

**MID-TERM EXTERNAL EVALUATION
OF PHASE II OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAM:**

**Developing Capacities for the Gender Analysis of the Region's Economies and
Conditions for Positioning the Women's Agenda in the New Stage of Trade
Opening**

MEX 30-00052789 "Women's Economic Agenda, WEA"

Final Report

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADIM	Asociación Alternativa para el Desarrollo Integral de las Mujeres (<i>Alternative Association for the Integrated Development of Women</i>)
AECI or AECID	Spanish Agency for International Cooperation
ANMPAR	Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Productoras Agroindustriales Rurales, (<i>National Association of Rural Agroindustrial Productive Women</i>)
CA	Central America
CAFTA	Central American Free Trade Agreement
CAMIPYME	Centro de Apoyo a la Micro, Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (<i>Support Center for the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise</i>)
CCSICA	Consejo Consultivo del Sistema de Integración Centroamericana (<i>Consultative Committee of the Central American Integration System</i>)
CEFEMINA	Centro Feminista de Información y Acción (<i>Feminist Center for Information and Action</i>)
CEIMM	Centro de Estudios e Información de la Mujer Multiétnica (<i>Center of Research and Information on Multiethnic Women</i>)
CELADE	Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre
CIDEUR	Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios sobre el Desarrollo Urbano, Paraguay (<i>Interdisciplinary Center for Studies on Urban Development, Paraguay</i>)
CIEM-UCR	Centro de Investigación en Estudios de la Mujer-Universidad de Costa Rica (<i>Research Center for the Study of Women-University of Costa Rica</i>)
CMO	Consejo de Mujeres del Occidente (<i>Western Women's Council</i>)
CMYDR	Comisión Interinstitucional de Mujer y Desarrollo Rural (<i>Inter-institutional Commission of Women and Rural Development</i>)
COCOCH	Consejo Coordinador de Organizaciones Campesinas de Honduras (<i>Honduran Coordinating Council of Peasant Organizations</i>)
COLPROCE	Colegio de Profesionales en Ciencias Económicas, El Salvador (<i>School of Professionals in Economic Sciences, El Salvador</i>)
COMMCA	Consejo de Ministras de la Mujer Centroamericana (<i>Council of Women Ministers for the Central American Women</i>)
CONAFRUVE	Conglomerado Agroindustrial de Frutas y Vegetales de Nicaragua (<i>Nicaraguan Fruit and Vegetable Agroindustrial Conglomerate</i>)
CONIMIPYME	Consejo Nicaragüense de la Micro, Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (<i>Nicaraguan Council for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises</i>)
CSUCA	Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (<i>Higher Council for Central American Universities</i>)
DEMI	Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena (<i>Ombudsman's Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women</i>)
DIGESTYC	Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censo, El Salvador (<i>General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses, El Salvador</i>)
DIPPEGEP	Diplomado de Presupuestos Públicos Pro-Equidad de Género contra la Pobreza, FLACSO, Mexico (<i>Diploma Course on Public Budgets Pro-Gender Equality against Poverty, FLACSO, Mexico</i>)
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ENA	Encuesta Nacional Agropecuaria, Guatemala (<i>National Agricultural Survey, Guatemala</i>)

ET	Evaluation team
EU-CAAA	European Union-Central America Association Agreement
FEMUPROCAM	Federación Agropecuaria de Cooperativas de Mujeres Productoras del Campo de Nicaragua (<i>Nicaraguan Agriculture Federation of Women Field Farmer Cooperatives</i>)
FIDEG	Fundación Internacional para el Desafío Económico Global, Nicaragua (<i>International Foundation for Global Economic Challenge, Nicaragua</i>)
FLACSO	Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences
FMICA	Foro de Mujeres para la Integración Centroamericana (<i>Women's Forum for Central American Integration</i>)
FNM	Foro Nacional de la Mujer, Guatemala (<i>National Forum for Women, Guatemala</i>)
FOIL	Formación Ocupacional e Inserción Laboral (<i>Occupational Formation and Integration into the Workforce</i>)
FORUMSYD/FED	Fondo para la Equidad y los Derechos Sexuales y los Derechos Reproductivos (<i>Fund for Equity and Sexual and Reproductive Rights</i>)
FUMDEC	Fundación Mujer y Desarrollo Económico Comunitario, Nicaragua (<i>Women and Community Economic Development Foundation, Nicaragua</i>)
FUNDE	Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo, El Salvador (<i>National Foundation for Development, El Salvador</i>)
FUNDEMUNI	Fundación de Desarrollo Municipal, Nicaragua (<i>Foundation for Municipal Development, Nicaragua</i>)
GED	Gender, Economy and Development
GEM LAC	Red de Género y Macroeconomía de América Latina (<i>Latin American Gender and Macroeconomics Network</i>)
GDP	Gross domestic product
GRB	Gender-responsive budgets
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
ICEFI	Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMU	Instituto de Investigación, Capacitación y Desarrollo de la Mujer, El Salvador (<i>Institute for Research, Training, and Advancement of Women, El Salvador</i>)
INAM	Instituto Nacional de la Mujer, Honduras (<i>National Institute for Women, Honduras</i>)
INAMU	Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, Costa Rica (<i>National Institute for Women, Costa Rica</i>)
INATEC	Instituto Nacional Tecnológico, Nicaragua (<i>National Technological Institute, Nicaragua</i>)
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Guatemala (<i>National Statistics Institute, Guatemala</i>)
INEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, Costa Rica (<i>National Statistical Institute, Costa Rica</i>)
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, Mexico (<i>National Institute of Statistics and Geography, Mexico</i>)
INIDE	Instituto Nacional de Información de Desarrollo, Nicaragua (<i>National Institute for Development Information, Nicaragua</i>)

INIM	Instituto Nicaragüense de la Mujer (<i>Nicaraguan Institute for Women</i>)
INPYME	Instituto Nicaragüense de Apoyo a la Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (<i>Nicaraguan Institute for the Support of the Small and Medium Enterprise</i>)
ISDEMU	Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer (<i>Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women</i>)
IUCN	World Conservation Union
IUMUSAC	Instituto Universitario de la Mujer de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (<i>University Institute for Women of Guatemala's University of San Carlos</i>)
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account
MEC	Movimiento de Mujeres Empleadas y Desempleadas Maria Elena Cuadra (<i>Working and Unemployed Women's Movement Maria Elena Cuadra</i>)
MIFIC	Ministerio de Fomento, Industria y Comercio, Nicaragua (<i>Nicaraguan Ministry of Development, Industry, and Commerce</i>)
MINECO	Ministerio de Economía, Guatemala (<i>Ministry of Economy, Guatemala</i>)
MyDEL	Programa Mujeres y Desarrollo Económico Local (<i>Women and Local Economic Development Program</i>)
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee
ORMUSA	Organización de Mujeres Salvadoreñas (<i>Salvadorean Women Organization</i>)
PARLACEN	Central American Parliament
PEMCE	Programa Promoviendo la Equidad Mediante el Crecimiento Económico (<i>Program for Promoting Equity through Economic Growth</i>)
PNDPMG	Política Nacional para el Desarrollo y Promoción de las Mujeres Guatemaltecas (<i>National Policy for the Development and Promotion of Guatemalan Women</i>)
PNED	Plan Nacional de Empleo Digno, Honduras (<i>National Plan for Dignified Work, Honduras</i>)
PRODELMAS	Programa de Desarrollo Económico Local de Masaya, Nicaragua (<i>Program for the Local Economic Development of Masaya, Nicaragua</i>)
PRODOC	Program document
PROMIPYME	Programa de Desarrollo de la Micro, Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (<i>Support Program for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises</i>)
RUTA	Unidad de Regional de Asistencia Técnica (<i>Regional Technical Assistance Unit</i>)
SEPREM	Presidential Secretariat for Women (Guatemala)
SICA	Central American Integration System
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SIECA	Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration
SNIP	Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública (<i>National Public Investment System</i>)
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
STRO	Social Trade Organisation
SWISSCONTAC	Swiss Foundation for Technical Development
TC	Technical Coordinator (WEA)
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCA	Central American University José Simeón Cañas
UCA-N	Central American University (Nicaragua)
UES	University of El Salvador

UMCAH	Unión de Mujeres Campesinas de Honduras (<i>Union of Rural Women of Honduras</i>)
UNAG	Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos, Nicaragua (<i>Nicaraguan National Union of Farmers and Ranchers</i>)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for the Development of Women
UNPFA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIRSE	Unión Nicaragüense para la Responsabilidad Social Empresarial (<i>Nicaraguan Union for Corporate Social Responsibility</i>)
URACCAN	Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense (<i>University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast</i>)
WB	World Bank
WEA	Women's Economic Agenda
WINNER	Women into the New Network for Entrepreneurial Reinforcement

1. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The WEA is an innovative program, with great potential for generating changes to correct the gender-based inequalities existing in Central America and to contribute to the advancement of women in the region. The Program's general strategic statement is practical and partially innovative. It opens up a new field of work for UNIFEM that involves influencing policies in terms of gender equality and reducing the asymmetries in the distribution of the benefits of economic production. Overall, the Program is relevant to UNIFEM's mandate and current strategic plan and is also relevant in relation to the mandate, objectives, and strategies of partner organizations and beneficiaries. It is perceived that the actions of the WEA do serve the real economic needs of women, primarily at the country level.

Phase II of the Program has implemented an effective system of collegiate direction between sectors of the government, civil society, academic community, and private sector, together with international cooperation agencies, creating the synergies necessary to guarantee advances toward the goal of women's economic autonomy.

Program evaluability for the period analyzed (2006-2008) was poor, as PRODOC's logical framework does not fully meet UNIFEM standards and generally accepted planning procedures. It should be noted, however, that subsequent Annual Operational Plans (2008-2010) improved Program evaluability as verifiable results were defined, with adequate process and outcome indicators, resources assigned to specific activities, and responsible persons per activity. However, these plans were designed based on thematic areas, and Program outputs are not defined in relation to the objectives initially set by the PRODOC.

Program effectiveness is, in general terms, satisfactory, more than satisfactory in the case of the objective related to spaces for dialogue, and unsatisfactory in the case of the objective of incorporating the women's economic agenda into national and regional economic agendas. Greater coherence is needed between the different activities carried out by the WEA, and greater advantage must be taken of the different national experiences so that these can be replicated in other countries, accelerating the advances made toward achieving such a crucial objective as this one.

During the Program's short life span, several actors recognized the WEA as an opportunity to generate and disseminate ideas on Gender and Economics in Central America. Women's organizations, in particular, find support in the WEA as a provider of statistics and accompaniment to endorse their struggles.

Phase I of the WEA was effective in producing publications and other documents of rigorous research on Gender and Economics in the region. The institutional credibility that has resulted has been good in terms of WEA's prestige as knowledge generator. It is noticed, however, that there is no balance between the production of documents and the dissemination of knowledge generated. Efforts should be better focused on building informed positions through formation processes, sensitization events, and discussion forums.

The WEA has implemented several mechanisms to influence policies, strengthening women's organizations in their activities of mobilization and negotiation to achieve economic autonomy and supporting academic institutions to strengthen their educational capacities. However, greater systematization of the efforts of political incidence is needed to provide guidelines on how to build the framework of policies that will help mitigate and eliminate gender-based inequalities and promote women's autonomy.

Regarding training activities, the ET found that the comments on courses, workshops, and seminars offered by the WEA were, in general, positive. The careful selection of participants by the WEA, based on the potential of each individual to subsequently multiply the knowledge at his/her institution, was highlighted as well as the fact that all selections were endorsed by a letter of commitment signed by the director of each institution.

WEA's organizational structure is operating satisfactorily. Its strategic design, with a Regional Executive Committee formed by people knowledgeable on the topic and with the capacity to influence policies, and an Advisory Committee that serves as mechanism of monitoring and feedback to the Program, grants the WEA a unique character and a high added value with potential to have an impact on society. The periodicity of committee meetings should be shortened, and members should be more actively involved in the Program to promote a systemic discussion of themes that are strategic for political incidence.

Process management at the country level is good in countries where the WEA operates. Flexibility and creativity are observed in problem-solving and fund raising, and the small working groups are characterized as being highly motivated, actively contributing to results, and highly committed to knowledge generation/dissemination and the accompaniment of WEA processes in each country. The existence of the national tripartite decision-making mechanisms (government, civil society, and the academic community) and the thematic committees complement this management system very well.

However, the linking of what is regional with what is national to effectively focus actions around the Program's regional objectives was observed to be poor. The exceptions are the academic networks and the networks of women in resistance promoted by the WEA, where the connection between the national and the regional levels is indeed observed. The supportive role of the regional adviser has been insufficient to achieve the cohesion of processes and activities among countries.

The ET ranks the management of the Program and its activities as moderately satisfactory, mainly due to the weakness of planning, monitoring, and control systems and the perceived non-articulation between national and regional activities. However, the strong technical leadership for the production of publications should be highlighted, for which prioritization and systematization are recommended.

There is a general perception that the joint program WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP provides an efficient platform for executing the WEA and allows procedures to be rapid and effective. Administrative delays are reported in some countries, mainly in the payments to service providers, which were attributed to the system of receiving funds from the donor. However, there is an overall consensus that the synergy WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP has managed to build a unified image to position the Women's Economic Agenda. It is acknowledged that politicians, enterprises, and the civil society respond more favorably to the WEA proposal once they find out that the United Nations (UNIFEM and UNDP) endorses the Program. However, there are opinions that, at the Program level, the positioning of the WEA within the UNDP is not the best, and that the WEA should not replace routine gender activities at UNDP, as sometimes interpreted.

The contracting of a good professional paid by the WEA to serve as focal point in the Mechanisms for Women Empowerment in each country, through a signed agreement, has been a success. These individuals are incorporated into the daily activities of the Mechanism, while they continue to participate in WEA activities. Nonetheless, the reflection of most people is: Is it convenient to place the WEA Focal Points at the Mechanisms for Women, or would their role be more proactive if they are placed at governmental institutions where economic and financial matters are addressed, i.e., Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Employment and Labor, Budget and Finances Departments?

Recommendations

Based on the innovative nature of the Program, the achievements already reached, and the time needed for the outcomes to be established in target institutions, the ET recommends that a Phase III of the Program be planned and funded. Regarding UNIFEM's mission in Central America, the concept behind the WEA is of such relevance that the ET recommends that the Fund secure, as soon as possible, the funding of Phase III, investing also its own resources and, if necessary, those of other donors.

Alternatively, in case a Phase III of the Program would be financed, the ET recommends that its planning begin in early 2009, aiming not only to strengthen the concept of the Program and, particularly, its operational relationships, but also to correct the weaknesses observed during Phase II, especially those regarding the design, monitoring system, and operational planning. This way a new project document would be ready by June 2009, formally establishing a strategic monitoring, planning, and feedback system.

Recommendations in case of the definitive termination of the WEA in 2010

- A. It is recommended to reformulate the program's design and strategy through a participatory system of operational planning that takes into account the following actions, among others: (i) Update the PRODOC and translate it into Spanish, with conceptual frameworks and clear methodological proposals; (ii) Combine planning by results (logical framework) and planning by processes, including mapping of actors; (iii) Review Annual Operational Plans to adjust them to measurable results, consonant with the four areas of expected results of the PRODOC; (iv) Design a simple, easy-to-use monitoring and evaluation system that shows Program outcomes and provides clear indicators for monitoring the advances made; (v) Design the Program's phase-out strategy, highlighting those actions of appropriation, incidence, and capacity building that will ensure the sustainability of the Women's Economic Agenda after the Program culminates in 2010.
- B. **Program structure, organization, and management.** To begin with, the functions of the regional headquarters of UNIFEM-Mexico and the regional coordination of the WEA in Nicaragua should be clearly defined. UNDP payment procedures regarding the Program should be standardized and made easy, and the assignment of functions to WEA-UNIFEM staff at all headquarters should be assessed to redistribute tasks. The Terms of Reference of the Adviser to the Regional Coordination should be reformulated, and the process of publishing, disseminating, and socializing publications should be managed more effectively.

It is recommended to continue assigning the leadership in thematic areas to different countries, promoting co-leadership between two or more countries, and to potentiate the role of the Advisory Committee to have more political incidence and to further increase its effect on Program results and impacts. The establishment and plans of the thematic working groups in each country should be examined to guarantee their effectiveness.

- C. **Knowledge management.** The WEA requires a knowledge management (KM) system that maximizes the use of available Information and Communication Tools (ICTs) and a strategy that includes: (i) a webpage for the WEA; (ii) a toolbox of basic concepts and relevant statistical information on Gender and Economics in the region, which decision makers can use in their analyses; (iii) messages that attract the interest of different audiences; (iv) an electronic newsletter that reaches target audiences; (v) lessons drawn from successful WEA knowledge sharing events and strategies for subsequent systematization and adaptation to other contexts; (vi) use of other KM strategies to share knowledge; and (vii) an aggressive telecommunications strategy.
- D. **Political incidence.** The operational concept of the civil society should be reviewed to make it more inclusive, inviting other civil society organizations to participate, such as work unions, chambers of commerce, professional associations, and commercial networks. Very clear guidelines should be established regarding the participation of the Focal Point in the plans and activities of the Mechanism for Women in each country, maintaining the flexibility that this figure has had to date to adapt to the demands of each Mechanism as well as to the political context of each country. It is also recommended that the practice of signing an inter-institutional agreement that endorses the designation of the person to the Mechanism, now in place in several countries, be continued. An effort should be made to guarantee that the role played by the WEA Focal Point in the National Mechanisms for Women is one of influence and appropriation of the methods and practices of Gender and Economics promoted by the Program.

In view of the technical support provided by the WEA to COMMCA, this should be consolidated as an instrument of reciprocal support for the Program. It is recommended that the WEA establish agreements with the COMMCA so that the Program's strategic statements can be launched through the Council to the Central American Council of Ministers of Economy.

- E. **Strengthening of institutional, governmental, and nongovernmental capacities.** *At the individual level,* it is recommended to give continuity to the work carried out with the academic community to systematically reinforce the knowledge related to Gender and Economics at educational centers and from these to governmental and nongovernmental organizations and the society in general. A database of trainees in Gender and Economics since Phase I of the Program should be created to make better use of this human resource, increase the awareness on this topic, and identify those sectors where the WEA has had greater incidence to streamline processes. A larger number of men and women not knowledgeable in the topic of Gender and Economics should be gradually integrated into the training events facilitated by the WEA. Commitments should be formalized with the staff of the WEA and partner organizations participating in specialized courses, studies, and training courses regarding the sharing of the knowledge acquired during these events and its subsequent incorporation into their work plans. This strategy can be institutionalized through the signing of a letter of commitment.

At the institutional level it is recommended to map institutions and organizations knowledgeable in the topic to give continuity to the strategy through the continuous formation of actors. The Equity Seal should be promoted within the region, provided that this recognition to public organizations and private entities developing a gender management system responds to clear standards that can be continually revised and monitored by the National Mechanisms. The establishment of the Regional Observatory of Gender and Economics in one of the countries of the Program should also be endorsed. The Observatory would grant continuity to the processes already initiated.

Recommendations in case of approval of Phase III of the WEA

- A. **Formulation of the Program strategy.** Planning, monitoring, and evaluation techniques that take into consideration maps of power or relationships as well as measurements of behavioral changes are recommended because the WEA is a program that basically seeks changes in the ways of thinking and attitudes of economic agents and the society in general. Short-, medium-, and long-term indicators of appropriation should be established to compete with immediacy, and combined strategies should be used that bring together the academic community, the media, and other means of mass communication such as learning networks and communities of practice.
- B. **Knowledge management.** As indicated previously, a program such as the WEA should be based on a solid KM strategy. Phase III should be characterized by a KM system that effectively disseminates concepts on Gender and Economics that underlie the positioning of the WEA within national economic agendas. A practical and user-friendly system is needed that facilitates the flow of information and new knowledge generated by the Program, while serving as discussion forum of current issues related to Gender and Economics in the region, using modern ICTs.
- C. **Political incidence.** Phase III of the Project should take advantage of the achievements made so far to build a structured strategy of political incidence based on knowledge appropriation and capacity building, as indicated in point D of previous section.
- D. **Strengthening of institutional, governmental, and nongovernmental capacities.** The recommendations for this section are the same as those given in point E above, in case the Program will definitely culminate in 2010.

General recommendations for UNIFEM

Based on several findings of this mid-term external evaluation of the WEA, the ET recommends that UNIFEM: (i) Improve the process of project and program formulation, using commonly accepted concepts and terminologies so that project documents can effectively guide operational planning and execution, especially regarding the chain of results, involving more UNIFEM staff in project and program formulation and feedback so that the lessons learned and best practices of other initiatives can serve as input in the designing of new initiatives. (ii) Improve the interrelationship of the different actors involved in the initiative (headquarters, regional office, regional focal points, and national teams) so that operations run more smoothly and respond better to UNIFEM's global institutional strategy for the region. It will also be necessary to strengthen a sole regional channel that respects the particularities of each country while ensuring strategic and operational coherence between different

initiatives of the Fund. (iii) A thematic evaluation of the experiences of political incidence of all UNIFEM initiatives in the region should be conducted to systematize the main lessons learned and the best practices; define operational possibilities that allow political incidence; and propose *ad hoc* evaluative tools capable of rigorously representing the outcomes and impact on this field.

2. Introduction

In compliance with the provisions of the Project Document for the Second Phase of the joint UNIFEM–UNDP Regional Program known as Women’s Economic Agenda (WEA), financed by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), a mid-term external evaluation was conducted for the period June 2006–September 2008 by an evaluation team¹ (hereinafter referred to as the ET). The team, contracted after an international selection process, carried out the evaluation during the months of September to November 2008. The present report presents the analysis, findings, conclusions, and recommendations of said evaluation.

Phase II of the Program commenced in September 2006 and will terminate in September 2010, with an estimated budget of US\$3,742,860 for the 4-year period of execution. The WEA program is carried out in the six countries of the Central American Isthmus (Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua), with coordination headquarters located in Nicaragua.

To execute this phase, the United Nations Fund for the Development of Women (UNIFEM) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding, based on a common objective of promoting the empowerment of women in economic issues to thus enhance their exercise of active economic citizenship and their incidence on public policies.

The WEA is addressed within the strategy of women’s economic autonomy within the UNIFEM Multi-year Financial Framework. The WEA program currently carries out its work at different levels: (i) at the **regional** level, coordinating initiatives, generating and disseminating knowledge, and exchanging best practices and lessons learned for their replication both within countries and at the intraregional level; (ii) at the **national** level, strengthening partnerships between governmental institutions, the academia, and civil society organizations, particularly those of women; and (iii) at the **local** level, empowering women for better incorporation into the economic sector and increasing their impact on public policies.

At the onset of this stage of the project, several thematic axes around which WEA work would revolve were identified and prioritized. Each axis is led by one of the countries covered by the Program as follows: Public Budgets and Fiscal Policy (El Salvador); Work and Workers’ Rights (Costa Rica); Economic Opening (Nicaragua); Strengthening of the Civil Society (Nicaragua); Academic Community (Costa Rica); Migration and Remittances (Guatemala); and Economic and Gender Statistics (Panama).

¹ The ET is formed by Fabiola Amariles Erazo, Coordinator and Main Evaluator; Carolina Escobar Sarti, Evaluator and Expert in Gender Issues and Political, Economic, and Social Processes; and Fabrizio Feliciani, Adviser in Methodology and Analysis.

The external evaluation aims to identify the successes and challenges that will allow the Phase II outputs to be achieved while serving as basis for aligning the program with proposed strategic objectives. The evaluation therefore aims to assess the advances made by the Program toward proposed outputs; analyze its relevance with respect to the needs and priorities of the Central American region; identify mechanisms to measure the future impact of the intervention; and analyze the efficiency of the joint UNIFEM-UNDP mechanism of management and of the UNIFEM-UNDP-SIDA partnership for achieving program outputs.

As indicated in the enclosed technical proposal (Annex II of this report), the ET was formed by three people: two evaluators, one of them also serving as coordinator, and an adviser in methodology and analysis.

In her role as coordinator, the main evaluator was responsible for the overall organization of the evaluation, relationship with both the Management and Reference Groups and the timely delivery of outputs, as well as the application of the cross-sectional approaches.

The evaluators helped define the methodology and analyzed existing documentation, literature, and other secondary sources of information. They also collected data in the field, participated in their analysis, and in the writing of the corresponding reports. They established pertinent contacts to fulfill their mission.

The adviser in Methodology and Analysis was responsible for defining the evaluation methodology and the tools to be used and for adapting them in accordance with the advances made; providing feedback on the process regarding relevance, effectiveness/impact, and viability; controlling the quality of the evaluation and providing guidelines to ensure its compliance with required evaluation standards; participating in the analysis, drafting, and review of reports at key stages as well as participating in the meetings of induction and return of results.

The evaluation was based on two conceptual and methodological pillars: **accountability** and **learning**, striving to define the “best practices” and lessons learned as a way of knowledge sharing and appropriation. Institutional analysis was an important component of the evaluation and the interrelationships between people and organizations that ensure success or inhibit the execution of Program activities were examined. Both qualitative and quantitative research and evaluation methods were used. Data were collected using a participatory approach.

The ET followed the norms and standards for evaluation in the UN System, especially the guidelines adopted by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). The SIDA general guidelines for project evaluation were also taken into consideration. At an initial meeting held at the UNIFEM subregional office in Mexico, the ET had the opportunity to interact with the Managerial and Reference Groups for this evaluation and lay out the methodological groundwork of the process, approve the evaluation matrix, and agree on ethical issues and applicable evaluation standards.

In addition to using the collection of documents delivered at the beginning of the evaluation for analysis, a series of interviews, surveys, and consultations were also conducted with Program participants and nonparticipants as well as with experts of the different countries covered by the WEA to ensure comprehensive geographical coverage and take into account special cultural features of the different sites. Overall, more than 190 people were contacted in the six countries and

interviewed either personally, by phone, or by e-mail. Focus groups were also interviewed (see Annex III).

The two ET researchers visited four of the countries covered by WEA: one conducted face-to-face interviews and focus groups in Nicaragua and Honduras, while the other one did the same in Costa Rica and Guatemala. Two people directly involved in the WEA in Panama were also interviewed. People involved with the program in El Salvador and Panama were interviewed by phone and by Internet. Although all interviews followed a structured questionnaire previously prepared by the ET, a semi-structured open interview approach was used.

Perception surveys were also e-mailed to 485 people of four groups of WEA program collaborators or partners: (i) staff of WEA/UNIFEM and sister institutions; (ii) civil society; (iii) public sector; and (iv) the academic community. The surveys were administered anonymously via SurveyMonkey, an online hosting platform. The technical data and reports of these surveys are presented in Annex IV.

The present report contains the following sections:

1. ***Executive summary of main conclusions and recommendations***
2. ***Introduction***, which synthesizes information on the Program and summarizes the evaluation process.
3. ***Background and Context***, which presents the WEA program within a regional context of Central American integration in recent decades, making special reference to issues related to regional economy and gender and the situation of women from the social and economic viewpoints.
4. ***Evaluation Methodology***, which defines the limitations faced by the ET, indicates the reliability achieved in accordance with international standards, and briefly describes the evaluation methodology and criteria used.
5. ***Logic of Program Design***, which analyzes the functionality of the design.
6. ***Relevance and Coherence*** of the Program with regard to the policies and strategies of UNIFEM, SIDA, regional and governmental entities linked to the Program, and women's organizations.
7. ***Program Effectiveness***, in relation to the achievement of program objectives.
8. ***Perceived Effects and in Perspective***, planned and unplanned, favorable and unfavorable changes in procedural and development conditions, attributable to the Program and identified by the ET.
9. ***Managerial Efficiency***, which describes the management structure and discusses its rationality and functionality based on ET findings.
10. ***External factors***, which indicates the main external factors that have affected, are affecting and/or could affect Program performance, with subsequent consequences on the scope of its goals.
11. ***Program Monitoring and Feedback***, which describes and evaluates the Program's monitoring system and the effectiveness of the monitoring practices in place.
12. ***Sustainability***, which appraises existing procedural elements, capable of facilitating the permanence of achievements over time.
13. ***Thematic Dimension of the Evaluation***, which analyzes the topics considered fundamental to program design such as appropriation and incidence as well as other cross-cutting issues, such as use of the gender approach and interculturalism.

14. ***Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Institutional Learning***, which presents several of the lessons learned that were identified during the evaluative process and can be applied to other situations.
15. ***Findings and Conclusions***, which states the findings of the evaluation based on the data collected.
16. ***Recommendations***, which presents a series of recommendations based on the evidence obtained and the conclusions of the evaluation.

The ET sincerely appreciates the valuable collaboration of the WEA/UNIFEM staff at the regional headquarters in Mexico and in the different countries during the execution of this evaluation. The team is especially thankful for the reflections of numerous people involved in WEA and in different sociopolitical and economic processes of Central America (CA), whose forthright and open input highly enriched this report. We are grateful that the ET was allowed to act with independent criteria—a fundamental requirement of all evaluative processes. Our special thanks also go to the WEA technical teams of each country for the time they dedicated to this endeavor and for their valuable assistance.

3. Background and Context

This section positions the program “Developing capacities for the gender analysis of the region’s economies and conditions for positioning of the women’s agenda in the new stage of trade opening”, also called the “Women’s Economic Agenda” (WEA), in the Central American context and within the process of regional integration over the last decades, with special reference to gender-related economy problems and the situation of women in the political, cultural, social, and economic context of each Central American country.

The WEA, a UNIFEM program, began to operate in 2003, as an output of the analyses made of the status of women empowerment and autonomy (one of the Development Goals of the United Nations Millennium Summit) in the context of a notable advance in globalization in the Central American region.

Central American women have not participated proactively in the still ongoing process of regional integration that began in the 1950s and 60s². A profound political realization that the building of peace did not simply depend on the isthmus’ position in the current geopolitical map revitalized the process in the mid-80s³. Gender perspectives were initially considered in the reform of the region’s institutional framework, with the creation of the Central American Integration System (SICA, its Spanish acronym) in 1991; results, however, have been poor. Women’s participation in important decisions for the region is still very limited.

The Council of Women Ministers for Central American Women (COMMCA, its Spanish acronym), created on 27 August 2002, was initially promoted by Guatemala’s Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM, its Spanish acronym) “in response to the need for creating closer ties of

² The first formal act of regional integration was the adoption of the Charter of San Salvador in 1951, which originated the Organization of Central American States. The first Central American Common Market was created in 1960.

³ The Declaration of Esquipulas states that “We have Central American roads for peace (...)”, where Presidents set aside their ideological and strategic differences, the first political act of Central America since the Declaration of Independence.

cooperation among National Mechanisms for Women Empowerment of the Central American and Caribbean region, as well as to the urgent need of addressing women's participation and, in the specific case of women's institutionalism, in the progressive advances of Central American integration.⁴

Five years later, within the framework of the Guatemala's Pro-Témpore Presidency, the General Secretariat of SICA and COMMCA signed a Functional Collaborative Agreement, as a preceding measure to the installation of the COMMCA's Technical Secretariat at that regional entity. The Secretariat is responsible for monitoring technical and administrative actions resulting from resolutions of the Presidential Summits and for promoting the establishment of new legally-binding presidential agreements to further gender equality in the region.

In this context of regional institutional strengthening, the adoption of trade liberalization strategies in CA implied a new displacement of the axis around which integration was conceived and posed the need for promoting the participation of all sectors in international free trade. The participation of Central American women in this process, although limited, is gradually increasing.

At the onset of regional economic integration, the situation of Central American countries differed among themselves. Costa Rica was in a more favorable position than the others in terms of income distribution, social indicators, and per capita GDP. Those differences were even more noticeable because of the armed conflict that had occurred in almost all Central American countries, but that had touched Costa Rica only marginally, a country where social investment policies were maintained as well as the respect for democracy. Panama's situation was similar to that of Costa Rica. On the contrary, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua lived intense political-military crises that adversely affected human development processes. The gradual pacification in CA brings new hopes for regional development, and the keen desire for integration required a new agenda that aimed to strengthen the region's institutional framework.

In negotiations of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), promoted a few years ago within the region, women's specific contribution to the dialogue on free trade resided in the emphasis they placed on equity and development with a gender approach. But they did not participate in the discussions, as only the enterprise chambers, where women have a limited leadership, were invited to speak. The studies made at that time corresponded to analyses of the potential impact of trade and other macroeconomic policies on social development and well-being of the Central American women, their families, and communities. Central American women then began an important period of negotiation and lobbying, a process from which they learned important lessons for the future: One of the interviewees⁵ pointed out, "Although we did not participate in the CAFTA, we are now prepared for the EU-CAAA⁶."

Trade liberalization has undoubtedly had an impact in developing countries. UNIFEM pointed out that "women—especially poor women—have inequitable access to resources such as land, credit, and education. As a result, their ability to benefit from trade liberalization is more limited and they are

⁴ As stated in the Managua Declaration, cited in COMMCA's 2006-2009 Strategic Plan and Action Plan, published by SEPREM.

⁵ Member of a women's organization in Nicaragua.

⁶ Refers to the association agreement between the European Union and Central America, which was under negotiation at the time of this report.

more vulnerable to the adjustment costs of trade reform and economic restructuring⁷.” Important public policies that do not consider these aspects seriously threaten women empowerment in particular and, as a result, communities and countries.

Phase I of the WEA program (2004-2006) accordingly aimed to examine the impact of economic processes and the regional integration strategy on Central American women and men. The region’s economy was analyzed from a gender perspective and gender profiles were established for the economies of CA countries.

The results of Phase I indicated that social, economic, and political gaps continued to exist even after the processes of regional democratization and integration had culminated, in particular gender-responsive gaps that should be considered as challenges that need to be addressed. Phase II was accordingly designed to “promote gender equality and women’s economic empowerment and rights through the inclusion of gender equality issues in the Central American Economic Agenda through the generation of knowledge, capacity building, and public policies that contribute to a decrease of gender inequality in the economy and the transformation of the economic order⁸.”

