

TRANSFORM



Evaluating UN Women's Policy Advocacy Work

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 23rd issue of Transform, which focuses on UN Women's work in policy advocacy. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, Generation Equality Forum and the United Nations Climate Change conference (COP 26) have been galvanizing moments offering many opportunities for policy advocacy in recent years. At the same time, the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed to gender equality and a regression of progress made on women's empowerment highlight the continued need for effective policy advocacy work.

Policy advocacy work is central to UN Women's mission of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, thus the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) led this evaluation to assess UN Women's policy advocacy efforts, understand what has worked well and identify how UN Women's policy advocacy work can be strengthened around the world.

The evaluation team found that UN Women is viewed as a successful policy advocacy organization, and that UN Women's integrated mandate enables UN Women to play a strong policy advocacy role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women takes on several critical roles to advance policy advocacy objectives at the global, regional and country levels and demonstrates a comparative advantage in its ability to convene government, civil society and other stakeholders around key issues. The evaluation team also found that a more coherent and coordinated organizational approach for policy advocacy could further strengthen UN Women's work. Similarly, there is opportunity to deepen strategic partnerships that advance policy objectives. Finally, policy advocacy is inherently difficult to measure, and UN Women should monitor, report and evaluate not only high-level results, but also ways in which policy changes resulting from advocacy efforts impact the lives of women and girls.

This evaluation draws on numerous policy advocacy achievements, including UN Women's contributions to knowledge and research at the global level; UN Women's work on the care economy in Latin America and ending violence against women programming in the Pacific at the regional level; and many illustrated examples from case studies at the country level.

The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 serves as a good opportunity to reflect on and strengthen UN Women's policy advocacy work and this evaluation offers six strategic recommendations designed to support implementation of the new Strategic Plan and to inform UN Women's work in the future.

Inga Sniukaite

Chief, Independent Evaluation Service
Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS)

Think Beyond. Stay Ahead.

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DISCLAIMER

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ON THE COVER

Typhoon Vamco Response under the Women and Girls at the Center of COVID-19 Prevention Project (Philippines). Photo ©UN Women/Rash Caritativo



Why evaluate UN Women's policy advocacy work?

Are we getting it right? Does our support positively change the lives of women and girls and contribute to gender equality?

To get better results, we need to know what works. We also need to know what doesn't work and how to adapt it.

As part of the revised UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan (2018–2021), UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) conducted a corporate evaluation of UN Women's policy advocacy work.

Corporate evaluations specifically aim to enhance accountability, inform decision-making and contribute to improving UN Women's learning and performance. This corporate evaluation was initiated in May 2021 and completed in February 2022.

UN Women contributes to developing global norms, policies and standards

Building the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to implement normative frameworks



Facilitating evidence-based dialogue with governments and civil society



Providing knowledge and advice to support Member States and other stakeholders in intergovernmental processes



UN Women does not have a formal organizational definition of policy advocacy. Therefore, during the inception process, the evaluation team developed the following working definition of policy advocacy to ensure a consistent approach to analyses: policy advocacy is the process of influencing and supporting decision makers, institutions and civil society to demand, adopt, develop, implement and uphold gender-responsive normative frameworks, legislation and policies; and is a process designed to foster policy change leading to improvements in the lives of women and girls and their increased access to rights.

The evaluation studied: the value and benefit UN Women's role in policy advocacy brings to UN Women, United Nations organizations, governments and other partners, and to the overall achievement of policy advocacy outcomes.

This evaluation covered the period from 2018 to 2021, with a focus on UN Women's role in policy advocacy as it relates to the revised Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this evaluation will contribute to strategic decision-making, organizational learning, accountability and the strengthening of UN Women's policy advocacy work, including implementation of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

UN Women's Executive Board, senior management and programme personnel directly working on, or with an interest in, policy advocacy are the primary intended users of this evaluation, and the evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors working on policy advocacy, such as civil society organizations, United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and development partners.

