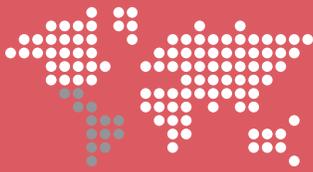


SUMMARY CASE STUDY REPORT

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



‘FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY’:  
PROMOTING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION  
AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING  
IN NICARAGUA



in partnership with



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A number of people contributed to this report. The evaluation was conducted by IOD PARC, an external and independent evaluation firm and expresses their views.

This case study is part of an overall evaluation process managed by an Evaluation Management Group that was chaired by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and composed of representatives from the independent evaluation offices of the commissioning entities - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) in partnership with the Governments of Spain and Norway.

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The full evaluation report can be found at:  
<http://gate.unwomen.org>

Disclaimer: The text of this summary report does not necessarily reflect the views of the commissioning United Nations entities and their Executive Boards, the Governments of Spain and Norway or United Nations Members States. The text has not been edited to official publication standards and the commissioning United Nations entities and the Governments of Spain and Norway accept no responsibility for error.

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## Acronyms

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| CCA      | Common Country Assessment  |
| CEDAW    | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CSO      | Civil Society Organization   |
| FAO      | Food and Agriculture Organization  |
| GBV      | Gender-Based Violence  |
| GEEW     | Gender Equality and the Empowerment Women                                  |
| GRB      | Gender-Responsive Budgeting  |
| HRBAP    | Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming                                 |
| INIM     | Instituto Nicaragüense de la Mujer (Nicaraguan Institute for Women)        |
| IOM      | International Organization for Migration                                   |
| MDG      | Millennium Development Goals   |
| MDG-F    | Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund                              |
| MPTF     | Multi-Partner Trust Fund   |
| NHDP     | National Human Development Plan  |
| NGO      | Non-Governmental Organization  |
| NSC      | National Steering Committee  |
| UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women     |
| UNCDF    | United Nations Capital Development Fund                                    |
| UNDAF    | United Nations Development Assistance Framework                            |
| UNDP     | United Nations Development Programme                                       |
| UNESCO   | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization           |
| UNFPA    | United Nations Population Fund   |
| UNICEF   | United Nations Children Fund   |
| UNIFEM   | United Nations Development Fund for Women                                  |
| UNV      | United Nations Volunteers  |
| WFP      | World Food Programme   |
| WHO      | World Health Organization  |
| WTO      | World Trade Organization   |

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## Rationale

This summary report is based on a case study of the United Nations' joint programme 'From Rhetoric to Reality: Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting, in Nicaragua'. It is one of five case studies<sup>1</sup> that form part of a wider Joint Evaluation of Joint Gender Programmes in the United Nations System, which was launched in May 2012.<sup>2</sup> It was the only case study conducted in the Central and Latin America region.

The overall purpose of the joint evaluation is 'to provide evaluative information for the strategic direction and use of joint gender programmes within the United Nations system reform process and support future policy and guidance on their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for a more coordinated and effective United Nations system contribution to advance gender equality at the country level'.

The evaluation's unit of analysis is joint gender programmes operating at national level, established between 2006 and 2010, and which encompass a range of geographical and thematic areas. This case study is explicitly not a full external evaluation of the joint gender programme, for which a wholly different approach, design and methodology would be required. This summary report is the product of a fuller version of the original case study, which was developed for use by the evaluation team, country stakeholders and the evaluation's governance structures.

Case studies are intended to deepen the evaluation evidence base; to increase understanding of how joint

gender programmes operate in different contexts including opportunities and barriers experienced; to learn what results were being generated how, why and through which pathways; and to channel this information into a form accessible to United Nations country teams, those who design future joint gender programmes, and those engaged in the ongoing case study joint gender programmes. The case study encompassed five overarching areas of enquiry centred on relevance; ownership; coherence, synergies and efficiency; accountability and sustainable results.

## Method<sup>3</sup>

The case study applied a set of structured evaluative tools, which included an evaluation matrix, aligned with that for the global evaluation, a pre-defined set of 'models' of joint gender programmes and the indicative theory of change for the global study,<sup>4</sup> a budget mapping tool and a semi-structured interview guide.<sup>5</sup> Findings were generated through systematic analysis of documentation supplemented by an initial round of telephone interviews; budgetary and financial analysis; a focus group with civil society organizations (CSOs); a seven-day field mission to Managua from 12-18 November 2012 inclusive. In total, 61 interlocutors were interviewed,<sup>6</sup> including:

- 26 national/local government representatives or Members of Parliament;
- 27 partner United Nations and donor agencies;
- 6 civil society and implementing partner representatives; and
- 2 donor/international agency representatives.

1 The other case studies are of joint gender programmes in: Albania, Kenya, Liberia and the State of Palestine.

2 The evaluation was commissioned by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund (MDG-F) and the Governments of Norway and Spain.

3 See Annex 1 for the methodology description applied to the five case studies.

4 See Annexes to Evaluation Synthesis report for these tools.

5 See Annexes 2 (Stakeholder Analysis) and 3 (Budget Analysis) respectively

6 See Annex 5 for the list of persons interviewed.

Validation of findings was conducted through a feedback exercise with the Resident Coordinator, members of the Resident Coordinator's Office and of the Programme's lead agency, and by circulating the draft report to national stakeholders for comment. Limitations to the case study included the relatively short field time available, and the fact that while the joint gender programme was mostly field based, time allocation to the field mission only allowed interviews in Managua, though the case study team interviewed both civil society partners and representatives of civil society and women's groups not involved in the implementation programme. Whilst six other joint programmes were operating in Nicaragua at the time, these did not prove feasible as comparators, given differing thematic areas, timescales, sectors, activities, target areas and partnerships. Despite these caveats, the joint gender programme provided a useful contribution to the evaluation and a valuable case study from which others can learn.

# 2. OPERATIONAL AND POLICY CONTEXT FOR THE JOINT GENDER PROGRAMME

## Political and socio-economic dimensions

In spite of recent growth,<sup>7</sup> and being rated as a ‘medium human development country’ by the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), ranking 129 out of 187 countries and territories, Nicaragua remains the second poorest nation in the Central and Latin America region after Haiti. It suffers from widespread underemployment and poverty, with more than 80 per cent of its poor living in the rural areas.

The North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS) were created in 1987 with juridical status of autonomy of the Atlantic Coast, as the result of a process of reconciliation which followed a period of armed conflict and political confrontation. Nearly three-quarters of the population of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast lives in poverty or extreme poverty,<sup>8</sup> and is excluded or marginalized from the country’s economic, political and social life.

## Aid environment

Until 2006, many donors in the international community perceived Nicaragua as a successful pilot for the application of the Paris Declaration Principles on Aid Effectiveness.<sup>9</sup> Harmonization and ownership were

emphasized in development programming, as well as greater efficiency of aid.<sup>10</sup> Nicaragua continues to rely on international assistance to meet financing obligations but external funding reduced following controversy around the 2008 elections, with some donors citing weaknesses in budgetary transparency, concerns over the electoral process, weakening of the rule of law, increased centralization and the Government’s hostility to non-governmental organizations (NGOs).<sup>11</sup> The Nicaraguan Government has set a clear policy direction to ensure alignment of international aid with national political priorities.

## Gender

Nicaragua is ranked 101st (out of 146 countries) in the Gender Inequality Index for 2011, with a score of 0.506.<sup>12</sup> Key gender issues include:

- Gender-based violence (GBV): Since 2006, at least five different committees of the United Nations, including the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Rights of the Child have highlighted their concern over the situation of violence against women and girls in Nicaragua, with anything from 66 per cent to 85 per cent of the victims

7 The economy grew at a rate of about 4 per cent in 2010, having achieved the fastest growth in Central America after Panama.

8 *Fundacion para la autonomia y el desarrollo de la Costa Atlantica de Nicaragua*, “The Autonomous Regions of Nicaragua”, n.d. Available from <http://www.fadcanic.org.ni/?q=node/17>.

9 <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm#Paris>

10 An example can be found in the *Evaluation of the Country Programme between Finland and Nicaragua*, Ministry for Foreign Affairs for Finland (2012). Available from <http://www.oecd.org/countries/nicaragua/49514675.pdf>.

11 Elise Pallais, “Rule of Law in Nicaragua: The Consequences of Governing by ‘El Pacto’”, 1 April 2009. Available from [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1440944](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1440944).

12 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2011* (New York, 2011). Available from [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2011\\_EN\\_Complete.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Complete.pdf). Accessed 29 February 2012. p.141.

estimated to be minors<sup>13</sup> and one in four of them girls younger than 10 years old;<sup>14</sup>

- Women's health: High maternal mortality rates are reported,<sup>15</sup> mainly stemming from limited access to sexual and reproductive health, breast cancer and cervical cancer as well as a result of abortions carried out in unsafe conditions. The latter are expected to increase as a result of the prohibition of therapeutic abortion in 2006, even in cases of rape or threat to the life of the mother, making Nicaragua one of only six countries in the world<sup>16</sup> with such a law in place; and
- Access to justice, particularly for GBV, is limited.<sup>17</sup>

Other factors include unemployment and inadequate labour protection, particularly in the case of informal employment; limited public and political participation; and the 'persistence and pervasiveness of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men within the family and in all spheres of society'.<sup>18</sup>

The main policy framework for gender in Nicaragua is the 2007-2011 National Plan for Human Development (NHDP), which sets out challenges and targets for the country's development, including for all major gender-related issues. The proposed Gender Policy of 2008 was not approved at the time of the case study's conduct, and remains in draft form.

A range of legal reforms promoting equality have, however, been implemented in recent years, including those on: equal rights and opportunities (Ley 648, 2008); equal access to land ownership (Ley 717, 2010); protection against abuse and GBV (Ley 779, 2012); and promoting increased participation (Amendment and Addition to Law No.40 [2012], known as the Law 50-50, requiring 50 per cent of municipal officials to be women). Yet concerns have been raised regarding the viability of these laws, since they lack sufficient

financial resources for implementation. Together with the ban on abortion, they remain the focus of the national women's movement.

The Nicaraguan Institute for Women (INIM) was set up to achieve equal opportunity in all State programming as well as to institute a system of gender-focused indicators in all sectors. It is charged with mainstreaming gender and the promotion of Law 648 on equal opportunities throughout Government institutions at national and municipal level. Yet INIM was recognized by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2007 as being under-resourced and dependent on international financing, with all its programmes funded by the United Nations.<sup>19</sup>

## The United Nations System in Nicaragua

Following a Common Country Assessment (CCA), the guiding framework for the United Nations system in Nicaragua is the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2008-2012.<sup>20</sup> This presents a single, coherent plan for all United Nations agencies working in Nicaragua. Its priority areas are:

1. Democratic governance and rule of law for the exercise of human rights;
2. Reduction of multiple inequalities, poverty, hunger and malnutrition to achieve sustainable human development (Millennium Development Goal [MDG] 1);
3. Guarantee of social rights for the achievement of the MDGs and the Millennium Declaration and other international instruments and agreements (MDGs 2 to 6), including the protection of maternal health and the prevention of other diseases controllable;
4. Environmental protection and risk management for sustainable human development (MDG 7); and
5. Strengthening institutional capacities for the establishment of a national information system that ensures monitoring and tracking of MDGs.

13 Charly Abbott, "Human Rights Situation of Women in Nicaragua", 27 March, 2011. Available from <http://hrbrief.org/2011/03/human-rights-situation-of-women-in-nicaragua/>.

14 Ibid.

15 Maternal mortality ratio†, 2006-2010\*, reported 67; Maternal mortality ratio†, 2008, adjusted 100; maternal mortality ratio†, 2008, lifetime risk of maternal death: 1 in: 300. [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nicaragua\\_statistics.html#sthash.xFdBGUT5.dpuf](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nicaragua_statistics.html#sthash.xFdBGUT5.dpuf).

16 The other countries being Chile, El Salvador, Malta the Philippines and Vatican City.

17 Op. cit. 14.

18 Ibid.

19 UN (2007) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Thirty-seventh session 15 January-2 February 2007 CEDAW/C/NIC/CO/6

20 The 2013-2017 UNDAF was in draft form at the time of the case study. Only the draft version, discussed in the second regular session, 4-10 September 2012, was available

The total budget of the UNDAF is \$191.6 million<sup>21</sup> over a five-year period.<sup>22</sup> There are currently seven agencies and six non-resident agencies, as well as programmes and specialized funds present in Nicaragua who are aligned to the UNDAF.<sup>23</sup>

## Other United Nations Joint Programmes

In addition to the joint gender programme, Nicaragua benefitted from six other concurrent joint United Nations programmes, all operating during the period 2008-2013. These amounted to a total of over \$47 million.<sup>24</sup> The thematic areas of these were: environmental management (\$4.5 million); water and sanitation (\$7.7 million); cultural development (\$8.5 million); employment opportunities (\$5.6 million); HIV and AIDS (\$8.6 million); and integrated development in a geographical area (\$5 million). The first five of these were funded by the Spanish Government's MDG-F, and the latter by the United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS). Annex 6 provides more detail on these programmes. They did not, as stated, provide robust comparator data for the joint gender programme, but they did enable some limited comparison to take place.