As mentioned earlier, the trade liberalization in the Central American region did not result in a significant improvement of the economic and social situation for the vast majority of the population, especially women. As stated in one of the WEA reports⁹, this situation is reflected in a series of indicators as those published by the UNDP and contained in the Human Development Index (HDI), whose performance over the years has evidenced inequalities in the Central American region. For example, in the case of Guatemala, the HDI from 1980 to 2005 was, on average, 0.40, surpassing only Haiti. The average HDI for men was 0.43 and for women 0.38, with inequalities being greater between urban and rural areas, a situation that is even worse for indigenous women farmers who are, for the most part, submerged in extreme poverty and indigence. Costa Rica, in contrast, presents an average HDI of 0.87 for the same period, in conditions of equality.

The region has undergone significant changes over the last decade, especially in terms of harmonious political coexistence, but many of the structural causes that gave rise to past and present crises continue in force. Several Central American countries rank among the most gender inequitable of Latin America and the world, as indicated by the 2008 Gender Gap Index¹⁰, in which Nicaragua ranks 71 and Guatemala 112 among 130 countries. This means that inequality continues to be a distinctive characteristic and is directly associated with the very conservative role played by the State in investment and social development. However, generalizing also implies trivializing, and exceptions such as those of Costa Rica and Panama must be recognized in this context.

The foregoing devises a suitable framework for developing a democratic rule of law through public policies and programs such as the WEA program. The dismantling of authoritarian patterns and former wealth distribution patterns in different Central American countries and the shifting from a

⁷ UNIFEM: “Promoting Women’s Economic Security and Rights”. Online resource http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=15

⁸ Executive summary of the “Women’s Agenda” Program Document.



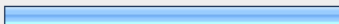
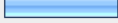

⁹ Final Guatemala WEA Report for the first semester of 2008.

¹⁰ The Gender Gap Index is produced annually by the World Economic Forum to show how countries worldwide are distributing their resources and opportunities between their male and female populations. The 2008 Report is available at <http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/GenderGapNetwork/index.htm> (consulted 18 November 2008).

state of war to one of peace through equality is a challenge that is just being addressed as a region. In brief, the regional dynamics of CA are not solid and the enormous challenge remains of balancing national inequalities based on a regional vision that takes into account the special characteristics of each country. As mentioned by one of the interviewees in Panama, “The relationship between what is regional and what is national is complex and requires much political effort.”

Of all these special characteristics, there is one that is common to all Central American countries: women in this region suffer from political and economic invisibility. As eloquently expressed by one of the interviewees in Honduras: “It is impossible to position women as economic agents.” In light of this fact, the WEA, the National Mechanisms for Women, and the institutions working in this field face a highly complex task, but one that can also prove to be an opportunity for the Program.

The results of the surveys carried out in CA during the evaluation show that, in most Central American countries, the WEA is seen as “an actor that participates in debates and is taken into consideration by several sectors (50.9%)” as shown by the following graphic

5. In your opinion, in your country, the WEA is considered as:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
An indispensable actor, considered priority by all interested in the thematic areas (government, civil society, international community, etc.)		13.2%	7
An important actor, recognized by most		17.0%	9
An actor that participates in debates and taken into account by several sectors		50.9%	27
Just another actor in the panorama		17.0%	9
Does not know / did not reply		1.9%	1
answered question			53
skipped question			3

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that all gender and economy programs in CA have to face two major challenges: incidence in economic field—traditionally considered as male territory, and how economic issues related to gender, a concept about which there is much ignorance and stigmatization and which is interpreted by most entities as a synonym of women, not considering it from the perspective of equality. As an interviewee of the academic community of Panama said, “Gender issues are addressed with resentment.” All the above indicates that the gender approach is not duly positioned in current economic policies and legislation in Central American countries.

In El Salvador, gender discrimination persists in the labor field. The gap in salaries and the high occupational segmentation continue. The chapter on gender that the Salvadoran WEA submitted to the 2007-2008 Human Development Report shows “the unequal distribution of the global work load

and the important role played by reproductive work in the logics of how society operates. The incorporation of WEA topics in the public agenda through the Human Development Report and its proposed agreement on employment and social cohesion has proved to be a valuable opportunity in the sense that the recommendations derived from the findings of the chapter on gender that forms part of this proposal shall be submitted to representative sectors of national life for discussion.”

Regarding Honduras and the role played by women in the new economic scenario of trade liberalization, “it is possible to point out several trends in the presence of women in the labor market, for example the unemployment rate of women is higher than that of men or the rate of economic participation is lower for women. However, these data hide the fact that female labor dominates in informal markets and in household work¹¹.”

“Particularly in Guatemala, the rural area that is home to 73% of the country’s poor women requires public policies that serve their needs. According to the 2006 National Agricultural Survey (ENA, its Spanish acronym), 145,000 women are dedicated to farming. Labor laws¹², however, consider farm workers as helping the heads of households. This is a quite serious issue because not only does it describe them as dependents but also limits their decision-making power and economic autonomy¹³.”

In Costa Rica, on the other hand, over the past 17 years “the net rate of participation of women in the paid labor market increased from 30.4% in 1988 to 38.7% in 2007 (INEC, 2006), peaking in 2005 with 40.8% (INEC, 2005). Nevertheless, the increased participation of Costa Rican women occurs in a market that is not only *segregated* because the different branches of economic activity are clearly differentiated by gender, but also *inequitable*. Recent studies evidenced that during the 1990s women as work force were, on average, 14% less expensive than men working the same hours, with the same qualifications and identical productivity due to undetermined reasons grouped under the concept of ‘discrimination’¹⁴.”

According to a study recently published on Nicaragua’s economy¹⁵, “different cultural patterns have created false stereotypes that give the idea that activities performed by women are not of economic nature, a situation that has biased the access to resources in favor of men and, as a result, women do not have the same opportunities as men to achieve economic development. The International Foundation for Global Economic Challenge (FIDEG, its Spanish acronym) conducted a survey in 2006 on the status and conditions of Nicaraguan household from the gender perspective. Results indicated that 92 of every 100 córdobas (the national currency) of income gap in favor of men in the Nicaraguan labor market are the result of gender discrimination. The remaining 8 córdobas can be attributed to the differences in human capital between men and women, for example level of education, training, and experience¹⁶.”

It is also important to mention that, in this context of inequity and economic openness of CA, the negotiation of the EU-CAAA has dominated the domestic and regional agendas in recent months. This initiative has been characterized by the limited participation of the civil society and the lack of information mechanisms so that it can be properly monitored from the social audit perspective.

¹¹ 2006-2007 Honduras WEA Report.

¹² Guatemalan Labor Laws, Article 139.

¹³ Final Guatemala WEA Report for the first semester of 2008.

¹⁴ 2007 Costa Rica WEA Report.

¹⁵ *El Observador Económico*. International Foundation for Global Economic Challenge (FIDEG). February 2008.

¹⁶ *Idem*, October 2007.

Although the organized civil society, including the women's movement, has clearly defined political positions regarding this process, it has been difficult to table them because of the secrecy with which the negotiations have been carried out, the lack of balance between commerce and investment in relation to cooperation, and the non-inclusion of the gender approach in said agreement. The WEA of each country has accordingly assumed different ways of intervention ranging from the participation in regional forums and meetings to the application of intervention strategies to carry out processes of sensitization-formation to generate the reported positions.

After the CAFTA and as has been mentioned elsewhere in this section, women's organizations, in addition to other sectors, have concluded that "trade agreements have not become instruments for national development nor have they contributed to economic growth, the well-being of the population, and less so to social and gender equity¹⁷." Therefore it is important to rescue the efforts of the Women's Forum for Central American Integration (FMICA, its Spanish acronym) "to ensure the effective participation of women in the negotiation process for preparing and signing the European Union-Central America Association Agreement¹⁸." In recognition of women diversity, a Gender Equality Act was accordingly prepared for inclusion in the EU-CAAA. During the process of preparing this Act, "the regional Women's Economic Agenda (WEA) program is of special importance, [...] positioning topics such as public budgets, statistics, labor market, economic opening, migrations and remittances on the public agenda¹⁹."

The cultural variable must be included in this contextual analysis. Special cultural particularities and the ethnographic composition of each Central American country necessarily affect program development at the regional level, and the possibility of situating the information obtained in accordance with national scenarios will allow new courses of action to be identified. To confirm the above, it is important to mention that the last report submitted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)²⁰ to Guatemala stated that "the deeply rooted cultural beliefs sustain inequality between men and women (...). Culture not only affects social relationships, but also aspects relevant to development, such as gender inequality, maternal health, fertility, aging, and poverty."

A common denominator has been identified in the political environments in which the WEA evolves during Phase II, a factor that has adversely affected the program in all countries and, as a result, at the regional level: the turnover of government in each country generates destabilization in women's institutional environment and does not give continuity to ongoing processes or delays the execution of actions included in operational plans. "All of our institutions suffer political erosion", points out one of the women interviewed in Nicaragua.

Another factor that is found in all countries, which has hindered the impact of WEA within and from decision-making spaces, is that the National Mechanisms for Women are technically and budgetary weak and with a few exceptions, do not have a political influence in governmental structures. There is also a prevailing vision of pro-women social welfare programs promoted by governments, in contrast with the more political vision to build institutionalism to create opportunities for incidence in public policies, study plans, and national legislation.

¹⁷ Reference document for building a women's agenda within the framework of the European Union-Central America Association Agreement (EU-CAAA), March 2007.

¹⁸ Idem.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Report on convergence: culture, gender, and human rights. UNFPA. Guatemala 2008. Presented on 13/11/08.

Of the six countries studied, all of them except Panama have a National Mechanism for Women Empowerment. In the case of Panama, Phase II is being implemented in a weak institutional framework that responds to political turnovers, among other situations, hindering continuous development processes. The creation of the National Mechanism for Women in Panamá is very recent. Presidential elections, with all this implies, will be held soon and strong tensions exist between political groups and women's organizations.

Regarding the mechanisms in place for women empowerment in each country, in the case of Costa Rica, the current political situation “allows a qualitative change in the vision of the institutionalism of gender, as well as its positioning at the highest decision making level of the government²¹.” The close relationship between the WEA and the National Institute for Women (INAMU, its Spanish acronym) has facilitated important alliances with the academic community, women's organizations, and the private sector, which furthers program development significantly. However, it called the attention of the ET that until early 2008 the office of Costa Rica's WEA working team was located at INAMU but is no longer there. The change in office location has decreased the efficiency of initiatives and the full institutionalization of a gender-sensitive economic agenda.

The situation in Honduras is encouraging because the Director of the National Institute for Women (INAM, its Spanish acronym) has a ministerial position, strongly influencing governmental decisions. However, the position is also subject to political turnovers such as the one that recently occurred with the resignation of the Minister, which adversely affected both the women's sector and the WEA, because “the past Director was very dynamic and had already outlined an incidence plan. Her resignation sets back the implementation of the plan and slows other processes. A new Minister should be appointed in January 2009 following a consultative process with women's organizations²².”

In Guatemala, the change of government and the delay in electing a new Secretary for Women marked a period of difficult transition for the WEA program, not only because the previous administration had distanced itself from the women's movement, but because the new government has no clear strategy regarding the place of the National Mechanism for Women within the State structure. It finally preserved its prior place as a Secretariat.

In El Salvador, the political context is saturated with high social polarization, escalated by pre-electoral activities. This could weaken consensus-building opportunities between the civil society and the Government; however, it could also prove to be an opportunity to propose a gender-sensitive economic policy that could be reused by political parties. As a result of the foregoing, women's organizations asked the Salvadoran WEA to accompany them in the preparation of a platform that would be presented to contesting political parties, “which gave way to a collaborative agreement to prepare an action agenda around WEA's three thematic axes. The work of the WEA, as an initiative that facilitates the building of collaborative spaces between the government, the civil society, and the academic community, can be potentiated in this type of framework²³.”

In the case of Nicaragua, Phase II of the Program was officially launched in September 2006, coinciding with the campaign period for election of national authorities that ended with the victory of the Sandinista Front. The relationship between the women's movement and the government has

²¹ Statement of an interviewee working in Costa Rica's governmental sector.

²² Information provided by an interviewee involved in international cooperation in Honduras.

²³ El Salvador WEA July 2007 Progress Report.

weakened significantly and this hinders, but does not impede, giving continuity to the WEA. In recent years different social actors have felt the pressing need to link women to the country's economy. The women themselves demand greater recognition of the contribution they make. As a result, since the first semester of 2007, the Program has been carried out in Nicaragua within a complex political reality, characterized by high polarization. The existence of the INIM since the end of the 80's provides a suitable framework for program institutionalization, as well as Law 648 on "Equality of Rights and Opportunities" (Nicaragua was the only country that did not have such a legal tool) with emphasis on economic themes, some of them already worked by WEA/Nicaragua.

Finally, the international scenario has been marked by the financial crisis intensified in the United States in 2008, which has begun to particularly affect the women in the region and could increase their levels of poverty.

In general, we conclude that, despite the different tensions existing in most of the countries, the political situation is favorable for disseminating the topic of gender and economy within the region, not only because there is already a minimum sensitization toward the topic in decision-making spaces and interest is growing, but also because international cooperation now conditions much of its economic aid to the thrust Central American governments give to the gender approach in public policies. In this regard and as well expressed by an interviewee from Costa Rica, "times are good because the current political scenario allows maneuvering."

4. Methodology of the Evaluation

4.1 Purpose

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), the evaluation aims to facilitate the decision-making processes of the main partners of the WEA (UNIFEM, UNDP, and SIDA), especially regarding the following issues: eventual reorientation and/or retargeting of the Program; strengthening of strategies and partnerships to influence national and regional economies from a gender perspective; identification of good practices for their consideration in other contexts; definition of mechanisms and initiatives that increase the sustainability of implemented practices and promote their institutionalization at various territorial and political levels of action; and definition of actions that aim to improve Program management.

The evaluation specifically aims to:

- (a) Assess the advances made by the Program toward the achievement of proposed outputs, identifying internal and external factors that have influenced, are influencing, or could influence the process, either positively or negatively.
- (b) Assess the relevance and coherence of the Program and the mechanisms, strategies, and processes implemented in terms of the priorities of different actors and sectors (entrepreneurial women, women's associations, production groups, supportive NGOs, the academic community, local governments, national governments, entities of Central American institutionalism, and local, national, and regional networks, among others).

- (c) Identify areas in which intervention design must be improved.
- (d) Propose specific measures to improve the Program's monitoring system as well as mechanisms to be able to measure the Program's impact in the future.
- (e) Assess the efficiency of the UNIFEM/UNDP management mechanism being used for the Program, identifying the achievements reached as well as the eventual difficulties inherent to this model and, in time, propose ways to improve this mechanism. The value of associative synergies between UNIFEM, UNDP, and SIDA will also be analyzed to ensure the achievement of Program outputs.

4.2 Approach

The evaluative approach was based on the evaluation policy established by the UNDP Executive Board²⁴, which also applies to UNIFEM, as well as on the guidelines adopted by UNEG²⁵, which are shared by more than 40 agencies of the UN System, including UNDP and UNIFEM. The evaluation approach also considers general conceptual contributions of SIDA²⁶, as well as the thematic contributions published in documents of the series *SIDA Studies in Evaluation*²⁷.

The definitions and methodologies of the evaluation approach are those prepared by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)²⁸, whose criteria are usually recognized for the evaluation of development projects, programs, and processes. UNDP, UNIFEM as associated fund, and the government of Sweden are active members of DAC network of evaluation of development projects and have adopted evaluation approaches consistent with these guidelines.

The evaluation presented herein has been designed to systematically and objectively evaluate the Program and its design, implementation, and achievements in terms of *accountability* and *learning*.

The evaluation approach is also:

- (a) **Participatory.** It strives to combine the thorough eye of the evaluator, with the experience of Program operators and partners. The ET interacts continuously with the Evaluation Reference Group (hereinafter referred to as RG), composed of representatives of the main partners of the Program and responsible for monitoring and guiding the evaluation process. An attempt has been made to maximize the levels of participation and consultation during the evaluation, involving ET members and representatives of most of the entities participating in Program activities.

²⁴ UNDP Executive Board: *The evaluation policy of UNDP*. New York, 2006.

²⁵ UNEG: *Norms for evaluation in the UN system and Standards for evaluation in the UN System*, both published in 2005.

²⁶ SIDA: *Looking Back, Moving Forward. SIDA Evaluation Manual*, SIDA, Stockholm, 2004.

²⁷ Among others, the following: *Evaluating Gender Equality—Policy and Practices* (1998); *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* (2000); *Reflection on Experience of Evaluating Gender Equality* (2003).

²⁸ OECD/DAC: *Development Assistance Manual*, Paris, 2002; OECD/DAC: *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management*, Paris, 2002-2008.

- (b) ***Future-oriented.*** The contributions of different internal and external factors to the achievement of Program outputs are analyzed, whether these are foreseeable or unexpected, deliberate or not. Special emphasis has been placed on the study of strategic factors and processes being carried out by the Program's institutional partners in parallel to the Program, for example alliances and networks, technical assistance, technical monitoring and formation, dialogue on policies, good trades and mediation, coordination of efforts, and synergies.
- (c) ***Awareness-oriented.*** The evaluation aims to help disseminate and highlight the purpose of the WEA Program, creating awareness about its strengths and strategic objectives and contributing to the achievement of its outputs.
- (d) It addresses four key issues: (a) the gender approach; (b) interculturalism; (c) the perspective of Human Rights; and (d) political incidence.

4.3 Scope

The scope of the evaluation is detailed in the ToR and is summarized below.

- (i) Time framework. Program execution from June 2006 to June 2008 will be covered.
- (ii) Geographical dimension. Program activities in all target countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) will be covered. The ET will select three²⁹ of the six aforementioned countries to conduct in-depth studies based on the criteria and procedures stated further on. One or two members of the ET will visit each of these countries. In addition, the complete ET will visit the UNIFEM Subregional Office in Mexico at the beginning of the evaluative process for initial induction activities and to work together on the detailed design of the evaluation.
- (iii) Institutional dimension. Institutions participating in this endeavor include: (a) the group of international partners (SIDA, UNDP, UNIFEM) as well as various groups mentioned in the ToR; (b) municipal governments and their networks; (c) counterpart NGOs; (d) national and local counterpart interinstitutional and collective spaces; (e) civil society organizations and women's organizations; (f) national regulatory entities of public ministries; (g) counterpart academic entities for regional and national activities; and (h) political entities at the regional level.
- (iv) Evaluative dimension. The evaluation will present viewpoints and /or recommendations on the following aspects of the Program and its execution: (a) relevance and coherence; (b) effectiveness in terms of achievement of general and specific outputs and specific assessment of the synergies produced by relationships and institutional partnerships developed to achieve project outputs; (c) efficiency of program management; (d) appropriation of the topic Gender and Economics by national and regional actors as a result of Program activities; (e) sustainability of Program achievements and levels of institutionalization.

²⁹ In reality, the ET did field work in four countries during this evaluation.

The previous dimensions of the evaluation have been applied to the following **specific program objectives**:

1. Prepare and negotiate economic strategies that strengthen women's economic autonomy and use of opportunities in the context of economic openness.
2. Promote the inclusion of more women in the paid labor market, in important jobs.
3. Position the importance of a gender-sensitive public planning and budgeting system on domestic economic agendas.
4. Promote women's access to knowledge generated by feminist economy and develop research lines on power relationships established in economic systems at the macro, mid, and micro levels.
5. Strengthen the capacities, knowledge, incidence, and interrelationship of Central American women's organizations for increased impact.

The ToR of the Evaluation³⁰ and the technical proposal presented by the ET³¹ delimit the scope of the evaluative study, which will culminate with the presentation of the final report. Based on an exhaustive review of existing documentation, the ET presented a first report (Cabinet Report) that defined several additional aspects that help define more precisely the field of action.

Based on the documentation studied, the following limitations are considered pertinent to this evaluation:

- (a) **Insufficient evaluability** of the Program Document.³²
- (b) **Absence of a monitoring system** that offers information on the advances made by the Program over time.
- (c) **Difficulties** inherent to the evaluation of development project that aims to promote cultural change by promoting research and action-oriented research, intersectoral dialogue, and political incidence.

4.4 Development

The evaluation was carried out in **five phases** over a period of approximately three months:

- (i) Induction and detailed design of the evaluation
- (ii) Documentary research and preparation of the first report
- (iii) Gathering of information
- (iv) Analysis and validation
- (v) Devolution

During the initial induction phase, the ET had the opportunity of working closing with the Program management team and became familiar with institutional documents. Existing documentation was then analyzed, Program evaluability determined accordingly, and the design of subsequent evaluation phases detailed.

³⁰ UNIFEM (2008).

³¹ See Technical Proposal of ET in Annex II.

³² As pointed out in the Cabinet Report and summarized in the following section of this report.

The third phase, which lasted five weeks, was spent gathering data and information in all the countries where WEA operates. The ET selected four countries—Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua—to visit and conduct face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and other activities to obtain an in-depth appreciation of national scenarios. Nicaragua was chosen because it is the host country of the Program’s regional liaison; the other three were selected at random by the ET. A series of research tools—self-administered surveys, telephone interviews, e-mail communications—were used to gather information and viewpoints of both Program staff and officials of partner institutions at the regional level and in El Salvador and Panama (the two countries that were not visited by the ET).

The evaluation covered 485 individuals overall, of which about 36% (173 individuals) were directly interviewed by the ET,³³ either face-to-face or by phone individually, by e-mail, or in focus groups.

The ET has applied specific tools, using an array of techniques and scenarios, to research the same issue, with a view to producing sufficient data and information on which the conclusions of the evaluation could be based. When defining universes and research techniques, the criterion for triangulation of sources has prevailed.

A broad range of reliable sources has been used to find evidence that could serve as basis for the evaluation. The analysis has attempted to correlate quantitative and qualitative aspects, looking for significant confluences or divergences, to identify internal and external factors supporting or hindering Program execution.

In compliance with Program design and implementation, the universe of sources for the evaluation has been subdivided into the following categories:

- (a) Literature from WEA and principal partners (especially UNIFEM)
- (b) Institutional documentation of those organizations (regional, national, academic, public, and civil society) with which WEA works most closely
- (c) Officials and representatives of:
 - The Program, UNIFEM, UNDP, and SIDA
 - The national and regional public sector
 - Participating civil society organizations
 - Academic institutions
 - Other cooperation entities and initiatives

The following tools, among others, have been used to gather information:

- (a) Open interview in person
- (b) Semi-structured interview in person
- (c) Focus group
- (d) Direct observation
- (e) Self-administered survey on the Internet for clients
- (f) Short questionnaires
- (g) Multisectoral meetings

The application of these tools to target sub-universes is detailed in the following matrix:

³³ Annex III presents the list of people participating in the Evaluation.

EVALUATION MATRIX

Types of information-gathering tools in relation to aspects covered by the Evaluation and according to information sources

Aspects to be covered by the Evaluation	EVALUATION SOURCES									
	International partners (ASDI, UNDP, UNIFEM)	Municipal governments and their networks	Inter-institutional spaces and counterparts	Civil society and Women's groups	National steering entities	Academic institutions	National policymaking entities	Regional entities	Informed actors and other external spokesperson	Institutional documents and general literature
Relevance and Coherence	IP SU	SU IP	SU IP	SU		SU IP	SU	SU	IP SU	DA
Effectiveness	IP SU	SU IP FG	SU IP FG	SU FG				SU	IP SU	DA
Management efficiency	IP FG	SU IP	SU DO					SU	IP SU	DA
Appropriation	FG	IP	SU DO FG	SU DO FG	SU IP	SU IP		SU	IP	DA
Sustainability	SU FG	SU	SU IP DO	SU IP DO	SU IP	SU IP	SU	SU	IP SU	DA

DA = document analyses **SU** = survey **IP** = interview in person (in selected countries)
DO = direct observation **FG** = focus group

Evaluation outputs, in chronological order of preparation and discussion with the Management Group and/or Evaluation RG, are as follows:

- (i) Work Plan
- (ii) Cabinet Report
- (iii) Preliminary Evaluation Report to be discussed with the WEA Management Group
- (iv) Final Evaluation Report and Executive Summary (in Spanish and English)
- (v) Presentation of the Evaluation

The main principles for information analysis have been (i) participatory analysis and validation between the ET and the RG; and (ii) the application of the triangulation principle.

The **insufficient evaluability** of the program document that was prepared, together with the lack of a functional and efficient monitoring system, **made the effectiveness analysis very complex**, as

discussed in the section on effectiveness. For these same reasons and because of the difficulties inherent to the evaluation of this type of Program, **it has not been possible to adequately examine the Program's effectiveness**³⁴.

Regarding the other aspects covered by this Evaluation, the diversity of sources and the coincidences in triangulations allow the ET to determine that the **reliability of the viewpoints expressed regarding relevance and coherence, program design, managerial performance, program monitoring and feedback, thematic dimension of the evaluation; and external factors is considered adequate.**

4.5 Comments from UNIFEM to the Evaluation

The ET has dialogued with representatives from the Management Group of the Evaluation during the whole evaluative process. In particular, the preliminary report has been presented to the Management Group and UNIFEM officers have been consulted on this report. On 13 February 2009 the Management Group sent to the ET the final institutional comments on the report.

Comments from UNIFEM have been incorporated into this Final Report applying the following criteria:

- (i) The text of the Report has been corrected when the ET accepts comments that contain new data or documented corrections.
- (ii) Those observations that the ET does not fully agree with, will be quoted with the corresponding arguments.
- (iii) Comments of a general nature on the overall evaluative process and the present Report, as well as the complete list of comments from UNIFEM are enclosed as Annex V.

5. Logic of the Design of the Program

The logic of the design of the Program is analyzed from two perspectives: (a) the internal logic of the formulation and validity of the Program statement, and (b) the compliance of standards applicable to UNIFEM.

Table I summarizes the main elements of Program design.

³⁴ The analyses of effectiveness and efficiency of initiatives that seek changes in policy-making processes (public and corporate) through incidence are usually complex. This type of analysis could be facilitated with the preparation of a framework of specific guidelines for this type of projects that provides orientation on both the design and the monitoring and management of these programs, so that their characteristics, including effectiveness and efficiency, can be compared using evaluative tools. The generation of this framework could prove to be of particular interest for UNIFEM, whose program and project portfolio includes many initiatives that seek to generate changes in policy-making processes.

Table I: Main elements of the Program document

Program Design³⁵
<p><i>Contextual analysis</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>How does the distribution of macroeconomic development affect women</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the productive structure - effects on women's employment • <u>Women's participation in clusters</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intensification of the working day - trade liberalization modifies the productive structure - drastic changes in the female workforce are not registered - analysis of several production chains - migration of the Garifuna population from Honduras to Nicaragua • <u>Greater flexibility in the labor market</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - modifications derived from the inclusion of labor standards in trade agreements • <u>Background.</u> Summary of the products obtained during the Phase I of the Program • <u>Rationale.</u> Opportunities identified based on the outcome of Phase I of the Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - policies to promote competitiveness linked to poverty reduction strategies, which are an opportunity to incorporate the interests and needs of women - innovative nature of the WEA has caught the attention of governmental entities and women's organizations in the six countries - universities and civil society organizations see the Program as a source of information and analysis, which serve as basis for proposals presented by the civil society within the SICA framework - possible effects of the impact of China on the international market and the EU-CAAA evidence the need to develop a holistic position to increase regional competitiveness; women can play an important role - the logic that promotes collaborative efforts, put into practice by the WEA, can enhance the harmonization and alignment of UN programs in each country
<p><i>Management and coordination arrangements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational structure • Monitoring and evaluation • Reports and audit • Administrative arrangements
Logical framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Countries:</u> Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama • <u>Development objective:</u> To foster the development of knowledge, capacities, and public policies that contribute to gender-equitable economic governance, with a view to promoting Central American women's economic autonomy and the full enjoyment of their rights

³⁵ UNIFEM (2006).

<i>Expected Outcomes</i>	<i>Planned products</i>
1. Spaces and mechanisms that promote the dialogue between government, civil society, academic community, and development cooperation entities institutionalized and consolidated.	1.1 SICA's institutional and regulatory framework enables the representation and participation of women and other key stakeholders in the process of regional economic integration. 1.2 The dialogue and joint work promoted by the WEA are strengthened as a sustainable organizational structure in all six countries, thus ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of proposed outcomes.
2. The WEA incorporated into national economic agendas.	2.1 Political proposals introduced by the WEA are adopted by national authorities. 2.2 The availability of gender-sensitive statistics for analyzing economic issues is improved. 2.3 The staff of important institutions at the national level responsible for making economic decisions has improved its capacity for gender-sensitive economic analysis.
3. The WEA widely recognized as a space to generate ideas, knowledge, and proposals that have political impact on women's economic autonomy.	3.1 Increased recognition by the public opinion and by institutions at the national and regional levels that the WEA plays a leading role in knowledge generation and serves as a space to discuss the main economic problems faced by women and propose solutions.
4. Women's organizations and mechanisms and other entities advocating gender equality positioned and coordinated to influence policies for women's economic autonomy.	4.1 The capacity of women's organizations to influence public policies at the national and regional levels is improved. 4.2 Academic institutions linked to the Program have strengthened their study plans and their capacity to analyze and present proposals that contribute to women's economic empowerment.

The use of materials produced by the Program itself in the previous stage indicates continuity; however, it could also suggest that PRODOC's statement is self-referring. To verify or refute this hypothesis, the ET reviewed several elements of pertinent documents produced by other institutional actors—women's organizations, civil society organizations, universities, centers of national and international studies; and other entities³⁶.

A quick comparative analysis contradicts the hypothesis of self-reference. The assumptions and elements of analyses contained in the PRODOC are compatible with most sector studies and with the statements of most national and international organizations that have expressed a position regarding the WEA in Central America, in particular regarding the Gender Gap Index and the HDI.

The Program Document (PRODOC) is written in English and has not been translated into Spanish³⁷. Most of the document addresses the contextual analysis of participating countries and the regional scenario and is largely based on the reflections and products of Phase I of the Program.

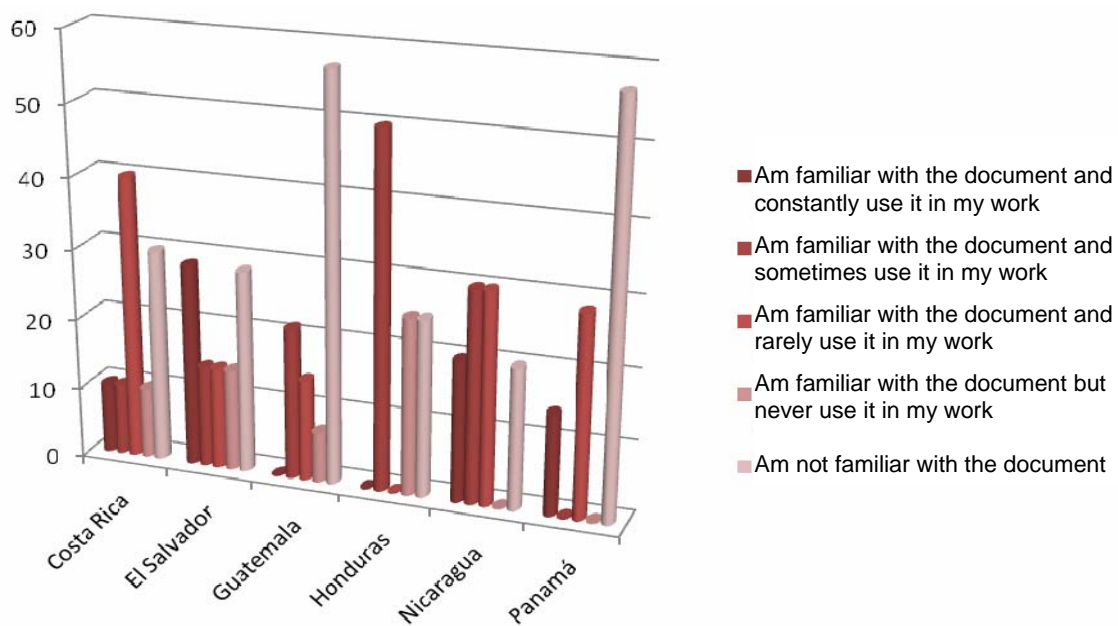
It should be pointed out that PRODOC's extensive strategic analysis is probably partially wasted because it cannot be used in any technical-political dialogue as there is only a version in English. Survey results as well as several of the interviews conducted by the ET confirm the limited use of PRODOC as a conceptual and strategic tool.

³⁶ Chant (2007), Espino (2005), Flores and Lindo (2007), Orozco (2007), GED (<http://ged.hn>), among others.

³⁷ In Honduras, the ET had access to a printed version of PRODOC in Spanish, but the electronic version was not available. Several TCs reported that they do not have nor use this document, which coincides with the findings of the Internet Survey as mentioned further in this Report.

The Internet survey conducted by the ET (see results in Annex IV) indicated that 39% of the staff of the WEA and institutional partners of the Program are not familiar with PRODOC, and 31% do not use it or use it sparingly in their work. In other words, 70% of the staff directly involved in the Program and its innovative institutions do not use the PRODOC as a working tool. The survey also confirms that PRODOC is not used by the WEA as an instrument of technical-political dialogue: of the interviewees from the academic community, the public sector, and civil society organizations, 80%-84% are not familiar with the document.

The following figure shows the distribution per country of the opinions on the familiarity with and use of the PRODOC by Program staff. It is most widely known in Honduras and least known and used in Guatemala and Panama.



Regarding the process of Program formulation, the ET has documented several opinions, including those of involved staff members, that suggest that the process has not been completely participatory: “(...) A shared vision for designing the Joint WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP Program was lacking”; “ (...) we became involved in something that was already in process;”; “The teams that were going to implement the program further on should have been invited to participate³⁸.”

