



Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the UN System Briefing Note: Summary of Interim Emerging Findings

This **Briefing Note** is being provided as a background document for the **Joint Executive Board Meeting of February 2013**. The information contained hoped to be a useful input on joint programmes on gender equality in the UN system at country-level as part of the overall discussion on ‘**Operationalizing the decisions of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)**’. The final evaluation report that contains final validated findings and recommendations will be available in June 2013.

1. Background to the Evaluation

The Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality (JGPs) in the UN System is a collaborative effort by UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, the MDG-Fund, as well as the Governments of Spain and Norway as partners, managed jointly by each agency’s respective evaluation office and conducted by an independent evaluation team. It is the first ever evaluation of its kind, with the purpose of providing ‘evaluative information for the strategic direction and use of JGPs within the UN system reform process and support future policy and guidance on their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for a more coordinated and affective UN system contribution to advance gender equality at the country level’. The evaluation aims to assess: the relevance of JGPs to national contexts; the overall contribution of JGPs to national development results on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE); the sustainability of these results; and the role of JGPs in creating synergies in efforts for gender mainstreaming.

The evaluation is focused on country level JGPs, defined as those programmes that involve two or more UN organisations and (sub) national partners that have jointly signed a programme document and which have an explicit objective of empowering women and/or promoting gender equality at the strategic level and/or women and/or girls may constitute the main beneficiaries/programme partners. It does not include joint programmes that mainstream gender equality. The Evaluation has four main stages; Inception (completed July 2012); Desk Review (August-October 2012); Field case studies (November 2012 - February 2013); and Synthesis (March - June 2013). A final Synthesis Evaluation Report will be issued in June 2013 and disseminated.¹

2. The Interim Desk Review: purpose and limitations

This Briefing Note synthesises the Interim Desk Review Report of the Evaluation, indicated above. A representative sample of 24 JGPs implemented between 2006 and 2010 has been systematically analysed, and interviews conducted with interlocutors (UN, country governments and donors, and civil society organizations) at country level. The findings presented here are **interim only**, and are yet to be tested and refined through fieldwork. No evaluative judgments have consequently been made; these are reserved for analysis during the Synthesis stage to be finalized in 2013.

3. Interim Emerging Findings

a) Design: *To what extent have JGPs been conceptualized, planned and designed jointly to respond to international, regional and national commitments?*

Thus far, the Evaluation finds the majority of JGP designs reviewed to be **aligned with national priorities** on gender equality. Design processes have been generally **joint and inclusive**, though the voices of women and civil society occur mainly as ‘programme implementers’, rather than strategic partners for gender equality at

¹ For more information on the evaluation including the TOR please see: <http://www.unwomen.org/about-us/evaluation/ongoing-strategic-evaluations/>

country level. However, a clear ‘vision’ of JGP potential to be ‘**more than the sum of its parts**’, and associated implications for co-ordination on the ground, are often absent. This is reflected in commonly over-ambitious designs; unrealistic timeframes; and assumed capacity of partners – including UN agencies - to deliver results.

Key areas seen lacking at design stage include: **analysis** of country conduciveness for joint programming; technical **gender expertise** (particularly regretted by national counterparts); shared visions for **intended results**; joint **risk assessments**; clear statements of **accountability**; and a **strategic overview** of how to maximise results through joint implementation. Few JGP designs also assess **coherence** with other JGPs operating concurrently. There appears a widespread assumption that ‘joint programmes’ equals ‘parallel activities’ or ‘business as usual’.

b) Delivering results and value added: *To what extent have JGPs achieved results on GEWE at the national level; and has collaborating through a JGP facilitated UN agencies and their partners to enhance the level of results achieved?*

Despite shortcomings in design, many **relevant higher and interim level results** from JGPs analysed can be seen for both rights-holders and duty-bearers. Examples include: improved **responses to gender-based violence**; and **positive changes in health, education, economic empowerment and political/civil participation for women**. These occur alongside improved policy environments; enhanced gender mainstreaming and budgeting within ministries and departments; legislative reforms; and political/budgetary commitments to gender. Please see **Table 1** for specific results gleaned at this interim stage.

