

# Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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# Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2020

Summary

This document presents an overview of completed strategic evaluations; the performance of the evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels; UN-Women's contribution to promoting gender-responsive evaluation in the United Nations; and national evaluation capacity development. It also provides the Independent Evaluation Service's 2021 programme of work and budget.

The Executive Board may wish to: (i) take note of the 2020 report on the evaluation function of UN-Women, the 2021 programme of work and budget of the Independent Evaluation Service; (ii) welcome that UN-Women continues to maintain an independent, credible and useful evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide, gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development; and (iii) express continuing support for strengthening the evaluation function in UN-Women.





# I. Introduction

1. This report provides an overview of completed strategic evaluations; the performance of the UN-Women evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels; UN-Women's contribution to promoting gender-responsive evaluation in the United Nations; and national evaluation capacity development. The report covers two corporate evaluations; a meta-synthesis of UN-Women evaluations; and ten strategic regional and country portfolio evaluations (CPEs), three of which were Independent Evaluation Service (IES)-led. In 2020, IES provided technical assistance to 26 decentralized evaluations; promoted the use of evaluation for learning and accountability in UN-Women; and worked with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and globally with national partners to advocate for gender-responsive evaluation.

2. In 2020, the Executive Board endorsed the revised evaluation policy that further strengthened the evaluation implementation modality, whereby IES staff assumed a greater role in leading strategic evaluations. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it is more important than ever for UN-Women to explore cost-effective, adaptive and more rapid evaluation processes to better deliver on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

3. This report is structured into six sections. Section 1 describes the adaptation of UN-Women's evaluation activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Section 2 summarizes corporate evaluations and meta-synthesis findings. Section 3 includes a synopsis of ten regional evaluations and CPEs. Section 4 presents the performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women. Section 5 summarizes IES key results in UN coordination and national evaluation capacity development. Section 6 presents the IES work programme and budget for 2021.

# II. Evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic

4. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IES undertook several initiatives to provide continuing support for evaluation globally and at the decentralized level, including the development of guidance; revision of evaluation planning; and provision of advisory and quality assurance support to the management and conduct of strategic regional, thematic and CPEs.

5. IES remained in close contact with UN-Women field offices, consulting on the feasibility of evaluation activities and advising on potential adjustments. Technical review and consultation also focused in part on remote evaluation methods on a case-by-case basis with evaluation teams at the country level. Evaluation planning and implementation stressed the principle of "do no harm".

6. IES developed guidance and launched several rapid assessments to respond to emerging evaluative evidence needs at global and regional levels, e.g. the pocket tool provided practical guidelines for gender-responsive evaluation management and data collection. Due to the increased use of virtual data collection, the tool highlighted upholding relevant ethical protocols; using gender-responsive methods for remote data collection; storing and protecting sensitive data; and sharing findings in accessible and user-friendly ways.

7. IES undertook two rapid assessments to identify key lessons and provide evidence for UN-Women's COVID-19 response: the Rapid Assessment of the UN-Women's Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (ACRO) response to the COVID-19 crisis provided real-time insights into regional strategies and adaptations to COVID-19; and the Rapid Assessment of Cash-based Interventions (CBIs), conducted in collaboration with the UN-Women Internal Audit Service (IAS), assessed organizational and programmatic preparedness against a CBI benchmarking framework.

8. IES participated in UN system-wide efforts by joining the evaluation advisory group for a lessons learned and evaluability assessment of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (COVID-19 MPTF), and by contributing to the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition managed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

# **III.** Corporate evaluations and studies

9. IES conducts corporate evaluations to assess issues of strategic significance concerning the Entity's contribution to results towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. The results of corporate evaluations provide insight and lessons learned which inform implementation of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and ongoing development of the forthcoming UN-Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

10. In 2020, IES presented two corporate evaluation reports and one meta-synthesis to the Executive Board:

(a) Effectiveness and efficiency assessment of UN-Women Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) and Thematic Priorities of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

(b) Thematic evaluation of UN-Women's support to National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

(c) Meta-synthesis of UN-Women evaluations.

11. In 2020, IES also launched two corporate evaluations: (a) UN-Women's coordination and convening role in Ending Violence Against Women; and (b) a formative evaluation on UN-Women's approach to innovation. IES also collaborated with the United Nations University on a joint study entitled *Gender equality for health* and well-being: Evaluative evidence of interlinkages with other SDGs.

# Effectiveness and Efficiency Assessment of UN-Women Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) and Thematic Priorities of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021

12. The evaluation found that while the FPIs faced several challenges related to operationalization, knowledge management and resource mobilization, they had also made a significant contribution to greater awareness and adoption of focused and strategic programming across all areas of UN-Women's work. Although there was considerable variance in the 12 FPIs' ability to fully meet their ambitious goals, they succeeded in providing a coherent framework through comprehensive theories of change (ToCs) to operationalize UN-Women's five Thematic Priorities and to package and brand UN-Women's programming in ways that could be consistently communicated to donors and other stakeholders.

13. While the evaluation concluded that the FPIs were successful in embedding a corporate mind-shift towards consolidated and scalable programmatic approaches, opportunities for improvement were identified in quality assurance mechanisms, resource mobilization, financial tracking and reporting, corporate performance monitoring and initiatives related to structured partnerships. The evaluation offered six forward-looking recommendations, all accepted by management, including the

establishment of clear accountability frameworks and an explicitly defined thematic programme focus to amplify UN-Women's delivery footprint based on field capacity and resource mobilization targets in the next Strategic Plan.

# **Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN-Women's support to National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)**

14. This corporate evaluation found that UN-Women effectively facilitated WPS NAP processes that built awareness and consensus at the national level and strongly contributed to WPS NAPs adoption. This work contributed to laying the foundations for transformational change in gender equality. However, UN-Women would benefit from a ToC for this area of work to help support national governments with implementation of WPS NAPs, recognizing the importance of national ownership for their long-term sustainability.

15. The evaluation offered eight recommendations, all accepted by management, suggesting that UN-Women: devise a strategy to harmonize its coordination efforts, with a focus on strengthening and linking global, regional and national-level coordination processes; define a clear and consistent strategy for support to WPS NAP implementation; enhance its internal reporting systems related to tracking financial resources and results for WPS NAPs to better demonstrate impact and results; and strengthen technical leadership to ensure a harmonized approach to UN Women's WPS NAP support.

