

# TRANSFORM



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## Dear Readers,

The seventeenth issue of TRANSFORM is out! We are pleased that the magazine has gained traction and allows our community to be closely connected with the work of UN Women and gender-responsive evaluation. This issue focuses on a central topic in today's world: ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamentally addressed in humanitarian action.

UN Women has been working in this area since 2011, increasing its contribution every year and establishing itself as a humanitarian actor since 2014. UN Women's work in humanitarian action is focused on ensuring that women and girls play a greater role in, and are better served by, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response and recovery process efforts in order to support their empowerment and resilience.

The evaluation concludes that while the growth in UN Women's humanitarian work is positive, a more strategic and consistent approach is needed to make further progress. This will require a new detailed response-level strategy with specific approaches to effectively engage in coordination mechanisms, as well as innovative resource mobilization strategies, partnerships, and knowledge management and learning initiatives. Increasing the effectiveness and impact of UN Women's humanitarian action work to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable women and girls are among the recommendations of this evaluation.

We hope you find this new TRANSFORM issue useful to better understand the importance of advancing gender equality approaches in humanitarian interventions and the important role of UN Women in this area. The evaluation will support UN Women in strengthening its work as well as contributing to building knowledge and organizational learning.

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*Think Beyond.  
Stay Ahead.*

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ON THE COVER Jordan – Empowerment through employment for Syrian refugee women in Jordan. Jordan. Za'atari Refugee Camp. October 2018.

Photo: UN Women/Christopher Herwig

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# Gender equality at the heart of humanitarian action: the work of UN Women

It is widely recognized that humanitarian action delivers better results when it accounts for the needs of women and girls, and when gender equality and women's empowerment are central to all aspects of the humanitarian programme cycle. UN Women is one of the most important actors in ensuring that this is achieved consistently and well.

**Since 2011, UN Women has played an active role in focusing attention on gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action.**

Since 2011, UN Women has played an active role in focusing attention on gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action.

UN Women's work in humanitarian action covers its three mandated areas: normative support functions, United Nations system coordination, and operational activities in an integrated and mutually reinforcing manner. UN Women is a very young actor in humanitarian action; however, the evolution and trajectory of its work in this area has been positive.

UN Women's humanitarian work is guided by the vision that women and girls: a) contribute to, and have greater influence in, building peace and resilience; and b) benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts, and from humanitarian action as articulated under outcome 5 of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021. UN Women's approach to humanitarian action goes beyond direct response and towards the transformative benefits of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

By 2018, UN Women's contributions to humanitarian action included: crisis prevention; preparedness; responses to reduce vulnerabilities, address risks and promote resilience; and leveraging of women's leadership across the humanitarian–development nexus. UN Women has supported normative work to assist Member States and the United Nations in developing and implementing humanitarian action policies. The Entity also assumed the role of coordinator for the United Nations system and the humanitarian community at various programming levels during humanitarian responses.

Through its normative work and at the global level, UN Women ensured that recommendations to address disaster risk and gender responsiveness were included in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015). UN Women was one of the main drivers in ensuring that gender equality and the empowerment of women were overarching themes in the seven core commitments agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit.

UN Women's coordination work involves providing expertise for gender-inclusive responses to humanitarian coordination mechanisms and disaster risk reduction bodies. At the global level, UN Women co-chairs and serves as the Secretariat of the Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the main global humanitarian coordination mechanism. The Entity also participates in the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group and convenes the informal Friends of Gender Group for the Grand Bargain. At the field level, UN Women works with regional coordination mechanisms where they exist, as well as United Nations Humanitarian Country

Teams, clusters and inter-cluster coordination groups to ensure that humanitarian coordination mechanisms and humanitarian action policies, programmes and operational procedures and standards respond to women and girls' specific needs.

#### HOW CRISES AFFECT WOMEN DIFFERENTLY

- Gender-based violence
- Exclusion from life-saving services
- Exclusion from decision-making processes
- Increased care-related tasks
- Economic vulnerability

#### GAPS DESPITE INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

- Lack of accountability for gender
- Gaps in data and understanding of the gendered impacts of crises
- Barriers hindering women's participation and leadership
- Lack of targeted investment in women's empowerment, livelihoods and resilience

Two Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) guided much of UN Women's work on humanitarian action at the operational level. The Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) in Crisis Response FPI provided a crisis response framework to ensure that humanitarian response planning, frameworks and programming are gender inclusive and responsive, and that protection and economic opportunities are available for women. The Addressing the Gender Inequality of Risk and Promoting Community Resilience to Natural Hazards in a Changing Climate FPI focused primarily on prevention and making gender equality and women's empowerment central to coordinated, effective humanitarian action and crisis response.

