



IN BRIEF



MALAWI COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION (2018-21)

Photo: UN Women Malawi Country Office

Country portfolio description

The 2018-2021 portfolio aimed to support women and girls to enjoy their full rights and contribute and benefit from social, economic and political developments in Malawi.

The total resources mobilized for the period was USD 30 million. The portfolio covered four areas: i. Gender Based Governance; Women's Economic Empowerment; iii. Elimination of Violence and Women and Girls; iv. Humanitarian Action.

Evaluation overview

The evaluation assessed UN Women Malawi's strategic positioning and strengthen accountability and guide the implementation of the new strategic note. The evaluation applied the criteria of: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Gender equality and human rights. Data was collected through review of literature and from across sampled project sites. The evaluators consulted 250 stakeholders.

Key achievements

The portfolio contributed to:

Gender statistics

- Supported institutionalizing gender statistics in the government's strategic planning process. However, capacity challenges at local council and community levels affected the use of gender statistics for gender responsive budgeting.

Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)

- Increased food security and economic independence

of women, through agricultural productivity and entrepreneurship programmes.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- Supported a coordinated and multi-sectoral referral system for VAW victims, by forging and coordinating partnerships, introducing innovative tools, building capacity and providing technical support.

Normative

- Supported the development of policy and instruments, including:
 - Amendment to the constitution through Bill 36, increasing the marriage from 16 to 18
 - Support to the enactment of the Political Parties Act which advances women representation
 - Alignment of the Chief's Act with international human rights standards
 - Review of 5 gender laws and 2 policies, expected to enhance gender equality once approved and operationalized.

Conclusions

RELEVANCE

1. The country portfolio was aligned to global, regional and national frameworks. It drew on a strong evidence base, which meant the portfolio was focused on the underlying causes of gender equality. The Country Office strategically allocated resources to multi-sectoral partners, which ensured portfolio relevance.

EFFECTIVENESS

2. Significant progress was made in terms of implementing normative and policy frameworks, gender statistics, climate smart agriculture, social

norms change, and women's roles in disaster risk reduction. There was some progress on gender responsive budgeting and limited progress on women leading in decision-making, due to the influence of socio-cultural norms and practices. The country office also supported awareness raising on socio-cultural norms and practices, though it was not possible to ascertain the level of transformation in this area.

3. Progress was affected by operational constraints (delayed disbursements) and contextual constraints (protracted approvals for legal frameworks, natural disasters).

EFFICIENCY

4. The country office's structure and staff capacity were appropriate. Significant amounts of resources were mobilized but spread thinly across many implementing partners and short-term projects.

SUSTAINABILITY

5. The likelihood of sustainability is high as most interventions were mainstreamed through existing institutions. These institutions have been supported with capacity building.
6. However, short project durations, resource constraints for coordination institutions, accountability system issues and staff attrition affect sustainability.

GENDER EQUALITY and HUMAN RIGHTS

7. The Strategic Note was designed based on gender equality and human rights principles. All interventions aimed to reach those left behind. The portfolio contributed to a positive, but gradual shift in attitude towards women in leadership positions.

COHERENCE

8. Institutional and programmatic linkages and synergies existed but coordination was a challenge.

Lessons learned

- 1 Collaboration with a range of partners across the UN, government and civil society organizations, based on their mandates and comparative advantage, facilitates synergies and efficiency, resulting in greater effectiveness.
- 2 Engagement of partners that are already present in project locations facilitates implementation.
- 3 Contextual changes provide opportunities for innovation. Adaptability and responsiveness are required. Socio-economic contexts vary across the

country and tailored approaches are needed.

- 4 Economic empowerment interventions are more effective when they engage the entire household.
- 5 Addressing gender equality requires involving men and traditional and political leaders.
- 6 The short term, intermittent nature of projects undermines project momentum and potential benefits.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1:

UN Women should streamline and consolidate its portfolio, focusing on where it can support long-term change. It should engage partners who can deliver holistic programs across the country. This will require stronger identification and due diligence of potential partners, prioritizing organizations already working in these areas.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

For the new country portfolio, UN Women should:

- Maximize use of existing gender coordination platforms and look to scale up alternatives
- Intensify targeted advocacy work to support legal, policy and strategic gender frameworks
- Build the Department of Human Resource Management and Development's technical and resource mobilization capabilities
- Support the government to disseminate and enact new approved gender responsive budgeting guidelines, including through capacity building
- Continue partnering with the National Statistics Office to build the capacity of government bodies and councils on gender data disaggregation
- Strengthen its focus on capacity building on gender mainstreaming.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

UN Women should strengthen its operations by:

- Establishing a database of prequalified consultants, based on identified needs
- Develop a resource mobilization strategy
- Aim to move towards longer-term projects and reducing the number of implementing partners
- Strengthen the results-based management system
- Build a robust mechanism for greater participation of beneficiaries and local structures in intervention design, implementation and monitoring.