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

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Evaluation

Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2018

Summary

This report provides information on the performance of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women's evaluation function at corporate and decentralized levels. It also provides information on UN-Women's contribution to United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation. The report details the establishment of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service (IEAS) and presents the 2019 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service (IES).

The Executive Board may wish to: (i) take note of the report on the evaluation function of UN-Women 2018 and the IES programme and budget for 2019; (ii) welcome the steps taken by UN-Women to maintain an independent, credible and useful evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development; (iii) express continuing support for strengthening the evaluation function in UN-Women; and (iv) request that IES continue to seek opportunities with other United Nations agencies to conduct further joint and system-wide evaluations.

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I. Evaluation for transformative change

1. The Secretary-General's United Nations reform programme outlines a vision for a more agile, effective, innovative, transparent, accountable, decentralised and results-driven United Nations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2018 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on repositioning the United Nations development system in the context of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), stresses the need to improve monitoring and reporting on system-wide results and welcomes the strengthening of independent system-wide evaluation measures by the Secretary-General. These reforms call for a new generation of assurance and evaluation services that embrace collaboration, joint working and system-wide results.

2. Building on the firm foundation established by the UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office, the creation of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) in 2018 could not be better timed to support UN-Women in building a culture of continuous learning and accountability in a changing context.

3. The IEAS Charter states that IEAS will provide credible evidence of UN-Women's performance in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, and assurance that the entity's governance, risk management and control processes are adequate, effective and functioning as intended to meet strategic and organizational objectives. Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit are two distinct functions but have one overarching goal to assist UN-Women in achieving its strategic, programmatic and organizational objectives.

4. While the Annual Reports for each Service are presented separately, provisions have been made to leverage the expertise of each Service to deliver the highest quality insight to stakeholders for accountability and learning purposes.

5. In 2018, IES remained operationally independent and free of interference in the selection of its assignments and reporting of its work.

A. Governance of the evaluation function in UN-Women

6. The UN-Women Evaluation Policy governs the entity's evaluation function. It sets out the purpose and use of evaluation in the organization, provides definitions, principles and norms, and outlines roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function. In line with good practice for periodic review, and provisions in the policy itself, the UN-Women Evaluation Policy will be reviewed in 2019 and will reflect *inter alia* the establishment of IEAS.

7. The strategic goal of the evaluation function is to enhance the ability of UN-Women to achieve normative, operational and coordination results on gender equality. To accomplish this goal, IES manages corporate evaluations, provides quality assurance and technical support to decentralized evaluations, leads the United Nations system on promoting gender-responsive evaluation, fosters national capacities for gender-responsive evaluation and promotes the effective use of evaluations.

8. The Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021 establishes the direction for the ongoing quality improvement of UN-Women's evaluation function, while the Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021 provides a time-bound framework of corporate evaluation activities. UN-Women's decentralized evaluation procedure and regional evaluation strategies guide the strategic planning, management, quality and use of decentralized evaluations.

9.   The Global Evaluation Advisory Committee (GEAC) continued to serve as a corporate advisory mechanism to the Executive Director and IEAS on the independence and quality of the evaluation function. In line with the GEAC's recommendations received in 2017, the IES collaborated with other UN agencies on joint evaluations and knowledge management initiatives, renewed its focus on evaluation use and continued to influence system-wide evaluation practice through the United Nations Evaluation Group, as well as spearheaded gender-responsive national evaluation capacity development through EvalGender+ and other regional initiatives. IES integrated the GEAC's recommendations in the UN-Women Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021. The progress achieved in the recommended areas of focus is presented in this report.

10.   During its 2018 annual meeting, the GEAC discussed the performance of the evaluation function and provided advice on implementation of evaluation strategy and the planned review of the UN-Women Evaluation Policy. The GEAC members expressed appreciation of the maturity, growth and performance of the evaluation function. The GEAC issued key recommendations on:

    (a)   Strengthening evaluations and their use by identifying, *inter alia*, strategic opportunities in the UN-Women programming cycle and refining indicators of evaluation use.

    (b)   Reviewing evaluation policy and strategy to take into account, *inter alia*, the establishment of IEAS and changing internal and external contexts.

    (c)   Aligning the GEAC terms of reference to the updated terms of reference of the Audit Advisory Committee (renamed the Advisory Committee on Oversight in early 2019) which will take on a greater role in overseeing, *inter alia*, the performance of the evaluation function.

II.   Implementing effective corporate evaluations

A.   Implementation of the Corporate Evaluation Plan

11.   At the corporate level, IES provided coverage of key results areas of the UN-Women Strategic Plan, as per the 2018 corporate evaluation work programme and the Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021. In 2018, IES presented two corporate evaluation reports to the Executive Board:

    (a)   Evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's political participation and leadership.

    (b)   Meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2017.

In addition, an evaluability assessment of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 was completed.

Two corporate evaluations and one joint evaluation exercise (1st deliverable) were started in 2018 and are on track to be finalized in 2019. The implementation status of these corporate evaluation activities is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Implementation status of planned corporate evaluations 2018–2019

	Title of evaluative study	*Additional information*
1.	Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's leadership and political participation	Presented to the Executive Board at the annual session, 2018
2.	Meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2017	Presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2018
3.	Corporate thematic evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to governance and national planning	To be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session, 2019
4.	Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to humanitarian response	To be presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2019
5.	Meta-synthesis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2018	To be presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2019
6.	Joint evaluation of the common chapter of the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women (1st deliverable)	To be presented at an informal session of the second regular session of the Executive Boards, 2019

B.   Methodological development

12.   In 2018, IES finalized two innovative contributions to strengthen evaluation approaches and methods which are relevant to address the challenges of assessing gender equality and women's empowerment. These two contributions were also appreciated by the GEAC.

13.   The first contribution is a new systemic and intersectional approach that was introduced through a guide entitled *Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices (ISE4GEMs): A new approach for the SDG era*.[1] The approach provides a systemic framework for incorporating analysis of gender equality, environments and marginalization in a transdisciplinary manner. The guide provides theoretical explanation of concepts, detailed practical guidance and tools. The approach was used in the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's leadership and political participation, and learning events to introduce ISE4GEMs were facilitated in 2018 through various events and platforms.

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[1] Stephens, A., Lewis, E.D. and Reddy, S.M. 2018. Inclusive Systemic Evaluation (ISE4GEMs): A New Approach for the SDG Era. New York: UN-Women. The guide can be accessed at http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/9/ise4gems-a-new-approach-for-the-sdg-era.