UN Women also established the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, a flexible and rapid global pooled funding mechanism, which aims to significantly increase financing for women's participation, leadership and empowerment in both humanitarian action and peace and security settings. It provides direct support to increase the capacity of local women to respond to crises and emergencies.

Over the course of 2011–2017, UN Women's contributions to humanitarian action have grown. From working in four countries with a portfolio of US\$ 3.4 million in 2011, UN Women's annual humanitarian action budget has increased by 700 per cent to US\$ 27.2 million in 2017. UN Women's humanitarian action budgets are, however, almost completely dependent on non-core funds – an average of 95 per cent of funding under the scope of this evaluation was non-core.

#### EXAMPLES OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS ON HUMANITARIAN ACTION PRODUCED BY UN WOMEN

- Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex "[The effect of gender equality programming on humanitarian outcomes](#)", 2015
- [Placing Women and Girls at the Centre](#), (IASC), 2015
- [Promoting the Rights, Needs and Agency of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action](#), 2016
- [UN Women, empowerment and accountability for gender equality in humanitarian action and crisis response](#), 2017
- [IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action](#), 2017
- [IASC Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, Policy Gender Equality and The Empowerment of Women And Girls In Humanitarian Action](#), 2017



# ACCOUNTABILITY S LEARNING

**GATE System:**  
**The Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use**

An online Public Information Management System, which facilitates UN Women's efforts to strategically plan and effectively use evaluations for accountability, management for results, and knowledge management.

>>> <http://gate.unwomen.org/>



# Why evaluate UN Women's work in humanitarian action?

PHOTO: UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

**Are we doing the right things? Are we doing things in the right way to positively change the lives of women, girls, men and boys and to contribute to gender equality? Are we doing these things on a scale that makes a difference for gender equality? To get better results, we need to know what works. We also need to know what doesn't work and how to fix it.**

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) undertook a corporate evaluation of UN Women's contribution to humanitarian action as part of its Corporate Evaluation Plan. This evaluation focused on

UN Women's contribution to humanitarian action at the global, regional and country levels. The evaluation's scope was from 2014 to present, with a brief review of work conducted from 2011 to 2013.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION WAS TWOFOLD:

- To present evidence to inform UN Women's strategic decisions on its approach to humanitarian action and to feed into the Entity's efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women within the context of the New Way of Working, United Nations reform, the Agenda for Humanity, the United Nations Common Guidance on Resilience and the commitment to leave no one behind.
- To provide actionable recommendations to inform future decision-making on UN Women's support for humanitarian action and to solidify the Entity's work in this area. The primary intended users of the evaluation findings and recommendations are the UN Women Executive Board and UN Women senior management and staff at headquarters and regional and country levels.

#### THE EVALUATION ASSESSED THE:

- Relevance and appropriateness of UN Women's humanitarian action in addressing local needs and priorities, and in increasing ownership and accountability for integrating gender considerations into humanitarian action.
- Effectiveness and efficiency of UN Women's contributions in prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and resilience-building.
- Extent to which UN Women's interventions are connected to longer-term development efforts and support sustainable approaches to recovery and disaster risk reduction.
- Extent to which and how a human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in humanitarian action.

The primary audiences for this evaluation include UN Women's Executive Board, senior management, staff of the Humanitarian Action and Crisis Response Office

(HACRO), and regional and country level staff working on gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action.



#### EXPERT'S VIEW

## Marcy Hersh

*Senior Manager,  
Humanitarian Advocacy,  
Women Deliver*

When UN Women formed in 2011 and gained a mandate to engage in humanitarian action, I was working for UNIFEM, and then UN Women, in post-earthquake Port-au-Prince, Haiti. That humanitarian response proved challenging for all humanitarian actors, and perhaps most of all for this new UN entity that sought to find its footing in a complex and fast-moving field. At the end of this decade, and now outside of UN Women and working for an international NGO, it has been my great pleasure to support the external evaluation of UN Women's work in humanitarian action. UN Women's growth and scope of humanitarian programming since 2011 is

impressive. The evaluation process allowed for a thoughtful reflection on all that has been achieved since those early days. At the same time, the path ahead is still fraught: rhetoric on the centrality of women and girls' protection and empowerment in humanitarian contexts has improved, but meaningful progress in the field remains largely out of reach. The evaluation report offers a helpful pathway forward, ensuring that humanitarian action at UN Women will continue to fight for meaningful outcomes for crisis-affected women and girls. It is only when their needs are met that humanitarian action will be considered effective.

