

EVALUATION BRIEF

FINAL EVALUATION

**OF THE UN WOMEN PROJECT “ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY
FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT
IN NATIONAL REFORMS, PEACE AND SECURITY IN UKRAINE”
(MAY 2017 – FEBRUARY 2022)**

The Final Evaluation was conducted between May and November 2021



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This is a brief to the project evaluation. For the full text of the evaluation report, contact UN Women Ukraine at unwomen.ukraine@unwomen.org.

FINAL EVALUATION

Of the UN Women Project “Enhancing Accountability for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in National Reforms, Peace and Security in Ukraine” (May 2017 – February 2022)

The Final Evaluation was conducted between May and November 2021

Overview

This brief presents the findings of an independent evaluation of the UN Women project “Enhancing Accountability for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in National Reforms, Peace and Security in Ukraine” (hereinafter the project) that was commissioned by the UN Women Country Office in Ukraine and conducted between May and November 2021. The goal of the project was to achieve transformative results for gender equality and women’s empowerment in Ukraine by integrating gender and women’s human rights commitments into national

reforms and women, peace and security processes and by putting mechanisms in place for adequate financing, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The project was funded by the Government of Sweden with a time frame from 1 May 2017 until 28 February 2022. As such, the project was operating at the national level with no specific interventions at decentralized levels.

The project partnered with a wide range of stakeholders from the Government of Ukraine, civil society and



Grass-root women activists discussing the State Social Program on Equal Opportunities For Women and Men, Consultative meeting of Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine with the regional state administrations and local hromadas, 17 September 2018, Dnipro, Ukraine. Photo: UN Women/Oleksandr Myshko

the private sector. Key Government of Ukraine partners and the primary targeted duty bearers include, specifically, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, the Ministry of Social Policy, the Parliament Inter-Factional Caucus ‘Equal Opportunities’ and relevant parliamentary committees working on gender equality and women’s empowerment and human rights. The project also worked with other public institutions, such as the State Statistics Service of Ukraine and the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service, as well as other key ministries (e.g. Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy, etc.). Key rights holders engaged in the project included civil society organizations (CSOs) representing diverse groups of women and gender equality advocates and private sector actors engaged in a gender-equality-related communication campaign (HeForShe).

The overall objective of the final evaluation was to assess the progress made towards the achievement of the set outcomes and objectives and to analyse

the results achieved and challenges encountered. The specific evaluation objectives focused on assessing project relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The information generated by the evaluation will be used by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (hereinafter UN Women) and stakeholders to develop effective gender equality and women’s empowerment strategies.

Methodology

The evaluation applied a non-experimental theory-based contribution methodology. As the project was heavily focused on policy advice and advocacy, the evaluation team reconstructed the project theory of change and used it as the overarching theory to understand how changes happened at the strategic and operational levels. Contribution analysis was used to develop an overall performance story and assess plausible project contributions to the observed changes. A mixed-methods approach was applied, involving a blend of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods such as a desk review, interviews,



Plenary session of the Consultative meeting of Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine with the regional state administrations and local hromadas, 17 September 2018, Dnipro, Ukraine. Photo: UN Women/Oleksandr Myshko

focus groups and a survey of the project's training beneficiaries. The methods utilized the best mix of data-gathering tools to yield the most reliable and valid answers to the evaluation questions and generate maximum learning within the limits of resources and the availability of data. Triangulation was applied for consistency, validity and reliability.

Evaluation findings

Assessment of project design

- The project components were well balanced and complementary to achieve the project's diverse range of objectives. The project design has been successful in ensuring that its results were seen as a shared responsibility between the Government of Ukraine and UN Women. Some aspects of project design were strong, including its well-focused and holistic approach to advancing changes at the levels of legislation and policy and its emphasis on evidence and using international effective practices. The project shortcomings included its too-wide spread and limited focus on the implementation of promoted policies and strategies.
- The project Results and Resources Framework was well structured and captures some important results that were logically linked to project activities, but some project components did not have corresponding indicators, and some indicators were focused only on outputs.