### **Meta-Synthesis of UN-Women Evaluations**

16. The meta-synthesis brought together evidence on UN-Women's organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs from all UN-Women evaluations completed between 2018 and 2019, as well as corporate evaluations from 2017. The meta-synthesis highlighted progress and captured commonly identified drivers of change in the form of good practices and challenges. The meta-synthesis concluded that UN-Women plays a pivotal role in the UN system, providing technical expertise to mainstream gender equality and the empowerment of women and by convening diverse UN stakeholders to deliver effective joint programmes.

17. The meta-synthesis found areas for improvement in UN-Women's results-based management systems, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity, and use of focused and specific output-level indicators. The most commonly highlighted risks in the evaluation sample related to insufficient financial resources and high personnel turnover. However, evaluations highlighted the value of UN-Women's committed personnel in managing demanding workloads, supportive and responsive management, and efforts to remove operational bottlenecks. The meta-synthesis provided six key recommendations, which were being taken up to inform the development of UN-Women's new Strategic Plan. The management response also confirmed the Entity's commitment to use evaluation as a tool to further optimize performance and drive transformative change in gender equality and women's empowerment.

# Corporate evaluations fostering change

18. UN-Women continued to use evaluation findings and recommendations from corporate evaluations to improve policies, strategies and programming practices.

# Corporate thematic evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to humanitarian action

19. The 2019 corporate thematic evaluation on humanitarian action provided a framework for shaping UN-Women's comparative advantage in humanitarian action and its merger with the Peace and Security Section to strengthen UN-Women's contribution to crisis response, recovery and resilience across the Entity's normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities. Recommendations are being implemented to strengthen internal systems and capacities for humanitarian action in UN-Women. Out of 11 actions that emanated from the evaluation recommendations, 5 were completed and 6 are ongoing.

20. Based on the evaluation, a new (draft) Humanitarian Strategy (2021–2025) was developed focusing on advancing accountability for gender equality and empowerment of crisis-affected women and girls; supporting women and girls' protection and livelihoods; and promoting the voices and leadership of women and girls in strengthening accountability to crisis-affected populations. At the time of this report, this strategy was under consultation, to also align with the new UN-Women Strategic Plan, and to be implemented in close partnership with key UN humanitarian actors. Together with UN-OCHA, UN-Women continues to function as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Desk, supporting the IASC Humanitarian Gender Accountability Framework Reports. A knowledge platform was developed to share lessons that inform programming and to conduct training on gender in humanitarian action. Lastly, UN-Women is strengthening expert deployment systems at global and regional levels, leveraging existing partnerships with emergency standby partners.

#### **Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning (GNP)**

21. The 2019 corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to GNP supported the continuation of UN-Women's leadership in this area. The recommendations were used to refine the Entity's strategic approach; inform field-level strategies and programming; strengthen capacity development efforts; and enhance engagement with UN agencies. Out of 19 actions that emanated from the evaluation recommendations, 12 are completed, 4 ongoing, 2 initiated and 1 was not yet initiated.

22. The GNP team developed a revised ToC with a focus on integrating gender equality into national and sectoral strategies; ongoing capacity strengthening in gender analysis of government partners, parliaments and civil society; and transparency of budget allocations in support of stronger systems of accountability. In its operationalization, management is working to ensure stronger links between GNP and UN-Women's other thematic areas.

23. As part of its integrated package of support, the Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) training course was updated to incorporate cutting-edge knowledge and tools. In its technical support, the GNP team continued to focus on monitoring and reporting approaches that better capture links between gender-responsive plans and budgets and downstream changes.

24. Regarding UN system coordination, collaboration with UN-DESA was further strengthened, with the GNP team providing comprehensive inputs to the global methodology on integrated financing frameworks and in developing, with UNDP, guidance on gender mainstreaming in these frameworks.

25. UN-Women completed an internal review of its work to address the gender dimensions of the HIV epidemic, which indicated its essential contribution to integrate gender perspectives within the UNAIDS Joint Programme and

recommended for it to participate in the development of the new UNAIDS Strategy. The review recommended continued mainstreaming HIV response in UN-Women's work on governance, women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women.

### Innovative methodological approaches

26. In partnership with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, UN-Women finalized key activities, including: (a) a working paper and guidance note on evaluating impact on gender equality and the empowerment of women elaborating the steps for planning and conducting impact evaluations at UN-Women; (b) a rapid assessment tool to assess gender equality and the empowerment of women results in humanitarian contexts; and (c) a good practices booklet for gender-responsive evaluations in the context of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2021, UN-Women will continue to disseminate related knowledge products and explore greater application of these initiatives.

# IV. Decentralized evaluations

27. Decentralized evaluations are conducted by independent external evaluators and managed by UN-Women field offices and headquarters-based business units. IES Regional Evaluation Specialists support the capacity development of UN-Women personnel with a focus on managing decentralized evaluations, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) evaluations and other joint evaluation processes.

28. In 2020, IES undertook several initiatives to strengthen the quality and credibility of decentralized evaluations. IES implemented a near-time independent assessment of the quality of evaluation reports to allow timely feedback and quality improvement as part of the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS). IES also initiated a pilot assessment of disability inclusion in evaluation based on the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy; while the pilot assessment does not contribute to the overall rating of the assessment report this year, it serves to help to mainstream disability inclusion in UN-Women's evaluation practices.

29. IES intensified its efforts in supporting strategic evaluations, including leading CPEs or co-managing CPEs with country offices (COs). Under the revised Evaluation Policy and the Evaluation Coverage Norms, COs are expected to have at least one CPE every two Strategic Note (SN) cycles to feed into subsequent strategic planning processes. In 2020, seven CPEs (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, El Salvador, Nigeria, Paraguay, Uganda and Viet Nam,) were completed, while six CPEs (Albania, Cambodia, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and the Multi-country Office in the Caribbean) were ongoing. This reflects an increase in: the overall number of CPEs conducted in a year; CPEs directly led by IES; and evaluation coverage.

#### Internal evaluation capacity development

30. The IES handbook "How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluation" is a key guidance document for UN-Women personnel managing evaluations. In 2020, IES initiated an update of the handbook in alignment with the revised UN-Women Evaluation Policy and Coverage Norms; updated IES governance; and UNEG guidance.

