much of these pressures. However, it will be important to ensure that a strong staff induction process and support mechanisms, including periodical opportunities for peer review and knowledge exchange, are in place to unlock bottlenecks and prevent staff burn-out. The proposed Regional Office support for a functional review to optimize office structure should also set out to more precisely identify and address pressure points.

CONCLUSION 6:

Sharper and more consistent analysis of marginalized groups would improve understanding of layered forms of marginalization in the country, and therefore would support more precise targeting. It would also draw attention to the need for more systematic monitoring of the effects of operational and normative work on these groups.

Based on Finding 1, Finding 5 and Finding 14

Although BCO's human-rights and gender-equality approach is well embedded in most processes, a number of findings suggests it could be enhanced by sharper analysis of the specific marginalized groups targeted by interventions. Findings 1 and 14 note that there is some analysis in the SN of the effects of intersecting forms of discrimination among marginalized women, which might support strategic targeting. The numbers of women marginalized by poverty in Bangladesh have historically been high. But analysis based on economic wellbeing alone masks other, layered, types of marginalization as well as inequalities within broad economic categories. In addition, as Bangladesh moves into middle-income status, the need to distinguish and identify those left behind by economic advancement will become acute.

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123 As opposed to migration-related issues.

Finding 5 highlights that while many activities do explicitly aim to reach marginalized groups in general terms, disaggregated monitoring of which groups are actually reached by interventions is not systematic. Together these suggest a need for clearer targeting of specific groups as part of the overall strategic programming (Conclusion 1), as well as work towards more systematic disaggregation in monitoring. This should include both government monitoring and the reporting by implementing CSO partners.



Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce

7 Lessons learned

7. LESSONS LEARNED

The process has been designed to generate lessons for the ongoing decision making to structure and implement UN Women's country portfolio in Bangladesh. These lessons learned from programme implementation during the evaluation period, are integrated into the findings-conclusions-recommendations logic of this report.

Beyond these, the evaluation offers a few lessons with broader relevance for work towards GEEW in other contexts.

- Consistent with evidence from elsewhere, experience in Bangladesh shows that it takes time to change social norms around the status of migrant women workers at community level, and this may require direct community-level intervention alongside policy-level change. More generally, this also adds to a body of evidence that to achieve consistent and sustained change in power dynamics, interventions need to be long-term and to include efforts to institutionalize the systems that allow these changes to flourish at local levels.
- As Bangladesh moves into middle-income status, marginalization born of poverty will become less widespread. In this context, it will become more urgent to identify those groups excluded from the benefits of economic development and to monitor the effects of policy and projects on these groups.
- In view of the implied role of pilot projects in the reconstructed theory of change, and of the experience reflected here of implementing pilot projects over the last years, further thinking and guidance may be appropriate in UN Women and in the development sector more generally on what constitutes success for pilots, and how and under what conditions scaling up should be considered. Pilot projects represent the sector's innovation pipeline: A clear framework and criteria for assessing whether and how an innovation is working would be a promising asset.
- Like other UN Women country offices, the BCO has undergone considerable expansion over the last decade. This has involved growth in budget, growth in staff, and a wider range of operational and coordination work, alongside a less explicit growth in visibility and legitimacy in areas of comparative advantage. This

growth has in many ways been successful, but it also appears to have been somewhat ad-hoc and experimental. The balance between driving growth with new work and maintaining legitimacy and credibility has at times been challenging to maintain. This is a period of general UN Women expansion, and more interest is being paid to the role of gender relations in economic development. At such a time strategic guidance and support might be available to country offices to help structure and steer expansion processes over a medium- and long-term period.



Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaizer

8

Recommendations

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been developed on the basis of the evaluation's findings and conclusions. Articulating recommendations has included a consultative process involving BCO as well as the wider group of stakeholders represented by the ERG, with the intention of expressing these in ways that align realistically with BCO processes and structures.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Based on Conclusion 1 and Conclusion 2

Relevant to: senior management and broader team

Priority: high

Difficulty: medium

In preparation of the new SN, include a team-wide initiative to develop the current programme-level theory of change, and also develop impact-area theories of change that articulate with this. A statement of intent needs to describe both a vision of what is expected to change, and the steps required. This evaluation process has offered a provisional programme-level theory of change, developed from an external perspective to support the evaluation framework. Incorporating an internally owned and developed version of this would be an important process. Moving forwards, this framework could be used to periodically revisit the strategy and fine-tune ongoing programme decision-making.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Based on Conclusion 1

Relevant to: communications staff

Priority: medium

Difficulty: low

Following the development of the SN, consider combining this programme statement with the theory of change to produce an accessible communications brief for dissemination throughout the local UN system and among development partners.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Based on Conclusion 3