Relevance

- Partners and beneficiaries found the project highly relevant. The project was consistent and directly supported the Government of Ukraine with meeting its international gender equality and women's empowerment commitments and the development of respective national strategies and plans. The project stayed in the centre of gender reform in Ukraine and was able to work with government institutions and areas that were previously closed off to conversations about gender equality and women's empowerment such as the defense and security sector. A good indicator of the relevance of the UN Women project was the increasing numbers of national and international partners willing to collaborate with the project and UN Women. Frequent and extensive demands from the national partners for the project's support created a significant ad hoc workload and managerial burden.

- The project has shown fluidity, striking a balance between planned interventions and the room for maneuvering to effectively respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Coherence

- The project promoted effective National Women's Machinery coordination. The project supported improved cross-sectoral collaboration that enabled better coordinated policy responses. As gender equality and women's empowerment advancement requires effective cross-sectoral collaboration, the project supported the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and other partners of the National Women's Machinery to improve intersectoral collaboration and focus on results, which can be considered as one of the project's important, strategic contributions. The UN Women project missed an opportunity to work more closely with the Ministry of Finance to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment considerations are firmly embedded into the financial normative framework of Ukraine.

“UN Women is very cooperative and open to explore synergies, sharing tasks and providing their expertise to others.” – UN agency representative

- The UN Women project collaborated extensively and well in some areas such as statistics with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on women, peace and security, the Council of Europe (CoE) on the Roma Strategy, multiple CSOs, etc. The UN Women project did not explore possibilities to participate in the “Delivering as One” joint UN projects, which would have enabled the project to develop and test operational aspects of developed policies on the ground and conduct budget estimates.

Effectiveness

- The project was verifiably effective in terms of achieving most of the planned outputs as detailed in the reconstructed theory of change and results framework. The evaluation team concludes that the overwhelming majority of targets as outlined in the results matrix will be achieved or exceeded



Women and men gathering together in the city centre to mark the start of the 16 Days of Activism against Violence towards women and girls, Kharkiv, 25 November 2017, Kharkiv. Photo: UN Women/ Oleksandra Gunko

by February 2022. The UN Women project did not support the implementation of strategies and policies on the ground through piloting or developing operational protocols and other instruments, which limited the impact of the project on the final beneficiaries. In the evaluation team's assessment, the project overemphasized the policy development stages at the expense of supporting the policies' proper implementation. Ownership has also been considerable at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Social Policy and the National Agency for Civil Service. For some other counterparts, the long-term effectiveness was less certain. The project succeeded in delivering results with transformative potential in a number of areas, such as by contributing policy advice to the first Voluntary National Review on the SDGs, the Roma Strategy and its Action Plan; supporting gender audits/assessments in a number of ministries; promoting disaggregated gender equality monitoring indicators; and

contributing to the methodological recommendations regarding a gender impact assessment of sectoral reforms, among other initiatives.

- The most significant and long-lasting results were achieved by the UN Women project in advancing the women, peace and security agenda. Women, peace and security is a priority for UN Women, and success can be partially attributed to the effective support of UN Women management. The UN Women project work in the area of women, peace and security is an excellent example of how significant changes can happen if policy-level support, capacity development, and support with policy implementation, monitoring and engagement of CSOs and other key stakeholders are pursued at the same time.

“The project has managed to achieve significant and extensive results in multiple areas. It has been responsive and effective.” – Senior government official

- The capacities of supported duty bearers were strengthened through training and direct support. Institutional capacities to provide gender equality and women’s empowerment training of public servants have been strengthened. There is a risk of capacity replacement as some decision makers perceive the UN Women project’s consultants as permanent staff assigned to their institutions.
- The UN Women project supported the ‘leave no one behind’ agenda, but progress is uneven, limited by data and strategy gaps as well as inconsistent partnerships with CSOs representing marginalized communities. The goal of the agenda is to make the perspective of the ultimate beneficiaries better represented at the national and local levels.
- The UN Women project’s work on social norm change to support gender equality and women’s empowerment was promising and has a strong potential to contribute to systemic changes. The empowerment of women may not be sustained unless there are real shifts in social norms.

