



**INDEPENDENT CORPORATE EVALUATION OF
UN WOMEN'S APPROACH TO VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN PREVENTION AND RESPONSE:**

NAVIGATING CHANGES IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report, and the overall evaluation process, was informed and enriched by the participation of more than 300 stakeholders, personnel and partners – many of whom actively contributed to the evaluation by serving as reference group members or key informants, attending focus group discussions, or completing comprehensive surveys. Without the support and active participation of these individuals, this report would not have been possible.

The evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES). The IES team included Tara Kaul, Evaluation Specialist as Team Leader; Katherine Garven, Evaluation Consultant; Soo Yeon Kim, Evaluation Analyst; and Aileen Allen, Evaluation Consultant. The team received overall support and guidance from Inga Sniukaite, Chief of UN Women IES.

We are grateful to the Internal and External Reference Group members for their thoughtful comments and insights and for investing significant time and effort to ensure that the evaluation would be of maximum value and use to the organization. We also extend our thanks to UN Women's Senior Management Team for its feedback and contribution to the evaluation. The evaluation also benefitted from the active involvement of the UN Women Ending Violence Against Women section and the Regional and Country Office personnel consulted during the data collection phase. We thank the Country Representatives and staff of these offices for the time they dedicated and invested in supporting the evaluation process and in facilitating the engagement and inclusion of a wide range of partners and stakeholders. Finally, we would like to thank all those who engaged or participated in this evaluation, be it through responding to a survey, participating in an interview, or engaging in the consultation process. We are grateful for your contributions, which have without doubt enriched this report.

EVALUATION TEAM:

Tara Kaul, Evaluation Specialist and Team Leader

Katherine Garven, Evaluation Consultant

Soo Yeon Kim, Evaluation Analyst

Aileen Allen, Evaluation Consultant

EVALUATION MANAGEMENT:

UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

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

Lisa Sutton, Director, UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

Copy-editing: **Catherine Simes**

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

Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

© 2025 UN Women. All rights reserved.

Cover photo: ©UN Women/Johis Alarcón

Disclaimer: The analysis and recommendations of this report are those of the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women. This is an independent publication by the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS).

INDEPENDENT CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S APPROACH TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PREVENTION AND RESPONSE:

NAVIGATING CHANGES IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION, AUDIT AND INVESTIGATION SERVICES (IEAIS)

Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

UN Women

New York, April 2025

FOREWORD

The world is currently witnessing heightened levels of violence against women and girls, fuelled by the interplay of multiple concurrent crises. Whether in the form of armed conflicts, mass displacement and migration, environmental disasters, food insecurity, economic crises or widespread political instability, these overlapping crises causally interact and exponentially amplify some of their most dire consequences.

In this context, UN Women has been at the forefront of efforts to bring violence against women into the public spotlight and to work with a wide array of partners to strengthen prevention and response efforts in this area at country, regional and global levels. This *Independent Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Approach to Violence Against Women Prevention and Response: Navigating Changes in Global and Regional Contexts* aimed to assess the relevance and adaptability of the Entity's responses to violence against women in the context of polycrisis, and to assess the effectiveness of its work and efforts in leaving no one behind. Given the widespread pushback against women's human rights and gender equality, the evaluation also looked into the coherence of the Entity's efforts with other key partners, and the sustainability of results to safeguard the gains made.

The evaluation found UN Women's work on prevention and response to violence against women and girls to be highly responsive to changing contexts and growing forms of violence, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic – albeit in need of further guidance and tools for other contexts across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and in response to emerging areas such as technology-facilitated violence. UN Women has also been effective in advancing norms and policies aligned to international human rights standards and in strengthening responses to violence against women, especially with regards to survivor-centred essential services.

UN Women plays a key role in convening and amplifying voices from the women's movement, and supporting the efforts of women's rights organizations and civil society

organizations. Further investment in movement building at national and local levels is needed, along with better support for smaller, community-based organizations.

The evaluation found that UN Women's approach incorporates an intersectional perspective in line with the leave no one behind principle, while challenges remain in scaling interventions and systematizing knowledge. The Entity would benefit from more comprehensive corporate guidance on addressing specific groups, particularly those hardest to reach due to their location and cultural sensitivities. There is room to strengthen synergies across thematic areas, as well as collaboration with other UN agencies, to develop comprehensive ending violence against women and girls initiatives. Finally, UN Women's successful efforts to embed sustainable programming elements are likely to support and safeguard gains in some contexts.

The evaluation offers a series of recommendations to strengthen UN Women's work on prevention and response to violence against women and girls. The Entity should continue to develop corporate guidance, frameworks and tools to adapt and strengthen programming in response to persistent and emerging priorities at all levels, and to support social norms change on violence against women and girls at multiple levels. UN Women should also enhance and tailor its support to women's rights organizations and grassroots/smaller civil society organizations working on prevention and response to violence against women and girls; continue to tailor technical/capacity development support; and scale-up successful pilot initiatives. Finally, the evaluation recommends that UN Women identify and address barriers to developing more comprehensive and longer-term programming at the country level.

Eliminating violence against women and girls has been and will continue to be a priority for UN Women. We trust that this evidence-based evaluation will inform the Entity's future work and further strengthen support for the prevention and response to violence against women and girls.



Lisa Sutton

Director, Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	vi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vii
1. BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Overview	2
1.2 Purpose, objectives and scope	2
1.3 Evaluation approach	4
1.4 Ethics, gender equality and no one left behind	7
1.5 Evaluation constraints and limitations	7
2. EVALUATION CONTEXT	8
2.1 Global context	9
2.2 UN Women's Strategic Plan reporting on ending violence against women	10
3. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS	11
3.1 Financial and geographic analysis	12
3.2 Donor agreement analysis	14
4. FINDINGS	15
4.1 To what extent has UN Women's work on VAWG prevention and response adapted to the needs and concerns of women, and to priority policy areas?	16
4.2 How effectively has UN Women's support contributed to VAWG prevention and response?	20
4.3 To what extent is UN Women's work coherent with the work of other partners in this space (UN agencies and non-UN actors)?	27
4.4 In what ways are the principles of leave no one behind, human rights, including disability inclusion, and gender equality integrated in VAWG prevention and response?	33
4.5 What is UN Women's approach to safeguarding gains and ensuring sustainability in this area of work?	36
5. LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES	39
6. CONCLUSIONS	41
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	47
ANNEXES	<i>Separate volume</i>

ACRONYMS

ACT	Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action programme
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
EVAWG	Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HDP	Humanitarian, Development, Peace
IEAIS	Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and all expressions of sexual diversity, and gender identity and expression
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TF GBV	Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WHO	World Health Organization
WRO	Women's Rights Organization



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INDEPENDENT CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S APPROACH TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PREVENTION AND RESPONSE: NAVIGATING CHANGES IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS

Photo: ©UN Women/Johis Alarcón

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to the prevention and response to violence against women (VAW). Undertaken by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES), part of the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS), the evaluation was initiated in April 2024 and is expected to be presented to the UN Women Executive Board through an Informal Session in 2025.

Background and context

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most flagrant and pervasive human rights violations worldwide, undermining women's autonomy, enjoyment of basic rights and stunting progress towards gender equality. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and ensuing global crises such as acute food insecurity, climate change and growing armed conflicts are all contributing factors to the pervasiveness of VAW worldwide. In the aftermath of the pandemic, for those women and girls who have access to the internet, online violence has increased given the surge in internet use as daily activities for many have shifted online.

The elimination of violence against women and girls (EVAWG) is one of UN Women's strategic priorities, as reflected in the Entity's previous and current Strategic Plans. The Entity supports Member States to enact or reform **legislation and policies** on violence against

women and girls (VAWG) in alignment with international standards, and strengthens institutional capacities for their effective implementation. UN Women promotes **social norms change** to prevent VAWG through a variety of strategies, such as policy support, awareness-raising, community mobilization and male engagement. Drawing from evidence, UN Women works to prevent VAWG through policy, advocacy and programmatic support to a wide range of stakeholders. This includes developing integrated frameworks to inform prevention programmes; supporting a whole of government approach; and supporting the development of evidence-based approaches through national action plans. UN Women's prevention work includes an emphasis on transforming patriarchal masculinities by engaging various male-dominated sectors to integrate women's safety and gender equality.

The Entity supports **women's rights organizations** (WROs) in their advocacy and monitoring of government commitments to end VAWG and their participation in comprehensive EAW prevention and response programming. UN Women supports **access to quality services** for women victims/survivors by strengthening multi-sectoral coordination of essential services, focusing on institutional change and building capacities of the judiciary, police and other key service providers. The Entity supports the incorporation of VAWG prevention and response in a broad range of **laws, policies and programmes in different settings** (including across the humanitarian, development, peace [HDP] nexus).

Key global programmes include, among others, the Joint Programme on Essential Services, the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Flagship Initiative and the European Union-funded Spotlight initiative. Most recently, in 2024, the global Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action (ACT) to End Violence Against Women global initiative was launched. UN Women also manages the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women, a system-wide mechanism that supports innovative approaches to address GBV globally. UN Women also enhances the collection and use of data on VAW for evidence-based decision-making and generates knowledge on the issue.

The purpose of this independent corporate evaluation was to contribute to strategic decision-making, learning and accountability. In line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee's evaluation criteria, the evaluation examined the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of UN Women's support to strengthening VAWG prevention and response over the four-year period from June 2020 to June 2024. The geographic scope of the evaluation covered UN Women's programming globally and across all six regions.

The domino effects of the current polycrisis have important implications for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 on Gender Equality. Therefore, the evaluation also examined the adaptability of UN Women's work on VAWG prevention and response in different operational contexts.

THE KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS WERE:

1. To what extent has UN Women's work on VAWG prevention and response adapted to the needs and concerns of women, and to priority policy areas? (Relevance/Adaptability)
2. How effectively has UN Women's support contributed to VAWG prevention and response? (Effectiveness)
3. To what extent is UN Women's approach coherent with the work of other partners in this space (UN agencies and non-UN actors)? (Coherence)
4. In what ways are the principles of leave no one behind, human rights, including disability inclusion, and gender equality integrated in VAWG prevention and response? (Equity)
5. What is UN Women's approach to safeguarding gains and ensuring sustainability in this area of work? (Sustainability)

The evaluation included an assessment of results achieved under UN Women's previous (2018–2021) and current (2022–2025) Strategic Plans. Given the systemic outcomes approach of the current Strategic Plan, the evaluation was scoped to focus primarily on assessing contributions to systemic outcomes related to positive social norms and women's access to services, goods and resources. The analysis also explored links to systemic outcomes on women's leadership, policies and institutions. Findings from relevant evaluations related to systemic outcomes on gender statistics and UN coordination were also incorporated. To avoid overlap with concurrent evaluations and assessments, the **Spotlight Initiative and the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women were outside the scope of the evaluation**. However, the evaluation team reviewed and incorporated evidence from relevant reports.

The focus and coverage of the evaluation were informed by extensive stakeholder consultations, detailed portfolio reviews of UN Women's programmes and desk reviews of relevant evaluations and strategic documents.

The evaluation is intended for use primarily by the UN Women Executive Board, UN Women's senior management, UN Women's Ending Violence Against Women (EAW) section, UN Women Regional and Country Offices designing and implementing programming for the prevention and response to VAWG, in addition to other personnel and partners working on or with an interest in the issue.

Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation methodology consisted of a **mixed-methods design and theory-based approach**, building on a reconstructed theory of change. The evaluation team employed a combination of qualitative content analysis, quantitative descriptive statistics and contribution analysis to facilitate a summative assessment of UN Women's contributions towards outcome and impact-level results. The evaluation was learning-focused and allowed for open-ended questions/lessons to facilitate a forward-looking assessment to inform UN Women's current and upcoming Strategic Plan (2026–2029).

The evaluation team undertook primary and secondary data collection through **semi-structured interviews** and in-depth **desk reviews** at the **global** level, and through eight **country and regional programme case studies**. The case studies included a combination of in-person and virtual data collection in Bolivia, Egypt, India, Tanzania, Viet Nam and regional EVAWG programmes in Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa.

The evaluation team undertook an overall **portfolio review** and **programme reviews** of key global EVAWG initiatives, including the Essential Services Package, Prevention Frameworks and Initiatives; the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces with Women and Girls Flagship Initiative; and the ACT programme. The evaluation team also conducted two **online surveys** fielded to relevant internal stakeholders and external partners at global, regional and country levels.

In total, 326 stakeholders (82 per cent female, 17 per cent male and 1 per cent prefer not to say) were consulted as part of the evaluation; 172 stakeholders (83 per cent female, 17 per cent male) were engaged through semi-structured interviews (key informant interviews and focus group discussions); and the online surveys received 154 responses (30 per cent internal response rate, 46 per cent external response rate). Consulted stakeholders included key UN Women personnel working on EVAWG and other thematic areas, government partners, Member States and donors, civil society organizations (CSOs) and WROs, other partners such as those from academia and the private sector, and UN agencies in the EVAWG space.

The evaluation incorporated a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach that aligned with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards. The evaluation adhered to UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Ethical Guidelines, UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system and UNEG guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluation. The evaluation also drew on feminist evaluation principles which, *inter alia*, encourage wide stakeholder engagement and facilitate the evaluation as a valuable process in and of itself to empower stakeholders to reflect on and engage with UN Women's EVAWG work.

DATA COLLECTED FOR THIS EVALUATION

Mixed method data



Primary qualitative and quantitative data was collected and triangulated
Secondary data sources include:
Quantum, Transparency portal, DAMS

172 stakeholder interviews



Semi-structured interviews and
focus group discussions
(N = 142 female, 30 male)

300+ documents reviewed



Desk review, synthesis and portfolio
analysis of annual workplans,
Strategic Notes, evaluations, project
and programme documents, etc.

8 case studies



5 country case studies: Bolivia, Egypt,
India, Tanzania and Viet Nam;
3 regional programmes in: Asia and
the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia,
and West and Central Africa

2 online surveys, 154 respondents



UN Women personnel
(N = 48; 30% response rate)
UN Women partners
(N = 106; 46% response rate)

4 IES country visits



Members of the IES evaluation team
led country visits to gather data and
insights from UN Women personnel
and external stakeholders in Bolivia,
India, Tanzania and Viet Nam.

Key conclusions

CONCLUSION 1.

UN Women's EVAWG approach has been responsive to changing contexts and growing forms of violence. By leveraging established areas of work, the Entity was particularly agile in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some Country Offices working in development contexts were able to respond to other emerging crises and the increase in technology facilitated gender-based violence (TF GBV), there is scope to further strengthen and expand strategic guidance, frameworks and tools to support these areas of work.

(Relevance/Adaptability, Coherence and Effectiveness)

As evidenced through regional and country case studies, UN Women's EVAWG approach was flexible in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in supporting existing government and WRO/CSO partners to continue with VAWG service provision throughout the pandemic; supporting the integration of VAWG considerations into government pandemic response plans at national and local levels; supporting partners to move activities online and shifting towards online stakeholder engagement; and advancing data/evidence generation and highlighting the shadow pandemic.

While in some regions and countries UN Women's EVAWG programming responded to climate and humanitarian/refugee crises to some extent, personnel at the country level indicated the need for strategic guidance and tools to work effectively across the HDP nexus. Commonly identified impediments in responding quickly to crises included the limited availability of immediate funding, constraints due to administrative processes and disparities in humanitarian expertise at the country level.

In the emerging area of TF GBV, UN Women's efforts at the global level have focused on advancing international norms and standards by informing intergovernmental policy processes and outcomes. UN Women has contributed to knowledge generation on TF GBV, focusing on normative frameworks; safe technologies for supporting victims/survivors of violence; mapping of existing evidence; and methodological approaches for data collection at the global and subnational level to advance evidence-informed policy and programme action. At regional and national levels, the absence of normative frameworks to address TF GBV is a particular gap UN Women is working to address. In some case study countries, UN Women has taken initial steps with government partners to raise awareness around the importance

of addressing this issue and to strengthen governments' capacity to work in this area. UN Women's overall approach has been to integrate TF GBV across its EVAWG programming as it is conceived as part of the continuum of violence experienced by women and girls. While efforts have been made by headquarters to promote an Entity-wide exchange of information, the linkages between global, regional and country levels in this area are still being established.

CONCLUSION 2.

UN Women's EVAWG work has been effective in advancing normative changes and strengthening the provision of survivor-centred services. Successful strategies included engagement of diverse coalitions of EVAWG actors (including multiple key line ministries); identifying strategic opportunities to strengthen implementation of laws; and focusing on women's access to justice. While various initiatives have supported VAWG prevention efforts, including through community mobilization, awareness-raising and piloting interventions in male-dominated sectors, work on social norms change for EVAWG needs to be strengthened. This includes strengthening strategies to engage men and boys to transform patriarchal masculinities at community and institutional levels.

(Effectiveness, Coherence, Sustainability)

UN Women has successfully positioned itself and gained important trust and credibility in supporting partners with the establishment and implementation of VAWG laws, frameworks and policies at national, state and municipal levels. The Entity's multi-pronged approach to engaging stakeholders (including across different key line ministries), supporting institutional capacity-building and strengthening referral/access to justice systems contributed to improving access to essential services for women and girls, including those in situations of vulnerability.

With respect to VAWG prevention work, most case study countries had successfully implemented and adapted the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Flagship Initiative model (focused on creating safe public spaces for women and girls in cities) to local contexts, with many countries expanding the model to spaces such as educational institutions, private-sector supply chains and other male-dominated sectors.

UN Women piloted some successful strategies and entry points to change social norms in the case study countries, including promoting community-level discussion and awareness-raising through media campaigns, participatory theatre, couples counselling and positive parenting workshops, among others. While there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach for social norms work, there were limited efforts to replicate/exchange and contextualize some of the successful initiatives across different regions. A recent corporate evaluation on social norms change concluded there is a need for UN Women to clarify and strengthen its overall approach to social norms work.¹ Similar challenges were noted in this evaluation, as UN Women’s social norms work on EAWG was seen to lack a clear implementation plan; a measure of what actual attitudinal and behavioural change means (not just reach); and sufficient funding to support the achievement of planned VAWG social norms results. In addition, the strategic focus on transforming patriarchal masculinities and the engagement of men and boys in changing social norms was found to need further strengthening.

CONCLUSION 3.

UN Women’s EAWG work included some cross-thematic approaches, particularly with Women’s Economic Empowerment. However, synergies with other thematic areas were uneven in some cases and not consistently applied across all EAWG areas of work. Efforts were hindered to some extent by the Entity’s thematic structure and thematic funding modalities.

