

## Formative Evaluation of UN Women’s capacity development support to partners to respond to the needs of women and girls in the Europe and Central Asia region

### Terms of Reference

#### 1. Introduction

UN Women is commissioning an independent formative evaluation of UN Women’s capacity development support to partners over the period 2018 to 2022 to respond to the needs of women and girls in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region.

UN Women regularly evaluates its work to enhance accountability, inform decision making, and contribute to learning. In 2022, as part of the agency’s corporate evaluation plan, UN Women’s Independent Evaluation Service (IES) initiated a corporate evaluation of UN Women’s capacity development support to partners to respond to the needs of women and girls. In alignment with identified corporate evaluation needs and as part of its strategic evaluation planning, the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO), planned an evaluation to assess this key area of UN Women’s work in the ECA region.

UN Women’s strategic plan identifies capacity development as one of the six types of support within UN Women’s operational activities. Capacity development cuts across the organization’s thematic areas and strategic areas of change. The evaluation will be led by IES, with the support of external experts, to ensure its independence and credibility.

The present terms of reference (ToR) provides key information for the evaluation including a background on UN Women’s work in this area at global level.

#### 2. UN Women’s background on capacity development

UN Women is the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women is the global champion for gender equality, working to develop and uphold standards and create an environment in which every woman and girl can exercise her human rights and live up to her full potential.

Capacity development support to partners has been a key intervention strategy in UN Women’s work and cuts across the organization’s thematic areas of work, and cross-cutting priorities. UN Women delivers on its commitment to support Member States in addressing structural barriers to gender equality and women’s empowerment by leveraging its triple mandate of normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities. Within this triple mandate, UN Women uses capacity development to partners as a key strategy to achieve its outcomes. UN Women’s support to capacity development focuses on working with partners to strengthen their capacities for the achievement of UN Women’s outcomes and contribute to UN system results.

According to the UN Women Result Management System (RMS), in 2016–2019 UN Women’s most frequent type of activity at the output level was capacity building; followed by advocacy and coordination; knowledge generation; and data and statistics support. This is also reflected in the significant investments made, including USD\$ 33 million (about 7.5 per cent of the total UN Women’s budget) in the 2018 allocation, specifically on training-related interventions<sup>1</sup>. In February 2020, the Independent Evaluation Service conducted an evidence

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women Independent Evaluation Service, “Key Lessons Learned on capacity development”, 2019

gap mapping (EGM) analysis which identified that approximately 90 percent (n=93/103) of UN Women's evaluation reports reflect the Entity's capacity development efforts.<sup>2</sup>

### *Capacity development in UN Women's Strategic Plans (2018-2021 and 2022-2025)*

In line with its collaborative and comparative advantage and objective to advance the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in a comprehensive manner, UN Women 2018-2021 Strategic Plan envisioned capacity development as one key type of support in its operational activities, to be provided to key partnership stakeholders. Indeed, one of the guiding principles of UN Women's work should be supporting national capacity development as a key strategy for sustainable development.

According to the 2018 -2021 strategic plan, the UN-Women's Training Centre remains central to these efforts, developing and offering trainings to diverse partners, including the UN system, and consolidating UN-Women's offerings in support of national capacity development. To this date, the UN Women's Training Centre is still operating, but a strategic assessment and business plan are on-going in order to provide recommendations for its future configuration and functions.

The same importance is given to capacity development by the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, where capacity development is recognized as one of the key drivers approaches to the development of results. In both Strategic plans, the capacity development strategy cuts across the different priority areas of UN Women's work, including women's economic empowerment and eliminating violence against women. Great importance is given to supporting capacity development efforts for production and use of gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data and the generation of knowledge.

UN Women's strategic plans also make reference to the need of UN Women to develop the capacity of either duty bearers, to ensure the frameworks in which they are working are gender responsive, and rights holders to foster their empowerment. In particular, specific relevance is given on one hand, to directly support the capacity and work of civil society organizations, including grassroots and women's organizations and, on the other hand, to promote capacity development for youth, in support of UN-Women's strategic priorities.

### *Capacity development in the annual reporting to the Executive Board*

In the annual reporting to the Executive Board, UN Women confirms its commitment to develop the capacities of stakeholders in all its priority areas, as well as the fundamental role played by the UN Women Training Centre to this end. In 2018, 2019 and 2020, several results were reported, with training being the primary method utilized to build capacities, often accompanied by technical assistance, dialogue facilitation and advocacy support.

