

UN WOMEN EVALUATION STRATEGY 2022 - 2025



**UN WOMEN INDEPENDENT
EVALUATION SERVICE (IES) OF THE
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND
AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS)**

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
GATE	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System
IAS	Internal Audit Service
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Service
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEDAP	UN Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific
UNEG	UN Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific
UN-SWAP EPI	United Nations System-wide Action Plan Evaluation Performance Indicator
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the updated evaluation strategy for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The UN Women Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025 outlines how UN Women will leverage its evaluation function to provide evaluative evidence for greater impact on the lives of the women and girls it serves. It sets out four strategic areas of work: (i) implementing strategic corporate, regional and country portfolio evaluations; (ii) implementing effective decentralized evaluation systems; (iii) supporting United Nations (UN) and national stakeholder partnerships on gender-responsive evaluations; and (iv) strengthening evaluation use.

The UN Women Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025 prioritizes (i) improving the use of evaluations and follow-up of recommendations by UN Women management and other stakeholders; (ii) providing timely and relevant evaluative evidence on UN Women’s contributions to development and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results; and (iii) increasing demand for gender-responsive evaluations that support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and beyond, including through joint and system-wide evaluation initiatives. The strategy is informed by UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025; lessons learned from implementation of the previous evaluation strategy; and the broader set of directions and reforms adopted by the UN system.

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES), of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS), will lead implementation of the UN Women Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025 in collaboration with UN Women, development partners and key stakeholders.

This document presents the purpose and scope of UN Women’s Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025; provides an overview of the evaluation function at UN Women and its governance mechanisms; describes the strategic context that informs the Evaluation Strategy; and lays out strategic areas of focus and results of the evaluation function. It also presents a Theory of Change for the UN Women evaluation function and the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework which accompanies the strategy.

Overview: Purpose of Evaluation Strategy

Developed in the middle of a global pandemic, the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 articulates how UN Women will leverage its unique triple mandate to mobilize urgent and sustained action to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Given the interconnected nature of global challenges, UN Women focuses on integrated approaches to address the root causes of inequality and to affect broader systems change across its thematic focus areas: governance and participation in public life; economic empowerment; ending violence against women and girls; and women, peace and security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction. In support of this vision, UN Women’s Evaluation Strategy positions evaluation as an accelerator for the delivery of transformative results related to the Strategic Plan by advancing learning, accountability and informed decision-making.

In accordance with the Evaluation Policy, IES conducts independent corporate and strategic evaluations such as country portfolio and regional evaluations. Corporate and strategic evaluations assess issues concerning development effectiveness, organizational performance, and normative and operational coherence. IES also provides technical support and quality assurance to decentralized evaluations, which assess issues of significance at the programmatic level; system-wide and joint evaluations that support UN system

coordination and accountability; and some targeted national capacity development that supports gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In support of implementation of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025, the Evaluation Strategy outlines the following key areas of work:

- i. implementing strategic corporate, regional and country portfolio evaluations;
- ii. implementing effective decentralized evaluation systems;
- iii. supporting the UN and national stakeholder partnerships on gender-responsive evaluations; and
- iv. strengthening evaluation use.

The UN Women Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025 aims to support UN Women's mission and to help the organization learn, adapt and hold itself accountable for fulfilment of its integrated mandate. In doing so, IES expects that the findings, conclusions and recommendations emerging from its evaluations will stimulate real and sustained corporate action.

UN Women's Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025 was informed by consultations with the Advisory Committee on Oversight, senior management, regional directors and IES personnel.



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EVALUATION FUNCTION AT UN WOMEN

Evaluation Policy

The UN Women evaluation function, along with all initiatives supported and funds administered by the Entity, is governed by the Evaluation Policy (UNW/2020/5/Rev.1).¹ The Evaluation Policy was revised in 2020 and was informed by UN General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards (2016).²

UN Women's Evaluation Policy establishes a framework for ensuring that an independent evaluation function exists to provide credible evidence on the performance of UN Women in terms of results achieved in the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It also outlines the role of UN Women in system-wide evaluations and in promoting evaluations that are responsive to gender equality and the empowerment of women, including women's full enjoyment of their human rights. UN Women is charged with leading, coordinating and promoting accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment in the UN system and promoting more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming.

The Evaluation Policy states that UN Women conducts evaluations for three main and equally important purposes that together support the overall delivery of results. First, it is a means to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, including women who are rights holders and duty bearers. Second, it provides credible and reliable evidence for decision-making in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women to improve results. Third, it contributes important lessons learned about normative, operational and

coordination work in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women that adds to the existing knowledge base.³

The Evaluation Policy is implemented through both the UN Women Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025 and the Corporate Evaluation Plan 2022–2025. The Corporate Evaluation Plan 2022–2025 provides a time-bound framework for systematically generating and producing useful evaluation evidence on the performance of work under the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

Governance

IES prepared the UN Women Evaluation Strategy drawing on consultations and its regular exchanges with the Advisory Committee on Oversight, the senior management team (including regional Directors) and executive management. The Evaluation Strategy (and reporting on its implementation) is shared with the UN Women Executive Board through the evaluation function's Annual Report. IES leads implementation of the Evaluation Strategy in cooperation with the senior management team and regional directors.

Roles and responsibilities

As the custodian of the UN Women evaluation function, IES is responsible for establishing and implementing effective corporate evaluation systems; strengthening decentralized evaluation systems; leading UN coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; promoting innovation and knowledge generation concerning what works in promoting gender equality through national evaluation capacity building; and working to ensure that evaluation findings are used by management

¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Evaluation Strategy (New York, 2020). Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/08/evaluation-policy-of-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women>

² United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), UNEG Norms and Standards (New York, 2016). Available at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Evaluation Policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (New York, 2020). Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/08/evaluation-policy-of-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women>

and other stakeholders in UN Women's governance processes and are presented to and used by programme managers in the conduct of their work.

The UN Women Evaluation Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities⁴ of key evaluation constituents across the organization. IES, in collaboration with UN Women offices (e.g., Country Offices, Regional Offices and headquarters divisions) and other partners, ensures implementation of the UN Women Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025 to objectively assess UN Women's contribution to development results.