# How relevant and appropriate, effective and efficient, and connected to sustainable development is UN Women's work in humanitarian action?

*"We need to continue to invest in gender analysis. If humanitarians do not understand the gender dynamics, roles, and inequalities in a given context, they risk that their assistance is ineffective or even does harm",*

*Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Mueller – Remarks at the Humanitarian Networking and Partnerships Week event, February 2019*



## **UN Women helps to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women remains central to humanitarian action.**

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are largely recognized as important factors to achieve effective humanitarian action. Most stakeholders consulted in the context of this evaluation noted UN Women's normative,

coordination and programming work as relevant to humanitarian action. They also recognized how gender equality and the empowerment of women contribute to more sustained humanitarian outcomes and longer-term transformative

change. However, the relationships between UN Women's normative, coordination and programming work and the wider role that the Entity plays in humanitarian action was not always clear. Therefore, some stakeholders see smaller-scale, country-level programming as the entirety of UN Women's contributions in a specific response, thus missing how UN Women also informs important coordination and normative work.

### **THE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES:**

- **Humanity**

Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.

- **Neutrality**

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

- **Impartiality**

Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.

- **Independence**

Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

## **Stronger links are needed between UN Women's global normative work and humanitarian coordination mechanisms where needs and priorities are determined.**

Over the last five years, UN Women has been involved in, and has often been instrumental to, all major international and regional forums concerning humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction. This engagement has provided a foundation

for making links to response-specific coordination mechanisms that define the needs of women and girls and other vulnerable groups. Such coordination mechanisms include the Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian

Response Plan processes, United Nations Humanitarian Country Teams, humanitarian clusters and sectors, and inter-cluster working groups. However, a consistent, early and strategic presence in country-level coordination mechanisms is needed to establish the vital links between UN Women's global normative work and effective humanitarian action to ensure that the needs of women and girls are appropriately addressed in humanitarian contexts.

## UN WOMEN'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING IDENTIFIED GAPS AND NEEDS

IDENTIFIED GAP/NEED	UN WOMEN'S APPROACH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender still not seen as a priority by all humanitarian actors</li> <li>• Gender not integrated into programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy (normative and coordination)</li> <li>• Programming in humanitarian action (pilots and Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action)</li> <li>• Technical assistance (gender focal points)</li> <li>• Capacity building and training to address gaps in gender-based approaches</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaps in data</li> <li>• Gaps incorporating specific barriers and needs that affect women and girls in planning/programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PDNA (Nepal, Somalia, India) and gender alerts (IASC – Ebola, Nepal), situation analysis (i.e. Profile of Venezuelan migrant women)</li> <li>• Advocacy (coordination), research and capacity building</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited participation of women and girls in decision-making and solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with women's organizations and women (e.g. mediators)</li> <li>• LEAP (empowerment)</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of targeted investment in women</li> <li>• Lack of accountability on gender by humanitarian actors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy (e.g. UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund 30% target for projects/results, Colombia)</li> <li>• Development of IASC Accountability Framework, oversight of gender equality for funding distribution (Iraq, Colombia)</li> </ul>

## UN Women should continue to build on its development work while increasing its focus on the humanitarian side of the nexus.

UN Women's global normative work has provided a foundation for activities that are closer to the development side of the humanitarian–development nexus. This could lead humanitarian stakeholders to view UN Women solely as a development actor, thus decreasing the Entity's opportunities to influence humanitarian and other actors in their work to support women and girls in emergencies, and as they integrate gender equality and the empowerment

of women into their programmes. UN Women could have a greater impact by ensuring that: a system-wide response is gender sensitive from the beginning; the Entity addresses underlying power dynamics; programming considers possible risks and backlash to women's participation; and barriers to access are addressed. These actions are all closer to the humanitarian side of the nexus and also facilitate links to UN Women's global normative work.

### SNAPSHOT: ECUADOR

UN Women supported a cash for work programme in response to the 2016 earthquake in Ecuador that affected approximately 720,000 people. UN Women trained more than 240 women on livelihood skills for income generation, such as building reconstruction and debris-removal activities, and certified 48 people from the earthquake affected area in masonry and construction skills. This is an example of how UN Women, albeit in a small way, supported a traditional activity (cash for work) in ways that met needs and promoted gender equality and the empowerment of women.