Outcome 2 (Women lead, participate in, and benefit equally from governance systems) and 3 (Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy) appeared to be the priority areas in which capacity development results were reported more consistently. With regard to Outcome 2, UN Women has intensively worked both with National Gender Machineries on strengthening their capacities on issues such as gender budgeting, gender responsive planning, and access to justice, but has also done recurrent work with female

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<sup>2</sup> UN Women Independent Evaluation Service, "Key Lessons Learned on capacity development", 2019

candidates to develop their institutional capacities and leadership skills, including with indigenous women. On Outcome 3, consistent focus has been on enabling women's participation in the economy. In 2020, UN-Women supported 114,243 women in 33 countries to strengthen technical, digital and financial skills and capacities to participate in the economy, including as entrepreneurs (69,332 from rural areas, 1,426 migrant women and 393 women with disabilities)<sup>3</sup>.

In terms of beneficiaries, a wide range of different stakeholders were capacitated by UN Women: from State parties that were trained and supported in reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, to members of a women's association in the rice value chain who doubled their productivity through climate-smart agriculture capacity-building.

### 3. Intended evaluation use and users and evaluation objectives

The evaluation will be utilization focused and intended for strategic decision making and organizational learning. The primary intended users of the evaluation are senior management, the UN Women staff at the regional, country and global levels with an interest in, or working in the area of capacity development to partners. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors that work in this area, including civil society, UN agencies and national partners, as well as development partners.

Building on the corporate understanding of UN Women's capacity development support to partners as, the evaluation will look at capacity development as a standardized approach within the Theories of Action of each outcome area, and its role in delivering signature interventions in the ECA region.

In alignment of and to complement the corporate level evaluation, this regional evaluation has the following key objectives:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of UN Women in providing capacity development support to partners and the effectiveness and efficiency of UN Women's capacity development support interventions to partners to respond to the needs of women and girls in the ECA region;
2. Identify examples of good regional and country level practices from key interventions in ECA that include capacity development support to partners including corporate tools that country offices can leverage for capacity development initiatives;
3. Develop lessons learned and recommendations to strengthen UN Women's capacity development support strategies to partners to respond to the needs of women and girls in the ECA region.

The formative evaluation will look at capacity development provided by UN Women to partners in ECA from 2018 to 2022 (to date). It will include the following components all with the view to provide specific recommendations to inform the implementation of regional and country level SNs. The evaluation will:

- Map and assess status of capacity development support initiatives to partners in ECA as identified in the internal systems of UN Women, thematic areas and based on the current UN Women playbook and theories of action;

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on the progress made on the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, Annual Session of 2021, para 44, p.14

- Within capacity development support to partners, the evaluation will scope through the inception report the more specific strategic interventions to look at among training, learning workshops, development of national gender equality expertise and potentially others to be identified through the thematic signature interventions;
- Test the reconstructed Theory of Change for Capacity Development support to partners developed in the context of the corporate level evaluation;
- Assess whether the organizational processes and structures support a consistent approach of capacity development support to partners that responds to the needs of women and girls that could be used coherently across the organization in the region;
- Provide key recommendations for improvements and programmatic and operational suggestions for capacity development support to partners in ECA.

#### 4. Evaluation approach and methods

This evaluation will serve as a pilot exercise that links regional and global evaluation processes for Independent Evaluation Service led evaluations commissioned at corporate and regional levels. The two evaluation processes have been aligned and include parallel evaluation teams led by a HQ based evaluation Specialist and the Regional Evaluation Specialist for Europe and Central Asia, respectively. Further details of the scope of both exercises will be included in the inception report.

The evaluation will be transparent and participatory, involving relevant UN Women stakeholders and partners. It will be carried out in accordance with UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Code of Conduct and UN Women Evaluation Policy and guidelines. Explicit emphasis will be placed on the integration of gender equality and human rights principles in the evaluation focus and process as established in the UNEG Handbook, Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation.

The evaluation team will develop the design for the evaluation including the approach, the evaluation criteria, questions and matrix, and methodology for data collection and analysis. Indicative methods for data collection will include documentary review, interviews with key informants, focus groups and surveys. The evaluation design will be developed during the inception phase of the exercise and presented in the inception report.

