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CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S UN SYSTEM
COORDINATION AND BROADER CONVENING ROLE IN
ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



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The evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES). The IES team included the Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service, Inga Sniukaite as Evaluation Team Leader; Tara Kaul, Evaluation Specialist; Soo Yeon Kim, Evaluation Analyst; Genevieve Quinn, Research Assistant; and Divvaakar Subramanyam Vidalur, Independent Consultant.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEB	Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary General
EVAW	End Violence Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GTG	Gender Theme Group
IANWGE	Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality
IBC	Issue Based Coalition
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
IRRF	Integrated Results and Resources Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PPID	Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RCP	Regional Collaborative Platforms
RMS	Results Management System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SP	Strategic Plan
UNCF	United Nations Cooperation Framework
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCD	UN System Coordination Division
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan
UNTF	United Nations Trust Fund
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

FOREWORD

Violence against women and girls is a significant problem globally which takes many forms and has both immediate and long term physical and mental health consequences. Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) is a key developmental outcome and focus in UN Women's current Strategic Plan (2018-2021) and the Entity's work on EVAW spans its integrated mandate of normative support, UN system coordination, and operational activities on the ground. In working towards preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, UN Women coordinates and works with partner agencies in the UN system, and also convenes and collaborates with civil society, the private sector, local governments, and women's organizations. With a view to informing this important strategic area, the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) led an evaluation to assess the contribution of UN Women's coordination and convening role to the EVAW results.

The evaluation found that UN Women's mandate to lead, promote and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality and women's empowerment is a strategic asset that enables the Entity to engage on both normative advocacy and operational support, with coordination acting as a binder for the two. With the UN-SWAP 2.0 and the SDGs, the emphasis of coordination is evolving from accountability for mainstreaming gender within systems, processes, and functions of UN entities, to transformative results in thematic areas. However, the existing accountability mechanisms are insufficient and need to be complemented with an appropriate Coordination for EVAW Results Framework. The evaluation also found that a lack of articulation of a concrete value proposition of coordination has constrained the operationalization of the coordination role in thematic areas, while other challenges include a lack of sufficient financial investments and appropriate metrics to showcase the value of UN Women's coordination work to the UN system as a whole.

Despite these challenges, there is strong evidence of the contribution of UN Women's coordination and convening role in advancing the cause of EVAW across regions - including via the Essential Services Programme, Partners for Prevention, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, and the UNiTE campaign, to name a few. UN Women's role in the UN system's COVID-19 response is another strong example that showcased UN Women's thought leadership, expeditious mobilization of evidence, and strong and cohesive advocacy for action in EVAW.

UN Women's founding resolutions enable the Entity to lead, coordinate and promote a system-wide Coordination for EVAW Results Framework, and to strengthen inter-agency mechanisms for coordinated actions in the thematic area of EVAW towards accountability for development results as envisioned in UN-SWAP 2.0 and internationally agreed goals on EVAW, especially SDG 5.2.

Internally, the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 is a timely opportunity for UN Women to recognize and reflect on its UN system coordination and convening functions in thematic areas, particularly EVAW. The recommendations in the evaluation are forward looking and suggest a reaffirming of UN Women's mandate to coordinate for results in key thematic areas, clear articulation of the value proposition of coordination to accelerate EVAW outcomes, strengthening of inter-agency and in-house coordination mechanisms, as well as systematic documenting and communication of the impact of coordination. We hope that the insights from this evaluation will contribute to strategic decision-making, including the development of UN Women's next Strategic Plan.



Lisa Sutton

Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S UN SYSTEM COORDINATION AND BROADER CONVENING ROLE IN ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Photo ©UN Women/Supasan Banyongkasena

This report presents the findings of the corporate evaluation of UN Women's UN system coordination and broader convening role with civil society, governments and other partners in ending violence against women (EVAW). This evaluation was conducted by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (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 2018–2020. It was initiated in December 2020 and completed in April 2021.

WHAT WAS EVALUATED

The evaluation focused on UN Women's UN coordination and convening role in EVAW primarily during the period of the current Strategic Plan (2018–2021) and allowed for the inclusion of relevant historical results and mechanisms. While not a focus of this evaluation, the emerging lessons learned for coordination and convening from the Spotlight Initiative to EVAW were also considered.

Drawing on insights collected during the evaluation inception stage, the evaluation focused on five key questions:

- What is the **strategic significance** of UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening role in advancing globally agreed goals on EVAW?
- How has UN Women **operationalized** its UN system coordination and broader convening power on EVAW issues?
- What are the **results** of UN Women's UN system coordination and broader convening role on EVAW issues?
- How has UN Women's coordination and convening role contributed to EVAW during the **COVID-19 global pandemic**?
- What **lessons** emerge from programmes where UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening work has led to demonstrated impact in EVAW?

The findings from this evaluation are expected to contribute to strategic decision-making; organizational learning and accountability; and to strengthening UN Women's

UN system coordination and its broader convening role in EVAW, including through the development of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, and senior management and programme staff directly working on, or with an interest in EVAW. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors working on EVAW, including civil society, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and development partners.

HOW IT WAS EVALUATED

The key emphasis of the evaluation was on mapping and validation of UN Women's coordination work on EVAW outcomes – those reflected in the Integrated Resource and Results Framework of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021, and the targets enshrined in international commitments including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The evaluation team employed a combination of primary and secondary data sources to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions (See Annex 2 for Evaluation Matrix).

