

EVALUATION BRIEF

GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLUSTER EVALUATION

FOR THE PROJECTS “BUILDING DEMOCRATIC, PEACEFUL AND GENDER-EQUAL SOCIETY IN UKRAINE” (2017-2021) AND “DECENTRALIZATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT REFORMS: TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN UKRAINE” (2018-2022)



UN WOMEN UKRAINE
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This is a Brief to the Gender-Responsive Cluster Evaluation.
For full text of *the Evaluation Report* contact UN Women Ukraine
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GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLUSTER EVALUATION

For the projects “Building Democratic, Peaceful and Gender-Equal Society in Ukraine” (2017–2021) and “Decentralization and Law Enforcement Reforms: Transformative Approaches to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Ukraine” (2018–2022)

UN Women in Ukraine commissioned a cluster evaluation of its work in two projects that contributed to the three priority outcome areas of its Strategic Note (SN): (1) Governance, Leadership and Participation; (2) Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG); and (3) Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The projects evaluated operate primarily in eastern Ukraine: (1) **“Building Democratic, Peaceful and Gender-Equal Society in Ukraine”** (December 2017 – April 2021), funded by Norway; and (2) **“Decentralization and Law Enforcement Reforms: Transformative Approaches to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Ukraine”** (February 2018–December 2022), funded by Denmark.

The **purpose and objectives of the cluster evaluation** were to assess the extent to which results were achieved as per the project agreements at the individual and institutional levels, document lessons

learned and obtain data and analysis to inform the future decision-making of the Ukraine Country Office (CO), donors, other UN agencies, Ukrainian civil society organizations and the Government of Ukraine (GoU).

The evaluation also conducted the following:

- analysed and reviewed the projects’ Theories of Change (ToCs) and key assumptions;
- analysed the projects’ relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability against the outcomes of UN Women’s SN;
- identified good practices and innovations as well as challenges to inform future work;
- identified strategies for replication and upscaling.

The projects share a common methodological approach and similar ToCs. The Decentralization and Law Enforcement Reforms project also works at the national level with the Ministry of Internal Affairs,



Young women mobilizers in Lozno-Oleksandrivka, Luhansk region, 2020 (Photo by: UN Women Ukraine, Maksym Holoborodko)

“Now women are not treated only as housewives – but also as leaders.” SHG member, Luhansk region

with a focus on the development of a unified police curriculum on gender-based violence (GBV), as well as with the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development (MCTD) and the MIA to enhance their capacities to implement gender-sensitive reforms and support the development of different policies. Both projects have sought to assist the GoU in its democratic reform process through initiatives designed to facilitate the decentralization of gender-responsive planning and budget processes and the GoU’s WPS National Action Plan (NAP). The projects have also used a combination of the development of WPS local action plans and application of the Community Mobilization for Empowerment (CME) approach to address community priority needs at the regional and local levels and to begin to address GBV prevention and response services. UN Women and UNDP both applied the adjusted CME methodology in different eastern Ukraine communities, although there was some overlap.

The CME approach is broken down into 10 steps: (1) arriving in the community; (2) establishing self-help groups (SHGs); (3) conducting community profiles; (4) building the capacity of mobilized groups; (5) identifying priority needs and consolidating groups; (6)

facilitating interactions between communities and the authorities, lobbying for incorporating their needs in local plans/programmes; (7) identifying community-based initiatives for support with small grants; (8) implementing such initiatives/projects; (9) using monitoring for learning; and (10) conducting an evaluation and determining follow-up steps.

