



EVALUATION BRIEF

UN WOMEN BANGLADESH
COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

January 2020



Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaizer

Bangladesh has been globally recognized for the progress made in improving the situation of women and girls. Bangladesh's Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) value for 2017 are 0.881 and 0.542 respectively. Bangladesh ranks highest in the Gender Gap Index in South Asia achieving 48 out of 145 countries. With women in the positions of the prime minister, the leader of the opposition in parliament, and the Speaker, Bangladesh is the fifth most gender equal country in the world in terms of political empowerment with 0.526 points. The challenges are in manyfolds as there is high number of women in vulnerable employment such as unpaid family work and domestic work; and very limited access to formal employment. Social norms and attitudes impedes women and girl's empowerment and gender equality. Women and girls in Bangladesh are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts due to the nature of their livelihoods, their social status and confines. The most protracted humanitarian situation is that of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh; and a significant number of women and girls reported witnessing or experiencing gender-based violence, including severe forms of sexual violence.

The Bangladesh Country Office (BCO) undertook its overall Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) with a view to assessing relevance, effectiveness of UN Women's work in Bangladesh; and promoting accountability and learning of UN Women. The key purpose of the CPE was to conduct a systematic assessment of the contributions made by UN Women to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level. The UN Women portfolio responds to its integrated mandate, which includes normative, operational and coordination work. The evaluation covers two Strategic Note periods from 2014-16 up to early 2019, while mainly capturing Quarter 1 (Jan-April) 2019 from a formative perspective. The Strategic Note was implemented through partnerships with government, civil society, the UN Country Team (UNCT) and development partners including some operational work was conducted within the framework of global, regional and joint UN programmes.

What did evaluation conclude and recommend

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1. Strategic planning for the next SN will require a strong, coherent vision which can provide the basis for completing a transition from project-orientation to programme thinking, and counterweight the risks inherent in higher exposure to non-core resources.

CONCLUSION 2. The underlying expected role and objectives of operational work in particular needs clarification in the process of developing this statement of intent. A clearer expectation of what this work sets out to achieve would provide a foundation for selecting of project and programmes which can be expected to be optimally fit-for-purpose.

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CONCLUSION 3. UN Women has taken a strong role in coordination on GEEW across the UN, but there remain some gaps, particularly in programme level strategic coordination. UN Women could take stronger leadership in this, using the opportunity of the upcoming UNDAF formulation and gender scorecard. This could include efforts to coordinate and rationalise ministry partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1.
In preparation of the new SN, include a team-wide initiative to evolve the current programme level theory of change, and impact-area theories of change that articulate with this.



RECOMMENDATION 2.
Consider combining this programme statement with the theory of change to produce an accessible communications brief for dissemination throughout the UN system and among DPs.



RECOMMENDATION 3.
Take steps in the UNDAF formulation process to ensure a gender-responsive evaluation that would include a strong analysis of the UN Systems ability to coordinate on GEEW.



CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 4. There is scope for working more effectively to BCO's comparative advantage. This means maximising a focus on policy influence and advocacy; more consistent convening of CSOs and government in order to fully institutionalise the role of CSOs in policy monitoring; and drawing on international experience for knowledge and expertise.

CONCLUSION 5. Alongside evidence of UN Women's increasing visibility; strong leadership and increasing efficiency in terms of budget delivery, there is some indication of areas for improvement. While current continuing staff recruitment may well resolve some of these issues, it will be important to strengthen systems for induction of new staff and continuing education/training of staff to bolster capacity and confidence.

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CONCLUSION 6. Sharper and more consistent analysis of marginalised groups would benefit understanding of layered forms of marginalisation in the country, and therefore would support more precise targeting. It would also draw attention to the need for more systematic monitoring of the effects of operational and normative work on these groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 4. Facilitate the reinstatement of a strong civil society umbrella and advisory group to BCO and seek ways to convene this and government on issues related to focus operational areas.

RECOMMENDATION 5. Seek a defined role for WEE should be pursued bearing in line with the SN programme selection guidance.

RECOMMENDATION 6. Use the proposed functional review process to further explore precise areas in which staff confidence could be enhanced and understanding of operational procedure amplified.

RECOMMENDATION 7. Consider addressing sustainability issues by involving relevant actors more substantially and by focusing on interventions which can contribute to sustaining capacity.

RECOMMENDATION 8. Sharpen analysis of intersecting forms of inequality among women and base programme targeting on specific groups identified by this analysis.

Evaluation Approach and Methodology:

Theory of Change based approach. This used a portfolio-level theory of change reconstructed in consultation with BCO staff and through presentation and discussion with the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). It was reconstructed on the basis of documentation for the Strategic Notes (SNs) during the inception period, alongside impact area theories of change for Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)- Climate Change (CC), and Gender-responsive Governance (GRG)/Normative work as articulated in the SN 2017-20. The theories of change provided a framework for establishing evidence around how change was expected to happen, testing and validating the logic of interventions at the portfolio level. Applying this approach meant emphasizing context and accommodating complexity and focusing on seeking out causal pathways as experienced by respondents in question design for interviews and focus groups.

Utilization-focused approach. The evaluation questions were prioritized to provide maximum utility to the BCO, providing insights into the central questions founding the development of the next SN. A collaborative process was also part of this approach, in which the BCO was consulted for sense-checking findings and the formulation of recommendations at different points in the evaluation process.

Gender-responsive process in purpose, approach and method, following the UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation at the design, data collection and analysis stages. This meant taking a participatory approach wherever possible, engaging the ERG at key stages of design and the development of findings, maintaining a collaborative relationship with the BCO, and explicitly consulting rights holders in semi-structured focus groups.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTED FOR THIS EVALUATION

63 Interviews

UN Women staff, government stakeholders, UN family stakeholders, development partners, and CSOs



39 women
24 men
at country level

4
Focus Group
Discussions

26 women rights-holder

200+
Documents

26
Online Survey
Responses

2 Site visits

19 women
7 men