Chapter 8. Applying HR & GE Principles to Evaluation Use and Dissemination

8.1. Promoting evaluation use

232. The impact of an evaluation exercise is determined by the degree to which the knowledge gained is accessed and used in practice by key decision makers and a wider audience of affected stakeholders. One of the primary concerns of any evaluator is to produce a useful product, worth the investment, that can influence decision-making through the provision of empirically driven evidence. When done to quality standards and used strategically, evaluations are effective tools to support managing for results and public accountability. They have the capacity to generate vital knowledge and foster institutional learning. Each evaluation has a diverse set of end users, whom evaluators must carefully consider – from the design through the final reporting – in developing a report that is widely accessible wherein the findings and experiences gleaned can be applied in practice. In this chapter two principal means to increase levels of access and use are highlighted, dissemination and management response.

233. It is the ultimate responsibility of the intervention management to ensure the management response and resulting actions apply HR & GE standards and principles. Evaluators and evaluation managers should also strive to enable the development of a strong management response and action plans. Evaluators can do this by presenting recommendations that are clear, actionable, prioritized, specifically on HR and GE issues. Evaluation managers should use their role to quality assure the final report to ensure that the evaluator has presented recommendations in this way and they may be called on to provide some advice to management in developing the response. Evaluation managers can also guide the intervention management and encourage them to respond on the HR and GE issues raised in the report, even if there are no specific recommendations. Through these actions, evaluators and evaluation managers can play an important role in guaranteeing that the process of defining the response (from the document distribution and the discussion of the conclusions, to the determination of implementation strategies) is in accordance with the principles of inclusiveness and participation, accountability, transparency, non-discrimination and empowerment.

234. UNEG has identified three preconditions to aid effective evaluation management response and follow-up process to incorporate HR & GE principles:140

235. **The involvement of internal and external stakeholders.** To ensure the effective use of the evaluations it is fundamental that its primary audience feels ownership of the evaluation and commitment to implement its recommendations (be it intervention staff, partners, rights holders or

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duty bearers). Through adopting a utilization-focused approach, a sense of ownership can be nurtured by ensuring the intended users are actively involved in significant decision-making processes throughout the evaluation. Actively involving primary intended users leads to greater understanding and ownership of the evaluation process, which in turn leads to an increased probability of use.141

236. As has been emphasized throughout this Guidance, the active participation of the intervention stakeholders (with particular attention to inclusion of duty bearers and rights holders, and within these two groups, women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against) is one of the core principles of HRBA and gender equality mainstreaming. An evaluation that has followed the standards and processes recommended to address HR & GE dimensions throughout the process should have created an enabling environment for active engagement of a comprehensive set of stakeholders in the final stages of the evaluation. Thus, in line with the HR & GE responsive evaluation process, it is expected that participants in an intervention feel represented in the recommendations and have developed an interest in their implementation. This sense of ownership is an essential resource to effectively promote stakeholders’ active involvement in monitoring the implementation of the resulting recommendations.

237. Not all stakeholders can be involved in the same way and to the same extent. It is therefore important that the evaluators and the evaluation manager focus on the evaluation’s primary users and establish a clear understanding of their respective commitments regarding implementation and

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**Box 25. What if the Evaluation Process Was Not Inclusive/Participative?**

If HR & GE principles have not been applied consistently throughout the evaluation process, the design of the use and dissemination strategy becomes even more critical in ensuring meaningful, strategic and timely interaction and dialogue with affected stakeholders. Target audiences should be identified as early as possible in this final phase so stakeholders can be given adequate time to prepare their input. Developing specific evaluation products to meet the needs and demand among targeted audiences can also be undertaken to ensure stakeholders have an opportunity to be informed of the knowledge generated from the evaluation and can perhaps bring forward additional views that were not considered in the report. Fostering collaboration with duty bearers and rights holders not only upholds key HR & GE principles, it is also critical in paving the way to implementing evaluation recommendations and achieving results.

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use. However, when designing the final stages of an HR & GE responsive evaluation, evaluators must verify that a balance of viewpoints is represented and taken into account, not only in the evaluation report and its findings, but also when considering how and by whom its recommendations should be implemented. It is important that this effort is made to target responsible parties for the implementation and monitoring of each recommendation, especially those addressing HR & GE issues, and that the concrete actions needed to respond are clearly identified.

