2014-2017

Regional Evaluation Strategy for the Americas and the Caribbean

October 2014

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Abbreviations

AC	Americas and the Caribbean
ACRO	Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CLEAR	Regional Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results
CO	Country Office
DaO	Delivering as One
EB	Executive Board
EVALUN LAC	Network of UN M&E focal points in LAC region
GATE	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation System
GEOS	Global Evaluation Oversight System
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System
HR	Human Resources
IAWG	Interagency Regional Working Group
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IOCE	International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation
KM	Knowledge Management
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MCO	Multi-Country Office
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MER Plan	Monitoring Evaluation and Research Plan
MR	Management Response
NEC	National Evaluation Capacity
NEP	National Evaluation Policy
PMD	Performance and Management Development
PPGU	Planning and Programming Guidance Unit

POM	Programme and Operations Manual
PRG	Peer Review Group
PRODOC	Programme Document
RBM	Results-Based Management
REDLACME	Monitoring and Evaluation Network for Latin America and the Caribbean
ReLAC	Latin American and the Caribbean Network for Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization
RES	Regional Evaluation Specialist
RO	Regional Office
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound
SN	Strategic Note
SP	Strategic Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VOPEs	Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators

I. Background and Justification

Within the framework of the [Evaluation Policy](), evaluation in UN Women is a comprehensive function that reinforces accountability, learning and oversight in order to support management decisions and enhance programme effectiveness on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The work of UN Women is largely anchored in its Strategic Plan (SP) which is the centerpiece for the organizational programming, management and accountability. The SP 2014-2017 primarily guides the normative, operational and coordination role of UN Women on gender equality and the empowerment of women which is largely driven by a longer-term vision, goals and results.

The Americas and the Caribbean (AC) region, comprising a majority of upper and middle income countries, has benefited from sustained economic growth and social investment that have contributed to closing key gender gaps in education, labour market and political participation, and in health and reproductive rights. Many countries have instituted constitutional reforms and progressive electoral mechanisms, which have allowed some women to reach the highest leadership positions. On the other hand, significant gender inequalities continue to be compounded by other forms of inequalities based upon race, ethnicity, geographical location, income, age, disability, HIV status, and sexual orientation.

UN Women operates in the Americas and the Caribbean Region through the Regional Office in Panama City, which supports the Caribbean Multi-Country Office (Barbados)[1], 9 Country Offices (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico and Paraguay) as well as countries where UN Women has a more limited programmatic presence (Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay). The Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office (ACRO), the Caribbean Multi-Country Office (MCO) and the Country Offices (COs) have developed Strategic Notes (SN) covering the period 2014-2017[2] that set out the strategic direction and thematic priorities, Annual Work Plans (AWP) and Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER) Plans.

A global UN Women Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) needs assessment carried out in 2013 by the Evaluation Office revealed a number of major challenges with respect to M&E capacity and knowledge amongst UN Women staff. The majority of the staff who responded (60%) had not participated in any evaluation training. The biggest challenges related to <u>monitoring</u> were the following, listed in order of priority: (1) staff knowledge and expertise in monitoring; (2) staff time for monitoring, (3) clarity in responsibilities and processes for monitoring, (4) lack of monitoring guidance and tools, and (5) financial resources for monitoring. The biggest challenges related to <u>evaluation</u> were (1) staff knowledge and expertise in evaluation followed; (2) staff time for evaluation, (3) clarity in responsibilities and processes for evaluation, (4) financial resources for evaluation, and (5) lack of evaluation guidance and tools.

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[1] Caribbean MCO covers 22 countries.
[2] Durations of Country Office Strategic Notes are aligned with respective UNDAF at country level.

In 2014 UN Women Evaluation Office established a Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) with the purpose to provide transparent information on evaluation performance at corporate and field level. The GEOS is based on a dashboard with 7 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for evaluation. Two KPIs have been added later in 2014 to reinforce compliance with quality assurance standards for evaluation processes and enhance the knowledge and skills required for managing gender-responsive evaluations.

> KPI 1: Human resources for M&E
> KPI 2: Financial resources invested in evaluation
> KPI 3: Evaluation coverage
> KPI 4: Evaluation implementation rate
> KPI 5: Quality of evaluation reports
> KPI 6: Evaluation Reports with Management Response uploaded to the GATE[3]
> KPI 7: Implementation of previous evaluation management responses
> KPI 8: Number of staff that have completed certification programme
> KPI 9: Percentage of offices that managed evaluation in a specific year compliant with QA standards

Performance based on the KPIs is presented to UN Women Senior Management Team bi-annually and to the UN Women Executive Board annually through the IEO Annual Report. Although evaluation culture and capacities have been strengthened in the AC region in the last years, through training courses, webinars, guidelines, etc., certain areas continue to require improvement in particular with respect to human and financial resources (KPI 1 and KPI 2), evaluation implementation rate (KPI 4) and quality of evaluation reports (KPI 5).

In 2013 ACRO implemented a Results-Based Management (RBM) Integrated Framework that emphasizes the importance of carrying out results-based planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. It provides the guiding principles to be applied and the tools to be used. It also describes the key roles, responsibilities and timings at the regional, multi-country and country level. In the framework of this Strategy, ACRO will continue promoting a real RBM culture and strengthening capacities in the Offices.

II.   The Global Evaluation Strategic Plan (2014-2017)

A Global Evaluation Strategic Plan (2014-2017) was developed by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). The Global Evaluation Strategic Plan is a comprehensive framework that guides the entire organization at global, regional and country level to strengthen the evaluation function. It is guided by a Theory of Change (ToC) based on a system-approach to strengthen the institutional capability to better perform and deliver expected results in line with the Evaluation Policy. The ToC aims to strengthen the capability to demand and use evaluation by senior managers, as well as the capability

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[3] Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation System.

to deliver high-quality evaluations by UN Women staff and M&E officers/focal points at the regional, multi-country and country office levels (See Annex 1).

Based on the Evaluation Policy, the evaluation function at UN Women focuses on the following major key result areas:

> Area 1: Effective Corporate Evaluation Systems implemented
> Area 2: Effective Decentralized Evaluation Systems implemented
> Area 3: UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation promoted
> Area 4: National Evaluation Capacities for gender responsive M&E systems strengthened

The Americas and the Caribbean Regional Evaluation Strategy is aligned with the Evaluation Policy and the Global Evaluation Strategic Plan (2014-2017) while focusing on the key results areas 2, 3 & 4. It aims to achieve an effective evaluation function that provides timely and credible evaluative evidence to inform and influence programming and decision making at the regional, multi-country and country levels, and ultimately make UN Women a more effective and efficient organization in the region.