Policy advocacy is the process of influencing and supporting decision makers, institutions and civil society to demand, adopt, develop, implement and uphold gender-responsive normative frameworks, legislation and policies; and is a process designed to foster policy change leading to improvements in the lives of women and girls and their increased access to rights

EVALUATION QUESTIONS



To what extent is UN Women's policy advocacy work **effective at contributing to policy change and relevant to country needs** and global priorities?



To what extent does UN Women have the necessary **organizational, strategic and operational approaches, and capacity in place** to efficiently and coherently perform its policy advocacy roles?



To what extent is UN Women **effective at translating normative policy advocacy successes** at the global level into regional and country-level action?



How are **human rights, gender equality and inclusion** incorporated into UN Women's policy advocacy work?



Photo ©UN Women/ Haleem El Shazani



EVALUATING IMPACT IN GENDER EQUALITY

Guidance note to evaluate impact in gender
equality and women's empowerment



Download the Guidance Note [here](#)

KEY INSIGHTS

What value and benefit does UN Women's policy advocacy work bring to UN Women, United Nations organizations, governments and other partners, and to the overall achievement of collective policy advocacy outcomes?



1 UN Women's integrated mandate enables the Entity to have a strong policy advocacy role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment priorities.



However, there is an opportunity for UN Women to define policy advocacy and use the Strategic Plan to develop a coherent approach for planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy.

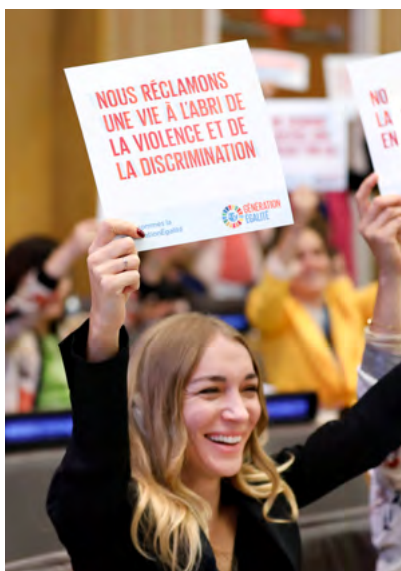


Photo ©UN Women/ Ryan Brown

UN Women's policy advocacy work is rooted in its founding resolution and several key normative frameworks, and UN Women has contributed to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation that address gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women's triple mandate also extends policy advocacy work in multiple directions, such as when coordinating and influencing policy change and actions within the UN system and across its network of external partners, and through its regional and Country Offices that influence policy change.

UN Women's leadership and contributions to policy advocacy work are embedded throughout most of its programmatic work. UN Women has multiple pathways to policy advocacy, and it employs several strategies that advocate for policy change at the various levels in which it operates.

Convening is one of UN Women's key strategies for conducting effective policy advocacy.

UN Women often provides governments and local women's organizations a platform to come together and engage in discourse. Similarly, UN Women is effective at cultivating intergovernmental processes that facilitate the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment principles and priorities with global norms and standards.

While UN Women has been able to affect some policy changes, a standard definition or shared understanding guiding what policy advocacy entails is lacking. The absence of a high-level theory of change and an underdefined cohesive approach to policy advocacy work has impacted UN Women's ability to measure and report on UN Women's direct contributions to policy advocacy outcomes. The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 offers opportunities to define policy advocacy and create coherent policy advocacy approaches and reporting mechanisms through the development of thematic theories of change and Signature Interventions.

Examples of most significant change/results in part due to UN Women's policy advocacy work

Bangladesh

Efforts resulted in the gender-responsive Standing Order on Disaster, where gender and social inclusiveness issues were integrated into all chapters and sections, and in the National Plan for Disaster Management 2021-2025.

Syria

In 2019, women assumed 30 per cent of the seats on the committee to draft the Constitution, as compared to 10 per cent in the earlier version.

Myanmar

Ensured gender-specific priorities in addition to featuring gender as a cross-cutting issue in the longer-term COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Reform Plan in 2020, as compared to an initial gender-blind plan.

Timor-Leste

Adoption of a policy framework to promote decent work for rural women.