238. **Quality evaluation recommendations.** While it is imperative that recommendations are firmly based on sound evidence and analysis, it is also critical that recommendations are clearly formulated and accessible to a variety of target audiences in order to ensure effective dissemination and implementation. This requires careful consideration of the evaluation’s HR & GE dimensions and may require an adaptation of the language and style used to accommodate the needs of various intended audiences.

239. **Evaluation credibility.** Credibility depends on “independence, impartiality, transparency, quality and the appropriateness of the methods used.” Credibility is essential when tackling sensitive political and social issues, as are typically involved in HR & GE work. Strengthening and widening the sense of ownership and buy-in of the evaluation and its findings through validation and participatory dissemination with key stakeholder groups also raises the credibility of the evaluation.

240. Evaluations can be used for different purposes, for example to improve the intervention under evaluation, to design a new initiative, to learn how to replicate or scale up an experience, or to establish future institutional or operational strategies. This is particularly true concerning HR & GE responsive evaluations. They might also foster a change in ideas, level of awareness, and understanding of an issue; transform relationships among stakeholders; empower communities; reframe decision-making processes; and provide justification for political (in)action.

241. Evaluations are not only technical programming exercises. Critically, they often consider political and social factors or address power imbalance that affect development or aid. In some contexts, HR and gender issues can be extremely sensitive. Thus, applying HR & GE standards, evaluators and the evaluation manager need to be aware, from the beginning to the end of the process, that some evaluation findings and recommendations might meet resistance or be questioned, and anticipate the response. The evaluation process should not only be as transparent, rigorous and participatory as possible, but HR & GE evaluations also require a fuller appreciation of the political dimensions of development – including in planning their dissemination and use – to be sure that entrenched patterns of discrimination are not reinforced.

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142 Ibid., p. 426.
8.2. Including HR & GE standards and principles in management responses

242. The UNEG guidance on preparing management responses states: “[T]he purpose of the management response mechanism to evaluations is to improve the timely and effective use of evaluations. It provides an opportunity to hold a dialogue with all evaluation stakeholders to reflect on the evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons and to incorporate them in ongoing programmes and in programme formulation.”¹⁴⁵ The management response mechanism (or management responses) identifies practical implementation actions, establishes clear responsibilities and outlines a time-frame for completing the agreed actions. These elements should be concrete, actionable and owned by the evaluation users.

243. Applying these general principles to HR & GE responsive evaluations, evaluation managers need to ensure that the evaluation follow-up responds to the specific findings, conclusions and recommendations addressing HR & GE and incorporates HR & GE approaches. In addition, it is important in considering that other (non-HR & GE) findings, conclusions and recommendations are supportive of and impact positively on HR & GE outcomes. Given that HR & GE often needs to be strengthened in UN programming, it is particularly important to ensure allocation of responsibility and resources for following up on recommendations related to these two themes. For interventions that do not succeed in integrating HR and GE programming principles in their design it would be important for the evaluation to recommend that design processes should include these elements in the future. By including such a recommendation, management is required to respond to it and develop an action plan to ensure that these elements are not overlooked in future intervention design processes. Thus, one recommendation has a strong potential to help further institutionalize HR & GE into the design processes within an organization and throughout the United Nations system.

244. The management response preparation will need to consider the HR & GE dimensions from different perspectives:

- **Participation in the discussions:** In line with its commitment to all stakeholders, and following the principles of participation and inclusion – particularly of those women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against – the management response discussion should be an inclusive process. The stakeholder analysis should inform who will be part of the discussion, and how women’s voices and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against will be represented (for example, through representatives of NGOs, CSOs or networks of partners).