14.   The second contribution is an exploration of the use of big data sources in evaluation. The feasibility study[2] sought to investigate the feasibility of leveraging big data sources – particularly Twitter, Facebook and radio data – to improve the evaluation of gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives. The approach represents a crucial first step and is an important contribution to the evaluation community's better understanding of how to make use of big data sources. It provides an analysis of the pros and cons of some potential data sources, initial step-by-step protocols for their use, and recommendations based on lessons learned about using big data sources in a meaningful way for evaluation. Nonetheless, it requires further study, discussion and consideration before it can be mainstreamed as part of standard evaluation processes.

C.   Corporate evaluations as an agent of change

15.   UN-Women has continued to use evaluation findings and recommendations from major corporate evaluations to inform changes and improve policies, strategies and programming practices.

D.   Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

16.   As reported by management, the Evaluation of UN-Women's Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (completed in 2016 and presented to the Executive Board in 2017 (UNW/2017/CRP.3)), informed the development and roll-out of UN-Women's Resource Mobilization and Partnership Strategy 2018–2021. The Strategy outlined UN-Women's plan to deepen and broaden its donor base to secure the resources required to fulfil its mandate.

17.   A partnership policy accompanied by procedure and business processes is being finalized and will be rolled out in the second quarter of 2019. The policy aims to clarify principles and practices for managing UN-Women's engagement with partners in the mobilization of resources and the roles and responsibilities within UN-Women for its application. In response to the recommendation contained in the evaluation on managing strategic partnerships including with the private sector, UN-Women adopted the Due Diligence Policy and procedures in 2018. The Policy provides the framework for an effective, efficient and transparent due diligence process to enable UN-Women to manage the risks and maximize the benefits and opportunities arising from potential private sector partnerships.

18.   In response to the recommendation to strengthen the support to National Committees and field offices to diversify UN-Women's funding base, a senior post (P5) was established. Building on previous systems, a new governance system was developed to encourage increased investment and return.

19.   In line with UN reform efforts and responding to insights from the evaluation to enhance coordination with strategic partners including in the UN system, UN-Women has worked closely with other funds and programmes at different levels. At the global level, UN-Women has worked to ensure coordinated engagement of Executive Board members, including through the organization of joint informal sessions. A common chapter was developed describing the key joint approaches that will be followed to

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[2] Abreu Lopes, C., Bailur, S. and Barton-Owens, G. 2018. Can Big Data Be Used for Evaluation?: A UN-Women feasibility study. New York: UN-Women. The study can be accessed at http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/4/can-big-data-be-used-for-evaluation.

ensure enhanced coherence and collaboration through the implementation of each entity's Strategic Plan. UN-Women offices are making efforts to base their programming on partnerships with United Nations entities and other key stakeholders on clear division of responsibilities, with joint programmes reportedly representing a significant proportion of every office's portfolio.

20.   These key changes reflect UN-Women's overall efforts to clarify roles, establish a sufficiently resourced, integrated and commonly agreed upon framework for strategic partnerships and to improve efficiency and effectiveness, as it implements the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

21.   As of January 2019, of the eighteen recommendations contained in the evaluation, fourteen have been reported as completed, and four are ongoing and expected to be completed by the end of 2019.

III.   Performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women

22.   UN-Women reports on the performance of the evaluation function against key performance indicators (KPIs) through the Global Evaluation and Oversight System (GEOS) that it maintains. Table 2 presents results achieved in 2018, targets and historical trends. Further elaboration on each KPI follows below.

Table 2: Trends in key performance indicators 2015–2018

Key performance indicator	Description	UN-Women SP 2014–2017			UN-Women SP 2018–2021	
		2015	2016	2017	2018	Target (by 2021)
Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Evaluation expenditure over UN-Women programme expenditure	2.0	2.9[3]	2.7	2.2	3.0
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Offices that appointed a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	100.0	100.0	100.0	95.0	100.0
Evaluation coverage	At least one evaluation per Strategic Note cycle	71.0	84.0	89.0	84.0	100.0
Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of evaluations being implemented	76.0	84.0	84.0	90.0	85.0
Quality of evaluation reports	Percentage of evaluations rated "Good and above"[4]	100.0	100.0	100.0	88.0	100.0
Evaluation reports posted on GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports posted on GATE	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Management response submission to GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports submitted with management response to GATE	86.0	94.0	100.0	97.0	100.0
Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response key actions being implemented	85.0	94.0	86.0	87.0	80.0
Use of evaluations	Percentage of offices that reported using evaluation	75.0	–	86.0	86.0	90.0

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[3] The figures for 2016 and 2017 are calculated using the new methodology; therefore, it is not comparable to previous years.

[4] This KPI was changed in 2018 to reflect the higher rating "Good and above" whereas for the years 2014–2017 the KPI was "Satisfactory and above" therefore it is not fully comparable to previous years.

A. Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

Table 3: Evaluation function expenditure 2014–2018 (US$)

	2014	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*
Total UN-Women programme expenditure	270 537 900	315 101 084	254 413 520	249 447 953	285 670 628
Total expenditure on evaluation	5 917 163	6 272 545	7 391 573	6 714 506	6 253 679
IES	4 499 942	4 621 818	5 377 637	4 208 814	3 787 888
Decentralized evaluations[5]	1 417 221	1 650 727	2 013 936	2 505 691	2 465 791
Total evaluation expenditure (percentage)[6]	2.2	2.0	2.9	2.7	2.2

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.

According to expenditure data provided by the UN-Women Division of Management and Administration (DMA), total spending on evaluation in 2018 was US$ 6.3 million. This represents 2.2 per cent of the total UN-Women programme expenditure. Total expenditure for IES in 2018, including staff costs for its Regional Evaluation Specialists, was US$ 3.8 million, while US$ 2.5 million was reportedly spent on decentralized evaluation activities. The decrease in the ratio of evaluation expenditure (2018: 2.2 per cent; 2017: 2.7 per cent) was driven by a 15% increase in total programme expenditure (2018: $285.7 million; 2017: $249.4 million) compared to a 7% decrease in evaluation expense (2018: $6.3 million; 2017: $6.7 million). The decrease in evaluation expense in 2018 was mainly due to post vacancies and reduced evaluations conducted on behalf of the Fund for Gender Equality.

23. Tracking full expenditure related to decentralized evaluation activities across UN-Women remains a challenge. To enable more accurate reporting on total expenditure on evaluation, and as part of finalization of the new procedure for decentralized evaluation, IES is working with relevant business units to establish a better tracking mechanism. IES will continue to track other means, beyond the financial ratio, to measure and ensure that sufficient and appropriate importance is placed on evaluation, and that planned evaluation activities take place and are of high quality.

