UN WOMEN

REVIEW OF UN WOMEN'S **EVALUATION OVERSIGHT SYSTEM** IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
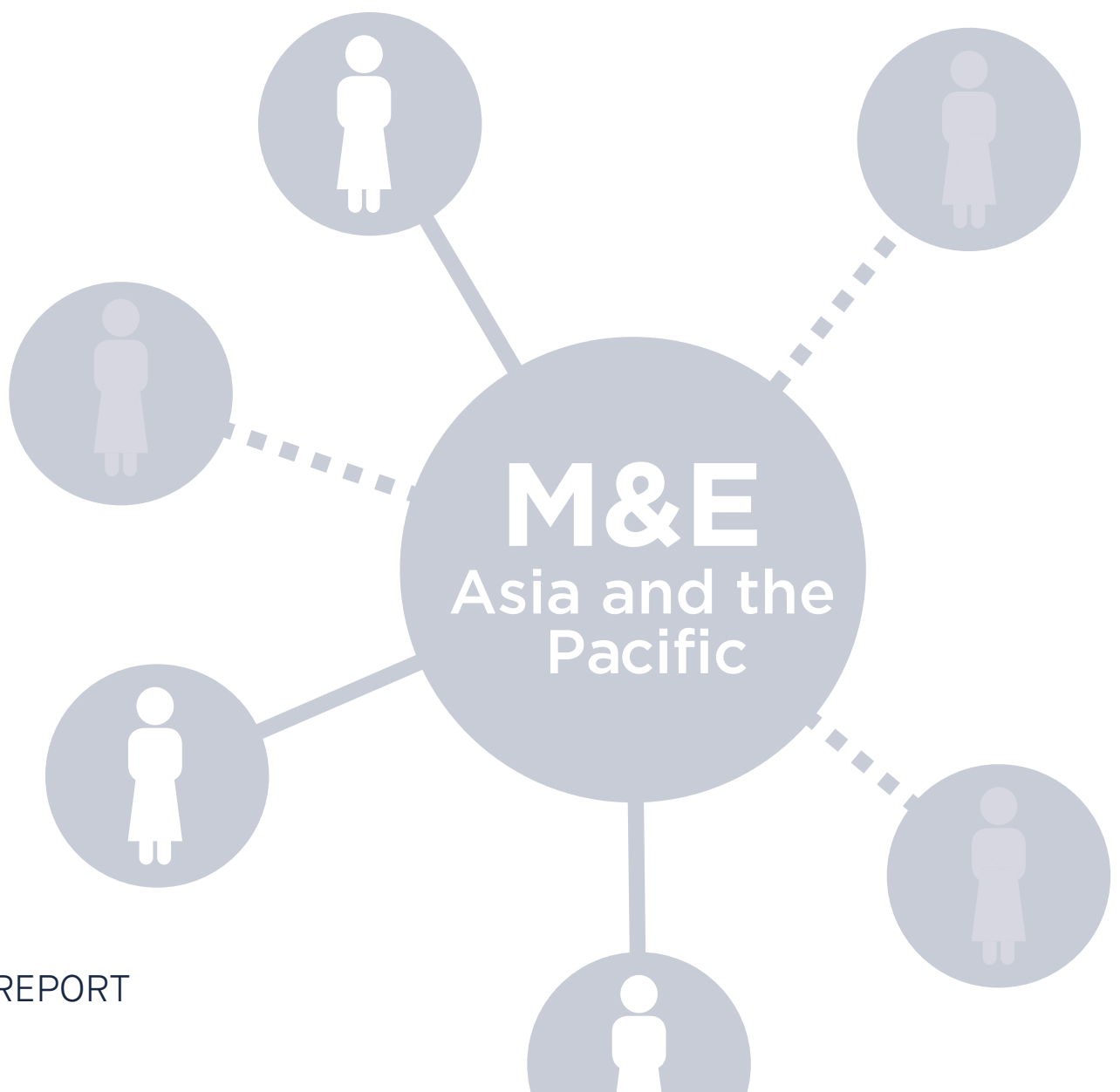
M&E
Asia and the Pacific

FINAL REPORT

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ACRONYMS

CO	Country Office
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
GATE	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation
GEOS	Global Evaluation Oversight System
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System
GE	Gender Equality
GEEW	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
HR	Human Rights
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
KII	Key Informant Interview
MCO	Multi-Country Office
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
ME	Meta-Evaluation
MERP	Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan
RBM	Results-Based Management
RES	Regional Evaluation Specialist
RMS	Results Management System
RO	Regional Office
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
RPAC	Regional Programme Appraisal Committee
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UN SWAP	UN System Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UN WOMEN	UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women)

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1 BACKGROUND OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

BACKGROUND

The purpose and role of evaluation in UN Women is to contribute to learning on the best ways to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, enhance UN Women's accountability, and inform decision-making. By providing evidence-based information, evaluation contributes to UN Women's role to generate knowledge on what works to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

The UN Women Evaluation Policy came into effect in January 2013 and a new Strategic Plan (2014-2017) was endorsed in September 2013. A landmark System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality and women's empowerment was also adopted that requires annual reporting against a performance indicator on gender-responsive evaluation.

Given the decentralized nature of the organization, the majority of the evaluations supported by UN Women are managed at a decentralized level. On average, in Asia and the Pacific region, 20 evaluations are conducted by UN Women Offices each year. Therefore, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) is giving increased emphasis to strengthening support for decentralized evaluations conducted by Multi-Country Offices (MCOs) and Country Offices (COs) in the region.

To address the organizational demands for enduring good quality and credible evaluations particularly at decentralized level, in December 2013, the UN Women's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) established a Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS). Based on eight key performance indicators, the purpose of GEOS is to provide transparent information on the performance of the evaluation function at corporate and decentralised levels[1]. The system includes a dashboard that presents the key performance indicators for the evaluation function in a user-friendly manner.

[1]   UN Women Independent Evaluation Office, Report of the Evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2014 (para 8), 29 April 2015.

In 2014, the independent Evaluation Office prepared a comprehensive evaluation strategic plan to operationalize UN Women's Evaluation Policy. The strategy seeks to enhance the ability of evaluation managers to deliver high-quality evaluations while strengthening the use of evaluation for accountability, learning and evidence-based decision-making. The UN Women Regional Office has a Regional Evaluation Strategy for Asia and the Pacific Region for 2014-2017 which aims to sustain the gains achieved in improving the evaluation function in the region so far, and to address remaining gaps in key evaluation performance areas through providing a clear framework for the realization of all aspects of the Evaluation Policy pertaining to the regional, multi-country and country offices of Asia and the Pacific Region. Furthermore, it supports the UN system wide processes and programme within the context of UNDAF and joint programming in the region[2].

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The main uses of this review are learning and accountability. This report is designed for sharing within UN Women among the primary users including the Regional Evaluation Specialist and management of the UN Women IEO and management and staff of the Regional Office and Country Offices of the Asia and Pacific region[2].

In line with the TOR, the **purpose** of reviewing the oversight system is to analyse how UN Women in the Asia Pacific region has been ensuring quality evaluation reports and implementing management responses, including through its financial and human resources[3].

[2] UN Women, 2014-2017 Regional Evaluation Strategy, Asia and the Pacific Region, August 2014.

[3] UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Terms of Reference: Evaluation Consultant to Review Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS), Meta-Evaluation and Meta-Analysis (GERAAS) of UN Women Asia and the Pacific in 2010-2016.

BOX 1: REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What human and financial resources are available for monitoring and evaluation in the region? What changes have been made since 2013?

2. What is the current workload of M&E staff?

3. What is the evaluation coverage by country?

4. What is the evaluation implementation rate?

5. How is the quality of evaluations? How are evaluations rated under GERAAS?

6. Are Management Responses available in the GATE system? How are they managed and implemented?

7. To what extent are evaluations systematically being used to inform programming? What factors are affecting usage (of global, regional and country-level evaluations)? To what extent is there buy-in from management to support use and implementation of evaluations?

8. How many UN Women staff in the region have successfully completed the e-learning course on gender-responsive evaluation? Is the number increasing? What other evaluation skills/capacities are needed by UN Women staff in the region?

9. What recommended measures are needed to systematise the evaluation function and support a strengthened M&E culture and practice across UN Women's work in the region?

The **objective** of the review is to examine the quality of UN Women's evaluation oversight system in the region by providing a summary of the performance of the decentralized evaluation function by UN Women in the region[4] (based on GEOS reports). It also analyses where the strengths and challenges of UN Women's evaluation work in the region lie and provides forward-looking recommendations to ensure the use of evaluations in enhancing performance, learning and accountability.

The **scope** of this review includes GEOS reports since 2013[5]. In addition to assessing compliance with the nine GEOS Key Performance Indicators (KPI), the review also explores and assesses the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) culture and practice across the region including the extent to which there is support and buy-in from management in encouraging the use evaluation data to inform programme development. Whilst it is already known that the low evaluation implementation rate is a challenge/weakness in UN Women[6], the reasons and causes of the low implementation rate are further examined in this report and recommendations to further systematise the evaluation function and support a strengthened M&E culture across UN Women's work in the region are provided.

The review of the Evaluation Oversight System addresses a number of key questions (see Box 1). **The list of questions was modified during the inception phase of the review process and further expanded from the original list included in the TOR**. The list in Box 1 includes questions relevant for this Evaluation Oversight System Review.

METHODS

The main data source for the review was the GEOS reports and IEO Annual Reports; however in order to provide deeper analysis about usability of evaluations and implementation of evaluation management responses, Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted with 16 persons (13 women and 3 men) between 31 January and 14 February 2017. Interviewees included a balanced mix of ROAP and CO management, programme officers and M&E staff (see Figure 1). Efforts were made to consult a range of COs (60 per cent of interviewees were from MCOs or COs), including those with high numbers of evaluations as well as COs that have conducted either no or a limited number of evaluations. The full list of stakeholders consulted is included in Annex B and the list of interview questions posed during the KIIs is included in Annex C. Where it was not possible to conduct KIIs, the interview questions were shared and staff provided their input in written form.
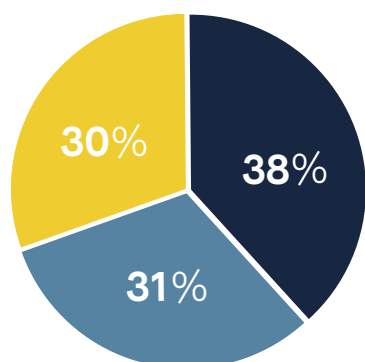
FIGURE 1: BREAKDOWN OF STAFF CONSULTED

- Senior Management from ROAP/COs
- M&E Staff
- Programme Staff

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[4] Ibid.

