



PROGRESS OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN

Evaluation of UN Women's Flagship Report



Independent
Evaluation Office

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REPORT

EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S
FLAGSHIP REPORT:

Progress of the World's Women



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UN WOMEN

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1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Progress of the World's Women (Progress) is one of UN Women's flagship reports. Launched in 2000, the report aims to frame and explore key gender and women's rights issues for a broad audience of policymakers, advocates, and academics. Each report takes up a particular theme, and the key elements of the report include a conceptual framework, policy and data analysis, case studies, and policy recommendations.

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope

The evaluation identifies key findings and recommendations for UN Women's Director of Policy and the Research and Data (R&D) team to inform future decisions on the report. Secondary users of the evaluation are past and potential donors. The evaluation assesses how *Progress* reports have been used by a range of development actors and stakeholders, including governments, NGOs (particularly feminist and women's organizations), researchers, and bilateral and multilateral organizations. It also assesses the extent to which *Progress* reports have informed UN Women's policy messages, programming, and positioning. Recognizing that influence on policy processes is always complex and influenced by many factors, the focus is not on policy outcomes per se, although these are identified where they exist. Instead, the evaluation concentrates on the contribution that the reports have made to public policy processes, advocacy, and debates.

Objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess how *Progress* reports are used to contribute to policy debates at the global level, including in UN normative intergovernmental forums; and to policy discourse, advocacy, and public policy processes at regional and national levels.
- To assess the contribution of *Progress* to positioning UN Women as a knowledge hub on gender equality and establishing the organization as a global advocate on gender equality and women's rights.

- To assess the contribution of *Progress* reports for catalysing new programming or enhancing programme coherence at regional and national levels, within UN Women and among partners in the UN, governments and civil society.

To date, *Progress* has not undergone a formal evaluation process. This appraisal, therefore, aims to assess the contributions of the last two editions of *Progress* (2011–12 and 2015–16). While the focus of the assessment is on *Progress 2011* and *Progress 2015*, this report considers the reach and influence of all editions of *Progress*, since its inception, to inform the overall analysis of the specific reports in question and whether data is readily available or relatively easy to develop.

Five evaluation criteria provided the analytical framework for the evaluation: relevance, quality, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency. The evaluation was conducted between December 2015 and December 2016 by a team of two external evaluators, who were managed by the R&D team. Two external advisors contracted by the R&D team provided inputs on the inception report and draft evaluation report.

1.2 Methods

We adopted a utilization-focused approach, given the fact that the unit that is being evaluated (the R&D team) serves both as the primary audience for the evaluation and as the evaluation manager. In this sense, the evaluation takes learning as its primary purpose, rather than accountability—for which a

more independent management structure would be desirable. The R&D team played an important role in developing the Terms of Reference (TOR), including the evaluation criteria and some of the questions, and it continued to play a key role in the ongoing evaluation process. Care was taken to ensure that the evaluation design was in line with UN Evaluation Group standards and gender and human rights approaches.

The evaluation took a comprehensive approach in collecting data for answering the questions agreed to by the R&D team and to test the team's theory of change for how the *Progress* reports influence policies and programmes. These methods included: analysis of web and social media metrics for the *Progress* microsite and related products; development of quantitative and qualitative data on citations of *Progress* in the news media, in UN official documents, and in the academic literature; perception surveys of UN Women staff and external stakeholders; key informant interviews (KIIs) with UN Women staff and external stakeholders; academic peer reviews of *Progress 2011* and *Progress 2015*; and development of data on a comparable publication - UNDP's Human Development Report (HDR). Additionally, to examine *Progress's* theory of change, we developed six case studies of influence of *Progress 2011*, using process-tracing techniques to document the links (or lack thereof) between *Progress* and policy/programme outcomes.

Desk review involved a wide range of internal and public-facing documents from UN Women, as well as documents from external stakeholders. R&D team documents included all *Progress*-related products for *Progress 2011* and *2015* (e.g., the report, fact sheets, press releases and policy briefs); project documents (ProDocs) for *Progress 2011* and *2015*; reports to donors; communications and launch plans; and internal work products, including lessons-learned documents, expenditure tracking and so on. UN Women documents included corporate strategic plans, results frameworks, and communications strategies; non-R&D section programme documents; and other UN Women public reports. Content from external stakeholders included documentation related to the six case studies, as well as publications, citing *Progress* (e.g., UN official

documents; news media stories; and civil society organization publications).

In all sampling strategies, we ensured a gender-responsive human rights-based approach, as appropriate. For surveys, the full population of UN Women staff was surveyed; outside of UN women, the sampling was convenience-based, relying partly on the lists of invitees to launch events of the most recent two *Progress* reports, as well as other lists deemed relevant after review (e.g., OECD-DAC Network on Gender (GENDERNET) members, invitees to the launch of other UN Women reports and people appearing on relevant lists provided by UN Women's civil society section). The surveys were conducted in English, Spanish, and French. Sampling for KIIs was purposive, intended to gather substantive detail and to surface a variety of institutional and professional perspectives. Within UN Women, we interviewed all team members working on *Progress*, as well as a cross-section of staff directly connected to the report (e.g., contributors, peer reviewers and organizers of launches). We also identified and interviewed HQ-based and field-based staff who were not directly associated with the report. Outside of UN Women, semi-structured interviews were conducted with external experts who advised on *Progress 2011* and *2015*, as well as with a cross-section of target groups for the last two editions of *Progress*. Sampling of case studies related to *Progress 2011* was purposive, with the goal of selecting those that: 1. Had relevance to the issue areas of *Progress 2011*; 2. Could offer rich detail about use or nonuse of *Progress*; and 3. Could feasibly be undertaken in English, Spanish, French, or Portuguese, and within the time frame of this evaluation. All survey/interview lists and case studies were decided in consultation with UN Women. To ensure a degree of independence and impartiality, the consultants reserved the right to make final decisions on the lists and added people according to their discretion.

In the analysis and write-up phase, a mixed-methods approach was applied, involving a blend of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis methods through triangulation.

1.3 Context

In 2000, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) launched *Progress* as its flagship. Seven issues have been published to date (2000, 2002 volumes 1 and 2, 2005, 2008, 2011 and 2015). The reports have differed substantially from one another in theme, approach, framing, and content. Production methods also have varied, impacting their reception within the organization. The 2000, 2002, and 2008 reports were produced by an internal team drawn from existing policy staff. The 2005 report was produced almost entirely by an external team of researchers. Starting in 2009, a dedicated team was created to produce the *Progress* report, including a manager, a statistician, and a programme associate. In 2011, this team was folded into the newly created unit, R&D section. As of October 2016, the R&D team includes 11 staff members, six of whom are on the dedicated *Progress* team. See comment box.

Progress 2011 resources, duration and activities

The projected budget for the 2011 report was \$2,522,430 (from January 2009 to December 2010, or 24 months), with actual expenditures estimated at \$2,527,980 (from January 2009 to September 2012, or 45 months). The 2011 edition of *Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice* examines progress towards women's access to justice. The content is based on extensive desk research. It included 14 background papers and case studies commissioned from academics, practitioners, and activists, as well as data and statistics compiled by the report team, encompassing original gender data not previously available, such a global dataset on laws on violence against women (VAW) and women's representation in courts. A globally-representative expert advisory group guided the research.

The 2011 edition of *Progress* garnered coverage in high-quality print and broadcast media in all regions across the world. Nine global media-launch events took place in seven countries over three days in July 2011, followed by more than 40 regional advocacy and outreach events. All sparked debate on issues, including: women's rights in the new constitutions of Egypt and Kenya; access to justice for women migrant workers in Tajikistan;

indigenous women's rights in Ecuador; and gender and transitional justice at the International Criminal Court. The report was translated into French and Spanish, and 80,000 copies were printed (50,000 in English, 20,000 in Spanish, 10,000 in French); approximately 34,000 of these were distributed through UN Women's comprehensive networks to stakeholders.

Progress 2015 resources, duration and activities

The projected budget for the 2015 report was \$2,366,007.60 (from January 2013 to December 2014, or 24 months), with actual expenditures estimated at \$3,211,568 (from January 2013 to December 2015, or 36 months). *Progress of the World's Women 2015–16: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* focuses on the realization of women's economic and social rights from a human rights perspective. The content is based on desk research, 38 research papers from among the most prominent feminist scholars in the world, and data and statistics gathered by statisticians on the R&D team. Overall, the report sourced the best available data on the themes that *Progress 2015* covered, including gender and social security and presented data in accessible and innovative ways. Original analysis was also commissioned.

On 27–28 April 2015, the global launch of the report took place simultaneously in seven cities, including Alexandria, Bangkok, London, Mexico City, Nairobi, New York, and Sydney. A high-level event at the International Labour Organization (ILO) followed in May 2015 for Geneva-based United Nations agencies and the intergovernmental community. In June 2015, the report was launched in Dakar for Francophone countries. A global media strategy was aimed at replicating the extensive coverage received by the previous report in both traditional and new media. *Progress 2015* scaled up social media engagement on Facebook and Twitter. The report and summary were produced in English, Spanish, and French. Twenty thousand copies were printed in English and 7,000 copies were printed each in Spanish and French; 13,100 of these were ultimately distributed to partners and stakeholders with the UN system and civil society. Electronic versions on memory sticks also were distributed to reduce the number of printed copies.

Project goals/objectives

While there is a coherence of intention and content running through the various editions of the *Progress* report during the past 15 years, they should not be considered a single “project” in the typical sense of a concrete and bounded intervention. We make this judgment based not just on the fact that the reports deal with different themes over time, but also because they have been produced under different circumstances and have targeted different subject matter experts. With this context in mind, we follow the TORs for this evaluation in examining three outcome areas identified by the *Progress* team. The TORs suggest that the *Progress* report can be expected to have:

- Supported the reframing of key development issues from a feminist perspective, contributing to global policy debates.
- Supported advocacy at global, regional and national levels by gender equality advocates in civil society, in governments and in the media, by providing access to relevant and compelling evidence (concepts, data, and policy analysis).
- Supported UN Women to build more coherent programming, both internally and among its partners in the UN system, governments, and civil society.

The *Progress* team identified that the ultimate outcome in producing *Progress* as influencing policy change at global, regional, and national levels to create an enabling environment for women and girls to realize their rights. In service of this ultimate outcome, the intermediate outcome is that the analysis contained in *Progress* be used in public debates and as evidence in policy processes to influence policy reform and programme formulation that is responsive to advancing gender equality and women's rights.

1.4 Findings

Progress is mainly relevant to the need for authoritative data and arguments to support gender equality advocates' work.

“Relevance” in this context refers to the extent to which the reports' contents and formats address the priorities and needs of *Progress*'s target groups. Relevance was primarily captured through internal and external surveys and through key informant interviews. Relevant documents were also consulted.

KIIs and perception surveys suggest three critical needs for a research product, such as *Progress*, among gender equality advocates:

- Authority or legitimacy to help position their work: The need for bring recognition and legitimacy to feminist positions or views that may be marginalized within a field or institution.
- Data and arguments for advocacy: The need for supplementary evidence for making the case for gender equality or inclusion.
- Knowledge for action and decision-making: The need for examples of good practice upon which users can draw to develop policies and programmes or to take other action.

We found that *Progress* is mainly relevant for providing legitimacy to feminist views that may be seen as marginalized and for furnishing data and arguments to support gender equality advocates' work. For example, KIIs suggest that the report is relevant to UN Women staff needs for a serious, credible piece of research to position themselves and UN Women as legitimate interlocutors with other expert agencies. We found that although there are certainly instances, both internally and externally, where *Progress* is relevant to action and decision-making on programmes and policies, it was less relevant to this need than to the others. Some people stress that it would be a mistake to think of *Progress* as a “blueprint” for programmatic action, and that it can best be used as background information for thinking through issues, conducting analysis,

or offering high-level guidance against which to reflect on their programmes. Others observe that the recommendations in the 2015 report were not specific enough to be actionable in a programmatic sense.

In terms of the themes, people who say that they are familiar with the reports' contents express the view that the thematic choices are relevant, particularly when a theme aligns with their own work. The survey data bears this out. For the most recent two reports, the themes were relevant internally to UN Women's work. There were existing programmes on access to justice and economic empowerment that were in need of deeper conceptualization, and those programmes have continued to the present, represented in the new flagship programmes approach. Externally, there was also agreement on relevance. Women's access to justice was (and remains) an under-researched area and is particularly weak in relation to statistical data. A recent corporate evaluation of UN Women's work on economic empowerment noted the relevance of the subject to global debates, including UN Women's niche in promoting a rights-based approach to that work.

Progress has always taken the format of a printed report. In recent editions, it has been accompanied by a microsite on the UN Women web site, progress.unwomen.org, as well as an array of supplementary materials for different audiences, including the policy briefs series, regional fact sheets, infographics and so on. We found that the long format of the report is more relevant to some audiences than others; many people note that because the report findings were backed by a substantive piece of research it rendered them more authoritative and legitimate. To compensate, however, for the fact that some audiences are unlikely to pick up or read a report of this length, in recent years the *Progress* team has created a diverse set of products additional to the report. Both KIIs and survey respondents welcome further experimentation with different ways to present the report's key findings.

In terms of factors affecting the relevance of the *Progress* reports, we found that UN Women's human resources, in particular the expertise of the R&D team,

is the most important factor contributing to the report's relevance. Factors that limit the relevance of the report include: the need for a more clearly defined target audience, the global scope of the report, and the lack of internal capacity to refresh data, external resistance to feminist ideas, as well as rights-based approaches on some issues.

The research in *Progress* is robust and authoritative.

UN Women defines "quality" in the TORs in relation to three interconnected, yet separate, dimensions: robustness, relevance, and authoritativeness. As we already addressed relevance, we excluded it from this part of our investigation. "Robustness" is a term of art that refers to the existence of multiple independent sources for the same research findings; it is typically achieved through grounding of research in recognized scientific methods. Authoritativeness is a more general dimension, relating to the trustworthiness and reliability of the research, as well as to its ability to command attention and respect. The TORs also mention other criteria of importance to the UN Women team, including conceptual clarity, robustness of data and presentation, and persuasiveness of the policy analysis and presentation.

As quality relates to social judgments of professional communities, we commissioned nine anonymous peer reviews for the 2011 and 2015 reports. For each report, three or four standard peer reviews were received, along with a review that took an intensive look at a sample of figures, statistics and data in each report. We also examined perceptions of quality in our internal and external surveys.

In surveys, readers who claim some familiarity with the reports' contents give the report high marks across the board on quality. In particular, they express high confidence in the quality of the data presented, which receives the highest scores from both internal and external audiences. There is some perception of weakness in quality, relating to the originality of the reports. This perception was borne out in the peer reviews, which noted that the reports demonstrated originality in the innovative ways they

brought together an impressive array of knowledge, rather than in the proposal of new arguments and “fresh” evidence.

On robustness and authoritativeness of research and data analysis, the evidence base that the 2011 and 2015 reports drew upon for the main text (excluding figures and statistics) was generally robust, and research and analysis were authoritative. In particular, summaries of the literature and case studies were accurate and well done. In the case of the 2015 report, the reviewers disagreed on whether Chapter 4 on macroeconomics should have had a stronger evidence basis to support its argumentation.

On conceptual clarity, the 2015 report was stronger than the 2011 report. For the 2011 report, greater conceptual framing to bind together the disparate aspects of women’s access to justice and a description of the basis for inclusion and exclusion of evidence would have been welcome. The conceptual framework for the 2015 report was judged to be clear.

On robustness of data analysis and presentation (figures and statistics) was generally solid. The 2015 report, however, was judged to have more robust data analysis and presentation than the 2011 report. The greater availability of data on the theme of the 2015 report, compared to the 2011 report, played a part here. In addition, differences in the quality of the statistics could be interpreted as an improvement in quality assurance processes over time.

On persuasiveness of policy examples and recommendations, there were mixed findings for both reports. Many examples were strong and persuasive, but there might be a need in the future to ensure that evidence is not being cherry picked and to explain the limitations of the evidence.

The most important factor affecting quality is the level of human and financial resources available to produce research. Other factors include the availability of existing data, the use of peer review mechanisms and tensions between goals of the publication (normative versus empirical aims).

Progress’s reach among gender equality advocates is good but could be furthered by addressing limitations.

In the TORs, UN Women redefined “effectiveness” in relation to qualities that have specific relevance to *Progress* as a flagship research publication (rather than a programme per se). These qualities are reach and influence. We analyse reach based on a variety of sources and methods: news coverage; analysis of references in UN official documents; Google Analytics for the *Progress* microsite; Facebook and Twitter data; analysis of documents relating to communications strategies and launches; KIIs; and survey data.

The reach of a publication is typically defined by the number of people who are aware of it. This element plays a role in UN Women’s theory of change, in which having an adequate reach is important, i.e. putting information and arguments into the hands of people who may be able to leverage or use them. We found that potential awareness of the report through various media—e.g., news stories, social media, UN Women web site—stretches into the millions, while access to the report itself is more limited to thousands or tens of thousands. In general, it is difficult to know how many people have accessed the report. Additionally, *Progress* readership is concentrated in developed and middle-income countries, such as the United States, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Spain and Brazil. Attempts to reach audiences through launch events in lower-income countries did not generate increased traffic on the *Progress* microsite, and print rather than digital versions might still be more relevant in some countries.

The survey, KIIs and extensive key word searches on the web yielded good information on the types of actors that are picking up *Progress*’s messages. We focused on *Progress 2011*, since it is too early to have a good picture of the extent to which *Progress 2015* has been picked up. Indeed, a diverse range of media, civil society, multilateral and other actors are referring to *Progress* in their news stories, reports and blog posts, speeches and so forth. We do not have any rigorous way to count most of these instances, nor the resources to do content analysis on many of the

instances we have found. As UN Women adopts digital object Identifiers and enables tracking algorithms, like Altmetrics, it will improve its ability to track these kinds of links and citations.

A critical vector of uptake and dissemination concerns those closest to the report, namely: UN Women policy and programme staff. Sixty-eight per cent of staff who have some familiarity with the *Progress* reports say that they are using it to communicate publicly. Indeed, the survey shows that the report is widely used for talking points and speeches. Further, KIIs suggest that the Executive Director and other senior staff rely on it for messages in speeches about access to justice and economic empowerment.

One area for which we have a count and content analysis is “usage” of the *Progress 2011* report in UN Official Documents. *Progress 2011* has been directly cited in 37 official documents since its appearance, including 13 Secretary General reports, 11 reports linked to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and seven Special Rapporteur reports (as well as one UN Human Rights Council established working group report). Of these 37 documents, content analysis shows that roughly half contain substantive references to the report’s ten recommendations—rather than passing mentions or no mention.

Another key vector of uptake concerns people working on gender within other multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Development Law Organization (IDLO), and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as well as donor agencies. KIIs suggest that this group welcomes data and arguments to bolster their own position within agencies where they might feel or be marginal—these views have been expressed for both *Progress 2011* and *2015*. The survey, however, suggests mixed uptake among this group. We surveyed people who are part of the DAC Network on GENDERNET and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), and they reported being slightly less aware of the report than the general set of respondents.

Uptake with other actors has happened, but is anecdotal. We have found grey literature or blog posts, citing *Progress 2011*, from a wide range of leading international civil society organizations. There are instances in which influential opinion makers, such as Duncan Green and Nicholas, Kristof, picked up messages from *Progress 2011*. Launch events have involved senior policymakers as panelists at the national level. Limitations on the scope of our research means that we have little sense for the extent to which inclusion of such officials resulted in a wider uptake or dissemination of *Progress 2011*.

The global media have picked up the report, owing to an outreach strategy centered on deliberate outreach to the press. Highly influential news outlets and global wires covered the launch of the two most recent editions of the *Progress* report, including *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNBC*, *Time*, *The Huffington Post*, *Press Association*, *Reuters*, *Dow Jones*, *Bloomberg*, *Forbes*, and many others. Content analysis for *Progress 2011* shows that the stories are substantive, but most repeat the press release rather than developing original content. Apart from media outreach to the general public (whose impact we did not assess), we did not find evidence that the report was reaching beyond UN Women’s existing or natural constituencies. Awareness and uptake among general target audiences in the “issue” areas of access to justice or development have been mixed, and there is scope for improvement.

Survey data shows that the primary way people hear about *Progress* is via the UN Women web site. Interestingly, news stories and social media do not rank high as methods of hearing about the report—indeed, word of mouth (“from a colleague”) is a more important source than these two. The microsite is a critical piece of the outreach strategy for *Progress*; however, its potential is strongly limited by its static content and the low level of resources committed to developing it. *Progress 2015* made a positive showing in social media, even beyond the launch date, owing to creative use of infographics. Further improvement could be made through more outreach to influential people on social media.

Publishing a high-quality report is not sufficient on its own to influence policies and programmes.

Progress has made an impact when additional factors contributed, such as engagement of potential end users (inside and outside of UN Women) and the clear intention (and strategy) to take part in particular debates.

To assess influence, we draw on KIIs, survey data, document review and a set of six case studies related to *Progress 2011*. The case studies are also used to examine how influence happens and under what conditions; in this sense, we use them to analyse the theory of change for *Progress*. We note here that while we gathered data for both the 2011 and 2015 reports for these questions (and other reports, as relevant), we believe that it is still too soon to make judgments about the influence of the 2015 report, since only one year has passed since its publication.

When it comes to global policy debates, it is important to remember how many factors influence the spaces for such debates. A single research product rarely reframes an entire debate or an entire space; instead, a good product adds to a body of research and to momentum around an issue. “At best, research is only one element in the fiercely complicated mix of factors and forces behind any significant governmental policy decision. Policies in most governments, most of the time, are the outcomes of all the bargains and compromises, beliefs and aspirations and cross-purposes and double meanings of ordinary governmental decision-making.”¹

Three case studies, examining the influence of *Progress 2011* on UN Women policies and programmes, yielded fruitful data for analysing the R&D team’s theory of change. That theory states that the production of high-quality research, released through a range of channels, will lead to uptake and influence on policies and programmes. The case studies suggest that the theory is partially correct, but that there are many

other factors in uptake. Indeed, the empirical literature agrees that simply publishing research—high-quality or not—is unlikely to lead to uptake on its own.

The case studies examined the influence of the report on an attempt to create a joint programme on women’s access to justice with UNDP and OHCHR, as well as its influence on two UN Women country programmes: Ecuador and the State of Palestine. In assessing influence, it is important to understand the uptake of research in two distinct ways: 1. Informing decisions on specific interventions; and 2. Informing a decision-maker’s understanding of the context. We found that although there are instances of direct programmatic influence (e.g., with the joint programme), *Progress*’s internal influence mainly contributes to the shaping of UN Women staff’s contextual understanding of the issues (which may indirectly inform programme and policy interventions). Moreover, its influence on policies and programmes has been stronger when potential end users have been involved early in the research process and/or when there is already receptivity to research among end users. In general, however, use for programme development tends to be of limited to moderate significance, as many other factors have been in play in the development of programmes at the country level. *Progress*, it seems, is used primarily today as a support and evidence. Influence could be strengthened with a clearer corporate statement on the role and positioning of the report in UN Women’s work.

Progress 2011 was picked up in some relevant global debates, mainly in the form of contributing to a body of research and contextual understanding, which is helpful in advancing issues of access to justice—and women’s access to justice in particular. Through two case studies, we investigated *Progress 2011*’s influence on a set of global forums or debates to which we might have expected it to contribute: the development of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation on Women’s Access to Justice. We did not find evidence of significant impact on global debates in terms of direct and identifiable shifts in positions. We found, instead, a more general positive

¹ Fred Carden, *Knowledge to Policy: Making the Most of Development Research* (IDRC, 2009), 19.

result. *Progress 2011* added to the research on access to justice, an issue that has been receiving increased attention in recent years. Influence on global debates would be enhanced if there were an intent and an accompanying strategy—including a corporate-level strategy for UN Women—to use the report to affect specific debates.

A critical gap, apart from making group presentations, was the lack of a clear intention to engage these debates, either from the R&D team or from UN Women. *Progress* has been used in national and regional policy processes in a number of instances, but we do not have enough information to assess the significance or extent of this use. *Progress* has been employed similarly in programme development in a number of specific instances, but we do not have enough information to assess the significance or extent of this use.

Progress has made a contribution to the positioning of UN Women as a credible knowledge provider among those who are aware of it, making a positive difference in readers' perceptions of UN Women as a source of knowledge, evidence and data. A sixth case study on the influence of *Progress 2011* among gender statistics experts supported this finding. Specialists (e.g., in gender statistics, development, or access to justice) might be further drawn to UN Women as a knowledge hub if they are directly engaged by the R&D team and receptive to gender approaches, and if the data in *Progress* were regularly updated, motivating them to return on a periodic basis.

Several key factors have been contributing to *Progress's* effectiveness. Among them are the expertise and skill of the dedicated *Progress* team; the perceived quality of the report and, in part, the degree to which the team has engaged potential end-users and intermediaries (e.g., in advance through the advisory group, or later through other means); and the extent to which the team has leveraged its outreach opportunities and adapted to an evolving information environment with new products and communications platforms. Insufficient levels of financial and human resources for meeting the many objectives of the report, especially

around programme and policy influence, represent key factors constraining effectiveness. The absence of clear positioning within corporate strategy and description of roles and responsibilities for *Progress* outside of the R&D team constitute another limiting element. Other constraining factors include the infrequency of the report, the static web site and the narrow focus of outreach on the launch period.

Regarding corporate strategy in effectiveness/influence of the report, both internal and external KIIs commented on the fact that they were not clear on the role for *Progress* at the strategic level. As the questions for this evaluation suggest, *Progress* has tried to be all things to all people. It would benefit from a well-defined position within corporate strategy that clearly identifies the functions it should perform vis-à-vis policy, programmes, and communications. It is unfair to place unrealistic expectations on the report or on a small R&D team.

Progress continues to be cited

Sustainability refers to the continued relevance, influence and reach among *Progress's* target groups after its initial publication and launch. We found that *Progress's* themes have remained relevant over time, and the reports continue to be cited, with varying frequency depending on the report, by those already aware of them and working in the same general area of expertise. One report has proven to be particularly sustainable, which is *Progress 2002* (v.1).

Some of the key factors affecting sustainability include the level of uptake of *Progress* by UN Women policy and programme units (who are critical vectors of sustainability within the institution); the degree to which thematic topics remain relevant to global agendas; and the fact that the data in the reports become outdated (and therefore can no longer be referenced). In the case of *Progress 2002* (v.1), a report that contained little statistical data, we could speculate that strong internal uptake and the growing relevance of women, peace, and security in global normative spaces have contributed to its sustainability.

Progress has achieved efficiencies in many aspects of its work, in spite of “start-up” challenges and resource gaps.

Overall, *Progress 2011 and 2015* were both managed roughly in accordance with the originally-intended resource allocation, with the exception of much higher salary costs than projected. The publications experienced production delays, but were still published within six to seven months of the planned target date. Inefficiencies, where these existed, were linked to the fact that the R&D team was largely new, had many demands on its time unrelated to *Progress*, and was working within a transitioning organization.

Progress is developed with relatively fewer resources than other research-oriented flagships (e.g., *Human Development Report*, (HDR)) and might, therefore, be judged efficient. However, lack of adequate resources in areas, such as production and outreach, has led to inefficiencies, as staff might not have adequate time or needed skills to undertake all activities. Comparing *Progress*'s budget with the HDR's suggests it would be difficult to publish a more frequent and predictable report at the current level of resource allocation and maintain the same level of research quality. While run efficiently, in general, *Progress* encountered some inefficiencies in processes and expenditures.

1.5 Conclusions

Conclusion 1

Progress made a contribution to the reframing of some key development issues from a feminist perspective; however, contributions to global policy debates have been uneven and ad hoc.

The *Progress* reports have consistently chosen thematic areas where feminist perspectives are either under represented (e.g., *Progress 2011*) and/or undervalued (e.g., *Progress 2015*) in their respective professional communities. Among UN Women's networks globally, most people have some level of awareness of the report and of its contents. Actors all over the world have found the report relevant to a wide range of purposes—most notably in positioning themselves in an external environment that might not take gender seriously, advocating for specific policies, advancing practical ideas to include gender in programmes, developing global gender statistics, and more.

Following the empirical literature on research uptake, we have emphasized that it is important to understand the uptake of research in two distinct ways: informing decisions on specific interventions and informing a decision-maker's understanding of the context. We found that *Progress* is more likely to influence the latter than the former. We also emphasized that policy influence is always overdetermined, and that it is unusual for a report to single-handedly shift a debate appreciably.

The R&D team has made a positive effort through launches, media/social media engagement, and presentations to groups like CEDAW, the World Bank, OECD, the UN Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group (RoLCRG), donor agencies, and many others to influence this space. Ultimately, though, the R&D team's theory of change makes the assumption that others will perform such translation and advocacy without much prompting from UN Women. But this may rarely be the case. The assumption that by just putting the report out there, others will pick it up and shift the debate, does not hold up well. In the current information environment, in which people are

overloaded with information, this kind of translation typically only happens with what are perceived to be strikingly original arguments or evidence, or with the use of high-level mediators to champion the ideas. Had a more coherent institutional approach been in place for the *Progress 2011* report, we might have seen a greater degree of influence on SDG 16, for example. An alternative example of how this translation process works concerns *Progress 2002 (v.1)*, which we did not examine closely. This edition helped to frame the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and was headlined by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

We observe that it is not within the R&D team's mandate or functional role to take on the added tasks of translation and advocacy in the global policy space—nor do they currently have the resources to do it. In contrast with a larger flagship like HDR, *Progress* has a fraction of the staff (3 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff for *Progress* versus 18 staff for HDR) and no staff specifically to handle outreach or production. It would be unfair to hold the R&D team responsible for this level of outcome. These functions might be performed better by other parts of the house or by external actors. Currently, UN Women does not have a clear positioning of *Progress* in its corporate strategy, including definitions of roles, responsibilities, and processes in relation to translating and advocating for the messages in the report. It is hard to see how *Progress* can be expected to contribute significantly to debates at the global level without a more coherent approach at the corporate level. We note that the corporate communications strategy makes passing reference to *Progress*. Outreach strategies also focus most attention on the narrow window of launch, rather than striving to find relevance to unfolding events and key policy windows. Additionally, a strategy to leverage high-level mediators who can act as translators and mediators of the report, if done more proactively, could help to propel the ideas into new spaces. R&D has tried this approach in the selection of its Advisory Group members, and it could be further developed.

Conclusion 2

To an extent, *Progress* has supported gender equality advocates in civil society, in governments, and in the media at global, regional, and national levels by providing access to relevant and compelling evidence (concepts, data, and policy analysis) for this primary group of end users. The report's influence has been constrained by factors relating to: the lack of a sustained outreach strategy to specific target groups aligned with the current information environment; issues relating to audience receptivity to rights-based or gender-based arguments, as well as reports that do not present "original" evidence; and the lack of frequency of publication or refreshing of data. Regional and national influence has been constrained by the global nature of the report; influence at this level may be better performed by regional, rather than global reports, such as those being created in Latin America.

One of the key strengths of the *Progress* report is its relevance to the needs of gender equality advocates, among others, who are seeking to position themselves in an environment that may not take their arguments seriously. The availability of a serious piece of research with the UN Women imprimatur makes a positive difference to this group, in particular, and *Progress's* data and arguments have been widely cited as support of such position-taking. More generally, all audiences describe a thirst for data and evidence, and positively associate *Progress* with both of these. The report has been picked up by Special Rapporteurs and in high-level UN reports. It has been extensively covered in the media. In addition, *Progress* has been cited by a wide range of relevant civil society actors, especially at the global level; donor and multilaterals refer to it. In short, the report is being used.