B. Key performance indicator 2: human resources, 2018

24. The IEAS structure comprises a Director, Chief of Evaluation and Chief of Internal Audit. Recruitment of these posts was completed during the course of 2018. IES is further comprised of six evaluation professional posts at headquarters and six regional evaluation professional posts (one based in each Regional Office). The work of IES is further supported by consultants and interns, as needed.

25. In terms of M&E capacity to support evaluation functions at the country level, 95 per cent of Country and Regional Offices have appointed at least one M&E officer or focal point. Specifically, 25 Country and Regional Offices (43 per cent) reported having at least one M&E officer, while the 52 per cent had focal points to support M&E functions. Due to human resources constraints and frequent change of roles,

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[5] 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.

[6] The figures for 2016, 2017 and 2018 are calculated using new methodology; therefore they are not comparable to previous years.

three offices (5 per cent) in East and Southern Africa and Asia and the Pacific regions were unable to appoint the required focal points for M&E activities in 2018.

26. Although the M&E focal point arrangement has helped to address gaps at the country level, it was also noted that M&E focal points sometimes have multiple roles and duties and, at times, have limited evaluation knowledge and skills. While such arrangements are understandable given financial constraints, Country Offices with bigger programmatic investment and larger portfolios would benefit from having more substantive M&E human resources. In this regard, M&E capacity at the country level is key to addressing gaps in the evaluability of programmes, monitoring systems, management of evaluations and to improving continued learning from evaluations.

Figure 1: Human resources for monitoring and evaluation officers/focal points by region 2018
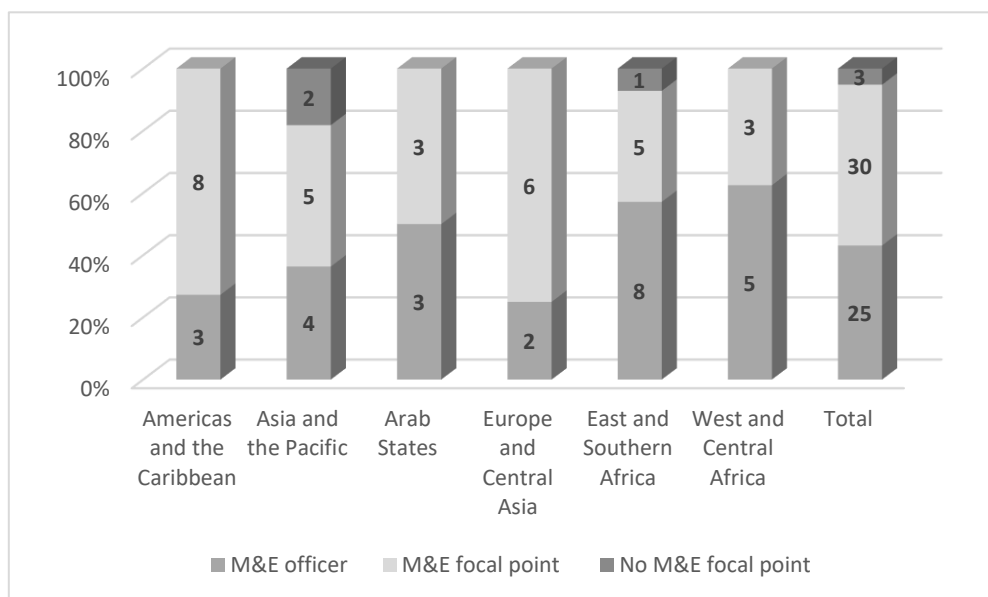
Source: Global Evaluation Oversight System.

C. Key performance indicator 3: coverage of evaluations, 2018

27. UN-Women has a field presence in 6 Regional Offices, 47 Country Offices and 5 Multi-Country Offices. Eighty-four per cent of Regional and Country Offices had carried out at least one evaluation during the period 2014–2018. However, nine offices have not yet completed any type of evaluation. This proportion has not changed compared to the past. Therefore, evaluation coverage remains an area requiring attention.

28. The conduct of CPEs gained good traction and coverage has reached 35 per cent since the roll-out in 2015. This pattern suggests that Country Offices are giving greater emphasis to strategic evaluations, which provide a richer assessment that cuts across thematic areas of work and UN-Women's contribution to development effectiveness at the country level. Nonetheless, there was a noticeable variation across regions. East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, and Europe and Central Asia had the highest percentages of Country Offices with CPEs, accounting for 89 per cent of the total CPEs completed over the four-year period.

29. In accordance with the forthcoming new procedure for decentralized evaluations, CPEs are expected to become mandatory independent evaluations

co-managed by IES together with the commissioning Country Office. For this to be realized, among other issues, adequate resources and capacity at the Country Office level needs to be assured. Fulfilment of the requirement will ensure greater coverage, accountability and learning to inform the development of subsequent Strategic Notes.

**Figure 2: Evaluation coverage by region 2014–2018**

Source: Global Evaluation Oversight System.

D. Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned evaluations, 2018

30.   In 2018, of the 70 evaluations planned, 90 per cent were being implemented (49 per cent were completed and 41 per cent were at different stages of implementation). Seven evaluations (10 per cent) had either been postponed or cancelled due to extension of programmes, insufficient levels of funding and inclusion into other strategic evaluations. East and Southern Africa (24 per cent) and the Americas and the Caribbean (21 per cent) were the regions with the highest proportion of completed evaluations in 2018.

31.   While the implementation rate of planned evaluations continues to be positive, inadequate funding, limited in-house evaluation capacity, and finding skilled evaluation consultants were identified as key challenges for completing planned evaluations. More realistic planning and the effective and efficient use of consultants for evaluation are also required.

Figure 3: Evaluation implementation rate 2018
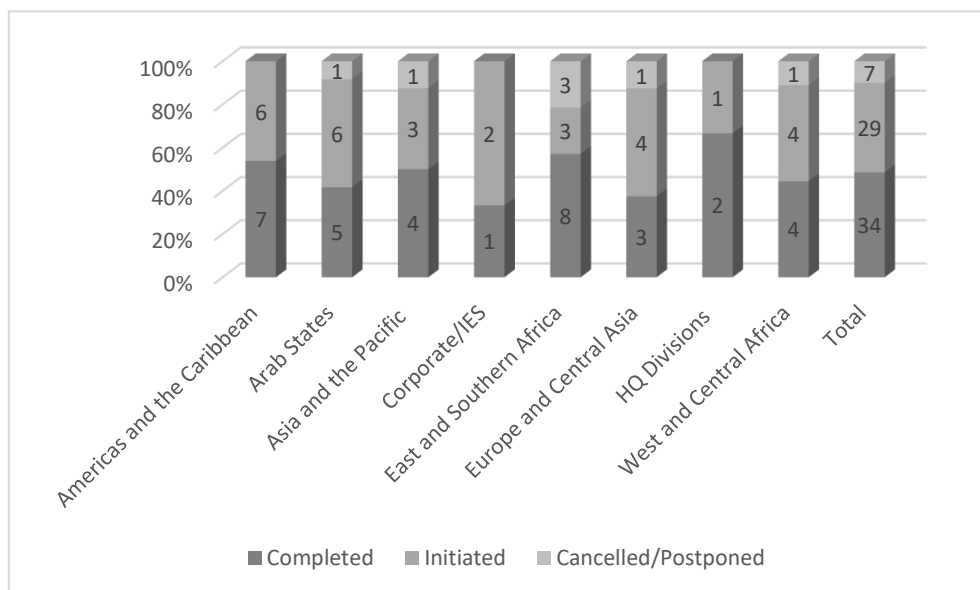
Source: Global Evaluation Oversight System.

E. Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports, 2018

32.   Through an external reviewer, IES carried out a systematic quality assessment of the 34 evaluation reports completed in 2018. The review included assessment of the UN System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) Evaluation Performance Indicator (EPI) standards. Thirty-eight per cent of the evaluation reports received an overall rating of "Very Good" and 50 per cent were rated "Good." Only four evaluation reports (12 per cent) were rated at the lower end of the spectrum – two reports were rated "Fair" and two were rated "Unsatisfactory." The data shows that a majority of the evaluations performed well against the standards established. The two "unsatisfactory" reports were completed in the Asia and the Pacific region during a gap in staffing of the Regional Evaluation Specialist. Comparison of ratings with previous years may not be fully possible due to IES's update and revision of the quality assessment grid of reports.

33.   IES provides technical advice to improve the quality of evaluations. However, the assessment identified some gaps in mitigation strategies for limitations in evaluation methods and data sources, limited information or vague reference to ethical practices, narrow evidence-base for findings, and lack of prioritization of recommendations. Systematically addressing these gaps will help ensure that future evaluations provide even higher quality insight.

Figure 4: Quality of evaluations 2018
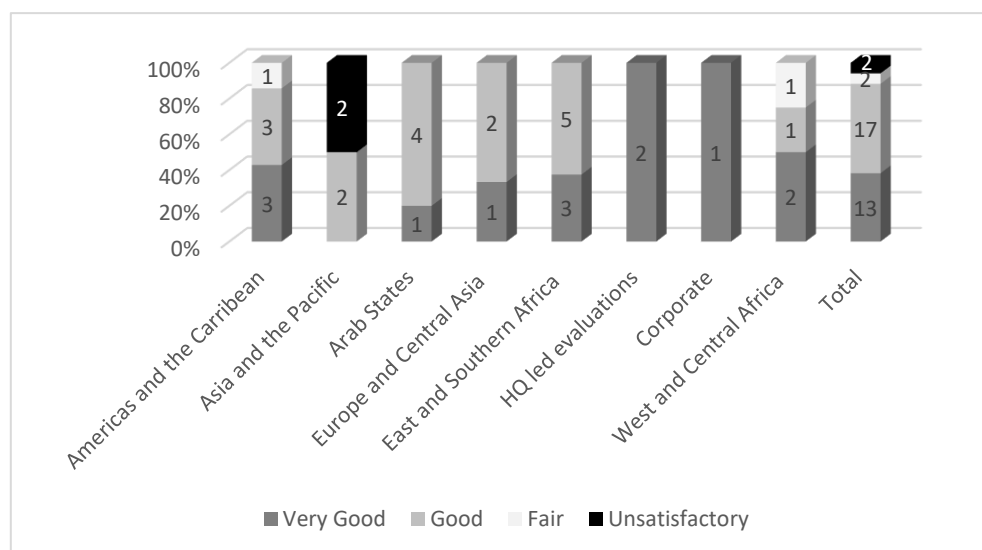
Source: Global Evaluation Assessment and Analysis System.

F. Key performance indicator 6: submission rate of completed evaluation reports to GATE

34.   IEAS maintains the online Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system to enable staff and external stakeholders to access evaluative information about UN-Women's work and track the status of management responses and action plans. As per the Evaluation Policy's disclosure requirement, all evaluation reports completed in 2018 were made publicly available through the system.

G. Key performance indicator 7: management response submissions to GATE

35.   The UN-Women Evaluation Policy requires a management response to all completed evaluations within six weeks of finalization. In 2018, 97 per cent of completed evaluations received a management response. However, approving and posting a management response within six weeks after completion of the evaluation report on the GATE was often not fully complied with.

H. Key performance indicator 8: implementation of management response/key actions, 2017

36.   There were 444 management response actions committed based on the 38 evaluations completed in the preceding year. As of February 2018, 87 per cent of actions were either completed or in progress (48 per cent completed and 39 per cent in progress/ongoing). Thirteen per cent are yet to be initiated; of these, 83 per cent are overdue. While the absorption and uptake of evaluation recommendations has improved, timely implementation of management response actions remained an area for further improvement. The synergy currently forged with the Internal Audit Service is expected to add impetus to more systematically address the quality of management response actions taken by Country Offices. Deeper engagement with Regional and

Country Offices will also ensure that evaluation recommendations are further used for broader organizational learning.

Figure 5: Implementation of evaluation management response actions
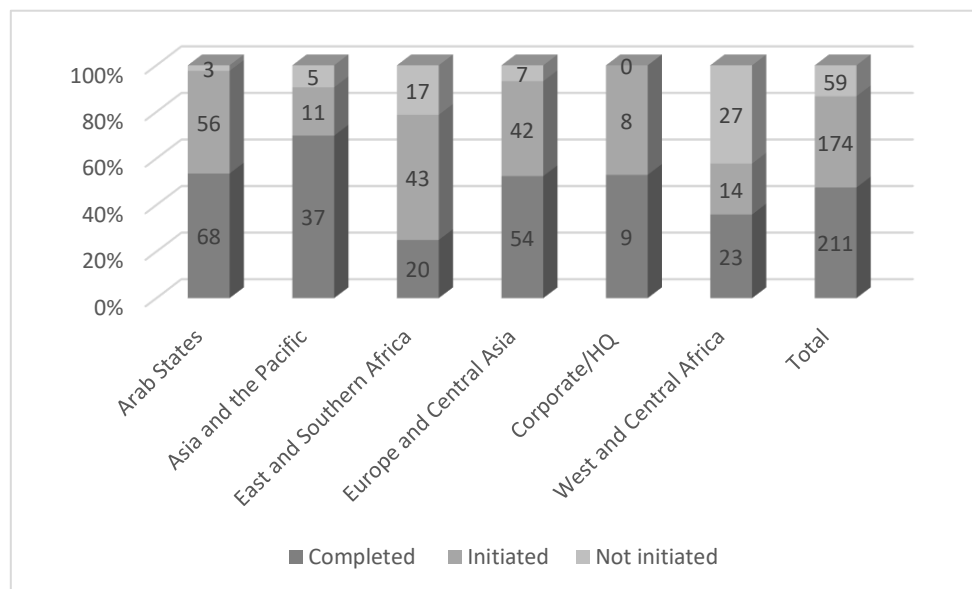
Source: Global Evaluation Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use.

