MOPAN

Multilateral Organisation
Performance Assessment Network

Synthesis report

**United Nations Entity
for Gender Equality and
the Empowerment of
Women (UN-Women)**

Executive Summary · 2014

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of an assessment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) conducted by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). MOPAN reports provide an assessment of four dimensions of organisational effectiveness (strategic management, operational management, relationship management, and knowledge management), an assessment of the evidence of the organisation's relevance and development results, and snapshots of UN-Women's performance in each of the six countries included in the MOPAN survey.

UN-Women envisions a world free of gender-based discrimination, where women and men have equal opportunities, where women and girls can be active agents of change, and where women's rights are upheld in all efforts to further development, human rights, peace and security.

UN-Women was created by the UN General Assembly in July 2010 in response to longstanding challenges faced by the UN in its efforts to promote gender equality, including insufficient funding and the lack of leadership to direct UN activities on gender equality. The new organisation was established by UN Member States at the urging of more than 300 civil society organisations worldwide. It emerged from the consolidation of four previously distinct entities: Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

UN-Women is the centre of the gender equality architecture of the United Nations system and has a triple mandate that encompasses normative support, co-ordination and operational functions, as spelled out in General Assembly Resolution 64/289, the founding resolution for the Entity. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for UN-women's normative support functions and provide normative policy guidance. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Executive Board of the Entity constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for the operational activities and provide operational policy guidance. The founding resolution also established the Entity's additional role of leading, co-ordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Towards this end, the Entity operates as part of the UN Resident Coordinator system, within the United Nations Country Team, and the head of the Entity is a full member of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

The General Assembly founding resolution called for UN-Women to have universal coverage and established that any expansion of its capacity should build on the field presence and infrastructure of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). Based on the results of a field capacity assessment completed in February 2011, and taking into account the presence and capacity of other UN agencies, along with criteria from the Strategic Plan 2011-13 (i.e. the situation of gender equality, women and girls; development and income level of the country; active conflict or post conflict or the presence of other insecurities faced by women in the country; and high levels of inequality), by the end of 2013, UN-Women had established a decentralised structure and delegated authority to six regional offices, six multi-country offices, and 48 country offices, in addition to maintaining a programme presence in 28 countries.

Several international agreements frame UN-Women's work, including the Charter of the United Nations; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including its twelve critical areas of concern; the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly; and applicable United Nations instruments, standards and resolutions that support, address and contribute to gender equality and the empowerment and the advancement of women. UN-Women is also guided by the recommendations of the General Assembly in Resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

UN-Women's six impact areas are laid out in its strategic plan.

UN-WOMEN'S IMPACT AREAS [1]

Impact 1:	Women lead and participate in decision making at all levels
Impact 2:	Women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development
Impact 3:	Women and girls live a life free from violence
Impact 4:	Peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women leadership and participation
Impact 5:	Governance and national planning fully reflect accountability for gender equality commitments and priorities
Impact 6:	A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment is in place and is applied through action by Governments and other stakeholders at all levels

The bulk of UN-Women's funding comes from voluntary contributions from member states and non-governmental partners. In addition, UN-Women is allocated funds from the regular UN budget (approximately 2% of UN-Women's projected funding for 2014-2015) (UNGA, 2013 [02]).[2]

MOPAN assessment

This is the first MOPAN assessment of UN-Women. It is based on information collected through a perception-based survey of key stakeholders, document review, and interviews with UN-Women staff. The survey respondents included UN-Women's direct partners, MOPAN donors based in-country and at headquarters, and peer organisations in countries where UN-Women has programming. Six countries were included in the MOPAN survey of UN-Women: Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Kenya and Tanzania.

A total of 254 respondents participated in the survey (30 MOPAN donors based at headquarters, 29 MOPAN donors based in-country, 141 direct partners, and 54 representatives of peer organisations). The document review examined more than 400 documents. Interviews were held with 61 UN-Women staff members (52 staff members at headquarters, 6 Country Representatives /Officers-In-Charge and 3 Regional Directors).