The findings also suggest that the reach of the publication could be broader. In particular, it is reaching UN Women's networks to a fair degree, but likely not far beyond them. This needs to improve. Target groups tend to be too general, such as "media," or "academics." For *Progress 2011*, and *2015*, there was little discussion of mapping the specific justice and development constituencies that the report should target, whether through launches or other actions, outside of the big

multilaterals (e.g., World Bank, OECD). Additionally, people cannot draw on the report if they either do not know about it or if it is not available in formats that align with their information preferences. Where *Progress* has experimented with formats—in particular, infographics and social media—it has benefited. Long-format reports might be in decline, but many are still produced with success. Strategizing about outreach has not been integral to the process as a whole, but rather considered mainly towards the end and in relation to a narrow period of launch. Of course, all of this is limited by the level of human and financial resources that can be allocated to these activities. As mentioned, there is no dedicated staff to handle these functions. It is, therefore, difficult to imagine how they could be performed effectively and efficiently, unless handled by other parts of the house.

The question of audience also relates to the observation that while many audiences enthusiastically embrace the messages in *Progress*, others may be less receptive. The R&D team is aware of this. Part of their objective is to produce research that may challenge existing orthodoxies from a feminist point of view. This might naturally favour the women's movement as the main target audience and subordinate others. It raises a tension among objectives, especially if *Progress* is expected to reach outside of UN Women's natural constituencies. Other audiences may be seeking new data and evidence, but since *Progress* is not resourced at the level required for this, its use will be constrained with these audiences.

The lack of frequency and unpredictability has constrained the use of *Progress*. If it appeared more frequently and predictably, people would be more apt to seek it out and less likely to forget about it. While it is positive that R&D has succeeded in getting other agencies with more capacity to update certain statistics, the fact that most data goes out of date hinders use and sustainability.

Progress is developed for a global audience. Many people at the national and regional level say this is useful because it enables them to link their own context “up” to the international level and “out” to other country contexts. Additionally, where people

feel that their own region is adequately represented, they are happy; where they feel it is not, they are less likely to use the report. A global report can only do so much to be relevant to all regions and countries. Some countries (Brazil) and regions (Latin America/Caribbean) have taken matters into their own hands by starting to develop their own *Progress* reports, which might be a welcome supplement to the global report.

A final note concerns the role of the report in positioning UN Women as a knowledge hub. *Progress* contributes to this positioning because it is seen as substantive and credible. Its data and arguments are valued and used. The contribution could be improved with more sustained outreach, greater frequency of publication (which would drive audiences more consistently to UN Women), and regularly updated information, among other things.

Conclusion 3

In many instances, *Progress* has supported UN Women to build more coherent programming. The significance of this support, as well as the durability of the outcomes, has been uneven. Outside of UN Women—in the UN system, governments, and civil society—*Progress* does not appear to be widely used to support more coherent programming. It may be unrealistic to expect a report of this nature to have influence on programmes as its primary outcome.

Progress 2011 played an important role in proposals for a joint programme on women's access to justice with UNDP and OHCHR. It supplied a framework for UN Women's policy work on access to justice and helped country programmes to position themselves externally or to strengthen their programming internally. *Progress 2015* also envisioned strengthening the conceptual basis of UN Women's work on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Uptake by staff working on WEE appears to be uneven so far, but the situation is still evolving. Policy work might align with some messages (e.g., social protection and equal work) in *Progress 2015* more than others (e.g., macroeconomics), as some in the development field

have been resistant to UN Women’s distinctive rights-based approach up to this point.

The thematic choices for recent editions of *Progress*, therefore, have focused on areas of UN Women programmatic engagement with the idea of strengthening them. Several factors have constrained the report’s relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability in this regard. The choice of theme itself can be limiting, since focusing on one area of UN Women’s work might not be seen as relevant to people working in different fields. For the next *Progress*, R&D is focusing on a more crosscutting and intersectional issue—the family—which may have broader relevance to different areas of work.

As mentioned above, the unclear position of the *Progress* report in relation to corporate strategy (the Strategic Plan) and structure hinders the report’s contributions to programming. It is agreed that *Progress* is “our flagship knowledge product.” What remains unclear, however, is the role it plays or should play within the institution in relation to policy advocacy, programme development, communications, and so on. The result is that UN Women staff can have very different perspectives on and expectations for the report.

Shifting priorities within the institution and transitions at the senior level also have had an impact. For example, they have affected the prospects and sustainability of the joint programme on women’s access to justice that might have been a key outcome to which *Progress 2011* contributed. The long timelines associated with producing *Progress* can put its potential for programmatic influence at risk; what is a priority one year may not be as relevant three or four years down the line.

As mentioned above, *Progress* is more apt to influence decision-makers’ contextual understanding than it is to influence decisions on specific interventions. Externally, we found some incidence of *Progress* being used for programme development. We lacked information to assess how extensive this application was. Our analysis suggests that this may not be a realistic expectation for a global flagship report. Findings show that the report is primarily being used for positioning,

public communications, and advocacy. While using it for developing programmes is not unheard of, it is less common.

Conclusion 4

The R&D team has adequate resources to produce a high-quality research publication like *Progress* every few years. With some improvements in efficiency—fewer background papers, streamlining internal approvals, and improving the production process (e.g., working with a standard layout design), among others—*Progress* could be published on a somewhat more regular basis. Because, of staff deficits in production and outreach, however, *Progress* does not have the resources needed to publish the same quality of publication more frequently to improve its outreach.

Progress has been produced roughly in accordance with the terms set out in its ProDocs. The 2011 and 2015 reports had slight delays in their launches (6-7 months) for a variety of reasons, some of which were outside of the R&D team’s control. For the both the 2011 and 2015 reports, we noted that salary costs were significantly underestimated in the original ProDocs. There were a few areas where costs might have been saved (mainly: background papers, layout design, printing, mailing), but most costs were in line with the original budget, and there were no unduly worrisome expenditures.

A comparison of budgets between *Progress* and HDR yielded a few notable results. The cost per publication is roughly \$6 million per HDR versus roughly \$2.9 million per the *Progress* report. However, if we compare costs on a yearly basis, the difference is stark: the salary costs on a yearly basis for HDR are seven times higher than those for *Progress* (about \$3,500,000 versus roughly \$450,000), and the overall budget is more than seven times higher (about \$6 million for HDR versus \$850,000 for *Progress*). *Progress* has a FTE of three staff, whereas HDR has 18 staff.

This comparison tells us something about relative performance and what logically can be expected. Unlike HDR, *Progress* has no staff dedicated to production or to outreach, and it spends far less on salary.

If UN Women wishes for the R&D team to continue producing the same kind of high-quality, long-format, and data-rich reports—even if the data is not “original”—it is unlikely the team can continue to produce the report more frequently and ramp up outreach without additional resources.

1.6 Recommendations

We have organized our recommendations around four issues that the evaluation suggests are most critical to prospects for *Progress* to realize its potential as a relevant, high-quality, effective, sustainable, and efficient product for positioning UN Women as a knowledge hub, contributing to policy debates, and informing programming (if the objective of “informing programming” continues to be relevant):

Recommendations to strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of the contents of the *Progress* reports:

- a. The R&D team should continue to improve the quality of the *Progress* reports. Possible steps include: conduct a systematic literature review at the start of every *Progress* to assess the quality of existing evidence (not just an annotated bibliography), which could be a publishable research product in itself; conduct anonymous, paid peer review of chapters and a sample of the statistics to ensure quality; focus on evidence basis for key claims and practical examples in boxes; put a methodological annex in the back of the book or make it available online, for those who want it; continue to ensure adequate framing and conceptualization—*Progress* should hold together.
- b. The R&D team should identify low-resource ways to deliver the original research and messages that many readers want to see more of, even if it is a matter of just a few statistics. It also should make data downloadable. Moreover, it should choose a set of statistics to refresh each year and launch as an infographic.

- c. Finally, UN Women regional and country offices, in coordination with the R&D team, should pursue opportunities to translate substantive contents to the regional/national level through the development of regional/national *Progress* reports. Such reports should be encouraged by senior management and included in strategic planning documents.

Recommendations to strengthen and innovate in the communications and outreach strategy of the *Progress* reports:

- a. The R&D team should develop a written engagement strategy for UN Women staff in deciding on the theme; consider them as the primary end-users; and develop a process for analysing their most important information needs in their work, rather than asking them to take part in the research itself (which they may not have time or capacity to do).
- b. The R&D team should identify external target audiences more clearly for each report; start to engage them before the research is finished; map early on the UN Women staff and other relevant stakeholders, who are likely to be potential end-users; invite high-profile actors in target groups to be on the Advisory Group; and develop a research blog that updates potential end-users on the process, e. g., choice of theme, composition of the advisory group, selection of background paper topics, striking findings from initial research, and problems and challenges.
- c. The R&D team should identify early on the strikingly original statements that the report will make, so that they can start building them into an outreach strategy.
- d. Senior management should appoint a small team, or at least one senior staff member, to lead the task of identifying policy windows and target audiences, as well as translating the report into advocacy actions in the global policy space.

e. The R&D team, working with the Communications section and the team appointed by senior management, should develop a written, medium-to-long-term sustainable outreach strategy that identifies relevant global forums and debates, as well as entry points for advocates and influential people to act as mediators to translate and promote *Progress's* messages. This strategy should ensure early engagement with media, including providing copies of the report and access to the web site well in advance; identifying new formats and continued strong engagement with social media; including an agreement that Communications should mine the report on a periodic basis, as relevant issues emerge in the news, to provide journalists with other opportunities to cite the report throughout the year; and ensuring that Communications associates Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) with all publications in order to enable Altmetrics.

f. The R&D team should develop a robust monitoring strategy to track key, performance indicators qualitative information on uptake at the national, regional, and global levels and content analysis of important citations of the report.

Recommendations to clarify and improve the positioning of *Progress* within UN Women:

- a. The R&D team should develop a new theory of change, based on findings in this evaluation.
- b. Senior management should develop a document that clearly explains the role and position of *Progress* in relation to the strategic goals of the institution, including its normative mandate. These roles and positions should be clearly integrated into the next strategic plan. This document should include an indication of whether senior management supports *Progress*

continuing to take a distinctive rights-based approach and the extent to which linkages and alignment with Policy, Programme, and other relevant units should be expected (or not expected) It also should clearly outline the expected roles and responsibilities for aligning *Progress's* messages across the institution. In addition, the document should identify specifically what level of financial and human resource R&D team requires to adequately perform the functions expected of it.

- c. Communications should develop a strategy for a more sustained engagement with the flagship beyond the launch period.

Recommendations to improve resource allocation and efficiency:

- a. The R&D team and senior management should have a formal, facilitated discussion about the resource commitment needed to improve the outreach and production functions for *Progress*, alongside its current commitment for a periodic high-quality research publication. They should also reach a formal agreement about the timetable for sign off, production, and launch for each *Progress* report.
- b. R&D team should develop a resource plan (including staff costs) for creating a more dynamic web site, including provisions for updating content with blog posts, interesting new data or research, and more. This plan should be shared with senior management.
- c. The R&D team should reduce the number of background papers commissioned. It should consider combining resources to commission a smaller number of papers that might deliver more of the kind of strikingly original research and messages many readers wish to see.

2.

OVERVIEW

Progress of the World's Women (Progress) is one of UN Women's flagship reports. Launched in 2000, the report aims to frame and explore key gender and women's rights issues for a broad audience of policymakers, advocates, and academics. Each report takes up a particular theme. Main elements of the report include a conceptual framework, policy and data analysis, case studies, and policy recommendations.

Progress was launched by the UNIFEM as its flagship in 2000. Seven issues have been published to date (2000; 2002 volumes 1 and 2; 2005; 2008; 2011; and 2015), on the following topics:

- 2000: *Progress of the World's Women*. The first edition of the report focused on gender equality and globalization
- 2002: Volume 1: *Women, War and Peace*, focused on the gender impacts of conflict and the role of women in peace building; Volume 2: *Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*.
- 2005: *Women, Work and Poverty*, analysed women's paid employment, providing new data on informal employment and demonstrating the need for policies to promote decent work and social protection.
- 2008: *Who Answers to Women* focused on governance and accountability systems in politics, service delivery, the market, the justice sector, and in international aid and security institutions.
- 2011: *In Pursuit of Justice* used a human rights framing to assess progress on legislation to promote gender equality and reform of justice systems to ensure women can access justice for violations of their rights.
- 2015: *Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* focused on women's economic and social rights, and provided a conceptual framework for substantive

equality. It analysed policies on work, social protection and social services, and macroeconomics.

The reports have each been quite different from one another thematically and in approach, framing, and content. How the reports have been produced has also varied, which has impacted their take-up within the organization. The 2000, 2002, and 2008 reports were produced by an internal team drawn from existing policy staff. The 2005 report was produced almost entirely by an external team of researchers. In 2009, a small team was established in UNIFEM to provide devoted capacity to produce the report. After the launch of the 2011 report, this team became part of UN Women's new R&D section within the Policy Division and produced the 2015 report.

2.1 Project overview

The *Progress* reports appear at different intervals, from two to four years, with the most recent taking four years to complete. Generally, the work that goes into each report includes:

- Commissioning and bringing together high-quality research, innovative data analysis, compelling case studies, and stories of change to provide evidence on how policies and programmes can advance women's and girls' rights.
- Compiling and producing an authoritative and attractive policy-relevant report and associated materials (e.g., policy briefs), which reframe key

policy issues from a feminist perspective and can be used by a broad range of stakeholders to make the case for change.

- Implementing a dynamic outreach and advocacy strategy to help to place the research and analysis in the hands of allies and stakeholders involved in policy advocacy and programme formulation on gender equality at global, regional, and national levels.

Starting in 2009, a dedicated team was created to produce the *Progress* report, including a manager, a statistician, and a programme associate. In 2011, this team was folded into the newly created R&D unit. As of October 2016, the R&D team includes 11 staff members, six of whom are on the dedicated *Progress* team.

Progress 2011 resources, duration and activities

The projected budget for the 2011 report was \$2,522,430 (from January 2009 to December 2010, or 24 months), with actual expenditures estimated at \$2,527,980 (from January 2009 to September 2012, or 45 months).² The 2011 edition of *Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice* examines progress towards women's access to justice. It takes on the paradox of significant national and external investments to improve the rule of law and justice systems in many countries, juxtaposed against the difficulties that women have in accessing justice worldwide in systems that are inherently gender-biased. It shows how women and countries are reshaping justice systems, so that women can navigate the justice chain and take advantage of a more gender-responsive legal framework. It showcases legal precedents that have changed women's lives, both at national and global levels, and highlights the central role that women play as agents for change as legislators, lawyers, campaigners, and community activists.

² We note that although the ProDoc started in January 2009, there was no staff and therefore no work until June 2009.

The content is based on extensive desk research; 14 background papers and case studies commissioned from academics, practitioners, and activists; and data and statistics compiled by the report team, which includes original gender data not previously available, such as a global dataset on laws on violence against women (VAW) and women's representation in courts. The effort was guided by a globally-representative expert advisory group. The 164-page publication is divided into several sections. Part I, "Making Justice Systems Work for Women," consists of four chapters that examine the justice system with regard to legal reform, the justice chain, plural legal systems, and justice for women in conflict and post-conflict settings. Part II provides a review of the Millennium Development Goals from a gender-equality perspective, demonstrating that further progress depends on additional action to achieve women's rights. It is followed by ten recommendations that would make justice systems work for women. *Progress*, fifth edition's annexes offer a selection of data, showing gender-equality indicators and the status of gender-sensitive legislation in different spheres.

The 2011 edition of *Progress* garnered coverage in high-quality print and broadcast media in all regions across the world. Nine global media launch events took place in seven countries over three days in July 2011, followed by more than 40 regional advocacy and outreach events. These events sparked debate on issues, including women's rights in the new constitutions of Egypt and Kenya; access to justice for women migrant workers in Tajikistan; indigenous women's rights in Ecuador; and gender and transitional justice at the International Criminal Court. The report was translated into Spanish and French, and 80,000 copies were printed (50,000 in English, 20,000 in Spanish, 10,000 in French); roughly 34,000 of these were distributed through UN Women's comprehensive networks to stakeholders.

Progress 2015 resources, duration and activities

The projected budget for the 2015 report was \$2,366,007.60 (from January 2013 to December 2014, or 24 months), with actual expenditures estimated

at \$3,211,568 (from January 2013 to December 2015, or 36 months). *Progress of the World's Women 2015-16: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* focuses on the realization of women's economic and social rights, from a human rights perspective. It develops a framework to conceptualize substantive gender equality, with three inter-related dimensions: redressing women's socioeconomic disadvantage; addressing stigma, stereotyping, and violence; and strengthening women's voice and agency. The report makes the case that by simultaneously addressing these dimensions, it is possible to transform existing structures and institutions that constrain gender equality. The framework is used to assess the extent to which social and economic policies support progress towards substantive equality and the realization of women's rights in practice.

The content is based on desk research, 38 research papers from among the most prominent feminist scholars in the world, and data and statistics gathered by statisticians on the R&D team. Overall, the project sourced the best available data on the themes that *Progress 2015* covered, including gender and social security, and presented the data in accessible and innovative ways. Original analyses were also commissioned. Among them, for example, was an analysis of labour market surveys, over time, in 16 countries that informed Chapter 2 of the report; analysis of the Luxemburg Income Survey data for 37 high- and middle-income countries to ascertain the impact of social transfers on women's poverty; and analysis of the Chilean pension system to present an example of how pension policy design can penalize women.

The global launch of the report took place simultaneously in seven cities, on 27–28 April 2015: Alexandria, Bangkok, London, Mexico City, Nairobi, New York, and Sydney. A high-level event at the ILO followed in May 2015 for Geneva-based United Nations agencies and the intergovernmental community. In June 2015, the report was launched in Dakar for Francophone countries. A global media strategy aimed at replicating the extensive coverage received by the previous report in both traditional and new media. *Progress 2015* scaled up social media engagement on Facebook and Twitter.

The report and summary were produced in English, French and Spanish, with 20,000 copies printed of the English report, and 7,000 copies each of the Spanish and French reports; 13,100 of these were ultimately distributed to partners and stakeholders in the UN system and civil society. Electronic versions on memory sticks also were distributed to reduce the number of printed copies.

2.2 Project goals/objectives and theory of change

While there is a coherence of intention and content running through the various editions of the *Progress* report over the past 15 years, the reports should not be considered a single “project” in the typical sense of a concrete and bounded intervention. We make this judgment based on the fact that the reports deal with different themes over the years, have been produced under very different circumstances, and have targeted different subject matter experts. As one example of this difference, prior to 2011, the reports were created by UNIFEM, whereas the 2011 and 2015 were published by the larger, unified, new agency, UN Women.

This is to say that it makes little sense to evaluate the report against a pre-existing set of goals and objectives that have changed over time and (especially with earlier reports) might not have been explicitly articulated.³ In the TORs for this evaluation, the *Progress* team articulates a theory of change it wants the evaluation to test. The team notes that this theory was first developed in recent years, in funding proposals for the *Progress 2015* report.

3 In the ProDoc for the 2011 report, the goal and “anticipated results” are directly linked to outcomes and outputs in UNIFEM's Strategic Plan 2008-11; there are no stand-alone goals or objectives for the report. This is fine, but it confirms the idea that the goals and objectives have changed over time, as they change to align with the operative strategic plan. See UNIFEM, “Project Document: *Progress of the World's Women 2010-2011*” (17 February 2009), sections 3 and 4. By contrast, the ProDoc for the 2015 report includes a results framework with goals, outcomes, and indicators specific to the 2015 *Progress* report. (Ultimately, monitoring data for the results framework was not produced.) See UN Women, “Project Document: *Progress of the World's Women 2014*” (June 6, 2013), pp. 6-8.

With this context in mind, we follow the TORs for this evaluation in examining three outcome areas identified by the *Progress* team. The TORs suggest that the *Progress* report can be expected to have:

- Supported the reframing of key development issues from a feminist perspective, contributing to global policy debates.
- Supported advocacy at global, regional, and national levels by gender equality advocates in civil society, in governments, and in the media, by providing access to relevant and compelling evidence (concepts, data and policy analysis).
- Supported UN Women to build more coherent programming—both internally and among its partners—in the UN system, governments, and civil society.

These outcome areas have the merit of aligning with the various articulations of objectives/results that have surfaced in document review of ProDocs and reports to donors.

The *Progress* team has also offered a theory of change that is based on the assumption that research and knowledge have the potential to inform policy discourses, debates, and processes. It is driven by the notion that strong research-based analysis can put new issues on the agenda, re-frame existing issues, add substance and credibility to advocacy, and highlight evidence to show what policies and programmes work, and what doesn't work and why.

According to this theory of change, the substance of the report in terms of the quality and robustness of research and analysis is critical. There are several other factors, however, that contribute to the uptake of the findings in relevant policy spaces, including:

- Channels through which findings are presented and key messages are communicated.
- Audiences to which these findings are targeted.
- Spaces in which the report is presented and used, including intergovernmental and civil society forums at global, regional, and national levels.

- Stakeholders and allies who use the report and communicate it to larger audiences, serving as multipliers of its messages.

In developing this theory of change, a series of three suppositions was identified:

- (1) That if gender equality advocates can access credible, evidence-based, policy- and programme-relevant research; and,
- (2) Global debates direct attention to the structural underpinnings of gender inequality; and,
- (3) Spaces are created for debate and action to advance gender equality in national, regional and global forums, then,
- (4) Gender equality advocates will have the tools and opportunities to influence policy and programmatic change in favour of women's rights; and,
- (5) Decision-makers will be more likely to strengthen laws, policies and programmes to advance gender equality and women's rights; because
- (6) They will have authoritative, high-quality and comprehensive evidence upon which to base policies and programmes, and
- (7) Will be held accountable by informed constituencies of gender equality advocates.

Based on this theory of change, the *Progress* team identified that the ultimate outcome in producing *Progress* is to influence policy change at global, regional, and national levels to create an enabling environment for women and girls to realize their rights.

In service of this ultimate outcome, the intermediate outcome is that the analysis contained in *Progress* be used in public debates and as evidence in policy processes to influence policy reform and programme formulation that is responsive to advancing gender equality and women's rights.

2.3 Purpose and audience of the evaluation

The evaluation identifies key findings and recommendations for UN Women’s Director of Policy and the R&D team to inform future decisions on the report. Secondary users of the evaluation are past and potential donors.

2.4 Evaluation objectives and scope

The evaluation assesses how *Progress* reports have been used by a range of development actors and stakeholders, including governments, NGOs (particularly feminist and women’s organizations), researchers, and bilateral and multilateral organizations. It also assesses the extent to which *Progress* reports have informed UN Women’s policy messages, programming, and positioning. Recognizing that influence on policy processes is always complex and overdetermined, attention is not on policy outcomes per se (although these are identified where they exist). Instead, the focus is on the contribution that the reports have made to public policy processes, advocacy, and debates.

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess how *Progress* reports are used to contribute to policy debates at the global level, including in UN normative intergovernmental forums; and to policy discourse, advocacy, and public policy processes at regional and national levels.
- To assess the contribution of *Progress* to positioning UN Women as a knowledge hub on gender equality and establishing the organization as a global advocate on gender equality and women’s rights.
- To assess the contribution of *Progress* reports to catalysing new programming, or enhancing programme coherence at regional and national levels, within UN Women and among partners in the UN, governments, and civil society.

To date, *Progress* has not undergone a formal evaluation process. This evaluation therefore aims to assess the contributions of the last two editions of *Progress* (2011–2012 & 2015–2016).⁴ While the focus of the evaluation is on *Progress 2011* and *Progress 2015*, it should consider the reach and influence of all editions of *Progress* since its inception. If data is readily available or relatively easy to develop, this would inform the overall analysis of the specific reports in question.

2.5 Gender and human rights approach

Given the fact that the subject matter and the evaluand (the report being evaluated) are specifically gender-related, and that the project’s purpose is to advance gender equality, the evaluation naturally took a gender approach. We did not, however, develop any specific application of a gender analysis framework, as this issue was not raised by UN Women in the inception phase. We, however, ensured that there was adequate gender representation of interviewees and survey participants. In terms of human rights, the target groups for the report tended more toward elite intermediaries (e.g., policy actors), rather than the ultimate beneficiaries (e.g., vulnerable or marginalized women). Consequently, we were unlikely to be interacting with vulnerable or marginalized women as part of this evaluation. Insofar as we had occasion to interact with groups for which a human rights or intercultural approach is required, we took steps to meet linguistic and cultural needs, and to respect cultural differences and confidentiality.

2.6 Evaluation criteria and questions

UN Women highlighted the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability as the most salient to this evaluation in its TORs. The agency also added a specific set of questions on reach, quality, and influence. After discussion with UN Women in

⁴ We will refer to these reports as *Progress 2011* and *Progress 2015* in this evaluation.

the inception phase, we agreed to reorganize UN Women's evaluation criteria and questions as follows:

Relevance

- Do target audiences regard the themes and content of the report to be relevant?
- To what extent is the format of the report relevant to the needs of target audiences?
- What are the key internal and external factors that contributed to or constrained relevance?

Quality

- Does the report contain robust and authoritative research and data analysis?
- To what extent does the report meet peer expectations for conceptual clarity, robustness of data analysis, and presentation?
- To what extent does the report meet peer expectations for and persuasiveness of policy examples and recommendations?
- What are the key internal and external factors that contributed to or constrained the quality of the report?

Effectiveness

- How many people in which spaces have been able to access the report?
- What kinds of stakeholders are picking up and repeating the messages of the report?
- Do they include those who are not UN Women's existing (or natural) constituencies and/or allies?
- To what extent is the report reaching the audiences targeted in its issue areas and objectives?
- Are the modalities of promoting the report effective in reaching its target audiences?

- To what extent has the report informed UN Women's policy messages, programming, and positioning?
- To what extent has the report contributed to the positioning of UN Women as a knowledge hub on gender equality?
- Has the report been used in programme development? To what extent is that use significant?
- Has the report been used to influence global debates (e.g., in normative forums such as the Human Rights Council and the CSW; the development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and speeches/articles by global leaders, including senior UN staff)? To what extent is that use significant to advance gender and human rights issues?
- To what extent have *Progress* reports been used in policy processes at national and regional levels as a source of knowledge, evidence, and data?
- What are the key internal and external factors that contributed to or constrained effectiveness?

Sustainability

- Has the report's usefulness in influencing policy and programmatic processes been sustained beyond the immediate period of the launch?
- What are the key internal and external factors that contributed to or constrained sustainability?

Efficiency

- To what extent have the reports been developed in a timely and efficient manner and managed in accordance with the originally intended timeline and resource allocation?
- To what extent were the outputs achieved with the lowest possible use of resources/inputs (e.g., funds, expertise, time, administrative costs.)?
- What are the internal and external factors that affected implementation and management?

2.7 Evaluation design and data collection methods

A full explanation of the methodology can be found in the Inception Report, Annex 1. Given the fact that there was little or no monitoring data, the evaluation design is a post-test with no control group. The evaluation focuses mainly on issues of performance and process, as opposed to impact. As such, the design focuses mainly on answering descriptive (Who used *Progress*?) and normative questions (To what extent was the reach of *Progress* sufficient, compared to agreed standards or similar products?), rather than answering questions on cause-and-effect relations (Did *Progress* cause X policy change?). Our approach was systematic. It collected and drew on a range of qualitative and quantitative data and information sources, and critically reviewed and synthesized evidence. Multiple data sources for each evaluation question allowed us to triangulate findings, and we made efforts to assess the strength of the evidence underpinning our findings.

We adopted a utilization-focused approach, given the fact that the unit that is being evaluated (the evaluand) serves both as the primary audience for the evaluation and as the evaluation manager. In this sense, the evaluation takes learning as its primary purpose, not accountability, or which a more independent management structure would be desirable. That unit played an important role in developing the TOR, including the evaluation criteria and some of the questions, and continued to play a key role in the ongoing evaluation process. The utilization-based approach, in which teams themselves decide the primary evaluation questions and can feed learning from evaluation directly into their processes, is suitable for these types of situations.

To answer the evaluation questions, we used the following data collection methods:

- UN Women document review: ProDocs; reports to donors; communications and launch plans;
- Peer review reports: External, anonymous reviews from four experts for each of the 2011 and 2015 reports.
- External document review: Media analysis for *Progress 2011* and *2015*; content analysis of official UN docs, citing *Progress 2011*; agendas for high-level meetings; and more.
- Web and social media traffic: Page views; Facebook metrics (e.g., likes, shares, comments); Twitter metrics (e.g., retweets, likes); backlink data; and others.
- Data on a set of comparator publications: Gathered statistics on use/reach, as well as budgets for UNDP's HDR; we also gathered comparative statistics for two relevant UN Women publications: *The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014* and the *Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2015)*.
- Perception surveys in English, Spanish, and French: Gathered perception and use data from a wide range of target audiences: UN Women staff and external policymakers; government officials; UN staff; civil society representatives; and academics.
- Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs): Gathered perception and use data from target audiences, including 43 UN Women staff and 50 external observers.
- Case studies: Following a process tracing methodology, carefully documented the links between *Progress* and policy or programme outcomes in six brief case studies. The case studies were developed using desk research and Skype interviews with key observers and participants.

2.8 Sampling

In all sampling strategies, we ensured a gender- and human rights-based approach, as appropriate. Since the reports mainly targeted elite mediators (e.g., policy actors), rather than the ultimate beneficiaries, we did not interact with vulnerable or marginalized groups as part of this evaluation.

- Citations, social media data, and media analysis: As far as the data permits, we endeavored to include citation and social media data for all editions of *Progress*. Media analysis was performed for *Progress 2011*; while we intended to do the same for *Progress 2015*, the citations compiled by UN Women were not adequate to do the content analysis. We performed content analysis on citations of *Progress* in official UN documents for *Progress 2011*. Citations for all editions were tracked in Google Scholar.
- Surveys: The full population of UN Women staff was surveyed. Outside of UN Women, the sampling was convenience-based, relying partly on the lists of invitees to launch events of the most recent two *Progress* reports, as well as other lists deemed relevant after review—e.g., GENDERNET members, invitees to the launch of the *Global Study* report, people appearing on relevant lists provided by UN Women’s civil society section. We wished to use the sampling method of relying on launch invitation lists because it appeared to be the most efficient for capturing the pre-defined target audience for *Progress*. The surveys were conducted in English, Spanish, and French.
- KIIs: Sampling for KIIs was purposive, intended to gather rich substantive detail and to surface a variety of institutional and professional perspectives.
 - UN Women KIIs: Within UN Women, we interviewed all team members working on *Progress*, as well as a cross-section of staff directly connected to the report (e.g. contributors, peer reviewers, organizers of launches). We also identified HQ-based and field-based

staff who were not directly connected to the report for interviews. For these interviews, we tried to focus on people who have been working at UN Women for at least five years and who represent a cross-section of HQ and field offices.

- External KIIs: Semi-structured interviews also were undertaken with external experts who advised on *Progress 2011* and *2015*, as well as a cross-section of target groups for the last two editions of *Progress*. In addition to external advisors for the report, this included staff at other UN agencies, donor agencies, UN Missions, regional and multilateral organizations, think tanks, civil society networks, and academics. Sampling was purposive, designed to gather a range of perspectives from people who are well positioned to offer substantive comment on the evaluation questions.
- Comparator publications: Sampling was purposive, to look mainly for “like” publications appearing in or around the same time as the 2015 report, such as flagship reports (HDR and UN Women’s other flagship report *World Survey on the Role of Women and Development 2014*) and the *Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325* (2015).
- Case studies: Sampling for case studies related to *Progress 2011* was purposive, with the goal of selecting cases that: 1) had relevance to the issue areas of *Progress 2011*; 2) could offer rich detail about use or nonuse of *Progress*; 3) could feasibly be undertaken in English, Spanish, French, or Portuguese, and within the time frame of this evaluation. Case studies were selected in consultation with the R&D team, after gathering data from select KIIs and the survey.

All survey/interview lists and case studies were decided in consultation with UN Women. The consultants reserved the right to make final decisions on the lists to ensure a degree of independence and impartiality. They also added people according to their discretion.

2.9 Methodological and data limitations

The objectives for the reports have varied over time, as indicated in the ProDocs (2009 and 2013) and the reports to donors (Government of Spain and the Hewlett Foundation) made available to the evaluators.