Regarding these aspects, the ET has gathered sufficient evidence to conclude that the familiarity with PRODOC is very limited, especially in the case of external actors. A more participatory formulation would probably have improved the conceptualization of national strategies, and a more universal use of PRODOC would probably be of help in technical-political dialogues.

³⁸ Comments of a UNDP officer interviewed in Nicaragua. To this respect, institutional response from UNIFEM is that “probably what has occurred here is that UNDP or UNIFEM could not develop a process for appropriation of the Program by UNDP. But this does not put in discussion the level of participation that the planning process had for the II phase. It should also be noticed that regional economic themes were not a priority for UNDP... The importance given by this institution to economic themes is partially explained by the work developed by those WEA’s TCs assigned to UNDP offices (Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador), to internationalize this topic within UNDP”.

The section of the document that explains the Program's Logical Framework is reduced to a 1-page table and, as seen above, is linked to a general objective, four expected outcomes, which should be reached through eight products.

The development objective aims at building capacities and developing public policies that strengthen gender equality in economic development, promoting women's economic autonomy through income generation and added value. Based on the analysis of pertinent problems, it is logical to assume that this goal is strategic.

This strategic vision is also innovative regarding the most common practices of promoting women's economic autonomy. The goal is to reduce the asymmetries in local and national economies through affirmative actions contained in important public policies, so that women's productive work generates greater income for them. The linking of this vision to increased influence on public policies and the inclusion of knowledge generation constitutes a relative new approach for UNIFEM, as will be discussed in the following section on Relevance.

The four expected outcomes establish processes logically necessary to reach the objective: (i) building the capacities of women's groups advocating gender equality to influence public economic policies; (ii) incorporation of the WEA into economic development agendas and regulations at the national and regional levels; (iii) political positioning of the WEA; (iv) merging of spaces and dialogue mechanisms between governments, the civil society, the academic community, and regional and international entities.

Products can be classified into three groups³⁹:

- (a) Those referring directly to the political influence of the Program⁴⁰
- (b) Capacity building⁴¹ of the government and civil society, at the national or regional levels
- (c) Knowledge generation⁴²

In another section, PRODOC indicates the activities to be carried out by the Program.

Most of the outputs are formulated in terms of intermediate outcomes between the four expected outcomes and the true outputs of the Program⁴³, which are not specified.

To exemplify this conclusion, Outputs 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, and 4.2 have been grouped under Political Incidence. In all five cases, no result that the Program can reasonably and directly achieve is formulated: in other words, no output is formulated but rather a result that does not depend directly on the Program but on a change of attitude and/or in decision making of third parties, based on Program outputs.

For example, none of the following outputs can be obtained by the Program without the active participation of other people and institutions: the change of SICA's regulatory framework; the

³⁹ Several of PRODOC's statements contain more than one output, which means that they appear in two groups.

⁴⁰ Output 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, and 4.2.

⁴¹ Outputs 1.2, 2.3, and 4.1.

⁴² Outputs 2.1, 2.2, and 4.2.

⁴³ Reference is made to the categories of Results, Outcomes, and Outputs according to the definitions applicable to UNIFEM (DAC/OECD, 2004; UNEG 2007; UNDP: 2005).

adoption of WEA proposals by national authorities; the consideration of the WEA as main space for developing public policies in the sector by national and regional actors; women's organizations influence public policies; and the modification of the study plans of diverse academic programs by academic institutions, based on the Program's work. In other words, these are 'outcomes' and not 'outputs'.

The unconventional formulation of most of the "Outputs"⁴⁴ in terms of Outcomes leaves important strategic gaps. In these cases, the PRODOC does not contain sufficient elements to answer the question: How is the Program going to achieve these outcomes in counterpart and partner organizations? The analysis indicates that neither is the section on Activities exhaustive enough to answer this question.

In addition, the PRODOC logical framework does not suggest process indicators that correspond to the four expected Outcomes. However, in most cases the Outputs defined in the PRODOC can be regarded as adequate indicators of Expected Outcomes⁴⁵. Furthermore, the PRODOC indicates that "once the Joint Program is in operation, the terms of reference, the work plan, and the mechanisms for monitoring of results and indicators will be defined⁴⁶." As formulated, the document transfers the definition of indicators to the operational phase, leaving this aspect undecided in the design phase⁴⁷.

The relatively poor definition of "how" the Program can achieve the outcome of political incidence is an issue that will have to be considered in the following evaluation phase. Several hypotheses can be formulated in this sense. Three are given herein and will be analyzed, together with others, during the evaluation: (i) the consolidation of WEA's positioning and of UNIFEM's incidence capacities is such that it can directly produce changes in governmental institutions and the civil society; (ii) the decisions on how to carry out political incidence are taken at the national level; and (iii) the Program does not make planned decisions, but reacts instead to statements made by third parties.

Finally, the lack of definition of specific products that correspond to the most relevant outcomes hinders the analysis of consistency between resources, outputs, and outcomes. In other words, because no series of specific Program outputs has been defined, the following question cannot be answered: Is it hypothetically feasible for the Program to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs with the resources that are available?

The PRODOC also establishes several provisions regarding the Program's governance and its technical coordination, involving miscellaneous institutions, committees, and working groups⁴⁸. These issues will be addressed further on this report.

⁴⁴ In this case "Output" (between quotation marks) refers to the definitions applied in the PRODOC, whereas elsewhere in this report output (without quotation marks) is used as generally defined.

⁴⁵ As suggested by several authors, intermediate outcomes and process indicators coincide. For example, "Output 1.1", a new regulatory framework for SICA, is a process indicator of Outcome 1, which seeks to institutionalize spaces and mechanisms for dialogue between the government, civil society, the academic community, and development cooperation entities.

⁴⁶ PRODOC, page 21.

⁴⁷ Consistent with this decision, the ET will investigate the definition of Indicators as a part of the analysis of Program Management and Effectiveness.

⁴⁸ PRODOC: Flow chart on page 21.

Regarding established strategies, the ET has gathered several viewpoints that indicate the need to increase the WEA base: “(...) organizations, such as labor unions, professional associations (doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, (...)), must also be included”. It was also pointed out that it would prove advantageous to extend the integral character of the approach: “the WEA needs a greater interdisciplinary input from, for example biologists, sociologists, economists, and experts in bioethical issues⁴⁹”. Overall, numerous opinions expressed the need to expand the social base, the number of partnerships, and the approach.⁵⁰

The following conclusions were reached regarding the logic of the design, the formulation, and the use of the PRODOC:

- (i) In general, **the contextual analysis and the general statement of the Program are logical, compatible with other relevant studies and shared by other stakeholders.**
- (ii) The fact that the PRODOC has not been translated the Spanish reduces its use as a tool of technical-political dialogue. **The use of the PRODOC is very limited as a tool within the Program itself and the vast majority of partners are not familiar with it.**
- (iii) **The general strategy is adequate and partially innovative for UNIFEM, representing the opening of a new and strategic field of work for the organization:** the promotion of political incidence in gender equality and the reduction of asymmetries in the distribution of economic production benefits.
- (iv) **The logical framework does not fully meet the standards applicable to UNIFEM because of the inadequate use of categories, the non-inclusion of explicit indicators, and the significant gaps in the illustration of the chain of Results, especially due to the lack of definition of Program Outputs** that correspond with the expected outcome of political incidence.
- (v) As a result, **there is no evidence that an analysis of consistency between available resources and expected results was carried out when formulating the Program.**⁵¹
- (vi) Based on the foregoing, **Program evaluability based on the PRODOC is poor.**

Institutional comments from UNIFEM about this section are that “Observations and comments made previously to the Cabinet Report were not included in this Final Report; especially those referred to the design of the Program”. To this respect, the ET replies that in fact those comments were not incorporated because they were superseded by discussions on the Preliminary Report, when the ET clarified the arguments that support the lack of coherence of the WEA Logical Framework with definitions applied to UNIFEM and those accepted worldwide⁵²

⁴⁹ Comments made by an interviewee of the academic sector in Panama.

⁵⁰ There were various suggestions in this sense, including the following: include the Chambers of Commerce; increase the participation of trade organizations; and form alliances with the education sector to facilitate the dissemination and acceptance of the approach.

⁵¹ Consequently, the ET does not find sufficient elements in the PRODOC to perform the consistency analysis.

⁵² OECD/DAC (2006-2009)

6. Relevance and Coherence

6.1 Relevance to the UNIFEM/UNDP vision and strategies

Commonly accepted definitions consider Relevance as the alignment of the goals of a project with (i) the vision and objectives of directly associated institutions; and (ii) the expectations and priorities of organizations and people who will benefit from successful Program execution.

UNIFEM's mandate and current strategic plan⁵³ will be taken into account to assess the Relevance of the Program to UNIFEM's vision and objectives. Table II shows the common features between Program aspects and the UNIFEM strategy⁵⁴.

Table II: Elements for analyzing the Relevance of the Program to UNIFEM/UNDP⁵⁵.

ELEMENTS OF THE UNIFEM/UNDP VISION AND STRATEGY	COMPLIANCE OF PROGRAM ELEMENTS				
	Contextual analysis	Strategy	Development objective	Expected outcomes	"Outputs" ⁵⁶
<i>UNIFEM Mandate and Strategic Plan, 2008-2011</i>					
UNIFEM's mandate, articulated in General Assembly Resolution 39/125 (1984), which asks UNIFEM to (i) provide innovative and catalytic programming and financial support to countries to achieve gender equality in line with their national priorities; and (ii) strengthen action on gender equality across the United Nations system of development cooperation ⁵⁷ .	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++
The plan is ambitious in its focus on deepening the knowledge and impact that emanated from UNIFEM targeted support and the experience of its partners in government, civil society, and the United Nations ⁵⁸ .	+++	+++	+++	+++	N/A

⁵³ The evaluation does not intend to judge the Relevance and Coherence of the Program when it was formulated, but rather its current relevance to the strategies of its partners.

⁵⁴ Because UNIFEM is governed by the same Executive Board that governs UNDP and taking into account the strategic and operational relationships between the two UN organizations, the ET assumes that UNDP has the same referents regarding its involvement in gender-related topics.

⁵⁵ The level of compliance found by the ET is summarized as follows: +++ = highly pertinent; ++ = pertinent; + = partially pertinent; - = non-pertinent; N/A = does not apply (of implicit compliance in view of other elements).

⁵⁶ Really intermediate outcomes or process indicators.

⁵⁷ UN General Assembly (1984).

⁵⁸ Source of this and the following citations of this section: UNIFEM Strategic Plan, 2008-2011.

ELEMENTS OF THE UNIFEM/UNDP VISION AND STRATEGY	COMPLIANCE OF PROGRAM ELEMENTS				
	Contextual analysis	Strategy	Development objective	Expected outcomes	“Outputs” ⁵⁶
UNIFEM is positioned to enhance its catalytic role with a specific focus on enabling and inspiring implementation of commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment.	+++	+++	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Goal</i> 25. UNIFEM work is driven by a single goal: national commitments to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment are implemented in stable and fragile states.	N/A	N/A	+++	N/A	N/A
<i>Indicators by theme of the goal (first theme)</i> Enhance women’s economic security and rights: – Proportion of women who work on their own account or in a family business workers in total employment – Wage gap: Ratio of female:male income	+++	+++	+++	N/A	N/A
<i>Focus areas</i> 28. UNIFEM will continue to base its work on a theory of change that is premised on three focus areas: (a) aligning laws and policies to create a conducive environment for the empowerment of women and human rights; (b) strengthening institutions and organizations in work processes, resources, and capacities to fulfill obligations to the Convention, as well as other global, regional and national normative agreements; and (c) supporting community-level initiatives that demonstrate how changes in practices and attitudes can be achieved to permit the implementation of commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment.	+++	+++	+++	++	N/A
29. <u>Outcome 1</u> . Increased numbers of national development strategies (including poverty reduction strategies, sector-wide approaches, post-conflict reconstruction strategies, and other nationally owned plans) incorporate gender equality in line with national commitments to the empowerment of women (such as the MDGs) and human rights (the Convention, for example).	N/A	N/A	+++	+++	N/A
<u>Outcome 5</u> . Gender equality experts, advocates and their organizations and networks enhance their capacity and influence to ensure strong gender equality dimensions in national laws, policies and strategies, including in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction processes.	+++	N/A	+++	+	N/A

ELEMENTS OF THE UNIFEM/UNDP VISION AND STRATEGY	COMPLIANCE OF PROGRAM ELEMENTS				
	Contextual analysis	Strategy	Development objective	Expected outcomes	“Outputs” ⁵⁶
UNIFEM Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF), 2004-2007⁵⁹					
<u>Goal 1: Reducing feminized poverty and exclusion</u> UNIFEM will continue to focus on reducing feminized poverty and exclusion by: (a) mainstreaming a gender perspective in trade and macro-economic policymaking; and (b) increasing women’s access to and influence on markets for labour, goods and services. Expanding economic opportunities for poor women requires that UNIFEM support the mainstreaming of gender-responsive, rights-based poverty reduction strategies in the PRSPs, the MDGs, trade agreements, and other policy and coordination instruments.	N/A	+++	+++	++	N/A
<u>Goal indicators:</u> - Improved availability and use of data on women’s share of unpaid care work by policy-makers - Proportion of women and men with incomes below \$1 per day - Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector - Women’s participation in the informal sector	N/A	N/A	N/A	++	++

The review of Table II indicates that the Program is highly relevant regarding several UNIFEM mandates, goals, and strategies. Relatively fewer coincidences are found in (i) aspects relative to *the funding of community-level initiatives that demonstrate how changes in practices and attitudes can be achieved to permit the implementation of commitments to gender equality*, including aspects related to entrepreneurship; and (ii) regarding the lack of an explicit indication of gender-sensitive approaches in the PRODOC for peace-building processes and post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction. Furthermore, the Program’s approach some way contains and surpasses the goals and strategies foreseen in the reviewed MYFF.

It is evident that the Program does not attempt to contribute—nor could it do so—to all of UNIFEM’s goals and strategies. Therefore the absence of aspects linked to community practices is not considered in itself a negative finding. However, for UNIFEM to implement a corporate strategy in the region it would be necessary for the other projects working in coordination with the Program to promote practices regarding macro issues of WEA interest⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ UNIFEM (2003). The EE has not had access to the UNIFEM Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) that follows. Therefore Relevance has been analyzed on the basis of the MYFF for 2004-2007, which corresponds to a previous period.

⁶⁰ Particularly other UNIFEM programs such as: (1) MyDEL, Women’s Economic Empowerment and Participation in Local Government and Development Processes, and (2) Women and poverty, with the project “Incorporating the

On the other hand, the lack of explicit approaches to guide the Program in peace-building and post-conflict situations is a major shortcoming when considering that most of the women in the Program's area of action live in countries with these conditions, e.g. El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, as well as in other countries with high levels of migration.

When other referents of institutional visions⁶¹ are taken into consideration, PRODOC does not address in detail specific topics pertinent to the Mayan and Garifuna people or other non-dominant ethnic groups.

Two conclusions can be reached:

- (i) **The Program's formulation is pertinent to the UNIFEM mandate and current strategic plan.** The only major shortcoming identified is the **lack of specific approaches in relation to countries undergoing peace-building processes and the addressing of intercultural and multi-ethnic problems**—approaches that are needed in view of the situation of most Central American women living in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.
- (ii) To comply with the definition of Focus Areas of the UNIFEM Strategic Plan, the Regional Director must make sure that the Program works in coordination with other UNIFEM projects and initiatives that include the support of community practices related to WEA thematic areas at a macro level.

6.2 Relevance regarding the priorities of other associated institutions and final beneficiaries

The Pertinence of the objectives and strategies of the evaluated project regarding the expectations, goals, and strategies of associated entities and final beneficiaries is also called Relevance. To analyze Relevance, the main elements of Program design must be compared with the visions, priorities, and main actions of associated beneficiary organizations.

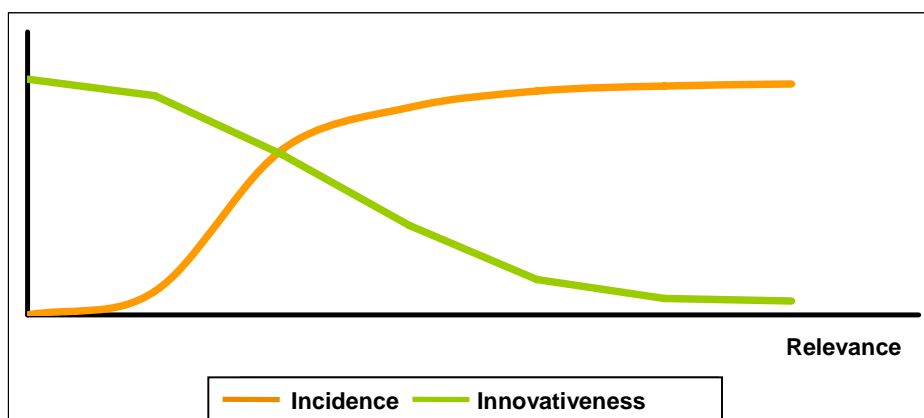
Some Program characteristics make this analysis unique. We mainly refer to: (i) its innovative character, and (ii) its potential impact on public policies and organizational strategies.

Because it is an innovative approach, it can be expected that most organizations have not yet incorporated it into their visions and priorities. Furthermore, one of the indicators of Program incidence is precisely the degree of incorporation of this approach into the agendas of associated entities; in other words, it is highly relevant to innovative projects. The following figure illustrates the theoretical relationship between Relevance, Incidence, and Innovativeness of a project.

dimensions of gender, race, and ethnic group in poverty eradication programs in four Latin American countries: Guatemala, Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay.”

⁶¹ For examples, documents of Common Country Assessment-United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA-UNDAF) of target countries and the UNDP Human Development Reports, among others.

Figure I: Incidence and innovativeness of a development initiative as a theoretical function of its relevance



This theoretical case refers in general to any project that seeks to influence the agendas and visions of third parties by introducing new innovations: the greater its incidence, the greater its relevance because the number of associates incorporating the project's approach increases. However, at the same time the Program's innovativeness is gradually lost precisely for the same reason. These projects have identified a shortcoming and use approaches that are not widely shared by other entities.

Relevance can be either intermediate or low, depending on Program characteristics. In the case of the civil society, the WEA works with trade associations and women's organizations: the former have not necessarily adopted an appropriate gender perspective, while the latter have not necessarily prioritized the economic sector and the productive work of women as key areas to promote women's economic independence. The Program, on the other hand, works in spaces that are common to both women and producers and in mechanisms of institutional coordination with national and regional public entities, which are strategic areas to promote incidence.

To verify this hypothesis, the visions and priorities of organizations working with the WEA and other civil society organizations of Central American countries interested in the economic development and/or equitable development of women were examined. As summarized below, the assessment confirmed the hypothesis that the Program is innovative and, as a result, its strategic approach is only partially relevant to the vision of external organizations. The Relevance is high in several specific cases of entities that the WEA considers as strategic partners.

The Program promotes practices that are innovative to a certain point regarding the struggles and programs of women's organizations. It seeks to influence public policies on economic development, promoting women's economic autonomy based on their productive work, minimizing barriers and asymmetries but also combining different strategies and alliances to identify resources that will enable the implementation of activities considered of importance to the different focus areas of the WEA.

The Program is innovative because many existing women's organizations have not prioritized practices guided by these principles. Most prioritize other topics and goals such as the full effect of

women's civil and political rights; the recognition of reproductive work; the struggle against social, community, and family discrimination; the struggle against violence against women, among others⁶².

Numerous women's organizations seek the economic development of their members, but most do not consider political incidence to change the current system of economic development to increase women's participation as a priority, but rather try to support their members to more efficiently access the existing system.

Other organizations, such as the International Foundation for Global Economic Development (FIDEG, its Spanish acronym)⁶³ and Gender, Economy and Development (GED, its Spanish acronym)⁶⁴, do include the incidence in public policies that reduce economic asymmetries in their declared visions and strategies.

On the other hand, trade organizations and NGOs that support the micro, small, and medium enterprise (referred to as *Mipymes*) agree with some of the technical statements posed by the WEA, for example those referring to asymmetries within a chain of value and the importance of analyzing governance to favor those actors who are at a disadvantage or more vulnerable; however, these entities only partially incorporate adequate gender perspectives. This is the case, for example, of the Honduran Coordinating Council of Peasant Organizations (COCOCH, its Spanish acronym)⁶⁵, the Nicaraguan National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG, its Spanish acronym)⁶⁶, and the National Foundation for Development (FUNDE, its Spanish acronym)⁶⁷.

COCOCH and UNAG, for example, are second-level associations⁶⁸ that have women's organizations among their members⁶⁹. It is interesting to note that in both cases the vision of second-level organizations as well as several public pronouncements⁷⁰ do not adequately consider the gender perspective, despite the fact that women's organization participate as members. This finding must be considered from a perspective of effectiveness and external factors, in an attempt to answer the following question: Why hasn't a gender-sensitive perspective permeated mixed trade associations whose membership includes women's organizations?

These indications derived from the comparison of WEA objectives and approaches with the priorities of associated organizations have been confirmed in the interviews and surveys carried out by the ET. Several of the interviewees, for example, confirm the procedural character of incorporating the WEA

⁶² This is the case of the following organizations, among others: Las Dignas: Association of Women for Dignity and Life (www.angelfire.com/amiga2/lasdignas); Mujer Nica (www.muojernica.info); CEMUJER (www.angelfire.com/nh/cemujer); ORMUSA www.analitica.com/mujeranalitica/organizacionesfemeninas/7446607.asp); Network of Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean Women in the Diaspora (www.muojeresafro.org); Center for Women's Rights (www.derechosdelamujer.org).

⁶³ www.fideg.org/generoyecono.

⁶⁴ <http://ged.hn>.

⁶⁵ The vision, mission and main objectives of COCOCH can be consulted at www.redmesoamericana.net.

⁶⁶ www.unag.org.ni.

⁶⁷ www.funde.org.

⁶⁸ Second-level associations group other associations whose members are individuals.

⁶⁹ The Union of Rural Women of Honduras (UMCAH, its Spanish acronym) and the National Association of Rural Agroindustrial Productive Women (ANMPAR, its Spanish acronym) form part of UNAG; the Honduran Association of Rural Women, UMCAH, and the Council for the Integrated Development of Rural Women are members of COCOCH.

⁷⁰ See, for example, the two UNAG pronouncements (S/F; 2008) referred to in the Bibliography of this report: **I.** Central American Agricultural Policy; and **II.** Rural Economies, Food Sovereignty, and Trade Liberalization.

approach into organizational priorities and strategies. Others point out that the WEA has still not been prioritized by all stakeholders:

“women’s organizations have demanded other topics, but not Gender and Economy⁷¹;
“(...) we are a Human Rights organization that has to do with the civil society. We are still concerned with other issues. We are dedicated to caring for life, respect, but we have not become involved in the economic part. The alliance with the WEA serves for mutual enrichment. The statistical data on the situation of women serve as support in discrimination analysis...⁷²”

At the same time, several interviewees evidence a process of appropriation:

“(...) our school for leaders has a political approach, but is incorporating economic issues....⁷³”

The evaluative process has also documented numerous indications of the high relevance of the WEA, as expressed, for example, by officers of the Costa Rica’s public sector who also agree that the WEA approach is gradually being incorporated into the national agenda.

“This is a good moment for the relationship between the WEA and INAMU. It is important to continue. There is a convergence of visions, goals, objectives ...”

“The theme of Gender and Economy is fundamental because it contributes a new vision of women as actors in the economic scenario (...); however (...) the entrepreneurship of women has not been placed on the agenda and the Program is therefore relevant to the country.”

The Program’s relevance has also benefited from the broad scope of the WEA approach and the flexibility of its strategy. Associated entities feel free to jointly define the agenda with the Program. “This alliance has proven to be highly positive, showing a great deal of flexibility. Parameters have not been imposed on us. There is an environment of respect ...⁷⁴”

The surveys conducted by the ET illustrate how the positioning of the WEA at the national and regional levels is perceived⁷⁵. These perceptions can be regarded as a proxy indicator of the relevance of WEA strategies and goals. The survey reveals that 30% of the staff of the WEA and institutional partners considered the Program as an important or indispensable actor and 50.9% say that it is an actor considered by several sectors. The same question regarding the importance of the WEA as regional actor also shows positive perceptions, but quantitatively lower (indispensable actor, 5%; important, 19%; considered by several, 46%).

The following figure illustrates the perceptions of the people closest to the WEA—Program and UNIFEM staff—regarding its positioning at the national level.

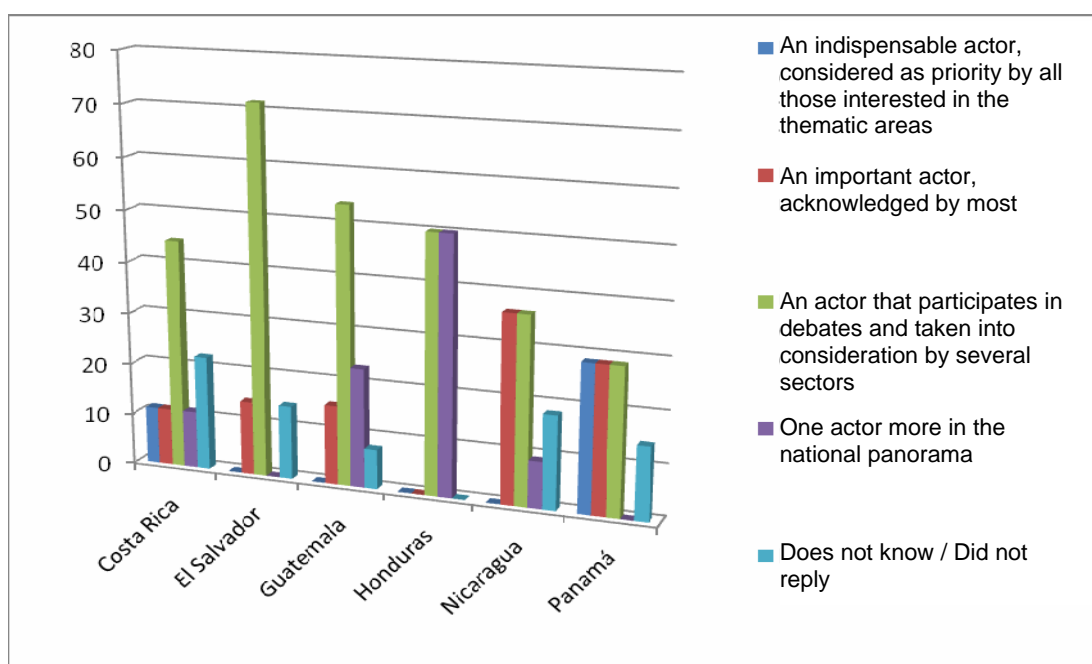
⁷¹ Interview carried out with a women consultant on WEA in Honduras.

⁷² Interview carried out with the woman director of a legal aide organization for the civil society in Panama.

⁷³ Interview carried out with the woman director of a WEA beneficiary organization in Nicaragua.

⁷⁴ Interview carried out with the director of an academic institution in Panama.

⁷⁵ In reply to the question: “In your opinion, the WEA in your country is considered as: (a) an indispensable actor ...; (b) an important actor ...; (c) an actor ... considered by several sectors ...; (d) one actor more in the panorama”



Regarding the distribution of replies per country, Honduras shows a different trend. Partner organizations opine that the WEA is either an actor acknowledged by many or just one actor more in the national panorama. The contrary trend occurs in Nicaragua, where most consider that the WEA is an important actor in the national panorama.

Interviewees were also asked whether the actions of the WEA relate to the economic needs of women, at the national and regional levels. The vast majority of replies—between 54% and 60% in three of the surveys carried out⁷⁶—indicate that they are completely related. Another 20% states they are related, at least most of the time. In this case, the perception of relationship is less positive at the regional level. The conflicting note comes from the survey directed at civil society organizations: 35% say that WEA actions only occasionally relate to women's needs.

In conclusion, the ET has collected sufficient evidence, using different tools and investigating various universes, to conclude that the **Program's Relevance and Coherence are satisfactory, primarily in country scenarios. Program relevance, however, can be increased between civil society organizations and at the regional level.** In answer to the request posted in UNIFEM comments to this Report, we clarify that the previous paragraph synthesizes the findings of the EE as a result of triangulating several sources: (a) surveys; (b) personal interviews with UNIFEM staff, associated organizations, counterparts and key informants; (c) bibliographic and documentary sources. The common trend of data gathered from these sources shows that there is a spread perception that the WEA is less relevant for the mentioned groups.

The Program is innovative and seeks to influence public policies and strategies of associated organizations. As a result, the potential increase in **Relevance is inherent to the initiative's own**

⁷⁶ The exceptions are the perceptions of officials of civil society organizations. Only 35% stated that WEA actions are completely related to the economic needs of women in their countries.

structure. The more limited Relevance in this case means that not all the associated organizations appropriated the approach nor have they applied it on a priority basis. This is precisely why the Program is necessary.

The perception of the procedural character of the gradual incorporation of WEA approaches into the agendas of associated entities is common. The successful implementation of this innovative Program has influenced public agendas as well as the civil society agendas, thus increasing its Relevance.

With regard to this section of the Report, comments from UNIFEM indicate agreement with the ET: “there is correspondence with the evaluative judgments of the ET regarding relevance and coherence of the Program”. There is also a methodological observation which is briefly discussed in this footnote⁷⁷

7. Effectiveness

This section will address the degree in which the WEA is achieving its objectives and producing expected results and, ultimately, other results, whose nature is further discussed in the following section on perceptible effects and in perspective.

The effectiveness analysis of a Program should be conducted by comparing what should be, composed by objectives, purposes, scopes, and/or results defined in the PRODOC, with what really is, composed by advances, achievements, and real verifiable effects at the time of the evaluation.

It was difficult for the ET to conduct a linear comparative analysis of the effectiveness of the WEA Program for the period under evaluation. On the one hand, there are no indicators to measure results that could be used to confirm the advances made by the Program⁷⁸. On the other hand, there were inconsistencies in the way the different planning and reporting tools⁷⁹ were used, making it even more difficult to find reference frames to perform comparative assessments and, as a result, analyses.

⁷⁷ “Is it fair to measure the relevance by analyzing the WEA answers to the needs of women? ¿Wouldn’t be better to talk about relevance with regard to the need to have policies or policy tools that include women economic rights?” Strictly speaking, relevance should be analyzed according to the accepted definition that takes into account the priorities of those involved in the intervention (persons, groups, institutions); “the need to have policies or policy tools” is established by the priorities of social and institutional actors involved in the Program. However, outside the positive vision that underlies the logic of development projects, this observation is interesting and seems to be the preamble of a discussion about the levels of consciousness of diverse actors. A discussion that could be of interest for WEA, given the levels of social exclusion and political participation of numerous sectors of Central American population.

⁷⁸ Neither in the PRODOC nor in subsequent planning documents are there indicators against which the results reported in the different countries could be measured. As indicated in the section on monitoring and feedback, there is no system in place to monitor the advances made to produce information that allows the achievement of objectives to be controlled.

⁷⁹ For example, there is a limited use of the PRODOC Logical Framework or its modified version as a planning and monitoring tool. Progress reports, although very complete and detailed, do not refer to measurement indicators to quantify the advances made. At times, concepts such as ‘vision’, ‘objectives’, ‘mission’, ‘outcomes’, ‘outputs’, etc., are used inadequately, as mentioned earlier in the analysis of Program design, hindering activities from being directed toward concrete results.

Difficulties were also encountered regarding the information the ET received for the effectiveness analysis. The planning information necessary to review program effectiveness⁸⁰ was missing for the period under evaluation June 2006-June 2008; however, regional work plans organized by thematic areas do exist for the period 2008-2010 and the ET used these as reference to plan future Program activities in terms of their potential effectiveness.

It is therefore necessary to review not only the planning process carried out for this second phase of the WEA, but also the objectives proposed and the results reported during the evaluation period to contextualize the analysis of Program effectiveness.

As indicated in the analysis of the Program design, several outcomes and outputs were defined in the PRODOC for the second phase of the WEA. But, as mentioned earlier, the PRODOC as formulated has major shortcomings because expected outputs were put forward as outcomes⁸¹. As a result, the causal mechanisms to achieve Program results are vague.

To correct these shortcomings and as initial activity at the onset of the second phase of the WEA Program, a Regional Planning Workshop was held in August 2006 to adapt the Program's strategic framework and the respective work plans of the regional component as well as prioritize the themes that should be addressed in this second phase. It should be noted that the agreements that resulted from this workshop differ slightly from those approved in the PRODOC⁸².

The new planning elements of the WEA in its second phase are as follows:

Vision: The women of the Central American Isthmus with economic autonomy and contributing actively to social and gender equality so they can fully enjoy their economic, social, cultural, and political rights.

General objective⁸³: A comprehensive program that fosters social and political actions promoting the economic autonomy of women of the Central American Isthmus, generating knowledge, capabilities, and effective public policies that help reduce gender inequality in the economy and transform the current economic order in the search for a development model focused on the well-being of people and society.

⁸⁰ As confirmed by the ET, the 2006-2008 Annual Operational Plan provided for this evaluation was not sufficiently socialized nor used as a tool to report the results corresponding to that period. As a result, it could not be used to verify effectiveness. The ET decided to center its analysis on the 2008-2010 Work Plan presented as documentation for the evaluation, clarifying that only the first semester of 2008 will be analyzed.

⁸¹ **Outcomes** are results that do not depend directly on the Program, but indicate a change of attitude and/or decision making based in the Program's outputs **by third actors**, for example the change in SICA's regulatory framework, the adoption of WEA proposals by national authorities, the success of women's organizations in influencing public policies, and modified study plans in university academic programs. None of these results can be obtained by the Program without the active participation of other persons or institutions.

⁸² For example, the terminology used in official planning documents changed: the 'outcomes' of the PRODOC were referred to thereafter as 'objectives'. The broad development objective proposed in the logical framework lost visibility in subsequent planning stages, giving way to the declaration of a new vision for the Program. The text of the elements of the logical framework also changed slightly.