The volume and scale of the joint United Nations programmes being implemented in the country concurrently led to the creation of the Petite Comité, a structure that brought together the lead agencies from the various joint programmes. This structure provided a broader framework for joint programmes to work within, seeking to find common solutions and extract common lessons learned.

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21 Unless otherwise indicated, currency refers to United States dollars.

22 [http://www.pnud.org.ni/files/doc/1238002929\\_UNDAF%20scaneado.pdf](http://www.pnud.org.ni/files/doc/1238002929_UNDAF%20scaneado.pdf)

23 These are: the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO-WHO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UNDP, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

24 <http://www.fodm.org.ni/6noticias-y-eventos>

# 3. PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

## Rationale

The joint gender programme was derived from the gender priorities identified by partner United Nations agencies during the process of developing the CCA (2000) and its associated UNDAF, namely participation in the economic, social and political decision-making process. It was the first joint programme of the seven in Nicaragua.

The initial concept note emphasized national-level planning and programming, and included NGOs as key partners in the programme design. However, following approval of the initial concept note, a new Government acceded to power (in 2008). Consequently, the joint gender programme's design required adjustment for alignment with the incoming Government's strategy and vision on gender, as per the National Plan for Human Development (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Humano). This Plan set out a new political philosophy of providing direct support to the vulnerable, with as few intermediaries as possible. The new Government was also explicit in its view that NGOs in Nicaragua do not constitute legitimate representatives of women's interests.

Consequently, the concept note of the joint gender programme underwent a process of intensive negotiation. The planning and programming processes in the joint gender programme's design were reoriented from the national to the municipal level, and at national level, NGOs and civil society, including women's representatives, did not participate in the process.

## Implementation and timeline

The joint gender programme was approved in January 2008 and launched in August of the same year. Delays were encountered during the design and implementation process, with the reorientation of the programme following the 2008 elections delaying the design process by several months. Municipal elections towards the end of 2008, which led to a change of

authorities, also delayed implementation. It was only in early 2009 that the coordination unit for the joint gender programme was established. The programme closed in May 2012 having achieved a 100 per cent delivery rate.

A mid-term evaluation, as mandated by the MDG-F's monitoring and evaluation strategy and overseen by the MDG-F Secretariat in New York, took place in June 2009. In April 2011, a nine month no-cost extension was approved to ensure adequate finalization of the joint gender programme. A final evaluation took place in August 2012. The timeline in Annex 7 sets out specific events and milestones.

## Budget

The programme's total budget was \$8 million dollars for three years. The funding modality was pass through,<sup>25</sup> with a fairly even budget distribution between Outcomes 2 and 3 (13 per cent and 12 per cent of the total budget respectively) leaving over half of the total programme budget, \$4.6 million, earmarked for Outcome 1.

Under the pass-through mechanism, the MDG-F provided yearly disbursements to United Nations agencies through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) in New York, which acted as the administrative agent for the MDG-F. Yearly amounts could only be disbursed once 70 per cent of all previous funds had been committed.

## Partner agencies

The programme included the participation of nine United Nations agencies,<sup>26</sup> ten government

<sup>25</sup> See <http://mptf.undp.org/overview/funds/jp> for more information on funding modalities within joint programmes.

<sup>26</sup> FAO, IOM, UN Women, the United Nations Capital Development Fund [UNCDF], UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and WFP.

**Table 1: Outcome areas, lead agencies and activities**

| Outcome areas   | Lead agencies | Outputs  |
|---|---------------|--|
| 1. Strengthened capacities of women in 15 municipalities for their empowerment and full participation through the application of gender practices in the economic, political and social spheres.  | UN Women      | 1) Increased access to training, decent work, credit and nutritional security;<br>2) Increased access to services for sexual and reproductive health as well as services for prevention and response to gender-related violence; and<br>3) Strengthened participation and impact of local actors in the process of design and development of local plans, budgets and monitoring mechanisms. |
| 2. Strengthening local development in 15 municipalities through the incorporation of a gender focus in the formulation and implementation of municipal development plans and results-based budget.  | UNCDF         | 1) Strengthened capacities of the local actors to be able to include gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in design, implementation and monitoring of local plans; and<br>2) All 15 municipalities have information systems which allows to monitoring and evaluation of gender practices within the local plans and budgets, as well as level of accountability and social monitoring.         |
| 3. Incorporating gender practices <sup>28</sup> in policies and budgets at national level, with particular focus on the Ministries of Health and Labour, to ensure the exercise of human rights, economic autonomy, and the restoration of rights in these areas. | UNDP          | 1) Gender practices incorporated into the planning process of national budgets;<br>2) Gender practices incorporated into the planning and budgeting process of the Ministries of Health and Labour at the national level; and<br>3) National statistics system strengthened to be able to generate, monitor and assess gender indicators linked to gender in national public policies.       |

institutions,<sup>27</sup> with regional and municipal authorities acting as strategic partners.

UNFPA acted as lead agency for the joint gender programme on behalf of the United Nations, while INIM constituted the lead on behalf of the Government. The programme also had strong support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) and the Resident Coordinator’s Office, which oversaw all joint programmes in the country. Of the nine participating agencies, only five, namely FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP were resident agencies. The others had non-resident agency status with limited representation in the country.

Table 2 above indicates the joint gender programme’s outcome areas, lead agencies and activities.

Management and coordination structures followed MDG-F requirements for all its programmes. These included:

<sup>27</sup> The National Institute for Technology (INATEC), INIM, the National Institute for Information and Development (INIFOM), National Institute of Information Development (INIDE), Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security and Ministry of Family (INSS-MIFAN), the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAGFOR), Ministry of the Treasury (MHCP), Ministry of Development, Industry and Trade (MIFIC), Ministry of Health (MINSa) and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Work (MINTRAB).

<sup>28</sup> As reported during the case study, the Government of Nicaragua uses the expression “gender practices” instead of gender focus as it believes that policies should be expressed through action

- A National Steering Committee (NSC) chaired by the Resident Coordinator, co-chaired by the Vice-Minister and Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and including the participation of the representative in Nicaragua for the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID). The NSC oversaw strategic alignment between all MDG-F programmes in Nicaragua and had ultimate responsibility for achieving results;
- The Programme Management Committee, co-chaired by UNFPA as the United Nations lead agency and INIM as the Government lead agency, responsible for day-to-day implementation;
- In addition, the joint gender programme formed working groups for each results area composed of the agencies that had responsibilities in that area and further divided into subworking groups that included stakeholders involved in a particular area of work, for example credit, reproductive health, etc.;
- A coordination unit, led by the joint programme coordinator, promoted internal coherence of the joint gender programme; and
- At the municipality level, UNVs were hired by the programme to support implementation in municipalities. There were initially ten UNVs, but this number was reduced to five after the initial two years.

# 4. THEORY OF CHANGE

## Conceptual model

No separate explicit theory of change is present within the joint gender programme's design although an implicit logic for how change was intended to happen is present within the programme document. The objective of the programme is to support the Government in its commitments to promote women's participation in the economic, social and political decision-making process, and to ensure allocation of resources for this. This was to be achieved through the three Outcome areas above.

The model above was developed by the case study team, based on the evidence arising from this study. It was developed ex post, once all the evidence gathered by the study had been analysed. Accordingly, it constitutes an analytical output of the study, rather than an ex ante framework for analysis. The analysis in the 'findings' section below has applied the evaluation matrix for the study, rather than the theory of change presented here.

The developed theory of change however sets out the strategies and features of this particular joint gender programme and the pathways from these towards the process-level changes created (in the ways the United Nations and partners work on the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women [GEEW] in Nicaragua), and the interim results generated on the trajectory towards objectives. It attempts to make explicit what is currently implicit in the design and implementation experience of the joint gender programme in Nicaragua.

The crux of the theory of change for the joint gender programme in Nicaragua was that improved development results for GEEW, economic autonomy and the restoration of human rights for women could be achieved through coordinated United Nations support to the NHDP. This in turn could be achieved through direct economic empowerment, increased local capacity and the promotion of political participation of disadvantaged women. Capacities could be enhanced through the incorporation of a gender focus in the formulation and implementation of municipal

development plans and budgets; by incorporating gender practices into policies and budgets at national level; and through better mechanisms to monitor and build policy on GEEW.

At the municipal level, the programme focused on moving women from a position of dependency and vulnerability to one of economic empowerment through targeted capacity-building and social investments, while reducing vulnerabilities (for example, by providing support to single mothers or large families), and strengthening necessary conditions for higher productivity.

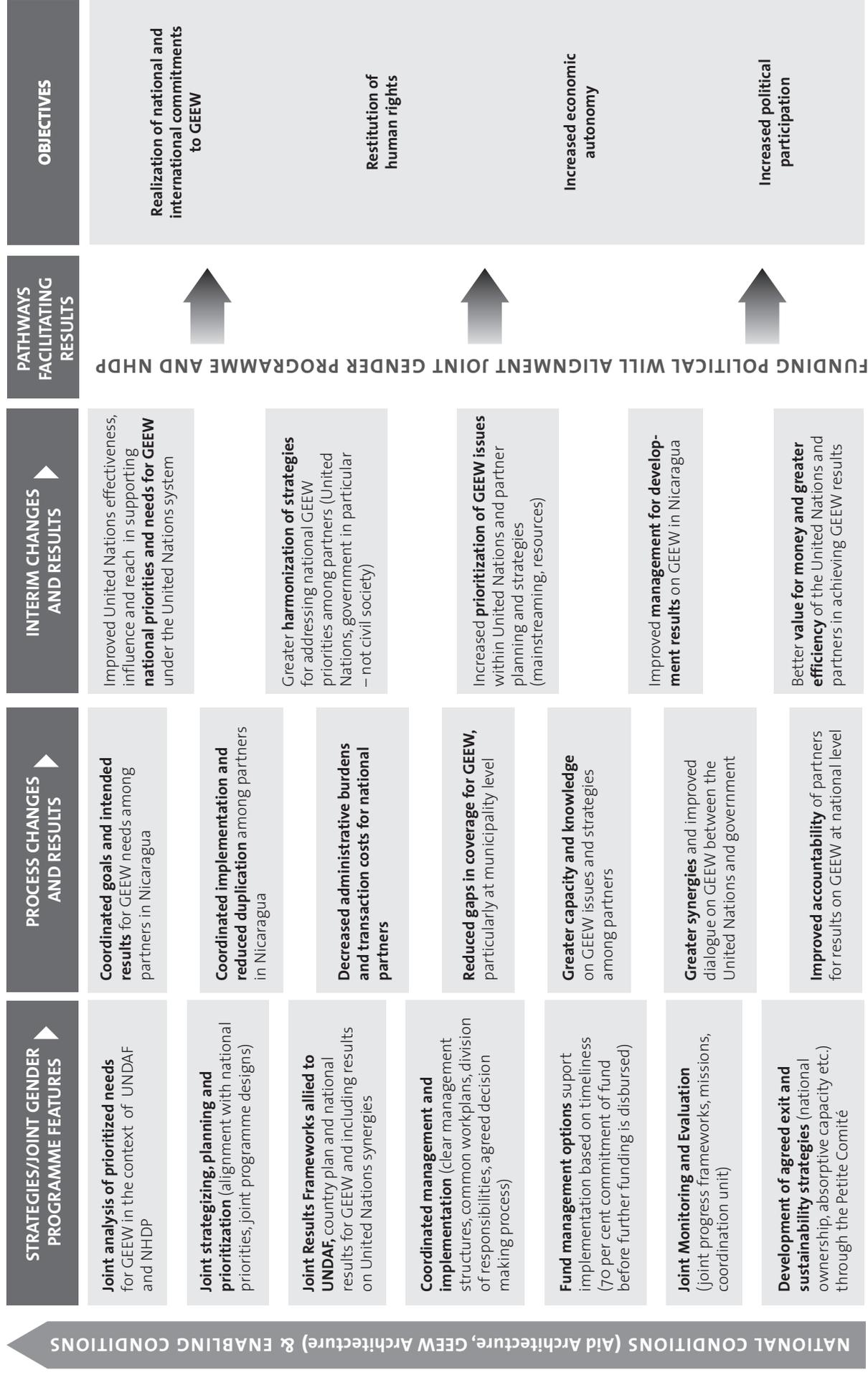
## Assumptions

A number of assumptions underlay the below theory of change. Not all of these were adequately unpacked at the time of design. Key amongst them were:

1. The national context and aid architecture would be conducive to United Nations joint programming, including capacity and political will for design and implementation;
2. The national context and aid architecture had the capacity to absorb, manage and implement the joint gender programme;
3. Civil society groups formed part of the national partnership for GEEW;
4. A national vision, intended results for GEEW and the modalities for supporting programme implementation existed;
5. Sufficient incentives and willingness exist for partner agencies to work operate jointly and insufficient institutional or organizational barriers existed; and
6. Differences among stakeholders in intentions and approach could be identified and resolved at an early stage.