Whenever evaluation is undertaken on a project that spans such a long period of time, there are general problems related to institutional memory and staff turnover, difficulty in finding documentation, challenges in remembering events that took place, and so forth. We found that although this evaluation focused on the most recent two reports, documentation and people's memories for the 2011 report were not always strong. Moreover, although the R&D section and the Communications Section did produce some data, they were limited. For example:

- There is little or no relevant web or social media data for the 2011-12 report, because the needed Google Analytics code was not added to the progress.unwomen.org subdomain; the launch of a new UN Women web site during that time means that old data were lost.
- UN Women has never tracked downloads, which requires addition of a special line of Google Analytics code to each download web page (Note: the R&D team wanted to track downloads, as the ProDoc for the 2015 report states that # of downloads is an indicator. The back end of the UN Women corporate web site, however, was not set up for such tracking).
- UN Women staff did not systematically track outcomes or instances of influence of the reports.
- UN Women does not use Digital Object Identifier (DOI) numbers, which is the standard for registering and tracking digital documents; without a DOI, it may not be possible to map fully the web-based circulation of the report.

- There is limited documentation on regional/country level dissemination of the 2011 report, including lists of invitees to and participants in the launch events.

These gaps mean, in general, that we had to reconstruct data and try to find examples of use after the fact, based on the recall of interviewees and survey respondents.

We had originally envisioned developing data on comparator publications external to UN Women, including UNDP's *Human Development Report (HDR)*, the World Bank's *World Development Report*, UNICEF's *State of the World's Children*, and UNFPA's *State of the World's Population*. Unfortunately, this data was much more difficult to get than we had envisioned in spite of considerable communications with these sister agencies. In the end, we were only able to get the needed data for the HDR.

Finally, we had also envisioned performing content analysis of media stories for both the 2011 and 2015 reports. We completed the analysis for the 2011 report. The clipping file for the 2015 report, however, was gathered by UN Women through a different method, which yielded an incomplete and highly duplicative set of stories—making the file unusable. While these stories were reviewed, content analysis was not performed.

The impact of these limitations on our investigation was the following:

- We were not able to send the external survey to the sample we had originally intended. In the inception report, we envisaged sending the survey to anyone who had been invited to a launch event for the 2011 and 2015 reports. However, these lists, in most cases, either did not exist or were otherwise unavailable. In some cases, for example, we had to build new lists based on invitations to more recent events in New York; in others, we asked country offices to send out the survey as a blast to their current list. Therefore, the fundamental conception for the survey as being related to invitees to launch events has changed. Instead, we have surveyed as

many people as possible from UN Women’s R&D section and Civil Society section lists.

- We had to develop a Plan B for the comparisons we originally wanted to make between *Progress* and similar reports. While still using the information from HDR (a much larger and more established publication), we also generated information on one of UN Women’s other flagship reports, as well as a major new report, *The Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*.
- Developing the case studies for *Progress 2011* was difficult and time consuming, owing to gaps in memories, staff turnover, and lack of access to documentation. Case studies are not as robust as they could have been given these constraints.

Finally, in making judgments about reach and influence, we note that there is a general lack of standards to evaluate social scientific research uptake outside of academia. Even with limited indicators, such as number of citations, we have little in the way of standards. We do have some comparison citation data for UNDP’s HDR and the World Bank’s *World Development Reports* from a recent evaluation of the HDRs. We still do not have agreed-upon standards for what “good” or “poor” performance for these types of reports should be.

3.

FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance

Relevance in this context refers to the extent to which the report’s contents and formats address the priorities and needs of *Progress*’s target groups. Relevance was primarily captured through internal and external surveys and through KIIs; relevant documents were also consulted. These sources were used to assess the relevance of the report’s contents among people who self-identify as being well acquainted with the contents of the most recent two reports.

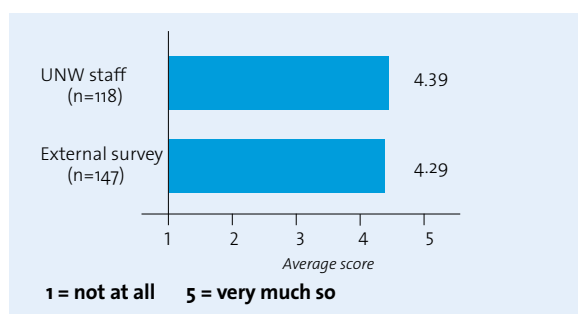
1. Do target audiences regard the themes and content of the report to be relevant?

FINDING 1: *Progress* is mainly relevant to people inside and outside of UN Women doing gender equality work. It is helpful in providing legitimacy to feminist views that may be seen as marginalized, and also in supplying data and arguments to support gender equality advocates’ work. It is less relevant to the need for knowledge for action and decision-making on programmes and policies.

Documentation and interviews suggest that *Progress* is trying to reach a wide variety of audiences: UN Women staff; actors in the women’s movement; civil society organizations working on issues relevant to *Progress*’s themes; gender advocates in government at the national level; gender advocates working in regional and international organizations; academics and researchers; journalists and the media; and, to an extent, people outside of the normal gender constituency.

In terms of the process for deciding the theme for each report, the practice has changed over time, particularly with the creation of dedicated staff positions to produce the report and the establishment of UN Women in 2011. For the 2011 report, a number of steps were taken. In 2009, a staff survey was sent out by the Deputy Director and a consultation meeting was held at HQ, in which a number of themes were proposed and discussed. For the 2015 report, there was a similar consultation meeting at HQ, including a meeting with the ED, in which R&D proposed three themes and recommended one. In each case, approvals went through senior staff and the ED. External consultation in this process is minimal.

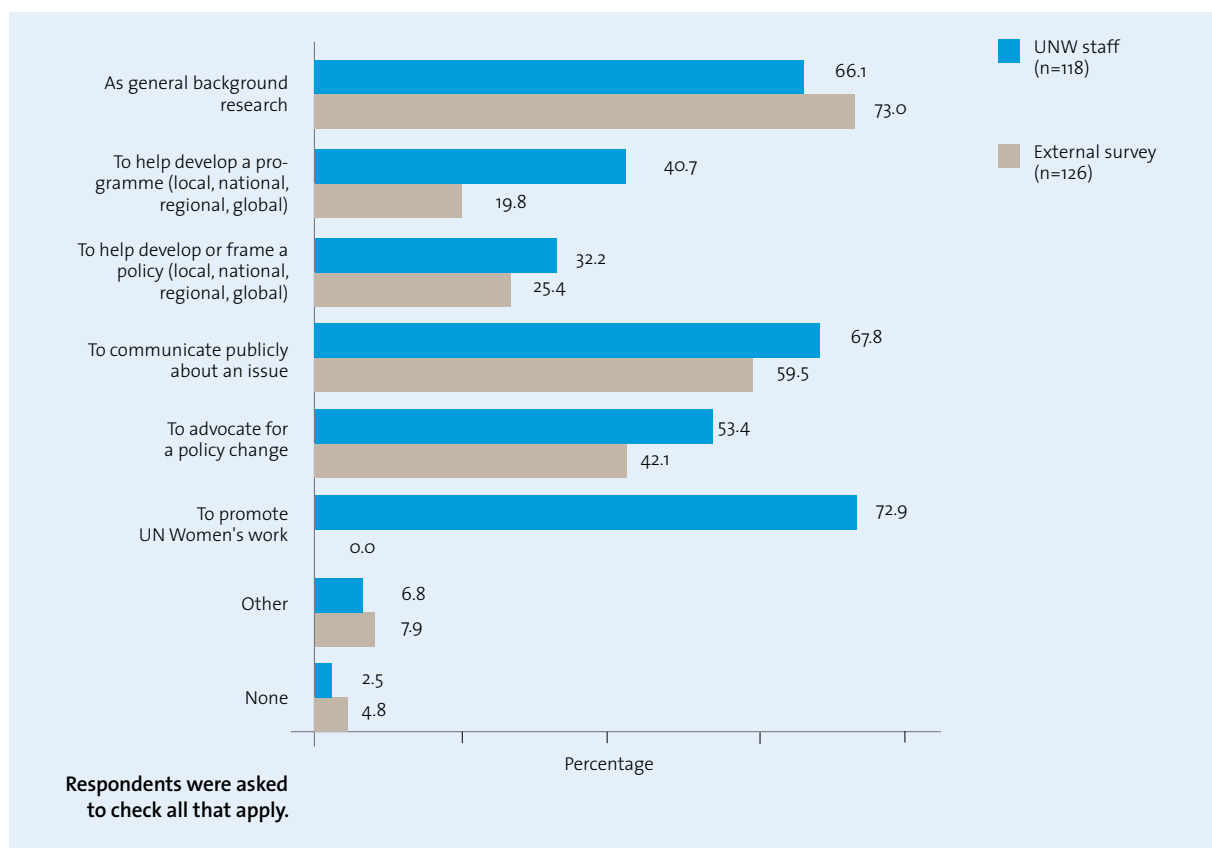
FIGURE 1
Relevance: Does the report address relevant problems; does it provide relevant recommendations for policies, programmes, or framing agendas?



While in the past there were no formal criteria for selecting themes (they have since been developed for future reports⁵), implicit criteria described in KIIs included: subject areas that had research gaps on women and gender, or where a feminist perspective

⁵ “Note on the next edition of *Progress* (R&D document, not for sharing at this stage): Potential criteria for selecting a *Progress* topic,” internal R&D document, May 2015.

FIGURE 2
In which contexts you have used the *Progress* report?



remains weak; subject areas where UN Women already had programming, but would benefit from deeper conceptualization; and subject areas that were meaningful externally and aligned with corporate priorities. One of the people supporting the theme of women’s access to justice in 2009 said:

“From my own perspective, the purpose was to make sure that UNW’s work in this area would be serious and focused.”
 —UN Women staff

In relation to the selection of the theme of women’s economic empowerment (WEE), one person noted (in relation to the recent appointment of Michele Bachelet as UN Women’s first Executive Director):

“Bachelet had just come in, and economic empowerment and political participation were her priorities.”—UN Women staff

At a general level, people who say that they have some level of familiarity with the report’s contents have found the thematic choices for them to be relevant, particularly when the theme aligns with their own work. The survey data bears this out. For the most recent two reports, the themes were relevant internally to UN Women’s work: there were existing programmes on access to justice and economic empowerment that were in need of deeper conceptualization, and those programmes have continued to the present, represented in the new

flagship programmes approach.⁶ Externally, there was also agreement on relevance. Women’s access to justice was (and remains) an under-researched area and is particularly weak in relation to statistical data. A recent corporate evaluation of UN Women’s work on economic empowerment noted the relevance of the subject to global debates, including UN Women’s niche in promoting a rights-based approach to that work.⁷

KIIs and perception surveys suggested three critical needs for a research product like *Progress*:

- Authority or legitimacy to help position their work: The need for bringing recognition and legitimacy to feminist positions or views that might be marginalized within a field or institution.
- Data and arguments for advocacy: The need for supplementary evidence for making the case for gender equality or inclusion.
- Knowledge for action and decision-making: The need for examples of good practice upon which users can draw for to developing policies, programmes, or to take other action.

The survey shows that *Progress* is being used primarily in relation to the first two needs, but with different groups having different priorities. External actors (e.g., women’s movement, other UN agencies) have found it relevant primarily to their needs for data and information to support research and communicate about

issues. UN Women staff’s primary use of the report is to promote UN Women’s work. Secondary uses are for background research, followed by advocating for a policy change or communicating publicly on an issue.

KIIs suggest that the report is relevant to staff needs for a serious credible piece of research to position themselves and UN Women as legitimate interlocutors with other expert agencies. That relevance is especially noticeable when there is existing programming in an area related to the theme of the report, such as access to justice or WEE. As one member in the Policy section observed about the 2015 report:

“People now think that we know what we are doing, so they are more open to partnerships with us. Before they had no idea that we knew what we were doing.”—UN Women staff in HQ

The report has also been relevant to the need to raise the profile of programme work and to position it at the national level. The launch of the 2011 report was used in Ecuador, the State of Palestine, Pakistan, and elsewhere to promote existing work on women’s access to justice. One person noted in relation to *Progress 2015*:

“It is very effective when *Progress* is used in the talking points of the UN Women Country Rep at high-level meetings or of that of the Resident Coordinator. This gives UN Women visibility and positions us as a lead UN organization in the field of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE).”
—UN Women Country staff

Both UN Women staff and external users have found the report relevant to needs for data for making credible arguments about gender equality. UN Women staff report extensive use of the data in developing talking points and speeches, including speeches of the ED; indeed, when asked to categorize the different uses they put the reports to, 82 per cent of staff report using the report in talking points and speeches—the highest category of reported use in the survey. External users similarly report that *Progress* is relevant to their

6 On the need for deeper conceptualization of Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) work at UN Women, a recent corporate evaluation concluded, “After assessing the literature and evidence from the case studies, the evaluation found that by remaining only, or mostly, at the micro-level in its country-level programming, UN Women is precluded or heavily restricted from proactively engendering strategies for future sources of job creation that meet decent work standards. In order to do this, UN Women needs to strengthen its internal expertise to contribute substantively to macroeconomic policy and influence structural change within national economies in the same way that it has acquired credibility and authority in leading a rights-based approach in its normative work.” UN Women Independent Evaluation Office, “An Empowered Future: Corporate evaluation of UN Women’s contribution to women’s economic empowerment” (UN Women, 2015), p. 11.

7 Ibid., pp. 35–36.

needs for data and argumentation. Additionally, data is relevant to other needs, such as issue-based advocacy, fundraising proposals, and so on.

“It was relevant because...it gave us arguments and knowledge and evidence on the topics that we were addressing in the global policy work, in terms of influencing the 2030 agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Plan.”
—Gender focal point in a development agency

“There is nothing like good data analysis, good evidence. The *Progress* [report] is a good source of information and evidence to pitch everything we do in gender equality.”
—UN Women staff

In terms of using *Progress* decision-making and action, we find that although there are certainly instances, internally and externally, where *Progress* is relevant, it may be less relevant to this need than it is to others. Within UN Women, we found that many staff at both country and HQ level find *Progress* relevant for conceptualizing policies or programmes (in particular, programmes related to access to justice or WEE), specific instances of use will be discussed in the section on “Effectiveness” below. Of the three key needs, *Progress* is somewhat less relevant to this one. One indicator of this is that the internal survey shows that programme staff at UN Women were less likely to be familiar with the report than policy staff. Some people stressed that it would be a mistake to think of *Progress* as a “blueprint” for programmatic action, and that its best use is as background, as help in thinking through issues or doing analysis, and as offering high-level guidance against which to pin their programmes. Some said that the recommendations in the 2015 report were not specific enough to be actionable in the programmatic sense (e.g., “Create more and better jobs for women.”), in contrast with those in the 2011 report (e.g., “Support one-stop shops”).

External audiences identified “general background research” as their main use of the report, and this selection ranked high among UN Women staff as well (third). “General background research” is a minimal

way that a research product might contribute to a programme or policy. In fact, many fewer said that they were using the report to develop a policy or a programme—these rank lowest among external audiences. *Progress* is one among many research products that people draw on in their work. When asked to compare the relevance of *Progress* to other research products they use, KIs identified a number of distinguishing features, including: it is a substantive piece of research, specifically on issues related to gender equality; it is produced by UN Women, which occupies a key position in the women’s movement and in the UN; and it takes an explicitly rights-based approach. A typical comparison was:

“I think that if we compare it to the World Bank, it’s very important for the World Bank to produce its reports, but UN Women stands for women, and it is a UN agency”
—Gender focal point in a development agency

We noted that some segments of the audience, including academics and statisticians, would have found the report more relevant to their needs if it had been based on new data, meaning primary data collection, rather than largely drawing on existing sources. These audiences report that they find the framing and argumentation relevant to their work, but that the report, on the whole, could be more relevant. Typical comments were:

“We want to make sure that we understand what the gender issues are so we know what needs to be measured and monitored. So we need to be on top of the policy discussion.”
—Statistics expert

“I typically do empirical work. I will draw from the World Development Indicators from the World Bank and the labor statistics from the ILO. I have also referenced the Human Development Index from UNDP. On *Progress*, I found the overview of the women’s economic status globally very useful. ...*Progress* does great work in presenting the status of gender equality at any given moment.”—Academic

2. To what extent is the format of the report relevant to the needs of target audiences?

FINDING 2: The long format of the report is more relevant to some audiences than others. Most audiences welcome further experimentation with different ways to present the report's key findings.

Progress has always taken the format of a printed report. In recent editions, it has been accompanied by a microsite on the UN Women web site, at progress.unwomen.org, as well as by an array of supplementary materials for different audiences, including the policy briefs series, regional fact sheets, infographics, and more. (Discussion of this supplementary products will be treated under “Effectiveness.”)

Focusing only on the report, KIIs and the surveys indicate mixed perceptions on the relevance of the long-format report to a variety of audiences. Simply put, different audiences have different preferences for accessing information. In KIIs, many UN Women staff defended the long-format report, arguing that in order to be relevant, the report must be substantive and address needs for evidence and data—even if the report is not actually read cover to cover. Other recent reports, which many inside and outside of UN Women consider highly relevant, such as, McKinsey Global Institute's *The Power of Parity* (2015), are also long-format reports (155 pages)—suggesting that these reports can and do have relevance, if they touch the right subject at the right time.⁸

While the long-format report can still be relevant, there is a widespread perception among KIIs that *Progress* has become too long in its most recent edition (2015). The 2015 report was more than twice as long (342 pages) as the previous longest report (166 pages). It is not, however, longer in terms of its word count than comparable flagship reports issued by the World Bank and the Human Development Research Office, but only in page count, owing to its design.

A minority view found long-format reports are less relevant altogether. It argues that people have little time to read, are overwhelmed by too much information,

and access information in very different ways that are not conducive to traditional modes of conveying research. “The summary alone is 28 pages,” one survey respondent complained. Another KII echoed, “My issue with their reports is the length.” These observations are in line with current understandings of the information environment, which were frequently discussed in KIIs and mentioned in the survey. If the expectation is for target audiences to read a long-format report cover to cover, then this is not an expectation that will be met. Many staff within UN Women, including senior staff, say that they have not read the full report—and yet they know and deliver the key messages, and are comforted by the fact that a substantive report stands behind these messages. To compensate for the limitations of the long-format report, the *Progress* team has created a diverse set of products additional to the report designed to reach audiences that are unlikely to pick up or read a report of this length. (These will be discussed below.) Both KIIs and survey respondents mentioned the need for these kinds of products. One survey respondent noted appreciatively, “The length of the report is formidable, although the accompanying policy briefs were very useful.”

FIGURE 3
Pages per *Progress* edition, 2000–2015



⁸ McKinsey Global Institute, *The Power of Parity: How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth* (September 2015); available at <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>.

3. What are the key internal and external factors that contributed to or constrained relevance?

FINDING 3: UN Women’s human resources, in particular the expertise of the R&D team, is the most important factor contributing to the report’s relevance. Factors that limit the relevance of the report include the need for a more clearly defined target audience, the global scope of the report, the lack of internal capacity to refresh data, and external resistance to feminist ideas, as well as rights-based approaches on some issues.

As mentioned previously, relevance refers to the extent to which the report’s contents and formats address the priorities and needs of *Progress*’s target groups.

The most important factor contributing to the relevance of the report is composition and expertise of the R&D team. The team has identified important areas where there are gaps in feminist approaches and thought leadership. It also has aligned the report with UN Women corporate priorities and identifiable programmatic needs, as well as needs in the external environment. Additionally, the team has produced reports that are perceived as substantive and credible, which permits them to be leveraged for positioning at a variety of levels.

While the survey and KIIs suggest a generally positive view of relevance of the report to audiences working on women’s access to justice and economic empowerment, there were a few recurring observations on limitations to relevance for these audiences.

Some factors are related to internal processes at UN Women. One is that for the report to be relevant, it must have a clear articulation of who it should be relevant to. This scoping of target audiences and constituencies has been broad in its sweep, mirroring the wider audiences that UN Women targets. The report could be more relevant if it were conceived in relation to a few, narrow primary audiences. Related to this gap is the fact that the process does not include advocacy strategies on specific global policy issues, debates, and convenings to which the *Progress* report is relevant. This gap will be discussed in further detail below. In brief, it would be useful to have strategies to link the reports to concrete debates, for instance, the development of the SDGs for 2011 or the High-Level Panel on WEE for 2015. Another issue is that the process for deciding on new themes is unclear and inconsistent. Moreover, there is little action to link

this process with building enthusiasm and buy-in of potential end-users, especially UN Women staff. Many staff members said that, as of July 2016, they did not know a new theme had been chosen for the next report. Those who did know about the theme (“the family”), had a variety of opinions, but rarely expressed the notion that the report was being done with their needs in mind.

Other factors related to the contents of the report. For example, the fact that the report is global in scope limits its relevance for those not working at the global policy level; those working at the country level are often looking for information and data specific to their context. Some working at the national level said that global reports are relevant, as it can be helpful to them to link local work to global trends.

“It is fundamental that reports like *Progress* exist. They allow us to know other realities, compare Mexico to women in other countries, observe current discussions on the theme of gender equality, and recognize the concepts that are found on the international agenda.”—External survey respondent

As another example, the fact that data in the report is not updated limits the relevance of the contents over time. A large number of interviewees commented on this issue. As one external observer noted of the 2011 report, “A lot of the examples are dated. ... It’s great to consolidate things, but 2-3 years down the line, for practitioners, we need some updates.”

Yet another factor relates to the external receptivity to the ideas in *Progress*. Many KIIs expressed the view that gender and feminist approaches are still marginal subjects within many institutions, which will necessarily limit the perceived relevance of reports on gender equality in their fields.

“Most gender specialists know that if you go to a meeting you will be the only one talking about gender. And if you don’t come, they will proceed without you, if the topic is not a ‘gender’ topic.”—Multilateral representative

“Whenever we talk gender equality, there is the echo chamber.”—UN Women staff

UN Women’s rights-based approach is one of its distinguishing elements, and for many audiences the rights-based approach is highly relevant and welcome. With the 2015 report, however, it may have limited the relevance of the report’s findings to those working in the development community, who may be seeking more empirical evidence in support of rights-based argumentation. Even within UN Women, there is a minor dissenting view on the report’s relevance—a view that was not expressed in KIIs in relation to previous reports. Some UN Women staff found parts of this report, in particular Chapter 4 on macroeconomics, to be less relevant to their needs than it might otherwise have been. A representative view of this position is:

“I think the report is well written...but it is very ideological. ...Recommendations on the role of the state in social protection policy... they are totally unrealistic... I feel that 99 per cent of economists will not take it seriously.... I am a feminist and I might agree ideologically, but I don’t find their research to be sound. So I think it’s like a tract. I personally am not disseminating it at all.”

Others within UN Women have found the report relevant, albeit challenging with respect to the objective of engaging new audiences. They see Chapter 4’s approach on unsettling traditional views as something positive rather than negative:

“I often use *Progress 2015* to highlight the need for ‘shifting the discourse’ on macroeconomic policy and the importance of social and economic policy for women’s rights...While it is challenging to present it to economists and policymakers, I often use these points.”

3.2 Quality

UN Women has defined “quality” in the TORs in relation to three interconnected yet separate dimensions: robustness, relevance, and authoritativeness. As we have already addressed relevance, we will exclude it from this part of our investigation. “Robustness” is a term of art that refers to the existence of multiple independent sources for the same research findings and is typically achieved through grounding of research in recognized scientific methods. Authoritativeness is a more general dimension, relating to the trustworthiness and reliability of the research, as well as to its ability to command attention and respect. The TORs also mention other criteria of importance to the UN Women team, including conceptual clarity, robustness of data and presentation, and persuasiveness of the policy analysis and presentation.

Because quality relates to social judgments of professional communities (as pointed out by one of the external advisors on this evaluation), we commissioned four anonymous peer reviews each for the 2011 and 2015 reports (for a total of eight); three of these were standard peer reviews, and one was an intensive look at a sample of figures, statistics, and data in the reports. We also examined perceptions of quality in our internal and external surveys.

R&D’s approach to ensuring the quality of the reports was multifaceted. Each report has benefited from a senior-level advisory group comprised of academics, colleagues from other UN agencies (including, for 2011, a Special Rapporteur and a CEDAW committee member), civil society organizations, and others. The group provides guidance at all stages of the conceptualization and drafting process, in particular on the structure of the report, on the selection and the quality of the background papers, and on report drafts (according to their areas of expertise). The draft report is peer reviewed extensively, using internal and external reviewers; however, reviews are not anonymous. R&D has internal processes for fact checking figures and statistics. Every figure is double checked against its original source. For the annexes, a different staff member than the one who prepared the table rechecks the figures according to a set

protocol. For the 2011 report, R&D developed an annotated bibliography before undertaking research. It provides an overview, although it is not a systematic

review of the literature (in the social scientific sense) because its research questions and methodology are unclear.

4. Does the report contain robust and authoritative research and data analysis?

5. To what extent does the report meet peer expectations for conceptual clarity, robustness of data analysis and presentation?

6. To what extent does the report meet peer expectations for the persuasiveness of policy examples and recommendations?

FINDING 4: On robustness and authoritativeness of research and data analysis, the evidence base that the 2011 and 2015 reports drew upon for the main text (excluding the figures and statistics) was generally robust, and research and analysis were authoritative. In the case of the 2015 report, the reviewers disagreed, however, on whether Chapter 4 on macroeconomics should have had a stronger evidence basis to support its argumentation.

FINDING 5: On conceptual clarity, the 2015 report was conceptually stronger than the 2011 report. For the 2011 report, greater conceptual framing and description of the basis for inclusion and exclusion of evidence would have been welcome.

FINDING 6: On robustness of data analysis and presentation (figures and statistics), most of the data analysis and presentation was solid. The 2015 report, however, was judged to have more robust data analysis and presentation than the 2011 report. Differences in the quality of the statistics could be interpreted as an improvement in quality assurance processes over time.

FINDING 7: On persuasiveness of policy examples and recommendations, there were mixed findings for both reports. Many such examples were strong and persuasive, but there might be a need in the future to ensure that evidence is not being cherry picked and to explain the limitations of the evidence.

These questions are taken together, as they overlap. As a general matter, readers who claim some familiarity with the reports' contents give them high marks across the board on quality. In particular, readers express high confidence in the quality of the data presented, which receive the highest scores from both internal and external audiences. Where there is some weakness in perceptions of quality, it is in relation to the originality of the reports. Although this perception still scores well, it is the lowest of the five—owing mainly to a much smaller proportion of “5,” which is the highest score. This judgment came across in interviews; one external KII opined, “This report wasn’t saying anything that I haven’t heard before. Other reports have written about women in the economy. Altogether, it is quite a good overview of what is out there. ...A statement from UN

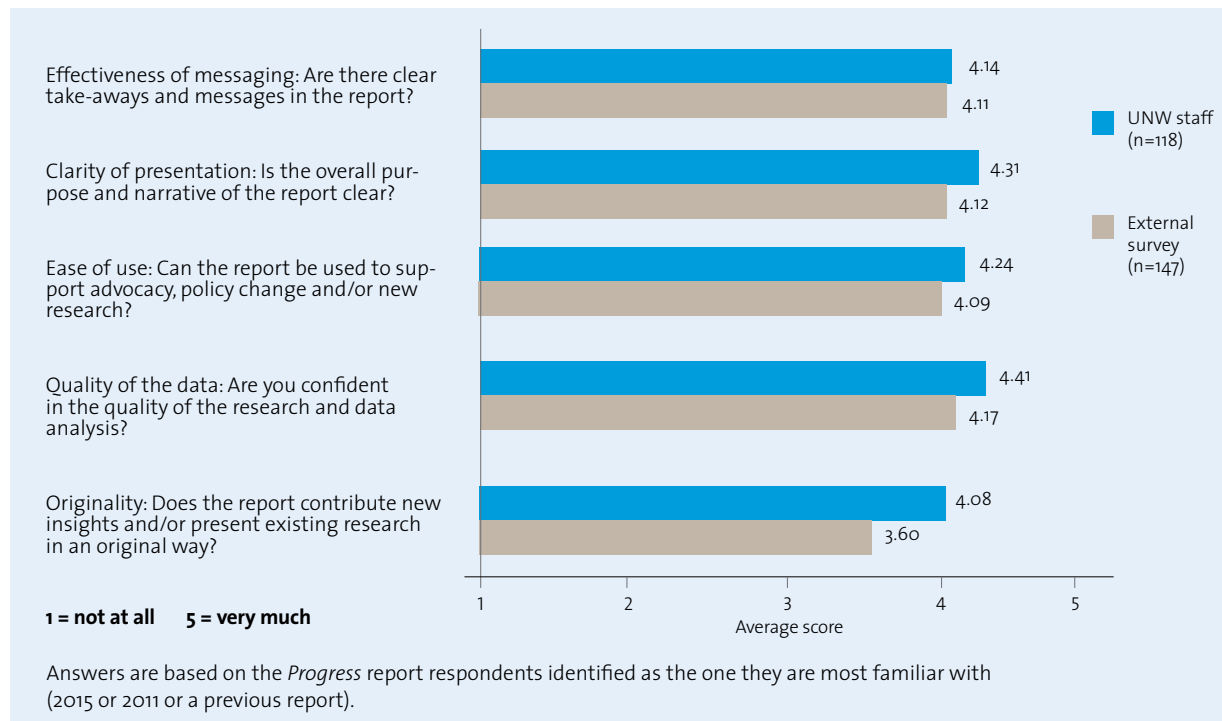
Women on these issues of gender equality is really important, and adds its value.”⁹

Beyond the surveys, the peer reviewers affirmed many of these perceptions. Peer reviewers were asked to assess dimensions of originality, technical merit, overall

9 An interesting piece of information is that the perceptions of quality are slightly higher across the board for the 2011 report than they are for the 2015 report. For both internal and external audiences, respondents gave the 2011 report a higher proportion of “5” scores than they did to the 2015 report in almost all categories. This finding might be considered, however, in light of the relatively low number of scores for the 2011 report versus the 2015 report: for the internal staff survey, 31 people identified 2011 as the report they knew best, whereas 105 identified the 2015 report. For the external survey, the difference was 24 to 69, respectively. It is possible that these scores would even out with a larger number of responses.

FIGURE 4

What are your perceptions of this report in relation to the following qualities?



clarity and persuasiveness, and the logic and value of figures and boxes. They were invited to review the whole report, with a focus on one or two chapters, according to their particular expertise. Peer reviews have been included in Annex 7 of this report.

Peer reviews of the 2011 report

For the 2011 report, reviewers found originality in the breadth of resources brought together. In particular, the organizing concept of the “justice chain” was seen to be a highlight. One reviewer called it “the most dimensional” section in terms of “comparing and contrasting different cultural contexts,” and another commented that it “gets at the heart of access to justice for women.” Reviewers also found originality in packaging the resources together.

“It is particularly impressive in drawing together evidence from very diverse case studies and across a breadth of different country settings. This speaks very positively to the report’s originality. The report is also

distinguished by its ambition.”—Reviewer A (2011)

“While not necessarily original in what it is saying, the report does bring together a myriad of topics and case studies in a way that is innovative. ...Drawing linkages between justice, conflict and development is extremely useful for the broader audience, as these issues are often addressed in siloes.”—Reviewer B (2011)

The technical merit (which addressed robustness and authoritativeness) of the 2011 report was mixed, according to reviewers. On the one hand, summaries of the literature and case studies were accurate and well done. On the other, a key gap they agreed on was the lack of an articulated methodology, including criteria for including or excluding examples and evidence. The reviewers recognized that the report is not a piece of scholarly research, therefore, holding it to these standards might not be appropriate.