[5] For the Meta-Evaluation and Meta-Analysis, the scope is 2010-2016.

[6] UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Terms of Reference: Evaluation Consultant to Review Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS), Meta-Evaluation and Meta-Analysis (GERAAS) of UN Women Asia and the Pacific in 2010-2016.
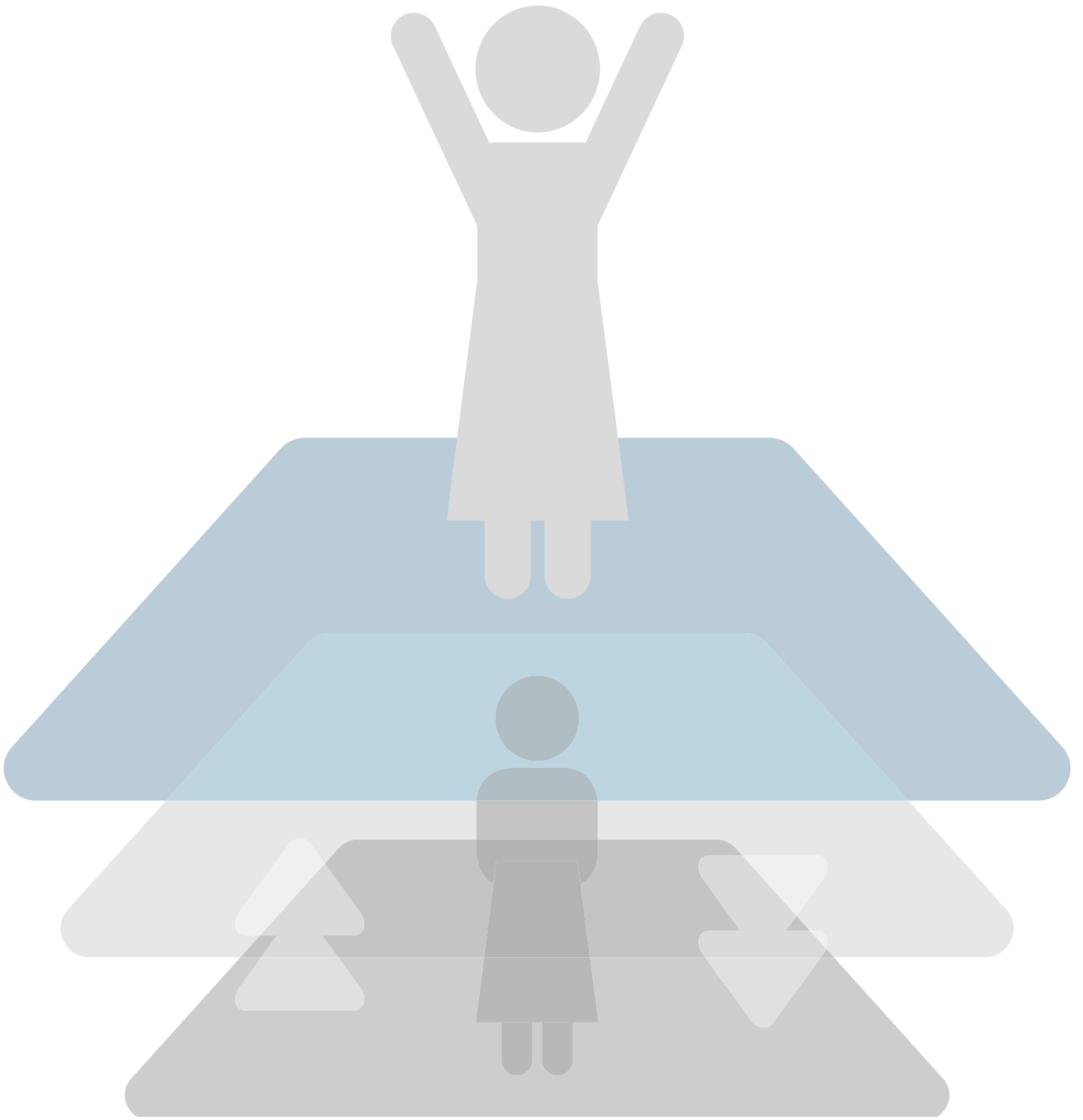
2 KEY FINDINGS

The following key findings are informed by and based on GEOS data, IEO annual reports, regional and country-level MERPs. Information and insights harvested from the KIIs with ROAP and CO management and staff was used to provide further evidence and support deeper qualitative analysis.

HUMAN RESOURCES FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION (KPI 1)

FINDING 1: Whilst there is 100 per cent M&E coverage, for more than half of the offices in the region, the M&E function is carried out on a part-time basis by focal points which has in some instances limited the ability of staff to fully support M&E.

Since 2013, all 11 offices in the region have had M&E Officers or focal points in place. This includes six M&E focal points (who perform an M&E function in addition to their other main responsibilities) and five M&E Officers (who have M&E as their sole focus). Compared with other regions, the AP region has the second highest number of M&E staff overall[7] and the third highest ratio of fulltime M&E officers[8].

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF M&E STAFF IN THE REGION[9]

OFFICES WITH M&E FOCAL POINTS	OFFICES WITH M&E OFFICERS
• Afghanistan • Pakistan • Papua New Guinea • Timor-Leste • Bangladesh • Viet Nam	• Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific • MCO for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka • MCO for the Pacific Islands • Cambodia • Nepal

[7] The West and Central Africa region has the highest number of M&E staff (15).

[8] The Europe and Central Asia region has the highest ratio of full-time M&E officers (57 per cent) followed by the West and Central Africa region (56 per cent).

[9] In the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, there are two additional full-time M&E staff including a Monitoring and Reporting Specialist for the Fund for Gender Equality and a Programme Officer for the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (who also serves as Regional Focal Point for the UNTF).

> The SDGs are taking up more and more of our time. We are now being requested to develop M&E frameworks for this and to help build the capacity of partners. If we had extra support for our M&E work, we could focus more on evaluation, particularly supporting utilisation and building capacity of national authorities on evaluation.
>
> — UN Women Country Office staff member

> Although my Country Office is one of the few with dedicated M&E, my monitoring role requires me to work on the RMS, to support annual planning, to help develop PMFs and track indicators and also working with governments. It is a challenge to manage everything. If had an associate to help with the work, it would be helpful. Because of the lack of human resources, I am unable to analyse data and my ability to engage with government partners is limited.
>
> — UN Women Country Office staff member

Overall, M&E staff are overstretched and overburdened by their dual roles and unable to fully meet all of their increasing monitoring and evaluation-related demands. Whilst there has been complete M&E staffing coverage, for more than half of the offices in the region, the M&E function is conducted on a part-time basis by focal points (who assume an M&E role in addition to their other duties). This arrangement has in some instances limited the ability of staff to fully support M&E. For example, the two offices that did not complete any evaluations between 2013 and 2016 have M&E Focal Points and the offices with the highest number of evaluations completed have M&E Officers (see Section 2.3 below). During key informant interviews with M&E Officers, most estimated that roughly 30 per cent of their time was spent on evaluation and for M&E Focal Points, with a part time focus on M&E, this percentage was even lower. Staff pointed out that monitoring work is generally more time-intensive and, as a result, their ability to focus on supporting evaluation utilisation and building evaluation capacity of national authorities is often hampered by their daily monitoring demands.

A greater institutional investment in M&E is needed at the regional and country level. Currently none of the M&E Officer positions are financed with core funds (although this will change in 2017 with the decision of the MCO for the Pacific Islands to allocate core funds towards an M&E Officer position). In other instances, M&E staff hired to support specific projects under project funding are often being asked to gap-fill and are pulled into multiple programmes or having an office-wide M&E function. For this reason, where M&E needs remain high and unmet, it is important that consideration be given to finance such work under core funds and that large-scale projects include a specific budget line for M&E staff to specifically support project-related M&E. Where, due to funding constraints, project-related staff are required to take on broader functions related to the work of the regional or country office, these functions should be supplemented with core funds.

FINDING 2: Evaluation demands are increasing due to a greater focus on building national evaluation capacity in support of Agenda 2030 and supporting gender-responsive evaluation through the UNCT. Because this expanding role is combined with intensive M&E work, additional resources may be needed in instances where the demand for evaluation engagement and support is higher.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development provides an important opportunity for an increased focus on gender responsive evaluation. This is in part due to the strong gender equality focus of the SDGs as well as the elevated importance of evaluation in Agenda 2030. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 69/237, "capacity-building for the evaluation of development activities at the country level", reiterates the importance of building national evaluation capacity including the strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programmes)[10]. UN Women M&E staff are already playing an integral role in supporting gender responsive evaluation through regional M&E and UNCT fora as well as through direct engagement with governments, parliamentarians and civil society. Combined with these demands, there is also an increased interest by the IEO to conduct Country Portfolio Evaluations which will inevitably require further engagement of the M&E Officers and Focal Points.

[10] UN General Assembly Resolution 69/237, adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2014.
Source: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/69/237&referer=/english/&Lang=E

BOX 2: FEATURED GOOD PRACTICE: LINKING M&E, RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND DONOR RELATIONS

MCO for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka

Recognising that M&E functions are an essential part of donor relations and resource mobilization strategies and that having these functions separate increases transaction costs, the MCO has pulled together the three functions into one unit. In doing so, the MCO has been guided by evidence that conducting effective resource mobilization is not possible without an intimate knowledge of results being generated through donor contributions and that if these functions are separate, there is a risk of knowledge and relationship gaps and a disconnect with data needed to inform and attract resource mobilization efforts. The arrangement is working well in the MCO and has helped it to build a stronger M&E culture within the Office.

