

# **HOW TO MANAGE GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATIONS:**

EVALUATION HANDBOOK



# FOREWORD

In 2015, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) issued its first evaluation handbook on How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluations. The evaluation handbook and evaluation professionalization programme (developed in collaboration with Human Resources and the UN Women Training Centre) have been key components of efforts to professionalize the evaluation function within UN Women.

Gender-responsive evaluation remains a priority area for UN Women in 2022 and serves three key purposes: first, to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders; second, to provide credible and reliable evidence for decision-making; and third, to contribute important lessons learned about normative, operational and coordination work.

With the aim of continuing to strengthen and support the evaluation function, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) has developed an updated version of the evaluation handbook.<sup>1</sup> The primary audience for the handbook remains UN Women personnel who are involved with and manage evaluations. The updated handbook includes a number of new evaluation resources that may also be useful for the wider developmental evaluation field.

Users of the previous handbook will find a familiar overall structure, which follows the evaluation process through planning, preparation, conduct, reporting, evaluation use and follow-up. For each stage, the handbook has been updated to align with the current UN Women Evaluation Policy and coverage norms, as well as IES structure, governance and processes.

In addition to providing up-to-date links to all guidance documents and references (including the 2020 United Nations Evaluation Group [UNEG] ethical guidance for evaluations, disability inclusion and IES data management guidance for evaluations), the handbook includes references to a rich set of new IES knowledge products, including Good Practices in Gender-Responsive Evaluation, Humanitarian Rapid Assessment Tool, Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices Guide (ISE4GEMs), Guidance Note on Evaluating Impact in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the Pocket Tool for managing evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The handbook also reflects recommendations on how to improve evaluations from recent IES Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) reports.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis threatens to reverse important gains in gender equality and the need for robust gender-responsive evaluations and good evidence on what works, why and for whom has never been stronger. We hope that users of the handbook will find the new updates helpful and relevant in undertaking high-quality evaluations that feed into important policy, programmatic and strategic issues for gender equality and women's empowerment.

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## PRODUCED BY

Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent  
Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women (IEAS)

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<sup>1</sup> This evaluation handbook is an updated version of the UN Women Evaluation Handbook on How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluations, 2015.

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS



<b>AWP</b>	Annual Work Plan
<b>GATE</b>	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use
<b>GEOS</b>	Global Evaluation Oversight System
<b>GERAAS</b>	Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System
<b>IEAS</b>	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
<b>IES</b>	Independent Evaluation Service
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MERP</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan
<b>RBM</b>	Results-Based Management
<b>SMART</b>	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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# INTRODUCTION TO GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

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This chapter introduces the concept of gender-responsive evaluation and how it fits within results-based management (RBM) at UN Women.

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## Introduction to gender-responsive evaluation

A. Frame of reference and principles for gender-responsive evaluation

B. Definition of gender-responsive evaluation in UN Women

C. Strategic intent of gender-responsive evaluation

D. Gender-responsive evaluation within results-based management (RBM)

E. Differences and similarities between evaluation and other organizational functions

### A. Frame of reference and principles for gender-responsive evaluation

UN Women's work is framed by the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), which is often called the “international bill of women's rights”, and the [Beijing Platform for Action](#), which outlines governments' commitments to enhance women's rights.

The spirit of these agreements has been affirmed by the [Sustainable Development Goals](#); UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security and on sexual violence in conflict;<sup>2</sup> Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions [1997/2](#) and [resolution 2011/5](#); and the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination [policy on gender equality and women's empowerment](#) and its corresponding UN System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Evaluation in UN Women is guided by these normative agreements to be gender-responsive and uses the Entity's [Strategic Plan](#) as a starting point for identifying the expected outcomes and impacts of its work and for measuring progress towards the achievement of results.

