



CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO  
**WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT BY  
ADVANCING GENDER-RESPONSIVE LAWS,  
FRAMEWORKS, POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIPS**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES). The IES team included Tara Kaul, Evaluation Specialist as Team Leader with support from the Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service, Inga Sniukaite; Susanne Turrall, Senior Evaluation Consultant; Soo Yeon Kim, Evaluation Analyst and Anita Hasni Mohammad, Research Assistant.

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## EVALUATION TEAM:

**Inga Sniukaite**, Chief, UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

**Tara Kaul**, Evaluation Specialist and Team Leader

**Susanne Turrall**, Senior Evaluation Consultant

**Soo Yeon Kim**, Evaluation Analyst

**Anita Hasni Mohammad**, Research Assistant

## EVALUATION MANAGEMENT:

UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS)

**Inga Sniukaite**, Chief, UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

**Lisa Sutton**, Director, UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS)

Design and layout: **Yamrote A. Haileselassie**

Copy-editing: **Catherine Simes**

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# **WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT BY ADVANCING GENDER-RESPONSIVE LAWS, FRAMEWORKS, POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIPS**



**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS)**

Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

UN WOMEN

*New York, March 2023*

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# ACRONYMS

<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>EE</b>	Economic Empowerment
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>IEAS</b>	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
<b>IES</b>	Independent Evaluation Service
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IRRF</b>	Integrated Resource and Results Framework
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunications Union
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>RMS</b>	Results Management System
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNCDF</b>	United Nations Capital Development Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNGC</b>	United Nations Global Compact
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>WEE</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

# FOREWORD

Following more than two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy continues to suffer from a series of economic shocks due to regional conflicts and increasingly severe environmental challenges and climate-related disasters. Higher-than-expected inflation in many parts of the world is triggering a tightening of global financial conditions, and policy discussions and responses have yet to sufficiently take gender equality perspectives into account. This evaluation offers a retrospective look at UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships during the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 period, as well as a forward-looking view that can be leveraged as implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 gets underway.

UN Women's work on women's economic empowerment has a broad and ambitious mandate (responding to 8 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals) and aims to strengthen women's economic rights and respond to pressing global needs across multiple sub-thematic areas. The sub-thematic areas cover crucial areas of the economy including macroeconomics, decent work, the care economy, social protection, gender-responsive budgeting, migration, land rights, women's empowerment principles and sustainable development. Moreover, UN Women plays a key role as convener on several women's economic empowerment agendas and has been called on to lead and/or represent women through memberships in groups such as the Global Alliance for Care, Equal Pay International Coalition, UN Network on Migration and Generation Equality Action Coalitions, among others.

This evaluation found that UN Women continues to have a comparative advantage in normative work and in facilitating policy dialogues and also maintains a good approach to building partnerships. UN Women's work in this area is aligned with regional and national priorities, but the entity should plan to adapt to new and emerging priority policy areas.

The Entity has exceeded or close to achieved its targets in several sub-thematic areas and case studies revealed substantial efforts have been made along the pathway to policy change. However, there is scope to improve and harmonize reporting and tracking results along the pathway to policy change. UN Women has made key contributions in generating research and evidence to inform WEE debates and support policy dialogue and development. Financial and human resources are significant challenges for UN Women in this area of work. UN Women's approach to WEE incorporates the principles of Leave No One Behind, but there is room to improve the intersectional approach.

The evaluation outlines six strategic recommendations with actionable steps to support UN Women as it undertakes development of a WEE strategy and moves forward with implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, including three Signature Initiatives related to WEE, and beyond.

It will be critical for UN Women to continue supporting the global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE across sub-thematic areas and to advocate for gender-responsive approaches in emerging priority policy areas, including climate change. UN Women's strategy on WEE should include a progressive global framework on women's economic empowerment, develop a cross-sectoral approach and also review internal capacities to ensure adequacy of resources. There is also an opportunity for UN Women to review and formalize its roles and responsibilities of WEE personnel at headquarters, regional and country offices and to systematize its approach to partnerships for WEE. In terms of sustainability, UN Women should work to address structural barriers, support governments on implementation and monitoring of WEE related policies, and strengthen complementary work on social norms change.



**Lisa Sutton**

*Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT BY ADVANCING GENDER-RESPONSIVE LAWS, FRAMEWORKS, POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women's contribution to the economic empowerment of women by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships. The corporate thematic evaluation was conducted by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS). The evaluation was initiated in February 2022 and will be presented to the UN Women Executive Board during its Annual Session in June 2023.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment (WEE) by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships and to capture notable practices to inform UN Women's strategies and implementation.

The thematic scope covers UN Women's entire WEE portfolio, with particular focus on sub-thematic areas where there is a stronger emphasis on laws, frameworks and policy strengthening. The geographical scope includes UN Women's work globally and across all regions.

This evaluation covers the period from January 2018 to June 2022, which includes the entirety of the previous Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the first two quarters of the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The evaluation includes both a retrospective view of results achieved and forward-looking insights to support implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, senior management and programme personnel. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors directly working on, or with an interest in, WEE including civil society organizations (CSOs), UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and development partners.

## KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS



To what extent is UN Women's work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for WEE **aligned with global normative frameworks, priority policy areas, and the needs of beneficiaries?**



To what extent is UN Women's work in WEE **coherent with the work of partners and other key thematic areas?** How effectively does UN Women leverage its integrated mandate?



To what extent have UN Women's efforts in this area led to **demonstrable impact/outcomes?** What metrics exist to measure progress?



What efforts have been made to ensure **efficiency of programming and sustainability of benefits and efforts** in this area?



To what degree are **human rights, leave no one behind** – including **disability inclusion** and **gender equality** – principles integrated in this area of work?

## EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation team adopted a theory-based approach, drawing on various methodologies for measuring policy influence and contribution analysis. This involved developing a conceptual framework on the role of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies in bringing about change within individuals in the context of economic empowerment that considers the multi-dimensional aspects of WEE. Contribution analysis was used to assess how changes were achieved at different levels and to compare the reality of UN Women's work on WEE in various contexts against a theory of change.

Both primary and secondary data sources were consulted to gather evidence to address the questions developed for this evaluation.

The evaluation team adopted a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach, in alignment with the UN Women Evaluation Policy, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Ethical Guidelines, the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System and the recent UNEG Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluation.

## SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION



### 83 STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured & mostly virtual  
Internal\* (38 female, 11 male)  
External\*\* (23 female, 11 male)



### 300+ DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Desk review, synthesis & portfolio analysis of work plans, evaluations, project documents, reports, etc.



### MIXED-METHODS DATA

Qualitative & quantitative data collected & triangulated  
Sourced from ATLAS, DAMs, RMS, OneApp



### 10 CASE STUDIES

8 country case studies (with regional representation) and 2 global case studies



### 2 ONLINE SURVEYS

UN Women personnel  
(n = 90/309; 29% response rate)  
UN Women's partners  
(n = 38/128; 29% response rate)



### 2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus group discussions with ministry representatives & CSOs while on mission in Kenya

\* Internal stakeholders from UN Women Headquarters (n=19), Regional Offices (n=5) and Country Offices (n=24)

\*\* External stakeholders from Academia/Think tanks (n=2), Beneficiary Representatives (n=3), CSOs/NGOs (n=7), Donors (n=2), IFIs (n=1), National/Sub-national Government (n=9), Private Sector (n=1), UN system (n=6)

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

## KEY CONCLUSIONS

**1 UN Women has clear and well acknowledged comparative advantages in normative work and facilitating policy dialogues, including through key intergovernmental processes, related to WEE. National (and regional priorities) inform WEE programming and are responsive to changing contexts, for example the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is scope to proactively plan for the need to adapt to current and emerging priority policy areas, such as climate change, the cost-of-living crisis, macroeconomic stagnation and the impact of ongoing conflicts.**

UN Women has successfully contributed to alignment in global norms, policies and standards for women's economic rights and autonomy. The Entity has facilitated policy dialogues and advocated for alignment with normative frameworks related to WEE through key inter-governmental processes, such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

As first noted in the 2014 corporate thematic evaluation on WEE, UN Women has continued to make significant contributions to global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE. Policy and normative work related to WEE remains one of UN Women's comparative advantages and the Entity has facilitated the engagement of CSOs in global intergovernmental policy processes.

In addition to the priority policy areas identified in Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and corresponding Strategic Notes, UN Women played a successful role in highlighting the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on WEE. At regional and country levels, UN Women's work has been adapted to focus on contextually relevant sub-thematic areas within WEE. Where it has successfully aligned with national priorities, UN Women has been able to capitalize on strategic opportunities and develop close relationships with governments to facilitate implementation of gender-responsive policies.



The current economic and political context encompasses rising inequalities and economic exclusion, protracted conflict and humanitarian emergencies, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change. While needs assessments and national and regional priorities inform UN Women's WEE programming, there is scope for further flexibility in adapting to changing contexts at the field level.

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**2 UN Women works effectively to build consensus and facilitate a coherent voice within global policy dialogues on WEE. While UN Women's approach to partnerships on WEE is generally sound and tailored to the operating context, engagement with international financial institutions on WEE-related policies could be further strengthened.**

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Within its work at global, regional and country levels, UN Women partners with a range of stakeholders including governments, other UN agencies, think tanks, CSOs and the private sector. While there is no stand-alone WEE partnership strategy, UN Women's partnering approach to WEE is often appropriate and sound, facilitated by formal multi-stakeholder planning systems (such as the UN Sustainable Development Group). UN Women also engages in a context-specific way, partnering and 'filling gaps' as needed with other operating partners.

UN Women works effectively in building consensus on WEE issues across multiple stakeholder groups (e.g. care, social protection, migration actors) and in facilitating a 'coherent' voice within global policy dialogues. This consensus is often then translated into regional and national coordination work, to align regional and country partners with global norms and standards. The Entity promotes coherence and coordination on WEE within the UN system, working across a range of relevant agencies and tapping into relevant economic expertise where possible. While much of the work is complementary and improves efficiency, there are cases where partnerships for WEE are underutilized.

There is a need to ensure that engagement with international financial institutions (and other global actors) on issues related to WEE is coherent with UN Women's overall strategy for cross-sectoral and thematic engagement with such institutions, and builds on existing engagements in the areas of gender data and public finance. While mainstreaming gender in macro-economic debates is recognized by many stakeholders as a key area of work, there is also concern about insufficient capacity to engage effectively on these issues. The recent move of engagement with international financial institutions work to the Economic Empowerment (EE) section and linking the EE section with the Financing for Gender Equality hub, are positive steps in having the appropriate internal architecture in place to strengthen work with international financial institutions.

UN Women's scope to work on multiple levels and optimize the interlinkages of the integrated mandate is a comparative strength that has yet to be consistently realized. There are examples where programmes have not been designed to utilize this strength and work is focused more on 'downstream' operational efforts, without engaging in relevant policies. There is also evidence where policy engagement is strong, but lacks a systematized approach to engaging CSOs and women's movements within policy processes.

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**3 The lack of a WEE strategy and managerial vacancies have impacted the direction of UN Women's work on WEE, the efficiency of internal architecture and personnel. While there has been substantial progress in various WEE sub-thematic areas, the absence of a specific overarching organizing framework for WEE has hindered coherence. The recent appointment of a Chief of EE and current development of a strategy provides an opportunity to strengthen the strategic focus and organization of UN Women's work on WEE, including more proactive and systematic cross-thematic linkages.**

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During the period under review, the EE section experienced multiple vacancies among the senior leadership team, in particular, a long vacancy in the post of Chief. The lack of substantive leadership has had an impact on the direction of the EE section, its internal architecture and personnel.

As a section, EE has a broad and ambitious mandate (responding to eight Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]) and aims to strengthen women's economic rights and respond to pressing global needs across multiple sub-thematic areas. While the separate sub-sections have made significant progress against their objectives (discussed further in Conclusion 4), it has been in the absence of overarching WEE strategic guidance for some time.

The appointment of the Chief of EE in 2022, and the current development of a strategy on WEE, provides an opportunity for the EE section to take stock and reflect on its strategic direction; consider where it has the potential to make the most transformative impact within its limited resources; and analyse whether it has the appropriate skills to advance. Fostering internal coherence and a shared sense of identity is an important element of this.

Engagement with other thematic areas is apparent and organic at the country level; however, there is no explicit vision or system for cross-thematic or integrated approaches.

**4 UN Women’s reporting shows that the Entity has exceeded, or is close to achieving its targets on strengthening gender-responsive WEE policies, including on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems. While there are some inconsistencies in interpretation and results reporting by countries, evidence collected from case studies shows significant contribution through constructive and agile engagement within the policy change process. There is limited monitoring of the impact of policy change on the lives of women and girls, which warrants further attention, for accountability purposes and learning and also to strengthen communication of UN Women’s results.**

Changes in policies on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems have led to some progress. However, the reporting of results within UN Women’s results management system (RMS) is inconsistent, showing different interpretations of indicators, which suggests a need to harmonize reporting and provide further guidance in some cases. Case studies confirmed significant efforts have been made along the ‘pathway’ to policy change, often taking several years. UN Women’s role in convening diverse stakeholders, providing technical support, developing evidence-based data and the use of specific policy analysis methodologies, are particularly valued.

While it is highly plausible that the gender-responsive WEE policies and legislative changes in place have had a positive impact, monitoring of how the changes impacted the lives of women and girls is limited.

**5 The proposed Signature Initiatives provide opportunities to work programmatically and scale up activities on global priorities for WEE, by embedding changes in laws, frameworks and policies within wider systemic change. While UN Women is in a position to lead and support on the care economy, decent work, and entrepreneurship at the global level, the Entity needs to strengthen its capacity on climate change if it is to play a supportive role in this area (including in gender-responsive approaches to the transition to green and blue economies and climate-resilient agriculture).**

The proposed Signature Initiatives provide opportunities to work in an enhanced programmatic way within three key areas of WEE, namely transforming the care economy; decent work and entrepreneurship; and women’s climate action and green and blue economies.

UN Women has made significant and pioneering contributions on transforming the care economy around the world, placing the issue on the global agenda, generating evidence and advocating for change.

The Entity is well positioned to continue its leadership role (for instance with the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights and the Global Alliance for Care). UN Women brings significant experience and expertise in research and data, convening and advocacy in this area and in its collaboration with partners including ILO, UNICEF and African Development Bank.

Within UN Women’s work on decent work and entrepreneurship, UN Women will build on the Entity’s substantial body of work on tackling discriminatory norms, laws and policies in both public and private sectors (although analysis of work with the private sector falls beyond the scope of the evaluation). The Entity works with different partners and takes a leading or supportive role dependent on the presence and role of different actors in different contexts. At the country level, UN Women often leads in the area of gender-responsive procurement, both in advocacy and implementation. The Signature Initiative also provides the opportunity to include the rights of migrants to work, as UN Women is one of the few actors bringing a rights-based approach to migration. This Initiative will draw on UN Women’s comparative strengths in convening, research and diagnosis, although a ‘toolkit’ of methodologies and tools that are used in related policy analysis throughout UN Women has yet to be established.

The third proposed Signature Initiative on women’s climate action, green and blue economies is responding to the pressing global need to address the threats and impacts of climate change and environmental destruction, with particular focus on the destruction of livelihoods and markets with disproportionate impact on women, and unequal access to natural resources (including land tenure systems). UN Women plays an important supportive role within the climate change process to ensure a gender-responsive approach, including within green and blue economies. However, as a relatively new significant area, UN Women does not yet have the capacity to successfully support efforts in a consistent way. There is also a need to ensure that climate change work is mainstreamed across the WEE portfolio, as part of a broader organization-wide strategy on climate change.

**6 Financial and human resources are identified as the most significant challenges for UN Women in advancing gender-responsive WEE laws, frameworks and policies. Personnel at all levels are over-extended and take on multiple functional roles. There is a need to improve support across headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices, for example, to support programme management, knowledge management and resource mobilization. While WEE was the least funded thematic area from 2018–2021, the increased planned budget for Strategic Plan 2022–2025 is more commensurate with WEE’s broad mandate.**

Financial and human resources were found to be the most significant challenges in achieving gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies. The resourcing of the EE section was constrained by limited funding during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, with the lowest funding among thematic areas, and declining core funding. The reliance on non-core funding resulted in short-term, project-based resourcing with limited funding suitably dedicated to longer-term policy change processes.

Personnel have been highly pressurized over the period under evaluation, with capacities to work on the broad array of sub-thematic areas highly stretched. WEE personnel take on multiple specialties and multiple roles (e.g. policy analysis, programme management, resource mobilization, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management).

While there are positive examples of coordination across headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices, a systematic approach is lacking and mixed levels of coordination for results persist. There are no clear lines of responsibility for supporting Country Offices in resource mobilization, data generation, sharing policy guidance, tools and methodologies, or knowledge management in the spirit of ‘pivot to the field.’ Limited systematic knowledge management and sharing, specifically risks undermining the utility and value of the rich research and knowledge products developed.

For UN Women’s work on WEE to be successful, a strategy for WEE needs to be in place, along with stable leadership and strong institutional support, including for resource mobilization. The increased planned budget for Strategic Plan 2022–2025 is encouraging.

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**7 Supporting gender-responsive WEE policy is a suitable strategy for nationally owned, sustainable change and potential impact at scale. Systematic attention needs to be placed on advocating for policies that are resourced, and have implementation plans and appropriate accountability frameworks. The inter-relationship between changes in laws, frameworks, policies and social norms is also important for sustainability and should be consistently articulated and integrated within UN Women programming.**

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UN Women’s approach to working on WEE, in supporting the development of and/or strengthening of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies is paving the way for commendable nationally owned changes. While achieving a policy and legislative change represents a significant achievement, more consistent focus is required to ensure that they are accompanied by appropriate resources and implementation plans to achieve realizable and long-term change. The tracking and monitoring of results of policy change is also important, yet challenging.

In addition to supporting governments, UN Women could draw upon its networks and resources in the CSO movement to support this.

The relationship and linkages between WEE laws, frameworks and policies and the relationship with social norms change is not articulated or consistently integrated within the WEE policy cycle. There are some positive examples where UN Women is working on complementary communications and advocacy campaigns, with different media— some of which target men and boys. However, there is scope to do more, and to tackle the root causes of gender inequalities and gender stereotypes to achieve more transformative and sustainable change.

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**8 UN Women’s overall approach to WEE considers leave no one behind principles and is perceived to be relevant to the needs of marginalized groups. The approach could be strengthened by translating global principles and approaches into practical and context specific tools; improving the availability of disaggregated data; and by strengthening considerations of the connected systems and structures of power.**

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The degree to which UN Women’s work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE incorporates the principles of leave no one behind—including disability inclusion, human rights and gender equality— varies across offices and programmes. While global standards are clear about the inclusion of marginalized groups, they need to be translated into working principles that are relevant for, and sensitive to, the particular context of different regions and countries. Furthermore, implementation teams do not always possess the relevant monitoring and evaluation or data capacities to fully execute the leave no one behind requirements and meaningfully track the inclusion and impact of an intervention on all relevant marginalized groups.

UN Women’s work on WEE highlights several good examples of a comprehensive leave no one behind approach, and the Entity has focused on policies with a particular emphasis on human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion. While UN Women has made efforts to include marginalized groups, there is room to improve the inter-sectional approach and consideration of the connected systems and structures of power. A lack of relevant data has been a challenge, particularly when trying to reach the marginalized groups left furthest behind.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



### RECOMMENDATION 1

UN Women should continue its support to the global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE, while advocating for gender-responsive approaches in emerging priority areas.



### RECOMMENDATION 2

UN Women's WEE strategy should include a clear articulation of key definitions and a framework for WEE; an assessment of current financial and human resources allocated to WEE policy support; and clarity on the approach to harnessing cross-thematic linkages.



### RECOMMENDATION 3

UN Women should refine and systematize its approach to partnerships for WEE and look to further strengthen its engagement with international financial institutions (and other global actors), where strategically advantageous.



### RECOMMENDATION 4

UN Women should review and formalize the roles and responsibilities of headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices in the area of WEE, particularly in terms of knowledge sharing and management, research and data, and monitoring and reporting.



### RECOMMENDATION 5

UN Women should develop sustainable approaches to addressing structural barriers that impede WEE and to supporting social norms change. Efforts should be focused on supporting governments and other actors to monitor the effects of WEE policy changes on women's lives and livelihoods.



### RECOMMENDATION 6

UN Women should refine and contextualize its approach and strategy to leave no one behind and the inclusion of marginalized groups, as they relate to WEE.



Photo: UN Women/Rosendo Quintos

# 1. BACKGROUND

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women's contribution to the economic empowerment of women by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships. The corporate thematic evaluation was conducted by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS), which undertakes corporate evaluations to enhance accountability, inform decision making and contribute to learning. The evaluation was initiated in February 2022 and will be presented to the UN Women Executive Board during its Annual Session in June 2023.

Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) is one of four key thematic impact areas for UN Women. Work on WEE aligns with key global normative frameworks and international commitments, including the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>1</sup> the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women<sup>2</sup> and a series of relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, among others.<sup>3</sup> The evaluation includes both a retrospective view of results achieved during Strategic Plan 2018–2021, as well as forward-looking insights to support implementation of Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

**During the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 cycle, UN Women focused its contribution to WEE in three areas:**

1. More policies promote decent work and social protection for women. This includes support to address women's disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work and the gender pay gap; promote the rights of domestic workers and workers in the informal sector, as well as the voice and representation for women, including through trade unions.
2. More women own, launch and/or manage small, medium and large enterprises. This includes ensuring women's access to digital, financial, technical and vocational education and training opportunities, as well as leveraging public and private procurement processes to expand opportunities for women-owned enterprises and increasing levels of commitment by employers to the Women's Empowerment Principles.
3. More rural women secure access to, control over and use of productive resources and engage in sustainable agriculture to increase their income security, work conditions and resilience to climate change. This includes support to ensure access to land, information, finance, markets and vital infrastructure services such as telecommunications, water and energy.

**FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2022–2025 CYCLE, UN WOMEN IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR WEE:**



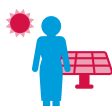
**TRANSFORMING THE CARE ECONOMY** by strengthening and implementing the 5Rs: recognize, reduce, redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, and reward and represent care workers



Incentivizing **DECENT WORK, EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**, including by promoting financial and digital inclusion to close the digital gender gap and gender-responsive procurement, among other strategies



Supporting the development and implementation of **GENDER-RESPONSIVE MACROECONOMIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES** by influencing ministries and international financial institutions.



Championing women's increased participation and leadership in **GREEN AND BLUE ECONOMIES AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE**.



Engaging effectively with women-led organizations, the private sector and trade unions to tackle discriminatory social norms, practices and legislation, and **ENSURING WOMEN'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN THE ECONOMY**.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Notable global normative frameworks include the seven drivers of transformation identified by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and ILO Conventions 100, 111, 156 and 183.

The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 identifies the following key partners in these efforts: UN agencies, including FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITU, OHCHR, WFP, UNGC, UNEP, UNIDO, UNESCO, UNOPS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF; and key line ministries, regional economic commissions and international financial institutions.