Lessons learned and areas that need to be strengthened

Successful implementation of the Evaluation Strategy and determination of outcomes and associated actions requires that the following five challenges be addressed:

Conducting strategic IES-led evaluations at country and regional level:

In 2019, IES piloted the first IES-led country portfolio evaluation to further strengthen the quality and richness evaluative evidence and insight. Following a successful pilot, additional IES-led regional and country portfolio evaluations were conducted to enhance the independence, credibility, quality and utility of UN Women evaluations. IES has since updated guidance on country portfolio evaluations to reflect lessons learned through IES-led evaluations. Recent years have shown an increase in the total number of IES-led evaluations and a positive impact on evaluation quality and evaluation use.

However, IES-led evaluations at the country and regional level are planned and budgeted at regional and country levels and often have limited funding. Implementation of these strategic evaluations could be strengthened through centralization of funding for IES-led evaluations under IES. IES will continue to engage with SPRED and budget

unit on this. It will also explore the potential for these strategic evaluations to be better funded in the context of corporate discussions ongoing on direct project costing and direct project management costing.

Evaluation use and management action:

Evaluation evidence, results and recommendations are well received by management and the Executive Board at UN Women. Country Strategic Note discussions systematically highlight how the results of evaluations, particularly country portfolio evaluations, are applied in planning and to inform UN Women's programmatic approach in key results areas. Nevertheless, in many instances, the same corporate issues and recommendations continue to arise in evaluations, and the capacity of management to monitor follow-through on implementing its committed actions needs to be strengthened.

Engagement in system-wide and joint evaluations:

IES engages in both UN system-wide and joint evaluations. However, both system-wide and joint evaluations pose certain challenges. Progress on system-wide evaluations is limited and more investment from the UN Secretariat is needed to stabilize and mature the evaluation function. UN Women also requires more clarity which joint programmes warrant evaluation; the conduct of these evaluations; and how to promote management accountability for the use of subsequent findings.

Improving the involvement of beneficiaries and other rights holders in evaluation:

The views and experiences of beneficiaries and rights holders, when IES has been able to gather them, have been illuminating. However, the ability to reach a wide and large enough sample of rights holders is limited by budgets, time frames and other factors, which have been further hampered

⁴ Ibid. paras 19-32.

by the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Moving towards impact evaluation:

UN Women is invested in measuring and assessing the Entity's impact to understand how its efforts affect the everyday lives of the women and girls it serves. Determining causality is important for upscaling interventions and achieving SDG-related targets and goals. Impact evaluations help advance knowledge on what works and under what circumstances. While IES continues to develop and contribute advice and guidance to measuring impact, there is an opportunity for UN Women to strengthen impact evaluations, which would help the Entity to demonstrate its transformative results.

Context and changes that shape the evaluation function

COVID-19 pandemic:

The socioeconomic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected women and girls; however, most policy responses to COVID-19 have not taken gender equality perspectives into account.⁵ In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IES undertook several initiatives to support evaluations globally and at the decentralized level. IES remained in close contact with UN Women field offices, consulting on the feasibility of evaluation activities and advising on potential adjustments to evaluation planning and implementation.

New guidance and the launch of several rapid assessments were introduced to respond to emerging evaluative evidence needs at global and regional levels. Additionally, technical reviews and consultations focused in part on remote

evaluation methods at the country level, and evaluation planning and implementation stressed the principle of "do no harm." Due to the increased use of virtual data collection, IES developed a pocket tool⁶ that stressed upholding relevant ethical protocols; using gender-responsive methods for remote data collection; storing and protecting sensitive data; and sharing findings in accessible and user-friendly ways.

Generation Equality Forum:

This is anchored in the UN Decade of Action for the SDGs, emphasizing the achievement of SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as to ensuring that the entire 2030 Agenda delivers for women and girls. The Generation Equality Forum also supports the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's vision on the future of global cooperation and reinvigorating inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism, as expressed in his report "Our Common Agenda".

UN Women holds two distinct and mutually reinforcing roles in driving the follow up to the Generation Equality Forum: as the global convenor of Generation Equality and as a development actor and partner of choice to support the implementation of commitments and the achievement of results. Given the transformative potential of this multi-stakeholder partnership, IES will monitor its development through evaluations of UN Women Strategic Plan by integrating the various aspects of the Generation Equality Forum in its corporate and strategic evaluations.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and UN reform:

Since 2018, the UN system has undergone significant changes to lay the groundwork for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The aim of the reform is to reposition the UN system as a

⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), UN Women from Insights to Action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19 (New York, 2020). Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>

⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Pocket tool for managing evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic (New York, 2020). Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/pocket-tool-for-managing-evaluation-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

stronger partner for countries in achieving the SDGs, and to build a coordinated UN development system that is more coherent, integrated and focused on delivery on the ground, with clearer internal and external accountability mechanisms, capacities and resources that are better aligned.

As part of UN reform, UN Women is working closely with other UN entities to promote shared methodologies and ensure that strategic plans are complementary and include explicit references and commitments to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. For example, IES promoted UN system coherence, coordination and accountability for gender equality and the empowerment of women through its engagement with system-wide evaluations and joint evaluations. IES also participated in UN system-wide efforts by joining the Evaluation Advisory Group for the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund and by contributing to the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition managed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). IES collaborated on joint evaluations and initiatives and supported the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance evaluations at country and regional levels. IES also continued to support the UN System-wide Action Plan Evaluation Performance Indicator (UN-SWAP EPI) by providing technical guidance to all reporting entities and preparing annual reports documenting progress and highlighting best practices for improving gender mainstreaming in evaluations.

Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of Operational Activities:

The 2020 QCPR of operational activities for development of the UN system⁷ continued to emphasize that the governance architecture of the UN development system must be more efficient, transparent, accountable and responsive to Member States; and able to enhance coordination, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the operational activities for development within and

among all levels of the UN development system to enable system-wide strategic planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation to better support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2020 QCPR also emphasized the need to ensure the independence, credibility and effectiveness of system-wide evaluation efforts.

UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025:

UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 aims to guide UN Women for the next four years – with an eye towards the 2030 deadline to achieve the SDGs.

Since its inception, UN Women has grounded its work, organized its teams and measured its impact in four thematic areas: (i) governance and participation in public life; (ii) women's economic empowerment; (iii) ending violence against women and girls; and (iv) women, peace and security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction. With the launch of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, UN Women recognizes that addressing the root causes of gender inequality will require UN Women and its partners to increasingly take an intersectional approach – and that their initiatives may not always fall neatly into one of the four thematic areas. Based on its thematic work, UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 identifies seven systemic outcomes that UN Women strives for to achieve impact at scale, and which serve as the building blocks for a more gender-equal world. The seven systemic outcomes are:

1. To achieve stronger global norms and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as more gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions.
2. To increase public and private financing policies, strategies and instruments to advance gender equality.