The role of these assumptions in shaping implementation are discussed in the findings and conclusions below.

Figure 1: Theory of Change – Nicaragua Joint Gender Programme



# 5. KEY FINDINGS

## a) Relevance

This section of the case study discusses the relevance of the joint gender programme's design to national gender needs and priorities, and to the capacities of the operating context.

### Alignment with normative frameworks

The design documentation of the joint gender programme clearly references the key normative frameworks which informed its design, including CEDAW and related protocols and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the MDGs. The issues it sought to address — lack of access for women to credit and basic social services, including health, education and training; unemployment and labour laws; political and public participation, as well as the limited availability of data disaggregated by sex — are reflected in the CEDAW report of 2006.<sup>29</sup>

### Alignment with national gender needs

The capacity development dimensions of the programme were designed to support and strengthen the INIM after the CEDAW report highlighted its lack of 'visibility, human and financial resources, authority and capacity to effectively promote implementation of the Convention and support the use of the gender mainstreaming strategy across all sectors and levels of Government'.<sup>30</sup> It was aligned with national structural needs, therefore.

In terms of alignment with national gender priorities, the joint gender programme design process did not set out to commission other separate analyses pre-design, preferring to draw on existing material available. This included the analysis and priorities

identified during the CCA and associated UNDAF exercises. Such analyses identified key issues taken forward within the joint gender programme, for example, the prioritization of reducing inequalities such as poverty, hunger and malnutrition to achieve sustainable human development (UNDAF priority area 2) and the need to strengthen institutional capacities for the establishment of a national information system to monitoring and track MDGs (UNDAF priority area 5).

In 2010, following a change in management in the Office of the Resident Coordinator, the joint gender programme initiated a diagnostic exercise to analyse the gender situation in Nicaragua. The diagnostic took place in all 15 participating municipalities of the joint gender programme. The results of the analysis — which had not been available at design stage — subsequently allowed for adjustments in content to components of the programme. For example, projects focusing on responding to both the practical and strategic needs of women at municipal level were incorporated. To facilitate this, a fund was created with municipal co-financing, and was included in the annual workplan for years two and three. In addition, a baseline was undertaken in 2010 which helped to adjust the initial results framework, as well as identifying process indicators to monitor progress.

The design did not, however, prioritize other gender concerns highlighted in the 2006 CEDAW report. These included: the ban on abortion, including in cases of danger to the mother; the high level of under-age pregnancies (estimated at 30 per cent of the total number of pregnancies<sup>31</sup>); GBV; and high maternal

<sup>29</sup> List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports and concluding comments of the CEDAW Committee (February 2007).

<sup>30</sup> UN (2007) Concluding comments of the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Nicaragua Thirty-seventh session 15 January-2 February 2007

<sup>31</sup> According to Dr. Oscar Flores, honorary member of the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nicaragua, 30 per cent of total pregnancies in Nicaragua occurs in adolescents. Of these, 25 per cent will die. Report available from [http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/103358\\_aumentan-embarazos-de-adolescentes](http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/103358_aumentan-embarazos-de-adolescentes).

mortality rates,<sup>32</sup> particularly the number of deaths resulting from illegal and unsafe abortion. Whilst no programme can be comprehensive, the selective approach adopted did raise issues - which were highlighted particularly by civil society interlocutors during the case study - of whether the United Nations had opted for 'easy targets' in the design of the joint gender programme, rather than seeking to address more systemic and deep-rooted gender inequalities within Nicaraguan society and the national legal framework.

The involvement of national partners in design was mixed, being shaped by the surrounding context of political transition. Initially, a technical proposal had been developed by the agencies in the United Nations Gender Theme Group, which included consultation with government partners and with civil society. Following the accession of the 2008 Government to power, the initial proposal had to be adapted in order to ensure alignment with the incoming Government's strategy on gender. This took place through a process of intensive negotiation with Government partners in Managua.

While the Government therefore had the opportunity to take part in design at both stages, and included discussion at both the technical and the strategic level, civil society's participation was limited to a two-day workshop in Managua held as part of the initial stage of design. They were not involved in the second-stage redesign. As a result of negotiations, the national women's movement and NGOs were excluded from the joint gender programme altogether at the national level. Rights holders' participation was limited to Government-aligned groups or to the role of beneficiaries, and only at the municipality level.

In terms of areas targeted, the 15 municipalities were agreed between the United Nations and the

Government at renegotiation stage.<sup>33</sup> Selection was based on legitimate parameters: high levels of poverty, vulnerability, health and discrimination, as well as some geographic considerations for feasibility and ease of access. The exception to this was la Cruz de Río Grande, on the Atlantic Coast, which does not have easy access but was selected to ensure inclusion of Nicaragua's Autonomous Regions.

## Operational relevance

No formal capacity assessments were undertaken of national partners. The shift to the municipal level, whilst it supported national Government's priorities at the time, did not take into account the fact that most participating United Nations agencies and Government institutions, and in particular the INIM, did not have presence or capacity at municipality level. The use of a network of UNVs was intended to offset this gap and support implementation at the municipality level, but raised questions around sustainability given that these posts would end with the joint gender programme. One year before completion, in fact, only five out of ten UNVs were still supporting the 15 municipalities.

For the partner United Nations agencies involved, no formal mapping of comparative advantage took place. All the partner agencies involved were already active in gender and/or inclusion issues in Nicaragua, being members of the Gender Theme Group. However, there was no visible analysis of the strategic value added of each agency in regards of the identified goals of the joint gender programme design, or how each agency would 'fit within the puzzle' or contribute to the higher level results articulated in the programme design. Rather, each agency aligned itself under an Outcome area based on its expertise, mandate and ongoing activities. The primary driver to participating in the joint gender programme, as expressed by those interviewed during the case study, was access to funds.

32 According to the article 'Abortion ban in Nicaragua needlessly endangering women's lives' (Ray Downs, 3 November 2011), 170 deaths per 100,000 births. Available from <http://global.christianpost.com/news/abortion-ban-in-nicaragua-needlessly-endangering-womens-lives-say-activists-60425/>.

33 The municipalities covered by the programme were: Achuapa, Blufields, Dipilto, El Sauce, El Tuma La Dalia, Estelí, Jalapa, Jinotega, La Cruz De Río Grande, Matagalpa, Puerto Cabeza, San José de Cusmapa, San Nicolás, Somoto and Waspám.

No analysis was conducted at the design stage of partner United Nations agencies' experience of, or commitment to, joint modalities; or any analysis of what the joint programme model would imply for day-to-day working or business practices. This gap was to prove a subsequent challenge at implementation stage, below, with a high degree of unsubstantiated faith placed in national and United Nations stakeholders and systems to successfully implement a complex GEEW programme.

A critical gap in the design process, central to relevance, was risk identification and mitigation. The programme document contains a brief and limited risk assessment. There five identified risks were extremely broad, as follows:

| Outcomes  | Risk assessment  |
|-----------|--|
| Outcome 1 | 1. Ownership from municipal authorities after the elections.<br>2. Local participants participatory culture.   |
| Outcome 2 | 3. Political will to incorporate gender practices in municipal plans and budgets.<br>4. Lack of coordinated response with other international players to support the municipalities. |
| Outcome 3 | 5. Weak capacity to incorporate gender practices in public policies, plans and budgets.  |

Mitigation strategies identified were generally vague. For example, in response to the perceived risk of a 'lack of political will to incorporate gender practices in municipal plans and budgets' the proposed mitigation strategy is awareness-raising and capacity-building – neither of which comprehensively address political will. Meanwhile, wider risks related to the challenges of conducting direct implementation of a programme in 15 different areas, with at least one with very difficult access issues and with little to no presence of the Government or the United Nations agencies and no initial buy-in from the local authorities, and in areas where municipal level institutional capacity was low, went unaddressed.

Perhaps more importantly, risks related to the fragmented interministerial coordination in Nicaragua, the United Nations' lack of experience in joint programming; and the polarized and deteriorating

relationships between Government and civil society, including the national women's movement, also went unconsidered.

In terms of the integration of human rights, the programme design was partly geared to human rights considerations, with the programme document identifying key guiding human rights instruments and related documents.<sup>34</sup> The design also integrates a some rights-based measures, including: improving mutual accountability; a focus on building the capacity of rights holders; political inclusion for women and access to justice; and supporting awareness-raising and advocacy on domestic violence. Its focus on ethnicity is also a rights-based issue in the context of Nicaragua.

Yet the limited participation of civil society during the design process, combined with the purposeful exclusion of national women's groups as beneficiaries or implementing partners in line with Government priorities at the time, and the emphasis on capacity developed support for duty bearers, raises questions over the alignment of the joint gender programme with the United Nations' human rights-based approach to programming (HRBAP). Interlocutors in Managua also questioned the thematic focus of the programme in relation to human rights issues in Nicaragua, supporting economic empowerment at the cost of avoiding more politically sensitive, yet also critical, issues such as GBV.

In seeking to fit the current political reality, therefore, the joint gender programme faced a number of difficult challenges and trade-offs. Some of these compromised the comprehensive adoption of a HRBAP.

Overall, therefore, the joint gender programme's relevance was influenced by the major factor of the changed political climate in Nicaragua. Its redesign had to take account of new political priorities and emphases; whilst meeting the commitments of the UNDAF. In doing so, it sought to walk a difficult line

<sup>34</sup> Such as CEDAW and related protocols; the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the International Conference on Development (Cairo, 1994), the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate All Forms of Violence Against Women (*Belem do Pará*, 1994).

between alignment (with national political priorities and broad gender needs) and responding to specific gender and human rights priorities.

The programme also faced the difficult challenge of needing to negotiate the tensions and gaps in dialogue between the new Government and civil society in Nicaragua, including the women's movement. The choices made by the joint gender programme sought pragmatism but, in achieving this, trade-offs were made, with a comprehensive human rights approach in particular being compromised. Operational relevance was also undermined by a lack of analysis, meaning that capacity gaps occurred at municipal level. The lack of experience of United Nations agencies in joint programming was unrecognized, and neither analysed nor strategized for.

## b) Ownership

The principle of ownership adopted in the evaluation and case study is a broad-based one encompassing citizens as well as government. It also incorporates national-level leadership and support from development partners to strengthen capacity to deliver this.<sup>35</sup> Building and sustaining ownership for gender results has proven to be a particular challenge for nations and for agencies and one to which a joint gender programme might be expected to pay particular attention.<sup>36</sup> In Nicaragua, ownership of the joint gender programme was a challenging issue from the start, given the contested relations between the new Government and civil society outlined above. Given the findings of the case study, it is not reflected within the theory of change above.

### Understanding of ownership

The design documentation for the joint gender programme does not set out a clear understanding or

definition of ownership within the joint gender programme. The main rationale for ownership was the grounding of the joint gender programme in the Draft National Policy for Gender and the Government's NHDP (2007-2011).

Yet the conceptualization and defining of ownership in the Nicaraguan context has been challenging. The determination of national government to ensure ownership of the joint gender programme was clearly articulated by stakeholders during the case study and evidenced in their detailed engagement in the design phase. At municipal level, however, authorities did not participate during design, and ownership was consequently more dilute. The exclusion of women's groups at the national level during the second phase of design in particular meant that ownership was not achieved in the broad-based sense required by Paris Declaration commitments.

However, the programme design did contain a range of strategies for ownership in the narrow sense applied by the programme. These included:

- At national level: The creation of a gender unit within the Treasury, together with methodologies for ensuring GRB in all national budgets, and the codevelopment of tools for gender mainstreaming for use by national institutions, as well as seeking technical improvements to existing Government programmes, such as USURA cero and the Bono Productivo and Hambre Cero. The joint gender programme was integrated into the annual workplans (Programas Anuales de Trabajo) of the participating national institutions.
- At local level: Strategies included investing time in the development of municipal-level plans around the focus areas of the programme; the local financing of gender projects through their inclusion in municipal budget; the creation of committees and discussion groups to ensure continued participation of women in the municipalities at different levels of the planning, budgeting and monitoring process; and co-financing for some initiatives.

In terms of the joint gender programme's integration into national reporting, many of the activities of the joint gender programme, such as the promotion of

<sup>35</sup> Derived from the Paris Declaration Aid Effectiveness Principle (<http://www.oecd.org/development/aideffectiveness/34428351.pdf>).