The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 also brings with it the introduction of Signature Initiatives. Signature Initiatives are to be the primary programme implementation instrument for UN Women and they provide flexible, yet coherent, programming frameworks and standardized approaches to guide the work of UN Women’s Regional and Country Offices in strategic areas where UN Women is best positioned to make the highest impact at scale to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## 1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope

The purpose of this corporate thematic evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of UN Women’s contribution to WEE by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships and to capture notable practices to inform UN Women’s strategies and implementation.

This evaluation covers the period from January 2018 to June 2022, which includes the entirety of the previous Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the first two quarters of the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

The scope of the evaluation was developed in consultation with key stakeholders during the Inception Phase (see Annex 1), and the following areas emerged:

- The evaluation focuses on UN Women’s contribution to WEE by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships.

Of the nine Signature Initiatives, three are being developed around WEE. These include 1) decent work and entrepreneurship; 2) transforming the care economy; and 3) women’s climate change, and green and blue economies. It is envisioned that work on gender-responsive macroeconomic policies will be integrated across all three of these Signature Initiatives.<sup>4</sup>

Volume I of the report is presented through seven chapters: background, context, portfolio analysis of UN Women’s contribution, findings, lessons learned and promising practices, conclusions and recommendations. Volume II contains the Annexes corresponding to this report.

- The thematic scope covers UN Women’s entire WEE portfolio, with particular focus on sub-thematic areas where there is a stronger emphasis on laws, frameworks and policy strengthening. Where there are recently completed or ongoing evaluations, the team draws on those insights and data to the extent possible.<sup>5</sup>
- The geographical scope includes UN Women’s work globally and across all regions.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, senior management and programme personnel. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors directly working on, or with an interest in WEE, including civil society organizations (CSOs), UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and development partners.

### THE KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS ARE:



To what extent is UN Women’s work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for WEE **aligned with global normative frameworks, priority policy areas, and the needs of beneficiaries?**



To what extent is UN Women’s work in WEE **coherent with the work of partners and other key thematic areas?** How effectively does UN Women leverage its integrated mandate?



To what extent have UN Women’s efforts in this area led to **demonstrable impact/outcomes?** What metrics exist to measure progress?



What efforts have been made to ensure **efficiency of programming and sustainability of benefits and efforts** in this area?



To what degree are **human rights, leave no one behind** – including **disability inclusion** and **gender equality** – principles integrated in this area of work?

<sup>4</sup> At the time of report writing, the Signature Initiatives were still under development.

<sup>5</sup> Ongoing relevant IES evaluations include the corporate evaluation on climate change, regional evaluation on entrepreneurship/private sector in Asia and the Pacific, and the regional evaluation on WEE in West and Central Africa.

## 1.2 Evaluation approach and methodology

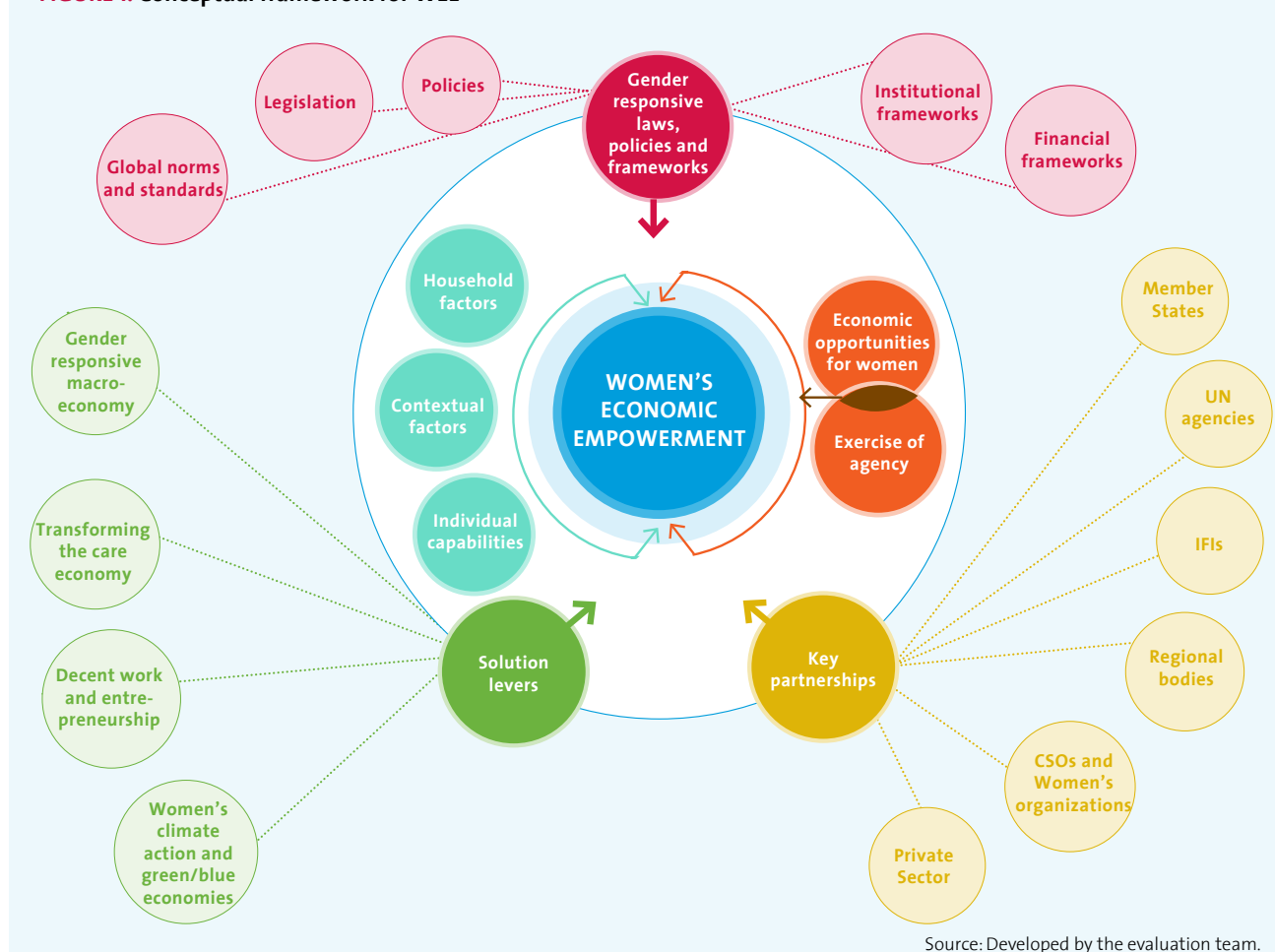
To analyse UN Women’s contribution to WEE by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships, the evaluation team drew upon various methodologies, including methodologies for measuring policy influence,<sup>6</sup> WEE<sup>7</sup> and contribution analysis.<sup>8</sup> While attention to measuring the effectiveness of WEE interventions has increased significantly in recent years, many monitoring and evaluation methodologies remain project-orientated and/or lack a systemic approach (as required for this evaluation). This is confirmed by a recent review of women’s economic development programmes which found that, despite their importance, policy and legal constraints and enablers to WEE are infrequently addressed or measured, and few indicators exist in this area.<sup>9</sup>

The evaluation team developed a conceptual framework on the role of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies in bringing about change within individuals in the context of economic empowerment that considers the multidimensional aspects of WEE.

UN Women’s support to the advancement of laws, frameworks and policies is structured around key solution levers and is achieved with the support of strategic partnerships that include decision makers regarding laws, frameworks and policies.

As shown in Figure 1, the centre of the multidimensional framework places emphasis on the need for change to occur on multiple levels. The framework draws from the “Women’s Economic Empowerment Framework” (developed by the Centre for Global Development) which frames WEE as a product of contextual (e.g. laws, regulations, gender norms), household (e.g. distribution of resources and work including unpaid care) and individual (capabilities) factors.<sup>10</sup> The contextual and household factors define economic opportunities for women, separately and jointly. The process of empowerment, also referred to as the “exercise of agency” is the product of the interface of women’s capabilities (their education, skills and other capacities) and the economic opportunities available to them.

**FIGURE 1. Conceptual framework for WEE**



<sup>6</sup> Tsui, J., Hearn, S., & Young, J. (2014). Monitoring and evaluation of policy influence and advocacy; Jones, H. (2011). A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Influence.

<sup>7</sup> Golla, A.M., Malhotra, A., Nanda, P., & Mehra, R. (2011). Understanding and Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment

<sup>8</sup> Mayne, J. (2011). Addressing Cause and Effect in Simple and Complex Settings through Contribution Analysis. In *Evaluating the Complex*, R. Schwartz, K. Forss, & M. Marra (Eds.), Transaction Publishers.

<sup>9</sup> Calder, R., Rickard, S., & Kalsi, K. (2020). Measurement of Women’s Economic Empowerment WOW Helpdesk Guidance Note No. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Buvinic, M., O’Donnell, M., Knowles J.C., & Bourgault, S. (2020). Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment: A Compendium of Selected Tools.



The evaluation team also developed a logic model for this evaluation (see Annex 2) that draws on UN Women's results areas where possible and tests assumptions about the extent to which change occurs between activities and outputs, and between outputs and outcomes.<sup>11</sup> Contribution analysis was used to assess how changes were achieved at different levels and to compare the reality of UN Women's work on WEE in various contexts against a theory of change. This was complemented by 'episode studies' undertaken to assess various activities and outcomes that influenced specific policy changes. A complete analysis of the contributions to systemic outcomes was not conducted as it was beyond the scope of this evaluation.<sup>12</sup>

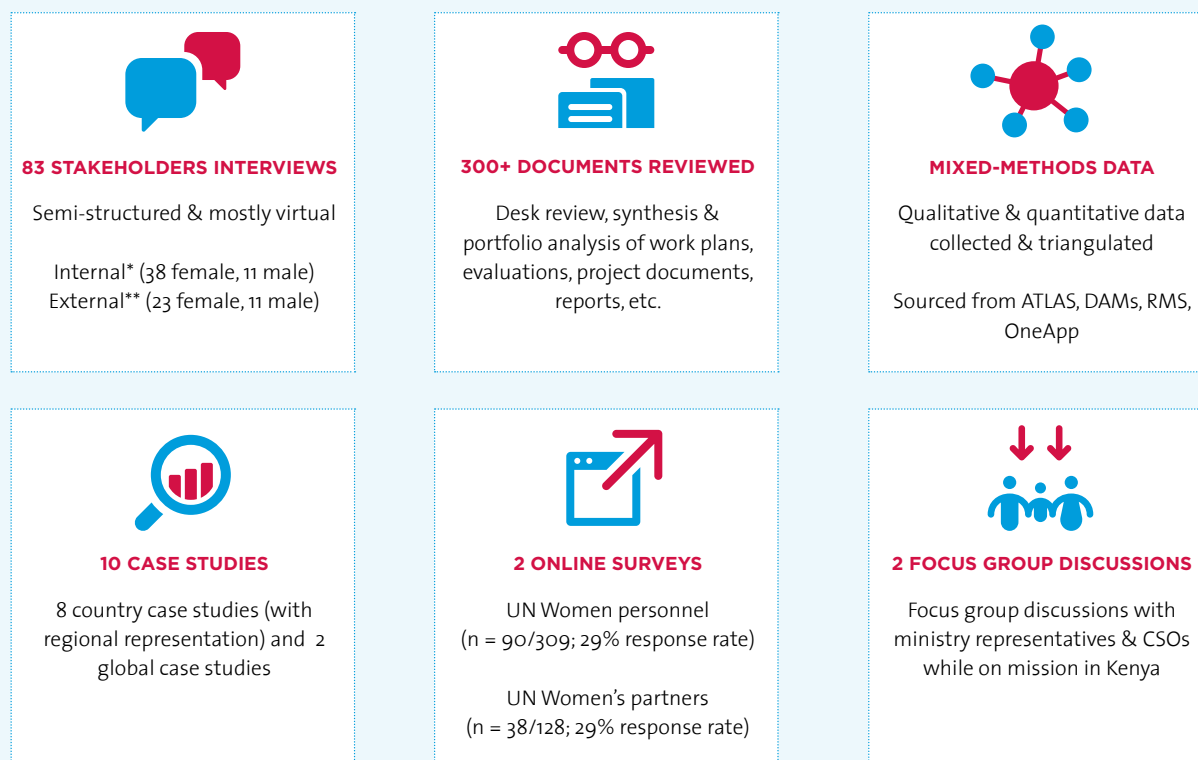
Both primary and secondary data sources were consulted to gather evidence to address the questions developed for this evaluation (see Annex 3 for the Evaluation and Data Collection Matrix). The evaluation team engaged 83 stakeholders through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (see Figures 2 and 3 for details on stakeholders and Annex 4 for a mapping of stakeholders), most of which were undertaken virtually.

An in-person data collection mission to Kenya was undertaken and included interviews and focus group discussions with 25 stakeholders (UN Women personnel, UN agencies, donors, implementing partners, national government, beneficiary representatives from local government, CSOs and academia). Additionally, the evaluation team designed and fielded an online survey for internal and external partners which received responses from 128 stakeholders (90 UN Women personnel, 38 partners), representing 29 per cent of internal and 29 per cent of external stakeholder populations targeted for the survey (see Annex 5 for details on survey respondents).

The evaluation team developed two global case studies to explore the WEE portfolio's engagement in a) inter-governmental processes; and b) generating knowledge products and tools. The evaluation team also undertook eight country case studies (Egypt, Georgia, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria and Tanzania) to explore promising practices and lessons learned from each region.

In all, 211 stakeholders were engaged through interviews, focus group discussions and surveys.

**FIGURE 2. Sources and methodology for data collection**



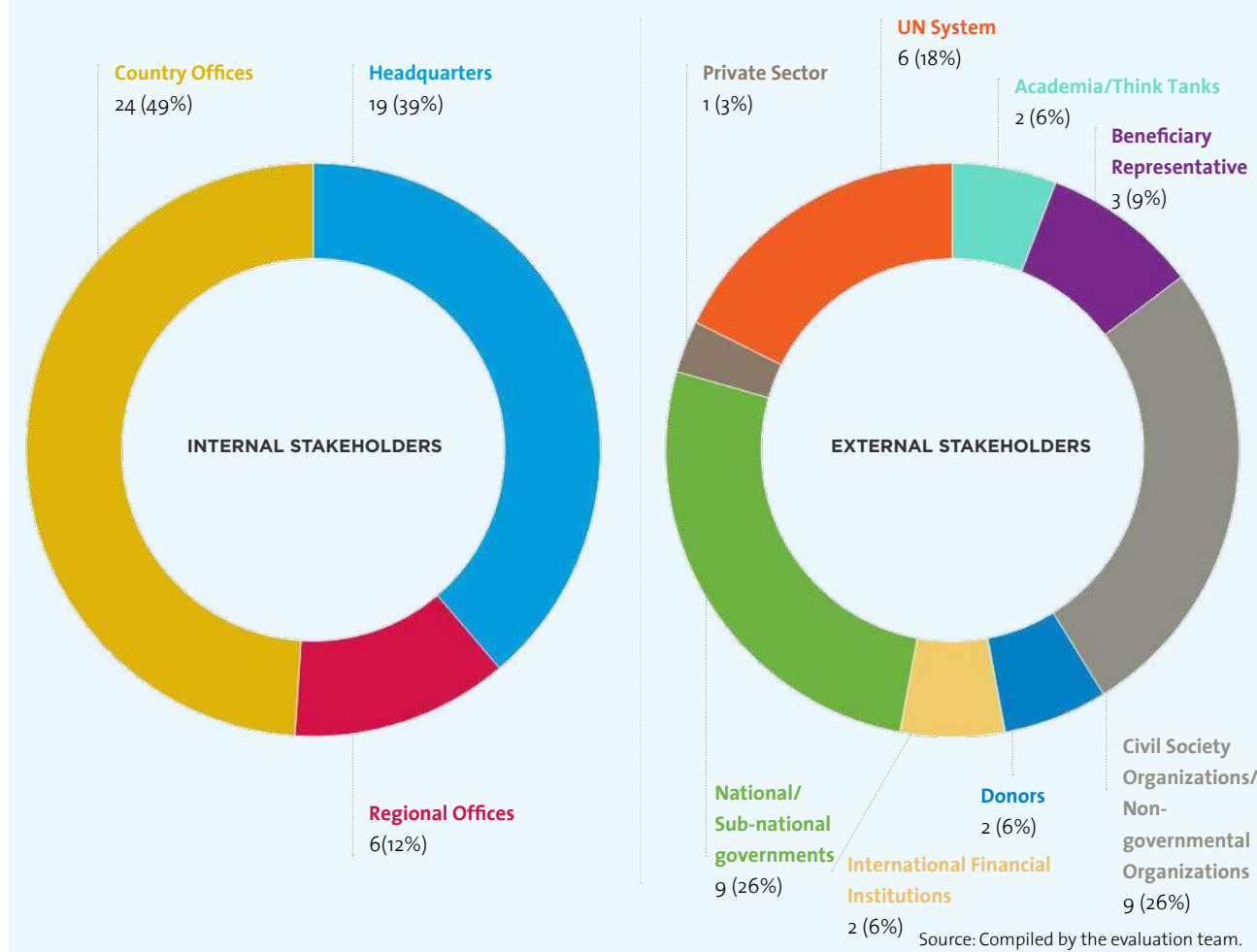
\* Internal stakeholders from UN Women Headquarters (n=19), Regional Offices (n=5) and Country Offices (n=24)

\*\* External stakeholders from Academia/Think tanks (n=2), Beneficiary Representatives (n=3), CSOs/NGOs (n=7), Donors (n=2), IFIs (n=1), National/Sub-national Government (n=9), Private Sector (n=1), UN system (n=6)

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

<sup>11</sup> Assumptions are aligned with questions articulated in the Evaluation and Data Collection Matrix (Annex 3)

<sup>12</sup> See Annex 2 for UN Women's activities, outputs and outcomes.

**FIGURE 3. Types of stakeholders consulted**

### 1.3 Ethics, gender equality and no one left behind

The evaluation team adopted a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach, in alignment with the UN Women Evaluation Policy, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Ethical Guidelines,<sup>13</sup> the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System<sup>14</sup> and the recent UNEG Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluation.

In the conduct of evaluations, managing data systematically and with integrity ensures that the rights, safety and welfare of stakeholders is maintained along with their confidentiality. All data collected for this evaluation were stored and managed confidentially, in accordance with IES Data Management Guidance, and as described in the accompanying data management plan.<sup>15</sup>

The evaluation team's methodology and approach were sensitive to marginalized groups that have been included (and attempted to identify those that have been excluded) within UN Women's work on advancing laws, frameworks and policies for WEE.

Data collection was designed to capture diverse values and perspectives of duty bearers, rights-holders and under-represented/disadvantaged groups (e.g. women and girls by age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, location, migrant women, women with disabilities) in an effort to capture a more complete, fair and unbiased assessment.

One of the key evaluation questions aimed to assess the degree to which human rights, leave no one behind—including disability inclusion and gender equality principles—are integrated into UN Women's work on laws, policies and frameworks to advance WEE. The corresponding findings, conclusions and recommendations discuss strengthening the principles of leave no one behind in this area of work.

<sup>13</sup> UNEG, <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

<sup>14</sup> UNEG, <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

<sup>15</sup> See Annex 1 for a link to the Inception Report Annexes which include the data management plan.

## 1.4 Evaluation constraints and limitations

The evaluation team acknowledges the challenges in confidently attributing causality to UN Women's efforts in advancing laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE. First and foremost, the lack of an overarching strategy for WEE makes it challenging to evaluate UN Women's contributions. Moreover, policy change is complex and non-linear, and can involve multiple actors and multiple contributing factors. Defining success in the context of policy change also involves some amount of subjectivity, as policy change must often be accompanied by effective implementation, a supportive political context, adequate resources, changes in social norms and behaviours, and other enforcement mechanisms. Lasting change also takes time and often goes beyond the typical timelines of project-based work. UN Women's efforts may not have been the factor (or only factor) that led to change, and identifying unique contributions to any progress on WEE is difficult to measure. However, this challenge is common in evaluations centred on policy change and while it may not be possible to assess impact-level results, this evaluation report includes "episode studies" on policy change designed to illustrate successful strategies with the potential for replication in other contexts.

Some data limitations were also present in this evaluation. For example, to better understand capacity and resource mobilization needs, the evaluation team was interested in exploring the qualifications of UN Women's WEE personnel; however, data was not readily available at that level of detail (e.g. core versus non-core funded positions, tenure of personnel, skills and credentials of personnel).<sup>16</sup> There was also disparity in the types and quality of data available across case studies. Therefore, it was difficult to consistently compare UN Women's contribution and progress on WEE across the countries selected for further study.

The reliance on virtual data collection also presented some limitations; however, the evaluation team was able to successfully complete one in-person mission to Kenya for data collection. To address some of the gaps in data collection, the evaluation team attempted to systematically include evidence from relevant and recently completed corporate and decentralized evaluations.<sup>17</sup> It is also important to note that as monitoring data is available on an annual basis, the evaluation team's findings, conclusions and recommendations are based on data available up to December 2021 (see Annex 6); these data were complemented with insights on implementation of the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025 gathered through case studies and survey data collected up to June 2022.

Because policy change is so wide-reaching, it was not possible to track and speak with many rights holders or beneficiaries (e.g. women in entrepreneurship, domestic workers, rural women, refugees, migrant women, women with disabilities) who may have been impacted by UN Women's contribution to advancing WEE. Therefore, the evaluation team was limited in its ability to gather direct inputs on impact. Nevertheless, the team was able to engage with some beneficiary representatives during the in-person mission to Kenya.

While there were some challenges in gathering data and in speaking to beneficiaries about their experiences, overall, the evaluation team determined it was able to effectively triangulate data from multiple reliable sources to evaluate UN Women's contribution to WEE by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships.

<sup>16</sup> Note that this challenge is not unique to personnel working on WEE.

<sup>17</sup> See Annex 12 for a list of evaluations consulted.



Photo: UN Women/ Eduard Pagria

## 2. EVALUATION CONTEXT

Following more than two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy continues to suffer from a series of economic shocks due to regional conflicts and increasingly severe environmental challenges and climate-related disasters. Higher-than-expected inflation in many parts of the world is triggering a tightening of global financial conditions. Policy discussions and responses have yet to sufficiently take gender equality perspectives into account. For example, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, only 13 per cent of the 2,280 fiscal, social protection and labour-market measures taken at the time of writing this report target women's economic security, and only 11 per cent address rising unpaid care demands.<sup>18</sup> **With just eight years to go until the 2030 SDG deadline, progress in many areas, including time spent on unpaid care and domestic work is falling behind.<sup>19</sup> There is increased recognition that WEE and sustainable development are intertwined, yet several gaps remain.**

Between 2018 and 2022, several milestones were marked in addressing the socioeconomic challenges. For example, the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) adopted the agreed conclusions that place primary focus on gender and climate change linkages and provide a blueprint to promote women's full participation in the design and implementation of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction efforts. Global multi-stakeholder platforms, such as Generation Equality, the Global Alliance for Care, and the Alliance for Feminist Movements, that bring together national governments, feminist organizations and researchers also launched to address barriers and advance and coordinate financial and political support to organizations and the critical role that they play amid global uncertainty.

The UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 Integrated Resource and Results Framework (IRRF) includes multiple outcome indicators and outputs focused on WEE. Specifically, Outcome Area 3: Economic Empowerment, contained impact and outcome-level indicators aligned with SDG indicators and 14 output level indicators.<sup>20</sup> During the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, all five indicators related to Output 9, particularly capacity development and support for women entrepreneurs, gender-responsive procurement policies and Women's Economic Principles were reported by management to be on track or met in the 2020 reporting cycle and exceeded in the 2021 reporting cycle. For Output 10, which focuses on rural women, the two indicators related to gender-responsive policies on land were reported to be on track or exceeded by 2021. However, for Output 8, two of four indicators (number of legal and policy frameworks for decent work and gender-responsive macroeconomic policies) made, according to management, some progress over the four-year cycle, but neither met their annual targets for 2021.

According to management, the other two key indicators for Output 8, which relate to UN Women's support to legal frameworks in support of social protection have made consistent progress since 2020 and exceeded targets for 2021 (see Table 1).

UN Women's Impact Area 2: Women's Economic Empowerment— women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy— in the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025 focuses on integrated approaches to address the root causes of inequality in WEE. The three proposed Signature Initiatives related to WEE aim to contribute to progress towards relevant Strategic Plan systemic outcomes. Additionally, the IRRF contains seven cross-cutting/cross-thematic systemic outcomes with corresponding outcome and output indicators.

Implementation of the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025, as well as current external environments, presents an opportunity for UN Women to place women and girls at the centre of inclusive economic growth efforts. This evaluation is timely as UN Women is in the process of developing the corporate strategy for its approach to work on WEE and finalizing the Signature Initiatives as the primary programme implementation instrument of the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025. This is in addition to the ongoing corporate organizational realignment effort of 'pivoting to the field,' which involves moving resources closest to where they are needed (i.e. at country level) and orienting the organization towards servicing the field. As mentioned above, this evaluation was undertaken to provide systematic, timely and evidenced-based feedback on UN Women's work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE at global, regional and country levels and to inform UN Women's key interventions in the future.

<sup>18</sup> UN Women & UNDP (2021). COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker: Global Factsheet.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations (2022). The Sustainable Development Goals Report.

<sup>20</sup> Following the strategic reprioritization exercise and subsequent COVID-19 revisions to the IRRF, three additional indicators were introduced under the WEE areas: i) UN Women's support to gender-responsive socioeconomic impact assessment in response to the COVID-19 crisis; ii) implementation of women's empowerment policies informed by socioeconomic impact assessment; iii) gender-responsive fiscal stimulus packages for COVID-19 economic response and recovery.

**TABLE 1.** UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018-2021 indicators related to WEE laws, frameworks and policies

Subset of Strategic Plan indicators directly linked to laws, frameworks and policies in WEE	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Progress	Target	Progress	Target	Progress	Target	Progress
8.1 Decent work policies	87	65	117	89	143	107	164	162
8.2 Macroeconomic policies	25	29	40	37	55	51	70	65
8.3 Social protection systems	50	54	70	72	90	91	110	110
8.4 Unpaid care work policies	29	22	50	26	30	52	35	97
8.5 Response to the COVID-19 crisis						22	14	44
8.6 Focused on at-risk populations						12	15	27
9.3 Gender-responsive procurement policies	60	310	90	365	415	536	470	1,045
9.5 Fiscal stimulus packages for COVID-19 recovery						19	45	41
10.1 Land policies	43	53	68	81	84	111	100	131

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team based on UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021 management dashboard.

## 3. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Financial analysis

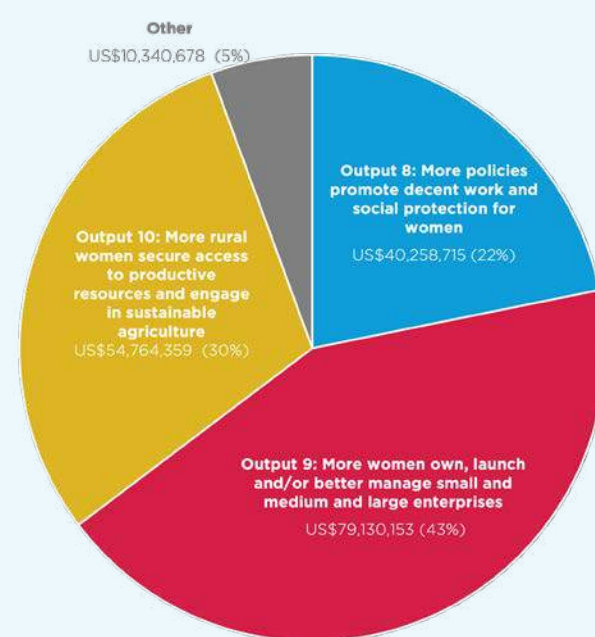
During the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 cycle, WEE had a total programmatic budget of US\$ 184 million (17 per cent of overall funds at UN Women)<sup>21</sup>. As shown in Figure 4, Output 9 on women-led enterprises, had the highest budget (US\$ 79 million), nearly double the amount allocated to Output 8 on decent work and social protection (US\$ 40 million), and Output 10 on women in agriculture had a budget of US\$ 55 million. The remaining funds (US\$ 10 million) were allocated across activities such as data, capacity development for policymakers and support for dialogue mechanisms.

UN Women's contribution and support to policies, programmes and initiatives related to WEE span global, regional, country and local levels. Between 2018 and 2021, 83 business units, (six Regional Offices, three units at UN Women headquarters, and 74 Country Offices/ programme presences) mapped budgets and deliveries to WEE. As seen in Figure 5, during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, the Asia and the Pacific region had the highest reported WEE budget (US\$ 51 million), followed by East and Southern Africa (US\$ 38 million) and Americas and the Caribbean (US\$ 33 million). The lowest budgets for WEE were reported at headquarters (US\$ 8 million) and the Europe and Central Asia region (US\$ 12 million).

For the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 period, UN Women estimated that 16 per cent of resources for the IRRF would be allocated to Impact Area 2 on WEE:

- **Impact Area 1** (Governance and Participation in Public Life): US\$ 351.04 million (21 per cent)
- **Impact Area 2** (Women's Economic Empowerment): US\$ 280.83 million (16 per cent)
- **Impact Area 3** (Ending Violence Against Women and Girls): US\$ 473.90 million (28 per cent)
- **Impact Area 4** (Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction): US\$ 596.76 million (35 per cent).

**FIGURE 4. Cumulative budget by WEE output/activity in Strategic Plan 2018–2021**

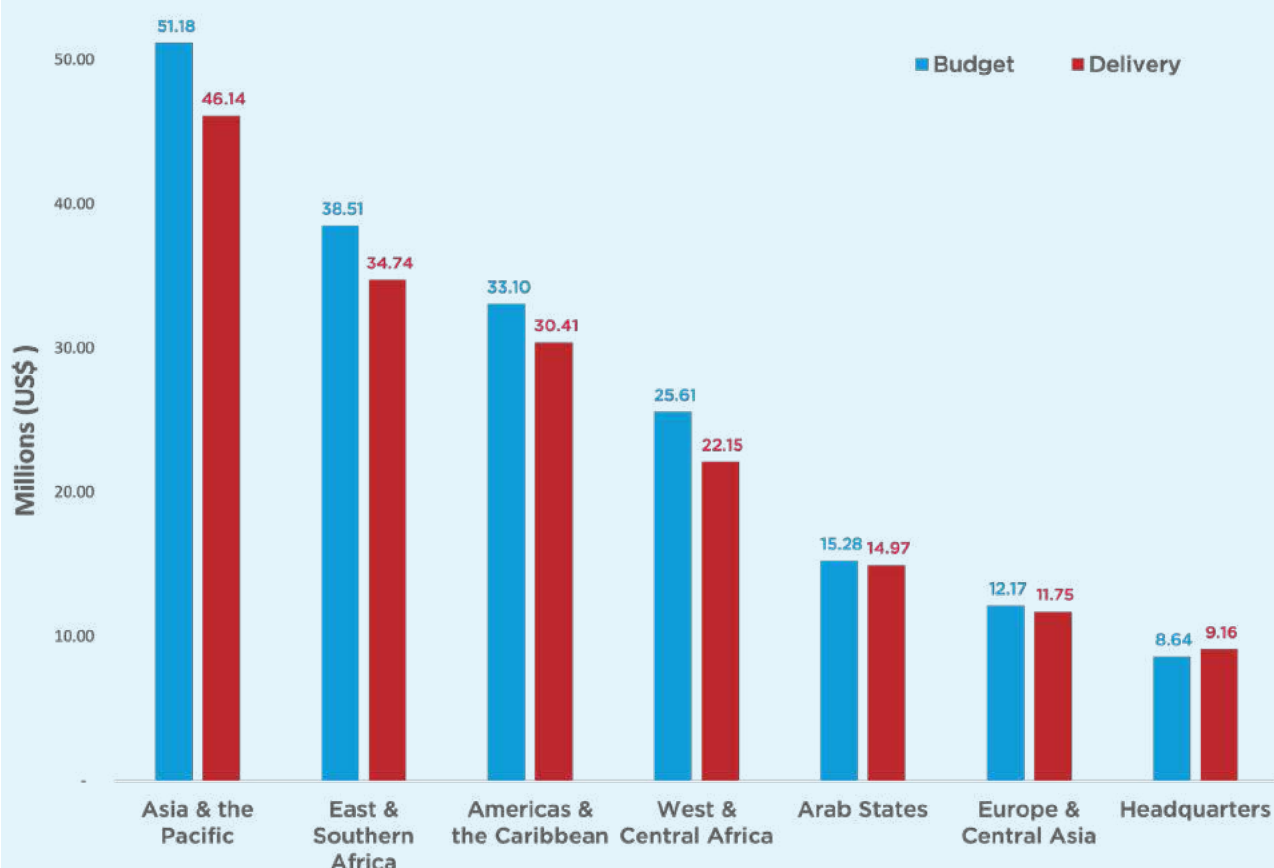


Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women's RMS dashboard (May 2022).

The evaluation team also reviewed recent data on thematic budget allocations described in UN Women's meta-analysis of its 2022 annual workplans. As seen in Figure 6, in the 2022 budget, WEE has the second largest budget of the four impact areas (US\$ 121 million; 17 per cent of the total budget), which represents an 80 per cent increase for WEE from the 2021 budget (US\$ 63.4 million).

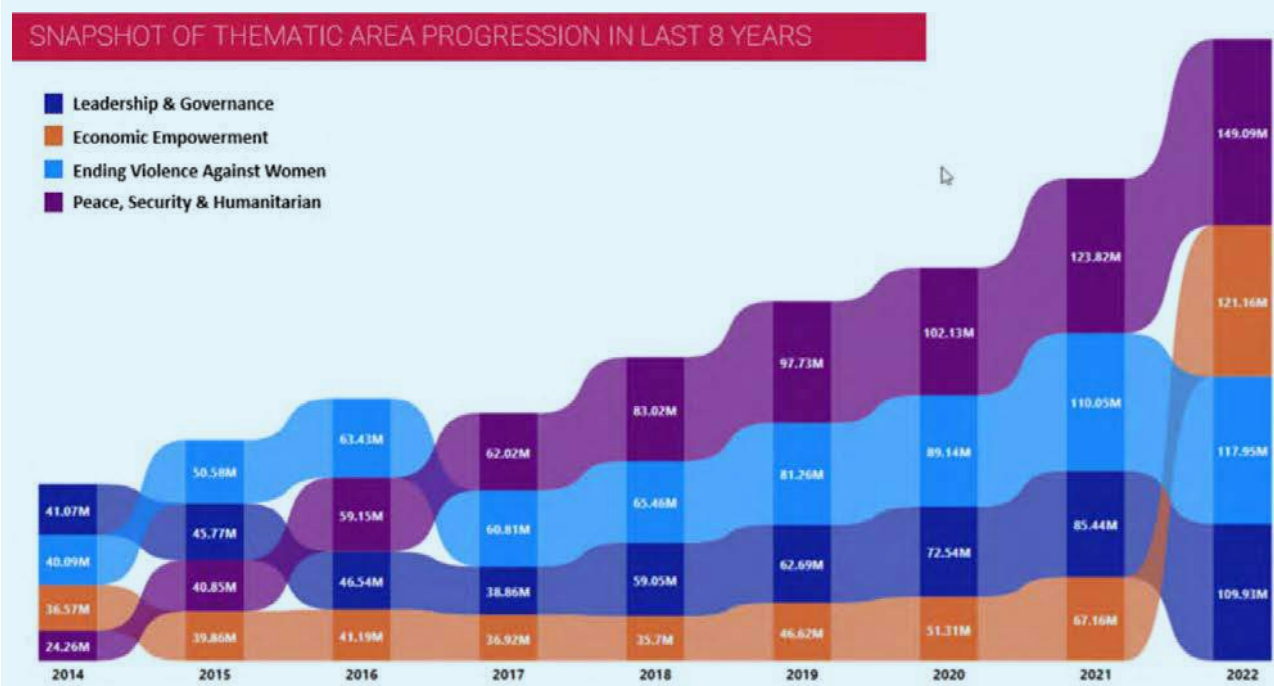
<sup>21</sup> As per the RMS dashboard, total budget of the headquarters EE section for 2018–2021 was US\$ 13.6 million.

**FIGURE 5.** Cumulative budget and spending on WEE by region in Strategic Plan 2018–2021



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women’s RMS dashboard (May 2022)

**FIGURE 6.** UN Women workplan budgets by thematic area (2014–2022)



Source: Meta-analysis of UN Women 2022 workplans, SPRED






### 3.2 Types of support to laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE and key partnerships

During the portfolio review of WEE-related projects, the evaluation team found that several sub-thematic areas fall within each of the three outputs related to WEE (see Annex 7). UN Women contributes to advancing laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE throughout the policy cycle by providing different types of support—sometimes in parallel with other strategies—to influence specific points or key stakeholders in the process (see Annex 8). Through the portfolio review of project documents, the evaluation team found that the most frequently reported types of activities that UN Women engages in to contribute towards WEE include capacity development and upskilling of key stakeholders in relation

to laws, frameworks and policies; production and dissemination of research, global tools and knowledge products to inform evidence-based economic policy; and communications and advocacy efforts.

UN Women also collaborates with a wide range of partners to deliver jointly and/or to convene key actors to establish alliances and partnerships that can amplify the Entity's efforts in influencing gender-responsive policy change related to WEE. This includes intergovernmental processes such as CSW. The evaluation team collated a list of key partners that UN Women regularly engages with in its efforts to advance WEE (see Table 2).

**TABLE 2. UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 key partners for WEE**

WEE OUTPUTS AND SUB-THEMATIC AREAS	KEY PARTNERS
 <p><b>OUTPUT 8:</b> More policies promote decent work and social protection for women (Macroeconomic policies/ social protection/care work/decent work)</p>	<p>ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, International financial institutions, key line ministries, regional bodies, regional economic commissions, Member States</p>
 <p><b>OUTPUT 9:</b> More women own, launch and/or better manage small and medium and large enterprises (Women's Economic Principles/gender-responsive procurement/migration)</p>	<p>ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UN Global Compact, ITC, UNIDO, UNOPS, Executive Committee agencies of the UN Network, CSOs, private sector</p>
 <p><b>OUTPUT 10:</b> More rural women secure access to productive resources and engage in sustainable agriculture (Sustainable Development including climate, environment and agriculture)</p>	<p>UNEP, FAO, IFAD, WFP, women's cooperatives, farmers associations, CSOs</p>

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.



Photo: UN Women/Daniel Donald

# 4. FINDINGS

**4.1** To what extent is UN Women’s work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for WEE aligned with global normative frameworks, priority policy areas and the needs of beneficiaries?

## FINDING 1.

**UN Women’s work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies for WEE is well aligned with global normative frameworks and includes efforts to support adherence to these frameworks at the regional level. UN Women also promotes and contributes to shaping global discourse around policy issues related to WEE.**

UN Women’s support to gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE is guided by key global normative frameworks, such as the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, provisions related to WEE and relevant ILO conventions.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, UN Women participates in and/or leads global intergovernmental processes, working groups, action coalitions and other mechanisms that offer opportunities for the Entity to advocate for alignment with normative frameworks related to WEE (see Box 1).

One of the key mechanisms through which UN Women supports and aligns global normative efforts related to WEE is the annual CSW. In recent years, the majority of priority and review themes for annual sessions of CSW have been aligned to and led by the WEE portfolio at headquarters, including: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls (2018); Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (2019); and Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes (2022).

The agreed conclusions resulting from discussions among Member States prioritized actions to be taken through economic and social policies that align with WEE portfolio areas, such as macroeconomic and public policies, agriculture, economic empowerment and decent work, entrepreneurship and procurement, financial inclusion and financial services, unpaid care and domestic work, and family policies.<sup>23</sup> Through CSW, UN Women has made concerted efforts to elevate and highlight normative issues around WEE.

### BOX 1

#### Examples of UN Women’s contribution to global frameworks and discourse related to WEE

- Contributes to the Secretary General reports related to WEE (including on development, climate change, women and girls living in rural areas, violence against migrant women)
- Secretariat for the Expert Working Group on Addressing Women’s Human Rights in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
- Advisory member of the Committee on World Food Security
- Member of the UN Network on Migration (Global Migration Group)
- Co-Convenor of the Global Alliance for Care
- Member of the gender group of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board
- Supports Generation Equality Action Coalitions for Feminist Action for Climate Justice and Economic Justice and Rights
- Member of the Secretariat for the Equal Pay International Coalition

For instance, a study on the analysis of discriminatory legislation in Latin American and the Caribbean on the autonomy and economic empowerment of women found that declarations at CSW have established the commitment of governments towards fulfilling international obligations and ratifying relevant ILO conventions.<sup>24</sup> This includes commitments to areas such as decent jobs, entrepreneurship, equal pay and access to social protection.

<sup>22</sup> In particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Article 2, Article 3, Article 4.1, Article 5, Article 11, Article 13 and Article 14.

<sup>23</sup> Proposed actions include strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks to ensure the right to social security in national legal frameworks and ensure universal access to social protection, ratification and implementation of a number of ILO conventions, normative guidelines on food security, and recognizing the disproportionate impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters on all women and girls as well as the economic and social fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic that compounded the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.

<sup>24</sup> UN Women (2018). Analysis of Discriminatory Legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean on the Autonomy and Economic Empowerment of Women.

At the regional level, UN Women works to ensure that global normative frameworks are integrated within regional frameworks. For example, in Asia and the Pacific, UN Women advocated for implementation of the Global Compact for Migration and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women General Recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations members via the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Forum on Migrant Labour.<sup>25</sup> UN Women's Liaison Office for the African Union focuses on key issues related to WEE, including protocols related to the African Continental Free Trade Area and tools to measure progress on gender in the continent. In collaboration with the National Institute of Women in Mexico, UN Women launched the Global Alliance for Care to address the burden of care that hinders economic opportunities for women and to accelerate an equitable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>26</sup>

## FINDING 2.

### UN Women's work to support gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies is aligned with priorities identified in the Entity's Strategic Plans and regional Strategic Notes. The WEE thematic area includes an expansive range of priority policy areas, each requiring specialized technical expertise.

UN Women's work on laws, frameworks and policies to advance WEE is well aligned with the Entity's priorities and commitments identified in Strategic Plan 2018–2021, as evidenced by progress reported by management on the related Strategic Plan indicators (shown above in Table 1). Between 2018 and 2021, UN Women's work to support laws and policies related to WEE covered all priority areas identified in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

According to management reporting available in UN Women's Results Management System (RMS), the work included technical support and capacity development in areas such as adherence to labour rights in the workplace (e.g. Palestine), decent work for rural women (e.g. Timor-Leste), decent work for women migrant workers (e.g. Bangladesh), cost–benefit and fiscal analysis of economic policy measures aimed at closing gender gaps in the world of work (e.g. Colombia), contribution to economic development plans (e.g. Niger, Viet Nam), policy dialogues on gender-responsive fiscal policy (e.g. Jordan), policies on social safety nets and social protection (e.g. Bangladesh, Tunisia, Viet Nam, Tanzania, St. Lucia, Pakistan), studies on care services and policies (e.g. Ethiopia, Malawi, Republic of Moldova, Paraguay), cost–benefit and fiscal analysis of paternity leave (e.g. Colombia), cost–benefit and fiscal

As part of this initiative, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and UN Women collaborated to develop a guiding framework for comprehensive national care systems as a pillar of social protection for countries in the region.<sup>27</sup>

Most survey respondents (internal personnel: 73 per cent,  $n=66/90$ ; external partners: 69 per cent,  $n=24/35$ ) indicated that UN Women is (highly or somewhat) effective in advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies through its global normative work and support to intergovernmental processes related to WEE,<sup>28</sup> making this a highly regarded area of work within WEE and a comparative advantage for the Entity. The survey results align well with the findings of the 2014 evaluation on WEE, which concluded that UN Women's normative mandate has enabled it to effectively influence international discourse, standards and a range of national policies.

analysis of universal childcare (e.g. Mexico), training on gender-responsive procurement for businesses (e.g. India, Jamaica, Rwanda), gender-responsive fiscal stimulus for COVID-19 (e.g. Indonesia, Fiji, Mali, South Africa), gender mainstreaming of agriculture policies (e.g. Kenya, Albania, South Africa, Ethiopia) and women's land rights (e.g. Tanzania, Central African Republic). These areas span rights (e.g. land rights, economic rights), labour markets (e.g. decent work), social structures (e.g. care economy) and the macroeconomy (fiscal policies, social protection).

From the perspective of linking to global priority areas, UN Women's work on WEE contributes to eight SDG targets through its sub-thematic areas of work including social protection (SDG 1.3), care work (SDG 5.4), decent work (SDG 8.3), migration (SDG 10.7), gender-responsive procurement (SDG 12.7) and sustainable development (SDG 6.2, 13.1, 15.C). Therefore, it is evident that the WEE thematic area is diverse, spanning areas that are linked, yet require specialized technical expertise.

At the regional level, UN Women's work on WEE is guided by regional priorities outlined in regional Strategic Notes. Some priority areas within WEE, such as the response to COVID-19, are common across regions, while others vary in terms of emphasis.

<sup>25</sup> UN Women (2022). Evaluation of UN Women's contributions to women's economic empowerment through private sector engagement in Asia and the Pacific.

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://alianzadecuidados.forogeneracionigualdad.mx/acerca/?lang=en>

<sup>27</sup> UN Women and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2021). Towards the Construction of Care Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>28</sup> UN Women internal personnel survey (Question 6) and external partners survey (Question 6) (see Annex 5).

