2014-2017

Regional Evaluation Strategy

Arab States Region

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Acronyms

CO	Country Office
CR	Country Representative
DaO	Delivering as One
DRD	Deputy Regional Director
EvalMENA	Middle East and North Africa Evaluators Network
GATE	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation
GEHR	Gender Equality and Human Rights
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System
GEOS	Global Evaluation Oversight System
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
MCO	Multi-Country Office
(M)CO	Multi-country/Country Office
MERP	Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan
POM	Programme and Operations Manual
RD	Regional Director
RES	Regional Evaluation Specialist
ROAS	Regional Office for Arab States
SN	Strategic Note
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

I. Background and Justification

Within the framework of the UN Women Evaluation Policy, evaluation in UN Women is a comprehensive function that reinforces accountability, learning and oversight in order to support management decisions and enhance programme effectiveness on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The work of UN Women is largely anchored in its Strategic Plan which is the centerpiece for organizational programming, management and accountability.

The Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) and Multi-country/Country offices (M)CO in the region have developed Strategic Notes aligned with the Strategic Plan (2014-2017) covering the period 2014-2017[1]. The Strategic Notes set out the strategic direction and priorities of the region and guide the normative, operational and coordination work in the areas of increasing women's leadership and participation; enhancing women's economic empowerment; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting.

The Arab States Region for UN Women includes 17 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. UN Women has a regional office in Egypt, a multi-country office in Morocco covering Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia; country offices in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine; and programme presence in Libya and Yemen.

Monitoring and evaluation is a priority for all UN Women offices in the region. During 2012-2013 evaluation coverage with respect to the number of offices conducting evaluations was relatively low. Over the 2014-17 the number of evaluations is expected to grow significantly with all offices commissioning a minimum of two evaluations. This will require the strengthening of the evaluation function across the region.

In April 2014, the ROAS conducted a regional M&E survey to assess the needs of UN Women programme staff in the region. The assessment indicated the need for M&E capacity development in the region. Two-thirds (67 percent) of respondents had not participated in any evaluation training in the past five years. Less than half of respondents knew of key UN and UN Women evaluation resources – approximately 47% knew about the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Guidance Notes. Respondents ranked staff knowledge and expertise and staff time as the two biggest challenges with respect to both monitoring and evaluation. Additional challenges cited included: integrating the gender perspective in M&E, finding qualified consultants, the lack of prioritization of evaluation, more support for the reporting and use of evaluation, and partner capacity on M&E.

[1] The time period of the multi-country / country office strategic notes varies depending on the country specific United Nations Development Assistance Framework. All strategic notes begin in 2014 but end with the UNDAF cycle for their respective country.

The top 5 M&E training priorities identified by respondents were:

1. Ensuring evaluations are Gender Equality and Human Rights (GEHR) responsive
2. Basic concepts of results based monitoring (RBM) and developing a Results Framework
3. Key principles of monitoring at various levels, monitoring tools, organizing & analyzing monitoring data etc.
4. Setting up a monitoring framework and arrangements
5. UN Women Evaluation Policy and Guidelines / 5. United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms & Standards

II. The Global Evaluation Strategic Plan (2014-2017)

A Global Evaluation Strategic Plan was developed by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) as a comprehensive framework to guide the entire organization at global, regional and country level to strengthen the evaluation function. It is guided by a Theory of Change (ToC) based on a system-approach to strengthen the institutional capability to better perform and deliver expected results in line with the Evaluation Policy. The ToC aims to strengthen the capability to demand and use evaluation by senior managers, as well as the capability to deliver high-quality evaluations by UN Women staff and M&E officers/focal points at the regional, multi-country and country office levels. See Annex 1 for details.

Based on the Evaluation Policy, the evaluation function at UN Women focuses on the following major key results areas:

Area 1: Effective corporate evaluation[2] systems implemented
Area 2: Effective decentralized evaluation[3] systems implemented
Area 3: UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation promoted
Area 4: National evaluation capacities for gender responsive M&E systems strengthened

To ensure a transparent and sound system to monitor the performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women, the Independent Evaluation Office has established a Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS). The system includes a dashboard that presents seven (7) key performance indicators for the evaluation function (see Annex III), specifically:

KPI 1: Human resources for monitoring and evaluation
KPI 2: Financial resources invested in evaluation
KPI 3: Evaluation coverage

[2] *Corporate evaluations* are independent assessments undertaken by the independent Evaluation Office with the support of external evaluators.
[3] *Decentralized evaluations* are evaluations conducted by independent external evaluators but managed by programmatic offices. They are conducted in full consultation or in partnership with national stakeholders and United Nations agencies, to the extent possible.

KPI 4: Evaluations planned vs. completed
KPI 5: Quality of evaluation reports
KPI 6: Evaluation reports and management response submission rate
KPI 7: Implementation of Management Responses

III. Purpose of the Regional Evaluation Strategy

The Regional Evaluation Strategy for the Arab States is aligned with the Global Evaluation Strategic Plan (2014-2017), but based on the unique context and needs of the region and will ensure that the evaluation function in the Arab States region plays the strategic role foreseen by the Evaluation Policy. It seeks to achieve an effective evaluation function that provides timely and credible evaluative evidence to inform and influence programming and decision making at the regional, multi-country and country levels, and ultimately make UN Women a more effective and efficient organization in the region.

The strategy aims to build on the gains achieved in improving the evaluation function in the region so far, and to address remaining gaps in key evaluation performance areas through providing a clear framework for the realization of all aspects of the Evaluation Policy pertaining to the regional, multi-country and country offices of Arab States Region. Furthermore, it supports UN system wide processes and programmes within the context of UNDAF, UN reforms (DaO M&E), and Joint programming in the region.

The Regional Evaluation Strategy outlines the rationale, purpose, strategic results, quality assurance in evaluation processes, responsibilities, mechanisms for monitoring implementation and a results framework. The eventual goal is to support UN-Women's mission and help the organization better serve gender equality and women empowerment in the region. The strategy is framed around three of the four global strategic result areas, specifically:

- Area 2: Effective decentralized evaluation systems implemented
- Area 3: UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation promoted
- Area 4: National evaluation capacities for gender responsive M&E systems strengthened

The Regional Evaluation Strategy is based on the needs and priorities of all offices in the region.[4] As outlined in the evaluation chapter of the Programme and Operations Manual (POM), the decentralized evaluation function is managed through a shared responsibility involving the country offices, multi-country offices, regional offices, and the Independent Evaluation Office. Each office assumes a distinct role and responsibility. Working together, they contribute to a coherent and effective evaluation function in UN Women. Thus, the strategy is inclusive of the work of the Regional Office, Multi-country and Country offices.

[4] While the Regional Evaluation Strategy is based on the Global Evaluation Strategy, it specifics are grounded in the specific regional needs as expressed in the M&E Needs Survey and discussions with offices in the region. Once developed it was shared with all offices who were asked for feedback.