(Effectiveness, Sustainability)

Efforts to create linkages between EAWG and Women’s Economic Empowerment were noted in several case study countries. However, cross-thematic collaboration was not consistently applied across UN Women’s EAWG work. Commonly identified barriers included UN Women’s primarily thematic structure and focus on thematic funding models. Some strategies that facilitated cross-thematic collaboration included holding regular cross-office meetings to identify cross-thematic entry points; building programming portfolios that integrate cross-thematic elements/outcomes (e.g. Safe Cities); leveraging linkages with diverse government ministries (including through coordination committees); implementing different thematic programmes within the same geographic space to promote cross-synergies; and strengthening Strategic Note and annual planning to identify common entry points and synergies across thematic areas.

CONCLUSION 4.

UN Women continues to play a pivotal role in advancing global norms, developing guidance documents and supporting programming and data frameworks related to VAWG prevention and response. Collaborating with various stakeholders, UN Women has advanced and tailored global frameworks and promoted more coordinated EAWG initiatives at the country level. While joint programming and collaboration among UN agencies continue to be critical for developing comprehensive EAWG initiatives, challenges with the coherence of internal systems and resource allocation persist.

(Coherence, Effectiveness)

UN Women has played a key role in shaping global EAWG frameworks, such as the *Essential Services package*, the *Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence* and the *RESPECT framework*. This has entailed working with a wide range of stakeholders to draw on global and national evidence and adapt frameworks to local contexts. UN Women has engaged with UN agencies (including UNOPS, ILO and the World Bank) to develop guidance and tools integrating EAWG approaches into other thematic areas such as infrastructure, transport and climate action. UN Women has continued to leverage its knowledge and thought leadership through engagement in intergovernmental processes, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, among others, to highlight VAWG issues.

UN Women’s engagement in joint programmes (particularly with UNODC, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO) at the country level has resulted in more comprehensive programmes addressing VAWG. At the same time, there remains room to expand UN Women’s partnerships with a wider variety of UN agencies to help its EAWG programming enter new spaces and address complex thematic issues. Success in implementing joint initiatives relies to a great extent on open communication and agencies’ willingness to collaborate. Additional challenges, such as differences in reporting systems, disagreements over areas where mandates overlap and competition for resources remain. Despite these obstacles, resource partners favour funding more integrated approaches and joint programmes, indicating a strong demand for coordinated efforts.

¹ 2024 IES Feminist Collaborative Evaluation of UN Women’s Approach to Social Norms Change

CONCLUSION 5.

UN Women plays a key role in strengthening WROs and CSOs, particularly by acting as a convenor and amplifying voices from the women's movement. UN Women worked closely with these organizations in advocating for EVAWG laws and policies; participating in data collection/research; raising awareness and community mobilization to address social norms; building capacity for VAWG prevention and response; and other co-creation processes related to EVAWG programming. There is a need to better support smaller, community-based organizations, especially in challenging contexts, and further invest in movement building at national and grassroots levels.

(Coherence, Effectiveness)

UN Women is widely recognized for its strong relationships with WROs, and its efforts to facilitate networking and amplify these organizations' voices at global, regional and national levels. However, stakeholders expressed a need for more convening, networking and advocacy opportunities, and increased support in diversifying funding sources, particularly as VAWG is one of the ways backlash against women's rights and gender equality occurs, and given the context of shrinking civic spaces in some countries. Support to WROs and movement building is critical to advance EVAWG prioritization across stakeholders, hold governments accountable and resist pushback. This is well reflected in UN Women's strategic and programming documents, but evidence from the case study countries suggests that support to WROs and women's rights movement building requires further support at national and grassroots levels, including through a diversified donor base. Owing to changes in regulations, direct funding from UN Women to CSOs may no longer be feasible in some contexts. However, the Entity's role as a convenor of diverse stakeholders remains highly valued. Stakeholders also perceived some constraints, due to internal policies and procedures, on the types of partners that could be engaged in different contexts. This issue was particularly highlighted in engagements with small, informal organizations and new types of partners.

CONCLUSION 6.

UN Women's approach to EVAWG incorporates an intersectional lens, focusing on addressing intersecting forms of discrimination that various groups of women may experience, and which heighten their risk of experiencing violence. Key progress has been made in disability inclusion and outreach to rural women, though challenges remain in scaling interventions and strengthening knowledge exchange. There is also a need for more comprehensive guidance on addressing specific groups in situations of vulnerability, including those that are the most difficult to reach due to cultural sensitivities or other factors.

(Equity)

UN Women's EVAWG frameworks and guidance documents and other knowledge products emphasize the importance of an intersectional approach and the leave no one behind principle in addressing VAWG prevention and response. UN Women implemented diverse, context-specific interventions to address the needs of women in situations of vulnerability. Disability inclusion was fairly consistently (though not universally) incorporated, reflecting corporate-level emphasis in this area of work and demonstrating the progress made in recent years. Successful initiatives to reach rural women were also seen across several case study countries. Areas for improvement include ensuring that leave no one behind approaches are scaled effectively across different regions and contexts, and increasing the availability of data.

Several guidance documents and studies on reaching specific groups within EVAW programming have been developed in recent years. While these resources are published and disseminated through various channels, country-level stakeholders identified the need for further guidance on balancing leave no one behind approaches with political and social constraints in some contexts.

CONCLUSION 7.

UN Women's efforts to embed sustainable programming elements into its EAWG work are likely to support and safeguard gains in some contexts. Successful strategies included institutional capacity-building and support to leveraging and expanding domestically available funding for VAWG prevention and response. However, reliance on relatively short-term funding in some countries is hindering the development of programming that is holistic and able to contribute towards sustainable change.

(Sustainability, Coherence)

UN Women's EAWG programming has made concerted efforts to integrate sustainable programming elements to increase the likelihood of results enduring beyond project/programme completion. Particularly successful strategies included supporting normative change; building capacities within government/public institutions (e.g. shelters, police, etc.) to implement existing laws and the delivery of services; making use of existing government EAWG budgets/funding; and supporting the additional allocation of government funds towards EAWG work through gender-responsive budgeting.

UN Women's reliance on funding models that are primarily donor driven and based on short-term projects limits the extent to which Country Offices can develop comprehensive EAWG strategies that lead to impact-level change. Although cumulative funding for EAWG within UN Women has increased during the current Strategic Plan period, more consistent, flexible and longer-term funding is required. This is particularly the case for social norms programming, which requires longer-term, consistent investment. Building on successful fundraising through key programmes (such as the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, Essential Services Package and ACT), provides scope to leverage UN Women's collective voice and expertise in further support of country-level fundraising efforts. Through such global initiatives, UN Women was able to pilot country-level EAWG programming, which in some case study countries has subsequently expanded, been scaled-up and/or replicated. Securing funding for cross-thematic work and Strategic Note implementation appears to be a resource mobilization strategy that supports more holistic programming. However, work with the private sector to create violence-free workspaces has yet to translate into broader resource mobilization in support of EAWG programming. Finally, the global pushback against women's rights presents a threat to the sustainability of gains, underscoring the need to further invest in supporting WROs and movement building at multiple levels.

Recommendations



RECOMMENDATION 1. Continue to refine and roll out existing guidance, and develop further guidance, frameworks and tools to adapt and strengthen EAWG programming in **response to persistent and emerging priorities** (e.g. across the HDP nexus and in response to growing TF GBV).



RECOMMENDATION 2. Further enhance global, regional and country-level **support to WROs and grassroots/smaller CSOs** working on VAWG prevention and response, including through a diversified donor/partner base.



RECOMMENDATION 3. Continue to roll out comprehensive frameworks on prevention and response that include a focus on **social norms change at multiple levels** and further refine and/or develop new tools/guidance to further support institutional norms change, including through multiple strategies to engage with men and boys.



RECOMMENDATION 4. Strengthen and adapt approaches to foster **more comprehensive and longer-term EAWG programming** at the country level.



RECOMMENDATION 5. Building on UN Women's **role as convener** in the EAWG space, continue to strengthen the multi-stakeholder approach and **scale up** successful pilot initiatives at the country level.



Photo: ©UN Women/Ploy Phutpheng

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Overview

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to violence against women (VAW) prevention and response. Undertaken by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES), part of the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS), the evaluation was initiated in April 2024 and is expected to be presented to the UN Women Executive Board during an Informal Session in 2025.

The elimination of violence against women and girls (EVAWG) is one of UN Women's key thematic areas, as reflected in the Entity's previous and current Strategic Plans.² UN Women supports Member States to enact or reform **legislation and policies** on violence against women and girls (VAWG) in alignment with international standards and strengthens institutional capacities for their effective implementation. The Entity promotes **social norms change** to prevent VAWG through a variety of strategies, such as policy support, awareness-raising, community mobilization and male engagement. Drawing from evidence, UN Women works to prevent VAWG through policy, advocacy and programmatic support to a wide range of stakeholders. This includes developing integrated frameworks to inform prevention programmes, supporting a whole of government approach and supporting the development of evidence-based approaches through national action plans. UN Women's prevention work includes an emphasis on transforming patriarchal masculinities by engaging various male-dominated sectors to integrate women's safety and gender equality.

UN Women supports **women's rights organizations** (WROs) in their advocacy and monitoring of government commitments to end VAWG and their participation in comprehensive EAW prevention and response programming. The Entity supports **access to quality services** for women victims/survivors by strengthening multi-sectoral coordination of essential services, focusing on institutional change and building the capacities of the judiciary, police and other key service providers. UN Women supports the incorporation of VAWG prevention and response in a broad range of **laws, policies or**

programmes in different settings (including across the humanitarian, development, peace [HDP] nexus). This includes developing integrated frameworks to inform effective prevention programmes and supporting a whole of government approach.

Key global programmes include, among others, the Joint Programme on Essential Services, the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Flagship Initiative and the European Union-funded Spotlight Initiative. Most recently in 2024, the global Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action (ACT) to End Violence Against Women programme was launched. UN Women also manages the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women, a system-wide mechanism that supports innovative approaches to address gender-based violence (GBV) globally. UN Women also enhances the collection and use of data on VAW for evidence-based decision-making and generates knowledge on the issue.

UN Women's current approach to prevent and respond to all forms of VAWG is reflected in *Gender Equality Accelerator 6: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls-Together to Zero*.³ This programmatic framework identifies key areas of focus; elucidates linkages with the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 systemic outcomes; and underscores the Entity's integrated, comprehensive approach in partnership with governments, the UN system, research and private-sector entities, civil society organizations (CSOs) and WROs, and platforms such as the Generation Equality Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition.

1.2 Purpose, objectives and scope

The purpose of this independent corporate evaluation was to contribute to strategic decision-making, learning and accountability. In line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee's evaluation criteria,⁴ the evaluation examined the **relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability** of UN Women's support to strengthening VAWG prevention and response over the four-year period from June 2020 to June 2024. The geographic scope of the evaluation covered UN Women's programming globally and across all six regions.

² Under Strategic Plan 2018-2021, UN Women identified EVAWG as one of five key corporate outcomes and centred its efforts on strengthening prevention and essential services for victims of GBV, and creating cities with safe and empowering public spaces for women and girls. UN Women's current Strategic Plan (2022-2025) includes a cross-cutting approach, while continuing to emphasize ending VAWG as one of four key thematic areas.

³ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/07/gender-equality-accelerators-brochure>

⁴ Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Since 2020, the world has experienced multiple, concurrent crises such as COVID-19, the climate crisis and armed conflicts. The domino effects of the current “poly-crisis” have important implications for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 on Gender Equality. Therefore, the evaluation also examined the **adaptability** of UN Women’s work on VAWG prevention and response in different operational contexts.⁵

THE KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS WERE:

1. To what extent has UN Women’s work on VAWG prevention and response adapted to the needs and concerns of women, and to priority policy areas? (Relevance/Adaptability)
2. How effectively has UN Women’s support contributed to VAWG prevention and response? (Effectiveness)
3. To what extent is UN Women’s approach coherent with the work of other partners in this space (UN agencies and non-UN actors)? (Coherence)
4. In what ways are the principles of leave no one behind, human rights, including disability inclusion, and gender equality integrated in VAWG prevention and response? (Equity)
5. What is UN Women’s approach to safeguarding gains and ensuring sustainability in this area of work? (Sustainability)

The evaluation included an assessment of results achieved under UN Women’s previous and current Strategic Plans (2018–2021 and 2022–2025, respectively).⁶ Given the systemic outcomes approach of the

current Strategic Plan, the evaluation was scoped to focus primarily on assessing contributions to systemic outcomes related to **positive social norms** and **women’s access to services, goods and resources**. The analysis also explored links to systemic outcomes on women’s leadership, policies and institutions. Findings from relevant evaluations related to systemic outcomes on gender statistics and UN coordination were also incorporated.⁷ To avoid overlap with concurrent evaluations and assessments, the **Spotlight Initiative and the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women were outside the scope of the evaluation**. However, the evaluation team reviewed and incorporated evidence from relevant reports.⁸ The focus and coverage of the evaluation were informed by extensive stakeholder consultations, detailed portfolio reviews of UN Women’s programmes and desk reviews of relevant evaluations and strategic documents.

The evaluation is intended for use primarily by the UN Women Executive Board, UN Women’s senior management, UN Women’s EVAW section, UN Women Regional and Country Offices designing and implementing programming for the prevention and response to VAWG, in addition to other personnel and partners working on or with an interest in the issue.

Volume I of this evaluation report is presented through seven chapters: background (including evaluation approach), context, portfolio analysis, findings, lessons learned and promising practices, conclusions and recommendations. Volume II contains the Annexes corresponding to this evaluation report.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/desa/cascading-global-crises-threaten-human-survival-and-sdg-roadmap-way-forward>

⁶ Under Strategic Plan 2018-21, the outcome area on EVAW included two key outputs, namely Output 11: More countries and stakeholders are better able to prevent violence against women and girls and deliver essential services to victims and survivors; and Output 12: More cities and other settings have safe and empowering public spaces for women and girls. Under Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and Gender Equality Accelerator 6, efforts towards ending VAWG are centred around **four levers of change** and contribute to six cross-cutting systemic outcomes, namely: (1) Supporting Member States to strengthen the development, monitoring and reporting on global norms and standards on ending violence against women and girls (Systemic Outcome 1 on **norms, laws, policies and institutions** and Outcome 7 on **UN system coordination**); (2) Supporting the formulation of whole-of-government action plans on VAWG prevention and incorporating VAWG prevention in other policies that promote positive social norms, including by engaging men and boys, and strengthening the knowledge and evidence base on policies and practices to prevent VAWG (Systemic Outcome 1 on **norms, laws, policies and institutions**, Systemic Outcome 3 on **positive social norms** and Outcome 6 on **gender statistics**); (3) Strengthening multisectoral coordination of essential services, focusing on institutional change, improving access to justice and ensuring perpetrator accountability, and access to other quality, integrated and victim/survivor-centred and trauma-informed services for all women and girls (Systemic Outcome 4 on **access to services, goods and resources** and Systemic Outcome 7 on **UN system coordination**); and (4) promoting the autonomous agency of women’s rights organizations to end VAWG (Systemic Outcome 5 on **women’s voice, leadership and agency**).

⁷ This includes the 2021 IES Corporate [Evaluation of UN Women’s UN system Coordination and broader Convening role in Ending violence against women](#) and the 2023 [Evaluation on the WHO-UN Women Joint Programme on Violence against Women Data](#).

⁸ This included the 2024 Final [Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative](#) led by the UN System-Wide Evaluation Office, the [2024 thematic assessment of Spotlight Initiative’s contribution to the engagement of civil society, the implementation of ‘Leave no one behind’, and movement building](#) and various United Nations Trust Fund evaluations and annual reports.

1.3 Evaluation approach

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

To guide the analysis, the evaluation team developed a reconstructed theory of change for UN Women's EVAWG work (see Figure 1) that spans the two Strategic Plan periods. This incorporates UN Women's EVAWG theory of change from Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the theory of change and theory of action for *Gender Equality Accelerator 6*. The reconstructed theory of change captures the information on results, interventions and root causes of VAWG outlined in the two theories of change. It also includes key information obtained during the inception phase of the evaluation on cross-cutting themes, contextual challenges, and facilitating and hindering factors.

The overall change logic for the reconstructed theory of change is that **IF** *global norms and standards on EVAWG are translated into gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions that are implemented to prevent and respond to VAWG; and IF favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours are established at the community and individual levels to promote gender equality and end VAWG; and IF women and girls who experience violence can access quality essential services and perpetrators are held accountable; and IF CSOs and WROs are supported to exercise their key role in the EVAWG agenda through implementing long-term engagement and funding strategies; THEN there will be a substantial reduction in violence against women and girls BECAUSE violence will be prevented before it occurs and those who have experienced violence can access the necessary essential services to recover and rebuild their lives.*

Within this theory of change, the levers particularly relevant to the scope of the evaluation were strengthening access to essential (and other) services for all women and girls (lever of change 3) and supporting favourable social norms to prevent VAWG (lever of change 2). While focusing primarily on the pathways of change related to these two levers, the analysis was situated in the context of UN Women's overall approach to EAW and examined linkages across the four levers of change.

The evaluation also examined **cross-cutting** issues identified during the inception phase of the evaluation. These included the growing **role of technology** in countering and perpetuating VAWG; UN Women's work across the **HDP nexus**; and leveraging UN Women's triple mandate at global, regional and country levels. The analysis examined UN Women's programming within and response to **challenging external contexts** including the COVID-19 pandemic; climate change and environmental disasters; wars, conflict and humanitarian response; and post-conflict peacebuilding contexts. The evaluation examined changes that occurred between Strategic Plans 2018–2021 and 2022–2025, with a particular emphasis on **intersectional approaches** and **cross-thematic programming**.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION

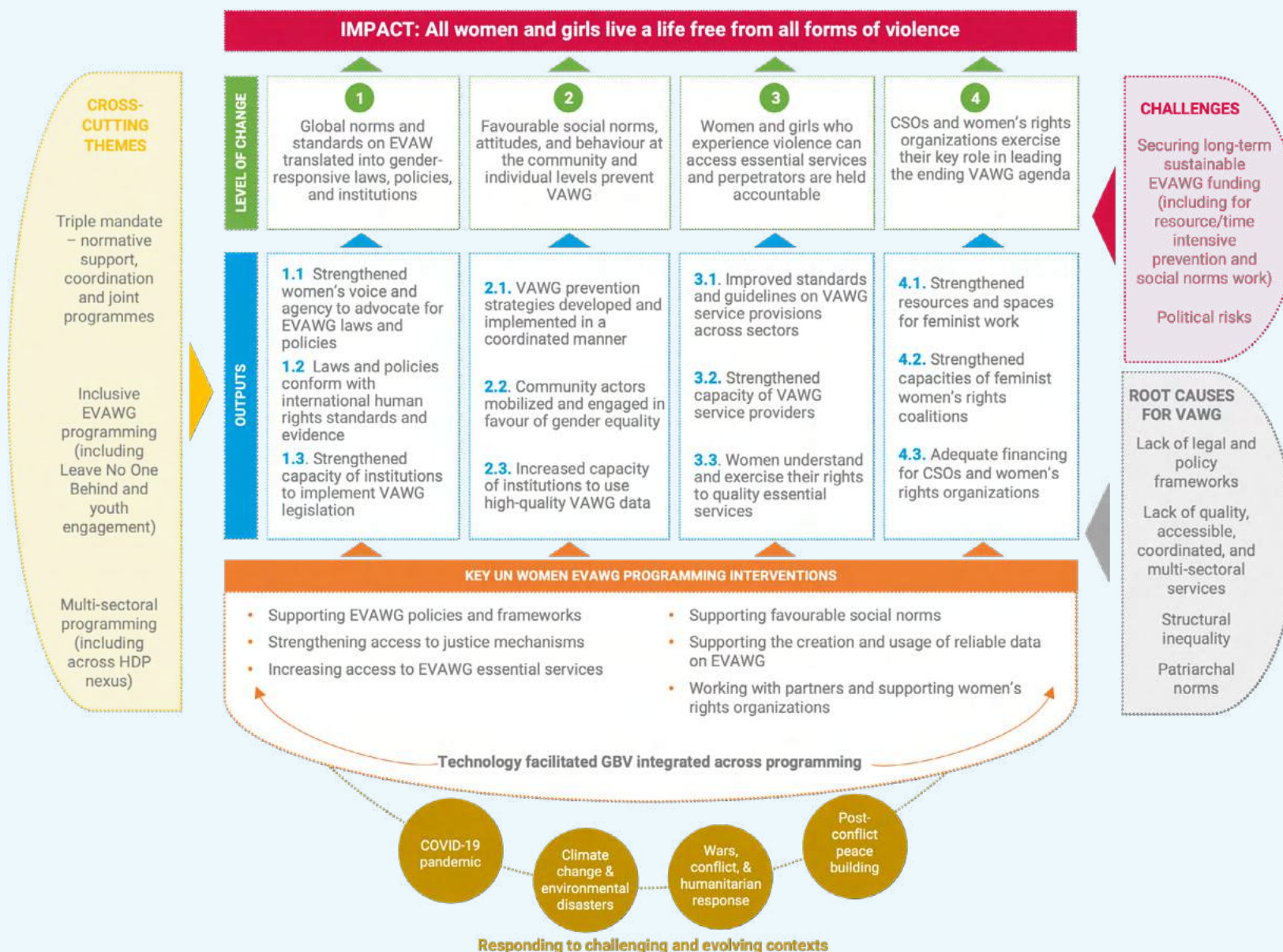
The evaluation methodology consisted of a **mixed-methods design and theory-based approach**, building on the reconstructed EVAWG theory of change. The evaluation team employed a combination of qualitative content analysis, quantitative analysis descriptive statistics and contribution analysis to facilitate a summative assessment of UN Women's contributions towards outcome and impact-level results.⁹ The evaluation was learning-focused and allowed for open-ended questions/lessons to facilitate a forward-looking assessment to inform UN Women's current and upcoming Strategic Plans.

The evaluation team undertook primary and secondary data collection through **semi-structured interviews** and in-depth **desk reviews** at the **global** level, and through eight **country and regional programme case studies** (see Figure 2). Identified in consultation with stakeholders, the case studies aimed to provide a representative sample of country and regional level VAWG prevention and response portfolios, with a focus on the cross-cutting themes identified during the inception phase of the evaluation.¹⁰ The case studies included a combination of in-person and virtual data collection in Bolivia, Egypt, India, Tanzania, Viet Nam and regional EVAWG programmes in Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa.¹¹

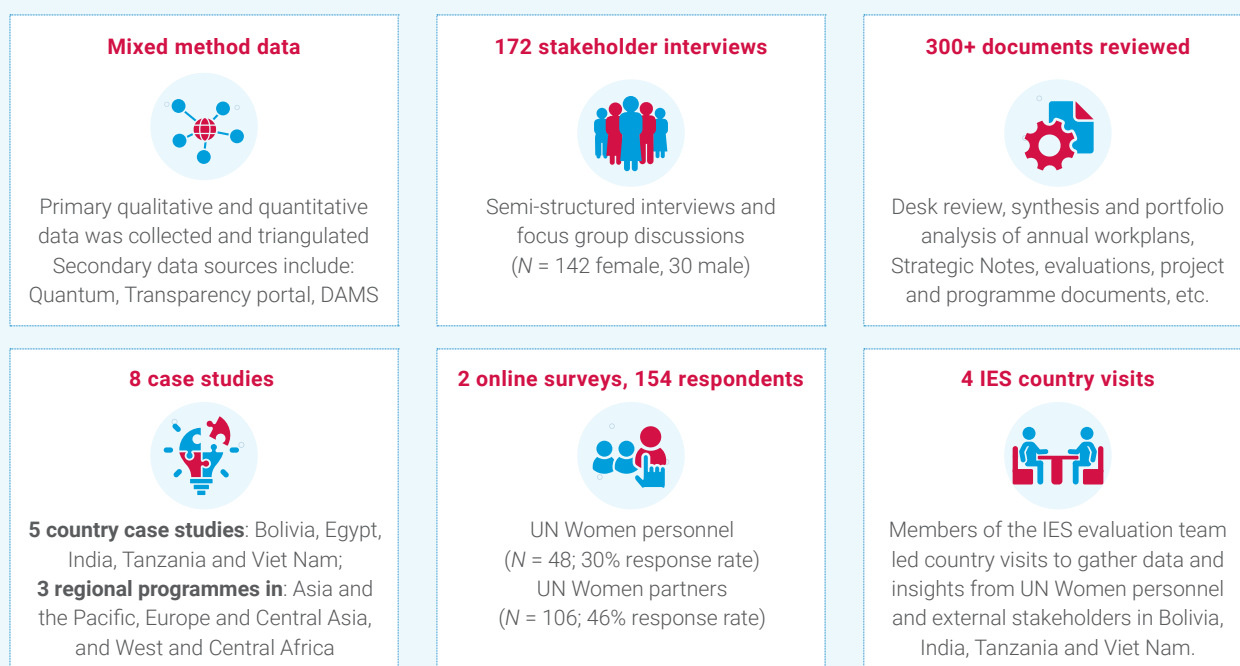
⁹ In addition, the evaluation team drew on Lori Heise's Violence Against Women Ecological Framework to better understand the origins and complexities of gender-based violence that women and girls face. This understanding supported the analysis of UN Women's response to VAWG by providing a foundation to examine the relevance and impact of UN Women's approaches and strategies in response to the underlying causes of VAWG and the factors that drive VAWG. While comprehensively measuring impact was outside the scope of this evaluation, the evaluation team assessed UN Women's momentum towards transformational change by examining the pathways of change between outputs and outcomes and the interlinkages across outcomes leading to impact.

¹⁰ Criteria for the selection of case studies included the extent of UN Women's EAW work on prevention and response (diversity), geographic balance and availability of data and evidence.

¹¹ See Annex 1 for further details.

FIGURE 1. Reconstructed theory of change

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

FIGURE 2: Sources and methodology for data collection

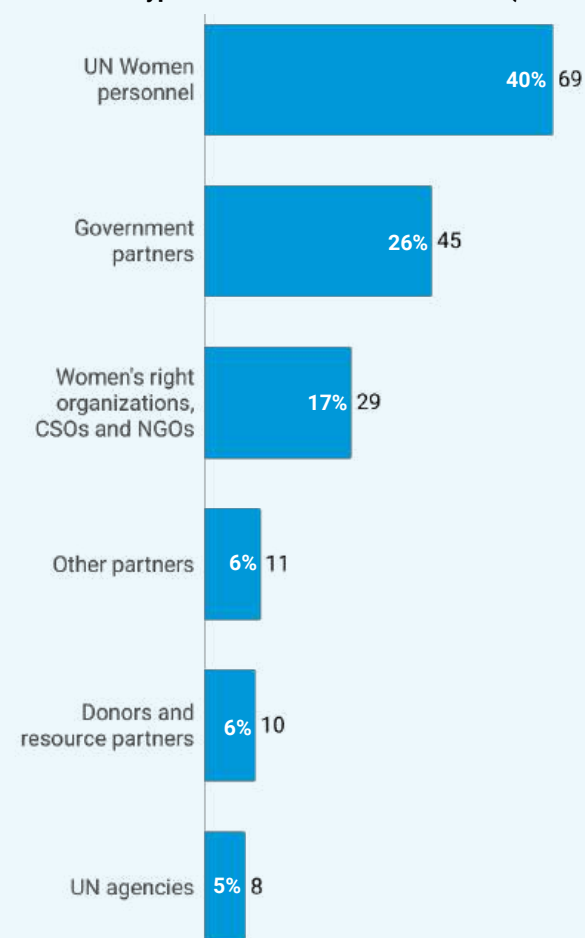
Notes: 1. Interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken in Arabic, English, Hindi, Spanish and Vietnamese.
2. The external online survey was fielded in six languages: Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Swahili and Vietnamese.

The evaluation team also undertook an overall **portfolio review** and **programme reviews** of key global EVAWG initiatives, including the Essential Services Package, Prevention Frameworks and Initiatives; the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative; and the ACT programme.

The evaluation team conducted two **online surveys** fielded to relevant internal stakeholders and external partners at global, regional and country levels.

In total, 326 stakeholders (82 per cent female, 17 per cent male and 1 per cent prefer not to say) were consulted as part of the evaluation: 172 stakeholders (83 per cent female, 17 per cent male) were engaged through semi-structured interviews (key informant interviews and focus group discussions). This included key UN Women personnel working on EVAWG and other thematic areas, government partners, Member States and donors, CSOs and WROs, other partners such as those from academia and the private sector, and UN agencies in the EVAWG space (See Figure 3 for details and Annex 8 for stakeholder engagement).

The online surveys received a total of 154 responses. The survey fielded to UN Women personnel received a 30 per cent response rate (N=48; 77 per cent female, 19 per cent male and 4 per cent prefer not to say/other). The survey sent to external partners received a 46 per cent response rate (N=106; 84 per cent female, 15 per cent male and 1 per cent prefer not to say/other).¹²

FIGURE 3: Types of stakeholders interviewed (N=172)

Source: Computed by the evaluation team

¹² See Annex 8 for further details on survey respondents.

1.4 Ethics, gender equality and no one left behind

The evaluation incorporated a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach that aligned with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards. The evaluation adhered to UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation,¹³ UNEG Ethical Guidelines,¹⁴ UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation¹⁵ in the UN system and UNEG guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluation.¹⁶ The evaluation also drew on feminist evaluation principles which, *inter alia*, encourage wide stakeholder engagement and facilitate the evaluation as a valuable process in and of itself to empower stakeholders to reflect on and engage with UN Women's EVAWG work.

The methodology included a focus on issues of equity and aimed to capture the perspectives of stakeholders working with survivors of GBV and women in situations of vulnerability (including women with disabilities and rural women), to understand the challenges and opportunities in ensuring their inclusion in prevention and response efforts. Due to ethical considerations, the evaluation team made a conscious decision not to reach out to women survivors of GBV directly. In anticipation of possible distress during interviews with stakeholders given the subject theme of the evaluation, the team was familiarized with resources that provide guidance for conducting research on VAW, and relevant UN Women Human Resources contacts for referral services.¹⁷ To ensure perspectives from stakeholders across all regions were captured regardless of language limitations within the evaluation team, the external survey was issued in six languages (determined in consultation with stakeholders) and interviews were conducted in five languages.

The rights, safety, welfare and confidentiality of stakeholders engaged in this evaluation were ensured by managing the data collection process systematically and with integrity, in accordance with IES Data Management Guidance.¹⁸

1.5 Evaluation constraints and limitations

The evaluation team faced a minimal number of constraints and limitations in carrying out the evaluation. There were some disparities in the types and quality of data collected across case studies. The virtual case studies engaged relatively fewer stakeholders than the in-person case studies; a small number of external stakeholders declined to participate in interviews at the country level; and the regional programme case studies relied extensively on internal stakeholder interviews and evaluations. Despite these minor issues, it is important to note that the overall number of stakeholders reached through interviews and focus group discussions (172) exceeded by 54 per cent the sample size proposed during the inception phase (85–112). The online surveys also received relatively high response rates of 30 per cent for the internal survey and 46 per cent for the external survey. In the latter case, the geographic distribution of respondents was slightly unbalanced, with 2 per cent of responses from the Arab States region and 3 per cent from East and Southern Africa. This was mitigated to an extent by ensuring sufficient key informant interviews from the two regions (See Annex 8 for further details on stakeholder engagement).

Changes in the overall structure and format of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework across the two Strategic Plan cycles posed some challenges in comparing results. UN Women's work on EVAWG remains one of the Entity's primary impact areas, with results tracked and reported through impact indicators. However, while the previous Integrated Results and Resources Framework contained a set of thematic area outcome and output indicators, the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 framework shifted towards reporting UN Women's work through seven systemic outcome indicators that are cross-thematic in nature. Although some systemic outcome indicators track EVAWG-specific work, this change made it difficult to consistently analyse corporate results. Some concerns were raised around the possible under-reporting of results or difficulty in aggregating results at the corporate level due to the decreased number of indicators specific to EVAWG under the current Strategic Plan. As a mitigating strategy, the evaluation team reviewed reporting on country-level Strategic Note indicators and reporting on Strategic Plan indicator results to validate and further assess UN Women's EVAWG results.

¹³ <https://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980>

¹⁴ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

¹⁵ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

¹⁶ <https://unevaluation.org/document/detail/3050>

¹⁷ See Annex 5.

¹⁸ For details, see Annex 9 on the data management plan and protocols applied to ensure data was protected and treated during and after the evaluation.



Photo: ©UN Women/Ismael Jiménez

2. EVALUATION CONTEXT

2.1 Global context

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most flagrant and pervasive human rights violations worldwide, undermining women's autonomy, enjoyment of basic rights and stunting progress towards gender equality.¹⁹ It is estimated that one in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.²⁰

The right to a life free from violence is protected by international human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), as well as regional instruments such as the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará, 1994); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol, 2003); and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention, 2011). It has also been reinforced by international political commitments such as the Vienna Declaration and Platform for Action (1993); the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993); the Beijing Platform for Action (1995); and the 2030 Agenda (2015).

Over the last 30 years, significant progress has been made at the normative and policy level, with the passing of first and second-generation legislation on GBV and the adoption of comprehensive national action plans or strategies.

According to the World Bank, at least 162 countries have ERAW legislation (2023).²¹ However, implementation of these normative and policy frameworks to ensure women can effectively exercise their rights continues to be a challenge in all regions. Obstacles are wide-ranging: they include limited coordination among public institutions responsible for addressing VAW; limited gender knowledge and capacities of public servants; and insufficient resources. The limited availability of national and comparable data on GBV, alongside challenges in accessing and ensuring quality essential services across sectors (health, police, judiciary, etc.) also hinder progress. Entrenched social norms that stereotype and discriminate against women; women's lack of awareness about their rights; and their limited participation and leadership in public life also play a role in perpetuating the widespread prevalence of GBV in societies.

The risk of violence against women has heightened in recent years given the current state of "*polycrisis*,"²² which has adverse implications for women's rights and, more broadly, the achievement of the SDGs. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic²³ in 2020 and ensuing global crises such as acute food insecurity,²⁴ climate change²⁵ and growing armed conflicts²⁶ are all contributing factors to the pervasiveness of VAW worldwide. In the aftermath of the pandemic, for those women and girls who have access to the internet, online violence has increased given the surge in internet use as people's daily activities have shifted online.²⁷

¹⁹ The term violence against women (and girls) is defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". (UN General Assembly, 1993). The term gender-based violence includes violence against men, boys and sexual minorities or those with gender-nonconforming identities. Gender-based violence is defined as "violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, dignity, equality between women and men, non-discrimination and physical and mental integrity". (Council of Europe, 2012). For the purpose of this evaluation, the two terms are used interchangeably. Discussion on terminology can be found at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/violence-against-women-and-girls/terminology>

²⁰ WHO (2021). Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018: global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women. See <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/341338/9789240026681-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

²¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures#83921>

²² Experts use the term to describe the causal interaction of crises across global systems and their cascading and amplifying effects: "A polycrisis occurs when crises in multiple global systems become causally entangled in ways that significantly degrade humanity's prospects. These interacting crises produce harms greater than the sum those the crises would produce in isolation, were their host systems not so deeply interconnected." Lawrence, Michael, Scott Janzwood, and Thomas Homer-Dixon (2022). '[What Is a Global Polycrisis?](#)' Version 2.0. Discussion Paper 2022-4. Cascade Institute.

²³ UN Women (2021). Measuring the shadow pandemic. Violence against women during COVID-19. See <https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Measuring-shadow-pandemic.pdf>

²⁴ World Bank Hatcher et al. (2022). Systematic review of food insecurity and violence against women and girls: Mixed methods findings from low and middle income settings. See <https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgph.0000479>

²⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change-en.pdf>

²⁶ According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the number of conflicts involving states totalled 59 in 2023, the highest number ever since the start of data collection in 1946. See <https://www.uu.se/en/press/press-releases/2024/2024-06-03-ucdp-record-number-of-armed-conflicts-in-the-world#:~:text=This%20has%20been%20shown%20by,2022%2C%20each%20with%2056%20conflicts.>

²⁷ Internet usage is estimated to have increased between 50 and 70 per cent, data published in March 2021. An Infographic by The Economist Intelligence Unit Measuring the prevalence of online violence against women. See <https://onlineviolencewomen.eiu.com/>. See also: UN Women (2020). COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls. UN Women (2020). Online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19.

2.2 UN Women's Strategic Plan reporting on ending violence against women

OUTCOME AREA ON EVAW UNDER STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2021

The outcome area on EVAW under UN Women's previous Strategic Plan (2018–2021) included two key outputs, namely *Output 11: More countries and stakeholders are better able to prevent violence against women and girls and deliver essential services to victims and survivors*; and *Output 12: More cities and other settings have safe and empowering public spaces for women and girls*. According to results reporting for Strategic Plan 2018–2021, UN Women reportedly achieved or surpassed its four-year targets for seven of the eleven indicators related to EVAWG.

The targets for outputs related to the number of EVAW national action plans and strategies; number of countries conducting community activities; improvements in guidelines and protocols for providing quality services to victims/survivors; number of beneficiaries and agents of change from United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women projects; increased partnerships for safe cities/public spaces, and gender-responsive local development plans; and measures to address GBV during COVID-19 (four of five sub-indicators) were all exceeded.²⁸ Only four output indicators fell slightly below their set targets: the number of countries providing information about women's rights to access quality essential services; number of countries integrating VAW prevention and response into COVID-19 response plans; number of countries where different sectors are addressing the elimination of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces through the transformation of social norms; and improved knowledge and skills of partners to influence legislation and policies on sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.

IMPACT AREA ON EVAW UNDER STRATEGIC PLAN 2022–2025

Under the current Strategic Plan (2022–2025), UN Women's key interventions in EVAWG include supporting Member States to strengthen the development, monitoring and reporting of global norms and standards on ending VAWG; supporting the formulation of national action plans on VAWG prevention that promote positive social norms, including by engaging men and boys; and strengthening the knowledge and evidence base on policy and practice to prevent VAWG.

The current Strategic Plan includes six new indicators to track the Entity's support to EVAWG and contribution to various systemic outcomes.²⁹ As per reported results for 2022 and 2023, UN Women exceeded its annual targets for four of six indicators: the number of countries and/or other actors with comprehensive and coordinated VAW prevention strategies; the number of countries with a process in place to design and implement prevention strategies, or with prevention interventions based on global norms and standards; and the number of countries with multi-stakeholder initiatives in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence, including sexual harassment.³⁰ The Entity fell short in 2022 but reached its target in 2023 for the number of countries reporting an increase in the number of women who access services after experiencing violence or discrimination. At the time of writing this report, the indicator related to UN system coordination did not include annual targets.

²⁸ See Annex 10 for detailed results and indicators.

²⁹ See Annex 10 for detailed results and indicators.

³⁰ Available online at: UN Women Transparency Portal <https://open.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Performance%20assessment%20per%20SP%20indicator%202022%20milestone%20-%20Copy.pdf>. UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 Integrated Results and Resources Framework <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/UN%20Women%20SP%20IRRF%202022-2025.pdf>



Photo: ©UN Women/Faith Mvula

3. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

3.1 Financial and geographic analysis

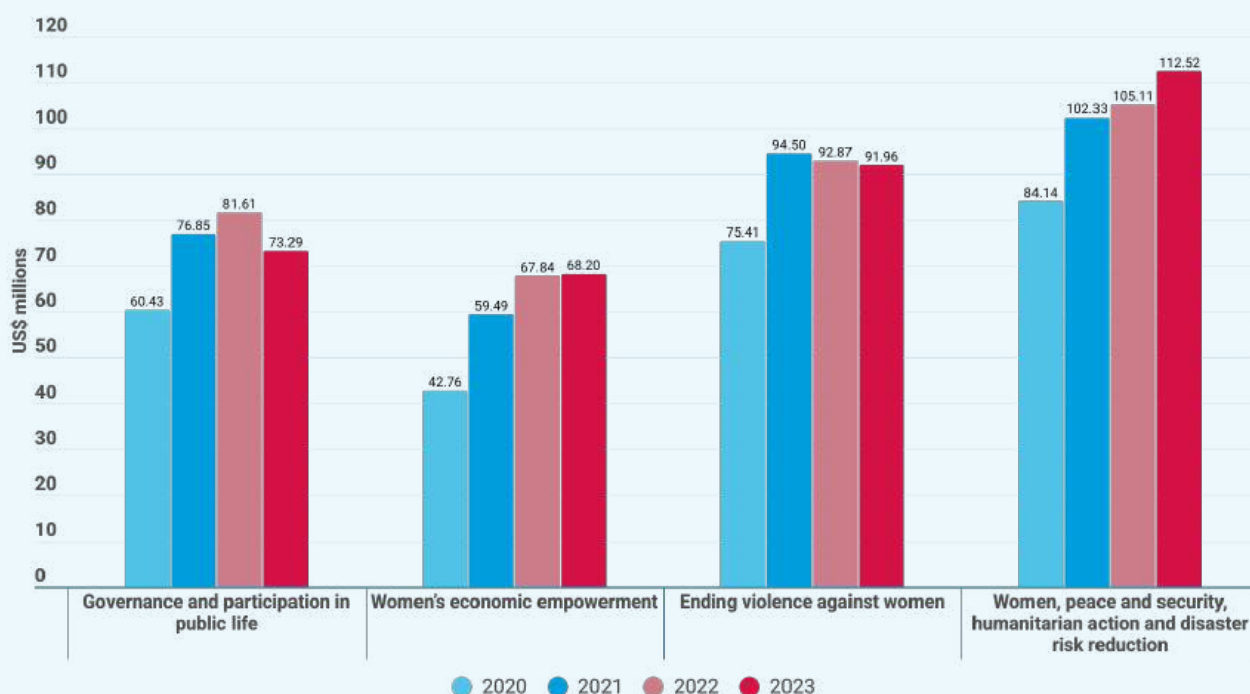
Between 2020 and 2023, the Entity's cumulative expenditure on EVAW was US\$ 354.78 million.³¹ Compared to UN Women's other thematic areas, this represented the second highest expenditure (the highest being Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction, totalling US\$ 404 million), as shown in Figure 4. Reported annual expenditure on EVAW increased from US\$ 75.4 million in 2020, to US\$ 94.5 million in 2021 and remained somewhat consistent at US\$ 92.87 in 2022 and US\$ 91.96 million in 2023.

As shown in Figure 5, the region with the highest reported spending for EVAW during 2020–2023 was headquarters (US\$ 81 million), which included funds allocated for the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women, the Spotlight Initiative, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, ACT and other UN Women initiatives on EVAW. The Regional Office with the highest level of expenditure was Asia and the Pacific, at US\$ 76 million. While the regions of East and Southern Africa, Americas and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa reported relatively similar expenditure,

ranging between US\$ 42 million and US\$ 46 million, the Arab States region had the lowest level of spending (US\$ 25 million).

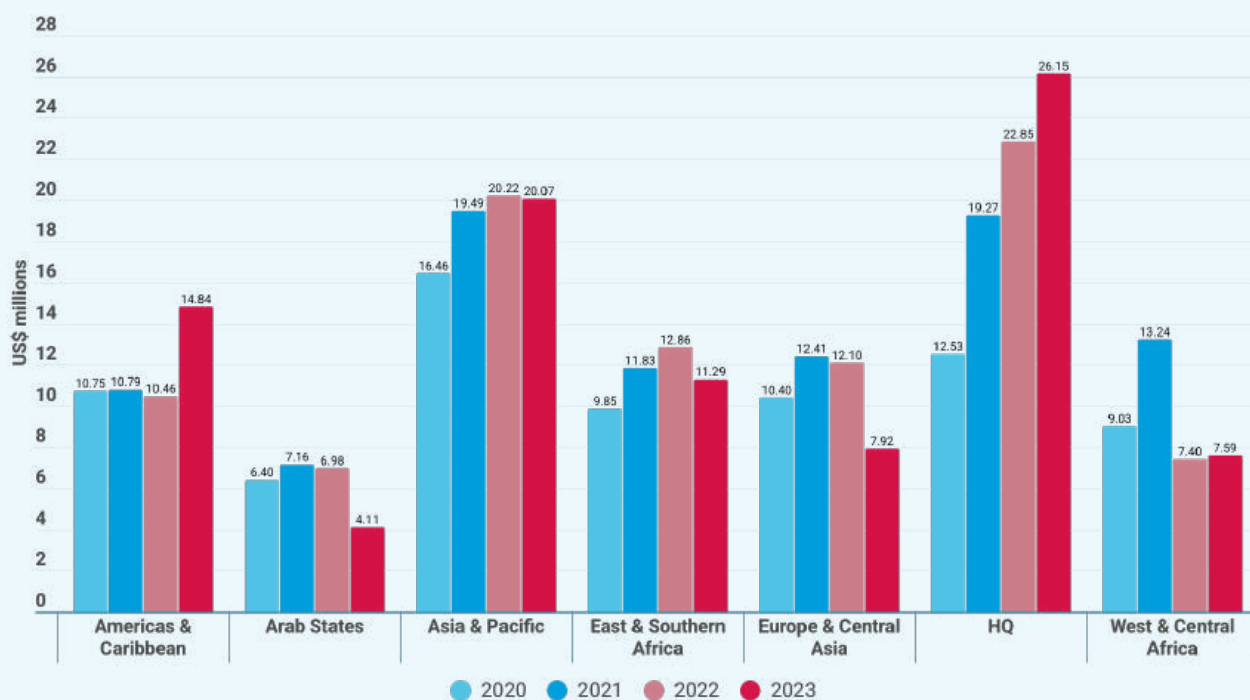
Under the current Strategic Plan, UN Women's expenditure on EVAW is spread across seven systemic outcomes. For 2022 and 2023 (see Figure 6), the highest cumulative EVAW expenditure was recorded under Outcome 4: Access to Services, Goods and Resources (US\$ 60.1 million); followed by Outcome 3: Positive Social Norms (US\$ 42.6 million). Outcome 4 also had the highest relative EVAW expenditure across all regions, with the exception of West and Central Africa, where the highest spending was under Outcome 3. Outcome 5: Women's Voice, Leadership and Agency reported expenditure of US\$ 40.1 million, with the majority of spending (US\$ 33.8 million) through global initiatives. Expenditure on other systemic outcomes was lower, with US\$ 20.5 million for Outcome 1: Norms, Laws, Policies and Institutions and US\$ 11.8 for Outcome 7: UN System Coordination. The lowest expenditure was reported under Outcome 2: Financing for Gender Equality (US\$ 4.5 million) and Outcome 6: Gender Statistics (US\$ 3.8 million).

FIGURE 4. Annual expenditure by thematic area, 2020–2023

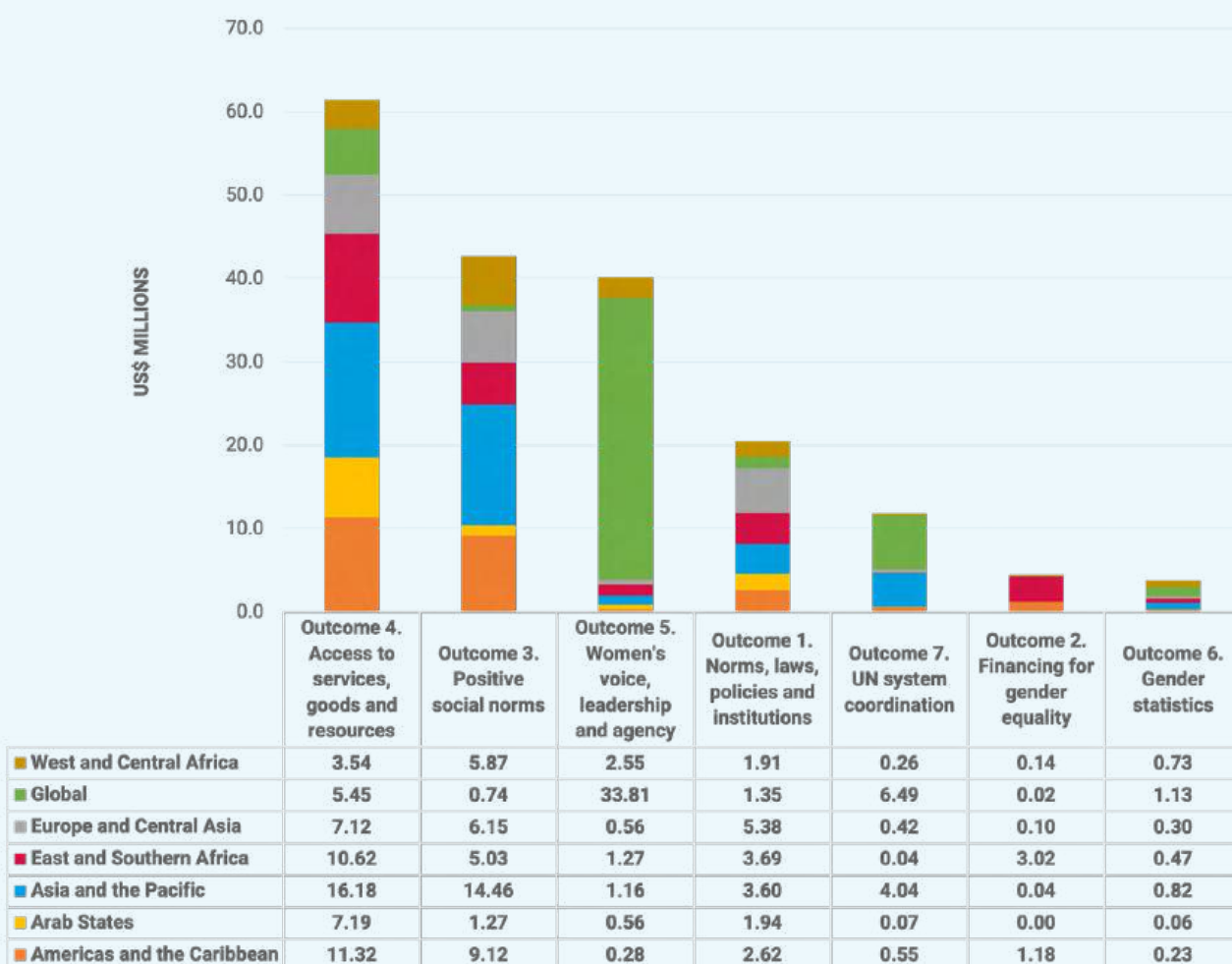


Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women's OneApp project delivery dashboard (for 2020–2021) and the UN Women Transparency Portal (for 2022–2023)

³¹ At the time of this review, due to the ongoing transition to the UN Women Quantum system, financial data for the entire period under review was not available on a single platform. Therefore, as advised, the financial data for 2020–2021 were drawn from UN Women's One App project delivery dashboard, and financial data for 2022–2023 was sourced from the UN Women Transparency Portal.

FIGURE 5. Annual expenditure for EVAW by region, 2020–2023

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women's OneApp project delivery dashboard (for 2020–2021) and the UN Women Transparency Portal (for 2022–2023)

FIGURE 6. Cumulative expenditure for EVAW, by systemic outcome and region, 2022 and 2023

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women Transparency Portal

3.2 Donor agreement analysis

Data gathered from UN Women's Donor Agreement Management System indicated that approximately US\$ 483.1 million was mobilized to fund UN Women's work related to EAW between 2020 and 2024.³² Of this amount, US\$ 61.04 million (12.6 per cent) was mobilized for the United Nations Trust Fund, and a similar amount of US\$ 61.05 million (12.6 per cent) was mobilized for the Spotlight Initiative. The remaining US\$ 361 million (74.7 per cent) was mobilized to fund UN Women's projects related to EAW across all regions and for global initiatives. This included 237 donor agreements with more than 80 funding partners, such as governments, multi-lateral organizations, UN system partners and the private sector. Top donors included the European Union (US\$ 80.6 million), United States (US\$ 50.2 million), Sweden (US\$ 42.7 million) and Australia (US\$ 34.7 million).

Looking across Strategic Plan periods, the donor agreement data suggest an upward trend in the number and value of agreements signed. Excluding any funds mobilized for the United Nations Trust Fund and Spotlight Initiative, funding for UN Women's work on EAW in the two and a half years of the current Strategic Plan (January 2022–June 2024) was substantially higher (US\$ 274.2 million), when compared with funding in the last two years of the previous Strategic Plan (January 2020–December 2021). The number of agreements signed also

showed an upward trend, accompanied by a doubling in the average and median value of agreements (see Table 1).

Examples of relatively higher-value agreements included global programmes such as the ACT programme, the Safe Cities and Safe Public spaces, and the Essential Services Package and Prevention Frameworks and Initiatives; regional programmes such as the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls Phase II (Fiji Multi-Country Office); and country-level programmes such as Enabling Essential Services for Afghan Women and Girls Activity, Protection of Women's Rights in Afghanistan and Delivery of Essential Services to Address Gender-Based Violence (Afghanistan Country Office) and Promoting the Rule of Law and Enhancing the Criminal Justice System (Pakistan Country Office). Higher-value agreements included funding for Strategic Notes and for programmes that integrated work on EAW with other thematic areas, such as Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and Advancing Women's Leadership (Tanzania Country Office), and Ending Violence, Expanding Livelihood Opportunities for Women and Accelerating Gender Governance in Moldova (Moldova Country Office). Overall, the analysis indicated a positive trend of moving towards developing larger initiatives for UN Women's work on EAWG under the current Strategic Plan.

TABLE 1: Amounts mobilized from donor agreements for EAW, January 2020–June 2024

Agreement start period	Total mobilized amount (US\$ million)	# of agreements	Average value per agreement (US\$)	Median value per agreement (US\$)
Jan 2022 – Jun 2024	274.23	132	2,077,508	790,286
Jan 2020 – Dec 2021	86.76	105	826,366	305,050

Note: Data excludes funds mobilized for the Spotlight Initiative and the United Nations Trust Fund.

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using UN Women Donor Agreement Management System data for donor agreements started between Q1 2020 and Q2 2024.

³² This estimate is based on the accumulative donor agreement value recorded in the UN Women Donor Agreement Management System data. Funds received in different currencies were converted to US\$ based on the conversion rate as of June 2024. These agreements were identified using the self-reported thematic tags available in the Donor Agreement Management System. Note that the analysis included only non-core contributions, excluding voluntary core contributions received. The implementation period for some of these agreements goes beyond 2024, and any agreements commencing prior to 2020 that fund implementation between 2020 and 2024 are also excluded from this analysis.



Photo: ©UN Women/Tamara Abdin

4. FINDINGS

4.1 To what extent has UN Women's work on VAWG prevention and response adapted to the needs and concerns of women, and to priority policy areas?

FINDING 1

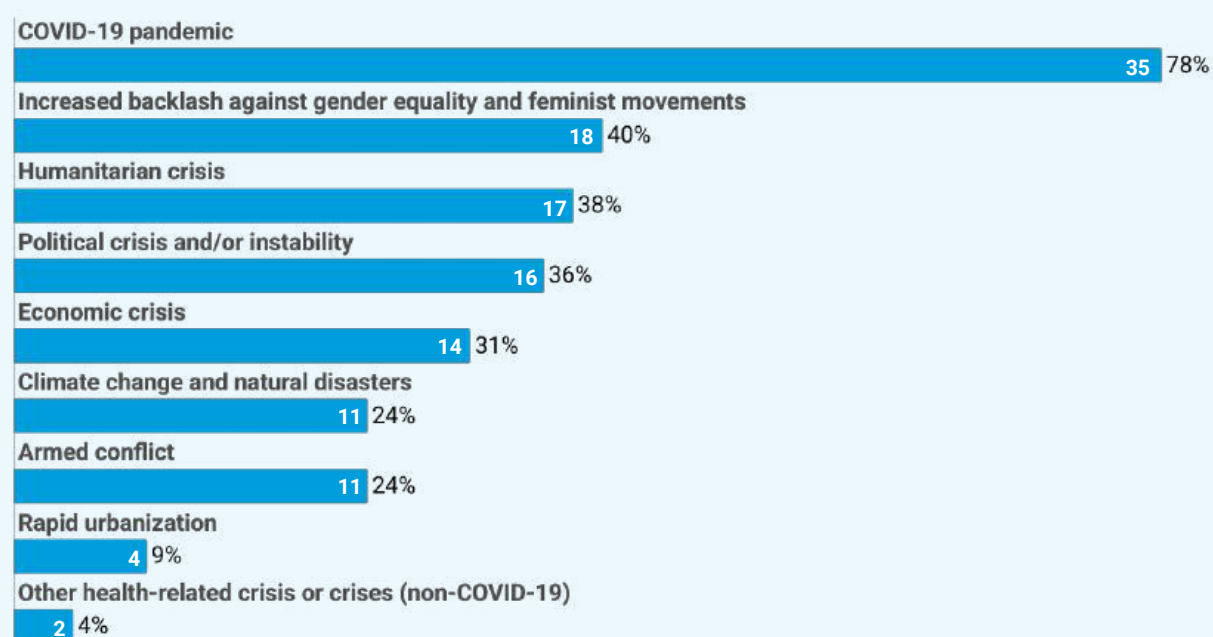
While UN Women's EVAWG work has responded to a number of crises since 2020, the Entity was particularly adaptive and agile in addressing the shifting needs of women and girls in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between 2020 and 2024, UN Women's EVAWG work responded to multiple context-related crises to remain relevant to the most pressing needs and priorities of women and girls. When surveyed, UN Women EVAWG personnel across regions identified the COVID-19 pandemic (78 per cent, n=35/45), increased backlash against gender equality (40 per cent, n=18/45) and humanitarian crises (38 per cent, n=17/45) as the top three context-related crises to which they had to respond. Political crises and instability (36 per cent, n=16/45), economic crises (31 per cent, n=14/45), climate change and natural disasters

(24 per cent, n=11/45) and armed conflict (24 per cent, n=11/45), were also identified as important challenges, but these varied across regions (See Figure 7).

Responses to the external partner survey indicated that most stakeholders considered UN Women's response to the heightened risks of VAWG and the evolving needs and priorities of partner organizations to be either "very responsive" (37 per cent, n=28/75) or "quite responsive" (40 per cent, n=30/75). Only 20 per cent (n=15/75) rated the Entity as "somewhat responsive".³³

FIGURE 7. UN Women personnel's perceptions of key crises that the Entity's EVAWG work responded to between 2020 and 2024 (Total responses:45)



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2024)

Note: UN Women Personnel Survey (Question 5): While addressing everyday forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a universal issue in many settings, please identify up to three context-related crises that your work on the prevention and response to VAWG had to respond to over the time frame June 2020 to June 2024.

³³ Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2024). Partner Survey (Question 5) On a scale from one to four, how responsive has UN Women been towards your organization, in the context of the heightened risks of VAWG in emerging crises and your organization's evolving needs and priorities?

UN Women personnel and external partners perceived the Entity's EVAWG programming as particularly adaptive and responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic. This strong degree of responsiveness was largely because UN Women was able to shift its EVAWG work into areas that were already relatively well established.³⁴ For instance, during the pandemic, across regions UN Women shifted its focus towards supporting research and data on the impact of the pandemic on VAWG. These efforts served to inform decision-making by key stakeholders such as government partners. UN Women also leveraged its close working relationships with government actors to provide policy advice and advocacy to better incorporate gender considerations into COVID-19 response plans and initiatives. In addition, UN Women leveraged its facilitation role to support stakeholders to move their activities online and continue stakeholder engagement through online methods. This included engaging women and girls through radio, television and social media and ensuring continued access to services for women victims/survivors of GBV.

In most case study countries, UN Women successfully supported government partners and women's organizations to continue providing access to VAWG essential

services to women and girls throughout the pandemic. For instance, in Egypt, UN Women supported access to women's shelters by supporting infrastructure needs, developing operating procedures and strengthening the capacities of personnel to address mental health issues. In India, UN Women strengthened the capacity of One Stop Centres to respond to VAWG through infrastructure support, technical support and capacity development support. In Viet Nam, UN Women strengthened infrastructure for shelters and helplines and built the capacity of service providers to respond to VAWG.

UN Women was also successful in providing direct VAWG support to women through the provision of information, emergency supplies and cash transfers, in some cases. Across case study countries, stakeholders validated UN Women's role in providing key information to women and girls on how to better protect themselves against VAWG during the pandemic and where to go to access essential services and other support. UN Women also reported providing cash transfers to women and girls who were in situations of vulnerability or who had experienced violence during the pandemic in countries such as India, Egypt and Viet Nam.

FINDING 2

UN Women's VAWG prevention and response work in development contexts³⁵ is increasingly required to respond to humanitarian crises and to work across the HDP nexus. However, the response of EVAWG programming to these crises is relatively nascent and faces wider challenges that include the absence of clear strategic positioning, the need for additional guidance and a paucity of financial resources.

While UN Women's VAWG work in development contexts was able to engage in humanitarian response to a great extent during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Entity has been less able to consistently respond to other humanitarian crises, including natural disasters and climate change. The degree of responsiveness also varied considerably across regions and countries. For instance, UN Women's EVAWG response to climate change in the Asia Pacific region has been more active than in many other regions. UN Women was able to work across the HDP nexus (in response to natural disasters and climate change) through the Pacific Partnership Programme by developing several service protocols, including for emergency crisis response, that have the potential to be further leveraged in other emergency contexts. UN Women also supported crisis-response centres following Tropical

Cyclone Harold, such as the Vanuatu Women's Centre and helped to rebuild a crisis centre in Tonga.

In Moldova, UN Women was able to successfully work across the HDP nexus to continue providing EVAWG services to women and girls in response to the influx of Ukrainian refugees. What most facilitated this response was the fact that refugees were integrated throughout host communities and not kept in isolated refugee camps. Therefore, UN Women's EVAWG work expanded to them, as opposed to having to enter a humanitarian context within the refugee camps. At the same time, UN Women personnel reported facing challenges in engaging with other UN agencies to integrate a development perspective into humanitarian work and indicated that the Entity also struggled to strategically position itself in relation to other UN agencies.

³⁴ This also aligns with findings from the 2021 Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's UN System Coordination and Broader Convening Role in Ending Violence Against Women, which found that UN Women's EVAWG portfolio was successful at shifting resources towards data collection and analysis and supporting the strengthening of access to services during the lockdown.

³⁵ The case study countries selected for this evaluation predominantly represent development contexts and did not experience protracted humanitarian crises during the period under review.

Other types of humanitarian responses across the case study countries were limited to one-off initiatives, such as the provision of survival kits and cash transfers to support women victims of forest fires in Bolivia and supporting a needs assessment during recent floods in India. Interviews with UN Women personnel suggest that the degree of responsiveness of UN Women's EVAWG work (in development contexts) to humanitarian crises depends a great deal on country-level personnel's level of knowledge and prior experience.

While UN Women is increasingly playing an important coordination and advisory role in supporting UN-wide humanitarian responses to be more gender responsive and inclusive, it was generally unclear among country-level personnel how to engage in VAWG prevention and response work when faced with humanitarian crises or what UN Women's strategic positioning should be in this context. While UN Women has recently developed an EAW-HDP Strategy, at the time of writing this report, the strategy remains in draft form and has not yet been shared across the Entity. Some interviewed personnel suggested that UN Women's strategic role should be to ensure that the voices of women and girls are heard by key humanitarian stakeholders and reflected in humanitarian decisions and processes. However, specific guidance is needed on how to provide VAWG prevention and response support during humanitarian crises and how to work across the HDP nexus. Some UN Women

personnel from case study countries expressed a need to clarify what role UN Women should play in relation to other UN agencies also working on GBV in this space.

Another hindering factor in UN Women's responsiveness to VAWG in humanitarian crises was the limited formal partnerships with key humanitarian actors, such as UNHCR, to facilitate effective entry into this area. Although humanitarian migration and refugee crises currently exist in countries such as Tanzania and Bolivia, UN Women was not partnering with UNHCR in these countries and was not actively engaged in supporting women and girl migrants or refugees through VAWG prevention and response work.

Limited to non-existent flexible funding for humanitarian response work at the country level was also a barrier that UN Women personnel raised, given that immediate and accessible funding is critical to respond to crises in a timely manner. Personnel also cited operational bottlenecks as a major barrier to responding quickly and flexibly during humanitarian crises. Nearly 60 per cent (n=26/44) of the UN Women personnel surveyed indicated that the Entity's internal operating processes, procedures and mechanisms have only been "somewhat flexible and responsive" to crises and/or changing contexts, while 18 per cent (n=8/44) believed that they were "not at all flexible and responsive."³⁶

FINDING 3

Technology facilitated gender-based violence (TF GBV), including online violence, was identified as one of the most pervasive emerging forms of violence against women and girls. UN Women has engaged in important research and thought-leadership initiatives at global and regional levels to address this issue. At the country level, research and data initiatives are emerging to address key gaps related to TF GBV.

UN Women EVAWG personnel identified a number of new, emerging or persistent forms of VAWG that included, but are not limited to, TF GBV, intimate partner violence, femicides, sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces and workplaces, sextortion, violence against women in politics, economic violence against women, emotional and psychological violence, harmful practices and trafficking of women and girls. Among these, the most commonly identified form of violence was TF GBV, as indicated by 69 per cent (n=31/45) of surveyed personnel.³⁷ This type of violence

was also highlighted as being particularly pervasive among young women and women in politics.

To respond to this form of violence, UN Women has developed research studies, policy papers, guides and tools largely at global and regional levels, which are available in a consolidated online [repository](#). These resources aim to advance normative work at the global level; provide useful overviews of existing data and evidence on addressing TF GBV; and provide important information on TF GBV, including on the types of TF GBV, and laws and frameworks that currently exist.

³⁶ Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2024). UN Women Personnel Survey (Question 6) On a scale from one to four, how flexible and responsive have UN Women's internal operating processes, procedures and mechanisms been to respond to these crises and/or changing contexts?

³⁷ Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2024). UN Women Personnel Survey (Question 8) In the context of where you work, please identify up to three of the most pervasive new/ emerging/ or growing forms of violence over the time frame June 2020-June 2024.

An example of recent normative work is the passing of UN General Assembly Resolution 79 on [Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: the digital environment](#), which was largely facilitated by UN Women.

At the country level, UN Women's response to TF GBV across case study countries was seen to be emerging and focused primarily on conducting research and gathering data to increase awareness on TF GBV and, in some cases, inform the development of evidence-driven approaches through collaboration with government, WROs, CSOs and other partners. Most of the case study countries do not yet have comprehensive laws, policies and systems in place to address TF GBV, prosecute perpetrators and provide adequate services to victims of TF GBV. UN Women has initiated some work at country level to address this key gap. In Egypt, for example, UN Women and UNFPA are supporting the National Council for Women to develop a national strategy, protocol and tools to prevent and respond to TF GBV. In some cases, UN Women has taken initial steps with government partners to raise awareness around the importance of addressing TF GBV and to

strengthen the capacity of government partners to work in this area. For instance, in Bolivia, UN Women created a guide for government actors on how to respond to TF GBV; while in Viet Nam, UN Women conducted capacity development workshops on TF GBV with key government ministries. A major challenge that UN Women faces with this work is engaging with technology companies to better address TF GBV. UN Women currently has few partnerships or direct interactions with the technology companies who are key actors in addressing this issue.

There appears to be a need to further strengthen the linkage between the normative and research work undertaken by UN Women at global and regional levels and UN Women's initiatives to address TF GBV at the country level. Personnel at the country level indicated a need for more corporate guidance and tools on how to address TF GBV and how best to support women and girls within rapidly changing online spaces. Interviewed UN agency partners also indicated a continuing need to bring the UN system together on this key issue.

4.2 How effectively has UN Women's support contributed to VAWG prevention and response?

FINDING 4

UN Women has been largely effective in working with government actors to implement VAWG laws, support VAWG service provision and strengthen referral systems. Successful strategies included developing multisectoral engagements across key line ministries, and working at local/subnational levels. Impediments to effectiveness were said to include limited funding, tight implementation timelines and programming delays due to certain internal processes.

UN Women's programming at country (and regional) level included different types and combinations of VAWG response and prevention efforts. Across all case studies, UN Women achieved considerable results by working with government partners to develop VAWG laws, frameworks and policies, and to support implementation of existing VAWG laws. In most case study countries, UN Women successfully supported implementation of the Safe Cities model. In terms of access to services, UN Women's work primarily focused on improving VAWG referral systems and strengthening access to justice through improved police and judicial capacities and systems. UN Women was effective in leading awareness-raising campaigns

and mobilization efforts, including some at the community level. These results are broadly in alignment with the Entity's relatively strong EVAWG achievements, as reported through its annual Strategic Plan indicators (presented under Section 2).

Table 2 provides illustrative examples of VAWG prevention and response results/outcomes drawn from the country and regional case studies. It includes entry points and successful strategies used to achieve results, as validated through internal and external stakeholder interviews.

TABLE 2: Illustrative examples of key VAWG prevention and response results/outcomes and entry points

Development of VAWG laws, frameworks and policies	
<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Women worked across stakeholder groups to support the adoption of the new National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women in mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. UN Women also provided considerable technical support to the newly established Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Elders and Children in Zanzibar³⁸ to mainstream gender-transformative principles throughout its structure and to support it to lead inter-ministerial coordination on VAWG. Since the inception and during the adoption of Fiji's National Action Plan, UN Women provided technical expertise, funding and facilitated multi-sector consultations. This helped to ensure a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. 	<p>Entry points/strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multisectoral approach to engage stakeholders from across key line ministries, various government levels and stakeholder groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In West and Central Africa, UN Women's partnership with the Economic Community of West African States contributed to the development of a regional strategy to prevent and respond to VAW validated by national women's machineries and adopted by Heads of State. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborating with regional organizations as equal partners to ensure local buy-in and alignment with regional priorities.

³⁸ This ministry was newly established in 2022 and is responsible for leading the government's EVAWG work across Zanzibar.

Strengthened implementation of existing EAWG laws	
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In Bolivia, UN Women supported the establishment of a municipalities network to facilitate the sharing of existing VAWG services across rural and urban municipalities located in geographically similar areas as part of efforts to support implementation of Law 348 that guarantees access to VAWG services to all women in Bolivia. 	Entry points/strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Leveraging existing government EAWG funds and resources to implement laws and shift to local level work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In India, UN Women supported implementation of the 2013 Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Act by providing capacity development and technical support to state and central government officials, and to certain private-sector partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Expanding EAWG work through cross-thematic collaboration, using workplace safety as an entry point to wider EAWG work.
Support to safe public spaces for women and girls	
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In most case study countries, UN Women implemented the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces model to prevent and address sexual harassment and create safe public spaces for women and girls. In several cases, these initiatives were expanded to other spaces such as universities, markets, technical institutes and transportation in Egypt, Tanzania and Viet Nam, as well as private-sector supply chains and workplaces in India. 	Entry points/strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Localization of global frameworks and tools along with their adaptation to facilitate expansion in a variety of settings attentive to local contexts.
Strengthened access to VAWG services	
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In Egypt, UN Women strengthened the psychosocial and legal capacities of the Women's Complaint Office, contributing to its expanded reach. The Entity also strengthened the capacities of shelters under the orbit of the Ministry of Social Solidarity, using a survivor-centred approach to increase safety, privacy and confidentiality. 	Entry points/strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Integrating survivor-centred approaches in VAWG referral systems and services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In the Pacific region, UN Women collaborated with regional and national organizations to integrate gender and protection measures into disaster response and management. The Entity provided training on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; supported the Fiji Safety and Protection Cluster in developing preparedness plans; and strengthened capacity within the Kiribati National Protection Cluster and civil society groups in the Solomon Islands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Integrating EAWG service protocols into emergency crisis response.
Strengthened access to justice mechanisms	
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In Chile, as part of the Essential Services global programme, UN Women trained police to address human rights violations, particularly sexual violence committed by state agents, and is supporting a broader process of institutional gender mainstreaming within the two national police services. ➤ In Tanzania, UN Women supported the development of a gender bench book to provide guidance to judges on how to effectively rule on VAWG cases in a standardized way and supported the provision of legal aid on VAWG to marginalized rural communities through mobile legal aid clinics. 	Entry points/strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Direct engagement with the police and judicial systems, leveraging tools such as the Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence.
VAWG prevention efforts at the community level	
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In Egypt, CSOs supported by UN Women used strengthening parental abilities as an initial discussion theme to bring women and men together to eventually discuss family dynamics, including VAWG. ➤ In Moldova, young couples were brought together to discuss positive inter-personal relationships, which served as an entry point to engage in dialogue around VAWG. 	Entry points/strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Using community dialogues and widely accessible themes, such as parenting and positive relationships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In Viet Nam, UN Women engaged with Men's Clubs to strengthen dissemination of information on shelters for VAWG survivors. In Dien Bien, a remote region with a relatively high incidence of VAWG, UN Women engaged with and provided capacity-building support to five men's clubs, including two clubs of ethnic men and one with the police. ➤ In Fiji, UN Women engaged faith-based organizations and sports bodies in primary prevention efforts to promote social norms change within influential community structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mobilization of non-traditional actors in primary prevention efforts.

In terms of contribution towards outcome-level results (as presented in the reconstructed theory of change), evidence from the case studies highlighted several results related to Outcome/Lever of Change 1 where “global norms and standards on ERAW are translated into gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutions”, as well as Outcome/Lever of Change 3 where “women and girls who experience violence can access essential services and perpetrators are held accountable”. UN Women’s support to governments at both national and subnational levels to create and implement gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions was seen to be a focus of UN Women’s ERAWG work and the case studies validated the Entity’s contribution to stronger legal frameworks and strengthened capacity for institutions to support efforts to prevent and respond to VAWG. Under Outcome/Lever of Change 3, VAWG referral systems were strengthened across case study countries through UN Women’s efforts to bring stakeholders together by using a multi-sectoral approach and by strengthening the capacities of CSO and government actors that provide VAWG services. An assessment of synergies across UN Women’s corporate ERAWG outcomes indicated strong linkages between UN Women’s work to promote gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions and access to ERAWG services. When ERAWG laws and policies were in place and sufficiently financed and implemented, these were seen to directly facilitate increased access to VAWG services for women and girls.

Progress towards achieving Outcome 2 on “changing social norms, attitudes and behaviour at community and individual levels to prevent VAWG” and Outcome 4 where “CSOs and women’s rights organizations exercise their key role in leading the ERAWG agenda” was less prominent in evidence from the case studies. In part, this may have been due to reprogramming requests from partners during the COVID-19 pandemic that prioritized essential service provision, and the social distancing rules in place that impacted prevention intervention in urban and rural spaces. Other issues highlighted by stakeholders included challenges around implementing a coherent social norms change framework; limited funding available to support prevention work; and resource gaps in supporting women’s movement building and CSO advocacy and networking, particularly at national and subnational levels.

The case studies also validated potential synergies between changing social norms (Outcome 2) and increased access to VAWG services for women and girls (Outcome 3) where improved attitudes towards ERAWG as well as increased knowledge of available ERAWG services among women and girls positively impact the

willingness of women and girls to access VAWG services and denounce perpetrators. This was seen, for instance, in Tanzania, where interviewed national police personnel mentioned that they had noticed an increase in women’s willingness to denounce perpetrators and access VAWG services in those communities where social norms work had taken place and where there were male champions of ERAWG. Results under Outcome 4 (CSOs and WROs exercise their key role in leading the ERAWG agenda), while intricately connected to the other three outcomes, were less evident through the case studies. The emerging nature of this work and the challenges that UN Women is facing to support WROs in many contexts could negatively impact the results obtained under the other three outcomes.

BOX 1.

Spotlight Initiative: Perspectives from UN Women’s ERAW section

Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030. The first phase (2017-2023) was launched with a funding commitment of EUR 500 million from the European Union. During Spotlight 1.0, UN Women played a leadership role representing the Recipient UN Organizations in the highest governing body and held technical coherence roles in 23 of 32 programmes. UN Women was an implementing agency in 30 of the 32 programmes and was responsible for management of 38 per cent (US\$ 197.8 million) of the global investment. UN Women’s programming through key partnerships led to impactful results across all outcome areas, including:

- **Strengthening laws and policies:** Contributed directly to strengthening 477 laws and policies that promote gender equality, while supporting 35,000 women’s rights advocates to further advance laws and policies.
- **Strengthening institutions:** Supported capacity development of 6,637 government officials on gender-responsive budgeting and supported 1,201 government officials to draft and cost action plans to end VAWG.
- **Enhancing prevention:** Established 83 networks, including with religious and traditional leaders, to challenge tolerance of VAWG and supported 234 awareness-raising initiatives reaching over 172 million people.
- **Enhancing response:** Supported efforts that contributed to 124,035 VAWG cases being reported to the police.
- **Strengthening women’s movements:** Directed US\$ 86 million to WROs and other CSOs.

Note: As the Spotlight Initiative was outside the scope of this evaluation, the results reported above were provided by UN Women’s ERAW section and were not independently validated by the evaluation team. All reports and evaluations related to Spotlight Initiative are available at: https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/latest?type=ct_publications

Despite important advances, internal stakeholders across case study countries indicated that the effectiveness of UN Women's overall approach to EVAWG is often limited by the project-based nature of funding and short timelines for delivery. Personnel also identified the perceived rigidity of UN Women's administrative procedures as a key internal barrier impacting the effectiveness of their EVAWG prevention and response work. Long procurement processes; administrative rules that implied limitations in working with small CSOs and non-traditional partners; and delays in processing payments were highlighted as having had a negative impact on planned results and cancelled programming. Examples of such

issues in the case study countries included delays in hiring new UN Women personnel; long procurement processes to hire external consultants; challenges in partnering with private-sector companies who use patents on their intellectual property; and delays of several months in transferring funds to implementing partners. Some external stakeholders also shared the perception that UN Women's internal procedures were negatively affecting the Entity's ability to partner with diverse actors and achieve planned results, and suggested there was a risk that UN Women could face potential loss of reputation if these issues are not addressed.

FINDING 5

UN Women's efforts to address VAWG-related social norms have primarily focused on large-scale, information-sharing and awareness-raising campaigns (alongside community mobilization); while community based/behaviour change interventions have been at a relatively smaller scale. In the absence of a strong corporate framework to support and measure the impact of social norms change, Country Offices have taken the initiative, engaging in social norms work where feasible. Although UN Women is implementing some strategies to engage men, the Entity's overall focus on male engagement to end VAWG could be strengthened.

Across case study countries, UN Women engaged extensively in information-sharing and awareness-raising campaigns to change social attitudes towards VAWG, and to empower women to seek out VAWG services. This included working at the community level through in-person information-sharing sessions, door-to-door campaigns, radio and television information-sharing campaigns, and by pursuing large-scale national media campaigns (including social media), which were often tied to global initiatives such as the 16 Days of Activism Campaign and the HeforShe Campaign. In Viet Nam, the annual "Unite/16 Days" campaign was aligned with the national month of action and was rolled out at both provincial and local levels, providing a good entry point, which was a critical factor in enhancing the scale and reach of the campaign. Building UN Women personnel's capacity to manage online and social media campaigns has greatly helped to facilitate this work. While some analytics regarding information-sharing (for example, the number of people reached, the number of social media posts shared, etc.) can be compiled, internal stakeholders highlighted challenges in measuring actual changes in attitudes and behaviours that may have been impacted by these initiatives. These challenges revolve largely around difficulties in linking causation between information-sharing and behaviour change due to the multiple

factors that influence changes in behaviour, as well as the need to continually monitor such changes over the medium to long term.

Community-level engagement

While UN Women has engaged in other types of social norms change initiatives at the community level, they were typically ad hoc and under-funded. Some promising practices included the work undertaken in the West and Central Africa region to promote community-based discussions between women, men, girls and boys to exchange perspectives and foster empathy with the aim of eliminating harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage. UN Women Country Offices in the region are also engaging with community and religious leaders to reinforce that VAWG is not tolerated in religious texts and to encourage religious leaders who are highly influential to speak out against VAWG. Engagement with religious leaders as an EVAWG strategy has so far been largely limited to ending harmful practices but is gaining traction in other parts of the world. For instance, the UN Women Country Office in Bolivia is currently developing a VAWG initiative that will engage religious leaders to promote EVAWG. UN Women is also using couples counselling and parenting workshops as strategies/entry points to work on VAWG and intimate partner violence across regions.

Research compiled by the [Prevention Collaborative Knowledge Hub](https://prevention-collaborative.org/prevention-strategies/working-with-couples/?cat_id=19&scat_id=46) identifies working with religious leaders and engaging men through couples counselling and parenting workshops as highly effective strategies to reduce VAWG and intimate partner violence, as long as EVAWG is placed as a central theme throughout these initiatives.³⁹

The UN Women Moldova and Egypt Country Offices successfully used interactive theatre as a means to open community-level discussions around ending VAWG. In Bolivia, as part of the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative, UN Women supported attitude changes among community members and municipal government workers towards women recyclers by highlighting the social, economic and environmental benefits that the women bring to the community and by supporting the professionalization of their work by providing orange safety vests and strengthening women recycler associations. The Entity also supported the collective organization of women recyclers at grassroots level to advocate for their rights. In Tonga, Fiji and Samoa, UN Women used sport as an entry point to advance social norms change to end VAWG, which in Tonga resulted in overturning a ban on girls in public schools playing rugby.

Male engagement

For social norms work to be effective, it must also focus on changing men's behaviour towards women and girls. Recent research confirms that effective prevention programming must address men's multiple risk factors for perpetrating violence, which include exposure to violence in childhood, attitudes that endorse male superiority, adherence to rigid norms around acceptable male and female behaviour, and harmful alcohol use.⁴⁰ Some promising practices seen in case study countries to engage men around EVAWG include supporting men's clubs in Viet Nam to raise awareness about VAWG; promoting EVAWG male champions at the community level in Tanzania and connecting them to male champions at the highest political levels, including the President of Zanzibar; harnessing a shared passion for football in the Western Balkans and Turkey through a communications campaign to challenge toxic masculinity and reformulate men and boys' perceptions of VAWG; and facilitating collaboration between fathers' initiatives and WROs in Turkey to better promote girls' education and the elimination of child and forced marriage.

UN Women has engaged in some limited work in case study countries to change the behaviour of VAWG perpetrators. For instance, UN Women supported access to psychological support services to male perpetrators in Bolivia to prevent recurring or escalating cases of VAWG. This included support to psychologists to work with male perpetrators, along with the creation of a technical guide for psychologists to follow to facilitate this work. So far, over 500 male perpetrators have reportedly received psychological support as part of a rehabilitation model supported by UN Women. Reportedly several municipalities in Bolivia have expressed interest in continuing the rehabilitation model with their own budgets. In Viet Nam, UN Women engaged in a similar initiative where the Entity supported legal consultation for select male VAWG perpetrators as a strategy to support rehabilitation and the continued well-being of their wives and families.

While the case studies highlighted some examples, the Entity's overall focus on male engagement to end VAWG was found to be relatively weaker in terms of focus and investment. UN Women has recently published a briefing paper outlining lessons learned and good practices on how to engage men and transform patriarchal masculinities. Building on a 2021 internal review of UN Women's work engaging men and boys, the Transforming Patriarchal Masculinities: [Learning from Practice](https://prevention-collaborative.org/prevention-strategies/supporting-parents-and-caregivers/?cat_id=19&scat_id=78) publication proposes a framework that not only looks at individual-level change but also at the structures and systems (institutions, ideologies) that perpetuate patriarchy. The framework was tested through the Dialogue, Reflection, Insight, Learning and Sharing initiative in five countries in 2023. It has yet to be widely disseminated and adopted across the organization.

Barriers

While UN Women implemented some effective strategies to advance social norms work at the community level, engage men and address male behaviour, this area of work has considerable challenges. As indicated in the 2024 *IES Feminist Collaborative Evaluation of UN Women's Approach to Social Norms Change*, working on social norms at the community level is typically complicated, resource-intensive and difficult to monitor and evaluate. This is largely because social norms approaches need to be modified for each local context⁴¹ and behaviour change typically requires sustained interventions and funding.

³⁹ https://prevention-collaborative.org/prevention-strategies/working-with-couples/?cat_id=19&scat_id=46

⁴⁰ https://prevention-collaborative.org/prevention-strategies/supporting-parents-and-caregivers/?cat_id=19&scat_id=78

⁴¹ The 2024 Feminist Collaborative Evaluation of UN Women's Approach to Social Norms Change states that "social norms must be understood within the local context and that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Methodologies must be tailored and contextualized, and better still, built from the bottom up in a participatory and collaborative manner". (page IX, Executive Summary).

UN Women's predominantly project-based funding structure at the country level has resulted in short, unpredictable programming, which does not facilitate sustainable social norms change. While some country case studies, such as Zanzibar in Tanzania and those involved in the Pacific Partnership Programme, have recently experienced slightly longer-term and more sustainable funding which has helped to facilitate more cohesive programming, these longer-term initiatives are exceptions and do not necessarily cover all of UN Women's EVAWG areas of work. For instance, in Zanzibar, longer-term EU funding did not include a strong focus on social norms change and did not facilitate UN Women's support to strengthen WROs. Moreover, it only focused on the island of Zanzibar and did not support EVAWG work in mainland Tanzania,

leaving UN Women with a more unpredictable funding situation in the mainland. In India and Bolivia, despite UN Women's efforts to create linkages across projects, project funding has been largely piecemeal and has hindered the offices' ability to create a comprehensive, holistic and strategic VAWG portfolio. In addition, UN Women does not have sufficient corporate guidance, frameworks and tools to support Country Offices with social norms work at the grassroots level. UN Women EVAWG personnel from across case study countries identified a strong need for corporate guidance, frameworks and tools to support social norms change, often citing opportunities for UN Women to become a thought leader in this area.

FINDING 6

UN Women's EVAWG work achieved some synergies with other thematic areas, including Women's Economic Empowerment. In some cases, cross-thematic approaches have helped to create entry points for EVAWG work and have supported the achievement of higher-level results. This remains an area for further strengthening, as envisioned in UN Women's current Strategic Plan.

Efforts have been made within UN Women's EVAWG portfolio of work to collaborate and develop synergies with other thematic areas, including Women's Economic Empowerment, Women's Political Participation and Women, Peace and Security. In responses to the survey of UN Women personnel, these synergies were most frequently observed between EVAWG and Women's Economic Empowerment programming, with 38 per cent (n=17/45) of surveyed personnel identifying Women's Economic Empowerment as the most common thematic area for cross-thematic collaboration and synergies; followed by Women, Peace and Security (22 per cent, n=10/45) and Women's Political Participation (16 per cent, n=7/45).⁴²

In Tanzania, UN Women's EVAWG team collaborated closely with the Women's Economic Empowerment team to improve safety for women in marketplaces in Zanzibar and to support the development of women's marketplace economic groups through the use of a Safe Cities approach. In Egypt, UN Women intentionally included a cross-thematic approach to its ERAW work through economic empowerment strategies. Emphasis was placed on strengthening the entrepreneurial and employability skills of the women who use public shelters and safe public spaces. UN Women also engaged with the private sector to raise awareness and foster the adoption of protocols and practices to ensure workplaces are free from sexual harassment.

In India, through the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme, UN Women leveraged implementation of the 2013 Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act as a key entry point to address VAWG. UN Women worked with the Tea Estates in Assam to provide training to tea garden management staff on sexual violence and harassment in the workplace as they are often first responders. This work then expanded into community-level social and behaviour change communication interventions on VAWG. Lessons learned from these initiatives were subsequently applied to similar work in the spices sector in other states in India. UN Women in India recently launched the Textile Industry Coalition, which is a multi-stakeholder platform to support women's empowerment and safety across the value chain, while aiming to promote a survivor-centric response on factory floors and in communities.

Key examples of collaboration and synergies generated between UN Women's EVAWG work and other thematic areas (apart from Women's Economic Empowerment) included collaboration with the Women's Political Participation team in Moldova where support for women political candidates to champion ratification of the Istanbul Convention helped the EVAWG team to strengthen the normative framework around EVAWG. In addition, a 2021 study entitled [Civil Society Voices on Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Responses: Regional Perspectives from West and Central Africa](#) reflected a cross-thematic approach between EVAWG and Women, Peace and Security.

⁴² UN Women Personnel Survey (Question 13): Which other UN Women thematic area (select only one) do you most collaborate with regarding your EVAWG work on prevention and response, if any?

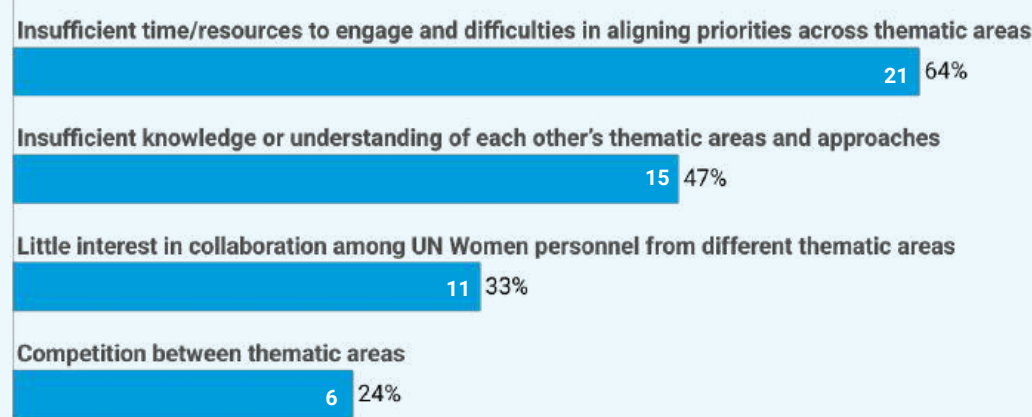
Some strategies that facilitated cross-thematic collaboration, as identified by UN Women personnel from several case study countries, included holding regular inter-thematic meetings within the Country Office to look for cross-thematic entry points across UN Women programming; building programming portfolios that integrate cross-thematic elements/outcomes (e.g. Safe Cities); implementing different thematic programmes within the same geographic space to promote cross-synergies; and strengthening Strategic Note and annual planning to identify common entry points and synergies across thematic areas. While the value in and of itself of a cross-thematic approach to EAWG was widely underscored by UN Women personnel and key stakeholders, the limited availability of funding for EAWG at country level (in some cases) was also cited as a driver for this approach.

Although UN Women personnel are making visible efforts to create linkages between EAWG and other UN Women thematic areas (including through action coalitions and some global, regional and country programmes), cross-thematic collaboration was not consistently

applied across UN Women's EAWG work. A number of key barriers are hindering UN Women's efforts to achieve cross-thematic synergies. As outlined in Figure 8 below, 64 per cent (n=29/45) of surveyed UN Women EAWG personnel identified insufficient time and resources to engage in cross-thematic collaboration as a key barrier to working and synergizing with other UN Women thematic areas. In addition, 47 per cent (n=21/45) identified insufficient knowledge or understanding of each other's thematic areas and approaches as a key barrier; 33 per cent (n=15/45) identified limited interest in working with other thematic areas; and 24 per cent (n=11/45) identified competition between thematic areas as a key barrier.

The UN Women personnel interviewed across regions agreed that these barriers are primarily the product of UN Women's thematic structure, which inherently creates silos that don't support the joint delivery of comprehensive, cross-thematic programming. Programme funding associated with a specific thematic area also promotes further silos.

FIGURE 8. UN Women EAWG personnel's perception of the most common challenges or barriers to achieving cross-thematic synergies with other UN Women thematic areas (Total responses: 45)



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2024)

Note: UN Women Personnel Survey (Question 15): Please identify up to three of the most common challenges or barriers that you experienced to collaborate with other UN Women thematic areas.

4.3 To what extent is UN Women's work coherent with the work of other partners in this space (UN agencies and non-UN actors)?

FINDING 7

UN Women has played a key role in leading global normative processes and supporting the development of knowledge products, guidance documents, VAWG data and frameworks. Undertaken in collaboration with a diverse coalition of stakeholders (UN agencies and non-UN actors), these efforts aimed to support coherence on EVAWG issues. At the country level, UN Women has partnered closely with various government entities to promote the coherence of VAWG initiatives by providing technical assistance and support for adapting frameworks and guidance to local contexts.

Over the past four years, UN Women has built on its well acknowledged technical expertise⁴³ and continued to partner with UN agencies and other actors to develop key EVAWG knowledge products/resources, including on strengthening data. For instance, as part of the Joint Programme on Violence Against Women Data, UN Women and WHO issued a series of briefs on the challenges in measuring, collecting and making data available on violence against particular groups of women or specific aspects of violence against women. These include, among others, "[Measuring violence against women with disability: Data availability, methodological issues, and recommendations for good practice](#)" (2024) and "[Violence against women 60 years and older: Data availability, methodological issues, and recommendations for good practice](#)" (2024). The 2023 [Evaluation on the WHO-UN Women Joint Programme on Violence Against Women Data](#) found that the programme contributed to an increase in the availability of VAW data and harmonization of methods and measurement. The programme also developed the first-ever global guidance on the collection and production of administrative VAW data. Jointly with UNODC, UN Women published global estimates on femicide/feminicide [Gender-related killings of women and girls \(femicide/feminicide\): Global estimates of female intimate partner/family-related homicides in 2022](#) (2023) and [Gender-related killings of women and girls: Improving data to improve responses to femicide/feminicide](#) (2022).

To support the scale up of prevention initiatives across different regions, in collaboration with UN and other partners, UN Women continued to support implementation of the RESPECT Package (2019),⁴⁴ and developed

a handbook on a coordinated multisectoral national strategy for VAW prevention and programming guidance materials (on social protection, climate change and innovation) (2023).⁴⁵ In 2022, in partnership with Global Rights for Women, UN Women introduced the *Safe Consultations with Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls* guide, which emphasizes the integration of survivors' voices in both programming and policy advocacy. UN Women also collaborated with partners such as UNODC, the International Development Law Organization and the International Association of Women Police to enhance women's access to justice and advance gender-responsive policing by contributing to the development of the [Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services](#) (2021). The handbook continues to be piloted and adapted to countries across the world, including in Chile, through a 2022 Memorandum of Understanding formalizing UN Women's technical assistance role in the public security reform process.

UN Women supported guidelines and training developed by other UN agencies that incorporate women's safety principles and address risk factors associated with VAWG (for instance, in the context of women's access to safe spaces, women's economic empowerment and access to quality survivor services). Examples included support to UNOPS's [Inclusive infrastructure for climate action](#) (2023) and [Guidelines for developing inclusive transport infrastructure](#) (2024); and to the [Global Online Course on Gender and Transportation](#) (2021) developed jointly with the World Bank, UN Women's Training Centre and the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative.

⁴³ This has been reflected in several recent UN Women evaluations, including the 2021 IES Corporate [Evaluation of UN Women's UN System Coordination and Broader Convening Role in Ending Violence Against Women, under](#) Finding 5: "Over the years, UN Women has built a solid core of technical expertise on specific policy and programming areas of EVAWG".

⁴⁴ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/05/respect-women-preventing-violence-against-women> (2019)

⁴⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/10/together-for-prevention-handbook-on-multisectoral-national-action-plans-to-prevent-violence-against-women-and-girls>

UN Women's efforts have contributed to strengthening internal United Nations system-wide policies and practices on sexual harassment. For example, as co-chair of the Chief Executives Board Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System, UN Women contributed to finalization of guidance advancing a common understanding of a victim/survivor-centred approach to sexual harassment within UN organizations ([Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-Centred Approach to Sexual Harassment, 2021](#) and [Investigators Manual Investigation of Sexual Harassment Complaints, 2021](#)).

UN Women has continued to leverage its knowledge and thought leadership through engagement in intergovernmental processes, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, to highlight key VAWG issues. For instance, building on negotiations during the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2022, UN Women partnered with the International Union for Conservation of Nature to develop a [guidance note](#) summarizing

promising practices and adaptable resources for implementing initiatives that address VAWG within the context of climate change. Stakeholders validated UN Women's key role in facilitating the process and strengthening political will towards implementation of norms. UN Women also organized an Expert Group Meeting with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women highlighting the impacts of the climate crisis, environmental degradation and related displacement on violence against women and girls.

At the country level, UN Women has worked closely with government partners to foster coherence on VAWG policies and initiatives (see section 4.2 on effectiveness). Government partners interviewed for this evaluation viewed UN Women as a valued knowledge partner and expressed the continued demand for engagement through technical assistance and capacity development support. Stakeholders also greatly valued the Entity's high-quality conceptual work on VAWG and ability to support tailored analysis at the country level.

FINDING 8

The modality and extent of UN Women's collaboration with other UN entities on EVAWG varies at the country level. In contexts where it was successfully deployed, joint UN programming resulted in a more comprehensive approach to EVAWG. Differences in internal processes and competition for resources at the country level continue to challenge further advancements in joint work.

At the country level, UN Women collaborates with various UN agencies on EVAW through joint programmes, advocacy campaigns (such as the UNITE campaign) and/or coordination for other initiatives. On EVAWG, UN Women most frequently partners in-country with UNODC, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO. By working jointly with these agencies, UN Women has supported comprehensive programmes aimed at strengthening VAWG prevention and services for women, children and adolescents. This has allowed VAWG programming to be more holistic and impactful. Of the countries under review, examples of such joint work were identified in Bolivia, Viet Nam and recently developed programmes in Egypt. In Bolivia, the agencies conducted a needs-mapping exercise for EVAWG; developed an action plan for the Bolivian government; and created the municipalities network model to promote shared VAWG resources across rural municipalities. In Viet Nam, UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF collaborated on a joint programme addressing violence against women and children during the COVID-19 pandemic. This programme was subsequently expanded and currently covers policy support, prevention and response. In Egypt, together with UNFPA and UNICEF, UN Women developed

two new joint programmes addressing social norms change and women's safety at work and in public spaces. In the case study countries, UN Women engaged to some extent with agencies such as UNDP, UN Habitat, IOM and ILO on EVAWG. Stakeholders highlighted the opportunity to expand the Entity's collaboration with other UN agencies, particularly in working across the HDP nexus.

Where successfully engaged in joint work, UN Women and other UN agencies leveraged their ability to speak in a coherent UN voice, which has helped to develop trust and buy-in from governments and resource partners. Strategies for successful joint work, as indicated by internal and external stakeholders, included open communications between agencies and a willingness to work together. For instance, in Bolivia, working relationships between UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF were seen as strong due to clear communication on respective mandates and amicable cooperation to identify programming synergies. Other facilitating factors included strong leadership and desire to work together at the Head of Office level and strong leadership from the Resident Coordinator.

Joint programming has been a useful approach in the Europe and Central Asia region to promote synergies across UN agencies and to achieve gains that are larger than the sum of each agency's contributions. This was validated in the [Final evaluation of the regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Türkiye](#), which found that each agency chose interventions that represented their comparative advantage in the region.

One of the key challenges in implementing joint programmes, as identified by internal and external stakeholders, was a lack of coherence in results, financial reporting systems and operational approaches. For instance, UN Women in Viet Nam developed and collaborated with other UN agencies on relatively comprehensive VAW programmes covering policy support, prevention and response. However, at times, the engagement has been challenging owing to a lack of coherence in reporting systems. As indicated in the mid-term review of the programme, this misalignment will remain a significant challenge for future programming. The issue is well known to external partners, including the key donor, and could present a reputational risk if left unresolved. In developing Phase II of the *Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme*, internal stakeholders indicated that while there has been an attempt to engage with other UN agencies, differences between UN Women and UNFPA in operational approaches to strengthening service provision created some tensions. Similarly, the 2024 evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative highlighted operational risks associated with UN system entities' processes and procedures.⁴⁶

Another challenge to joint work stems from differences in perceptions of agencies' mandates, which at times can lead to competition. In the 2021 IES [Evaluation of UN Women's UN System Coordination and Broader Convening Role in Ending Violence Against Women](#), some stakeholders highlighted that UN Women faces

challenges in establishing trust among sister agencies and resolving perceived conflicts between its coordination and operational/programme implementation roles. The evaluation found that UN Women's mandate is not automatically accepted by all UN actors and must be earned by demonstrating added value on the ground. Where the Entity has sizeable human resource capacities and financial resources, or where it has cordially agreed the division of labour (such as the division of pilot countries and respective sector engagements within the Essential Services Global Programme) this has worked well; however, coordination between agencies with greater capacity has sometimes been challenging. Successes have often resulted from individual leadership rather than institutional arrangements. This sentiment continued to be reflected by internal and external stakeholders who contributed to this evaluation across various countries and regions. In some case study contexts, stakeholders highlighted that inter-agency collaboration is, at times, personality driven and therefore subject to changes in personnel and risks from staff turnover. Given some perceived overlaps in mandate that exist (and which are unlikely to be further delineated at the global level), stakeholders suggested that UN Women should strengthen the capacities of its country-level personnel to effectively navigate these challenges.

Aside from programming, UN entities engage with different ministries within the same country and there were some examples of agencies working in parallel on similar laws, strategies and policies, with limited coherence of these efforts. The internal survey data validated this insight, with 84 per cent of respondents (n=37/44) indicating competition between agencies was the most common barrier to collaborating on EVAWG with other UN entities.⁴⁷ Finally, while competition for resources remains a challenge for agencies, resource partners interviewed for this evaluation indicated a preference for funding more comprehensive joint programmes.

⁴⁶ 2024 Final [Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative](#), under Finding 7: "The different operational systems and internal processes of RUNOs ran counterproductive to joint operationalization of the Spotlight Initiative country and regional programmes. Efforts to work collaboratively to improve programme efficiencies had limited success although the evaluation identified "bright spots" of success."

⁴⁷ Based on responses to internal survey Q 18 "Please identify up to three of the most common challenges or barriers that you experienced to collaborate on VAWG prevention and response with other UN entities or working in this area". Other barriers included little interest in collaboration (39 per cent, n=17), insufficient knowledge of others' thematic approaches (34 per cent, n=15) and insufficient time and resources to engage (32 per cent, n=14).

FINDING 9

UN Women has a widely acknowledged and long-standing relationship with an extensive network of CSOs and WROs working towards EVAWG. At global and regional levels, the Entity has supported several initiatives to strengthen networks and amplify voices from the women's movement. While UN Women has similarly strong relationships at the country level, WROs and CSOs (including grassroots organizations) indicated the need for further convening and networking opportunities, particularly in contexts where the civic space for such organizations is shrinking. These organizations also highlighted the need for support in diversifying their donor/partner base in response to country-level regulations on funding and, where possible, the need to simplify procedures when receiving direct funding from UN Women.

UN Women's role as a key partner for CSOs, and more specifically WROs, was strongly validated in stakeholder interviews and is also reflected in evidence from evaluations.⁴⁸ The means and extent of the engagement varies across countries and regional and global levels.

In some countries and regions, strengthening WROs has been integral to UN Women's VAWG prevention strategy. This has translated into concrete support for networking, capacity-building and coordinated advocacy on the issue. In Europe and Central Asia, this support was credited with invigorating organizations to effectively address VAWG with locally relevant solutions, creating positive synergies with normative/policy efforts and identifying promising approaches to implementation of the Istanbul Convention.⁴⁹ In West and Central Africa, UN Women's support for movement building led to development of the Abuja Feminist Alliance and platform, which effectively mobilized to avoid repeal of legislation banning harmful traditional practices in The Gambia, and the creation of a network of young feminist activists and CSOs. Key strategies in support of this alliance and platform include the fostering of intergenerational dialogue, peer learning and inclusion of youth.

Similarly, at the global level, UN Women is strengthening global and regional networks for the development of a shared agenda and coordinated responses around EVAWG; supporting research and data collection; and providing funding for the growth and strengthening of WROs. The ACT programme represents a substantial investment by the Entity in movement building aimed at supporting feminist alliances, women's organizations and regional networks in Latin America and East

and West Africa to prevent and respond to VAWG. The programme has also set up a coordination mechanism with the Spotlight Initiative to promote synergies, avoid duplication and ensure further coherence through inter-governmental processes.

In other countries, UN Women has engaged with WROs as implementing partners for community outreach, awareness-raising and social norms work, such as in Bolivia, Egypt, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tanzania. For example, in mainland Tanzania, UN Women supported several WROs to engage in awareness-raising around VAWG and foster changes in attitudes and behaviours through the SASA! Approach (Start, Awareness, Support, Action), a community mobilization programme that empowers communities through dialogue and EVAWG champions. UN Women has also engaged with CSOs and WROs as frontline respondents to VAWG to ensure wider reach, as in Egypt and Europe and Central Asia.

UN Women relied on its strong convening role to engage with WROs, enabling them to access spaces for advocacy and to influence government-led efforts to prevent and respond to VAWG. For instance, as part of the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme, UN Women hosted the Pacific Regional Prevention Summit, which provided a space for national organizations to learn and discuss transformative approaches to EVAWG in linking response services and prevention efforts. UN Women reported that the Summit was instrumental in synthesizing lived experiences, evidence and dialogue, thereby enhancing the capacity of the organizations to advocate and take action against VAWG.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ This has been validated by recent evaluations, namely the 2021 IES Corporate [Evaluation of UN Women's UN system Coordination and broader Convening role in Ending violence against women](#), under "Finding 5: There is broad consensus and recognition of UN Women's UN system coordination mandate and long-standing work on EVAW; and the Entity's relationships with CSOs, women's rights networks and national women's machineries being strong drivers of comparative advantage."; and the 2023 [IES Evaluation of Engagement with Civil Society in the Americas and Caribbean](#) under, "Conclusion 1: The strength of UN Women's partnerships with feminist and women's organizations in the Americas and Caribbean region has been and will continue to be the bedrock for effectively achieving the Entity's mission of gender equality and women's empowerment."

⁴⁹ As highlighted in the [Final evaluation of the regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Türkiye](#).

⁵⁰ 2023 Annual Report, UN Women Fiji MCO (Source: UN Women's Results Management System)

While collaboration with CSOs and WROs is part of UN Women's approach to EVAWG, opportunities for partnering and support are highly influenced by context, with the **closing of civic space** being a major barrier. Over the past four years, in some countries, WROs and CSOs have been impacted by tighter regulations on funding and registration and a wider pushback on women's rights. This has led to extended vetting processes for these organizations, extended periods for security approvals, loss of registered status and limitations to receiving foreign funding. In contexts with government restrictions on registration and vetting of CSOs, UN Women has been unable to directly provide financial support to these organizations. In a majority of the countries sampled for this evaluation, UN Women currently does not have donor funding to support work that can directly strengthen WROs. Given the challenges in accessing direct funding from UN Women, some stakeholders requested that the Entity undertake landscaping and identify or "vet" innovative programmes and organizations, especially smaller grassroots organizations, given the potential for visibility and engagement of other resource partners. Stakeholders also indicated a demand for UN Women to play a role in supporting the mobilization of resources from the private sector for smaller CSOs and WROs.

In contexts where direct funding is limited or no longer possible due to changes in regulations, UN Women has employed mitigating strategies to ensure the participation of WROs/CSOs in the VAWG prevention and response efforts it supports, whether through convening, consultations, opportunities for capacity-building of smaller organizations or administratively creative solutions. For instance, while programming funds for EVAWG in India and Zanzibar focused primarily on supporting the government, UN Women attempted to integrate support for WROs by inviting them to participate in consultative sessions with government ministries so that women's voices could be heard. CSOs/WROs highlighted UN Women's collaborative approach and ability to maintain relationships even after projects were formally closed and strongly expressed appreciation and demand for UN Women to continue to play a convening role, particularly in restrictive contexts.

Stakeholders highlighted that UN Women's **administrative policies and procedures** for contracting with CSOs were a challenge at times. While not specific to EVAWG programmes, requirements such as legal registration and minimum number of years of operation were noted as barriers for many organizations. This is especially the case for smaller CSOs/community-based organizations, who might possess expertise and on-the-ground capacity, but cannot be engaged by UN Women due to the above-mentioned requirements. This could have implications for expanding engagements with new CSOs/WROs (including community-based partners) who are particularly critical for social norms work. The 2024 evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative highlighted similar concerns raised by civil society (and grassroots) organizations in navigating UN systems and procedures.⁵¹ UN Women colleagues have acknowledged that this situation often leads the Entity to over rely on the capacities of larger, registered and more experienced CSOs, which limits UN Women's CSO base and can over-burden these organizations. As validated by the 2023 IES Evaluation of Engagement with Civil Society in the Americas and Caribbean, stakeholders indicated that UN Women's processes often require repeated back-and-forth communication with headquarters on contract modalities, legal clarifications and compliance requirements.⁵² In some countries, UN Women personnel suggested the need for a dedicated person assigned by UN Women to assist and strengthen the capacities of CSO partners to comply with the Entity's administrative and reporting requirements.

Insights from the case studies indicate there is room to expand support for strengthening WROs, further supporting advocacy and networking opportunities, and contributing to movement building at the country level. In the case of smaller WROs/CSOs, stakeholders suggested further leveraging links with the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women as a way of reaching grassroots organizations, a strategy that was used in the Spotlight Initiative, with some success.⁵³ The United Nations Trust Fund will undertake grant-making for emerging subregional coalitions and networks, and fund annual convenings under the ACT programme, which has the potential to directly strengthen support to smaller, grassroots WROs and CSOs.

⁵¹ 2024 Final [Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative](#), under Finding 7: "UN systems presented challenges in reaching grassroots organizations that had limited human resources, weaker auditing and financial reporting capacity, or were physically located in remote areas with associated challenges around reporting and connectivity. Even among larger civil society organizations, UN procedural requirements were cited as disincentives to working with the Spotlight Initiative".

⁵² 2023 [IES Evaluation of Engagement with Civil Society in the Americas and Caribbean](#), under Conclusion 4: "The policy and procedures for managing UN Women's formal partnerships with CSOs hindered the Entity's efficiency and broader reach to civil society. Consequently, UN Women's readiness for achieving impact at scale with civil society remained low."