Efficiency

- Results were achieved in an economically efficient manner and with manageable transaction costs. The project was effectively managed, but lack of a dedicated M&E position made assessment of project progress vis-a-vis results, inconsistent.
- There was near consensus among the partners that the interventions’ results have been achieved with little waste and duplication. The project’s positioning in the ‘centre of the reforms’ allowed the project to establish strong connections with other organizations, including other UN agencies and CSOs. Oftentimes, these partnerships resulted in joint or cost-shared activities.
- The project management was very professional and well organized. In the absence of a dedicated M&E staff the project did not consistently capture progress with regard to its long-term outcomes such as effects of UN Women interventions on policy implementation results that affect in particular the most vulnerable women.

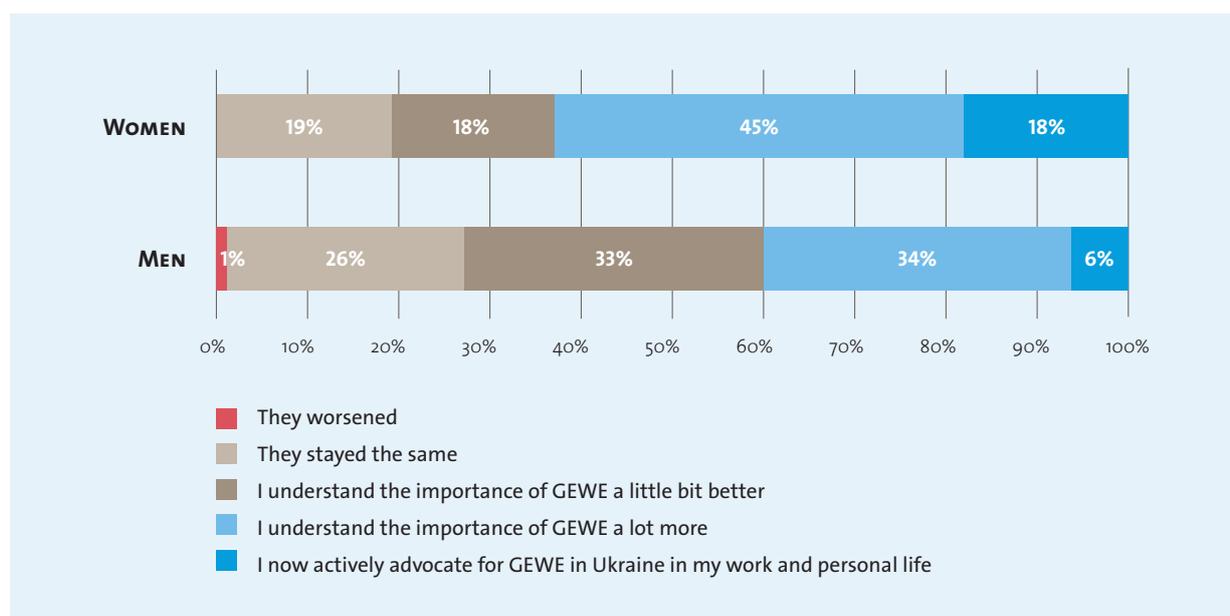


Women Participants at the International Forum “Women, Peace and Security”, 15 September 2016, Kyiv, Ukraine. Photo: UN Women/ Volodymyr Shuvayev