III.   The Regional Evaluation Strategy

The main purpose of the Regional Evaluation Strategy is to provide a results-based framework to strengthen the evaluation function in the AC region in the context of the Evaluation Policy and UN Women 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. The eventual goal is to support UN Women's mission and help the organization better serve gender equality and women empowerment in the region.

This Regional Evaluation Strategy aims to sustain the gains achieved in improving the evaluation function in the AC region and to address remaining gaps identified in key evaluation performance areas at the regional, multi-country and country level. It also outlines key initiatives in the region with regard to UN coordination on gender-responsive evaluation and capacity building for national M&E systems.

The strategy is inclusive of the work of the Regional Office, Multi-Country and Country Offices. It builds on the premise that senior managers assume overall accountability for evaluation in their respective offices, including adequate staffing, financial resource allocation and quality assurance for evaluations.

The Regional Evaluation Strategy is framed around three strategic result areas:
1. Effective decentralized evaluation system strengthened and implemented
2. UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation promoted
3. National Evaluation Capacities for gender responsive M&E system strengthened

The Regional Evaluation Strategy outlines the rationale, purpose, strategic results, quality assurance in evaluation processes, responsibilities, mechanisms for monitoring implementation and a results framework.

IV.   Key Results of the Regional Evaluation Strategy

Result Area 1: Effective decentralized evaluation system strengthened and implemented

A. Management attention to decentralized evaluation function is heightened

In accordance with the Evaluation Policy, the Regional Director and Multi-Country and Country Office Representatives champion the use of all evaluations in the AC region and ensure that adequate financial and human capacity is made available for decentralized evaluation to ensure a fully effective and efficient function. They also assume responsibility for creating an enabling environment for the strengthening of the evaluation culture in the area under their purview.

### *A.1 Investment in evaluation*

Appropriate budget allocation is central in ensuring the quality, credibility, and utility of evaluation. The Regional Evaluation Strategy aims to reinforce efforts to advocate for and secure the resources necessary to perform the evaluation function at the regional, multi-country and country office levels.

A retrospective look at the investment on evaluation in the AC region in 2013 reveals the function is under-resourced and with 0.4% far below the minimum level of investment target of 3% set out in the Evaluation Policy:

Figure 1: Financial resources invested in evaluation, 2013[4]

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[4] The total percentage includes costs incurred by the IEO, HQ divisions and Decentralized Offices. It represents the total evaluation expenditure in the entire organization in 2013.
*While it is likely that resources invested in evaluation fluctuate yearly, this key performance indicator provides an indication of the financial commitment to the evaluation function.
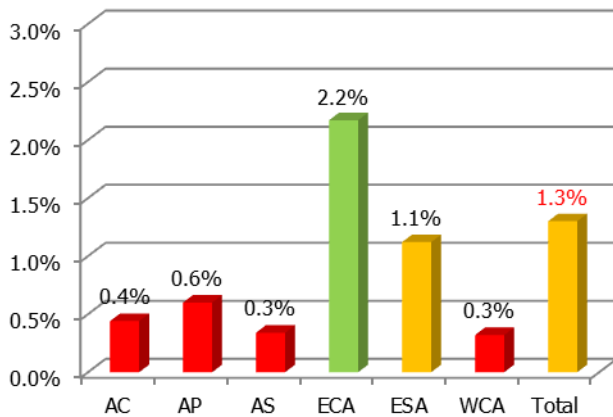
Source: 2013 figures generated from Atlas by Division of Management and Administration, complemented by data obtained from ROs.

All Offices in the region will be encouraged to set aside a reasonable amount of their total budget for evaluation related activities. Given the financial resource constraints in UN Women, the Regional Evaluation Strategy will take an incremental approach towards increasing allocations for evaluation at RO, MCO and CO levels.

The Regional Evaluation Strategy aims to ensure that:

- *Offices in the region increase gradually budget allocations towards UN Women minimum requirements (3%) for evaluation related activities (decentralized evaluations, capacity development and evaluation dissemination and communication)[5].*

A.2 Adequate and skilled human resources for Monitoring and Evaluation

There are diverse institutional arrangements for staffing at the field level. Congruent with the decentralized nature of UN Women, efforts have been made to increase capacity for monitoring, RBM and evaluation at the field level. Nonetheless, the majority of UN Women offices in the region do not have specialized/dedicated monitoring and evaluation staff rather only have focal points for monitoring and evaluation functions. In 2013, only the Regional Office had a monitoring and evaluation specialist (the Regional Evaluation Specialist, RES), while MCO and COs had appointed M&E focal points[6]:

Figure 2: Human resources for M&E in 2013

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[5] This includes appropriate costing of evaluations in MER Plan and GATE system.
[6] In 2014, Colombia and Haiti COs have appointed M&E Officers.
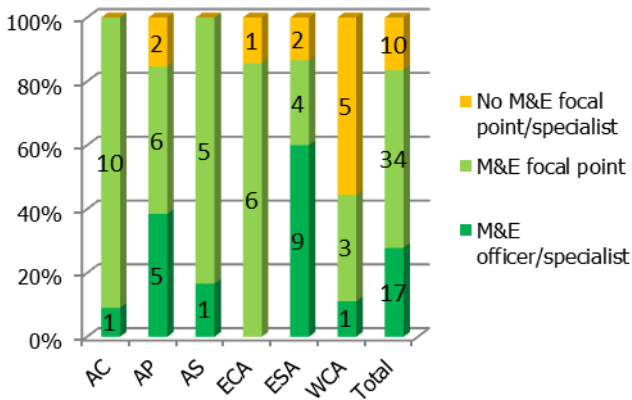
Source: UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System.

While such an arrangement is understandable given the operational span and resource base of the Entity, the continued absence of such dedicated expertise will have a significant bearing on the overall evaluative work of UN Women and its capacity to promote gender equality and human rights responsive evaluation in joint and/or system-wide evaluation at the country-level, including in evaluations of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The Regional Evaluation Strategy aims to ensure that:

- *MCO and COs in the region ensure appointment of dedicated M&E officers or M&E focal points.*
- *RO, MCO and COs, with the support of the IEO, strengthen the capacity of staff on the design, conduct and use of gender equality and human rights responsive evaluations by means of trainings, e-learnings, webinars, guides and manuals.*

A.3 Reinforcing accountabilities for evaluation

Ensuring the quality, credibility and use of evaluation is the responsibility of all managers of UN Women. This is mainly promoted through a system of organizational incentives, inclusion in the performance appraisal system and investment in evaluation capacity development. In accordance with the Evaluation Policy, the use of evaluation for improved performance will be included as a key element in the performance appraisals of senior managers. In this regard, *the Regional Director will ensure integration of the evaluation function in the individual Performance and Management Development (PMD) of country office representatives*. Moreover, the Regional Evaluation Strategy aims to further mainstream the demand for evaluation particularly among senior managers of the regional, multi-country and country offices.