<sup>36</sup> Supported by numerous evaluations and syntheses, such as African Development Bank (2011) Mainstreaming gender equality: A road to results of a road to nowhere? An evaluation synthesis and Wood, B; Betts, J; Etta, F; Gayfer, J; Kabell, D; Ngwira, N; Sagasti, F; Samaranayake, M. The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration, Final Report, Copenhagen (May 2011)

increased direct participation of women and men in decision-making within the Municipal Planning System for Human Development, were reported within the updated NHDP (2012-2016), which was drafted towards the end of the joint gender programme's lifetime. The achievements generated by the joint gender programme were used to frame the proposed future actions of the revised Policy for the Development of Women incorporated within the new Plan.

The joint gender programme's efforts to embed ownership in national structures mainly took the form of funding staff posts within INIM and the Treasury. In some cases this took the form of amending roles and remits – for example, the INIM focal point for the joint gender programme was part of Government staff before and after the joint gender programme, but was financed by the joint gender programme during implementation.<sup>37</sup> Government interlocutors were clear that the activities undertaken would remain post-joint gender programme, but the case study does not have evidence to this effect.

A further effort to ensure ownership was the coordination and decision-making structures of the programme, which – under MDG-F requirements - were designed to ensure full representation of national stakeholders. The joint gender programme's NSC included a representative for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and met twice a year to discuss policy and more political issues. The Management Committee also included the Government, namely INIM, as well as one national representative for each result, namely the Ministry of Information and the Treasury. At municipality level, regular coordination meetings were held which included municipal authorities and civil society.

The participation of national Government counterparts was therefore ensured in the major decision-making structures of the joint gender programme. Engagement was agreed by all interlocutors during the case study to be strong, with decisions taken reflecting their views. Yet the participation of civil society was limited, with no participation in programme structures at the national level, and little

to no decision-making power. Municipal authorities' engagement in the decision-making process was also constrained, given their lack of involvement on the Management Committee, which was in practice the main arena in which decisions were made. During the case study, civil society and municipal-level interlocutors expressed their concern over their restricted participation in the decision-making processes.

In terms of resource allocations to national partners, in the absence of a final budget breakdown it was unfeasible for the case study to fully quantify specific allocations to national partners. However, over half of the joint gender programme was initially allocated to Outcome 1, in support of women of the 15 selected municipalities, which involved direct delivery to partners. Some of the joint gender programme support staff at the INIM and the Treasury were also paid for by the joint gender programme. Of the budget, 83 per cent was allocated to delivery, with 17 per cent comprising relatively high operational costs.

No separate overarching capacity development strategy was developed as part of the joint gender programme. However, the joint gender programme collaborated closely with national ministries and local authorities to develop and strengthen the operating capacities of duty bearers. In some cases this occurred through specific initiatives, such as training for staff in charge of Maternity Homes (Casas Maternas), or the training of health practitioners on recognizing GBV. Within national Ministries, some of the staff of the joint gender programme were subsequently absorbed to improve capacity, such as the head of the newly formed Gender Unit at the Treasury. Some participating institutions also created gender units which are still functioning, for example the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (MHCP) and the Ministry of Work (MITRAB).

At municipality level, capacity development training also took place. This included training for rights holders in labour laws (including the new law on equal rights and opportunities, Ley 648); empowerment; technical expertise; business administration; and civil participation. However, while support to institutions at the national level took the form of a continuous process, capacity development of rights holders took

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<sup>37</sup> As reported by interlocutor during the in-country visit, although no evidence was provided.

place in the form of one-off trainings rather than as part of a comprehensive and overarching strategy.

Moreover, capacity-building was not comprehensive, with plans to reinforce the area of statistics and the creation of gender sensitive indicators at both national and municipal levels, a gap highlighted by the CEDAW report and the UNDAF, not undertaken. The funds allocated had eventually to be transferred to other activities.

Overall, therefore, the programme took place in a complex environment for ownership. In seeking alignment with national strategies, plans and political priorities, it faced dilemmas of both breadth and depth in stimulating ownership.

Whilst the programme design did embed and apply strategies for ownership by national Government and institutions – mainly through ongoing capacity development – its efforts were weighted towards duty bearers. Civil society and the national women’s movement were effectively excluded at the national level. The joint gender programme therefore did not sufficiently embed efforts to extend or develop the national partnership and dialogue on GEEW, but arguably rather indirectly contributed to the polarization of its actors.

## c) Coherence, synergies and efficiency

### Coherence

Coherence, synergies and efficiency<sup>38</sup> are central to the premise of the joint modality. The first two are key process-level results of the joint gender programme, as reflected in the theory of change above. As one of seven joint programmes in Nicaragua at the time, the joint gender programme aimed to bring these criteria to the United Nations’ gender work in the county. Efficiency is not reflected in the theory of change, for reasons described below.

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<sup>38</sup> See the Glossary in Annex 5 of the main Synthesis Report for definitions of these terms.

### Surrounding context

At the time of its design and implementation, the joint gender programme was part of a wider trajectory of change within the United Nations system in Nicaragua. With coherence a driving principle, it sought to continue the shift towards harmonization and greater system-wide efficiency, reflected in the drawing in of multiple joint programmes in the country.

The joint gender programme therefore benefited from wider structures and processes related to this drive for harmonization, such as the Petite Comité, which had an oversight remit for all joint programmes operating in the country. However, as is clear, it also operated within a challenging external environment for coherence, particularly given the polarised relationships in the country between Government and civil society. Conditions for coherence were therefore complex from the outset.

Nonetheless, the design process brought together nine United Nations agencies, ten Government institutions and 15 municipal authorities under one programme framework, as well as formalizing the support systems for planning, coordination, progress tracking and reporting. This in itself was a significant achievement.

However, the case study found that, while coherence on the Government side was relatively strong, the design process did not, on the United Nations side, significantly facilitate coherence. Each United Nations agency, during the design discussions, continued to maintain its own vision, with different approaches and criteria depending on its expertise, culture and mandate. Common concepts, a common vision and agreed strategies were not therefore developed from the outset, despite the joint gender programme being the first experiment with the joint programme modality in the country. The results framework for the programme did not contain a specific dedicated results area to coordination or coherence.

The programme did however recognize the need for a coordination function at implementation stage. Accordingly, it allocated a full-time Coordination Unit to the programme, although this came into being a

year after the implementation of the joint gender programme had begun. This Unit provided the main coordination function for the joint gender programme, including facilitating communication among partners and managing day-to-day operations.

The programme design also sought a unified approach at operational level, prioritizing the creation of intended results first. Once partner agencies had agreed on

the results, and based on their respective mandates and expertise, they negotiated which activities would take place in order to achieve it, the funding required and leadership. The resulting design – which was carried forward into implementation – does present a largely unified model, with coordinated actions under particular activity or outcome area aggregating up to contribute to Outcomes. An example comes from Outcome 1.

| <b>Outcome 1: Strengthen capacity of women in 15 municipalities for their empowerment and full participation from the application of gender practices in the economic, political and social spheres.</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Partners: FAO, UNFPA, UN Women,<sup>39</sup> UNOPS, WFP, WTO</b>  |   |
| Output 1.1: Increased access in all 15 municipalities to training, decent work, food security and credit (WTO and INIM lead)   | <p>Activity: 1.1.7a: Implementation of activities supporting Hambre Cero: training in food security and nutrition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners: FAO- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Education</li> </ul> <p>Activity 1.1.7a: Training in hygiene, health and nutrition rescuing healthy traditions and practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners: WFP- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry</li> </ul> |

As for most joint programmes, some activities were assigned to individual partners, whether Government or United Nations. This necessarily implied some division of labour, but the surrounding framework for coordination and the combining of efforts within particular activities, meant that overall, a good degree of coherence in design was achieved.<sup>39</sup>

Implementation of the joint gender programme was only partly synchronized. Implementation plans were developed in the form of annual workplans, which acted as the main planning and monitoring tool for the joint gender programme, and which were developed in a participatory planning process. Annual workplans were coordinated by UNFPA in their role as lead agency with support of the joint gender programme’s coordinator. Meetings of the coordination

committee were held monthly to review progress and identify any off-track areas.

However, only the lead agencies of a group took part in the monthly coordination meetings, creating a lost opportunity for the identification of synergies between the group, and disempowerment of the agencies that were excluded from the decision-making structures. It also created increased burdens for the Coordination Unit; for example, the unit reported that in one instance it had 33 meetings in one month. Perhaps for this reason some interlocutors felt that implementation was undertaken largely bilaterally between one United Nations agency and its Government counterpart, in some cases going as far as having formal bilateral agreements (for example between WFP and the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture).

The financial reporting model of the MDG-F also exacerbated these barriers to coherence, with the flow of funds from the MPTF in New York to different United Nations agencies in Nicaragua requiring agencies to employ their own separate reporting and accountability procedures, preventing a fully synergized approach. It also effectively delinked financial accountability and higher-level results. Competition over resources was a feature of the programme, with negotiations extending from design into implementation phase, amid a tendency to ‘defend fiefdoms’.

<sup>39</sup> UN Women was created by General Assembly resolution 64/289 in 2010 and became operational in 2011. It is a new organization that combines and expands the mandate of its four predecessor entities (the Division for the Advancement of Women [DAW] the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women [INSTRAW], the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women [OSAGI] and the United Nations Development Fund for Women [UNIFEM]). UNIFEM was the predecessor entity engaged in this joint gender programme prior to 2011.

## Joint performance monitoring and measurement

The monitoring and measurement approach of the joint gender programme however supported coherence. It followed MDG-F procedures in the development of a joint monitoring framework as part of wider objectives on United Nations Coordination. The joint framework was managed by the Coordination Unit, with each agency responsible for monitoring its own activities and submitting reports to the Coordination Unit. A Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in the Coordination Unit had oversight of the process, collating reports and sending an aggregated version through to the MDG-F in New York.

## Synergies

The joint gender programme had a mixed effect in terms of creating synergies between partners working on GEEW issues in Nicaragua. Specifically:

- Lines of communication and synergies between the United Nations and national partners were partially improved, through the agreement on a common framework for work on some aspects of GEEW in the country. However, due to the breakdown of the management and governance structures into small technical subgroups within each result area, there was little room for new partnerships, with groups comprising partners who have for the most part worked together before. One of the main potential benefits of the joint programme modality were therefore lost, namely 'cross-fertilization'. The opportunity for expanding dialogue with the women's movement and civil society at the national level was also lost;
- Synergies among national partners were also partially improved, with enhanced lines of communication between Government institutions at national and municipal level in particular, on the theme of gender. However, the model of small technical subgroups; the involvement of only one national institution; and the lack of participation from civil society at national level, diminished the potential for further interaction amongst national stakeholders; and
- Synergies among United Nations partners were also partially improved, though again the model

of small subgroups meant that most partners were working with familiar parties. However, the fact that the joint gender programme was one of seven joint programmes at the time in the country facilitated the sharing of experiences and lessons learned.

Synergies have been only partially improved therefore, partly as a result of the complexities in the operating environment and partly as a result of programme structures which limited the potential for synergizing to within operational-level groups. The exclusion of civil society at national level has been the major constraint to enhancing synergies, constraining the options for supporting a broad-based partnership on gender in Nicaragua.

The joint gender programme did, however, in conjunction with the other joint programmes in the country, build awareness of the implications of joint working – and what this means in terms of operating modalities and day-to-day work. The advent of the Coordination Unit one year into implementation is reflective of the realization that a joint modality does not imply 'business as usual' but rather a changed ethos, practice and better communication.

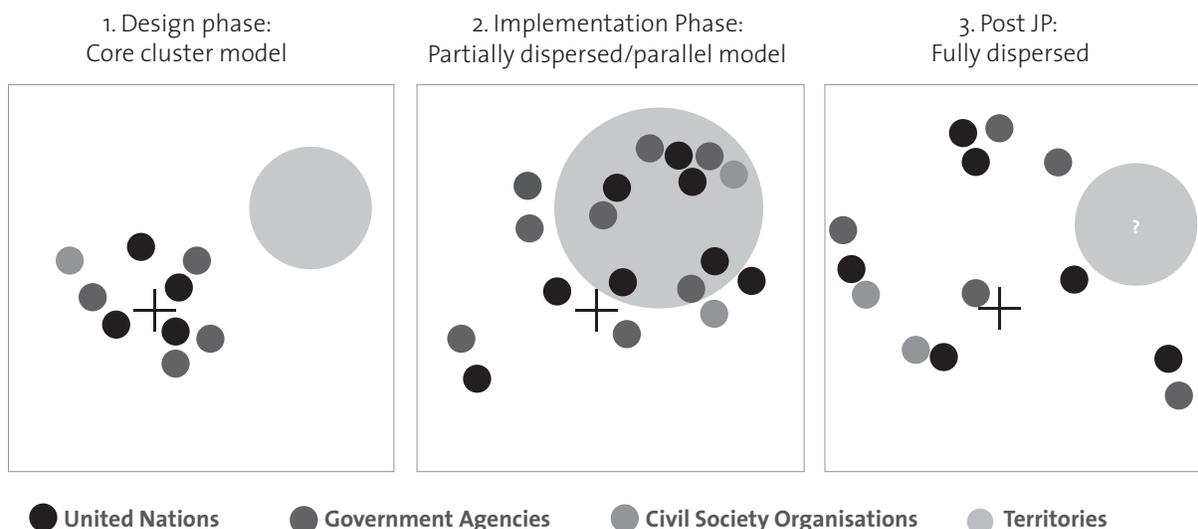
## Efficiency

The case study sought evidence on whether the United Nations' efficiency in gender work had improved through the use of the joint modality in Nicaragua. The joint gender programme was implemented within positive contextual factors for efficiency, namely; the strong leadership of the Resident Coordinator; a lead agency whose mandate is directly linked to GEEW activities; and a supportive national environment, including political will and streamlined policy dialogue, thanks to the structures envisioned by the MDG-F.