FINDING 3: The evaluability of programmes and the overall quality of evaluations is inextricably linked with M&E effectiveness. Whilst evaluation support received through the IEO and Regional Evaluation Specialist is regarded as highly effective and useful, there remain significant gaps in addressing and responding to specific monitoring needs and greater regional guidance is needed to support this work.

At the regional level, evaluation work is guided and supported by the Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES) who reports directly to the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office, with a second reporting line to the Regional Director. M&E staff interviewed all expressed a high level of satisfaction with the evaluation-related support and guidance they receive in terms of guidelines, tools and online training opportunities (see Section 2.9 for more detail). The majority of M&E staff interviewed expressed the view that the guidance they have received on Results-Based Management has been useful; however ongoing monitoring-related support has been insufficient and staff members performing this role at the regional and country level are significantly overstretched. Many staff members felt that, at the regional level, this work would benefit from the establishment of a position equivalent to the RES but focused specifically on providing guidance and direction for monitoring, especially in the context of the SDG work that M&E staff are increasingly becoming involved with. The need for strengthened monitoring support at the regional level was also highlighted during the mid-term review of the Strategic Note for the Asia and the Pacific Region (2014-2017) which noted that although result-based management capacity is high in the region, gaps still remain in terms of regional and country-level capacity to measure and monitor results[11].

Due to its positioning within the IEO and the independent nature of the RES position, its responsibilities are de-linked from M&E programmatic support. Although the RES has been involved in supporting RBM training, the focus of work has been on supporting regional and country office staff exclusively in the area of evaluation. Because evaluability of programmes depends on high quality monitoring data in order to fully assess and measure the change that interventions are contributing to, it will be important to identify measures to further invest in this area. In some country offices, additional M&E support is being sought through the inclusion of specific posts within donor-financed programmes as was recently the case with the Programme on Women's Entrepreneurships and Renewable Energy under the MCO for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka and the new regional programme on EVAW managed by the Regional Office. Where additional resources are not possible, another suggested response is to further institutionalise M&E responsibilities for programme staff by explicitly including these in their job description.

[11] UN Women ROAP, Mid-term Review of the Strategic Note for the Asia and the Pacific Region (2014-2017), p. 10.

❝❝ We need better data out of projects. Often, we end of cutting corners when the budget is limited. We do not do a full baseline survey followed by a full end-line survey and as a result, we are not doing a thorough job to compare before and after changes in a though and meaningful way. ❞❞

— Country Representative

❝❝ When you want to do an evaluation, you have to look at evaluability and whether you have enough data for an evaluation. This is where the gap is. We do not have a system of proper documentation and evidence building that is done consistently during the lifecycle of a programme. ❞❞

— Country Office M&E Staff

❝❝ If M&E is important for the organisation, this role should not be an 'add on' in someone's TOR. We need dedicated people at the macro level and at the implementation level, M&E should be the role of the programme officer. But if we want someone who is answering RMS questions and making strategic links to flagship indicators we need better evidence and analysis. ❞❞

— Country Office M&E Staff

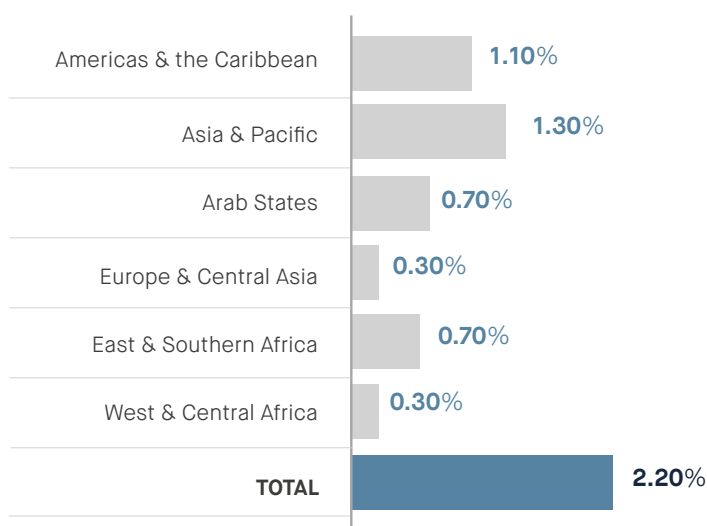# FINANCIAL RESOURCES INVESTED IN EVALUATION (KPI 2)

As guidance related to expenditure in evaluation over the total expenditure, UN Women's Evaluation Policy recommends a minimum level of investment in evaluation of three per cent of the total plan/programme budget[12].

FINDING 4: Between 2014 and 2016, evaluation expenditure increased by 21 per cent with increased investment in evaluation costs, M&E staff and communications, and decreased expenditure on capacity building.

According to GEOS data, in 2014, 1.3 per cent of the overall budget of UN Women in the Asia Pacific region was invested in evaluation. Compared with other regions, the Asia-Pacific region had the highest investment (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: REGIONAL COMPARISION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES INVESTED IN EVALUATION (2014)

Region	Percentage
Americas & the Caribbean	1.10%
Asia & Pacific	1.30%
Arab States	0.70%
Europe & Central Asia	0.30%
East & Southern Africa	0.70%
West & Central Africa	0.30%
TOTAL	2.20%

A further examination of disaggregated data on evaluation expenditure for the Asia-Pacific region, shows that evaluation expenditure increased by 21 per cent between 2014 and 2016 (see Figure 3).

Overall evaluation costs[13] increased from 47 per cent of the overall evaluation budget in 2014 to 57 per cent which is likely due to the increased number of evaluations commissioned in 2016[14].

Although expenditure on M&E staff[15] increased from 23 per cent of the total evaluation budget in 2014 to 30 per cent in 2016, as mentioned in the previous section, none of the M&E Officer positions are currently financed out of core funds.

[12] According to IEO explanations included in the 2015 GEOS, this figure includes estimated costs incurred for evaluation studies, capacity development on M&E, portion of M&E staff/focal point cost and communication and dissemination of evaluation products. Source: GEOS, January-December 2015.

[13] Evaluation costs include: costs for evaluation consultant + M&E costs (staff time spend on evaluation-related activities) + evaluation capacity building costs + evaluation communication costs

[14] In 2016, 11 evaluations were commissioned, compared with 5 in 2014.

[15] M&E staff costs refers to a monetary calculation of staff time spent on evaluation related activities, using as basis the total cost of the staff per year. A conservative estimate of staff costs was applied (5 per cent for focal points and 15 per cent for M&E)

The only area where there was a significant reduction in expenditure was related to capacity building of M&E staff[16] which decreased from 29 per cent of the budget in 2014 to only 6 per cent in 2016. Given the frequent turnover of M&E Focal Points in the region and the evolving nature of evaluation techniques, it will be important for the region to maintain a continuous investment in building staff capacity related to evaluation.

Whilst there was an increase in expenditure related to communications[17] from 1 per cent to 8 per cent, the latter was spent on one evaluation. The low investment in communications may correspond with the low usage of evaluation reports.

FIGURE 3: EVALUATION EXPENDITURE IN THE AP REGION (2014-2016)

Costs for Evaluation   M&E Staff Costs   Capacity Building   Communications
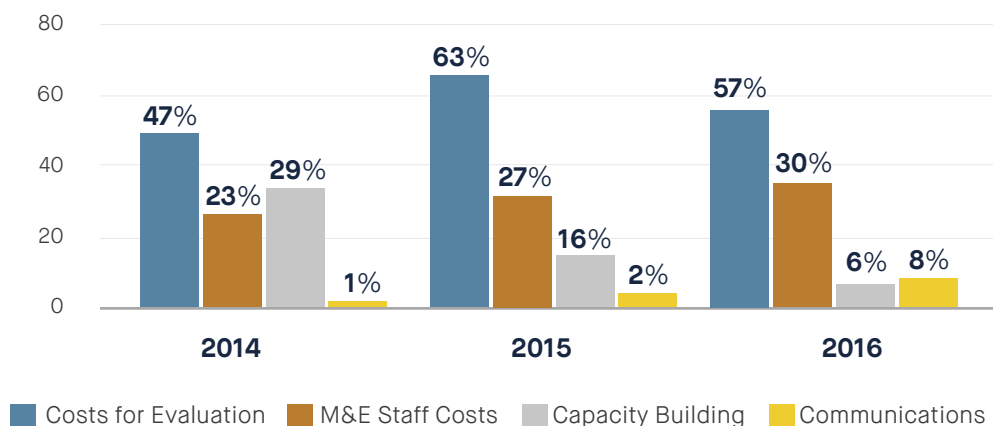
FINDING 5: Greater clarity is needed on the methodology for calculating and determining the required 3 per cent investment in evaluation under programmes and project.

From discussions with staff during the key informant interviews, it can be concluded that the methodology for determining the 3 per cent investment required for evaluation in programmes and projects is neither fully understood nor consistently applied by staff across the region. For example, whether the 3 per cent applies to programme/project expenditure verses budget allocation is unclear for some staff. Whilst the 3 per cent allocation is required under UN Women's Evaluation Policy, it has not been consistently enforced because for many offices, and for small projects (i.e. projects costing 5,000 USD and unlikely to be evaluated) the allocation is seen an unrealistic. It may therefore be necessary to set more specific thresholds to apply for different budget amounts.

Staff also identified the need for further guidance on what should be specifically included in the M&E budget allocation. For example, for large scale one million dollar plus projects, it would be important to require engagement of a full time M&E officer.

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[16]   Evaluation capacity building costs include evaluation trainings for UN Women staff & partners, including. trainer travel and DSA, participation in evaluation conferences etc.