Nepal, Uganda

Successful integration of gender and equity issues in National Development Plans.

Kenya

Budget allocation for implementation of National Action Plan 1325 in 2018.

Ukraine

Signing the Decree "on Urgent Measure to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence, Gender-based Violence and Protect Rights of Such Violence" in 2020.

Liberia

Adoption of the Local Government Act into Law in 2018 to provide women with the opportunity to have special seats on County Councils (two seats for women and two for youth).

Guatemala

Approval of the updated version of the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women, 2020-2029.

2

Evidence-based and credible knowledge is central to UN Women's policy advocacy work.



In intergovernmental processes, UN Women plays an active role as the technical expert on gender policy and as a convener of knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women's policy advocacy strategy involves knowledge generation and dissemination, and knowledge products and research are produced at the headquarters, regional and country levels.

While UN Women follows rigorous research and publication standards for knowledge products and reports produced at the global level, data, evidence and knowledge generated at the country level are not consistently afforded the same rigorous peer review and methodological approaches. Furthermore, UN Women's plans to manage and disseminate lessons learned, model policies, tools and knowledge are often unclear. Thus, UN Women would benefit from developing a strategic knowledge management and dissemination process at all levels.

Localization of knowledge and context-specific evidence are fundamental to supporting policy advocacy at the regional and country levels. UN Women often draws upon global knowledge and data and then contextualizes it to regional and country needs by leveraging partnerships and networks to further policy development and implementation. While UN Women's knowledge platforms have proven to be important depositories of information and data, their governance and business continuity needs to be reviewed and strengthened.

In general, knowledge platforms have fostered thematic knowledge generation and sharing which has contributed to evidence-led advocacy. However, it has been difficult to measure how UN Women's knowledge platforms directly contribute to the effectiveness of policy advocacy efforts due to the lack of a theory of change and standardized approaches to results monitoring.

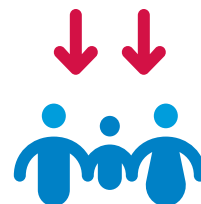
In general, knowledge platforms have fostered thematic knowledge generation and sharing which has contributed to evidence-led advocacy.



Photo ©UN Women/ Ryan Brown

3

Partnerships, a strength of UN Women, are critical to ensuring a multiplier effect, leveraging resources and approaching policy advocacy work holistically.



The evaluation found that UN Women often acts as a bridge-builder among stakeholders by providing a platform for discussions between governments and local women's organizations.

UN Women's partnerships with other agencies have contributed to setting a strong agenda in inter-governmental processes across all regions for initiatives such as peace and security, unpaid care work and the measurement of femicide. At times, partners working on outcome/thematic areas in silos impeded a comprehensive approach to policy advocacy efforts by competing for the same time with decision makers, resources, and support from CSOs.

UN Women has been a valuable partner in many policy advocacy initiatives. Policy advocacy work at the country level is undertaken at the request of Member States and is conducted following the principle of national ownership and by promoting national leadership of policy development and implementation processes. Thus, partnering with governments ensures local ownership and sustainability of progress made through policy advocacy and often increases uptake of UN Women's knowledge products and platforms.

Similarly, partnering with governments, particularly their national mechanisms for gender equality, on global normative frameworks and CSW agreements helps to facilitate the adoption of resolutions and the strengthening of relationships with regional women's advocacy organizations.

CSOs play a key role in UN Women's policy advocacy work, particularly in community-based policy efforts and sustainability of the policy process. For example, grassroots partners, such as sports organizations, churches faith-based organizations, and local women's networks, have been vital in enabling UN Women to reach marginalized groups and to change attitudes/behaviors through programming. While these partnerships have been fruitful, at times, UN Women's sometimes siloed efforts hindered a holistic and coordinated approach of working on thematic areas of policy advocacy issues at the country level. Also, there is an opportunity for UN Women to better leverage and learn from the experiences and skills of grassroots organizations that regularly work with marginalized groups.

