



EVALUATION BRIEF



REGIONAL OFFICE PROGRAMME PRESENCE PORTFOLIO EVALUATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

January 2019

Background

Programme Presence Offices (PPO) are the smallest type of UN Women office and were designed to operationally implement global and regional programming in-country, but their role gradually expanded to encompass UN Women’s integrated mandate of normative, coordination and operational work, without an accompanying increase in resources or clear roles and responsibilities. This is the first multi-country portfolio review in Asia and the Pacific to assess the contributions of PPOs towards development results. The evaluation covers nine programme presence offices: Bhutan, China, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDF), Maldives, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Designed as a forward-looking evaluation, it aimed to provide insights for the formulation of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) 2019-2021 Strategic Note as well as decision-making for UN Women’s regional strategy in the context of UN Reform.

The evaluation applied a theory-based cluster design to assess performance according to the theory of change stated in the ROAP SN 2014-2018. It also used a mixed methods approach and incorporated in-depth case studies of 3 of the 9 assessed countries: Lao PDR, Philippines, and Thailand. Assessment was based around standard OECD/ DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, organizational efficiency, and contribution towards sustainability, as well as an additional criterion of leveraging human rights and gender equality. The evaluation employed gender-responsive and participatory methods throughout the process, and findings were validated using triangulation of data and the use of three distinct data analysis methods.

Methodology



Conclusions and recommendations

Recommendations are presented in order of priority; they are interdependent and should not be taken as stand-alone statements.

CONCLUSION 1

UN Women PPOs in Asia and the Pacific have made important contributions to advancing gender equality and empowering women at the national and local levels and there is strong demand for UN Women in countries where PPOs have been operating. However, their strategic value has not been realized.

Recommendation 1

UN Women ROAP should advocate within the global change management process that UN Women continue to place value on small office presences and consider how best to use these offices to strategically advance UN Women's triple mandate and build on gains made. Implementation of this recommendation is dependent on the implementation of the other recommendations: definition of role of small presence offices (recommendation #2); mapping of typology and presence for the region (recommendation #3); and targeted support to small presence offices (recommendation #4).

CONCLUSION 2

A lack of clarity on the mandate of PPOs is a key issue that has limited the realization of the full potential of PPOs, and the UN reform presents an opportunity for defining this presence within the new UN operational context.

Recommendation 2

UN Women should define a distinct strategic and catalytic role within UN Women's regional architecture for small presence offices that is unique and different from that of country offices and that can be operationalized in select modalities currently being promoted within the UN Reform. Criteria for decision-making relating to country presence, modality and resource allocation should be done in accordance with this definition and should be flexible enough to respond to emerging opportunities – this is further discussed in Recommendation #3.

CONCLUSION 3

A whole-of-region approach to UN Women programming and operations that includes PPOs (or small presence offices) could help to realign the time and resources of the ROAP towards its core functions.

Recommendation 3

Based on decisions made in response to Recommendation #2, UN Women should commission a region-wide study to identify which countries in Asia Pacific will add the most strategic value to UN Women's overall regional positioning considering the current resource envelope, which may require a re-configuration of the current office presence.

Recommendation 4

Based on the findings and recommendations of the regional study (Recommendation #3) on where UN Women should be present, UN Women should continue to provide targeted investment and support to small presence offices fulfill their unique catalytic role (as defined based on Recommendation #2).