The Regional Evaluation Strategy aim to ensure

- *Integration of evaluation sessions in the agenda of main RO/MCO/COs meetings, including annual retreats.*
- *Where enough evidence is available from the body of completed evaluations in the region, the RES, with the support of M&E officers/focal points, prepares a regional meta-synthesis of main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of completed decentralized evaluations, to serve at the basis of discussion in the strategic planning process.*

B. Coverage of evaluations improved and maintained

The overall coverage of evaluation in the AC Region (2011-2013) is reasonably good with 7 offices having conducted at least one evaluation over the past 3 years (Figure 3). However, due to various reasons including poor planning of the MER plans, quite considerable number of evaluations were not conducted, delayed, postponed and/or cancelled.

The Regional Evaluation Strategy will reinforce the existing systems to ensure that evaluation plans are strategically designed, properly implemented and regularly reviewed. The strategy will give particularly focus to those offices with limited experience in conducing project/programme or country programme evaluations.


Figure 3: Evaluation Coverage (2011-2013)[7]
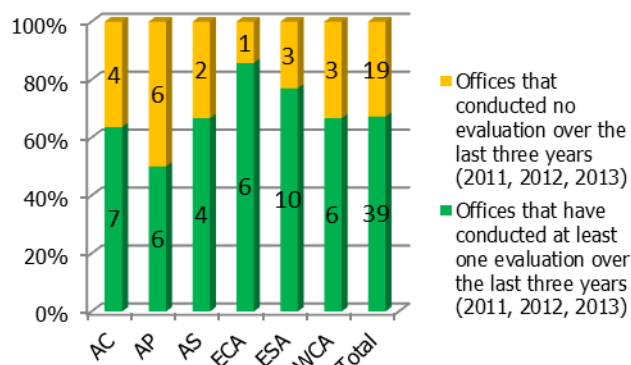
Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System.

The Regional Evaluation Strategy aims to:

- *Reinforce systematic support by the RO to MCO/COs to ensure evaluations are strategically planned, and carried out according to the evaluation plans, and are of high quality and can be used to improving learning, accountability and programming.*

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[7] Although some evaluations cover more than one country, the graph includes only those offices that managed/commissioned the evaluation. Furthermore, in this graph are not included other evaluations in which UN Women Offices participate (donors, Fund for Gender Equality and EVAW Trust Fund, UNDAF, etc.).

- *Ensure timely review of the evaluation plans in line with the AWP planning and make adjustment to the needs and priorities of the respective countries/offices.*
- *Ensure all Offices in AC region conduct, at least, one evaluation during the period 2014-2017 and will support, as much as possible, other evaluations such as donor, funds, joint and UNDAF evaluations.*
- *Explore possibilities whereby RO and COs conduct thematic multi-country evaluations (i.e. implementation of laws against femicide, UN Women support to NWM, etc.).*

C. Implementation of Evaluations

All Offices in the region are expected to identify their planned evaluations by analyzing their respective regional/multi-country/country Strategic Notes and identifying potential needs and commitments. Knowing in advance what evaluations will be conducted in a given period allows more time to identify and recruit evaluation teams with the right expertise to maximize the potential of evaluations.

However, experience shows that considerable number of evaluations were not implemented mainly due to over planning, limited financial and human resources and other competing priorities.

Figure 4 shows an evaluation implementation rate of 57% (4 out of 7) for AC region in 2013:

Figure 4: Evaluation Implementation Rate 2013
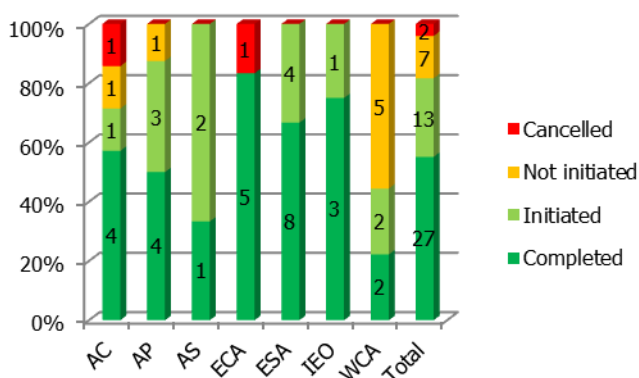
Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System.

In view of this evaluation implementation rate, senior management at country level need to pay special attention to increase evaluation implementation during 2014-2017. In view of this, the Regional Evaluation Strategy aims to ensure:

- Systematic *follow up of the implementation of evaluation plans, quarterly tracking in the GATE system as well as through the Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) by the RO/RES.*
- *MCO/COs provide quarterly updates of information on planned and ongoing evaluations in the GATE system.*

D. Quality and credibility of evaluations improved

The Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) was established by the IEO with the aim of improving the quality and use of decentralized evaluations. The GERASS uses UNEG evaluation report standards as a basis for review and assessment, while ensuring specific standards relevant to UN Women. The system provides an independent assessment of the quality and usefulness of evaluation reports. In addition, it serves knowledge management objectives by synthesizing evaluation findings, good practices and lessons learned, and capacity development objectives by sending individual practical feedback to commissioning offices on how to improve the quality and usefulness of future evaluations.

The 2013 GERAAS assessment shows the quality of evaluations in the region is reasonably positive. Out of the 4 evaluation reports assessed, only 1 had been rated as 'Unsatisfactory':

Figure 5: Quality of 2013 Evaluations
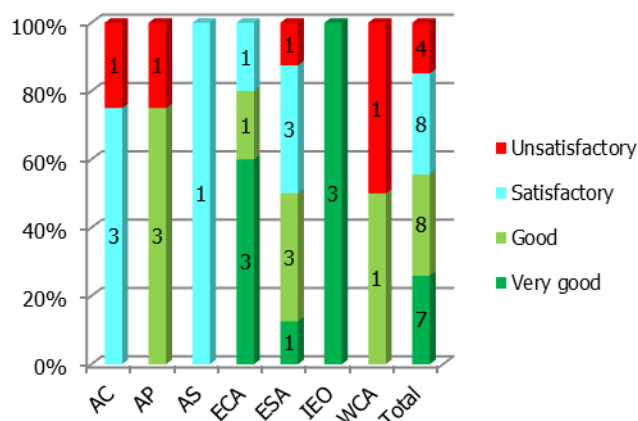
Source: Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS).