IV. Strategic Results Areas of the Regional Evaluation Strategy

Results Area 1: Effective decentralized evaluation system strengthened and implemented

A. Management attention to decentralized evaluation function is heightened

The Regional Evaluation Strategy builds on the premise that senior management assumes overall accountability for evaluation in their respective offices, including ensuring sufficient resources (human and financial) and quality assurance for evaluations. In accordance with the Evaluation Policy, senior managers at the decentralized level (Regional Director and Multi-Country and Country Representatives) should champion the use of all evaluations in the Arab States Region and make available adequate financial and human capacity for decentralized evaluation to ensure a fully effective and efficient evaluation function. They also assume responsibility for creating an enabling environment for the strengthening of the evaluation culture in the area under their purview.

Capacity to carry out evaluation function will mean nothing if evaluation plans are not budgeted, evaluation results are not properly communicated and used, and the required skills and expertise including mechanisms to build evaluation capacity are not made available. The Strategy aims to reinforce efforts to advocate for and secure the resources necessary to perform the evaluation function at the regional, multi-country and country office levels.

The IEO and ROAS will work to ensure that the Evaluation Policy is disseminated and staff in the Arab States Region are aware of and understand the evaluation function at UN Women, including the criteria to be applied in UN Women Evaluations, the evaluation criteria to be applied, and the processes and parameters for selecting evaluations to ensure adequate evaluation coverage.

A.1 Investment in evaluation

Appropriate budget allocation is central in ensuring the quality, credibility, and utility of evaluation. A retrospective look at investment in evaluation in the region reveals that the function is under-resourced. In 2013, only 0.3% of ROAS and CO budgets were invested in evaluation, well below the minimum level of investment target of 3% set out in the Evaluation Policy. This underinvestment was largely due to the fact that five of the six offices in the region did not conduct evaluations in 2013 and minimal funds were allotted for evaluation capacity development related activities. As all offices in the region have planned evaluations in the 2014-2017 period, each office should also have a costed evaluation plan, ensuring that sufficient funds are allocated for the conduct and dissemination of each planned evaluation as part of their Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan (MERP). To this end,

- ❖ All offices will allocate 3 percent of their total AWP budgets, including both core and non-core funds, for evaluation related activities over the period of their strategic note.[5]

The RO/MCO/COs will refine their MERPs annually based on their actual office portfolio/investment to ensure that they are on track to dedicate 3 percent of their portfolio during the Strategic Note period.

A.2 Adequate and skilled human resources for Monitoring and Evaluation

There are diverse institutional arrangements for staffing at the field level. Congruent with the decentralized nature of UN-Women, efforts are being made at UN Women to increase capacity for monitoring and evaluation at the field level. While all of the offices in the region have appointed M&E focal points in 2013, only one country office (Palestine) has a half-time dedicated/specialized M&E officer.

While such an arrangement is understandable given the operational span and resource base of the Entity, the continued absence of such dedicated expertise will have a significant bearing on the overall evaluative work of UN Women and its capacity to promote gender-responsive evaluation in joint and/or system-wide evaluation at the country-level, including in evaluations of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

As part of the Regional Evaluation Strategy

- ❖ ROAS will work with all Offices in the region to build the capacity of field office staff on the conduct, management and use of gender responsive evaluations[6]
- ❖ 100 % Offices will continue to ensure they have an M&E focal point and appoint M&E officers where possible

A.3 Reinforcing accountabilities for evaluation

Ensuring the quality, credibility and use of evaluation is the responsibility of all managers in UN-Women. This is mainly promoted through a system of organizational incentives, inclusion in the performance appraisal system and investment in evaluation capacity development.

In accordance with the Evaluation Policy, the use of evaluation for improved performance will be included as a key element in the performance appraisals of senior managers. In this regard, the Regional Director will ensure integration of the evaluation function in the individual Performance and Management Development (PMD) of country office representatives. Moreover, the strategy aims to further mainstream the

[5] The evaluation related budget is not limited only to the conduct of evaluation, but can also include evaluation related capacity building activities, dissemination of evaluation findings and lessons learned, and staff time spent on evaluation.

[6] Annual capacity development plans for UN Women staff in the region will be developed in collaboration with (M)COs.

demand for evaluation particularly among senior managers of the regional, multi-country and country offices. To support this aim,

- Evaluation will be integrated in the agenda of main country office or regional office meetings including annual retreats, and the main findings and recommendations will be discussed and regularly monitored.

B. Coverage of evaluations improved and maintained

All Offices in the region are expected to identify their planned evaluations by analyzing their respective regional/multi-country/country strategic notes and identifying potential needs and commitments. Knowing in advance what evaluations will be conducted in a given period allows more time to identify and recruit evaluation teams with the right expertise to maximize the potential of evaluations.

For a young entity, the coverage of evaluation in the Arab States Region (2011-2013) is reasonably good. About two-thirds of offices in the region have conducted a project or programme evaluation over the 2011-13 period. However due to various reasons including unrealistic planning, offices transitioning during the formation of the new regional architecture, and country specific instability a number of evaluations were delayed and / or postponed.

Over the next four years all of the offices in the region have planned to complete at least two evaluations (see Annex IV for list of planned evaluations). The strategy will reinforce the existing systems to ensure that evaluation plans are strategically designed, properly implemented and regularly reviewed.

In this regard, the strategy will pursue the following to improve coverage of evaluations in Arab States region:

- ROAS will provide systematic support to regional, multi-country and country offices to ensure evaluations are strategically planned, carried out according to the evaluation plans, are of high quality, and can be used to improving learning, accountability and programming.
- ROAS and COs will ensure timely review of the evaluation plans in line with the AWP planning and make adjustment based on the needs and priorities of the respective countries/offices.

C. Implementation of evaluations

A number of evaluations were not implemented within the planned timeframe; data for 2013 indicates an evaluation completion rate of 33 percent. Only one of the three evaluations planned for 2013 was completed in 2013; the remaining evaluations were initiated but have not yet been completed due to interruption in implementation or a project extension.[7] Based on MER plans approved during the 2014 strategic planning cycle, five evaluations and two evaluability assessments are planned for 2014. It will be very important for offices to ensure sufficient time, human and financial allocation for implementing evaluations.

[7] MER Plans should be updated quarterly to reflect changes in delays or cancellation of evaluations.

The Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES) will work with each office to ensure a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities and the key components of realistic evaluation planning and timely and quality implementation. The Strategy will give particular focus to those offices with limited experience in conducting project / programme or thematic evaluations. The Strategy will also reinforce the mechanism for follow up to implementation of evaluation plans through consistent technical assistance and follow up by the RES, quarterly tracking in the GATE system on planned and ongoing evaluations, as well as through the Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS)[8].

- All offices will aim to increase the evaluation implementation rate to 90 percent.

D. Quality and credibility of evaluations improved

The 2013 Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System[9] (GERAAS), established by the IEO with the aim of improving the quality and use of decentralized evaluations, included one evaluation from the Arab States Region which was rated as satisfactory. As more and more evaluations are planned to be undertaken in the span of the SN cycle with wider scope and coverage including programme-level, thematic, joint and UNDAF evaluations, consistent follow up and support is required to multi-country and country offices to conduct high quality and credible evaluations. While many factors, including limited financial and human capacity at field level can account for poor quality evaluations, the 2013 meta-analysis of all UN Women evaluations globally revealed that the majority of programmes lack explicit theories of change, measurable results frameworks, or adequate monitoring. Most of the evaluation reports also cite the lack of data as a major constraint to evaluation. All these have a significant bearing on the quality and credibility of evaluations undertaken in the region.