## I. Key performance indicator 9: use of evaluation

37. In addition to tracking implementation of management responses and actions, Country Offices annually report on the use of evaluative evidence and lessons. Analysis of the self-reported information by offices in the Results Management System in 2018 shows an increased uptake of lessons and recommendations. Specifically, 86 per cent of field offices indicated they used insights from evaluations to better shape new Strategic Notes and to generate lessons for programming.

38. It has been reported that evaluations served as a valuable resource that informed decision-making in programme planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting. Evaluations were used to leverage UN agency and partner resources and helped to sharpen and expand UN-Women's reach, scale and greater outreach to women. Evaluation findings and recommendations reinforced the importance of establishing a sound results-based management system to regularly monitor and measure progress and results and to ensure that the project management structure better supports integration and coordination across outcome areas. Some offices also responded by focusing on social norm change and increasing efforts to address marginalization, such as young women and girls with disabilities. Insight from evaluations helped offices to continue enhancing the capacity of women's organizations to test and expand sustainable approaches. Examples were provided showing where evaluations had resulted in development of joint programmes and better integration of gender equality dimensions in UNDAFs.

39. Nevertheless, efforts are required to ensure that evaluation evidence is used to inform organizational learning, decision-making and improvement. More impact-oriented evaluations, real time evaluative feedback/products and CPEs that provide evidence on what works and why, across UN-Women's integrated mandate, would further generate valuable evidence.

40.   At the corporate level, IES provided relevant evaluation insights and knowledge to major strategic organization processes. These included an evaluability assessment of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, meta-synthesis of evaluation insights, contribution to the appraisal of new country Strategic Notes, as well as engagement in corporate organizational change processes.

Figure 6: Use of evaluations 2018
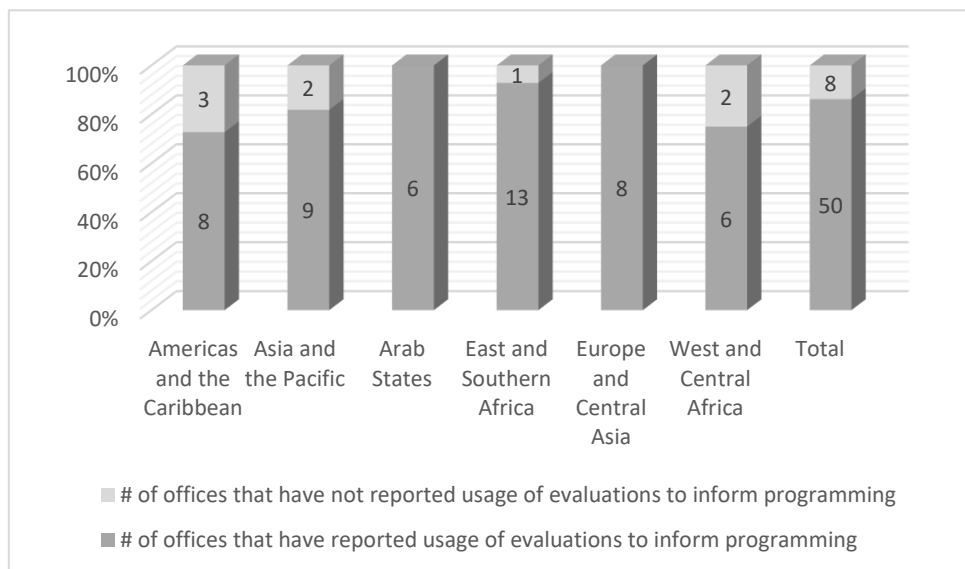
Source: Results Management System.

IV.   Decentralized evaluation system

41.   A wide range of activities and measures have been put in place to enhance the quality, coverage, credibility and use of decentralized evaluations. In this area, support was mainly provided through the IES Regional Evaluation Specialists. This advisory and quality assurance support covered a wide array of areas ranging from planning, conduct and management of strategic, regional and country level evaluations, support to UN system-wide coordination and national evaluation capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation.

42.   Through broad consultative and participatory processes, all regions have developed evaluation strategies. The strategies establish the direction for quality improvement and strengthening the culture and capacities for evaluation at regional and country levels.

43.   Anchored in the Global Evaluation Strategy 2018−2021, IES has strengthened synergy between corporate and decentralized evaluations and deepened collaboration with the Internal Audit Service through exchange of information and planning. This is expected to increase the richness of oversight evidence, cost-efficiency gains and sharing of lessons on processes and outcomes. In addition, IES promoted collaboration across UN-Women especially with the Programme Division to improve learning and accountability through an effective evaluation function.

A. Quality assurance and technical support to decentralized evaluations

44. Two important updates were initiated in 2018: the revision of the procedure for decentralized evaluations; and the evaluation report quality assessment guidance and tool to help maximize the relevance and quality of evaluations and related learning in the context of the Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021. The procedure, once finalized, is expected to provide greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of different actors for the decentralized evaluation function, and to provide clarity on the principles and evaluation quality standards. Implementation of the procedure is expected to also stimulate increased coverage of CPEs across all regions.

45. The revised evaluation report quality assessment guidance and tool introduced a standardized system of weighted ratings covering eight quality-related parameters. The updated tool incorporates the UN-SWAP revised EPI standards. These changes, in terms of rationalizing questions and making scores more consistent, is expected to further enhance the quality standards of evaluations by evaluation managers, evaluators and independent assessors.

46. In tandem with the priorities articulated in the Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021, IES expanded and shifted its engagement from provision of technical and quality assurance support towards managing more strategic evaluations. During the reporting period, through its regional evaluation specialists IES managed five regional evaluations in Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Americas and the Caribbean and West and Central Africa regions. Similarly, five CPEs were co-managed by IES with respective Country Offices in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Liberia. Beyond managing evaluation processes, IES staff started to take a greater role in the actual conduct of corporate evaluations, e.g. the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's leadership and political participation. IES also introduced a thematic case study in addition to the country case study approach for corporate evaluations. This approach proved vital in providing an in-depth insight in areas of thematic interest. In addition, quality assurance and advisory support was provided to over 50 ongoing and completed project, programme, joint and thematic evaluations commissioned by UN-Women offices at different levels.