• As it is aptly noted in the ‘UN Women Manager’s Guide to Gender Equality and Human Rights Responsive Evaluation’, the development of a formal management response to an evaluation is not sufficient in guaranteeing its use and impact. The inclusive participation of programme stakeholders in the final phases of the evaluation exercise is vital to ensuring the evaluation serves as a useful learning exercise, which contributes to programme improvements and evidence-based decision-making.\textsuperscript{146} It must also be recognized that many recommendations might be outside the control of the agency that commissioned and/or produced the evaluation. Unless there is comprehensive acceptance of the evaluation report and its recommendations by the direct and indirect stakeholders, the potential for follow-up on action will be very limited. In this context, the importance of fostering ownership by evaluation stakeholders throughout and after the evaluation process is evident.\textsuperscript{147}

• **Implementation of HR & GE related recommendations:** The management response should consider how to address specific HR & GE recommendations, and what results would need to be generated in these areas. Response to HR & GE recommendations should be prioritized and resources and responsibilities need to be clearly articulated to ensure that they are addressed. For example, for an intervention that is considered weak in these areas, implementing the HR & GE related recommendations should be considered a priority. Action plans on these recommendations should be monitored closely. CSOs, national governments and donors all have a central role in implementing HR & GE related recommendations.

• **Observation of the HR & GE dimensions in other recommendations:** It is also the responsibility of a HR & GE responsive management response to make sure that the implementation of all of the recommendations contributes to the application of HR & GE standards and principles or does not impede them. For example, if an agreed follow-up action is to partner with an NGO to provide training to intervention participants, it is advisable that the NGO selected has a proven track record of working with women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against to empower them. Particular attention should be paid to ensure appropriate stakeholder groups are targeted in this training, being careful not to overlook including both men and women, duty bearers and rights holders. There can also be concrete plans to invest time and resources to reach women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against as a target audience for the training.

245. Accountability mechanisms must be in place, (i.e. as outlined in agency policies on HR and GE, UN system-wide policies, etc.; see Chapter 4) with adequate resources allocated (See Chapter 6), to guarantee an appropriate follow-up to the recommendations. According to UNEG, “[...] standardized matrices are the tools most used by agencies to record management responses. User-friendly tools ensure coherent tracking of agreed recommendations and promote more systematic follow-up of recommendations [...]”. In general, the use of a formal manage-


ment response and follow-up process is bringing operational departments and evaluation units closer together in a joint effort to improve performance. A sample follow-up matrix extract is illustrated in Table 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation recommendation 1. UN Women Liberia together with all the projects, implementing partners as well as other collaborating partners should consider and implement the recommendations given on individual projects/programmes. The projects should be supported to produce realistic, measurable, achievable and time-bound action plans that prioritize the recommendations given in the body of the report. The M&amp;E Department of UN Women Liberia should monitor the respective projects for the implementation of recommendations action plans.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management response: UN Women Liberia takes note of the recommendations for the individual projects and will work closely with partners to best implement the specific and applicable recommendations for ongoing and future implementation. Unfortunately, UN Women Liberia does not have a dedicated M&amp;E Department; however, Programme staff will be tasked with monitoring the implementation of the applicable recommendations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key action (s)</th>
<th>Time-frame</th>
<th>Responsible unit(s)</th>
<th>Tracking</th>
<th>HR &amp; GE Standard &amp; Responsible Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Collate individual recommendations from the evaluation and include the most pertinent and applicable recommendations in the 2012 work plan.</td>
<td>End of 2011</td>
<td>UN Women Liberia Programme Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Sub-Regional Office (SRO), with its role in providing technical backstopping and oversight, will monitor and support to ensure that applicable recommendations are addressed.</td>
<td>During 2012</td>
<td>SRO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Appointment of a dedicated M&amp;E staff in Liberia</td>
<td>By end of 2012</td>
<td>Liberia Country Office and SRO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> SRO to provide backstopping to Liberia Country Office on M&amp;E issues</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>SRO &amp; Liberia Country Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use System (GATE)

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246. To ensure that HR & GE dimensions are taken into account in the evaluation management response, it is recommended that specific items or checklists regarding HR & GE issues be included in these tables, where applicable. For instance, as in the example above, key actions could specify the HR/GE standard it aims to apply, targeted rights holders and duty bearers, which stakeholders would be involved in its implementation and how they will participate (see the final column in Table 17).

