

**GUIDANCE ON
COUNTRY PORTFOLIO
EVALUATIONS
IN UN WOMEN**



Independent
Evaluation Office

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Foreword

Evaluation is central to the achievement of the mission of the [United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women \(UN Women\)](#) and in supporting fulfilment of its transformational role within the framework of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). A key principle that guides the gender-responsive evaluation is national ownership and leadership. In other words, evaluations should be country-driven and ensure leadership of evaluation processes by both rights holders and duty bearers. In this context, country-level strategic evaluations are particularly essential to generate contextually relevant evidence to improve performance and accountability for results on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Why is country portfolio evaluation important?

The country portfolio evaluation (CPE) approach is designed to be one of the mechanisms to provide an in-depth and independent assessment of UN Women contribution to development effectiveness with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level.

CPE is intended to help the organization by improving accountability for country-level development results on gender equality and women's empowerment, promoting programmatic and operational effectiveness and efficiency, and fostering learning on how to achieve gender equality results in different contexts. In particular, CPE increases our understanding of why some programmes and initiatives work, why others do not, and in what context and country typologies. This assists managers and partners in making necessary improvements and adjustments to programme management and implementation, and in making informed decision on alternatives on the next Strategic Note and programme cycle. CPE uses Strategic Notes as main point of reference.

What does the Guidance provides?

CPEs respond directly to the UN Women triple mandate, its modality of programming, and the specific need for accountability, learning and decision-making on gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level. This Guidance aims to ensure greater rigor, consistency and well-suited methodology in CPEs while providing flexibility to cater for varied contexts and country typologies. The Guidance covers an array of important issues including: why (we conduct CPEs), what (is to be evaluated), who (will manage, conduct and participate in CPEs), how (will they be done), and when (should they be initiated and finalized). The Guidance provides concepts, tools, tips, examples and references on specific topics and issues for every step in the CPE process. It further defines roles and responsibilities for CPEs in UN Women and the minimum resource requirements for effective CPEs.

How should the Guidance be used?

The Guidance includes [three sets of model documents](#) that provide a series of default options for the design of CPEs: a model evaluation for multi-country portfolios, a model evaluation for CPEs, and a model evaluation for minimum viable CPEs. These have been selected based on the nature of UN Women Strategic Notes, the likely resource envelope available to CPEs, and emerging consensus on best practice for gender-responsive evaluation. For a comprehensive understanding of how to manage gender-responsive evaluations, this Guidance should be read and used in conjunction with the “[UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation.](#)”

The Guidance is primarily aimed at Evaluation Managers in UN Women field offices in view of planning for and managing CPEs. However, it also provides independent evaluators with practical guidance and methodological rigor for the assessment of UN Women CPEs. The Guidance is also useful for country representatives and other staff members in UN Women and partner organizations who are involved in CPE, as it clarifies overall approach to CPEs and the respective roles and responsibilities during the process.

The Guidance was developed in a participatory manner, which entailed wide-ranging discussions among Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) staff—both at Headquarters and in the field—and selected experienced consultants who have collaborated with IEO in the past. The Guidance also greatly benefited from field office perspectives and UN Women’s past experience in managing and conducting country-level gender-responsive evaluations. It also draws upon the good practices of several UN agencies and development partners. The draft methodology was tested with the conduct of three CPEs in the Kazakhstan (multi-)country office, and Mozambique and El Salvador country offices.

We hope you find this Guidance useful to further bolster evaluation culture and build your capacity to conduct a high-quality, credible and impartial country-level evaluation that provides contextually relevant evidence to facilitate achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Therefore, all staff and evaluators involved in commissioning and managing UN Women CPEs should familiarize themselves with this Guidance.

Marco Segone
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LEGEND



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Checklists

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