B. Systems to improve the quality, credibility and use of decentralized evaluations

47. By providing a system to monitor the performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women through GEOS, IES tracked and monitored progress of key evaluation performance indicators. In collaboration with the Programme Division, updates on selected KPIs were provided periodically through the corporate Country Office Assessment System (COAT). The integration of selected evaluation indicators into this corporate system has helped to draw attention to areas that require closer follow-up and action.

48. Budgeted evaluation plans continue to be an integral component of country and regional planning and approval processes. However, strategic and realistic planning of evaluations needs to be addressed to improve their quality. Evaluations and management responses are available through the UN-Women Global Evaluation Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system.

49. While business units have the ultimate responsibility for using evidence and insight from evaluations, IES has played a key role in facilitating the integration of evaluation findings into corporate planning processes and programming. This has been achieved through participation in the conceptualization of some Strategic Notes

and programme appraisal and approval mechanisms. Three evaluability reviews were also undertaken to enhance programme design, results and monitoring frameworks and the eventual evaluability of programmes.

C. Internal evaluation capacity development and professionalization programme on evaluation

50.   Throughout 2018, IES continued to promote learning and the use of evaluation through internal evaluation capacity development and professionalization initiatives. These included evaluation training, guidance material and technical support to the decentralized evaluation function.

51.   The eLearning course, How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluation, is an online tool for UN-Women staff and external stakeholders to learn how to manage and use gender-responsive evaluations. The course is publicly accessible and, as of December 2018, 2,937 individuals were enrolled on the course, an increase of 956 individuals since 2017. In 2018, 64 per cent of UN-Women Country Offices have at least one M&E focal point that has received certification of completion. The UN-Women Evaluation Handbook, which is the basis of the course, had over 3,000 views in 2018 representing an increase of 10 per cent compared to 2017.

52.   In addition to these online learning tools, IES Regional Evaluation Specialists continued to address specific support needs. For instance, regional evaluation training sessions and workshops were hosted throughout the year in East and Southern Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean, and the Asia and the Pacific regions. Customized training was also delivered to UN-Women offices in the Europe and Central Asia region.

53.   IES maintained its efforts to train M&E focal points and officers, including through one-on-one coaching and training of trainers in all regions. IES also facilitated M&E focal points participation in external evaluation learning opportunities such as the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training to further strengthen M&E internal capacity.

V. Communication to facilitate use of evaluations

A. Implementing the communication strategy

54.   In 2018, IES disseminated evaluation results and findings through more diverse channels, capitalizing on its increased engagement with external audiences on the Internet and social media. The IES Twitter account was used to promote IES publications and evaluation results and to share information and knowledge on gender-responsive evaluation. These channels were also used as a platform to leverage and engage external audiences for conferences and webinars, including those co-organized with other partners.

55.   IES invested in producing more user-friendly evaluative data and information by developing publications and briefs that are more visually engaging. It issued three Transform magazines on: (a) corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to political participation and leadership; (b) meta-analysis of evaluations; and (c) working together to empower voices. The later Transform was developed as a special edition with the collaboration of partners, including UNICEF, UNODC, UNFPA and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

56.   As the main public communications channel, the UN-Women website on evaluation was actively updated with the latest publications and tools. In 2018, the

site received over 7,000 views, an increase of 51 per cent compared to 2017, indicating increased interest in evaluation content. Apart from the main site, in 2018 separate views for various IES communication products, including ISE4GEMs guidance and the big data study, attracted an overall accumulated total of over 10,000 views.

57. Similarly, UN-Women Regional Offices took actions to better harness evaluative evidence and make it more accessible. For instance, the Regional Office for the Arab States developed a dedicated evaluation page on the regional website to consolidate evaluation resources and increase evaluation use; and the Asia and Pacific Regional Office facilitated a learning session on evaluation. In addition, region-specific communication materials on IES knowledge products were produced by the Americas and the Caribbean, East and Southern Africa, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa regions.

58. IES developed an internal newsletter with updates on completed evaluations, publications and learning events and disseminated them to relevant stakeholders.

VI. United Nations system-wide coordination of gender-responsive evaluation

A. United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

59. UN-Women played an important role in promoting and advancing integration of gender equality and human rights dimensions in the work of UNEG. Through its role as co-convener of the Human Rights and Gender Equality Working Group, IES provided leadership for the initiation of the meta-synthesis of UNDAF evaluations with a gender lens. The synthesis seeks to analyse the state of integration of gender and human rights perspectives into UNDAF evaluations, and gender equality results. The results of the synthesis are expected to inform the development, implementation and evaluation of the new generation of UNDAFs. The synthesis will be completed in 2019.

60. IES continued serving as Secretariat for the UN-SWAP EPI. In 2018, in addition to leading the revision of the UN-SWAP EPI technical note and scorecard, IES quality assessed submissions by 42 reporting entities. A synthesis report that captured the strengths and challenges faced by reporting entities on the EPI was produced and disseminated. Guidance on evaluating corporate performance on gender mainstreaming was finalized in collaboration with several members of UNEG. The guidance serves as a resource for UN entities wishing to undertake an evaluation of gender mainstreaming at an institutional and programmatic level.

61. IES led the subgroup of the UNEG UNDAF Working Group reviewing country evaluation methodologies and management practices to inform discussions on how to align practice and identify areas for joint country evaluations, as inputs to UNDAF evaluations. IES co-chaired the UNEG Peer Review Group and Humanitarian Evaluation Interest Group. During the 2018 UNEG annual evaluation practice exchange, IES convened a well-attended session on gender-responsive evaluation. Engagement in these groups provided an effective forum to advocate for gender equality and evaluation issues.

B. United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

62.   In line with the new standards introduced as part of UN-SWAP 2.0, IES commissioned an external assessment of 34 completed evaluations for their treatment of gender considerations. Overall, UN-Women evaluation reports were strong, with the majority meeting UN-SWAP evaluation criteria. The overall average score placed UN-Women among the entities that exceeded UN-SWAP evaluation gender requirements. Responding to the findings and recommendations of the external assessment, IES will continue to sharpen its instruments and methods to ensure gender analysis and vulnerability assessments are fully applied at all stages of its evaluations. IES will offer further guidance to evaluators on examining and capturing results related to transformation of power relations, norms, structures and behaviours regarding gender equality.

63.   In 2018, of the 66 UN-SWAP reporting entities, 42 reported progress against the UN-SWAP EPI. Twenty-one per cent reported that they were "exceeding requirements, 24 per cent were "meeting requirements," and 18 per cent were "approaching requirements." No entity reported missing requirements; however, 37 per cent reported that the indicator was not applicable to their specific case either because no evaluations were conducted by the entity or as a result of their highly technical work. Taken together, almost 71 per cent have reached the benchmark for gender-responsive evaluation. Although performance patterns are varied, the majority of entities have taken remedial actions and improved their systems and capacity to conduct gender-responsive evaluations. Fourteen entities reported having conducted corporate evaluations of the performance of gender mainstreaming or gender policy, a new requirement introduced in 2018 for exceeding requirements.