[17]   Evaluation communication costs include dissemination of evaluation results & findings – publication cost and dissemination workshops etc.
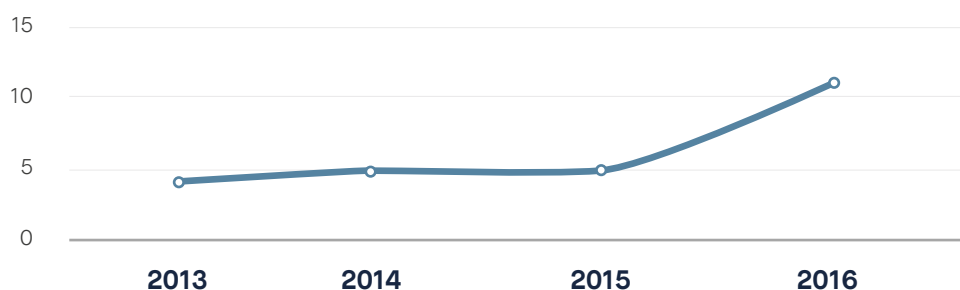
EVALUATION COVERAGE (KPI 3)

> **FINDING 6**: Between 2013 and 2016, the overall number of evaluations conducted in the Asia-Pacific region increased by 175 per cent with 72 per cent of Country Offices conducting at least one evaluation during this period. Offices with full-time evaluation staff conducted a higher number of evaluations than offices with part-time focal points

Out of the 11 Multi-Country and Country Offices in the Asia Pacific region, 72 per cent (n=8) conducted at least one evaluation between 2013 and 2016 and 27 per cent (n=3)[18] did not conduct any evaluations during this timeframe[19]. Compared to other regions, the AP region had the third highest rate of evaluation coverage[20].

FIGURE 4: NUMBER OF EVALUATIONS CONDUCTED IN THE AP REGION (2013-2016)

In addition to the increased evaluation coverage in the region, the number of evaluations conducted annually increased by 175 per cent between 2013 and 2016 (see Figure 4) putting the overall total number of evaluations for the region at 25.

Out of the 25 evaluations conducted, 64 per cent of evaluations were conducted by four offices (including the Regional Office, both MCOs and the Nepal CO) which are all well-resourced with full-time M&E staff. The three offices that did not conduct any evaluations were those with part-time M&E focal points. In such instances, staff cited limitations on their time and their high work load as the main limitations in conducting evaluations.

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[18] These countries are Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam

[19] Although the Viet Nam CO did not commission evaluation reports, it did however conduct an extensive evaluability assessment of its five-year programme on strengthening women's capacity in disaster risk reduction to cope with climate change.

[20] The regions with the highest rate of evaluation country coverage were the East and Southern Africa region (with 86 per cent of countries covered) and the West and Central Africa region (78 per cent).

FIGURE 5: BREAKDOWN OF EVALUATIONS CONDUCTED (2013-2016)

MCO (PACIFIC ISLANDS)	2
MCO (INDIA, BHUTAN, MALDIVES AND SRI LANKA)	4
ROAP (THAILAND)	5
VIET NAM	0
TIMOR-LESTE	0
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	0
PAKISTAN	2
NEPAL	7
CHINA	1
CAMBODIA	1
BANGLADESH	1
AFGHANISTAN	2
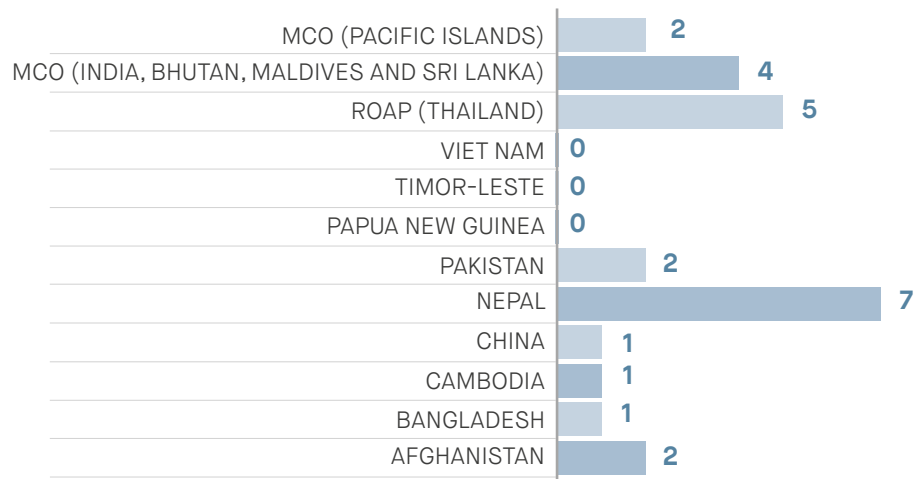
EVALUATIONS PLANNED vs. COMPLETED (KPI 4)

FINDING 7: The region had the highest evaluation completion rate with 89 per cent of evaluations implemented and only 11 per cent cancelled or postponed.

Out of 56 evaluations planned by UN Women in the AP region between 2013 and 2016, 89 per cent were implemented (45 per cent completed and 45 per cent initiated). Only 11 per cent were not implemented (9 per of which were not initiated and 2 per cent cancelled and/or postponed).

The number of completed evaluations increased from 88 per cent in 2013 to 95 per cent in 2016. Compared with other regions, the AP region had the highest implementation rate. Possible contributing factors to this high rate could be: a) 76 per cent of the evaluations conducted were managed by full-time M&E Officers; b) the existence of a regional evaluation strategy; c) the systematic development of Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Plans by all Country Offices; d) sufficient funding was allocated for the conduct of evaluations; and e) the commissioning of full-scale evaluability assessments by two County Offices in 2013[21]. In most instances where evaluations were postponed, this was usually attributed to timing issues and the late initiation of the evaluation process. Reasons for cancellation were insufficient funding for evaluations, weak quality of consultants' work and a lower level of prioritisation given to the evaluation topic.

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[21]   Evaluability assessments were commissioned by the MCO for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka and the Viet Nam CO.

QUALITY OF EVALUATION REPORTS (KPI 5)

FINDING 8: Between 2013 and 2016, 72 per cent of evaluation reports in the region were rated in the upper range as "very good" or "good", with only one reported rated as "unsatisfactory"; however, the total percentage of reports rated as "very good" or "good" decreased between 2015 and 2016 underlining the need for continued investment in evaluation capacity. The highest quality ratings were given for evaluations managed by M&E Officers.

FIGURE 6: QUALITY OF EVALUATIONS (2013-2015)

21.4%
SATISFACTORY

7.1%
UNSATISFACTORY

21.4%
VERY GOOD

50%
GOOD
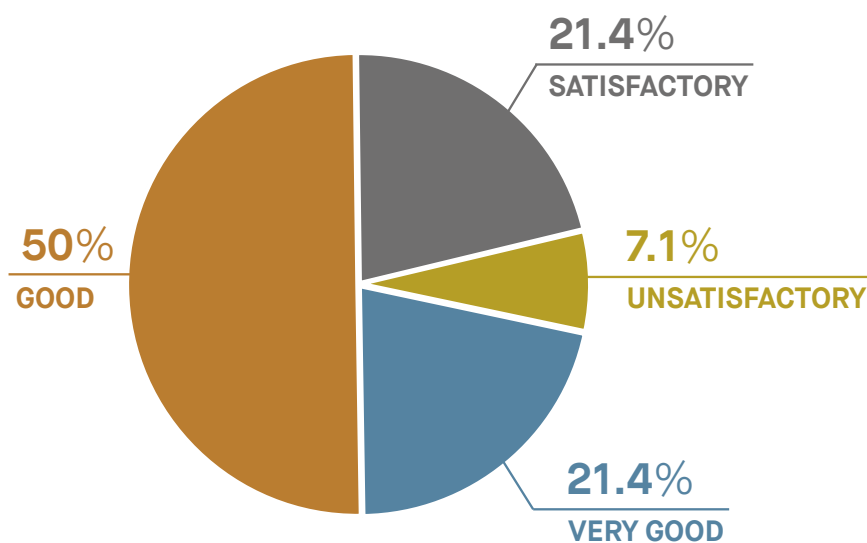
Since 2013, the IEO introduced the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) which is based on and aligned with standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group and with similar quality assessment methodologies used by other United Nations entities. The assessment and analysis system also integrates performance indicators and assessment on gender-responsive evaluation as required by the United Nations System-wide Action Plan.

According to the GERAAS ratings for 2013 to 2016, for the 25 evaluations conducted, 72 per cent of evaluation reports in the region were rated in the upper range as "very good" (n=6) or "good" (n=12) and 96 per cent of reports (n=24) were "satisfactory" and above, indicating that these reports can be used with a reasonable degree of confidence to inform evidence-based planning and programming.

Five out of six reports rated as "very good" were managed by M&E Officers in MCOs and COs. This points to the strong capacity of M&E Officers in the region and their important role in supporting quality evaluations.

In comparing the change in evaluation report quality between 2013 and 2016, three reports were rated as "very good" in 2016, compared with none in 2013. Possible reasons for this improvement may be the increased investment in evaluation capacity of the M&E Officers as well as the increased financial resources made available for evaluation (see Section 2.2) and the "Quality Assurance Process for Decentralised Evaluation in Asia and the Pacific" set out in the Regional Evaluation Strategy. Despite this improvement, three reports were assessed only as "satisfactory" in 2016 and the percentage of reports assessed as "very good" or "good" dropped from 80 per cent in 2015 to 73 per cent in 2016, underlining the need for continued investment in strengthened evaluation capacity (see section 2.9 for more detail).

FINDING 9: The greatest factors affecting the quality of evaluations are the availability of monitoring data and the quality of consultants.

In addition to analysing the quality ratings of evaluation reports, further qualitative input was provided by regional and country-level management and staff in order to further understand the factors that have contributed to and hampered quality evaluation reports in the region. The most frequently identified challenge was the lack of monitoring data resulting often in the low evaluability of programmes and projects. For six evaluations rated as "very good", five were from offices where there has been a significant financial and staffing investment in monitoring and where M&E Officers are in place (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2 above). A contributing factor to the highly rated evaluation for the Pacific EVAW Facility Fund was that it was preceded by a comprehensive evaluability assessment where monitoring data was further collected.

