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

The work of UN Women 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 sets forth governments’ commitments to enhance women’s rights. The spirit of these agreements has been affirmed by the Millennium Development Goals; UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security and on sexual violence in conflict; 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 system-wide action plan.

Evaluation in UN Women is guided by these normative agreements to be gender-responsive and utilizes 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. The UN Women Evaluation Policy and the UN Women Evaluation Strategic Plan 2014-2017 are the main guiding documents that set forth the principles and organizational framework for evaluation planning, conduct and follow-up in UN Women. These principles are aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, Standards for Evaluation in the UN System and Ethical Guidelines.

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 in order to promote coordination and coherence regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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• **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 carried out independently of other management functions in order to ensure that 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 the areas of 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 Code of Conduct for 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.
B. Definition of gender-responsive evaluation in UN Women

The UNEG Norms for Evaluation define evaluation as “an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance, etc. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organizations of the United Nations system. An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of the organizations of the United Nations system and its members.”

UN Women subscribes to the UNEG definition of evaluation but directly incorporates principles of gender equality, women’s rights and the empowerment of women: 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 regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Gender-responsive evaluation can enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women by incorporating gender and women’s rights dimensions into evaluation approaches, methods, processes and use. Thus the evaluation is not only a driver of positive change towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, but the process itself also empowers the involved stakeholders and can prevent further discrimination and exclusion.

What makes an evaluation a gender-responsive evaluation?

Gender-responsive evaluation has two essential elements: what the evaluation examines and how it is undertaken. It 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 inclusive, participatory and respectful of all stakeholders (rights holders and duty bearers).

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Gender-responsive evaluation promotes accountability to gender equality, human rights and women’s empowerment commitments by providing information on the way in which development programmes are affecting women and men differently and contributing towards achievement of these commitments. It is applicable to all types of development programming, not just gender-specific work.

Gender-responsive evaluation can also help promote social change by using the knowledge produced from an evaluation for better development programming that promotes gender equality, women’s empowerment and human rights in a sustainable manner. Engaging citizens in the evaluation can help individuals and groups: feel empowered through participation in the evaluation process and in the communication of its results, develop the capabilities to participate in broader processes of social change, and equip them with the knowledge to challenge existing development strategies. Gender-responsive evaluation can contribute to the development of social cohesion and collaboration through the relationships and communication among participants, programme managers, evaluators and other stakeholders.

**C. Strategic intent of gender-responsive evaluation**

The strategic intent of evaluation, as described under UNEG Norm 1, is to feed into management and decision-making processes, and to make an essential contribution to managing for results. Evaluation should inform the planning, programme, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle. It aims at improving the institutional relevance and the achievement of results, optimizing the use of resources and supporting accountability, and maximizing the impact of the contribution of the entity towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. Evaluation is also an important contributor to building knowledge and organizational learning.⁶

In UN Women, gender-responsive evaluation is conducted for three main and equally important purposes that together support the overall delivery of results:

1. It is a means to demonstrate **results and accountability** to stakeholders by providing information to stakeholders, participants and donors about programme processes and about intended and unintended effects on women’s empowerment, gender equality and human rights as a result of the intervention.

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2. It provides credible and reliable **evidence for decision-making** by providing information about programme design, implementation, and resource allocation and providing knowledge on participants’ and stakeholders’ needs, programme functioning and programme effects.

3. It contributes important **lessons learned** about normative, operational and coordination work in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women—including what is working well, what is not, and what this means for the programme and for other development efforts.

UN Women evaluations provide evidence of the processes employed at the global, regional and country levels and results achieved at the output, outcome and impact levels; illuminate the connections implicit in the unique role of UN Women in terms of operational, normative support and coordination work; and reveal the factors and modalities that facilitate or hinder the achievement of results.
D. Gender-responsive evaluation within results-based management

Evaluation is a critical component of RBM. RBM is a strategic management approach and one of the core programming principles for UN programmes. It helps to ensure accountability for programmes by offering a process and structure to formulate results and to manage for their achievement while also ensuring evidence for decision-making, learning and accountability. The UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-2017 includes efforts to institutionalize a culture of RBM as a key operational efficiency and effectiveness priority.\(^7\)

UN Women aligns its RBM framework with the United Nations Development Group RBM Handbook, where the key principles of RBM are outlined as follows: 1) accountability, 2) national ownership and 3) inclusiveness. RBM depends on critical assumptions about the programme environment and risk assessments, clearly defined accountabilities and indicators for results, and performance monitoring and reporting.

All of the steps in the RBM cycle have evaluation implications (Figure 1), and evaluation influences the work undertaken in each step. RBM is a manager’s responsibility and part of managing for results is to be clear on what the programme is designed to achieve, measure progress towards and attainment of results, as well as learning from programme experiences. Evaluation is an important tool for managers in their RBM responsibilities.

The planning stage of RBM entails the development of the UN Women development results framework\(^8\) (based ideally on the explicit theory of change\(^9\) or programme theory) in collaboration with partners and key stakeholders. The development results framework is key for evaluation because it helps explain the links or causal relationships (Figure 2) between the ultimate goal (impact), the means for achieving it, and indicators for measuring achievement. It is used as a key tool for assessing the programme’s contribution to results.

**Figure 2. Programmatic causal chain**

Results include outputs, outcomes and impacts. These are all articulations of what is hoped to be achieved in furthering human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment through the UN Women programme of work.\(^10\)

**Activities** are the specific technical, financial, advocacy, partnership and dialogue inputs from UN Women that combine with partner efforts to achieve the outputs.