C. Supporting joint evaluations and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

64.   To enhance evaluation coherence within the United Nations system and advance the integration of gender and human rights in evaluation practices, through its Regional Evaluation Specialists UN-Women has been actively involved in regional inter-agency evaluation groups. In 2018, UN-Women served as co-chair of the United Nations Development Evaluation Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP) and maintained its active engagement in the regional UNDG Peer Support Group in the Americas and Caribbean region. UN-Women also engaged in several joint initiatives in other regions. Within the framework of regional evaluation groups, UN-Women provided technical and advisory services to nine UNDAF evaluations.

65.   Additionally, UN-Women supported seven joint evaluations including a joint regional evaluation in West and Central Africa. The support to UNDAF and joint evaluations involved advisory and technical support in reviewing terms of reference, recruitment of consultants and quality assurance of the different evaluation phases.

66.   UN-Women collaborated with various agencies and supported the design and delivery of training on gender-responsive evaluations. During the reporting period, UN-Women collaborated with the UNSSC Knowledge Centre and co-facilitated a training session entitled "How to manage UN evaluations in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" in Bonn, Germany. UN-Women also co-facilitated a regional UNEDAP training with a focus on UNDAF and gender-responsive evaluations. Similar learning events and training courses were organized in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Timor-Leste, Uganda and Panama targeting participants from UNDAF roll-out countries. In 2018, over a hundred staff from UN-Women and

partner UN agencies gained knowledge and skills on how to manage gender-responsive evaluations.

VII. Leveraging partnership for national evaluation capacity development and evaluation for the SDGs

A. EvalGender+: Global partnership for promoting gender-responsive evaluations

67.   UN-Women continued its work in enabling the environment for gender-responsive evaluations in the context of the SDGs. Continuous efforts in improving national gender-responsive evaluation capacities were spearheaded through workshops, events and knowledge generation.

68.   During 2018, UN-Women continued co-leading EvalGender+, a global multi-stakeholder partnership that works to strengthen the demand, supply and quality of gender-responsive evaluations as an avenue to support accountability for gender equality commitments in the implementation of the SDGs. EvalGender+ community of practice grew to 3,664 members in 2018 providing the gender and evaluation community with good practices and new debates.

69.   As part of its work at the global level, in partnership with EvalGender+ and EvalSDGs, IES produced a policy brief on the extent to which gender-responsive evaluative evidence informed 2018 Voluntary National Reviews. The briefing concludes that more needs to be done to assist countries in using gender-responsive evaluations. During the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, together with EvalGender+, IES hosted a side event in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on the importance of gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluation. As a result of the event, parliamentarians and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPE) representatives from 25 countries expressed commitment to advocate for a "No One Left Behind" approach in their evaluation systems through inclusive and participatory evaluations that analyse power relations among stakeholders. Towards the end of 2018, as part of its partnership with EvalPartners and as co-chair of EvalGender+, UN-Women initiated interventions in five countries (Chile, Jordan, Nepal, Indonesia and Zimbabwe) to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective in national evaluation systems, and to ensure evaluation is used for Voluntary National Reviews.

70.   IES also partnered with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and held a joint practice-exchange event on gender-responsive evaluation and the SDGs in Helsinki. More than 150 participants attended the event from across the world. In 2018, a new partnership agreement with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation was signed to support IES efforts on national evaluation capacity development through production of methodological guidance and documentation of good practices and public goods on gender-responsive evaluation.

B. Supporting gender-responsive national M&E systems in selected countries

71.   In the Americas and the Caribbean, IES supported various national systems providing guidance on integrating a gender-equality lens in evaluations, M&E frameworks and developing gender indicators for measuring progress. Key collaborators during 2018 included the National Institute of Women (INAMU) of Costa Rica, the Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation (AUCI) and the Ministry of Women of the Dominican Republic. A joint initiative with various

regional partners to develop an Evaluation Capacities Index for M&E National Systems was launched in 2018.

72. In Arab States, based on collaboration with UN-Women, the EvalMENA regional evaluation network's seventh annual conference included a strand on gender-responsive evaluation for reporting on progress on the SDG agenda, which included discussions on Voluntary National Reviews and findings from national evaluation capacity development (NECD) case studies commissioned by UN-Women in four countries.

73. In Asia and the Pacific, UN-Women Nepal produced a video to share the Government of Nepal's experience in developing a Gender Responsive and Equity Focused National Evaluation Plan. IES also participated in the Peer Review Group of a joint effort with UNICEF and UNDP to assess national evaluation system readiness for evaluating the SDGs.

74. In Africa, national evaluation capacity efforts focused on strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians to manage and use gender-responsive evaluations. IES collaborated with the Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) in Anglophone Africa to integrate a gender lens into a training curriculum on research and evidence use in the parliamentary context. Various workshops were organized in partnership with the National Chapter of APNODE (Network of African Parliamentarians for Development Evaluation Section Côte d'Ivoire) to strengthen parliamentarians' capacities in managing gender-responsive evaluations.

75. In Europe and Central Asia, IES delivered on-site training to members of the Serbian National Government and key stakeholders from civil society organizations in preparation for the evaluation of the National Action Plan on gender equality 2016–2018.

VIII. The 2019 Independent Evaluation Service work programme

76. The 2019 IES work programme is derived from the Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit Services (IEAS) workplan for 2019. It is guided by the Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021 and Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021. The programme of work focuses on five key result areas discussed below.

A. Implementation of effective corporate evaluations

77. In 2019, IES will present to the Executive Board the findings of three corporate evaluations on: (a) Governance and National Planning; (b) UN-Women's contribution to Humanitarian Response; and (c) a meta-synthesis of corporate and decentralized evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2018. IES will also conduct a review of UN-Women's Evaluation Policy that will be presented to the Executive Board in 2020. IES will review and update the Global Evaluation Strategy which will be informed by evaluation evidence gap mapping. IES will continue to collaborate with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF on the joint evaluation of the common chapter of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021. Additionally, IES will continue to explore and strengthen innovative and gender-responsive evaluation methodologies and tools.

B. Implementation of effective decentralized evaluation systems

78. IES will co-manage regional and country portfolio evaluations as well as a pilot evaluation model with stronger involvement of IES staff in the conduct of evaluations and preparation of reports. IES plans to provide technical assistance to approximately

70 planned decentralized evaluations. CPE methodology will be updated to consider emerging lessons from evaluations completed in the last two years. IES will continue to provide mentorship to evaluation managers. IES will continue to track evaluation KPIs, implement the global evaluation reports assessment and analysis system, and maintain the GATE system.