- The regional evaluation strategy will aim to have 80 percent of evaluation reports receiving a quality rating of “good” or better.

The ROAS together with the IEO will reinforce the quality assurance mechanism in all evaluation processes at regional, multi-country and country level. These mechanisms includes reviewing of terms of reference, participation in selection of consultants, inception and final reports, assessment using the GERAAS methodology, as well as oversight, quality assurance and technical support by the regional evaluation specialist based in the ROAS. As part of the meta-evaluation, executive feedback and results of the review of individual evaluation reports will be provided to the multi-country and country offices citing areas for improvement and learning.

[8] The Global Evaluation Oversight System has been established to ensure a transparent and sound system to monitor the performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women. The system includes a dashboard that presents key performance indicators for the evaluation function in a user-friendly manner.

[9] The Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) uses UNEG evaluation report standards as a basis for review and assessment, while ensuring specific standards relevant to UN-Women. The system provides an independent assessment of the quality and usefulness of evaluation reports. In addition, it serves knowledge management objectives by synthesizing evaluation findings, good practices and lessons learned, and capacity development objectives by sending individual practical feedback to commissioning offices on how to improve the quality and usefulness of future evaluations.

D.1. Quality assurance system in evaluation processes

A quality assurance system is central in order to continuously improve and enhance the quality and credibility of UN Women's decentralized evaluations and of the evaluation function overall. The strategy among others will enforce and strengthen the mechanism for quality assurance at different stages of the evaluation process as outlined in table 1 below. In accordance with the UN Women quality assurance system

- All Offices are required to ensure 100% compliance with the quality assurance process for all evaluations managed by their respective offices.

This indicator will be reported on by respective offices and monitored by the ROAS on a biannual basis. Annex II provides the form for reporting on the status of compliance against the quality assurance process for decentralized evaluation. The RES will work with MCO/CO staff involved in the quality assurance process to ensure that they understand the distinct roles and responsibilities and have sufficient capacity to undertake the tasks outline below (for additional information on capacity development activities see section F). As indicated below, the M&E officer/focal point in each office will play an integral role in providing technical advice in the evaluation process, including the drafting of ToRs, selection of the expert, and review of reports.

Table 1: Quality Assurance Process for Decentralized Evaluations[10]

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plans (MERP)
The M&E officer/focal point develops the MER plan in consultation with concerned programme officers and senior managers
The draft plan is sent to the Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES) for review
The (M)CO Representative/Regional Director submits the MER plan together with the SN/AWP for PRG's review and approval
The M&E officer/focal point uploads the evaluation section of the MER plan to GATE within one month of approval
Terms of Reference (ToR)
The M&E officer/focal point provides assistance in the development of the evaluation's terms of reference. In the absence of an M&E Officer, the evaluation task manager takes the lead in developing the ToR.
The draft ToR is sent to the RES for quality review
Final ToR is approved by the country representative/deputy representative
Selection of consultants
The M&E officer/focal point provides assistance in the selection of the consultant used for the evaluation in consultation with RES. For countries with no M&E officer, the evaluation task manager plays a key role in the selection of consultant/s.
The final selection of the consultant is approved by the country representative/deputy representative

[10] Section V of the Regional Evaluation Strategy outlines the roles and responsibilities of the evaluation function at UN Women.

Inception Report
The M&E Officer/focal point or the evaluation task manager takes the primarily responsibility for quality assuring and approving the inception report.
The draft and final inception report is sent to the RES for quality review
Draft and final evaluation reports
The M&E officer provides assistance in ensuring the quality of the draft evaluation report. In cases where no M&E officer is appointed, the evaluation task manager should play the role of assuring the quality of the draft and final evaluation report.
The draft evaluation report is sent to the RES for quality review
The final report is approved by the country representative/deputy representative
The M&E officer/M&E focal point uploads the final evaluation report within six weeks of finalization to the GATE
Management response
The country representative/deputy representative leads the development of the management response and ensures timely implementation of key actions
The M&E officer/focal point uploads the management response in the GATE system within six weeks of finalization
The country representative approves the MER plan, final evaluation report and management response in the GATE system
The country representative or deputy should ensure timely implementation of the key actions

E. The evaluative evidence generated is used and supports evidence-based programming

E.1 The Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use

The IEO has established the online Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation - GATE system. The GATE provides a platform to store all evaluations including management responses in a transparent manner and establishes a follow-up mechanism to recommendations through a tracking system of implementation of key actions. Key performance indicator data on evaluation reported to the Executive Director and Executive Board is primarily drawn from the information entered on a quarterly basis in the GATE system. The ROAS will play an oversight role with respect to adherence to key corporate requirements in the region.

The evaluation chapter of the POM clearly spells out the user and approval rights of the GATE system. The Regional Evaluation Strategy will reinforce the appointment of a GATE focal point by all Offices in the region by the senior management.

- All offices will ensure that 100% of reports are uploaded and made available in the GATE system

E.2 Management Response and use of evaluations

E.2.1 Management response development and uploading it to the GATE system

In line with the requirements established in the Evaluation Policy, management responses should be prepared for every UN Women evaluation, including joint evaluations in which UN Women participates directly in the management and implementation.[11] In the Arab States Region, 100 percent of completed evaluations had management responses in 2013. As the number of evaluations conducted increases significantly in the next few years, it will be important for offices to continue to ensure that all evaluation reports uploaded into the GATE system have corresponding management responses. For decentralized evaluations, the Head of Office is responsible for finalization, implementation and monitoring of the management response.

- All offices will continue 100% compliance with the development, implementation and monitoring of management responses and actions and for reporting on their status through the GATE system.

E.2.2 Implementation of management response and key actions

The ultimate success of evaluation depends on the extent to which the recommendations are implemented and used to contribute to organizational accountability, informed decision making, and learning to improve performance and achievement of results. For evaluations conducted in the region in 2013, 67 (72%) of the key actions have been completed while 21 (22%) are under implementation and 6 (6%) are not yet initiated, representing a 94 percent implementation rate (completed + initiated) of management response key actions.

- Country offices will continue to ensure that a minimum 90 percent implementation rate of management response key actions. This parameter will be monitored by the regional evaluation specialist to ensure that key actions are implemented in a timely manner.

E.2.3 Use of evaluations

While compliance with management response is positive, there is no systematic approach at the regional, multi-country and country office level to ensure that evaluation findings are used to inform and improve decision-making and programming. To increase the utility of evaluation as an evidence-based programming tool, the strategy will support the establishment of an enforcement mechanism for reviewing new strategic notes to ensure all include references to evidence from evaluations of the preceding programme/strategic note cycles.

[11] Management responses for joint evaluations only need to address those recommendations specific to UN Women.