⁸³ Several official WEA documents and staff presentations refer to this general objective as the WEA mission.

Expected results at the end of the WEA Project Phase II

Specific objectives ('Outcomes' in PRODOC)	Expected outputs
1. Space for dialogue facilitated by the WEA has continuity, based on agreements between stakeholders: the academic community, central government agencies, civil society organizations, and international cooperation.	<p>1.1 An institutional framework for SICA-SIECA that coordinates and facilitates the representation and participation of women of different sectors in processes of regional economic integration.</p> <p>1.2 The space promoted by the WEA has been consolidated as a permanent and sustainable organizational structure that guarantees efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of its objectives.</p>
2. The WEA has been incorporated into regional and national economic agendas.	<p>2.1 Research and training. The staff of institutions involved in economic decision-making processes at the regional level have the tools necessary to conduct gender-sensitive economic analyses and prepare gender-sensitive policy proposals.</p> <p>2.2 Statistics. The region has improved availability of data and statistics to analyze economic information from a gender equality perspective.</p> <p>2.3 Political incidence. Regional and national authorities adopt policy and project proposals, proposed by the WEA, that favor women's economic autonomy.</p>
3. The WEA is widely recognized as a space for dialogue and for creating ideas and proposals that have a political influence on women's autonomy.	<p>3.1 The WEA managed to position itself and is recognized by the public opinion and by regional and national economic entities as a space to generate knowledge and debate on major economic problems faced by women and to build consensus on strategies to solve these problems.</p>
4. The WEA has managed to coordinate the participation of different sectors (women's social organizations, the academic community, mechanisms for women's empowerment, and other entities of the public sector) in processes of political incidence to strengthen women's economic autonomy.	<p>4.1 Women's social movements have boosted their capacity to mobilize, develop proposals, and influence public policies at the regional and national levels through the support, technical assistance, and accompaniment provided by the WEA.</p> <p>4.2 Higher education institutions linked to the WEA have strengthened their formation capacities and are capable of analyzing and preparing proposals that contribute to women's autonomy in the region.</p>

At this Regional Workshop, the responsibility of handling prioritized themes was assigned to different countries as follows:

Public budgets	El Salvador
Labor market and rights	Costa Rica
Economic openness	Nicaragua

Strengthening of the civil society	Nicaragua
Academic community (formation, training, research)	Costa Rica
Migrations and remittances	Guatemala
Statistics	Panama
Inventory of research studies and publications (Phase I)	Regional Coordination
Human resources database	Regional Coordination
Communications	<i>Ad hoc</i> Commission

With the creation of these thematic areas and the assignment of the responsibility of each theme to a different country, the planning of the WEA changed its course: the theme-based Annual Operational Plans or Work Plans became planning and monitoring tools⁸⁴.

Furthermore, the ‘strategies’ established in the PRODOC were also revised. The ET has found no evidence that these processes have been clearly formalized. For example, there are no indications that the PRODOC has been revised or amended. Such strategies, although implicitly respected and fulfilled, do not appear explicitly linked to WEA plans and activities. Strategies are as follows:

- (i) **Knowledge building and dissemination**, by contributing to the development of critical thinking and proposals that come from women to promote a growth model that is inclusive and that takes into account the needs of groups that have been traditionally marginalized, and by developing a communication strategy and making widespread use of key social commentators and opinion makers to ensure a wider audience becomes aware of the economic agenda of women⁸⁵.
- (ii) **Advocacy**, by supporting the use of knowledge generated in Phases I and II by women’s organizations and gender equality advocates in general so that they have a position and voice based on evidence and is up to par with the exigencies of regional negotiation fora.
- (iii) **Brokering and networking**, by continuing its support for increased dialogue and interaction among government, civil society, and academia, and bringing in other national and regional actors that can influence the SICA so that women’s economic agenda is owned by a broader range of key stakeholders given that a change in attitudes and behaviors of those responsible for public policies is required.

⁸⁴ According to correspondence with the Regional Coordinator, several months after the August 2006 Planning Workshop a consensus was reached on the theme-based Annual Operational Plans for 2006-2008 for Public Budgets, Job Market and Labor Rights, Economic Openness, Strengthening of the Civil Society, and the Academic Community. However, the operational funds for executing the regional components were only available in April 2007, which set back the execution of the plans. Subsequently, other planning activities were carried out to adjust the plans to the funds received, arriving at the Annual Operational Plans for 2008-2010 in force at the time of the external evaluation, which were not analyzed during the evaluative exercise.

⁸⁵ The ET observes that documents continue to be produced on different topics without a defined or established plan, taking up considerable time and effort. In contrast, the strategy of disseminating the knowledge generated in Phase 1 has dwindled. As a result, the proposed communications strategy, which should have been approved in April 2008, has still not been determined. It is imperative that actions be taken in this regard.

- (iv) **Capacity-building**, by working in partnership with universities to develop a regional curriculum on gender and economics, and by providing continued support to the COMMCA at the regional level and to national mechanisms for women's empowerment, statistical offices, and women's organizations to develop and/or use knowledge and data on gender and economics to influence and inform trade negotiations and public policies in general.

As a result of this situation, a clear reference system for the effectiveness analysis is still lacking. It is partly defined by the PRODOC and partly by the outcome of the aforementioned workshop and the operational planning carried out in each country and at regional level. The way definitions were applied differed notably among countries. Based on the documents analyzed and the interviews carried out, the ET has rebuilt an outline of the Program's planning components (Table III), which serves as frame of reference for evaluating effectiveness.

Because of the characteristics of the WEA, the ET faces a situation of **low evaluability** in terms of effectiveness. There is an absence of unified tools to compare "what should be" with "what really is", in other words, an adequate protocol cannot be applied to measure the degree of progress made in the achievement of objectives, given the dispersion of results. In addition, the scope of the external evaluation and the resources provided for said evaluation do not allow Program achievements to be systematized and subsequently linked to the plans initially designed.

However, based on the advances, achievements, and outcomes that the ET could verify throughout the evaluation, a decision was made to perform a specific analysis that consisted in comparing the objectives proposed in the August 2006 Planning Workshop with the advances, achievements, and outcomes that the ET found evidence of as advancing toward the results foreseen at the end of the Program. To do so, the progress reports presented in March 2007, December 2007, and June 2008 were reviewed, and the input of different actors who were interviewed and answered the survey were considered.

Because of the low evaluability and the specific methodology used for the effectiveness analysis, the reliability of the evaluative judgments could be low⁸⁶; however, given the numerous documents analyzed and the large number of interviews and surveys conducted, the conclusions of the analysis are considered acceptable.

The institutional response to this analysis of effectiveness refers to the need that the ET issue an evaluative judgment on the importance of Annual Operations Plans 2008-2010 for the achievement of a more focused planning. Although these Plans were not used for the Effectiveness analysis, the ET express the opinion that **for period 2008-2010 the Program improved its planning system, showing verifiable output indicators, adequate process and outcome indicators, resources assigned for specific activities and people responsible for each activity.** However, such Plans, which were established by thematic axes, do not link the outcome levels with the objectives foreseen in the PRODOC. It is necessary to redirect the results towards the strategic objectives of the Program, and monitor the achievement of results according to the planned activities.

The achievements indicated in the progress reports were analyzed and ranked according to the objectives proposed for the WEA for the period September 2006-June 2008. The following scale was

⁸⁶ **Reliability** is the consistence or dependability of data and evaluative judgments, with reference to the quality of the instruments, procedures, and analyses used to collect and interpret evaluation data (OECD-DAC).

used to measure the degree of effectiveness in the achievement of the objectives of the WEA Phase II:

Very satisfactory	The objective is met, surpassing planned goals ⁸⁷
Satisfactory	The objective is met, but further effort is still required so that all planned goals can be met
Unsatisfactory	The objective is only partially met. Major efforts are required to meet all goals.
Very unsatisfactory	There is a considerable lag in the achievement of foreseen goals.

⁸⁷ Or, in ongoing projects, as in our case, if the achievements to date substantiate a **very optimistic** forecast regarding the possibility of achieving the established objective by the end of the project. This exception is also applied to the other categories.

Table III: Reference Frame for evaluating Program effectiveness.⁸⁸

LINES OF ACTION	OBJECTIVES		PRODUCTS	THEMES
Political incidence	Spaces and mechanisms for dialogue among government, civil society, academic community, and cooperation entities are institutionalized and consolidated.		1. The institutional and regulatory framework of SICA enables the representation and participation of women and other key stakeholders in the process of regional economic integration.	1. Work and Labor Rights
			2. Political proposals introduced by the WEA are adopted by national authorities.	2. Academic community
	The WEA is incorporated into national domestic economic agendas.		3. Increased regional and national recognition of the public opinion and institutions that the WEA is a leading space for the development of knowledge and debate on major economic problems faced by women, as well as the development of solutions.	3. Gender-sensitive public budgets
			4. Increased capacity of women's organizations to influence public policies at the national and regional levels.	4. Migrations and remittances
Strengthening of the capacities of governmental institutions and of civil society organizations (especially of women), at the national and regional levels	The WEA is widely recognized as a space for the creation of ideas, knowledge, and proposals that have a political influence towards the economic autonomy of women.		5. The academic institutions linked to the Program have strengthened their study plans and capacities to analyze and develop proposals that contribute to women's economic empowerment.	5. Trade liberalization
			1. The dialogue and joint effort promoted by the WEA is strengthened as a sustainable organizational structure in all six countries, thus guaranteeing efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of its results.	6. Strengthening of key actors
			2. The staff of the most important national institutions making economic decisions are strengthened in their capacities to perform gender-sensitive economic analysis.	7. Gender-sensitive statistics
Knowledge generation and dissemination	Women's organizations and mechanisms and other entities advocating for gender equity are positioned and coordinate activities to influence policies for women's economic autonomy.		3. Increased capacity of women's organizations to influence public policies at the national and regional levels.	
			1. Political proposals introduced by the WEA are adopted by national authorities.	
			2. Improved availability of gender-sensitive statistics for the analysis of economic issues.	
			3. The academic institutions linked to the Program have strengthened their study plans and capacities to analyze and develop proposals that contribute to women's economic empowerment.	

⁸⁸ Prepared by the ET based on the review of documentation and the evaluation process.

7.1 Effectiveness in achieving Objective 1

Objective 1. Space for dialogue facilitated by the WEA has continuity, based on agreements between stakeholders: the academic community, central government agencies, civil society organizations, and international cooperation.

Expected outputs

- 1.1** An institutional framework for SICA-SIECA that coordinates and facilitates the representation and participation of women of different sectors in processes of regional economic integration.
- 1.2** The space promoted by the WEA has been consolidated as a permanent and sustainable organizational structure that guarantees efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of its objectives.

At the **regional** level, it is clear for different WEA actors and collaborators that the effectiveness of the WEA in terms of achieving Objective 1 largely depends on its close collaboration with the COMMCA, an entity that was incorporated into the SICA in June 2006 and ratified in July 2007 with a Functional Collaborative Agreement that established the headquarters of the Technical Secretariat of COMMCA at the General Secretariat of SICA.

The WEA has incorporated the COMMCA as an important ally, and has directed its actions toward providing this entity with permanent technical support not only in its incorporation into SICA but also in the preparation of regional and international conferences and meetings⁸⁹ in the form of theoretical and methodological inputs for its work. In most cases, these actions are requested directed by the COMMCA.

It should be noted that, given the diversity of the countries in the region, with varying political positions and degrees of support to regional integration, the task of the WEA of providing technical collaboration to COMMCA is not easy. The COMMCA is a relatively new entity that is still adjusting its gender-sensitive strategies and programs at the service of regional integration, within its political nature.

Governments participate to a greater or lesser extent in the activities carried out by the COMMCA, but the WEA adapts itself to this situation and, together with the COMMCA, taps opportunities to provide support that will favor decision-making processes regarding public policies in regional spaces. This flexible approach to the work it carries out with the COMMCA—promptly serving its demands with political neutrality, a high level of professionalism, and a collaborative attitude—has earned the WEA a good reputation and built confidence among the COMMCA directives, who seek the WEA for accompaniment and support⁹⁰.

⁸⁹ The participation of the WEA in the document “The contribution of women to economy, social protection, and democracy in the Central American region” was exceptional. This document served as input for the COMMCA for the preparatory meeting of the X Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito, Ecuador, in August 2007. The WEA also provided support for COMMCA’s First Meeting with Women’s Civil Society Organizations that work at the regional level. This meeting served to identify similar lines of work of the WEA within formal spaces of the SICA.

⁹⁰ When interviewed by the ET, COMMCA’s Technical Secretary said that “the relationship has been fruitful. (...) the WEA accompanies the Council in its different activities. (...) We take advantage of the different studies conducted and follow up on results”.

WEA activities directly fit into one of COMMCA's work areas: economic autonomy⁹¹. Several ongoing activities could potentially influence regional spaces: (i) exploratory study of the tourism sector; (ii) economic openness, gender, and poverty; (iii) critical analysis of experiences of gender-responsive budgets (GRB) in the Central American region; and (iv) proposal of a series of indicators on gender and economics.

Regarding trade liberalization, the WEA-COMMCA partnership also shows verifiable results. As a result of the Workshop on Trade and Gender to which the WEA was invited, the COMMCA prepared a position document on gender-sensitive negotiations of the EU-CAAA to be presented before the respective Ministers.

The decision to situate a person as focal point of the WEA in the Technical Secretariat of COMMCA in El Salvador promises to be a strategy that could contribute not only to knowledge dissemination but also the appropriation of the topic of Gender and Economics by that entity, thus improving the possibilities of achieving Objective 1. According to the Technical Secretariat of COMMCA, the presence of one focal point of the WEA at this Secretariat ensures high-quality professional support⁹² that allows joint WEA/COMMCA activities to be monitored and keeps all involved informed about SICA's institutionality.

Another important partner of the WEA in CA is the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN, its Spanish acronym)⁹³. The WEA provided technical support during the planning process of several PARLACEN commissions, in which topics in line with those of the WEA arose, such as tourism in the Central American and Caribbean region, a topic on which the WEA is working and will serve as knowledge-sharing component with the PARLACEN. The WEA should assume a proactive role in its alliances with this type of entities, with a view to appropriate the topic of Gender and Economics in the region.

Another outstanding example is the recent alliance with the Regional Technical Assistance Unit (RUTA, its Spanish acronym)⁹⁴ for gender-sensitive value chains—an interinstitutional initiative between the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ, its German acronym), World Bank, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Earth University-Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID, its Spanish acronym), with the technical support of programs such as the WEA and MyDEL of UNIFEM, among others. The ET was able to verify that, in the case of this alliance, the WEA enjoys a good reputation and a high level of trust because of the important role it has played in the area of Gender and Economics.

⁹¹ COMMCA also works in the areas of Comprehensive Health, Violence and Trafficking of Women, and Women's Participation in Politics.

⁹² A professional in Gender and Development, doing a UNIFEM internship, currently provides support for the COMMCA Technical Secretariat and is responsible for preparing a newsletter on SICA institutional activities that could also cover WEA and COMMCA actions.

⁹³ PARLACEN is the “organ for democratic and political representation of the people of Central America and the Dominican Republic. Therefore it takes the parliamentary functions of the common system of the regional integration to achieve solidarity between our people” (Taken from the PARLACEN Web site at <http://www.parlacen.org.gt/index-portada.html>).

⁹⁴ RUTA is a joint interagency and governmental initiative of the seven Central American countries and seven international development agencies that aims to promote sustainable development and mitigate poverty in rural Central America.

Most of the individuals interviewed during the evaluation also highlighted the support given by the WEA to regional networks of women's organizations, for example FMICA⁹⁵ and the Network of Meso American Women in Resistance. Without doubt, this space is important to generate and disseminate ideas on Gender and Economics throughout the region.

At the **national** level, Phase II has been characterized by tripartite steering and thematic work committees in each country, formed by members of governmental and nongovernmental organizations and the academic community. The ET was able to verify the strength and effectiveness of the tripartite Steering Committees in several of the countries visited, and the level of participation reported by actors of different sectors in the thematic committees and in the interrelationship with the other committees⁹⁶. However, these tripartite structures only apply at the national level, not the regional level. This achievement will be analyzed in Chapter 9, which addresses managerial efficiency, as part of the Program's organizational structure.

"To attend this meeting of the Committee is like being in a small Nicaragua, where all sectors are represented. I learn from all my colleagues and can relate to people of areas that I have had no previous contact with."

Comments of a participant of the WEA Monitoring Committee
Managua, 26 September 2008

This organizational scheme consisting of steering committees, work committees, and monitoring committees in each country could become an effective mechanism for promoting the WEA in its different fields of work and help it achieve its objectives. Given the differences between countries regarding the political willingness of different sectors to participate in collegiate alliances such as this one, the scheme must be adjusted to the situation of each country in such a way that the different committees can work together effectively to achieve planned results.

For example, the committees in Nicaragua and Costa Rica are characterized by a certain fluidity and synergy in their work, and, overall, the participants of the different sectors consider that they benefit by participating in these committees. In other countries, like El Salvador, at the beginning it was difficult to plan the committees' work around the WEA and the technical team had to adjust to this reality and make planning decisions based on the ideas proposed by the members of the commissions⁹⁷.

⁹⁵ Haydee Castillo, the chairperson of FMICA, provided evidence of the accompaniment that the WEA has given this civil society organization, so that its initiatives address the needs of Central American women in the process of regional integration and trade liberalization. Between 2007 and 2008, the FMICA trained more than 600 women leaders in issues relevant to Central American integration and the negotiation process of the EU-CAAA. Women analyzed the economic agenda of the Central American integration regarding gender equity and prepared proposals and demands so that their interests are incorporated into the political agenda of the process.

⁹⁶ A concrete example was found in Nicaragua, where, on the occasion of the ET visit, the Monitoring and Advisory Commission met. The Commission is formed by 30 institutions of the country's public and private sectors as well as delegates of international cooperation agencies working in areas of relevance to the WEA. Some 40 people of different sectors (academic community, civil society, government) shared their different viewpoints and contributed ideas for the evaluation. Although biases (political, academic, etc.) were detected, the knowledge-sharing process proved important to link different initiatives and bring together different sectors, one of the main objectives of the WEA.

⁹⁷ Information provided by the Technical Coordinator of the WEA in El Salvador during a phone interview.

An aspect that perhaps affected the good operation of these tripartite committees within the WEA was the distribution of activities by thematic areas at the national level, and the assignment of countries to lead a specific thematic area, based on their position regarding different topics in the regional scenario. The level of activity of the committees in each country depends on the thematic area it is responsible for. In Costa Rica, for example, the activity of the Academic Committee was outstanding, in Panama that of the Statistics Committee, and so on.

Based on the analysis of regional and national effectiveness, the following questions arise: How can national initiatives important for positioning the WEA in regional economies be incorporated into other regional initiatives such as the COMMCA and, through COMMCA, into SICA? What mechanisms would help establish these links?

The ET considers that the WEA can be more effective if it strengthens the interrelationship between its activities conducted at the country level and regional objectives. **It is important that regional leaders focus on facilitating and maintaining this interrelationship and tap successful national experiences to promote their implementation in other countries.**

Advantage must also be taken of the numerous actors who are already working on different aspects of Gender and Economics in Central American countries to form agents of change capable of sharing knowledge and practices with all types of organizations and, as a result, influence development strategies.

In conclusion, **the effectiveness in achieving the Objective 1 of the WEA was ranked as very satisfactory**. The Program is gradually positioning the topic of Gender and Economics in different types of organizations and is contributing know-how and technical assistance to gender-sensitive regional processes of economic integration and trade openness. At the national level, the collegiate steering mechanism has penetrated government agencies, the civil society, the academic community, and international cooperation agencies in a space for dialogue that is being consolidated as an organizational structure that generates the synergies necessary for guaranteeing advances toward the goal of women's economic autonomy.

7.2 Effectiveness in achieving Objective 2

Objective 2. The WEA has been incorporated into regional and national economic agendas.

Expected outputs

- 2.1 Research and training.** The staff of institutions involved in economic decision-making processes at the regional level have the tools necessary to conduct gender-sensitive economic analysis and prepare gender-sensitive policy proposals.
- 2.2 Statistics.** The region has improved availability of data and statistics to analyze economic information from a gender equality perspective.
- 2.3 Political incidence.** Regional and national authorities adopt policy and project proposals, proposed by the WEA, that favor women's economic autonomy.

As previously stated, the lack of a monitoring and feedback system in the WEA makes it difficult to correctly assess the advances made toward the achievement of Program objectives. It was particularly difficult to measure effectiveness at this level of results, given the vagueness of pertinent reports. The ET has attempted, however, to present some of the results and advances made that could be verified using the evaluation instruments used.

Research and training

Phase I of the WEA was characterized by an ample production of information on Gender and Economics, “contributing instruments and tools that enable capacity-building for gender analysis in the macroeconomics, within a context of Central American integration and economic openness⁹⁸.”

The intellectual production of Phase I is now considered as vast, and has been helpful in political incidence and policy-making processes, aiming for a perspective of gender equality in the region. As a result, Phase II aimed to “place greater emphasis on the dissemination of the approaches, products, and methodologies derived from the program to expand its radius of influence, contribute to women’s economic citizenship, and support institutionalization processes so that women’s needs and interests are prioritized and heeded within public policies at local, national, and regional levels⁹⁹.”

Without ranking the quality of the outputs obtained during Phase II of the WEA, the advances observed by the ET are summarized below. Comments on program efficiency in terms of production of publications and training are also made.

- Advances in the updating/in-depth coverage of the Gender Profile of Central American Economy. Research is under way in the six Central American countries, with the regional coordinator in Nicaragua being responsible for coordination and technical supervision. Plans are to finalize in early 2009.

The comments of people interviewed during the evaluative process indicate that this publication play a key role in disseminating gender-sensitive economic data in the region. Its easy-to-read format can be adapted to different audiences to reach them in the appropriate language. The following comment made by economist Mayra Falk, Consultant of UNIFEM’s MyDEL Project in Honduras, summarizes the feeling of several of the interviewees.

“The WEA needs to strengthen its capacity to translate information for the different actors. This is not a topic for women only. We need someone to take three documents and deliver condensed information to the Central Bank. Autonomy should be worked by segments.”

- Educational version of the CAFTA (Nicaragua). This output is used to support WEA’s work with women’s organizations in the negotiations of the EU-CAAA and to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations and the public sector on Gender and Trade (subnational meetings on the advances made in the negotiations).

⁹⁸ Boletín No. 1, Agenda Económica de las Mujeres, AGEM. Nicaragua. Septiembre 2008. p. 2

⁹⁹ Idem, p. 3.

As already commented, the accompaniment performed by the WEA to civil society organizations in free trade negotiations is firmly backed up by the publications produced during Phases I and II of the Program.

WEA's strategy to disseminate issues related to the CAFTA free trade agreement through its publications is worth mentioning. Although the agreement was not extensively discussed before its signing, today it is presented to the general public as an example of issues that should be taken into account to achieve gender equality when signing an agreement of this nature, in preparation for the signing of the EU-CAAA.

- Exploratory study on the work carried out in the tourism sector using a gender perspective. Six country studies have been conducted and the regional study is nearing completion. The impact of tourism on the living conditions and employment of both women and men in the Central American Isthmus can be measured based on the results of these studies.
- Preparation of the conceptual framework and the ToR for a regional study on paid domestic work requested by the COMMCA.
- Critical analysis of experiences of GRB in the Central American region. The final report is now available and will help define a regional perspective for the direct intervention of the WEA in the topic.
- In Costa Rica, the WEA supported women's organizations participating in the forum "Mesoamerican Women Fighting for a Decent Life" in their search for lessons learned during the CAFTA process to better face the processes of trade openness in the region, particularly in the negotiation of the EU-CAAA.
- Course on macroeconomics and gender, co-sponsored with the Latin American and Caribbean Gender and Macroeconomics Group (GEM LAC, its Spanish acronym). Several interviewees mentioned this course as being of great help for those not knowledgeable in the topic. The general perception is that course participants were well selected. The coordinator of a women's organization in her country, who was invited by the WEA to participate in this training event, commented the following:

"The seminar held in Costa Rica was very good. Some topics were difficult, but we met with our colleagues from [my country] in the evening, about six of us, (...) to discuss what had been covered during the day and study. Our understanding of economic topics was poor."
- Other courses, trainings, and institutional strengthening initiatives in Central American countries, directly attributable to the WEA, included: (i) the regional meeting of National Technical Coordinators and representatives of national statistics institutes (Panama, May 2007), which produced a document containing gender-sensitive economic indicators; (ii) several training and sensitization events for officials of Honduras' National Statistics Institute (INE, its Spanish acronym) and the celebration of a workshop on the application of basic gender concepts in the production of statistical information and its relevance to public policies; (iii) the workshop/ seminar "System of national accounts and valuation of unpaid work in household satellite accounts", held in Guatemala and offered to officials of the Bank

of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Statistics Institute (whose acronym is also INE), with the technical support of ECLAC Mexico. This reflects the effort to make synergies with specialized agencies in themes that are relevant for the Program.

A look at the reports and documentation that ET received for this evaluative process shows that there continues to be a vast production of publications, documents, and training events. However, there was no evidence of a systematic planning that would enable the Program to limit the number of publications produced and focus its efforts and resources on the task entrusted for Phase II—the dissemination of Program-derived approaches, products, and methodologies.

The ET perceived that several WEA staff members as well as other actors felt that there was an overproduction of documents and that this should be suspended or stopped to focus more on building “informed positions” through formation processes, sensitization events, and discussion forums. As expressed by one of the national technical coordinators...

“We already have the knowledge. Now it is necessary to translate this knowledge into negotiation tools. This task is still pending.”

Regarding training activities, the ET found that, in general, the comments on WEA courses, workshops, and seminars were favorable. The careful selection of participants by the WEA, which depended on the potential of each individual to multiply the lessons learned at his/her institution, was highlighted. Selected participants were endorsed by an agreement signed by the institution’s director.

Seen as a less positive practice was the inclusion of a very high percentage of women in training events. This does not help the objective of obtaining informed partners, both men and women, in the different entities responsible for making economic decisions, which are mostly dominated by men.

As expressed by a representative of an international cooperation agency, whose is also a member of one of the WEA commissions,

“Awareness must be created by incorporating new actors through presentations and seminars. These events shouldn’t be used to reach those who are already ‘convinced’ but rather to reach those who are not.”

In contrast, a high-level meeting was held in Honduras and was referred to very favorably by the people interviewed by the ET in that country. Governmental finance directors, mostly men, met for 2.5 days, to learn about Macroeconomics and Gender¹⁰⁰. The level of desertion was minimal. Experiences like this one should be shared with other countries and success factors and causality chains examined that favor their replication in other contexts.

The ET highlights these facts and recommends that, in the future, the gender balance should be considered when selecting course participants as a way of gradually penetrating other segments of the population, especially those predominantly male, with knowledge generated by the WEA.

The institutional response from UNIFEM to this recommendation is as follows:

¹⁰⁰ Presentation made by Mayra Falk, Regional Consultant for MyDEL/UNIFEM.

“...According to our experience, invitations to events are NOT only addressed to persons and women convinced about the thematic of Gender and Economics. However, as part of the cultural bias existent in our countries, when we invite to an event, women are delegated to participate. This topic is out of our control, but it is clear that we should make efforts to broaden the universe of people for the phase of sensitization and capacity building”.

Statistics

The thematic area of Statistics is considered by many as the backbone of the WEA. Indeed, most of the activities of the WEA Program revolve around this topic, which is headed by Panama and seconded by most of the countries. Major achievements include the following:

- In El Salvador, the WEA contributed to the incorporation of the analysis of productive and reproductive work into UNDP’s Human Development Report 2007/2008, as well as the incorporation of this topic into the National Convention on Employment and Social Cohesion.
- In Honduras, three questions directly related to the situation of domestic help were introduced into the Permanent Household Survey.
- In Panama, a proposal of gender-sensitive economic indicators for the design, formulation, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of economic policies is underway. This proposal will serve as input for a regional proposal.
- In Guatemala, the templates for the 2006 and 2008 Surveys on Living Conditions were reviewed, making changes to the module of Use of Time and to the Survey on Family Income and Expenses –ENIGFAM, its acronym in Spanish. These changes and suggestions were presented through the Women’s Presidential Secretary to INE for incorporation in the respective survey templates.

The ET considers that the environment is propitious and that concrete actions are being made by the WEA to make advances in this field, which is important to sensitize the public and support data showing the gender gaps that exist in the economy.

Political incidence

- Accompaniment to INAM in Honduras to incorporate a gender perspective into the National Plan for Dignified Work (PNED, its Spanish acronym) with the Secretariat of Labor and Social Security¹⁰¹.
- Support to the Honduran Ministry of Development, Industry, and Trade (MIFIC, its Spanish acronym) to incorporate a gender perspective into its sectoral policy (in process of approval).
- The Equality Seal, which integrates the three fundamental parts of the Program (knowledge generation and dissemination, institutional strengthening, and political incidence). The seal is

¹⁰¹ Section 14 of this report presents a synthesis of this case as “best practice”, indicating that the chain of effects occurring in this process illustrate how key causality factors occur to generate positive effects in the strategy.

still in the making and is a good tool to position the issue in the consolidation phase of the WEA; however, strict control mechanisms must be applied.

The two previous results evidence effective actions undertaken to incorporate a gender perspective into important governmental initiatives. The use of unique opportunities to influence different sectors and the gathering of cumulative knowledge to provide technical support to governmental institutions were decisive factors.

However, there is still a need to create and socialize procedures guidelines that help institutions incorporate a gender perspective into their policies and programs. A monitoring and control system is also required that ensures that these processes are completed and remain incorporated in the respective sections or, when necessary, are decreed as laws.

The ET recommends that the accompaniment of these processes be extended until their culmination, in other words, until the respective policies are formulated. Processes should also be documented so that they can be used as example for other organizations in the future.

Based on the elements within the reach of the ET, **the effectiveness in achieving Objective 2 of the WEA was ranked as unsatisfactory**. There are several reasons for this score. On the one hand, it is logical to think that it is difficult for a program to achieve such a high-level objective. If the effectiveness in achieving this objective during the first part of Phase II of the WEA had been satisfactory, then this would mean that the WEA would have already been incorporated into regional and national economic agendas or would be close to doing so. This is not only false, but if true, then the project could end, something that the ET does not recommend.

On the other hand, it has to be recognized that this type of process is slow and is not easily terminated within the short period of time that a project lasts. Therefore it is important to remember here the purpose of this evaluative judgment. The effectiveness in achieving this objective is unsatisfactory because the advances to date are insufficient to corroborate a favorable prognosis regarding its possible achievement by the end of the Program. This generally occurs when results are poor and, in some cases, when the project being evaluated has established, during the design phase, goals that are unrealistic or over-dimensioned. Objective 2 of the Program could be such a case.

Regarding the activities planned for this Objective, there have been specific achievements and notable advances in the area of research and training, as well as in the area of statistics. However, greater cohesion is needed among the diverse WEA activities as well as national experiences should be tapped so they can be easily replicated in other countries.

7.3 Effectiveness in achieving Objective 3

Objective 3. The WEA is widely recognized as a space for dialogue and for creating ideas and proposals that have a political influence on women's autonomy.

3.1 The WEA managed to position itself and is recognized by the public opinion and by regional and national economic entities as a space to generate knowledge and debate on major economic problems faced by women and to build consensus on strategies to solve these problems.

To analyze the effectiveness in achieving this objective, the ET considered the following factors based on multiple declarations of individuals participating in the evaluation:

- The prevailing perception of WEA partners and beneficiaries and key informants is that the Agenda has positioned itself in each country as well as in the region as a space to generate and discuss ideas. In the short time since the Program was launched, several public and private agencies have resorted to the Agenda (or to the Mechanisms for Women Empowerment in every country, where the WEA focal points are located) in search of support to incorporate the gender perspective into diverse initiatives. Women's organizations in particular have found in the WEA a source of support regarding figures and accompaniment in their endeavors.

Survey results (Annex IV) ratify the previous point. When asked "Do you consider that the WEA is recognized as a space for generating and disseminating ideas on Gender and Economics in Central America?", 60% of the respondents in the group of civil society organizations answered "Yes". The same occurred, although to a lesser extent, in the case of survey respondents of the governmental sector (35%), the academic community (35%), and staff of the WEA and partner entities (43%).

- Phase I of the WEA was effective in producing publications and other exhaustive research documents on Gender and Economics in the region. Although their dissemination to the general public has been slow, the resultant institutional credibility has been good in terms of the Agenda's prestige as knowledge generator.
- The WEA, under the umbrella of UNIFEM and UNDP, has penetrated public and private agencies with its activities of dissemination.
- Its political neutrality grants the WEA the power to bring together different sectors of the society, thus facilitating its work of knowledge dissemination and political incidence.

The former observations explain the positive perception about WEA's knowledge generation and dissemination. However, all the people interviewed recognized that the achievement of this objective depends to a great extent on the knowledge management and communication strategies implemented by the WEA to disseminate messages related to Gender and Economics among different national and regional entities and to promote knowledge generation and discussion of ideas on these topics.

The ET had access to the regional communication strategy proposed for the WEA, presented by a consulting firm. The scope of this external evaluation and its ToR limit an exhaustive analysis of the components of this proposal and a professional opinion on the desirability of its implementation. Based on its professional experience, the ET has, however, issued several concepts that could help in making a decision in this regard.

The strong messages identified in the aforementioned proposal, supported by economic figures from WEA studies, are summarized as follows:

- Women contribute to the economic development of society with their work at home and elsewhere.

- The current economic system can be more beneficial and fair if women's and men's potentialities as economic agents were taken into account.
- The equality of opportunities between men and women begins with the redistribution of the reproductive load.
- Equality of opportunities implies equal wages or income for equal work.