However, as more and more evaluations are planned to be undertaken in the span of the SN cycle with a wider scope and coverage including country-level, joint and UNDAF evaluations, consistent follow up and support is required to multi-country and country offices to conduct high quality and credible evaluations. While many factors, including limited financial and human capacity at field level account for the poor quality of evaluations, the 2013 meta-analysis revealed majority of programmes lack explicit

theories of change, measurable results frameworks, or adequate monitoring. Most of the evaluation reports also cite the lack of data as a major constraint to evaluation. All these have a significant bearing on the quality and credibility of evaluations undertaken in the region. Therefore, the RO/RES, together with the IEO, will reinforce the quality assurance mechanism in all evaluation processes at regional, multi-country and country level through:

- *Systematic review of all evaluation Terms of Reference, draft and final inception and evaluation reports using the quality assurance standards/checklist*
- *Support the evaluability of programmes to make sure that they are evaluable*
- *As part of the GERAAS meta-evaluation, provide executive feedback and review results of the individual evaluation reports to the RO/MCO/COs citing areas for improvement and learning.*
- *RES, with the support of M&E Officers and focal points, develop a roster of evaluation experts, consultants and firms that have done good evaluations in the region, in order to simplify selection processes and increase the quality of the evaluations.*

D.1. Quality assurance system in evaluation processes

As outlined in the Evaluation Chapter of the Programme and Operations Manual (POM), *quality assurance for decentralized evaluations is a shared responsibility involving the RO/MCO/COs and the IEO*. Each office assumes a distinct role and responsibility. Working together, they contribute to a coherent and effective evaluation function in UN Women. The Regional Evaluation Strategy will enforce and strengthen the mechanism for quality assurance at different stages of the evaluation process as outlined in the Table 1.

- *Ensure 100% compliance with the quality assurance process for all evaluations undertaken in the AC region. This indicator will be reported by respective offices and monitored by the RO on a biannual basis. This will also form part of the GEOS dashboard KPI to be reported to the SMT bi-annually by the IEO (Use Annex II: Checklist for the Quality Assurance Process for Decentralized Evaluation).*

Table 1: Quality Assurance Process for Decentralized Evaluations

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plans (MERP)
The M&E officer/focal point develops the MER plan in consultation with concerned programme officers and senior managers
The draft plan is sent to the RES for review
The MCO/CO Representative/Regional Director submits the MER plan together with the SN/AWP for Peer Review Group's (PRG) review and approval

The M&E officer/focal point uploads the evaluation section of the MER plan to GATE within one month of approval

Terms of Reference (ToR)

The M&E officer/focal point provides assistance in the development of the evaluation's terms of reference. In the absence of an M&E officer, the evaluation task manager takes the lead in developing the ToR

The M&E officer/focal point establishes a reference group for the evaluation that provides input to the TOR

The draft ToR is sent to the RES for quality review

Final ToR is approved by the country representative/deputy representative

Selection of evaluation consultants

The M&E officer/focal point provides assistance in the selection of the consultant used for the evaluation in consultation with RES. For countries with no M&E officer, the evaluation task manager plays a key role in the selection of consultant/s.

The final selection of the consultant is approved by the country representative/deputy representative

Inception Meeting and Report

The M&E officer/focal point or the evaluation task manager organize an inception meeting with the selected consultant/s, as well as the reference group

The M&E officer/focal point or the evaluation task manager takes the primarily responsibility for quality assuring and approving the inception report.

The draft and final inception report is sent to the RES for quality review, as well as the reference group

Ensure data collection and analysis

The M&E officer/focal point or the evaluation task manager makes sure that the evaluation consultant/s collect valid and reliable data for the analysis

The evaluation consultant/s provide preliminary findings to the M&E officer/focal point or the evaluation task manager when completing preliminary data collection and analysis

The RES participates in the review, if requested by the RO/MCO/COs

Draft and final evaluation reports

The M&E officer provides assistance in ensuring the quality of the different draft evaluation reports. In cases where no M&E officer is appointed, the evaluation task manager should play the role of assuring the quality of the draft/s and final evaluation report

The draft evaluation reports are sent to the RES for quality review

The final report is approved by the country representative/deputy representative

The M&E officer/M&E focal point uploads the final evaluation report within six weeks of finalization to the GATE and shares it with the main stakeholders

Management Response (MR)

The M&E officer/focal point or evaluation task manager, in consultation with the country representative or deputy, develops the management response
The M&E officer/focal point uploads the management response in the GATE system within six weeks of finalization
The country representative approves the MER plan, TOR, final evaluation report and management response in the GATE system
The country representative or deputy should ensure timely implementation of the key actions

Knowledge Management (KM) and Lessons Learnt

The M&E officer/focal point or evaluation task manager, in consultation with communication officer/focal point and RES, develops a KM strategy and dissemination products
The M&E officer/focal point or evaluation task manager, in consultation with communication officer/focal point and RES, strategically disseminates the final evaluation report and KM products (i.e. evaluation briefs), by means of workshops, seminars or webinars.
Senior Managers ensure the utility of the evaluation reports and incorporation of the evaluation findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned for policy and programme formulation, following a Results-Based Management (RBM) approach

E. Evaluative evidence is used and supports evidence-based programming

E.1 Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE)

The IEO has established [the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation](#) (GATE) system. The GATE provides a platform to store all evaluations including management responses in a transparent manner and ensures a follow-up mechanism to recommendations through a tracking system of actions. While the Evaluation Chapter of the POM spells out user and approval rights of the GATE system, experience shows that update of GATE information at country level continues to be a challenge. GATE data entered at country level is the primary source of information for corporate reporting on Key Evaluation Performance Indicators (KPI), so it is essential that this information is reliable and updated on a regular basis.

The Regional Evaluation Strategy ensures that:
- *All offices appoint GATE focal points who are responsible for uploading and updating evaluation information quarterly.*
- *RO provides oversight with respect to adherence to key corporate requirements in the AC region.*

E.2 Evaluation Management Response

E.2.1 Management response development and uploading it to the GATE system

In line with the requirements established in the Evaluation Policy, management responses should be prepared for each and every UN Women evaluation, including joint evaluations in which UN Women participated. For decentralized evaluations, the country representative or deputy is responsible for finalization, implementation and monitoring of the management response. Development of management response to evaluations and implementation of key actions is very positive in the region (Figure 6).