Findings were as follows:

- There was little evidence of burden reduction for partners as a result of the joint gender programme. In fact, administrative burdens were actually increased for the Government during programme implementation, as most agencies maintained a double system for monitoring and reporting: their own and the one required by the MDG-F. This meant that the Government had to report in different formats, sometimes for the same activity. This increased

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burden was regretted by Government interlocutors interviewed.

- For the United Nations, burdens similarly increased, given that agencies faced the same double reporting as Government partners. In addition, setting in place the management and governance structures of the MDG-F, plus the negotiation and discussion required for joint programming, necessarily involved considerable staff time, a process referred to as the 'costs of coordination' but largely perceived as an investment; and
- For civil society partners, such as were involved at municipal level, burdens remained unchanged, since they were simply contracted for activity delivery.

Efficiency was further undermined by the multiple financial accounting and reporting process of the MDG-F, where United Nations agency manages its own activities and their related budget in accordance with their respective internal administrative procedures. Since yearly amounts can only be disbursed once 70 per cent of all previous funds have been committed, significant transfer of funds delays of up to six months were reported, with serious effects on some agencies' abilities to implement in a timely manner.

However, the joint gender programme made strong effects to generate cost-sharing opportunities, for example through conducting joint monitoring visits

or sharing transport. Reduced duplication of activities on the ground through the harmonized approach was also a significant efficiency gain. Some costs were also borne by Government, such as transport or office space, freeing up resources for substantive activities.

Overall, therefore, the joint gender programme provided a first experiment at a coordinated joint programme in Nicaragua. It did enable some harmonization to take place, including better coordination of activities on the ground with reduced duplication and consequently lowered costs, more streamlined policy dialogue; better understanding of the modality and the implications of joint working; and a simplified coordination mechanism in the area of gender for government.

However, partly due to contextual challenges and partly to internal weaknesses, the joint gender programme did not adopt a fully harmonized approach, with 'business as usual' prevailing in much of its operations and practices. Opportunities for synergies were not fully maximized, and efficiencies remained largely unchanged.

For these reasons, the case study team concluded that the model of joint programme that applied varied throughout the lifetime of the joint gender programme could be characterized in the Inception Phase as core cluster model (where a few cluster

agencies cluster around a [partly] common vision of intended results). This then progressed to a partially dispersed/parallel model during the implementation phase (where the central vision is held by one or a very few core agencies; implementation largely takes place bilaterally, sometimes in mini-clusters around this), and culminating in a fully, dispersed/parallel model once the joint gender programme was finished (with limited or no shared vision, and where implementation takes place largely bilaterally). Civil society was excluded from this model (with some exception at municipal level).

## d) Accountability

Accountability for the joint gender programme has various dimensions: mutual, downwards and horizontal. It implies a reciprocal commitment, with national actors and development partners presumed to hold each other to account.

Mechanisms for mutual accountability in the joint gender programme included: the NSC as oversight body; the reporting process for the MDG-F; the active engagement of the Resident Coordinator; and the active engagement of the partner Ministry. The MDG-F places emphasis on the role of the Resident Coordinator as lead site of accountability for joint programmes. Another measure to promote mutual accountability came from the donor, in the form of the Government of Spain, who requested a commitment of 70 per cent of the total released funds in order to release the next tranche.

Downwards accountability – in the form of reporting to Nicaraguan citizens – was not fully embedded within design or implementation. The partnerships with municipal authorities and CSOs did provide some measure of downward accountability, though the relationship was more one of subcontractors than a true mechanism for accountability, particularly since neither of these parties were included in the programme's decision-making structures.

With regards horizontal accountability, within the programme's structures, each United Nations agency was accountable for its own workplan and for the management of resources. The lead agency, UNFPA, with the support of the Coordination Unit, provided

oversight and collated results twice a year. Many of the interlocutors agreed that accountability in fact lacked formal tools and relied on agency commitment and a sense of responsibility for delivery, which was varied among agencies.

The primary site of accountability within the programme – as is common within joint gender programmes – was upwards to agency headquarters. Mainly a function of the United Nations system, where each agency had to account for its performance, financial expenditure and delivery to headquarter agencies in New York, this mitigated against the grounding of accountability at country level. No clear sanctions, or tools to enact sanctions, existed at country level for poor delivery. Staff were also responsible, and rewarded for, individual achievements within their agencies, rather than collective/joint ones for the joint gender programme. These are systemic issues, which go beyond one joint gender programme, but do indicate the challenges faced by the implementation of a joint programme modality amid competing systemic forces.

Performance reporting mechanisms also provided building-blocks of accountability, with the MDG-F systems mandating a robust approach. Whilst the coherence of these was questionable, above, the systems and procedures were comprehensively followed and supported accountability.

A detailed report on progress, with the structure pre-defined by the MDG-F, was produced twice a year up to the finalization of the joint gender programme in 2012. Quarterly financial reports were also submitted by each agency directly to the MDG-F Secretariat. The programme was evaluated at mid-term, and a final evaluation was requested in August 2012 in line with MDG-F requirements. In addition, the joint gender programme undertook a systematization exercise in February 2012 to identify results, good practices, findings, facilitating factors and barriers, as well as lessons learned.

Under MDG-F systems, joint gender programme teams were also required to present an action plan to respond to the mid-term evaluation recommendations before the third tranche of the funds were disbursed. Whilst this necessarily incurred delays, as

discussed, it did ensure that evaluation recommendations were taken seriously and addressed within programming as part of accountability.

Overall, therefore, the accountability of the joint gender programme was largely determined by the structures and requirements of the MDG-F. These worked relatively successfully in terms of holding United Nations agencies and partners to account in financial and results terms, and in being able to demonstrate externally programme achievement. It also provided in-country stakeholders, through evaluation, with a narrative record of the programme's progress and effects.

However, the accountability systems were undermined by systemic limitations of the MDG-F – namely through the financial reporting system which emphasized accountability to individual agencies rather than as a collective partnership, grounded in the country. In particular, it did not emphasize downwards accountability to the Nicaraguan citizens whose interests the programme sought to serve.

## e) Sustainable results

This case study does not constitute a full examination of the joint gender programme's effectiveness. However, it has collated evidence from the joint gender programme to demonstrate its achievement against intended results.

The joint gender programme successfully delivered some significant results for the 'gender agenda' in Nicaragua, which have helped place gender on a firmer footing with the national agenda and to embed normative commitments more soundly at the national level. A major investment was made in building-up the capacity of the State machinery to address gender, with some significant results. Some of the main changes to which the joint gender programme contributed, and which are evident from triangulated data, include the following (further details supplied in Annexes 8 and 9):

1. An improved and more visible national machinery for gender, as reflected in the strengthened INIM, which has led to reported increased demand for assistance from other Government institutions;

2. Improved prioritization of gender in national budgets, following gender-budgeting piloted in the Ministries of Labour and Health, which led to the inclusion of gender-responsive indicators in current budget guides; the introduction of gender indicators in the national budget; and the creation of a gender unit to oversee the inclusion of these indicators and methodological tools at a national level in the Treasury;

3. An improved municipal-level partnership for gender, through the bringing together of national authorities, municipal authorities and civil society to develop municipal-level plans.

Some of the thematic interim development results achieved, which in particularly benefit rights holders, include:

1. Greater prioritization of, and accountability for, gender at the municipal level, as evidenced by:

- Mainstreaming of gender practices in the Municipal Planning Systems, which led to Gender Policies in eight municipalities and the inclusion of gender in local budgets;
- The creation of forums for dialogue between civil society and local authorities;
- The linking of women producers and their projects to municipal budgets;
- The formation of assemblies and councils, which increased the access of women to the participatory-budgeting process; and
- Strengthened lines of dialogue between the central-level and the municipal-level authorities on gender, especially significant for the Autonomous regions.

2. An improved framework for women's economic empowerment, as evidenced by:

- National social safety net and empowerment-level programmes, such as Bono Productivo Alimentario, Usura Cero or Hambre Cero, being revised for greater sensitivity; and
- Legal constitution of 24 women's cooperatives under the Food Production Programme.

However, the extent to which such results represent added value as a result of the joint modality is not

fully clear, given the lack of a fully harmonized approach. One exceptional example, however, was the creation of Investment Fund for Gender Equality with a contribution of \$211,664 from the joint gender programme and matched contributions from municipal budgets and communities.<sup>40</sup> In 2011, municipal budgets allocated \$84,421 towards the implementation of 14 projects identified through direct consultations with women. This mechanism was not in the original joint gender programme design but stemmed from the concept of shared responsibility generated by the joint gender programme, and would likely not have arisen without the collective approach adopted.

Areas where the joint gender programme did not achieve results were the creation of gender-sensitive indicators at both national and municipal levels, a need identified in the programme document and highlighted as a key barrier in the CEDAW report. For this, strategies were originally identified but no progress was achieved. However, the extent to which such results represent added value as a result of the joint modality is not fully clear, given the lack of a fully harmonized approach.

## Sustainability of results

The programme documentation sets out some clear envisioned strategies for sustainability. These include: i) increased accountability and visibility for gender in the national environment; ii) ownership developed at the municipality level; iii) capacity-building; and iv) tools developed for a sustained gender approach. The programme document does not, however, make explicit how these strategies would be implemented.

In many cases, these strategies appear likely to generate some degree of sustainability, as the sections above on ownership and capacity development have indicated. For example, the methodologies for ensuring GRB in all national budgets, together with the expressed commitment to pushing GRB into more ministries' budgeting practices, appear likely to endure.

Similarly, sustainability is evidenced through the new Municipal Planning System for Human Development, reflected within the updated NHDP (2012-2016), which reflects the priorities of the joint gender programme. Specifically, this includes the promotion of access to productive assets and resources, equal participation and equal rights and opportunities through national programmes for inclusion. Technical improvements made by the joint gender programme to existing Government programmes, such as *USURA cero*, the *Bono Productivo* and *Hambre Cero* were already funded by the Government and there is little question as to their sustained support.

Sustainability is not guaranteed however, with the future of some of the new activities, such as the financial credits or the participation of civil society in the municipal planning process, remaining unclear. The role of the INIM remains the main threat to sustainability. Many interlocutors agree on its underfunding, but also comment on its lack of political support in an increasingly centralized political environment. Decision-making for gender is commonly taken at the level of the Presidency, bypassing the INIM. There was also no indication during the programme that the INIM was being strengthened. On the contrary, it suffered from regular changes in management; did not participate of regional gender forums; did not benefit from any significant budget increase; and continues to have no municipal presence.

Moreover, and significantly, no identified pillar for gender exists in the next-generation UNDAF. This lack of an identified rallying-point for gender within the United Nations system may risk undermining the gains made.

Recognizing these risks going forward, the conclusions, lessons learned and implications below seek to provide some learning and guidance to the joint gender programme and the United Nations country team on future planning for GEEW in Nicaragua.

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<sup>40</sup> \$104,507 from municipal budgets and \$40,227 from the communities.

# 6. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The report concludes by drawing together the key findings on this case study and their implications for Nicaragua's joint gender programme and for wider learning on future joint programming.

The joint gender programme was developed at a timely moment for Nicaragua, when the United Nations was seeking increased coordination in the context of the United Nations reform and the 2008-2012 UNDAF, while the incoming Government was developing a new vision based around a more centralized, coherent and Government-led approach to international development. Both these elements reinforced each other and provided natural drivers for the joint gender programme. The joint gender programme was able to leverage these conditions and bring in support from the MDG-F, which provided funding and structure for six different joint programmes implemented in Nicaragua roughly over the same period of time.

The joint gender programme design faced the challenge of a context of political transition and increasing polarization between the Government and the national women's movement. The realignment of the technical proposal with the in-coming Government's vision, necessarily meant trade-offs and compromises. Two of the decisions taken were a) a thematic focus concentrated on economic empowerment, and b) consensus with the exclusion of civil society and the national women's movement at national level. As a result of this pragmatic approach, the joint gender programme's focus on equality was clear, but participation and accountability, the other cornerstones of HRBAP, were weak and, arguably, alignment with national gender priorities compromised.