UN Women partners in policy advocacy work



Examples of understanding policy processes and balancing relationships with stakeholders



Burundi: Political acumen to work with CSOs and women's networks and maintaining a good relationship with the Office of the First Lady and women parliamentarians in Burundi

Type of partners: CSOs, women's networks, Women parliamentarians, Office of the First Lady of the country



Viet Nam: Amending labour codes in Viet Nam by working closely with the Legal Department at the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs

Type of partners: National government (ministry)



Georgia: Working with the Department of Human Rights and Ministry of Internal Affairs on EAW

Type of partners: National government (ministry)



Mexico: Partnerships on gender statistics and organizing international meetings of experts on Time and Use of Unpaid Work Surveys

Type of partners: National Government (Ministries) – Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) and Instituto Nacional de Las Mujeres (INMUJERES) United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

4

There is need to clarify the organizational architecture for policy advocacy to form better coordination and communication linkages between headquarters and the regional and Country Offices.



UN Women's structure and organizational presence at the regional and country levels provides great opportunity for coordination, support and information sharing but also leads to fragmented policy advocacy work at times.

The absence of a shared understanding and overarching approach for policy advocacy work has led to a lack of horizontal coherence and linkages among units within headquarters and across different levels. For example, communications around policy advocacy between headquarters and local offices were fragmented and had limited coordination. Additionally, linkages between UN Women's communications and advocacy work were not always clear and opportunities to amplify key advocacy messages through corporate communications products were often lost. There are

several opportunities to bring communications into policy advocacy initiatives in a more coordinated and timely approach.

At the regional and Country Offices, programme managers and other UN Women personnel carry out varying levels of policy advocacy efforts, despite being outside the scope of their jobs. Stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation identified the need for more guidance, such as best practices, tools model legislation, data, evidence and knowledge products from headquarters. Stakeholders also noted that regional offices were in a strong position to provide greater context analysis to support Country Offices and highlighted the importance of Country Offices to provide lessons and guidance of their own, especially for the contextualization and implementation of policy work.

Overall, greater clarity around roles and responsibilities for policy advocacy across the organization could facilitate stronger engagement and coordination between headquarters, regional offices, and Country Offices.



UN WOMEN RAPID ASSESSMENT TOOL

To Evaluate Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Results In Humanitarian Contexts



Download the interactive PDF [here](#)

5

UN Women's monitoring and results tracking systems do not adequately capture policy advocacy results and lessons learned.



It was difficult to measure the effectiveness of key outcomes resulting from UN Women's policy advocacy work due to the long-term nature of most change.

While the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 included many indicators related to aspects of policy advocacy (e.g., measuring the number of laws, policies, or regulations changed or developed with UN Women support), the indicators were not consistent across thematic area, were presented at a high level and/or provided mostly quantitative outputs on policy change. UN Women could enhance its monitoring and evaluation of policy advocacy by measuring how it contributes to change and to what extent change occurred. There is also an opportunity to evaluate the longer-term outcomes and impact of policy changes on the lives of women and girls.

To do this, UN Women could utilize innovate methodologies, such as the Bellwether Methodology and conduct periodic evaluations of specific policy advocacy initiatives to complement the development results framework data. The introduction of cross-cutting outcome areas under the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 will surely provide an opportunity for more consistent reporting on policy advocacy results across thematic areas, particularly under Outcome 1, “global normative frameworks, and gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutions.”

Examples of successful instances from field offices on monitoring

Participants across focus group discussions highlighted the following as examples of successful policy advocacy monitoring.

Quantitative indicators were present in Burundi to capture meaningful engagements led by CSOs resulting from UN Women's policy advocacy activities or UN Women's support at the subnational level (e.g., number of trained women mediators and other community leaders participating in peace and recovery processes at the local level).

Progress of the World's Women indicators that measure the influence of the report include influence among UN Women staff which assesses changes in staff awareness of the report and its use in key strategy and programmatic documents; influence among key non-UN Women mediators which assesses how external mediators engaged as part of the research and outreach process have disseminated key messages; influence on specific policy debates by the Research and Data team assessing how normative debates have been reframed; expanding analysis of key statistics on gender equality and supporting nationally owned knowledge products to catalyse policy dialogue; circulation on receptivity; and update of the report (with online metrics and website analytics).