For instance, the Strategic Note for the West and Central Africa Regional Office 2022–2025 highlights the urgent need to adopt a gender-responsive approach towards climate change policy making, and strengthening the capacity of policymakers and practitioners in this area. The Strategic Note also prioritizes transition to the green economy, drawing on evidence from research undertaken jointly with the African Development Bank which shows that women are not well positioned to respond to the needs of high-quality green jobs in the future.

Women’s land rights remain an important area of work, with the Entity concentrating on bridging the gap between land law and practice and supporting the application of land legislation at the local level. Finally, the Strategic Note identifies the region’s varied migration patterns and the increasing feminization of labour migration. For the East and Southern Africa Regional Office, the current Strategic Note recognizes the importance of small-scale agriculture and cross-border trading for WEE, as two-thirds of women are employed in the informal sector. It also identifies the role of the African Continental Free Trade Area as a potential boon for women traders.

The Strategic Note for the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office mentions the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people’s lives and the economy within the region, and the disproportionate impact on women. In addition to regular and irregular labour migration, the region of Europe and Central Asia hosts many refugees and people in refugee-like situations.

Looking ahead in terms of UN Women’s overall priority policy areas for WEE, the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 highlights the following: policy frameworks to address the 5Rs of the care economy, gender-responsive decent work and financial inclusion policies, protection of the rights of migrant women workers, gender-responsive macroeconomic policies (fiscal, monetary and trade) and social protection measures, and policies to increase women’s land tenure security. Table 3 compares the three (proposed) Signature Initiatives for WEE, with priorities from the previous flagship programme initiatives, global programmes and action coalitions. Three of the five priority policy areas from the Strategic Plan are directly aligned with the proposed Signature Initiatives on WEE. It is envisioned that the work on macroeconomics will be mainstreamed across the portfolio. However, more clarity is needed on how UN Women’s work supporting the rights of migrant women will be operationalized under the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

The evaluation team surveyed stakeholders and asked them to rank the priority areas UN Women should focus on during implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025. Internal stakeholders ranked UN Women’s efforts on decent work and entrepreneurship, transforming the care economy, rural women’s economic empowerment and gender-responsive macroeconomics among the top priority areas.

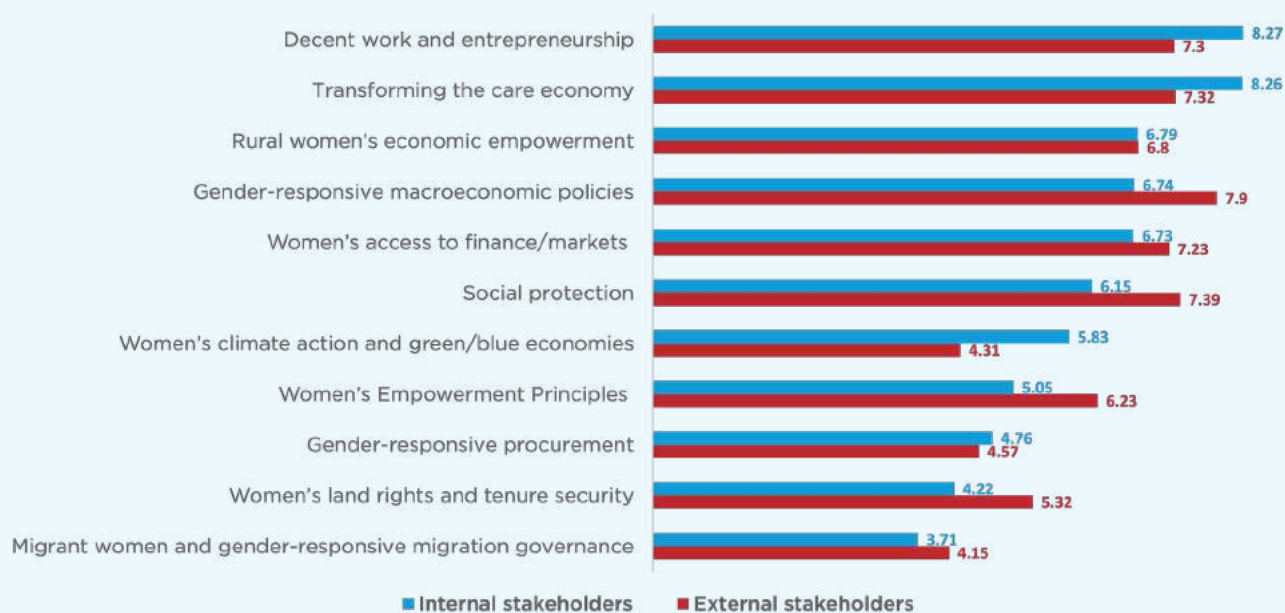
Priority area rankings from external stakeholders were similar, but with the addition of social protection and women’s access to finance as key areas to focus on in the near term (see Figure 7).<sup>29</sup>

**TABLE 3. Proposed Signature Initiatives related to WEE**

PROPOSED SIGNATURE INITIATIVES (Strategic Plan 2022-2025)	FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME INITIATIVES (Strategic Plan 2018-2021)	GLOBAL PROGRAMMES	ACTION COALITIONS (2020 onwards)
<b>Transforming Care Economy</b>	Income security through decent work and social protection	UN Women-ILO programme on care	Economic Justice and Rights
<b>Decent Work and Entrepreneurship</b>	Income security through decent work and social protection Stimulating equal opportunities for women entrepreneurs		Economic Justice and Rights
<b>Women’s climate action, green and blue economies</b>	Women’s access to land and productive resources for climate-resilient agriculture	Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment Joint Programme	Feminist Action for Climate Justice Economic Justice and Rights Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact

Source: Adapted from UN Women Signature Initiatives update and next steps, Regional Directors’ Briefing, August 2022.

<sup>29</sup> UN Women Internal personnel survey (Question 15) and External partners survey (Question 14) (see Annex 5).

**FIGURE 7. Stakeholders' weighted rankings of WEE sub-thematic areas in order of implementation priority**

Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2022).

Note: Internal Personnel Survey (Question 15) and External Partners Survey (Question 14): Rank the following WEE sub-themes in order of what you think UN Women should prioritize during implementation of the current UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Rank 1 indicates the sub-theme you think should be prioritized the most and Rank 11 the one that should be prioritized least.

### FINDING 3.

## UN Women's programming on WEE is aligned with national priorities. The Entity has also made efforts to identify and address beneficiary needs, including through a grassroots approach in some cases.

National commitments, priorities and results articulated in most Strategic Notes developed by UN Women Country Offices align with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and UN Women's Strategic Plans and include adaptations to reflect the local context and priorities. The evaluation team closely reviewed the Strategic Notes of the eight country case studies for this evaluation and found that all demonstrated alignment with national government commitments and priorities, as well as national United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

UN Women's programmes also align with beneficiary needs and aim to identify and address pressing national issues. From the eight country case studies, for example, UN Women Mexico Country Office conducted work on the care economy which was found to be relevant to the needs of women in Mexico and was informed by data, research and analysis, including the Common Country Assessment.

The Common Country Assessment highlighted that Mexico needs public policies that respond to elderly people's needs and policies that consider long-term care, including permanent care provision which currently is scarce and fragmented and is mainly provided by households and developed by women, in informal ways, with no payment or support. Stakeholders across multiple contexts and countries appreciated UN Women's role in highlighting the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on WEE through evidence-based research and analyses (e.g. the gender-responsiveness of fiscal stimulus packages).<sup>30</sup>

UN Women often undertakes needs assessments to inform its programmes, and stakeholders cited UN Women's grassroots approach as a valuable input for ensuring that women's voices and their participation are reflected in the development of gender-responsive policies. The Entity has been able to capitalize on strategic opportunities and develop close relationships with governments to facilitate implementation of gender-responsive policies when it has successfully aligned with national priorities.

<sup>30</sup> Available online at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/03/policy-brief-covid-19-and-fiscal-policy>

**4.2** To what extent is UN Women's work in WEE coherent with the work of partners and other key thematic areas? How effectively does UN Women leverage its integrated mandate?

#### FINDING 4.

**UN Women works in a coordinated way with partners at the global level and makes great efforts to enhance coherence among actors to pave the way towards a more conducive enabling environment for WEE. However, there is still scope to deepen and expand partnerships that can contribute to addressing the systemic and structural challenges for women in global economic systems.**

Both the previous Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025 emphasize the importance of working with and through partners to achieve transformational results for gender equality and women's empowerment at global, regional and country levels (see Box 2 for an example of partnerships with ILO). UN Women's also aims to enhance coherence within the enabling environment. Results from stakeholder surveys indicate that 68 per cent ( $n=26/38$ ) of external partners consider UN Women's approach to be "highly complementary" to the work and approach of other partners, and 29 per cent ( $n=11/38$ ) find it to be 'somewhat complementary.' In contrast, 53 per cent ( $n=48/90$ ) of internal respondents consider UN Women's approach to be "highly complementary," while 40 per cent ( $n=36/90$ ) consider it to be "somewhat complementary."<sup>31</sup>

Much of UN Women's normative work at the global level focuses on mainstreaming WEE within broader policies, thereby fostering a shared understanding of linkages between women's economic rights with partners across sectors. For example, within global migration policy with the ILO, IOM and OHCHR; and within climate, environment, agriculture (green, circular and blue economies) with UNEP, UNIDO, IFAD, FAO and the World Bank. In such cases, it should be remembered that there may be allegiance with relevant parts of each organization (such as an organization's gender team), but not necessarily coherence with the partnering organization as a whole.

UN Women also coordinates and supports senior management's participation in meetings of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination and participates in the UN Sustainable Development Group.

UN Women partners with diverse stakeholders to foster common goals and collective messaging through its involvement in/leading of coalitions (e.g. Generation Equality Action Coalitions for Economic Justice and Rights and Feminist Action for Climate Justice, and the Global Alliance for Care).

#### BOX 2

##### Partnering with ILO on WEE

UN Women's work with ILO spans various sub-thematic areas including decent work, social protection, the care economy and macroeconomics. Regarding normative work, UN Women works to translate ILO conventions on decent work and gender (e.g. maternity leave) into national policy.

For the Secretary General's high-level task force on WEE and the SDGs, to minimize duplicate efforts, UN Women partnered with ILO, which contributed funds to develop a three-year programme (that was then reformulated to respond to COVID-19), and collaboratively developed three applied policy tools on the care economy, response to crisis and employment.

UN Women has also worked with ILO on knowledge products, such as the recent joint publication on gender-responsive procurement and training on gender and economics. UN Women also works closely with ILO, as a fellow member of the Equal Pay International Coalition Secretariat (along with OECD) to reduce the gender pay gap by 2030 and promote equal pay for work of equal value.

At the country level, working with ILO has helped to strengthen inter-ministerial relations supporting gender ministries to communicate with finance and labour ministries; however, challenges around bureaucratic systems and the length of vetting processes before contracts can be agreed upon persist.

Overall, drawing on the ILO's economic technical expertise, knowledge and networks, and leveraging its strong gender technical expertise and networks, has enhanced efficiencies for UN Women.

The Entity has made efforts to increase its engagements with international financial institutions, which may be pivotal to UN Women's work on WEE. Engagement with these institutions to date has focused primarily on public finance.

<sup>31</sup> UN Women internal personnel survey (Question 14) and external partner survey (Question 13) (see Annex 5).

For example, UN Women and Agence Française de Développement co-chair the Gender Secretariat of the Finance in Common platform, which works with 450 public development banks on aligning methodologies and adopting best practices for gender-responsive investments. UN Women conducted a joint training course on gender and macroeconomics with the International Monetary Fund and is working on projects related to gender data with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank.<sup>32</sup>

UN Women has developed strategic memoranda of understanding with at least four international financial institutions, including the World Bank (2014), African Development Bank (2021), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2021) and the Asian Development Bank (2022). Areas of cooperation include strengthening gender data and statistics (e.g. Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development); promoting gender-responsive policy tools (Asian Development Bank); and mainstreaming WEE within policy formulation and programming (African Development Bank; see Annex 11 for further information).

The need to expand and further deepen relationships with international financial institutions and mainstream gender in global economic policy debates and decision-making is articulated in the recent Strategic Plan 2022–2025. In particular, the role that UN Women can play in analysis of and advocacy on global economic systems, and the systemic and structural issues that affect women's economic rights is vital (working with international financial institutions and other global actors). This was corroborated by key informant interviews and survey results.

## FINDING 5.

**UN Women is making commendable efforts to enhance coordination with partners such as the African Union, though there is scope to enhance working with regional economic commissions. Coherence with government partners at the national level is noteworthy, with concerted efforts to engage with finance/WEE-related government ministries in addition to ministries working on gender equality. While acknowledging the influential role of the private sector, there are concerns about potentially differing agendas on WEE policy. There are examples of engagement with CSOs in the WEE policy cycle, particularly policy implementation, but this has yet to be systematized, where relevant.**

At the regional level, there is evidence of deliberate and commendable efforts being undertaken to improve coherence, such as by the UN Women regions for East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa, working closely with the African Union Gender Directorate

External non-governmental organizational partners value UN Women's economic rights perspective and gender lens in their engagement with international financial institutions; however, UN Women personnel (at all levels) and external stakeholders expressed concern about UN Women personnel's insufficient technical capacity on macroeconomics. This concern was also highlighted in the 2014 corporate thematic evaluation on WEE.

Internal personnel surveyed for this evaluation indicated that they frequently engage with the UN system (83 per cent,  $n=73/88$ ), CSOs (78 per cent,  $n=69/89$ ), national government partners (74 per cent,  $n=67/88$ ) and women entrepreneurs (69 per cent,  $n=61/90$ ) on WEE. Fewer internal stakeholders indicated that they frequently engage with national statistics institutions (39 per cent,  $n=34/88$ ), international financial institutions (28 per cent,  $n=24/87$ ) and law enforcement (19 per cent,  $n=16/86$ ). When asked about the top three most influential actors in WEE, most internal personnel selected national governments (74 per cent,  $n=67/90$ ), private sector partners (66 per cent,  $n=59/90$ ), women entrepreneurs (57 per cent,  $n=51/90$ ) and CSOs (54 per cent,  $n=49/90$ ), followed by local governments (44 per cent,  $n=40/90$ ) and international financial institutions (34 per cent,  $n=31/90$ ). In contrast, the UN system (which is the most frequently engaged partner), was perceived as being influential by only 29 per cent ( $n=26/90$ ) of respondents. External stakeholders<sup>33</sup> perceived that CSOs (79 per cent,  $n=30/38$ ), women entrepreneurs (50 per cent,  $n=30/38$ ), national governments (45 per cent,  $n=17/38$ ) and local governments (37 per cent,  $n=14/38$ ) were the most influential actors in WEE.<sup>34</sup>

Department on developing a strategy to better align and integrate technical, advisory and policy support in partnership with Member States, regional organizations and other regional and subregional structures and institutions across the African continent.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/IFI%20Update%20ExBo%20FRS%202023%20Final.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> UN Women internal personnel survey (Question 10) and external partner survey (Question 9) (see Annex 5).

<sup>34</sup> Of note, 45 per cent of external survey respondents ( $n=17/38$ ) were from CSOs, which may suggest some bias in the responses.

<sup>35</sup> UN Women (2022). UN Women African strategy 2022-2025.



The strategy includes a specific outcome on WEE, particularly around positioning women's priorities in the centre of African Continental Free Trade Area and establishing sustainable mechanisms to enhance women's resilience to unexpected shocks through a continental gender-responsive contingency plan. In terms of work with regional economic commissions, the evaluation team found that while there are Memorandums of Understanding with regional economic commissions (information which remains unverified) setting out common areas of interest, in practice, there is limited engagement.

A positive example includes work with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (and related partners) which has resulted in the issue of unpaid care work being successfully highlighted in the region.<sup>36</sup> UN Women is also working with the African Development Bank on research related to green jobs and collaborating on country gender profiles, although the level of collaboration is said to have varied according to UN Women's available capacity, lines of communication and a lack of awareness about the Memorandum of Understanding in some cases. In Europe and Central Asia, UN Women is currently finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Economic Commission which should enable UN Women to leverage the region's unique role and access to government stakeholders and policymakers.

To align with the nationalized SDGs; prioritize WEE in gender-responsive policymaking; and in some cases, to integrate gender in national and sectoral strategies and action plans all countries develop their WEE portfolio within the broader frameworks of the UN Sustainable Development Co-operation Frameworks. Coherence with government partners is often the outcome of a longer-term process of engagement, dialogue and support. The evaluation team found high levels of coherence and coordination with government partners in all eight country case studies. For example, in Kenya, UN Women has been working to support the nation's agricultural policy since 2015. Evidence gathered through a desk review on South Africa also revealed close coherence with government actors on gender-responsive procurement work where a direct relationship with the Office of the President has been nurtured through a highly aligned approach.

While UN Women could naturally ally with gender ministries, efforts to advance WEE prompt UN Women to also seek relationships with other ministries such as ministries of finance and labour. In Pakistan, for instance, UN Women's Country Office reviewed and offered feedback on the State Bank of Pakistan "Banking for Equality" policy.

While in many cases UN Women is strategically making the connections and relationships themselves, the country case studies demonstrate that UN Women also draws upon its networks such as the World Bank and ILO to gain access and engage with relevant ministries. This enables the Entity to raise awareness and build understanding of the linkages between gender and economic policies.

While there is no overarching approach to WEE across the UN system, there are examples of synergies with other UN actors at the country level. For example, UN Women worked with UNDP on the Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus Programme, which was deemed a highly compatible partnership.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, UN Women collaborated with UNICEF, ILO and WFP on a programme to support the Government of Lebanon to develop a national road map for social protection, which effectively leveraged the strengths of each organization.<sup>38</sup>

Stakeholders suggested that UN Women should engage more with parts of the UN system and intergovernmental bodies that deal with macroeconomics (e.g. ECOSOC, DESA) to remain close to the economic paradigm. The evaluation team also found examples of missed partnership opportunities with non-UN agencies, such as a collaboration proposed by the Kenya Country Office to partner with the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR) on climate-resilient agriculture policies.

While there is evidence of some important and complementary relationships with the private sector, particularly through the Women's Empowerment Principles, and examples of strong alignment (e.g. development of a 'Global Women's Safety Framework' with Unilever to address safety concerns for safe passage to work and confidential reporting channels for cases of harassment, and work with companies to implement gender-responsive procurement policies) the evaluation team learned of some concerns that the private sector agenda on WEE differed from UN Women's. This suggests a need to conduct strategic and crucial conversations about how and when UN Women will engage the private sector.<sup>39</sup>

UN Women facilitates and supports the engagement of CSOs within the wider context and framework of the CSW. For example, the evaluation team found several cases of UN Women engaging CSOs within policy actualization, such as implementation of land tenure security policies in Liberia, and development of gender-responsive climate-resilient agriculture guidelines and monitoring of agriculture and development policies in Kenya. Less evidence was found regarding UN Women's facilitation of CSO engagement in policy advocacy of WEE, although one example included gender-responsive procurement advocacy in South Africa.

<sup>36</sup> UN Women (2022). Corporate Evaluation on UN Women's Policy Advocacy Work.

<sup>37</sup> UN Women (2021). Final Evaluation of Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus Project.

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF & ILO (2020). Social Protection in Lebanon: Bridging the Immediate Response.

<sup>39</sup> See also UN Women (2022). Evaluation of UN Women's contributions to women's economic empowerment through private sector engagement in Asia and the Pacific.

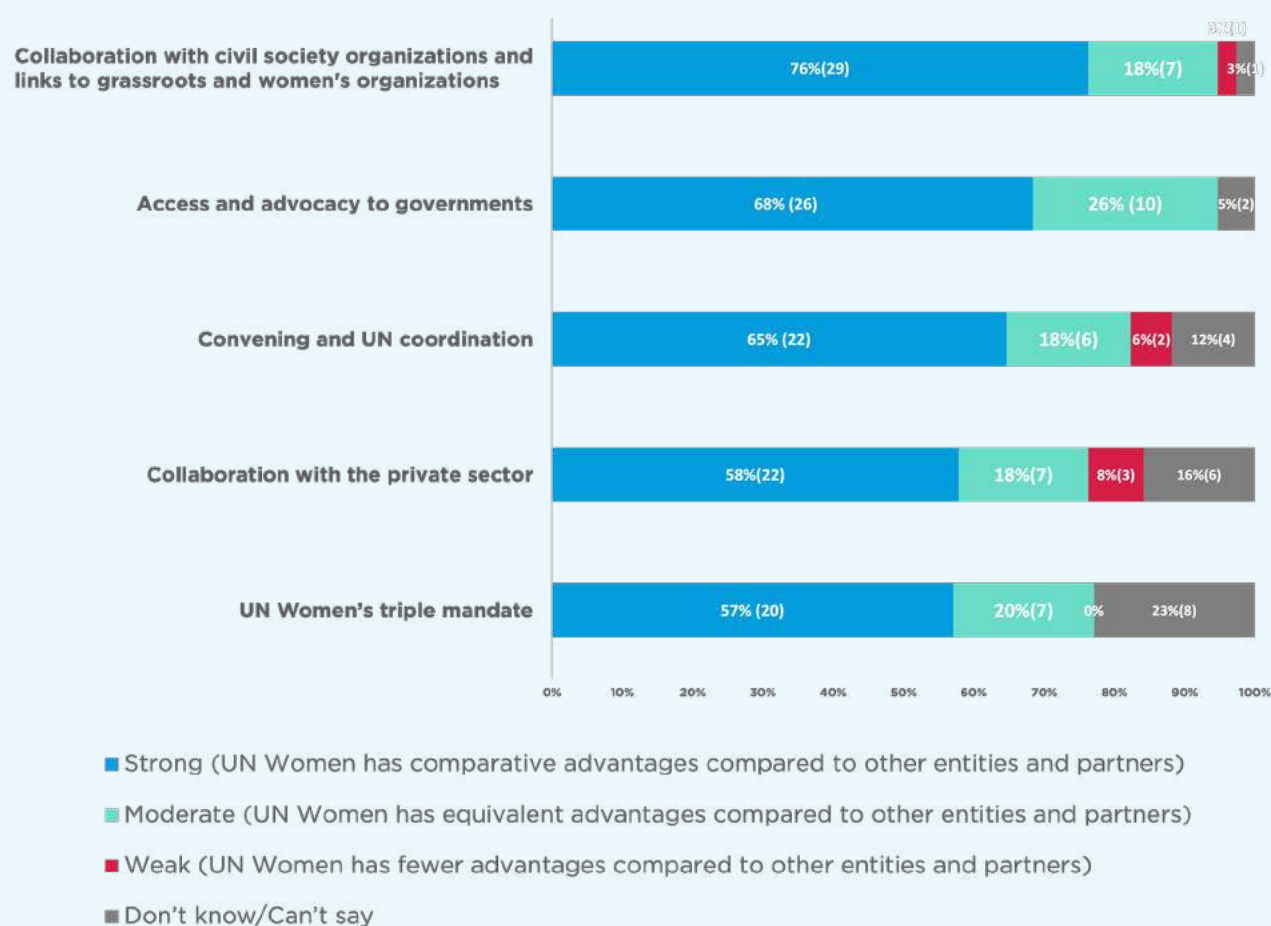
**FINDING 6.**

**UN Women has comparative strengths in supporting the development of WEE laws, frameworks and policies given its focus on the economic empowerment of women and girls, its direct engagement with national government partners and convening power among a range of actors.**

Among its partnerships work within WEE policy change, the evaluation team found UN Women’s comparative strengths to include: its unique mandate and leadership on gender equality and women’s empowerment issues within the UN; its ability to work through national governments to affect change at large scale; its convening power among a range of different actors at all levels (government, CSO, private sector, academic institutions); its ability to generate and disseminate evidence-based research to inform policy dialogue; its internal skills and capacities; and its access to external expertise.<sup>40</sup>

External survey respondents rated “collaboration with CSOs and links to grassroots and women’s organizations” (76 per cent,  $n=29/38$ ), and “access and advocacy to governments” (68 per cent,  $n=26/38$ ) as UN Women’s highest rated comparative advantages. In contrast, they rated “collaboration with the private sector” and “UN Women’s triple mandate” as UN Women’s lowest comparative advantages (see Figure 8).<sup>41</sup>

**FIGURE 8. External partners’ ratings of UN Women’s comparative advantages in the context of advancing WEE**



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2022).