Sustainability

- Sustainability of the gains made by the project, and the enhanced impact for women, will require a strategic and coordinated approach addressing all aspects of the policy cycle from policy design to implementation and reporting, with targeted capacity development of key partners, including decision makers, and an explicit focus on social norm change to support gender equality and women’s empowerment. The operationalization of ‘leave no one behind’ and broad CSO involvement are critical for successful impacts for the most vulnerable groups.
- With few exceptions, the overall sustainability level of the project was found to be adequate. In those instances where the government partners were fully engaged in gender equality and women’s empowerment legislation and policy development and there was a strong high-level political willingness to pursue gender equality and women’s empowerment, fuelled by a strong national consensus and by external partners’ advocacy, such as in the women, peace and security sector, sustainability was ensured and relevant gender equality and women’s empowerment policies were well implemented. In other areas, where the national strategies and programmes were too ambitious and unfunded and where the implementation was delegated to the local level where capacities were limited, sustainability remains a concern.
- Surveyed training beneficiaries confirmed that they have become more confident to implement gender equality and women’s empowerment as a result of taking the trainings. The national authorities have committed to continue with and expand a range of gender equality and women’s empowerment trainings introduced by the project.
- High-quality practical resources/advice developed with the project’s support are available, and some of them were used, but it is difficult to assess whether they will continue to be used by decision makers and other targeted groups.
- CSOs were empowered, but their continuous involvement in policymaking depends on their increased capacities and the openness of the Government for continuous dialogue. The project made an important contribution to strengthening the capacities of some CSOs and the institutionalization of CSOs’ participation in gender equality and women’s empowerment policy dialogue at the national level. The project did not approach building effective relationships for cooperation with CSOs strategically.

Response of training beneficiaries to the question, “Have the perceptions and beliefs around gender equality and women’s empowerment changed because of your participation in UN Women training event(s)?”





Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Kateryna Pavlichenko is presenting the results, conclusions and recommendations of the Masculinity Study in the Security Sector of Ukraine, 25 March 2021, Kyiv, Ukraine. Photo: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine

In general, the project captured well the outputs, or tangible results, of its interventions but has inconsistent mechanisms and practices to record and analyse outcome measures (both short-term and intermediate-term) that are the effects or impacts of the outputs. Results-based management has not been fully implemented through the planning, achieving and demonstrating results stages, with main gaps in setting measurable baselines, targets and indicators and the effective monitoring of project strategic results and impact on the ground.

Lessons learned

UN Women neutrality, impartiality, international expertise and reputation in advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda were major advantages when engaging in complex and often sensitive dialogue with the national partners. The evaluation team evidenced impressive technical sophistication and the commitment of management and staff, who showed remarkable expertise, flexibility, creativity, innovative thinking and dedication. The UN Women project's strength also lied in its

ability to draw on global and national expertise and to include stakeholders, including at the centre of the Government, in national dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment. The lessons learned include the following:

- High political commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment is critical, but frequent turnover of Government of Ukraine officials increases a risk to long-term gender equality and women's empowerment reforms. Policy reform requires work at all stages of the policy cycle: design, budgeting, piloting and implementation.
- Gender equality and women's empowerment advancement is linked to other reforms such as public administration reforms and decentralization, and it requires work with multiple stakeholders. In this context, a highly functional centrally positioned National Women's Machinery is crucial for success.
- The increased availability of sex-disaggregated evidence and data and gender-related statistics is critically needed to support evidence-based programme strategies, policy reforms and advocacy in Ukraine.

- The engagement of international partners, e.g. NATO, with strong leverage power can make a critically positive contribution to building high-level support of the women, peace and security agenda.
- The project relied heavily on national consultants who provided entry points/connections to high-level Government of Ukraine officials and resulted in positive policy reform, but this model needs to be reviewed in regard to institutional capacity development and sustainability.
- A change in social norms regarding gender equality and women's empowerment is a key factor that impacts the depth, reach and sustainability of all formal institutional policy reforms and programmatic interventions.

and targeted investment in the implementation of new strategies and policies. A more narrowed focus, based on a thorough analysis of vulnerabilities and determinants, defined through extensively structured and continuous consultations with the national partners, including CSOs, would allow for more in-depth technical support in regard to gender equality and women's empowerment policy implementation and monitoring. In addition to ongoing partnerships with the head of the National Women's Machinery through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, the Ministry of Social Policy should be considered as an avenue for targeted technical support.