6

Current resources are not always adequate to carry out policy advocacy work to the Entity's full potential, and there are capacity gaps in the availability of necessary personnel and expertise.



To effectively carry out policy advocacy work, it is necessary that UN Women personnel have political and social acumen and expertise and knowledge of context-specific gender issues in addition to understanding global norms and standards. Due to UN Women's limited financial and human resources capacity, regional and Country Offices often carried out policy advocacy work by including it in their various funding proposals, programme documents and Strategic Notes, and programme managers frequently took on additional roles such as resource mobilization, coordination and monitoring that required them

to navigate social and political dynamics to identify policy advocacy opportunities. Regional and Country Offices reported that funding often depended on the flexibility and willingness of the donor to support policy advocacy initiatives and many programmes lacked the necessary resources for policy advocacy work.

The evaluation also noted that most policy-related personnel were based at headquarters and relatively few were located at the regional and country levels. In the field, country office representatives played a key role in policy advocacy with their host national governments and within the UNCT.

This imbalance in expertise was often attributed to a lack of core funding available to support thematic policy expertise in regional and Country Offices. Current resources are not always adequate to carry out policy advocacy work to UN Women's full potential.



Photo ©UN Women/Ryan Brown

7

UN Women's policy advocacy work contributes to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation to address gender equality and empowering women.



However, it does not always clearly lead to longer-term outcomes for women and girls for a variety of reasons, such as capacity, funding and internal coherence as well as external factors that are beyond UN Women's direct control.

UN Women's work on normative frameworks, laws and policies builds capacity at the country level and fosters sustainability. Nevertheless, the evaluation team found opportunities for UN Women to increase its effectiveness by consistently and systematically utilising its normative, coordination, and programming work to support national partners in implementing laws and policies.

Global normative frameworks have been instrumental in advancing policy advocacy on the ground and the provision of normative support to intergovernmental processes and bodies has remained a high priority for UN Women. Evaluation case studies in Jordan, Viet Nam, Burundi and Mali all indicated that global normative frameworks enabled policy advocacy initiatives to move forward. UN Women's coordination and convening work has also contributed to improved policy and normative frameworks at the country level.

However, this has not always translated into positive changes in the everyday lives of women and girls. The evaluation concluded that a stronger evidence base, strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships, and more linkages across sectors would help UN Women improve coherence, consistency and coordination between its normative and operational efforts to deliver policy results for women and girls.

The CSW annual meeting has been one of UN Women's key policy advocacy platforms. While reaching a set of agreed conclusions negotiated by all Member States is a major accomplishment, UN Women is missing a clear strategy on how regional and Country Offices can systematically integrate the agreed conclusions in their respective spaces. The primary challenge has been that integrating the agreed conclusions into each Member States' national priorities takes time and countries and regions do not operate on a single timeline.



Photo ©UN Women/Ryan Brown

8

UN Women is seen as an advocate for “leave no one behind,” but translating this principle into practice continues to be a challenge. The process of implementing “leave no one behind” is often uneven and not systematically planned or monitored.



Consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Women has a strong commitment to “leave no one behind” and to promoting an understanding of women and girls’ experiences at the intersection of age, sex, race, ethnicity, location, disability, migration and displacement, indigenous, socio-economic and other statuses. For instance, 67 UN Women offices supported initiatives to empower women and girls with disabilities and UN Women facilitated access to HIV services for women living in 35 countries. UN Women has also played a leading role in inter-agency forums, ensuring gender equality and intersectional perspectives are included.

Although UN Women has achieved considerable progress in making intersectional inequalities visible through data, developing and implementing inclusion strategies within policy advocacy activities and interventions and monitoring/reporting on marginalized groups through disaggregated data or gender-responsive or intersectional analysis is uneven across policy advocacy efforts. Of note is the Women Count programme which has introduced tools related to “leave no one behind” and gender-responsive data collection (e.g., Counted and Visible Toolkit).