⁷ United Nations (UN), Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2020. 75/233. Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the

United Nations system. A/RES/75/233 (New York, 2020). Available at: <https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>

3. To support societies and communities to adopt attitudes and practices that advance gender equality and women's empowerment, including by engaging men and boys.
4. To create access to better – and more tailored – public goods, services and resources for all women and girls.
5. To ensure that more women and girls exercise their voice, agency and leadership.
6. To generate better knowledge and data, including more global statistics disaggregated by sex, to inform gender equality strategies.
7. To champion a more coordinated UN system united in the advancement of gender equality.

UN Women monitors development results and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results by tracking progress against indicators in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework. UN Women applies a balanced scorecard methodology to implement the organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework, ensuring full alignment and cascading of external reporting across five areas of organizational performance management: Principled Performance; Advancing Partnerships and Resourcing; Business Transformation; Empowered People; and Products, Services and Processes. UN Women positions evaluation as one of accelerators under Principled Performance that supports the achievement of UN Women's transformative results. IES will also leverage on its co-location with IAS that have a greater strategic focus on organizational enablers. Potential for joint-IES/IAS work will be considered where relevant and feasible in the implementation of the evaluation strategy.



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EVALUATION FUNCTION'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND KEY AREAS OF RESULTS

UN Women’s Evaluation Strategy 2022–2025 is operationalized within the framework of UN Women’s Corporate Evaluation Plan 2022–2025 and monitoring, research and evaluation plans. The long-term intended outcome is that evaluation is fully used within UN Women in support of organizational accountability and learning.

Four key impact areas have been identified when applying the evaluation Theory of Change to UN Women’s Evaluation Strategy. The synergistic approach of these four key impact areas, as well as the strong complementarities between them, will ensure that UN Women meets the requirements contained in the Evaluation Policy as well as UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025 Output 5 of the organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework, which relates directly to evaluation: “Effective normative, operational and coordination products, services and processes.”⁸

The long-term intended outcomes are:

- improved use of gender-responsive evaluation by UN Women and its partners for learning, strategic decision-making, policy and programme development;
- timely and relevant evaluative evidence on UN Women’s contribution to development and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results; and
- increased demand for and conduct of gender-responsive evaluations to support accountability for the gender equality commitments in the SDGs and beyond.

Area 1 and Area 2: Implementing corporate and strategic evaluations and strengthening decentralized evaluation systems

There are certain complementarities among the four pillars of work that are highlighted in the Evaluation Strategy. However, synergies between corporate and decentralized evaluations are particularly strong as they contribute to building the evidence base on UN Women’s performance.

UN Women seeks to generate evidence on its results across the full spectrum of the Entity’s integrated mandate – normative, coordination and operational – through both its corporate and decentralized evaluation systems. In 2022–2025, IES will lead and increase the number of IES-led corporate, regional and country portfolio evaluations.

Specific results for corporate evaluations will range from evaluating UN Women’s integrated mandate and aiming to understand UN Women’s impact; innovating methodological approaches to evaluation for high-quality and credible evidence; aligning key corporate and decentralized evaluation processes; and enhancing the usability and accessibility of evaluation findings and recommendations. The Corporate Evaluation Plan, an integral part of the Evaluation Strategy, provides a coherent framework within which useful evaluation evidence is generated systematically on UN Women’s transformative results. Regional Evaluation Specialists will lead the conduct of strategic regional evaluations as well as country portfolio evaluations. These evaluations will be monitored through the Corporate Evaluation Plan.

Decentralized evaluations make up most of UN Women’s evaluations and are supported by Regional Evaluation Specialists who provide technical assistance and quality assurance on these evaluations to field offices. Results emerging from decentralized evaluations complement corporate and strategic evaluations and ensure

⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Strategic Plan 2022-2025: Integrated results and resources framework (New York, 2021). Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/UN->

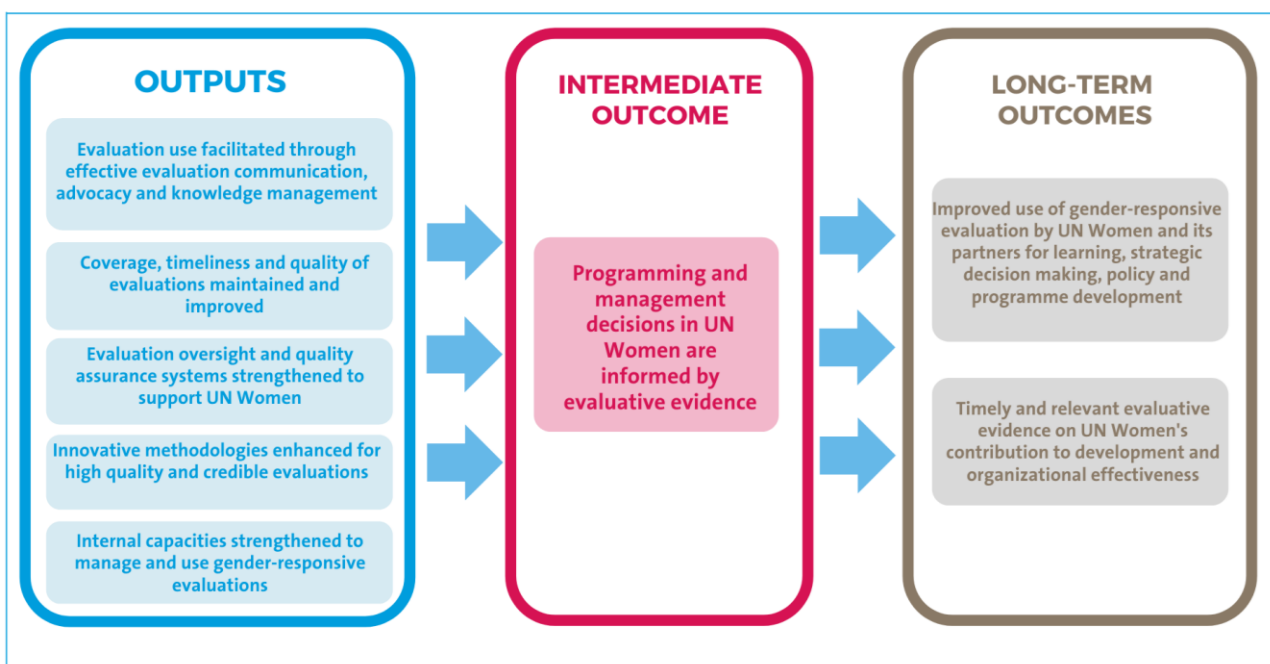
[Women-Strategic-Plan-2022-2025-Annex-01-Integrated-results-and-resources-framework-en.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/UN-Women-Strategic-Plan-2022-2025-Annex-01-Integrated-results-and-resources-framework-en.pdf)

that UN Women has timely, strategically focused and objective information on the performance of its Strategic Notes.

