
*Presentation by Director, Independent Evaluation Office, Mr. Indran Naidoo,
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EVALUATION OF UNDP CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (GEWE)

Distinguished members of the Board and colleagues, I have the pleasure of introducing the thematic evaluation on UNDP's contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, for your consideration. This is the second evaluation of UNDP's work on gender, and assesses the trajectory of change within UNDP since that evaluation was considered by the Board in January 2006.

Gender inequality is one of the most pervasive violations of human rights, and affects more than half the world's population. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights on which the UN is founded, set out the fundamentals of universal freedoms, equality and rights. Yet today, almost 70 years on, gender equality remains an unfulfilled promise. Granted - advances have been made and crucial milestones achieved, such as the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women in 1979 and the Beijing Platform for Action which introduced gender mainstreaming as a concept in 1995. But, there is much that remains to be done to ensure that gender equality becomes a universal phenomenon in word, as well as deed.

UNDP has been in the forefront within the UN system to address the issue of gender inequality. The report before you presents a quick overview of the

efforts that have been undertaken since the First Decade for Women was launched in 1975. The evaluation, however, focuses more closely on assessing the extent to which UNDP's **Gender Equality Strategy**, which covered the period 2008-2013, functioned as an *integrating dimension* of the UNDP's Strategic Plan. For this purpose, the evaluation first looks at the 'Institutional Change' results – those initiatives that were primarily of internal relevance to UNDP. The evaluation then goes onto assess UNDP's contribution to "development results" which helped promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The evaluation concludes by providing actionable recommendations of relevance to the implementation of the current Gender Equality Strategy, 2014-2017 and beyond. Overall, the evaluation has 38 findings, 7 conclusions and 5 recommendations. As is the standard practice now in the IEO, the report was quality assessed by two members of the Evaluation Advisory Panel – Ms Jayati Ghosh and Mr Michael Bamberger – who reviewed the Terms of Reference, the Methods Manual as well as the draft evaluation report itself.

Let me now provide you with a quick summary of the salient conclusions of the evaluation. The evaluation concludes that there has been **far-reaching change and a marked improvement in UNDP's approach** and implementation of policies to address gender equality and women's empowerment. **The Gender Equality Strategy** – the first of its kind in UNDP – has proved to be catalytic in its effect. It was only weakened by the fact that it was presented as optional guidance for UNDP programming and was not integrated as a mandatory dimension of UNDP's Strategic Plan. Nevertheless, it ushered in a number of

important tools and processes that helped place gender squarely on the corporate map. Among these, the evaluation points to the **Gender Marker**, the **Gender Strategy Implementation Committee** (or G-SIC as it is known) and the **Gender Seal**, as being noteworthy instruments. The Gender Marker has helped track financial investments in gender programming. And the GSIC, which is chaired by the Associate Administrator has demonstrated corporate accountability at the highest level. Indeed the annual Gender Days are now seen by informants as a “serious peer review process”.

The Gender Seal certification process, which is an adaptation of a UNDP supported programme originally developed for public and private organizations in Latin-America, has been a particularly innovative experiment to assess and reward gender mainstreaming within country offices. In addition, the UNDP has had a **Gender Parity Strategy** to keep track of the gender balance and corporate climate and has introduced the **Global Staff Survey** which provides useful data on staff opinion over the past few years.

The evaluation provides detailed findings on each of **these institutional measures**, provides evidence of gaps and proposes remedial measures. In sum, the evaluation concludes that while UNDP has done a thorough job on introducing key instruments to help instil a gender-friendly environment, senior management vigilance is crucial if these gains – which, I must stress, are fragile - are not to be lost. To quote directly from the evaluation on the issue of gender parity, for instance– *“at the critical middle levels of staff, gender parity has not been achieved. Men enter the organization at higher levels and get promoted*

*more quickly. **The culture and unwritten rules about who gets promoted and valued and whose voices are heard, requires deeper attention if UNDP is to truly achieve gender equality.***

I turn now to “**development results**” in the area of gender equality and women’s empowerment. To enable assessment of UNDP’s contribution, the evaluation team developed two scales of measurement which I would like to briefly introduce at this juncture. The first was the “**Gender Results Effectiveness Scale**” – the ‘GRES’ as it is called. This scale assesses the *effectiveness of gender results* on a 5-point scale which moves from gender *blind* and *negative* results, through gender *targeted* and gender *responsive* results, to the high end of the scale which is gender *transformative* results. These “gender results” - we coded 260 of them – are sourced from 62 independent ‘Assessment of Development Results’ (ADR) country reports. We also included gender results collected through the 16 country and regional visits undertaken for this evaluation.

