

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION UN WOMEN NIGER 2018–2022

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The evaluation of UN Women Niger’s portfolio seeks to address questions on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UN Women’s gender equality programmes in the country, as well as the cross-cutting question of how overall UN Women programming has been responsive to human rights and gender equality. The evaluation covers UN Women’s integrated mandate in Niger between 2018 and the second quarter of 2022. The evaluation serves a dual purpose: it looks back to assess the overall successes and challenges since 2018; and it also looks forward to anticipate new directions based on lessons drawn from implementation of the Country Office’s Strategic Note between 2018 and 2022.

Users of this evaluation are primarily expected to be decision makers and UN Women personnel at country, regional and headquarters levels. Additional users of this evaluation are actors directly working on, or with an interest in gender equality in the Niger Republic. Once issued by IEAS, this report will be disseminated among UN Women stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and development partners and uploaded to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system for global access.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The key evaluations questions were:

1. Do Country Office interventions target the underlying causes of gender inequality?
2. Is the Strategic Note aligned with priority concerns in the National Gender Policy?
3. What role has UN Women Niger played in response to major crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What was UN Women’s contribution to UN coordination of gender and towards the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Niger?
5. To what extent do UN Women’s human resources (both in size and capacity) support effective implementation?
6. Is the Country Office’s choice of implementing partners suitable to achieve its mandate for women?
7. To what extent has partner capacity been developed to ensure the sustainability of efforts and benefits? What local accountability and monitoring systems have been put in place to support continuity?
8. Was the Strategic Note implemented in accordance with the principles of inclusion/non-discrimination? To what extent did the country programme contribute to changing power dynamics in relations between different groups?

3rd

Niger holds the world’s third position in terms of gender inequality: its Gender Index is 0.835



38%

of women experience gender-based violence in their lifetime compared to 16.3 per cent of men



53%

of women aged between 20 and 24 have been married before the age of 18



EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation was led by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service Regional Evaluation Specialist for West and Central Africa with the support of an Evaluation Analyst and an external consultant. The Independent Evaluation Service (IES) provided oversight and quality assurance of the process. The evaluation team used a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach, in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy which is aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation.

The evaluation employed a qualitative approach, drawing upon both oral and written data collected from various sources to examine and triangulate diverse perspectives. This involved conducting open-ended interviews with a select yet representative group of participants. The desk review at inception stage helped understand the context and narrow down the main, relevant evaluation sources within the time period 2018–2022.

The evaluation analysed results using a detailed evaluation framework, taking into account people's perceptions of the progression of results over time. Reported changes were assessed against planned result pathways, as sketched in a reconstructed theory of change. Qualitative data was used for a more nuanced assessment of both internal and external factors that influenced performance.

In addition, the evaluation was conducted in compliance with UNEG Ethical Guidelines, the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluation and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

HIGHLIGHTS BY EVALUATION CRITERIA

RELEVANCE

In a context of reservations about the principle of equality between men and women, UN Women has pragmatically opted to focus on assisting the government and civil society in addressing specific gender inequality issues.

The Country Office's Strategic Note aligns with the country's national Gender Policy and mirrors the Policy's pillars in addressing women's political participation, violence eradication, economic empowerment, and peace and security. The Policy prefers using "gender equity" over "gender equality," acknowledging the specificity of the country's cultural norms. To tackle gender inequality shaped by deep-rooted norms, according to the shared perspective of both UN Women and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection, it was more pragmatic to address specific manifestations such as economic and political disparities and violence against women. The assumption is that incremental progress can lead to long-term social changes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Country Office adapted its work by modifying its annual plan to support vulnerable women in the informal economy in Niamey. This included awareness campaigns, training, and the distribution of food and cash transfers. While there were questions about the comparative advantage of food and cash aid, UN Women's commission of two studies assessing the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, and their protection needs was vital and informed Niger's response to the pandemic and its recovery plan. These studies fit more closely within UN Women's comparative advantage and expertise in gender statistics.

EFFECTIVENESS

UN Women in Niger has clearly demonstrated effectiveness in advancing women's representation in parliament and in ministerial positions. However, there are areas of concern and room for improvement.

