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Joint Management Response on the Joint Evaluation on Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the UN System



Scope

- The evaluation issued four major recommendations, each with a set of 'sub-recommendations'. The first set were directed at the UN entities, others were directed at UNDG, others to host governments and citizens, and others to donors.
- This management response addresses only those recommendations directed at the UN entities.
- The management response provides an overall response to the main recommendation and separate responses to each of the individual lower level recommendations, of which there were seven.

Overview (1)

- As confirmed by the evaluation, the overall experience of the entities suggests that when motivated by a clear rationale and well-designed, joint programmes can work well for promoting gender equality and that they can have a track record of producing results.
- They are often most useful in helping to advance gender equality when participating organizations work on areas no single entity could do alone.
- Like all modalities, they benefit from predictable sources of funding.
- As is well captured by the evaluation, joint programmes may not be the only choice, and entities should continue to consider a range of options when seeking to work better together on gender equality.

Overview (2)

- Since the evaluation commenced 2012, other efforts have been ongoing in an effort to improve how UN agencies can work together.
- The result of this is evident through changes such as the new Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) for Delivering As One countries.
- This has been in addition to other related efforts like the pending changes to UNDG guidance on joint programmes.

Overall recommendation to the entities

Recommendation: Ensure a clear strategic rationale for joint gender programmes -firmly ground designs in development effectiveness efforts at country level.

- The entities agree with this recommendation.
- The evaluation provided seven lower level recommendations to help operationalize the overarching recommendation.

Recommendation 1

Recommendation: Whenever possible, make the decision on a joint gender programme a strategic choice rather than a default reaction to funding incentives, United Nations reform or donor pressure. This implies a clear options appraisal, which requires the United Nations and partners to ‘make the case’ for the joint modality from a development effectiveness and comparative advantage perspective, including in-country capacity of the stakeholders involved. It also implies a) analysis of the state of gender programming nationally (as it sits within broader country programming) and b) the consideration of other potential modalities, which embed the principle of jointness but which may be differently implemented, such as silent partnerships, basket or challenge funds.

Recommendation 1 (cont.)

- The entities agree with this recommendation.
- Joint gender programmes should always be based on strategic planning processes and linked to UN planning frameworks responding to national priorities, rather than driven by ad hoc funding opportunities.
- The decision to use the joint programme modality should be thoroughly appraised based on issues of effectiveness and value.
- The emerging UNDG Joint Programmes Guidance posits the joint programme as just one modality for working together in the context of UNDAF, Delivering as One (DaO)/One Programme or other frameworks for common country programming

Recommendation 2

Recommendation 2: Increase the rigour of the design phase for joint gender programmes:

- **Precede design with robust analytical underpinnings, including political, political economy, conflict/fragility, human rights and operating context analyses. Ensure designs are built on solid capacity analyses of all partners, including United Nations entities, and including the capacity for coherence;**
- **Make design inclusive (including the guidance of the Gender Theme Group where appropriate); well resourced (human and financial, including technical expertise for gender and human rights); broad-based; and incorporate strategic visioning/realistic measurement and results frameworks geared to the realization of common intended results; and**
- **Ensure that design reflects the systematization of a human rights-based approach.**

Recommendation 2

- The entities agree with this recommendation.
- The entities recognize the importance of rigorous design phases for all joint programmes, including joint gender programmes, particularly with regard to the quality of the analysis.
- .This includes ensuring that a sound and robust analysis underpins the theory of change upon which the programme is based.

Recommendation 3

Recommendation:

The role of UN Women whose mandate positions them, where conditions permit, as a logical technical and/or coordination lead, should be clarified and made explicit within joint gender programmes.

Recommendation 3

- The entities agree with this recommendation.
- The entities recognize the importance of the role of all partners and stakeholders, including UN Women, be clarified and made explicit in the design and throughout the implementation of joint gender programmes.
- The role of the RC/UNCT is central.

Recommendation 4

Recommendation: Ensure that the following key principles are integrated into design and implementation:

Alignment should focus on the articulated priorities of rights holders (including those of women's organizations) and from a human rights perspective, rather than just generalized national needs;

Accountability should be shifted in perspective, from upwards to United Nations headquarters, to being truly mutual, human rights focused and centred on the country level. The role of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country team in holding programmes and partner agencies to account should be formalized including going beyond the use of tools of performance measures or scorecards. Joint monitoring and performance reporting should be both a precondition of funding and monitored throughout;

Ownership requires explicit strategies which are articulated from the outset and linked to capacity development strategies, below. Mechanisms for ownership during implementation should be broad based - including representatives of women's organizations and other appropriate agents of change - and tracked through reporting;

Recommendation 4

(continued...)