Note. External Partners Survey (Question 11): How would you rate UN Women’s comparative advantage in the following areas in the context of advancing WEE?

<sup>40</sup> UN Women (2021). Ethiopia Country Programme Evaluation.

<sup>41</sup> Of note, 45 per cent of external survey respondents ( $n=17/38$ ) were from CSOs, which may suggest some bias in the responses.

**FINDING 7.**

**There are positive examples of UN Women employing its integrated mandate (normative, coordination, operational) and enhancing the enabling environment to realize women and girls' economic rights. However, there remains scope to systematically strengthen the mutually reinforcing links among operational, coordination and normative work in this area.**

The desk review of regional and country evaluations related to WEE resulted in several examples where UN Women employed its integrated mandate. For example, an evaluation of UN Women's WEE work in the Americas and the Caribbean region found that UN Women has been capitalizing on its integrated mandate and working within the framework of international treaties, providing support to the development of national norms and policies as well as operational work.<sup>42</sup> Ethiopia's Country Portfolio Evaluation noted that the strength and impact of the integrated mandate is evident within WEE work, through a multi-pronged approach, conducting normative work to strengthen global standards and commitments; operational work supporting implementation of international standards and partnerships with civil society; and coordination work to ensure coherence and accountability across the UN system in support of commitments for gender equality and women's empowerment.

UN Women is mandated to lead, promote and coordinate efforts to advance the full realization of women's rights and opportunities within the UN system. Generally, as part of this function, UN Women coordinates and supports senior management's participation in meetings of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination as well as participation in the UN Sustainable Development Group.

Of the 32 projects reviewed in depth for this evaluation, half ( $n=16/32$ ) were programmes implemented jointly with other UN agencies: UNDP (8), ILO (7) and UNICEF (5) were the most frequently engaged partners. Other UN partner agencies include IOM, OHCHR, FAP, UNCDF, UNIDO and WFP. The scope and depth of partnership varies by project, as does UN Women's role in the partnership. For example, the Joint Action on Women's Economic Empowerment (JAWEE) programme in Georgia required better synergies with a broader range of UN agencies (i.e. UNDP, FAO, UNIDO) to address different structural barriers for the economic inclusion of women.<sup>43</sup>

Some examples indicated the need to strengthen inter-linkages. For instance, in Tanzania, national level policy work achieved to date could be further complemented with grassroots engagement and work with local governments to build a stronger enabling environment to address root causes of gender discrimination. Similarly, in Cameroon, it was recommended that in addition to its work with the national government, UN Women's work should also support CSOs and women's movements to articulate the demands within national policy dialogue.<sup>44</sup>

**FINDING 8.**

**The absence of a specific organizing framework for WEE has impacted the strategic direction, key definitions and conceptual underpinnings of UN Women's work in this area, thereby limiting the internal coherence of the WEE thematic area.**

While there is significant focus and coherence within sub-thematic areas of WEE, there is currently no single specific organizing framework or strategy for WEE that can provide a vision for the work, strategic direction or priorities (beyond those set out within the Strategic Plans). Efforts were made to address this within UN Women's 2016 flagship progress report, which presented a policy agenda for economic systems with women's rights at the centre; however, it did not gain traction or ownership within UN Women's work on WEE.

Internal stakeholders confirmed this, but were unable to provide strong reasons why it was the case. The evaluation team did not find any documents providing guidance to WEE personnel (across headquarters, Regional Offices or Country Offices) regarding the approach and conceptual underpinnings for UN Women's work on WEE or definitions to ensure a common understanding of related terms. The lack of a clear internal vision for the WEE thematic area was also a finding raised in the 2014 evaluation.

<sup>42</sup> UN Women (2020). Regional Evaluation: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Americas and Caribbean.

<sup>43</sup> UN Women (2021). Final Evaluation of the Project "A Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia."

<sup>44</sup> UN Women (2021). Country Portfolio Evaluation of Cameroon.

Additionally, numerous stakeholders mentioned that the four-year leadership vacuum (mid-2017 to early 2022) in the EE section negatively affected the overall strategic direction of work on WEE and impacted the identity of the EE section, as well as its internal architecture and personnel.

In the absence of a strategy on WEE, some Country Offices have developed their own conceptual frameworks to support internal coherence, some adapting frameworks from other organizations. In the country case studies for example, the evaluation team learned that the Georgia Country Office used conceptual frameworks from the High-Level Panel on WEE as well as ILO conventions to overcome barriers and enabling factors on WEE.<sup>45</sup>

The Egypt Country Office developed a ‘pyramid approach’ that supports the targeting of marginalized women (those most at risk of poverty) through tailored modalities, the “missing middle” (middle class women with tertiary education) and women in leadership/management positions.

Changes in the structure of the EE section have also led to concerns about the internal coherence of the WEE thematic area. Certain areas of work (such as Women’s Empowerment Principles) have been moved to different sections at headquarters, leading to fragmentation of the WEE portfolio. On the other hand, the engagement with international financial institutions has recently been moved to the EE section, with links to the Financing for Gender Equality Hub providing the appropriate internal architecture to strengthen work with these institutions and public finance.

UN Women’s work on migration sits within the EE section but has not been included within a Signature Initiative and was not included among the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 indicators.

The development of a WEE thematic strategy in 2022 is a promising opportunity to clarify the strategic direction and foster greater coherence on related issues, particularly with the position of Chief of EE now having been filled.

## FINDING 9.

**Cross-thematic linkages are evident in some country-level policy engagement work particularly between WEE and gender-based violence, and WEE and gender-responsive budgeting. At headquarters level, there is strong collaboration between WEE and the Research and Data Division, and WEE and the Intergovernmental Division. There is scope to enhance cross-thematic coordination.**

At the country level, cross-thematic collaboration occurs quite organically. The evaluation team found strong examples among the eight country case studies where WEE programmes involved cross-thematic linkages, such as with Ending Violence Against Women, e.g. in Tanzania, where a programme to enhance land security tenure and the economic agency of women and girls included working with local government systems to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

Among other sectors, the evaluation team found ongoing collaborations with UN Women’s broader work on gender-responsive budgeting. In Kenya, work on the gender mainstreaming of climate-resilient agriculture policies included capacity building, training and advocacy to local governments on the importance of budgeting for gender-responsive policies. Within the WEE programme in the South Caucasus, gender-responsive budgeting has helped to address women’s local level decision-making needs. However, within the eight country case studies, the evaluation team found only limited linkages of normative WEE work with women’s governance and participation in public life, and peace and security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction.

The evaluation team did not identify any cross-thematic ‘mapping’ of factors by the EE section, that show linkages between WEE and other thematic/sub-thematic areas. While links between WEE, poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth are articulated,<sup>46</sup> they are not expanded upon to consider cross-thematic linkages. For example, within the wider literature the links between gender-based violence and WEE show that gender-based violence can create a barrier for economic opportunity and growth; WEE can increase confidence and independence and reduce the likelihood of living in abusive situations; however, gender-based violence can also be an unintended consequence of economic activity.

As mentioned above, there was evidence of collaboration between some divisions at headquarters, but it was not consistent, and collaborations were typically less focused on cross-sectoral work and more on drawing on the services of a given division.

<sup>45</sup> ILO’s Convention on the Rights of Women with Family Responsibilities and on Sexual Harassment.

<sup>46</sup> UN Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment>

The evaluation team found significant collaboration between WEE efforts and the Research and Data Division, including around decent work and entrepreneurship, land access gender and climate change. This involved collecting data to inform programming and programme documents; individual research and analysis; and a COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker, among other materials. Stakeholders highlighted the need for increased collaborations to develop products that can add to policy-level discussions at national and regional levels.

There has also been close work between the WEE portfolio and the Intergovernmental Division, particularly around CSW themes that relate to WEE (as described in Finding 1) as would be expected in UN Women's efforts to support Member States.

The cross-thematic outcomes of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 suggest there will be systems, mechanisms and potential changes to the internal architecture of UN Women which could further facilitate cross-sectoral work in the future.

**4.3 To what extent have UN Women's efforts in this area led to demonstrable impact/outcomes? What metrics exist to measure progress?**

## FINDING 10.

**UN Women's reporting on contributions to the development and strengthening of WEE laws, frameworks and policies shows progress in many areas, though some results may be inconsistently reported. Evidence collected from case studies shows significant contribution through constructive and agile engagement within the policy change process.**

During 2018–2021, according to UN Women's management monitoring and reporting data, the Entity contributed to 44 countries having a stronger legal, regulatory and policy environment to advance WEE. It was also reported that UN Women contributed to the development and/or implementation of 53 gender-responsive macroeconomic policies, 41 gender-responsive fiscal stimulus packages, 114 laws and policies promoting women's access to decent employment, 69 laws and policies on gender-responsive social protection systems, and 85 laws and regulations on the care economy.<sup>47</sup> The Strategic Plan target attainment rate reported by management for the related indicators ranges from 91 per cent to over 150 per cent with a mean attainment rate of 124 per cent and a median of 140 per cent,<sup>48</sup> showing a high level of achievement (see Annex 6 for more details).<sup>49</sup>

These results suggest an extremely high level of achievement and in some cases, overachievement, on the indicators. However, closer scrutiny shows that Country Offices are interpreting and reporting on some of the indicators differently. In particular, the indicator on the development of macroeconomic policies shows that UN Women is not only reporting on macroeconomic policies (such as support to gender-responsive fiscal policy in Jordan, and the Economic and Social Development Plan in Niger) but in some instances included efforts that overlap with other indicators, such as land policies (10), decent work (3), care (1) and other sectoral policies.

For the indicator on land policies, some Country Offices are reporting more generally on agricultural policies rather than purely on the development and/or implementation of land policies. Furthermore, counting outputs varies with some Country Offices reporting for each activity (e.g. three training sessions) rather than a policy-level change. Overall, this suggests a need to improve the consistency of interpretation, clarity of guidance and definitions, and overall quality checks on reporting.

Therefore, assessment of the role and relative influence of UN Women in the policy/legislative process requires more in-depth analysis through case studies, which helps to encapsulate the complex reality and long-term nature of WEE policy/legislative change.

It also shows that efforts made to support the policy engagement process, such as framing debates; establishing issues on the appropriate agendas; affecting the awareness, attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders; capacity development of government staff; provision of technical support; generation of research-based evidence; and the convening of multiple stakeholders within the policy engagement process, are not always being reliably reported on or adequately reflected in corporate reporting.

<sup>47</sup> UN Women (2022). Report of the Under-Secretary/ED of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on Progress Made on the Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

<sup>48</sup> Drawn from reporting on Outcome 3 outputs related to strengthening WEE laws, frameworks and policies (8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 9.4, 9.5, 10.1).

<sup>49</sup> During the four-year period there was some under-attainment against annual targets (particularly 8.1 and 8.4), but results accelerated in subsequent years. Continual over-attainment (e.g. indicator 10.1) may suggest that the indicators could have been revised.

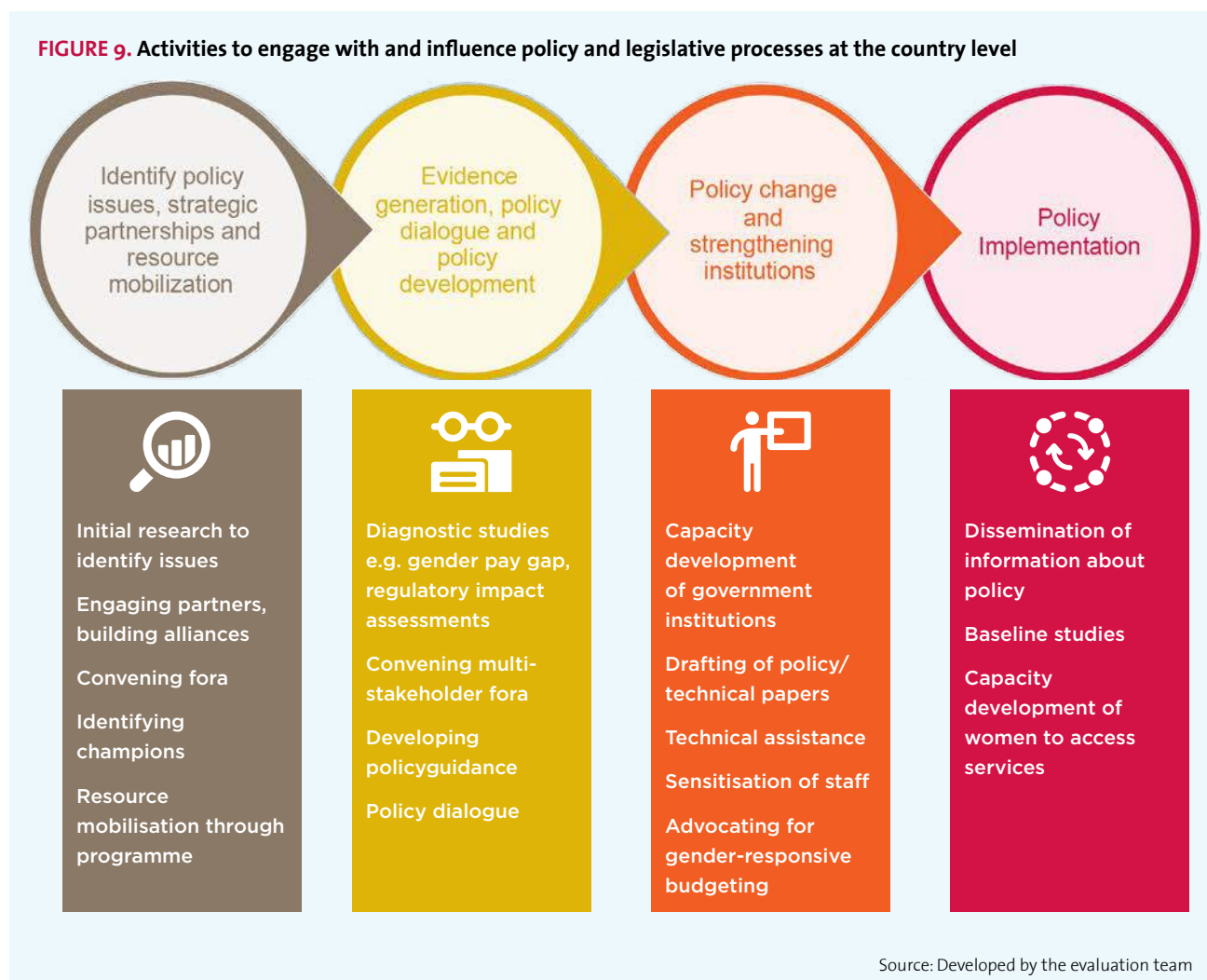
This evaluation's country case studies provide an opportunity to explore the pathways of policy/legislative change and UN Women's contributions, deepening our analysis. Annex 10 provides examples of policy engagements that have been reviewed across the country case studies. Interestingly among the 14 policy engagements explored within the eight case studies, at least seven are on the path to policy/legislative change, but are yet to achieve a change that could be reported as a 'result' within UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 monitoring data (see Annex 6). Some Country Offices have created their own country-level indicators that offer examples of 'progress markers' towards policy change (e.g. the Mexico Country Office that included indicators around forums convened, capacity development and technical assistance initiatives and evidence-based knowledge products).

Policy change can take multiple years. In Paraguay, for example, UN Women identified care work as one of the least recognized aspects of the economy in 2011 which, following efforts with partners (including diagnostic

studies, a time use survey, workshops, capacity development and convening) resulted in the Ministry of Social Development including care within the National Poverty Reduction Plan of 2017/2018.

Country Offices regularly carry out activities along the four stages of the policy development process (see Figure 9) in their efforts to engage with and influence the policy/legislative process.<sup>50</sup> If the eight country case studies that were selected for this evaluation represent UN Women Country Offices across the globe well, then considerable 'groundwork' has been carried out by UN Women at the initial stage of identifying policy issues, developing strategic partnerships and mobilizing resources. This includes identifying policy positions (e.g. on gender and the green economy in West and Central Africa); developing partnerships; and identifying champions within government and resource mobilization. The importance of being 'present' and engaging from the outset of any policy discussion (even while seeking resources) is crucial.

**FIGURE 9. Activities to engage with and influence policy and legislative processes at the country level**



<sup>50</sup> Drawn from UN Women (2022) Corporate Evaluation on UN Women's policy advocacy work.

The evaluation team also found significant evidence of UN Women's contribution on evidence generation, policy dialogue and policy development including connecting actors (e.g. establishment of permanent dialogue mechanisms between social actors and national authorities around the care economy in Mexico); convening multi-stakeholder forums; conducting diagnostic studies (e.g. regulatory impact assessments, gender pay gaps studies in Georgia); and developing policy guidance (e.g. for policymakers around gender-responsive procurement in Lebanon, and a policy guidance tool to facilitate design, implementation and monitoring of land policies through a gender lens).<sup>51</sup>

According to Strategic Plan 2018–2021 reporting, 27 countries have strengthened capacities to implement women's empowerment policies, informed by socioeconomic impact assessments and focusing on at-risk populations. However, internal stakeholders indicated that the number of personnel needed to engage with governments at this stage was often beyond expectations.

At the stage of policy change and strengthening of institutions, UN Women has played a decisive role by drafting policy/technical papers (e.g. policy amendments to promote women's access to decent work in Egypt); strengthening government staff capacity; providing technical assistance (e.g. drafting legislation on the national care system and evidence-based policy making in Mexico); conducting gender-equality sensitization; and advocating for resourcing of WEE policies (e.g. through local government systems in Kenya). At this stage in the process, UN Women personnel report facing challenges in having adequate expertise to draw upon to support the process and reduce the time it takes for changes to take effect in government systems (e.g. negotiation of a women-only agriculture programme in Georgia has taken one year).

At the final stage of policy implementation, UN Women has demonstrated a continuously active role when it comes to WEE efforts, including through dissemination of information about changes in policy (e.g. a campaign to raise awareness on labour rights of domestic workers in Mexico; and awareness raising on community radio regarding land tenure rights in Tanzania).

On the 'demand side' UN Women has supported the capacity development of women to access those services available as a result of policy changes (e.g. gender-responsive procurement to be able to access policy provisions and funds), including through simplifying policy documents. Baseline studies, such as that in Zanzibar on blue economy policies, have also been carried out so that any policy change can be tracked. Common challenges at this stage include concerns about policy reversal with changes of government/leadership and/or a lack of adequate systems to monitor the implementation of policy changes and assess results.

Country Offices also support government partners purely in implementation of policies when gender-responsive policies are already in place. In Tanzania, for example, the Country Office (working with USAID) is supporting implementation of land tenure rights for women, which are already enshrined in law through land demarcation. From the country case studies, the evaluation team found that Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania Country Offices are supporting implementation of procurement laws that set aside a percentage of all procurement opportunities to women and other special, often marginalized groups.

Figures 10 and 11 below provide example timelines of policy engagements reviewed in detail from among the evaluation's eight country case studies. Figure 10 shows the Georgia Country Office's efforts on decent work, specifically on closing the gender pay gap and women's labour rights (2018–2021). As shown in Figure 10, activities undertaken at different stages of the policy dialogue include conduct of a gender-impact assessment and gender pay gap analysis. The role of other actors (e.g. government partners, in particular, the statistical body GEOSTAT and the Parliamentary Gender Equality Council) is also represented. Internal and external factors, such as Georgia's goal of European Union accession, and its implications for adhering to decent work standards, can also be captured.

<sup>51</sup> Available online: <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/who-we-are/initiatives/landrights-and-sdgs>

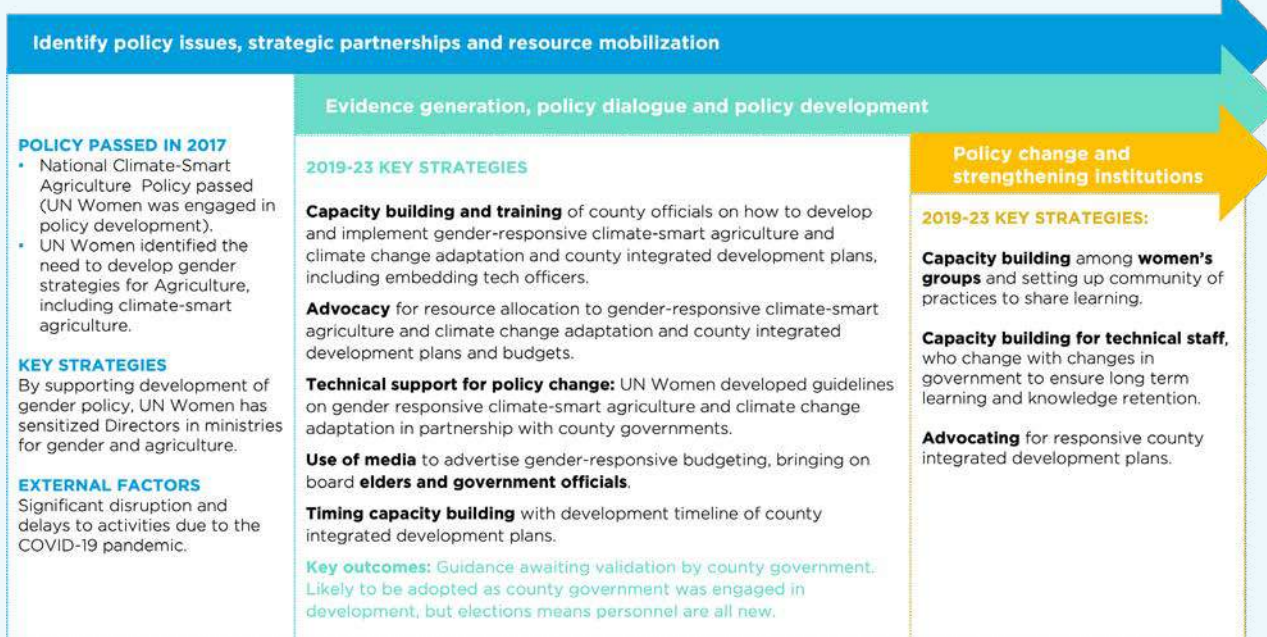
**FIGURE 10.** Closing the gender pay gap and on women's labour rights in Georgia (2018–2021)

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

Figure 11 shows the Kenya Country Office's work on WEE to mainstream gender within the country's climate-resilient agriculture policy. The policy was passed in 2017 and UN Women supported policy dialogues by undertaking capacity building, technical support and guidance (in partnership with subnational governments) on how to develop and implement gender-responsive climate-resilient agriculture.

