
Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System

Management Response

Management Response drafted by: Management Response Working Group (UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, MDGF/UNDP)
Date: 5/16/2014

Overall Management Response:

The interagency group which commissioned the Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System (“the entities”) considers this evaluation to be a valuable contribution to improving understanding of how to make joint programmes on gender equality most effective. 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, and this is confirmed by the evaluation. Joint programmes are an important modality for funding gender equality and women’s empowerment programming, helping to advance gender equality when participating organizations work on areas no single entity could do alone as gender inequality is a complex and multidimensional development challenge. As with all funding modalities, the joint programme modality benefits from predictable sources of funding.

However, as the evaluation also makes clear, joint programmes need not be the default option, and entities need to consider a range of options when seeking to work better together on gender equality, and appreciate that it is may not always be the best modality for cooperation, and its effectiveness is dependent on context. This is well captured by the evaluation and the corresponding recommendation for the entities (including the seven lower level recommendations for operationalizing the overarching recommendation) provide useful guidance in that regard. The entities also note that Joint Programmes on Gender Equality can be a means for advancing coherence within the UN more generally, and helping to bring us together around, for example, efforts to promote gender equality in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

Overarching evaluation recommendation to United Nations entities: Ensure a clear strategic rationale for joint gender programmes - firmly ground designs in development effectiveness efforts at country level.

Management response to overarching recommendation : The entities agree with this recommendation and welcome the emphasis on ensuring that designs of joint gender programmes are firmly grounded in development effectiveness efforts at the country level. It should be noted that there is currently an ongoing inter-agency process to revise and improve shared guidelines for joint programming where this and other related issues are being addressed. It should also be noted that in early 2014 and based on the experience of some of the entities on joint gender programmes, and including the preliminary findings of this evaluation, the manual “Making Joint Gender Programmes Work – Guide for design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation” was launched. In

Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System Management Response

addition to the overarching recommendation, the evaluation provided seven lower level recommendations to help operationalize the overarching recommendation. This management response will respond to each of the seven in turn.

Evaluation Recommendation 1: 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.

Management Response: The entities agree with this recommendation. Joint gender programmes should always be based on strategic planning processes and coherently linked to UN planning frameworks such as the UNDAF/One programme, rather than driven by ad hoc funding opportunities. The strong results planning and prioritization processes and systems deployed by the various entities both individually and collectively, should be brought to bear to systematically ensure that implementation modalities, including the selection of a joint programme modality, be thoroughly appraised based on issues of effectiveness and value. The ongoing work on revising UNDG Joint Programmes Guidance is currently examining this issue and positing 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. More broadly speaking, the entities recognize the need to strengthen capacity analyses of the policy/institutional framework, including United Nations and national partners’ capacity development needs and ability to work within a joint modality on gender.

Key Action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	Comments
			Status ¹	
Revisit programme guidance on selection of	Before end 2014	Relevant planning and programme guidance units		

¹ Status options: initiated, completed, not initiated or no longer applicable (please provide comments to explain the rationale).

Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System Management Response

implementation modalities to ensure that joint program modality is only selected where it is strategically appropriate.		within each UN entity.		
UN Women will review the new UNDG Guidance on Joint Programmes and advise on any specific additional measures that are required on gender joint programmes.	End 2015	UN Women		
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 2: Increase the rigour of the design phase for joint gender programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 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; b) 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 c) Ensure that design reflects the systematization of a human rights-based approach. 				
<p>Management Response: The entities agree with this recommendation. The entities note the importance of rigorous design phases for all joint programmes, including joint gender programmes, particularly with regard to the quality of the analysis rather than just the process. This includes ensuring that a sound and robust analysis underpins the theory of change upon which the programme is based. This issue is also being picked up by the current work on revising the UNDG guidelines on joint programmes and is actively looking at related issues such as building on country analysis and UNDAF/One Programme and other frameworks; and considering the capacity and comparative advantages of the government, implementing partners and participating UN organizations to coordinate, manage and support implementation and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the joint programmes. The entities</p>				

Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System Management Response

note the importance of ensuring a high degree of expertise and adequate resources at the disposal of the partners during this design phase if it is to meet expectations with regard to both quality and process.