1. It was agreed with UN-Women to use the formulation of the impacts from the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan
2. The proposed overall resources from the United Nations' regular budget attributed to UN-Women for the years 2014-2015 is 15,257,900 USD before recosting. In addition, extrabudgetary resources amounting to 700,000,000 USD under the UN-Women support budget are projected for the biennium 2014-2015. For more information, please see financial resources overview presented in the "Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015. Part IV: International cooperation for development: Section 17, UN-Women"

The main findings of the institutional assessment of UN-Women are summarised below.

Key findings

Strategic management

MOPAN established five key performance indicators (KPI) in the area of strategic management, which address the organisation's leadership on the results agenda and capacities for developing and following institutional and country strategies that reflect good practices in managing for results.

UN-Women has drawn on the experiences of other United Nations organisations in results-based management (RBM) and has made consistent efforts to develop, both internally and externally, a culture of RBM. UN-Women's corporate and country strategic planning documents offer evidence of a results focus, are tied directly to the Entity's mandate, and are based on extensive consultations with partners. UN-Women provides staff and partners with RBM training opportunities, although developing staff RBM capacity remains a challenge. Survey scores mostly concurred with the document review, rating UN-Women strong in most areas of strategic management.

UN-Women's strategic plan reflects its mandate and three main roles (operational, normative and co-ordination), identifies the six organisation-wide impact areas and indicates how the mandate will be implemented. The plan is strongly aligned with UN-Women's mandate and with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR). Surveyed stakeholders consider UN-Women's normative and co-ordination roles clear, but are less clear and/or have differing expectations about its operational role.

UN-Women maintains a strong focus on gender equality, good governance and human rights-based approaches in its operations. It undertakes some environmental activities when questions of gender and environment intersect, although environmental sustainability is not identified as an organisation-wide priority.

UN-Women was rated adequate for its corporate and country focus on results. Room for improvement was noted in: distinguishing levels of results (i.e. outputs often describe higher level changes that are typically associated with outcomes), the use of indicators that do not adequately measure UN-Women's outputs, and the lack of explicit and comprehensive theories of change. It is therefore difficult to see a clear link between UN-Women's activities and the outputs on which it reports, which translates into difficulties in assessing its contributions to development results.

Operational management

MOPAN established seven key indicators in the area of operational management, which refers to managing operations in a way that is performance-oriented, thus ensuring organisational accountability for resources and results.

UN-Women has demonstrated a results focus in operational management, adopting monitoring, reporting, evaluation, and auditing strategies and processes that take into account the need to provide senior management with adequate performance information to make informed decisions. Since UN-Women is a new organisation, it is still in the process of setting up practices and policies. However, most systems are now in place, including: annual reporting on expenditures and progress achieved; financial checks and balances such as annual external financial audits and internal audits carried out on countries and procedures identified as "high risk"; strategies to identify and deal with fraud and corruption; a human

resource performance assessment system applied to all staff; and processes for tracking performance of programmes and projects. It is still too early to assess the effectiveness of these systems in providing useful information to senior management.

In the MOPAN assessment, UN-Women was rated strong for its systems for financial accountability, ensuring that country programming is based on appropriate analysis, its human resource management practices, and its ongoing process of decentralisation and delegation of authority to regional and country offices. There are issues with respect to procurement procedures, risk management strategies and the transparency of UN-Women's system for allocating funding to country offices and partners. UN-Women's process of decentralisation and delegation of decision-making authority is ongoing, but a number of offices are under-staffed due to insufficient funding, thus restricting capacity to carry out plans. Some project audits report insufficient resources and inadequate guidance or supervision at project level. UN-Women has not yet adopted a formal and systematic approach to risk management, although it is making progress in that direction.

Relationship management
MOPAN established six key performance indicators (KPI) in the area of relationship management, which refers to how the organisation is working with others at the country level. This focuses on how it works with direct partners, peer organisations, and other donors at the country level in ways that contribute to aid effectiveness and that are aligned with the principles of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation and previous aid effectiveness commitments.