The Kenya Country Office has also advocated for the inclusion of gender-responsive, climate-resilient agriculture in local development plans such as County Integrated Development Plan, with a view to sustainability and future funding for such policies. The role of other actors, including engagement from media sources to build awareness and awareness raising among elders and community leaders is also highlighted in Figure 11.



**FIGURE 11. Mainstreaming gender in climate-smart agriculture policies in Kenya (2017-2023)**

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

Notwithstanding that the WEE policy processes reviewed are complex, take time to change and that it is difficult to identify the key factors that caused policy to change (or not), including when attempting to isolate the impact of each individual activity, evidence from the country case studies and episode studies show that UN Women has made significant direct contributions to policy and legislative change processes through the various activities described.

The stakeholders surveyed also indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that UN Women's efforts in advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE have led to demonstrable impact/outcomes (internal personnel: 78 per cent,  $n=70/90$ ; external partners: 89 per cent,  $n=34/38$ ). These results suggest a step change from the 2014 evaluation which recommended that UN Women should do more to mainstream gender in national policies.<sup>52</sup>

## FINDING 11.

**Although it is highly plausible that UN Women's contribution to WEE policy/legislative change has had positive effects on the livelihoods of women and girls, there is limited monitoring data to draw upon. The need to assess the impacts of WEE policy/legislative change on the livelihoods of women and girls is increasingly recognized; however, it is a challenging area, particularly given current capacity constraints.**

The evaluation team found pockets of evidence demonstrating the impacts of WEE policy/legislative changes on the livelihoods of women and girls. For example, an independent evaluation of the Ethiopia country programme highlighted that the Country Office's interventions in WEE resulted in positive shifts in women's access and control over resources, including land titles, working premises and facilities; and in their economic autonomy. Evaluation case study interviews helped to identify some changes that have been observed. In Kenya, for instance, training support provided to women has led to an increase in the number of women gaining procurement opportunities and contracts.

In Tanzania, support to the actualization of the policy on land tenure is reported to have increased access to land, finances (through the use of land collateral) and agricultural production for women.

Numerous stakeholders, across all levels of UN Women, raised the need to systematically understand and monitor policy impacts. However, it is well-known that monitoring policy impact is challenging, and UN Women is not alone in its need to find better solutions for monitoring. As mentioned in the broader literature, and in interviews with stakeholders, assessing policy impact is notoriously challenging given issues in determining causality; the influence of external factors; data limitations; and the length of time required to achieve impact.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> UN Women (2014). An Empowered Future: Corporate evaluation of UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment.

<sup>53</sup> CDC. Brief 5: Evaluating Policy Impact. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/pdfs/policy/Brief%205-a.pdf>

However, certain areas could be further explored to understand the impact of UN Women's contributions. For example, if used well, Theories of Change can articulate how change happened; clarify UN Women's role in contributing to change; and define and test critical assumptions. Furthermore, drawing on the portfolio review conducted for this evaluation, it was apparent that of the 32 programmes reviewed, some, but not all, programmes included Theories of Change, which could be used as a pathway to articulate the impact of policy on livelihoods.

Other opportunities to reflect policy impact include capturing Stories of Change or employing a Most Significant Change methodology. WEE stakeholders at headquarters noted that Country Offices are often aware of excellent and significant stories of impact that reflect UN Women's efforts, but lack the human resources, data skills and/or information to disseminate and demonstrate UN Women's impact.

Notably, the Nepal Country Office's use of qualitative monitoring methodologies to capture invisible changes is now being systematized for the WEE programme, and UN Women has designed an innovative co-creation initiative that aims to (a) understand and measure the patterns of change in social norms and harmful practices through storytelling; and (b) find ways to influence relations between individuals and across social institutions to achieve more transformative programming for gender equality. This initiative could be an excellent learning opportunity for the organization.

Fostering 'accountability champions' and strengthening women and communities to monitor and hold governments accountable are other options to potentially pursue. Although the evaluation team did not come across many examples where CSOs are engaging or having their voices amplified in the dialogue process on a large platform, one example was the Kenya Country Office which is building the capacity of women in rural communities to participate in public forums and influence the process of formulation, implementation and monitoring of the county's climate-resilient agriculture policies and plans.

## FINDING 12.

**One of UN Women's key contributions has been generating research and evidence to inform WEE debates and support the policy dialogue/development process. The application of methodologies for the diagnostic analysis of the gender responsiveness of policies/legislation has particular relevance across the organization.**

UN Women has developed a wide spectrum of knowledge products to inform the policy engagement process (see Annex 12 for selected WEE documents collated by the evaluation team). WEE knowledge products tend to be initiated and developed independently by Country Offices (with some exceptions such as the ILO–UN Women Care Economy Policy Tool). The evaluation team found that targets related to knowledge products are included within country-level Strategic Notes and IRRF indicators. Knowledge products vary in typology and include guides to support gender-disaggregated WEE statistics, evidence-based research, thematic papers, policy briefs, technical papers, training manuals and reflective pieces. The desk review and country case studies for this evaluation corroborated UN Women's significant contribution to WEE policy/legislation, which echoes a finding from UN Women's 2014 corporate evaluation of WEE noting that UN Women harnesses an important comparative strength in evidence generation work to influence policy processes.<sup>54</sup>

Another strength emerging from this evaluation is UN Women's role in recognizing that issues exist despite limited available evidence to initiate and inform debates (e.g. analysis of the green jobs' economy and gender within West Africa, and analysis of the blue economy and jobs in Zanzibar). Stakeholders noted UN Women's openness to acknowledge the lack of data/knowledge in some areas, and drive to generate relevant data and research. Some knowledge products are notably demand-led (such as the development of a baseline report on gender mainstreaming in social protection in Lebanon; and an analysis of the care economy in Mexico, including the development of methodology to estimate the costs and returns of investments in care services and a geospatial knowledge framework for WEE and care systems).<sup>55</sup> Other knowledge products led by Country Offices are ensuring national ownership, such as Georgia's Country Office which facilitated a time-use survey with support from an expert resourced by UN Women and implementation was carried out by the national government.

<sup>54</sup> UN Women (2020). Regional Evaluation: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Americas and Caribbean.

<sup>55</sup> UN Women (2021). Annual Report.

There is also direct collaboration with gender statistics bureaus, e.g. the Women Count Programme of the Research and Data Division and the Global Center of Excellence on Gender Statistics in Mexico.

However, it is important to highlight the need to intensify work in this area of WEE. Alongside the work that UNDESA is carrying out, it was also noted there is a strong need for more data on the sub-thematic area of migration (across host and recipient countries).

UN Women has significantly contributed to the generation of data on the impacts of COVID-19 on women and WEE. Forty-four countries reported having strengthened capacities to undertake gender-responsive socioeconomic impact assessments in response to the COVID-19 crisis, with a focus on at-risk populations. A number of countries also conducted rapid assessments and responses to data gaps around COVID-19 and WEE, which were considered to be swift and well formulated (e.g. the implications of COVID-19 for gender equality,<sup>56</sup> the care economy,<sup>57</sup> and migrant women<sup>58</sup>) including at the country level (e.g. in Georgia around impacts on domestic workers<sup>59</sup> and health care workers<sup>60</sup>).

The role of different methodologies, particularly to apply ex-ante to policy/legislative processes, emerged as an area of significant value to Country Offices and partners. These include time-use surveys widely implemented to inform care economy work (e.g. Mexico and Georgia); gender impact assessment methodologies for ex-ante gender analysis of policies; participatory gender audits; and tools developed to consider the impact of COVID-19 on women. Annex 9 includes a summary of the tools, their origin and purpose. Such methodologies are considered by both internal and external stakeholders to be a critical part of UN Women's contribution to the policy identification and development process.

There have also been commendable efforts to provide guidance on the use of methodologies such as the gender impact assessment methodology used by the Georgia Country Office,<sup>61</sup> and synthesis lessons on time-use methodologies produced by headquarters with an added assessment of issues and challenges encountered.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> UN Women (2020). From insights to action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19.

<sup>57</sup> UN Women (2020). COVID-19 and the care economy: Immediate action and structural transformation for a gender-responsive recovery.

<sup>58</sup> UN Women (2020). Guidance Note for Action: Addressing the Emerging Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migrant Women in Asia and the Pacific for a Gender-Responsive Recovery.

<sup>59</sup> UN Women (2020). Assessment of COVID-19 and the Implications for Domestic Workers.

<sup>60</sup> UN Women (2020). Assessment of COVID-19's Impact on Women Employed in the Health Care Sector in Georgia.

<sup>61</sup> UN Women (2021). Gender Impact Assessment Methodology.

<sup>62</sup> UN Women (2021). Measuring time use: An assessment of issues and challenges in conducting time-use surveys with special emphasis on developing countries.

#### 4.4 What efforts have been made to ensure efficiency of programming and sustainability of benefits and efforts in this area?

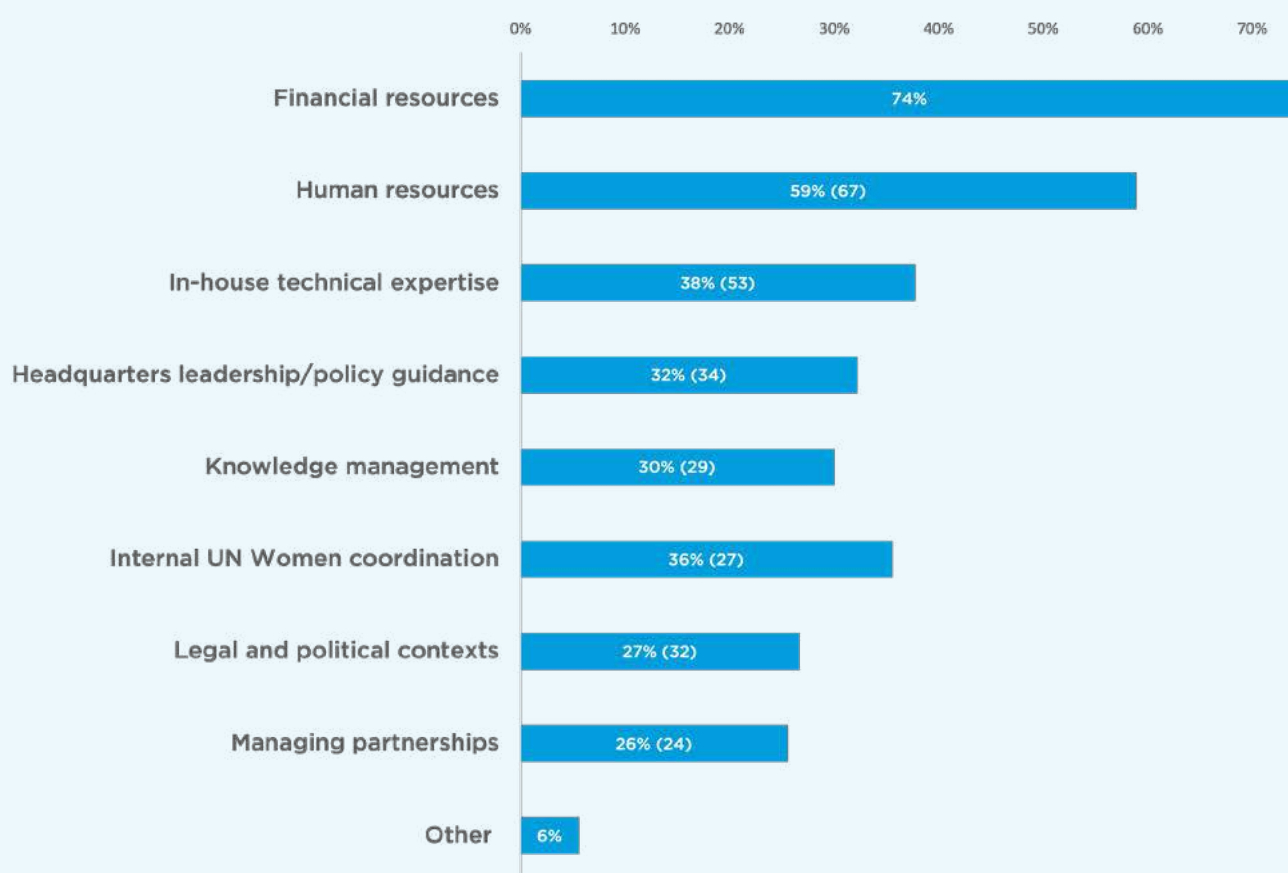
### FINDING 13.

**The budget for WEE 2018–2021 was the lowest of all the UN Women thematic areas and did not reflect its broad mandate or strategic priority. Core funding, which is already limited, declined during the period, and the consequent reliance on non-core funding has led to a portfolio of shorter-term project funding. Human resources for the EE section are stretched and many positions are funded through short-term project funding which are not synchronized with longer-term policy change work.**

The survey results showed that 75 per cent ( $n=64/86$ ) of internal respondents ‘strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’ when asked if they have sufficient human resources to draw upon; moreover, 78 per cent ( $n=63/81$ ) ‘strongly disagreed’ or ‘disagreed’ when asked if they have sufficient financial resources to effectively deliver work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies.<sup>63</sup>

UN Women personnel considered financial resources (74 per cent,  $n=67/90$ ), human resources (59 per cent,  $n=53/90$ ) and in-house technical expertise (38 per cent,  $n=34/90$ ) to be the most significant challenges to achieving UN Women’s goals on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies (see Figure 12).<sup>64</sup>

**FIGURE 12. Internal personnel’s perceptions of UN Women’s challenges in advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships related to WEE**



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September–October 2022).

Note. Internal Personnel Survey (Question 23): In which of the following areas does UN Women face the greatest challenges in achieving its goals on gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships to advance WEE? Please select up to three areas.

<sup>63</sup> UN Women Internal personnel survey (Question 21) (see Annex 5).

<sup>64</sup> UN Women Internal personnel survey (Question 23) (see Annex 5).

## Financial resources

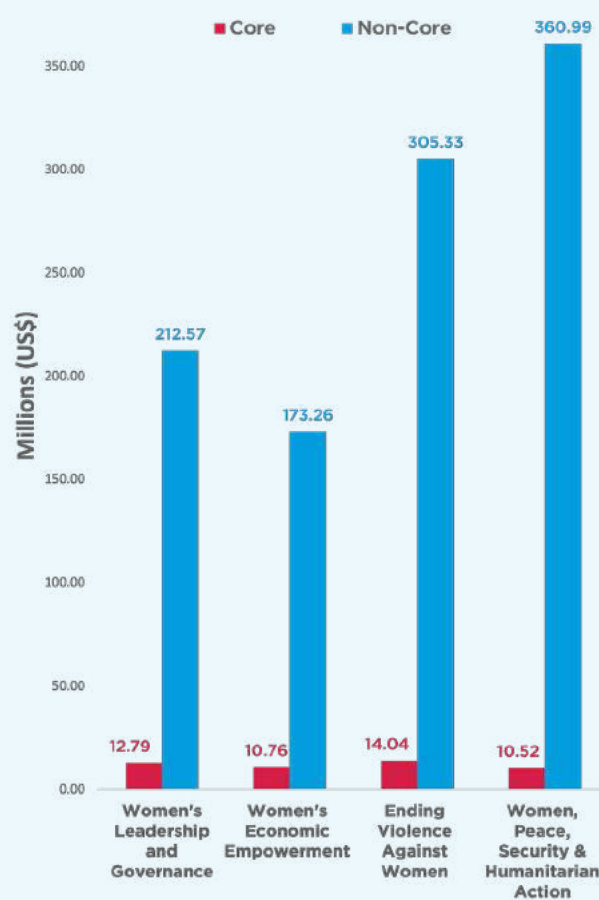
During the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, WEE was the lowest resourced thematic area with a budget totalling US\$ 184 million, when compared to the other three thematic areas (see Figure 13). The budget for WEE constituted 17 per cent of the overall budget, though the annual figures for UN Women’s budget for the WEE portfolio nearly doubled from 2018 to 2021 (see Figure 14).

WEE had the second lowest allocation of core resources compared to other thematic areas during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 cycle at US\$ 10.76 million. Ending Violence Against Women and Women’s Leadership and Governance had slightly higher funding, but overall, core resources remained low across thematic areas (ranging from 4 to 6 per cent of total funding). While overall funding for the WEE portfolio grew during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 cycle, core resources invested in WEE during 2018 reduced to half by 2021.

Multiple internal stakeholders raised concerns about the low level of core resources, and high dependence on generating funds from alternative sources (i.e. non-core funds). A reliance on non-core funds led to more donor-driven programmes/projects which were often of a shorter time frame and contributed to less stable and predictable funding streams.

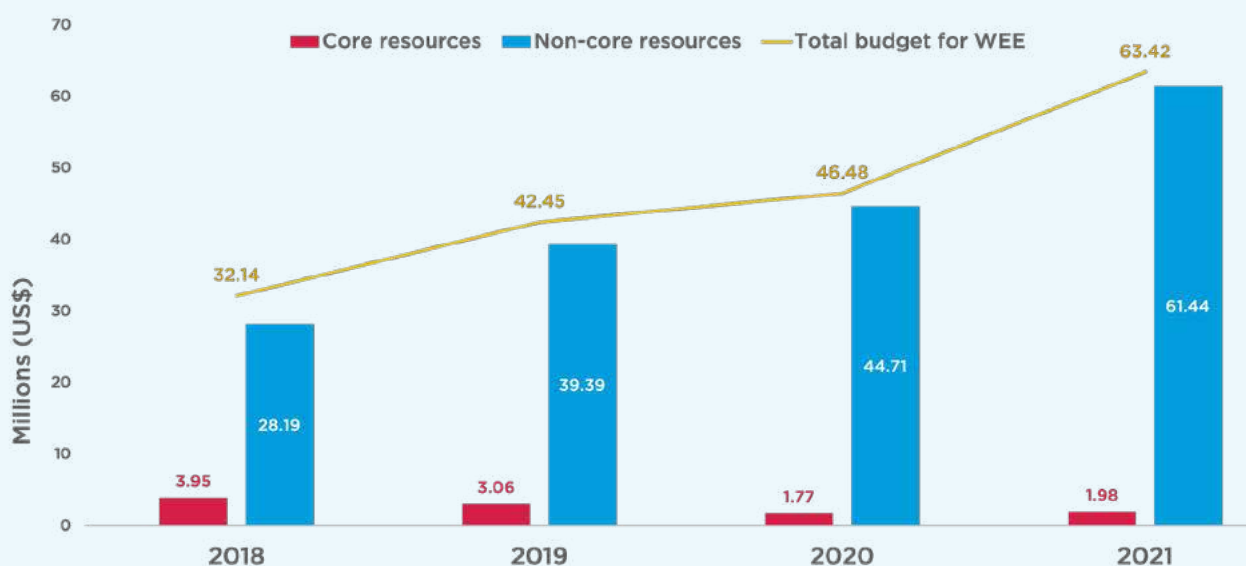
To verify the concerns raised during the interviews, the evaluation team reviewed 194 donor agreements that were tagged as WEE for the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period and found that 49 per cent of WEE-related agreements were short-term with projects lasting less than two years. Only 13 per cent of WEE-related agreements had funding cycles of four or more years (see Table 4). The average (median) programme was two to three years long and valued at an average of US\$ 1.1 million.

**FIGURE 13. Core and non-core funding across UN Women’s thematic areas (2018–2021)**



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women’s RMS dashboard (May 2022)

**FIGURE 14. Annual budget for WEE by funding type (2018–2021)**



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women’s RMS dashboard (May 2022)

**TABLE 4. Duration of donor-funded agreements related to WEE<sup>65</sup>**

Agreement duration	# of agreements	Per cent	Average amount (US\$)
Less than 1 year	24	12%	303,283
1 year - less than 2 years	71	37%	547,877
2 years - less than 3 years	45	23%	848,725
3 years - less than 4 years	29	15%	2,137,239
4 years and longer	25	13%	2,684,181
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100%</b>	

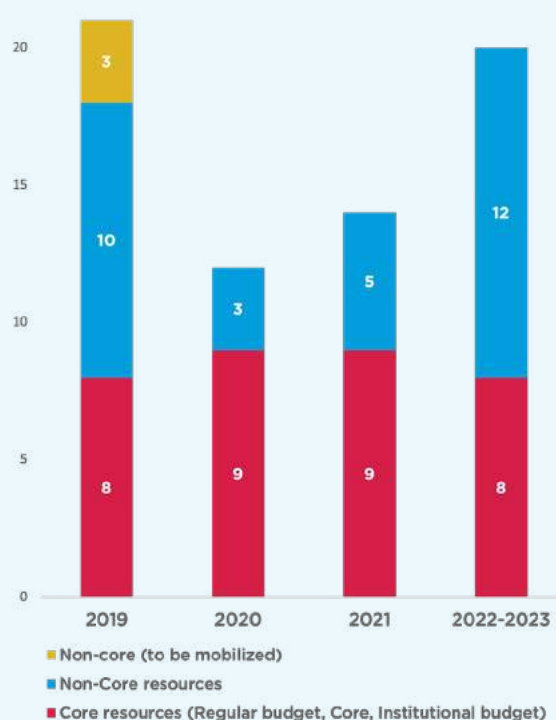
Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women's RMS dashboard (May 2022)  
Note: Agreements initiated between 2018 and 2021

While personnel within WEE sub-thematic areas often need to take the initiative and responsibility for mobilizing funds, strategic analysis of donors and prospective partners could have further strengthened and facilitated resource mobilization efforts. Given the long duration of policy change and difficulty in measuring key milestones, it can be a difficult area to mobilize resources (as opposed to more operational areas in WEE). However, it is important for UN Women to find ways to support this, including by demonstrating results, as it has the potential for large scale/national-level impact. Raising funds is also challenging in different contexts, for example, in countries which have high-middle income status and less interest from donors.

### Human resources

Multiple sources of evidence point to a finding that UN Women personnel affiliated with WEE across all levels (headquarters, Regional and Country Offices) are “stretched beyond capacity,” and that personnel are fulfilling multiple roles (see Figure 15). For example, personnel who are policy analysts or specialists are engaging in resource mobilization, programme management, coordination, knowledge management, monitoring and reporting activities. The evaluation team consistently heard from both internal and external stakeholders that WEE personnel were highly committed. The broad mandate of WEE requires an ambitious breadth of expertise and skill sets (e.g. climate change, social protection, macroeconomics, gender-responsive procurement, and more) to be able to engage meaningfully and contribute to policy change effectively.

Exacerbating the pressure on WEE personnel was the fact that the key post of Chief of the EE section was vacant from mid-2017 to early 2022. The post of team lead for Economic Institutions (P-5) has also been frozen since 2016.

**FIGURE 15. Economic Empowerment section personnel at UN Women headquarters (2019–2023)<sup>66</sup>**

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team based on UN Women RMS Annual/Bi-annual Work Plan HR Plan, 2019-2023 (November 2022)

The EE section is the only thematic headquarters section that lacks a dedicated data specialist. This limits the extent to which the EE section can dedicate resources to research for WEE, including the analysis of current economic trends, such as the impact of inflation on women in different contexts where UN Women operates.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, staff feel overburdened taking on responsibility for monitoring and evaluation without support available from a specialist versed in WEE at headquarters.

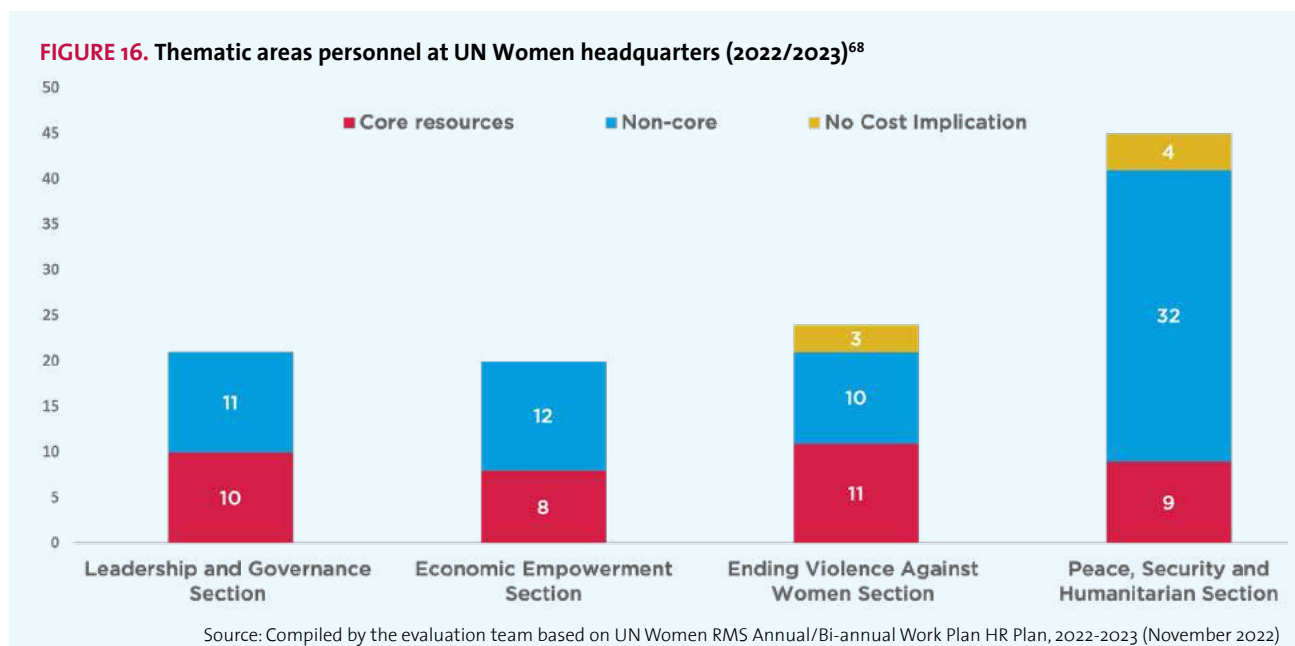
<sup>65</sup> These are planned agreement durations. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have caused programme durations to have changed.

<sup>66</sup> This includes UN Women personnel within the thematic section, including regular, temporary positions and consultants, as well as filled and vacant positions as provided under the HR DATA/RMS system.

<sup>67</sup> Evidence from interviews suggests that the EE section has identified this area as a need, but the lack of dedicated R&D staff within the section is a limitation.

To further explore the nuances of WEE personnel, the evaluation team extracted and analysed data from the RMS HR Plan module, particularly for headquarters personnel. In 2019, eight personnel were funded by core resources, which increased to nine in 2020 and 2021, but was reduced to eight core-funded personnel once again in 2022. Personnel funded by non-core resources showed much greater variability with 10–13 personnel funded in 2019, three personnel funded in 2020, and a slight increase to five personnel in 2021, with numbers returning to as high as they were in 2019 again in 2022/2023 (12 personnel).

Figure 16 shows the planned number of personnel across the different thematic sections for 2022/2023. Even in the upcoming year, the EE section is the thematic area with the least number of headquarters personnel (20) planned for when compared to the Leadership and Governance section (21), Ending Violence Against Women section (24) and Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action/DRR section (45). Of the four thematic areas, the EE section also has the least number of positions planned to be funded by core resources (8 for EE, 10 for Leadership and Governance, 11 for Ending Violence Against Women and 9 for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action/DRR).



## FINDING 14.

**Within WEE, the approach to coordination and communication across headquarters, Regional and Country Offices has been varied and ad hoc. The potential knowledge/experience sharing is undermined by limited systematic knowledge management across the WEE thematic area.**

The evaluation team found that UN Women personnel have mixed views about the adequacy of coordination and communication between headquarters, Regional and Country Offices. Forty-six per cent ( $n=41/90$ ) strongly disagreed or disagreed that there is sufficient internal coordination and communication occurring between headquarters, Regional and Country Offices to undertake work related to WEE while 47 per cent ( $n=43/90$ ) strongly agreed or agreed.<sup>69</sup>

Overall, systematic coordination and clear roles and responsibilities across the different levels seems to be lacking, which is leading to ad hoc and context specific coordination of the WEE thematic area.

While there are situations where coordination and communication between headquarters, Regional and Country Offices works well, there was also feedback that Regional Offices are generally being bypassed, and only brought in to support Country Offices during critical times. Headquarters does not appear to have clear lines of responsibility to support Country Offices (for example via Regional Offices) in areas such as resource mobilization and data generation.

The evaluation team did not identify any guidance regarding knowledge management and exchange, or specific roles and responsibilities allocated to headquarters, Regional or Country Offices.

<sup>68</sup> These include regular, temporary and non-staff positions, consultants and Junior Professional Officers funded by headquarters units.

<sup>69</sup> UN Women Internal personnel survey (Question 20) (see Annex 5).

WEE knowledge products and tools are commonly shared through separate and distinct microsites as an offshoot of UN Women's website and/or within global, regional and country pages. While many of these products have been effectively used at various levels, there is no central portal/repository which can be searched by internal personnel or external stakeholders.

The evaluation team did come across a few ad hoc, positive examples of knowledge sharing mechanisms such as a global listserv created by the Sustainable Development team for sharing knowledge products and a community of practice on WEE established by the region for West and Central Africa.

In many instances, knowledge on WEE was generated at the global level and shifted to the regions for 'adaptation and use,' rather than knowledge being created in a multi-directional fashion or leveraged from across different parts of the organization. This unidirectionality risks missing valuable lessons from grassroots efforts which could inform learning, and further policy engagement processes. On the other hand, many Country Offices feel they are operating without WEE guidance, methodologies and knowledge exchange practices and therefore seek out other sources or create resources themselves even at the risk of 'reinventing the wheel.' The lack of knowledge management, capacity and coordination not only impedes cross-regional, cross-country and organizational learning, it also makes monitoring and reporting more challenging.

## FINDING 15.

**While UN Women is making significant strides in supporting the development of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies, there is a need to routinely support governments to develop accompanying resources and implementation plans to support the realization of policies. There are also untapped opportunities to engage women's groups to enhance accountability of policy implementation.**

UN Women's work with laws, frameworks and policies is an example of working with a sustainability lens, by supporting nationally owned processes that have the potential to achieve greater gender equality goals. While having laws, frameworks and policies in place is an achievement, as measured within UN Women's Strategic Plan results framework, if the laws, frameworks and policies are not accompanied by the appropriate resources and/or implementation plans, then the policies are less likely to be realizable or lead to long-term change.

UN Women's complementary (and broader) work on gender-responsive budgeting is a very powerful tool in this regard, as it is integrating gender equality within public financial management systems across resource allocation and decision-making. In Liberia for example, UN Women supports the national government by providing technical and financial support to ensuring policy, plans, programmes and budgets are gender responsive.

Within policy and normative work there is also a need to ensure that implementation of laws, frameworks and policies is tracked and monitored and that accountability systems are integrated. In the spirit of national ownership and supporting sustainability, and with the knowledge that UN Women's resources are limited, engaging in partnerships to monitor and track changes on the ground is an area that should be further explored.

There is scope to further engage with women's movements to monitor, track and report against changes, which may require dedicated platforms, supporting the skills of women's movements and amplifying voices. This aligns with the recommendation made in UN Women's recent corporate evaluation of its policy advocacy work on the need to leverage partnerships with feminist movements and women's organizations to support policy change and implementation, and the need to include women within monitoring (as well as development and implementation) of policies which also emerged from UN Women's 2014 corporate evaluation on WEE.



**FINDING 16.****Although social norms change and its relationship with WEE policy change is not articulated or systematically integrated, there are examples of social norms change being included within WEE programming.**

While social norms have the potential to affect all stages of the policy cycle (see Box 3), the evaluation team did not encounter any articulation of the relationship between WEE policy/legislative and framework strengthening, and social norms change. However, evidence of efforts to support social norms change to tackle the root causes of inequalities did emerge. For instance, the Transformative Approaches to Address Unpaid Work in WEE Programming includes increasing the understanding of (and addressing) the disproportionate share of unpaid care work by women and girls.

Some programmes have undertaken awareness raising activities and campaigns leveraging the public and social media to build momentum around social norms change. For example, in Egypt and Palestine UN Women has used different media platforms to challenge social norms around the distribution of unpaid care work at home as described in the findings and recommendations of the published regional report *Progress of Women in the Arab States 2020: The Role of the Care Economy in Promoting Gender Equality*.

Egypt's "Because I am a Man Campaign," which ran in partnership with the national government to highlight the role that men should play at work as managers and co-workers and at home as husbands, fathers and sons also contained strong evidence for engaging men and boys. Some programmes also included social norms change within their Theories of Change, such as the Realizing Gender Equality through Empowering Women and Girls programme in Tanzania that aimed to empower women and female youth farmers economically and enhance the capacity of subnational actors and the community to respond to gender-based violence and harmful practices.

Social norms are also inextricably linked to the policy engagement process and are influential in terms of the openness and/or readiness of government partners and other actors to engage in the WEE process.

For example, in Georgia while UN Women aspires to encourage the adoption of WEE conventions for a more gender-transformative approach (e.g. paternity protection along with maternity protection), a pragmatic approach has been taken based on the prevailing social norms and what is considered feasible by the national government.

In other instances, there is a need to enhance focus on social norms. For example, an evaluation of the Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia (2017–2020) found that although the project was relevant to the needs of the most vulnerable, it would be critical to focus more on root causes of gender inequalities such as adverse social norms and stereotypes. This type of social norms work is particularly relevant at the current time, given the backlash against women's human rights in many countries.

**BOX 3.****Social norms and the policy cycle.**

Through their effects on what is considered an acceptable arena for government concern and action and what is 'off limits,' social norms influence the types of laws, policies and programmes that are proposed and adopted.

Two of the most critical points are:

- development, adoption and publication of laws, which can help change patterns of behaviour, establishing new 'descriptive norms,' attitudes and beliefs; and
- implementation of policies and related programmes, which may aim to shift discriminatory norms directly (by promoting discussion of the negative impacts of such norms) or indirectly by increasing women's access to resources and opportunities, which can lead to new norms emerging.

Source: The Social Norms Learning Collaborative (2021) *Policies and social norms: Their relationship to women's economic empowerment in Nigeria*.

**4.5 To what degree are human rights and leave no one behind– including disability inclusion and gender equality principles– integrated in this area of work?**

**FINDING 17.**

**While UN Women’s work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE broadly reflect human rights, leave no one behind, including disability inclusion, and gender equality principles, the approach could be more structured. There are some good examples of a comprehensive leave no one behind approach, but availability of disaggregated data remains a key challenge.**

The principles of leave no one behind– including disability inclusion, human rights and gender equality– are reflected in key programme documents and proposals across UN Women’s work on WEE. Within the WEE portfolio, programmes and initiatives vary in their attention to marginalized groups such as rural women, migrant women, including returnee workers, LGBTIQ+, elderly women, youth, female-headed households, single-mothers, persons with disabilities, women and trans sex workers, ethnic minority women, internally displaced persons, indigenous women, conflict-affected women, victims/survivors of trafficking, home-based workers, and women living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. The 2020 regional evaluation on WEE in the Americas and the Caribbean,<sup>70</sup> for example, noted that “UN Women’s interventions related to decent work and social protection linked to domestic workers, rural and indigenous women, and migrants are highly relevant to the regional context and needs of vulnerable women’s groups. UN Women has responded to inequality gaps affecting women as well as the mandate of the SDGs to Leave No One Behind.” Similarly, the evaluation on A Joint Action for Women’s Economic Empowerment in Georgia found that the project was relevant to the needs of the most vulnerable women in Georgia (i.e. rural women, internally displaced persons and ethnic minority women).<sup>71</sup> In its efforts to focus on the root causes of gender inequalities, such as adverse social norms, UN Women has also reached out to men and boys, and faith/traditional leaders.

Stakeholders surveyed for this evaluation overwhelmingly agreed or strongly agreed that UN Women integrates the needs of marginalized groups in its programmes and initiatives related to WEE (internal personnel: 85 per cent,  $n=76/90$ ; external partners: 97 per cent,  $n=37/38$ ). When asked about the relevance of UN Women’s work on WEE to the needs of marginalized groups, stakeholders similarly agreed/strongly agreed (internal personnel: 88 per cent,  $n=79/90$ ; External partners: 95 per cent,  $n=36/38$ ).<sup>72</sup>

While UN Women’s overall approach to WEE incorporates the principles of leave no one behind, stakeholders felt that UN Women could be more structured in its approach to intersectionality and the groups left furthest behind. For instance, the 2022 evaluation on WEE in the Asia and the Pacific region reported inconsistency in UN Women’s approach to the identification and engagement of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. This sentiment was also reflected by the stakeholders surveyed, some of whom noted that tools and resources for a comprehensive intersectional approach were not always available at the regional level. While global standards are clear about the inclusion of marginalized groups, contexts and sensitivities differ by region (and country), as does the feasibility of inclusion of all marginalized groups. Furthermore, implementation teams do not always possess the relevant monitoring and evaluation capacities to fully execute the leave no one behind requirement.

As for targeting beneficiaries, some WEE programmes and initiatives focus on specific marginalized groups, others include an overall leave no one behind approach, and others focus on women more broadly. For instance, the Advancing Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme implemented under the leadership of Nepal’s Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens from 2015 to 2019 focused on six specific women’s groups commonly excluded– returnee women migrant workers, survivors of trafficking, rural women, home-based workers, women living with HIV and conflict-affected women. Moreover, Nepal’s Strategic Note prioritized strengthening leadership, voice and agency of women, especially from excluded groups (such as Dalit women, women with disabilities, women and trans sex workers, rural women farmers, conflict-affected women, victims/survivors of trafficking, returnee women migrant workers, home-based workers, and women living with and affected by HIV/AIDS).

<sup>70</sup> UN Women (2020). Regional Evaluation: Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Americas and Caribbean.

<sup>71</sup> UN Women (2021). Final Evaluation of The Project “A Joint Action for Women’s Economic Empowerment in Georgia.”

<sup>72</sup> UN Women internal personnel survey (Questions 7, 8) and external partners survey (Questions 7, 8) (see Annex 5).

UN Women focuses on policies with a particular emphasis on human rights, gender equality principles and disability inclusion. The Entity's work on affirmative procurement in Nigeria and Kenya, which includes efforts to improve gender and vulnerability-disaggregated data collection are good examples of this. In Nigeria, the 2016 Procurement Act required setting aside a total of 30 per cent of annual procurement for people with disabilities, women, youth and elders, and UN Women is engaged and working with youth-owned organizations such as ImpactHer in efforts to support implementation of this act. UN Women's review of Nigeria's Economic Sustainability Plan highlighted that a lack of age and gender-disaggregated beneficiary data creates difficulties in delineating causal pathways between programmes and changes in the living standards of poor women, young women, and women with disabilities.

In Kenya, UN Women also focused on three identified groups of persons with vulnerabilities (persons with disabilities, women and youth) in its efforts to support implementation of the affirmative procurement law at national and county levels. UN Women supported supply and demand-side interventions by developing a simplified pocket guide; capacity development/monitoring and evaluation training for government offices; and by developing a handbook and training for women, youth and persons with disabilities entrepreneurs on how to access the programme. With a view towards sustainability, UN Women advocated for county and national governments to include funding for affirmative procurement and is now working with the private sector to explore options for providing credit/funds to entrepreneurs.

With UN Women's support, the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) secretariat is undertaking a survey to track beneficiaries by vulnerable group, and the quality of data reporting from counties has improved considerably. AGPO registration numbers have increased over time, which in turn raises the probability that these groups will secure contracts with the government.

While UN Women has made efforts to include marginalized groups, there is room to improve the availability of disaggregated data and the intersectional approach.<sup>73</sup> UN Women's programmes and initiatives are relevant in terms of targeting women with multiple vulnerabilities and identifying their needs to increase economic opportunities; however, the intersection approach also necessitates consideration of the connected systems and structures of power such as law, policies, media, state governments and religious institutions, among others. Here, a lack of relevant and accurate data remains a key challenge. For instance, tracking progress made on gender-responsive procurement policies is hindered by misreporting of "women-fronted" businesses, or a lack of data on the benefits reaching the most vulnerable women. In the context of COVID-19, with many assessments moving to online platforms/remote data collection, there is a real risk that the most vulnerable women will be unseen and left behind.

<sup>73</sup> UN Women (2022). Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results for a definition of intersectionality, available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/02/handbook-on-gender-mainstreaming-for-gender-equality-results>

## 5. LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

### WEE AND SOCIAL NORMS CHANGE



Where a more 'systems' approach has been taken and WEE programmes work to bring about changes in laws, frameworks and policies, informed by operational work, and accompanied by social norms efforts there is more likelihood of tackling the underlying causes of inequalities for gender norm change towards WEE.

Fundamental to some of UN Women's work on WEE is challenging notions of masculinity, for example, work on the unpaid care economy.

It is important to consider a life cycle approach, working with adolescents and women at all stages and considering the systemic barriers and risks faced at different stages.

### PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



In looking at partnerships with national governments, one lesson learned has been the need to respond to and support government partners in other priority areas, sometimes as entry points and sometimes to develop trust and be a supportive partner. For example, the Georgia Country Office was asked by government partners to provide support on gender-based violence within initial engagement on WEE.

Using methodologies for identifying policy issues (e.g. gender impact assessment), analysing likely policy impact and institutional development have been useful for UN Women personnel. They are also valued and appreciated by other stakeholders and help to give UN Women's work further credibility.

Within policy engagement work, reaching out/increasing the capacity of various levels of government, including subnational governments, has been particularly relevant for implementation and ground-level monitoring. However, this requires significant resources, particularly in terms of personnel's time which needs to be budgeted and accounted for.

### PROGRAMMING FOR IMPACT



Given the predominance of relatively short-term donor funding of programmes/projects in WEE, strategic decisions and selection of projects with the highest probability of uptake from the government and other partners has become important. UN Women has successfully implemented this in some contexts, for instance by focusing on supporting implementation of existing gender-responsive WEE policies and legislations.

UN Women has access to a large global network of gender experts and can play a convening role by facilitating linkages between organizations particularly where funds are limited.



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

## CONCLUSION 1.

UN Women has clear and well acknowledged comparative advantages in normative work and facilitating policy dialogues, including through key intergovernmental processes, related to WEE. National (and regional priorities) inform WEE programming and are responsive to changing contexts, for example the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is scope to proactively plan for the need to adapt to current and emerging priority policy areas, such as climate change, the cost-of-living crisis, macroeconomic stagnation and the impact of ongoing conflicts.

### FINDINGS 1,2,3

UN Women has successfully contributed to alignment in global norms, policies and standards for women's economic rights and autonomy. The Entity has facilitated policy dialogues and advocated for alignment with normative frameworks related to WEE through key intergovernmental processes, such as the CSW.

As first noted in the 2014 corporate thematic evaluation on WEE, UN Women has continued to make significant contributions to global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE. Policy and normative work related to WEE remains one of UN Women's comparative advantages and the Entity has facilitated the engagement of CSOs in global intergovernmental policy processes.

In addition to priority policy areas identified in Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the corresponding Strategic Notes, UN Women played a successful role in highlighting the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on WEE. Looking ahead, priority areas for WEE, as articulated in the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, include policy frameworks to address the 5Rs of the care economy (recognize, reduce, redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, and reward and represent care workers); gender-responsive decent work and financial inclusion policies; protection of the rights of women workers, including migrants; gender-responsive macroeconomic policies (fiscal, monetary and trade) and social protection measures; mainstreaming gender into job policies in climate change and green and blue economies; and policies to increase women's land tenure security.

At the regional and country levels, UN Women's work has been adapted to focus on contextually relevant sub-thematic areas within WEE. Where it has successfully aligned with national priorities, UN Women has been able to capitalize on strategic opportunities and develop close relationships with governments to facilitate implementation of gender-responsive policies.

The current economic and political context encompasses rising inequalities and economic exclusion; protracted conflict and humanitarian emergencies; environmental degradation; biodiversity loss; and climate change. While needs assessments, national and regional priorities inform UN Women's WEE programming, there is scope for further flexibility in adapting to changing contexts at the field level.

## CONCLUSION 2.

UN Women works effectively to build consensus and facilitate a coherent voice within global policy dialogues on WEE. While UN Women's approach to partnerships on WEE is generally sound and tailored to the operating context, engagement with international financial institutions on WEE-related policies could be further strengthened.

### FINDINGS 4,5,6,7

Within its work at the global, regional and country levels, UN Women partners with a range of stakeholders including government partners, other UN agencies, think tanks, CSOs and the private sector. While there is no stand-alone WEE partnership strategy, UN Women's partnering approach on WEE is often appropriate and sound, facilitated by formal multi-stakeholder planning systems (such as the UN Sustainable Development Group). UN Women also engages in a context specific way, partnering and 'filling gaps' as needed with other operating partners.

UN Women works effectively in building consensus on WEE issues across multiple stakeholder groups (e.g. care, social protection, migration actors) and in facilitating a 'coherent' voice within global policy dialogues. This consensus is often then translated into regional and national coordination work, to align regional and country partners with global norms and standards. The Entity promotes coherence and coordination on WEE within the UN system, working across a range of relevant agencies and tapping into relevant economic expertise where possible. While much of the work is complementary and improves efficiency, there are cases where partnerships for WEE are underutilized.

There is a need to ensure that engagement with international financial institutions (and other global actors) on issues related to WEE is coherent with UN Women's overall strategy for cross-sectoral and thematic engagement with international financial institutions, and builds on existing engagements in the areas of gender data and public finance. While mainstreaming gender in macro-economic debates is recognized by many stakeholders as a key area of work, there is also concern that there may be insufficient capacity to engage effectively on these issues.

The recent move of engagement with international financial institutions work to the EE section and linking the EE section with the Financing for Gender Equality hub, are positive steps in having the appropriate internal architecture in place to strengthen the work with international financial institutions.

UN Women's scope to work on multiple levels and optimize the interlinkages of the integrated mandate is a comparative strength that has yet to be consistently realized. There are examples where programmes have not been designed to utilize this strength and work is focused more on 'downstream' operational efforts, without engaging in relevant policies. There is also evidence where policy engagement is strong, but a systematized approach to engaging CSOs and women's movements within the policy processes is lacking.

### CONCLUSION 3.

The lack of a WEE strategy and managerial vacancies have impacted the direction of UN Women's work on WEE, the efficiency of internal architecture and personnel. While there has been substantial progress in various WEE sub-thematic areas, the absence of a specific overarching organizing framework for WEE has hindered coherence. The recent appointment of a Chief of EE and current development of a strategy provides an opportunity to strengthen the strategic focus and organization of UN Women's work on WEE, including more proactive and systematic cross-thematic linkages.

### FINDINGS 8, 9

During the period under review (2018–2021) the EE section experienced multiple vacancies among the senior leadership team, in particular, a long vacancy in the post of Chief. The lack of substantive leadership has had an impact on the direction of the EE section, its internal architecture and personnel. As a section, EE has a broad and ambitious mandate (responding to eight SDGs) and aims to strengthen women's economic rights and respond to pressing global needs across multiple sub-thematic areas. While the separate sub-sections have made significant progress against their objectives (discussed further in Conclusion 4), it has been in the absence of overarching strategic guidance on WEE for some time. A specific organizing framework for WEE that offers guidance to personnel about the approach, conceptual underpinnings and shared understanding has been lacking.

The appointment of the Chief of EE in 2022, and the current development of a strategy on WEE, signals an opportunity for the EE section to take stock and reflect on its strategic direction; consider where it has the potential to make the most transformative impact within its limited resources; and analyse whether it has the appropriate skills to advance.

Fostering internal coherence and a shared sense of identity is an important element of this. Engagement with other thematic areas is apparent and organic at the country level; however, there is no explicit vision or system for cross-thematic or integrated approaches.

### CONCLUSION 4.

UN Women's reporting shows that the Entity has exceeded, or is close to achieving its targets on strengthening gender-responsive WEE policies, including on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems. While there are some inconsistencies in interpretation and results reporting by countries, evidence collected from case studies shows significant contribution through constructive and agile engagement within the policy change process. There is limited monitoring of the impact of policy change on the lives of women and girls, which warrants further attention, for accountability purposes and learning and also to strengthen communication of UN Women's results.

### FINDINGS 10,11,12

Changes in policies on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems have led to some progress. However, the reporting of results within UN Women's results management system (RMS) is inconsistent, showing different interpretations of indicators, which suggests a need to harmonize reporting and provide further guidance in some cases.

Case studies confirmed there have been significant efforts along the 'pathway' to policy change, often taking several years, including efforts around framing the debates; raising issues on the agenda; capacity development of government staff; and support to the policy development process itself. UN Women's role in convening diverse stakeholders; providing technical support; developing evidence-based data; and the use of specific policy analysis methodologies, is particularly valued.

While it is highly plausible that the gender-responsive WEE policies and legislative changes in place have had a positive impact, monitoring how changes impacted the lives of women and girls is limited. While this is a notoriously challenging area, there is scope to increase efforts such as collecting stories of change and supporting CSOs in monitoring the effects on policies. There is also a need to enhance the role of women's movements within accountability frameworks.

## CONCLUSION 5.

The proposed Signature Initiatives provide opportunities to work programmatically and scale up activities on global priorities for WEE, by embedding changes in laws, frameworks and policies within wider systemic change. While UN Women is in a position to lead and support on the care economy, decent work, and entrepreneurship at the global level, the Entity needs to strengthen its capacity on climate change if it is to play a supportive role in this area (including in gender-responsive approaches to the transition to green and blue economies and climate-resilient agriculture).

### FINDINGS 2,10

The proposed Signature Initiatives provide opportunities to work in an enhanced programmatic way within three key areas of WEE, namely transforming the care economy; decent work and entrepreneurship; and women's climate action, and green and blue economies.

UN Women has made significant and pioneering contributions on transforming the care economy around the world, placing the issue on the global agenda; generating evidence and advocating for change; and the Entity is well positioned to continue its leadership role (for instance with the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights and the Global Alliance for Care). UN Women brings significant experience and expertise in research and data, convening and advocacy in this area and in collaboration with partners including ILO, UNICEF and the African Development Bank.

Within the area of decent work and entrepreneurship, UN Women will be building on the Entity's substantial body of work on tackling discriminatory norms, laws and policies in both public and private sectors (although analysis of work with the private sector falls beyond the scope of the evaluation).

The Entity works with different partners (such as ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, OECD, ITC, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNGC, IOM) and may take a leading or supportive role dependent on the presence and role of different actors in different contexts. Gender-responsive procurement is an area that UN Women often leads at the country level, both in advocacy and implementation. The Signature Initiative also provides the opportunity to include the rights of migrants to work, as UN Women is one of the few actors bringing a rights-based approach to migration. This Signature Initiative will draw on UN Women's comparative strengths in convening and research and diagnosis, although a 'toolkit' of methodologies and tools that are used in related policy analysis throughout UN Women has yet to be established.

The third proposed Signature Initiative on women's climate action, green and blue economies is responding to the pressing global need to address the threats and impacts of climate change and environmental destruction, with particular focus on destruction of livelihoods and markets with disproportionate impact on women, and unequal access to natural resources (including land tenure systems). UN Women plays an important supportive role within the climate change process to ensure a gender-responsive approach, including within green and blue economies. However, as a relatively new significant area, UN Women does not yet have the capacity to successfully support efforts in a consistent way. There is also a need to ensure that climate change work is mainstreamed across the WEE portfolio, as part of a broader organization-wide strategy on climate change.

## CONCLUSION 6.

Financial and human resources are identified as the most significant challenges for UN Women in advancing gender-responsive WEE laws, frameworks and policies. Personnel at all levels are over-extended and take on multiple functional roles. There is a need to improve support across headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices, for example, to support programme management, knowledge management and resource mobilization. While WEE was the least funded thematic area from 2018-2021, the increased planned budget for Strategic Plan 2022-2025 is more commensurate with WEE's broad mandate.

### FINDINGS 13,14

Financial and human resources were found to be the most significant challenges in achieving goals on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies.

The resourcing of the EE section was constrained by limited funding during the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 period, with the lowest funding among thematic areas, and declining core funding. The reliance on non-core funding resulted in short-term, project-based resourcing with limited funding suitably dedicated to longer-term policy change processes.

Personnel have been highly pressurized over the period under evaluation, with capacities to work on the broad array of sub-thematic areas highly stretched. WEE personnel take on multiple specialties and multiple roles (e.g. policy analysis, programme management, resource mobilization, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management).

While there are positive examples of coordination across headquarters, Regional and Country Offices, a systematic approach is lacking and mixed levels of coordination for results persist.



There are no clear lines of responsibility for supporting Country Offices in resource mobilization, data generation, sharing policy guidance, tools and methodologies or knowledge management in the spirit of ‘pivot to the field.’ The limited systematic knowledge management and sharing, specifically risks undermining the utility and value of the rich research and knowledge products developed.

For UN Women’s work on WEE to be successful, a WEE strategy needs to be established with stable leadership and strong institutional support, including for resource mobilization. The increased planned budget for Strategic Plan 2022–2025 is encouraging, and the split between core funds and non-core funds is promising.

### CONCLUSION 7.

Supporting gender-responsive WEE policy is a suitable strategy for nationally owned, sustainable change and potential impact at scale. Systematic attention needs to be placed on advocating for policies that are resourced, and have implementation plans and appropriate accountability frameworks. The inter-relationship between changes in laws, frameworks, policies and social norms is also important for sustainability and should be consistently articulated and integrated within UN Women programming.

#### FINDINGS 15,16

UN Women’s approach to working on WEE, in supporting the development of and/or strengthening of gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies is paving the way for commendable nationally owned changes.

While achieving a policy and legislative change represents significant achievements, more consistent focus is required to ensure that they are accompanied by appropriate resources and implementation plans to achieve realizable and long-term change. The tracking and monitoring of results of policy change is also important, yet challenging. In addition to supporting governments, UN Women could draw upon its networks and resources in the CSO movement to support this.

The relationship and linkages between WEE laws, frameworks and policies and the relationship with social norms change is not articulated or consistently integrated within the WEE policy cycle. There are some positive examples where UN Women is working on complementary communications and advocacy campaigns with different media, some of which are targeting men and boys. However, there is scope to do more, and to tackle the root causes of gender inequalities and gender stereotypes to achieve more transformative and sustainable change.

### CONCLUSION 8.

UN Women’s overall approach to WEE considers leave no one behind principles and is perceived to be relevant to the needs of marginalized groups. The approach could be strengthened by translating global principles and approaches into practical and context specific tools; improving the availability of disaggregated data; and by strengthening considerations of the connected systems and structures of power.

#### FINDING 17

The degree to which UN Women’s work on gender-responsive laws, frameworks and policies related to WEE incorporates the principles of leave no one behind (including disability inclusion, human rights and gender equality) varies across offices and programmes. While global standards are clear about the inclusion of marginalized groups, these need to be translated into working principles that are relevant for, and sensitive to, the particular context of different regions and countries. Furthermore, implementation teams do not always possess the relevant monitoring and evaluation or data capacities to fully execute the leave no one behind requirements and meaningfully track the inclusion and impact on all relevant marginalized groups.

UN Women’s work on WEE highlights several good examples of a comprehensive leave no one behind approach, and the Entity has focused on policies with a particular emphasis on human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion.

For instance, work on gender-responsive procurement in Nigeria and Kenya includes efforts to improve disaggregated data to track persons in situations of vulnerability. While UN Women has made efforts to include marginalized groups, there is room to improve the intersectional approach and consideration of the connected systems and structures of power. A lack of relevant data has been a challenge, particularly when trying to reach the marginalized groups left furthest behind.

# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the evaluation findings and conclusions. The recommendations were developed in consultation with key evaluation stakeholders, including the Evaluation Reference Group, and the EE section. To ensure the clarity of the proposed actions, the recommendations identify priority, timeline, responsible actors, impact, difficulty and what will happen if they are not implemented.

## RECOMMENDATION 1.

### UN Women should continue its support to the global discourse and normative frameworks on WEE, while advocating for gender-responsive approaches in emerging priority areas.

(Conclusions 1 and 5)

Priority

HIGH

Timeline

LONG-TERM

#### Suggested steps that could be taken:

Given UN Women's track-record (and positive perceptions of internal and external stakeholders) of its normative support work, the Entity should:

- Continue support to key global intergovernmental processes and working groups and play a more active role in other global and regional mechanisms linked to priority policy areas.
- Continue to support multi-stakeholder alliances at the global level, and improve engagement of CSOs in policy processes.
- Identify and address gaps in internal technical capacity on priority policy areas, such as social protection, care economy, climate smart agriculture/green and blue economies, macroeconomic policies (fiscal, monetary and trade) etc.
- Identify priority areas within WEE where UN Women can strategically partner with and leverage the technical capacity of other entities.

#### UN Women should continue to take an evidence-based approach in responding to new and emerging crises/priority areas. In particular, the Entity should:

- Undertake analyses of current economic trends (such as the implications for women of current macroeconomic stagnation, and the cost-of-living crisis), environmental changes and political developments to assess likely impacts on WEE and propose mitigating policies and laws.
- Continue to support an evidence-based approach, drawing on lessons from its successful response to COVID-19 (gender disaggregated data collection and use, rapid assessments, developing and implementing gender-responsive policy tools).
- Monitor and highlight the implications of emerging humanitarian crises on WEE, including through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (in collaboration with the new Humanitarian Action section).
- In implementing the Signature Initiatives, articulate UN Women's supportive role and niche, and strengthen its capacity to engage successfully in enhancing the gender responsiveness of climate action (including the transition to green/blue economies and climate resilient agriculture).

**To be led by:** Policy Programme and Intergovernmental Division and EE section, in collaboration with Intergovernmental Support section, Humanitarian Action section and Research and Data section.

**Impact:** This will leverage UN Women's strengths and contribute to systemic outcomes and implementation of relevant Signature Initiatives in the context of Strategic Plan 2022–25, and emerging priorities.

**Difficulty:** This is within UN Women's remit and control. Responding to emerging priority areas may require building appropriate capacities to be achievable.

**If not implemented:** There is a risk of underachievement and missed opportunities to remain flexible in changing global contexts.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.**

**UN Women’s WEE strategy should include a clear articulation of key definitions and a framework for WEE; an assessment of current financial and human resources allocated to WEE policy support; and clarity on the approach to harnessing cross-thematic linkages.**

(Conclusions 3 and 6)

**Suggested steps that could be taken:**

Priority

**HIGH**

Timeline

**SHORT-TERM**

- Develop and articulate a progressive global framework on WEE that is rights-based and complementary to the approach of partners.
- Agree on definitions of key terms including ‘women’s economic empowerment’, ‘gender-responsive macroeconomic policies’, ‘gender transformative macroeconomic policies’ etc.
- Align the strategy with UN Women’s mandate and comparative strength, and review internal capacities to ensure that the human resources available match the skills required, or can be developed.
- Harness the opportunity provided by development of a WEE strategy to reflect on the strategic direction and ensure it is grounded in the realities of the resources available.
- Given that WEE policy change can be a lengthy process, and projects tend to have shorter time spans, consider developing a long-term vision and mobilizing resources to support stages along the policy cycle. For instance, consider mobilizing high-quality/flexible non-core funding to support normative work on WEE. Also, consider the feasibility of resource mobilization strategic support being provided by headquarters to Regional and Country Office levels, to support awareness of resource mobilization opportunities, donor priorities, and to share guidance and lessons learned.
- Develop a cross-sectoral approach (both conceptual and practical). This should also fit/ be compatible with the systems and mechanisms for operationalizing systemic outcomes (including on gender-responsive normative frameworks, policies and institutions) of the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025, and make links with the work of the Humanitarian Action section.

**To be led by:** EE section in collaboration with Strategic Planning Resources and Effectiveness Division, with inputs from personnel in Regional and Country Offices.

**Impact:** This will lead to much needed clarity and coherence around UN Women’s work on WEE.

**Difficulty:** This is within UN Women’s remit and is possible to achieve within existing resources.

**If not implemented:** There is a risk that UN Women’s work on WEE will remain disjointed and lacking in clarity and overarching objectives.

**RECOMMENDATION 3.****UN Women should refine and systematize its approach to partnerships for WEE and look to further strengthen its engagement with international financial institutions (and other global actors), where strategically advantageous.***(Conclusion 2)***Suggested steps that could be taken:***Priority***HIGH***Timeline***MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM**

- Integrate a partnership approach within the WEE strategy setting out the appropriate partners to work with on different sub-thematic areas, while giving scope for flexibility in different contexts where partners have less or more of a presence.
- Articulate and identify types of partners to be engaged at each stage of the policy cycle: 1) identification of policy issues and resource mobilization; 2) evidence generation, policy dialogue/positions, policy development; 3) policy change and strengthening institutions; and 4) policy implementation.
- Strengthen the systematic engagement of CSOs at each stage (in supporting policy advocacy, facilitating platforms for CSO advocacy/engagement, amplifying voices, engaging CSOs in accountability frameworks of policy implementation).
- Strategically review the Entity's work with international financial institutions (and other relevant global actors) on WEE in terms of the potential to contribute to macroeconomic policy debates; coherence with other key areas (including financing for gender equality, strengthening availability of gender disaggregated data etc.); and 'readiness to engage' (capacity, networks, resources).
- Ensure that UN Women's overall strategy for engagement with international financial institutions is coherent with existing Memorandums of Understanding and cross- thematic work.
- Enhance the Entity's co-ordination role within the UN system. Potential avenues include:
  - › Driving accountability for collective results on laws, policies and frameworks related to WEE.
  - › Working with trade and economics-related agencies (e.g. DESA, UNCTAD, UNDP) to mainstream a gender-responsive approach.
  - › Supporting the UN system to strengthen gender dimensions of economic analysis (e.g. by working with senior economists in the Resident Coordinator's Office and/or other UN agencies).
- Continue to provide technical support, convening and capacity development support to governments, while also advocating for adequate resource allocations for implementation of gender-responsive WEE policies.
- Ensure a strategic approach as to whether UN Women leads or supports partnerships, according to the relative strengths of different actors within the context.

**To be led by:** EE section in collaboration with Strategic Partnerships Division, specific partnerships to be led by Regional and Country Offices.

**Impact:** This will harness the relative strengths of different partners and potentially amplify the impact of UN Women's work. It also has implications for overall coherence and scaling up of results.

**Difficulty:** A successful partnership approach will require cooperation and is not fully within UN Women's control. There is also a requirement to enhance internal capacity, particularly to engage with international financial institutions on substantive macroeconomic policy issues.

**If not implemented:** There will be an underutilization of potential linkages and coherence with the work of other key partners in this space.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.****UN Women should review and formalize the roles and responsibilities of headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices in the area of WEE, particularly in terms of knowledge sharing and management, research and data, and monitoring and reporting.***(Conclusion 4)*

Priority

**MEDIUM**

Timeline

**MEDIUM-TERM****Suggested steps that could be taken:**

- Review the (downward and upward) coordination and communication of the EE section among headquarters, Regional and Country Office levels with the view of headquarters and Regional Offices supporting Country Offices to have the resources, capacity and knowledge to support WEE outcomes at the country level (articulate within the WEE strategy).
- To improve knowledge management, the headquarters EE section should create a central repository of research, guidance, relevant tools, methodologies and examples of the application in different contexts and successful strategies to support the development and implementation of gender-responsive laws and policies. Where possible, the repository should provide guidance on which tool/ methodologies should be used at different stages of the WEE policy engagement process and systematically collect knowledge about the use of methodologies and experiences from the Country Office level.
- Build upon knowledge sharing opportunities and strengthen internal communications of results, particularly with regions, to learn from other WEE policy/laws/frameworks and processes and draw lessons from what works well and where.
- To enhance research and data, a research and data expert could respond to the research and data requests of Country Offices, by providing a network of experts and knowledge exchange as appropriate.
- Review of monitoring/reporting to include guidance on reporting to enhance consistency and strengthen quality assurance. There should be metrics on policy support efforts along the policy support cycle to link to systemic outcomes on WEE laws, policies and frameworks. The feasibility of policy implementation over the long term should also be captured, with indicators including elements related to allocated resources, implementation plans and accountability frameworks.

**To be led by:** EE section in collaboration with Strategic Planning Resources and Effectiveness Division and Regional and Country Offices.

**Impact:** This will lead to enhanced efficiency through strengthened coordination, improved knowledge sharing and better communication of results achieved.

**Difficulty:** While within UN Women's control and remit, this will involve changes to ways of working (delineation of responsibilities) and new ways of sharing knowledge and experiences.

**If not implemented:** This will be a missed opportunity to learn and identify initiatives/strategies for scale-up. Non delineation of responsibilities will lead to inefficiencies arising from personnel continuing to undertake responsibilities outside their remit.

**RECOMMENDATION 5.**

**UN Women should develop sustainable approaches to addressing structural barriers that impede WEE and to supporting social norms change. Efforts should be focused on supporting governments and other actors to monitor the effects of WEE policy changes on women's lives and livelihoods.**

(Conclusion 7)

Priority

**HIGH**

Timeline

**MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM**

**Suggested steps that could be taken:**

- Continue to integrate a long-term approach, placing emphasis on the actualization of policies (including costing and resourcing policies, supporting implementation plans and strengthening accountability systems).
- Include a social norms dimension in upfront diagnostic/research work to ensure WEE policy cycle engagements are based on a holistic understanding of root causes.
- Continue concerted efforts to challenge unequal power relations and discriminatory social norms through campaigns and advocacy (including through engagement of men and boys), and seek appropriate partnerships (e.g. with media and advocacy organizations).
- Strengthen data capacities within the EE section and collaborate further with R&D to support national statistical offices and relevant ministries with tools and guidance on the collection and use of gender disaggregated data (baseline and impact assessments, monitoring policy implementation etc.).
- Explore ways for UN Women to support governments to monitor the effects of WEE laws/frameworks/policy changes on people's lives and livelihoods (e.g. drawing on monitoring/reporting frameworks from CSOs and development agencies, collecting and sharing stories of change from the field, etc.). Also learn from examples both within the organization (such as CSO monitoring in Nepal) and externally.
- Where possible, prioritize donor funding of programmes that fit within and contribute to a coherent policy change objective.

**To be led by:** EE section in collaboration with Regional and Country Offices, and the Research and Data section.

**Impact:** This has the potential to foster sustainable impact at scale and significant advances in WEE.

**Difficulty:** This will require long-term sustained efforts, combined with a collaborative approach. Changes in social norms and enabling environment will be slow, and is likely to be difficult to measure.

**If not implemented:** UN Women's work on WEE risks falling short on implementation and large-scale impact of policies.

**RECOMMENDATION 6.****UN Women should refine and contextualize its approach and strategy to leave no one behind and the inclusion of marginalized groups, as they relate to WEE.***(Conclusion 8)**Priority***MEDIUM***Timeline***MEDIUM-TERM****Suggested steps that could be taken:**

- Consider global leave no one behind principles specifically within the context of WEE (including articulation of when it is/is not appropriate to target the most marginalized towards economic empowerment) and embed within the WEE Strategy.
- Develop practical guidance for use in different regional/country contexts and highlight cross-regional good examples of comprehensive and practical leave no one behind approaches to WEE.
- Provide tools to bolster relevant monitoring and evaluation capacities in the field, to fully execute leave no one behind requirements.
- Support efforts to improve the collection and availability of disaggregated data.
- Continue to expand outreach and engagement with organizations focusing on marginalized groups, including youth and persons with disabilities.

**To be led by:** Policy Programme and Intergovernmental Division and EE section, with support from the Research and Data section.

**Impact:** This will lead to an improved articulation of leave no one behind and an enhanced intersectional approach.

**Difficulty:** This is within UN Women's control and remit and is possible given existing resources.

**If not implemented:** There is a risk of a less explicit and intentional approach to leave no one behind with WEE work.

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The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit Service under the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service. The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service's main purpose is to enhance accountability, inform decision-making, and contribute to learning about the best ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the organization's mandate, including its normative, operational, and coordination work. The Independent Evaluation Service also works to strengthen capacities for gender-responsive evaluation within UN entities, governments, and civil society organizations.

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**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION  
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND  
THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL  
CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN  
WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE  
PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS  
WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



220 East 42nd Street  
New York, New York 10017, USA  
Tel: 212-906-6400  
Fax: 212-906-6705

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