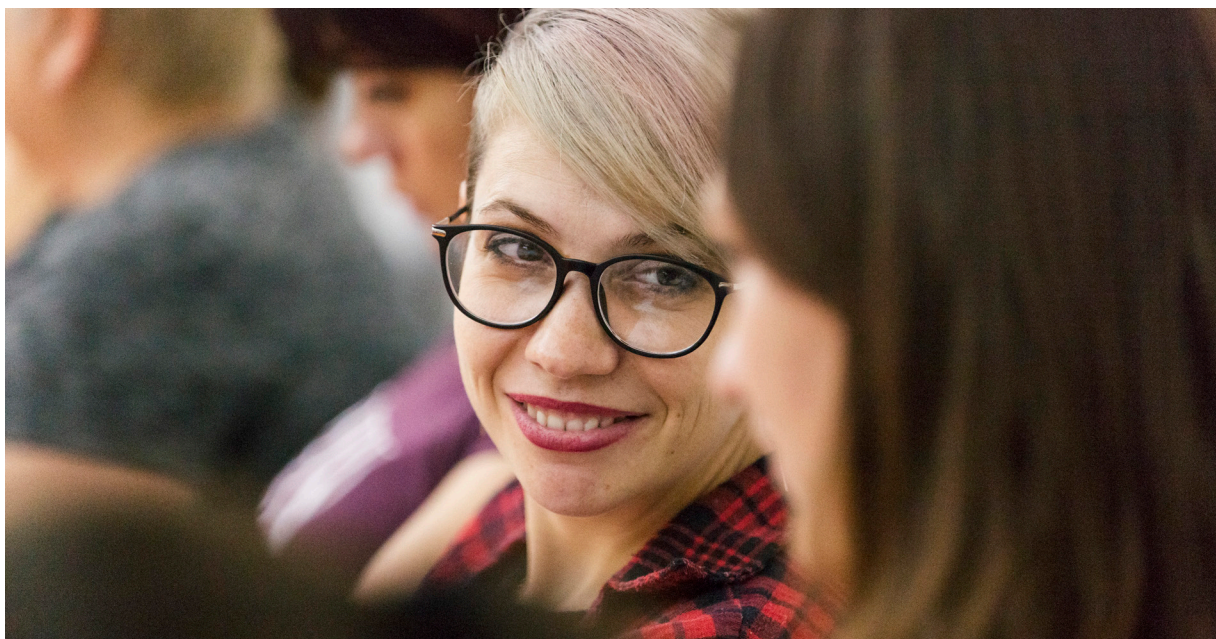
METHODOLOGY

The cluster evaluation was conducted over a **six-month period** (January–June 2021) and was based on an extensive document review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with 80 stakeholders and project beneficiaries: GoU officials at the national, regional and local levels; community-level project beneficiaries, Responsible Parties (RPs), donors and development partners; and other UN agencies. The evaluation data were analysed using a four-point ranking scale based on 16 main evaluation questions with 30 indicators.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Relevance:

- The projects reflect strong relevance to national GoU democratic reform priorities.
- At the community level, the Evaluation Team found that women and vulnerable groups identified economic security as being more important than physical



Community mobilizers at the CME workshop, 2019, Kharkiv (photo by: UN Women Ukraine, Anna Korbut)

security, the latter being the focus of the project support towards localizing the WPS agenda.

- The team also observed that the projects evaluated are part of the UN Women country programme (i.e. SN), funded by different donors and development partners. The ToCs for the projects, therefore, are aligned with this programme approach.

Coherence:

- The projects were well aligned with UN Women's SN and the GoJ's priorities related to democratic reform and its WPS NAP implementation and international and regional gender equality (GE) agreements and commitments.
- The CME methodology, which was used as the main project approach to contribute to SN Outcome 1 on Governance, Leadership and Participation, has been quite successful in increasing women's participation at the community level.
- However, there is still limited evidence of more equitable benefits resulting from this participation in terms of women's improved well-being, their access to justice or their having changed the perceptions of gender equality. This will require more time to achieve and measure.
- The team also found that some project approaches related to EVAW do not align with SN Outcome 2, which focuses on "transformative changes in social norms, attitudes and behaviours [being] achieved at community and individual levels to prevent GBV". They have achieved results, but more of the work at this level has focused on improved GBV response services as opposed to transformative prevention initiatives.
- Regarding SN Outcome 3 on WPS, UN Women is clearly a leader in promoting and advancing the WPS

"We had a case in our village where a woman called the police number to say that her husband beat her and wouldn't let her back to her house - our police usually don't respond to such cases and they told her no brigades were available - in this case she knew who to call and the police were able to come and receive her complaints. This woman probably wouldn't have called us before." SHG member, Zaporizhzhia region

agenda in Ukraine and specifically the localization of the WPS action plans. This approach stands as an innovative good practice that could be emulated both elsewhere in Ukraine (not only in the conflict-affected east) and more globally.

Effectiveness:

- The CME approach has contributed significantly to increasing women's participation in community-level decision-making and leadership.
- To take this approach to the next level of **transformative change** in women's and girls' lives will require the following: (1) further investments in capacity-building of SHGs to improve data collection and analysis (e.g. community gender profile analyses) and help the SHGs prioritize recommendations to local authorities; (2) greater involvement of these local authorities in this gender analysis process; (3) a stronger focus on gender analysis based on a human rights approaches; (4) the adaptation of curricula to focus on changes in attitudes and behaviours with regard to gender stereotypes; and (5) an increased focus on engaging men and boys.
- UN Women has also been successful in cooperating with local and regional administrations on the development of local WPS action plans. There are some potential constraints related to the financial and human resource capacity of local authorities to implement these plans; thus, proper monitoring will be critical to ensure that the plans will translate into actual results.
- The projects have been most successful with regard to building rights holders' capacity to participate more actively in community-level decision-making and to contribute to more gender-responsive planning at the local level. However, further investments are needed to ensure adequate capacities for gender-responsive planning and budgets for duty bearers.

Efficiency:

- Despite significant implementation challenges created by COVID-19 restrictions and national and local elections in 2019 and 2020 respectively, both projects were able to deliver almost all planned outputs on time, in many cases surpassing planned targets. UN Women also adapted well and quickly to these different challenges.