Figure 6: 2013 Evaluation reports with Management Response in GATE
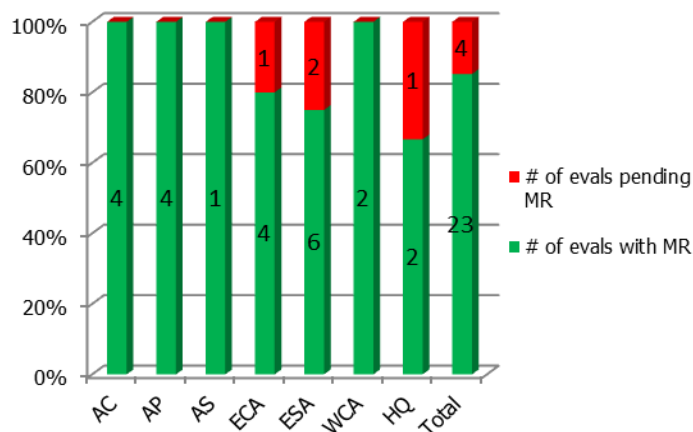
Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System.

The Regional Evaluation Strategy aims to further strengthen the responsibility for 100% compliance for development and upload of management response for completed evaluations in the GATE system.

E.2.2 Implementation of management response and key actions

The ultimate success of evaluation depends on the extent to which the recommendations are implemented and used to contribute to accountability, inform decision making and learning to improve performance and achievement of results. For evaluations conducted in the AC region in 2013, 43% of the key actions have been completed while 16% are under implementation and 6% not yet initiated.

Figure 7: Implementation Status of 2012 Management Response/Key Actions
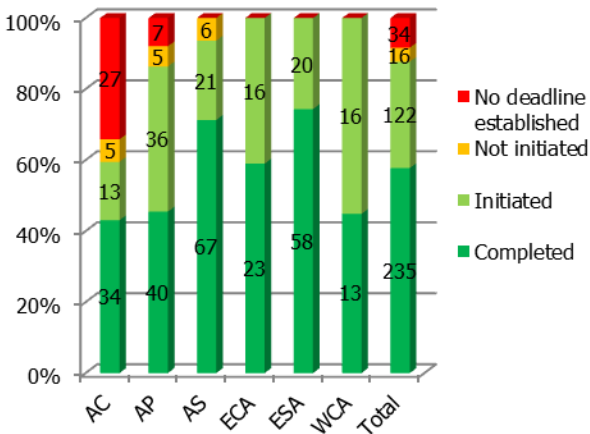
Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System

- *RES systematically follow up on the implementation of key actions and reinforce mechanism whereby all Offices provide quarterly updates on their status.*

E.3 Use of evaluations

Whilst compliance with management response is generally positive, there is no systematic approach at the regional, multi-country and country office level to ensure that evaluation findings are used to inform and improve decision-making and programming. As per UN Women Evaluation Policy, senior managers at the regional, multi-country and country level assume ultimate responsibility in the use of findings, recommendations and lessons learned resulting from evaluations commissioned by their respective offices and from other corporate or relevant evaluations.

To increase the utility of evaluation as an evidence-based programming tool, the Regional Evaluation Strategy will support establishment and enforcement mechanism for reviewing and including references to evidence from evaluations of the preceding programme/strategic note cycles in the SN/AWP and programme documents.

Proposed activities:
- *All Offices develop dissemination strategies and knowledge products of their evaluations (evaluation final reports, evaluation briefs, webinars, learning events, etc.) to share with internal and external audiences.*
- *When the available evidence allows, RES leads preparation of a regional meta-synthesis that aggregates emergent findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from completed decentralized evaluations.*
- *RO organizes a review session on evaluation findings at the regional retreat to improve decision-making, programming and strategic planning.*
- *All Offices include finding and lessons learned from previous evaluations in programme documents and SN/AWPs as one of the main inputs in the planning process.*

F. Internal evaluation capacities enhanced to manage and use evaluations

In UN Women, evaluation capacity development is seen as a more deliberate process whereby the abilities to design, manage and use gender equality and human rights responsive evaluations are acquired, enhanced, and sustained over time. In this context, enhancing capacities on evaluation will not only provide the impetus to effectively design, manage and use evaluations but ultimately lead to generating credible evidence and accelerating progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the AC region[8].

For this reason, the Regional Evaluation Strategy will deploy different modalities that combine traditional onsite training with innovative approaches including peer learning, online training[9] and virtual learning communities. The Regional Strategy aims to reinforce mechanism whereby:

- <u>All M&E officers, focal points, and relevant programme staff complete the UN-Women Evaluation Handbook e-learning course, equity focused and gender responsible evaluation e–learning course and participate in the coaching programme mainly provided by the RES</u> *and join the UN Women Evaluation Community of Practice for information and knowledge sharing.*
- *RO reinforces quality assurance and support mechanisms including technical assistance, coaching, facilitating networking across the region, etc.*
- *RO organizes annual combined learning workshops on RBM, M&E and KM.*

Results Area 2: UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation promoted

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A. Inter-agency evaluation capacity development, including regional level networks and groups supported

The Interagency Regional Working Group (IAWG) on M&E was created in 2010 with the aim to coordinate joint actions and exchange information, knowledge, and know-how on evaluation matters among regional agencies to provide support to M&E officers/focal points in the AC region. It is composed of 9 agencies at regional level and UN Women (RES) is the Chair of the IAWG since 2013. The main activities of the IAWG include:

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[8] As part of its national evaluation capacity efforts, the Regional Office will also support efforts to strengthen the capacities of Implementing Partners on evaluation design, management and use of projects financed by grant-making funds to generate evidence on gender equality and women´s empowerment.

[9] EvalPartners is offering a free e-learning course on development evaluation at http://www.mymande.org/elearning . It includes the following 4 courses: Equity-focused and Gender-responsive Evaluations; National Evaluation Capacity Development for Country-led Monitoring and Evaluation Systems; Emerging Practices in Development Evaluations; Introductory Course on Evaluation for Latin America and the Caribbean (in Spanish). The UN Women Independent Evaluation Office is also in the process of developing an e-learning course based on the content of the UN Women online Evaluation Manual.

a) Strengthen capacities and sharing experiences on evaluation through EVALUN LAC Network[10];
b) Promote experiences on national evaluation capacity development;
c) Technical and methodological support on UNDAF and joint evaluations.

<u>The RO/*RES will continue to closely work with the Interagency Regional Working Group on M&E to ensure that gender equality and human rights are addressed across UN evaluation work.*</u>

B. Gender equality integrated in UNDAF and joint evaluations

UN Women has a central mandate in supporting the integration of gender equality and women´s empowerment across UN interagency evaluation work. Annex III shows UNDAF Roll-Out Countries in the AC Region (2014-2017)[11]. The Regional Evaluation Strategy will further promote UN system coherence, coordination and accountability with respect to gender equality and human rights responsive evaluations through.

