**Strengthening inclusive evaluations: A case of inclusive gender thematic evaluation in Somalia**

UNDP Somalia has been strengthening inclusive evaluations to ensure involvement of all stakeholders especially, youth, women and the marginalized. A gender thematic evaluation conducted in 2024 utilized various methodologies, including a theory of change (TOC), gender mainstreaming approaches, SWOT analysis, and mixed methods to collect data. This helped establish causal links between development challenges and UNDP-supported interventions under the project outcome. The Gender thematic evaluation involved stakeholders such as government officials, donors, civil society organizations, women’s networks, UN agencies, academics, private sector representatives, and community members.

The evaluation included traditional methodologies including review of key strategies and documents and stakeholder interviews and use of evaluation reference groups.

However, a key dimension to the data collection involved training facilitators within the community to conduct focus group discussions and SWOT analysis amongst themselves in hard-to-reach areas. The exercise served not only to provide data for the evaluation but also served as a reflection event within the community, and in a way elicited immediate implementation of recommendations as key issues were identified. The participants and facilitators provided positive to the facilitators and wished these kinds of exercises were conducted more as part of community engagement.

The evaluation found that gender equality mainstreaming in the CPD is highly relevant to national priorities and well-aligned with UNDP’s and Somalia's gender strategies. UNDP Somalia’s ability to produce high-quality gender analysis focused on women and girls is a key strength. The UNDP Country Office (CO) has facilitated inclusive dialogues among federal and state governments, local authorities, and women networks, creating safe spaces for marginalized groups. However, recognizing these groups as agents of change is still in its early stages.

Gender considerations are crucial in development evaluations, especially in contexts like Somalia, where gender disparities significantly impact social and economic outcomes. Somalia, with its history of conflict, political instability, and cultural traditions, presents unique challenges and opportunities for integrating gender perspectives into evaluations. This paper explores the importance of gender in evaluations in Somalia, the challenges faced, and strategies for effectively incorporating gender analysis into evaluation processes. Gender analysis in evaluations ensures that the distinct experiences, needs, and contributions of men, women, boys, and girls are adequately captured.

However, challenges include cultural barriers, security concerns, data availability and capacity constraints. This paper seeks to share experiences on effective strategies for gender sensitive evaluations including training, inclusive data collection and use of technology.