Most staff felt that without the systematic collection of monitoring data (including complete baseline and endline data) it is difficult for evaluations to assess changes achieved through the programme interventions. Unless there is specific data available to measure such changes, it is difficult to use the evaluation reports to support organisational learning about what works and doesn't in terms of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

Another key challenge compromising evaluation quality is in finding consultants who are equally well-versed in techniques to support gender-responsive evaluation and who have a deep knowledge about gender equality and the underlying causes of gender inequalities. In to ensure that both types of expertise are included within an evaluation, some staff have resorted to hiring teams of individual consultants rather than contracting a company. Several staff members pointed out that decreasing budgets for evaluation have made it more difficult to hire high quality consultants as many COs are unable to pay higher fees for more experienced evaluators or are required to select less qualified evaluators in the name of efficiency. Another challenge has been with consultancy firms who interview well and provide solid and high quality bids but then fail to deliver high quality products and, as a result, require a greater investment of time by M&E and programme staff. Instances of evaluation reports not providing deep enough substantive analysis was also identified as a challenge with some reports either over-focused on compliance or examining cost-effectiveness, RBM and stakeholder management but not providing the required insights to inform future programming or assess the intervention's contribution to social norm change and GEEW advancement. Some staff felt that many evaluation recommendations are too generic in nature (i.e. including suggestions for UN Women to "be more efficient" or "be more participatory")

and that there is an increasing need for consultants who can provide greater depth in analysis so that evaluation reports bring value and provide informative insights to guide and strengthen future programming. Related to this, the need to expand the pool of evaluation consultants was also raised in order to bring in new perspectives and reflections on UN Women's work in the region.

EVALUATION REPORTS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SUBMISSION RATE (KPI 6)

FINDING 10: Whilst there was a 100 per cent rate of uploaded evaluations in the GATE system in 2014 and 2015, the figures for 2016 indicate delays in uploading evaluation reports (with 27 per cent of offices not yet uploading and/or approving reports). For management responses, 46 per cent of offices are delayed.

In line with UN Women's Evaluation Policy, all offices are expected to upload their final evaluation reports and management response within six weeks of completion to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system. In 2014 and 2015, 100% of reports were updated in the system with approved management response. For reports completed in 2016, 73 per cent of reports have been uploaded into the system and 54 per cent of management responses have been uploaded and approved. This rate is comparable with other regions and currently only one UN Women regional office has been able to meet this KPI fully to-date. Reasons provided for delays in uploading management responses into GATE were technical problems and delays in finalising the management responses for programmes/projects with multiple partners involved (i.e. joint programmes) where further consultation was required.

IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT RESPONSES/KEY ACTIONS (KPI 7)

FINDING 11: For the period 2012-2015, the Asia-Pacific region had the highest implementation rate of management responses with 92 per cent of key actions being completed or initiated.

Of the 272 key actions agreed to in management responses for 2013-2015[22], 92 per cent are being implemented with 34 per cent completed and 58 per cent initiated. Only 6 per cent of key actions have not been initiated including those that had passed their due dates (see Figure 5). The implementation rate also increased from 86 per cent in 2012 to 93 per cent in 2015 and compared to other regions, the Asia-Pacific region had the highest implementation rate[23].

[22] Data on implementation rates was reported for the previous year in the GEOS and IEO annual reports so the timeframe for this KPI is 2012-2015.

[23] Followed by the Europe and Central Asia region at 89 per cent and the East and South Africa region at 83 per cent.

FIGURE 7: IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF MANAGEMENT RESPONSE/KEY ACTIONS FOR EVALUATIONS COMPLETED BETWEEN 2012-2015 IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION
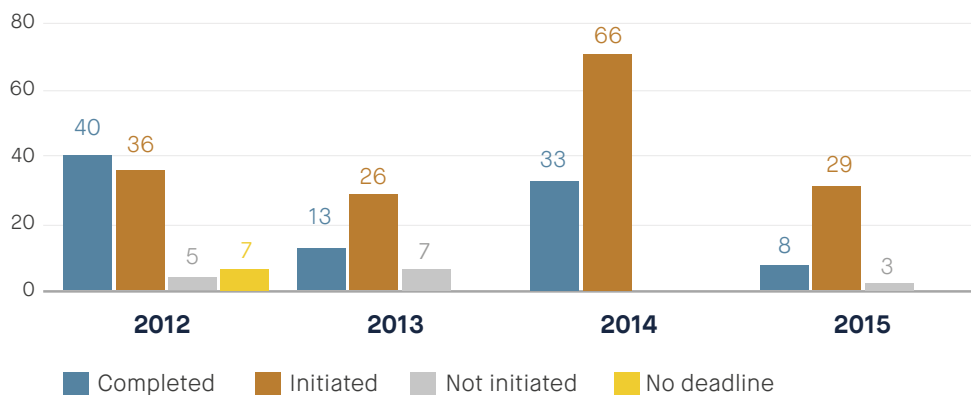
During interviews with regional and country-level staff, several reasons were cited to explain the non-implementation of some of the key actions. In a number of instances, actions have been completed but the update has not been reflected in the GATE system. In cases where it is not possible to complete evaluations prior to the end of the programme/project, staff often leave the project rendering it difficult to follow-up and engage with project stakeholders in crafting the management response. If a project is not extended and the project coordination teams are no longer functional, it is also not possible to follow-up on recommendations directed to them. Where action points only target UN Women, it is much easier to develop and regularly update management responses than for joint programmes with UN or government partners where it is difficult to hold agencies directly accountable. Even when agencies are jointly responsible for a project, it does not mean that they will upload the evaluation report into their systems and regularly update action points targeting their agency. Others noted that sometimes, recommendations are too generic, rendering it difficult to translated them into concrete actions.

USE OF EVALUATIONS TO INFORM PROGRAMMING (KPI 8)

According to UN Women's corporate evaluation policy, apart from its accountability role evaluation is also intended to: a) provide credible and reliable evidence for decision-making in order to improve results and b) to contribute important lessons learned about normative, operational and coordination work in the areas of GEEW, including knowledge about how to achieve greater coherence between normative and operational work in those areas[24].

In regard to the first area, recently, in its 2015 Annual Report, the IEO started to collect information on usage based on Results Management System (RMS) data. Data for the Asia-Pacific region, indicated that 67 per cent of evaluation reports were used to inform programming in 2014; however, during interviews with regional and country office staff, there was a clear consensus that evaluation usage remains weak and that there is no systematic approach at the regional, multi-country and country office level to ensure that evaluation recommendations are used to inform decision-making and programming.

Whilst there are many good practice examples of how evidence and lessons from recent evaluations have been used to inform programme design, implementation and management (see Box 3), a number of factors continue to impede effective usage. These include: 1) the length of evaluation reports combined with time limitations of management and programmatic staff; 2) accountability mechanisms to ensure that staff have reviewed and applied relevant evaluation findings when designing new programmes are limited; 3) some evaluation reports are not substantive enough to inform programmatic work and recommendations are too generic; 4) the majority of management and programme staff do not use the GATE system[25] and do not therefore regularly access the library of evaluation reports available on the site; and 5) the relevance and benefit of using evaluation to supporting programme design and implementation is still not fully understood by programme staff.

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[24]   UN Women Evaluation Policy, Para.5, October 2012.

[25]   Out of nine Country Representatives and programme staff members, only two responded that they had ever used the GATE system to access evaluation reports.

BOX 3: FEATURED GOOD PRACTICE: USE OF EVALUATION TO INFORM PROGRAMMING

Afghanistan: Formative Evaluation of the EVAW Special Fund (2015)

In response to the evaluation recommendations, future programming in the area of prevention and protection shifted away from providing grants to civil society towards greater and more meaningful involvement of civil society through the adoption of a community mobilisation approach. Related to protection, the new follow-on EVAW programme is now applying a more survival-centric approach by supporting the development of a cadre of mediation professionals and national regulations to support this work. The evaluation also ensured that the new programme had clear linkages and integration with work on women's economic empowerment and governance and national planning by engaging with parliaments and using gender-responsive budgeting as a means to support implementation of the EVAW law.

India: Final Evaluation – Empowering Women in Rural and Informal Settings through Capacity Development (2014)

When designing the new proposal for Phase II of the programme, MCO staff included a dedicated page detailing how the evaluation recommendations were applied in development of the new programme.

Regional Office: Final Evaluation – Project on EVAW in South East Asia (2015)

Based on the highly participatory nature of the programme, which included active stakeholder involvement throughout the implementation process, the evaluation recommended to share and disseminate information in order to inspire other projects in the region to apply a similar approach. This information was shared by the programme staff in order to support institutional learning and replication of its success in the design and implementation of other EVAW programmes.

Finding 12: A more systematic approach is needed to promote increased learning from evaluation through harnessing and packaging evaluation findings so that they have greater relevance and utility for UN Women staff, partners and stakeholders in the region.

Although evaluation use is promoted through the management response modality, it is important that evaluation findings and recommendations are shared and disseminated more widely in order to support increased learning among UN Women staff, partners and stakeholders in the region.

Although data from the monitoring and tracking of management responses in the GATE system indicates that evaluations are being used to inform the design and focus of individual programmes, broader lessons from evaluations are not always harvested and shared in a manner that supports learning in a more holistic and integrated manner. Whilst there have been increased efforts to provide condensed summaries of evaluation findings and organise opportunities such as webinars to discuss evaluation findings, this needs to be more systematic and to draw in programmatic staff from the regional and country offices so that they also benefit from the evaluation learning process.

A significant number of management and staff interviewed identified the need for the RES and M&E staff to further support programmatic learning across thematic areas by distilling programmatic insights from evaluations and clustering and packaging evaluation findings so that they can more easily be used and applied by staff. Convening webinars that bring together key findings and recommendations across multiple evaluations in a thematic way was suggested as a more effective and time-efficient way to promote evaluation learning. For example, holding a webinar to look at lessons learned in relation to social norm change in order to understand what types of interventions have had the greatest impact. Other staff highlighted the importance of peer learning and exchange opportunities following the review of Strategic Notes.

BOX 4: FEATURED GOOD PRACTICE: SUPPORTING EVALUATION LEARNING AND UTILISATION BY NATIONAL PARTNERS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Evaluation of the Regional Programme on Improving Women's Human Rights in South East Asia (CEDAW SEAP)

As part of the validation and dissemination of evaluation findings for the evaluation, participation was maximized through meetings of the project committee as well as through stakeholder meetings where recommendations were presented which stakeholders were actively involved in ranking. UN Women Country Representatives were also invited to the stakeholder meeting to ensure their buy-in and support for the final evaluation findings and recommendations. This process supported greater involvement of all concerned actors in the implementation and utilization of the evaluation findings. Significant resources were invested to support this process.