The second instruments, uses the **Gender@Work quadrants of change**. This is an analytical framework which classifies the *type of gender change* in terms of 4 domains – first; consciousness and awareness, second; access to resources and opportunities; third, formal policies, laws and institutional arrangements and fourthly; in terms of informal cultural change or what has been described as “deep cultural” change. So in summary, the evaluation uses **these two analytical frameworks – the GRES and the Gender@Work quadrants – to come up with a more nuanced and aggregate level view** of UNDP’s

contribution to development results that promoted gender equality and women's empowerment during the period 2008 to 2013.

Overall, the evaluation finds that UNDP has **been partially successful in achieving the objective of the Gender Equality Strategy that called for UNDP's contribution to be "gender responsive,"** meaning that the results addressed the different needs of women and men in terms of the equitable distribution or benefits, resources, status and rights. **Instead, UNDP's gender results were generally assessed as being "gender targeted,"** meaning that **UNDP is proficient at counting the numbers of men and women who were involved in the programme,** which is a necessary first step in gender mainstreaming. A positive finding was also found in the area of Democratic Governance where results more consistently addressed the different priorities and needs of men and women. Examples of such results was seen in the area of drafting of constitutions to be gender-friendly, providing training to female delegates from a range of political parties, establishing women's caucuses in Constituent Assemblies and the establishment of Women's Situation Rooms to promote peaceful election processes. Notable contributions were also seen in the areas sexual and gender-based violence and the deepening of access to justice. However, as important as these interventions were, they did not address the root causes of inequality and discrimination.

Furthermore, only **very few gender results analysed could be classified as "gender transformative"**, or focused on tackling changes in norms, cultural values, belief systems and power structures. The evaluation recognizes that

gender programming is not easy, that transformative change is a complex and long term process – often accompanied by instances of backlash and push back, where it is two steps forward and at least one step back. The evaluation is also alert to the fact that much of the achievement of such results depends on factors outside of UNDP's control.

The evaluation concludes with four recommendations which I will distil to three broad messages. First, UNDP will have to continue to pay **concerted attention to prioritising and resourcing gender as a key element of all its work**. UNDP management must consistently ensure that Gender does not become just the responsibility of the part-time Focal Point or a priority recognised on International Women's Day. Instead, as the evaluation notes, *“for gender equality to be recognized, it must be a point of departure for all core operating and programmatic engagements.”* **As one of our interviewees succinctly put it “if gender mainstreaming is to be successful, all involved have to become gender experts, for as he put it - “*doing it, convinces you.*”**

In this respect, UNDP has to make **gender analysis a mandatory first step** in all programming and ensure that attention is paid to the specifics of the context and whether there are differences in the expectations and needs of the stakeholders involved. In addition, UNDP must become **better at monitoring, reporting, evaluating and auditing gender aspects of its programming** in a way that goes beyond counting the numbers of men and women involved. My own office is deeply committed to doing a more consistent job at tracking, measuring and assessing UNDP's contribution to gender. Using **metrics that**

capture gender change in a more uniform, coherent and deeper manner is crucial if UNDP is to stay the course and make a lasting and transformative contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Secondly, the evaluation found that while UNDP recognized for its ground-breaking work in terms of the Human Development Report, and is seen – especially by national partners - as a facilitator, enabler and useful reference point on UN Commitments on gender, it is **not seen as a “Thought leader”** in this area. The evaluation therefore recommends that **UNDP should consider exploring new frontiers that go beyond women's issues** and engage more fully on working with men and undertake research on how exclusion negatively affects progress on development

Finally, in terms of **external partnerships**, the evaluation concludes that UNDP's historically close and often collaborative relationship with UN Women has matured as the latter has reorganized its global footprint. Nevertheless, there is **room for further clarification of partnership arrangements**. The evaluation recommends that this process should be *facilitated* by the headquarters of both institutions, but be driven at the country-level through assessments and the formulation of gender plans. These plans should systematically take stock of UNDP's comparative strengths and potential to leverage the expertise of other UN Agencies active on gender issues.

One of UNDP's acknowledged strengths is its sustained commitment to the countries in which it works, as well as its political neutrality and impartiality

when addressing what is often a very sensitive issue. It therefore has much to offer to promote the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment, which is acknowledged as a key factor to fast-forwarding development. As Malala Yousufzai (Yoo-suf-zai) so eloquently puts it **“We cannot succeed when half of us are held back.”**

This concludes my introductory statement on the thematic evaluation on gender. I appreciate very much the Board's consideration of the findings, conclusions and recommendations from this report, and trust that the information provided will help to inform and strengthen the continuing work of UNDP in gender.

Thank you.