Recommendations

Recommendations for UN Women

To strengthen

- Refine and reduce the number of partnerships with national institutions – and subsequently the project's gender equality and women's empowerment reform agenda – in order to ensure in-depth

- Ensure a strong and well-funded project component on advocacy and capacity development for budget commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in all new projects as appropriate. UN Women should consider key partnerships with the Ministry of Finance in order to advocate, in partnership with other National Women's Machinery partners, for adequate gender equality and women's empowerment financing.



Army psychologist Natalya Stypuk conducting an instructing workshop for women and men on active service, 2016, Ukraine. Photo: UN Women/Mytsyk L.



Anastasia Muntyan, a Roma woman who lives in a village near Kyiv, Ukraine in December 2017. Photo: UN Women/Volodymyr Shuvayev

- Ensure that any policy reforms promoted by UN Women explicitly promote the ‘leave no one behind’ principle to impact the lives of women in marginalized communities and with intersectional challenges, such as rural women, Roma women, women with disabilities and LGBTQI+ women. UN Women is advised to continue its work on gender-disaggregated statistics to inform the development of policies and support targeting the most vulnerable groups and women, while at the same time increasing the awareness of decision makers on quality disaggregated data so that any new data will reach a receptive audience. Future gender equality and women’s empowerment policy reform work should seek to strike an important balance between providing targeted support to duty bearers and increasing the visibility and engagement with CSOs who represent the most vulnerable women and girls.
- Strengthen internal M&E, tracking and reporting by allocating more budget and dedicated personnel and by improving the quality and relevance of M&E systems.

To continue and/or scale up

- Scale up work with the private sector and specifically as an avenue for sustainable approaches to women’s economic empowerment as the private sector is a vital stakeholder in achieving global women’s economic empowerment goals.
- Expand work with women’s civil society to continue the strategic shift away from the focus on bilateral implementing partnerships towards movement-building in a way that addresses the genuine concerns of women and implements the policies that address their needs. UN Women is advised to advocate for a need to introduce legislative provisions for CSOs’ involvement in gender equality and women’s empowerment policy discussions and monitoring and to facilitate regular meetings of organizations representing vulnerable groups of women with respective national partners, ministries and other central executive bodies. Proactive measures should be adopted to consult groups that are traditionally excluded or underrepresented.

To start doing

- Ensure that any new initiative of UN Women has concerted and specific programming around institutional social norms change that will promote broader buy-in for gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives. As part of this, future projects should include support to targeted institutions for combating sexual harassment (such as what was done with the National Agency of Civil Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs) and strategically engaging with men.

“Gender norm change takes time, and it's difficult because people don't believe it's as big of a problem as it is – we need to make it visible.”
– UN Women staff

- Include specific modules (as relevant for various target groups) on implicit bias and gender stereotypes in future national-level reform project capacity development approaches.

Recommendations for the institutions constituting the National Women's Machinery

- Adopt a clear strategy to consolidate and reinforce the national and local capacity of the National Women's Machinery to support implementation and reporting on key gender equality and women's empowerment commitments. The National Women's Machinery in Ukraine has made significant strides regarding the coordination of gender equality and women's empowerment across Government of Ukraine institutions the

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, especially at the national level. However, gaps remain, specifically regarding the implementation of key gender equality and women's empowerment commitments and the necessary capacity thereof. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, in close collaboration with the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, is advised to define the accountability to and monitoring of the compliance to gender equality and women's empowerment commitments through the National Women's Machinery and with regional state administrations. UN Women can provide technical support based on mutually agreed needs and priorities.

“CSOs are the institutional memory – therefore, what is needed is real, effective CSO and Government of Ukraine cooperation, especially at the local levels.” – UN Women staff

- Ensure that all gender equality and women's empowerment related action plans have budgets, clear targets, well-defined responsible parties and well-articulated implementation and reporting procedures, including the institutionalization of platforms for public/CSO engagement. It is necessary to strengthen government M&E systems to ensure that measurable outcomes and the impact of newly established policy or state programmes are well monitored. M&E information can improve the quality and effectiveness of government decisions and support their accountability.

This is a brief to the project evaluation.

For the full text of the evaluation report, contact UN Women Ukraine at unwomen.ukraine@unwomen.org



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