31. At the regional level, IES Regional Evaluation Specialists continued to work closely with UN-Women personnel in regional offices (ROs) and COs by providing tailored technical support and training to address evaluation support needs, including training and technical assistance provided to M&E focal points and officers; one-on-one coaching; and training at regional and country-level workshops. For instance, Regional Evaluation Specialists mentored M&E staff in the Arab States (AS) (Palestine) and Americas and Caribbean (AC) (Mexico). Customized trainings were also provided to newly appointed M&E focal points in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region (Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Ukraine).

#### Communications and knowledge management

32. In 2020, IES continued to invest in knowledge management and communications, with a focus on reaching relevant UN-Women personnel and stakeholders to maximize their use of evaluations. For strategic corporate evaluations and IES-led country and regional evaluations, IES prepares a user-friendly communication package which includes a visually designed report, evaluation brief and, for corporate evaluations, a Transform magazine.

33. Reports are publicly available on the UN-Women website, <u>Global</u> <u>Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE)</u> system and are also uploaded on the UNEG site and shared through social media. In 2020, the GATE system had more than 21,000 unique views, an increase of over 7 per cent from the previous year. UN-Women's evaluation pages on the site had over 28,000 views in 2020. The most visited evaluation pages were the UN-Women evaluation handbook on how to manage gender-responsive evaluation, followed by the newly published pocket tool for managing evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic and the booklet on good practices in gender-responsive evaluation published in 2020.

34. At the regional level, various knowledge products were developed and disseminated to provide concise, reader-friendly summaries of key emerging issues. In East and Southern Africa (ESA), as a collaborative effort by IES and the RO's knowledge management and communication teams, UN-Women produced a series of synthesis briefs summarizing lessons and recommendations from 26 evaluation reports completed in the region during 2015–2018, along with a short video, followed by a series of webinars with thematic experts. In the AC region, meta-synthesis briefs covering different UN-Women thematic areas were published in Spanish and English synthesizing lessons from 20 evaluations carried out between 2015–2020. In West and Central Africa (WCA), UN-Women developed a short video to disseminate the recent regional evaluation on knowledge management.

### Synopsis of key strategic evaluations at the decentralized level

35. IES continued to take steps to increase the influence and use of evaluation insights. This annual report presents a synopsis of evaluation findings from ten regional evaluations and CPEs.

#### Regional Evaluation "Ending violence against women (EVAW) in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing norms, changing minds" Europe and Central Asia Regional Office

36. This evaluation was finalized in April 2020. It concluded that the programme had kept EVAW on the policy and political agenda in a challenging environment; strengthened women's networks; supported the development of case management tools, including protocols related to domestic violence against women and girls, that incorporate an intersectional approach to service provision; and successfully

implemented peer-to-peer and grassroots engagement to educate and empower women and community members. The programme allowed for experimentation in the engagement of influencers and changing professional practice, but changing the behaviour of men and boys, media professionals and service providers requires ongoing training and mentoring. The evaluation offered 19 recommendations, of which management accepted 18 and partially accepted one.

#### Regional evaluation of Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office

37. The evaluation was finalized in September 2020 and covered the period 2015–2019. It concluded that the UN-Women regional office had moved towards greater clarity regarding its role and relevance of its contribution, and was recognized by national and regional partners as an actor with a unique position and legitimacy to promote WEE and establish strategic alliances. UN-Women had an impact in the introduction of gender equality issues into the public agenda by promoting statistics with a gender perspective and legislative and public policy frameworks for WEE; developing capacities of both state institutions and rights holders; promoting linkages and alliances; developing knowledge to support the need for changes towards WEE; and involving the private sector by promoting change within companies. The evaluation highlighted opportunities for improvement in the operationalization of cross-cutting approaches that target multiple themes (human rights/environmental sustainability/unpaid care work/masculinities) and strengthening implementation of an intersectional approach to interventions. The evaluation offered eight recommendations, of which management accepted seven and partially accepted one.

#### Evaluation of the "Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities Programme" (MADAD) Europe and Central Asia & Arab States Regional Offices

38. This evaluation assessed the performance and results of the MADAD programme between February 2018 and December 2020. The evaluation concluded that the programme was innovative and highly relevant to regional and national priorities for supporting Syrian refugees and host communities, responding in a context-sensitive manner to the basic needs of targeted beneficiary groups. It was successful in including hard-to-reach and vulnerable women with the provision of comprehensive services through careful selection of locations and national partners; working with women's grassroots civil society organizations; and conducting community outreach activities. The programme contributed to improving beneficiaries' shorter-term coping mechanisms and economic situation, allowing spending on essential needs such as healthcare and children's schooling, also in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme's combination of protection and psychosocial support services; livelihoods training and job opportunities; workshops on life skills and women's rights; and women's solidarity and social cohesion activities in a safe and supportive women-only environment had a sustainable impact on beneficiaries' personal and relational empowerment. The evaluation offered 26 recommendations of which management accepted 16 and partially accepted ten.

#### **Country portfolio evaluation El Salvador Country Office**

39. This CPE analysed the Strategic Note for the period 2016–2020 and concluded that the Country Office had developed projects and initiatives that were relevant to the needs and context of the country, and were well aligned with the goals and interests of the relevant government administrations. UN-Women was largely successful in implementing the Strategic Note and was recognized by implementing

partners for its capacity to provide policy advice and expertise in gender equality and the empowerment of women, especially in the area of ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG). Success factors included effective inter-agency cooperation and implementation of joint programming; UN-Women's technical capacity; and a wellsuited office management structure. The evaluation provided ten recommendations, of which management accepted nine and partially accepted one.

#### **Country portfolio evaluation Colombia Country Office**

40. The evaluation of the Colombia Strategic Note/Cooperation Framework (SN/CF) 2015–2019 was finalized in February 2020. The evaluation concluded that the SN/CF was highly relevant to the needs of women and girls in Colombia, but that there were weaknesses due to the lack of clear connection between the SN/CF's ToC, results-based management intervention logic, and the Country Office's vision of change. The evaluation commended the Country Office's articulation of UN-Women's triple mandate; focus on cross-cutting areas of work; the positioning of UN-Women as a national adviser on gender equality and the empowerment of women; and internal innovations in the Country Office's working style. The evaluation highlighted the Country Office's technical support to organizations for capacity building in management as a good practice that contributes to the overall efficiency of UN-Women in the country. The evaluation offered five recommendations, all of which were accepted by management.