The lack of inclusion of the women's movement at national level was also a major dilemma for the joint gender programme. Accompanying this has been the lack of focus on including rights holders in a meaningful manner, with decision-making ability limited.

Concern remains that full alignment of the United Nations to the incumbent Government's agenda helped to perpetuate a situation where women's groups were not included in the dialogue on women's issues. This has had reputational implications for the United Nations, as well as undermining the legitimacy of the joint gender programme as a response to gender priorities in Nicaragua, as opposed to Government priorities for women.

Within its narrower remit, however, the joint gender programme has delivered some significant results in Nicaragua. These include: increased capacity and visibility for the national partner tasked with leading on gender issues in the country, namely INIM; increased participation for women at the municipal level; and the integration of gender-sensitive methodologies and indicators into plans and budgets at national and municipal levels. Uncertainty remains over the sustainability of some of the gains made, particularly the status and remit of INIM, but there is no doubt that the joint gender programme has brought together partners within a common framework to achieve change.

More importantly, in regards to results for women, the joint gender programme was committed to assisting the same group of women through a coherent pathway, which meant a significantly more comprehensive approach and translated into substantial benefits for women. This comprehensive approach was a direct result of the joint modality, which aligned different mandates and expertise with the will to achieve something different and which led to a more comprehensive impact for the beneficiaries concerned. It is through this temporal bringing together of regular activities where the potential added value added of joint programming becomes apparent.

Some wider lessons for joint gender programmes have been learned, many linked assumptions present at the

outset. These have resulted in gaps in the theory of change, including:

1. The design stage is crucial as it sets the framework for the entire programme. Gaps or challenges not addressed at this stage remain and become harder to address;
2. A common language, agreed concepts and strategies for change need to be clearly identified and agreed at the initial stage;
3. The United Nations needs to identify adequate administrative and reporting mechanisms for joint programming; and

4. While alignment with the Government guarantees a high-level of ownership, HRBAP requires meaningful inclusion of all key players;

Overall, the joint gender programme has provided a valuable experiment, welcomed by both the United Nations and the Government, the latter having expressed their desire to continue working in this modality, and the former having engaged in several joint programme proposals since the finalisation of the joint gender programme. The following section considers implications for future joint gender programmes (and potentially joint programmes) in Nicaragua.

# 7. IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT GENDER PROGRAMMES NATIONALLY

For the United Nations country team in Nicaragua, the current process of agreeing a new UNDAF provides a unique opportunity to build on achievements and lessons learned stemming from the joint gender programme and joint programming experiences in general. To ensure the continued prominence of gender within the national dialogue, within development programming, and within United Nations activities, we suggest the following, based on the evidence arising from this case study:

1. Strengthening INIM should be a priority for both the United Nations and the Government. For the Government, this should take place through increased funding and political support. For the United Nations, this should extend beyond funding and technical support to advocating for the necessary resources and political backing necessary to be able to fulfil its assigned role;
2. In addition to supporting the INIM, it is important to strengthen other national mechanisms for gender across sectors. For example, a concerted effort should be made to define the roles, responsibilities and accountability of gender units and gender focal points in different key sectors, such as health or education; to set targets and workplans for these; to adequately resource them, and to build networks between and among them;
3. Given the existence of national understanding of GEEW, the United Nations should work with the Government to define a common terminology, which should be clearly defined and aligned with international standards, in line with Nicaragua's international commitments<sup>41</sup> and a clear statement issued to this effect;
4. Both the United Nations and the Government should, in any future joint gender programme, ensure the meaningful participation of civil society and representatives of women's movements, regardless of political affiliation, throughout planning, design and implementation to ensure a comprehensive rights-based approach to GEEW. Given the current polarization between national women's groups and the Government, the United Nations has the potential to play a pivotal role in promoting dialogue and/or acting as bridge between the two.
5. Any future joint gender programme should ensure the full participation of all agencies involved in the decision-making structures and process, as well as the regular participation of high-level management. This applies to both United Nations and Government stakeholders and also to municipality level, who in the context of the current Government's policy direction, are key stakeholders, both strategically and operationally. This will promote ownership and with it more sustainable processes; and
6. The upcoming UNDAF should ensure meaningful inclusion of right holders when determining priorities and, given the lack of a gender specific pillar, earmark resources for gender in all existing pillars, as well as a specific workplan, intended results and allocated responsibilities for GEEW, as well as clear reporting lines. It should also attempt to identify synergies, in line with the principles of GRB and with the theory of change of the joint gender programme outline at the start of this case study.

<sup>41</sup> Treaties signed by Nicaragua: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, accession 12 March 1980; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, accession 15 February 1978; CEDAW, ratified 27 October 1982; Optional Protocol to CDEAW (not signed); United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, ratification 9 September 2002; Equal Remuneration Convention & Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, ratified 31 October 1967.

# ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

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## OUTLINE

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### Joint Evaluation of Joint Gender Programmes in the UN System

#### Case Study of Joint Gender Programmes: Methodology Outline

##### 1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Field studies of five joint gender programmes in five different operating contexts will take place during November 2012. This short note sets out the generic methodological approach to be adopted during each field study. Specific methods for field study and general data sources are set out in the evaluation matrix template, attached. This will be tailored for specific contexts, depending on contextual factors, data availability and key lines of enquiry brought up by the desk study.

##### 2. METHODS TO BE APPLIED

The main operational tool for field study is the evaluation matrix. This provides a template geared to indicators against the evaluation questions. It provides a systematic way of mapping data against indicators, in a transparent way, so that clear chains of evidence can be developed for analysis.

The evaluation matrix will be applied throughout the study process. A partly-populated version will be developed, based on the data gathered during desk review stage, as part of the preparatory stage. Field study will interrogate, triangulate and deepen this enquiry, with gaps being filled where they inevitably exist, and some of the specific lines of enquiry relevant to the individual joint gender programme being followed up.

The methodological approach to be adopted will operate within this common framework, to be adapted to context as required. However, the core elements will

remain constant, in order to ensure that findings are generated in a systematic way, and therefore facilitate robust analysis at synthesis level. Below the evaluation matrix, the specific methods to be applied are:

##### i) Context and stakeholder mapping

For each joint gender programme, it will be important to develop a timeline of context, stakeholders and events during the programme's lifetime. For the design stage, for instance, it will be important to understand not just the role of civil society and women's groups in design, but how this relates to the wider environment of socio-political relationships, including the role of national women's machineries. This is critical both for the importance the evaluation places on context and for responding to the full set of evaluation questions.

Two main tools will be used for this purpose:

- A stakeholder analysis tool, in Annex 2, to analyse the functions, relative influence and power of different stakeholders as they relate to the joint gender programme; and
- A timeline, template in Annex 7, to map out the events in the programme's lifetime. This will be developed by teams ex ante as part of the preparatory process and used as a discussion point during the mission.

##### ii) Development of a specific programme theory

An indicative generic programme theory for joint gender programmes was developed during the inception phase of the study, and subsequently developed further by evidence generated during the desk review stage. Field studies will develop individual programme theories for the joint gender programmes under study. These will be developed with programme staff, applying the generic model developed and adapting this to the specific joint gender programme. Specific focus will be placed on:

- How the joint gender programme has contributed to expected GEEW outcomes;
- What interconnections arise between joint gender programmes and the different levels of results observed (pathways to results – this will be particularly important, and a separate template has been developed for the purpose);
- What conditions have facilitated results (applying the generic set of conditions already developed and attached); and
- What assumptions are evident, as well as whether and how these have been managed (applying generic set of assumptions pre-developed and also attached).

The programme theory template provided will be populated/refined/made specific to the joint gender programme by the field study team. The distinct programme theories developed will then be analysed and collated to develop an overarching programme theory for joint gender programmes at synthesis level, which has both emerged from desk review data and been tested in the field.

### iii) Models of joint gender programmes

From desk analysis, several potential ‘models’ of joint gender programmes emerged, which are indicatively only at this stage. These have been applied, in a light sense, to the selection of joint gender programmes for field study, to ensure diversity. It is recognized that they are likely to be fluid, with joint gender programmes moving through them at different stages, from conceptualization and design through to implementation.

For each joint gender programme, a specific schematic will be developed based on the models provided. This will take place through discussion and validation with stakeholders. The assumptions embedded in the design stage as described above, can also be assessed at this stage. At synthesis level, therefore, as for the individual programme theories, these can be synthesized and analysed to demonstrate the range of possible options for joint gender programmes ‘models’.

### iv) Secondary data analysis

Analysis will take place of national datasets, where these are relevant to either context mapping or

programme performance. This is particularly relevant to results, where data from desk review stage will benefit from intensification.

Similarly, analysis will also take place of secondary data unavailable to the team previously (though much data has already been supplied by programme teams). This will apply the systematic analytical tool developed at desk study stage, which is geared to the indicators and sub-questions of the evaluation matrix. Data will be plotted in to the evaluation matrix, with sources being clearly specified.

### v) Financial and budgetary analysis

Financial and budgetary analysis of the programme will also need to take place, particularly since the desk review stage found disbursement delays to be a very prominent feature of all sample joint gender programmes. Budgets will be analysed using the standard and very simple format attached: anticipated contributions/actual contributions per year; anticipated expenditure/actual expenditure per year; and position at project end-date.

Reasons for any disbursement delays will need to be explored, particularly as these relate to the JP mechanism used (parallel, pooled, pass-through) and to issues such as procurement requirements and the MDG-F requirement for 70 per cent of funds to be disbursed before the release of the next tranche of funding.

### vi) Interviews

Interviews are likely to absorb a prominent part of the actual methods applied at field study level. These will apply a semi-structured interview format – again geared to the evaluation matrix but also pursuing specific lines of enquiry that have arisen for sample joint gender programmes during desk study. The interview format will be adapted as appropriate by individual teams to the specific joint gender programmes for different groups of interlocutors. Interview data, as for all other data, will serve both as primary data in itself and to validate/triangulate all other data streams. It will also be recorded onto the partly-populated evaluation matrix against the relevant indicator or question. The generic semi-structured interview guide will also provide the basis for developing specific focus group guides.

#### **vii) Participatory tools**

Participatory approaches – such as focus groups and process tracing - will be used where the field teams consider that their use will enhance the quality and accessibility of information. These are most likely to take place with groups of stakeholders involved in programme delivery rather than with primary beneficiaries themselves, which would require a wholly different methodological approach. Such approaches may be particularly valuable when seeking to understand the context within which joint gender programmes have operated over time or the ‘added value’ of working jointly for results on GEEW.

Tools which will be applied are mainly those above, including the timeline and stakeholder mapping tool, and standard interview and focus group guide. As above, all data will be plotted onto the evaluation matrix.

#### **3. VALIDATION AND TRIANGULATION.**

To support triangulation/complementarity/interrogation, findings from the desk review will be plotted onto the relevant evaluation matrix template in advance of the field study, and areas where enquiry needs to be deepened/validated and tested/interrogated identified. All pieces of data arising from the desk review will be triangulated during the field study, to ensure that internal validity is maximized, for example by applying any independent data from civil society which reflects on the joint gender programme performance, the partnerships and synergies it has supported or otherwise, etc. Minimum thresholds will be applied, e.g. a report from a single interviewee does not ‘count’ as reliable data, but a consistent set of reports will do so (though be explicitly reported as arising from interview data only).

#### **4. ANALYSIS AND REPORTING**

Analysis for field study reports will apply the evaluation matrix as the main analytical tool across data streams, grouping evidence around the indicators within it, including those on human rights and gender equality, and providing summary evidenced progress assessments. Reporting will take place to the agreed structure and length, to ensure comparability of findings and maximum contribution to the final report. Reports will be written in clear and concise language, without the use of jargon or acronyms. Content will focus on analysis and progress assessments, rather than description. The report structure will be that reflected in the evaluation matrix (i.e. oriented around the evaluation strategic priority questions).