247. Follow-up to management responses include formal and informal processes to promote and verify that evaluation-based learning takes place within the organization and among partners. This often includes the publication of management responses in public databases and management reports on the status of implementation of recommendations. The obligation of the implementing office to track and update their status serves as an important monitoring tool that should be complemented with a reporting mechanism, such as annual reports to executive boards, etc.

248. The use of public databases to house evaluation reports and management responses are common among an increasing number of UN entities, the OECD and the World Bank. The databases are often searchable by gender equality categories but not necessarily by human rights topics. For example, UNDP and UN Women have developed a web-based model for tracking recommendations, the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) and Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE), respectively, which is searchable by categories such as ‘fostering democratic governance’ and ‘gender mainstreaming’. UNICEF evaluation database includes a category for child rights, gender equity, and also several categories for child protection. UNFPA evaluation database is searchable by keyword including gender (women and children’s rights), and the database includes corresponding management responses.

8.3. Disseminating the evaluation taking into account HR & GE principles

249. As a rule, key findings and recommendations of an evaluation should be made available to a wide audience that extends beyond the intervention partners and key stakeholders. Broad dissemination of knowledge generated by evaluation exercises can serve to increase the impact of evaluation in important ways. Further, access to evaluation findings can be empowering in and of itself as it has the potential to provide stakeholders with previously inaccessible knowledge.

149 For example, the OECD-DAC evaluation database has no category for human rights. <www.oecd.org/findDocument/0,3354,en_35038640_35039563_1_1_1_1_1_1_00.html>. The World Bank Poverty Impact Evaluations Database has one reference under human rights, <web.worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTISPMA/0,,menuPK:384336~pagePK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:384329,00.html>.

150 <erc.undp.org/> and <gate.unwomen.org>.

151 See <www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_13711.html>.


The UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation\textsuperscript{154} require that:

\begin{quote}
The formal parties to an evaluation should ensure that the full set of evaluation findings along with pertinent limitations are made accessible to the persons affected by the evaluation, and to any others with legitimate claims or rights to receive the results, in relevant language(s).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
As a norm, all evaluation reports shall be made public. Evaluation reports will only be withheld from publication for compelling reasons and in accordance with relevant rules within each agency. The evaluation manager shall ensure high standards in accessibility and presentation of published reports and use a range of channels to reach audiences through, for example, electronic and interactive channels, knowledge networks, communities of practice, presentations at relevant conferences, as well as appropriate publications.
\end{quote}

It is the responsibility of evaluation managers to design a comprehensive dissemination strategy that will efficiently distribute evaluation findings and recommendations in the most accessible, transparent and inclusive way possible. It must be noted, however, that often it is not feasible given resource and cost constraints to implement all of the dissemination channels highlighted in this section. Therefore, it has to be carefully considered who will actually be interested in and be able to use the findings. In this process, evaluation managers should take into account national processes/events that findings can feed into (e.g. gender policy development, CEDAW reporting, etc.) in an effort to make the dissemination more strategic. Throughout this section, key tips are presented based on the successful dissemination strategy developed for the UN Women Sabaya programme in the State of Palestine.\textsuperscript{155} In particular, the evaluation office should:

- \textit{Identify and involve the direct users of the evaluation:} It is important to refer back to the stakeholder analysis to assess to whom the evaluation should be disseminated, how best to provide access to information for the various stakeholder groups identified, how direct users should be engaged and how they can contribute to dissemination, and how they can take advantage of their own channels to disseminate the evaluation.

\textsuperscript{154} \url{<www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=102>}
\textsuperscript{155} \url{<gate.unwomen.org/unifem/evaluationadmin/manageevaluation/viewevaluationdetail.html?evalid=4438>
In addition to the direct users already defined in the stakeholder analysis, the dissemination phase is a key time to identify other potential users who may benefit from the evaluation findings, or who may have an interest to know the conclusions of the process. For example, these may include:

- **International and national human rights, women’s rights and gender equality groups and other civil society organizations (including business communities, journalists, church groups).** These groups may be at the forefront of promoting human rights and gender equality. If appropriate, it may be useful to brief them separately.

- **Duty bearers,** State and government counterparts (at national and local levels) not directly involved in the project/programme being evaluated should be targeted as appropriate, especially if they are tasked with fulfilling the relevant State’s human rights and gender equality mandates that the findings speak to (for example, gender ministries, national planning departments or ministries involved in assigning resources; institutions in charge of producing national data).