#### IES-led Country portfolio evaluation Nigeria Country Office

41. This CPE assessed the evolution, growth trajectory and effectiveness of two Strategic Note cycles, looking at critical aspects of programming for gender equality and the empowerment of women in Nigeria. The CPE sought to help UN-Women consolidate learning from what works well and what could be done differently, and to offer insight to support the mid-term review of the 2018–2020 Strategic Note. The evaluation concluded that the Country Office was adept at evolving its strategic positioning in terms of gender equality and the empowerment of women and changing priorities in the country context. The evaluation highlighted the Country Office's normative work and ability to amplify the voices of women in various strategic discourses as key strengths, while also noting the impactful results of the WPS programme at the policy and institutional level and in influencing social norm changes. However, the evaluation noted some inhibiting factors including a highly constrained staffing structure; areas for improvement in planning and M&E; and the fragmented nature of some projects in terms of funding and duration. The evaluation provided seven recommendations, all of which were accepted by management.

#### **Country portfolio evaluation Paraguay Country Office**

42. This CPE found that UN-Women had made significant contributions in generating and amplifying women's social capital and improving women's quality of life. Through advocacy and capacity building of women leaders, the Country Office contributed to the affirmation of women's rights and introduced gender equality issues in public debate. UN-Women contributed significantly to the achievement of the country's development priorities, working in line with national policies and plans and promoting the involvement of diverse stakeholders. With the installation of the Country Office, new impetus was given to gender equality and the empowerment of women, ensuring better coordination within the UN system and national and local governments. The evaluation noted that UN-Women was recognized as a national and

international leader in the gender equality playing a vital role in the advancement of the SDGs. In terms of added value, the evaluation highlighted UN-Women's capacity to provide technical support to government organizations and establish alliances with diverse social actors. The evaluation offered four overarching recommendations which have yet to be reviewed by management.

#### IES-led Country portfolio evaluation and audit (CPE+A)<sup>1</sup> Viet Nam Country Office

43. This CPE+A was finalized in December 2020 and concluded that, despite the challenges of mobilizing resources in a middle-income country with decreasing Official Development Assistance, the Country Office was able to grow its portfolio and enhance its partnerships. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic effects coupled with the Country Office's reliance on regional and global funds presents a risk to the sustainability of the office's work. Given these uncertainties, it was an opportune time for UN-Women to determine its strategic vision for its small office presence in the AP region for the next four years. The evaluation highlighted the alignment of the Country Office's work with the principle of Leaving No One Behind, and the Country Office's ability to leverage networks and reach and amplify the voices of diverse groups. Opportunities for improvement were identified in data collection, validation and reporting, focusing on results and milestones, and prioritization and control of key risks and opportunities in project management and operations. The evaluation offered seven recommendations of which five were fully and two were partially accepted.

#### IES-led Country portfolio evaluation Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Office

44. The CPE concluded the Country Office demonstrated value and success across its triple mandate over its Strategic Note period. UN-Women's normative and policy work in EVAW and GRB had the most widespread impact. Recent gains in other governance areas and in coordination efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic were also notable. Monitoring and evaluation by the Country Office and its partners did not include sufficient follow-up or long-term planning. However, capacity-building activities have generated increased institutional ownership for gender equality and the empowerment of women across different political levels. Internally, the Country Office had not yet fully optimized its potential to build a synergistic approach across thematic areas; support innovative and strategic staff engagement; and meaningfully report on its contributions to the UN-Women Strategic Note outcomes. The Country Office would benefit from an overarching strategic approach to ensuring that the principle of Leave No One Behind impacts the lives of women in marginalized communities, and those with intersectional challenges. The evaluation offered eight recommendations, of which five were accepted and three partially accepted by management.

#### Country portfolio evaluation Uganda Country Office

45. This CPE found that the Uganda country portfolio was strategically positioned to deliver on UN-Women's triple mandate. Overall, the ToC supporting the programme appeared to have held true in terms of results achieved but could be improved through the inclusion of an essential assumption on how to influence the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The CPE+A of the Viet Nam CO was jointly led by IES and IAS. To reduce overlap and increase efficiency, IEAS combined its efforts and conducted the CPE and audit jointly focusing on different aspects of the assessment.

national context and traditional beliefs about women. The evaluation noted that an expansion in personnel, renewed and reinforced procedures and effective institutional arrangements contributed to strong evidence of programme achievements, while allowing the Country Office to balance its reliance on implementing partners and developing partner oversight capacity. The Country Office enhanced access of women, girls and marginalized groups to their rights by directly delivering services, goods and by building capacity for targeted key duty bearers to deliver more effectively and efficiently. The evaluation offered six recommendations, all of which were accepted by management.

# V. Performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women

46. IES uses a set of performance monitoring systems to promote the transparency and accountability of the UN-Women evaluation function. The Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS) is used to track and inform managers of progress on evaluation key performance indicators (KPIs). The GATE system also functions as an online repository of evaluation reports, with corresponding report quality ratings and management response actions. Table 1 presents the results for 2020, targets and historical trends. The overall results show sustained progress on the KPIs.

		UN-Women SP 2014–2017			UN-Women SP 2018–2021		
Key performance indicator	Description	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target (by 2021)
Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Evaluation expenditure over UN- Women programme expenditure	2.9	2.7	2.2	2.0	1.9	3.0 <sup>2</sup>
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Offices that appointed an M&E focal point or officer	100.0	100.0	95.0	98.0	98.0	100.0
Evaluation coverage	At least one evaluation per SN cycle	84.0	89.0	84.0	86.0	92.0	100.0
Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of evaluations being implemented	84.0	84.0	90.0	77.0	95.0	85.0
Quality of evaluation reports	Percentage of evaluation reports rated "Good and above" <sup>3</sup>	100.0	100.0	88.0	$68.0^{4}$	90.0	100.0
Management response submission to GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports submitted with management response to GATE	94.0	100.0	97.0	95.0	100.0	100.0
Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response key actions being implemented	94.0	86.0	87.0	85.0	89.0	80.0
Use of evaluations	Percentage of offices that reported using evaluation	_5	86.0	86.0	86.0	88.0	90.0

#### Table 1: Trends in KPIs 2016–2020

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The revised Evaluation Policy (2020) recommends that UN-Women allocate between 2 and 3 per cent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> To further advance the quality of evaluation, the target for this KPI was raised in 2018 to reflect the higher rating "Good and above" (during 2014–2017 the KPI was "Satisfactory and above"); therefore, it is not fully comparable to previous years.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This figure refers to 26 of 38 evaluation reports, rated as "Good and above". In 2019, 95 per cent (36 of 38 reports) were rated as "Fair and above".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Due to glitches in the Results Management System (RMS), data on evaluation use for 2016 was not captured in annual reporting by offices.

# Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total UN-Women programme expenditure	254 413 520	249 447 953	285 670 628	326 069 512	341 366 277
Total expenditure on evaluation	7 391 573	6 714 506	6 253 679	6,359,651	6,388,787
IES/IEAS	5 377 637	4 208 814	3 787 888	3 433 020	3 441 396
Decentralized evaluations <sup>6</sup>	2 013 936	2 505 691	2 465 791	2 926 630	2 947 391
Total evaluation expenditure (percentage)	2.9	2.7	2.2	2.0	1.9

#### Table 2: Evaluation function expenditure 2016–2020 (US\$)

Source: "Total UN-Women programme expenditure" and "IES expenditure" figures were generated from ATLAS by the Division of Management and Administration (DMA). Figures for decentralized evaluations were calculated based on figures by DMA and supplemented by data obtained from field offices.

47. The revised Evaluation Policy (2020) recommends that UN-Women allocate between 2 and 3 per cent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function. In 2020, UN-Women's total spending on evaluation was US\$ 6.39 million. This figure is based on expenditure data provided by the Division of Management and Administration that, to the extent possible, IES reviewed for completeness and consistency. While overall spending on evaluation remained similar to that of 2019 (2020: US\$ 6.39 million, 2019: US\$ 6.36 million), the ratio of evaluation expenditure to UN-Women programme expenditure decreased to 1.9 per cent from 2 per cent. The slight decrease in the ratio was mainly driven by a 4.7 per cent increase in total UN-Women's programmatic expenditure, up from US\$ 326.07 million in 2019 to US\$ 341.37 million in 2020. This can also be partially attributed to corporate reprioritization/reprogramming process undertaken in response to the COVID-19 crisis as well as travel restrictions posed by the global pandemic in conducting some on-site evaluation activities.

# Key performance indicator 2: human resources

48. In 2020, under the leadership of the Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS), IES was led by the Chief of Evaluation, supported by five Evaluation Specialists at headquarters and six Regional Evaluation Specialists, each based in an RO. IES' evaluation work was supported by individual consultants and interns as needed.

49. In 2020, 98 per cent of UN-Women COs and ROs appointed at least one M&E officer or M&E focal point, except for one office that recently became a CO and was in the process of appointing one at the time of this report. Of these, 34 COs and ROs (53 per cent) reported having at least one M&E Officer to support the evaluation function. This reflects some progress made in overall M&E capacity at the country level, which had been relatively stagnant in previous years at a rate of less than 45 per cent.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Estimated costs for decentralized evaluations included a broad range of categories: conduct of evaluation, capacity development on evaluation, M&E staff costs, and communication and dissemination of evaluation products.

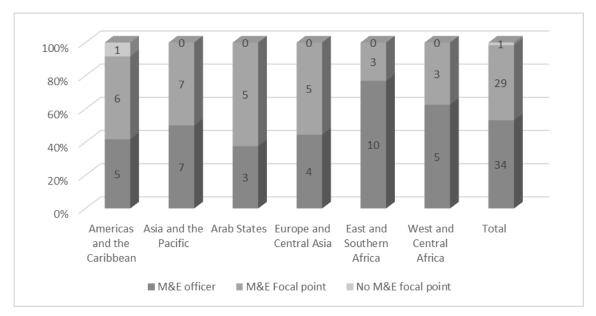


Figure 1: Human resources for M&E officers/focal points by region 2020

Source: GEOS

### Key performance indicator 3: evaluation coverage

50. The revised Evaluation Policy requires adequate evaluative coverage across the key areas of UN-Women's work. Over the period 2016–2020, 92 per cent of ROs and COs had carried out at least one evaluation. This reflects an overall improvement in evaluation coverage, compared to coverage of 86 per cent or less in previous years. With close follow-up and support provided by IES, three of five non-compliant COs initiated at least one evaluation in 2020.<sup>7</sup> With the new Evaluation Coverage Norms and the revised Evaluation Policy that recognizes CPEs as mandatory strategic evaluations, UN-Women is progressing towards achieving overall good coverage with high-quality strategic evaluations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Of the five non-compliant COs (Haiti, Cambodia, Iraq, Turkey and South Africa), three COs (Haiti, Cambodia, Turkey) initiated at least one evaluation in 2020 that are expected to be finalized in 2021.

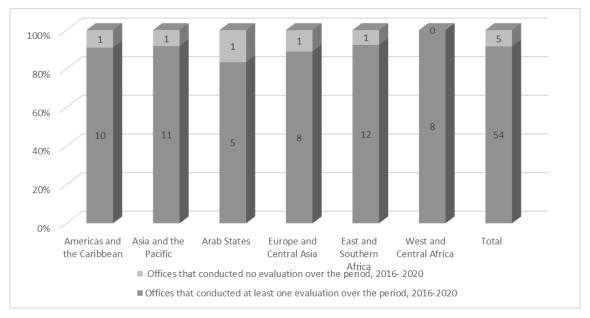


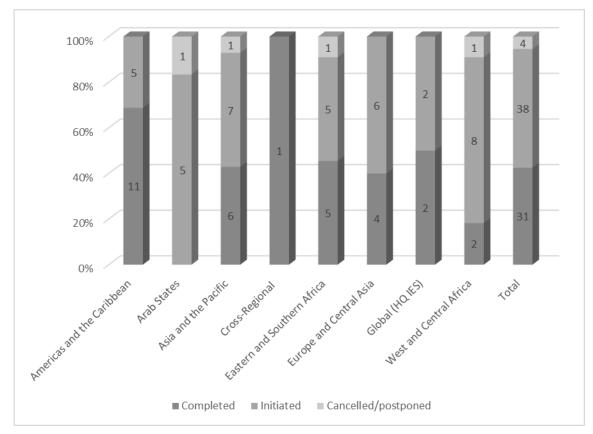
Figure 2: Evaluation coverage by region 2016–2020

Source: GEOS

# Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned evaluations

51. Based on the Monitoring, Research and Evaluation Plan developed by COs and ROs, IES prepares an annual global evaluation plan to track and monitor the implementation status of planned evaluations. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic related challenges and restrictions, in close consultation with COs and ROs, IES conducted a mid-year review of the global evaluation plan. A number of planned evaluations were adapted into lighter review processes; subsumed into other strategic evaluations; or postponed to 2021 due to programme and project extensions. This report reflects this update.

52. In 2020, of the 73 evaluations planned, 31 (42 per cent) were completed. A further 38 (52 per cent) were initiated and at varying stages of implementation at the time of this report. Four had been postponed or cancelled. Factoring in the mid-year adjustments, these numbers reflect a slight decrease in the overall number of evaluations, but an increase in the implementation rate compared to 2019. This demonstrates strong commitment from UN-Women to carry out evaluation activities, even during a global crisis. Regional level data shows that the AC region implemented the most evaluations in 2020, followed by Asia and the Pacific (AP), ESA and WCA regions.





Source: GEOS

# Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports

53. All completed UN-Women evaluation reports were externally assessed based on GERAAS. The results of the assessments show that the majority of UN-Women evaluation reports (approximately 90 per cent) obtained an overall rating of "Very good" and/or "Good" – up from 69 per cent in 2019. Ten per cent of evaluation reports (three reports) were rated "Fair". None of the reports were assessed as "Unsatisfactory".

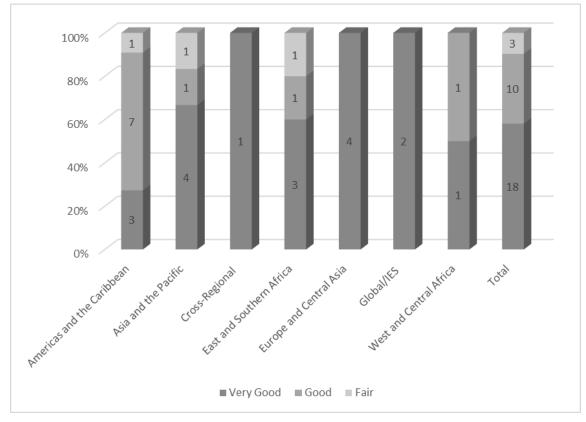


Figure 4: Quality of evaluation reports 2020

Source: GATE

# Key performance indicator 6: submission rate of completed evaluation reports to GATE with management response

54. The UN-Women Evaluation Policy requires a management response to all completed evaluations within six weeks of finalization. Of the 31 completed evaluations in 2020, all completed evaluations received a management response at the time of this report. IES noted some challenges, however, in terms of management's timely approval and posting of their management responses in GATE within the six-week timeframe. IES will continue to monitor the timeliness and completion of management responses, including through the follow up by its Regional Evaluation Specialists with country offices and Regional Directors.

# Key performance indicator 7: implementation of management response/key actions, 2020

55. There were 428 management response actions committed based on the 38 evaluations completed in 2019. Of those actions, 89 per cent were either completed or in progress (58 per cent completed and 31 per cent in progress/ongoing) and 11 per cent were yet to be initiated (5 per cent not initiated and 6 per cent overdue). This reflects an improvement from the 85 per cent implementation rate in 2019.

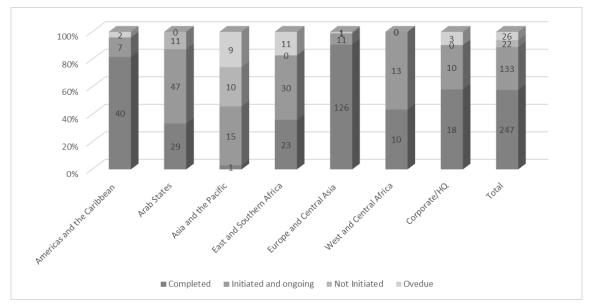


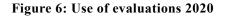
Figure 5: Implementation of management response/key actions 2020

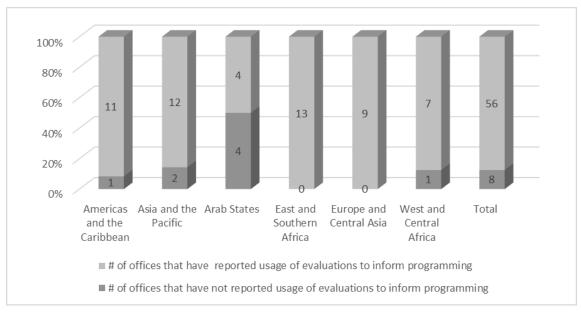
Source: GATE

# Key performance indicator 8: use of evaluation

56. UN-Women offices report on the use of evaluation through UN-Women's results management system (RMS). In 2020, 88 per cent of field offices reported that lessons and recommendations from evaluations were used to leverage and improve programming. This reflects a slight increase in the use of evaluations compared to previous years. Analysis of annual reports further indicates an incremental increase in the use of evaluations,. Findings and recommendations from corporate, decentralized and external evaluations (e.g. UNSDCF evaluations) were also drawn upon to improve UN-Women's programming.

57. The Director, IEAS and the Chief, IES also periodically presented evaluation findings to senior management in meetings of the UN-Women Senior Management Team and the Business Review Committee. IES participation as observers in corporate strategic planning activities also provided the opportunity to flag and ensure that evaluation findings and recommendations are used. Regional Evaluation Specialists also contribute advice on regional planning activities which also provides the opportunity to ensure that evaluative evidence is applied.







# VI. Working in partnership for gender-responsive evaluation

### Promoting gender-responsive evaluation in the UN system

58. In 2020, IES continued to actively contribute to UNEG by participating in 11 working and interest groups and by serving as co-convenor on two groups – the *Gender Equality, Disability, and Human Rights and Humanitarian Evaluation groups*. These groups contributed to developing and promoting common methodologies, guidance and approaches related to gender equality and disability inclusion and to improved capacity to undertake evaluations of the humanitarian/development/peacebuilding nexus within the UN system.

59. Adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, IES led the organization of three virtual Evaluation Practice Exchange sessions to facilitate exchange between UNEG members. The first was a moderated discussion with panellists from five UN agencies sharing challenges and solutions in conducting corporate evaluations of gender mainstreaming. The second session focused on the new UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. The third session explored Innovative Data Collection for Humanitarian Evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

60. At the regional level, UN-Women continued to co-chair the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP) and facilitate exchange among members on approaches to evaluation during the pandemic and to coordinate support to UNSDCF processes. In the ESA region, UN-Women engaged with the UN Network for Evaluation in Eastern and Southern Africa (UNNEESA) through two working groups on evaluation capacity development and technical support to UNSDCF and joint evaluations.

# UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Evaluation Performance Indicator (UN-SWAP EPI)

61. As the secretariat for the UN-SWAP EPI, IES reviewed annual submissions; provided support on the application of technical guidance to reporting entities; and prepared the annual report documenting progress and highlighting best practices for improving gender mainstreaming in evaluations.

62. As in previous years, IES continued with the best practice of undertaking an external assessment of the UN-SWAP EPI. Of the 26 evaluations assessed, 22 (85 per cent) were assessed as "meeting the requirements", in line with the established scale. This represents an increase in comparison with the 69 per cent of UN-Women evaluations which met the requirements in 2019. The remaining four evaluations (15 per cent) approached the requirements, with none of UN-Women's evaluations missing the requirements. Based on the 2020 assessment, UN-Women "Exceeds the requirements" related to the EPI in terms of integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women in its evaluations.

# Supporting joint evaluations and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

63. UN-Women continued to collaborate with other entities and supported several UNSDCF evaluations and joint initiatives at the regional level. Approximately 13 joint evaluations were either jointly managed or supported by UN-Women in 2020. In addition, UN-Women contributed to several UNDAF/UNSDCF evaluation processes and delivered training to UN Country Teams (UNCTs) on evaluation throughout the regions. In the AS region, UN-Women provided technical input to the Morocco UNSDCF evaluation. In the AP region, UN-Women contributed to UNSDCF processes in Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam. In the ECA region, UN-Women reviewed and provided technical support to a number of UNCT evaluations including: Argentina UNDAF evaluation; Brazil UNDAF evaluation design; El Salvador UNDAF evaluation; Honduras UNDAF evaluation; Uruguay UNDAF evaluation. In the ESA region, UN-Women supported the UNSDCF evaluation in Zambia.

64. UN-Women delivered training for participants from UNCTs on integrating gender perspectives in UNSDCF evaluations and on the UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicators. For instance, in the AP region, as part of UNEDAP efforts to support UNDAF evaluations, UN-Women provided technical advice to the Bangladesh UNCT and conducted a workshop on gender-responsive evaluation for the UNCT in Viet Nam. In the AC region, several workshops were supported for UN M&E capacity at the country level, including: UNCT Honduras workshop for designing the new UNSDCF; UNCT Mexico workshop for designing indicators for the new UNSDCF, with a training session focused on adopting a gender lens in the indicators; and UNCT Brazil workshop on designing the new UNSDCF with an intervention focused on gender-sensitive programming strategies based on lessons learned.

# National Evaluation Capacity Development EvalGender+: Global partnership for promoting genderresponsive evaluations

65. UN-Women continued to co-chair EvalGender+, a global partnership for promoting gender-responsive evaluations. During 2020, EvalGender+ disseminated findings from 2018 and 2019 analysis assessing the extent to which the Voluntary National Reviews use gender-responsive evaluative evidence to inform SDG reviews. EvalGender+ provided four small grants to evaluation associations that foster knowledge generation to advocate for more gender-responsive evaluation, including EvalJordan, Sri Lanka Evaluation Association, Bhutan Evaluation Association and SAHAJ in India. Greater collaboration among networks produced new publications and knowledge products.

66. At the regional level, in the ESA region UN-Women partnered with CLEAR South Africa on some initiatives, including the resource book 'Systems of Evidence Use in African Parliaments'. In the AC region, UN-Women initiated support to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)'s development of an M&E framework supporting its Gender Equality Strategy; together with UN partners supported ongoing work on the National Evaluation Capacity Index initiative (INCE, by its Spanish language acronym) being piloted in five countries in the region. In the WCA region, with the Association Sénégalaise d'Evaluation (SenEval), UN-Women initiated the adoption/translation of the Rapid Tool on Gender-Responsiveness of Humanitarian Interventions. In the AP region, UN-Women collaborated with the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA) on a webinar on gender-responsive evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# VII. The 2021 Independent Evaluation Service programme of work

67. The IES 2021 programme of work is informed by the revised Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Coverage Norms, the 2018–2021 Corporate Evaluation Strategy and Corporate Evaluation Plan. IES will deliver its programme of work in the five key areas of work described below.

# Strategic evaluations and activities at the corporate level

68. IES will conduct three major corporate evaluations that will be presented to the Executive Board in its 2021–2022 sessions: (a) corporate evaluation of UN-Women's coordination and convening role in EVAW; (b) corporate evaluation of UN-Women's policy advocacy function; and (c) a meta-synthesis: lessons on the types of UN-Women support 2018–2020. In addition, UN-Women will finalize the joint study with the United Nations University on *Gender equality for health and well-being* and will undertake three formative strategic evaluations on UN Women's approach to: (a) innovation; (b) climate change; and (c) engagement of men and boys. These evaluations will be presented for the consideration of UN-Women management and partners and will be detailed in upcoming annual reports on the evaluation function.

69. In 2021, IES will develop its next Corporate Evaluation Plan (2022–2025) and Evaluation Strategy (2022–2025) building on the new UN-Women Strategic Plan in consultation with key stakeholders, and building on lessons learned from implementation of previous plans and strategies.

# Strategic evaluations and technical assistance at the decentralized level

70. In 2021, IES will lead and co-manage decentralized strategic regional evaluations and CPEs through its Regional Evaluation Specialists. In taking a greater role in supporting these strategic evaluations, IES plans to lead two regional evaluations and ten CPEs of the total 15 planned, while three CPEs will be co-managed by IES. In addition, IES will provide technical support to decentralized programme/project evaluations and joint evaluations led and owned by the respective country, regional and headquarters offices.

71. IES will continue to strengthen its decentralized systems and practices by maintaining GEOS and tracking evaluation KPIs; externally assessing the quality of evaluation reports; and providing staff capacity development through training and coaching.

# Promotion of United Nations system coordination on genderresponsive evaluation

72. In 2021, IES will contribute to UNEG initiatives and activities; regional evaluation groups; and system-wide evaluation efforts, including joint and UNSDCF evaluations. IES will provide leadership through co-convening the UNEG Gender Equality, Disability and Human Rights working group and the Humanitarian Evaluation interest group. IES will also continue to lead the report on the UN-SWAP EPI.

# National evaluation capacity development

73. IES will continue to support targeted national gender-responsive evaluation capacity development through EvalGender+ and other direct partnerships with evaluation organizations. IES will use its role as co-chair of EvalGender+ strategically to advocate for gender-responsive national evaluation systems. IES will provide targeted technical assistance through its Regional Evaluation Specialists to selected national evaluations of gender strategies, policies and action plans.

# Strengthening evaluation use and communication

74. IES will continue to provide evidence to support the development of the new UN-Women Strategic Plan, and will actively participate in Senior Management Team and Business Review Committee meetings to ensure that evidence and recommendations from evaluations is known and used. IES will monitor the degree of evaluation use in key strategic planning documents and organizational processes. Communication materials and social media will continue to be important means to disseminate evaluation findings, recommendations and other learning initiatives to wider audiences. IES will engage in knowledge and learning partnerships with the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division and Strategy, Planning, Resource and Effectiveness Division, and will contribute to the overall UN-Women knowledge management strategy by sharing and contributing evaluation findings and evidence.

# **Budget for the 2021 Independent Evaluation Service programme of work**

75. The IES budget for 2021 is US\$ 3,431,000. The budget is comprised of institutional budget and core programmable resources. The institutional budget of US\$ 2,281,000 covers the salaries of IES headquarters staff posts and one Regional Evaluation Specialist staff post, and key workplan activities (corporate evaluations; support to some IES-led CPEs; communication products and knowledge management; support to decentralized evaluation systems; support to UN system coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; and targeted national evaluation capacity development on gender-responsive evaluation). In addition to the institutional budget, the salaries of five Regional Evaluation Specialists (US\$ 1,150,000) are covered through core programmable resources.

Region	Office/division	Title	of evaluation	Report quality rating	
West and Central Africa	Central African Republic	1. Evaluation finale du Projet Conjoint 'Promotion de la participation politique et leadership de la femme dans la consolidation de la paix en République Centrafricaine'		Good	
	Nigeria	2.	IES-led Country portfolio evaluation	Very good	
Eastern and Southern Africa	Ethiopia	3.	Mid-term evaluation of 'Programme on Increased Participation and Representation of Women in Leadership in Ethiopia: The Road to Equitable Development'	Very good	
		4.	Mid-term evaluation of the African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI)	Fair	
	Kenya	5.	Evaluation report of Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP): Promoting the Empowerment of Women and Girls within the Humanitarian- Development Nexus in Kenya	Very good	
	Uganda	6.	Country portfolio evaluation	Very good	
	Malawi	7.	Final evaluation of IBSA ending child marriage	Good	
Asia and the Pacific	Japan Liaison Office	8.	Final evaluation of UN-Women project "Raising awareness of gender equality among young people"	Good	
	India	9.	Final evaluation of "From opportunities to capacities: a multi-sectoral approach to enhancing gender-responsive governance"	Very good	
	Pakistan	10.	Workers and excluded groups in Pakistan (April 2017– August 2020)	Very good	
	Viet Nam	11.	IES-led Country portfolio evaluation and audit	Very good	
	Sri Lanka	12.	End of project evaluation of "Assessing sexual bribery experienced by female heads of households, including military widows and war widows in Sri Lanka to enable resilience and sustained peace"	Very good	
	Timor-Leste	13.	Evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to the implementation of Timor-Leste's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2016–2020)	Fair	
Europe and Central Asia	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office	14.	Final evaluation of the programme "Ending violence women in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Implementing norms, changing minds"	Very good	
	Georgia	15.	Final evaluation of the project, "A Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia	Very good	
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	16.	IES-led Country portfolio evaluation	Very good	

# Annex 1 UN-Women Evaluations completed in 2020

Region	Office/division	Title	of evaluation	Report quality rating	
	Kyrgyzstan	17.	Final evaluation of the programme: "Across Generation and Gender Borders: Communities Combatting Gender-Based Violence in Kyrgyzstan"	Very good	
Americas and the Caribbean	Bolivia	18.	Final evaluation of the project, 'Improvement of the quality of life and empowerment of northern amazon women'	Fair	
	Caribbean Multi-country office	19.	Social Mobilization Programme to End Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean (2014–2017 and 2018)	Good	
	Colombia	20.	Country portfolio evaluation	Good	
	Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office	21.	Regional evaluation on Women Economic Empowerment (2015–2019)	Good	
	Brazil	22.	Regional Mid-term evaluation of the regional programme: Win-Win: Gender Equality Means Good Business	Very good	
	El Salvador	23.	Country portfolio evaluation	Very good	
	El Salvador	24.	Women and Municipal Policies for Equality and the eradication of violence	Good	
	Paraguay	25.	Country portfolio evaluation	Good	
	Mexico	26.	Informe final de la Evaluación – Centro Global de Excelencia de Estadísticas de Genero	Very good	
	Chile	27.	Programa originarias: "Empoderamiento de las mujeres indígenas del norte de Chile para el desarrollo sostenible" 3016–2018	Good	
	Guatemala	28.	Evaluación final independiente de Proyecto PBF/IRF194: Haciendo una realidad el efecto transformador de la sentencia de reparación de Sepur Zarco para romper el continuo de la violencia sexual y otras formas de violencia contra las mujeres en situaciones de conflicto y postconflicto del Fondo para la Consolidación de la Paz	Good	
Corporate	Independent Evaluation Service (IES)	29.	Effectiveness and efficiency assessment of UN-Women Flagship Programme Initiatives and Thematic Priorities of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021	Very good	
		30.	Corporate thematic evaluation of UN-Women's support to National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace, and Security	Very good	
Cross- regional	ECARO and ASRO	31.	Evaluation of the "Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities Programme" (MADAD)	Very good	