For some JGPs, the modality has helped create shared visions for gender equality and women’s empowerment; raised gender-related issues on national agendas; stimulated donor interest; and supported a multidimensional approach. **These are powerful potential benefits** for supporting results on gender equality and women’s empowerment. But, they have not commonly been fully realised in implementation. **Division of labour** – rather than a coherent approach to execution – predominates; and **disbursement delays** are widespread, attributed mainly to UN procedures.

Key implementation weaknesses identified include: insufficiently clear and understood **management and leadership** strategies; inadequate **staffing** (seniority and expertise); and weak mechanisms for **accountability**. Emerging evidence shows few improvements in **efficiency** through the use of the JGP modality and in fact some increases for partners in aid burdens. This is partly due to the learning curve that joint programming implies, partly to the lack of a culture change in UN operations at the country level and partly to other exogenous factors.

c) Sustainability, national partnerships and ownership, and people-centred approaches: *To what extent and in what ways JGPs have contributed to governments meeting national and international commitments to GEWE and fulfilling their obligations towards women’s and girls’ human rights; while also supporting rights-holders to demand their rights?*

All JGPs reviewed at this interim stage – though to different degrees - support **national efforts** to realise commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment. Many are integrated with national machineries. **National partners** are included in decision-making structures; though weighted towards government representatives. **Capacity development efforts**, particularly with government partners, are emphasised; though these rarely adopt a coherent or systematic approach. **Sustainability strategies** largely emphasise supporting government ownership rather than national ownership. **Power, influence and resources** are felt by most external partners to remain concentrated in the UN.

d) Synergies: *To what extent and in what ways have JGPs contributed to improved gender equality mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in other UN programmes and efforts at country level?*

JGPs analysed have contributed positively to **complementary and synergistic efforts** on UN and partner efforts towards improving gender equality and women’s empowerment at national level. Key gains include: new or improved **communication lines** between partners; and greater **coordination and collaboration** within and between among national stakeholders and the UN. However, a continued **tendency to work bilaterally**, and a steep **learning curve** surrounding ‘joint working’, are powerful emerging themes.

4. Emerging conditions for results on gender equality and women’s empowerment and barriers to achievement to be further explored

At interim stage, the evaluation has identified a number of emerging exogenous and endogenous emerging conditions which enable or hinder the achievement of results on gender equality and women’s empowerment through the JGP modality. Emerging **conditions** include:

Exogenous

- Enabling policy frameworks and mechanisms for gender equality
- Conducive national context and aid architecture to joint programming, including capacity and political will
- Enabling environment provided by UN offices at HQ, regional and country level
- Participation of key partners, including donors and civil society in design and implementation
- Civil society with the capacity, political space and willingness to strategically engage
- Sustained political interest in, and commitment to, gender equality and women’s empowerment
- Conducive UN reform movements, including Delivering As One and associated structures and mechanisms, to joint gender programming

Endogenous

- Common vision and results developed, and implications of joint working assessed
- Application of relevant analysis early, including capacity assessments
- Focus on national ownership/leadership
- Empowered JGP management and co-ordination function
- Staffing requirements met (expertise, seniority and time)
- Use of funding modalities fit for context
- Clear management and performance reporting strategies and roles
- Full accountability mechanisms including sanctions for poor delivery
- Design and delivery geared to sustainability
- Prioritisation of knowledge management

Emerging **barriers** to achieving results on gender equality and women’s empowerment include:

Exogenous

- Overly broad guiding national strategies / policy frameworks which do not prioritise gender
- Weak national aid-co-ordination structures / internal co-ordination processes
- Slow national procedures & decision-making processes e.g. procurement
- An only nascent or limited civil society
- Limited depth and sincerity of national commitment (political will / cultural dimensions)
- Rapid staff turnover within national ministries and departments

- Dwindling donor interest in/support for UN reform

Endogenous

- Lack of a clear vision and intended results
- Failure to anticipate conceptual and operational issues of working jointly
- Failure to anticipate risk / clarify accountability
- UN cultural tendency to work bilaterally
- Individual agency procedures limit delivery e.g. disbursement delays
- Loss of UN agency or partner interest in JGP when not accompanied by resources
- Insufficient dedicated staff time / expert and senior staff, high levels of turnover

These are being further tested and refined through fieldwork in Albania, Kenya, Liberia, Nicaragua and oPt.