Moreover, as per UN Women Evaluation Policy, senior managers at the Regional and Country Office level will assume ultimate responsibility in the use of findings, recommendations and lessons learned resulting from evaluations commissioned by their respective offices and from other corporate or relevant evaluations.

In order to maximize the use and dissemination of evaluations:

- RO and COs will develop dissemination and communication strategies for all planned evaluations
- ROAS and COs will organize dissemination / learning events to review evaluation findings, when possible together with other meetings
- ROAS will develop thematic evaluation briefs and other knowledge management products based on the evaluations conducted in the region to ensure that findings and lessons learned are shared across the region
- ROAS will conduct regional webinars to share and discuss evaluation findings

F. Internal evaluation capacities enhanced to manage and use evaluations

In UN Women, evaluation capacity development is seen as a deliberate process whereby the abilities to manage, conduct and use GEHR evaluations are acquired, enhanced, and sustained over time. In this context, enhancing capacities on evaluation will not only provide the impetus to effectively design, manage and use evaluations but ultimately lead to generating credible evidence and accelerating progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the region.

Different modalities including online, internal and external trainings, inter-country (south-south) collaboration, learning events, workshops, and community of practices will be promoted and used to build staff capacity on evaluation. More specifically the regional evaluation strategy will support the following sets of strategies towards enhancing internal capacity on evaluation:

- ROAS will conduct annual learning events on GEHR M&E for UN Women staff in the region;
- ROAS will work with (M)COs to develop different user-friendly modalities to deliver training on the conduct, management and use of gender responsive evaluation to larger group of CO staff
- Regional Evaluation Specialist will hold monthly skype conferences with (M)CO M&E focal points;
- (M)COs will encourage M&E officers/focal points and other staff to participate in the UN Women Evaluation Community of Practice (CoP)

Results Area 2: UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation promoted

A. Inter-agency evaluation capacity development, including regional level networks and groups supported

One of UN Women's roles in promoting United Nations system coherence, coordination and accountability in terms of gender equality and the empowerment of women is to support gender responsive evaluation capacity with the UN system. Participation in interagency M&E groups is one way to work with other UN agencies on ensuring increased GR evaluation capacity development.

Currently, there is no regional level UN interagency M&E group in the Arab States region. The ROAS will reach out to other regional UN agencies to explore interest in establishing an interagency network for the Arab States region to promote an evaluation culture and contribute to UN coherence on evaluation. The interagency group can also support the strengthening of regional evaluation capacities among UN agencies and their partners. The group can also facilitate the exchange of information and experience of country level M&E groups. To strengthen capacity on gender responsive evaluation:

- ROAS will work to establish regional interagency M&E group
- (M)COs will participate in interagency M&E groups

B. Gender equality integrated in UNDAF and joint evaluations

As part of its coordination role in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women within the UN system, UN Women should participate in joint evaluation, United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations, "Delivering as one" evaluations and any relevant system-wide evaluation exercise at the regional or country level. Over the next four years offices in the region have planned to conduct 10 joint evaluations (see Annex IV). Moreover, UNDAF evaluations (mid-term and / or final) are scheduled for many countries in the region (Annex V).

In order to ensure that gender equality is integrated in UNDAF and joint evaluations, the regional and country offices will actively contribute to regional and country level evaluation groups, including monitoring the timing of UNDAF evaluations and providing input throughout the evaluation process, and promoting joint evaluation initiatives regarding gender equality and system-wide accountability at the regional and country levels. **Over the next four years 80 percent of offices will participate in UNDAF and joint evaluations**. To achieve this:

- (M)COs will appoint a staff member to serve as focal point for UNDAF / UNCT M&E groups

- ROAS will work with the UNDAF focal point in each M(CO) to provide technical assistance during the UNDAF evaluation related processes[12]
- ROAS will work with joint evaluation task managers in each (M)CO to provide technical assistance during evaluation related process

In countries where UN Women has no country office, the ROAS will provide input to the UNDAF evaluation through the Peer Review Group.

Results Area 3: National Evaluation Capacities for gender responsive M&E system strengthened

The development of national capacities as a key element of all its evaluation processes is a central component of the work of UN-Women. Partnerships for gender responsive evaluation capacity development initiatives will be promoted to support the capacity of governments and national and regional evaluation associations and networks with respect to gender-responsive evaluation. Increased M&E capacity development of national partners was also cited as an issue in the M&E Needs Assessment conducted in early 2014.

Over the next four years the ROAS and (M)COs will work with national partners, both government and civil society to increase awareness of and capacity in evaluation and particularly gender responsive evaluation, and promote the practice and institutionalization of evaluation at the national level.

A. Civil society capacity development on gender responsive evaluation strengthened

The practice of evaluation is expanding with the establishment and growth of national and regional level evaluation associations. The MENA Evaluators Network (EvalMENA), a regional network was established in 2011 and Egypt, Jordan and Morocco have registered evaluation associations. These organizations and others in the region have worked to develop, adapt and translate evaluation materials for the region; EvalMENA and EREN (the Egyptian Research and Evaluation Network) have expressed interest in integrating modules on equity focused and gender responsive evaluation into some of the materials they have developed.

- ROAS will establish and expand partnerships with national VOPEs.
- ROAS will work with regional and national evaluation associations to integrate modules on gender responsive evaluation into existing materials and courses, as well as exploring additional collaboration for capacity development of evaluators on gender responsive evaluation in the region.

[12]This could include support to the gender thematic group in exercises that include assessments or evaluation of gender mainstreaming within UNDAF or UNCT.

B. Government partners have increased evaluation capacity

There has been increasing recognition of the importance of evaluation for evidence-based public policy making. In the Arab States Region only Morocco has formally integrated the principle of evaluation in its constitution and articulated the important role that Parliament plays in evaluating public policy. Other countries while having no national evaluation policies or systems conduct evaluation but not systematically. In addition, in accordance with core principles of conducting evaluation in UN Women is that evaluation should be country driven and nationally owned and led, it is important for UN Women support the development of capacity at the national level to conduct evaluations that are responsive to gender equality and women's rights. Evaluations in each office should be developed based on participatory approach and mechanism with National Partners, to ensure that it addresses national priorities and needs and provides quality information for evidence-based planning and programming. To this end, UN Women will work with parliamentarians and other strategic government partners identified by (M)COs to support national evaluation capacity development.

B.1 Members of Parliament

Parliamentarians have a critical role in ensuring a demand for evaluations to thrive and evaluation evidence is used for strengthening decision-making for greater development effectiveness and inclusive growth. One of the Parliamentarians' roles is to shape national evaluation policy, advocate for country led evaluation, and monitor implementation.

UN Women ROAS and (M)COs work extensively with Parliamentarians across the Arab States Region. Offices in the region have been working together to identify Parliamentarians who are interested in engaging on evaluation as advocates for the use and institutionalization of evaluation.

A core group of Parliamentarians has been established who are committed to greater engagement on advocating for and advancing the institutionalization of evaluation in their countries. These Parliamentarians came together in April 2014 to begin a regional discussion amongst themselves and with the evaluation community in the Arab States Region on the role of Parliamentarians as strategic advocates in promoting the evaluation of national and local programmes and policies to ensure that these programmes and policies are gender responsive and promote inclusive growth.

As part of the regional evaluation strategy, UN Women ROAS and (M)COs will work to expand this group so that it remains dynamic and inclusive. Offices will continue to work with Parliamentarians to:

- support the regional exchange of experiences through a regional Parliamentarians' google group
- support dialogue at the national level with other Parliamentarians and civil society and to continue the dialogue with members of the evaluation communities in their respective countries

- increase awareness on the differences between evaluation and audit/oversight through training and capacity development on evaluation
- assist Parliamentarians in identifying where evaluation issues can be integrated into their existing networks/forums

ROAS in partnership with (M)COs will also explore how to make these efforts sustainable at the national level through specific parliament units.

B.2 Government Partners

UN Women will also work with other governmental regional and national counterparts to develop their capacity in GEHR evaluation in a manner which supports sustainability. This will be done through evaluation workshops for national partners, as well as the conduct of joint evaluation where possible with national counterparts. Specifically,

- (M)COs will identify the relevant national entity(s) / counterparts for evaluation capacity development efforts
- ROAS will work collaboratively with (M)COs to identify, adapt and / or develop relevant training materials for national counterparts
- ROAS and (M)COs will identify a strategic evaluation with national counterparts with which to pilot joint evaluations which include the full and active participation of counterparts in all stages

V. Responsibilities for evaluation function

The UN Women Evaluation Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of key constituents of the organization in evaluation. This is further elaborated in the evaluation part of the Programme and Operations Manual (POM). The Regional Evaluation Strategy will further reinforce systems for accountability particularly by senior managers and those with programmatic, monitoring and evaluation functions.

Table II: Roles and responsibilities of the evaluation function in UN Women at the decentralized level

Staff Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Multi-Country/Country Representatives/Directors	• Assume overall accountability for evaluation function at country level • Appoint M&E officer and/or M&E focal point • Institute measures to ensure that evaluations are strategically selected based on a set of criteria charted out in the Evaluation Policy • Ensure the timely development and implementation of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research plans (MERP) • Ensure appropriate allocation of the country office budget to evaluation • Ensure that strategic notes, new programmes and initiatives are designed in a way that permits evaluation at a later stage

Staff Position	Roles and Responsibilities
	(founded on clear results statements and SMART indicators, theory of change, baseline and target information, etc.) • Institute appropriate management arrangements described below to ensure independence and quality of evaluations according to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards as provided in the UN Women Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) • Approves evaluation plans, evaluation reports and management response in the GATE system • Ensure that evaluation findings are considered to improve programming, learning and decision making • Ensure that management response to recommendations are prepared, and that appropriate management action is taken • Ensure that all programme staff have a foundational knowledge of evaluation principles and types and ensure that new appointments to monitoring and evaluation posts are made against the UNEG evaluation competencies
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officers/Focal Points	• Advise on evaluability by preparing the programme for future evaluations • Provide technical advice in the planning, management, dissemination and response to decentralized evaluations • Assume responsibilities as focal point for the GATE system: o upload, update and report on status of evaluation plans (i.e. evaluation section of the MER), completed evaluation reports and ToRs o support the monitoring of action plans of management responses to evaluations, including providing quarterly updates on status of implementation in the GATE system • Support the office in accurately tracking evaluation allocations and expenditures • Support Senior Managers in developing management responses to all evaluations and follow up timely approval by head of the respective office • Individual capacity permitting, act as Evaluation Task Manager • Support the organization of Corporate Evaluation data collection, including organizing case study missions, identify documents and stakeholders to be consulted, design interview schedules, organize feedback on the draft case study and management response to the final case study, and provide logistical support as required • Take part in system-wide UN coherence including representing UN Women in inter-agency platforms on M&E at the country level • Support efforts to enhance UN Women internal M&E capacity and national capacity on M&E with a focus on gender responsive evaluation
Regional Directors	• Assume overall accountability for evaluation function in the region • Ensure country and multi-country offices' compliance with evaluation-related accountability

Staff Position	Roles and Responsibilities
	• Ensure appropriate allocation of resources for evaluation (3% of the total budget in the region) • Support and guide regional, multi-country and country offices capacity in evaluation • Approve MERP, ToR, evaluation reports, and management responses for the Regional Office • Ensure that evaluation findings are fully considered, that management response to recommendation are prepared, and that appropriate management action is taken • Promote organizational learning through application of evaluation findings and recommendations in the region programming
Regional Evaluation Specialists	• Conduct and/or manage strategic decentralized regional and country-level evaluations • Support implementation of evaluation policies and strategies • Lead development of regional evaluation strategies and ensure their implementation • Advise regional, multi-country and country directors on evaluation issues • Provide technical support and oversight on the development of MCO/CO's MER plans, review of ToR, inception report, and draft and final evaluation reports • Provide direct technical support and advice for decentralized evaluations including UNDAF and other joint evaluation processes from a gender equality and human rights perspective • Support evaluation capacity development through trainings and exchange of experiences and continuous learning on M&E • Provide technical assistance in the use of GATE, and track management response to evaluations conducted by the ROs, MCOs and COs • Represent UN Women in regional inter-agency M&E platforms • Support regional and national voluntary evaluation networks and associations and national evaluation capacity development from a gender equality and human rights perspective

VI. Mechanism for monitoring implementation of the Strategy

Monitoring the implementation of the Strategy is an integral part of the Strategy. The Strategy identifies the key results areas, indicators with baselines and targets for each strategic focus area to strengthen evaluation function in the region over the next four years (2014-2017). It also lays out the overall accountability/responsibility for implementation of the identified actions, the key milestones and the timelines for delivering them. Moreover, progress on the key performance indicators of the evaluation function will be reported through the Global Evaluation Oversight System Dashboard to the senior managers of the organization on a quarterly basis.

Periodic review will be conducted by the regional office to take stock of the performance and make adjustments on the progress. All offices in the region will report on country level key performance data (see Results Framework – Section VII

below) through the GATE system, Altas and communication between the (M)COs and the ROAS. The RES and IEO will analyse the data and report on it at the regional level.

RES will hold quarterly meetings with M&E focal points to discuss progress as well as conduct a joint annual review of the regional evaluation strategy with COs.

VII. Results Framework

Results	Indicators	Reporting Frequency	Source of data	Baseline	Target	Responsible
Result Area 1: Effective decentralized Evaluation System strengthened and implemented						
A. Management attention to decentralized evaluation function is heightened	% of evaluation expenditure from the total expenditure in the region	Annual	Atlas	0.3%	3%	RO & (M)CO financial officer
	% of Offices that have appointed M&E focal points or M&E Officers	Annual	(M)CO reporting	100%	100%	RO & (M)CO HR
	% of Offices in which evaluation was discussed and integrated in annual retreats	Annual	(M)CO reporting	TBC	100%	RES & M&E focal points
B. Coverage of evaluations improved and maintained	Number of Offices that conducted at least one evaluation over total number of Offices	Annual	GATE system	TBC	80%	GATE focal points
C. Implementation of evaluations	Number of evaluations completed, initiated, not initiated and cancelled in a given year against total number of evaluations planned	Quarterly	GATE system	33% completed	90% completed	GATE focal points
D. Quality and credibility of evaluation improved	% of decentralized evaluations rated as “Good’ and above on the GERAAS evaluation report quality assessment scale.	Annual	GERAAS	0%	80%	IEO/RO
	% of COs that managed evaluation in a specific year compliant with quality assurance system in place	Annual	(M)CO reporting	NA[13]	100%	COs, RO, IEO
E. Evaluative evidence generated is used and supports results and	% of evaluation reports uploaded and made accessible in the GATE system	Annual	GATE system	100%	100%	M&E focal points

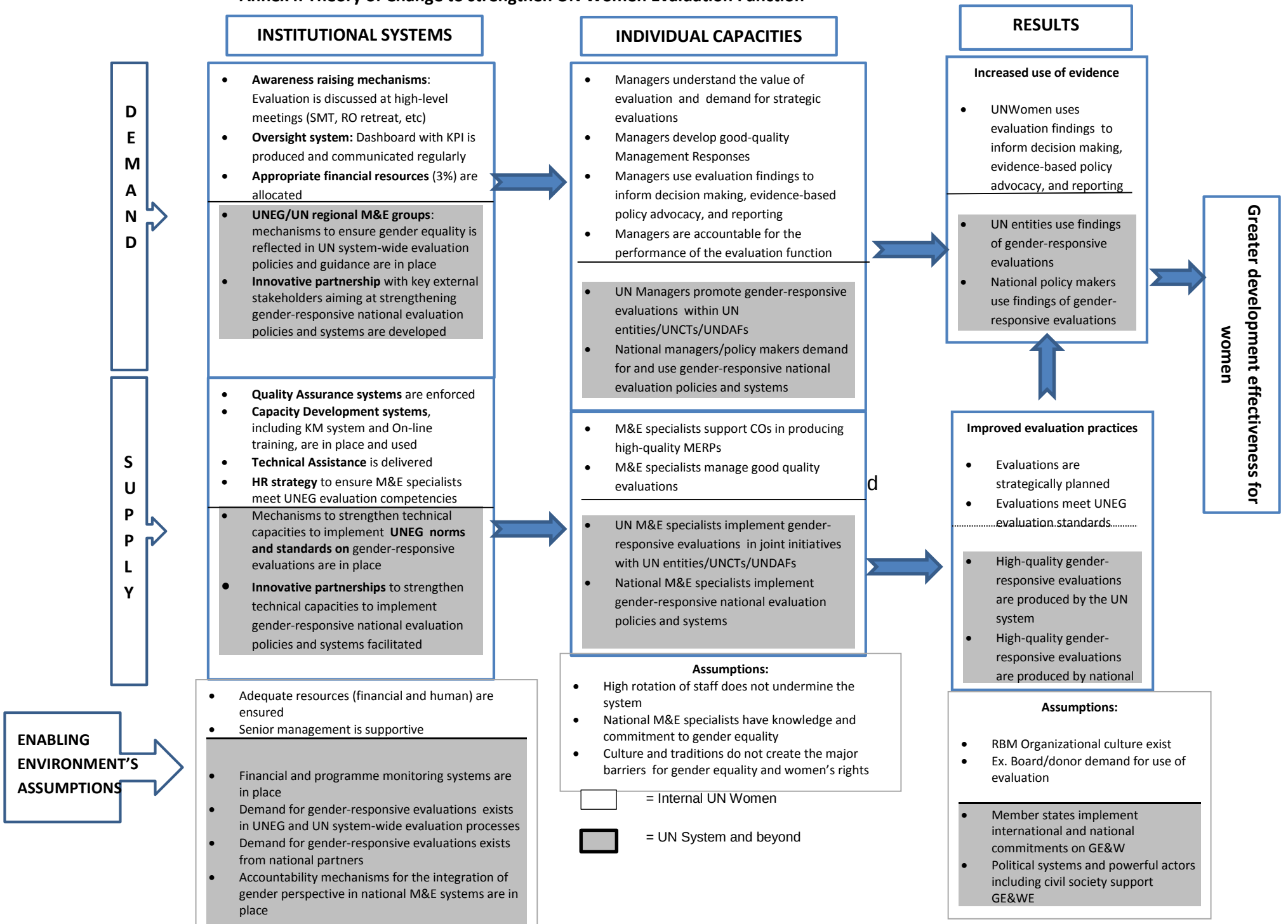
[13] As the quality assurance was instituted in 2014 no baseline data is available.

Results	Indicators	Reporting Frequency	Source of data	Baseline	Target	Responsible
evidence based programming	% of new Strategic Notes informed and made reference to evaluative evidence	Annual	Strategic Notes	TBC	100%	RO
	% of decentralized evaluations that have developed and uploaded management response in the GATE	Quarterly	GATE system	100%	100%	(M)COs, ROs, IEO
	% implementation of management response key actions	Quarterly	GATE system	94%[14]	90%	(M)COs, ROs, IEO
F. Internal evaluation capacity enhanced to manage and use evaluations	% of M&E specialists/focal points who are members of the Global M&E Community of practice	Annual	Global COP records / Survey	TBC	90%	RO
	% of M&E specialists/focal points trained in gender responsive evaluation	Annual	RO training records / Survey	0%	80%	RO
Results Area 2: UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation promoted						
A. Inter-agency evaluation capacity development, including regional level networks and groups supported	% of countries in which UN Women is represented in inter-agency M&E working groups	Annual	Survey	TBC	80%	COs
B. Gender equality integrated in UNDAF and joint evaluations	% of offices that participated in UNDAF and Joint evaluations	Annual	Survey	TBC	80%	(M)COs
Results Area 4: National Evaluation Capacities for gender responsive M&E system strengthened						
A. Civil society capacity development on gender responsive evaluation strengthened	# of workshops on gender responsive evaluation conducted at regional evaluation workshops/meetings	Annual	RO reporting	0	4	RO/RES
	# of materials/courses developed for the region by	Annual	RO reporting	0	2	RO/RES

[14] 67% completed with an additional 27% initiated

Results	Indicators	Reporting Frequency	Source of data	Baseline	Target	Responsible
	national and or regional evaluation networks in which module on gender responsive evaluation is integrated					
B. Government demand and use of evaluation increased	# offices conducting joint evaluations with national counterparts	Annual	(M)CO reporting / MERP	TBC	2	COs
	# trainings on GRE held for counterparts	Annual	RO & (M)CO reporting	0	2	RO, (M)COs
	# of countries with representation in Parliamentarians group on Linking Evaluation to Policymaking	Annual	RO records from google group	6	10	RO

Annex I: Theory of Change to strengthen UN Women Evaluation Function



Annex II: Checklist for the Quality Assurance Process for Decentralized Evaluation

Name of Office:		**Region:**	
Title of the Evaluation:			
Name of Evaluation Task Manager:		**Name of M&E Officer/focal point (if different from the Eval. Task Manager):**	
Year			
Stage of the Evaluation	**Quality assurance process to be complied**	**Status of compliance against set of quality assurance processes**	**Remark (if any)**
Planning Stage	**Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plans (MERP)**		
	The M&E officer/focal point develops the MER plan in consultation with concerned programme officers and senior managers	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The draft plan is sent to the Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES) for review	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The (M)CO Representative/Regional Director submits the MER plan together with the SN/AWP for PRG's review and Approval	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The M&E officer/focal point uploads the evaluation section of the MER plan to GATE within one month of approval	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Preparation Stage	**Terms of Reference (ToR)**		
	The M&E officer provides assistance in the development of the evaluation's terms of reference. In the absence of an M&E Officer, the evaluation task manager takes the lead in developing the ToR.	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The draft ToR is sent to the RES for quality review	Yes ☐ No ☐	

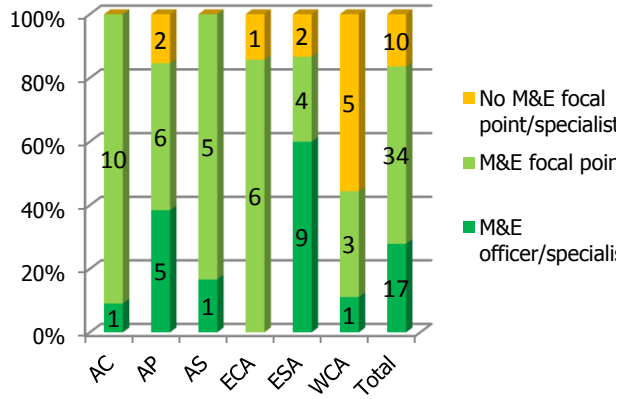
	Final ToR is approved by the country representative / deputy representative	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	Selection of consultants		
	The M&E officer provides assistance in the selection of the consultant used for the evaluation in consultation with RES. For countries with no M&E officer, the evaluation task manager plays a key role in the selection of consultant/s.	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The final selection of the consultant is approved by the country representative/deputy representative	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Conduct	**Inception Report**		
	The M&E Officer or the evaluation task manager takes the primarily responsibility for quality assuring and approving the inception report.	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The draft and final inception report is sent to the RES for quality review	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	Draft and final evaluation reports		
	The M&E officer provides assistance in ensuring the quality of the draft evaluation report. In cases where no M&E officer is appointed, the evaluation task manager should play the role of assuring the quality of the draft and final evaluation report	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The draft evaluation report is sent to the RES for quality review	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The final report is approved by the country representative/deputy representative	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The M&E officer/M&E focal point uploads the final evaluation report within six weeks of finalization to the GATE	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Use	**Management response**		

	The country representative/deputy representative leads the development of the management response and ensures timely implementation of key actions	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The M&E officer/focal point uploads the management response in the GATE system within six weeks of finalization	Yes ☐ No ☐	
	The country representative approves the MER plan, final evaluation report and management response in the GATE system	Yes ☐ No ☐	

Annex III: UN Women Global Evaluation Oversight System
Semester 2 – 2013

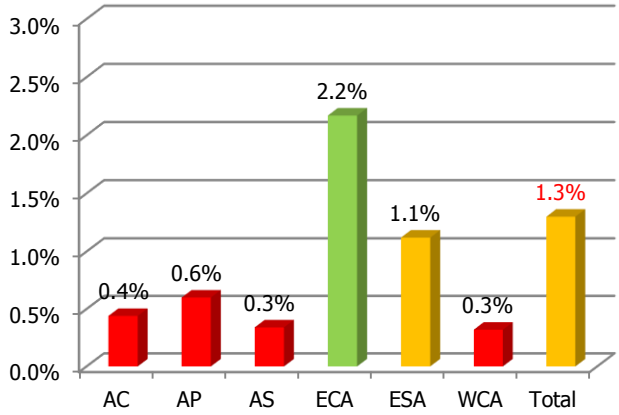
I. Resources for Evaluation Function

A. Human Resources for Monitoring and Evaluation, 2013[15]



Source: UN-Women Global Evaluation Oversight System

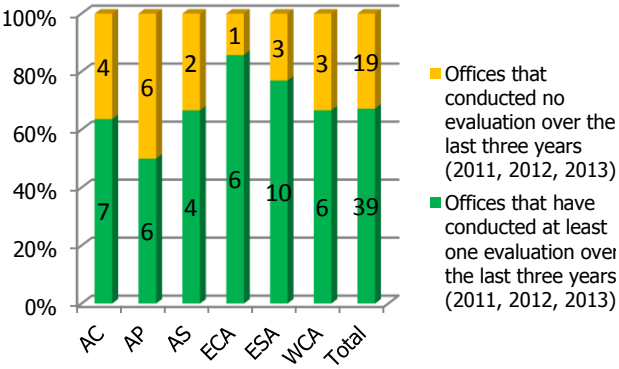
B. Financial resources invested in evaluation, 2013[16]



Source: 2013 figures are generated from Atlas by the Division of Management and Administration and complemented by data obtained from Offices through Regional Evaluation Specialists

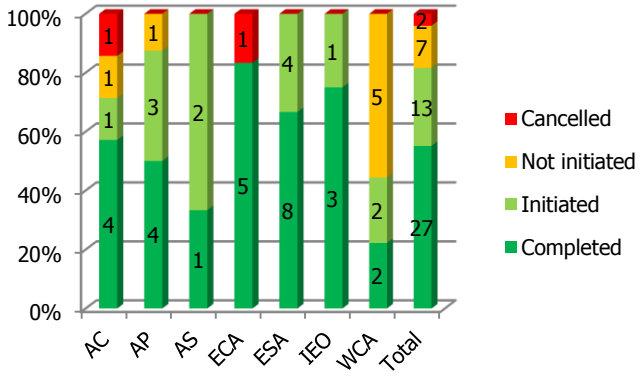
II. Evaluation Planning and Implementation

C. Evaluation Coverage (2011-2013)[3]



Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System

D. Evaluation implementation rate, 2013



Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System

[1]Country offices, multi-country offices and regional offices are included in the above analysis. *AC (Americas and the Caribbean), AP (Asia and the Pacific), AS (Arab States), ECA (Europe and Central Asia), ESA (East and Southern Africa), and WCA (West and Central Africa)

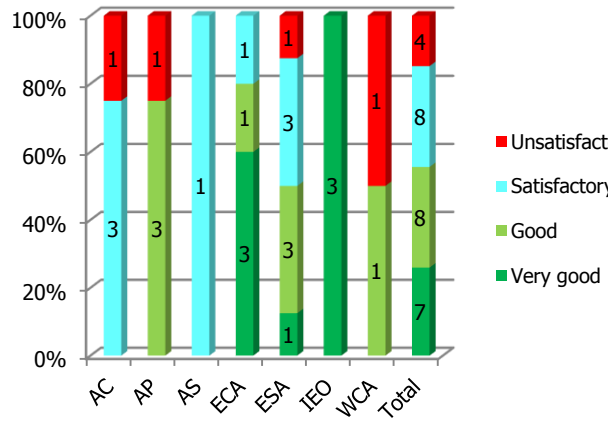
[3] Although some evaluations cover more than one country, the graph includes only those offices that managed/commissioned the evaluation. Figures for 2011 and 2012 should be understood in line with the changes introduced as part the consolidation of the regional architecture.