In alignment with UN reform, UN Women will continue to actively engage and lead a selected number of system-wide evaluations related to SDG 5 as well as intensify UN Women’s engagement in joint evaluations with UN sister agencies.

Figure 1 outlines the outputs and outcomes associated with these key results areas. The indicators and targets related to how these objectives will be achieved are described in the M&E Framework in Annex 2.

Figure 1. Implementing strategic corporate evaluations and decentralized evaluation systems



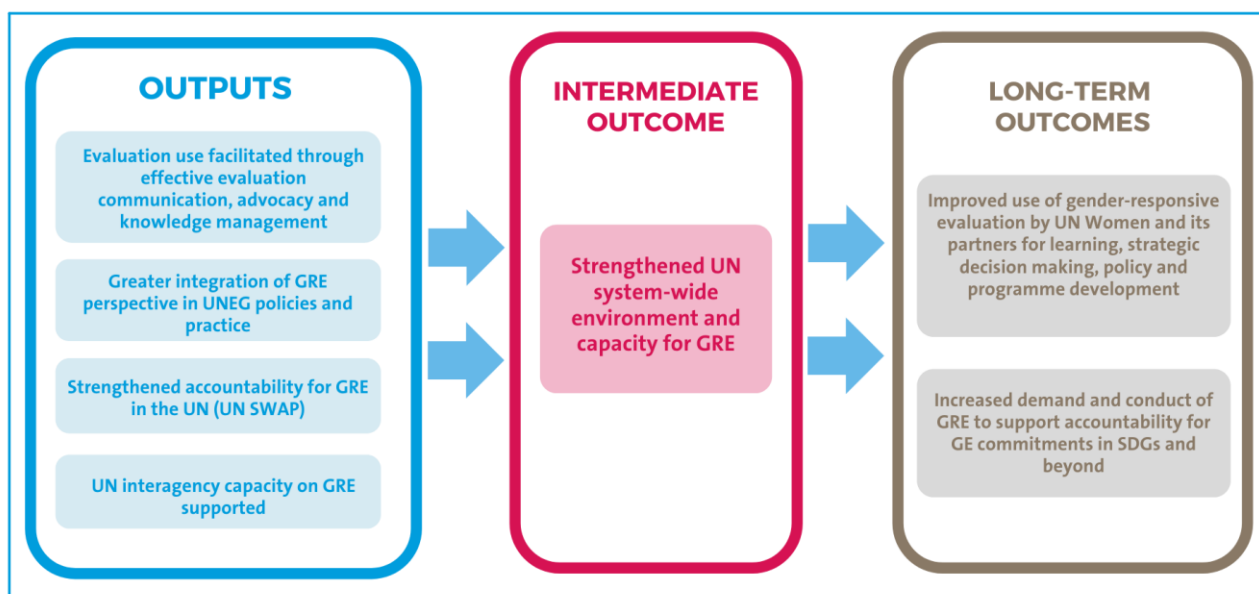
Area 3: Supporting the UN and national stakeholder partnerships on gender-responsive evaluation

UN Women plays a leading role in system-wide coordination and accountability for gender equality and the empowerment of women. In the long term, the UN Women evaluation function aims to increase collaboration, efficiency and alignment of the UN system in gender-responsive evaluation. UN Women supports the UNEG and UN system to integrate a gender perspective in evaluations in their areas of focus, including by strengthening

accountability to gender equality commitments and reporting on the UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicator. Results include engaging with UNEG; reporting on evaluation through the UN-SWAP EPI; aligning with system-wide evaluation initiatives and joint evaluations; and participating in and coordinating inter-agency networks and regional evaluation groups.

Figure 2 outlines the outputs and outcomes associated with promoting UN coordination on gender-responsive evaluation. The indicators and targets related to how these objectives will be achieved are described in the M&E Framework in Annex 2.

Figure 2. Promoting UN coordination on gender-responsive evaluation



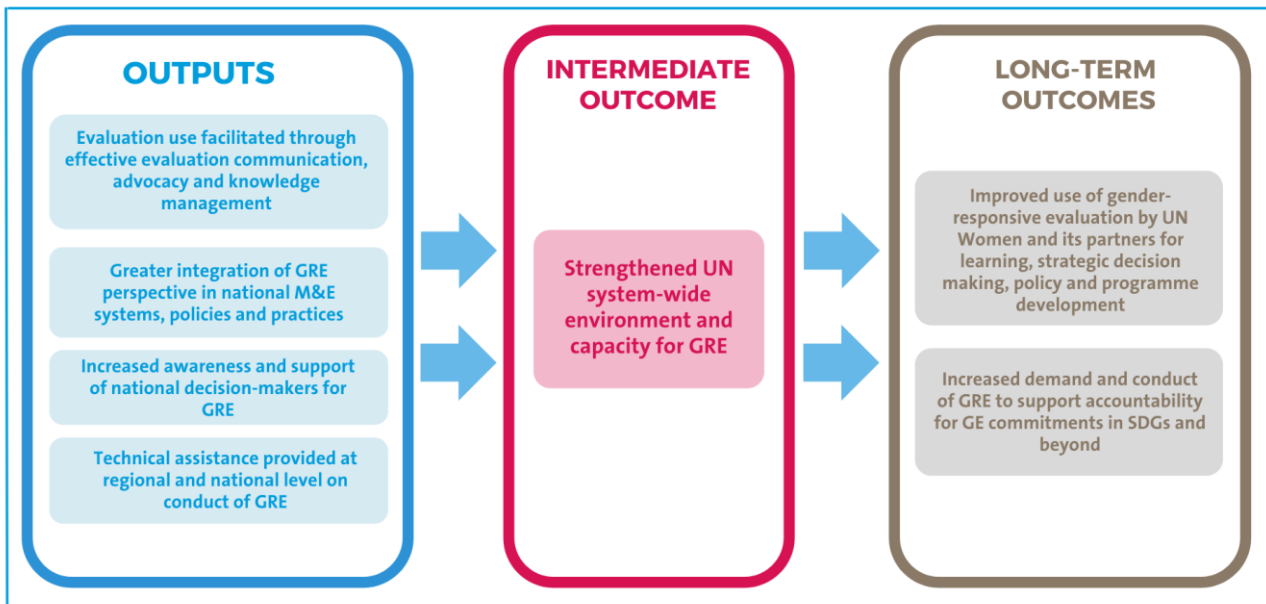
Strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive M&E systems is guided by national ownership and leadership. To this end, the development of national capacity to demand and supply high-quality, gender-responsive evaluations is a key contributor to achieving more effective development for women, men, girls and boys.

IES will continue to engage in partnerships to leverage support to increase gender-responsive evaluation for the SDGs. IES will support limited targeted national gender-responsive evaluation capacity development through Global Evaluation Initiative, EvalGender+ and EvalPartners and will strategically use its role as co-chair of EvalGender+ to advocate for gender-responsive national

evaluation systems. At the institutional and individual level, IES with internal stakeholders will work on that demand and use gender-responsive evaluation. IES will continue its work on enhancing methodologies and tools that strengthen the conduct of and demand for gender-responsive evaluation. A large variety of guidance documents, e-learning, tools and training on gender-responsive evaluation are available for governments and civil society.

Figure 3 outlines the outputs and outcomes associated with strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive evaluation systems. The indicators and targets related to how these objectives will be achieved are described in the M&E Framework in Annex 2.

Figure 3. Strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive M&E systems



Area 4: Strengthening evaluation use

Reflecting on the challenges of both information overload and evaluation under-utilization, the UN Women Evaluation Strategy acknowledges that communication is only one element contributing to evaluation use and aims to strengthen other enablers, such as knowledge management and advocacy.

A participatory and transparent evaluation model encourages instrumental use of evaluations. The implementation of IES-led evaluation model also contributes to increased evaluation use and credibility of evaluations. UN Women stakeholders appreciate that IES personnel understand better corporate systems, organizational processes, and gender programming, including challenges and constraints. The independent perspective combined with internal knowledge and direct experience enables IES to present evaluation findings and speak to senior and executive management with credibility and astuteness.

Corporate and decentralized participatory and transparent evaluation models involve users in all

aspects of the evaluation process, including follow-up mechanisms. Evaluative knowledge is then made available in a transparent manner utilizing evaluation platforms such as GATE and UNEG. IES will continue strengthen its engagement with key internal and external stakeholders in an effort to improve the focus, timing and follow-up of evaluations and to enable greater ownership of recommendations and to ensure that lessons are absorbed.

IES will invest in knowledge sharing through knowledge and learning partnerships. The enhancement and integration of knowledge management systems will further complement the corporate and decentralized function and transform IES into a “knowledge hub” for evaluative evidence. This will include, but not be limited to, using existing corporate information platforms such as the corporate newsletter to communicate IES activities; updating the IES website and intranet to ensure users know where to find relevant information and to facilitate online searches of existing databases; creating a “help desk” to provide timely support to staff across UN Women; and linking the Global Accountability and

Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) into the Results Management System to facilitate closer integration with the organization’s enterprise resource management system and related information systems.

IES will target advocacy efforts at both internal and external audiences at the intersection of gender equality and evaluation, with the aim of yielding a high return of engagement from the UN system, civil society, governments, academia and the development community at large.

A brief survey conducted with IES personnel to gather inputs on UN Women’s proposed evaluation strategy for 2022–2025 found that nearly all

respondents believed evaluation use and management action should be the highest priority for UN Women’s evaluation function during the 2022–2025 cycle.

As evaluation use is facilitated across IES’s four key results areas, it contributes to all long-term and intermediate outcomes and outputs of the UN Women Evaluation Strategy. However, its direct contribution to certain outcomes and outputs is clearly determined and shown in Figure 4. The indicators and targets related to how these objectives will be achieved are described in the M&E Framework in Annex 2.

Figure 4. Strengthening evaluation use

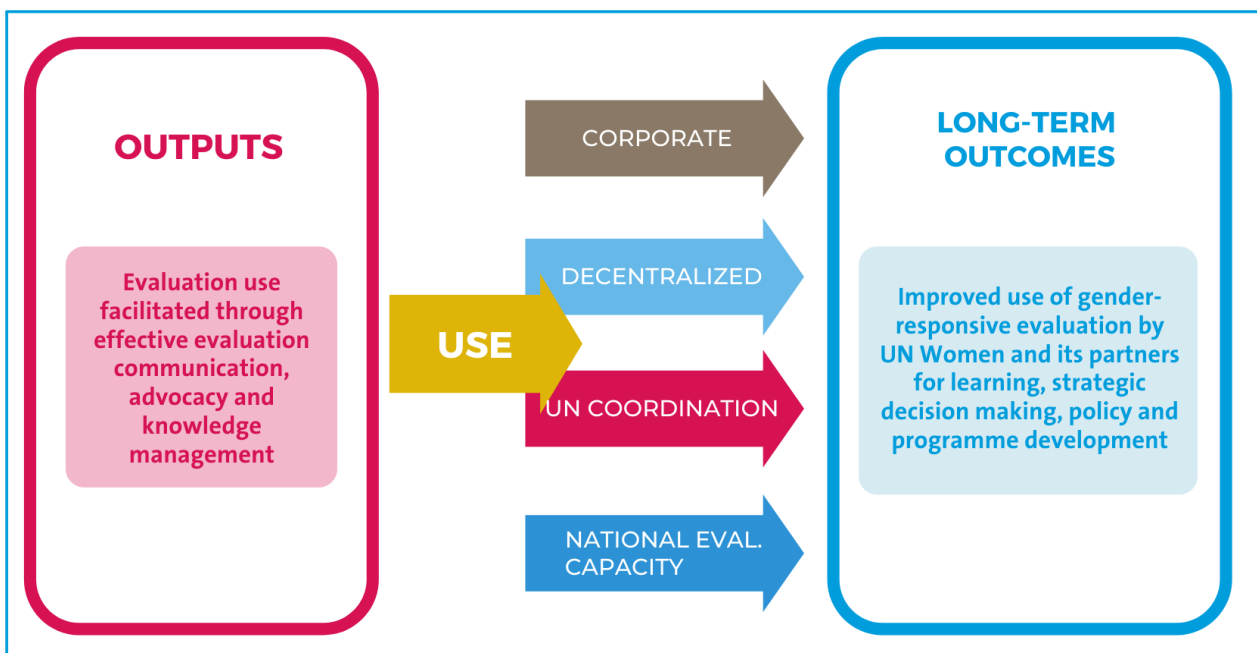




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IV THEORY OF CHANGE OF THE UN WOMEN EVALUATION STRATEGY

The UN Women Evaluation Strategy's Theory of Change envisions that UN Women uses gender-responsive evaluation as the agent of change in achieving its mandate and advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in the 2030 SDG era.