**Outputs** are changes in skill or abilities of individuals or institutions, or the availability of new products and services that result from the completion of activities within a development intervention within the control of UN Women. They are achieved with the resources provided and within the time-period specified.

**Outcomes** represent change in the institutional and behavioral capacities for development conditions that occur between the completion of outputs and the achievement of goals. Gender equality and human rights goals are long-term goals, thus the majority of programmes and projects at UN Women identify intermediate-term outcomes and longer-term outcomes.

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8 A results framework is a management tool that specifies the results to be achieved (outputs, outcomes and goals or impacts), indicators for measuring progress, and baseline information for monitoring progress against expected results.

9 Theory of change articulates the programme theory on how change occurs, identifying causal linkages between the inputs, outputs and outcomes of a programme, and how UN Women expects to achieve results taking into consideration the programme context, partners and underlying assumptions. The Development Results Framework is a programming tool based on the theory of change.

Impacts include changes in conditions for women and girls, and men and boys. Such changes are positive or negative long-term effects on target populations produced by a development intervention (whether directly or indirectly, intended or unintended). These effects can be economic, socio-cultural, institutional, environmental, technological or of other types. Positive impacts should have some relationship to the Millennium Development Goals or the foreseen Sustainable Development Goals, other internationally agreed development goals, and national development goals, including commitments to conventions and treaties. UN Women, through collective effort with partners and stakeholders, contributes to the achievement of impacts for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Although evaluation is placed at the end of the RBM cycle, evaluation can take place at various points of the programme implementation (the evaluation types will be discussed in Chapter 3). Lessons learned through evaluations are instrumental to the RBM process, as they should help UN Women staff design new programmes and enhance knowledge on what works to further gender equality and human rights in development programming. Evaluation is critical for supporting RBM and contributing to knowledge management in UN Women and beyond.

E. Differences and similarities between evaluation and other organizational functions

Evaluation is related to, but distinct from, other oversight and organizational functions carried out in UN Women: audit, reviews, social research and knowledge management.

- **Audit** is focused mainly on compliance with the rules and regulations of the organization and risk management, while evaluation is focused on development results and enhancing the understanding of what works or doesn’t work, why and how.

- **Monitoring** is an ongoing systematic collection of data by programme managers that helps UN Women and its partners track progress against expected results and indicators to make corrections based on new information as implementation occurs.
• **Reviews** are periodic or *ad hoc* assessments of the performance of an initiative. Reviews tend to emphasize operational issues over achievement of development results and are conducted by those managing or overseeing the programme. Reviews tend to not be as methodologically rigorous, and they generally do not assess results against evaluation criteria (effectiveness, relevance, etc.). An evaluability assessment is an example of a review that should be conducted prior to an evaluation.

• **Social research** is a systematic examination aimed at the development of or contribution to knowledge. Evaluation uses traditional social science research methods of data collection and analysis and can contribute to knowledge. However, its main purpose is to support management by contributing to organizational accountability, decision-making and learning.

• **Knowledge management systems** are fed by evaluation findings and lessons, which are inputs to organizational learning.

**Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)** are integral parts of RBM. Robust monitoring systems are necessary to ensure that a programme has sufficient data to be evaluated, but it is not sufficient for evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation are similar in many ways, but key differences distinguish them (see Table 1). Timing is one key difference: monitoring occurs on an ongoing basis, while evaluations occur at specific points of programme implementation—baseline, mid-term or end of programme. Another key difference is that monitoring is conducted by programme staff or implementing partners, while evaluation is conducted by independent/external consultants or firms, with the exception of self-evaluation, which is a methodologically rigorous process conducted by the UN Women office managing the programme or project of interest.
Table 1. Differences and similarities between monitoring and evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Systematic tracking of progress against the planned goals and indicators</td>
<td>Systematic and objective assessment of the expected and achieved results; it aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, gender and human rights responsiveness, and sustainability of interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>For learning, decision-making and accountability</td>
<td>For learning, decision-making and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who conducts</strong></td>
<td>Programme manager or implementing partner</td>
<td>Independent or external consultant UN Women office managing programme of interest (for self-evaluation) IEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timing</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing through end of programme</td>
<td>Specific points in the programme life cycle: baseline, mid-term, end of programme or years after end of programme (to measure impact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type and source of information</strong></td>
<td>Typically quantitative Primary data: dependent on indicator</td>
<td>Quantitative and/or qualitative Primary data: interviews and focus groups with stakeholders, observations, etc. Secondary data: monitoring data and reports, other documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of analyses</strong></td>
<td>Tracks achievement of outputs and tracks changes at the outcome and, to the extent possible, impact levels Tracks the timely and effective undertaking of activities and the availability of required inputs</td>
<td>Triangulation to measure achievement and contribution towards outcomes and impact Different frameworks for analysis Ultimately makes a judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use</strong></td>
<td>Can lead to changes in programme plans</td>
<td>Can lead to: Changes in programme plans Organizational change Resource allocations Innovation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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• Millennium Development Goals: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals
• MY M&E Resource Center and E-learning Course: http://mymande.org

• Beijing Platform for Action: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/

• MyM&E, e-learning course on Equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations: http://mymande.org/elearning/course-details/1
• UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment and its corresponding system-wide action plan: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/
• UNEG: http://www.unevaluation.org/
  • Ethical Guidelines
  • Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations
  • Norms for Evaluation in the UN System
  • Standards for Evaluation in the UN System
• UN Women: http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library
  • UN Women Evaluation Policy
  • UN Women Evaluation Strategic Plan 2014-2017
  • UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-2017
• UN Women intranet: https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/
• Programme Operations Manual: Programme and Project Management section
  • 1325 (2000), and 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), and 2122 (2013)