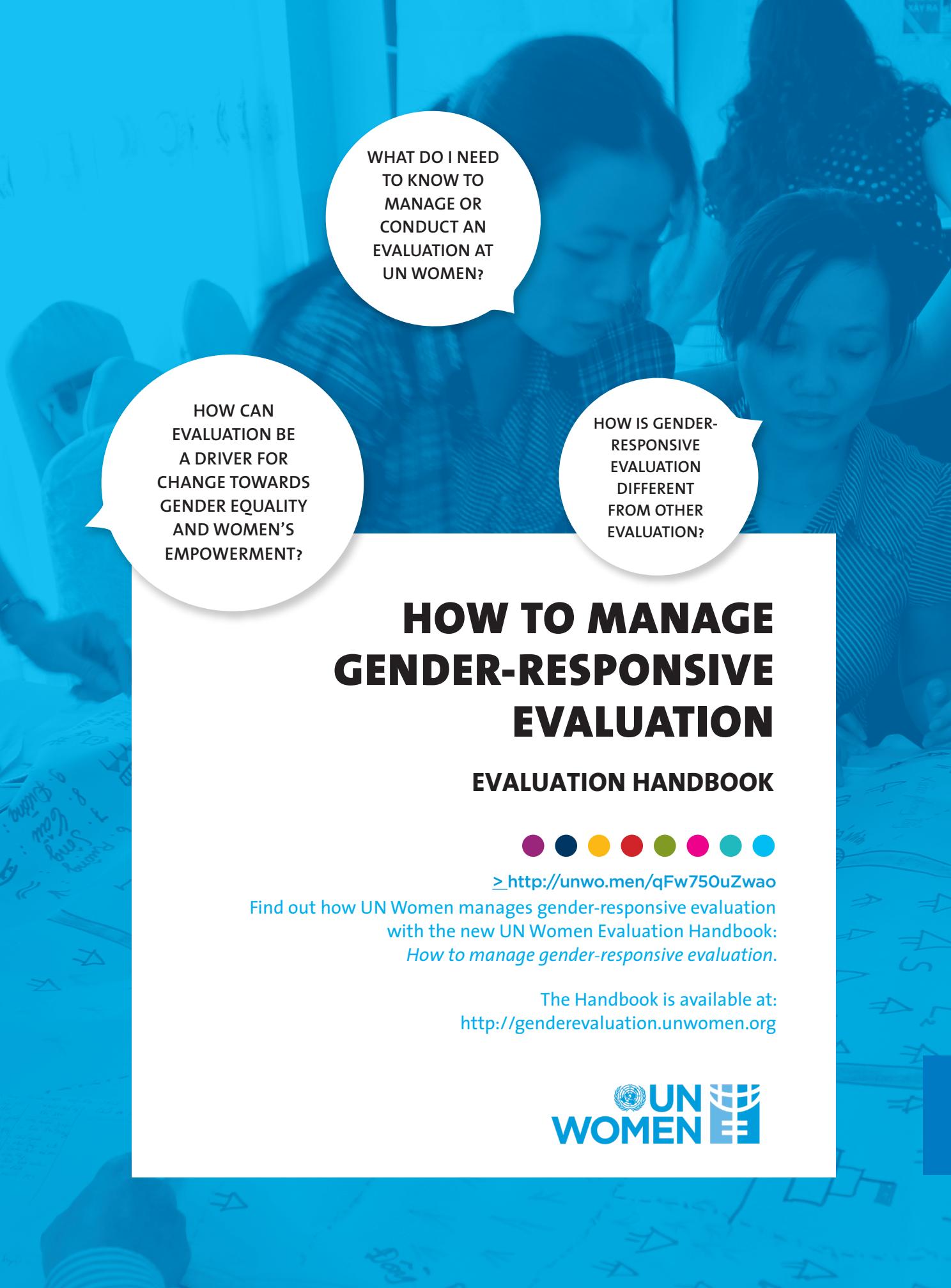
## Working in partnership can ensure that UN Women makes sufficient contributions and increases funding opportunities.

United Nations organizations are generally enthusiastic about engaging with UN Women, which has emerged from the partnerships that UN Women has forged to date. However, in the future, partnerships could be more central to how UN Women works in terms of specific responses. Partnerships with OCHA, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, among others, could enable UN Women to contribute to developing effective gender equality and women's empowerment

approaches, while creating a channel for these to be implemented at scale. This is important as UN Women's programming currently tends to be at a smaller scale, meaning its efficacy and relevance is difficult to appraise. Working in partnership and at scale would be an effective way to demonstrate results, inform global policy and increase the inclination and capacity of donors to fund similar approaches and partnerships in other humanitarian responses.

