



IN BRIEF

CORPORATE EVALUATION ON UN WOMEN'S POLICY ADVOCACY WORK

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This brief presents the findings of the corporate evaluation of UN Women's policy advocacy work. This evaluation was conducted by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Services (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) as part of the revised UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan (2018-2021). The evaluation covered the period from 2018 to 2021. It was initiated in May 2021 and completed in February 2022.

What was evaluated

The evaluation focused on UN Women's policy advocacy roles, initiatives and interventions and the organizational, operational, and strategic structures and approaches UN Women has put in place to support policy advocacy. The evaluation examined the linkages at global, regional and country levels to understand how policy advocacy work translates into changes in the everyday lives of women and girls.

Findings from this evaluation are expected to contribute to strategic decision-making, organizational learning and accountability, and implementation of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, senior management and programme personnel directly working on, or with interest in, policy advocacy. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors working on policy advocacy, including CSOs, United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and development partners.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS



To what extent is UN Women's policy advocacy work **effective at contributing to policy change and relevant to country needs** and global priorities?



To what extent does UN Women have the necessary **organizational, strategic and operational approaches, and capacity in place** to efficiently and coherently perform its policy advocacy roles?



To what extent is UN Women **effective at translating normative policy advocacy successes** at the global level into regional and country-level action?



How are **human rights, gender equality and inclusion** incorporated into UN Women's policy advocacy work?

How it was evaluated

The evaluation approach was participatory and included a combination of theory-based, appreciative inquiry and most significant change methodologies. The evaluation also incorporated the principles of gender-responsive evaluation and the “leave no one behind” perspective. The evaluation team carried out 11 in-depth case studies and 25 country portfolio analyses, yielding rich data and valuable lessons.

A combination of primary and secondary data sources were used to gather evidence to answer the evaluation questions. In alignment with the UN Evaluation Group’s (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted, which identified a range of internal and external stakeholders directly involved, or with an interest in UN Women’s policy advocacy work. In total, 262 internal and external stakeholders were engaged through semi-structured virtual interviews, focus group discussions and stakeholder surveys conducted in accordance with the recommendations for remote data collection during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

DATA COLLECTED



Desk review and case studies

Portfolio analysis, desk review and synthesis
Global, regional and country case studies



Interviews and surveys

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups
Internal and external surveys with partners

+350

documents
reviewed

262

stakeholders
engaged

11

in-depth case
studies

5

focus group
discussions

2

online
surveys

FACTORS OF SUCCESS



Building relationships with policymakers/ decision makers is essential.



Multi-stakeholder approaches successfully unite diverse stakeholders around policy advocacy messages.



Global and regional experts are critical to high-quality, evidence-based policy advocacy and knowledge production.



Partnerships with government institutions often lead to increased uptake in knowledge products and knowledge platforms.



Long-term institutional investments and advocacy yield better support for the adoption and implementation of progressive interventions.



Flexibility and smart and rapid responses to changes in the external environment, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can provide an opportunity for policy advocacy work.

LESSONS LEARNED



It is necessary to **understand and navigate contextual factors** for successful policy advocacy.



Changes in the political landscape can bolster/hamper policy advocacy efforts.



Multiple players in the policy advocacy ecosystem working disjointedly results in duplicate efforts.



Knowledge products that are not **translated/contextualized** have lower uptake and limited reach.



Lack of established mechanisms impedes systematic engagement with CSOs at various levels.



Timing plays a key role in the probability of influencing discourse and policy.

CONCLUSIONS*

CONCLUSION 1

UN Women's integrated mandate enables it to have a strong policy advocacy role in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. However, there is an opportunity for UN Women to define policy advocacy and use the Strategic Plan to develop a coherent approach for planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy.

CONCLUSION 2

Evidence-based and credible knowledge is central to UN Women's policy advocacy work.

CONCLUSION 3

Partnerships, a strength of UN Women, are critical to ensuring a multiplier effect, leveraging resources and approaching policy advocacy work holistically.

CONCLUSION 4

There is need to clarify the organizational architecture for policy advocacy to form better coordination and communication linkages between headquarters and the regional and country offices.

CONCLUSION 5

UN Women's monitoring and results tracking systems do not adequately capture policy advocacy results and lessons learned.

CONCLUSION 6

Current resources are not always adequate to carry out policy advocacy work to the Entity's full potential, and there are capacity gaps in the availability of necessary personnel and expertise.

CONCLUSION 7

UN Women's policy advocacy work contributes to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation to address gender equality and empowering women. However, it does not always clearly lead to longer-term outcomes for women and girls for a variety of reasons, such as capacity, funding and internal coherence as well as external factors that are beyond UN Women's direct control.

CONCLUSION 8

UN Women is seen as an advocate for "leave no one behind" but translating this principle into practice continues to be a challenge. The process of implementing "leave no one behind" is often uneven and not systematically planned or monitored.

RECOMMENDATIONS**



RECOMMENDATION 1: Leverage the Strategic Plan to enable coherent planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy priorities.



RECOMMENDATION 2: Clarify and strengthen the Entity's policy advocacy architecture, including strengthening integration of policy advocacy across the organization and ensuring meaningful participation of all divisions working directly or indirectly on policy advocacy.



RECOMMENDATION 3: Strengthen data, knowledge generation and knowledge management systems as enablers for policy advocacy work and establish UN Women as a recognized knowledge broker on gender equality in the policy advocacy sphere.



RECOMMENDATION 4: Continue to strengthen relationships with national governments, UN agencies, and feminist movements and women's organizations to support policy change and implementation.



RECOMMENDATION 5: Strategically place policy advocacy specialists across the organization and ensure that field offices have the appropriate level of social and political acumen and adequate capacity in terms of the number of staff with technical expertise and knowledge of local context on gender issues.



RECOMMENDATION 6: Strengthen and improve mechanisms and processes within UN Women by developing guidance tools and best practices to effectively engage groups being left behind through policy advocacy work.

* Results, lessons learned, and conclusions are further elaborated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the evaluation report.

** Chapter 7 provides suggested timelines, prioritization and steps for implementation of each recommendation. The recommendations are based on the evaluation framework, findings and conclusions. The recommendations were developed in consultation with key evaluation stakeholders, including the Evaluation Reference Group, PPID, Communications, SPRED, and senior management.