As part of organizational change, UN Women's internal audit and evaluation functions were co-located under one oversight service umbrella with evaluation forming part of UN Women's wider work on oversight via the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS).<sup>3</sup>

The [UN Women Evaluation Policy](#) and the [UN Women Evaluation Strategy](#) are the main guiding documents that set out the Entity's principles and organizational framework for evaluation planning, conduct and follow-up. These principles are aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) [Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System](#),<sup>4</sup> [Ethical Guidelines](#),<sup>5</sup> [Evaluation Guidance](#)<sup>6</sup> and [Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming](#).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The UN Security Council has adopted seven additional resolutions on women, peace and security: [1820](#) (2008), [1888](#) (2009), [1889](#) (2009), [1960](#) (2010), [2106](#) (2013), [2122](#) (2013), [2242](#) (2015), [2467](#) (2019) and [2493](#) (2019).

<sup>3</sup> The IEAS Charter governs the IEAS mandate, responsibilities and activities: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20us/accountability/un-women-charter-of-independent-evaluation-and-audit-services-en.pdf?la=en&vs=4942>

<sup>4</sup> UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group). 2016. UNEG Norms and Standards. New York: UNEG. Available at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

<sup>5</sup> UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group). 2020. UNEG Ethical Guidelines. New York: UNEG. Available at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/3625>

<sup>6</sup> UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group). 2014. Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations. New York: UNEG. Available at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>.

<sup>7</sup> UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group). 2018. Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming. Available at: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/2133>.



# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction to gender-responsive evaluation

A. Frame of reference and principles for gender-responsive evaluation

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### The key principles for gender-responsive evaluation at UN Women are:

- ➔ **National ownership and leadership:** Evaluation should be country driven and respond to the need for national ownership and leadership by rights holders and duty bearers.
- ➔ **UN system coordination and coherence with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women:** Whenever possible, evaluation should be conducted system-wide and jointly with UN agencies to promote coordination and coherence on gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- ➔ **Innovation:** Evaluations should seek to identify and highlight innovative approaches to gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- ➔ **Fair power relations and empowerment:** Evaluations should be conducted with an understanding of contextual power and gender relations. Evaluations can foster empowerment through the participation of stakeholders in the creation of knowledge about the intervention and other aspects of the evaluation process, and in the communication of its results.
- ➔ **Participation and inclusion:** Evaluations should promote participation of stakeholders and inclusiveness.
- ➔ **Independence and impartiality:** The evaluation function should be independent of other management functions to ensure it is credible, free from undue influence, and results in unbiased reports.
- ➔ **Transparency:** Evaluations should be conducted in a transparent and consultative manner with key stakeholders.
- ➔ **Quality and credibility:** Evaluations should be conducted in a systematic manner, applying sound approaches and methods.
- ➔ **Intentionality and use of evaluation:** Planning for evaluations should demonstrate a clear intent regarding the purpose and use of findings to improve the work of UN Women or the UN system in gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- ➔ **Ethics:** Evaluators should have personal and professional integrity and abide by the [UNEG Ethical Guidelines](#) for evaluation and the [UNEG Pledge of Commitment to Ethical Conduct in Evaluation](#) in the UN system to ensure that the rights of individuals involved in an evaluation are respected. Evaluators must act with cultural sensitivity and pay particular attention to protocols, codes and recommendations that may be relevant to their interactions with women.

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## B. Definition of gender-responsive evaluation in UN Women

The [UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#) define evaluation as “an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.”<sup>8</sup>

UN Women subscribes to the UNEG definition of evaluation but directly incorporates principles of gender equality, women’s rights and the empowerment of women, i.e. a systematic and impartial assessment that provides credible and reliable evidence-based information about the extent to which an intervention has resulted in progress (or the lack thereof) towards intended and/or unintended results for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Therefore, an evaluation is not only a driver of positive change in term of gender equality and the empowerment of women, but the process itself also empowers the stakeholders involved and can prevent further discrimination and exclusion.

UN Women subscribes to the UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality In Evaluations<sup>9</sup> and promotes non-discrimination and the meaningful participation of all stakeholder groups, with particular focus on women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against. This is most often due to race, gender, class, caste, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, etc. Individuals/groups often experience multiple forms of discrimination.

### What makes an evaluation gender-responsive?

**Gender-responsive evaluation has two essential elements: what the evaluation examines and how it is undertaken. A gender-responsive evaluation assesses the degree to which gender and power relationships—including structural and other causes that give rise to inequities, discrimination and unfair power relations change as a result of an intervention using a process that is**

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