Based on a review of preliminary documentation, a set of questions were developed that will be further developed during the inception phase of the evaluation.

#### 6. Evaluation process

The evaluation process consists of five phases:

1. **Preparation:** gathering and analysing programme data, conceptualizing the evaluation approach, internal consultations on the approach, establishment of the reference groups, and recruitment of the evaluation team
2. **Inception:** consultations between the evaluation team and main stakeholders, portfolio review, stakeholder mapping, inception meetings with the reference groups, review of the result logic for this area, finalization of evaluation methodology and inception report. Coordination with corporate level evaluation.

3. **Data collection:** desk research, review of thematic global programmes, review of country and regional annual work plans cross-checking with thematic global programmes; financial analysis, administration of surveys; interviews with key internal and external stakeholders and in country data collection (four country case studies are initially foreseen in the context of this regional evaluation).
4. **Analysis and synthesis stage:** analysis of data and interpretation of findings, and drafting of an evaluation report; including regional component in the form of another report
5. **Dissemination and follow-up:** development of a Management Response, publishing of the evaluation report, and production of other knowledge products and learning events, such as a webinar.

### Quality Assurance

The internal quality assurance of the evaluation takes place at two levels : 1) internal quality assurance through the review and sign-off of deliverables by the IES Chief and IEAS Director, 2) external quality assurance by the different reference groups established, both internal and external.

Activity	Deliverables	General Timeframe
<b>Initiation of evaluation exercise</b>		June 2021
<b>Inception phase of evaluation</b>		July-August 2022
<b>Inception report</b>	<p>The inception report will present a refined scope, a detailed outline of the evaluation design and methodology, evaluation questions, and approach and criteria for in-depth studies (3). The report will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an evaluation matrix and detailed work plan,</li> <li>• a detailed portfolio analysis,</li> <li>• stakeholder analysis</li> </ul>	
<b>Data collection phase of evaluation</b>		September-October 2022
	<p>Data collection will include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with main stakeholders</li> <li>• Desk review</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Case Studies</li> </ul>	September-October 2022
<b>Analysis and reporting phase</b>		
<b>Data Analysis Phase</b>	The evaluation team will implement the data analysis methods agreed in the inception report ensuring triangulation, integration of human rights, and gender analysis. Additional data collection or analysis as needed may be requested for resolving unclarities.	October-November 2022
<b>Presentation preliminary findings</b>	A presentation and cover note detailing the emerging findings of the evaluation will be shared with Reference Groups for feedback and validation. The evaluation team will incorporate the feedback received into the draft report.	November 2022

Activity	Deliverables	General Timeframe
<b>Draft Report</b>	<p>Some very specific and additional data collection may be required to robustly answer evaluation questions and to respond to feedback provided to the preliminary findings, as agreed by the IES.</p> <p>A final draft report will be developed for consultation and validation, including an Executive Summary and annexes detailing the methodological approach and analytical products.</p>	December 2022
<b>Final Report</b>	The final report will include a concise Executive Summary and annexes detailing the methodological approach and any analytical products developed during the course of the evaluation.	January 2023

## Evaluation Management

As an IES led evaluation, the UN Women IES is responsible for the management and conduct of this evaluation, including the quality of the evaluation report and its presentation to UN Women’s management. The evaluation team will have a combination of the requisite experience in evaluation and technical expertise in gender and capacity development.

The UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialist for Europe and Central Asia will conduct the evaluation as the Team Leader, manage the evaluation process, constitute a quality assurance system, and provide administrative and substantive support.

The **core Evaluation Team** will combine the requisite knowledge and experience in evaluation, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and technical expertise in capacity development

UN Women IES quality assurance system, based on the UNEG norms and standards and good practices of the international evaluation community, defines the quality standards expected from this evaluation.

**Reference Groups** will help strengthen the relevance of the evaluation process and its products, will provide strategic input to key products and ensure their accuracy, and will validate preliminary and final reports. The internal reference group will be composed of key stakeholders from within UN Women and the external reference group will include members from relevant UN agencies, multilateral organizations, development partners and key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. In addition, an internal IES peer review mechanism will be established to ensure peer to peer quality assurance and knowledge exchange.

The composition of the evaluation team and reference groups will strive to allow for geographic diversity and gender balance.