The Theory of Change drives UN Women's Evaluation Strategy and outlines how the strategy's priorities (in the form of long-term and intermediate outcomes and outputs) are necessary for the UN Women evaluation function to support UN Women's mission effectively and efficiently. It identifies innovation, becoming a "knowledge hub," and forming and sustaining targeted partnerships and networks as key drivers of change for achieving long-term outcomes.

Through its four key results areas, IES seeks to improve the use of gender-responsive evaluation by UN Women and its partners for learning, strategic decision-making, and policy and programme development. Through its corporate and decentralized evaluation systems as well as evaluation use, UN Women aims to provide timely and relevant evaluation evidence on UN Women's contribution to development and the organizational effectiveness and efficiency results. Through its UN system coordination on gender-responsive evaluation, its targeted national evaluation capacity and evaluation use focus area, UN Women seeks to increase the demand for and conduct of gender-responsive evaluation to support accountability for gender equality commitments in the SDGs and beyond.

The Theory of Change assumes that the UN Women evaluation function works by leveraging its comparative advantage and expertise, positioning gender-responsive evaluation as a catalyst and the agent of change in UN Women. It also assumes that UN Women evaluations are relevant to the UN system and national stakeholders to assess and contribute to progress in achieving the SDGs. Another assumption is that the UN Women evaluation function can build targeted evaluation partnerships and learning coalitions with UN agencies, civil society organizations and other

partners to evaluate transformative change and women's empowerment in the SDG era. Moreover, the Theory of Change implies that support for evaluation in UN Women has improved and increased resources are allocated for the IES regional and country portfolio evaluations. Finally, management and leadership at all levels support the UN Women Evaluation Policy and implementation of UN Women's Evaluation Strategy.

Potential risks that could affect effective implementation of the Evaluation Strategy include availability of adequate financial and human resources; timeliness and quality of evaluations; partnership capacity; and management attention to the evaluation function. In addition, several external risks could directly impact the achievement of results as described in the Theory of Change. Several risks cut across all outcomes: lack of political will and support for gender-responsive evaluation; challenges in results-based programming at the country level, lack of accurate data and monitoring systems; lack of evaluators with gender expertise; and conflicting priorities of stakeholders and development partners. IES monitors these assumptions and risks and puts in place mitigation measures to ensure the effective implementation of the Evaluation Strategy.

The Theory of Change underscores the deeply interlinked nature of the UN Women Evaluation Strategy's outcome areas and how results are catalyzed through the four strategic areas of focus. For clarity and communication purposes, the Theory of Change is presented as a logic model where the aggregate results at output level aim to lead to the outcomes and the aggregate outcomes contribute to the impact of UN Women's overall mandate. Nonetheless, change in the Theory of Change is understood as multilinear, happening through synergies and feedback loops among different outputs, intermediate and long-term outcomes as well as possible reversals that could be driven by identified internal and external risks.

The Theory of Change is summarized in Figure 5.

Figure 5. UN Women Evaluation Strategy Theory of Change

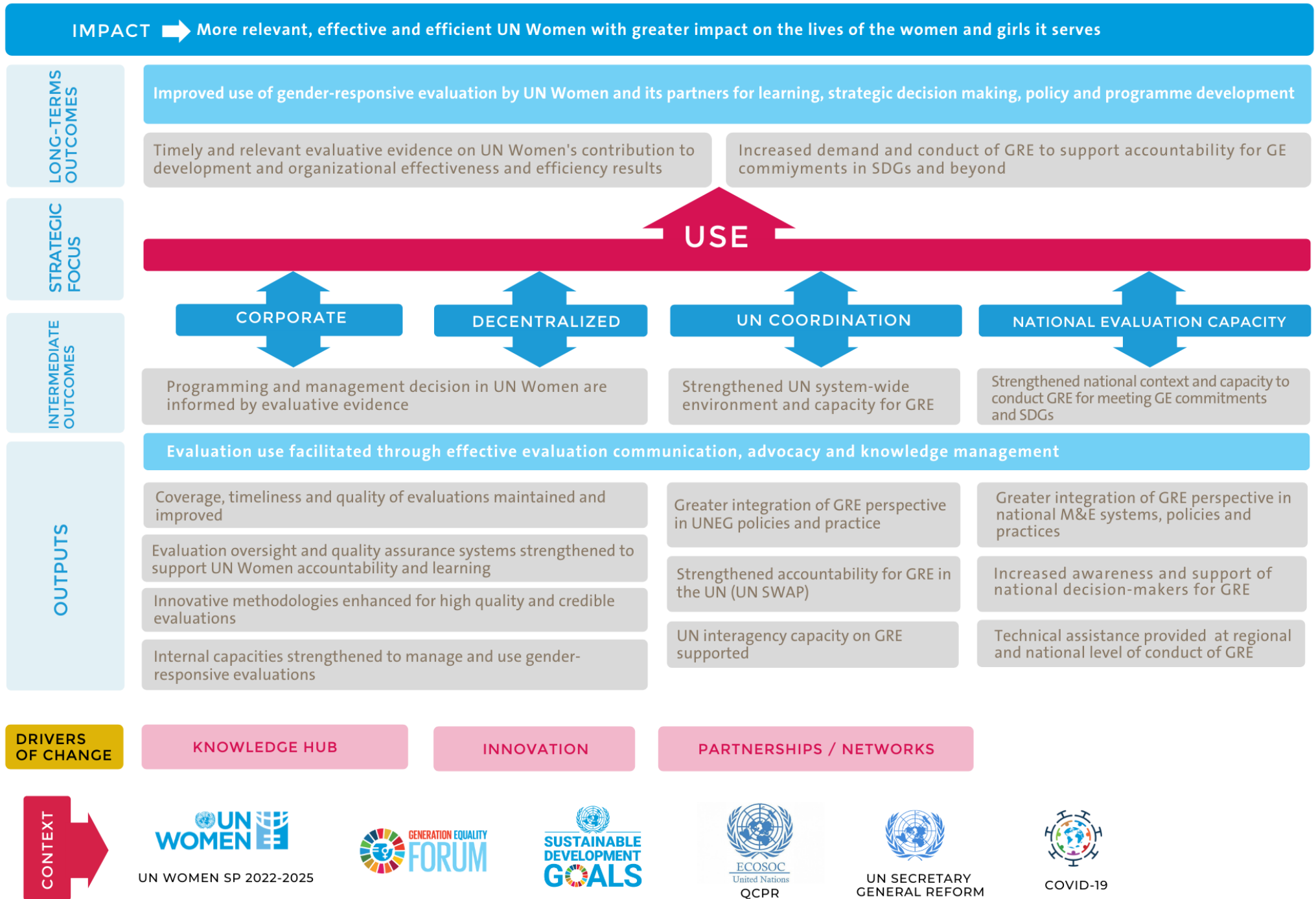




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BUDGETING, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, AND REPORTING

IES develops a biannual budget at the beginning of each two-year cycle, which specifies the institutional budget and core programmable resources required to implement UN Women's Evaluation Strategy. The biannual budget includes the salaries of IES headquarters-based Evaluation Specialists, Regional Evaluation Specialists, and key workplan activities such as strategic evaluations at the corporate level; support to selected strategic IES-led regional and country portfolio evaluations;

communication products and knowledge management; support to decentralized evaluation systems; and support to partnerships with UN system and national stakeholders that promote gender-responsive evaluation. IES reports on implementation of the Evaluation Strategy through the UN Women Annual Report on the evaluation function.



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VI ANNEXES

Annex 1: Guiding evaluation principles and standards

A number of principles guide evaluation planning, conduct and follow-up to ensure that all evaluation processes reflect: (a) the integrated normative, operational and coordination mandates of UN Women as an entity within the UN system, (b) the commitment of UN Women to evaluation that is responsive to gender equality and the empowerment of women, including women's full enjoyment of their human rights, and (c) alignment with the UNEG norms and standards and the UNEG ethical guidelines and tools. Evaluation conducted through UN Women should adhere to the following principles:

(a) National ownership. Evaluation should be planned and conducted to promote national ownership and leadership of evaluation processes by both rights holders and duty bearers. To this end, they should support the development of capacity to conduct evaluations that are gender responsive;

(b) UN system coordination and coherence with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Evaluations should be conducted systemwide and jointly with UN sister agencies, whenever possible, as a means to promote coordination and coherence regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women. Evaluations should systematically assess how to improve coordination and coherence in terms of gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly with regard to normative and operational work in those areas;

(c) Innovation. Evaluations should seek to identify and illuminate innovation in the work of UN Women with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women. They should also apply innovative evaluation approaches and methods that have potential to more fully capture the complex and long-term nature of achieving results in those areas;

(d) Fair power relations and empowerment. Evaluations should be conducted with an understanding of contextual power relations that affect gender equality. The process should seek to empower women and those left furthest behind, including women with disabilities and women facing marginalization;

(e) Participation and inclusion. Evaluation processes should ensure stakeholder participation that is both relevant and inclusive, given the evaluation subject at hand. In particular, stakeholder analysis should be conducted and planned to take into account the additional time and resources needed to allow for the participation of all relevant stakeholder groups, especially women who face barriers to participation;

(f) Independence and impartiality. Evaluations are conducted independently of management functions in order to ensure that their process and results are credible and free from undue influence. Evaluators should demonstrate impartiality and be free from any conflict of interest or bias. They should have full access to information regarding the subject that they are evaluating;

(g) Transparency. Evaluations should be conducted in a transparent and consultative manner with key stakeholders. Evaluation plans, terms of reference and reports should be made publicly available in order to enhance the transparency of UN Women with regard to efficiency and commitment to managing for results;

(h) Quality and credibility. Evaluations should be conducted in a systematic manner, applying sound approaches and methods to ensure the quality and credibility of findings, recommendations and lessons generated. Reports should be complete and balanced. A quality assurance mechanism will support evaluators and evaluation managers in this regard;

(i) Intentionality and use of evaluation. Planning for evaluations demonstrates a clear intent regarding the purpose and use of findings (i.e., findings of facts) and of evaluation results to improve the work of UN Women based on

identified strategic and/or programmatic needs in UN Women or in the UN system in the areas of gender equality and empowerment of women;

(j) Ethics. Evaluators should have personal and professional integrity and abide by the UNEG ethical and professional guidelines for evaluation in the UN system., Evaluators must act with cultural sensitivity and pay particular attention to protocols, codes and recommendations that may be relevant to their interactions with women.

Annex 2: Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Framework

OVERALL IMPACT	MORE RELEVANT, EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT UN WOMEN WITH GREATER IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IT SERVES
Long term-outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved use of gender-responsive evaluation by UN Women and its partners for learning, strategic decision-making, policy and programme development • Timely and relevant evaluative evidence on UN Women’s contribution to development and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results • Increased demand for and conduct of gender-responsive evaluation to support accountability for gender equality commitments in the SDGs and beyond
Key indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of strategic evaluations both at corporate and decentralized levels • Increase in the number of strategic plans, policy documents, programmes, projects and institutional reforms demonstrating evidence of application of lessons from gender-responsive evaluations • Increase in evaluation coverage to support strategic decision-making • Increase in the number of independent system-wide evaluations that UN Women contributes • Evidence of enhanced contribution to advancing gender-responsive evaluation and to accountability for gender equality results in the UN system and at the national level through the SDGs

AREA 1 AND AREA 2: IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS AND STRENGTHENING DECENTRALIZED EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Outcomes	Outputs	Indicators/Targets <i>*Key performance indicator for UN Women's evaluation function to track corporate level progress (within management control).</i>
<p>1./2. Programming and management decisions in UN Women are informed by evaluative evidence</p>	<p>1./2.1 Evaluation use facilitated through effective evaluation communication, advocacy and knowledge management</p>	<p>Indicators and targets for this output are listed under output 5.1</p>
	<p>1./2.2 Coverage, timeliness and quality of evaluations maintained and improved</p>	<p>Percentage of planned evaluations being conducted * (Target: 100%)</p> <p>Percentage of financial resources spent for evaluation* (Target: 2-3% of programme budget)</p> <p>Increased coverage of evaluations* (Target: At least one evaluation per Strategic Note cycle)</p> <p>Percentage of evaluations rated “good and above”* (Target: 100%)⁹</p> <p>Number and percentage of IES-led evaluations (Target: 40 evaluations in a cycle of Evaluation Strategy)</p> <p>Number and percentage of (i) joint evaluations; and (ii) independent system-wide evaluations in which UN-Women engaged (QCPR)¹⁰ *</p>

⁹ This is a corporate evaluation indicator that covers corporate and decentralized evaluations. UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025, Integrated Results and Resource Framework, Indicator O.5.2.