### SNAPSHOT: COX'S BAZAR

At the country level, the evaluation team found that there was positive collaboration between WFP and UN Women in Cox's Bazar, particularly in UN Women's multi-purpose centres for Rohingya women and girls in the camps. WFP in Bangladesh was eager to work with UN Women and noted that the technical expertise and support provided by UN Women during needs assessments was very helpful. WFP was also planning to utilise space within one of UN Women's multi-purpose women's centres to deliver livelihood programmes to Rohingya women, combining WFP's expertise in this area with UN Women's access to women in the camp, working together in a transparent and mutually beneficial manner to achieve joint objectives more effectively.



WHAT DO I NEED  
TO KNOW TO  
MANAGE OR  
CONDUCT AN  
EVALUATION AT  
UN WOMEN?

HOW CAN  
EVALUATION BE  
A DRIVER FOR  
CHANGE TOWARDS  
GENDER EQUALITY  
AND WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT?

HOW IS GENDER-  
RESPONSIVE  
EVALUATION  
DIFFERENT  
FROM OTHER  
EVALUATION?

# HOW TO MANAGE GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

## EVALUATION HANDBOOK



> <http://unwo.men/qFw750uZwao>

Find out how UN Women manages gender-responsive evaluation  
with the new UN Women Evaluation Handbook:  
*How to manage gender-responsive evaluation.*

The Handbook is available at:  
<http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org>



## **There is significant evidence that UN Women has been highly effective in its global normative work.**

There are several examples of how UN Women has worked to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into frameworks and policies that guide humanitarian action. The evaluation could not identify any relevant international forum or event in which UN Women was absent in the last five years. The examples provided throughout the evaluation indicated that UN Women was not merely present, but also ensured that issues of gender equality and women's empowerment were incorporated into key normative frameworks and guidance.

### **UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)**

#### **CSW 2015**

Hosted workshop for civil society activists on the topic of Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the World Health Summit (WHS) to generate recommendations for the consultation process for the WHS and were shared at other women's consultations and workshops.

#### **CSW 2016**

High Level Leaders Roundtable on Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality. CSW60 High Level Side Event "Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Humanitarian Action through the World Humanitarian Summit". Included participation of the Executive Director of UN Women, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Member States and women civil society.

The 2016 CSW Agreed Conclusions underlined the imperative of empowering women in leadership and decision-making in all aspects of responding to and recovering from crisis; the need to prioritize women and girls' needs in humanitarian action and in all emergency situations; and stressing that every humanitarian response should take measures to address sexual and gender-based violence.

#### **CSW 2017**

Estimating the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region.

#### **CSW 2019**

Leveraging cash-transfers to reduce intimate partner violence at scale: promise and potential from research around the globe.

## **Lessons from UN Women's country-level work should serve to improve programming approaches globally and act as a catalyst for longer-term transformative change.**

UN Women lacks systematic methods to effectively extract and document learning from specific humanitarian responses. While this is typical of many international organizations, it is of particular

importance for UN Women as it supports programming that addresses immediate needs, pathways to recovery and longer-term transformative change. A systematic and consistent approach to appraise

and extract lessons on how different actors incorporate a gender lens into humanitarian activities – either independently or because of direct UN Women support – would not only continue to build the case for investment in gender equality and women's empowerment, but would also provide a compendium of best and emerging practices that could be replicated and brought to scale in other responses.

## **UN Women's reliance on non-core resources tends to make it more reactive and less strategic, and therefore less efficient overall.**

With non-core resources comprising around 95 per cent of UN Women's humanitarian funding, the Entity is mostly "supply driven".

This means that UN Women is largely reliant on project-level funding and opportunities, which affects its ability to be more coherent and strategic at the global level.