- **Evaluation networks.** Global, regional and national evaluation networks are making important contributions to the evaluation field and they act as important forums for sharing lessons, challenges and experiences on HR & GE responsive evaluation. Sharing evaluation findings and methodological briefs is a means to build national evaluation capacity and an asset in building stronger ties with civil society, local and national counterparts, and governments. They can be allies in promoting HRBA and gender equality mainstreaming and may serve as a valuable space in which to compare experiences in the area of HR & GE evaluation with colleagues in the UN system and beyond. Likewise, evaluation offices can create opportunities for their staff’s professional development by participating in networks (e.g. attending conferences/events, participating in communities of practice, joining working groups, publications, etc. to learn and sharing examples of how HR & GE dimensions have been applied in evaluations and the resulting lessons learned. A list of evaluation associations that have specific sub-groups working on HR & GE evaluation has been included in Annex 4.

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**Box 27. Tips from the Sabaya Programme: Engaging Stakeholders**

- ✓ Organize a stakeholder meeting in the region with representatives of various groups, including programme participants, donor representatives, UN and national officials, local and international CSOs.

- ✓ Use different tools during the stakeholder meeting, for example including presentations, discussions, a movie and an award ceremony, which appeal to different audiences.

- ✓ Use the results of the discussion in the stakeholder meetings to inform the management response, in order to ensure a relevant management response plan, guided by the programme’s lessons and experiences.
Provide barrier-free access to evaluation products (including a variety of knowledge products coming out of the evaluation process): This entails making sure that the language and format of the report are accessible to all potential users. The version of the report to be disseminated should be written in clear and understandable language to meet the demand and needs of its potential audience. The document should also be easily accessible and presented in a way that enhances learning. In particular, the report – or at least its summary – should be translated in the local language(s).

In addition, evaluation managers should consider utilizing targeted, HR & GE responsive knowledge products, to reduce barriers to information and exchange lessons learned and experiences. Such products may include the dissemination of systematically extracted lessons learned and best practices, the development of presentations and summaries.

**8.3.1. Targeted dissemination: Thinking beyond the report**

A traditional evaluation report is often not equally accessible to all targeted groups. To overcome this, dissemination planning should identify a diversity of channels and formats that appeal to and reach different audiences. In particular, seeking alternative ways to present evaluation findings to women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against is essential and fulfils their right to know the conclusions of a processes to which they have contributed and are effected by. The evaluation team/manager is encouraged to develop evaluation products that make use of alternative ways of depicting information, for example through imagery, theatre, poetry, music, etc. Engaging media in the dissemination phase, and increasingly ‘new’ media, can also prove to be an effective means to make the findings more engaging and to share evaluation results with traditionally unreached audiences and communities.\(^\text{156}\)

156 Ibid.
254. Box 28 highlights an example of an effective and comprehensive dissemination strategy used by UN Women, which takes participation and inclusion principles into consideration, and taps into a variety of dissemination channels.

8.3.2 Feedback and lessons learned

255. Finally, it is important to establish a feedback and learning mechanism on the effectiveness of the dissemination strategy, the quality of particular knowledge products, and impact (where feasible). This will help to gauge the extent to which evaluation information has been useful and applied in programming and policy decision-making. Information should also be gathered on rights holders’ (in particular, women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against) participation in the follow-up process.

256. In summary, the impact of an evaluation exercise is determined by the degree to which the knowledge gained is accessed and used by key decision makers and a wider audience of affected stakeholders. It is critical to note that the evaluation process does not conclude with the completion of a report. The final stage of the evaluation process needs to be considered and prepared from the assessment’s outset. It should guide and be guided by the anterior phases of the evaluation process. In HR & GE responsive evaluation, this requires actively ensuring that women and marginalized and/or discriminated against stakeholders remain directly included throughout the evaluation process, including in this final stage. Finally, strategic distribution of HR & GE responsive evaluations should be capitalized upon as an opportunity to cultivate evaluation culture among stakeholders and enhance awareness, and integration, of HR & GE principles in future.

157 Ibid., p. 188.