C. Promotion of United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation

79.   IES will use UNEG and regional United Nations evaluation groups as key entry points to mainstream gender equality across inter-agency evaluation work and to promote gender-responsive evaluation. In collaboration with UNEG, IES will lead the meta-synthesis of UNDAF evaluations from a gender perspective. IES will continue to support United Nations entities on the UN-SWAP EPI through technical guidance, training and reporting. IES will actively participate in UNEG working groups and contribute to discussions regarding UN reform and system-wide evaluations.

D. Strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive evaluation systems

80.   IES will continue to support national gender-responsive evaluation capacity development through EvalGender+ and EvalPartners and other direct partnerships with evaluation organizations. IES will provide targeted assistance to integrate a gender perspective in national M&E systems under the EvalPartners umbrella. IES will help to link evaluation with SDG processes, specifically strengthening capacity of national evaluation systems to contribute to Voluntary National Reviews with gender-evaluative evidence. This will ensure that gender-responsive evaluation continues to be an avenue to support accountability in meeting the gender quality commitments of the SDGs.

E. Strengthening gender-responsive evaluation use

81.   To further enhance the utility of corporate and decentralized evaluations, IES will revisit and update its evaluation use and communication strategy (together with that of IEAS more widely). IES will monitor the degree of evaluation use in key strategic planning and organizational processes. Communication materials and social media will continue to be important means for disseminating evaluation findings and recommendations and other learning initiatives. In addition, IES will invest knowledge and learning partnerships with Programme and Policy Divisions and will contribute to the overall UN-Women knowledge management strategy with evaluation evidence.

F. Budget for the 2019 Independent Evaluation Service programme of work

82.   The IES budget for 2019 is US$ 3,887,028. The budget is comprised of three funding categories: institutional budget, core programmable and non-core resources.

83.   The institutional budget of US$ 2,586,339 covers the salaries of seven IES staff posts and 50 per cent of three IEAS Directorate staff members, as well as the key workplan activities: cost of evaluation studies; cost of communication products and knowledge management; support to decentralized evaluation systems; support to

United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; and national evaluation capacity development on gender-responsive evaluation. In addition to the institutional budget, the salaries of five Regional Evaluation Specialists are covered through core resources in the amount of US$ 1,181,599. IES has also secured US$ 119,090 of non-core resources from NORAD for some specific evaluation activities in 2019.

Annex I

Evaluations completed in 2018

Region	Office/division	Title of evaluation	Report quality rating
West and Central Africa	Mali	L'évaluation Finale Du Projet « Projet D'amélioration De L'accès Des Femmes Victimes De Violences Sexuelles Et Basées À La Justice Et À La Sécurité Dans Le Processus De Consolidation De La Paix Au Mali »	Fair
	Regional Office for West and Central Africa (Senegal)	End-Term Evaluation of the Joint Programme on Gender, Menstrual Hygiene and Sanitation	Very Good
	Cameroon	Prise En Charge Adéquate Des Femmes Victimes De Violences Dans La Région De L'extrême Nord	Good
	Liberia	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
East and Southern Africa	Burundi	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Kenya	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
		Evaluation of "Countering Violent Extremism" Project in Kenya	Good
	Rwanda	Final Evaluation of the Joint Programme "Advancing and Sustaining Gender Equality Gains in Rwanda"	Very Good
		Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	South Sudan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Ethiopia	Evaluation of "Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls in Ethiopia" Programme	Good
	Mozambique	Mid-term Evaluation of WEE project in Gaza, Mozambique	Good
Asia and the Pacific	Bangladesh	Evaluation of "Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women (BCPVAW)"	Good
	Multi-Country Office for the Pacific (Fiji)	End of Project Evaluation of the EC Strongim Mere: "Promoting Women's Political Participation And Representation in the Solomon Islands" (2014–2016)	Unsatisfactory
	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Thailand)	Final Evaluation of Regional Project "Preventing Exploitation of Women Migrant Workers"	Good
	India MCO	Final Evaluation of RNE supported project "Promoting women's political participation in Sri Lanka"	Unsatisfactory

Region	Office/division	Title of evaluation	Report quality rating
	Regional Office for Arab States (Egypt)	Evaluation of "UN-Women's Economic Interventions under LEAP/HA programming in the Arab States region"	Good
	Jordan	Evaluation of UN-Women's "Peace and Security in the Arab States" Regional Project	Good
	Egypt	Evaluation of "Securing Rights and Improving Livelihoods of Women (SRILW)" Action	Good
		Final Evaluation of UN-Women's "Promoting Women's Employment by Creating Safe and Women-Friendly Workplaces" Programme (WEPP)	Good
	Morocco MCO	L'évaluation Finale du Projet de l'opérationnalisation de l'entente de partenariat pour la promotion de la participation des Femmes à la gestion des affaires locales et le renforcement de la gouvernance territoriale sensible au genre (2014–2017)	Very Good
Europe and Central Asia	Albania	UN Women Albania Outcome Evaluation on "Women's Leadership and Political Participation"	Good
	Kyrgyzstan	Joint Programme on: "Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women"	Very Good
		Livelihoods Through Participation and Equal Access to Water	Good
Americas and the Caribbean	El Salvador	Evaluación Final Del Proyecto: "Ciudad Mujer/Onu Mujeres"	Good
	Mexico	Evaluation of "The Safe Cities Campaign #Noesdehombres"	Very Good
	Ecuador	Evaluación Del Proyecto "Mujeres Liderando El Desarrollo Inclusivo Sostenible De La Provincia De Loja"	Good
	Colombia	Final Evaluation of the "Women's Citizenship for Peace, Justice and Development"	Good
	Colombia	Mid-term Evaluation of the Programme: "Overcoming Gender-Based Violence to Ensure Women's Full Enjoyment of Rights"	Very Good
	Regional Office for Americas and the Caribbean (Panama)	Regional Evaluation on Normative Frameworks	Very Good
	Ecuador	Mid-term Evaluation of "Sustainability of the wasteland from a gender perspective"	Fair

Region	Office/division	Title of evaluation	Report quality rating
Corporate	Independent Evaluation Service (IES)	UN-Women's Contribution to Women's Political Participation and Leadership	Very Good
		Meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2017	
Headquarters	Fund for Gender Equality	Independent Evaluation of "UN-Women's Fund for Gender Equality" (2009–2017)	Very Good
	Policy Division	Knowledge Gateway on Women's Economic Empowerment	Very Good

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