UN-Women is guided by the principles set out in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR). It supports the aid effectiveness agenda through its participation with other entities of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in efforts to adhere to QCPR directives, such as simplification of the programming process (to allow the strengthening of national ownership and a closer alignment of the UNDAF with national priorities) and a stronger focus on joint programming.

UN-Women is perceived to be adequate or strong in all areas of relationship management, including in supporting national priorities, adjusting procedures, using country systems, contributing to policy dialogue, and harmonising procedures. UN-Women is effective in aligning its programming at the country level with both national priorities and other UN programming. Country offices develop multiyear country planning documents in consultation with country stakeholders and these are aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and national priorities on gender equality. The organisation is generally seen as flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. UN-Women offers technical support to strengthen national government capacity for data collection and provides a platform for discussion and negotiation between government and civil society. Its inputs to policy dialogue are seen as strong by survey respondents.

In accordance with its mandate to lead and co-ordinate UN system-wide efforts on gender equality, UN-Women is particularly involved in co-ordination and partnership initiatives. The Entity's co-ordination role is reflected in its leadership of the UN System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) on gender equality and its co-ordination of gender theme groups and other initiatives (gender equality markers, co-ordination of UN country team initiatives on gender mainstreaming, etc). However, both thematic evaluations and staff interviews indicate that its co-ordination capacity has been uneven across country offices and there has been uncertainty among country staff about how to operationalise the Entity's co-ordination mandate at the country level. On the partnership side, UN-Women has participated in more than 100 joint programmes

with other UN agencies and has developed joint initiatives with private sector and civil society organisations in line with wider UN system efforts to strengthen joint programming processes and improve coherence. As with its co-ordination role, UN-Women's ability to lead joint initiatives (particularly among the UN agencies) in some countries has been limited by capacity constraints and inadequate strategic planning.

Knowledge management

MOPAN established three key performance indicators (KPI) in the area of knowledge management, which refers to developing feedback and reporting mechanisms and learning strategies that facilitate the sharing of knowledge and performance information. UN-Women was rated strong in evaluating results and adequate in presenting performance information and disseminating lessons learned.

While reporting and evaluation systems are in place, reporting is affected by lack of baseline data and identification of results and performance indicators, which do not yet present a complete picture of UN-Women's expected contributions to the outcomes identified in its development results framework.

A strong evaluation function is in place but is not yet fully used to capture and report on lessons learned. Although interviews confirmed UN-Women senior management's recognition of and commitment to a results-based management approach, its implementation across the organisation, particularly at the country level, is dependent on the availability of resources and an organisational culture that consistently supports evaluation and monitoring. UN-Women's systems for internal knowledge dissemination and communication of lessons learned between headquarters and country offices require improvement. UN-Women assigns importance to stakeholder participation in evaluations as an important empowerment tool, but stakeholder participation in all stages of the evaluation process is not well documented.

UN-Women's relevance and development results

The MOPAN assessment found that UN-Women's work is relevant, particularly in terms of pursuing results that are in line with its mandate and functions and with global trends and priorities in the development field. The rationale for the creation of UN-Women remains valid (e.g. one of the main reasons for the creation of UN-Women was the need for leadership on gender equality at the global level). Survey respondents concurred on the relevance of UN-Women's key areas of work, noting particularly the relevance of its work in the areas of women's economic empowerment, women's political participation, and ending violence against women.

At the country level, the assessment found some, but still limited, documentary evidence that UN-Women's work responds to local needs and priorities. Since UN-Women is a relatively new entity, few corporate or decentralised evaluations have been conducted so far, and of these, only a small number address its relevance to country beneficiaries.

Document review and survey results suggest that UN-Women is making progress towards its expected organisation-wide results. Evidence is strongest for the three UN-Women impact areas for which corporate evaluations have taken place: advancing global norms, policies and standards (for example, through its support to the Commission on the Status of Women), ending violence against women, and peace and security. UN-Women's contribution in these areas has been recognised as effective and significant in corporate evaluations.

The survey results and document review considered UN-Women's progress towards its stated country-level results as adequate in the six countries included in the assessment. Evidence of progress is stronger in Kenya (and to a somewhat lesser extent, Tanzania), where UN-Women made key contributions in the areas of women's political leadership and participation in decision making, and in ending violence against women.