- *Increased engagement and participation of MCO/COs staff in UNDAF/M&E Interagency Groups to ensure integration of gender equality and human rights dimensions in Joint, UNDAF and DaO evaluations as well as in the UNDAF results frameworks.*
- *Increased participation and engagement of UN Women in joint evaluations at regional level (i.e. IADB impact evaluations on VAW prevention programmes) or conduct joint evaluations with other UN Agencies (i.e. joint initiative with UNDP on the implementation of EVAW national programmes).*

Results Area 3: National Evaluation Capacities for gender responsive M&E system strengthened

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A. Building National Evaluation Capacities

Evaluating the performance of public policies and programmes is a fundamental ingredient to foster accountability and good governance at national level. This highlights the need to strengthen national, sub-regional and regional evaluation capacities and support the establishment of gender equality and human rights responsive national M&E systems through working with national governments and civil society. In this sense, it would be also important to promote national gender responsive planning, policies, budgeting, statistics and information systems.

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[10] The main objective of the EVALUN LAC Network (with almost 250 members) is strengthening of capacities on evaluation of the United Nations System at inter-agency level, as well as sharing experiences and lessons learned amongst the different agencies of the system throughout the region. EVALUN LAC has a virtual space in Teamworks and can be accessed in the following link: https://undp.unteamworks.org/node/149963

[11] In 2014, 5 countries are supposed to conduct UNDAF evaluations (Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, and Uruguay). Colombia UNDAF evaluation is completed and Panama and Uruguay UNDAF evaluations are initiated. IAWG on M&E is supporting technically these evaluations.

In 2013, in the framework of the consultancy '*Strengthening institutional capacities in evaluation in the Americas and the Caribbean region'*, UN Women IEO elaborated the "Mapping of National M&E Systems in the AC region". This was mainly undertaken to divulge the experience in institutionalizing evaluation and the viability to integrate gender equality, human rights and interculturality dimensions into these systems. As a result of this process, UN Women, EvalPartners, IOCE (International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation) and ReLAC (Latin American and the Caribbean Network for Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization) established a *Joint project to engender national M&E systems in the AC Region*, which main objective is to engender National M&E Systems through provision of training on gender equality and human rights responsive evaluation and technical and methodological support to integrate gender equality perspective in the evaluations of their public policies and programmes[12].

Proposed activities:
- *RO/IEO will continue supporting national M&E systems in selected countries of the AC region, through training courses, technical and methodological support.*
- *MCO/COs will strengthen partnerships with selected countries in the AC region with the aim of supporting integration of gender equality and human rights dimensions at country level and support south-south cooperation to facilitate knowledge and information exchange on Gender Responsive Evaluations.*

B. Partnerships with Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs)

UN Women has been supporting the institutional capacity of following Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) in the AC region: ReLAC, REDLACME (Monitoring and Evaluation Network for Latin America and the Caribbean), CLEAR Latin America (Regional Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results) as well as sub-regional (Sub-Regional Caribbean Network) and national evaluation networks. For instance, RES is part of the coordination of the ReLAC Working Group on Gender and Evaluation, which has more than 100 members.

UN Women ACRO will continue promoting the demand, supply and use of gender responsive national M&E systems by supporting "EvalPartners", the global partnership on national evaluation capacity development initiatives[13]. UN Women AC will particularly support the engendering of 2015 International Year of Evaluation and national M&E policies and systems.

Proposed activities:
- *RES will continue supporting VOPEs in the AC region, among others,* the ReLAC Working Group on Gender and Evaluation.

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[12] There was a specific demand from three M&E national systems to pilot this initiative: the National Planning Department (SINERGIA, Colombia), the Ministry of Inclusion and Social Development (MIDIS, Peru) and the National Council for the Evaluation of the Social Development Policy (CONEVAL, Mexico).

[13] EvalPartners is currently co-chaired by UN Women. http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners

- *M&E officers/focal points will participate in Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) at country level.*
- *RO/MCO/COs support "EvalPartners" engendering the 2015 International Year of Evaluation.*

V.   Responsibilities for evaluation function

The UN Women Evaluation Policy and the evaluation chapter of the POM outlines the roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function in UN Women. *The Regional Director and MCO/CO Representatives assume overall accountability for the evaluation function at regional, multi-country and country level respectively and ensure that adequate financial and human capacity is made available to ensure a fully effective and efficient evaluation function.*

The Regional Evaluation Strategy will further reinforce systems for accountability particularly by senior managers and those with programmatic, monitoring and evaluation functions. See Table 2 below on detailed roles and responsibilities.

Table 2: Roles and responsibilities of the evaluation function in UN Women at the decentralized level

Multi-Country/Country Representatives/Directors	• Assume overall accountability for evaluation function at country level • Appoint M&E officer and/or M&E focal point • Institute measures to ensure that evaluations are strategically selected based on a set of criteria charted out in the Evaluation Policy • Ensure the timely development and implementation of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research plans (MERP) • Ensure appropriate allocation of the country office budget to evaluation • Ensure that strategic notes, new programmes and initiatives are designed in a way that permits evaluation at a later stage (founded on clear results statements and SMART indicators, theory of change, baseline and target information, etc.) • Institute appropriate management arrangements described below to ensure independence and quality of evaluations according to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards as provided in the UN-Women Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) • Approves evaluation plans, evaluation reports and management response in the GATE system • Ensure that evaluation findings are considered to improve programming/strategic planning, learning and decision making • Ensure that management response to recommendations are prepared, and that appropriate management action is taken • Ensure that all programme staff have a foundational knowledge of evaluation principles and types and ensure that new appointments to monitoring and evaluation posts are made against the UNEG evaluation competencies

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officers/Focal Points	• Advise on evaluability by preparing the programme for future evaluations
	• Provide technical advice in the planning, management, dissemination and response to decentralized evaluations
	• Assume responsibilities as focal point for the GATE system:
	    ○ upload, update and report on status of evaluation plans (i.e. evaluation section of the MER), completed evaluation reports and ToRs
	    ○ support the monitoring of action plans of management responses to evaluations, including providing quarterly updates on status of implementation in the GATE system
	• Support the office in accurately tracking evaluation allocations and expenditures
	• Support Senior Managers in developing management responses to all evaluations and follow up timely approval by head of the respective office
	• Individual capacity permitting, act as Evaluation Task Manager
	• Support the organization of Corporate Evaluation data collection, including organizing case study missions, identify documents and stakeholders to be consulted, design interview schedules, organize feedback on the draft case study and management response to the final case study, and provide logistical support as required
	• Take part in system-wide UN coherence including representing UN Women in inter-agency platforms on M&E at the country level
	• Support efforts to enhance UN Women internal M&E capacity and national capacity on M&E with a focus on gender equality and human rights responsive evaluation

Regional Directors	• Assume overall accountability for evaluation function in the region • Ensure country and multi-country offices' compliance with evaluation-related accountability • Ensure appropriate allocation of resources for evaluation (3% of the total budget in the region) • Support and guide regional, multi-country and country offices capacity in evaluation • Approve MERP, ToR, evaluation reports, and management responses for the Regional Office • Ensure that evaluation findings are fully considered, that management response to recommendation are prepared, and that appropriate management action is taken • Promote organizational learning through application of evaluation findings and recommendations in the region programming
Regional Evaluation Specialists	• Conduct and/or manage strategic decentralized regional and country-level evaluations • Support implementation of evaluation policies and strategies • Lead development of regional evaluation strategies and ensure their implementation • Advise regional, multi-country and country directors on evaluation issues • Provide technical support and oversight on the development of MCO/CO's MER plans, review of ToR, inception report, and draft and final evaluation reports • Provide direct technical support and advice for decentralized evaluations including UNDAF and other joint evaluation processes from a gender equality and human rights perspective

	• Support evaluation capacity development through trainings and exchange of experiences and continuous learning on M&E (i.e. coordinate annual evaluation finding review session) • Provide technical assistance in the use of GATE, and track management response to evaluations conducted by the RO/MCO and COs • Represent UN Women in regional inter-agency M&E platforms • Support regional and national voluntary evaluation networks and associations and national evaluation capacity development from a gender equality and human rights perspective • Review programmes and plans to ensure evaluability • Elaborate a regional meta-evaluation annually

VI. Mechanism for monitoring implementation of the Strategy

Monitoring the implementation of the Strategy is essential for tracking progress and making adjustments to improve evaluation performance. The Strategy identifies the key results areas, indicators with baselines and targets for each strategic focus area to strengthen evaluation function in the AC region over the next four years (2014-2017). It also lays out the overall accountability/responsibility for implementation of the identified actions, the key milestones and the timelines for delivering them.

Progress on the key performance indicators (KPIs) of the evaluation function will be reported through the Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) Dashboard to the UN Women senior managers bi-annually and to the Executive Board annually through the IEO Annual Report.

Progress in the implementation of the AC Regional Evaluation Strategy will be discussed annually at the regional retreat and summary of the progress will be featured in the IEO annual reports. A participatory mid-term review will be conducted at the end of 2015 and a final review at the end of 2017 by the RO in close collaboration with MCO/COs.

VII. Results Framework

Results	Indicators	Reporting Frequency	Source of data	Baseline (2013)	Target (2017)	Responsible
Result Area 1: Effective decentralized Evaluation System strengthened and implemented						
A. Management attention to decentralized evaluation function is heightened	% of evaluation expenditure from the total expenditure in the region	Once a year	ATLAS (Code 023)	0.4%	2% by 2015 3% by 2017	RO/MCO/COs IEO
	% of Offices that have appointed M&E focal points or M&E Officers	Once a year	Human Resources/ RES	100% (10 M&E focal points + RES)	100% (not only M&E focal points but also M&E Officers)	Human Resources/ RES
	% of Offices in which evaluation was discussed and integrated in annual retreats	Once a year	Interview with M&E officers/ focal points	TBD (2014)	100%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
B. Coverage of evaluations improved and maintained	% of Offices that conducted at least one evaluation over total number of Offices	Once a year	Interview with M&E officers/ focal points	63% (7 out of 11 offices)	80%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
C. Implementation of evaluations	% of evaluations completed, initiated, not initiated and cancelled in a given year against total number of evaluations planned.	Quarterly update (GATE) Once a year (report)	GATE / Interview with M&E officers/ focal points	57% (4 out of 7 completed)	80% by 2015 90% by 2017	M&E officers/ focal points RES
D. Quality and credibility of evaluation improved	% of decentralized evaluations rated as "Good' and above on the GERAAS evaluation report quality assessment scale.	Once a year	GERAAS	0%	60% by 2015 80% by 2017	IEO
	% of COs that managed evaluation in a specific year compliant with quality assurance system in place	Once a year	Interview with M&E officers/ focal points	TBD (2014)	100%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
E. Evaluative evidence is used and supports results and evidence based programming	% of evaluation reports uploaded and made accessible in the GATE system	Quarterly update (GATE) Once a year (report)	GATE	100%	100%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
	% of new Strategic Notes informed and made reference to evaluative evidence	Once a year	Desk review	TBD	100%	RO/MCO/COs RES

		% of decentralized evaluations that have developed and uploaded management response in the GATE	Quarterly update (GATE) Once a year (report)	GATE	100%	100%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
		% implementation of management response key actions	Quarterly update (GATE) Once a year (report)	GATE	43%	90%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
		Number of regional meta-evaluations elaborated annually	Once a year	GATE (evaluation reports)	0	3 (1 each year)	M&E officers/ focal points RES
F.	Internal evaluation capacity enhanced to manage and use evaluations	% of M&E specialists/focal points who are members of the Global M&E Community of practice	Once a year	UN Women ICT	TBD	90%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
		% of M&E specialists/focal points trained in gender responsive evaluation	Once a year	Interview with M&E officers/ focal points	TBD	80%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
Results Area 2: UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation promoted							
A.	Inter-agency evaluation capacity development, including regional level networks and groups supported	% of countries in which UN Women is represented in inter-agency M&E working groups	Once a year	Interview with M&E officers/ focal points	TBD	80%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
B.	Gender equality integrated in UNDAF and joint evaluations	% of offices that participated in UNDAF and Joint evaluations	Once a year	Interview with M&E officers/ focal points	TBD	80%	M&E officers/ focal points RES
		% of UNDAF evaluations supported by the Interagency Regional Working Group on M&E	Once a year	RES	TBD	50%	RES
Results Area 3: National Evaluation Capacities for gender responsive M&E system strengthened							
A.	Building National Evaluation Capacities	Number of National M&E Systems supported	Once a year	RES	3 (Colombia, Peru, Mexico 2014)	5	RO/MCO/COs RES
B.	Partnerships with Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs)	Number of regional, sub-regional and national evaluation networks supported	Once a year	RES	3 (ReLAC, REDLACME, Sub-Regional Caribbean Network)	5	RO/MCO/COs RES