[16] The total percentage includes costs incurred by the IEO, HQ divisions and Decentralized Offices. It represents the total evaluation expenditure in the entire organization in 2013.

*While it is likely that resources invested in evaluation fluctuate yearly, this key performance indicator provides an indication of the financial commitment to the evaluation function.

III. Quality of Evaluations

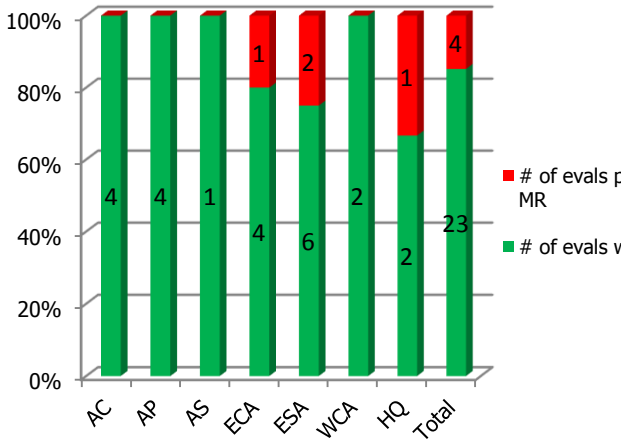
E. Quality of 2013 Evaluations



Source: UN Women Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS)

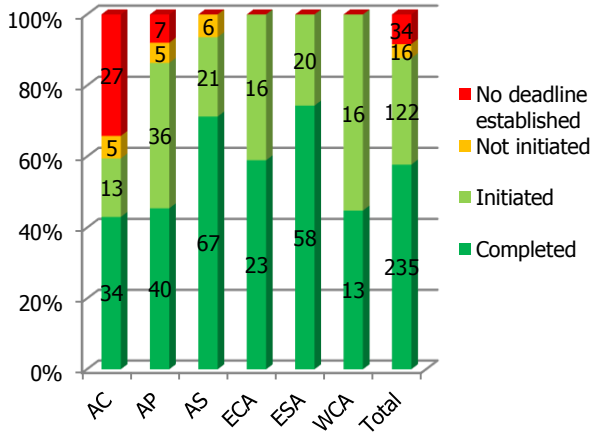
IV. Use of Evaluation

F. 2013 Evaluation Reports with Management Response uploaded to the GATE system



Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System

G. Implementation Status of 2012 Management Response/Key Actions



Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System

Annex IV: Planned Evaluations 2014-2017[17] - Arab States Region

Evaluation name	Thematic Area	Office	Joint activity	Planned Dates
2014				
Volunteerism initiative to enhance young people perception on women rights Project	Leadership & Political Participation	Jordan & Syria CO	Y	2014 (Q1)
Achieving E-Quality Project	Econ. Empowerment	Jordan & Syria CO	N	2014 (Q2-Q3)
Final Evaluation Support for Delivery of Justice Services for Women	VAW	Palestine CO	N	2014 (Q1-Q2)
Evaluation of the project "Support to a local planning that is gender sensitive and incorporates adaptation to climate change concerns in Morocco"	Governance & National Planning	Morocco MCO	Y	2014 (Q4)
AWP/SP OUTCOME Evaluation DRF 5	Governance & National Planning	Palestine CO	Y	2014 (Q4)
2015				
Efficiency and effectiveness of gender units in the ministries	Leadership & Political Participation	Iraq CO	*Y*	2015 (TBC)
Final Evaluation for the Citizenship, leadership and participation: new pathways for Arab women	Leadership & Political Participation	Regional Office	Y	2015 (Q1-Q2)
Evaluation of Women's Political Participation & Leadership Component	Leadership & Political Participation	Jordan & Syria CO		2015
External final evaluation of the project women election watch	Leadership & Political Participation	Morocco MCO	N	2015 (Q2-Q4)
Final Evaluation Socially Responsible Development Planning: Women Run School Canteen phase III	Economic Empowerment	Palestine CO	N	2015 (Q1-Q3)
Midterm Evaluation of the Safe Cities project	VAW	Egypt CO	N	2015 (Q1-Q2)
Evaluation of Project Improve access to judicial services for women and children victims of human trafficking	VAW	Morocco MCO	Y	2015 (TBD)

[17] Based on 2014 RO and CO MER Plans approved during the SN/AWP/MERP process. Note while all MER Plans start in 2014, the end date varies depending on the country UNDAF. Egypt 2014-17, Iraq 2014-15, Jordan 2014-17, Morocco 2014-17, Palestine

Evaluation name	Thematic Area	Office	Joint activity	Planned Dates
Strengthened capacities for inclusive and effective women's (refugees and in the hosting communities) and girls' participation in decision making processes affecting their lives	Regional Response Plan 5/ Objective 2	Jordan & Syria CO	N	2015
2016				
AWP/SN OUTCOME EVALUATION DRF 1	Leadership & Political Participation	Palestine CO	Y	2016 (Q4)
Final Evaluation of the Spring Forward Regional Programme	Leadership & Political Participation Econ. Empowerment	Regional Office	Y	2016 (Q2-Q4)
Final evaluation of the GRB Center of Excellence	Governance & National Planning	Morocco MCO	N	2016 (Q3)
Effectiveness of incubator project in Kurdistan	Econ. Empowerment	Iraq CO	*Y*	2016 (TBC)
2017				
Evaluation of Thematic Impact Area 1 and 2 of Egypt AWP 2013- 2016	Leadership & Political Participation Econ. Empowerment	Egypt CO	N	2017 (Q1)
Final Evaluation of the Safe Cities project	VAW	Egypt CO	N	2017 (Q3-Q4)
Regional Thematic Evaluation	TBD	Regional Office	Y	TBD

Annex V: Planned UNDAF Evaluations 2014-2017 – Arab States Region

Country	Document	Year	Evaluation
Algeria	Algeria - Cadre de Coopération Stratégique 2012-2014	2012-2014	Final evaluation 2015 Q1
Egypt	Egypt UNDAF (2013 - 2017)	2013-2017	Mid-term review 2015 Q1 Final evaluation 2017 Q1
Iraq	UNDAF Iraq (2015-2019)	2015-2019	Final evaluation 2018 Q4
	UNDAF Iraq (2011-2014)	2011-2014	2014
Jordan	Jordan UNDAF (2013 - 2017)	2013-2017	early 2016
Lebanon	Lebanon UNDAF 2010-2014	2010-2014	2014
Morocco	Morocco - UNDAF 2012-2016	2012-2016	Mid-term evaluation 2014 Q2 (if needed) Final evaluation 2016 Q1
Palestine	State of Palestine - UNDAF 2014-2016	2014-2016	2015
Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia - UNCCSF 2012-2016	2012-2016	Mid-term evaluation 2014 Q4
Tunisia	Plan Cadre D'Aide au Développement Tunisie 2015-2019 (Draft)	2015-2019	
Yemen	Yemen UNDAF 2012-2015	2012-2015	2014