### COMPARISON OF CORE AND NON-CORE RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

YEAR	DRF (core)	DRF (non-core available)	TOTAL	NON-CORE/SUM OF CORE AND NON-CORE (%)
2018	US\$ 951,133.00	US\$ 15,741,293.00	US\$ 16,692,424.00	94%
2017	US\$ 726,432.00	US\$ 19,768,202.00	US\$ 20,494,634.00	96%
2016	US\$ 892,984.00	US\$ 17,948,201.81	US\$ 18,841,187.81	95%

## **UN Women's capacity and expertise in humanitarian action vary across offices, risking the Entity's ability to deliver consistently.**

As seen from other organizations' experiences, becoming established as a reliable humanitarian actor requires commitment in terms of sufficient humanitarian capacity across the organization. Current corporate systems do not facilitate UN Women's understanding of what type of humanitarian-related expertise it has available and where it can be found. A team of dedicated staff

that could be deployed in the earliest stages of a response would help to ensure the implementation of a strategic and consistent humanitarian approach. Ideally, this team would include three to seven staff members with experience from multiple humanitarian responses who have a deep understanding of humanitarian coordination and appeal mechanisms.



## UN Women's work exemplifies gender equality and human rights approaches.

Overall, UN Women's approach to humanitarian action demonstrates an understanding of how dynamics in a crisis can affect women and girls

by increasing their vulnerability and impacting their resilience, which ultimately undermines their ability to benefit from humanitarian action.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### NORMATIVE WORK

**+20**

UN Women involved in more than 20 processes to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in humanitarian action

#### COORDINATION WORK

**10**

UN Women Country Offices participated in Humanitarian Country Teams in 2014

**22**

UN Women Country Offices participated in Humanitarian Country Teams in 2018

#### OPERATIONAL WORK

##### Technical assistance

**83%** ↗ **88%**

of country programmes engaged in humanitarian action in 2014      of country programmes engaged in humanitarian action in 2018

##### Safe spaces

**66**  
safe spaces and/or empowerment centres, in 13 countries by 2018

##### Capacity building

**33%** ↗ **75%**  
of country programmes providing capacity building in 2014      of country programmes providing capacity building in 2017

**Livelihood activities** **34K** people reached in livelihood activities in 2014      ↗ **79K** people reached in livelihood activities in 2018

#### COUNTRY SNAPSHOT

In South Sudan, UN Women has focused on a multi-pronged strategy that includes sponsorship of the Gender Standby Capacity Project, convening forums for all gender focal points; active participation in clusters and subclusters; and in providing guidance to national NGOs seeking financing from the country-based, pooled funds. This strategy ensures that UN Women is involved in how needs and priorities are determined; how different actors meet these needs; and how to strengthen the gender equality and women's empowerment aspects of programme designs. It moves from needs and priorities to more effective programming and the possibility for transformative change responding to the needs of women and girls in humanitarian settings.



What is systems thinking and how is it applied to evaluations?

How can we include marginalized voices in evaluations?

How can we bring "nature's perception" into our analysis?

# ISE4GEMS: A NEW APPROACH FOR THE SDG ERA

## Evaluation Guide Book



The Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMS) guide is written in two parts:

Part A presents the theoretical background on systems thinking and  
Part B provides practical steps and tools to conduct an Inclusive Systemic Evaluation.

Find the guide here: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/9/ise4gems-a-new-approach-for-the-sdg-era>





# Moving forward: four ways to accelerate action for gender-responsive humanitarian action

*The evaluation identified four recommendations that are critical for UN Women's future contribution to humanitarian action.*

## → RECOMMENDATION 1

### UN Women should develop a response-level strategy to complement its global humanitarian strategy.

A response-level strategy should provide specific approaches and standard operating procedures for engaging with and influencing: coordination mechanisms (Humanitarian Country Teams, the Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan); resource mobilization strategies within and beyond coordinated appeals; key partnerships and

joint programming opportunities; and approaches that ensure knowledge management and learning.

UN Women should establish criteria to define its field-level engagement, considering the level of need, capacity and inter-agency agreement. UN Women's most important contribution to humanitarian action could be

in helping operationalize guidance and bridging policy and practice. UN Women could also better track financing and results in programmes that specifically target women and girls to strengthen accountability.

To be a credible actor, UN Women needs to be predictable to better serve women and girls in humanitarian settings. This requires UN Women to commit to what it will do in crises (what, when and how). The decision on



PHOTO: UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

what to prioritize should be informed by humanitarian needs, UN Women's comparative advantages and gaps in the system-wide response.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1.1**

**UN Women should review its humanitarian strategy and develop a complementary and detailed resource mobilization strategy to leverage opportunities at the country level (Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan) and with key donors.**

UN Women may need to revise its Humanitarian Action and Coordination Response Office (HACRO) humanitarian strategy based on a revised theory of change and develop a resource mobilization strategy that is coherent with these priorities and effective humanitarian action.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1.2**