While UN Women aims to reach vulnerable populations (particularly women and girls) through most of its policy advocacy efforts, there is scope to improve how marginalized groups or those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are identified when implementing policy advocacy initiatives.



Photo ©UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

Summary of factors influencing successes and lessons learned in policy advocacy work.

FACTORS OF SUCCESS



Building relationships with policymakers/ decision makers is essential.



Multi-stakeholder approaches successfully unite diverse stakeholders around policy advocacy messages.



Global and regional experts are critical to high-quality, evidence-based policy advocacy and knowledge production.



Partnerships with government institutions often lead to increased uptake in knowledge products and knowledge platforms.



Long-term institutional investments and advocacy yield better support for the adoption and implementation of progressive interventions.



Flexibility and smart and rapid responses to changes in the external environment, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can provide an opportunity for policy advocacy work.

LESSONS LEARNED



It is necessary to **understand and navigate contextual factors** for successful policy advocacy.



Changes in the political landscape can bolster/hamper policy advocacy efforts.



Multiple players in the policy advocacy ecosystem working disjointedly results in duplicate efforts.



Knowledge products that are not **translated/contextualized** have lower uptake and limited reach.



Lack of established mechanisms impedes systematic engagement with CSOs at various levels.



Timing plays a key role in the probability of influencing discourse and policy.



MOVING FORWARD

Six ways to strengthen UN Women's policy advocacy work



IES offers six recommendations that are critical for UN Women's future policy advocacy work.

Recommendation 1

Leverage the Strategic Plan to enable coherent planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy priorities.

UN Women should develop a clear definition of policy advocacy which includes a high-level theory of change and monitoring mechanisms for policy advocacy work. Additionally, it is recommended that UN Women establish global policy advocacy priorities through the operationalization of the Strategic Plan and utilize cross-cutting Outcome 1 of the Strategic Plan on gender-responsive normative frameworks and institutions to build cohesive policy advocacy approaches, monitoring and

reporting. It is recommended that UN Women develop policy advocacy strategies and measurement mechanisms through the development of thematic Theories of Action and Signature Interventions and UN Women should contextualize the policy advocacy priorities for regional and Country Offices through Strategic Notes and workplans. Policy advocacy priorities should align well with communications and knowledge, data and evidence produced by UN Women.

Recommendation 2

Clarify and strengthen the Entity's policy advocacy architecture, including by strengthening the integration of policy advocacy across the organization, and ensuring meaningful participation of all divisions working directly or indirectly on policy advocacy.

It is recommended that UN Women map and clarify the key actors and roles across different divisions, regional offices and Country Offices that are involved in policy advocacy. UN Women should strengthen synergies among divisions through joint planning and matrix management activities and should bolster networked management of regional offices (policy regional advisers) as the link between headquarters and Country Offices.

UN Women should strengthen linkages between UN Women communication and advocacy efforts at all levels of the organization so that communication products and messages can directly support policy advocacy. Additionally, it is recommended to develop headquarters/regional office/country office annual strategic communications plans and key messages to improve focus, consistency and efficiency.

Recommendation 3

Strengthen data, knowledge generation and knowledge management systems as enablers for policy advocacy work and establish UN Women as a recognized knowledge broker on gender equality in the policy advocacy sphere.

UN Women's should develop effective data and knowledge generation systems based on UN Women's policy advocacy priorities and evidence from gap analysis on policy development. This includes identifying which data and knowledge will be produced by UN Women, jointly with partners and by partners separately. UN Women should invest in strengthening knowledge management systems for policy advocacy priorities to support the work of UN Women

personnel. Furthermore, ensuring that policy guidance, key messages and training/capacity building tools in support of policy advocacy are effectively disseminated across the organization will be key to successful policy advocacy. It is recommended that UN Women establish a corporate communication plan to systematically disseminate knowledge products to regional and Country Offices and partners.

