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Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present to you our tenth issue of *Transform*, addressing a topic that is critical for achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, but often overlooked: strategic partnerships. Partnering is an essential aspect of our work and can have huge implications for multiplied impact, but also higher risk. We rarely have an opportunity to take a step back and reflect on our approach to partnering and whether we are taking the right approach with the right partners.

UN Women Independent Evaluation Office undertook a corporate evaluation to learn from progress made so far and inform future strategic partnerships for gender equality and women's empowerment. The evaluation covered strategic partnerships at all levels and across all dimensions of UN Women work. It identified strengths and weaknesses and developed eight recommendations intended to enhance UN Women's approach to strategic partnerships. Highlights of its findings and next steps are included in this issue. To read a more detailed version of the report, you can access the full report at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/evaluation/corporate-evaluations>.

We hope you find this issue useful in strengthening the work of UN Women and its partners worldwide.

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Think Beyond. Stay Ahead.

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ON THE COVER UN Women, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Always celebrated at Teatro de Câmara in Cidade das Artes, the 'One Win Leads to Another' initiative, which gives an opportunity to adolescent girls living in socially vulnerable contexts to use sport as a tool to reduce gender inequalities and build and maintain confidence in their lives. With the attendance of nearly 200 of the girls participating in the project, the event highlighted the power of sport to change lives and break social stereotypes.

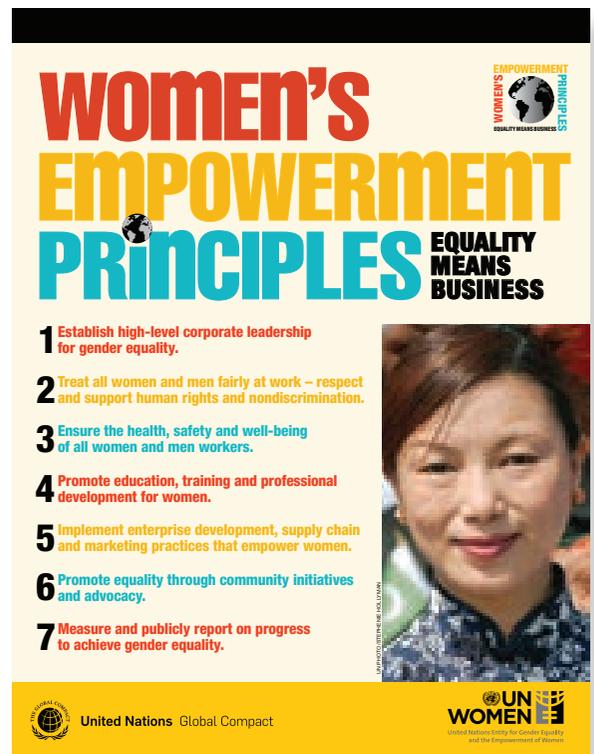
Partnering for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The transformative vision of the sustainable development agenda adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 places new demands on the scale, scope and ambition of UN Women's strategic partnerships to achieve transformative change by 2030. In particular, the SDG Agenda sets unprecedented and ambitious goals and targets for gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW) (specifically the stand-alone gender goal 5 and GEEW targets under the other goals) that will require the commitment of a wide diversity of stakeholders for their achievement.

Despite having limited resources, both financial and human capital, UN Women has built strategic partnerships with a variety of sectors aimed at generating transformative change in the social and cultural patterns between women and men. The wide spectrum and breadth of partners include civil society, government, UN system, private sector, academia, celebrities, foundations, media, sports, youth, men and boys, and faith actors. The Executive Director has brought renewed and strengthened attention to strategic partnerships, in particular with non-traditional partners (men and boys, faith based organizations,

youth organizations) and the private sector (the launch of the UN Global Compact put a strong emphasis on resource mobilization (RM) and direct involvement of the Executive Director's Office in steering strategic partnerships for UN Women). Under the leadership of the new Deputy Executive Director for the Policy and Programme Bureau, UN Women launched (September 2015) the Flagship

Programming Initiatives (FPI) which will shape UN Women country-level programming, resource mobilization and strategic partnerships in the future.





ACCOUNTABILITY S LEARNING

**GATE System:
The Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use**

An on-line based Public Information Management System, which facilitates UN Women's effort to strategically plan and effectively use evaluations for accountability, management for results, and knowledge management.

>>>> <http://gate.unwomen.org/>

Why evaluate strategic partnerships?

A WOMAN FARMER IN HUNZA VALLEY OF PAKISTAN WORKS WITH CHERRY, APRICOT AND ALMOND TREES.

Partnerships are an essential aspect of our work, but are often overlooked when we evaluate the results of our work. The skill set, time and resources necessary for ensuring truly effective strategic partnerships are often underestimated. In 2015-2016, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office undertook a corporate evaluation of UN Women's Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The evaluation is intended to enhance UN Women's approach to strategic partnerships with the aim of ensuring that gender equality is reached by 2030. It was also expected to contribute to an understanding of how UN Women's strategic partnerships can facilitate a strong position for gender equality and women's empowerment within the current global development context and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030).

The evaluation developed a working model consisting of four elements, each of which was evolved through consultations with UN Women management and staff during the evaluation's HQ assessment and case study visits:

- a) **Defining characteristics:** What makes partnerships strategic? What does UN Women look for from strategic partnerships that differentiates them from other types of working arrangements?
- b) **Partnership modalities:** What are the partnership arrangements that are used by UN Women to govern strategic partnerships?
- c) **Enabling factors:** What are the characteristics of effective partnerships?
- d) **Results:** What are the typical results to which UN Women's strategic partnerships are intended to contribute?

Since its foundation, UN Women has stressed the importance of working through partnerships with both right-holders and duty-bearers to deliver on its composite mandate and achieve its goal for the advancement of GEEW globally, regionally and at the country level.

Defining characteristics for strategic partnerships

The defining characteristics for strategic partnerships bring UN Women closer to a definition for strategic partnerships and were applied in the selection of partnerships for the evaluation. These characteristics were established based on consultations with UN Women staff:

If a partnership contributes to the mission of both partners so as to be mutually beneficial

If a partnership leads to force multiplication, innovation or positive externalities that would not otherwise happen

If a partnership is a long-term commitment for transformational changes in gender relations

If a partnership combines the knowledge, experience and capabilities of its partners

If the above factors contribute to accelerating the achievement of common objectives for advancing GEEW

**THEN THE PARTNERSHIP IS A
"STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP"**



EXPERT'S VIEW

Srilatha Batliwala

Partnership falls within the spectrum of important but abstract and amorphous concepts – like democracy, leadership, equality – that are extremely hard to pin down conceptually and strategically. As someone who has worked on and with abstract concepts like power, empowerment, and leadership, and their practice in the women's rights and gender equality arena, I can appreciate how difficult it is to unpack – much less evaluate! – the concept and practice of strategic partnerships for a complex system like UN Women. The evaluation team is to be congratulated for taking on this very challenging task with both conceptual rigor and thoroughness. The sheer scale and scope of the evaluation process commands respect. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are both comprehensive and nuanced – and could provide valuable guidance to a broader range of social justice actors, where partnerships in the shape of networks, alliances and coalitions have become a critical mode for amplifying their voice and impact. This evaluation provides very valuable insights, principles and guidelines that constitute an excellent roadmap for UN Women to design its future partnership strategy. I strongly urge UN Women to create a user-friendly manual or toolkit based on this evaluation that would be welcomed by a much broader audience.



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