**UN Women should conduct internal annual reviews of gender in humanitarian action and/or gender equality and the**

**empowerment of women in humanitarian action to analyse how strategies are contributing to demonstrable results.**

This may include assessing changes in coordination and the adoption and use of proven approaches and models, as well as strengthening leadership, accountability and technical capacity in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

**UN Women should identify the necessary leadership, minimum levels of staffing and office structures in humanitarian settings for an adequate response-level strategy in humanitarian action to ensure that the Entity can maximize its influence at the country level.**

UN Women's humanitarian capacity should be central to relevant parts of the Entity's management and administration systems. This would include

expanding and strengthening training on humanitarian principles, gender in humanitarian action, humanitarian coordination, the humanitarian

programme cycle, accountability to affected populations, communications with communities, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse. Management and humanitarian staff would benefit from guidance on how to engage with humanitarian donors and strategic partners.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

**UN Women has developed important partnerships in different contexts and should build on this experience and focus on developing global partnership frameworks with OCHA, UNHCR and UNFPA.**

UN Women should prioritize global partnerships with OCHA and UNHCR which could help to define a core package of services that UN Women could commit to delivering in (pre-defined) humanitarian contexts. Given their coordination roles, OCHA and UNHCR could then promote this "package" in other responses.

UN Women should continue to clarify and expand its partnership with UNFPA, recognizing each organization's contribution and how they build on and support each other in emergency contexts. This should go beyond

agreements related to gender-based violence referrals, psychosocial support and prevention of gender-based violence, as currently agreed. A memorandum of understanding should be signed between both organizations and guidance should be developed to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of both organizations in all contexts. A joint team of focal points could be established to travel to selected countries, clarify issues and work collaboratively.

An enhanced partnership with UNICEF could also be considered as

there are some understandable overlaps between the two organizations. UN Women should work towards an agreement that illustrates how UN Women and UNICEF complement each other in different humanitarian contexts. This should also provide the approach to how each organization takes the lead on issues affecting women and girls.

Recommendation 3 requires UN Women and corresponding partners, such as OCHA, UNHCR and UNFPA, to mutually engage at the highest level in order to secure the necessary commitment and sufficient specificity as to what, how and when they will collaborate to guide implementation on the ground.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

**UN Women should increase its effectiveness and impact in humanitarian action by better linking the Entity's work to system-wide responses, while minimizing programming that is not conducted in partnership or does not have broader strategic importance.**

Due to its limited size and scale, UN Women should seek to increase its reach by better linking to system-wide responses, for example, rolling out the IASC Accountability

Framework on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Humanitarian Action, integrating gender-responsive programming throughout the humanitarian programme

cycle, and promoting women and girls' participation from the initial assessment stage to management, implementation and assessment. From this, UN Women can promote accountability and learning and further focus on enabling outcome-centred response planning and improved Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan processes.



PHOTO: UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN



## **EXPERT'S VIEW**

# Simon Lawry-White

*Humanitarian Expert*

For this evaluation, I had the pleasure of acting as an independent expert reviewer for the UN Women Evaluation Office. Ensuring that gender considerations are properly taken into account during humanitarian action is a constant struggle. For many reasons, many gender related, women and girls suffer disproportionately during times of crisis. Through the IASC, gender has been established as a key topic on which comprehensive sector by sector guidelines have been issued. Other humanitarian actors want to improve how they integrate gender into their response and so have an interest in partnering with UN Women. Currently, this potential is not being fully met, according to

the evaluation report. UN Women is relatively new to humanitarian action and its humanitarian activities are small in scale and budget compared with more established agencies. Its activities are very diverse, making it difficult to see where the organization's comparative advantage in gender in humanitarian action lies. As the expert reviewer, I encouraged the evaluation team to map out the humanitarian eco-system and propose where UN Women might fit within it. The report concluded by challenging UN Women that it was at a crossroads and needed to determine whether it was ready to step forward as a fully engaged part of the humanitarian sector.



# UN Women management response to the humanitarian action evaluation

PHOTO: UN WOMEN/CHRISTOPHER HERWIG

**UN Women welcomes the findings and recommendations of the Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action.**

The evaluation assessed UN Women's contribution to humanitarian action from 2014–2018 at global, regional and country levels. Based on an extensive desk and portfolio review, country visits, online survey and meetings with key stakeholders in Geneva and New York, the evaluation assessed the relevance and effectiveness of UN Women's

contribution in line with rights-based approaches and gender equality principles.