In total, over 400 stakeholders were engaged through interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys and questionnaires. The evaluation team also carried out five in-depth case studies which were considered of an appropriate scale and maturation to offer useful lessons.

DATA COLLECTION



Desk review and synthesis, portfolio analysis and review



Key informant interviews and 6 focus group discussions



Surveys conducted and 5 case studies

200+

documents reviewed

6

focus group discussions

100

stakeholders engaged

306

survey respondents

2

online surveys

5

case studies

LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

The evaluation brought to light a few key factors that influence success in any coordination and convening role. While they are potentially applicable across thematic areas, their specific importance to EAW is due to the large and overlapping footprints of EAW programming in the UN system.

LESSON 1

Having a coordination mandate is a necessary but insufficient condition for ensuring effective coordination to mainstream gender perspectives in development results. Implementing the mandate requires appropriate investment to strengthen the legitimacy vested in the coordinating entity to ‘lead, promote and coordinate’ the UN system.

At a fundamental level, while UN Women’s mandate is to lead the UN system in coordination for gender equality and women’s empowerment, it is the collective responsibility of the UN system as a whole to work together to realize this goal. Coordination is the joint action of entities coming together based on the shared and agreed benefits of coordination. Therefore, drivers, incentives and enabling factors are required for peer entities to engage in coordination of EAW, based on clear and shared understanding of its contribution to system-wide results as much as to support agency-level objectives.

LESSON 2

Coordination in thematic areas is intertwined with the normative and operational roles of UN Women’s mandate. A large part of coordination in thematic areas takes place within the context of normative work and programming: joint planning; development and dissemination of knowledge products; programme implementation; and advocacy and communications. Coordination therefore needs to be viewed in terms of the value it adds to normative and operational results and outcomes.

The averred importance of coordination’s contribution to results needs to be corroborated by due recognition in strategic plan thematic results through a theory of change; adoption of appropriate results indicators (beyond processes); elaboration of resource needs; allocations in programming budgets, and implementation of a framework of standards against which progress can be regularly aggregated, measured and reported on. A systematic documentation of coordination efforts would also enable recognition of the significant time spent in coordination for results, and the quality of the enabling environment in which coordination takes place.

LESSON 3

Coordination is as much about people skills and building trust as it is institutional arrangements. Instances of strong leadership and individual efforts to build collaborative relationships were found to result in successes. Good examples were noted in the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (the Essential Services Global Programme) and the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

At the country level, coordination responsibilities are attached to operational programme management responsibilities. However, skill sets for effective coordination can be quite different from those for effective operational programme management. Leadership, building trust, interpersonal skills and communication are important competencies for coordination, and are present to varying degrees in staff whose primary functions are in operational programme management rather than external coordination. In the absence of clearly specified and agreed coordination outputs, operational programme management often supersedes coordination as a priority, especially given the considerable amount of time involved in coordination.

COORDINATION PRACTICES

The evaluation team noted the following examples of promising practices in coordination that demonstrate the benefits of coordination, especially highlighting the costs of ‘non-coordination’.

First, from a design perspective, some elements of the Spotlight Initiative’s coordination structures could be further studied and potentially applied to joint programming in general:

- **Vesting coordination functions and oversight of implementation in the Resident Coordinator** who is accountable to the Deputy Secretary General, rather than appointing a UN funding entity as the coordinating entity, therefore enabling equidistance of agencies and promoting a more joined-up approach to UN’s work on EAW in the country.
- **Selection of agencies based on comparative advantages, experience and technical expertise in each country** (in terms of the results of the thematic pillars of the theory of change), under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.
- **Explicitly recognizing the importance of coordination at national, regional and global levels** and providing a dedicated structure and resources for programme coordination support, including a dedicated coordination resource for each agency.
- **Explicitly recognizing the importance of technical coherence** in programme planning and implementation and assigning lead responsibility to UN Women for technical coherence.

As a flagship programme of the UN’s SDG efforts and in line with the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform, the Spotlight Initiative has positioned the Resident Coordinator’s office as the location of UN system coordination for the programme. While this design is still to prove

regional office structures. UN Women’s substantial human resources and expertise in EAW is a corporate asset not matched in the UN system, and could be leveraged more effectively to countervail non-uniform country presence and capacities.

Second, UN Women’s recognition as the key counterpart UN agency on gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the Entity’s strong on-the-ground networks are UN Women’s strategic assets in its coordination role, more than the size of its operational programmes. The evaluation team also noted several instances of UN Women’s strong positioning with external actors at the country level as the ‘go-to’ agency for EAW matters. The strong constituencies built with national women’s machinery, government-led coordination structures, CSOs and women’s organizations has emanated from long-standing engagement in advocacy for a human rights-based, survivor-centred and multisectoral approach to EAW. This has enabled UN Women to play a lead role in external coordination even in countries with small programme portfolios.

Third, notwithstanding some challenges in developing an effective division of labour, both UN Women and UNFPA have made due efforts to evolve pragmatic inter-agency arrangements in joint programming, development of global knowledge products, and advocacy and communications. This was evident in the agreed division of territories in the Essential Services Global Programme and in the UNiTE Campaign in Asia and the Pacific, and also in managing joint programmes in countries where UN Women does not have a country presence. These successes are in no small measure due to the initiative shown by individuals to build a collaborative relationship within specific engagements towards common objectives. There is also mutual recognition and respect among the senior leadership in both entities of each other’s technical expertise and continuing investment in EAW capacities. This has led to current dialogue on more effective corporate arrangements for collaborative action and minimized implementation frictions on the ground, though these nonetheless

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