Relevant to: senior management and coordination staff

Priority: high

Difficulty: medium/high

Take steps in the UNDAF formulation process to ensure a gender-responsive evaluation that includes a strong analysis of the UN Systems' ability to coordinate on GEEW and promote a twin-track approach for GEEW across the UN, which includes high-level programmatic coordination on gender. Explore the potential of the Strategic Plan-level Common Chapter for framing or guiding this process. Moving forward, seek out opportunities for consistent collaboration with key sister agencies, especially but not only through gender units and gender focal persons, but also with heads of agencies and through formally or informally arising technical support opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Based on Conclusion 4

Relevant to: senior management and project management staff

Urgency: medium

Difficulty: medium/high

Facilitate the reinstatement of a strong civil society umbrella and advisory group to BCO, either drawing on the experience of the Civil Society Advisory Group or facilitating a similar locally owned group. Seek ways to convene this and government on issues related to focus operational areas. Help institutionalize a sustained role for this group in policy consultation and monitoring, and in providing evidence for policy advancement. Make relationships with CSOs more consistent, with an emphasis on women's rights organizations, beyond the framework of required processes for normative frameworks, and including these in strengthening support to government to implement CEDAW commitments.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Based on Conclusion 4

Relevant to: senior management and WEE project staff in liaison with other UN agencies

Urgency: high

Difficulty: medium

A defined role for WEE – the operational area in which UN Women's role is currently least defined - should be pursued, bearing in mind that the SN programme selection guidance stated work areas should synergize the dimensions of: a) a major national challenge; b) UN Women

comparative advantage; c) alignment of key national actors to support UN Women action. Promoting gender equality in employment and business as the economy expands continues to be a major national challenge. Working to the comparative advantage of UN Women would mean a focus on policy-level advocacy and synergises work across the mandate. Aligning with key national actors would mean liaising with UNDP and ILO in seeking a defined role in WEE, and selecting issues where women's-rights CSOs already are or can be engaged. This might be in focusing on tackling gender segmentation in the labour market and improving the quality of work for women, as UN Women has contributed to supporting in the context of migration. It might also be in advocating on including women's unpaid care work in initiatives targeting women's economic empowerment.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Based on Conclusion 5

Relevant to: all staff

Urgency: medium

Difficulty: medium

Use the proposed functional review process to further explore precise areas in which staff confidence could be enhanced and understanding of operational procedure amplified. Meanwhile, ensure that strong induction and support processes are in place for incoming staff, so that they can be facilitated as quickly as possible into full confidence of their thematic expertise as it aligns with BCO's programme of work, and into full understanding of how to manage and plan for operational procedures. Where possible, specifically link the definition and allocation of responsibilities to identified internal bottleneck processes and have regular review sessions to ensure that everyone is on the same page. This should form a part of deepening efforts for longer-term, sustained and targeted capacity building. Activities might include the following:

- continuing to strengthen strategies to engage colleagues in understanding any changes to operational policies;
- quarterly opportunities for knowledge exchange and critical progress review so that there is more programme thinking; and
- mock role-playing exercises to ensure that everyone, not just the programme leads, is confident in representing the organization in meetings.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Based on Conclusion 3

Relevant to: senior management and project staff

Urgency: medium

Difficulty: high

Consider addressing sustainability issues by: 1) involving relevant actors more substantially not only in pre-programme consultation but also in the design of programmes and in on-going decision making during implementation; and 2) by focusing on interventions which can contribute to sustaining capacity in institutionalized ways. In the case of interventions with government, the latter can mean establishing required gender-orientation course modules focused on gender equality in a particular sector. For intervention with other bodies, it can mean establishing routine gender and sexual harassment orientation, for instance among university students and professors.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Based on Conclusion 6

Relevant to: senior management and monitoring and evaluation staff

Urgency: high

Difficulty: medium/high

As part of strategic programme development, sharpen analysis of intersecting forms of inequality among women and base programme targeting on specific groups identified. In addition, enhance BCO's evidence on how far it reaches marginalized groups through operational work by ensuring that partners implementing projects are enabled and accountable to monitoring target populations in ways that disaggregate beyond sex.

In the longer term, continue to support government in the development of national monitoring and data collection processes (e.g. in Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) that disaggregate beyond sex so that layered marginalization becomes clearly visible. Integrate objectives for monitoring on this basis into GNP processes, such that the effects of gender-responsive budgeting can be reviewed and evaluated and policies modified on the basis of how far they address the needs of the most marginalized.

In 2000, 189 Member States adopted the Millennium Declaration, outlining a global vision for eradicating poverty eradication, fostering peace and security, protecting the environment, and achieving human rights and democracy.

Women's rights are recognized as a foundation for progress in all spheres. The Declaration pledges explicitly 'to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)'. And it further recognizes the importance of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as an effective pathway for combating poverty, hunger and disease and for stimulating sustainable development.

The Millennium Declaration also reconfirms the commitments made at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) and other major world conferences such as the Rio Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the Vienna Conference on Human Rights (1993), the Cairo Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Istanbul Conference on Human Settlements (1996).



Bangladesh Country Office
House #39, Road # 43, Gulshan-2
Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh
Tel: +88 02 9858593

www.unwomen.org
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