Key Action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	Comments
			Status	
Review and, if necessary, revise entity guidance (internal and agency specific programme and operations manuals or equivalent) on joint programmes to ensure that the design phase is rigorous and quality assured.	Before end 2014	Relevant planning and programme guidance units within each UN agency.		
Entities will encourage use of the UNDG gender experts' roster to ensure quality of the design process	3 rd quarter 2014	All entities		
Entities will review project/programme appraisal procedures to ensure that there is adequate rigor in the design phase, including by building on the human rights based approach.	Mid-2015	All entities		
Entities will encourage their staff to use existing relevant	End-2014	All entities		

Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System Management Response

resources, including but not limited to “Making Joint Gender Programmes Work – Guide for design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation”				
Evaluation Recommendation 3: 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.				
Management Response: The entities agree with this recommendation. It is important that 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. In contexts where UN women does not have an established presence, the RC/UNCT should come to consensus on the most appropriate technical and/or coordination lead. It should be noted that the revised UNDG Joint Programmes Guidance is also considering the determination of roles and responsibilities as a crucial step in establishing joint programmes. This includes the selection of the UN organization(s) that will be assigned special roles as Administrative Agent (AA), Convening Agency (CA), or Managing Agent (MA).				
Key Action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Entities will develop a shared approach to determining and making explicit the different technical and coordination roles of different partners in joint gender programmes.	Before end 2015	UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA. (led by UN Women)		
Entities will provide direction to field offices on the implementation of the shared understanding.	Before end 2015	Relevant UN coherence and coordination units within each UN entity.		

Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System

Management Response

Evaluation Recommendation 4: 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;
- 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.

Management Response: The entities partly agree with this recommendation. It is fully agreed that key programming principles

Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System Management Response

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 based approaches, including the full integration of the rights holder perspective, are already a standing principle of UN programming. Capacity development and RBM (and national ownership of development strategies) are also two of the UN Development Group’s five 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 (*already highlighted in previous recommendations*).

The issue of harmonizing for coherence is also well noted and the entities are active in the UN Development Group in working to ensure that there is increased joint monitoring and reporting across all types of UN programmes and where the national operating context is conducive. While the underlying point is well noted and all five 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 beyond the authority of the five entities addressed by this evaluation.

Key Action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
The entities will share the findings of the evaluation with the UNDG	2 nd quarter 2014	UN Women		
The evaluation report will be shared with all UNCTs through the coordination practice network (CPN)	2 nd quarter 2014	UN-Women		

Evaluation Recommendation 5: 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.

Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System Management Response

Management Response: 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. It is also recognized that challenging operating environments present increased challenges to the successful implementation of programmes, including joint gender programmes. 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.

Key Action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Entities to review and, if required, revise their strategies and guidance for humanitarian action to harmonize, and ultimately to provide additional guidance to field offices to engage in joint programmes.	By 1 st quarter 2015	Relevant thematic or sectoral unit/team in each entity.		

Evaluation Recommendation 6: 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.

Management Response: 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 risks (thresholds for joint programmes are introduced to enable the participating organizations to collectively manage risks, whether political/strategic, programmatic or financial, in their common programming).

Key Action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments

Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System Management Response

Review and, if necessary, revise entity guidance on risk management to ensure that it is fully reflected in programme guidance.	By end 2014	Relevant risk management units within each UN entity.		
Review and, if necessary, strengthen quality assurance processes (including through project appraisal) of joint programmes to ensure that risk management is being incorporated into joint programme design.	By mid-2015	Relevant risk management units within each UN entity that has internal quality assurance processes for engagement in joint programmes.		
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 7: 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.</p>				
<p>Management Response: The entities partly agree with the recommendation. Joint gender programmes can be, and often are, positioned as an opportunity to develop comprehensive national capacity development strategies for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. However, country context is of prime importance in designing support mechanisms for national capacity development strategies, and for joint gender programmes. Decisions as to whether specific joint gender programmes should be positioned as an opportunity to develop comprehensive national capacity development strategies for gender equality and empowerment of women are best informed by analysis during the design process and based on the national context, building on the principle of national ownership. The entities recognize that gender joint programmes should be leveraged to enhance national capacities and it is fully agreed that any support provided by the entities to national capacity development strategies for gender equality and women’s empowerment should be aligned with and consistent with broader national capacity development strategies.</p>				

**Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the
United Nations System**

Management Response

Key Action(s)	Timeframe	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
None required.	n/a	n/a		