# ANNEX 2: BUDGET ANALYSIS

| YEAR ONE  | \$USD     |
|-----------|-----------|
| Received  | 2,994,743 |
| Disbursed | 1,752,375 |

| YEAR THREE | \$USD     |
|------------|-----------|
| Received   | 1,965,579 |
| Disbursed  | 3,208,936 |

| YEAR TWO  | \$USD     |
|-----------|-----------|
| Received  | 3,039,678 |
| Disbursed | 3,029,004 |

| YEAR THREE PLUS NO-COST EXTENTION | \$USD     |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Committed                         | 8,000,000 |
| Received                          | 8,000,000 |
| Disbursed                         | 7,990,316 |

# ANNEX 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

## Joint Evaluation of Joint Gender Programmes in the United Nations System: Case Study Tools and Methods Semi-structured interview guide: GENERIC

### Introduction

Brief description of evaluation/purpose of interview/ confidentiality and anonymity

#### 1. DESIGN

a. What were the main drivers for design of the joint gender programme in the country at the time? How did it respond to national need?

b. How did the main features of the operating context (Delivering as One, fragile situation, middle-income, the aid architecture and the policy context for GEEW etc.) influence the design process?

c. To what extent were national partners (government and civil society) involved in the design process? Would you say that the design process was a truly collaborative one?

d. To what extent were issues of capacity, including the capacity of the aid architecture, national stakeholders and the United Nations itself, addressed?

e. What has been the role of donors as drivers of joint gender programmes?

f. What efforts were made to develop a common vision and understanding among stakeholders? Who led the visioning process?

g. What efforts were made to develop a common terminology and discourse among stakeholders? Who led this?

h. How were roles of individual agencies and partners decided?

i. What incentives and barriers were found to conducting the design process jointly?

j. Did any tensions and difficulties arise? How were these resolved?

k. How was gender expertise deployed within the design process?

l. Was the design process for the joint gender programme perceived as different from a single-agency approach? How?

m. Was the design process sufficiently robust in your view or would you suggest anything different from hindsight?

#### 2. DELIVERING RESULTS AND VALUE ADDED

a. Which staff were assigned to work on the joint gender programme by different agencies, at which level, and with what expertise on GEEW? Was dedicated staff time built into implementation?

b. What was the role of gender expertise in implementation? Advisory or other?

c. What factors – if any - bound agencies together in joint delivery? (shared vision, coordination function, accountability etc.). How did this work and why?

d. What were any barriers to joint implementation? What effects did these have on the achievement of results?

e. How effective was the joint gender programme in achieving development outcomes in terms of benefits for girls and women/reduction in gender inequalities?

f. What were some of the specific pathways/facilitating factors towards results?

g. What tangible changes have occurred in terms of United Nations and partner coordination? [Beyond

‘improved relationships’]. How have these affected the delivery of results?

h. What effects on normative commitments can be seen?

i. What was it about the joint gender programme which helped and hindered the achievement of results?

j. Did you observe any difference in (a) the types of result aimed for by the joint programme and (b) how results are achieved (compared with other/prior single agency programmes)?

k. Was the time frame realistic for the expected results?

l. How did performance reporting work? Was this a joint responsibility, or did each agency report separately on results? What was its quality, and was it cohesive?

m. Were the accountability measures/strategies for performance on results adequate to ensure full responsibility by all partners (United Nations agencies, national partners)?

i. Where does/did accountability rest?

ii. What is/was the role of the Regional Coordinator and Gender Theme Groups?

n. Did any areas of poor performance by specific agencies arise, and how were these addressed?

o. What do you feel was/is most needed to ensure increased joint gender programme focus on and reporting on results?

p. Did the joint approach, in your view, lead to a programme which was ‘more than the sum of its parts’? Or was the approach more of ‘business in parallel’?

### 3. NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

a. What measures did you observe within the joint gender programme to strengthen national ownership and sustainability (capacity-building, cost sharing, decision-making etc.) and how effective were these?

b. Did the implementation and monitoring of the joint gender programme support meaningful participation of different categories of duty bearers and rights holders and promote social inclusion? What helped to ensure this and what were the main challenges?

c. What voice did national partner groups (including civil society and women’s organizations) have in

implementation? Were they perceived as strategic partners?

d. What has been the influence of the joint gender programme on national practices and approaches for GEEW, and institutional strengths? Is there any evidence of strengthened capacity and momentum of partner institutions to deliver GEEW results?

e. Has the introduction of GEEW tools and approaches in government agencies and ministries had any effect on increased government resource allocation to GEEW?

f. Have government of other national partners made any budgetary or other in-kind commitments to the joint gender programme?

g. Do you have any examples or suggestions about how the joint gender programme can help overcome challenges to national ownership?

h. Any there examples of new innovation in the joint gender programme, leading to strategic entry points for mainstreaming GEEW in government, with potential impact nationally?

### 4. SYNERGIES

a. To what extent has the joint gender programme contributed to synergies with other national (or regional) initiatives in relation to GEEW:

i. Within the United Nations family (e.g. United Nations country team, Gender Team, United Nations theme groups, mainstreaming of GEEW within other thematic joint gender programmes);

ii. With national partners (e.g. strengthened partnerships, wider engagement of non-traditional gender partners, more effective networking and collaboration between government and civil society on GEEW); and

iii. With other development partners (e.g. Development Partners Gender Group; gender in accountability frameworks; gender on the agenda of Joint Assistance Strategy/equivalent priorities)

b. What are the incentives and barriers (administrative, procedural, structural and cultural) to working jointly on GEEW issues?

c. Has the joint gender programme been able to attract any new resources (including in-kind contributions, human and financial), beyond those in the original design? What are the sources of these resources

# ANNEX 4: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

## UN Agencies

- *Analista de coordinación, OCR*
- *PMA, encargada de atención al plan de emergencia y Punto Focal de Género.*
- *Oficial de Programa (OIC). PMA*
- *Oficial de género, UNFPA*
- *Especialista en Monitoreo y Evaluación de los F-ODM*
- *Coordinador Residente de la ONU y Representante Residente de PNUD*
- *Representante (OIC UNFPA).*
- *Representante Auxiliar. UNFPA*
- *Oficial Nacional de Proyecto OIT*
- *Coordinadora de ONU Mujeres en Nicaragua.*
- *Coordinador de Programa Desarrollo Sostenible y Salud Ambiental, OPS/OMS*
- *Representante Residente Auxiliar, UNDP*
- *Representante Adjunta de UNICEF*
- *Coordinador Programas Conjuntos, FAO*
- *Joint Gender Programme Focal point, ILO*
- *Joint Gender Programme Focal point, UNDP*
- *UNICEF deputy during the Joint Gender Programme*
- *UNCDF focal point during the Joint Gender Programme*
- *Joint Gender Programme Focal point for UNOPS/OMS*
- *Especialista Programas Conjuntos en apoyo a coordinación PC JEM - PNUD. Integró la unidad coordinadora del PCG.*
- *Coordinador del PC Cultura y Desarrollo (se intentó vía skype, pero no se pudo, envió respuestas en un documento de word).*
- *Coordinador del PC Juventud, Empleo y Migración.*
- *Joint Gender Programme Focal point for FAO*
- *M&E UNICEF.*
- *Former focal point for the National Institute of Information Development (INIDE) during the first part of the joint gender programme*
- *joint gender programme focal point for OIT*
- *Oficial de programa de género, UNDP*

## Government Representatives

- *Cordinador de proyecto, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores o viceministerio (MINREX)*
- *Director of INIM during the joint gender programme*
- *Responsable del departamento de Capacitación y Formación INIM.*
- *Asistió a la reunión en calidad de observadora, MINREX*
- *Vice-Ministra MAGFOR (Ministerio de Agricultura y Forestal)*
- *Directora de Pymes. MEFCA (cut short)*
- *Vice minister Ministry of Development, Industry and Trade (MIFIC)*
- *Jefa Despacho MIFIC*
- *Directora General de Función Pública del MHCP.*
- *Coordinadora de la Estrategia de Casas Maternas. Dirección General de Atención y Calidad, Ministry of Health (MINSA)*
- *Analista de Planificación. Dirección General de Planificación y Desarrollo. MINSA*
- *Técnica de Componente de Medicina Tradicional. Dirección General de Atención y Calidad. MINSA*
- *Directora del Programa Integral de Nutrición Escolar (PINE-MINED).*
- *Responsable de la Dirección de Consejería Escolar y Formación de Valores. MINED*
- *Dirección de Consejería Escolar y Formación de Valores. MINED*
- *Responsable de la Unidad de Nutrición Escolar en el PINE-MINED.*
- *Directora de Programas Especiales. INATEC*
- *Técnica de Programas Especiales INATEC*
- *Técnica de Programas Especiales INATEC*
- *Coordinadora la Unidad Coordinadora del PCG desde el INIM.*
- *Responsable de la Unidad de Género del MHCP.*
- *Directora General de Inspección del Trabajo. MINTRAB*
- *Responsable de la Unidad de Género del MITRAB.*
- *Dirección de Fortalecimiento Institucional. MINTRAB*

- *Representante oficial ante el PCG del INSS (Instituto Nicaragüense de Seguridad Social).*
- *Directora CDI (Centros de Desarrollo Infantil), MIFAN (Ministerio de la Familia).*

## **Civil Society**

- *Enlace, coordinadora de la RMCV. Sociedad Civil no involucrada con el PCG. Red de Mujeres Contra La Violencia (RMCV).*
- *Coordinadora de Red de Casas Maternas.*
- *Presidente del Foro Permanente para cuestiones indígenas de las Naciones Unidas.*
- *Directora del ILLS (Instituto de Liderazgo de las Segovias), integrante del Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres y del CC-SICA (integración Centroamericana).*
- *Coordinadora de Comisión Municipal de Género Jinotega.*
- *Directora Ejecutiva del MPN, Movimiento por Nicaragua.*

## **Donors and other Representatives of the International Community**

- *Gender and health focal point in the Embassy of Finland.*
- *Responsable Unidad de Género, AECID.*

# ANNEX 5: APPROVED JOINT PROGRAMMES AND CONCEPT NOTES ELABORATED

Recently approved joint programmes, implementation expected during the semester of 2012<sup>42</sup>

| Name  | Convening agencies | United Nations participating agencies | Donor/ Budget   | Status/ Observation   |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Reduction of Human Insecurity in Alto Wangki Bocay (Nicaragua): An integrated, multisectoral and intercultural human security intervention  | UNFPA              | FAO, IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, UNV.          | OCHA Trust Fund<br>\$3,596,448<br><br>3 years: 2012-2014  | First concept note approved in July 2011, and 2nd concept note approved in November 2011. The programme document elaborated and presented to OCHA on April 2012. Implementation initiated in August 2012.   |
| United Nations Indigenous Peoples Partnership (UNIPP): Indigenous peoples rights in Nicaragua: Strengthening knowledge and consultation mechanisms                                    | UNDP               | IOM, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNV, WTO.         | UNIPP: \$ 170,000<br>Other United Nations participating agencies: \$334,492<br>Total: \$508,492<br>2 years: 2012-2013 | Programme approved in March by the UNIPP Board. Implementation started in May 2012. This joint gender programme is thought to be the foundation/ basis for a joint gender programme on indigenous and afro-descendant people as part of the new UNDAF 2013-2017.  |
| Health: Accelerating MDG's 4 and 5 in the departments of Matagalpa, Jinotega, Chontales and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region & North Atlantic Autonomous Region (Caribbean Coast) | PAHO/WHO           | UNICEF and UNFPA.                     | Government of Luxemburg<br>3 million<br><br>3 years: 2012-2014  | This joint gender programme will be administrated by the MPF-T Office, under the pass-through modality. Programme document has been approved by Luxemburg (donor), United Nations participating agencies and the Government of Nicaragua (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health). Programme to be signed/initiate implementation in November 2012. |