UN Women appreciated the evidence generated from the evaluation which will inform organizational learning and future direction within the framework of organization-wide efforts to optimize and

align presence and engagement, specifically in the context of UN Development System Reform. The evaluation highlights the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment considerations to effective and responsive humanitarian action. It highlights external partners' strong recognition and appreciation of UN Women's

relevant and positive contribution to ensuring that gender equality and the empowerment of women remain central to humanitarian action.

UN Women welcomes the recognition of the evaluation, UN and donor organizations interviewed of its pioneering and highly effective normative and coordination role at the global level and key regional forums which has resulted in the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into frameworks and policies that guide humanitarian action despite UN Women's lack of membership in the IASC.

UN Women agrees with the assessment of the evaluation team that these efforts provide a foundation for stronger engagement and links between UN Women's global

normative work and humanitarian coordination mechanisms, and efforts at the country level.

UN Women recognizes the opportunities outlined by the evaluation to increase UN Women's effectiveness and impact at the country level by building on UN Women's strengths in the development side of the nexus; sustaining catalytic transformative programming; and better linking its work to system-wide responses while minimizing small-scale humanitarian programming that is not done in partnership or that does not have broader strategic importance.

The evaluation notes that UN Women's contributions to humanitarian action have been growing at a fast pace in influence and in budget,

with a 700 per cent growth in the past six years. UN Women appreciates the recognition of this growth and agrees with the evaluation that the heavy reliance on non-core funding for humanitarian assistance (currently at 95 per cent) poses significant challenges to UN Women's staffing capacities and at times renders it reactive and supply driven.

UN Women recognizes that its work in this area has increased to a point where a more strategic and consistent approach is required to strengthen its contributions to humanitarian action, from emergency response to longer-term transformative change. This will require more resources and investment in UN Women's humanitarian and nexus capacity to fully implement the evaluation's recommendations.





PHOTO: UN WOMEN/ALLISON JOYCE

# Comprehensive methodology for a broad evaluation

## EVIDENCE COLLECTED



**5 country visits +  
New York & Geneva**



**Extensive portfolio  
review (39 countries)**



**Over 550 documents  
reviewed**



**23 focus group  
discussions (with  
affected populations)**



**461 semi-structured  
interviews**



**Survey with 221  
responses  
(33% response rate)**



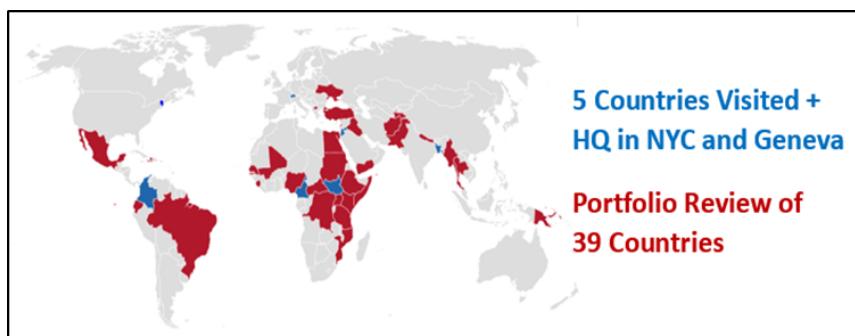
**Self-assessment  
questionnaire  
(six regional  
humanitarian advisers)**

The evaluation was conducted from September 2018 to June 2019. Given the comparatively short history of UN Women's engagement in humanitarian action, this evaluation was formative and had a strong utilization-focused approach.

The evaluation drew from a range of qualitative and quantitative sources: a desk review of more than 550 UN Women documents and of other entities; five country visits (Bangladesh, Cameroon, Colombia, Jordan and South Sudan), as well as meetings in New York and Geneva; a portfolio review of UN Women's work in 39 countries with humanitarian

interventions; a global survey; and a self-assessment exercise completed by all six UN Women regional humanitarian advisers. In total, 461 semi-structured interviews and group discussions took place.

The evaluation was conducted in line with the principles of the UN Women Evaluation Policy, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNEG Handbook on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance, and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct.



## **ABOUT TRANSFORM**

Published by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service, Transform is the first magazine dedicated exclusively to gender-responsive evaluation. It aims to communicate good practices on gender-responsive evaluations, as well as evaluation findings on what works for gender equality.

## **ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE (IES)**

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit Service under the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS). The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service's main purpose is to enhance accountability, inform decision-making, and contribute to learning about the best ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the organization's mandate, including its normative, operational and coordination work. The Independent Evaluation Service also works to strengthen capacities for gender-responsive evaluation within UN entities, governments and civil society organizations.

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