Table 1: Summary results areas identified through desk review			
Higher level results for rights holders		Higher level results for duty-bearers	
Results area	Specific results / examples	Results area	Specific results / examples
Gender based violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in tolerance increases in number of cases reported • Increase in follow-up activities by authorities increase in number of prosecutions by courts 	Improvements in the policy environment for GEWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National plans, strategies, policies or action plans targeting GEWE issues developed, validated or implemented.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in attitude towards maternal and neo-natal health among the target population; • Increased health intervention-seeking behaviour • Increased proportion of births in health facilities and births by C-section • Reduced maternal and neo-natal case fatalities in the target population • (HIV and AIDS) increased numbers of people going for Voluntary Counselling and Testing • Increased use of condoms. 	Enhanced gender mainstreaming across other ministries or departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of gender focal points within ministries • Application of gender sensitive practices within departments • Drafting of Gender Mainstreaming Strategies and action plans • Recruitment of JGP staff into national ministries to work on thematic areas related to GEWE
Economic Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to assets and services among target populations • Increased employability / entrepreneurship among beneficiaries 	Improvements in gender budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolling out of gender budgeting within central and decentralised agencies, and within CSOs • Including gender sensitive indicators in the national fiscal monitoring system
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased enrolment and retention among girls 	Legislative changes / legal reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of new laws e.g. Law on Domestic violence and its National Action Plan • Improvements in judicial process around e.g. Gender Based Violence • Expansion of social safety net schemes to include vulnerable women
Political or civil participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation of women in local administrative or municipal decision making structures • Increased participation of women in national parliaments or legislative bodies 	Political or budgetary commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource allocation, policy instruments or institutional reforms, as well as normative mechanisms to delivering on GEWE issues • Enhanced government willingness to support CEDAW and shadow CEDAW reporting

Interim level results for rights holders		Interim level results for duty bearers	
Results area	Specific results / examples	Results area	Specific results / examples
Improved access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in the structures, services and processes to address GBV e.g. referral pathways for psycho social support and access to judicial redress and safe houses • Improved access to healthcare for women and girls 	Improvements in the capacity of national machinery / structures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in the visibility and institutional capacity of national gender machinery e.g. to coordinate stakeholders and interventions for gender mainstreaming • More sensitised civil services to GEWE issues • More sensitive local services on gender-related issues e.g. to support victims of GBV or provide MNH services • Formation of gender audit team • Enhanced policy design capacity • More sensitised judiciary • Improved national systems for data gathering on GEWE issues
Improved awareness of GEWE-related rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved public awareness and openness about domestic violence • Greater understanding of maternal and neonatal health issues through use of campaigns and education • Increased awareness around child labour through information dissemination 	Improvements in the national knowledge base for GEWE issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in databases / greater disaggregation of statistics • Improved knowledge through specific GEWE issues • Improved reporting of cases of gender-based rights abuses or violations
Improvements in the capacity of rights holder groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater entrepreneurial capability and leadership • Improved understanding of peacebuilding and conflict prevention • Improved 'life skills' inter alia 	Availability of tools and standards for GEWE-sensitive policymaking / gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and documentation on the main GE issues currently in need of being addressed in the country • Creation of tools for integration of gender issues into budgets and institutional spending • Implementation gender audits • Carrying out of training workshop and manual on incorporating gender into departmental planning and programme formulation • Creation of protocols for dealing with victims of violence
Improved capacity of CSOs, women's organisations for networking or advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved capacities of CSOs to advocate for and provide services • Improved advocacy capacity of key actors and improvements in the co-ordination and networking of civil society at a regional level • Improved policy advocacy with MP involvement 		