Ensuring that sufficient opportunities and resources are in place to communicate evaluation findings among implementing partners and key national stakeholders and to facilitate their learning, implementation and utilisation of the evaluation recommendations is also an important priority which a number of staff felt needed greater investment. In order to achieve this, sufficient resources need to be in place to ensure that evaluation products and dissemination/validation processes are designed to maximise stakeholder participation. This includes actively involving partners and stakeholders in the final development and validation of findings and recommendations. Significant investment is also required in terms of designing summary and user-friendly evaluation products and ensuring that they are available in the languages of the intended users/implementers.

In order to improve overall programming results at a regional level, evaluation findings and recommendations need to be systematically used in not only the design of new programme interventions but also in the development and review of Strategic Notes at the regional and country level. In this regard, it is important that processes and structures are in place to apply evaluation findings more broadly across UN Women's planning, monitoring and reporting processes in the region. Currently some mechanisms exist but they are not systematically applied. For example, whilst Strategic Notes have a section devoted to lessons learned where information can be included about how evaluation findings and recommendations were used, most of the information included is anecdotal and not based on lessons learned from evaluations. When designing programmes, staff are also encouraged to refer to how evaluation findings were applied, however this is not a requirement in order for the Project Document to be approved and evaluation learning is not an explicit input area in the Project Document template.

Finding 13: There is a perceived disconnect between evaluation and programmatic work and more concerted efforts are needed to promote a greater culture of evaluation.

Although a regional evaluation strategy and multi-year costed evaluation plans aligned with regional and country Strategic Notes have supported greater institutional commitment to the evaluation function, buy-in from management and programme staff to systematically use evaluation to inform strategic planning and programme design remains limited.

Feedback from the key informant interviews indicates that in many offices, there is not a culture of systematically using evaluation to guide and inform planning and programming. A contributing factor to this is the fact that most staff do not have the time to read thematic evaluations and generally only review reports commissioned for their particular project or thematic area. Although evaluation reports are accessible through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) system, it is not regularly being used or accessed by ROAP and CO management and staff.

According to some staff, one of the factors contributing to this is the perception that there is still too much of a focus on the mechanics of evaluation (i.e. analysis about evaluation processes/systems and whether reference groups were set up) rather than substantive analysis about the content of evaluation. This dichotomy also plays out during the selection of evaluation consultants where programmatic staff generally tend to favour substantive GEEW experts whereas M&E staff often give priority to consultants with sound evaluation experience.

" From a management perspective, evaluations need to provide analysis, insights and findings that pertain to programme design and lessons learned. Far too often, the analysis is too much about the quality of the evaluation rather than about the substance. The role of M&E staff in distilling programmatic insights from across the body of evaluations is lacking and we have not maximized this. "

— UN Women staff

" I am not using other evaluations from the region or commissioned by HQ. I know that there are good practices but what I am not getting is if we are doing a project on EVAW, I do not receive guidance about what works and doesn't in terms of designing future programmes. "

— UN Women staff

" M&E is seen as something not relevant to programme staff. Greater efforts are needed to show added value where evaluation lessons learned have influenced programming. The whole culture of using evaluation will improve if people see benefit to their work. "

— UN Women Programmatic Staff

" We don't use evaluation as much as we should because of our hectic day-to-day operations – we simply do not have time to reflect. "

— UN Women Programmatic Staff

" I have received great technical and substantial support from the Regional Evaluation Specialist on my evaluation work. She has helped me to develop better TOR and to think more strategically about evaluation and ensure better quality. The webinar peer learning sessions were particularly helpful for me in my work . "

— Country Office M&E Staff

Finding 14: A more integrated and coordinated approach to evaluation would support better utilisation and implementation of evaluations

Given the challenges cited previously in terms of evaluation use, there is a need to think innovatively about how to conduct evaluations in a way that is more strategic and useful for staff in the region, especially in light of human and financial resource constraints. One suggested approach is to minimise the number of evaluations through commissioning integrated evaluations that include multiple inter-connected projects in order to assess and measure broader cumulative change achieved through different interventions.

The piloting of Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPE) in three countries in 2015 and roll-out in 2016 is another example of how limited resources can be used on fewer but strategic and high quality evaluations that cut across the thematic areas of work and enable a richer assessment of UN Women's contribution to development effectiveness with respect to GEEW at the country level.

In terms of coordination, the important role of the RES in negotiating the involvement of COs in corporate evaluations was also highlighted, particularly in instances where projects have already been extensively evaluated and there is a clear sense of stakeholder fatigue in being consulted through evaluation processes.

EVALUATION CAPACITY (KPI 9)

Finding 15: Staff capacity on gender-responsive evaluation has been bolstered as a result of high numbers of staff completing the e-learning course. In the region, UN Women is well-positioned to continue to support and promote gender-responsive evaluation among UNCTs, governments and civil society. It is therefore critical that the remaining 33 per cent of staff, along with new project M&E staff, are supported by their offices to complete the course.

In 2015, 26 UN Women staff from the Asia-Pacific region successfully completed the e-learning course on gender-responsive evaluation. Compared to other regions where the maximum number was five, this was a very high number. In 2016, 67 per cent of M&E staff from the region enrolled in the course and 63 per cent of those enrolled received the course certificate. Compared with other regions, the Asia-Pacific region had the second highest number of M&E staff enrolled[26].

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[26] The highest enrolment rate was for the West and Central Africa region.

During interviews, M&E staff who have taken the course affirmed the value and usefulness of it to their work, particularly in their efforts to engage with UNCT's and national stakeholders to advance gender responsive evaluation. Reasons for non-completion of the course were mainly related to the fact that M&E staff are over-stretched and their work load does not enable them to devote the necessary time required to complete the course. Given the key role and contribution of UN Women in supporting and promoting gender-responsive evaluation in the region, especially in the context of the SDGs, UNDAF evaluations and through UNCT task forces on M&E at the country level, it will be important to ensure that M&E staff (including newly recruited M&E project staff) are supported to complete the course.

Finding 16: The current investment in staff evaluation capacity is low with only 6 per cent of the total evaluation expenditure allocated for this purpose in 2016. Given the frequent turnover of M&E Focal Points in the region and the evolving nature of evaluation techniques, increased investment in building staff capacity related to evaluation is needed.

As discussed under Finding 4, there has been a significant reduction in expenditure related to capacity building of M&E staff from 29 per cent of the budget in 2014 to only 6 per cent in 2016. This low investment poses a particular challenge for M&E staff as expectations are increasing for UN Women to lead efforts to support quality gender-responsive evaluation among the UNCT peers and with national counterparts, particularly in the context of the SDGs. M&E staff interviewed felt that these increased demands require a greater investment in building their evaluation capacity.

During key informant interviews, UN Women staff from the regional and country offices were asked about other evaluation skills and capacities that are needed. The main area identified was in relation to monitoring work which has a direct impact on evaluation quality and evaluability. As mentioned previously, whilst the M&E staff benefit from extensive guidance and support from the RES in relation to evaluation, support for their monitoring work has been more limited. In order to address capacity gaps, some staff have been able to benefit from the experience and collaboration with other M&E colleagues within the UNCTs. For example, in the case of Viet Nam, where the M&E focal point has served as a regular member of the RBM working group since 2012, she has been able to build her capacity through the ongoing annual activities of this group. In another instance, monitoring capacity support was provided by a donor. The need for increased M&E training among Deputy Country Representatives was also highlighted as a priority area for some COs.

The increasing demand for greater corporate guidance on how to measure process and social norm change was also mentioned by a number of staff. As interventions are increasingly aiming to achieve changes that are notoriously difficult to measure, such as changes in attitudes and social norm change, greater support is needed to help staff to design adequate indicators (as opposed to proxy indicators) and identify the necessary data that needs to be collected to meaningfully measure such change.

Finally, the important role that the RES has had in providing guidance and support during regional and country-level evaluations was highly appreciated by management, programme and M&E staff. The value and usefulness of the peer support and webinars was also acknowledge as an important practice that should continue but also be further expanded to include deeper discussion on evaluation findings, as opposed to mainly evaluation process and technical aspects. As mentioned previously, the need for M&E staff to play a greater role in distilling and analysing insights from evaluation and in contextualising and regionalising findings and recommendations from global reports are important areas for further engagement.

3 SUGGESTED ACTIONS

The following proposed list of actions is based on the findings in this report. The list was reviewed by members of the Evaluation Reference Group who had the opportunity to provide further input and feedback. Their final feedback is reflected in the list below.

TO SUPPORT INCREASED QUALITY OF EVALUATION REPORTS AND PROCESSES:

1. Establish a roster at the regional level, together with UN agencies, with vetted consultants who have extensive GEEW knowledge and well as expertise in gender responsive evaluation;
2. Review the proposal scoring sheet for evaluation consultants in order to minimize deviation by refining the criteria and including short guidance on how each criterion should be assessed;
3. As part of the budget allocation for evaluation of programmes/projects, include funds to support full-scale evaluability assessments;
4. Provide greater guidance and clarity on the methodology for calculating and determining the required 3 per cent investment in evaluation under programmes and project and ensure that this is conducted during the project development phase in coordination with the Local/Regional Programme Appraisal Committee. This will ensure that adequate funds are allocated for evaluation and for conducting full-scale evaluability assessments during the programme approval stage.

TO SUPPORT INCREASED EVALUATION USE:

5. As part of the terms of reference for every evaluation, require as one of the deliverables, the development of a two-page overview of key evaluation findings and recommendations and a final power point presentation that can be used to disseminate and discuss findings in different fora at the regional and country level;

6. Ensure that the review of evaluation recommendations is a requirement when developing new programmes by dedicating a page in the Project Document to explain how evaluation recommendations were applied in the design of the programme. Completion of this input should be mandatory in order to receive RPAC approval and could be further supported with the mandatory participation of M&E staff in the Local/Regional Programme Appraisal Committee.

7. Provide clearer written guidance to staff when completing the lessons learned section for regional and country level Strategic Notes so that specific information on evaluation utilization is provided and can be used to report on and assess evaluation use;

8. Ensure that adequate funds are allocated for communication during evaluations to support the development of high quality dissemination/validation processes and final user-friendly products that are available in the languages of all implementers and users;

9. Engage M&E staff in distilling programmatic insights from evaluations and clustering and packaging evaluation findings so that they can more easily be used and applied by staff.

TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE CULTURE OF M&E IN REGIONAL AND COUNTRY OFFICES IN THE REGION:

10. Continue to organise webinars for the M&E network and expand these to reach and target a broader range of staff (including annual/bi-annual sessions with managers and quarterly with programme staff). Consider approaches that bring together key findings and recommendations across multiple evaluations in a thematic way;

11. Consider commissioning Country Profile Evaluations in the region in order to assess results in a more integrated and efficient manner;

12. Institutionalise M&E responsibilities for programme staff by explicitly including these in their job description or terms of reference;

13. For projects over 1 million USD, include an M&E post in the project budget;

14. In instances where project-related M&E staff are required to take on broader M&E functions related to the work of the regional or country office, these functions should be supplemented with core funds;

15. Ensure that there are sufficient human and financial resources at the regional level to provide strategic guidance and direction for monitoring work throughout the region;

16. Use regional retreats as an opportunity to present learning from evaluations.

TO STRENGTHEN M&E CAPACITY IN THE REGION:

17. Invest further to further strengthen staff capacity related to evaluation by indicating specific areas for training/capacity development in the Annual Work Plan and ensuring that there are sufficient budget allocations for this purpose;

18. Approach the UN Women Training Centre to explore the possibility of developing a training on monitoring and measuring social norm change;

19. Support staff in completing the online course on gender responsive evaluation;

20. Continue to provide training and support to programme staff on M&E, particularly in collecting baseline and endline data and using this data to measure and assess changes achieved through programme interventions.

ANNEX A: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title: Evaluation Consultant to review Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS), Meta-Evaluation and Meta-Analysis (GERAAS) of UN Women Asia and the Pacific in 2010-2015

Location: Home-Based

Contract Duration: 3 months: 1 October – 31 December 2016

Contract Supervision: Regional Evaluation Specialist

Application Deadline: 23 September 2016

Background

UN Women is dedicated to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The mandate and functions of UN Women call for the promotion of organizational and UN system accountability on gender equality through evaluation, strengthening evaluation capacities and learning from evaluation, and developing systems to measure the results and impact of UN Women with its enhanced role at the country, regional and global levels.

The purpose and role of evaluation in UN Women is to contribute to learning on best ways to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, enhance UN Women's accountability, and inform decision-making. By providing evidence-based information, evaluation contributes to UN Women's role to generate knowledge on what works to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

Given the decentralized nature of the organization, the majority of the evaluations supported by UN Women are managed at a decentralized level. On average, in Asia and the Pacific region, 20 evaluations get carried out by UN Women Offices each year. Therefore, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is giving increased emphasis to strengthening support for decentralized evaluations conducted by Multi-Country Offices (MCOs) and Country Offices (COs) in the region.

To address the organizational demands for enduring good quality and credible evaluations particularly at decentralized level, the UN Women's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has designed a Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) and a Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) driven by similar good practices enforced by other UN entities and consistent with the UNEG Norms and Standards. The system is serving as a key instrument to increase the application of sound approaches and methods to continuously improve the quality and credibility of evaluation methods and reports within UN Women. As part of this process, the IEO assesses the quality of the oversight system on a quarterly basis and corporate and decentralized evaluations on a yearly basis and made available assessment findings to senior managers, programme unites and the UN Women Executive Board.

In addition to the quality assessment of individual reports, the GERAAS system requires a meta-analysis of evaluations to capture the key insights from evaluation reports – rated satisfactory or above according to UN Women standards. This is required to develop constructive lessons for future system strengthening of programming, organizational effectiveness and the evaluation function. Whereas the meta-evaluation provides a rating of the quality of evaluation reports according to UN Women standards, meta-analysis synthesizes the key findings conclusions and recommendations for the body of evaluation reports that meet UN Women quality requirements.

UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is seeking for a consultant to conduct a review on GEOS and a meta-evaluation and meta-analysis of the evaluation reports produced in the region during 2010-2015, using the GERAAS. The selected consultant will review the GEOS and the GERAAS reports, focusing on the evaluation reports produced by the Asia and the Pacific region, as well as reviewing the evaluation reports, to analyze trends, results, contributions, strengths and weaknesses across UN Women Asia and the Pacific region. It should also synthesize the recurrent findings, recommendations, conclusion and, and lessons learnt for all evaluation reports completed in the given years.

UN Women has the Regional Evaluation Strategy for Asia and the Pacific Region for 2014 -2017 and this review will contribute to reviewing the current Evaluation Strategy.

Duties and Responsibilities

- To examine the quality of the evaluation oversight system in Asia and the Pacific by providing a summary of the GEOS reports to the Senior Managers and staff in the region;
- To examine the quality of the past evaluation reports in Asia and the Pacific by providing a summary of the GERAAS reports to the Senior Managers and staff in the region;
- To analyze the impacts of the UN Women Asia and the Pacific's programmes/projects;
- To provide better understandings and insights into UN Women Asia and the Pacific's performance;
- To capture experiences and lessons learnt from the evaluations to enhance organizational learning and knowledge management.

Key questions

The review is guided by the following core questions:

Oversight system (GEOS):
- How is the situation of the human resources in the field of ME in the region?
- How is financial resources related to evaluation in the region? Any changes?
- How is evaluation coverage by country?
- How is the evaluation implementation rate?
- How is the evaluation quality? (this overlaps with the meta-evaluation below)
- Are Management Responses available in the GATE system? How are they managed?
- How are the implementation of the key action points in the GATE system?
- How are the use of the evaluations?
- How many people in the region have undertook the evaluation e-learning course? Is the number increasing?

Meta-evaluation (GERAAS):
- How many evaluations have been conducted by UN Women's Asia and the Pacific in 2010-2015?
- What are their thematic areas, evaluation types, and countries? Any trends?
- is there any missing evaluations in terms of thematic areas, types, and countries?
- How were they rated by the GERAAS? Any improvements in the last 5 years?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation reports?

Meta-analysis (GERAAS):
- What are the strengths that emerge from the evaluations of UN Women Asia and the Pacific's programmes/projects?
- Which types of efforts/strategies being implemented have shown high degrees of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency and impact?
- What factors have contributed to this or inhibited success?
- Are there any patterns and lessons to be learnt regarding results produced by UN Women Asia and the Pacific's programmes in general?
- Are there findings and conclusions that point in the same direction?
- What strengths and challenges do the evaluations expose?
- What are lessons learnt?

Methodology

The evaluation will have **three phases/components:**

Phase 1 – Oversight system: Review the GEOS reports since 2013. The purpose of reviewing the oversight system is to analyze how UN Women Asia and the Pacific has been ensuring to produce quality evaluation reports. To produce quality evaluation reports, human and financial resources are inevitable, and this review should examine this. It is already knows that the low evaluation implementation rate is a challenge/weakness in UN Women. The review should summarize the implementation rate in the past and discuss the solutions. It should also examine the GATE system, especially the management responses and their implementations.

Part 2 - Meta-Evaluation - ME: Review the 30 evaluation reports produced from 2010 until 2015 (See Annex 1) that will be part of this exercise and undertake a meta-evaluation of these.

The purpose of the ME is to capture the quality of evaluation reports. This is required to develop constructive lessons for future systemic strengthening of evaluation, and to allow possible trend analysis to examine changes in the quality and credibility of evaluations managed by UN Women Asia and the Pacific. This phase is mainly designed to strengthen UN Women Asia and the Pacific's evaluation capacity by providing practical recommendations to improve future programmes and projects.
This will be done based on UN Women's past GERAAS reports and UNEG standards.

Phase 3 – Meta-Analysis - MA: Evaluation Reports that are found to be "satisfactory or above" (using GERAAS), will be selected to take part in the Meta-Analysis. The MA aggregates the recurrent findings, conclusions, lessons learned, good practices and recommendations that have

come out of the evaluations. The Meta-Analysis is poised to provide a basis to better understand UN Women Asia and the Pacific's programme interventions around the UNEG criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact). It also provides further analysis on the progress made against UN Women's organizational goals and priorities (and strategies).

The synthesis of this information will support the use of evaluation findings by UN Women Asia and the Pacific as well as stakeholders. It will also inform donors and other development partners about the effectiveness of the interventions supported by UN Women Asia and the Pacific in the last 5 years.

Usability will be ensured through different strategies, including tailoring of the deliverables to ensure that the results of the Oversight system, ME and MA are captured in a way that stimulates sharing and understanding of knowledge.

Expected Deliverables
The four main expected deliverables of the consultancy will be[27]:

1- Inception Report		
This report will be completed after initial desk review of program documents. It will be 7 pages maximum in length and will include: • Introduction • Background to the evaluation: objectives and overall approach of both phases of this exercise. • Identification of evaluation scope (see points above regarding reports to be included and excluded). • Description of evaluation methodology/methodological approach. • Work Plan with dates and deliverables.	Expected Duration: 1st week	Management Notes: • This report will be used as an initial point of agreement and understanding between the consultant and the Evaluation Manager (the Regional Evaluation Specialist) & Reference Groups. • Payment: 10% of total on approval of deliverable.
2- Oversight Report		
A 5-10 page Oversight report with findings based on GEOS reports.	Expected Duration: 2nd -6th weeks	Management Notes: • This will be reviewed by the Evaluation Manager (the Regional Evaluation Specialist). • Payment: 10% of total on approval of deliverable.

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[27] Please see Annex for additional information on reports. Please note that the UN Women Evaluation checklist for reports will be shared with the selected evaluation experts as will all other tools as per UN Women Evaluation Handbook. http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en

3- Meta-Evaluation Report		
An 8-10 page Meta-Evaluation report with findings and assessment based on UNEG and GERAAS standards, all ER will be qualified: [Very Good, Good, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory] and key concrete recommendations for FGE on evaluation and RBM will be provided. It will include: • Executive Summary (1 page) • Assessment/systematization of key strengths and weaknesses observed/identified and lessons learned and good practices emerging from the review of the 25 FGE evaluation reports. (5 pages) • A set of concrete recommendations for UN Women FGE to improve evaluation based on RBM programme management. (2-3 pages) • Annex: Scoring of the quality of the 25 ER using GERAAS tool (tailored to this assignment as needed) using the Quality Review Template (GERAAS Annex III) of each of the 25 reports.	Expected Duration: 2th -8th Weeks	Management Notes: • The final Meta-Evaluation report will go through a process of review and approval by the Reference Group. Once approved Phase 2 can begin with selected Evaluation Reports. • Payment: 40% of total on approval of deliverable.