“A report of an inter-governmental organization obviously differs in nature, rigour, and methodology to an academic piece of work. This is most apparent in some of the fundamental views that underpin the report. The document’s role is to highlight some of the key advancements in international gender justice...rather than to critique these.”—Reviewer B (2011)

“A short discussion on methodology in the introductory chapter would be the norm in the field. ...While the report’s positive focus on good practice and lessons learned is appreciated, I did wonder at the decision not to include more negative or cautionary examples.”—Reviewer A (2011)

“Technical merit is difficult to analyse to some extent, as there is no methodology section. ...I was left asking: what were the limitations of the methodology and the challenges faced in gathering global perspectives and country level information?”—Reviewer C (2011)

Overall clarity and persuasiveness was also mixed for reasons already hinted at above. Reviewers found the report to be clear and well written, and they commended the goal of bringing together a large number of disparate literatures as a major achievement:

“The report is well structured, clear, and allows complex issues to be addressed in an accessible manner.”—Reviewer B (2011)

“The report is written crisply, and with a certain consciousness about the historical exclusion and lack of attentive analysis of the contexts, conditions, and complex multiplicities of southern hemisphere countries. ...The authorship team did a commendable job on this report. On the whole, it is a useful, informative, reflective, and informed piece of work.”—Reviewer C (2011)

“It is rigorously researched and it draws on appropriate evidence.”—Reviewer A (2011)

They also found that clarity would have been improved with a stronger focus and conceptual frame to bring together the different aspects of women’s access to justice. Reviewer C suggested that the report could have been framed around a “lifecycle” approach, which would look at how women faced challenges in accessing justice at various stages of their lives. Other reviewers also would have welcomed a stronger conceptual frame:

“The focus of the respective chapters is not entirely intuitive. ...The report is, perhaps of necessity, very general in trying to link equal pay claims in Scotland, post-conflict accountability for sexual violence in Rwanda, and strategic litigation in Colombia. A working definition of ‘access to justice’ would have been helpful in the opening sections in making clear how the report understands these different cases to be instances of the same problem. ...The illustration explaining ‘the justice chain’ is good practice in this regard. A similar visual for ‘access to justice’ at the outset of the report would have been a worthwhile addition.”—Reviewer A (2011)

Persuasiveness was strong in terms of the clear description of the examples chosen, but was limited by an approach that eschewed critique and was unclear in its selection criteria:

“As long as the intent of the report is recognized, it could definitely be viewed as persuasive. It does not ‘sugar coat’ the issues and does try to engage with the limitations in the current realities of the international system. Obviously, as an academic, I would hope for more emphasis on those limitations, but I also recognize how this might be counter-productive!”—Reviewer B (2011)

The logic and value of boxes, representing policy and programme examples, were found to be informative, well written, and succeeded as supplements to the

text. Similar to critiques of technical merit, however, the reviewers had questions about selection criteria for the boxes, i.e., whether examples were being cherry picked or whether there was limited evidence:

“The use of boxes to provide context is useful to chart links between the more ‘dry’ data on laws and policies with lived realities. Nonetheless, the boxes in Chapter 4 are slightly problematic as some may construe them as romanticized and/or misleading.”—Reviewer B (2011)

Reviewers found that the data analysis and presentation (the figures) added value to the main narrative. Words used to describe the figures included “excellent,” “easy to digest,” “effective,” “extremely valuable,” and “thought-provoking.” They were seen largely to reinforce messages from that narrative, with a few exceptions. Reviewers raised some criticisms of specific figures, some of which might have benefited from greater clarity or logic, and explanation of the methodology for arriving at them. In general, however, these were received positively.

Discussion of the figures leads us into the peer review on statistics in the 2011 report. In comparing the statistics in the *Progress* report to those in the UN Women spreadsheet used to create the tables and figures, the reviewer found that most of the statistics that could be checked were good. The analysis is based on a sample of 13 figures across four chapters and one annex. Presentation (e.g., use of colors, clear distinction between women and men, and the mix of different types of figures, such as bars and pie charts) was judged to be very nice. Based on their expert knowledge of existing data sources, reviewers also found the statistics to have been well chosen and typically well linked to the text.

The review also found issues of concern. In some cases, the reviewer found discrepancies between the original data and the data in the figures; in others, they were not able to replicate the same figures, using the data provided. In some cases, they noticed that the text suggested a relationship or a correlation that was weak. The reviewer also questioned why some

existing data for countries were not included (e.g., why choose Iceland to represent Europe in Fig. 2.1 even though there were existing data for other countries?). In several instances, there were more recent data available for some statistics (e.g., in Annex 3), but this was not always used. Echoing concerns from Reviewer A, they questioned the logic of Figure 1.2, “Laws on age of marriage and incidence of early marriage.”

The statistical review, therefore, raised questions about the quality of a small proportion of the data; previously, the only known problem with it concerned data on World Bank funding allocated to gender equality within rule-of-law projects—an error that was addressed in the errata to the report.¹⁰

Peer reviews of the 2015 report¹¹

Similar to the 2011 report, reviewers saw the report’s originality in relation to the way it synthesized and presented existing data and evidence in a new light—rather than in relation to the presentation of new evidence. Three of the reviewers were satisfied with this approach:

“Chapter 2 presents original research and data analysis by the report team based on a rigorous analysis of descriptive statistics regarding labor market outcomes. ...Chapter 4 is particularly important as gendering macroeconomic analysis and policy is a new research and policy agenda.”—Reviewer B (2015)

“Chapter 4 does not carry out primary research but simply reviews existing literature and case studies to support arguments. In this sense it is not ‘original.’ It is still original however in the way it presents data and other evidence

10 UN Women, “Progress of the World’s Women 2011-12: In Pursuit of Justice: Errata as of 28 September 2011,” available at <http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2011/progressoftheworldswomen-2011-errata.pdf?v=1&d=20150402T222824>.

11 A note on the limitations of these peer reviews: unlike the reviews of the 2011 report, peer reviewers were less likely to engage with the report as a whole, perhaps because it was more than twice as long as the 2011 report. All reviewers were invited to focus their attention on chapters in their area of expertise, but the reviewers of the 2015 report took a much narrower approach in interpreting this guidance.

and connects available research together.”—Reviewer A (2015)

“What I find exciting about these chapters [1 & 3] is the conceptual framework around the ideas of substantive equality and human rights as a way to analysing women’s status and gender equality.”—Reviewer D (2015)

Two of the four reviewers said that the report would have been more original had it been able to bring more fresh evidence to bear on the subject matter. One of the reviewers struck an encouraging tone, acknowledging that this is a difficult task given the existing data gaps; another reviewer was more critical:

“It is important to connect policies and data to outcomes, I also see that it is a challenge for the authors to collect and analyse consistent outcome data. Indeed, this seems to be the case as throughout the two chapters [1 & 3] outcome data are not always consistent... The report therefore has a bit of patchy feel to it, as it jumps from one case to another. I am not sure what can be done about this. I think the author(s) do make best of what data they have.”—Reviewer D (2015)

“This was really disappointing [Chapter 4]. I could not find a single original estimate or argument in the chapter. ...One does not expect to see some striking original academic insights from such a publication. I think that as the report of a UN agency, the report has to couch its policy advocacy in the language of human rights (something no one will publicly oppose—who can oppose apple pies!). But, I doubt very much whether that language carry any persuasive power in most national political contexts.”—Reviewer C (2015)

In terms of technical merit, the reviewers assessed that the report drew on the most authoritative and robust evidence available. Where there was disagreement, it concerned expectations, in particular, concerning the evidence underpinning evidence in Chapter 4 on macroeconomic policy. Where two reviewers saw the

chapter as exploratory (one reviewer even included a list of issues which could be further explored by other researchers), a third reviewer thought that the chapter was advancing claims that it could not sustain.

“Both chapters [1&3] are based on an extensive survey and review of research and scholarly work. I found the research presented in these chapters robust and authoritative.”—Reviewer D (2015)

“The research presented in Chapter 4 is sound, up to date, and very clearly articulated. The review of existing studies and empirical evidence covers a wide range of issues under the umbrella of ‘macroeconomics’ and does so in a very competent way.”—Reviewer A (2015)

“Both Chapters 2 and 4 offer a rigorous analysis of the labour market outcomes for women and the impact of gender inequality on the economy at large, based on robust research, an extensive coverage of the key literature in the field at a high methodological standard.”—Reviewer B (2015)

“The report meets the standards [of technical merit] to a large extent. ...I think it is a very useful compendium. However, the evidence presented in [Chapter 4] is quite weak on two crucial issues...: the gendered employment effects of macroeconomic policy and...the effects of macroeconomic policies on unpaid domestic and care work.”—Reviewer C (2015)

The reviewers found the clarity of the report to be a strength. All four reviewers found the writing and structure to be clear, at least to “a reasonable degree” (Reviewer C).

“The chapter structure—moving gradually from the legal framework to policies to strengthen women’s position in paid work, to social policies, and finally to the enabling macroeconomic environment—works very well.”—Reviewer A (2015)

“This report is clearly written with a broad audience in mind. I found the language is clear, fair and consistent, and it maintains its key messages without being jargony or technocratic.”—Reviewer D (2015)

Assessments of the persuasiveness of the report, including the policy and programme examples in the boxes, were mainly positive. Reviewers expressed appreciation for the “breadth of experiences from structurally different countries” (Reviewer B), and in some cases they wished for even more detail than the boxes made room for. Each reviewer found policy or programme examples that were persuasive, and each found ones that were less so. Three of the reviewers made reference to Box 4.4 on the sovereign wealth fund in Papua New Guinea as an example that was either wanting more explanation or too new to be assessed. Reviewer C noted that in some cases, limitations to the approach presented in the boxes were not discussed. Reviewer D found the boxes useful and also expressly wished for examples of failure: “I think we can learn from failures as well as from success.”

In a more general sense, three of the four reviewers found the report as a whole persuasive; the fourth found it less so, based on their dissenting judgment on Chapter 4. As mentioned, some of the reviewers had little expectation that the report would present original data or evidence, while one had this expectation. The disagreement may hinge on these differing expectations, as well as perceptions of who is the audience for the report.

“I do think that the lacuna regarding evidence that I identified is quite damaging from a strategic perspective, i.e., from the point of view of bringing skeptical or neutral policymakers to their side. After all, the main purpose of the chapter is to argue for a gender-sensitive macroeconomic policy framework. The authors fail, in my view, to provide evidence to support the two crucial planks of this argument: gendered employment effects and effects on unpaid care and domestic work. This is also a failure from a purely academic standpoint.”—Reviewer C (2015)

“My review looks at the contribution of Chapter 4 from the perspective of established macroeconomic theory and policy; and in that sense the report makes a major contribution in gendering macroeconomic analysis. It puts forward more questions than answering them and it is the state of macro profession that there is not sufficient gendered macro empirical research.”—Reviewer B (2015)

Regarding the data analysis and presentation (the figures), reviewers were generally positive, with a few minor exceptions. Reviewer C found the figures “very useful” and agreed that they were generally well linked to the argumentation in the chapter. Reviewer D had high praise for Figure 3.3 (women’s pension attrition and the gender pension gap), which they called “highly effective.” Criticism, when made, tended to be minor. Two of the reviewers commented that they found some of the full-page figures (1.4 and 4.6 were mentioned) to be overly complex (and one noted that the black background was a problem for printing them off—this comment was also made in the external survey).

“The figures chosen, in particular in Chapter 2, give a good overview of headline statistics, while also supported by notes or captions highlighting causality between the variables presented wherever appropriate.”—Reviewer B (2015)

“I find Figure 4.3 to be exceptionally original: it is visually simple but effective in comparing the economic value of unpaid domestic work and care with the economic value of other economic sectors such as manufacturing or mining... What work less well for me are them more diagrammatic representations such as Figure 4.6... It is rather complex and confusing to work out.”—Reviewer A (2015)

This discussion leads us into the statistical peer review. The review found that, overall, the statistics presented were accurate and credible, based on analysis of a sample of ten figures across the four chapters and

one annex. Unlike the reviewer for the 2011 report, this reviewer found just one or two errors in the underlying UN Women spreadsheets upon which the figures were based, although they gave the caveat that some of the spreadsheets were missing formulas, meaning calculations could not be checked. Nonetheless, they expressed confidence in the data and judged it credible.

They noted that more effective figures had more than one dimension to their analysis. Those with only one dimension may not be interesting enough and in some cases were judged to take up more space on the page than was warranted (Figures 3.9 and 3.13)—but that too many dimensions had rendered one figure unintuitive (Figure 2.9). Those figures that struck a balance and were joined by rich discussion in the text were considered ideal (Figure 4.4). In general, presentation (colours, labelling) was strong.

The reviewer did note two minor quality issues with the data. First, there were some instances of confusion concerning which data for a figure in the underlying spreadsheet was operative, since some included multiple versions of the data (“corrected” or “revised”). Similar to the 2011 statistical reviewer, they also noted that it was sometimes unclear why some country data was excluded from figures when it was available in the data set.

Summary analysis

This section addresses three related and overlapping questions: robustness and authoritativeness of the research and data analysis; conceptual clarity, robustness of data analysis and presentation; and the persuasiveness of policy examples and recommendations.

On robustness and authoritativeness of research and data analysis, the reviewers found that the evidence base drawn upon for the main text was generally robust and that research and analysis was authoritative. In the case of the 2015 report, the reviewers disagreed, however, on whether Chapter 4 on macroeconomics should have had a stronger evidence basis to support its argumentation. Note that these two reports are in fields with different standards of technical merit, and while lawyers would expect a high degree of precision in how legal concepts, legislation and cases are presented, original data may be more important in peer judgments of authority and robustness among economists.

On conceptual clarity and robustness of data analysis and presentation, reviewers would have welcomed greater conceptual framing and description of the basis for inclusion and exclusion of evidence for the 2011 report. The 2015 report was conceptually clear. There were mixed findings on robustness of data analysis and presentation for the 2011 report; these findings were stronger for the 2015 report. The team had a vastly greater choice of statistics to choose from for the 2015 report, compared to the 2011 report for which data is scarce. In addition, differences in the quality of the statistics could be interpreted as an improvement in quality assurance processes over time.

On persuasiveness of policy examples and recommendations, there were mixed findings for both reports. Many such examples were strong and persuasive, but there might be a need in the future to ensure that evidence is not being cherry picked and to explain the limitations of the evidence.

7. What are the key internal and external factors that contributed to or constrained the quality of the report?

FINDING 8: The most important factor affecting quality is the level of human and financial resources available to produce research. Other factors include the availability of existing data, the use of peer review mechanisms, and tensions between goals of the publication (normative versus empirical aims).

Internal factors affecting quality primarily include, the limited level of human and financial resources available to produce the research, as will be discussed under “Efficiency” below. Limited resources fundamentally

constrained the capacity to collect new data, which is particularly important in technically demanding fields, such as economics. But this limited resource likely also affected quality in other ways, as the team

set ambitious goals to cover a wide range of topics. For the 2011 report, this overview was done very capably, but its ambitious scope also resulted in a lack of clarity in the conceptual framework.

Another internal factor affecting quality was the existence of peer review mechanisms. While these were used extensively in the process, none of the reviews were commissioned on an anonymous basis, which would have provided a higher standard for assuring quality. Additionally, it is unclear how extensive peer review was used in assessing the quality of the statistics for the 2011 report, in particular, or the overall conceptual framework.

A final internal factor concerns the tension between multiple goals of the publication. These goals might reflect the various mandates of UN Women: its normative, UN coordination, and implementation work. In some ways, *Progress* has normative aims and is expected to represent distinct positions. These goals may conflict at times with empirical evidence, particularly when such evidence is scarce. This tension was noted by several reviewers for both the 2011 and 2015 reports.

A related external factor affecting quality concerns the level of existing data and evidence to support the arguments in *Progress*. For the 2011 report, in particular, the R&D team faced difficulties in finding basic data on access to justice, which is a data-poor field. For the 2015 report, the team could draw from a much richer data environment on unpaid care work and social protection policies. Yet, as reviewers noted, data gaps also affected the report in relation to macroeconomic policy.

A final note is that these two reports are in fields with different standards of technical merit, so that original data might be more important in peer judgments of authority and robustness among economists.

3.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness relates to the extent to which a programme has achieved its objectives. In the TORs, UN Women has redefined “effectiveness” in relation to

qualities that have specific relevance to *Progress* as a flagship research publication (rather than a programme per se). These qualities are reach and influence. To assess effectiveness, we draw on KIIs, survey data, document review, and a set of six case studies related to *Progress 2011*. The case studies are also used to examine how influence happens and under what conditions; in this sense, we use them to analyse the theory of change for *Progress*. We note here that while we gathered data for both the 2011 and 2015 reports for these questions (and other reports, as relevant), we believe that it is still too soon to make judgments about the influence of the 2015 report, because only one year has passed since its publication.

As document reviews and KIIs with the R&D team and communications staff show, outreach and communications strategies for the last two reports have differed. In 2011, R&D engaged outside assistance to handle most aspects of the media and global launches. This included a PR firm (Portland) and a consultant to assist with launch event planning and execution. A written communications and advocacy strategy was developed that was divided into three phases: Global launch events, immediate follow-up advocacy in the two months following launch, and longer-term advocacy for the year after that. The strategy described an ambitious plan. Initially, in Phase One, the focus is on engaging the media through press briefings and high-profile launch events. Social media was mentioned, but only briefly. A suite of collateral materials for media and country offices was envisioned, and a dedicated microsite was created. Phase Two and Three were mainly focused on making presentations at events to reach key audiences (global and country launches, as well as presentations to groups, such as the European Union, the UN Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group [RoLCRG, the CEDAW committee, and so forth). The strategy did not identify specific debates or policy process in which the report might be engaged, but rather stayed at the level of spreading the word among potentially interested groups.¹² An ambitious number of reports were printed (80,000) with plans for an extensive distribution. Regional factsheets were

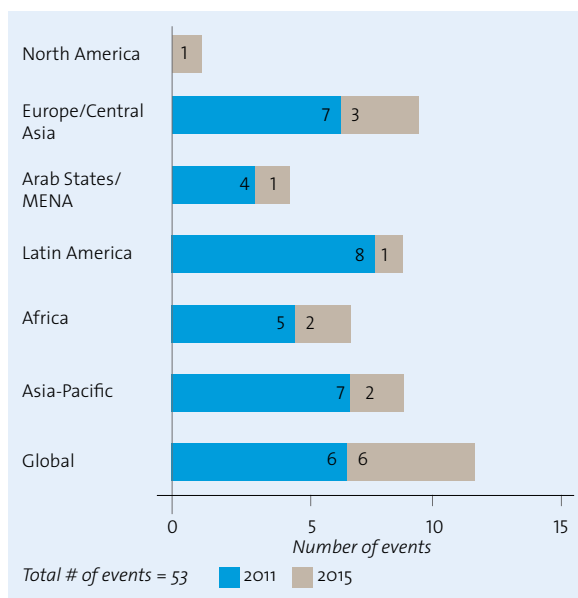
¹² UN Women, “Communications and Advocacy Strategy,” internal document, June 14, 2011.

produced, and a set of “third party advocates”—women’s rights advocates from different regions who could speak to the themes of the report—were identified to support media outreach.

In 2015, again an external PR firm was used (Bartley Robbs), this time reporting to the UN Women communications team. The firm’s role was to support media outreach and they were not involved in organizing the global launch events (as Portland had been). An additional outreach coordinator reporting to the R&D team was also added for the launch and post-launch period. A written communications and advocacy strategy was developed, with most of the focus on media engagement and launch event planning in “Phase One”; the longer-term elements in the previous strategy were less sketched out. Unlike the previous strategy, this one mentioned tying the report to advocacy at a specific event, the G20 Summit in November 2014.¹³ CSW in March 2015 also was mentioned, specifically, as a site of dissemination.¹⁴ In comparison to the launch of *Progress 2011*, there were fewer global and regional/national launches, and the print run of the report was substantially reduced to 34,000 copies. At the same time, more effort was placed on social media and creating a diverse set of collateral materials for both public consumption and

use by UN Women staff. As well as regionally-tailored fact sheets, innovations included the development of infographics for web and social media, a story series, and later, short policy briefs, picking up on some of the main recommendations of the report. Similar to the previous report, a microsite was created on the web.

FIGURE 5
Outreach events for *Progress 2011* and *2015*



8. How many people in which spaces have been able to access the report?

FINDING 9: Potential awareness of the report through various media stretches into the millions, while access of the report itself is more limited—in the thousands or tens of thousands. In general, it is difficult to know how many people have accessed the report.

The reach of a publication is typically defined by the number of people who are aware of it. This element plays a role in UN Women’s theory of change, in which having an adequate reach is important, i.e., putting information and arguments into the hands of people

who may be able to leverage or use them. Awareness occurs through a number of means. Reading the report is one example, but likely the most limited, given that it is the most time intensive. One might become aware of the report by reading about it in a newspaper article or blog post or in other social media, by attending a launch event or conference, through word of mouth, and so forth. Reach, as a quantitative matter,

¹³ The report ended up missing that window, as it was published in April 2015. The G20 was conceived as a site of advocacy because the November 2014 meeting was hosted by the Australian government, which was also a funder of the *Progress* report. As the report was not ready in time for the meeting, the R&D team posted some data to the web site that might be useful on the theme of women’s economic empowerment, but we have no information on whether that data was used.

¹⁴ CSW was mentioned because the launch for *Progress 2015* was originally intended to take place in January 2015. Once it was pushed back to April (after CSW), this was no longer possible. R&D distributed the report at the following year’s CSW.

should capture the number of people who have some awareness of *Progress*.

It has been difficult to gather numbers on reach, particularly for the 2011 report. Also, we have no way of estimating reach through email blasts, blog posts, citations in grey literature, references in speeches by the ED and other UN Women senior staff, and simple word of mouth. The numbers offered below, therefore, should be taken as indicative rather than comprehensive.

For each of the most recent two reports, the broad reach is in the tens of millions, if one counts the full circulation of news media publishing stories on *Progress*, the potential audience of broadcast coverage of *Progress*, and the reach figures of social media accounts on Twitter and Facebook. This reach to tens of millions of people is a direct consequence of strategies to engage traditional media and social media. Both of these have been effective, with social media being particularly effective. These numbers, of course, tell us nothing about how many people actually looked at the stories that were published.

The following synopsis gives an indication of this broader reach in traditional media:

- *Progress 2011* was covered with a full-page story in *Time* (print circulation: 3,314,946) and extensively in *The Guardian* (unique visitors/month: 11.5 million), where a microsite devoted to the report was produced, featuring interviews and stories about women’s rights advocates, and innovative presentation of data from the report. It appeared in Al-Jazeera Arabic (audience of approximately 50 million) and *Times of India* (print circulation: 3,433,000). It was also covered on CNN and CNN en Español and all of the leading global wire services. In short, coverage was extensive and global.¹⁵
- *Progress 2015* continued this trend. In total, *Progress 2015* was covered in approximately 1,200 media

15 UN Women, “Launch Summary: *Progress of the World’s Women 2011-12*,” internal document, January 2012. We do not have a count of how many articles mentioned the report; our only information is top-level reporting in English language newspapers, which shows 141 articles overall. However, this is clearly only a small proportion of actual media coverage.

reports in more than 30 countries. The op-ed by the ED was picked up by 22 major outlets around the world. The report again appeared in long pieces in *Time* and *The Guardian*. Broadcast coverage included TV5Monde, CNN en Español, BBC Africa TV, among many others.¹⁶

Social media also has reached potentially tens of millions of people around the world:

- Although we only have minimal data for *Progress 2011*, the launch summary reports that the hashtag #UNWomenProgress created more than eight million impressions on Twitter.
- For 2015, we have more complete data. The top ten tweets related to the report created 33,886,224 impressions, and the top ten Facebook posts created 857,069 impressions (based on a 90-day time period following the launch).

Drilling down to numbers that are more directly related to people we can assume have some awareness of the report, we can look at the levels of engagement on social media (retweets, Facebook shares), as well as participation in launch events and receipts from printed copies of the report.

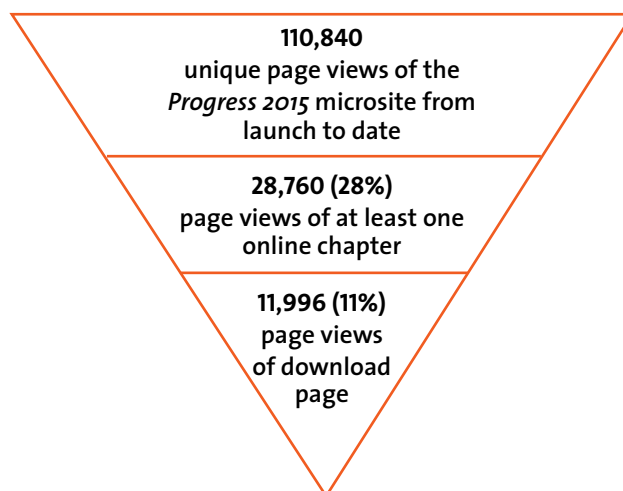
TABLE 1
Progress 2011 and 2015: Number of people with evidence of awareness, from launch to date

	2011	2015
Web site reach	No data	30,105
Facebook likes	No data	26,678
Retweets	5,000	5,097
Launch participants	2,094	820
Printed reports distributed (En, Sp, Fr)	33,447	19,044
Printed summaries distributed (En, Sp, Fr)	66,300	32,867
Flash drives distributed (En, Sp, Fr)	6,900	865

Source: UN Women tracking and Google Analytics.¹⁷

16 UN Women, “Communications and Advocacy Report: *Progress of the World’s Women 2015-16*,” internal document, no date.

Therefore, while potential awareness of the report stretches into the millions, direct awareness of it is on a smaller scale—tens to hundreds of thousands. Drilling down even further, we can expect that many more people are aware of the report than read it. One indication of this difference is represented in unique page views on the *Progress 2015* microsite: of the 110,840 unique page views, only 26 per cent of these were for the online chapters, and only 11 per cent were of the download page for the report.



FINDING 10: *Progress* readership is concentrated in developed and middle income countries, such as the United States, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Brazil. Attempts to reach audiences through launch events in lower income countries did not generate increased traffic on the *Progress* microsite. Print, rather than digital versions, might still be more relevant in some countries.

We also investigated the regional dimension of traffic to the microsite. We found the highest proportion of traffic from launch to present to be coming from: USA, Mexico, UK, Spain, Brazil, Canada, Australia, India, France, and Argentina. With one exception, Brazil instead of Colombia, the top ten countries accessing *Progress* and the main UN Women web sites were the same. Four of seven countries where an official launch event took place were already in the top 10 list. The three remaining countries—Kenya (#19), Egypt (#30), and Thailand (#33)—still ranked low (not differently from their ranking on UN Women website). The organization of the launch event in a country, therefore, did not appear to translate into increased traffic on the *Progress* web site for that country.¹⁷

Progress 2015 was available in English, Spanish, and French. The *Progress* microsite had a similar proportion of viewers for English and French as did the main UN Women website, but a significantly lower proportion for Spanish (from 28 per cent to 18.5 per cent). This comes as a surprise, as *Progress 2015* contained several case studies from Latin America and had an official launch hosted in Mexico. On the other hand, the *Progress* website received a significantly larger

proportion of the Portuguese speaking audience than the UN Women website (4.5 per cent compared to 1.5 per cent). This might be a result of the publication by UN Women Brazil of an adapted version of the global *Progress* report that focused on the Brazilian economy, as well as the outreach initiatives they conducted for it.

Finally, we note that *Progress* may not be reaching certain audiences. In some instances, country office KIIs suggested that there was a local demand for printed matter, but their supply did not meet the demand. This is a problem that is easily remedied, since there is tremendous overstock of the printed report, as will be discussed in “Efficiency” below.

“Print version is very relevant at the country level. You can give it away in universities, governments, and so on. This is particularly relevant for countries that don’t have reliable electricity and Internet. Besides the report itself, it is important to have supplementary material to give away. *Progress* offers all these to a certain extent. But it could consider other alternatives as, for example, having a pocket book or having a flash disc. The latter we had for the *Access to Justice* report.”—UN Women staff

¹⁷ Note that numbers of distribution of printed materials include reports that have been sent to regional and country offices, but may not yet have been given out.

9. What kinds of stakeholders are picking up and repeating the messages of the report?

FINDING 11: A diverse range of media, civil society, multilateral, and other actors are referring to *Progress 2011* in their news stories, reports and blog posts, speeches, reports, and so forth. In most cases, we do not have information to assess how substantive these references are. Exceptions are references in UN official documents and in news media stories. For the former, roughly half of the references are substantive (rather than passing mentions or data points). For the latter, the stories are substantive, but most repeat the press release rather than developing original content.

The survey, KIs, and extensive key word searches on the web yielded good information on the types of actors that are picking up *Progress's* messages. We focused on *Progress 2011*, since it is too early to have a useful picture of the extent to which *Progress 2015* has been picked up. Indeed, a diverse range of media, civil society, multilateral, and other actors are referring to

Progress in their news stories, reports and blog posts, speeches, and so forth. We do not have any rigorous way to count most of these instances, nor the resources to do content analysis on many of the instances we have found. As UN Women adopts DOIs and enables tracking algorithms like Altmetrics, it will improve its ability to monitor these kinds of links and citations.

FINDING 12: UN Women staff have frequently used the report to communicate publicly, especially in talking points and speeches.

A critical vector of uptake and dissemination concerns those closest to the report: UN Women policy and programme staff. As already discussed above in "Relevance," 68 per cent staff members who have some familiarity with the *Progress* reports say that they are using it to communicate publicly. Indeed, the survey shows that the report is widely used for talking points and speeches, and KIs suggest that the ED and other senior staff rely on it for messages in speeches on access to justice and economic empowerment. The *Progress 2011* report has also been cited in publications by UN Women; some examples include¹⁸:

- *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges* (2012)
- *A Window of Opportunity: Making Transitional Justice Work for Women* (2012)
- *Realizing Women's Rights to Land and Other Productive Resources* (2013; with OHCHR)

- *Access to Justice for Women in Plural Legal Systems of Southeast Asia* (2014)
- *A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women* (2015)

The *Progress 2011* report is also cited in the brief introducing UN Women's new Flagship Programme on Access to Justice, and it has played a role in the development of that programme (to be discussed in greater detail below). We note also that messages are reaching senior policymakers around the world through ED speeches and other senior staff speeches. For example, Michele Bachelet quoted arguments and statistics from *Progress 2011* in her speech on women's access to justice, attended by Ban Ki-moon, the presidents of Finland and South Africa, the head of the US Department of Justice, and others.¹⁹

¹⁸ Although we tried to use keyword searches to find documents citing *Progress* on the UN Women web site, the searches did not yield accurate results.

FINDING 13: A number of UN Special Rapporteurs and other officials have drawn on the 2011 report. Half of these uses have been substantive, especially in terms of upholding the 2011 report’s recommendations on the need for gender-sensitive law reform.

One area for which we have a count and content analysis is “usage” of the *Progress 2011* report in UN official documents. *Progress 2011* has been directly cited in 37 official documents since its appearance, including 13 Secretary General reports, 11 reports linked to CSW, and seven Special Rapporteur reports (as well as one report of a UN Human Rights Council-mandated Working Group). Of these 37 documents, content analysis shows that roughly half contain substantive references to the report’s ten recommendations—rather than passing mentions or no mention.

Special Rapporteurs citing the 2011 report are:

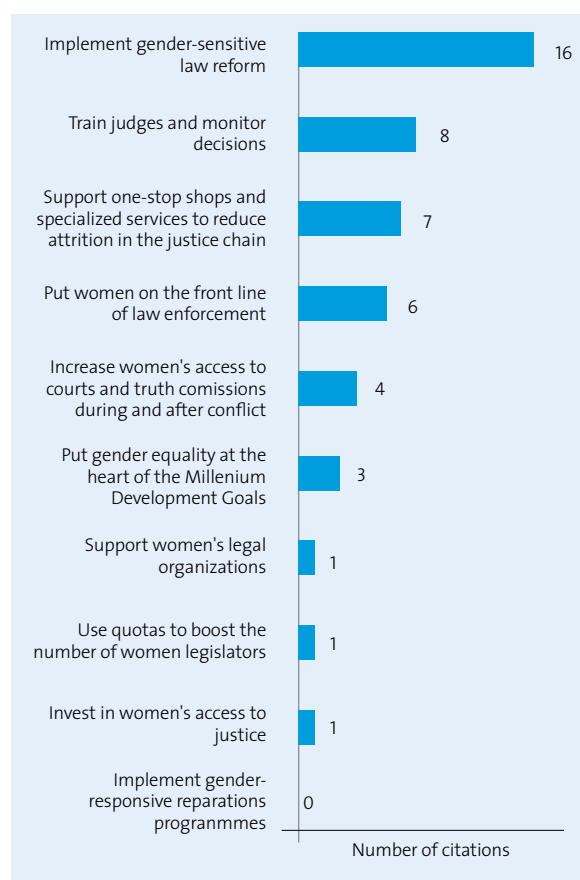
- Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers (2 reports)
- Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (2 reports)
- Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights
- Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context
- Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation

SG reports of note include:

- *Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls* (E/CN.6/2013/4)
- *Women, Peace, and Security* (S/2015/716)

¹⁹ She did not, however, mention the title of the report itself. UN Web TV, “Strengthening Women’s Access to Justice,” September 24, 2012; available at <http://Webtv.un.org/meetings-events/watch/strengthening-women%E2%80%99s-access-to-justice/1859018960001>.

FIGURE 6
Number of UN Official Documents citing *Progress 2011* recommendations



- Measures taken and progress achieved in the promotion of women and political participation (A/68/184)
- Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2015/3)

Content analysis also shows several instances where the *Progress 2011* was mentioned as a key reference

early on in a document, but not cited again. This suggests that the report might have had more influence of which we are unaware. Similarly, there might be many other documents that were influenced by the report; however, in our methodology we only examined direct citations.

Finally, we observed that *Progress 2011* was cited numerous times in the *Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*.

Gender focal points within multilateral institutions and donor agencies

Another key vector of uptake concerns people working on gender within larger agencies, such as the World Bank, UNDP, OECD, IDLO, and OHCHR, as well as donor agencies. As mentioned under “Relevance,” KIs suggest that this group welcomes data and arguments to bolster their own position within agencies where they might feel or be marginal—these views have been expressed for both *Progress 2011* and *2015*. The survey, however, suggest mixed uptake among this group. We surveyed people who are part of GENDERNET and IANWGE, and they reported being slightly less aware of the report than the general set of respondents. Most identified greater awareness of the 2015 report rather than the 2011 one, which is not surprising given that it is more recent.

Other staff in multilateral and donor agencies

In addition to gender focal points, we found citations to *Progress 2011* in publications from the following agencies. (We did not do keyword searches to find similar references to *Progress 2015*.) This list should be considered representative rather than exhaustive:

- African Union (AU)
- Asian Development Bank (AfDB)
- Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid) Council of Europe
- Department for International Development (DFID)
- UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO)

- Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)
- UNAIDS
- UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)

Civil society and women’s movement groups

We have found grey literature or blog posts citing *Progress 2011* from the following organizations. Note that most are international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) or do work on the global level. This is a limitation of the search method, since INGOs are more likely to have searchable publications on their web sites than local/national NGOs. We do not have a strong sense of the level of uptake of the report among local/national NGOs.

- ActionAid
- Amnesty International
- Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)
- Avocats Sans Frontières
- Comité de América Latina para la Defensa de los Derechos de las Mujeres (CLADEM)
- Equality Now
- Gender Conscience Initiative (Cameroon)
- Global Alliance on Armed Violence (GAAV)
- Global Justice Center
- Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC)
- Harm Reduction International
- Human Rights Watch (HRW)
- International Criminal Court (ICC) Trust Fund for Victims

- International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
- Impunity Watch
- Inclusive Security
- ILO International Training Center
- Overseas Development Institute
- Oxfam
- Namati
- Plan International
- Saferworld
- Womankind
- Zonta International

There has started to be similar pick up on *Progress 2015*, although it is too soon to provide an exhaustive list (and not enough resources to do key word searches related to this report). For example, KIIs suggest that organizations like Oxfam, AWID, the Gender and Development Network (GADN), the Center for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESR), the European Women’s Lobby, and others have been picking up the messages.

Opinion makers

There are instances in which influential opinion makers picked up messages from *Progress 2011*. These included coverage on Duncan Green’s blog, *From Poverty to Power*, where Green reproduced key elements of the “Executive Summary.”²⁰ Additionally, *The New York Times* writer Nicholas Kristof tweeted about the report the day of the global launch. Although the New York launch of *Progress 2011* featured noted journalist Catherine Crier, it is unknown the extent to which she might have picked up its messages.²¹

²⁰ Duncan Green, “Justice for Women: Great new report from UN Women,” July 6, 2011, available at <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/justice-for-women-great-new-un-women-report/>.

²¹ Also worth noting in relation to *Progress 2015*, which we did not investigate in depth, is Anne-Marie Slaughter, “The Work that Makes Work Possible,” *The Atlantic*, March 23, 2016; available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/03/unpaid-caregivers/474894/>



Nicholas Kristof
@NickKristof

UN Women issues report today noting that 600 million women live in countries where domestic violence is still not a crime.

7:30 AM · Jul 6, 2011 · Twitter Web Client

416 Retweets 18 Likes

Tweet by Nicholas Kristof about *Progress 2011* launch, July 6, 2011.

Senior policymakers

Launch events have involved senior policymakers at national level as panelists. For *Progress 2011*, this group included ministers and other national officials from Liberia, Kenya, Australia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Thailand, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Mexico, Norway, Jordan, occupied Palestinian territory, Colombia, Tajikistan, and the Philippines. Other high-level officials, who acted as panelists, include senior officials from Organization of American States, IACHR, the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, a Special Rapporteur, a CEDAW Committee member, and a permanent representative to the UN.

Limitations on the scope of our research means that we have little sense for the extent to which inclusion of such officials resulted in a wider uptake or dissemination of *Progress 2011*. There may be reason to believe that this happens. For example, one of the panelists at the Australia launch, Hon Catherine Branson QC, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, subsequently referred to the report in a speech to the Commonwealth Law Ministers’ Meeting.²²

Media

We have already discussed the extensive reporting on *Progress 2011* and *2015* in the media. Content analysis of English-language stories for *Progress 2011* shows that more than 60 per cent of the 141 news articles analysed featured evidence, key messages, and recommendations of the report to a great extent (more than 4 times). It is important to note that most of the evidence, key messages, and recommendations in the news were taken from the press release; in rare exceptions, news would pick up more detailed data in the report. One factor highlighted in KIIs is the importance of ensuring that adequate materials are made

available to journalists in a timely way in advance of the launch, affording journalists more time to integrate the rich material into their stories.

Academics

There also has been uptake by academics. We have found 146 citations to *Progress 2011* to date (118 in

English, 24 in Spanish, and 4 in French). So far, we have found 49 citations of *Progress 2015* (44 in English and 5 in Spanish). A wide range of *Progress* reports are used in teaching and research, as shown by keyword searches for the *Progress* report and the word “syllabus.” The survey and KIs confirmed this uptake, as scholars reported using the report in their classes.

10. Do stakeholders include those who are not UN Women’s existing (or natural) constituencies and/or allies?

FINDING 14: Apart from media outreach to the general public (whose impact we did not assess), we did not find evidence that the report was reaching beyond UN Women’s existing or natural constituencies.

The key means by which the report reaches people who are not part of UN Women’s natural constituencies is through media outreach, which is intentionally broad. Beyond this approach, there is some effort to engage other constituencies, but it is ad hoc, not informed by a strategy, and stops short of a mapping external constituencies to which the report might appeal. This is especially important because actors working on access to justice and development work largely outside of the women’s movement and might not be part of UN Women’s normal outreach networks. We, therefore, do not have evidence that the report has reached much beyond UN Women’s existing constituencies and allies. Some representative comments from external KIs were:

“They are not reaching out—and this is something I have to do—to the non-converted. The report [2015] is preaching to the converted.”—Multilateral staff

“I think the report [2011] was never presented at my [major multilateral organization] and that would have been really useful at the time. Had I had a better connection at the time, I would have organized it.”—Multilateral staff

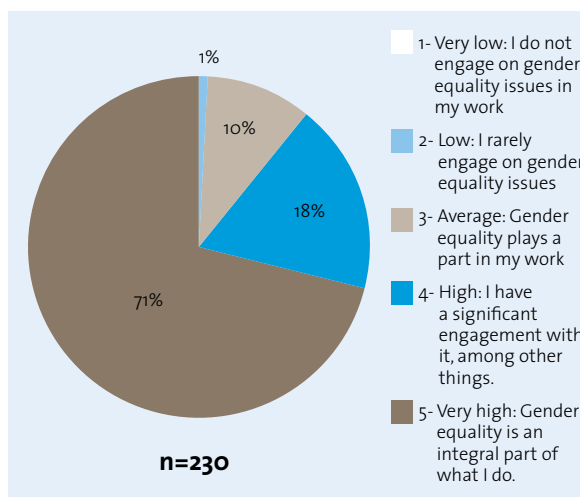
One indicator of the proportion of people to which UN Women is reaching who fall outside of UN Women’s normal constituencies is the degree to which survey respondents said that they did or did not have gender equality as a main feature of their work. Of 230 people

responding to the external survey (based on UN Women email lists), 89 per cent said that they have high or very high level of engagement with gender equality in their work. This suggests, at a minimum, that respondents to the survey are largely within UN Women’s natural allies or networks—the same networks through which UN Women is channeling the *Progress* report.

One programme staff member observed in relation to the *Progress 2015* report:

“Given the focus on women’s economic empowerment in the region, we have been able to take full advantage of the report and use it in speeches, papers, and more. But the report hasn’t been largely disseminated outside UN Women.”

FIGURE 7
Level of professional engagement with gender equality among survey respondents



22 Catherine Branson, “President Speech: ‘Women as Agents of Change’: Balancing the scales,” Commonwealth Law Ministers’ Meeting, July 13, 2011; available at <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/president-speech-women-agents-change-balancing-scales>.

11. To what extent is the report reaching the audiences targeted in its issue areas and objectives?

FINDING 15: The report is primarily reaching target audiences in the gender equality community (including UN Women staff). Awareness and uptake among target audiences in the “issue” areas of access to justice or development have been mixed, and there is room for improvement.

As mentioned in the section above on “Relevance,” the audiences for *Progress* are not clearly defined; instead, they are general and inclusive. For *Progress 2011*, the report has reached some people and organizations working on access to justice, e.g., the Trust Fund for Victims at the ICC, ICJ, Impunity Watch, Inclusive Security, Namati, and so on. It also reached actors in the justice field through the process of writing the report itself. Acknowledgments include people working at Open Society Justice Initiative, the International Center for Transitional Justice, the International Association of Women Judges, and others. We did not find, however, many specific actions taken to map or reach out to this constituency, which itself is quite diverse (as the diversity in the report’s topics suggests). In fact, the communications and advocacy strategy says that the communications goals are to “increase awareness of the issues facing women in accessing justice amongst governments, donors, and UN agencies.”²³ There is no mention of those already working on access to justice as a key constituency.

KIIs suggest that the level of uptake among these actors may be mixed. Two interviewees from INGOs who work in this issue area, but who were not involved with producing the report, said that their awareness of the report was very low. One reason for this, as explained by a civil society actor, was that they felt the report was not really pitched to practitioners:

“It feels very policy-maker focused in terms of the way it is pitched. So I wonder if it is... trying to win over people who work in the UN system or in policy-maker circles about what it means for justice for women.”—INGO staff working on access to justice for women

Indeed, the report has clearly reached UN constituencies working on access to justice and the rule of law within the UN system, including UNDP, OHCHR, and RoLCRG. UNDP has cited the report in numerous documents related to their rule of law work, and KIIs suggest that there was awareness of the report generally among rule of law staff. Additionally, the R&D team made a presentation to RoLCRG.

12. Are the modalities of promoting the report effective in reaching its target audiences?

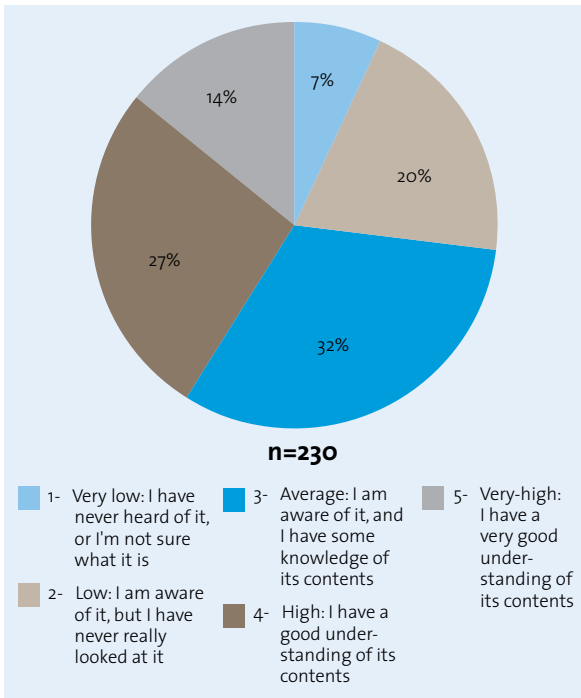
FINDING 16: A substantial proportion of people in UN Women’s networks have awareness of the report. The primary source of information about the report is the UN Women web site.

The internal and external surveys give us some data points on how effective the report has been in reaching its target audiences, as it was sent primarily to people in UN Women’s networks. In general, we would expect these respondents to have at least heard of the report, even if they do not know what is in it. By and large, they do. Most people (roughly 83 per cent) in these networks have some awareness of *Progress*. Additionally, 63 per cent of people have knowledge of its contents. Finally, more than 50 per cent of people in

UN Women’s networks report that they have a good understanding of the contents or higher, suggesting some level of engagement—even reading—of the material. If one wants a statistic on the proportion of people in UN Women’s networks who are really reading the report, then that number may be somewhere around 12 per cent of people: those who have the highest score on awareness (5). UN Women staff demonstrate a slightly higher awareness of the report, mainly due to the fact that fewer people indicated that they had never heard of it (even so, 15/208 staff members, or 7 per cent, selected this response), and a slightly higher number of people said their awareness

²³ UN Women, “Progress of the World’s Women: In Pursuit of justice—Communications and Advocacy Outline,” internal document, no date, p. 1.

FIGURE 8
Awareness of *Progress* in UN Women's networks



was “4-High.” Otherwise, awareness was similar between the two groups.

In terms of modalities for promoting the report, we identified the following:

- Launch events and media briefings
- Coverage in the mainstream media
- Dedicated web site
- Social media
- Presentations in meetings and conferences
- Collateral materials, including regional factsheets

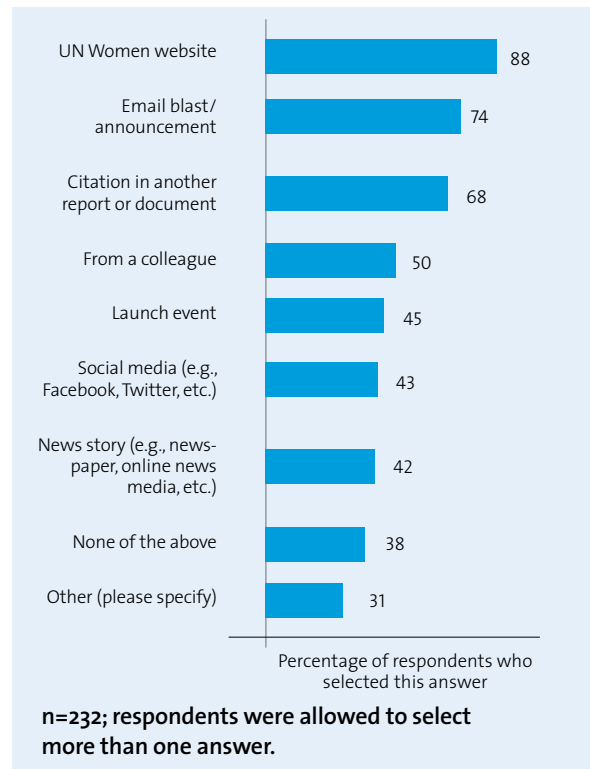
Survey data shows that primary way that people hear about *Progress* is via the UN Women web site. News stories and social media do not rank high as methods of hearing about the report. Word of mouth (“from a colleague”) is a more important source. UN Women staff report similar numbers that the web site is the main source, and news and social media rank low.

Another point to note is that those external survey participants who attend launch events are much more likely to rate their awareness of *Progress* higher than the general survey population. In fact, of the 33 respondents who had attended a launch event, more than 60 per cent rated their awareness “4-high” or “5-very high.” The quotes below illustrate the value of the launches in socializing the report with senior level officials:

“The law makers both at the national and local level must be aware of this publication through presentations by UN Women offices. They do not have time to visit web sites [on] women’s issues.”—Academic and civil society representative (Asia-Pacific)

“I am fully aware of the 2015 report.... I am not aware of any other theme of previous *Progress* reports. I was invited to the launch, so I studied the report.”—National government representative (Latin America/Caribbean)

FIGURE 9
How external survey participants have heard about *Progress* over the past five years





Ines Bonilla at the UN Women launch of *Progress of the World's Women* in Quito, Ecuador, July 7, 2011. (Photo: UN Women)

FINDING 17: Launch events can be an important means of solidifying awareness of the report's contents and recommendations among attendees. Successful launches have been conceived and implemented in a strategic way, with specific objectives and target audiences in mind.

Analysis of feedback reports from the organizers of the launch events for *Progress 2011*, as well as reports by the Communications team on both the 2011 and 2015 launches, suggested that people who belonged to the target audience groups formed a large proportion of the speakers and participants of the launch events. Interviews with key stakeholders also confirmed this fact, but at the same time suggested difference in terms of the groups of stakeholders attending the launch events in the different locations:

“The majority of the audience was civil society organizations and NGOs. There were also academics and a few policy makers.”—Civil society representative

“It was open for everyone to attend, but obviously the vast majority were people from the organization hosting.”
—Multilateral representative

This was strategic in most cases, but probably not all. Certainly, many launches showed thoughtfulness in terms of invitation lists; the examples from the State of Palestine and Ecuador for *Progress 2011* demonstrate this (among others), as well as events in Mexico City and elsewhere for *Progress 2015*. There might be scope for improvement, however, as concern or confusion about who the launch is targeting was raised by a number of external observers.

It is possible that some of these issues are linked to the decision-making process about where to launch. We have heard different perspectives on this issue, with one office suggesting that it was impelled to do a launch for which it did not have adequate time or resources. The office judged its own launch not to have been particularly successful in getting the right participation, because it was piggy-backed onto another event. By contrast, most offices have reported a smoother process. In the end, the country office doing

the launch is the one developing the invitation list, which is tailored to its own engagements on thematic issues in the reports.

The most recent editions of the *Progress* report had launch events organized in seven to eight countries, and the selection of the locations followed geographic representation as defined by UN Women:

- Asia and the Pacific: India and Australia (2011) and Thailand and Australia (2015)
- North Africa and the Arab States: Egypt (2011 and 2015)
- East and Southern Africa: Kenya (2011 and 2015)
- West and Central Africa: Senegal (2015)
- Latin America & the Caribbean: Ecuador (2011) and Mexico (2015)
- North America: USA (2011 and 2015)
- Europe: United Kingdom (2011 and 2015)

Other UN agencies have shown a different approach in the selection of the locations for the launch events. UNDP, for example, organized the launch events of the HDR in donor countries and capitals. The United Nations Population Fund has utilized a similar approach for the launch of the *State of World Population Report*, with many locations in the Global North.

According to the feedback reports from the organizers of the launch events for *Progress 2011* and reports from the *Progress 2011* and *2015* launches prepared by the R&D team, the number of participants attending the launch events in the different locations varied substantially. This had an impact on the effectiveness of reaching the target audiences in some locations.

For the *Progress 2011* launch events, the event in Nairobi had 80 participants, while the event in Quito had 500 participants. For the *Progress 2015* launch events that had data available, it was also possible to see a remarkable difference, with 120 participants in the event in London and 450 participants in the event in Dakar. There were also reports of low-rate of attendance at some presentations.

In the few locations where a live streaming of the launch event was available, the number of viewers was rather low. One hundred fifty participants attended the launch event of the 2015/2016 *Progress* report in New York. The event also was live streamed on the web, but had only 63 views. The 2015/2016 launch event in Bangkok, which was only streamed on the web, had 25 views.

In most cases, the media briefing for the launch of *Progress 2011* and *2015* was combined with the launch events and happened at the same day—sometimes in different venues in the same city. International press was invited to the briefing and launch in New York and London, while regional and national media were invited to other locations.

FINDING 18: The global media have picked up the report, including some major print and broadcast media, owing to an outreach strategy centered on deliberate outreach to the press.

As mentioned, the launch of the *Progress* report was well covered by international media and by some regional and national media. According to the media coverage synopsis of the launch of *Progress 2015* prepared by the communications team, more than 1,200 news reports appeared in the media spanning more than 30 countries.

Media clippings showed that highly influential news outlets and global wires covered the launch of the two most recent editions of the *Progress* report, including *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNBC*, *Time*, *The Huffington Post*, *Press Association*, *Reuters*, *Dow Jones*, *Bloomberg*, *Forbes*, and many others.

According to media coverage report prepared by Portland for the launch of *Progress 2011*, the media published hundreds of news stories across every region of the world. Highlights included: CNN and Al-Jazeera interviews with the former UN Women’s Executive Director Ms. Bachelet, and *Financial Times* and *The Guardian* extensive and detailed coverage in print and online.

Content analysis of *Progress 2011* media coverage indicated that 41 per cent of 141 news articles in English

related to the *Progress 2011* launch cited the report in the title or headline, and 70 per cent cited it in the first paragraph—which is a good showing. Forty-four per cent of the news articles also referenced quotes from UN Women’s spokespersons, with the former Executive Director Ms. Bachelet mentioned 82 per cent of the time. As noted, with rare exceptions, the stories repeated the press release rather than developing new content. It would have been desirable for more articles to do in-depth reporting.

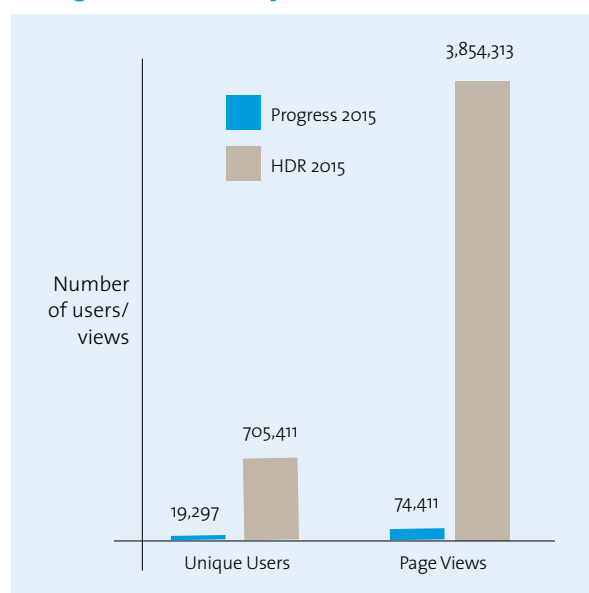
FINDING 19: The microsite is a critical piece of the outreach strategy for *Progress*. Its potential is limited by its static content and limited resources to developing it.

Given the fact that most people hear about the *Progress* report from the web site, it is critical to assess how well it is delivering content. The dedicated web site for *Progress 2015* presented features that could accommodate the needs of diverse audiences. Navigation was clear. It contained a dedicated page for each one of the chapters, a page with options for downloading the report and other related materials, pages for case studies/stories, and an archive of easily-accessible archive of previous editions.

In some interviews, the dedicated web site was mentioned as a reference or source of information. Scholars said that they were using the *Progress* web site as a reference in their courses, and people welcomed the fact that they can download the report in several languages.

We observed that within 90 days following the launch of the 2015 report, its dedicated microsite had 74,411 page views from 19,297 users. This represents a very small spike in web site visits on the overall UN Women site (the big spikes are around CSW and international days). By contrast, within 90 days following the launch of the 2015 UNDP HDR, its English-language web site had 3.85 million page views from 705,000 users.

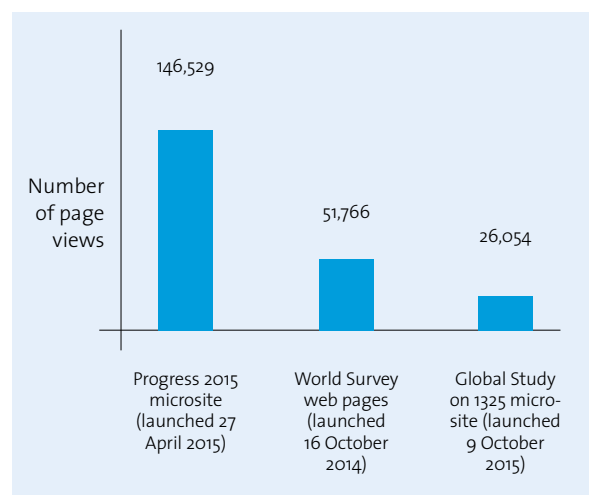
FIGURE 10
Web analytics for *Progress 2015* and HDR 2015 in English, first 90 days after launch



Many factors might account for this discrepancy in numbers, not the least of which is the long history and higher profile of the HDR, as well as the breadth and depth of the UNDP organization globally. Another important factor is that HDR has dedicated outreach staff and an annual budget of roughly \$6 million—compared to no dedicated outreach staff for *Progress* and an annual budget that averages \$850,000.

Further exploration of the analytics suggests another factor. The content in the *Progress* web site was static and published only on the occasion of the launch. It then sits there more or less untouched until the next *Progress* comes out.²⁴ The HDR web site, by contrast, offers lessons, by combining static and dynamic content, publishing new content in the

FIGURE 11
Page views of UN Women comparison publications from launch to present



form of blogs and news stories through the year, and offering other opportunities for engagement—for example, sign-up to a newsletter. The HDR web site also had datasets, country profiles, and country reports updated on a regular basis. Given the static nature of the site, it is perhaps not surprising that it receives half of all its page views and that nearly 65 per cent of its unique users come in that initial 90-day period after launch.

Lest we leave the impression that this is poor performance (it is not), we should draw some other comparisons. We compared page views of similar publications from the past two years: the 2014 *World Survey of the Role of Women in Development* and the 2015 *Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*. In both instances, page views for *Progress 2015* far outpaced both reports.

FINDING 20: The 2015 report made a positive showing in social media, even beyond the launch date, owing to creative use of infographics. Further improvement could be made through more outreach to influential people on social media.

Web data suggested that social media was an important driver of traffic to the dedicated web site for *Progress 2015*—almost exclusively from UN Women social media accounts. Analysis of traffic showed:

- 4 of top 10 *Progress* tweets, including the top 3, were posted on Father’s Day/Mother’s Day (i.e., not around the launch)
- 4 of top 10 *Progress* tweets published within 7 days of launch
- 9 of top 10 *Progress* tweets with link to progress.unwomen.org landing page

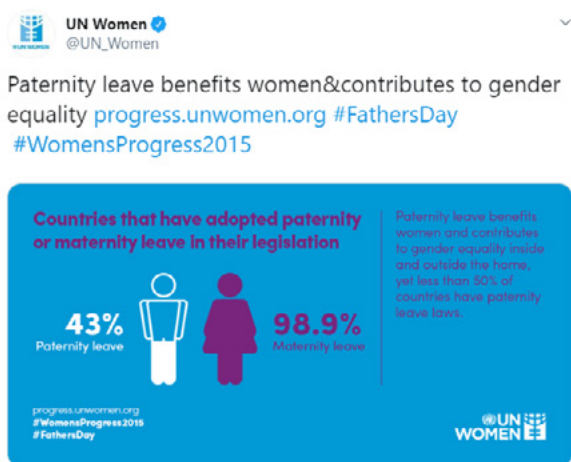
- 8 of top 10 *Progress* tweets showed striking data in the form of simple infographics
- Most popular tweet (553 retweets) about *Progress* data on Father’s Day (see image below)

A comparison between the performance of UN Women and UNDP twitter accounts within 90 days of the launch of their respective reports showed that UN Women tweets about *Progress* received on average two and half times more retweets and favourites than UNDP tweets about HDR—despite the fact that UN Women had slightly fewer Twitter followers (less than 1 million) than UNDP (over 1 million). HDR’s most

24 A donor report for *Progress 2015* states that there was an intention to build a more dynamic site, but the team ran into challenges: “While the completed website is well-designed and an effective resource for readers to engage with the content of the report, UN Women was unable to deliver the envisioned degree of data visualization and interactivity on the website. This experience reinforced the importance of putting a website development plan in place early on, and funding permitting, including in that plan devoted in-house support capacity. UN

> Women is exploring a longer-term strategy to make the data from *Progress* reports available (and data from UN Women’s growing portfolio of gender statistics work, including related to the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals), with the aim of investing in a sustainable way of disseminating and publicizing this work, rather than by creating a new website for each edition of *Progress*, which showed a limited shelf life and reach.” See UN Women, “Final Report to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, July 2013 – July 2015,” internal document, no date, p. 6.

popular tweet had roughly half the retweets (282) as *Progress*'s most popular one (548).



10:30 AM - Jun 21, 2015 - Hootsuite

500 Retweets 317 Likes

Progress 2015's top tweet, June 21, 2016.

Of note is the fact that nine out of the top 10 UN Women tweets about *Progress 2015* had links to the *Progress* landing page. On the other hand, only three out of 10 UNDP tweets about HDR had links to the landing page, with the other tweets linking to other pages of the HDR web site, including the launch event, press release, specific chapters, download page, and dataset. Having almost all social media linking to the landing page might have not been as effective, since web data

showed that half of the viewers of the *Progress* landing page left without visiting other pages.

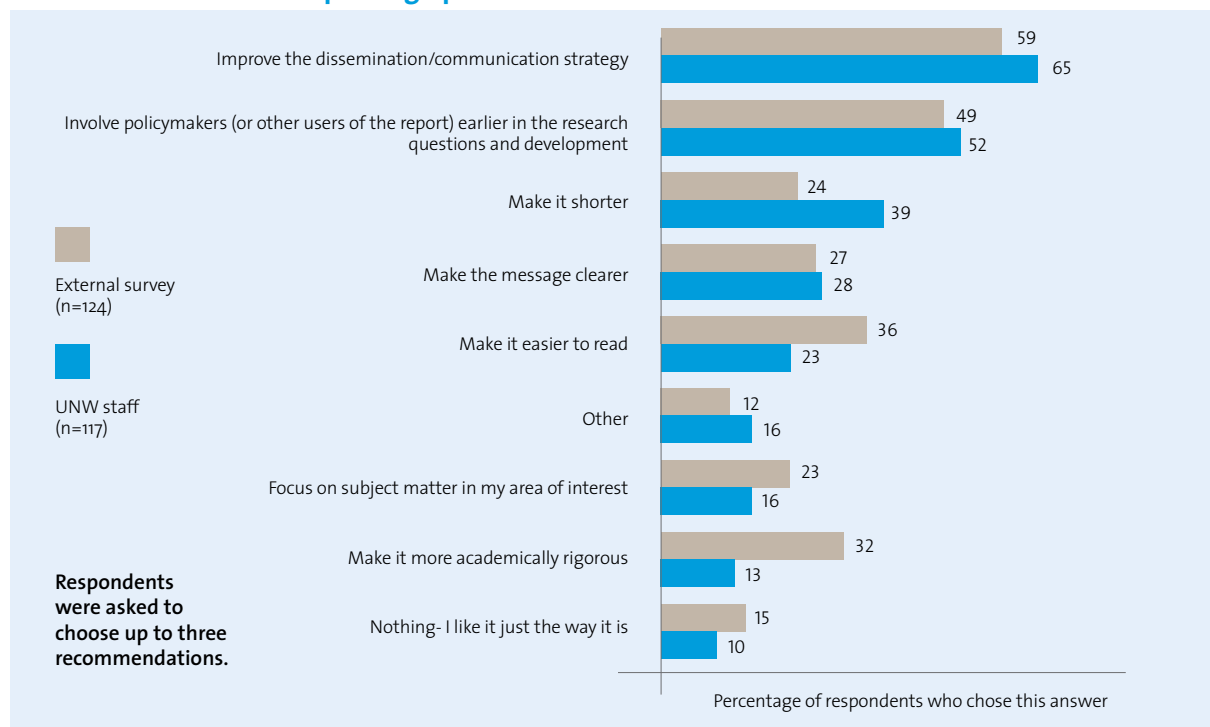
There were a few reports on other social media accounts of influential bloggers or partner organizations promoting the launch of *Progress 2015*. The official United Nations Twitter account sent only five tweets about *Progress*; UNDP twitter sent four tweets; and the World Economic Forum and World Bank sent none.

“In our part of the world, bloggers are more influential than national newspapers. We haven’t reached out to those bloggers for dissemination.”—UN Women staff

Other findings

In the surveys, we asked respondents who said they had some familiarity with the contents of the report to tell us which changes would most improve the chances that they or others would use *Progress*. The top two choices for both internal and external audiences were the same: improve the dissemination strategy, and involve policymakers or other end-users in the research questions and development. After this, UN Women wished the report to be shorter, whereas external respondents wished it to be easier to read. Note the high number of external respondents who wanted a more academically rigorous publication—owing to the fact that academics were part of the external survey group.

FIGURE 12
Recommendations for improving uptake



13. To what extent has the report informed UN Women’s policy messages, programming, and positioning?

Turning from “reach” to questions on “influence” of the *Progress* reports, the next few questions will be examined through a set of case studies, along with KIIs, survey data, and document review. In these questions,

we will use frameworks and theories of research uptake developed by DFID, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and scholars to evaluate the evidence and assess the theory of change for *Progress*.

FINDING 21: *Progress’s* internal influence stands mainly in relation to contributing to the shaping of UN Women staff’s contextual understanding of the issues (which may indirectly inform programme and policy interventions); *Progress* has also had some instances of direct influence on specific UN Women programme and policy interventions. Its influence on policies and programmes has been stronger when potential end users have been involved early in the research and/or when there is already receptivity to research among end users. Influence could be strengthened with a clearer corporate statement on the role and positioning of the report in UN Women’s work.

As mentioned in the section on “Relevance,” *Progress* is relevant to all three of the needs in this question (policy messages, programming, positioning), with an emphasis on positioning. In all three cases, it is difficult to assess the full extent that the report has informed these processes. We, therefore, try to address this question through the use of three case studies of the influence of the *Progress 2011* report. The first

looks at the influence of *Progress 2011* at the global/corporate level. The other two examine different ways that the report has been used to advance positioning or programming at the country level.

Before looking at *Progress 2011*, however, we would note that KIIs have suggested influence from two previous editions of *Progress*, in particular *Progress*

2008: *Who Answers to Women?* and *Progress 2002, v.1: Women, War, and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peacebuilding*. For *Progress 2008*, because there was no separate R&D office, the report was produced by the same UNIFEM Policy staff who used it to guide policy and global programming. KIIs suggest that this report still resonates with a number of staff, some of whom cite it as their favourite *Progress* report. *Progress 2002 (v.1)* has had an outsized impact not only because it addressed the issues of women, peace, and security at exactly the right moment, but also because it was co-authored by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. KIIs report that this report helped to deepen UNIFEM's engagement on these issues.

Case study one:

Progress 2011 as the basis for “going big” in UN Women policy messages, programming, and positioning

Starting with positioning, one of the most significant outcomes of the *Progress 2011* report was the attempt to create a joint programme on women's access to justice with UNDP and OHCHR. In this instance, the report directly influenced, to a great extent, all three dimensions: policy messages, programming, and positioning. According to KIIs, there was an idea at the most senior levels of UN Women to leverage the report to create a large-scale programme: to “go big.” Because UN Women had the *Progress 2011* report in hand, its credibility and expertise on the issue of access to justice were enhanced in the eyes of potential partners. Additionally, as they developed the research, the *Progress 2011* team worked closely with experts from UN Women, UNDP, and OHCHR who would later develop the joint programme. As a result, interest and awareness of the report was already built in. After high-level discussions with UNDP and OHCHR, the decision was taken to move forward with the programme, which would take the form of a trust fund of \$35 million. Starting in 2012, a lengthy development period followed, and the partners put together an ambitious ProDoc that was directly framed around the themes and structure of

the *Progress 2011* report. Fundraising began, including talks with the European Commission and other donors who might provide large-scale funds.

Ultimately, the joint programme did not move forward. Turnover of key senior staff in all three institutions meant that the programme did not have the same level of institutional support as it had previously. The policy staff person at UN Women in charge of the programme also left, and that position was not filled for a full year. In reflecting on why the joint programme did not move forward, KIIs had different perceptions and memories. Points of agreement included the fact that institutional changes in all three organizations weakened support for the idea. Furthermore, there was the perception of an implicit (or explicit) competition between a programme on women's access to justice in general, and well-funded programmes on access to justice, specifically in conflict and post-conflict countries in the three agencies. There also was a perception that such a large programme might outstrip UN Women capacities, even if responsibilities were shared jointly. Finally, there was a concern the programme was too ambitious in scope, and that using the *Progress 2011* report as a blueprint for developing the ProDoc might have been misplaced; a narrower, more focused initiative might have been easier to develop, fund, and implement.

Although the *Progress 2011* did not cause the creation of the proposed joint programme, as discussions and relationships predated the report, it played an influential role. One external KII summed up this view: “That was a great report. Substantively, it was very strong and timely. Issues it raised were critically important. What was too bad is that it wasn't leveraged for follow up. It just raised the issues.”

UN Women still maintains work on women's access to justice and has recently signalled its commitment by establishing it as a flagship programme. With a new policy advisor on board, the programme has recently developed a draft toolkit on implementing CEDAW's General Recommendation 33 on Women's Access to Justice. The *Progress 2011* report continued to be relevant in developing this toolkit, although its relevance might have been further enhanced if its data could have been updated.

Case study two:

Leveraging *Progress 2011* to position new programming on women's access to justice in the State of Palestine

The State of Palestine office took advantage of the unplanned convergence of the publication of *In Pursuit of Justice* and the start-up of its new programme on women's access to justice. The team developed a strategy for bringing together Palestinian Authority and civil society actors together for a half-day programme in November 2011 to discuss the findings of the report and to introduce the new programme. Panelists included senior officials from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the judiciary, the attorney general's office, the police, and the bar association; the event drew some 180 attendees. The R&D team also supported the launch through the participation of the lead author, Laura Turquet.

As a KII said, "Our programme was grounded on the assumption that to ensure effectiveness, we needed a multi-sectoral approach, to go through the entire justice chain, and to work on the security aspect and the other services of victims. The *Progress* report says the same thing: 'You cannot work on justice and security by looking at just one aspect.'"

After the launch, the team continued to use *Progress 2011* as a reference point. Although it did not shape the activities directly (these had already been set), it positively reinforced the programme's direction. The programme ultimately implemented one-stop centers, advocated for increased numbers of women in the security sector, and worked on critical legal reform—all recommendations in *Progress 2011*. As of 2014, the programme was renewed for another three years.

One direct contribution of the *Progress 2011* report was to inspire further research on women's access to justice specific to the State of Palestine. In 2014, UN Women published the first of three reports: *Access Denied: Palestinian Women's Access to Justice in the West Bank of the oPt*, by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Suhad Daher-Nashif. In 2016, the second report appeared: *In the Absence of Justice: Embodiment and*

the Politics of Militarized Dismemberment in Occupied East Jerusalem, by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian. While these reports were not conceived of as "country-level" *Progress* reports, they represent a deeper reflection on and understanding of the issues, as they are relevant to the local context.

Case study three:

Using *Progress 2011* to engage new stakeholders and create momentum for an existing programme on indigenous women's rights in the Andean region

When UNIFEM's Andean office, located in Ecuador, learned that the next theme of the *Progress of the World's Women* report would be on women's access to justice, it seized the opportunity. Staff contacted headquarters and started working with the *Progress* editor on a case study about indigenous women's rights in Ecuador to be featured in the report. The Ecuador case, which was also documented in one of the background papers commissioned for the report, ultimately provided the lead-in to Chapter 3, "Legal Pluralism and Justice for Women," covering the results of the UN Women-led regional programme in Latin America started in 2008.

The scope of this programme, which covered nine countries and ran from 2008 to 2012, included the spectrum of indigenous women's rights. A key component of this programme was access to justice, particularly in the context of legal pluralism. Partially motivated by the 2007 adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the programme sought to ameliorate the situation of indigenous women. They constituted one of the most vulnerable and excluded groups of women in the region and soon became a priority for the work of UNIFEM in Latin America. Early efforts included publications aimed at opening up the discussion about indigenous women's rights and supporting the programme to reach out to key stakeholders in government, the justice system, and indigenous communities. In 2009, UNIFEM hired an influential indigenous woman to lead the next phase

of working directly with indigenous organizations. Examples of activities during this period included training of judges, lawyers, and the police on themes of human rights, gender equality, and legal pluralism in the context of indigenous peoples, as well as enabling indigenous people to create their own spaces of justice that respected the rights of women.

Upon the publication of *In Pursuit of Justice* in 2011, the Ecuador office organized a launch event in Quito. Interest was high. Five hundred people attended, including local and national government, foreign embassies, civil society, and national and global media. Organized in coordination with important sectors of the civil society (and culminating in the National Meeting for Women's Rights), the event had the participation of around 130 women and feminists' organizations coming from all provinces in Ecuador. It garnered national and regional media coverage and benefited from the presence of indigenous and governments' representatives from Bolivia and Peru.

Experts presented the findings. A high-level panel with ministries and members of the assembly and the justice system discussed the implications. They highlighted the case study of the Cotacachi indigenous women from Ecuador featured in the report: "Our intention was for indigenous populations and governments to see the relevance, importance, and impact of what had happened in Cotacachi and recognize its value." At the end of the launch, indigenous and government representatives wanted the indigenous women of Cotacachi to travel to Bolivia and Peru to share their experience.

The launch of the report also coincided with the establishment of UN Women. In the year that followed, UN Women staff organized trips to countries of the Andean region to present the findings of the report, share the experience of the Cotacachi indigenous women and what they had achieved in terms of justice and legal pluralism, and renew commitments with leaders in the government, justice system, and indigenous communities. Some Cotacachi women participated in these missions to share their first-hand experience. The teams carried copies of the *Progress* report to distribute.

The report aligned well with the existing programme. It included recommendations for putting women on the front line of law enforcement; training judges and monitoring judgments for non-discriminatory and unbiased decision-making; and increasing women's access to the justice system. It also provided a case for a better understanding of the status of women in relation to access to justice, the key challenges, and some recommended solutions. Local staff referenced these recommendations as a basis for re-engaging the Ministry of Public Administration (responsible for policing and security), the Ministry of Justice in Ecuador, and discussions with ministries of other countries in the region.

The report was also useful in its provision of examples of what was working elsewhere, including in countries that shared social, economic, and cultural similarities. It also offered a common language to discuss legal issues affecting indigenous women, and presented concrete solutions to increase their access to justice and a fair treatment. Ultimately, the report contributed to re-opening dialogue with important parts of the government and the legal system, and enabled UN Women to offer technical support in the development and delivery of training to police officers and judges on women's indigenous rights.

After the inauguration of *In Pursuit of Justice*, the Ecuador office launched two other reports on indigenous women's rights as part of the programme. Although *Progress* was not explicitly cited in these reports, the topic of one of the reports was legal pluralism and contemplated some of the recommendations put forward in the *Progress* report. "Obviously the *Progress* report was consulted, especially on normative issues and on the recommendations," one former staff member said.

Toward the end of 2012, the funds for the indigenous women's programme in Ecuador ceased, and the programme closed down. International donors were going through difficult financial times and had to reprioritize investments. Indigenous women's rights, though extremely relevant in the region, were not a priority on the international agenda. No further commitments of international funds meant the end

of the programme, as regional and local funds were scarce and unreliable. Changes in the social and political contexts with more popular governments also contributed to diminish the influence of women's movements and indigenous women's rights activists.

The Ecuador case study in *Progress* raised the visibility of the programme and helped to generate a new momentum. The Ecuador office mobilized new stakeholders and renewed the interest of other governments and indigenous people in the Andean region. According to an interviewee “the launch of the *Progress* report allowed us to showcase the case of indigenous women's access to justice in Ecuador across the Andean region.” Although the programme did not move forward after 2012, thereby lessening *Progress's* overall impact, this case study demonstrates the potential for impact when the report aligns with strong and relevant programming.

Analysing the case studies to explore *Progress's* theory of change

These snapshots of influence are intended to help explore the theory of change for *Progress*. The theory suggests that the production of high-quality research, released through a range of channels, will lead to uptake and influence on policies and programmes. These case studies suggest that the theory is partially correct and that there are many other factors in uptake. The empirical literature confirms that simply publishing research—high-quality or not—is unlikely to lead to uptake on its own, and it offers us other insights for analysing these case studies.

First, we should understand the uptake of research in two distinct ways: informing decisions on specific interventions versus informing a decision-maker's understanding of the context.²⁵ The former is much easier to document than the latter, but we see some evidence of both in these case studies. In all cases, there is evidence that decision-makers' understanding of the context—especially UN Women decision makers—were shaped in some way by the report.

²⁵ See Department for International Development (DFID), *What is the evidence on the impact of research on international development?* version 1.1 (DFID, 2014), 5.

The most significant shaping took place in relation to the joint programme on women's access to justice, but the country programmes also evinced concerns for alignment with the report, even if they did not directly borrow from it. The publication of the report raised the profile of the issues as important and noteworthy. As for informing decisions on specific interventions, we see little evidence of this in the Ecuador and State of Palestine cases; however, we find evidence in the case of the joint programme on women's access to justice and UN Women's ongoing access to justice thematic work.

In sum, the case studies suggest that we should expect a report like *Progress* to have more influence on difficult-to-measure contextual understanding than on specific interventions, which might be ongoing with their own timelines, contexts, and limits.

Second, the cases suggest that influence can be stronger when potential users are directly involved in the research. In the access to justice and Ecuador cases, potential users were involved either in the conceptualization of the product or in a major case study. Those two instances clearly showed the highest degree of influence. The State of Palestine, by contrast, which was not involved in the development of the report, used it as a strategic leverage, but not directly in their programming. This finding is consistent with the empirical literature on research uptake, which emphasizes the “demand-side” of research and the importance of “productive interactions” in influencing processes.²⁶

Third, the empirical literature notes the importance of “receptivity” to research on the part of decision makers: the context of its time and place. “Influence is easiest to achieve when policymakers' receptivity to research is high and where their capacity to apply

²⁶ See, e.g., Fred Carden, *Knowledge to Policy: Making the Most of Development Research* (IDRC, 2009), Ch. 3; and Roger Harris, “The impact of research on development policy and practice: An introduction to a review of the literature,” July 29, 2013, available at www.researchtoaction.org/2013/07/the-impact-of-research-on-development-policy-and-practice; Jack Spaapen and Leonie van Drooge, “Introducing ‘productive interactions’ in social impact assessment,” *Research Evaluation* 20, no. 3 (2011): 211–18, available at www.siampi.eu/Content/Introducing_Productive_Interactions.pdf

research is adequate,” according to Fred Carden.²⁷ In many ways, receptivity relates to relevance, which we have discussed above.

In all three of our case studies, receptivity to research was high, mainly because the research aligned closely with the existing programmes or with interest in establishing a programme. Another example of this alignment was reported in the staff survey. In Rwanda, *Progress 2011* gave evidence to support a new joint programme on supporting victims of gender-based violence (GBV) using one-stop centers. This proposal was developed in 2013, and the report helped with critical information on VAW and girls, especially the analytics around it. They drew on data from around the world and within the region, comparing them to Rwanda, and learned about what other countries were doing. The proposal attracted funding from the Dutch Embassy, and now the use of one-stop centers to respond to the needs of victims of GBV is being scaled up nationwide.

Fourth, the case studies also suggest instances where receptivity alone is not enough—that institutional processes also need to be in place to support influence and uptake among UN Women staff.²⁸ As we saw in the case study on the joint programme on women’s access to justice, there was early support at the highest levels of UN women to translate the report into a joint programme for a variety of reasons. Later, however, that programme was derailed partly as a result of staff transitions in the three agencies involved, including UN Women. This suggests that the programme was not sufficiently embedded in corporate strategy to survive such transitions.

In general, the case studies, combined with KIIs and survey data, suggest that the report would benefit from a clearer position within corporate strategy. While offices, such as Ecuador and the State of Palestine, were quick to pick up and leverage the report, and

the R&D team readily provided support and encouragement, this was at their own initiative. Indeed, UN Women’s corporate strategy does not place any particular emphasis on *Progress* or describe its role within the organization. Essentially, staff choose on an individual basis whether or not to embrace its contents and messages. While KIIs and the survey show that many people do so enthusiastically (and ask for *Progress* to appear more frequently), this is not always be the case. Moreover, some staff express confusion about what the report is for, e.g., Should it be linked directly to UN Women country work? Or should it be exploratory and contribute to UN Women’s normative mandate? These aims might or might not overlap.

Finally, we note a contingent factor that was important in all three cases: The *Progress 2011* launch coincided with the launch of UN Women. The report offered an occasion for local staff to convene local stakeholders and promote the new agency. This opportunity is not likely to be repeated in the near future. Therefore, we can expect that national offices will be less likely to hold launches for subsequent *Progress* reports unless they align clearly with the office’s programmes. Indeed, there were far fewer launches for *Progress 2015* than there were for *Progress 2011*.

We observed some similar uptake in regard to *Progress 2015*, even though we did not investigate it in detail for this evaluation. As two examples, the Brazil country office and the Latin America/Caribbean regional office both decided to prepare national versions of the *Progress 2015* report. Other examples offered by UN Women staff include:

“A new Flagship Programme on social protection and decent work, for example, has drawn entirely on evidence, findings and recommendations of the *Progress* report.”

“In Uganda, new programmes and projects on women’s economic empowerment now rely on the latest *Progress* report [2015].”

At the policy level, *Progress 2015* is being used to support UN Women engagement on SDG 5. It figures in background and collateral materials. KIIs suggest that

²⁷ Carden, *Knowledge to Policy*, 32.

²⁸ For example, Carden notes that there are instances where policymakers may be interested in research, but it does not have influence because the needed leadership on implementation of the researchers’ recommendations may not exist. *Ibid.*, 28-29.

research for the report helped to inform UN Women’s position paper on SDG 5, even though the position paper was published before the *Progress 2015* report.²⁹

A last observation concerns an unintended consequence of the *Progress* reports. As of 2016, UN Women has a Flagship Programme on gender statistics for SDG localization that is being led by the chief statistician in the R&D team.³⁰ Funded by the Gates Foundation, among others, the programme aims to build the capacity of national actors to develop gender statistics. KIs suggest that the existence of an R&D team with a standing capacity in statistics contributed to the creation of this programme. While this outcome is not due to *Progress* alone, the need

for statistical capacity to produce these data-rich reports likely helped to establish UN Women as a player in the gender statistics field.

In sum, there has been influence, particularly among staff who were already receptive to the report’s contents. Influence has been stronger at the level of helping to shape people’s contextual knowledge than it has been at the level of specific decisions on interventions—although the latter has also taken place. When they use *Progress*, UN Women staff are doing it primarily for alignment, support, and understanding. They are picking up themes or actions that are most relevant to their context—not so much as a “how-to” guide.

14. To what extent has the report contributed to the positioning of UN Women as a knowledge hub on gender equality?

FINDING 22: *Progress* has made a contribution to the positioning of UN Women as a credible knowledge provider among those who are aware of it—making a positive difference to readers’ perception of UN Women as a source of knowledge, evidence, and data. Specialists (e.g., in gender statistics, development, or access to justice), might be further drawn to UN Women as a knowledge hub if they are directly engaged by the R&D team, if they are receptive to gender approaches, and if the data in *Progress* were regularly updated (causing them to return on a periodic basis).

UN Women is a young organization, and the R&D team has limited resources that are not on par with major actors, such as the Human Development Report Office (HDRO) or the World Bank. We should not expect UN Women to become a “knowledge hub” overnight, even if it is the most important global agency advocating for gender equality. Yet, the report has clearly made a contribution in this regard, as suggested in the comments from users in “Relevance” above. People are drawing on the report because it is a credible substantive piece of research with the UN Women imprimatur.

Survey results also substantiate this impression, albeit with some nuances. When asked to rate the extent to which the report enhances their perception of UN Women as a provider of knowledge, evidence, and data, respondents agreed that the report made

a positive difference. In fact, both UN Women staff and external respondents rated this dimension highly. Also well rated is the notion that the report makes the reader more likely to seek out knowledge, evidence, and data from UN Women. Finally, scoring drops slightly on the question of whether the report has raised the profile of UN Women in their networks.

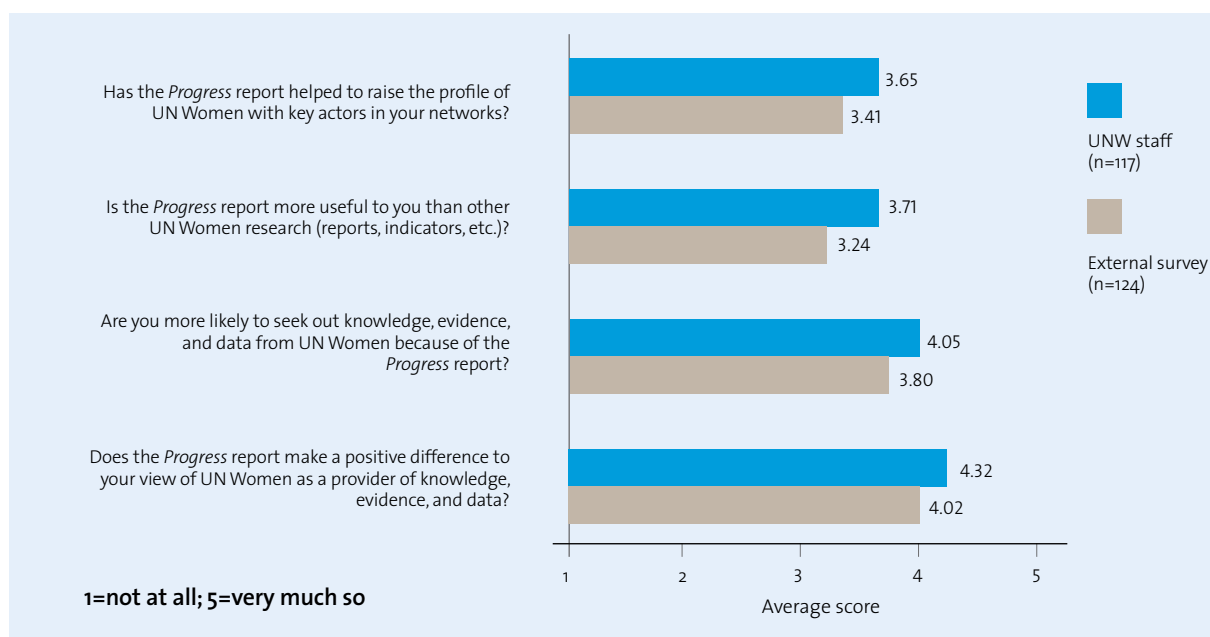
Where the report scores least well—close to average for external respondents—concerns its comparative usefulness with other UN Women research products. This scoring might be a testament to the wide variety of products that UN Women publishes, including at the local and regional level. It also could reflect that some readers want more targeted publications on specific issues, rather than publications that pull

²⁹ See, for example, UN Women, “SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” (no date), available at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>.

³⁰ See UN Women, “Better Gender Statistics for SDGs Evidence-Based Localization,” (May 2016); available at <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/flagship-brief-statistics.pdf?v=1&d=20160512T210319>.

FIGURE 13

Perceptions of UN Women as a provider of knowledge, evidence, and data



together a wide range of topics, which might be of marginal value to them. As one KII mentioned in relation to *Progress 2011*:

“The most useful thing from UN Women is actually not this report, but the ‘Making Transitional Justice Work for Women’ document. It is very user friendly. We have distributed it in meetings with local partners. Very accessible and has key examples. So that is something that we have used in our work.”—Civil society representative

KIIs also suggested other factors that would enhance *Progress’s* value in this regard. As already mentioned, making the underlying data available for download, and updating it periodically, would do much to drive people back to UN Women to see what has changed. Producing original data would certainly raise the profile of the publication and, by extension, UN Women as a thought-leader.

“Adding new data not already present from ILO, WB would be of great value added.”
—Multilateral representative

“I’m not a report kind of person—I would be a lot more likely to use that information in a database format.”—Statistician

Since data play such a critical role in establishing the report as a knowledge product worthy of attention, we developed a case study related specifically to gender statistics.

Case study four:

Influencing other experts? The use of Progress in the gender statistics community.

People who value the *Progress* report do so not just for the arguments and narrative, but also for the extensive data that it presents. Although the R&D team does not typically have the resources to generate new data, it painstakingly combs through existing data, posing new questions to them and reproducing them in illuminating ways. For the 2011 report, the R&D team noted the paucity of good data on laws relating to VAW. Consequently, they developed their own data set, which is one of the original contributions that the

report makes to the field (as most other data for the report were drawn from existing sources).

The *Progress 2011* team included a member of the World Bank's Justice for the Poor group in its advisory committee to encourage cooperation and uptake with the bank. Ultimately, the Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) database at the World Bank started to include indicators on laws on VAW in its 2014 iteration. The *Progress 2011* report served in this case as a catalyst (among others) for cooperation, as the WBL and R&D teams met and corresponded after publication of the report. KIIs and email correspondence show that the R&D team provided WBL team with suggestions for enhancing WBL database, including in relation to covering VAW. Both the 2012 and 2014 WBL reports cite *Progress 2011* (and UN Women more generally) as sources and partners in this effort, among others. *Progress 2011* played a supporting role in encouraging the WBL team to forge ahead with the inclusion of these new indicators. The R&D team worked with WBL team to develop the survey questions for the VAW laws indicator in particular.³¹ WBL also integrated a statistic into its database related to women in the judiciary:

"In *Progress 2011*, there is a graph or a box where they talk about women and supreme courts. I found that data point interesting, and we picked it up. ...The International Association of Women Judges has also brought up the issue of counting judges at this level."—World Bank staff

VAW data also contributed to Minimum Set of Gender Indicators (MSGI), according to KIIs and document review. MSGI is a group of 52 quantitative indicators and 11 indicators related to norms and laws adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2013.³²

³¹ See World Bank, "Acknowledgments," in *Women, Business, and the Law 2014* (Bloomsbury, 2013), 181; available at <http://wbl.worldbank.org/~media/WBG/WBL/Documents/Reports/2014/Women-Business-and-the-Law-2014-FullReport.pdf?la=en>. *Progress 2011* is cited in the report, along with other UN Women research products, such as the Virtual Knowledge Center to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

³² See "Minimum Set of Gender Indicators," available at <http://genderstats.un.org/#/home>. Additionally, see the 11 qualitative indicators, including the one on laws relating to violence against women, at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Data/QualitativeIndicators.html>.

An interagency and expert group on gender statistics developed MSGI with the goal of having common indicators for monitoring gender equality and WEE. UN Women participated in the interagency group. As concerns *Progress 2011*, annexes from the report on "reservations to CEDAW," as well as "VAW laws," are included as indicators 8 and 9 in the qualitative indicators.

Finally, *Progress 2011* contributed to the development of the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). The report came out when the SIGI team was revising its methodology and provided arguments (alongside other reports, such as those from the CEDAW committee and ODI) that were valuable for advocating a stronger rights-based approach to SIGI. The annex data in *Progress 2011* on VAW laws, prevalence of violence against women, and political quotas were used as sources for the SIGI narrative country reports. As was the case with the World Bank and MSGI, members of the R&D team had direct contact with the SIGI team, providing helpful support as the latter worked on their methodology.³³

In spite of the fact that UN Women has comparatively few resources to create statistics (when compared to, e.g., HDRO, the World Bank, UNODC), *Progress 2011* made modest contributions to innovation in gender statistics. *Progress 2015* continues this contribution. The World Bank staff believe it might make a more significant impact on economic debates and are developing an indicator on the gender pension gap that was directly inspired by *Progress 2015*. The potential for the indicator is thus:

"If we can be more intentional about pension system design, then it might help with old-age poverty [where women predominate]."—World Bank staff

³³ See OECD, "Social Institutions and Gender Index," available at <http://www.genderindex.org/>. For specific references to how the *Progress 2011* report was used, see OECD Development Centre, "2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index: Understanding the Drivers of Gender Inequality," available at <http://www.genderindex.org/sites/default/files/2012SIGISummaryresults.pdf>.

Analysing the case study to explore *Progress's* theory of change

It is important to understand that the theory of change articulated by the R&D team, while comprehensive, does not address how the team expects the report to help position UN Women as a knowledge hub. (Nor does it define what it means by “knowledge hub.”) Instead, it focuses on the conditions under which the report could be expected to have influence on policy or programmes.

In the case study above, we observe that in these instances of influence, there was direct contact between the R&D team and the statisticians who ended up adopting some of the concepts or data from the *Progress 2011* report. This bolsters the finding from the previous case studies on the importance of engaging potential end users, as well as of the receptivity of the audience. This direct contact may have been doubly important as UN Women was just getting on its feet and establishing its reputation. In a sense, *Progress 2011* afforded an opportunity for the research team to either establish or deepen relationships with other experts.

As noted, the *Progress 2011* editorial team consciously selected a World Bank staff member to be on the advisory committee, in order to enhance the potential for interactions. Moreover, the statisticians on the R&D team were active in UN discussions on MSGI, alongside publication of the report. These supplementary actions not only helped to develop channels of influence, but they impressed upon others the importance for more and different kinds of gender statistics. Additionally, the groups that were influenced in this case were already interested in gender statistics, therefore, there was a certain receptiveness built-in. Direct contact with R&D might have helped to push forward particular issues, as R&D could provide arguments for the importance of including data on VAW laws, and more.

The case study also suggests ways in which the report might have promoted UN Women as a knowledge hub, even more than it did. For example, to the extent that R&D has the capacity to develop original data for *Progress*, this will enhance its image as a source

of data and evidence among experts in particular, driving them to seek out UN Women expertise in the future. We note, however, that the R&D team has much fewer resources for developing such data in comparison to other “knowledge hubs,” such as the World Bank or HDRO. As mentioned, the annual budget for HDRO is roughly \$6 million (as compared to roughly \$850,000 per year for *Progress*). Expectations, therefore, should be tempered. Notwithstanding this aspect of originality, continuing to present original arguments or repackaging of existing contents in thought-provoking and useful ways also helps.

“There is a dearth of stuff out there (on women’s access to justice). People don’t invest in these issues at that level. What else are you going to refer to? What else is out there?”
—UN Women staff

“Most other reports stand within traditional development economics. It remains within the accepted case for gender equality. What *Progress* (2015) does is trying to bring some cutting-edge feminist ideas to the forefront. The one on poverty didn’t go beyond what other reports were doing. The latest one did.”—Academic

One other issue that stands out in regard to promoting UN Women as a knowledge hub is the infrequency of the publication. KIIs for the case study (as well as other KIIs) noted this as a limiting factor, along with the absence of a regular schedule for its publication. Many UN Women staff, for example, felt that it would be beneficial for the report to appear more frequently, since as time passes, people forget about it. Some external people who are rightly in UN Women’s networks still do not know that *Progress* is UN Women’s flagship:

“It would be good if they had a time frame.”—
Multilateral representative

“I have no awareness of any of the other *Progress* reports (besides *Progress 2011*)... They haven’t registered with me for some reason.”—Civil society representative

15. Has the report been used in programme development? To what extent is that use significant?

FINDING 23: *Progress* has been used in programme development in a number of specific instances, but we do not have enough information to assess the significance or extent of its use.

This question in relation to UN Women programmes has largely been answered above. Apart from the attempt to create a joint programme on women’s access to justice and the subsequent establishment of the Flagship Programme, use of *Progress 2011* tends to be limited to moderate significance, as many other factors have been in play in the development of programmes at the country level. *Progress* is used primarily for support and evidence.

A few interviews, within UN Women and with other key stakeholders, questioned the extent to which practitioners working on programmes were aware of the report and its contents, and, whether they would have the interest in considering its findings and recommendations.

“The question is, how much are the people working in programmes and social policy aware of *Progress*? I am not sure that within (my multilateral agency) people in programme and policy pay sufficient attention to *Progress*.”— Multilateral representative

The UN Women staff survey suggests that this concern is not entirely unfounded, but it should not be blown out of proportion. UN Women programme staff report that they are somewhat less aware than policy staff of *Progress*. This is not to say that they are unaware, but this data point provides guidance for future outreach and improvement.

The second concern is the fact that outside of the gender community, gender equality has not been central to programmes that do not focus specifically on this issue. *Progress 2011* highlighted this point in its statistics on the proportion of funds that the World Bank rule-of-law programmes spend expressly on gender-related activities.

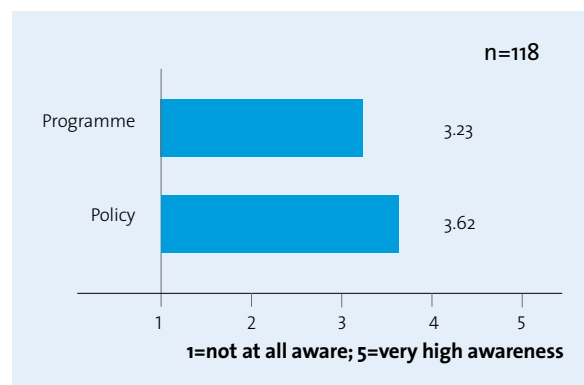
“Development practitioners may not understand substantive equality and human rights approaches.”—Civil society representative

“The challenge is that (my multilateral institution) does not work on human rights, and they are very sensitive to anything that goes in the rights realm.”—Multilateral representative

It has been difficult to uncover evidence on the use for external programme development —especially for *Progress 2011*. We had hoped that the external survey would shed light on this outcome. However, only 18 people surveyed indicated they used it in programme development, and most of these people did not give specific details on what that programme was. When people gave information, it was pleasantly surprising. For example, in relation to *Progress 2015*:

“We have implemented our...project in rural district of (East Africa) where women’s reliance on agriculture is paramount. The progress report on world’s women (sub-Saharan Africa) provided a good framework through evidence-based analysis of women’s informal employment in rural areas... Through this report, we have been able to mobilize collective action at the grassroots level to ensure that the government, through policy action, enforces laws and policies to guarantee women’s access to their rights and resources in the grassroots

FIGURE 14
Awareness of *Progress* among UN Women staff



level... Accessibility of health care services and health financing were the most used components of the report that we used to build up an advocacy policy to engage our government and stakeholders.”—Civil society actor

Mostly, people report using the report for advocacy and other purposes, for example:

“Education and awareness-raising among trade union members in 2016: the information in the report has complemented the education tools we make available to our members for use in their organizing and advocacy.”—Civil society representative

“In a consultancy with UNW Asia Pacific on increasing women’s access to justice in plural legal systems in Southeast Asia and

policy advice to governments when I was regional gender adviser for [multilateral organization.]—Multilateral representative

“Actual development of NGO statement to CSW; lobbying a Minister in the House of Commons.”—Civil society representative

“The *Progress* report added weight to advocacy arguments during international presentations, in particular the arguments on combining human rights with economic rights.”—Multilateral representative

To sum up, there is an information deficit concerning the uses of *Progress* for programming outside of UN Women. It is used in this way to an extent, although available evidence suggests that this is not among the primary uses of the report.

16. Has the report been used to influence global debates? To what extent is that use significant to advance gender and human rights issues?

Research for this question, like other questions on influence, has focused primarily on the effects of *Progress 2011*. Through our case studies, we investigated *Progress 2011*’s influence on a set of global forums or debates to which we might have expected it to

contribute: the development of SDG 16, the CEDAW Committee’s General Recommendation on Women’s Access to Justice, and the reports of Special Rapporteurs most closely linked to UN Women.

FINDING 24: The 2011 report was picked up in some relevant global debates, mainly in the form of contributing to a body of research and contextual understanding helpful to pushing forward issues of access to justice and women’s access to justice in particular. We did not find evidence of significant influence on global debates, in the sense of direct and identifiable shifts in positions. Influence on global debates would be enhanced if there were an intent and an accompanying strategy to use the report to influence specific debates.

Case study five:

The role of *Progress 2011*’s in the work of the CEDAW Committee and Special Rapporteurs

As the preeminent research product of UN Women, the *Progress* report should carry special weight, particularly with those UN actors for whom gender or gender equality figure in their core missions. We would, therefore, expect to see the report taken up

by the CEDAW Committee and a number of Special Rapporteurs. The R&D team targeted outreach to the CEDAW Committee, presenting the findings in a special meeting in July 2011. There also was a CEDAW Committee member, Dubravka Šimonović, on the advisory group. Additionally, an R&D member presented the report in a meeting organized by the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

We have already noted that five Special Rapporteurs referenced *Progress 2011* in their reports. The most extensive use of *Progress 2011* was made by the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers—in one report, the Special Rapporteur significantly draws on *Progress 2011* for her overall framework. We do not see other Special Rapporteurs using *Progress 2011* in quite this way, but rather as substantive support or for data, often with multiple references.

In 2015, the CEDAW Committee adopted General Resolution 33 on Women’s Access to Justice (GR33). Two KIIs unrelated to CEDAW suggested that they saw a direct line between *Progress 2011* and GR33. Our interviews and document review suggest that *Progress 2011* had a degree of influence, but that it was limited. A critical fact is that the CEDAW Committee decision to develop a general recommendation on women’s access to justice predated publication of *Progress 2011* by a half year.³⁴ In fact, access to justice is not a new issue for CEDAW. A search in UN Official Documents for the term “access to justice” from 2000 to 2016 shows that the term was not widely used before this year (2016) and that the most significant user of the term was the CEDAW Committee.³⁵ Thus, the process was already in motion by the time the R&D team briefed the committee. KIIs suggest that the report spurred some thinking at this stage:

“It was helpful to guide their thinking in addition to the 20 years of work they have done on this issue.”—Multilateral representative

As the work got started, UN Women provided a consultant to assist the committee with the development of a concept note. KIIs agree that the work performed by the consultant was not what the CEDAW Committee was looking for—although it is unclear why—and the consultant and CEDAW parted ways

34 A/66/38; CEDAW, “Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women” (2011), Decision 48/VII; available at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=3&DocTypeID=27.

35 Keyword search for “access to justice” in the UN Official Documents System, available at <https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>.

(OHCHR provided another consultant, who then wrote a new concept note.). I have not been able to obtain a copy of the concept note to determine the extent to which *Progress 2011* was used and whether it was a source of the disagreement. On this matter, one KII recalled:

“The (first) consultant did what we feared [they] might do, which is to take access to justice in a broad sense. Meaning access to health, sanitation, etc., rather than access to justice in a technical sense. ... The (*Progress 2011*) report itself focuses on the technical aspects, but also devotes a lot of pages to justice issues, such as access to land and employment, and more.”—Multilateral representative

The committee members instituted a particularly consultative process in the development of this GR, including submissions from 57 organizations. UN Women submitted the *Progress 2011* report in full, and five of the other submissions referred to the *Progress 2011* report as well. Undoubtedly, it was considered. Although there is a lot of thematic convergence, an analysis of the final GR 33 document does not yield any obvious signs of influence.

In sum, we see *Progress 2011* playing a role among these actors. In most cases, this influence should not be overestimated, and expectations should be tempered. *Progress 2011* was used primarily as supporting evidence and for understanding the context. In at least a few cases, it might have spurred new thinking on the issue of access to justice.

Case study six:

Drawing on *Progress 2011* in the creation of SDG 16

As the process for determining the 2030 agenda started to ramp up in 2011-2012, a coalition of actors began to form, with the objective of lobbying for the inclusion of justice and access to justice in what would become the SDGs. These actors, which included

(most prominently) the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI)³⁶ coalesced around two processes: the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and (later) the Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs.

The contents of *Progress 2011* were directly relevant to the agendas of these actors. Extensive document review shows that the report was cited both by some civil society actors, who were lobbying the processes, and by some official reports of the processes. For example, Namati cited *Progress 2011* in several reports, including its background paper for UNDP's Global Dialogue on the SDGs in September 2013.³⁷ More important, *Progress 2011* was cited in the HLP report in 2013—not in relation to the proposed goal on justice, but rather to the proposed goal on gender equality.³⁸ Other civil society actors, however, do not recall the report, nor do they recall UN Women being present in early discussions on what would later become Goal 16.

One Special Rapporteur who was deeply involved with the advocacy process found *Progress 2011* to be a critical support for arguments to shift the language away from “legal empowerment”—which was promoted in the 2008 report of the Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor (CLEP)—and towards “access to justice,” which was seen to encompass a more substantive and rights-based approach to justice issues. We have not been able to corroborate this view. Because other actors used the language of “access to justice,” it is difficult to know how that particular discursive shift took place.

Later, UN Women was on the Technical Support Team (TST) for the OWG. Interviewees from UN Women staff involved with the TST for Goal 16 do not recall drawing upon *Progress 2011* in their efforts, although the report is mentioned in the Issues Brief prepared

for the TST.³⁹ UN Women staff were focused generally on getting women's representation into each of the targets, as well as on disaggregated outcomes for women—neither of which ultimately came to fruition. Also, the focus of the discussions was perceived to be more on peace and security themes than on themes related to access to justice. It should be noted that UN Women's Peace & Security section was leading the engagement. Additionally, for most of the TST period, no one was occupying the policy advisor position for UN Women's Access to Justice programme. By the time the new hire came on board, the work of the OWG was largely complete; there was little scope to add indicators related to women's access to justice. One staff member recalls:

“There was no one (in the TST) representing the access to justice perspective except for DPA.”

It is difficult to draw conclusions from this information. In the end, there is an SDG on access to justice, which is an accomplishment, but it is essentially insensitive to gender. It remains unclear the extent to which UN Women engaged in pushing for a goal on access to justice early in the process (i.e., before the TST for the OWG). One civil society representative recalls that the advocacy around the SDGs was siloed and that women's groups did not participate actively in discussions on SDG 16—although they participated actively on discussions for SDG 5. Interestingly, R&D made presentations of the report to key actors involved in lobbying for an access to justice goal—at OSJI and at a conference co-hosted by the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights and Columbia Law School—but it is not clear that R&D connected these presentations to the post-2015 agenda.

We conclude that while *Progress 2011* was relevant to this advocacy, UN Women did not have an identifiable strategy to engage with this particular set of actors on Goal 16 and likely focused most of their energy on Goal 5. The upshot is that influence was spotty, with

36 See OSJI's project, “Justice and Development: The Global Goals,” at <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/projects/justice-and-development>.

37 Namati, “Background Paper on Justice for the Global Dialogue on Rule of Law and the Post-2015 Development Agenda,”

38 High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development* (2013), p. 35; available at <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf>.

39 Inter-agency Technical Support Team for the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals, “Issues Brief” (2014); available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1554TST_compendium_issues_briefs_rev1610.pdf.

some drawing substantively from the report, some using it for data and evidence, and others having no awareness of it at the time.

Analysing the case studies to explore *Progress's* theory of change

The case studies show mixed findings on the influence of the *Progress 2011* report on the global policy debates investigated. We reiterate, as mentioned above, that we can understand the uptake of research in two distinct ways: informing decisions on specific interventions versus informing a decision-maker's understanding of the context. We looked for evidence of both of these in our interviews and document review, even though the latter is admittedly harder to show.

When it comes to global policy debates, it is important to remember how overdetermined the spaces for such debates are. A single research product rarely reframes an entire debate or an entire space; rather, a good product adds to a body of research and to momentum around an issue. "At best, research is only one element in the fiercely complicated mix of factors and forces behind any significant governmental policy decision. Policies in most governments, most of the time, are the outcomes of all the bargains and compromises, beliefs and aspirations, and cross-purposes and double meanings of ordinary governmental decision-making."⁴⁰

In this sense, we find a positive result as *Progress 2011* added to the body of research on what clearly is an issue whose profile has been rising in recent years: access to justice. KIs and survey data confirm this finding, as gender advocates within donor and multi-lateral agencies report having awareness of the report and rely on it for arguments, evidence, and support. In this sense, it is contributing (to an extent) to the reshaping of discussions at the global level.

We acknowledge, however, that these case studies did not show the influence that had been envisioned. The question is: why? A critical gap—apart from making group presentations—is that there was no

clear intention to engage these debates. In a review of the empirical literature on research uptake, Roger Harris concludes, "Researchers must have the intent to influence policy and practice for their results to do so. Intent should be written into the research design, but in the absence of other aspects, it will have limited impact."⁴¹ While there has been some influence, it could have been strengthened if UN Women had a strategic approach to engaging these policy debates, specifically in relation to access to justice.

We note that in the theory of change for *Progress*, there is no mention of an intent to influence any particular debates, or working with others at UN Women to influence any particular debates. We circle back here to the point made earlier about the importance of gaining institutional clarity of the role of research in policy work and establishing a clearer positioning of the *Progress* report in UN Women's corporate strategy. It would be useful to have an answer to questions about how UN Women leadership sees *Progress* as a means for positioning itself and its messages in a specific set of key global debates—and which actors within UN Women are best placed to take forward *Progress's* messages into these debates. The R&D team is not a "policy influence" outfit—it does research. So, who within UN Women should have this responsibility? It could be that this role changes as the topic of *Progress* changes. Even this level of generality is unclear, and would benefit from some kind of formalization.

These organizational and strategic gaps are important. There is quite a solid literature on policy influence, including debates on different types of approaches to influencing policy. The approach that *Progress* aligns most closely with is the "policy windows or agenda setting" approach, which seeks to identify the windows of opportunity "when advocates may successfully connect two or more components of a policy process: the way a problem is defined, and the policy solution to the problem or the political climate surrounding their

⁴⁰ Fred Carden, *Knowledge to Policy: Making the Most of Development Research* (IDRC, 2009), 19.

⁴¹ Roger Harris, "The impact of research on development policy and practice: An introduction to a review of the literature," July 29, 2013; available at <http://www.researchtoaction.org/2013/07/the-impact-of-research-on-development-policy-and-practice>.

issue.”⁴² For this to happen, however, it is important to identify the policy windows and to develop a strategy to bring the research to the actors involved in that process. Note that the outcome at this level is defined in terms of shifting the debate and reframing the agenda, and not in terms of specific policy outcomes that are implemented. Indeed, it is much more likely (per the literature on policy influence) that *Progress* could be leveraged to reframe issues in a debate rather than to change specific policies. Policy change is a long-term and multifaceted process.

A brief note on the influence of *Progress 2015* is also order, because we have already been able to observe pockets of influence and one major instance of lack of influence. In terms of pockets of influence, KIIs and the survey report that people have been using *Progress 2015* to make arguments on Goal 5 and the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, UN Women staff report using it in relation to their advocacy on the SDGs.

“Our last flagship came out just as the negotiations on the SDGs were going on. The whole issue of unpaid care work (Target 5.4) being debated and people questioning: What does it mean? And I think that the most brilliant case was made by the flagship report.”—UN Women HQ staff

“During the Agenda 2030 discussions of Goal 5, you could hear many governments mentioning it.”—Multilateral representative

“I just finished writing a report on SDG 10 on inequality, and I cited *Progress* report in a section talking about substantive equality.”—Civil society representative

It has also been used in relation to CSW 60 in 2016. In fact, many survey respondents recall that CSW is where they heard of the report. It fed into background papers for the event, as well as the Agreed Conclusions⁴³:

42 Chris Barnett and Robbie Gregorowski, “IDS Practice Paper Brief,” (Institute of Development Studies, September 2013), 6.

43 CSW, “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development Agreed Conclusions,” March 24, 2016; available at http://www.asiapacificforum.net/media/resource_file/CSW_60_Agreed_Conclusions.pdf.

“The paragraphs on unpaid care draw a lot from the report.”—UN Women HQ staff

“I used it while preparing the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India.”—Academic

“In negotiations for CSW and in the preparation of national speeches.”—UN Permanent Mission staff

There is one policy debate in which one might have expected the report to have a significant influence, but everyone involved agrees that it did not: the HLP on WEE, which released its report in September 2015.⁴⁴ We did not have time to investigate the factors behind this outcome in depth, although it was mentioned in a number of KIIs and survey data. The R&D team made a concerted effort to raise the profile of the report, including background papers with the HLP; however, the team concedes that the issues were not taken up by the HLP for reasons they do not fully understand. In addition, as noted, even though the corporate evaluation of UN WEE work identifies it as a potential niche, there are different points of view within the organization concerning the extent to which a rights-based approach to economic empowerment is valued. This point already has been made above: a minority of UN Women staff find it challenging to bring a rights-based approach to their interlocutors, and they take issue with the arguments in Chapter 4 on macroeconomics in particular.⁴⁵ As the case studies above also illustrate, a lack of intent and strategy for engaging the HLP on issues in *Progress* might have made a difference.

44 R&D team notes that not only was *Progress 2015* overlooked in the HLP report, but so were many other important feminist economists who have shaped the field of economic empowerment, such as Diane Elson and Naila Kabeer. See High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment* (2016); available at <http://www.womenseconomicempowerment.org/reports/>

45 R&D team has noted in comments on this evaluation that the intention, especially with Chapter 4, was to be challenging and forward thinking, and it is only natural that it may be seen as controversial.

17. To what extent have Progress reports been used in policy processes at national and regional levels as a source of knowledge, evidence, and data?

FINDING 25: Progress has been used in national and regional policy processes in a number of instances, but we do not have enough information to assess the significance or extent of this use.

This question has already been answered above in relation to UN Women staff's use of the report in policy processes. We, therefore, turn to actors outside of UN Women in addressing this question: To what extent did they use the report in policy processes at his level? In the external survey, 38 per cent of respondents say that they have used the report to advocate for a policy change, and 25.5 per cent say that they have used the report in a local, national, or global policy process; because the word "global" was included, we do not know what proportion of that 25 per cent might have pertained to the local/national versus the global level.

Although people are using the report in the context of local and national policy processes, the range of this usage around the world is unclear, as is the significance of the usage—in terms of how critical the evidence and data are to the specific arguments being advanced. As with evidence on the *Progress* report's influence on programme development, we have an information gap. For the *Progress 2011* report, we regret that we did not obtain the interviews we wanted with local actors in Kenya and the State of Palestine. We also struggled to identify other external actors at the national level with whom it might be useful to speak. It is understandable that UN Women staff had trouble remembering who was involved in the issues around 2011; in many cases, staff turnover meant that they did not know who was involved. We had better success with interviews relating to *Progress 2015*, likely because it is much fresher in people's minds. Again, we had hoped that the survey would shed more light in more detail on some of this uptake.

Some instances of using the *Progress 2011* report are:

"I used the data in the report (2011) to support an argument in the context of women's access to justice in India."—Academic

"Advocating for the adoption and implementation of 1325 rule. Kenya is one of the countries, which has a national action plan to implement the 1325 rule. Advocating for increased representation of women in politics in Kenya."—UN Women staff (observation of others using the report)

"In a debate about introducing mandatory political quotas for women, *Progress 2011* was extensively used as it has a good comparison between the countries with and without quotas and how long does it take for women in the latter to be elected, so that they form a decisive minority."—UN Women staff (observation of others using the report)

For *Progress 2015*, instances of local/national policy use include:

"I have used (the report) in the preparation of the national and international context for work on economic empowerment of women and in the work of monitoring budgets for equality between women and men in Mexico."—Government representative

"Regionally, the latest issue of the *Progress* report has been used in debates in Latin America on the issues of 'Financing for development.'"—UN Women staff

"In advocacy it is difficult to know what influenced what. The 'paid care' position of the government has changed. Whether or not we've influenced it through the conversations and lobbying we made (and mostly based on the findings and recommendations of *Progress 2015*), it's difficult to know."—Civil society representative

“It came out at the right time with the Agenda 2030—for economies to be more inclusive—and the government of Uganda starting a programme on women’s economic empowerment.”—UN Women staff (observation of others using the report)

“For us, it was significant that we were not aware of the importance of gender in the work we did. Even if we already worked with these issues, with the issues of women’s participa-

tion in the market, it was our relationship with UN Women and the *Progress* report that brought us the consciousness of incorporating the gender dimension/approach to our day-to-day work. ...This was one of the incentives to sign a collaboration agreement with UN Women.”—Government representative

Clearly, there has been use at this level, but more investigation would be needed to understand its extent and significance.

18. What are the key internal and external factors that contributed to or constrained effectiveness?

FINDING 26: The key factors contributing to effectiveness have been the expertise and skill of the dedicated *Progress* team, the perceived quality of the report, and—to an extent—the degree to which the team has engaged potential end-users and intermediaries (e.g., in advance through the advisory group, or later through other means), as well as the degree to which the team has been able to leverage its outreach opportunities and adapt to an evolving information environment with new products and means of communications.

FINDING 27: The key factors constraining effectiveness include the levels of financial and human resources, which are not sufficient to meet the many objectives for the report, particularly around programme and policy influence. Additionally, the lack of clear positioning within corporate strategy and description of roles and responsibilities for *Progress* outside of the R&D team has been a constraining factor. Other constraining factors have been the infrequency and unpredictability of the report, the static web site, and the narrow focus of outreach of the launch period.

The most important internal factor concerns the resources that produce the *Progress* report. There is a dedicated team of subject-matter and publication experts who enjoy wide respect, both inside and outside of the institution. Without this expertise, and without a dedicated team, it is hard to see how UN Women could produce the kind of horizon-scanning, long-format reports that *Progress* represents.

The second most important factor is the quality of the research, including its perceived seriousness. High-quality, credible research backed by data and evidence will be picked up, especially by those already working on gender equality. Also important is having recommendations that are actionable, rather than too general. Where effectiveness has been constrained in this regard concerns originality of the research. Some audiences, like economists, tend to require it. Another way it has been constrained is in using rights language, which some audiences are likely to resist.

The level of resources, although adequate to producing the report itself, does not align well to the many other objectives that the R&D team has set for *Progress*, or that the institution sets for it. Issues with frequency, producing original data, the capacity to do outreach, and engaging new constituencies—all of these are related to deficits in both financing and human resources. The R&D team’s theory of change currently relies on a strong assumption that if it produces a quality product, then people will use it. As our research has shown, however, these products also require strategies to engage end-users and external constituencies, to identify the most receptive audiences, to target specific policy processes for influence, and to leverage key mediators to have uptake. (Resources will be analysed in more detail in the “Efficiency” section below.)

Another internal factor affecting effectiveness is the extent to which the *Progress* report has a clearly defined place in corporate strategy. Both internal and

external KIIs commented on the fact that they were not clear on the role for *Progress* at the strategic level. As the questions for this evaluation suggest, *Progress* has tried to be all things to all people. It would benefit from a well-defined position, within corporate strategy, that clearly identifies the functions it is supposed to perform vis-à-vis policy, programmes, and communications. It is unfair to place unrealizable expectations on the report or a small R&D team.

A well-defined place in corporate strategy would clarify questions for people, both internally and externally, about how the theme is decided. Is *Progress*, for example, supposed to provide a platform for deepening UN Women's programming, or is it supposed to plant a flag on a big global issue? Clarifying this role would also provide direction to R&D in terms of how and when it should be engaging with other parts of the house. If *Progress* is supposed to help to shape policy and programme work at UN Women, then the process to develop it and do outreach around it should reflect that objective, and these internal audiences should be regarded as potential end-users that are engaged at every stage of the process.

Shifting corporate priorities and turnover at the senior level also has affected the prospects for *Progress*'s effectiveness. *Progress 2011* is a good case in point, as enthusiasm for access to justice as an area of work has waxed and waned over time. This is only normal, but it is a risk that is amplified because of the long period of time it takes to produce *Progress*. A lot can change in the space of three to four years.

The question of frequency and predictability of the publication is another factor identified in many interviews. People do not know when to look for *Progress* and do not always know what the *Progress* team is working on. These factors can dampen interest and engagement, particularly if the publication appears after a long wait and does not contain strikingly original data or messages.

A final internal factor concerns outreach and communications. R&D and UN Women's Communications Unit have started adapting the report to a new information environment, and some of these innovations

have been quite successful, such as social media effort. However, nearly all the effort focuses on a very narrow window around the launch period. We did not observe that either R&D or the Communications Unit continued to position the report in relation to emerging debates or new developments (such as the HLP on WEE, in the case of *Progress 2015*). The *Progress* report has so much content that could be mined.

Moreover, since the web site is the most important source of information for both internal and external *Progress* audiences, effectiveness was affected by its design and functionality. While the R&D team wished to have a site with more interactivity and data visualization, it realized after the fact that it may not have put a plan in place early enough to realize this. Beyond this, the static nature of the content is a factor limiting its effectiveness. While no one should expect *Progress* to perform as well as HDR in attracting visitors, a study of the HDR site gives a target to aim for.

These points raise another issue that was mentioned by many staff members: what is the role of *Progress* in UN Women's Corporate Communications Strategy? Some staff members mentioned that other flagships (UNICEF, UNFPA) are integrated into all aspects of an organization's communications. While it's doubtful that UN Women staff want to wear T-shirts with a "Transforming Economies" logo on it, it does appear the flagship plays a minor role in the overall strategy.⁴⁶ R&D has had good support from communications around the global launches and with social media engagement, using infographics from the report. For *Progress* to succeed in today's media environment, however, it will need to continue building out more products and to connecting them to a larger strategy that makes sure its messages are getting into the right spaces at the right moments. Admittedly, all of this requires resources, which are in short supply both for R&D and for the Communications Unit.

In terms of external factors, a critical element in predicting success is the early engagement of potential

⁴⁶ See UN Women, "Communications and Public Advocacy Strategy, 2016-2020," (internal document, 2016), p. 11.

end-users, including the existence of mediators who can help socialize the report with their networks and constituencies. *Progress 2011* saw traction because, while the report was being drafted, it engaged people in UNDP and elsewhere who went back to their own agencies and socialized the report with their peers. It also saw traction as influential people, such as Special Rapporteurs, picked up its messages; members of the *Progress* report's Advisory Groups also played a role. Our case studies suggest that *Progress* would be more successful if there were a stronger engagement of potential end users in targeted constituencies (e.g., the justice sector) from start to finish. These end-users could help identify the "policy windows" to which the report's messages might be most relevant.

We observe that R&D already discusses some of these issues in its internal reviews and launch debriefings. For example, the idea was to develop a more data-driven web site after a review of the 2011

microsite, and there was a desire to build the brand and generate discussion. But this was not reflected in the current site.

3.4 Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the continued relevance, influence, and reach among *Progress* target groups after its initial publication and launch. R&D takes some actions to promote sustainability. It considers the long-term value of new research in a particular subject-matter area when it chooses a new theme for the report. The team is active in presenting the report to a variety of small audiences, as well as distributing it at big convenings like CSW. It also endeavors to get the reports reviewed in academic journals. And, as mentioned above in the case study on gender statistics, it urges other actors with greater resources to take up new indicators related to *Progress* and to track them over time.

19. Has the report's usefulness in influencing policy and programmatic processes been sustained beyond the immediate period of the launch?

FINDING 28: *Progress's* themes have remained relevant over time and the reports continue to be cited, with varying frequency depending on the report, by those already aware of them and working in the same general area of expertise. One report that has proven to be particularly sustainable is *Progress 2002* (v.1).

In a general sense, *Progress's* themes have remained relevant to audiences over time. Internal and external surveys showed that almost all of the themes were still valued, with the exception of the first edition (which perhaps attracts less attention because it is general in scope rather than focused on an issue area). In terms of use for policy and programmes, KIIs show that many people still refer to earlier editions—*Progress 2008* was mentioned with special fondness by several long-time staff members. Regarding more recent editions, KIIs report that that *Progress 2011* continues to be relevant mainly to those people working directly on access to justice. The fact that there is a Flagship Programme on Access to Justice, as well as country programme work, means that usage of the report has been sustained, even if it has tapered off over time. A recent example of such usage is the *Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*, which

drew positive substance from *Progress 2011*. For other staff members, 2011 is too far back in time to recall whether the report is directly relevant to them.

It is too soon to tell whether *Progress 2015* will have sustainable policy and programmatic influence within UN Women. As described above, there is a discussion within the organization about the rights-based approach to WEE. Those working on WEE report drawing on the report for data and evidence on unpaid care work and social policy. What is unclear is the extent to which the WEE programme's approach aligns with the overarching messages in *Progress 2015*—such alignment will be critical for the report's sustainability with that programme.

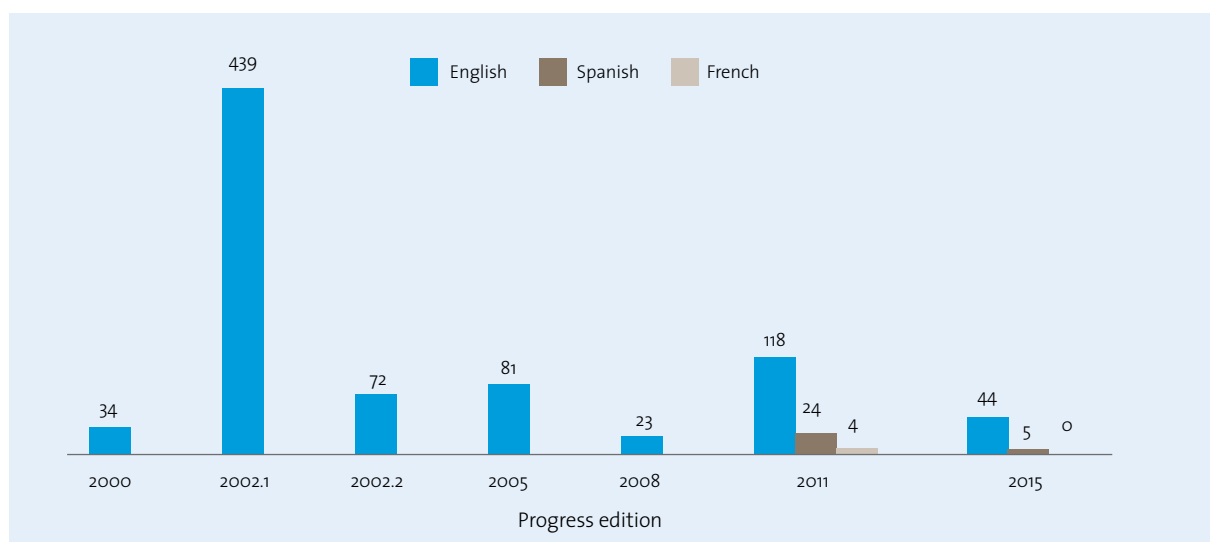
For those still using the reports, both internally and externally, its potential influence is damped by the

fact that the data are now out of date. KIIs described a strong and unending thirst for data and evidence in every document they produce, but users have to move on to other sources because *Progress*'s data are old.

Google Scholar gives an indication of the sustainability of *Progress* over time, with some interesting results: not only has *Progress 2002* (v.1) been the most cited report, it continues to be well cited up to present day. For example, in 2016 alone, this report had 44 citations. We see that *Progress 2011* has performed well in relation to the other *Progress* reports, and *Progress 2015* is on track to perform similarly or better.

Finally, it is notable in both internal and external surveys that a majority of people say that they are most familiar with the latest report, *Progress 2015*. As a result, it was difficult to gather information on the extent to which people working on justice issues continue to use the report in their work. We did not find examples of current usage in policy or programme work outside of UN Women. We know that there are almost no references to *Progress* in the media outside of the narrow launch horizon, suggesting that journalists do not think to go back to it when they are reporting on other issues.

FIGURE 15
Citations of *Progress* in Google Scholar, 2000 to present



20. What are the key internal and external factors that contributed to or constrained sustainability?

FINDING 29: Key factors affecting sustainability include the level of uptake of *Progress* by UN Women policy and programme units (who are critical vectors of sustainability within the institution), the degree to which thematic topics remain relevant to global agendas, and the fact that the data in the reports goes out of date (and therefore can no longer be referenced).