Survey respondents in Kenya and Tanzania considered that UN-Women is making strong contributions to the achievement of national goals and priorities, including the MDGs. In the other countries, UN-Women's contribution is perceived as adequate. Although there is still a limited body of decentralised external evaluations to validate UN-Women's contributions, the document review noted that UN-Women's work is aligned with national goals and priorities.

Conclusions

UN-Women's clear mandate to promote gender equality and women's empowerment is a key strength of the organisation. The mandate is reflected in its planning and programming and is understood by most surveyed donors, direct partners and peer organisations, although surveyed stakeholders appear to be less clear or have differing expectations about UN-Women's operational role.

UN-Women's mandate and key functions are relevant. They are linked to the rationale for the creation of UN-Women and continue to be pertinent at the global and national levels.

Since its creation in 2010, UN-Women has had considerable success in setting up its operational infrastructure but more remains to be done to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of its operations. Funding challenges may limit UN-Women's ability to implement plans.

UN-Women has developed a focus on results and has set up relevant performance management systems. However, problems with the definition of results prevent UN-Women from identifying and assessing the contributions of its own activities. In addition, there are challenges with ensuring that a results-oriented culture and systems permeate the entire organisation.

UN-Women has made progress in fulfilling its function of leading and co-ordinating United Nations strategies, policies and actions to promote effective system-wide gender mainstreaming. However, its capacity to play this role is uneven at the country level due to funding and capacity constraints.

UN-Women has adopted good practices that are likely to enhance its contributions to development results. Despite resource mobilisation challenges, the organisation has set up global, regional and country strategic plans; put in place the necessary policies, systems and procedures for a decentralised organisation; expanded its presence at country level and delegated authority in order to improve the effectiveness of its country programming; and established knowledge management practices.

It is too early to assess in any comprehensive way UN-Women's development results. However, available evidence shows that UN-Women has made progress in three of its six impact areas: ending violence against women, women's leadership in peace and security, and advancing global norms and standards on gender equality. Overall achievements with respect to development results and the sustainability of results remain to be assessed.

Overall MOPAN ratings of UN-Women

Strategic management	Survey respondents	Document review
KPI-1 Providing direction for results	4.35	6
KPI-2 Corporate strategy based on clear mandate	4.73	5
KPI-3 Corporate focus on results	N/A	4
KPI-4 Focus on cross-cutting priorities	4.63	6
KPI-5 Country focus on results	4.73	4

Operational management		
KPI-6 Transparent and predictable funding	4.34	2
KPI-7 Results-based budgeting	4.13	4
KPI-8 Financial accountability	4.52	5
KPI-9 Using performance information	4.40	5
KPI-10 Managing human resources	4.08	5
KPI-11 Performance oriented programming	N/A	5
KPI-12 Delegating authority	3.59	5

Relationship management		
KPI-13 Supporting national plans	4.63	5
KPI-14 Adjusting procedures	4.22	N/A
KPI-15 Using country systems	4.53	N/A
KPI-16 Contributing to policy dialogue	4.87	N/A
KPI-17 Harmonising procedures	4.34	5
KPI-18 Co-ordination on gender equality	4.54	N/A

Knowledge management		
KPI-19 Evaluating results	4.76	5
KPI-20 Presenting performance information	4.08	4
KPI-21 Disseminating lessons learned	4.13	4

Legend

Strong or above	4.50–6.00
Adequate	3.50–4.49
Inadequate or below	1.00–3.49
Document review data unavailable	◆
Not assessed	N/A

Relevance and evidence of progress towards results – overall ratings

Relevance and results	Assessment Rating
KPI A: Evidence of UN-Women's relevance	Strong
KPI B: Evidence of progress towards organisation-wide results	Adequate
KPI C: Evidence of progress towards UN-Women's stated country-level results	Adequate
KPI D: Evidence of contribution to national goals and priorities, including Millennium Development Goals	Adequate

■ Weak ■ Inadequate ■ Adequate ■ Strong