¹⁰ This is a corporate evaluation indicator that covers corporate and decentralized evaluations. UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025, Integrated Results and Resource Framework, Indicator O.5.6.

	1./2.3 Evaluation oversight and quality assurance systems strengthened to support UN Women accountability and learning	<p>Percentage of management responses submitted* (Target: 100%)</p> <p>Percentage of management response actions are implemented and reported annually (self-reported and within management control)* (Target: 95%)</p> <p>Evaluation systems are updated and maintained (Target: Four systems)</p>
	1./2.4 Innovative methodologies enhanced for high-quality and credible evaluations	<p>Number of new guidance documents and methodological studies (Target: Four guidance documents or studies)</p>
	1./2.5 Internal capacities strengthened to manage and use gender-responsive evaluations	<p>Number of M&E staff in UN Women* (Target: At least one focal point per office)</p> <p>M&E specialists/focal points trained on gender-responsive evaluations (Target: 80% of M&E specialists/ focal points)</p>

AREA 3: SUPPORTING THE UN AND NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS ON GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

Outcomes	Outputs	Indicators/Targets
3a. Strengthened UN system-wide environment and	3a.1 Gender-responsive evaluation use facilitated through effective evaluation communication, advocacy and	<p>Evidence of gender perspective being integrated in key system-wide guidance documents and practices</p> <p>(Target: On “as requested” basis)</p>

capacity for gender-responsive evaluations	knowledge management	
	3a.2 Greater integration of gender-responsive evaluation perspective in UNEG policies and practices in the UN system	Lead UNEG task force (Target: At least one led by UN Women)
	3a.3 Strengthened accountability for gender-responsive evaluation in the UN (through UN SWAP)	Percentage of UN entities supported in reporting on UN-SWAP EPI (Target: 100 % of UN-SWAP EPI reporting entities)
	3a.4 UN inter-agency capacity on gender-responsive evaluation supported	Support regional M&E inter-agency groups (Target: At least four groups) Number of UNSDCF evaluations supported (Target: At least two per region per year)
3b. Strengthened national context and capacity to conduct gender-responsive evaluations for meeting gender equality commitments and the SDGs through targeted partnerships	3b.1 Gender-responsive evaluation use and national evaluation system supported through effective evaluation communication, advocacy and knowledge management	Substantively engage in Global Evaluation Partnership (Target: At least one global partnership)
	3b.2 Increased awareness and support of national decision makers for gender-responsive evaluation	Number of gender-responsive evaluative studies related to SDGs supported (Target: At least two studies)
	3b.3 Technical assistance provided at regional and national level on conduct of gender-responsive evaluations	Number of country level evaluations on gender strategies and plans supported (Target: At least one per region)
	3b.4 Greater integration of gender-responsive evaluation perspective in national M&E systems, policies and practices	Number of national M&E systems and policies supported with gender mainstreaming advice (Target: At least 10 countries)

AREA 4: EVALUATION USE STRENGTHENED

Outcomes	Outputs	Indicators/Targets
<p>4. Improved use of gender-responsive evaluation by UN Women and its partners for learning, strategic decision-making, policy and programme development</p> <p>(cross-cutting output for all four strategic areas)</p>	<p>4.1 Evaluation use facilitated through effective evaluation communication, advocacy and knowledge management (cross-cutting output for all four strategic areas)</p>	<p>Evidence of evaluation use in UN Women’s strategic planning documents (Target: 95%)</p> <p>Number of learning partnerships with internal and external stakeholders (Target: At least two per year)</p> <p>Number of key organizational processes in which IES provided tailored evaluative evidence (Target: As needed)</p> <p>Number of knowledge products produced by IES (Target: At least three products per corporate evaluation)</p>

Annex 3: Key achievements 2018–2021

STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2021 HIGHLIGHTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 corporate evaluations covering the integrated mandates and Strategic Plan impact areas • 10 IES-led country portfolio evaluations • 6 IES-IAS joint assessments • 138 decentralized evaluations • 4 meta-analyses of all evaluations managed by UN Women

2018	2019	2020	2021
Establishment of the Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit Services (IEAS) with co-located Independent Evaluation Service (IES) and Internal Audit Service (IAS)	Review of the UN Women Evaluation Policy	Development of the Pocket tool for managing evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic	Global Evaluation Plan and Corporate Evaluation Plan 2022–2025
Evaluability Assessment of UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021	Advisory Committee on Oversight in taking a greater role in overseeing the performance of the evaluation function in UN Women and replacing the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee.	Rapid assessments to inform UN Women’s COVID-19 response (Americas and the Caribbean region; and cash-based interventions together with IAS)	Joint study Gender Equality for Health and Well-Being: Evaluative Evidence of Interlinkages with Other SDGs in 2021 Independent Evaluation Services – United Nations University.

Joint Evaluation of the Common Chapter of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women	Launch of a pilot implementation modality (IES-led evaluation)	Development of the guidance note on evaluating gender equality and the empowerment of women; rapid assessment tool to assess gender quality and the empowerment women results in humanitarian contexts; good practices in gender-responsive evaluations	Update of the UN Women Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) with the new disability inclusion criteria rolled out.
Assessment of Voluntary National Reviews of the SDGs, with a focus on understanding how evaluative evidence related to gender	UN Women evaluation evidence gap mapping analysis	Update of the handbook “How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluation”	Update of the guide to conducting country portfolio evaluations
	As a co-chair of the UNEG Working Group, led the meta-synthesis of UNDAF evaluations with a gender lens		As a co-chair of the UNEG Working Group – Gender Equality, Disability – led the development of guidance for integration of disability inclusion
Co-chaired UNEG Working group - the Gender Equality, Disability and Human Rights working group and co-chaired the UN Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP)			
Continued to serve as the Secretariat of the UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicator			
UN-Women continued to co-chair EvalGender+, a global partnership for promoting gender responsive evaluations			

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN.
A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN
AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS
ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE
PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS
WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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