In conclusion, **the effectiveness in achieving Objective 3 is ranked as satisfactory** in view of the different ways in which knowledge has been generated and the economic situation of women in CA has been discussed. However, this effectiveness could be greater if the methods of knowledge dissemination used to date are complemented with modern knowledge management methods, such as the tools provided by current information and communication technologies (ICTs).

7.4 Effectiveness in achieving Objective 4

Objective 4. The WEA has managed to coordinate the participation of different sectors (women's social organizations, the academic community, women's mechanisms, and other entities of the public sector) in processes of political lobbying to strengthen women's economic autonomy.

- 4.1** Women's social movements have boosted their capacity to mobilize, develop proposals, and influence public policies at the regional and national levels through the support, technical assistance, and accompaniment provided by the WEA.
- 4.2** Higher education institutions linked to the WEA have strengthened their formation capacities and are capable of analyzing and preparing proposals that contribute to women's autonomy in the region.

There is no doubt that political incidence¹⁰² is one of the most important strategies to strengthen women's economic autonomy. It guarantees the intervention in social planning and, as a result, advances can be made in the transformations required to achieve gender equality in society. But sometimes political incidence can also be described as actions of accompaniment and empowerment of groups so that they can influence official entities and achieve social changes.

Regarding Objective 4, the ET has been able to verify that the actions of the WEA are oriented to both:

- (i) Women's movements are provided with elements, methodologies, and training to strengthen their position before national and regional decision-makers in economic issues, as illustrated by the support given to training and formation in the topics of Gender and Economics for women's organizations to build a pertinent agenda for the negotiations of the EU-CAAA. As a result, there is an explicit request to incorporate gender-sensitive policies and the official

¹⁰² Political incidence is conceived as an “**organized action** to plan efforts oriented to transform public policies in terms of correcting inequalities by redistributing economic, cultural, political, and environmental resources. This incidence belongs to the political scenario and is related to the right to citizen participation and democracy. In this sense, it involves all sectors of society.” (UNDP, Mexico, 2007)

acceptance of five questions to the European Parliament regarding the review of gender equality issues in the EU-CAAA.

- (ii) The exercise of political incidence strictly speaking, such as the accompaniment of the INAM in Honduras to incorporate a gender perspective into the PNED. This case is presented in Chapter 8 of this report, *Perceptible Effects and in Perspective*, as an example of the chain of causality to produce changes in a process.

In the latter case, the ET noted a slight dependency on external consultants to fulfill this task. For the sake of preserving the appropriation and sustainability of the WEA, it is not sufficient to facilitate consultants for specific situations of policy change. Actions should be directed toward the strengthening of organizations so that these can appropriate the knowledge that empowers them to exert that influence by their own means.

The ET considers that the WAE should produce guidelines on political incidence to support different groups so that they can achieve the transformations required to advance toward gender-sensitive development and women's autonomy.

Regarding Objective 4.2 on the strengthening of the academic community, the ET was able to verify that this is being fulfilled in two ways: (i) through courses and other training events in which people of all the countries of the Program's target area participate, including university professors and teachers of educational centers who are informed on the new advances in these topics; and (ii) through the participation of university professors and teachers of other educational centers in WEA's thematic commissions and steering committees, allowing them to interact with experts in different economic and gender topics and thus contributing to their self-formation¹⁰³.

The perceptions of advances in the strengthening of the academic community by the WEA are illustrated in the statement made by the director of a research center of a Panamanian university, who participates in the WEA and was interviewed by the ET:

"Thanks to the WEA, our research center has developed a very strong Gender and Economics component. We now have more gender-related information which allows us to propose new hypotheses. (...) Even if the WEA would disappear, the topic would not. The academic community would promote it."

When evaluating the effectiveness in achieving this objective the ET identified two factors that facilitate the work of political incidence and capacity building for women's economic autonomy: (i) the presence of one WEA Focal Point in the different National Mechanisms for Women Empowerment; and (ii) the lobbying and institutional support provided by UNIFEM/UNDP in these processes.

The effectiveness in achieving Objective 4 of the WEA is accordingly ranked as satisfactory. Mechanisms are in place to strengthen women's organizations in their activities of mobilization and negotiation to achieve economic autonomy; academic institutions are being strengthened in their formative capacities; and several mechanisms of political incidence are being applied. However, the

¹⁰³ As expressed by a female professor of the University of Nicaragua, who belongs to the WEA Academic Committee in that country: "I was not an expert in domestic work, but participating in the WEA has made me an expert in the topic."

work related to political incidence requires greater systematization, and guidelines are needed to build a frame of reference of policies that will help reduce and eliminate gender inequalities and promote women's autonomy.

TABLE SUMMARIZING EFFECTIVENESS SCORES

Specific objectives ('Outcomes' in the PRODOC)	Level of effectiveness
1. Space for dialogue facilitated by the WEA has continuity, based on agreements among the stakeholders: academia, Central Government agencies, agencies of civil society and international cooperation.	Very satisfactory
2. The WEA incorporated into regional and domestic economic agendas.	Unsatisfactory
3. The WEA is widely recognized as a space for dialogue, for the creation of ideas, and proposals that have a political influence on women's autonomy.	Satisfactory
4. The WEA has managed to coordinate the participation of different sectors (women's social organizations, the academic community, national mechanisms for women empowerment, and other entities of the public sector) to influence policies and thus strengthen women's economic autonomy.	Satisfactory

8. Perceived effects and in perspective

"The presence of the WEA in the region has factually changed the scenario."¹⁰⁴

"We are now in perspective."¹⁰⁵

"Without the WEA, we would not have been able to act as multipliers of the topic. Training has allowed us to acknowledge and disseminate this thematic contribution. It places us at the forefront of the economic debate."¹⁰⁶

This chapter describes the visible changes in procedural and development conditions, both unplanned and/or in perspective, that the ET identified as a result of the Program. The outcomes are second level results that guarantee behavioral changes. Because this is a mid-term evaluation, the elements that indicate the probability that the Program will achieve long-term outcomes (impact) are indicated. In all cases, a synthesis of the evidence and arguments that endorse the evaluative judgments will be included.

The key questions for the analysis of this part of the Report are: What visible changes have occurred in the behavior of key actors in governmental decision-making processes as a result of WEA actions? To what extent is the knowledge derived from WEA work facilitating the search for solutions to the problems faced by women in the different Central American countries and in the region as a whole? What benefits have women's organizations received as a result of their involvement with the WEA?

At this point it should be recalled that in the section *Logic of the Design of the Program* it was determined that the PRODOC does not contain sufficient elements to answer the question: How is the Program going to achieve these planned outcomes in counterpart and partner organizations? At the

¹⁰⁴ Interview with a woman participant of the civil society of Costa Rica.

¹⁰⁵ Member (male) of Guatemala's academic community.

¹⁰⁶ Woman of the civil society interviewed in Costa Rica.

same time, it was also pointed out that PRODOC's logical framework does not offer process indicators corresponding to the following four expected outcomes:

- (i) Spaces and mechanisms for dialogue among government, civil society, academic community, and development cooperation entities consolidated and institutionalized.
- (ii) The WEA is incorporated in national economic agendas.
- (iii) The WEA is widely recognized as a space for the creation of ideas, knowledge, and proposals that have a political influence toward women's economic autonomy.
- (iv) Women's organizations and mechanisms and other entities that advocate for gender equality are positioned and coordinate their activities to influence policies for women's economic autonomy.

In the logical framework, most of the outputs are formulated in terms of outcomes when they are actually intermediate outcomes between the four expected outcomes and actual Program outputs, which are not specified. In general terms, the eight outputs defined in the PRODOC can be regarded as adequate indicators for the Expected Outcomes.

This lack of clearly defined concepts made it difficult for the ET to initially answer the question of whether it was feasible, with Program resources, to achieve expected outputs and outcomes. However, after identifying the four broad strategies determined in the PRODOC, namely *knowledge-building and dissemination, advocacy, brokering and networking, and capacity building*, the ET concludes that these objectives can be integrated into three overarching lines of action:

- (i) Political incidence at the national and regional levels.
- (ii) Capacity building of governmental institutions and civil society organizations, at the national and regional levels.
- (iii) Knowledge generation and dissemination.

Table III (page 50 of this report) proposed lines of action and other elements, which were used to analyze in detail the effectiveness in achieving the expected outcomes of the WEA. This section will address several unexpected outcomes in the Program's perspective.

Interviewees clearly acknowledge program outcomes as evidenced in the following comments: "The WEA has given us the opportunity to know other experiences and share our own"¹⁰⁷; "The WEA has managed to position the topic of gender and economic and it is already being discussed as a priority topic within the academic community"¹⁰⁸; and "Changes have indeed occurred—several institutions are beginning to show changes, for example in data management and women's access to resources. WEA data were used to prepare the Shadow Report"¹⁰⁹. These outcomes will be addressed in detail in this section.

After citing these perceptions of individuals directly or indirectly related to the Program, several important outcomes in the three aforementioned lines of action—political influence, institutional strengthening (government and nongovernmental, regional and national), and knowledge generation and dissemination—will be discussed.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with the coordinator of women's organization in Honduras.

¹⁰⁸ Woman of the Nicaraguan academic community.

¹⁰⁹ Woman of a Panamanian civil society organization.

One of these unforeseeable outcomes, considered a paradigmatic case, also offers an interesting outlook to the future, as described below.

The case of the Costa Rica's Association of Domestic Workers (ASTRADOMES) was not planned, but the Program coordinator in that country knew how to take good advantage of the situation. "*María is a leader and, with her, women-related topics can be envisioned*", said one project beneficiary. "*This project is different because it does not show us how to make beds*", another beneficiary said and concluded, "*Before we only cleaned the computers. Now we are able to disassemble them and put them back together. We know how to use them and we enter Internet cafés. We navigate Web pages and help our children.*" Another project beneficiary added, "*I know things I didn't know before. This project is an important personal venture, an investment that results in increased knowledge for the entire family.*"

On the other hand, the informatics instructor of the domestic workers participating in this project said that "*the stigma regarding women and technology has been broken*". All parties involved consider that the project was definitively a success in terms of strengthening institutional capacities and generating and disseminating knowledge. In terms of alliances and harmonization of objectives between WEA and CISCO (the company providing networking support to the project), the CISCO representative, when interviewed by the ET, said that project continuation was viable because a technical and information platform is already in place. "*Women who only knew how to clean houses can now manage a computer.*"

The ASTRADOMES project, promoted by the WEA of Costa Rica, also facilitates a space for women's participation, the transfer of knowledge that triggers profound life changes, and the establishment of alliances between a UN agency, the national mechanism for women empowerment in that country, an important company, and the media, the latter expressing a keen interest in the experience. "*It was important that they believed in us*", says one of the beneficiaries, who recommended that we visit the Web page www.cisco.netacad.net for a clear idea on "*the merit of receiving these educational certificates, which are among the more respected in the world.*" The willingness to continue the process and promote a continued training strategy is therefore clearly evident.

Beneficiaries indicate that, "*ASTRADOMES facilities became too small and it was necessary to add a second floor to the building. We only have eight computers but we need at least 13 and will need even more if the project continues. We also need to consider the possibility of opening a training center in the future to ensure sustainability*". Furthermore, the INAMU has provided ASTRADOMES with "*timely accompaniment*" in its campaign to cut the number of working hours and increase wages, which evidences political incidence. "*Until ASTRODOMES received the support from INAMU, via WEA/UNIFEM/UNDP, it was considered unimportant in the national scenario.*" In 2007 the working day was cut from 14 to 12 hours thanks to an initiative presented to the Legislative Assembly, which served as incentive to continue with a coordinated campaign that is now trying to cut the working day to 8 hours.

The case of ASTRADOMES illustrates an unforeseeable effect that comprehensively addresses the Program's main lines of action.

The WEA is positioning the topic of Gender and Economics in national and regional political scenarios, which necessarily generates non-predictable effects over time and, depending on country-specific characteristics, within different sectors that are more or less organized as well as directly within the Central American population. These changes of approach are reflected in national legislation, important public policies, and actions carried out by women's organizations, the academic community, and other entities. However, it is impossible to accurately define the degree of impact because the endeavor is framed within a context of plural participation where strategies and objectives attempt to harmonize around common goals.

Regarding the political dimension, it is important to mention that all political commitments should translate into appropriate and effective institutional actions and mechanisms. To this end, it should be taken into account that they are two types of gender-sensitive policies¹¹⁰: some are specific and others involve mainstreaming, but should be developed in tandem and complementarily. The former translate into action plans that favor women empowerment in search for equality. The latter pursue the systematic integration of the gender dimension into important governmental policies, based on a strategy designed specifically for each territory and institution. WEA acts both ways.

Among the unforeseeable effects and in perspective, one interviewee¹¹¹ pointed out that “we have been able to influence the ongoing electoral process because we have created the instruments to do so.” A positive factor has been the creation of a critical mass of individuals of the academic community, the public sector, and the civil society knowledgeable in the topic and familiar with the Program's objectives. However, this same interviewee suggests that the national mechanism for women empowerment needs to have greater political belligerency, “because the mechanism ends up relying on us.”

In this regard, it is necessary to equip institutional mechanisms and governmental and nongovernmental entities in general with more tools so that they can better influence society. Another interviewee¹¹² said that “there have indeed been changes, beginning at the technical level, and the Minister always has first-hand information.” These effects could be situational within a certain period of government, but far-reaching if they form part of important political decisions of a given country or region.

Another interviewee¹¹³ pointed out that “the training offered to our staff officials has had a cascade effect toward target groups. This is important because rural women exert influence when presenting budgets. To exert influence implies change and making our proposals trigger changes. This also happens when women of civil society organizations receive training and they, in turn, work in networks and influence different areas of the national territory and region.

In this regard, **one unforeseeable effect is that the WEA has achieved, in a short period of time, important intersectoral relationships and has been become a regional referent to support decision-making processes.** The presence of organized and informed women's groups (networks) that are technically trained and committed to the gender approach in regional entities such as the

¹¹⁰ López, I. et al. 2007. *Género y políticas de cohesión social: Conceptos y experiencias de transversalización*. Documentos de Cohesión Social. FIIAPP-EUROsociAL.

¹¹¹ Interviewed woman, WEA, Panama.

¹¹² Interviewed woman of the public sector, Nicaragua.

¹¹³ Interviewed woman of the civil society, Nicaragua.

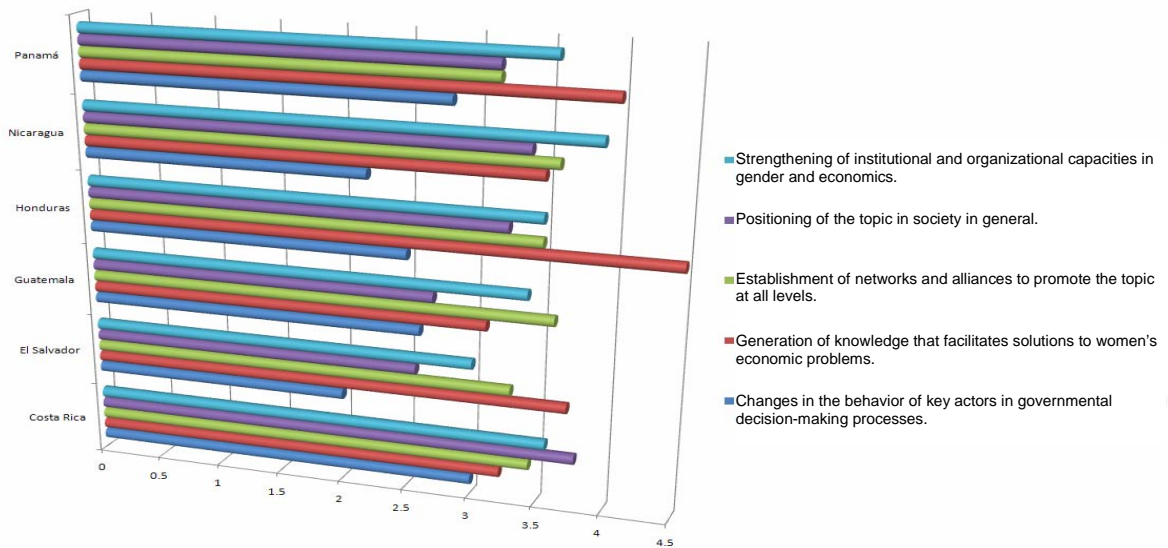
COMMCA, SICA, PARLACEN, and Consultative Committee of the Central American Integration System (CCSICA, its Spanish acronym) makes it possible to serve specific demands of these entities.

The technical support offered by the WEA and its partners to these spaces has facilitated consensus-building processes and the establishment of agreements regarding the incorporation of a gender equality perspective, allowing these regional entities to assume informed positions on different issues under their responsibility. The ET considers that the following words “together we have prepared an agenda”, expressed by a woman of Costa Rica’s civil society, defines quite well these levels of coordination and incidence.

The following figure is based on survey information and illustrates how these effects on national and regional governmental and nongovernmental organizations that have benefited from the WEA are perceived. The figure evidences that there are important valuations along the Program’s main lines of action regarding its contribution to knowledge sharing, political incidence, strategic partnerships, institutional strengthening, and best practices for replication.

12. Indicate whether the WEA has benefited your organization in relation to the following aspects.								
	No	In some cases	In many cases	Yes	Does not know / opine	Rating Average	Response Count	
• Knowledge	2.6% (1)	12.8% (5)	25.6% (10)	59.0% (23)	0.0% (0)	3.41	39	
• Political incidence	28.2% (11)	12.8% (5)	12.8% (5)	38.5% (15)	7.7% (3)	2.67	39	
• Institutional strengthening	20.5% (8)	25.6% (10)	10.3% (4)	35.9% (14)	7.7% (3)	2.67	39	
• Strategic alliances	12.8% (5)	30.8% (12)	12.8% (5)	38.5% (15)	5.1% (2)	2.81	39	
• Best practices	17.9% (7)	20.5% (8)	10.3% (4)	48.7% (19)	2.6% (1)	2.92	39	
	<i>answered question</i>							39
	<i>skipped question</i>							14

This notably coincides with the vision of staff of WEA-UNIFEM-UNDP-ASDI on Program outcomes. The following figure shows the coincidences and details the perceptions per country.



This refers us directly to the academic dimension¹¹⁴, in a stage of the Program where coordinated efforts to influence policies are visible. As mentioned before, the studies carried out by the academic community have served, in many cases, as input not only to increase the awareness of more individuals and entities, but also to strengthen national and regional institutions.

As a result, one of the most visible effects is that, based on a coordinated initiative between the WEA, the national statistics institutes, and national and regional mechanisms for women empowerment, **in the future more gender-equitable public policies will be available as well as clearer indicators to evaluate the impact of said policies**¹¹⁵. This can be evaluated as an outcome in perspective because gender statistics are an essential tool to prepare, enforce, and monitor policies, plans, and programs of social and economic development. Not only are they used to make decisions that are more aligned with the reality, but they allow better diagnoses to be made.

Without these tools inequity is perpetuated and sustained; with them, however, ...

“...men and women can even help build their own indicators of change, which necessarily translates to future changes in relationships of power.”¹¹⁶

This is definitively an outcome in perspective. Gender indicators are statistical data specifically selected to clarify a given issue in the economic, social, or demographic area, which enable clearer and more objective valuations on how the topic is expressed in terms of the activity of women and

¹¹⁴ In Guatemala, only to cite one example, the greatest advances have been made with the so-called Academic Committee, constituted by women researchers of the academic community from the University Institute for Women of Guatemala’s University of San Carlos (IUMUSAC, its Spanish acronym), the School of Economic Sciences of Guatemala’s University of San Carlos, the Rafael Landívar University, and the Mariano Gálvez University. This space has served to ongoing studies, make them known, and contribute to proposals that the WEA needs to make about the content of National Operational Plans as well as Regional Plans.

¹¹⁵ In the case of Costa Rica, the WEA provides funds for a consultant. Through this action, users have access to updated data (www.inec.go.cr) and a series of indicator. Although the Web page already existed, it now allows users to examine whether the indicators are valid and compare them with other studies and similar initiatives.

¹¹⁶ Interviewed woman of the civil society, Nicaragua.

men during a given period and in a determined space. Based on the foregoing, we consider that indicators not only contribute valid and understandable information, derived from the official statistics available in each country, but they also measure the difference in the access men and women have to development opportunities.

In addition, regarding the equity seal promoted by public entities and institutions of the different countries of CA, a non-predictable outcome and in perspective is that the goal is that not only the awareness and understanding of entities about gender-related issues be increased, but as stated by an interviewee of WEA/Costa Rica: “We are paying close attention that the same does not happen to us as has happened elsewhere, that entities earn the stamp without having assumed the gender approach. Therefore a fully operational audit mechanism is necessary.” An outcome in perspective is hence a regional observatory of gender and economics, which will soon be established in one of the Central American countries.

Overall, the ET considers that the topic of Gender and Economics is no longer unknown in Central America’s political, institutional, and academic spaces and there have been perceptible changes in the language and perspectives of several actors. The ET is also convinced that the WEA has directly affected this process of change. Therefore we can say that there are important outcomes and in perspective that endorse the consolidation of Phase III of the Program’s strategy.

9. Managerial Efficiency

In this section the WEA’s operational structure is described, and value judgments are made regarding its rationality and functionality based on the findings of the ET.

Based on observations, documentary analysis, and interviews and focal groups, concepts are issued about the strengths and weaknesses in Program management with respect to leadership, planning, and implementation. The observations regarding monitoring and evaluation, which also form part of the management process, will be dealt with in Chapter 11 of this report.

The management of several Program processes such as decision-making and communications is also reviewed. In addition, several interinstitutional linkages are examined, including the UNIFEM-UNDP coordination mechanism and the operating relationships with SIDA and UNIFEM.

This evaluation did not include a cost-effectiveness analysis of the Program in terms of the resources invested and the results obtained, given that there is no monitoring system that shows the relationship between the inputs and their cost with the Project results. Moreover, given that said analysis would be a comparative judgment and that there are no quantitative data to make such a comparison, the ET opted for a qualitative analysis of management.

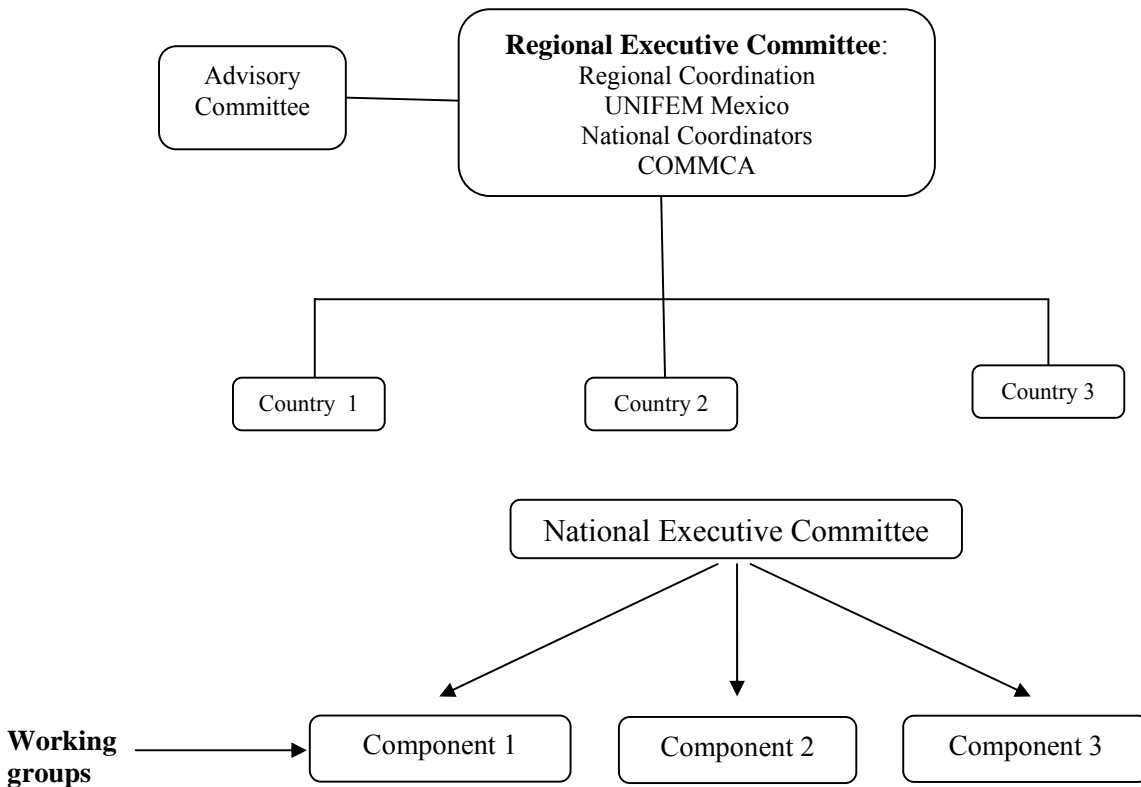
This management analysis is based on the fact that a greater understanding of the organizational capacity (leadership, resources, management, and interinstitutional relationships) is fundamental for taking informed decisions that will increase the possibilities of improving performance.¹¹⁷ The ET

¹¹⁷ For management analysis, the model promoted by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) from Canada was used partially to design the institutional profile of the organizations financed by the Center. In this profile the

hopes that the concepts that are emitted in this section serve as guidelines to target the actions for improving Program management until the Program terminates.

9.1 Organizational structure according to PRODOC

The document of the WEA Program establishes the following operational structure:



Regional Executive Committee (operationally referred to as Board of Directors)

This is the Program's highest governing body. Convened by the Regional Coordinator and based on **semiannual** analyses, this Committee develops guidelines for implementing the Program. The members of this Committee are:

- The Regional Director of UNIFEM for Mexico, Central America, Cuba, and Dominican Republic
- The WEA Regional Coordinator
- The Technical Coordinators for the topics prioritized on a regional scale
- The Pro-Tempore Chair of COMMCA
- The Regional Director of UNDP for Latin America and the Caribbean
- A delegate from the SICA Consultative Committee

six components of institutional capacity that underlie performance were analyzed: (i) strategic leadership; (ii) human resources; (iii) other core resources; (iv) program management; (v) process management; (vi) interinstitutional linkages. See http://www.idrc.ca/is/ev-28366-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.

The ET had access to the minutes of the meeting of this Committee, held 29 February 2008. This was the only meeting carried out by this Committee in the Program's second phase that the ET could confirm. At that meeting the Committee reflected on the comments of the Advisory Committee and then dictated standards and agreements on the different points addressed.

Advisory Committee

This Committee has been operating since Phase I of the WEA, holding meetings every two years at the beginning, middle, and end of the Program. Its primary functions are to approve the guidelines of the work to be carried out by the WEA; reflect on the documents and research done within the Program's framework; give feedback to WEA's directors regarding the strategic issues that should be included on the agenda; and support politically the incorporation of strategic issues that arise from the Program before the entities and regional forums where decisions are made. The following form part of the Advisory Committee:

- The Regional Director of UNDP or its representative
- The Regional Director of UNIFEM for Mexico, Central America, Cuba, and Dominican Republic
- The Head of the Social Development Unit of the Subregional Office of ECLAC in Mexico
- The Head of Consultancies of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, its Spanish acronym) in Mexico
- The Director of FLACSO in Guatemala
- The Director of the Center of Studies in Chile
- The Regional Coordinator of ILO's Gender Program

The Advisory Committee also met on 29 February 2008, and the important recommendations that came out of that meeting were analyzed later in a workshop.

Based on the reading of the minutes from these meetings of the Advisory Committee it was deduced that from the viewpoint of monitoring and control of activities, this system of supervision and high-level consultation would have the potential to achieve political incidence and impact of the Program. However, this Committee meets every two years, and some of its members do not have an active political role in the interim. To take advantage of the potential role of this Committee, it would be recommendable to increase the periodicity of its meetings. Its members should have a more active participation to generate a systemic reflection on strategic themes that facilitate the political incidence.

National Executive Committee

Each country has an Executive Committee that meets **once a month** (the frequency may decrease as the Program advances), with the purpose of taking decisions at the country level. It is formed by:

- The WEA Technical and Administrative Coordinator in the country
- The person responsible for the thematic component
- A representative of civil society
- A representative of the academic community

- A representative of the Government (can be the National Mechanism for Women Empowerment or another office)

In the field work conducted by the ET in four countries, it was possible to observe the dynamics of how the National Executive Committees work, which in general are referred to by their members as collegiate bodies that are highly participatory and enlightening.

The important role that the **National Executive Committees**¹¹⁸ play in activity planning and monitoring was also observed. The ET considers that this high level of participation can also contribute to the mass dissemination of the WEA in society as long as the levels of commitment, motivation, and participation of the members of said Committees are maintained, which should be a fundamental task of the Technical Coordinators in each country.

As mentioned in Chapter 7 regarding efficiency, these tripartite authorities have become important elements in how the WEA operates within the countries. Given that the WEA's principal objective is to provide a space for dialog and participation of the diverse sectors in order to strengthen women's economic autonomy, the Committees' role of bringing together people from diverse sectors makes them key factors of the Program's strategy for making an impact.

Working Groups

In each country, working groups operate according to the country's priority thematic component. The ET observed different levels of effectiveness of these groups, depending on the level of priority of the topic within the WEA structure and the leadership imparted by their members.

Some comments of the people interviewed were:

- "The groups are inclusive and representative. An added value of the WEA."
- "WEA, through its groups, but also thanks to its interinstitutional relations, does not give absolute power of the Program to any actor. It has autonomy."
- "As academicians we arrived at the WEA to support the Group, but the opposite occurred. We have learned much more from the WEA, and now we can pass on that knowledge in the University."

As indicated previously, the constitution of the working groups should be examined in greater detail so as not to fall into complex organizational schemes with low aggregate value for the Program. **The activities of the working groups should correspond to specific projects included in WEA's plans for the country, with the capacity to include new projects or respond to specific demands of counterpart organizations, but always with a very limited operating structure in order to guarantee their effectiveness.**

¹¹⁸ Although they are not well described in the national organizational charts, the Monitoring and Advisory Committees play a key role providing technical support of a consultative nature. The ET proved that these Committees support the tasks of planning and monitoring of the WEA to a greater or lesser extent, while serving as a meeting point among the different working groups in the countries. In Nicaragua, for example, the Monitoring Committee is formed by 30 institutions from the public and private sectors of the country and delegates of the international cooperation agencies that work on topics related to those of the WEA.

Focal Points in National Mechanisms for Women Empowerment

One of the implementation strategies established by the WEA is to name a Focal Point in each National Mechanism for Women Empowerment to strengthen collaborative efforts with the governments and to promote and support the institutionalization of the Program's objectives identified for these mechanisms in each country.

In the countries visited, the ET found an efficient operational fusion of the WEA Focal Point in the Mechanism for Women Empowerment.¹¹⁹ Without exception, there was total integration with the mechanism in the countries, and the person participates in the planning processes of both entities, which creating a strong link and opportunities for day-to-day interaction of each organization.

The effectiveness of Focal Point strategy for getting governmental institutions to approve proposals for policies or actions depends on the level that the National Mechanism for Women Empowerment has within the country. For example, in Honduras, where the Director of the INAM has a ministerial position, the influence that the WEA can have on governmental decisions is quite evident. In the other countries this influence is not so visible.

To ensure that the role of the WEA's Focal Point in National Mechanisms for Women is to appropriate the Gender and Economics methods and practices promoted by the Program, the ET recommends establishing **well-defined standards of participation of said Focal Point in the Mechanism's plans and activities in the country, maintaining the flexibility that this figure has had to date for adapting to the Mechanism's demands as well as to the country's political context. The practice of signing an interinstitutional agreement to endorse the designation of the person to the Mechanism, currently in effect in some countries, should be implemented in all countries.**

In relation to WEA's organizational structure, the ET concluded that it is functioning satisfactorily. Its strategic design, which includes a Steering Committee formed by people with both intellectual and political weight regarding the topic and an Advisory Committee that serves as a monitoring and feedback mechanism to the Program, gives the WEA special attributes and a high aggregate value that is rare in development projects or programs.

This, together with the existence of mechanisms for collegiate decision-making in each country and various thematic committees where the three key sectors—government, civil society, and the academic community—work together to penetrate society's different social strata with the topic of Gender and Economics is turning the WEA into an important point of convergence and a system of feedback valued by Program actors at all levels.

Without a doubt the structure created for this Program is unique and innovative, and has great potential for contributing to the accomplishment of the objectives of achieving impact and bringing about changes in society to achieve women's economic autonomy.

¹¹⁹ In various interviews with key informants, the people referred to the WEA Focal Point as if it were part of the Mechanism, which shows that WEA methods and practices are being institutionalized in these national entities "from within".

9.2 Program Management

9.2.1 Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is associated with the process of establishing organizational objectives, applying a clear vision, assuming risks, and generating ideas for directing the efforts of the staff and partners toward achieving those objectives. It also means developing methods for obtaining essential resources, inspiring the members of the organization to achieve its mission, and facing or adapting to the external forces that can affect the Program.¹²⁰

Since Phase I, the WEA has shown strong strategic leadership in promoting a topic that is innovative and not generally taken into account in women's movements of Central America and in regional economies. This leadership, as the ET was able to verify at the regional headquarters, is largely associated with the image that its Regional Coordinator has for approaching any of the sectors and being heard, in addition to the influence that she can exercise at different levels due to her prestige and great professionalism, primarily in the world of international cooperation and civil society.

This leadership is also complemented by the positive institutional image that UNIFEM and UNDP offer by endorsing the approach in all sectors. This has favored the extensive intellectual production of the WEA in Phase I and the efforts to disseminate the results of the studies conducted so far in Phase II.

At the country level, the leadership vary in function of the people that exercise it. Depending on the management of the topics that are being addressed in a country, there are greater or lesser levels of leadership and therefore greater or lesser effectiveness in the results.

Among the **positive aspects** found in the style of leadership prevailing in the WEA, there is a marked tendency to explore the external environment to tap opportunities and detect threats.¹²¹ The good communication with the National Mechanisms for Women in the countries gives strength to the Program and paves the road toward appropriation and sustainability. There is an indisputable image of intellectual and academic rigor that gives weight to achieving impact at various levels. To achieve objectives, new institutional allies have been identified; there is a rapid response to the specific demands of current and new partners in their field of action; strategic alliances are maintained with partners of the different sectors; and there is an effective intermediation for bringing together different sectors of society around the topics of Gender and Economics. The flexibility to adapt to changes and conditions of the principal partners and allies is another positive aspect.

Regarding those aspects where there is room for improvement, the ET detected a marked technical orientation that characterizes the style of leadership. This technical focus, which has already been mentioned as vital in the Program's Phase I, now needs to be complemented with a vision more targeted toward the Program's development objectives and toward the target population, providing orientation, disseminating and promoting the mission, and allocating the required resources; in other words, exercising effective program management and accompanying the processes required to reach the objectives.

¹²⁰ Lusthaus, C., et al. (1995)

¹²¹ The WEA moves in changing political situations, which has led it to maintain an attitude of constant adaptation to those changes, seeking pragmatic solutions for overcoming the obstacles.

The WEA's mission statement as a motivating and integrating element

“When the mission statement of an organization is formulated and used strategically, it becomes a powerful tool that communicates basic truths to both the internal and external collaborators. Thus the mission statement becomes the driving force of the organization and the ruler for measuring its accomplishments.”¹²²

As part of the analysis of the strategic leadership, the ET conducted an exercise to evaluate the degree of knowledge and socialization of the WEA's mission in focal groups and personal interviews, both of the Program's staff and its external collaborators. Its mission statement is:

A program that integrates and promotes social and political actions that advance women's economic autonomy, generating knowledge, capacities, and effective public policies that contribute to decreasing gender inequality in the economy and to reducing poverty in the development of the Central American isthmus.

In general the WEA's mission is known and guides the actions of the people that work in the Program or collaborate with it from different positions¹²³. There is awareness that this is an innovative program and that the task of delivering to society the knowledge being generated by the WEA is a slow, but effective one,¹²⁴ requiring a lot of motivation, broadmindedness, and persistence to reach the final goal of decreasing gender inequality in the economy and increasing women's economic autonomy.

9.2.2 Planning

The function of planning a program normally includes the tasks of:

- Setting goals and strategies; identifying focal or strategic areas and activities
- Developing operational plans that:
 - ✓ are consistent with the needs, strategies and focal areas
 - ✓ address problems and opportunities
 - ✓ take into account the techniques and organizational capacities for executing them
- Reviewing, approving, and controlling plans and budgets
- Generating and reviewing new project proposals; sending to and negotiating new sources for financing projects with donor agencies, sponsors, and clients
- Assimilating the comments of revisions, evaluations, and audits; approving proposals; allocating resources

¹²² Lusthaus, C., op. cit.

¹²³ In Honduras, the ET was pleased to find that the folders given to the members of the different working commissions have printed inside the vision, mission, and objectives of the WEA Phase II, as well as the Program's organizational scheme in the region. The ET highlights this fact as a contribution to the Program's good performance given that it provides collaborators with a basic tool for their work, which is that of constantly reminding them the fundamentals of what they are doing and toward where they should direct their efforts.

¹²⁴ Various people interviewed were aware that many organizations, primarily women's organizations, need the information, tools, and methodologies that WEA produces according to their mission, although their “banners” are different (human rights, health, political participation, etc.). They consider that the economic information regarding the inequalities in society and the consensus-building that WEA has brought about contribute, in general, to the solution of the problems of inequality and all types of discrimination that affect women.

In its planning function, the WEA has followed the standards provided by its host institution, UNIFEM's Regional Office for Mexico, Central America, Cuba, and Dominican Republic. The WEA framework is within the line of strengthening women's economic capacity, the axis prioritized by UNIFEM's Regional Office. For Phase II, the WEA also coordinates its planning efforts with UNDP in each country by virtue of the Joint Program Agreement between UNIFEM/UNDP for carrying out the Program's activities.

As expressed in Chapter 7, planning constitutes one of the weakest points that the WEA should adjust for what is left of the Program. In the ET's opinion, there are several factors that could have affected the weakness of the planning function in the period under evaluation:

- ✓ Starting up based on an inadequate project document, especially regarding the following operational aspects: (i) incomplete logical framework; (ii) no design of a system for monitoring progress and evaluating effects; (iii) gaps in the description of the operating and planning procedures
- ✓ The delay in receiving the operating funds for executing the regional components in Phase II
- ✓ Experimentation with a new joint-agreement system between UNIFEM/UNDP, which created confusion among the operating staff for incorporating the WEA's plans in the normal flow of planning of the two institutions.¹²⁵

The ET had access to the Annual Operational Plans for 2008-2010, which were not part of this evaluation in accordance with the ToR. However, as noted before, these plans improved the planning process as they have adequate indicators to measure and verify results, resources and accountability. However, they are based on thematic axes not contemplated by the PRODOC. In the opinion of the ET, the evaluability problems encountered in the period evaluated (2006-2008) could extend to the following phase, unless the planned results are linked to the strategic objectives of the Program.

With regard to the institutional comment of UNIFEM to "address the coherence between budget and activities that is absent in the report", the ET answers that due to the limitations of the planning system it was not possible to do the efficiency analysis on the allocation and use of resources, as there were not records of costs of the different activities programmed for the thematic axes. Such an analysis would be very complex given the information resources available and would not fit within the scope of this evaluation.

9.2.3 Implementation

In a program such as the WEA, adequate implementation has to do with the way in which the objectives are being reached; the technical, administrative, and logistic support of its activities; the identification and fulfilling of training needs; the dissemination of results; and the links established and maintained with decision-makers and other users of the information produced by the Program.

¹²⁵ In the opinion of a senior UNDP officer, there was no shared vision for designing the Joint WEA/UNIFEM Program, where the teams that were going to execute the Program were involved. "We came on board something that was already in motion," so it was difficult to adapt to the new joint agreement when it was already ongoing. "Even today we are dealing with the problems caused by the new system, where UNIFEM headquarters receives the funds and passes them on to UNDP. The systems should have been adjusted first, not the contrary. There are deposits that have not been used; we have a "red" that could not be applied."

In general the implementation of the WEA has been normal, with small groups of personnel who are directly linked to UNIFEM in each country and who work actively to achieve the proposed goals.¹²⁶ The support provided by UNDP in the administrative field and the backing that the image of UNIFEM and UNDP provided to the activities, has facilitated the implementation of the Program.¹²⁷

The WEA staff participates to a great extent in the workshops and other training events that are carried out in the different thematic areas. This is a good sign of keeping up to date with respect to the basic topics that comprise Gender and Economics. However, it is noted that this training of the WEA staff is not planned, nor are there follow-up activities to take advantage of the knowledge that that training produces as is done when the Program's training of external collaborators is financed. **The ET recommends to reinforce the commitments with the WEA staff that participate in training events to multiply the knowledge acquired and apply it to achieving the Program's results, by incorporating it to their working plans.**

The ET did not find evidence of routine evaluations of the multiple training events offered at different levels as part of the Program's activities. For the final period of WEA Phase II, the ET recommends implementing a system that allows participants to evaluate the quality of training events in order to measure their degree of effectiveness and thereby channel training topics and methodologies. It also recommends keeping records of participants by sex to promote a balanced participation of men and women in said events.

In relation to WEA publications, as already mentioned, their dissemination should be an important part of the knowledge management process as will be addressed later on. In terms of Program implementation, it is also important to have a plan for producing and socializing the materials produced.

9.3 Process Management

Process management has to do with the solution of problems, decision-making, communications, and other day-to-day matters in the organization.

The WEA is characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity from one country to another, which also generates different styles of process management, depending on the type of relationship with the host institution (UNDP in most cases), the personal and managerial characteristics of the Technical Coordinators, the topics under the responsibility of each country, as well as their degree of assimilation by the Program's Regional Coordination, the Regional Manager, and other UNIFEM projects.

As a WEA official in Costa Rica said, "Phase I of the WEA was a closed process; the second is an open process." This has given a different character to the Program's administrative and managerial duties in the countries in Phase II. On the one hand, in this phase there are several national authorities characterized by collegiate management, making decisions by consensus, that offer a good opportunity to exercise national leadership and direct actions toward the fulfillment of Program

¹²⁶ In some countries, people are financed by other donors that belong to the UNIFEM team and work full time with the Program in the country.

¹²⁷ One of the people interviewed, a representative of a women's organization, commented: "*Walking hand in hand with UNIFEM or UNDP in incidence endeavors opens doors in the government and gives us greater credibility.*"

objectives. On the other hand, this also constitutes a challenge for addressing those needs of national counterparts that were not contemplated in the plans, often having to face unexpected situations outside the Program's scope, a lack of resources or other eventualities.

Overall, process management at the **national level** was good in the countries where the WEA operates, showing flexibility and creativity in problem-solving and in fund-raising. Working groups were small, motivated, willing to contribute to results, and highly committed to generating and disseminating knowledge as well as to accompanying WEA processes in each country.

In contrast, a reliable definition at the **regional level** that would facilitate the efficient articulation of national actions around some of the Program's regional objectives was not observed. Except for the joint initiatives carried out by the countries—on occasions of their own will—there was no strong linkage in how regional processes were managed to give them coherence.

The regional advisor's support role has not been sufficient to achieve cohesive processes and activities among the countries,¹²⁸ and the system of communications among the Technical Coordinators is informal in nature. The planning workshops or videoconferences, which are appreciated by the majority as a means of sharing knowledge with their counterparts in the other countries, are sporadic and do not fulfill the objective of having a responsive and permanent system of communication among them.

In conclusion, in contrast with the perception of strategic leadership, which is widespread in the WEA, the evaluation of Program Management revealed several situations that can be improved. The ET scored Program Management and its processes as **moderately satisfactory**, given the specific reasons addressed in points 9.2.2 and 9.3 of this Chapter.

Some of the managerial aspects analyzed in the evaluation and mentioned by Program participants as being subject to improvement are, among others: (i) the concatenation between what is regional and what is national is not visible or perceived by the majority of the actors; there is a lack of clear guidelines at the regional level for adapting and applying at the national level and vice versa, extracting lessons from local success stories for a broader application; (ii) the monitoring and control systems are very weak; UNDP's support for incorporating the WEA's plans and reports in their monitoring and control system is not at the expected levels; (iii) the production of publications continues to be very active, but no prioritization was detected nor were the results of the materials published in the Program's first phase made known systematically.

9.4 Interinstitutional Links

Some institutional links of importance for WEA Management are examined here:

a. WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP

To complement the direct observation and the interviews done to different actors, the ET conducted an Internet survey among the participants in the WEA in the different countries to

¹²⁸ “On occasions I feel I’m alone in the handling of the thematic axis in my country,” commented a national Technical Coordinator.

learn their perceptions about the administrative management under this joint program, which is being implemented for the first time in WEA Phase II.

Grouping the people that agreed completely or partially with some affirmations, the following tendencies were found among the group of officers of UNIFEM/UNDP and associated entities: Of a total of 50 people that answered the questionnaire for this group, 78% indicated that this joint program provides an efficient platform for executing the WEA; 56% considered that the administrative management under this agreement permits the procedures to flow rapidly and effectively; and 50% felt that the quality of the services of financial management provided by UNDP to WEA/UNIFEM was adequate and efficient.

The foregoing data confirm the positive perception that the ET has that the WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP synergy has been able to develop a unified image for positioning the WEA.¹²⁹

Despite the initial problems of adapting to the new figure of the joint program (delay in the payments of the sums transferred by the donor; confusion in the accounting records when faced with the new figure of “joint program”; duplications; delays in payments to suppliers, which continue in some cases), today there is a productive institutional interaction especially in those countries where the WEA-UNIFEM offices are incorporated into those of UNDP, as in the cases of the regional headquarters of the WEA in Nicaragua and Honduras, where the ET observed the joint action in greater detail.

Regarding day-to-day administration, the general feeling was that, in the area of planning and control, the WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP contract is difficult to manage given that the planning systems of the two institutions are different and complex, which makes merging them difficult. For example, the dates for reporting financial information of the WEA-UNIFEM and UNDP do not coincide so there are gaps between one and the other; the WEA-UNIFEM is asked to present reports, but there is no feedback as to how these reports are to be incorporated in those of UNDP; and the financial data and data on budget execution are unreliable due to the difference in closing dates. On the other hand, UNDP is currently adjusting formats and procedures, which has hindered the normal administrative and financial implementation of the joint program.

In addition, the ET has noticed that, in the opinion of several UNDP officers, the inter-relationship between WEA/UNIFEM activities could increase their reciprocal contribution in the substantial work. In Honduras, a UNDP official stated: “Although it is true that in the technical part we function well (work with civil society organizations, meetings with the Government in increase participation), we lack more collaborative work, greater support. Here, the presence of UNIFEM is the WEA; tell us what we should do to apply the topic of Gender and Economics, give us a checklist, a concrete agenda, and we will assign funds for working together on it.” Another UNDP official in Nicaragua said “We should increase the possibilities of linking with other thematic areas; e.g. Development Economics. In Nicaragua we could work together in the the Caribbean Coast project.” Similarly, there are other perceptions such

¹²⁹ The following expression of an official of WEA-Costa Rica expresses the general feeling: “*Working with UNDP is good because there are financial and human resources and the national policy of equality is promoted.*” Another participant from the civil society commented: “*Through the WEA we have reached spaces of the United Nations that we couldn’t have otherwise.*”

as the one of a UNDP officer who expressed the need that this organization takes more advantage and appropriates more the knowledge generated by the WEA.

b. WEA-UNIFEM/SIDA¹³⁰

WEA/UNIFEM's relationship with the donor is cordial, and there is permanent feedback based on Program reports and the participation of SIDA representatives at the meetings of the WEA Regional Executive Committee and at meetings convened by WEA/UNIFEM to deal with planning and control issues.

The ET considers that, given the absence of a monitoring and control system, the donor's involvement in Program implementation by participating in meetings of the Regional Executive Committee and other periodic meetings as well as its continuous feedback on processes and reports constitutes a positive strategy for channeling the Program's efforts toward its development objectives.

c. WEA-UNIFEM/Mechanisms for Women Empowerment

The presence of a focal point of good professional level in the Mechanisms for Women Empowerment, paid for by the WEA in each country through a signed agreement, was a good decision. These focal points are involved in the daily tasks of the Mechanism, while they continue to be present in WEA's activities. This linkage not only constitutes a very important factor for developing strategies and initiatives, but it also facilitates the establishment of bases for appropriating the knowledge transmitted by the Program and for enabling its institutional strengthening strategy to achieve impact.

According to what was observed by the ET, the effect that the presence of the WEA can have on the Mechanisms for Women Empowerment in each country depends on the positioning that said Mechanisms has in the Government and on the influence and leadership that their Directors have. For example, in Honduras, where the Director of INAM has a ministerial position, said Mechanism has considerable influence on the Government, thereby increasing the potential impact of WEA through its focal point.

In other countries such as Nicaragua, despite the successful incorporation of the WEA focal point in the INIM in terms of organized collaborative work (training of human resources, participation in commissions, contact with grassroot organizations), the incidence effect of this 'focal point' figure is not very noticeable in promoting specific changes in policies or strategies for the appropriation of the topic of Gender and Economics.

In Guatemala, the integration of a focal point in SEPREM is still very recent (only two months ago). However, in this short time, the perception of the technical coordination is that processes are now more efficient and that there is greater fluidity in the management, both considered as positive.

¹³⁰ The ET could not obtain an evaluation of the Program through the interviews to persons representing the donor SIDA. Comments expressed in this section are based mainly on the documentary review.

In the case of Costa Rica, the focal point has established an important bridge between the WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP and INAMU, becoming an element of integration and coordination between these authorities and others of the civil society and the governmental sector. This reinforces the need to sustain this practice as a strategy for achieving more responsive and efficient processes.

d. WEA-UNIFEM/International Cooperation

Alliances with international cooperation agencies also constitute a positive factor in the performance of the WEA. The ET found that the communication with international cooperation agencies at the Regional Headquarters in Nicaragua is excellent for the harmonization of actions and mutual collaboration.¹³¹

In Honduras the Technical Coordinator of the WEA, in representation of UNIFEM, participates and has representation at the meetings of the Interagency Gender Group (MIG, its Spanish acronym), which is “a space where voluntary workers, who participate in national processes, can work together and exchange ideas, technically answering the demands for promoting equality between women and men.”¹³²

It should be highlighted that 14 governmental and multilateral cooperation agencies participate in the MIG. Its activities are reported to the G16, which is a standing group of countries that collaborate with Honduras. The ET had access to the agendas, minutes, and summaries of agreements of the eight meetings of the MIG held during 2008, confirming that this could be an important means for disseminating WEA information and for positioning it in the international scenario.

e. Other inter-institutional linkages

The lack of systematization made it impossible to study all the agreements signed with different entities in the different countries covered by this evaluation. As a result, the ET has generically selected several agreements that it had the opportunity to learn about during the evaluation process.

With the academic community. Agreements are established specifically with universities and education centers to carry out joint research and training activities pertinent to the topic of Gender and Economics. In Panama, for example, there is an alliance with the Center for Economics Research of the University of Panama for the shared activity of a Gender Observatory, which has prepared a list of Gender and Economics indicators and monitors their implementation.

With national statistics institutes. Agreements are in place for reviewing the systems of indicators, surveys, and statistical information pertinent to national economies, for example the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC, its Spanish acronym) in Costa Rica and

¹³¹ The ET was able to exchange ideas with officials and representatives of the World Bank, DfID, and the Government of Finland in a friendly meeting about the performance of the WEA Program, within the terms of the external evaluation. Their suggestions and comments have been used throughout this report.

¹³² Information regarding the MIG can be found at:

http://www.undp.un.hn/publications/Genero/Resumen_Mesa_interagencial_of_genero.pdf

the INE in Honduras. In Guatemala, the WEA, together with SEPREM and the INE in that country, promotes and disseminates statistical information on gender, for example “Indicators for Gender Analysis 2007.” In Panama and Honduras, the WEA has key people within the respective governmental statistics institutes to promote internally the initiatives regarding Gender and Statistics arising in the Program.

With governmental authorities and women’s organizations. In Guatemala, a Letter of Understanding was signed in 2007 between SEPREM and the Ministry of Economy (MINECO, its Spanish acronym) to establish a framework for interinstitutional coordination to diffuse, implement, and monitor a strategy for implementing the theme Economic Equity for Women, contained in the National Policy for the Development and Promotion of Guatemalan Women (PNDPMG, its Spanish acronym), whose institutionalization is coordinated and assisted by SEPREM.

Another example is the alliance between the WEA, the Women’s Forum for Central American Integration (FMICA), and the University Institute for Women of the University of San Carlos in Guatemala (IUMUSAC, its Spanish acronym) with the purpose of strengthening women’s participation in the civil society and of linking efforts for improving the living conditions of women in Guatemala and Central America by addressing topics such as the process of the Central American Economic Integration and the EU-CAAA. This has made it possible to organize various seminars-workshops. Furthermore, in Honduras, a member of one of the WEA thematic committees is the Director General of one of the institutes, ascribed to the Department of Finances, and has been promoting events of sensitization that have been well attended, due largely to the in-house activities she has carried out to promote the topic of Gender and Economics.

With other projects of UNIFEM, UNDP, and other international and national entities. In Guatemala a so-called technical working group was formed with the Ministry of the Economy-SEPREM, the WEA, the Women and Local Economic Development Program (MyDEL), the UNDP Women’s Economic Empowerment Project (PEEM, its Spanish acronym), the WINNER Program, and the European Union’s Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Project, with the purpose of facilitating actions of the Vice-Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (MIPyME, its Spanish acronym) and the aforementioned initiatives.

The SEPREM-WEA-UNIFEM-UNDP alliance led to the realization of the “Gender-sensitive exploratory study on Guatemala’s tourism sector,” which presented data broken down by gender and ethnic group, contributing valuable elements for future actions.

In conclusion, **WEA-UNIFEM is well positioned before pertinent actors in its environment** as shown by its relationship with UNDP in each country as well as with the diverse actors that participate directly in the Program’s activities.

In the case of UNDP, it was observed that WEA-UNIFEM works on gender issues in collaboration with each institution, conserving a different profile in accordance with its objectives. However, a gap was perceived in this relationship as to what is considered “substantial” as the officials of UNDP in Nicaragua and Honduras expressed, perhaps due to the lack of clarity and to the different expectations regarding the role that the people working for the WEA should exercise in their relation with UNDP. For example, the Joint Program Agreement did not contemplate whether the WEA

officials should exercise greater leadership in gender issues within UNDP or whether their work should be limited to coordinating the topics of Gender and Economics assigned to the WEA. This topic should be dealt with in greater detail, not only to define responsibilities but also to take advantage of the resources that one or another institution and the two together can place at the disposition of society.

Regarding interinstitutional linkages with international cooperation agencies, the ET highlights the excellent strategy and the example given by the coordination of actions with these international actors, as in the case of the Interagency Gender Group in Honduras, where the Technical Coordinator of the WEA has an important participation. In the ET's opinion, this is a valuable strategy that positions the Program in the broader context of incorporating the gender perspective in international initiatives to eliminate poverty, the UN Millennium Development Goals and the development of the nations.

In relation to the other interinstitutional linkages described in this section, the very nature of the WEA has meant that a diversity of actors are incorporated in the Program's activities, some to a greater degree of activity than others. The lack of systematization, of more information on the different institutional actors, and of strategies for managing these relationships hinders the evaluation of their effectiveness. It is essential to analyze the different actors and design strategies for optimizing the relationship with them.

10. External Factors

External factors are those that have affected, are affecting, and/or could impact, either positively or negatively, the Program's performance, having consequences regarding the scope of its goals. The ET also determined the WEA's level of response to said factors.

The most important external factors include the following:

- (i) **A culture that still stigmatizes gender issues** and is conservative in nature, tending to make gender issues invisible in fields such as economy, traditionally considered as dominated by men. This is, as mentioned in the first chapter of this evaluation, both an obstacle for the WEA and an opportunity to create new spaces, innovate topics, and promote intersectorial dialog not only within countries but also among countries in the region.
- (ii) **Political factors such as changes in the government and the subsequent removal of key personnel** in official institutions, especially in the Mechanisms for Women. The Program's directives should be attentive to these changes and attend them promptly. Along these lines, a National Technical Coordinator of the WEA commented: "Behind the institutions are the people. We should build map the lines of power and review the changes in the government to determine any new lines of authority, as well as map the alliances need to ensure the adoption of the WEA. To date this has been done intuitively, but should be done systematically." The Mechanisms, often subject to political changes, generate conditions of vulnerability for the Program, thus the need to make closer relationships with key governmental institutions, those that address economic policies.

- (iii) **The absence of long-term gender-sensitive public economic policies.** Current policies impact men and women differently. Here lies the importance of the WEA in generating and disseminating knowledge related to the topic, in creating awareness in different audiences, in influencing national and regional policies, and in strengthening institutions directly and indirectly related to the topic.
- (iv) **The economic illiteracy of the general public and of women in particular.** Women, even organized women, have focused more on social issues than on economic issues. Therefore several activities have been key in reverting this conceptual gap and lack of focus: the training offered by WEA to women and men of social organizations; the studies the WEA endorses in the academic community, results of which are widely disseminated; the pertinent spaces for dialogue that are opened in the Schools of Economics; and the sensitization of public officials and personnel from private enterprises.
- (v) **The transformations that have occurred in the Central American region as a result of globalization and economic openness** require the positioning of equity in the center of the concerns to ensure effective, sustained economic growth. Thus an economic agenda for women is essential, as long as there is a 'routing sheet' for implementing more egalitarian policies.
- (vi) **The technological environment (knowledge technologies/ICTs)** is opening up alternative routes for reaching broader audiences and for disseminating information and knowledge with greater speed. The WEA has possibilities of tapping this opportunity that is opening up for working with women in the countries participating in this Program (the case of ASTRADOMES in Costa Rica is a good example of this). This is also reflected in the links with the Winner Programm in Guatemala and Nicaragua.
- (vii) **The absence of official statistics on economic topics from a gender perspective** is still an obstacle for formulating economic policies with equity. Therefore the fact that WEA promotes the formulation and revision of indicators, as well as the generation of statistics broken down by gender is basic to its strategy.
- (viii) **An economic system that deepens misery and increases the gap between wealth and poverty.** In this context the labor markets are segregated by sex; there are inequalities of gender in the access to productive resources and salary inequalities due to gender. The WEA plays a very important role in the context of international treaties, which demand a more solid gender institutionalism, at both the national and regional levels. The participation of women in venues such as COMMCA, SICA (CSICA) or PARLACEN based on different rapprochement strategies has resulted in a greater impact at the institutional level.
- (ix) **The legal and/or financial institutions do not protect the economic rights of women properly.** In this case the WEA has already had important experiences of accompaniment (e.g. ASTRADOMES in Costa Rica) that have resulted in better laws for women. In some cases there has been little response from the Ministries of Finance, and this is unfavorable in terms of Program sustainability and consolidation.

- (x) **There is an increase in research and development of the topic Economics and Gender in general, particularly by the State.** The WEA has responded to this by endorsing a series of research studies on core issues in this field (GRB, non-remunerated domestic work, and so forth), which have later been broadly disseminated at the national and regional levels to put the proposals into practice.
- (xi) **There is a favorable juncture for introducing the topic in the political scenario.** This is a stage of consolidating support and of interinstitutional coordination for the positioning of the topic. Spaces are being opened up for working for equity, favoring alliances at both national and regional levels. The WEA not only promotes the SC-Government-WEA/UNIFEM coordination in the countries but also the representation of women in regional networks (academic communitys, women in resistance).
- (xii) **The Gender-Economics topic is not yet incorporated in the Central American society,** but the presence of sensitized women in decision-making spaces facilitates the insertion of the topic in the governmental institutionalization (e.g. the case of Honduras, where the President of the Central Bank was elected Minister of Finances, opening up more spaces for the topic and promoting efficiency in the processes).
- (xiii) **Crises can be opportunities.** At times of an economic crisis such as the present one in the current juncture, it is the women who cover many of the needs and buffer the effects of the crisis in different ways. This constitutes a moment of opportunity for the Program.

The external factors mentioned in this section not only constitute challenges to be faced but also opportunities to give continuity to the Program's development. We are aware that the only constant in any organization is change; and this occurs daily due to a multiplicity of internal and external factors that affect it. The influence of the external factors is due to the fact that all organizations, programs, or plans are always at the mercy of changes in the environment that can threaten their survival, but that also offer new opportunities for growth. Today it is deduced that the solutions have a shorter life; thus the importance of considering the management of change as something permanent for the Program. This requires that the WEA be innovative, flexible, and capable of responding to any sensibility for detecting signs that evidence the need for change.

11. Program Monitoring and Feedback

When planning a Program, monitoring and feedback are necessary elements to guarantee adequate implementation and confirm that Program results are indeed contributing to development. This especially applies in the context of the global effort to measure the advances toward achieving the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), for which world initiatives such as the Paris Declaration¹³³ and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)¹³⁴ have been launched.

These initiatives have solid systems in place for monitoring results, which allow them to improve the quality of the assistance they offer as well as their impact on development at the macro (country) and micro levels (projects and programs supported by international cooperation agencies, such as WEA/UNIFEM).

As mentioned in the chapter on Managerial Efficiency, WEA's monitoring system is just being developed. On the one hand, the PRODOC proposes indicators that are very weak and, on the other hand, an effective monitoring protocol that produces results has not implemented to date.

The observations that have led the ET to negatively assess the monitoring system include the following:

- Lack of a planning process that shows a chain of results as instrument to examine the causal relationships of policies and strategies promoted by the WEA, indicating inputs, activities, outputs, and results leading to the achievement of long-term goals.
- No series of indicators or a baseline that facilitates evaluation, explains how results were obtained, or offers a basis to calculate cost/efficiency or unit cost per product. The question "Is the Program achieving results efficiently?" cannot be answered.
- No established form or a process whereby the different WEA offices and groups can record information on Program advances and changes/modifications in their context.
- Minimal standardization of the operational planning system so it is not easy to compare and/or integrate and consolidate information produced at different levels.

Given the nature of the WEA as a program that seeks to identify the macroeconomic variables that illustrate gender inequalities, it is also necessary to establish baselines to measure the Program's medium- and long-term impact to confirm or reject the hypothesis of a chain of results and establish causalities.

The ET recognizes that it is a great methodological challenge to establish an efficient monitoring and evaluation system for an innovative program that seeks behavioral changes in complex situations that are usually part of a country's culture. It is not an easy task to seek women's autonomy and gender equality in deeply rooted patriarchal structures of power and measure the results obtained in the short and long term.

¹³³ "The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, endorsed in March 2005, is now recognized as landmark international agreement aimed at improving the quality of aid and its impact on development. It lays out a road-map of practical commitments, organized around five key principles of effective aid: (a) ownership by countries; (b) alignment with countries' strategies, systems, and procedures; (c) harmonization of donors' actions; (d) managing for results; and (e) mutual accountability." See Synthesis Report on the First Phase of the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration, cited at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/57/3/41136587.pdf>

¹³⁴ "The PRSP approach, initiated by the IMF and the World Bank in 1999, results in a comprehensive country-based strategy for poverty reduction. PRSPs aim to provide the crucial link between national public actions, donor support, and the development outcomes needed to meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are centered on halving poverty between 1990 and 2015." Cited in *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP): A Factsheet*, at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prsp.htm>

The ineffectiveness of the WEA monitoring system is framed in a general context where the development of monitoring and evaluation methodologies that adapt to the peculiarities of initiatives promoting public policy-making, within the framework of intersectoral dialogues, is still deficient. From this observation stems a recommendation that UNIFEM should tap this opportunity to develop a methodology to monitor and evaluate the outcomes and impact of this type of initiatives that support women's political agendas.

However, this evaluative reflection should go beyond the limits of the Program's past accountability and effectiveness/efficiency to steer the WEA toward concrete actions that seek more profound changes in society. The scope of this evaluation does not allow an in-depth analysis of which could be the most appropriate evaluation methods for such actions, but several questions do arise regarding the development of impact indicators and refer to those identified as the three main problems faced by women in CA, which the WEA aims to help women overcome¹³⁵:

- Little attention paid to the relationship between productive work $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ reproductive work;
- Lack of access to and control of tangible and intangible productive resources;
- Weak social capital of Central American women.

12. Sustainability

*"It is necessary to transcend governments."*¹³⁶

In general, we speak about sustainability when "present needs are met without compromising those of future generations."¹³⁷ In the case of this report, we used the appraisal of existing procedural elements capable of facilitating the permanence of Program achievements over time according to the definition of *sustainability* adopted by OECD-DAC evaluation network¹³⁸.

The sustainability of the WEA is influenced by the combination of at least six processes. These are:

- (i) Appropriate legal frameworks at the national and regional levels to support and sustain WEA-derived actions, even after the Program has terminated.
- (ii) Consensual public policies on the WEA that transcend government programs.
- (iii) Solid governmental institutionalism to give continuity to processes.
- (iv) Civil society organizations knowledgeable in the topic and forming alliances to influence policies. Networks consolidated at the local, national, and regional levels to influence policies.
- (v) Linking theory and practice around main WEA topics (research conducted by the academic community closely linked to the activities of governmental and nongovernmental organizations and institutions).

¹³⁵ Proceedings of the WEA Regional Meeting (27 and 28 March 2008).

¹³⁶ Women interviewee, Public Sector Focus Group, Costa Rica.

¹³⁷ Concept defined by the International Development Research Center (IDRC), Canada.

¹³⁸ Sustainability is defined as "the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistances has been completed; the probability of continued long-term benefits; the resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time" (OECD, Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, 2002-2008) at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf>.

- (vi) Public opinion and national/regional entities knowledgeable in the topic as the result of a gender-sensitive and culturally pertinent communication strategy.

We consider Phase I of the Program as one of political positioning and Phase II as the launching of the strategy in terms of political incidence, institutional strengthening, and knowledge generation and dissemination. Phase III will serve to consolidate the strategy.

In this chapter the ET will analyze Program activities in terms of sustainability.

In this sense, the surveys demonstrate that the perceptions of staff of WEA-UNIFEM-UNDP-SIDA and of governmental entities and civil society organizations regarding Program sustainability coincide completely: **they consider it feasible that the results of the WEA will be maintained after the Program has terminated.** Based on these perceptions, we deduce that willingness exists to give continuity to the processes initiated and that sufficient credibility has been gained to promote future actions.

The processes of linking the WEA to the National Mechanisms for Women and to regional mechanisms such as the COMMCA, within the framework of SICA and PARLACEN, have played an important role during Phase II. These relationships have already been described in the section on Effectiveness.

Based on the report on Phase II presented in February 2008 to the WEA Advisory Committee and Steering Committee, of which COMMCA forms part, four important priority actions, basically related to Program sustainability, were identified:

- (i) Review of the communication and political incidence strategy prepared by the WEA, based on the priorities agreed upon by the regional and country teams and the annual work plan, for subsequent distribution to Steering Committee members.
- (ii) Re-evaluation and monitoring of the situation of women in the subregion, using hard data that will serve to update a concise report for use by the COMMCA and other spaces that want to influence public policies.
- (iii) Promotion of a flexible model to implement the WEA but one that guarantees its ownership by national entities to grant sustainability to processes promoted by the Agenda (the underlining is ours).
- (iv) Strengthening the links between the WEA and UNDP program areas.

The above speaks about a regional vision for the future through incidence processes that have a lasting impact and which takes into account several factors that constitute important indicators of sustainability.

Furthermore, in the report submitted to the COMMCA in May 2008, the WEA points out that “women cannot be left out of the process (Central American integration) and the purpose of the Women’s Economic Agenda has therefore been to understand the reality lived by the region and how this reality influences the situation and conditions of women in society. Based on the studies conducted by the WEA, it is concluded that women need to understand these processes, demand their

rights, and work to modify the gender order existing in Central American society, which continues to discriminate against women and does not see them as subjects of development. Based on this conception, the WEA **“gives emphasis to the reinforcement of national capabilities and regional networking, which could trigger a change in the gender order with which regional negotiations operate and achieve, as a result, Central American integration in equal conditions for all.”**

In this regard, the WEA is pioneer in initiating diverse thematic studies, as is the case of the domestic work survey requested by the COMMCA and supported by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI, its Spanish acronym), which aimed to characterize paid domestic work and understand its implications for women’s life and autonomy in terms of autonomy and power relationships within the family, State, and society. Sustainability will depend on the linking of said characterization to public regulations and policies, as well as the designing of strategies that make recommendations viable at both the national and regional levels. In other words, the challenge for sustainability is that the COMMCA present proposals before the Central American Council of Ministries of Economy.

Another action of the WEA has been to update the gender profile of Central American economy to support the strengthening of national capabilities to analyze the economy and economic opening from a perspective of human rights, specifically from that of gender, to help mitigate poverty and inequalities. An important lesson was learned from the CAFTA experience, which has triggered tangible actions of organized women in CA regarding the EU-CAAA.

The positioning of the topic has allowed knowledge to be generated and disseminated, institutional capacities for influencing policies have been strengthened, and spaces of public policy that should be prioritized to formulate recommendations pertinent to sustainability have been identified, not only regarding the Program but also initiatives involved in the strengthening of policies on gender equality in the economic scenario. A strategy to ensure sustainability would then be able to link regional political spaces directed to social issues with those directed to economic issues, using a gender approach.

Other activities of the WEA during this stage involved a comparative study and a critical analysis of the legal and institutional framework, as well as a study of experiences with gender-responsive public budgets. Both allowed a better understanding of the initiatives that have been implemented in Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras; the situations in Panama and Costa Rica, countries that lack such initiatives, were also assessed. Tangible results on the impact of gender-sensitive resource allocation should be available in the near future (2010). This speaks of sustainability of equity-oriented processes, which in the future will translate into the possibility of defining budgets in a participatory manner, using a gender approach.

The analysis carried out by the WEA on linkages between the fiscal policy (income and payments) and State actions to reconcile productive and reproductive work is also important to evaluate sustainability. Not only is important information generated and socialized between key actors who can promote actions pertinent to gender-sensitive fiscal policies, but new tools based on internalized knowledge arise. The same can be said of the intra-household analysis of time use and decision making, differentiated by gender, which was carried out in coordination with ECLAC.

Other WEA initiatives, such as the in-depth studies on chains of value and their dynamics in three economic sectors as well as the studies on tourism, give women in Central American countries the

tools to exercise full economic citizenship. This translates into sustainability, when women become involved in specific proposals that help them negotiate in processes of national and regional economic openness.

The region's Equity Seal is also an important product. The inter-relationship between UNIFEM, UNDP, WEA, and the National Mechanisms (in many countries still vague) is, in itself, a strategy to ensure sustainability in institution strengthening, provided that this work-related recognition for public organizations and private companies that develop a gender-sensitive managerial system, responds to clear standards that can be continually reviewed and monitored by the National Mechanisms so that the recognition does not become an action without substance.

In the case of statistics, sustainability depends on the implementation of a regional system that contains essential and relevant information, disaggregates data, and makes visible realities from the gender approach for strategic and operational decision-making processes from the strengthening of national and institutional capabilities. The current system of generating statistics does not respond any more to the new questions being posed by women, human rights groups, and other sectors. The challenge faced by sustainability in this area is to increase the awareness of diversity and inequity within the state apparatus.

The strengthening of the Network of Academic Women, regionalized in the Higher Council for Central American Universities (CSUCA, its Spanish acronym), faces a limitation: there is no money, which means that more work in virtual and semi-presential education is needed. Without resources, sustainability does not go beyond being just good intentions. Universities are good niches to grant continuity and several universities have addressed the topic and have expanded their capacity for analysis, specifically in the schools of economics; however, the topic must be better positioned in national and regional political spaces through knowledge generation and dissemination to strengthen the capacities of women participating in economic negotiation processes and to increase the understanding of gender and economics. To meet these goals, the WEA provides support in the structuring of a broad regional network of women with active participation in the CCSICA, promoting an economic agenda they themselves prepared.

It is important that all organizations and officials receiving training promise to apply what they have learned. To ensure sustainability of achievements over time, these individuals must have autonomy to make important decisions at key moments. Perhaps a Letter of Commitment would be an appropriate way to institutionalize the strategy. The previous example can be transferred into the area of the civil society, in the case of the Network of Mesamerican Women in Resistance.

Any program that transcends governments has to clearly show the institution that endorses it (in this case UNIFEM) and prepare a strategy that is the result of a consensus-building process so that the achievements and the advances made are sustainable over time. A close linkage of what is national with what is regional is of utmost importance during this stage. The gender-sensitive strategy must also be institutionalized by the state entities mainly responsible for making it operational (National Mechanisms for Women Empowerment, the ministries of Economy, Finance, and Labor, statistics institutes, among others) so that it is duly reflected in public policies and in the day-to-day activities of institutions. In the future, this program should be part of the regional institutional framework (for example, link it to the COMMCA or SIECA).

A series of conditions that promote the topic of gender and economics and make it sustainable include the following: the widespread dissemination and discussion of publications; knowledgeable, politically influential, and empowered civil society organizations; an academic community committed with the topic; strengthened mechanisms for women empowerment; regional spaces working on the topic; sensitized governmental institutions; appropriate legal frameworks; and political situations attended. What other challenges will have to be faced to ensure the sustainability of the advances made and achievements over time? One example is the establishment of the regional observatory, whose platform could be coordinated, for example, by the Research Center for the Study of Women of the University of Costa Rica (CIEM-UCR, its Spanish acronym) which would give continuity to ongoing processes.

The mapping of the region's human resources specialized in gender and economics is necessary to firmly position the topic in Central American societies. The mapping of sensitized institutions and organizations is also pending to give continuity to the strategy through ongoing formation of actors. Finally, to make WEA's work more visible, it is important to position the Agenda in the public opinion (national and regional) through a comprehensive media campaign that considers both traditional and alternative ways and mechanisms to increase people's awareness and produce changes in attitude in the short, medium, and long term.

In brief, major advances have been made in two processes that influence the sustainability of Program achievements: (1) knowledge generation and dissemination, a platform that has allowed important diagnoses to be made for the designing and formulation of lines of political action, and (2) institutional strengthening of governmental and nongovernmental organizations at both the regional and national levels.

The alliances of women's civil society organizations with governments, companies, and UNIFEM has furthered the WEA during this stage, charting a different approach to the way women's networks influence policies in regional spaces such as the COMMCA, PARLACEN, SICA, CCSICA, and CSUCA. However, many actions are still required to strengthen regulatory and political frameworks so that a gender-sensitive economic agenda can be sustainable.

Critical issues that must be addressed are the lack of economic resources, the incipient institutionalization of the Program by National Mechanisms for Women Empowerment, and the lack of human resources trained in gender and economics throughout CA. Although the lack of political willingness, defined from a conservative vision of gender relationships, has been a major obstacle, it has also posed interesting challenges for the sustainability of the WEA.

Other gaps in terms of sustainability are the lack of sound agreements between institutions that can commit to monitor the topic and the lack of comprehensive communication and sensitization strategies on gender and economics so that the topic gradually positions itself in the collective thinking.

Overall, the balance in terms of sustainability is favorable and offers many possibilities to consolidate the WEA during Phase III.

13. Thematic Dimension

13.1 Appropriation /Capacity Building

“WEA documents should be used upstream to achieve greater impact and downstream to achieve greater appropriation”¹³⁹

Development programs and projects seek that beneficiary populations appropriate the results of by actively participating in project implementation, thus ensuring the sustainability of the changes achieved. This is known as **appropriation**, understood as an end in itself, which presupposes capacity building within a given social network or organization¹⁴⁰.

Capacity building efforts¹⁴¹ usually include one or more of the following approaches¹⁴²:

- Information dissemination
- Training
- Facilitation and mentoring
- Networking
- Feedback to promote learning based on experience

The application of these different approaches to the WEA was evidenced in the following:

Information dissemination

From Phase I, the WEA has been producing high-quality documents that show the different facets of the topic of Gender and Economics, aiming to present analytical figures that reveal the situation of women in Central American economy as effectively accomplished in the document “*Gender Profile of the Economy of the Central American Isthmus*”, published in Spanish, of which a reader-friendly version has also been published. The document is currently being updated in Phase II.

The WEA has combined its goal of producing and disseminating accurate information on Gender and Economics, which can be translated for different audiences, with its strategy to bring together actors of the civil society, the public sector, and the academic community to advance toward the creation of an informed critical mass.

As one governmental official of Panama mentioned when interviewed by the ET, “Ministers are already familiar with the topic. I have heard them.” Another individual of Panama’s academic community affirmed: “Based on the experience of our research center, we have developed a very strong Gender and Economics dimension. We now have more information on gender, which allows

¹³⁹ María Rosa Renzi, Regional Coordinator of WEA, in meeting with the group of international cooperation agencies and the ET in Managua, Nicaragua, on 24 September 2008.

¹⁴⁰ Gamero, J. (2008) Apropriación local de la ayuda al desarrollo. Ponencia. DESCO, Lima, Peru. Available at: desco.cepes.org.pe/apc-aa-files/d38fb34df77ec8a36839f7aad10def69/ponencia_esp2.doc (25 Nov. 2008).

¹⁴¹ Capacity development or building is defined as “the process by which individual, groups, and organizations improve their abilities to carry out their functions and obtain the results desired over time” (Morgan, 1997).

¹⁴² Horton, D. (2002). Planning, implementing and evaluating capacity development. ISNAR Briefing Paper No. 50. International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR).

us to propose new hypotheses.” As expressed by the Executive Director of an NGO in Nicaragua, “The strength of the WEA lies in the studies it conducts; the reader-friendly versions are read”. In Costa Rica, an interviewee of the public sector said that “One sign of appropriation is that economics linked to gender is a topic now discussed by the government, the academic community, and women’s civil society organizations.”

The main concern regarding the dissemination of information to achieve its appropriation is the capacity to penetrate top decision-making levels so that this information translates into policies, programs, and actions that further women’s economic autonomy. An ongoing question is, “What will happen within institutions when there is a change in government? These challenges continue, and the WEA will have to combine capacity building strategies, political incidence and adaptation to change to institutionalize processes that ensure the Program’s sustainability until its culmination.

In addition, there is a challenge of targeting the amount of information produced so that it is duly appropriated by different Program actors. When disseminating information, it should be taken into account that not only hard data on Gender and Economics must be transmitted, but also the corresponding analyses that show the situation of the women in areas such as employment and underemployment, remuneration and other labor conditions, and their access to and participation in economic resources.

These reports and documents, whether produced or not by the WEA¹⁴³, illustrate the topic and position the Women’s Economic Agenda in the foreground. The WEA should develop a strategy that, without duplicating efforts, provides its target population with the information on Gender and Economic that it needs to understand the topic and influence pertinent actions.

However, it should not be forgotten that information must also be disseminated on the Program’s purpose and activities to promote the Women’s Economic Agenda with specific actions that aim to change the economic indicators that are currently disadvantageous for women. The Program’s purpose should be appropriated by all local and regional actors, and different consensus-building spaces between the academic community, the civil society, and governmental agencies should be opened and positioned, through which women’s sustainable economic autonomy can be promoted over time.

Training

Phase II of the WEA has been characterized by its focus on training not only of its own personnel through workshops, video conferences, and thematic meetings, but by also building the capacities of national actors through fellowships for participating in virtual and in-person courses and specialized study programs¹⁴⁴.

It is sometimes believed that the strengthening of individual capacities will automatically translate into improved performance of the organization or community. This, however, is not necessarily true.

¹⁴³ There are reports of ECLAC, UNDP (Human Development Report with Gender Inequality Indicators), World Economic Forum (Gender Gap Index), and other organizations that already contain indicators that are updated each year and which can be used by the WEA to mass communicate the topic of Gender and Economics.

¹⁴⁴ The September 2006-June 2008 Report indicates that WEA personnel attended 23 regional meetings and that the Program financed the participation of 65 national actors of the different Central American countries in different training courses.

In addition to building the capacities of individuals, there must be a firm intention of institutionalizing certain principles, values, and attitudes in the standard procedures of each organization so that capacity building can have an impact at higher levels within organizations, communities, and the society in general. Capacity building is hence inherently linked to knowledge management. At the same time, the unique nature of each organization should be recognized as well as the need to develop creative and effective processes in accordance with its needs and special features.

The ET highlights the fact that the WEA strategy takes advantage of the tools it has—high-quality human resources, a good reputation, a pool of knowledge and publications on Gender and Economics, an excellent relationship with the academic community, and successful joint endeavors—to foster and promote training on topics pertinent to the Agenda. However, the ET also calls attention to the need of having a formal strategy to strengthen training to achieve the Program’s objective of knowledge appropriation.

Universities are a good niche to give continuity to the Program because of their power to multiply knowledge and because, in a certain sense, they are receptors of the training offered by the WEA. Factors such as these should be taken into account when designing the training strategy and establish, on the one hand, mechanisms that give the academic community the tools it needs to transmit knowledge and forge, on the other hand, partnerships with educational centers to multiply this knowledge within the target population.

Moreover, individual training should be accompanied by a formal agreement of commitment, already in use by the WEA¹⁴⁵, to ratify the institutionalization of methodologies and practices learned. In addition, the criteria for selecting institutions and individuals that will participate in training events should be established in advance. Questions, such as the following, should be answered: What objectives do we have in common as institutions that facilitate appropriation? How can we formalize the commitment and how can it be institutionalized¹⁴⁶? What level of decision-making autonomy does the participant have?

Facilitation and mentoring

Within its strategy of flexibility facing demand, the ET observed that the WEA continually plays an important facilitation and mentoring role in issues related to Gender and Economics, such as the incorporation of the gender approach into processes of integration and economic openness and into key public policies and a gender-sensitive managerial system. Advisory services are usually provided through established inter-institutional agreements, such as the one signed with National Mechanisms for Women Empowerment, the COMMCA, or with civil society organizations.

The ET confirmed the incorporation of the gender approach into several facilitation and mentoring activities carried out by the Program as follows: Honduras’s policy of dignified employment, Costa

¹⁴⁵ The ET was able to confirm that the individuals that the WEA-Nicaragua sponsors to participate in training events are asked to sign a letter of commitment, countersigned by the Director of the respective organization, that they will share the knowledge they acquire and therefore serve as multiplier agents. The same holds true in Honduras.

¹⁴⁶ For example, Nicaragua’s Women and Community Economic Development Foundation (FUMDEC, its Spanish acronym), whose personnel have benefited from attending the WEA-sponsored training courses, requires that course participants incorporate the newly acquired knowledge into their work plans (information given by Mrs. Rosa Adelina Barahona, Executive Director of FUMDEC in an interview with the ET).

Rica's Equity Seal in Costa Rica, Guatemala's Strategy for the Economic Sector and the Equal Opportunity Plan, and Nicaragua's Gender Strategy of the Ministry of Economic Development, Industry, and Trade, which aims to institutionalize the gender approach in those policies supporting and promoting the country's micro and small enterprises¹⁴⁷.

Networking

The WEA has also done commendable work in providing training and assistance in networking for women's organizations and the academic community, as indicated in the September 2006-June 2008 report and which the ET was able to confirm:

“The support that the WEA provides to regional networks of women's organizations has allowed them to have access to information and critical analyses to better influence policies. The Women's Forum for Central American Integration (FMICA, its Spanish acronym) and the Network of Mesoamerican Women in Resistance are two of several civil society organizations supported by the WEA and that are now better positioned and presenting better proposals before the official bodies of SICA, national negotiators, and the European Parliament in the negotiation of the EU-CAAA. In particular, it should be highlighted that during 2007 and 2008 women's organizations began a process of internal dialogue to identify framework agreements that allows the role played by women in political and negotiation spaces to become more visible, increasing their influence within SICA's Advisory Committee in its national chapters.”

The joint effort with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) should also be highlighted. This endeavor promotes the methodology of horizontal business networks, using a gender approach, to further women's development in target groups. This way the WEA extends its activities beyond its own borders to the local level through networks of organizations seeking support for micro and small enterprises.

Feedback to promote learning based on experience

As mentioned previously in this report, one of the main lines of action of a program such as the WEA is the strengthening of institutional capacities. Therefore an ongoing monitoring and evaluation system of activities should be established to determine performance constraints and capabilities and opportunities for change.

Plans developed to build capacity “should be viewed as works-in-progress rather than finished blueprints... Capacity-development efforts involve a great deal of experimentation, and managers need to know the results in order to sharpen or reformulate objectives and reorient their activities in appropriate ways” (Horton, 2004).

In conclusion, in the opinion of the ET, the Program is advancing **satisfactorily** in the five aforementioned areas of capacity building in terms of partners and beneficiaries appropriating the knowledge and methodologies generated by the WEA. The previous analysis shows that, to a greater or lesser extent, now half-way through Phase II the Program has taken important steps on different fronts to achieve appropriation.

¹⁴⁷ Taken from the WEA Progress Report for September 2006-June 2008.

13.2 Incidence

“... We need to provide policy-makers, politicians, and negotiators of trade agreements with recommendations, lobbying notes, and information oriented toward public policies. In other words, we need to have some bearing on main stakeholders so that they appropriate the results delivered by the WEA, incorporate them into their spaces to achieve changes, view poverty eradication policies in a different way, seek other development models, and create opportunities for participation”¹⁴⁸.

In the Cabinet Report of this external evaluation the ET indicates that, based on the planning documents of WEA Phase II, there are no clear indications on “how” the Program plans to influence policies and achieve the outcomes established in the PRODOC.

Several hypotheses were posed for confirmation during the evaluation: (i) the WEA as a space of political incidence and UNIFEM’s capacities to influence policies are so consolidated that they can directly produce changes in governmental institutions and the civil society; (ii) the decisions on how to influence policies are made at the national level; and (iii) the Program does not make planned decisions, but reacts to statements made by third parties.

The first observation is that *incidence*, and particularly *political incidence*, is one of the Program’s main themes. During the evaluation, the issue of political incidence was addressed many times in WEA documentation, structure, and practices. Direct mention is made to it in three of the four Program objectives and in several outputs. Several outcomes related to political incidence have also been identified.

Political incidence is also an issue we faced when trying to understand how the Program’s operational structure and the different Committees operate. They are the backbone of a system to facilitate political lobbying. Furthermore, we also had to address political incidence when analyzing external factors as well as Program sustainability. The word *incidence* appears profusely in this evaluation report because it describes a phenomenon of crucial interest to the Program.

In Chapter 7 of this report, related to Effectiveness, the issue of political incidence was addressed as an important strategy to strengthen women’s economic autonomy¹⁴⁹. According to the evidence found by the ET, the WEA is exerting influence on two fronts: (i) strengthening of the position of women’s movements before decision makers; and (ii) technical assistance, in the form of accompaniment to public agencies so that they incorporate the gender perspective into their policies and programs.

During the evaluation, the ET investigated strategies (both planned and unplanned) that are being used in Phase II of the WEA to achieve results in the line of action of political incidence. The Program’s Regional Coordinator said that....

¹⁴⁸ Teresa Rodríguez Allendes, UNIFEM Regional Director for Mexico, Central America, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, in internal communication with the WEA team.

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter 7, point 7.4 of this report.

“In our work at both the country and regional levels, ‘incidence’ is understood in a broad sense. It encompasses political incidence, which attempts to influence decision makers, as is the case of the forums we hold with policy-makers to present the conclusions of our studies, but also political influence that **actively involves government organizations in WEA’s decision-making processes and that these organizations gradually acquire a sense of ‘ownership’ of different concepts and methodologies developed by the WEA** (the emphasis is ours). Political incidence also covers what women’s organizations linked to the WEA do at national and international forums and decision-making spaces, a work that is nurtured by the elements, analyses, and studies conducted by the WEA.

Finally, there is a type of influence that is not properly political but related rather to the understanding and awareness of women’s rights. In other words, to the extent that our studies are able to reach women and society in general, we are contributing to their understanding and empowerment regarding economic issues. An indirect consequence is that these women start making increasingly better life decisions and, as a result, are able to influence policies in the long term.”¹⁵⁰

The previous statement clearly summarizes the incidence role played by WEA during Phase II. Furthermore, by penetrating the field of political incidence strictly speaking and by mobilizing other sectors to influence economic and political decision-making processes, the Agenda is turning into an mechanism for incidence through a collegiate system in which governmental policy-making entities can also participate. This innovative way of influencing policies, from which valuable lessons can be learned, should not be overlooked.

All the above, together with the image of UNIFEM/UNDP as catalysts of these processes, is leading the Program to take on the proposed line of action of political incidence as one of its main strategies.

As already commented in the previous section on appropriation, strategies inherent to the project should be systematized and formalized to potentiate results. The ET reiterates the need for incorporating all these forms of incidence into a planning system that includes the systematization of activities and the extraction of lessons learned so that widespread advantage can be taken of these experiences.

13.3 Gender Approach

The section addresses the question: Why mainstream a national and/or regional economic agenda from the gender perspective?

Applying gender mainstreaming as an economic agenda strategy seeks to achieve gender equality in decision-making processes at all levels of political and citizen participation, which will necessarily result in improved living and working conditions for women, but will ultimately be reflected in greater equity and development for society in general.

Although women’s contribution to family well-being and to the economic and social development of their communities is being increasingly recognized in the Central American region, it is also a fact

¹⁵⁰ Answer of Maria Rosa Renzi, Regional Coordinator of WEA/UNIFEM, to a question asked by the ET.

that equal access to development opportunities still poses several challenges for society in the different countries and in the region. The gender approach proposes parity as a feasible democratic horizon and as a resource of ethical nature to strengthen and legitimize those democratic institutions we want to build.

“Gender mainstreaming refers to the integration of gender equality issues into all public policies and that gender equality is not longer considered as being marginal or associated only to certain traditional social policies (family, for example) but rather proposed as a strategy that complements “national policies for women” or “specific policies directed toward women”. Although these policies focus directly on specific problems of gender inequality, they are insufficient to counteract the effects of inequality of general policies.¹⁵¹

WEA’s view of Gender mainstreaming has been a strategy to tackle the marginalization of gender issues linked to the economy and implies a broader, complementary view of traditional policies on equality. Methodologically, it attempts to achieve real equality between women and men in their access to development opportunities and in guaranteeing basic human rights. Therefore it definitively contributes to greater social cohesion.

The following are some of the reasons why the gender approach is so important for the WEA:

1. Gender equality is increasingly important and seeks to overcome historical marginalization in political agendas and pertinent institutions, mainly in country and regional economic agendas.
2. By introducing a ‘gender’ category into the economy, gender relationships in national social and political situations are better understood and all their dimensions and implications acknowledged.
3. The WEA initiatives at the country and regional levels are used to mobilize the resources necessary for achieving real gender equality.
4. It is a fact that significant transformations have indeed occurred in gender relationships at the inter-institutional level as well as in the different interventions of institutions impacted by WEA’s political incidence, although these transformations are still insufficient.
5. A learning process has occurred, and governmental and nongovernmental institutions and organizations at the country and regional levels have been enriched because this strategy has helped lobby policies that favor women but convene both men and women alike, which, in turn, enhances changes promoted by men.
6. There are now policies and institutions more aligned with principles of gender equality, human rights, and citizen participation in the economic area.

The gender approach in economy is based on the principle of gender equality proposed in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which defines new development agendas for countries. The United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) was very important for the WEA because it puts forward development objectives and goals that further a more just and equal world. The monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) demands gender mainstreaming in each of those objectives, at both a conceptual and strategic level.

¹⁵¹ López, I. et al. 2007. Género y políticas de cohesión social. Conceptos y experiencias de transversalización. Documentos de Cohesión Social. FIIAPP-EUROsociAL.

MAINSTREAMING...

“Is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs (...) making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies and programs (...) so that women and men benefit equally...”¹⁵²

We are aware that mainstreaming the gender approach in the economy implies transforming, reforming, and reorganizing current institutions, legislations, and policies so that they are capable of promoting gender equality actions, while being egalitarian themselves. This means that the WEA strategy has strived to influence not only institutions that design and promote economic policies, but also women and men who should live and access development opportunities in equal conditions.

However, to refer to gender impact based on the application of policies mainstreamed from this approach, we must consider that women and men have different lifestyles and, as a result, different needs, which should be considered on a priority basis in overarching policies of social cohesion. Equality is sought through observation and careful attention to the differences in interests and specific needs of men and women. This has been good judgment on behalf of WEA based on the influence it has had on national and/or regional statistics, policies, laws, and budgets.

There are no “gender-blind” policies because all policies have an impact on gender equality, whether favorable or negative. This ‘supposed’ neutrality conceals gender discriminations that do in fact occur within our social, cultural, political, and economic realities. A law conceived for “all individuals alike” will not benefit men and women in the same way.

The ET considers that there are indicators that allow us to consider that the gender approach has been successfully applied throughout the entire Program:

- The concept of gender and economics is clear and well anchored in the political willingness of country and regional coordinators (gender-economics profiles, labeled budgets, GRB, satellite accounts, disaggregated budgets and statistics, unpaid time...).
- Specific economic policies have been strengthened to complement major national and regional policies that favor women. Budgets, for example, constitute a planning tool that determines how resources are allocated and how income and wealth are distributed. Therefore it is necessary to breakdown budgets to reflect their differentiated impact on women and men. The use of this strategy aims to promote an integral development of society because gender identity is recognized as well as the need that policies respond to existing differences between the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of men and women.
- Organizational structures have been created that reflect political priorities around gender and economics (special units in Ministries of Economy, mechanisms for women empowerment, and so forth).
- Gender analysis is being applied systematically, including disaggregated gender data and statistics. Pertinent studies have been promoted, whose content is socialized and then translated into political or institutional practices. The WEA has been integrated into a novel budget planning dynamics. For example, the gender neutrality of public, national, or regional

¹⁵² UNDP (2002) Gender equality, Practice Note. p. 2.

budgets can be recognized and, based on these studies, the incorporation of a gender approach in the preparation and execution of these budgets can be proposed.

- The clear assignment of institutional responsibilities regarding gender and economics is promoted through partnerships and inter-institutional alliances.
- The networking of academic communities and organized women around the topic is being promoted at both the regional and country levels. The adaptation of different methodologies to strengthen society by identifying gender differences in the economic dimension seeks to empower women so that they can recognize and exercise their rights as citizens through social control and access to decision-making processes and political positions.
- An organizational culture in governmental and nongovernmental institutionality is promoted, oriented toward gender equality.
- Financial and human resources (specialized in gender and/or economics) have been allocated, but are insufficient.
- Formation programs in gender and economics have been developed.
- What is lacking is the designing of a gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation strategy for the Program.

The pursuit for transformation is evident in the origins of the WEA, its thematic statement, and its search for more equitable models and practices. In consequence, it questions even the traditional forms of equality policies that have been developed in recent years.

13.4 Interculturalism

“The joint efforts undertaken with the National Statistics Institute, the WEA, and other national initiatives, such as the Ombudsman’s Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women (DEMI), to design a gender-sensitive information system that provides either gender indicators with an ethnic approach or ethnic indicators with a gender approach, are not sufficient to illustrate inequities if we do not quantify the contributions that Guatemalan women make to the country’s economy in the areas of production and social reproduction.”

Angelina Aspucac, Under Secretary of SEPREM/Guatemala 2004-2008¹⁵³

The WEA is being implemented in a culturally diverse region of CA, where the mestizo population predominates, particularly in Costa Rica, and where indigenous groups are important. The descendants of the Mayas form a large ethnic group in Guatemala, but are minority in the other Central American countries. The black and mulatto populations are much smaller and mainly located in Belize, Nicaragua, and Panama.

The above information not only is valid because of the information it offers, but because of the analyses that must be conducted based on the socioeconomic and political situation of each country, which is directly related to each particular cultural reality. For example, in the case of Guatemala, when maps of largely indigenous populations are cross-referenced with poverty maps, they usually coincide. This gives us a general idea of how complex it is to think about a regional program based on those variables.

Gender equity is important to overcome poverty and develop local, national, and regional economies, but the different realities where policies, plans, and programs must be carried out should be first

¹⁵³ Guatemala’s 2007 WEA Report.

identified and analyzed. With this evaluation, the ET had a unique opportunity to systematize the WEA experience in incorporating gender approaches and interculturalism and was able to identify existing strengths and weaknesses in the search for gender equality.

The following table shows important data on the indigenous population in countries of the Latin American Region, to contextualize WEA's proposal within the diversity framework that pose new challenges:

Estimated proportion of indigenous population as compared to total population of Latin American countries

Country	Indigenous Population		Percentage of total population %	
	Interamerican Indigenous Institute	Word Bank	Interamerican Indigenous Institute	Word Bank
Argentina	350,000	360,000	1.00	1.10
Belize	30,000	27,000	19.00	14.70
Bolivia	4,500,000	4,150,000	63.00	56.80
Brazil	300,000	225,000	0.20	0.20
Caribbean Islands	3,000	x	0.01	x
Colombia	600,000	300,000	2.00	0.90
Costa Rica	30,000	26,000	1.00	0.90
Chile	800,000	550,000	6.00	4.20
Ecuador	4,100,000	3,100,000	40.00	29.50
El Salvador	400,000	1,000	7.00	0.02
Guatemala	5,800,000	3,900,000	66.00	43.80
Guyana	15,000	x	6.00	x
Honduras	600,000	110,000	12.04	2.10
Mexico	7,800,000	12,000,000	9.00	14.20
Nicaragua	160,000	48,000	5.00	14.25
Panama	140,000	99,000	5.05	4.10
Paraguay	100,000	80,000	3.00	1.90
Peru	8,400,000	9,100,000	40.00	40.80
Surinam	30,000	x	6.00	x
Uruguay	-----	x	-----	x
Venezuela	400,000	150,000	2.00	0.80
Total LA and Caribbean	34,225,000	34,426,000	7.72	12.76

----- : without indigenous population

x: no estimated data available

Sources:

World Bank, Regional & Sectorial Studies: Indigenous Peoples & Poverty in Latin America, Washington D.C., Sept. 1994 .

Instituto Indigenista Interamericano (*Interamerican Indigenous Institute*) (III), América Indígena, Vol. LV, No. 3, Mexico 1995.

The ET found no conflicts between the Program proposal, statements, and categories of analyses proposed in terms of gender perspective and the region's cultural diversity. Even if the special cultural characteristics of indigenous populations, whether majority or minority in the different Central American countries, are considered, at least two common elements can be identified:

1. The struggle for recognition of all cultural expressions found in the region.
2. The longing for equal representation at all decision-making levels.

The WEA will have to face, however, one common challenge: societies in general, and particularly those of Central America, are conservative when it comes to the changes in attitudes and behavior that gender-sensitive public policies imply in a hard topic such as economics and in contexts where racism and discrimination still define the relationships between the different cultural expressions found in these countries. The ET considers that the case of ASTRADOMES in Costa Rica is a valuable intercultural endeavor in this sense because, according to the interviews done to a group of project beneficiaries and advocates, 60% of the women forming part of the domestic workers association are Costa Rican and 40% are Nicaraguan. The proposal not only stems from affirmative gender actions and the intention of mainstreaming this approach to all institutional activities, but also promotes the exercise of interculturalism in conditions of equality.

As one Mayan women from Guatemala asked during the interview, "How can we indigenous women visualize ourselves within an economic agenda if for all purposes our society is conservative, more so if we take into consideration that we are dealing with an indigenous community, mostly comprised of women?" She answered herself, "'Linking gender issues to indigenous issues will take some 15 or 20 years'", and continued with another question: "And how can we evaluate the work women do in the field?" This last question seems important in a country where 65% of the population live in rural areas, half of the population are women, and according to the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE, its Spanish acronym), Population Division of the ECLAC Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, indigenous people accounts for 47% of total inhabitants (28.9% men and 28.1% women)¹⁵⁴.

This is why the WEA Guatemala Program "emphasizes the ethnic approach"¹⁵⁵ and has formed important partnerships with entities such as the National Forum for Women (FNM, its Spanish acronym) that is present in all departments and has 62 representative structures of linguistic communities as well as diverse sectors and organizations to offer training and generate knowledge on gender and economics. "People in rural areas do not know what 'gender' means. To negotiate with people's sensitivity is complex. What's hardest is to transfer knowledge and information on these topics," said a member of the FNM when interviewed in Guatemala. However, "every day more

¹⁵⁴ According to the 2008 report of UNDP Guatemala, "An economy at the service of human development?", the Active Economic Population in that country has increased, but "there are sectors that work harder, such as the lower income strata, the indigenous population, and, particularly, women , which increased from 25% in 1989 to 42% in 2006. However, work-generated income, as percentage of total income, has not increased. As a result, income distribution is significantly inequitable, with some groups in a disadvantageous position to access the resources they need to improve their quality of life."

¹⁵⁵ Interview with the WEA Coordinator in Guatemala.

indigenous women are becoming involved in spaces where gender issues are addressed,” pointed out one member of the Guatemalan academic community who was interviewed.

Because Guatemala is the country presenting the greatest cultural diversity in the region, it is important to also mention that WEA-Guatemala coordinated the celebration of four forums on successful business women in the departments of Guatemala, Quetzaltenango, Alta Verapaz, and Chiquimula, together with the European Union’s Small and Medium Enterprise Project, the Winner Program, and SEPREM. Two of these forums were attended by mainly Mayan population. Through the SEPREM-WEA-UNIFEM alliance, an “Exploratory Survey of the Guatemalan Tourism Sector, using a Gender Approach” was conducted. Survey results disaggregated data by gender and ethnic group, contributing valuable elements for future actions.