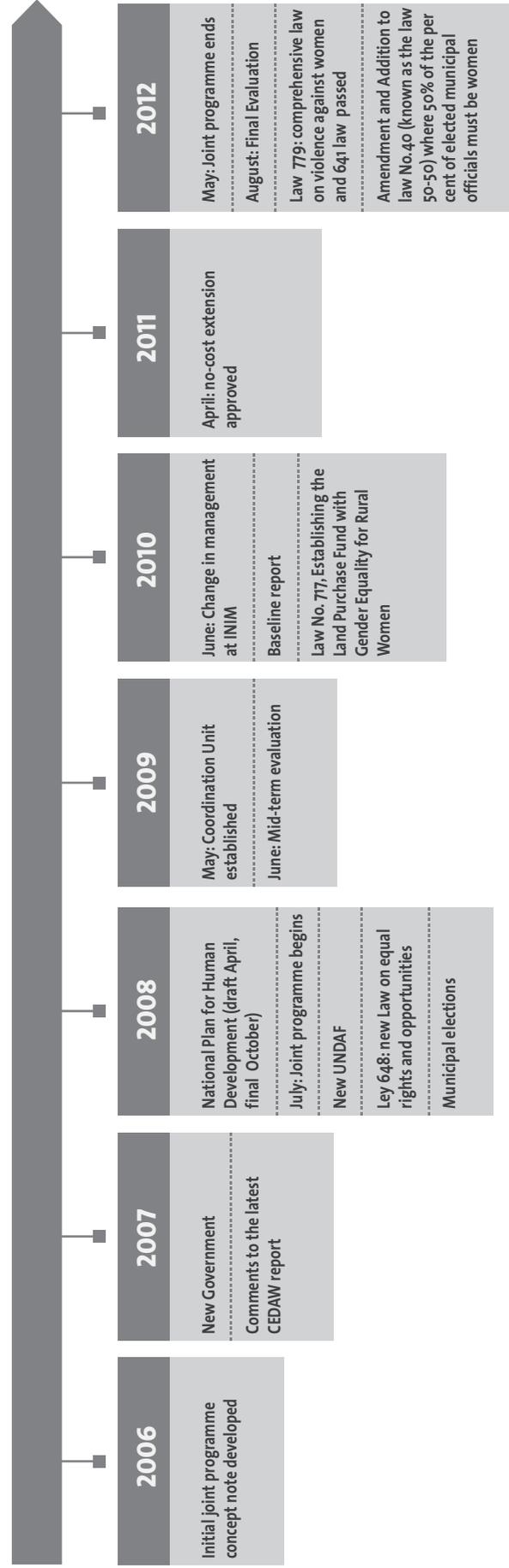
<sup>42</sup> Source: RCO Nicaragua

## Joint Programme Concept Notes elaborated in 2012 as part of the upcoming UNDAF Action Plan 2013-2017

| Name  | Convening agencies | UN participating agencies                        | Donor/ Budget  | Status/ Observation   |
|---|--------------------|--|--|---|
| Adolescent Girl Initiative Trust Fund: Restituyendo derechos de las mujeres adolescentes más difícil de alcanza”                        | UNICEF and UNFPA   | ILO, IOM, PAHO/ WHO, UN Women, UNFPA             | UN Adolescent Trust Fund<br>Amount estimated: \$ 6,000,000 | A concept note has been elaborated.   |
| UN Women Trust Fund   | UN Women           | ILO, IOM, PAHO/ WHO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA | \$ 994,997<br>Requested to Trust Fund                      | Concept note was presented in December as part of the 2011 call for proposals. This joint gender programme is thought to be the basis to formulate a gender violence joint gender programme as part of the new UNDAF 2013-2017.   |
| Productive development of Laguna de Perla: Sustainable Human Tourism  | WTO                | UNESCO and UNDP                                  | \$26,000<br>Funded by the European Union                   | Concept note elaborated. Programme document under formulation.  |
| Rehabilitación socio-ambiental y promoción de la producción sostenible en la parte alta y mediana de la cuenca binacional del río coco. | UNOPS              | Confirmed: UNEP, OPS, UNOPS                      | \$ 5,000,000   | A concept note has been initiated (Draft version – May 2012) between UNOPS, OPS and Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente. This version includes the contributions of the municipalities’ participants in this programme. Mobilization strategy under elaboration. |
| Desarrollo de capacidades en la Costa Caribe  | UNDP               | UNDP, UNICEF                                     | To be defined  | Pending to initiate the formulation with SDCC. UNDP and UNICEF have been leading this process.  |
| Programa Conjunto de No Violencia contra las Mujeres  | UN Women           | ILO, IOM, PAHO/ WHO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA         | To be defined  | A programme profile has been identified and a mapping exercise carried out by the Gender Thematic Group (August 2012). The initiative has been presented to the United Nations country team (September 2012).   |

# ANNEX 6: PROGRAMME TIMELINE

## From Rhetoric to Reality: Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua



# ANNEX 7: HIGHER LEVEL RESULTS IDENTIFIED

The higher level results below represent gains made for both rights holders and duty bearers under the joint gender programme. The precise degree of contribution of the joint gender programme to the higher level results below could not always be fully quantified by the case study – as perhaps would be feasible for example in a full evaluation – but those results included below are ones where the triangulated evidence shows that a sufficient degree of contribution can be reasonably claimed.

**Table 3: Higher level results**

| HIGHER LEVEL RESULTS FOR RIGHTS HOLDERS |   | HIGHER LEVEL RESULTS FOR DUTY BEARERS                                       |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Results area                            | Specific results/ Examples  | Results Area  | Specific results/Examples  |
| <b>Health</b>                           | Increased access for women to sexual and reproductive services  | <b>Improvements in the policy and accountability environment for GEEW</b>   | <p>The INIM undertook a series of diagnoses of the state of gender in all 15 municipalities, as well as a baseline which can now be used to measure progress and to guide municipal policies.</p> <p>In 8 of the 15 gender policies were developed and institutionalized, identifying both roles and functions.</p> <p>Centres for health assistance are now beginning to register cases of violence as part of their health statistics.</p> <p>Methodology to include gender equality developed and incorporated to the '<i>bono productivo Alimentario</i>' of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. It now also includes training on empowerment.</p> |
| <b>Economic empowerment</b>             | Gender integrated into municipal budgets by liaising women producers and their projects to municipal budgets. | <b>Enhanced gender mainstreaming across other ministries or departments</b> | <p>Incorporation of gender practices in the formulation and development of plans, projects and budgets of the 15 municipalities.</p> <p>Gender units now in some of the Ministries</p> <p>Inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators in the guide for the development of budgets at national level.</p>  |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Political or civil participation:</b></p> | <p>Promotion of participatory methodologies, such as assemblies and councils, which increase access of women to participatory budgeting process</p> <p>The legal constitution of 24 women's cooperatives under the Food Production Programme</p> | <p><b>Specific improvements in gender-budgeting</b></p> | <p>Methodology developed to be used as guide for all Ministries to ensure inclusion of GRB. This is already in use in the Treasury, was piloted in the Ministries of Labour and Health. Intention to increase pilot of GRB from two to five Ministries in next budget.</p> <p>Work on GRB led to the creation of a gender unit in the Treasury, which has remained and will be able to oversee and ensure GRB in all the national budgets.</p>  |
|   |  | <p><b>Political or budgetary commitments</b></p>        | <p>Creation of Investment Fund for Gender Equality with a contribution of \$211.664, from the joint gender programme, \$104.507 from municipal budgets and \$40.227 from the communities. This mechanism was not in the original joint gender programme design but stemmed from the concept of shared responsibility.</p> <p>2011 Municipal budgets allocated \$84,421 towards the implementation of 14 projects identified through direct consultations with women.</p> <p>Four agreements with municipalities and private companies to support maternity homes.</p> |

# ANNEX 8: INTERIM RESULTS IDENTIFIED

The table below provides an overview of key interim results achieved, disaggregated for rights holders and duty bearers. This draws on the same sources as above. Triangulation of sources indicated a high degree of joint gender programme contribution to the interim results, as would be expected.

| INTERIM LEVEL RESULTS FOR RIGHTS HOLDERS   |  | INTERIM LEVEL RESULTS FOR DUTY BEARERS                                |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| Results area   | Specific results/Examples  | Results area  | Specific results/Examples  |
| <b>Improved access to services</b>   | <p>Organized community networks for the prevention of GBV as well as 481 women, 284 men and 765 men from health units, allies for women health.</p> <p>Construction of 15 maternity homes, which can house more than 2,600 women awaiting labour, rehabilitated and fully equipped, many of which were part of the 528 women that benefitted from the 'bono productivo', towards production of own food, used both in the shelters and in some schools.</p> <p>12 health fairs at municipal level undertook tests for cervical cancer</p> <p>1,115 women benefited from the credit fund in addition to specialized courses in business, information technology or agricultural practices</p> | <b>Improvements in the capacity of national machinery/ structures</b> | <p>Development of a guide for healthcare workers which indicates steps to follow in cases of GBV "Ruta de la Violencia".</p> <p>Strengthened communication mechanisms between municipal and national authorities which have given way to more context appropriate Government response.</p> |
| <b>Improved awareness of GEEW-related rights</b>                                   | <p>Training of women and men at municipality level on gender and on labour laws</p> <p>Greater awareness of gender indicators within municipal information system for 26 men and 34 women from 15 municipalities and local governments</p>   | <b>Improvements in the national knowledge-base for GEEW issues</b>    | <p>Increased awareness of gender issues through the training of over 1,000 staff from the Ministry of Health.</p> <p>Law for equal rights and opportunities was approved before, the joint gender programme provided copies of it for all the ministries.</p>                              |
| <b>Improvements in the capacity of rights holder groups</b>                        | <p>Primers developed for use in the Ministry for Small and Medium Business (MIPIMES) as a guide for preparing gender-responsive business plans and business network organization</p> <p>Development of small business associations for women.</p>  |   |  |
| <b>Improved capacity of CSOs, women's organizations for networking or advocacy</b> | <p>Greater dialogue between local authorities and civil society regarding women's participation and their ability to impact local policy and budget planning, generated through the holding of regular meetings.</p>   |   |  |

# ANNEX 9: HUMAN RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS

| UN Agency                                    | Title                                       | Percentage of time allocated to the joint gender programme (%) |
|--|---|--|
| Coordinating Agency & Lead Agency:<br>UNFPA  | UNFPA Country Representative                | 10   |
|  | UNFPA Deputy                                | 10   |
|  | UNFPA Gender Officer                        | 60   |
|  | Gender focal point                          | 20   |
|  | National Officer for Security Sector Reform | 15   |
|  | Population and Development Officer          | 10   |
|  | Administrative assistant                    | 30   |
| Management Unit                              | Joint Gender Programme coordinator *        | 100  |
|  | Specialist for Outcomes 1 & 3*              | 50   |
|  | Specialist for Outcome 2 *                  | 50   |
|  | 5 UNVs*                                     | 100  |
|  | Administrative assistant*                   | 100  |
|  | driver *                                    | 100  |
| Lead Agency: UN WOMEN<br>Outcome 1: UN WOMEN | Country coordinator for UN WOMEN Nicaragua  | 33   |
|  | Specialist for Outcome 1 *                  | 40   |
| Lead Agency: UNCDF<br>Outcome 2: UNCDF       | Programme coordinator UNCDF                 | 35   |
|  | Administrative assistant                    | 25   |
|  | Specialist Outcome 2 UNCDF *                | 50   |
| Lead Agency: UNDP<br>Outcome 3: UNDP         | Gender officer                              | 40   |
|  | Specialist Outcome 1 *                      | 10   |
| WHO  | Coordination PAHO/WHO/MDG-F                 | 30   |
|  | Programme assistant                         | 30   |

|        |   |    |
|--------|---|----|
| FAO    | Coordinator FAO MDG-F                                     | 30 |
|        | Technical assistant                                       | 30 |
|        | Administrative assistant                                  | 40 |
| ILO    | National programme officer, coordinator for ILO component | 50 |
|        | Technical assistant                                       | 25 |
| WFP    | Gender focal point  | 80 |
| UNICEF | Programme officer   | 30 |

# ANNEX 10: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- African Development Bank (2011) Mainstreaming gender equality: A road to results of a road to nowhere? An evaluation synthesis
- Amnesty international (2010) Listen to their Voices and Act. Stop the Rape and Sexual Abuse of Girls in Nicaragua 25 November 2010
- Asensio Flórez, Celso, Hurtado Cabrera, Maria and Sánchez Barquero, Ana Maria (2012) Evaluación final del Programa Conjunto De la Retórica a la Realidad: Hacia la Equidad de Género y Empoderamiento de las Mujeres a través de la participación y Prácticas de Género en los Presupuestos Públicos
- Center for Human rights and Humanitarian law (2011) Human Rights Situation of Women in Nicaragua Report on Inter-American commission hearing: Nicaragua, 27 March 2011. <http://hrbrief.org/2011/03/human-rights-situation-of-women-in-nicaragua/>
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- 'From Rhetoric to Reality': Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua (2009-2012) Biannual Progress Reports, internal unpublished documents
- 'From Rhetoric to Reality': Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua (2009 and 2012) Marco de Resultados
- 'From Rhetoric to Reality': Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua (2012) DVD with life stories of beneficiaries internal unpublished document
- 'From Rhetoric to Reality': Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua (2008) signed PRODOC, available at <http://www.mdgfund.org/program/rhetoricrealitypromotingwomensparticipationandgenderresponsivebudgeting>
- 'From Rhetoric to Reality': Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua (2009) Taller de Inducción Voluntarios/as Programa Conjunto de Género, Mayo 2009 internal unpublished document
- 'From Rhetoric to Reality': Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua (2009-2012) Plan de Mejora available at <http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/Nicaragua20-20Gender20-20Improvement20Plan.pdf>
- 'From Rhetoric to Reality': Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua (2008) Signed approval memo, internal unpublished document
- 'From Rhetoric to Reality': Promoting Women's Participation and Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Nicaragua (2011) No-cost Extension approval memo, internal unpublished document
- Government of Nicaragua (2008) National Plan for Human Development 2008-2011
- Government of Nicaragua (2012) National Plan for Human Development 2012-2017
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (2012). Country Programme between Finland and Nicaragua 2012. Evaluation report 2012:1.
- UN (2000) Common Country Assessment, Nicaragua

- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006). Fourth periodic report of States parties (22 March).
- UN (2006) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports, 27 October 2006
- UN (2007) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Thirty-seventh session 15 January-2 February 2007 CEDAW/C/NIC/CO/6
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- UN (2008) UNDAF Nicaragua (2008-2012)
- UNDP (2011) Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office Administrative Agent Brief internal unpublished document
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