ANNEX I: THEORY OF CHANGE TO STRENGTHEN UN WOMEN EVALUATION FUNCTION

INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS

- **Awareness raising mechanisms**: Evaluation is discussed at high-level meetings (SMT, RO retreat, etc)
- **Oversight system**: Dashboard with KPI is produced and communicated regularly
- **Appropriate financial resources** (3%) are allocated
- **UNEG/UN regional M&E groups**: mechanisms to ensure gender equality is reflected in UN system-wide evaluation policies and guidance are in place
- **Innovative partnership** with key external stakeholders aiming at strengthening gender-responsive national evaluation policies and systems are developed

- **Quality Assurance systems** are enforced
- **Capacity Development systems**, including KM system and On-line training, are in place and used
- **Technical Assistance** is delivered
- **HR strategy** to ensure M&E specialists meet UNEG evaluation competencies
- Mechanisms to strengthen technical capacities to implement **UNEG norms and standards on** gender-responsive evaluations are in place
- **Innovative partnerships** to strengthen technical capacities to implement gender-responsive national evaluation policies and systems facilitated

INDIVIDUAL CAPACITIES

- Managers understand the value of evaluation and demand for strategic evaluations
- Managers develop good-quality Management Responses
- Managers use evaluation findings to inform decision making, evidence-based policy advocacy, and reporting
- Managers are accountable for the performance of the evaluation function

- UN Managers promote gender-responsive evaluations within UN entities/UNCTs/UNDAFs
- National managers/policy makers demand for and use gender-responsive national evaluation policies and systems

- M&E specialists support COs in producing high-quality MERPs
- M&E specialists manage good quality evaluations

- UN M&E specialists implement gender-responsive evaluations in joint initiatives with UN entities/UNCTs/UNDAFs
- National M&E specialists implement gender-responsive national evaluation policies and systems

RESULTS

Increased use of evidence

- UNWomen uses evaluation findings to inform decision making, evidence-based policy advocacy, and reporting

- UN entities use findings of gender-responsive evaluations
- National policy makers use findings of gender-responsive evaluations

Improved evaluation practices

- Evaluations are strategically planned
- Evaluations meet UNEG evaluation standards

- High-quality gender-responsive evaluations are produced by the UN system
- High-quality gender-responsive evaluations are produced by national

Greater development effectiveness for women

D E M A N D

S U P P L Y

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT'S ASSUMPTIONS

- Adequate resources (financial and human) are ensured
- Senior management is supportive

- Financial and programme monitoring systems are in place
- Demand for gender-responsive evaluations exists in UNEG and UN system-wide evaluation processes
- Demand for gender-responsive evaluations exists from national partners
- Accountability mechanisms for the integration of gender perspective in national M&E systems are in place
- Organizational culture supports gender equality

Assumptions:

- High rotation of staff does not undermine the system
- National M&E specialists have knowledge and commitment to gender equality
- Culture and traditions do not create the major barriers for gender equality and women's rights

☐ = Internal UN Women

▨ = UN System and beyond

Assumptions:

- RBM Organizational culture exist
- Ex. Board/donor demand for use of evaluation

- Member states implement international and national commitments on GE&W
- Political systems and powerful actors including civil society support GE&WE

Annex: II Checklist for the Quality Assurance Process for Decentralized Evaluation

Name of Office:		Region:	
Title of the Evaluation:			
Name of Evaluation Task Manager:		**Name of M&E Officer/focal point (if different from the Eval. Task Manager):**	
Year			
Stage of the Evaluation	**Quality assurance process to be complied**	**Status of compliance against set of quality assurance processes**	**Remark (if any)**
Planning Stage	**Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plans (MERP)**		
	The M&E officer/focal point develops the MER plan in consultation with concerned programme officers and senior managers	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The draft plan is sent to the Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES) for review	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The (M)CO Representative/Regional Director submits the MER plan together with the SN/AWP for PRG's review and Approval	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The M&E officer/focal point uploads the evaluation section of the MER plan to GATE within one month of approval	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Preparation Stage	**Terms of Reference (ToR)**		
	The M&E officer provides assistance in the development of the evaluation's terms of reference. In the absence of an M&E Officer, the evaluation task manager takes the lead in developing the ToR.	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The draft ToR is sent to the RES for quality review	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	Final ToR is approved by the country representative/deputy representative	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	Selection of consultants		

	The M&E officer provides assistance in the selection of the consultant used for the evaluation in consultation with RES. For countries with no M&E officer, the evaluation task manager plays a key role in the selection of consultant/s.	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The final selection of the consultant is approved by the country representative/deputy representative	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Conduct Stage	**Inception Report**		
	The M&E Officer or the evaluation task manager takes the primarily responsibility for quality assuring and approving the inception report.	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The draft and final inception report is sent to the RES for quality review	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	Draft and final evaluation reports		
	The M&E officer provides assistance in ensuring the quality of the draft evaluation report. In cases where no M&E officer is appointed, the evaluation task manager should play the role of assuring the quality of the draft and final evaluation report	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The draft evaluation report is sent to the RES for quality review	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The final report is approved by the country representative/deputy representative	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The M&E officer/M&E focal point uploads the final evaluation report within six weeks of finalization to the GATE	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Use	**Management response**		
	The country representative/deputy representative leads the development of the management response and ensures timely implementation of key actions	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The M&E officer/focal point uploads the management response in the GATE system within six weeks of finalization	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The country representative approves the MER plan, final evaluation report and management response in the GATE system	Yes ☐ No ☐	

Annex III: UNDAF Roll-Out Countries in the AC Region (2014-2018)

2014[14]	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*
Argentina (2010-2014, extended until Dec. 2015) **El Salvador** (2012-2015) **Panamá** (2012-2015) **Uruguay** (2011-2015) **Colombia** (2008-2012, extended until Dec. 2014)	**Barbados & OECS** (2012-2016) **Belize** (2013-2016) **Brazil** (2012-2015, extended until December 2016) **Dominican Republic** (2012-2016) **Guyana** (2012-2016) **Honduras** (2012-2016) **Jamaica** (2012-2016) **Peru** (2012-2016) **Suriname** (2012-2016) **Belize** (2013-2016) **Haiti** (ISF: 2013-2016)	**Bolivia** (2013-2017) **Costa Rica** (2013-2017) **Nicaragua** (2013-2017)	**Cuba** (2014-2018) **Chile** (2015-2018) **Ecuador** (2015-2018)	**Guatemala** (2015-2019) **Paraguay** (2015-2019) **Venezuela** (2015-2019)

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[14] Related to the evaluations, in 2014 Colombia UNDAF evaluation has been completed, Panama UNDAF evaluation is almost finished, El Salvador and Uruguay UNDAF evaluations are in progress and Argentina is not going to conduct a final evaluation because they undertook an external Mid Term Review in 2013.