In Nicaragua, the course on Gender-Sensitive Business Management coordinated by the WEA and the Women and Community Economic Development Foundation (FUMDEC, its Spanish acronym) and directed toward Miskito, Mayagna, Creole, and mestizo women should be highlighted. This course was organized by the Center of Research and Information on Multiethnic Women (CEIMM, its Spanish acronym) of the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN, its Spanish acronym), Bluefields Campus. Research was also conducted on “The path of white people” for the tourism sector, which includes an ethnic variable. One of the statements that perhaps best embodies the general feeling was made by women who participated in one of this projects and which appeared in the newsletter on the WEA-Nicaragua Web site (<http://www.pnud.org.ni/genero/doc/AGEM>): “... it is well worth the time invested in participating in an endeavor where you yourself construct the development strategy.” This is an irrefutable indicator of the Program’s gender mainstreaming and cultural relevance.

Based on these few examples that take into account the particularities of each Central American country, the proposal of giving the WEA an intercultural perspective arises from the definition of the Program itself, based on the four objectives defined before the initiation of Phase II and which have already been cited several times in this report. Each objective addresses multi- and intercultural issues, and the importance of generating and using statistical data disaggregated by sex, gender, and ethnic group has been stressed in all the countries, as well as the need to analyze factors contributing to inequality to continually contextualize advances and achievements. In brief, actions asserting or offsetting different cultural expressions of Central American countries are promoted, especially those that have been systematically excluded from development opportunities.

The ET considers that the WEA has played an important role in acknowledging the cultural plurality of the Central American region, as indicated below:

- The WEA, in its national and regional dimensions, considers the cultural particularities of each country, works to achieve equity, and acknowledges cultural diversity. This means—in theory—the recognition of the region’s indigenous populations and the comprehensive nature of their cultural, economic, social, and political rights. Programs, however, are typically designed from a global perspective and then later adjusted to national and regional scenarios when the inverse should occur. Cultural diversity should be considered first and WEA actions then planned accordingly.
- The WEA, within a framework of political incidence, is seeking to increase the commitment of Central American countries to improve their legal and political frameworks regarding

cultural diversity. However, in terms of a broader and sustained impact, greater political lobbying is necessary in regional forums where decisions are made.

- The Program is building the capacities of governmental agencies and civil society organizations so that they are capable of demanding gender-sensitive governmental services that are cultural relevant. As in the previous point, the strategy should be designed around the Program's cross-sectional thematic areas and not only include actions directed toward the indigenous population or women.
- Alliances, agreements, and commitments with indigenous entities and organizations (for example DEMI in Guatemala) are being strengthened and these are now co-developers of their own economic models.
- The WEA has opened opportunities for research, education, and training in gender and economics, which include intercultural participation. This should be the basis of a mainstreaming strategy.

The ET concludes that the intercultural perspective cross-sections the WEA program, taking into consideration the tangible differences among Central American countries, but that political decision-making spaces, legal frameworks, and pro-equity actions still need to be strengthened. While recognizing that WEA is compatible with the approaches of cultural diversity, multiculturalism and/or intercultural relationship, we consider that there is not an explicit strategy for inter-culturalism at WEA. There is sensitiveness on the topic, but in a strict sense, its incorporation into the majority of products of WEA is not evident. That's why advancements are still slow. The fact that the relevance analysis of this Report revealed a programmatic shortcoming regarding a specific approach for interculturalism, and further in the thematic section of the Report it addresses the work done by WEA in this topic, can be interpreted in the sense that, despite the absence of a programmatic approach, WEA has made considerable efforts to incorporate it.

14. Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Institutional Learning

The ET reflected on the lessons learned¹⁵⁶ during the first part of Phase II of the WEA as well as the best practices¹⁵⁷ implemented, using the trends identified in the interviews and other collected data.

The lessons learned help identify the experience's strengths and weaknesses, based on its successes and failures as well as what is now known that was not known before. These will be used as future referent on how to move forward, with fewer resources, to achieve the established objectives. The

¹⁵⁶ A 'lesson learned' is defined as a generalization based on an experience that has been evaluated or assessed. It is the result of a learning process that involves reflecting about the experience, drawing up a balance between successes and failures, analyzing the gap between planned results and results achieved, and comparing the initial blueprint with the pathway traveled to ultimately identify key cause-and-effect relationships.

¹⁵⁷ 'Best practices' are those strategies or activities identified during an evaluation that respond favorably to the following seven key criteria: innovation; creativity; replicability; sustainability; cooperation/alliances; effectiveness/impact; and efficiency. Best practices help capitalize experiences as the basis to not only maintain and increase effectiveness and efficiency, but also promote innovation. They also serve as basis to scale-up the impact of interventions and are therefore considered when formulating recommendations and when building future scenarios.

lessons learned answer two basic questions: If similar objectives and results are sought, what would we do the same? What would we do differently?

Of the **lessons learned**, the following three should be highlighted:

- A. In a short time UNIFEM, through the WEA, has managed to implement an **innovative system of collegiate management** between the government, the civil society, the academic community, and the private sector in the different countries through Steering Committees that govern the Program at the country level and several thematic committees. This has become an effective practice to mobilize numerous actors with few resources, thus linking social and economic approaches, as well as the governmental and private sectors around a common purpose: to reduce gender inequalities in the economic sector and advance toward women's economic autonomy in the region.

How has this effective tripartite decision-making system been put into motion? Firstly, the directives of the WEA Program have it very clear that the Program should serve as liaison and as discussion and learning forum on topics related to Gender and Economics. Advantage is taken of every opportunity to table current interest topics or research results and constantly generate interest and motivation among directives.

The National Executive Committees clearly understand their role of knowledge managers and agents of change in their institutions, playing a leading role with innovative initiatives that, in general, are well received. The selection of several themes around which the AGEM designs specific projects has consolidated the thematic committees, which now have work plans and are assigned Program resources to carry out different initiatives. People participating in the WEA have appropriated the topics and are committed to their role as multipliers in their respective institutions.

- B. The WEA has also become a **regional referent**—a space that supports decision-making processes and influences policies in regional spaces. This has been possible because of the support received from regional entities such as COMMCA, SICA, PARLACEN, and CCSICA that receive technical assistance in issues related to gender and economics, while maintaining sufficient flexibility to serve the specific demands of these entities. This technical support has facilitated agreements and consensus building processes regarding the incorporation of gender equality, allowing these regional entities to assume informed positions on different activities.

To make sure that its participation in the regional scenario is successful, the WEA has taken advantage of different situations occurring in the region to define its strategies:

- (i) **Process of Central American integration.** WEA has stressed that women cannot remain on the sidelines and that their situation and gender condition in society must be understood. Both the studies conducted by the WEA and the support it has provided to regional entities aim to reverse the disadvantageous situation of women to achieve a Central American integration in conditions of equality for all.
- (ii) **Trade liberalization agreements.** The experience of the CAFTA, in which women had little participation, left lessons that the WEA has rescued to counsel women's organizations in Central America about concrete actions to ensure that their petitions

are included in the negotiations of the EU-CAAA. The WEA has linked regional policy-making spaces on social issues with those on economic issues.

- (iii) **Incorporation of COMMCA into SICA.** The WEA also applies its principle of convergence to this regional situation. Aware that COMMCA is the appropriate channel to penetrate the region's political system and an important means to transmit knowledge on gender and economics, the WEA has provided technical support to the Council and has served as liaison to women's organizations in the region to facilitate joint statements and unified platforms for launching new initiatives. Situating a WEA focal point at the COMMCA Secretariat is a proper strategy to strengthen the link with the Council and, as a result, with SICA.

- C. **Positioning information on gender and economics** in different governmental and private entities by disseminating the Program's publications at forums and other informative events has been one of WEA's most successful strategies. People are becoming familiar with topics such as productive and reproductive work, dignified employment, critical budget analysis, gender-responsive statistics, among others, breaking several myths on traditional concepts that gender is solely a rights movement. Different sectors of society are already knowledgeable in several topics.

Additional effort is required in the case of other topics because paradigms must be broken so the comprehensive nature of human being can be visualized, what is economic must be reconciled with what is social, and structural challenges related to gender identity, human rights, and development with equity must be overcome.

The task of disseminating and socializing information on gender and economics has been favored by factors such as the following: (i) the increasing presence of WEA collaborators that represent governmental entities facilitates the sharing of information on events, publications, and other topics; as these collaborators become knowledgeable in these themes, they begin to play a role as information multipliers; (ii) the careful selection of target groups to socialize the topics addressed in the publications, together with the reputation of WEA/UNIFEM/UNDP in gender research, ensures the success of calls for publications as well as forums and workshops¹⁵⁸; (iii) the presence of the WEA focal point at National Mechanisms for Women Empowerment in every country is an important element for information dissemination for women's organizations and governmental entities hosting the National Mechanism for Women.

Nevertheless, despite the success of this strategy of oral dissemination, many individuals told the ET that an information system was needed where the summary of all WEA publications could be easily accessed by digital means. This important need should be quickly attended and corrective measures should be taken. A web site should be created that allows a greater dissemination of and access to Program publications, study results, and strategies for building a women's economic agenda.

¹⁵⁸ "We received a CD that contained research results and we use this information here." Declaration of an official of the Secretariat of Finance of the Government of Honduras.

Regarding **best practices**, the ET established causality relationships for several of the Program's successful activities to illustrate how desired outcomes are being achieved and, as a result, established objectives.

Two cases identified during the evaluation are described below. Both comply with the following key criteria: innovation and creativity; replicability; sustainability; cooperation/partnerships; effectiveness/impact; and efficiency. A simple exercise was carried out that consisted in recording the key causality factors observed.

This exercise does not aim to be a comprehensive analysis of the chain of results of the Program, which is beyond the scope of this evaluation. It simply attempts to illustrate the logical sequence of inputs, activities, and actions that can give rise to successful outcomes and whose processes could be adapted for application in other contexts, using the 'causal chain' logic.

Best practices help capitalize experiences to not only maintain and increase effectiveness and efficiency, but also promote innovation. The ET recommends that, for the rest of the Program, these practices should be systematized as part of the global monitoring and feedback system recommended in Chapter 11 of this report.

Case 1. Chain of outcomes of the WEA-UNIDO alliance for training in business networks¹⁵⁹		
Inputs - Activities - Actions	Outcome-outputs	Key causality factors
a. WEA-UNIDO form an alliance to incorporate the gender approach into training manuals for the business networks hosted by UNIDO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-institutional agreement to modify UNIDO manuals, with the support of the WEA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations get to know each other. • Offer of support.
b. The gender approach is being incorporated into training materials, with the technical support of the WEA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training manuals with a gender approach incorporated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility; professional support; sharing of information on the topic.
c. A new course, with a modified curriculum, is scheduled and the WEA offers scholarships to selected individuals of the entities participating in the Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of group of participants committed to the topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good selection of individuals receiving scholarships. • Individual and organizational interest.
d. The participants selected for the course include two facilitators of FUMDEC Programs in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. Both sign letters of commitment, endorsed by the Director of FUMDEC, to replicate the knowledge acquired at their institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participation of staff members of a partner institution is financed and they accept the commitment to share the knowledge acquired. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement of the Director of the organization. • Personal and organizational commitment.

¹⁵⁹ Prepared based on interviews with UNIDO and FUMDEC staff members.

Women and Community Economic Development Foundation (FUMDEC)

An organization that promotes the political, social, and economic empowerment of women in Nicaragua. Its mission is to help rural women fully enjoy their citizenship showing economic, political, and social leadership, accompanying learning and gender sensibilization processes; and facilitating the access, use, and control of credit facilities; technical assistance, and entrepreneurial advisory services.

<p>e. FUMDEC incorporates the knowledge acquired into its programs of accompaniment of the rural women to strengthen their leadership as citizens in political spaces and in the economic scenario.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FUMDEC’s training activities are strengthened with a better understanding of business networks. • Methods of accompaniment to rural business women are streamlined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The knowledge acquired is aligned with the mission and activities of the recipient organization.
<p>f. As a final output of the chain, a rural business network is formed to apply the knowledge acquired. A leader trained by FUMDEC in its business training programs will be appointed to manage the network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business network formed to benefit from the economies of scale and the knowledge derived from joint activities and improved communication with other networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous support provided to establish the network. • Communication with other people carrying out similar processes.
<p>g. The newly formed Network will be linked to other networks that result from the UNIDO course to obtain economies of scale as well as more information and communication on their activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural business women trained in business networks obtain economies of scale and improve their income. With the chain of outcomes described herein, it can be stated that the WEA comes closer to its vision of economic empowerment of Central American women and their full enjoyment of their rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous monitoring to the process; accountability. • Dissemination of results for replication elsewhere.

Case 2. Chain of outputs to incorporate the gender approach into Honduras's National Plan for Dignified Employment¹⁶⁰		
Inputs - Activities - Actions	Outcomes - Outputs	Key causality factors
a. A professional team of 3 men of the Secretary of Employment and Social Security Secretariat prepares the first draft of the National Plan for Dignified Employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of Plan ready for review and comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in having a policy tool to guarantee “dignified employment” for Honduran citizens. • Positioning of the issue nationwide, both as concept and as policy.
b. The first observation made regarding the draft version is the lack of a gender perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal review that triggers gender-related observations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of gender previously acquired by those commenting on the draft version of plan; awareness on the need to incorporate a gender perspective into public policies.
c. INAM is contacted. Work on gender issues has been done previously the Institute.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus regarding technical assistance to mainstream gender in the policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-institutional collaboration between two governmental entities.
d. The WEA focal point in INAM plays a leading role in the organization of workshop with several sectors of society to discuss the Plan for Dignified Employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop celebrated with a high level of participation of individuals from the civil society, the academic community, and the Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power to enlist support to take the discussion of the draft version of the Plan before different sectors. • Change in the mentality of the authors of the proposal to receive guidance on how to incorporate a gender perspective into the Plan. • Good understanding of the topic to make substantial contributions to the Plan during the workshop.
e. As an outcome of the workshop, the commitment develops to obtain additional specialized resources to continue with the incorporation of gender equality into the Plan, specifically in the area of indicators as operational tool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized consultancy to incorporate gender indicators to the Plan rendered to the Ministry (Cristina Fabrek–ACDI) in terms of level of participation of women in open unemployment; underemployment (visible and invisible); juvenile employment (boys, girls, young people, women, and men); vocational training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of proficiency in the topic. • Facilitation skills to manage the incorporation of changes and additions to the Plan. • Reputation of the consultant. • Resources for consultancy. • Visible added value.
f. Reviewed document delivered to INAM for validation (current status).	<p><u>IN PROCESS (to September 2008)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validation of indicators by INAM. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good monitoring system. • Compliance of the timetable. • Advisory services of the WEA focal point at INAM to achieve a high-quality professional contribution in the review of indicators.

¹⁶⁰ Prepared based on an interview with Mr. Juan Carlos Funez, Coordinator of the Technical Unit of the National Plan for the Generation of Dignified Employment; Secretariat of Work and Social Security, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 8 October 2008.

<p>g. <u>IN PROCESS</u> Phases to complete the cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous monitoring to validation; timetable. • Approval of legal framework. • Implementation of Plan. 	<p><u>IN PROCESS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan validated by INAM and its legal framework approved by the Ministry. • Socialization of the Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active role of a “Champion” within the Secretariat of Employment that directs the process until the Plan is completely operational in the territories. • Monitoring, follow-up, and evaluation mechanisms of the process in place. • Effective project management; institutionality of the Plan. • Resources available to make the Plan operational.
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15. Findings and Conclusions

- **The WEA is an innovative program, with great potential for generating changes to correct the gender-based inequalities existing in Central America** and to contribute to the advancement of women in the region. Most women's organizations and governmental entities implementing pro-women public policies have prioritized the social agenda but not the economic agenda. In this regard, this Program is innovative because it seeks to influence public policies oriented toward economic development, the promotion of women's economic autonomy based on their productive work, and the reduction of the gender gap in this area.
- **The Program's general strategic statement is practical and partially innovative.** It opens up a new field of work for UNIFEM that involves influencing policies in terms of gender equality and reducing the asymmetries in the distribution of the benefits of economic production.
- **PRODOC's logical framework does not fully meet UNIFEM standards.** The use of several categories is not clear and no explicit indicators are given. Significant gaps are found in the chain of results, especially because Program outputs are not defined in relation to the expected outcomes of political incidence. As a result, there is no evidence that the consistency between available resources and expected outputs was analyzed when designing the Program. Based on the above, Program evaluability based on the PRODOC was poor.
- Overall, the Program is **relevant to UNIFEM's mandate and current strategic plan.** The only breach of importance identified was the lack of specific approaches for those countries currently undergoing peace-building processes and for addressing intercultural and multi-ethnic problems. These approaches should correspond to the specific situation of most Central American women (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua).
- **The Program's relevance and importance are satisfactory in relation to the mandate, objectives, and strategies of partner organizations and beneficiaries.** Based on the documentary review and on the results of interviews and surveys that formed part of this evaluation, it is perceived that the actions of the WEA do serve the real economic needs of women, primarily at the country level. However, the Program's relevance can be increased in the case of civil society organizations as well as at the regional level.
- Phase II of the Program has implemented **an effective system of collegiate direction between sectors of the government, civil society, academic community, and private sector, together with international cooperation agencies**, whereby these sectors come together in a space for discussion and launching of initiatives that combine social and economic approaches to reduce gender-based inequalities in the field of economics, with a high level of participation and appropriation. This mechanism of collegiate direction is facilitating the entrance into governmental entities, civil society organizations, the academic community, and international cooperation agencies, creating the synergies necessary to guarantee advances toward the goal of women's economic autonomy.

- **Program effectiveness is, in general terms, satisfactory**, more than satisfactory in the case of the objective related to spaces for dialogue, and unsatisfactory in the case of the objective of incorporating the women's economic agenda into national and regional economic agendas.
- Despite the good positioning of the topic of Gender and Economics, the Program is far from achieving the **objective of incorporating the women's economic agenda into regional and national economic agendas**. To achieve this objective there have been identifiable successes and notable advances in research and training as well as in statistics. But greater coherence is needed between the different activities carried out by the WEA, and greater advantage must be taken of the different national experiences so that these can be replicated in other countries, accelerating the advances made toward achieving such a crucial objective as this one. **The objective put forth in the PRODOC is probably overdimensioned** regarding the possibilities of the Program to influence regulatory and public frameworks of maximum national and regional importance.
- During the Program's short life span, several public and private entities have gotten in touch with the Agenda (or with the Mechanisms for Women in each country, where focal points for the WEA are located) in search of support to incorporate a gender perspective into diverse initiatives. Women's organizations, in particular, find support in the WEA as a provider of statistics and accompaniment to endorse their struggles. In this regard, **several actors recognized the WEA as an opportunity to generate and disseminate ideas on Gender and Economics** in Central America, especially among the civil society.
- Phase I of the WEA was effective in producing publications and other documents of rigorous research on Gender and Economics in the region. Although their dissemination to the general public has been a bit slow and little systematized during Phase II, the institutional credibility that has resulted has been good in terms of WEA's prestige as knowledge generator. Safeguarded by UNIFEM and UNDP's good image, the WEA has made way in outreach activities before public and private entities.
- The WEA **has implemented several mechanisms to influence policies**, strengthening women's organizations in their activities of mobilization and negotiation to achieve economic autonomy; supporting academic institutions to strengthen their educational capacities, and implementing several mechanisms of political influence. However, **greater systematization of the efforts of political influence** is needed to have guidelines to build the framework of policies that will help mitigate and eliminate gender-based inequalities and promote women's autonomy.
- The ET gathered elements that indicate that several individuals of the WEA and informed actors **opine that the Program produces numerous documents, but has not showed the capacity to disseminate them effectively**. Some of them recommend that the production of documents be suspended temporarily and that efforts be better focused on building informed positions through formation processes, sensitization events, and discussion forums.
- Regarding training activities, the ET found that the comments on courses, workshops, and seminars offered by the WEA were, in general, positive. The careful selection of participants by the WEA, based on potential of each individual to subsequently multiply the knowledge at his/her institution, was highlighted as well as the fact that all selections were endorsed by a letter of commitment signed by the director of each institution.

- **WEA's organizational structure is operating satisfactorily.** Its strategic design, with a Regional Executive Committee formed by people knowledgeable on the topic and with the capacity to influence policies, and an Advisory Committee that serves as mechanism of monitoring and feedback to the Program, grants the WEA a unique character and a high added value seldom seen in development projects or programs. The existence of the national tripartite decision-making mechanisms (government, civil society, and the academic community) and the thematic committees complement the structure very well.
- **Process management at the country level is good** in countries where the WEA operates. Flexibility and creativity are observed in problem-solving and fund raising, and the small working groups are characterized as being highly motivated, actively contributing to results, and highly committed to knowledge generation/dissemination and the accompaniment of WEA processes in each country.
- However, **the linking of what is regional with what is national to effectively focus actions around the Program's regional objectives was observed to be poor.** Except for the joint initiatives carried out by countries, sometimes voluntarily, the link between regional processes is weak and this affects their coherence. The exceptions are the academic networks and the networks of women in resistance promoted by the WEA, where the connection between the national and the regional levels is indeed observed.
- Regarding the communication of the WEA with countries, planning workshops or video conferences—considered by most as the best way to share knowledge with colleagues in other countries—are sporadic and do not meet the objective of having a dynamic system of permanent communication among themselves. The supportive role of the regional adviser has been insufficient to achieve the cohesion of processes and activities among countries.
- **The ET ranks the management of the Program and its activities as moderately satisfactory.** Several management issues analyzed during the mid-term evaluation and that program participants mentioned that could be improved include the following: (i) the linking between what is regional and what is national is not visible nor is it perceived by most actors; (ii) monitoring and control systems are very weak; (iii) the production of publications continues to be very active, but there is no prioritization of publications nor have the results of materials published in Phase I been diffused systematically.
- **There are contradictory opinions regarding the ranking of administrative management under the WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP agreement.** Administrative delays are reported in some countries, mainly in the payments to service providers, which were attributed to the system of receiving funds from the donor. However, the general perception of the interviewees is that **the joint program provides an efficient platform for executing the WEA and allows procedures to be rapid and effective.** There is an overall consensus that the synergy WEA-UNIFEM/UNDP has managed to build a unified image to position the Women's Economic Agenda. It is acknowledged that politicians, enterprises, and the civil society respond more favorably to the WEA proposal once they find out that the United Nations endorses the Program.
- **The contracting of a good professional paid by the WEA to serve as focal point in the Mechanisms for Women Empowerment in each country, through a signed agreement, has**

been a success. These individuals are incorporated into the daily activities of the Mechanism, while they continue to participate in WEA activities. This bridge is very important for the development of strategies and initiatives, and lays the foundation for the appropriation of knowledge transmitted by the Program and for its strategy of building the capacities of organizations to influence policies.

16. Recommendations

Phase II of the WEA will conclude in June 2010. Based on the innovative nature of the Program, the achievements already reached that are documented herein, and the time needed so that the outcomes are settled in target institutions, the ET recommends that **a Phase III of the Program be planned and funded.** In our opinion, bringing this initiative to a close after Phase II would compromise the successful outcome of processes that require more time and extended accompaniment.

Regarding UNIFEM's mission in Central America, the concept behind the WEA is of such relevance that the ET recommends that the Fund **secure, as soon as possible, the funding of Phase III, investing also its own resources and, if necessary, those of other donors.**

In view of the weaknesses observed during Phase II, especially those regarding the design, monitoring system, and operational planning, in case a Phase III of the Program would be financed, the ET recommends alternatively to begin its planning in early 2009. This way a new project document would be ready by June 2009, formally establishing a strategic monitoring, planning, and feedback system. **The term of Phase II could be cut short to give initiation to Phase III from June 2009 to 2012.** This would strengthen the concept of the Program and, particularly, its operational relationships. The weaknesses observed during this evaluation could also be corrected early on and a more appropriate timeline defined.

It is not, however, within the scope of the ET to build feasibility scenarios in this regard. We therefore present our main recommendations, classified into two groups: (a) those applicable in case the Program is definitively terminated after Phase II, as currently planned; and (b) those aiming to contribute to the design and operational organization of Phase III. Finally, a series of general recommendations, directed to UNIFEM, are included, based on the findings of this mid-term evaluation of the Program.

Recommendations in case of the definitive termination of the WEA in 2010

A. Program reformulation and planning

It is recommended to reformulate the program's design and strategy through a **participatory system of operational planning** carried out coherently with a regional program, respecting the peculiarities of each country, and allocating resources equitably to all of them. The planning system proposed should aim to:

- ✓ Update the PRODOC, with **conceptual frameworks and clear methodological proposals.** The document should be translated into Spanish to ensure its socialization among all program participants, indicating the changes that have occurred since the onset of WEA Phase II.

- ✓ Given the complex nature of the WEA, use a combination of planning by results (logical framework) and planning by processes, based on a methodology that identifies and ranks actors or direct partners of the Program. The **mapping of actors** is recommended to identify strategies for each group.
- ✓ **Review Annual Operational Plans to adjust them to measurable results, consonant with the four areas of expected results.**
- ✓ Design a simple, easy-to-use **monitoring and evaluation system** that shows Program **outcomes** and provides clear indicators for monitoring the advances made.
- ✓ **Design the Program's phase-out strategy**, highlighting those actions of appropriation, incidence, and capacity building that will ensure the sustainability of the Women's Economic Agenda after the Program culminates in 2010.

B. Program structure, organization, and management

To begin with, the functions of the regional headquarters of UNIFEM-Mexico and the regional coordination of the WEA in Nicaragua should be clearly defined. UNDP payment procedures regarding the Program should be standardized and made easy, and the assignment of functions to WEA-UNIFEM staff at all headquarters should be assessed to redistribute tasks. An effort must be made to manage the process of publishing, disseminating, and socializing publications more effectively and the **dissemination of knowledge, rather than its generation**, should be prioritized.

It is recommended to **continue assigning the leadership in thematic areas to different countries** and, in those cases where local resources are available and means propitious, co-leadership should be promoted to ensure that program activities are successfully carried out, within WEA objectives.

Reformulate the Terms of Reference of the Adviser to the Regional Coordination. This person should provide support to WEA headquarters in the different countries, with a mandate to link these national efforts with that at the regional level. The profile of the person occupying this position should be more managerial-oriented and she-he should serve as liaison between country initiatives. Her-his functions should be fully aligned with a clear managerial strategy of the Regional Coordination.

The **Advisory Committee** is composed by individuals of notable experience and credibility in different sectors and disciplines, and therefore could exert notable influence on the Program's performance. This **management tool could be strengthened** to further increase its effect on Program results and impacts. The Committee currently meets every two years, so it is recommended that the periodicity of its meetings increase and to establish other mechanisms of political support from its members.

The establishment and plans of the thematic working groups in each country should be examined in greater detail **so as not to fall into complex organizational systems** with low added value for the Program. The activities of the work committees should correspond to specific projects included in the WEA plans for the country, with margins of action to include new projects or respond to specific

demands of counterpart entities, but always with a very specific operational structure to guarantee its effectiveness.

C. Knowledge management

The **WEA urgently requires a knowledge management (KM) system** that maximizes the use of available Information and Communication Tools (ICTs) and includes a database of its publications and other pertinent documentation, periodic bulletins, forums, and video conferences, using an aggressive telecommunications strategy.

The EE recommends that the following issues be taken into account when designing the KM strategy for WEA-UNIFEM:

- ✓ Create a web page for the WEA (with the corresponding links to the UNIFEM Web Site) to centralize all strategies of generation and dissemination of ideas, information, and knowledge.
- ✓ Generate a toolbox of basic concepts and relevant statistical information on Gender and Economics in the region, which decision makers can use in their analyses; promote WEA as a rapid source of information and documentation on basic issues relevant to Gender and Economics.
- ✓ Devise messages that attract the interest of different audiences and create awareness on the main economic problems faced by women; simplify the terminology used in Gender and Economics issues so that it can be better understood by different audiences.
- ✓ Create an electronic newsletter with a very well planned mailing list to reach target audiences.
- ✓ Draw lessons from successful WEA knowledge sharing events and strategies for subsequent systematization and adaptation to other contexts.
- ✓ Use other KM strategies to share knowledge, for example virtual forums, directories of experts, repositories of referenced documents, “*World Café*”, knowledge fairs, and so forth.

D. Political incidence

The **operational concept of the civil society** should be reviewed to make it more inclusive, linked to the fact that the WEA plays a complementary economic and supportive role in topics related to gender and human rights, defended by gender activism. In addition to supporting and linking women’s organizations to the WEA, the ET proposes **to invite other civil society organizations, such as work unions, chambers of commerce, professional associations, and commercial networks.**

To guarantee that the role played by the **WEA Focal Point in the National Mechanisms for Women** is one of influence and appropriation of the methods and practices of Gender and Economics promoted by the Program, very clear guidelines should be established regarding the participation of said Focal Point in the plans and activities of the Mechanism in each country, maintaining the flexibility that this figure has had to date to adapt to the demands of each Mechanism as well as to the political context of each country. It is also recommended that the practice of signing an inter-institutional agreement that endorses the designation of the person to the Mechanism, now in place in several countries, should be continued.

In view of the technical support provided by the WEA to **COMMCA, this should be consolidated as an instrument of reciprocal support for the Program.** It is recommended that the WEA

establish agreements with the COMMCA so that the Program's strategic statements can be launched through the Council to the Central American Council of Ministers of Economy.

E. Strengthening of institutional, governmental, and nongovernmental capacities

Regarding ongoing training in Gender and Economics, it is recommended:

- ✓ **Give continuity to the work carried out with the academic community** to systematically reinforce the knowledge related to Gender and Economics at educational centers and from these to governmental and nongovernmental organizations and the society in general.
- ✓ **Create a database of trainees in Gender and Economics** since Phase I of the Program, at both governmental and nongovernmental levels, within Central American countries and in the region as a whole. The database will help make better use of this human resource to increase the awareness on this topic, as well as to identify those sectors where the WEA has had greater incidence to streamline processes.
- ✓ From a gender-equality perspective, the ET recommends gradually **integrating a larger number of men and women not knowledgeable in the topic of Gender and Economics** in the training events facilitated by the WEA.
- ✓ **Establish commitments with the staff of the WEA and partner organizations** participating in specialized courses, studies, and training courses regarding the sharing of the knowledge acquired during these events and its subsequent incorporation into their work plans. This strategy can be institutionalized by the signing of a letter of commitment.

Within the framework of building institutional capacities, it is recommended to:

- ✓ **Map institutions and organizations knowledgeable in the topic** to give continuity to the strategy through the continuous formation of actors.
- ✓ **Promote the Equity Seal within the region.** The interrelationship that stems from the relationship between UNIFEM-UNDP-WEA-National Mechanisms (in many countries still vague) is, in itself, a strategy to ensure the sustainability of institutional strengthening endeavors, provided that this recognition to public organizations and private entities developing a gender management system responds to clear standards that can be continually revised and monitored by the National Mechanisms.
- ✓ Promote the establishment of the **Regional Observatory of Gender and Economics** in one of the countries of the Program. The Observatory would grant continuity to the processes already initiated.

Recommendations in case of approval of Phase III of the WEA

A. Formulation of the Program strategy

Planning, monitoring, and evaluation techniques that take into consideration maps of power or relationships as well as measurements of behavioral changes are recommended because the WEA is a program that basically seeks changes in the ways of thinking and attitudes of economic agents and the society in general.

The substantive appropriation of knowledge is a slow process. Short-, medium-, and long-term indicators of appropriation should be established to compete with immediacy, and strategies should

be used that bring together the academic community, the media, and other means of mass communication such as **learning networks** and **communities of practice**.

B. Knowledge management

As indicated previously, a program such as the WEA should be based on a solid KM strategy. Phase III should be characterized by a KM system that effectively disseminate concepts on Gender and Economics that underlie the positioning of the WEA within national economic agendas. A practical and user-friendly system is needed that facilitates the flow of information and new knowledge generated by the Program, while serving as discussion forum of current issues related to Gender and Economics in the region, using modern ICTs.

C. Political incidence

The Program has already initiated an effective process to penetrate civil, economic, and governmental entities with documentation on Gender and Economics that serves as basis for influencing public policies regarding gender equity. Phase III of the Project should take advantage of the achievements made so far to build a structured strategy to influence policies, based on knowledge appropriation and capacity building, as indicated in point D of previous section.

D. Strengthening of institutional, governmental, and nongovernmental capacities

The recommendations for this section are the same as those given in point E above, in case the Program will definitely culminate in 2010.

General recommendations for UNIFEM

Based on several findings of this mid-term external evaluation of the WEA regarding project design, operational planning, implementation, organization, monitoring of operational strategies, and feedback mechanisms, the ET recommends that UNIFEM:

- (i) Improve the process of project and program formulation, paying special attention to the following aspects:
 - ✓ Use commonly accepted concepts and terminologies so that project documents can effectively guide operational planning and execution, especially regarding the chain of results—from outputs to expected impact—and the establishment of a simple, feasible, and effective monitoring system.
 - ✓ Increase the participation of UNIFEM staff in project and program formulation and feedback so that the lessons learned and best practices of other initiatives can serve as input in the designing of new initiatives.
- (ii) Improve the interrelationship of the different actors involved in the initiative (headquarters, regional office, regional focal points, and national teams) so that operations run more smoothly and respond better to UNIFEM's global institutional strategy for the region. It will also be necessary to improve the levels of collaboration and coordination between various UNIFEM initiatives carried out in the same countries, on related topics, and with the same counterpart entities and partner organizations. The ET found that it is necessary to strengthen

a sole regional channel that respects the particularities of each country while ensuring strategic and operational coherence.

- (iii) The incidence on public policies and the reinforcement of the capacity of actors of the civil society to interact with state entities is fundamental not only for the WEA but also for most actions carried out by UNIFEM both in Central America and worldwide. A thematic evaluation of the experiences of political incidence of all UNIFEM initiatives in the region should be conducted to: (a) systematize the main lessons learned and the best practices; (b) define operational possibilities that allow political incidence; and (c) propose *ad hoc* evaluative tools capable of rigorously representing the outcomes and impact on this field.

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