Recommendation 4

Continue to strengthen relationships with national governments, UN agencies, feminist movements and women's organizations to support policy change and implementation.

To have the best impact appropriate to each context, UN Women should prioritize and leverage its various partnerships. The evaluation team recommends that UN Women collaborate with national governments to increase buy-in and ownership of policy change and implementation. Additionally, it is recommended that UN Women leverage partnerships with feminist movements and women's organizations at the global, regional

and country levels. UN Women should also leverage UN Reform, the Resident Coordinator's Office and partnerships with other UN agencies to enhance coordination, scale policy advocacy efforts, and foster support for implementation. The evaluation team recommends that UN Women leverage partnerships with academia, research institutions and think tanks for research-based knowledge generation and sharing.

Recommendation 5

Strategically place policy advocacy specialists across the organization and ensure that regional and Country Offices have the appropriate level of social and political acumen and adequate capacity in terms of the number of personnel with technical expertise and knowledge of local context on gender issues.

UN Women should strategically identify thought leaders and policy experts throughout the organization, including at the regional and country level, to better support policy advocacy priorities. The evaluation team recommends that UN Women recruit world-class experts on gender policy to bolster UN Women's role as a "thought leader" and develop capacity and expertise for policy advocacy work in regional

and Country Offices. UN Women should provide policy advocacy training to country and regional representatives and programme managers. Furthermore, the evaluation team recommends that UN Women review country office job descriptions and titles to ensure that policy advocacy works is adequately reflected to aid in the recruitment of personnel with required policy experience.

Recommendation 6

Strengthen and improve mechanisms and processes within UN Women by developing guidance tools and best practices to effectively engage groups that are being left behind through policy advocacy work.

UN Women should identify or develop approaches for integrating the "leave no one behind" principle into its policy advocacy work, including approaches for integrating the needs of "leave no one behind" within legislation, policies and standards; identifying when and how to share policy advocacy products with those at risk of being left behind; and monitoring and evaluating "leave no one behind" in policy advocacy work.

It is recommended that UN Women develop minimum standards for integrating "leave no one behind" principles that appropriately balance best practices and expectations with resource and time constraints. UN Women should also leverage its many partnerships with grassroots organizations, women's organizations and networks to identify and ensure sustained reach to groups being left behind.

What methods and tools are available to advance gender-responsive evaluation?

What can we learn from successful gender-responsive evaluation approaches?

How can we empower rights holders and maximize their participation?

GOOD PRACTICES IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATIONS

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UN
WOMEN



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REFLECTIONS FROM MANAGEMENT

Learning from this corporate evaluation

This article was developed based on UN Women's management response to the corporate evaluation and was presented to the UN Women Executive Board.

UN Women welcomes the findings and recommendations of the Corporate Evaluation on UN Women's Policy Advocacy work. Policy advocacy is carried out at different functional levels of the organization to address existing gender inequalities, strengthen institutions and propose gender-responsive policy recommendations and advice.

UN Women agrees that it should leverage its new Strategic Plan 2022-2025 to enable coherent planning, implementation and monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy priorities. The Entity notes that the evaluation's drafting overlapped with the finalization and approval of the new Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and the new Strategic Plan addresses some of the recommendations through its cross-cutting outcomes and indicators, of which approximately half, relate to policy advocacy. UN Women also acknowledges the need to develop a clear definition for policy advocacy, which will support identification of priorities and responsible units at all levels.

UN Women accepts the recommendation that it could further clarify its

policy advocacy architecture, and the roles HQ divisions, Regional and Country Offices play in policy advocacy. Policy advocacy is anchored in the Strategic Notes and biennial work plans at the Country Offices, which helps guarantee that policy advocacy and its key messages are timely and relevant to local contexts and thematic areas. UN Women acknowledges that efforts to ensure that Regional Offices more systematically contribute to corporate policy messaging, especially global policies developed at HQ, can be increased. UN Women also agrees that it is important to strengthen linkages between its communication and advocacy efforts at all levels so that communication products and messaging support policy advocacy.

UN Women supports the recommendations to strengthen data, knowledge generation and knowledge management systems as enablers for policy advocacy and to establish UN Women as a knowledge broker on gender equality in the policy advocacy sphere. To demonstrate UN Women's commitment to data, knowledge generation and knowledge management, the new Strategic Plan includes an outcome (Outcome 6) entirely dedicated to this work. To further strengthen UN Women's role as a knowledge hub, the forthcoming Data, Evidence and Knowledge strategy will bring together work on knowledge management, research, and data.

UN Women concurs that maintaining strong cooperation and partnerships with national governments, the UN system, and civil society, including women's organizations, is the bedrock of UN Women's work and that policy advocacy can only be effective in partnership with others. At the country level, the New Standards and Procedure for Gender Theme Groups (GTG) leverage the role of GTGs to advance strategic dialogues on gender-related policy questions with governments and civil society.

The Issue Based Coalitions on Gender do the same at the regional level. UN Women will continue to build these networks, noting the importance of making time and resources available for joint publication and dissemination of research and recommendations.

UN Women partially accepts the recommendation to strategically place policy advocacy specialists across the organization and to ensure that field offices have adequate social and political acumen and capacity. While, UN Women agrees that policy advocacy specialists should be embedded throughout the organization, it acknowledges that UN Women does not have sufficient funding to ensure this. Current policy advisors and specialists at HQ and in Regional and Country Offices are considered thought leaders on policies and laws in the four thematic impact areas, and UN Women recognizes that additional dedicated funding is necessary to develop capacity and expertise for policy advocacy work. Communities of practice (COPs), used to leverage in-house expertise, will also be strengthened in 2022 and 2023.

Finally, UN Women agrees that it should continue developing guidance tools and best practices to effectively engage groups most often left behind in policy advocacy with a focus on developing minimum standards for integrating “leave no one behind” in policy advocacy.



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Evaluation methodology

DATA COLLECTION



Desk review and synthesis:

portfolio analysis and review of UN Women's management systems, reports and internal assessments



Interviews and focus group discussions:

Semi-structured interviews of UN Women staff and partners; Focus groups with regional policy advisors & programme specialists



Online surveys

Internal survey of business units (48 responses; response rate of 49%) and survey with partners (71 responses; response rate of 18%); administered in 4 languages



Case studies:

Country case studies of Mexico, Burundi, Jordan, Viet Nam, Mali, Georgia; regional case studies in the Pacific and Caribbean; and global case studies of key knowledge platforms such as CSW

143

stakeholders interviewed

25

focus group discussions

5

focus group Interviews

11

case studies

350+

documents reviewed

2

online surveys

119

survey respondents

The evaluation approach was participatory and included a combination of a theory-based approach, appreciative inquiry and most significant change methodologies. The theory-based approach evaluated UN Women's policy advocacy work using a conceptual analytical framework of theory of change, while the appreciative inquiry enabled assessment of the approaches that UN Women implemented well, could replicate and scale-up as a forward-looking perspective on improving policy advocacy.

The most significant change methodology engaged key informants who helped identify the most significant changes that have taken place, in part due to UN Women's involvement. The evaluation also incorporated the principles of gender-responsive evaluation and the "leave no one behind" perspective.

A combination of primary and secondary data sources were used to gather evidence to answer the evaluation questions. In alignment with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted which identified a range of internal and external stakeholders directly involved, or with an interest in, UN Women's policy advocacy work.

Secondary data collection efforts involved a desk review and synthesis of more than 350 documents from global, regional and country levels, which included documentation from UN Women's management systems, evaluation and audit reports, and internal assessments. Additionally, the evaluation team carried out 11 in-depth case studies and 25 country portfolio analyses. The 11 case studies (three global, two regional and six country level) were conducted to further investigate the evaluation questions and cases were selected to offer a picture of the thematic and geographic representation of UN Women's policy advocacy work. Cases were also selected from across the policy cycle to illustrate different policy advocacy strategies as found in the theory of change.