Post-election initiatives in women's political participation need attention to prevent the potential erosion of progress. While efforts have been made in women's economic empowerment, sustained income improvements for rural women remain to be proven. Similarly, Women, Peace and Security initiatives require further documentation to clarify pathways to lasting peace and cohesion. Better synergy among UN agencies for implementation of activities is essential for addressing violence against women. Prior to gaining official Country Office status, UN Women faced challenges in coordinating gender efforts. With increased staffing and inclusion in key coordination frameworks, there is potential for greater influence within gender coordination mechanisms.

EFFICIENCY

The Country Office has increased its workforce following good progress in resource mobilization, enhancing its support for gender mainstreaming and UN coordination mechanisms.

However, this rapid growth has heightened expectations leading to excessive workloads, impacting staff onboarding and training. Additionally, the instability of employment contracts may affect staff retention. Staff awareness of IT security has progressed but compliance with UN Women's standards still falls short. Connectivity issues and power outages hamper online training. The Country Office works with specialized partners with proven expertise in specific areas: NGO Diko and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection are exceptions, as they engage in multiple impact areas. The former applies its women's economic empowerment expertise to peace and security initiatives, while the latter's institutional authority is key in supporting political participation and violence eradication.

SUSTAINABILITY

UN Women's work in Niger demonstrates sustainability through various positive practices that include participatory and inclusive planning; institutional support for women farmer cooperatives through Dimitra Clubs; solidarity-based savings and credit mechanisms; and securing multi-year funding.

Challenges in maintaining facilities provided to communities may hinder sustainability: issues include under utilization of renovated centres, equipment malfunctions, water and electricity supply challenges, lack of explicit exit strategies and the need for monitoring systems that strengthen local accountability.

GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

UN Women did not afford sufficient attention to the challenges faced by socially marginalized women, including traditionally excluded groups who are subjected to practices such as "Wahaya", involving forced domestic labour and sexual exploitation; and the specific needs of individuals living with disabilities.

Regarding women migrants, UN Women made valuable contributions in supporting rural communities to prevent migration and advocating for gender-responsive migration policies. However, there is a potential risk that the Country Office's focus on promoting awareness about border crossing requirements, customs regulations, migration policy and legal frameworks may be interpreted as inadvertently prioritizing a dissuasive approach to migration, rather than paying attention to the protection and humanitarian needs of migrant women, their families and communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Country Office should continue its approach of influencing the country's Gender Policy in a context of slowly evolving cultural norms. To address deep-rooted causes of gender inequality, the Country Office should initiate dialogues on the family code and related norms in collaboration with UNHCR and civil society partners, while maintaining its focus on specific manifestations such as economic and political disparities and violence against women.



RECOMMENDATION 2: To prevent the potential erosion of gains achieved during electoral processes, the Country Office should develop and implement post-election initiatives that focus on building upon the progress made in women's political participation in Niger. To achieve this, the Country Office should undertake specific resource mobilization to establish a dedicated team to sustain progress in this area.



RECOMMENDATION 3: Given the ongoing instability in the country, it is imperative to strengthen collaboration among UN agencies to safeguard the physical well-being and livelihoods of women. This proactive approach is crucial to prevent an escalation in the prevalence of gender-based violence compared to what was experienced during times of peace. By working together more effectively, UN agencies can better address these critical issues within the context of humanitarian and security crises.



RECOMMENDATION 4: The Country Office should strengthen its commitment to results-based monitoring across its programmes and initiatives by systematically tracking progress related to gender inclusivity in peace dialogues, income generation from agricultural support programmes and the impact of cash transfer interventions on vulnerable women. To sustain the results of its interventions, UN Women should also implement clear exit strategies involving local stakeholders and authorities to ensure the maintenance and durability of facilities. By consistently measuring and assessing the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives, UN Women can enhance its ability to contribute to lasting peace, economic empowerment and the well-being of women in the communities it serves.



RECOMMENDATION 5: The Country Office could promote greater gender responsiveness and coordination within the UN system in Niger by revitalizing the Gender Theme Group. This would help focus on monitoring and implementing the Gender Score Card recommendations and enhance awareness of the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Compact. Furthermore, the Country Office should assume a leadership role in fostering collaboration among UN agencies to more effectively address violence against women, particularly within the framework of the Spotlight Initiative. Minimum criteria for assessing gender integration in joint programmes should be established along with the dissemination and discussion of a gender mainstreaming tool with all UN agencies.



RECOMMENDATION 6: The Country Office could go beyond being non-discriminatory by ensuring its Strategic Note and programme proposals refer explicitly to disability and under-privileged groups to facilitate inclusiveness at programme implementation stage for the poorest and most marginalized.