4- Meta-Analysis Report		
This report will analyze and synthesize what are some of the findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned and best practices from selected programme evaluations undertaken worldwide. It will be a 25 page report that will help to paint a perspective of the achievement of UN Women Asia and the Pacific's programmes and projects vis-à-vis its organizational goals. The MA is poised to provide a basis to better understand UN Women Asia and the Pacific's interventions and achievement of its goal and outcomes. The content of the report will be discussed with the consultant in detail prior to the MA phase starting – after the ME is finalized and there is a clearer picture of what programme ER will be part of the MA. However, it is important to note that this report will include 4 knowledge pieces produced by the consultant: this can be, for example, 2-page document on strategies that work per Outcome or an analysis of trends per region, etc.	Expected Duration: 9th -11th Weeks	Management Notes: The final Meta-Analysis report will go through a process of review and approval. Final approval of findings will be done by the Regional Director. Payment: 40% of total on approval of deliverable.

Work Plan

	Weeks										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Inception Report	X										
Oversight System – Desk review		X	X								
ME Phase – Desk Review		X	X	X	X						
Draft ME Report submitted						X					
Validation of ME Report Final ME Report submitted.					X	X					
MA Phase - Desk Review		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Draft MA Report submitted									X		
Validation of MA Report										X	
Final MA Report submitted											X

Evaluation Management

Who: Actors and Accountability	What: Roles and Responsibilities
Reference Group	• Receive information throughout the entire evaluation process and participating in relevant meetings at strategic points during the evaluation. • Review key evaluation deliverables such as the Inception Report and Draft Final Report • Provide input on these evaluation deliverables as needed • Support dissemination of the findings and recommendations.
UN Women Evaluation Task Manager (Regional Evaluation Specialist)	▪ Ensure the quality of evaluation and management decisions to be made on time. Facilitate selection of the consulting firm ▪ Facilitate communication between the consultant and the reference group ▪ Monitor the process of review and provide guidance to the consultant ▪ Report any significant deviation from the evaluation plan ▪ Facilitate the preparation, conduct and report finalization. ▪ Facilitate a management response to all evaluation recommendations and ensure the implementation of committed actions in the management response ▪ Facilitate dissemination of initial and final evaluation findings to relevant stakeholders

Skills and Competencies

Position	Education	Professional Experience	Skills
Evaluation Consultant	A Masters or higher level degree in International Development or a similar field related to political and economic development, monitoring and evaluation, etc.	A minimum of 10 years relevant experience undertaking evaluations is required including proven practical professional experience in designing and conducting major evaluations. Substantive experience in evaluating similar development projects related to local development and political and economic empowerment of women. Substantive experience in evaluating projects and programmes with a strong gender focus is preferred. Excellent and proven knowledge of evaluation methodologies and approaches. Experience with meta-evaluation and meta-analysis of evaluation reports, preferably with UN agencies, is an asset. Proven experience in producing coherent, clear analytic reports and knowledge pieces is a requirement.	Excellent English writing and communication and analytical skills are required.

Evaluation ethics

Evaluations in the UN will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in both UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System and by the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. These documents will be attached to the contract. Evaluators are required to read the Norms and Standards and the guidelines and ensure a strict adherence to it, including establishing protocols to safeguard confidentiality of information obtained during the evaluation.

- Anonymity and confidentiality. The evaluation must respect the rights of individuals who provide information, ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality.
- Responsibility. The report must mention any dispute or difference of opinion that may have arisen among the consultants or between the consultant and the heads of the Programme in connection with the findings and/or recommendations. The team must corroborate all assertions, or disagreement with them noted.
- Integrity. The evaluator will be responsible for highlighting issues not specifically mentioned in the TOR, if this is needed to obtain a more complete analysis of the intervention.
- Independence. The consultant should ensure his or her independence from the intervention under review, and he or she must not be associated with its management or any element thereof.
- Incidents. If problems arise at any other stage of the evaluation, they must be reported immediately to the manager of the evaluation. If this is not done, the existence of such problems may in no case be used to justify the failure to obtain the results stipulated in these terms of reference.
- Validation of information. The consultant will be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information collected while preparing the reports and will be ultimately responsible for the information presented in the evaluation report.
- Intellectual property. In handling information sources, the consultant shall respect the intellectual property rights of the institutions and communities that are under review.
- Delivery of reports. If delivery of the reports is delayed, or in the event that the quality of the reports delivered is clearly lower than what was agreed, the penalties stipulated in these terms of reference will be applicable.

HOW TO APPLY
Interested candidates are requested to submit electronic application to
apirada.khachonpan@unwomen.org and hr.bangkok@unwomen.org not later than **[date]**

Submission of Package
- CV
- Letter of Interest containing the statement on candidate's relevant experience
- Financial proposal. The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount breaking down **proposed number of working days** and a daily professional fee.

All applications must include (as an attachment) the CV and the financial proposal. Applications without financial proposal will be treated as incomplete and will not be considered for further assessment.

Please note that only candidates selected for an interview will be contacted.

ANNEX B: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

No.	Name	Position and Office	Sex (M/F)	Data Collection Method
1	Anna-Karin Jatfors	Deputy Regional Representative, ROAP	F	KII
2	Rebecca Reichmann Tavares	Representative, UN Women Office for India, Bhutan, Maldives & Sri Lanka	F	KII
3	Aleta Faye Miller	Representative, MCO for the Pacific Islands	F	KII
4	Julie Broussard	Representative, China Project Office	F	KII
5	Janet Wong	Representative, Cambodia Country Office	F	KII
6	Wenny Kusuma	Representative, Nepal Country Office	F	KII
7	Yumiko Kanemitsu	Regional Evaluation Specialist, UN Women IEO	F	KII
8	Francisco Cos Montiel	Economic Empowerment Policy Advisor, ROAP	M	KII
9	Janneke van der Graaff-Kukler	Strategic Planning and Coordination Specialist, ROAP	F	KII
10	Andrea Nyberg	Programme Analyst, ROAP	F	KII
11	Nishtha Satyam	M&E Officer, MCO for India, Bhutan, Maldives & Sri Lanka	F	
12	Bivek Joshi	M&E Officer, Nepal Country Office	M	KII
13	Vu Phuong Ly	Senior Programme Officer (M&E), Viet Nam Country Office	F	KII
14	Sokleang Kim	M&E Officer, Cambodia Country Office	M	KII
15	Yassmine Shahrbabaki	Programme Specialist, Afghanistan Country Office	F	KII
16	Masumi Watase	Regional Programme Specialist	F	Input sent in written form

ANNEX C: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Standardised Introduction for Interviews:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in a key informant interview for the UN Women regional meta-evaluation and meta-analysis.

Part of the evaluation process will examine the evaluation oversight system in the region. In order to help inform the findings, we have decided to conduct interviews in order to seek more qualitative information about evaluation utilisation and implementation. This interview includes 8 questions and should take between 20-30 minutes. This is a confidential interview. The information will not be directly attributed to you without your permission.

1. Please describe your role and how long you have been working with UN Women? What has been your role and involvement with evaluations in your country/the region?

2. How do you rate the quality of evaluation reports and processes conducted in your country/the region?

3. How adequate do you think human and financial resources for monitoring and evaluation in the region/your country have been? What is the current workload of M&E staff and in the absence of devoted M&E staff, how is this function carried out in your country/programme?

4. To what extent has ROAP/your country office been able to implement key action points from the management response to the evaluation? What have been some of the challenges in implementing these? To what extent is there buy-in from management to support use and implementation of evaluations?

5. To what extent have findings and recommendations from evaluation reports been used to influence and inform programming in the region/your country? What factors have supported/hindered usage of evaluations? To what extent do you review and use global/regional evaluations to inform your work?

6. How regularly do you access the GATE? If infrequently, what are the reasons for this?

7. How do you assess evaluation capacity in the region/your country office? What do you see as the strengths and challenges in evaluation work? What suggestions do you have for strengthening and systematizing the evaluation function and building a stronger M&E culture?

8. Please feel free to share any further comments/reflections.

ANNEX D: DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

GERAAS-related Documents

1. Women GERAAS 2013, Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System, Meta-Evaluation Report, 30 March 2015.
2. UN Women Independent Evaluation Office, Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System, January 2015.
3. Women GERAAS 2013, Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System, Meta-Evaluation Report, 18 March 2014.

UN Women Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plans (MERP) for the Asia Pacific Region

4. UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Summary of 2016 UN Women-managed Evaluations.
5. UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Summary of 2015 UN Women-managed Evaluations.
6. UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Summary of 2014 UN Women-managed Evaluations.

GEOS-related Reports

1. UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) Report, January – October 2016
2. UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) Report, January – July 2015
3. UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) Report, January – October 2015
4. UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) Report, October 2014 – January 2015
5. UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) Report, Semester 2, 2014
6. UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) Report, Quarter 3, September 2014
7. UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) Report, 2016

Other Documents

8. UN Women, 2016 Global Integrated Decentralised Evaluation Plan, July 2016
9. Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2013
10. Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2014
11. Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2015
12. Evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2 October 2012
13. UN Women ROAP, Mid-term Review of the Strategic Note for the Asia and the Pacific Region (2014-2017),

ANNEX E: BIOGRAPHY OF EVALUATOR

Jo-Anne Bishop is a gender and human rights expert with senior leadership experience in results-based programme management and strategy review and development.

Jo-Anne has 15 years of experience supporting and advising governments, national institutions and intergovernmental organizations in the areas of human rights, gender equality, gender mainstreaming and non-discrimination in a number of countries including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liberia and Timor-Leste.

She has held senior positions as Head of Department for the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Director of the Canadian Governance Support Office in Afghanistan, Advisor to the Liberian Governance Commission and Advisor to the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality in Timor-Leste. Her experience also includes work with UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, IOM and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission to develop strategic plans and lead reviews and evaluations at a meta, global, regional and country-level.

In addition to serving as a team leader for a global evaluation of women's economic empowerment, Jo-Anne has led regional evaluations on gender responsive budgeting and recently conducted a review of the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) Evaluation Performance Indicator Reporting for the UN Evaluation Group. She also conducted a meta-evaluation and meta-analysis of the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality