



UN-HABITAT EVALUATION BRIEF

Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in UN-Habitat Evaluation Report 1/2011

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 1991, UN-Habitat established the Women and Habitat Programme. Since then, UN-Habitat has been implementing programmes directly linked to women's participation in human settlements development and management with the ultimate goal of ensuring women's rights through empowerment. In 1996, the first edition of UN-Habitat's gender policy was adopted. The policy was revised in 2002 with the overall objective to mainstream gender equality and women's rights into all of the UN-Habitat activities and policy decisions. UN-Habitat took another step towards gender mainstreaming in 2007 with the adoption of the Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP) (2008-2013) by the Governing Council through resolution 21/2. The MTSIP emphasizes that cross-cutting issues such as gender, environment, youth and disaster are to be duly reflected in the implementation of the Enhanced, Normative and Operational Framework.

The formulation of UN-Habitat's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) in 2009 was a strategic initiative by UN-Habitat to create a more strategic and coherent approach to strengthening the MTSIP in integrating and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and a framework guiding the progress. The Action Plan aims to promote women's rights, empowerment and gender-responsive sustainable urbanization policies at national and local levels. It is implemented through the Gender Equality Programme with the objective of reinforcing gender as a cross-cutting issue in all UN-Habitat's activities. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess what UN-Habitat has achieved in mainstreaming gender equality in its programmes, the appropriateness of its institutional arrangements and strategic partnerships for gender equality and to recommend how gender mainstreaming can be improved.

2. EVALUATION PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted by two independent consultants and gender specialists, Ms. Lucy Earle and Ms. Britha Mikkelsen, and managed by the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (now Evaluation Unit) in close coordination with Gender Mainstreaming Unit and the Gender Task Force.

The evaluation focused on assessment of gender mainstreaming in programmes, projects and policies in four of the MTSIP's six focus areas (Focus Areas 2-5). Data collection for the evaluation involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods including literature reviews, face-to-face interviews with UN-Habitat staff members, self-evaluations using the Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat (SWOT) methodology, evaluation workshop with Gender Focal Points, coverage of country and regional perspectives through email and telephone interviews, discussion and dialogue.

The country level perspective on gender mainstreaming was also assessed during a field visit to Senegal. Self-evaluations and questionnaires to the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), and country offices in Afghanistan and Pakistan provided regional and country perspectives on UN-Habitat's work in the humanitarian area. Limitations to the evaluation included difficulty of gauging results and impacts from document review and interviews with staff alone, and the need to focus on a relatively small sample of work in one country office (Senegal) and one regional office (ROAP) and small sample of partners.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

Strategic Focus and Institutional Arrangements

- UN-Habitat has sought to mainstream gender into its activities and policies.

However, efforts are not uniform in strength across the organizations.

- The formulation of Gender Equality Action Plan was an attempt to pursue a more strategic and coherent approach to gender mainstreaming across the agency. It sets out a series of frameworks that specify outputs, activities, indicators, responsibilities, potential partners, expected funding and timeframe, and anticipated results/outcomes for each focus area for MTSIP 2008-2013.
- The Gender Mainstreaming Unit has made a commendable attempt to involve itself in the strategic planning process for gender mainstreaming but was left on its own with limited input from programmes and focus areas.
- The primary actors in the effort to achieve the gender mainstreaming goals include many actors: the Gender Mainstreaming Unit, the network of Gender Focal Points and the Gender Task Force. However, the roles and responsibilities of key actors have not been adequately developed to ensure that the 'decentralized' model is effective.
- A number of Gender Focal Points were found to have high-level expertise in gender analysis and technical skills and the group is an asset for delivering on the agency's commitments to gender mainstreaming.
- The Gender Mainstreaming Unit is at its lowest staffing level with only two professionals; a Programme Officer and an Administrative Assistant.

Policy and Programming

- UN-Habitat has produced quality policy papers and research documents analyzing gender inequalities in human settlements and for the development of tools to counter gender discrimination.
- UN-Habitat's work on governance and security in cities has demonstrated awareness of problems associated with gender blindness within local government institutions.

- The extent to which UN-Habitat programmes and polices address discrimination and empowerment of women varies between the MTISP focus areas and between normative and operational work.
- UN-Habitat has taken considerable steps in promoting women's access to security of tenure, legislation of land and housing, women's legal ownership of property and improved women security.
- The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) has produced innovative tools used at the grass roots to assess the gender sensitivity of land policy.
- UN-Habitat's work in access to water and sanitation shows high degree of gender sensitivity.

Partnerships

- UN-Habitat's institutionalized partnerships with the Huairou Commission and with UNIFEM (UN Women) through Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to entrench work on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- There is ongoing scope for partnerships with professional organizations, such as surveyors, architects, researchers and also with local government. The working relationship between the Gender Water Alliance specialists is a positive example of a partnership at the operations level.
- Findings from the field visit to Senegal show that partners who are implementing the agency's programmes and projects are not necessarily willing or able to ensure that their work is gender sensitive.
- Given the size and capacity of UN-Habitat's country teams, there is a need for greater support for UN-Habitat Programme Managers to promote work towards gender equality with partners.

4. MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- There is not one model or solution for how to best to mainstream gender that can be applied to all organizations.
- Gender mainstreaming is a concept that is deeply ingrained in international development policies.
- Implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan requires mutual strengthening of activities and sharing of knowledge within and across the agency's programmes.

- The situation of women is unlikely to improve unless initiatives are undertaken at local level.
- Relevant gender indicators are hard to develop by a central Unit. For gender indicators to be relevant for monitoring purposes in particular units, programmes and projects, they need to be developed and prioritized in close collaboration with technical specialists who are familiar with the thematic area and country contexts.
- Choice of partners affects the extent to which a project's work is gender sensitive. Partnerships need to be nurtured and conflicts addressed and one cannot assume that non-gender specific partners at country level will have skills to undertake gender analysis, gender sensitive surveys and so on. Support to build capacity is required, particularly at country level.

5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- UN-Habitat should operationalize, implement and monitor selected activities outlined in Gender Equality Action Plan.
- Senior management and programme managers should be held accountable for commitments on gender equality in their work areas.
- The Action Plan should be aligned with the MTSIP monitoring processes and collect gender disaggregated data for existing indicators.
- The responsibility for coordinating monitoring of the GEAP should rest with the Gender Task Force.
- The Programme Review Committee should ensure commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in project and programme documents are included in monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- UN-Habitat Management should clarify the mandate of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit and its role with partners.
- The Gender Mainstreaming Unit should consider alternative ways to fundraise for gender specialist positions in the agency.
- Gender policy guidance material produced by UN-habitat should integrate key findings from relevant research on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Programmes and projects should be designed with indicators to assess impact on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- UN-Habitat should actively pursue opportunities to partner with UN Women, particularly at country level. The partner base should be diversified beyond grassroots networks.
- Programmes on basic services provision should ensure gender sensitivity/equality of access and actively promote women in management roles.
- To improve coherence between normative and operational work, gender specialists need to be placed strategically—in regions and in collaboration with the Regional and Technical Cooperation Division.
- The Gender Mainstreaming Unit and the Agency as a whole should consider how they can improve dialogue and links between country offices and headquarters.
- The Agency's own policy lessons on the need to actively support women's rights to land and housing in post-crisis situations must be incorporated into programming.
- The agency should consider applying the GLTN's gender evaluation criteria into its own programmes and land in post-conflict situations.
- Work of Gender Focal Points should be recognized in the staff appraisal system and management should ensure there are appropriate incentives, accountability, time and dedicated resources.
- The Gender Mainstreaming Unit should provide intellectual leadership, engage with senior management, mobilize partnerships, fundraise, coordinate gender mainstreaming and capacity building, facilitate support to countries and regions and develop and disseminate knowledge products.
- The organization should use its educational training materials to challenge gender stereotypes around household labour.
- Partners and programme staff need training and support in survey design and analysis of data.
- The draft partnership strategy should include criteria on willingness and ability of the proposed partner to adopt mutual approaches to gender equality.
- Given the stated goal of UN Women to increase its work at country level, UN-Habitat should identify opportunities for joint programming.
- UN-Habitat should increase its engagement on Safer Cities Initiative with UNIFEM and establishing ways to take on its role as lead global partner.