Harmonizing for coherence also needs a clear vision and set of strategies from the outset, full commitment from partners and to be followed through. The premise of the joint modality should be core to the visioning process, and embedded within monitoring and reporting requirements. An explicit results statement on coordination within results frameworks should be included. The use of pass through or parallel modalities, which actively militate against harmonization, should be resisted. Coordination mechanisms should be explicitly resourced and housed in national structures (not necessarily government) to increase the location of accountability at national level. Lesson learning strategies should be integrated and applied throughout; and

Underpinned by a shared vision, joint gender programmes need a stronger focus on managing for development results through collective working, and clearly monitored, measured, evaluated and reported upon. Activities do not need to be all jointly implemented, but need to be geared towards a common set of results, with clear upwards and horizontal linkages. Performance reporting needs to be frequent, joint, results-oriented and required. Comparison of the joint gender modality with single-entity models needs to be included in the design of country programme and thematic evaluations.

Recommendation 4

- The entities partly agree with this recommendation.
- Key programming principles and quality assurance processes should be continuously strengthened in order to ensure that these principles are reflected through all programmes, including joint gender programmes.
- Human rights, capacity development and RBM are already recognized as three of the UNDG programming principles.
- The entities believe that the issue in this case is to ensure more rigorous implementation of the principle through better design and quality assurance.

Recommendation 4

- The entities unambiguously accept the value of strengthened accountability for programme results, they are limited in their capacity to address the issue by their areas of authority and mandates.
- However, accountability issues related to the role of the RC and UNCT are not exclusively the authority of the five entities addressed by this evaluation.

Recommendation 5

Recommendation: For joint gender programmes to be implemented in fragile or conflict-affected situations, a Do No Harm analysis, the international principles for good engagement in fragile situations and a state-building lens should be applied as appropriate and on an ongoing basis. A separate theory of change should be developed for programmes in these situations, which includes the elements indicated in Section 4 of the Synthesis Report.

Recommendation 5

- The entities partly agree with this recommendation.
- It is vital that all programming in fragile or conflict-affected contexts be undertaken with due sensitivity and with heightened awareness of the implications of programming decisions through rigorous and robust design processes.
- The value of theories of change, logic models and pathways to change as means of conceptualizing shared programmatic logic, communicating to partners and stakeholders and identifying and managing risks and assumptions, is also fully recognized

Recommendation 6

Recommendation: Designs should be centred within a full risk framework from the outset – analysis of strategic, political, political economy, capacity and governance risks, as well as the risks of the joint modality itself, is essential. Mitigation strategies, and ongoing risk management processes, should be explicit, and frequently reviewed. This is the case for all joint gender programmes without exception and particularly those in fragile or conflict-affected situations.

Recommendation 6

- The entities agree with this recommendation.
- Risk management should be fully integrated into all programming processes, including joint gender programme, and particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations.
- Current efforts to review the UNDG Joint Programmes Guidance is also exploring the use of thresholds as an internal control mechanism to help manage risk.

Recommendation 7

Recommendation: Joint gender programmes should be positioned as an opportunity to develop comprehensive national capacity development strategies for gender equality and empowerment of women. This should fit with national capacity development strategies; reference UNDP's capacity development framework; include both duty-bearers and rights holders; and be partnership-oriented, inclusive and cross-cutting.

Recommendation 7

- The entities partly agree with the recommendation.
- Joint gender programmes can be positioned as an opportunity to develop comprehensive national capacity development strategies for GEWE
- However, country context is of prime importance.
- Decisions as to whether specific joint gender programmes should be positioned as an opportunity to develop comprehensive national capacity development strategies are best informed by analysis during the design process and based on the national context, building on the principle of national ownership.

Conclusion

- The evaluation, and the discussions that the entities have had together in response to it, have been extremely useful raised a lot of important issues
- It is clear that joint programmes can produce results for women and girls and are an important modality, helping to advance gender equality when participating organizations work on areas no single entity could do alone.
- We hope that many of these issues and the findings will also be of interest to other areas of work which are using joint programmes and to which many of the lessons are transferable.

Looking Forward

- This joint management response does not reflect the full spectrum of efforts underway within entities to improve joint gender programmes and internal responses to the findings.
- The entities covered by the evaluation will build further on the basis of the evaluation and continue discussing its implications moving forward, including through and with UNCTs.
- UN Women will be happy to continue playing a convening role as we move forward and explore ways of strengthening joint gender programmes, particularly in the context of the forthcoming UNDG joint programmes guidance.