Sustainability is affected by the relationship between *Progress* and UN Women policy and programme units. Internally, it can be beneficial for sustainability for the report to have a programmatic home that can then take its messages forward. This has been the case with access to justice and WEE. For the upcoming report on the family, there is no clear institutional home for whatever the report's findings and messages will be. While

it could be that by taking an intersectional approach, the report can link directly to more programmes than it has in the past, there is a risk that there will not be any ownership of its ideas within the institution.

Externally, sustainability is affected by the degree to which thematic topics are still relevant to global agendas. *Progress* has had good success in this regard, as

gender and development, women, peace and security, and access to justice (among others) remain relevant to global debates. Indeed, all have been heightened as a result of the SDGs.

Finally, sustainability is constrained by the fact that the data in the reports go out of date. To the extent that R&D has persuaded others to take up certain statistics and track them, this issue can be addressed. However, this is not the case with most of the data in the report.

3.5 Efficiency

Efficiency concerns the issue of how economically resources (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results. The *Progress* team has been very reflective in its own internal assessments of efficiency, and the following draws on internal review documents they prepared, as well as KIIs and my own document review (including reports to donors).

21. To what extent have the reports been developed timely and efficiently, and managed in accordance with the originally intended timeline and resource allocation?

Finding 30: Overall, *Progress 2011* and *2015* were managed roughly in accordance with the originally intended resource allocation, with the exception of much higher salary costs than originally projected. Each experienced delays in relation to its intended timeline, but was still published within six to seven months of the originally planned date. Inefficiencies, where these existed, were linked to the fact that the R&D team was largely new, had multiple demands on its time unrelated to *Progress*, and was working within a transitioning organization.

Progress reports have been produced in a somewhat consistent manner with their overall budgets. A review of major line items (e.g., staffing, production, communications) also suggests a general consistency between projected and actual expenses, with one exception.

We observe one major discrepancy in these numbers, however: for both the 2011 and 2015 reports, salary expenses were significantly underestimated (\$705,000 projected versus \$1,280,000 actual—a rise of 82 per cent over the original estimate for *Progress 2011*; for *Progress 2015*, the rise was 49 per cent above the original estimate). For *Progress 2011*, some of the tasks that were originally envisioned to be contracted out, such as a lead author, ended up being undertaken by UN Women staff (although it is not clear that this added to salary costs).

Additionally, the timeline for the project extended past December 2010 (to September 2012, including a range of launch and post-launch activities), adding to salary costs. For *Progress 2015*, the project extended a year past the original deadline. Furthermore, UN Women started rolling rents and overheads into salary costs after the original ProDoc was created (before, these were separate line items). We note that the high salary costs for *Progress 2015* are the main reason that the report exceeded its original budget by almost 50 per cent.

There are instances of projected activities not being carried out. The most significant example relates to the *Progress 2011* budget, where \$400,000 was allocated to contract work on monitoring and evaluation (nearly 20 per cent of the entire budget), none of which was

TABLE 2

Report	Projected salary	Actual salary	Projected non-salary expenditures	Actual non-salary expenditures	Projected total expenses	Actual total expenses
2011	\$705,000	\$1,280,518	\$1,817,430	\$1,247,462	\$2,552,430	\$2,527,980
2015	\$1,195,007	\$1,776,063	\$1,171,000	\$1,435,505	\$2,366,007	\$3,211,568

undertaken or spent.⁴⁷ For *Progress 2015*, regional/national policy dialogues around the world (envisioned in a proposal to one of their donors) did not take place.

In the cases of *Progress 2011* and *2015*, while both publications experienced delays, neither exceeded six to seven months for their projected launch dates. According to the ProDoc for *Progress 2011*, and confirmed with KIIs and internal document review, the report was conceived as a two-year project extending from February 2009 to January 2011. The ProDoc does not include a timeline of activities, so there is nothing to compare against, but we were told that originally the expected launch date was December 2010. The approved budget was \$2,522,430. A dedicated manager for the *Progress* report was brought on in June 2009, with other staff hired thereafter, comprising a core team of seven people at its peak staff complement. Delays in the research process occurred because gathering data on access to justice was difficult (owing to a dearth of data) and because of challenges with consultants or with the quality of commissioned papers. Nonetheless, the team succeeded in delivering a draft of the report to senior staff in December 2010.

The launch was pushed back, owing to several factors outside of R&D's control, according to document review and KIIs. It was decided that it would be more strategic to launch the report in 2011, when UN Women was officially established; however, it proved difficult to find a date for a variety of reasons, especially as the organization was just getting on its feet. In addition, the sign-off processes by senior staff proved more complicated than expected, particularly as new staff was entering the agency. The challenges with this process meant that the team did not have printed materials in all languages ready for the launch events in July 2011.⁴⁸

47 We observe, however, that there appears to be an arithmetic error in the ProDoc's budget. We believe that the expense for M&E was double counted, and should have been \$200,000 instead of \$400,000. This would have reduced the overall projected budget to \$2,322,430. In any case, none of these funds were spent on M&E.

48 See UN Women, "Final Report to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, July 2013 – July 2015," internal document, no date; and UN Women, "Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice: Internal review of the process," internal document, no date.

According to the ProDoc for *Progress 2015*, the report was again conceived as a two-year project, extending from January 2013 to January 2015. While there is no timeline in the ProDoc, we infer that the team expected to launch the report in 2014 as the document refers to *Progress of the World's Women 2014*. Delays resulted from the fact that the team had to dedicate time to producing the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014*, which is mandated by the Secretary-General, as well as other research activities that the R&D team is responsible for.

Worthy of note is the lengthy delay between the publication of *Progress 2011* (July 2011) and the start date of the ProDoc for the *Progress 2015*, which was a full year and a half later. A number of factors have contributed to these delays. A major one was the creation of the R&D section in 2011 and the hiring of a new section chief. UN Women wanted to wait until that person came on board to make a decision on the next edition of *Progress*. At the same time, the *Progress* manager was acting as the chief of R&D and diverted substantial resources onto other priorities. Another related factor is that the R&D team does a lot of other work outside of *Progress*, such as periodically producing the SG-mandated *World Survey* and other SG reports, work around CSW, and additional research products.

In general, the transition in 2011 to UN Women clearly contributed to some of the delays in that report, as the small team developing *Progress* was getting on its feet. Producing a major publication in multiple languages requires a high degree of communication and coordination, and the team at that point was entirely new and doubly challenged by working within a transitioning organization. We should expect that the next edition of *Progress* will be much more efficient, simply as a result of working through these "start-up" challenges.

Nevertheless, other factors must also be at play, since there has been a similar time lag in deciding on the theme for the forthcoming issue of *Progress*. The explanation for this is twofold: first, there were delays in getting agreement on the theme of the next report (which was also the case for the 2015 report); and two, since the report is only partially funded out of core

resources (the staff costs are covered from core, but most of the cost of producing the report is not), the team has to mobilize funding for each edition. If the team were larger, it would be possible to initiate these

start-up processes and finish up the previous report and outreach simultaneously. But with a small team, until one report is finished, it is very difficult to start focusing on the next.

22. To what extent were the outputs achieved with the lowest possible use of resources/inputs (e.g., funds, expertise, time, administrative costs)?

Finding 31: *Progress* is developed with relatively fewer resources than other research-oriented flagships (like the HDR), and may, therefore, be judged efficient; however, lack of adequate resources in some areas (production, outreach) has led to inefficiencies, as staff might not have adequate time or the needed skills to undertake all activities. Comparison of *Progress*'s budget with the HDR's suggests it would be difficult to publish a more frequent and predictable report, while maintaining the same level of research quality at the current level of resource allocation. While mainly efficiently run, *Progress* saw some inefficiencies related both to processes and expenditures.

The breakdown of staff time for *Progress 2015* is:

- Chief of R&D: 30%
- Progress manager: 70%
- Statistics and data specialist (P4): 30%
- Statistics and data specialist (P3): 70%
- Research specialist: 50%
- Report coordinator: 30%
- Programme associate: 25%

Although *Progress* has a dedicated team, it is important to acknowledge that none of its members work full time on *Progress*. Adding up the percentages given above, there is a FTE of roughly three staff people. Compare this to HDRO, which has 18 staff as of 2015. Note also that most of the staff complement is focused on the research and writing process. The manager and one staff person handle all of the coordination, outreach, and production, among other tasks. By contrast, HDRO has dedicated staff for outreach, production, and operations, in addition to research.

In spite of this small team wearing many hats, most KIIs report their interactions with team members to have run smoothly; these include internal peer reviewers, background paper authors, advisory group members, and so forth. KIIs, especially UN Women staff, are highly appreciative of the team's professionalism.

In terms of inefficiencies, due to limited resources (which leads also to the small size of the team and the staff complement), it should not be surprising, as mentioned above, that *Progress 2011* and *2015* have had difficulty in following a firm production schedule. The result has been inefficiencies and added expenses, such as multiple rounds of copy editing or translation, as mentioned in KIIs and internal documents. Because the team needs to mobilize non-core resources for each report, there are delays in getting the reports started. It should also not be surprising that *Progress* has been unable to sustain outreach past the period of launch nor able to develop strategies to target policy "opportunities" or "windows." There is no dedicated staff to handle these jobs. Finally, it follows that *Progress* has not been able to do more with its web site, on social media, or with developing other types of communications products and strategies. Although it is possible that it could have allocated resources to develop a more dynamic web site, there would be no staff to manage it.

One might read this situation as *Progress* running quite efficiently. If, however, the objective is to produce a report and have broad influence, then some of the puzzle pieces are missing—particularly in terms of dedicated staff time and skills—rendering the process ultimately less efficient.

A few minor notes on efficiency, which come from a comparison of actual expenditures for 2011 and 2015, as well as reports from the R&D team:

- Too many copies of the report have been printed, judging from the massive overstock for both the 2011 and 2015 reports—tens of thousands of undistributed reports for 2011 and nearly 15,000 undistributed for 2015), according to the R&D team’s internal count. The result has been somewhat higher printing costs, storage expenses, and (of course) the environmental cost/impact of printing tens of thousands of unread reports. It is a pretty extraordinary situation to have so many undistributed copies of a report.
- Comparing expenses between 2011 and 2015, we note a much higher cost for mailing in 2015 than in 2011, in spite of the fact that there were fewer reports distributed. Perhaps this is due to the higher page count and heavier weight of the report; the difference is striking. Costs for mailing in 2015 were \$91,655 versus only \$33,976 for 2011—nearly three times as much.
- There were a high number of background papers for the 2015 edition (38). We note much more money spent on background papers in 2015 over 2011—again, nearly three times the cost. R&D spent \$305,100 on background papers for the 2015 report versus \$136,422 for 2011.
- A final difference involves design costs for 2011, which were more than twice as much as those for 2015, even though 2015 was a longer report with a better web site. Design costs, including print and web, were \$145,000 for 2011 versus for \$66,975 for 2015. We note also that commissioning a new layout design for each edition is inefficient. Other reports often establish a single layout design, paying only for typesetting and cover design for each edition—an approach that reduces costs and enhances recognition and branding.

A general observation on efficiency and communications/information management: it is normal in any evaluation to spend time tracking information that is not readily available. In this case, there were some inefficiencies that were more structural in nature. For example:

- UN Women does not have a contact database
- Some country offices appear not to keep older documents/files, or cannot locate them
- Until this evaluation, the R&D team did not appear to keep track of costs for *Progress* specifically (but rather for R&D as a whole), making it challenging to analyse those costs

TABLE 3
External comparison with HDR expenses

Report	Progress salary	HDR salary	Progress non-salary	HDR non-salary	Progress total expenses	HDR total expenses
2011 edition	\$1,280,518	\$3,560,000	\$1,247,462	\$2,350,000	\$2,527,980	\$5,910,000
2015 edition	\$1,776,063	\$3,400,000	\$1,435,505	\$1,500,000*	\$3,211,568	\$4,900,000*

*Note that 2015 HDR costs are lower, as some production costs for 2015 were actually incurred in 2016, and therefore, are not reflected in this sum. The average costs for HDRs currently are roughly \$6 million.

We have produced a number of comparisons with HDR over the course of this report, and comparison of expenditures is critical to put all the others in context. On a per report basis, it costs twice as much to produce a single HDR report as it does to produce a single *Progress* report. One of the biggest differences, which can be clearly seen above, is that HDR has a much

stronger, dedicated staff complement than *Progress* does. As mentioned, HDRO has 18 staff members.⁴⁹

Another interesting comparison relates to the yearly costs for producing *Progress*. From January 2009 to

⁴⁹ Email communications from HDRO staff member, October 24, 2016.

December 2015, it cost UN Women roughly \$5,800,000 to produce two *Progress* reports, averaging about \$850,000 per year. UN Women covered salary costs and some of the costs of production from core resources, and the team also mobilized \$1.2 million from donors.⁵⁰ Compare this with the roughly \$6,000,000 per year spent to produce the HDR.⁵¹

We believe this financial comparison offers the best answer to the many questions we heard from people during our interviews, who asked why *Progress* does not appear more frequently. While there are many factors, a critical one is resources. HDR, for example, is funded at more than eight times the level than *Progress*. HDR's yearly cost for staff salary alone is roughly \$3,500,000—compared to a yearly average of \$450,000 for *Progress*.

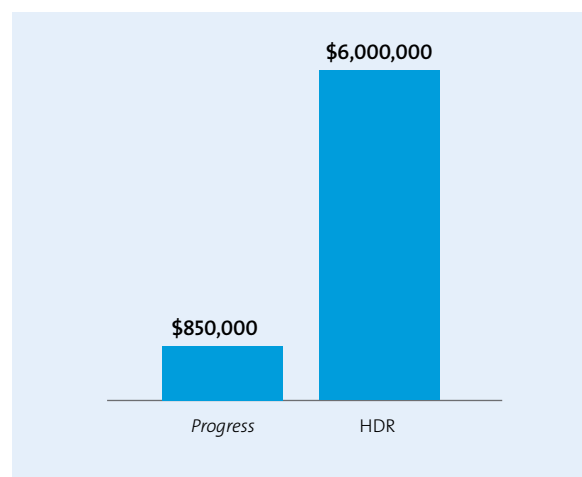
Looking at expenses per year tells us something else: if we assume that \$2,500,000 is roughly the needed amount to produce a *Progress* report, and if UN Women wishes to produce *Progress* on a biennial basis, then it would need to raise its annual commitment to *Progress*. Instead of \$850,000/year, it would need to spend \$1,250,000/year, every year, added to current expenses for all of the other R&D work that is done. This extra cost would likely be applied toward more staff to help with outreach and production. Unless this extra money can be raised through increased donor contributions, over

23. What are the internal and external factors that affected implementation and management?

A key factor positively affecting implementation is that *Progress* has a dedicated team that is acknowledged as personally efficient and professional. A key negative factor affecting implementation is that the R&D team lacks resources both to efficiently produce a high-quality research publication and to conduct effective outreach. Although the long-time period to

⁵⁰ The Government of Spain contributed €400,000 (USD \$535,475) towards the 2011 report; the Government of Australia contributed Aus \$500,000 (USD \$473,800) and the Hewlett Foundation contributed US \$200,000 towards the 2015 report. For the 2018 report, the team has mobilized \$400,000 from the Hewlett Foundation, \$200,000 from the Ford Foundation, \$300,000 from the Open Society Foundation, and \$163,043 from the Government of Ireland.

FIGURE 16
Average cost per year of producing flagship reports, 2009-2015



and above what the team has already raised, the additional resources would need to come from UN Women's core budget.

Given that the largest share of the costs of producing *Progress* is staff costs, this increase in support could reduce inefficiencies and potentially increase the impact of the report. Although the required annual investment would be higher, because the publication would be published more often, the overall cost of each report would likely be lower.

decide on the theme for the next edition eats up the calendar (leading to longer time intervals between publication), it seems unlikely in any case that the R&D team has adequate resources to publish more frequently at this resource level, given its other commitments aside from *Progress*.

⁵¹ There were very few expenses reported for *Progress* in 2012. For HDRO expenditures from 2009-2013, see UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, *Evaluation of the Contribution of the Global and Regional Human Development Reports to Public Policy Processes* (UNDP, 2014), p. 32; for 2014, we used an estimate of \$5,900,000; and for 2015, the source is an email communications from HDRO staff member, October 24, 2016. Numbers here are rounded.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have organized our conclusions around the key outcome areas identified in the evaluation's TORs, rather than by evaluation criteria. We will touch on each of the criteria as they are relevant to the conclusions. We have also added a conclusion specifically on resources at the request of the R&D team.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1

Progress made a contribution to the reframing of some key development issues from a feminist perspective; however, contributions to global policy debates have been uneven and ad hoc.

The *Progress* reports have consistently chosen thematic areas where feminist perspectives are either under represented (e.g., *Progress 2011*) and/or undervalued (e.g., *Progress 2015*) in their respective professional communities. Among UN Women's networks globally, there is a solid awareness of the report, in that most people have some level of awareness not just of the report, but also of its contents. Actors all over the world have found the report relevant to a wide range of purposes: most notably in positioning themselves in an external environment that may not take gender seriously, but also in advocating for specific policies, for leveraging practical ideas to include gender in programmes, in developing global gender statistics, and more.

Following the empirical literature on research uptake, we have emphasized that it is important to understand the uptake of research in two distinct ways: informing decisions on specific interventions versus informing a decision-maker's understanding of the context. We found that *Progress* is more likely to influence the latter than the former. We also emphasized that policy influence is always overdetermined and

that it is unusual for a report to single-handedly shift a debate appreciably. We reiterate, "At best, research is only one element in the fiercely complicated mix of factors and forces behind any significant governmental policy decision. Policies in most governments, most of the time, are the outcomes of all the bargains and compromises, beliefs and aspirations, and cross-purposes and double meanings of ordinary governmental decision-making."⁵²

The R&D team has made a positive effort through launches, media/social media engagement, and presentations to groups like CEDAW, the World Bank, OECD, RoLCRG, donor agencies, and many others in order to influence this space. Ultimately, though, the R&D team's theory of change makes the assumption that others will perform such translation and advocacy without much prompting from UN Women. This, however, might rarely be the case. The assumption that by just putting the report out there, others will pick it up and shift the debate, does not hold up well. In the current information environment, in which people are overloaded with information, this kind of translation typically only happens with what are perceived to be strikingly original arguments or evidence, or with the use of high-level mediators to champion the ideas. Had a more coherent institutional approach been in place for the *Progress 2011* report, we might have seen a greater degree of influence on SDG 16, for example. An alternative example of how this translation process works concerns a *Progress* edition that we did not examine closely, *Progress 2002* (v.1), which helped to frame the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, and was headlined by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

We observe that it is not within the R&D team's mandate or functional role to take on the added tasks of

⁵² Fred Carden, *Knowledge to Policy: Making the Most of Development Research* (IDRC, 2009), 19.

translation and advocacy in the global policy space—nor do they currently have the resources to do it. In comparison with a larger flagship like HDR, *Progress* has a fraction of the staff (3 FTE staff for *Progress* versus 18 staff for HDR) and no staff specifically to handle outreach or production. Therefore, it would be unfair to hold them responsible for this level of outcome; instead, these functions may be better performed by other parts of the house, or by external actors. Currently, UN Women does not have a clear positioning of *Progress* in its corporate strategy, including definitions of roles, responsibilities, and processes in relation to translating and advocating for the messages in the report. It is difficult to see how *Progress* can be expected to contribute significantly to debates at the global level without a more coherent approach at the corporate level. We note that the corporate communications strategy makes passing reference to *Progress* and that outreach strategies focus most attention on the narrow window of launch, rather than striving to find relevance to unfolding events and key policy windows. Additionally, a strategy to leverage high-level mediators who can act as translators and messengers for the report, if done proactively, could help to propel the ideas into new spaces. R&D has tried this approach in the selection of its Advisory Group members, and it could be further developed.

Conclusion 2

To an extent, *Progress* has supported advocacy at global, regional, and national levels by gender equality advocates in civil society, in governments, and in the media by providing access to relevant and compelling evidence (concepts, data, and policy analysis), with the primary group of end users being gender equality advocates.

The report's influence has been constrained by factors relating to: the lack of a sustained outreach strategy to specific target groups that is aligned to the current information environment; issues relating to audience receptivity to rights-based or gender-based arguments, as well as reports that do not present "original" evidence; and the lack of frequency of publication or refreshing of data. Regional and national influence has been constrained by the global nature of the report; influence at this level may be better performed by

regional *Progress* reports, such as the ones being created in Latin America, rather than the global report.

One of the key strengths of the *Progress* report is its relevance to the needs of gender equality advocates, among others, who are seeking to position themselves in an environment that might not take their arguments seriously. The availability of a serious piece of research with the UN Women imprimatur makes a positive difference to this group in particular, and *Progress's* data and arguments have been widely cited as support of such position-taking. More generally, all audiences describe a thirst for data and evidence, and they positively associate *Progress* with both of these. The report has been picked up by Special Rapporteurs and in high-level UN reports. It has been extensively covered in the media; cited by a wide range of relevant civil society actors, especially at the global level; and donor and multilaterals refer to it. In short, the report is being used.

The findings suggest, also, that the reach of the publication could be greater. In particular, it is reaching UN Women's networks to a fair degree (a degree that can and should be improved), but likely not far outside of them. Target groups tend to be too general, such as "media," or "academics." For *Progress 2011* and *2015*, there was little discussion of mapping the specific justice and development constituencies that the report should target, whether through launches or other actions, outside of the big multilaterals (World Bank, OECD). Additionally, people cannot draw on the report if they either do not know about it or it is not available in formats that align with their information preferences. Where *Progress* has experimented with formats in particular, infographics and social media—it has benefitted. Long-format reports may be in decline, but many are still produced with success. Strategizing about outreach has not been part and parcel of the process as a whole, but rather considered mainly towards the end and in relation to a narrow period of launch. Of course, all of this is limited by the level of human and financial resources that can be allocated to these activities. As mentioned, there is no dedicated staff to handle these functions, making it difficult to envision how they could be performed effectively and efficiently, unless tackled by other parts of the house.

The question of audience also relates to the next observation: while many audiences enthusiastically embrace the messages in *Progress*, others may be less receptive. The R&D team is aware of this, and part of its objective is to produce research that may challenge existing orthodoxies from a feminist point of view. This may naturally favour the women's movement as the main target audience, and put other audiences in the background. But it raises a tension among objectives, especially if *Progress* is expected to reach outside of UN Women's natural constituencies. Other audiences might be seeking new data and evidence, and since *Progress* is not resourced at the level required for this, its use will be constrained with these particular audiences.

The lack of frequency and unpredictability has constrained the use of *Progress*. If it appeared more frequently and predictably, however, people would be more likely to seek it out and less likely to forget about it. While it is a positive step that R&D has succeeded in getting other agencies with more capacity to update certain statistics, the fact that most data go out of date is a hindrance to use and sustainability.

Progress is developed for a global audience, which many people at the national and regional level report as useful, because they can link their own context "up" to the international level and "out" to other country contexts. Additionally, where people feel that their own region is adequately represented, they are happy; where they feel it is not, they are less likely to use the report. A global report can only do so much to be relevant to all regions and countries. Some countries (Brazil) and regions (Latin America/Caribbean) have taken matters into their own hands by starting to develop their own *Progress* reports, which may be a welcome supplement to the global report.

A final note concerns the role of the report in positioning UN Women as a knowledge hub. *Progress* contributes to this positioning because it is seen as substantive and credible. Its data and arguments are valued and used. The contribution could be improved with more sustained outreach, greater frequency of publication (which would drive audiences more consistently to UN Women), and updated data, among other enhancements.

Conclusion 3

In many instances, *Progress* has supported UN Women to build more coherent programming; the significance of this support, as well as the durability of the outcomes, have been uneven. Outside of UN Women—in the UN system, governments, and civil society—*Progress* does not appear to be widely used to support more coherent programming. It may be unrealistic to expect a report of this nature to have influence on programmes as its primary outcome.

Progress 2011 played an important role in providing proposals for a joint programme on women's access to justice with UNDP and OHCHR; supplying a framework for UN Women's policy work on access to justice; and helping country programmes to position themselves externally or to strengthen their programming internally. *Progress 2015* was also envisioned in relation to strengthening the conceptual basis of UN Women's work on WEE. Actual uptake by staff working on WEE appears to be uneven so far, although the situation is still evolving. Policy work may align with some messages in *Progress 2015*, (e.g., social protection and decent work) more than others (e.g., macroeconomics), as some in the development field have been resistant to UN Women's distinctive rights-based approach up to this point.

The thematic choices for recent editions of *Progress*, therefore, have focused on areas of UN Women programmatic engagement with the idea of strengthening them. Several factors have constrained the report's relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability in this regard. The choice of theme itself can be limiting, since by focusing on one area of UN Women's work, it may not be seen as relevant to people working in different fields. For the next *Progress*, R&D is focusing on a more crosscutting and intersectional issue—the family—which may have broader relevance to different areas of work.

As mentioned above, the unclear position of the *Progress* report in relation to corporate strategy (the Strategic Plan) and structure hinders the report's contributions to programming. It is agreed that *Progress* is "our flagship

knowledge product.” What remains unclear, however, are the functions it does or should play within the institution in relation to policy advocacy, programme development, communications, and so forth. The result is that UN Women staff can have very different perspectives on and expectations for the report.

Shifting priorities within the institution and transitions at the senior level also have played a role. They have, for example, affected the prospects and sustainability of the joint programme on women’s access to justice, which might have been a key outcome to which the *Progress 2011* contributed. The long timelines associated with producing *Progress* can put its potential for programmatic influence at risk; what is a priority one year may not be as relevant three or four years down the line.

As mentioned above, *Progress* is more apt to influence decision-makers’ contextual understanding than it is to influence decisions on specific interventions. Externally, we found some incidence of *Progress* being used for programme development. We lacked information to assess how extensive this use was. Our analysis suggests that this might not be a realistic expectation for a global flagship report. Findings show that the report is primarily being used for positioning, public communications, and advocacy. While using it for developing programmes is not unheard of, it is less common.

Conclusion 4

The R&D team has adequate resources to produce a high-quality research publication like *Progress* every few years. With some improvements in efficiency, such as fewer background papers, streamlining internal approvals, improving the production process (e.g., working with a standard layout design), among others, *Progress* could be published on a somewhat more frequent and regular basis. **However, because of staff deficits in production and outreach, *Progress* does not currently have the resources needed to publish the same quality of publication more frequently and simultaneously improve its outreach.**

Progress has been produced roughly in accordance with the terms set out in its ProDocs. The 2011 and 2015 reports had slight delays in their launches (6-7 months) for a variety of reasons, some of which were outside of the R&D team’s control. For both the 2011 and 2015 reports, we noted that salary costs were significantly underestimated in the original ProDocs. There were a small number of areas where costs might have been saved—mainly in background papers, layout design, printing, mailing—but most costs were in line with the original budget and without undue worrisome expenditures.

A comparison of budgets between *Progress* and HDR yielded a few results of note. The cost per publication is roughly \$6 million per HDR versus about \$2.9 million per *Progress* report. However, if we compare costs on a yearly basis, the difference is stark: the salary costs on a yearly basis for HDR are seven times higher than those for *Progress* (roughly \$3,500,000 versus approximately \$450,000), and the overall budget is more than seven times higher (about \$6 million for HDR versus \$850,000 for *Progress*). *Progress* has a FTE of three staff, whereas HDR has 18 staff.

This comparison tells us something about relative performance and also what can logically be expected. Unlike HDR, *Progress* has no staff dedicated to production or to outreach, and it spends far less on salary. If UN Women wishes for the R&D team to continue producing the same kind of high-quality, long-format, and data-rich reports (even if the data is not “original”), then it is unlikely that the team can continue to do this and, simultaneously, produce the report more frequently and also ramp up outreach—without additional resources.

Recommendations

We have organized our recommendations around four issues that the evaluation suggests are most critical to prospects for *Progress* to realize its potential as a relevant, high-quality, effective, sustainable, and efficient product for positioning UN Women as a knowledge hub, contributing to policy debates, and informing programming (if the objective of “informing programming” continues to be relevant):

Recommendations to strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of the contents of the *Progress* reports:

- a. The R&D team should continue to improve the quality of the *Progress* reports. Possible steps include: conduct a systematic literature review at the start of every *Progress* to assess the quality of existing evidence (not just an annotated bibliography), which could be a publishable research product in itself; conduct anonymous, paid peer reviews of chapters and a sample of the statistics to ensure quality; focus on evidence for key claims and practical examples in boxes; put a methodological annex in the back of the book or make it available online for those who want it; and continue to ensure adequate framing and conceptualization—*Progress* should hold together.
- b. The R&D team should identify low-resource ways to deliver the original research and messages that many readers want to see more of, even if it is a matter of just a few statistics; it should also make data downloadable. Moreover, the team should choose a set of statistics to refresh each year and launch as an infographic.
- c. Finally, UN Women regional and country offices, in coordination with the R&D team, should pursue opportunities to translate substantive contents to the regional/national level through the development of regional/national *Progress* reports. Such reports should be encouraged by senior management and included in strategic planning documents.

Recommendations to strengthen and innovate the communications and outreach strategy of the *Progress* reports:

- a. The R&D team should develop a written engagement strategy for UN Women staff in deciding on the theme; consider them as the primary end-users; and develop a process for analysing their most important information needs in their work, rather than asking them to take part in the

research itself (which they might not have time or capacity to do).

- b. The R&D team should identify external target audiences more clearly for each report, and start to engage them before the research is finished. Early on, map the UN Women staff and other relevant stakeholders who are likely to be potential end-users; invite high profile actors in target groups to be on the Advisory Group; develop a research blog that updates potential end-users on the process: choosing the theme; designing the composition of the Advisory Group; selecting background paper topics; striking findings from initial research; identifying problems and challenges; and so on.
- c. The R&D team should identify early on the strikingly original statements that the report will make to start building these into an outreach strategy.
- d. Senior management should appoint a small team, or at least one senior staff member, to lead the task of identifying policy windows and target audiences, as well as translating the report into advocacy actions in the global policy space.
- e. The R&D team, working with communications and the team appointed by senior management, should develop a written, medium-to-long-term sustainable outreach strategy that identifies relevant global forums and debates, as well as entry points for advocacy and influential people to act as mediators to translate and advocate for *Progress's* messages. This strategy should ensure early engagement with media, including providing copies of the report and access to the web site well in advance; identify new formats and continued strong engagement with social media; include an agreement that communications should mine the report on a periodic basis as relevant issues emerge in the news, providing journalists with other opportunities to cite the report throughout the year; and ensure that communications associates DOIs with all publications to enable Altmetrics.

f. The R&D team should develop a robust monitoring strategy to track key performance indicators; qualitative information on uptake at the national, regional, and global levels; and content analysis of important citations of the report.

Recommendations to clarify and improve the positioning of *Progress* within UN Women:

a. R&D team should develop a new theory of change, based on findings in this evaluation.

b. Senior management should develop a document that clearly explains the role and position of *Progress* in relation to the strategic goals of the institution, including its normative mandate. These roles and positions should be clearly integrated into the next strategic plan. This document should include an indication of whether senior management supports *Progress* continuing to take a distinctive rights-based approach and the extent to which linkages and alignment with policy, programme, and other relevant units should be expected (or not expected). It also should clearly outline the expected roles and responsibilities for aligning *Progress's* messages across the institution. In addition, it should identify specifically what level of financial and human resource support the R&D team requires to adequately perform the functions expected of it.

c. Communications should develop a strategy for a more sustained engagement with the flagship beyond the launch period.

Recommendations to improve resource allocation and efficiency:

a. The R&D team and senior management should have a formal facilitated discussion about the resource commitment needed to improve the outreach and production functions of *Progress*, alongside its current commitment for a periodic, high-quality research publication. They should also reach a formal agreement about the timetable for sign off, production, and launch for each *Progress* report.

b. The R&D team should develop a resource plan (including staff costs) for creating a more dynamic web site, including provisions for updating content with blog posts, interesting new data or research, and so on. This plan should be shared with senior management.

c. The R&D team should reduce the number of background papers commissioned; it should consider combining resources to commission a smaller number of papers than might deliver the kind of strikingly original research and messages more of which many readers wish to see.

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TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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