- Overall, UN Women and its project teams have a positive reputation.
- In general, UN Women has coordinated its work with other UN agencies and donors fairly well, but there remain some challenges regarding coordination between RPs and contractors, and there is room for improvement in the coordination between local government and community structures, such as the SHGs.
- There is a solid M&E system in place. However, the projects' monitoring mechanisms also had some weaknesses, which derive from the log frames' design and the (high) level of results designed. Several anticipated outcomes, particularly those related to social norms change, were overly ambitious for the projects' time frames. Therefore, there is a need to adjust these expectations to more realistic ones and to reflect this in the projects' ToCs.
- Monitoring data were also not always used to adjust activities and project implementation.
- The team also found great variations in how the RPs applied the M&E system and a need for greater

harmonization between the RPs and the project M&E system and process.

“I loved the trainings on women’s leadership and I think that it would be of interest to other women in our village because after such trainings you have more confidence and you realize that you are worth something in this life and capable of achieving something.” SHG member, Zaporizhzhia region

Sustainability:

- The projects' overall capacity-building efforts strengthened the capacities of some duty bearers, in particular of the vertical power structure dealing with gender-related issues at the regional and local levels.
- Changes in the individual capacity of SHG members as well as community mobilizers involved in the CME approach increased inclusive development/governance practices.



Women police officers from Donetsk region and representatives of Canadian Police Mission in Ukraine at the trainings on human rights and gender equality, Mariupol, Donetsk region (photo by: UN Women Ukraine, Ekaterina Tryfonova)

- UN Women also succeeded in promoting several of the approaches and methodologies that the projects initiated, so much so that they were replicated or scaled up in its projects in other parts of Ukraine as well as other hromadas in eastern Ukraine.
- National ownership of project results and processes is high, with the key government partners actively mainstreaming gender in their operations and policies. At the local level, ownership of project results was most effectively reached through the SHG process and local WPS adoption.

Recommendations Summary

Rec. 1: Programme Focus – To accommodate women’s and vulnerable groups’ identified priority needs for economic security, the CO should incorporate “women’s economic empowerment” as a new outcome area into its next SN while finding ways to continue its important work in the three existing outcome areas (Governance, GBV and WPS) without spreading resources too thinly, across the four SN outcome areas.

Rec. 2: Theory of Change – It is recommended that the UN Women CO revise its ToC related to SN Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 in order to (1) consider a longer-term approach to social norms change; (2) acknowledge that community mobilization approaches are heavily based upon volunteer labour; and (3) unpack and track the related change processes using a more incremental, phased approach.

Rec. 3: Coordination Processes – UN Women needs to develop more systematic mechanisms to coordinate RP activities at the oblast and community levels.

Rec. 4: CME Approach – UN Women should revisit the CME approaches to (1) improve the quality of community gender data collection and analysis and help SHGs prioritize recommendations to local authorities; (2) facilitate greater involvement of local authorities in community data collection and gender analysis; (3) place a stronger focus on gender analysis based on a women’s human rights approach; (4) adapt curricula to focus on attitudes and behaviours with regard to gender stereotypes; (5) put an increased focus on engaging men and boys; and (6) ensure that a higher percentage of community grant projects are allocated to activities that directly contribute to increased GE and GBV prevention.

Rec. 5: Research Dissemination Plans – UN Women Ukraine should require the development of dissemination and adaptation plans for relevant research conducted in collaboration with key partners. These plans would outline steps for dissemination to key internal partners and external stakeholders, including strategies, time and resources, to adapt key approaches based on findings from any formative research.

Rec. 6: Approach to M&E – The UN Women Ukraine CO should (1) continue working actively to strengthen UN Women and RP staff capacity in M&E; (2) design log frames and indicators that track intermediate results contributing to long-term results; (3) ensure that monitoring results and research findings are used to inform programme and project implementation; and (4)



Young girls participate in community-based event on zero tolerance to GBV, Hirsivka village, Luhansk region, 2019 (Photo by: UN Women Ukraine)

design M&E systems that capture the different phases and types of gender-transformative change.

Rec. 7: Expansion of UN Women Field Presence – It is recommended that UN Women Ukraine expand its programme team, including in its project locations, and ensure an adequate M&E function (officer), as well as ensure sustainable GBV prevention and GRB expertise to reduce its dependence upon external consultants and to increase its visibility at the regional/local levels.

Rec. 8: Gap Analysis – UN Women, in coordination with other key partners, should commission a gap analysis and mapping of actors in any future target communities in eastern Ukraine working specifically in thematic areas in UN Women’s SN.

Rec. 9: Institutionalization of Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting Processes – To strengthen

sustainability and the depth/breath of gender-transformative results, UN Women should elevate its approach to capacity-building with duty bearers related to gender-responsive planning and budgeting to greater focus on the institutionalization of these processes and related changes, working with all three levels of government.

“Our girls have started socializing more because they feel like they are heard and engaged. They feel like not only can they cook borscht at home but can also be active participants in community governance and can communicate some of the issues to local authorities that impact them.” SHG member



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