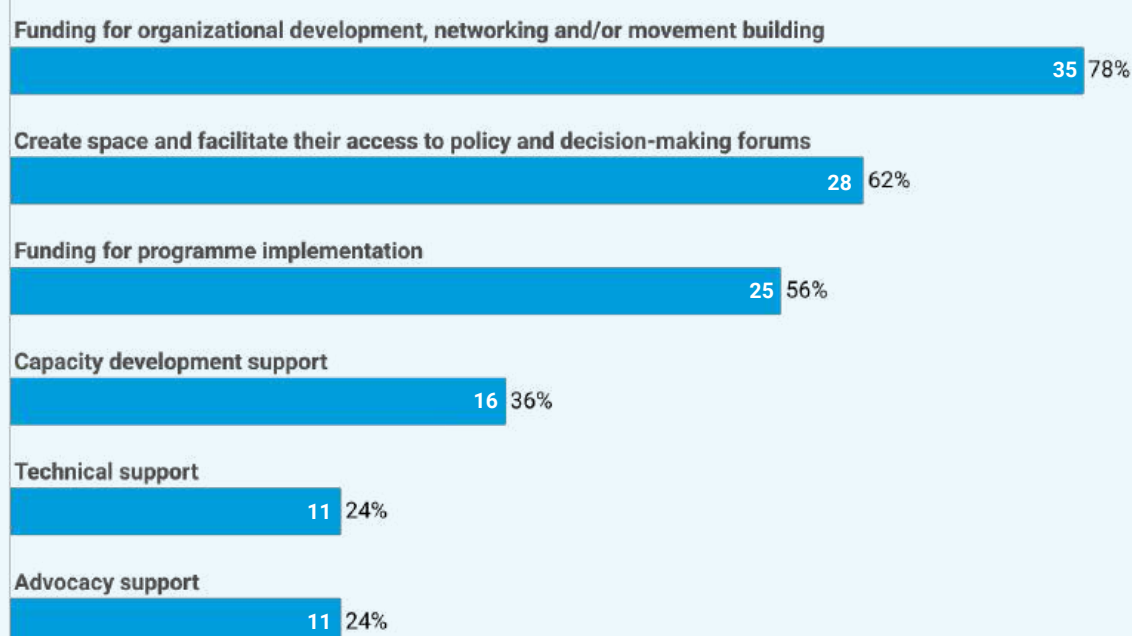
⁵³ [2024 Thematic assessment of Spotlight Initiative's contribution to the engagement of civil society, the implementation of 'Leave no one behind', and movement building](#) under Conclusion 2: "Spotlight Initiative also worked with the UNTF and WPHF (through two civil society grant-giving programmes), as well as with the WithHer Fund, to ensure that funds were able to reach these smaller organizations. These different funding modalities and partnerships were an important way for Spotlight Initiative to support GROs and WROs, but they were not consistently used or available and some of the existing UN reporting, procurement, and contracting systems and processes remained (and proved to be barriers) even within these mechanisms."

UN Women could consider supporting women's funds⁵⁴ that are present across regions as a way of reaching grassroots organizations and informal groups working to EVAWG within countries, while at the same time contributing to movement building.

Partnering with WROs not only as implementing partners but also as strategic allies by supporting their efforts in preventing and responding to VAWG, would further align UN Women's work with Gender Equality Accelerator 6 and the Action Coalition priorities. Almost 70 per cent of respondents (n=30/43) to the internal evaluation survey indicated WROs and feminist movements as key strategic partners with whom UN Women needs to develop or further strengthen collaboration around prevention and

response to VAWG. A similar sentiment was echoed in the external partner survey, with 70 per cent of respondents (N=47/68) identifying WRO and feminist movements as key strategic partners for UN Women in this area of work. This was further underscored by additional data from the internal survey, which indicated funding for organizational development, networking and/or movement building (78 per cent, n=35/45); creating space and facilitating access to policy/decision-making forums (62 per cent, n=28/45); and funding for programme implementation (56 per cent, n=25/45) as the top three areas where UN Women should strengthen its support to WROs and/or feminist movements to advance prevention and response to VAWG (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9. UN Women EVAWG personnel's perception on areas to strengthen support for WROs and/or feminist movements to advance its EVAWG work (Total responses: 45)



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2024)

Note: UN Women Personnel Survey (Question 21): Please identify up to three areas where UN Women should further strengthen its support to WROs and/or feminist movements to advance prevention and response to VAWG.

⁵⁴ Examples include the [Women's Fund Asia](#), [African Women's Development Fund](#), and [Fondo Regional de Apoyo a Organizaciones y Movimientos de Mujeres y Feministas](#), among others.

4.4 In what ways are the principles of leave no one behind, human rights, including disability inclusion, and gender equality integrated in VAWG prevention and response?

FINDING 10

UN Women incorporated the “leave no one behind” principle, including disability inclusion, into its work on EVAWG to a large extent by supporting women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and women who experience a heightened risk of or who have experienced violence. Key programme documents reflected an intersectional approach and EVAWG interventions were tailored to address context-specific needs.

In working towards VAWG prevention and response, UN Women has integrated the leave no one behind principle by supporting inclusive EVAWG guidance/policies; strengthening accessible VAW services for vulnerable groups; and fostering positive social norms through awareness-raising campaigns. By acknowledging distinct vulnerabilities to violence and discrimination faced by different groups of women, UN Women programmes employed diverse, context-specific interventions to address the needs of women in situations of vulnerability. These groups include but are not limited to women with disabilities, rural women, women living with HIV/AIDS, young women, older women, women and girls with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics, migrant women, indigenous women, domestic workers and ethnic minority women.

Survey data from external stakeholders validated UN Women’s focus on leave no one behind, as 78 per cent (n=51/65) of respondents to the partner survey indicated that UN Women supports their organization (frequently 49 per cent, n=32/45 or sometimes 29 per cent, n=19/65) to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized women and girls.⁵⁵ When asked about the groups of women in situations of vulnerability that need to be prioritized through EVAWG work, external survey respondents selected young women/adolescent girls (65 per cent, n=42/65); women and girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (52 per cent, n=34/65); women from rural and remote areas (52 per cent, n=34/65); and women and girls with physical disabilities (30 per cent, n=19/65) as top priorities.⁵⁶

By prioritizing evidence-based and context-specific adaptations, UN Women conducted targeted studies and tailored interventions to address the unique needs of groups in situations of vulnerability in each setting. In Egypt, in partnership with UNDP and UNFPA, UN Women supported the first-ever study on violence against women with disabilities, which led to development of

a “one-stop-shop” model for survivors and highlighted the importance of data collection in designing region-specific interventions. UN Women also supported policy and legal frameworks for VAWG to ensure inclusivity, such as aiding Kerala’s transgender policy in India.

UN Women’s approach to operationalizing leave no one behind involved building the capacity of service providers to better understand and address the needs of women with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Within the Essential Service Package framework, UN Women developed specific guidelines and training for service providers, incorporating guidance on supporting people with disabilities that ensured services such as shelters, hotlines and counselling centres were accessible and disability friendly. To shift harmful social norms, UN Women conducted an awareness-raising campaign that included inclusive messaging and targeted outreach to ensure diverse groups, including women with disabilities and women from remote areas were engaged, as seen in Fiji, Tanzania and Viet Nam.

UN Women partnered with and engaged local women’s organizations and networks of marginalized groups, such as organizations of women with disabilities, rural women’s groups and networks of women living with HIV/AIDS. In Western Central Africa, UN Women brought an intersectional approach to its work on EVAW by including women with disabilities, women living with HIV/AIDS and youth groups, ensuring their participation in networking, capacity-building and advocacy activities and their inclusion in the Abuja Feminist Alliance and platform. In Tanzania, UN Women worked to ensure that the voices of women with disabilities were present within national processes, including the National Action Plan on VAWG, and worked with WROs (paralegals and those that provide legal aid services) to provide legal aid on VAWG to marginalized rural communities through the use of “mobile legal aid clinics”.

⁵⁵ UN Women Partner Survey conducted by the evaluation team (September–October 2024), (Question 19): On a scale from one to four, to what extent did UN Women support your organization to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized women and girls?

⁵⁶ UN Women Partner Survey conducted by the evaluation team (September–October 2024), (Question 20): Please identify the three groups of marginalized women and girls that you would like to better reach through your EVAWG work.

In Bolivia, an innovative approach to increase access to VAWG prevention and response resources for women in isolated rural areas was undertaken, where UN Women supported implementation of a model that facilitates the sharing of EVAWG resources among geographically proximate rural municipalities. This enabled municipalities

to maximize existing resources to provide basic VAWG services (i.e. psychological support, social services and legal assistance). The model is reportedly being replicated across the country, with national-level funding under consideration for broader implementation of the municipality network.

FINDING 11

While application of the leave no one behind principle is a well acknowledged priority for UN Women's work on EVAWG, balancing inclusivity and equity with political and social constraints, limited resources and a paucity of data have led to inconsistencies in addressing the needs of some groups of marginalized women across different contexts.

The internal stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation confirmed the leave no one behind principle as a core aspect of their EVAWG work, though they acknowledged some challenges in reaching all groups of women and girls in situations of vulnerability. When asked about groups that UN Women's work has struggled to reach, internal survey respondents identified women and girls with physical disabilities (49 per cent, n=22/45); women and girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (38 per cent, n=17/45); women and girls with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (36 per cent, n=16/45); and women from rural and remote areas (29 per cent, N=13/45).⁵⁷

Interviews with internal stakeholders across several regions highlighted the challenge of social constraints and sensitivities that limit UN Women's ability to reach groups such as women with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics, and women living with HIV. These groups face high levels of stigma and Country Office personnel indicated a need for stronger corporate guidance on navigating the associated political backlash and societal resistance. In the absence such guidance, programming tends to focus on less contentious groups, unintentionally leaving some vulnerable populations less served, and decisions which may be left to the discretion of UN Women personnel at the country level.⁵⁸ Similarly, while involved in youth programming in several countries and recognizing the particular vulnerabilities of adolescents to various forms of violence which can have long-term impacts on their

lives, UN Women personnel highlighted difficulties in systematically reaching adolescent girls who are out of school and are particularly vulnerable to teenage pregnancies and child marriage.

In recent years, UN Women has developed corporate-level guidance on groups in situations of vulnerability, including [UN Women's approach to disability inclusion and intersectionality \(2023\)](#), [the LGBTIQ+ Equality and Rights: Internal Resource Guide \(2022\)](#) and [Investing in Adolescent Girls' and Young Women's Leadership and Voice in HIV Response \(2023\)](#). However, there is limited guidance or tools on operationalizing the leave no one behind principle in the context of EVAWG programming, with the exception of a few examples.⁵⁹

Resource limitations have been a barrier to the comprehensive application of leave no one behind. The high costs and logistical challenges of reaching isolated communities with limited infrastructure have impacted the meaningful inclusion and breadth of support UN Women can provide. In regions with limited resources, UN Women tailored its programmes to focus on the most pressing needs of vulnerable groups through targeted interventions. In some cases, UN Women incorporated digital tools to minimize logistical costs, particularly in hard-to-reach areas, allowing resources to be focused more on direct service provision than on travel or physical presence. For instance, in Tanzania and Egypt, UN Women leveraged virtual counselling and legal aid services to provide support to women in rural and underserved communities.

⁵⁷ UN Women Personnel Survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2024), (Question 23): Please identify the three groups of women and girls belonging to socially excluded and stigmatized groups who face heightened risks to violence, which your EVAWG prevention and response work has struggled most to reach or has not reached at all.

⁵⁸ The 2024 corporate evaluation on UN Women's work on social norms noted that "UN Women programmatic approaches related to the intersection of social norms and integration of LGBTIQ+ rights, transforming patriarchal masculinities, racial justice and disability inclusion are for the most part fragmented, without concrete strategies for engagement at the country or programme level".

⁵⁹ Examples of guidance, research and tools developed by UN Women to support the leave no one behind principle and intersectional approach in EVAWG programming include: [Women with disabilities stigma inventory \(UN Women/UNDP 2024\)](#); [Study on violence against LGBTIQ+ persons on Nepal \(UN Women Nepal, 2023\)](#); and [Essential Services Package Guidelines for Women with Disabilities facing Violence \(UN Women Pakistan, 2022\)](#).

This remote service delivery model reduced the need for physical visits and enabled more frequent and accessible support. Stakeholders suggested the potential to forge closer linkages with organizations engaged by the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women on outreach to groups in situations of vulnerability. In India and Egypt, the Country Offices engaged with United Nations Trust Fund grantee organizations that work to address VAWG in the context of hard-to-reach domestic workers.

Stakeholders shared that lack of comprehensive, disaggregated data on marginalized groups has further complicated efforts to fully apply leave no one behind principles. The absence of data, including difficulties in collecting data for intersectional categories, has been a consistent challenge, which has been noted in recent evaluations.⁶⁰ This data gap limits UN Women's ability to identify needs, tailor interventions accurately and monitor the impact of programmes on the most excluded populations. To mitigate this challenge, UN Women has taken a

proactive approach to generating evidence at the country level. This was noted across all case study countries: in Egypt – a study on violence against women with disabilities; Bolivia – a national disability study and research on the LGBTIQ+ population; Viet Nam – research on GBV among ethnic minorities and women living with disabilities; Tanzania – production of disaggregated data on VAWG from across income levels and dissemination through monthly multi-stakeholders meetings; and in India – mapping of services for women, children and queer survivors of violence. Responding to the growing need and interest in data to support leave no one behind principles, UN Women has developed some guidance documents, including on [Improving the collection and use of administrative data on violence against women](#) (2022). However, stakeholders indicated a further need for standardized frameworks or guidance to assist them in conducting comprehensive needs assessments and systematic analyses of stand-alone studies.

⁶⁰ The 2024 corporate evaluation on UN Women's work on social norms: "Evaluations consistently identified the need for practical and context-specific tools, disaggregated data and strengthened analysis of the structures and systems of power".

4.5 What is UN Women's approach to safeguarding gains and ensuring sustainability in this area of work?

FINDING 12

UN Women has embedded a number of sustainable programming elements into its VAWG prevention and response work. Of these, supporting institutional level capacity-building and leveraging existing government funding to implement VAWG laws and frameworks appear to be the most promising.

UN Women's VAWG prevention and response work includes a significant focus on supporting government actors to build the necessary systems, mechanisms and capacity to implement existing EAWG laws, frameworks and policies. Within this work, UN Women is making concerted efforts to support sustainable results by focusing on institutionalizing EAWG capacity throughout government structures and mechanisms. This was seen in Tanzania, where UN Women supported the development of VAWG national action plans in both the mainland and in Zanzibar to ensure that government support for VAWG prevention and response is integrated across state structures and mechanisms. In addition, UN Women supported the Tanzanian national police force to create a standard operating procedure to institutionalize and guide the integration of VAWG issues throughout its structure, training and police work. UN Women also supported the development of a VAWG training manual; the integration of VAWG issues into the national police's training curriculum; and the establishment of a train-the-trainer model to build the capacity of the Tanzanian police force to handle VAWG cases.

Another example of strong government institutionalization was seen in Viet Nam where UN Women supported the development of policy-relevant research that set the foundation for the government to modify policies and implement state-funded interventions regarding sexual harassment in public places. In India, UN Women supported government actors to implement the 2013 Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act. As staff turnover, particularly within government ministries, is often high and is typically considered a barrier to EAWG work, an approach that focuses on institutional strengthening as opposed to individual capacity strengthening better promotes the sustainability of results over the long term.

Evidence across case study countries pointed to efforts made by UN Women to promote the sustainability of results by leveraging existing government funding to support implementation of VAWG laws, frameworks and policies. The Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces model that has been implemented across case study countries, including in Viet Nam, Egypt, Tanzania and Bolivia, is sustainable as cities and municipalities primarily fund the initiatives themselves. In India, UN Women supported state governments to prepare and submit proposals to access national funding allocated to eradicating VAWG through the "Nirbhaya Fund."⁶¹ With this funding, state governments can advance EAWG work with existing national funds that have been allocated to improving the safety and security of women across the country. In countries such as Tanzania, UN Women is supporting governments to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into their national and subnational budgets to ensure that sufficient government resources are allocated to support VAWG initiatives and services.

While the evaluation found less evidence of systematic support through VAWG programming to building the sustainability of CSOs, WROs and women's movements at national and grassroots levels, some case study countries provided examples of sustainable CSO engagement. For instance, in Tanzania, some CSOs reported that working with UN Women even as implementing partners helped to strengthen their ability to write proposals, report on results and manage donor funding, which led to increased interest from other donors to fund their subsequent work. UN Women's work to strengthen networking between WROs through global and regional initiatives also promoted the sustainability of these organizations by strengthening their abilities to network and build momentum as a unified group.

⁶¹ The Government of India established a dedicated fund called the "Nirbhaya Fund" to implement initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women in the country. An empowered committee of officers constituted under the Nirbhaya Framework appraises and recommends proposals for funding under the Nirbhaya Fund in conjunction with the ministries/departments/implementing agencies concerned. After appraisal by the empowered committee, the ministries/departments concerned obtain approval of their respective competent financial authorities to release funds from their respective budgets and implement the approved projects/schemes directly or through states/Union Territories/implementing agencies.

FINDING 13

UN Women has increasingly secured larger and longer-term VAWG funding through regional and global efforts, which also support country programmes. This has the potential to foster more holistic and sustainable results. There is scope for this strategy to be expanded and further linked to country-level VAWG programming, which is struggling to secure sufficient and reliable funding in some contexts.

Over the period under review, UN Women obtained relatively larger-scale VAWG funding through efforts at global and regional levels. This included initiatives such as the Essential Services Package and Prevention Frameworks and Initiatives; the ACT Programme; and the Pacific Partnership Programme, among others, which could help to accelerate efforts towards ending VAWG.⁶² The portfolio analysis indicated that EVAWG is currently the second most funded UN Women thematic area and there is a positive and growing trend in terms of the number and size of EVAWG-funded initiatives under the current Strategic Plan. This trend includes an increase in holistic and multi-thematic funding for Strategic Note implementation and cross-thematic programming at the country level, which has been identified by UN Women personnel as a facilitating factor in achieving VAWG results. For instance, in Moldova, internal stakeholders explained that holistic multi-thematic funding for implementation of the Strategic Note helped to advance EVAWG work in the country by supporting more holistic EVAWG planning and by generating synergies across thematic areas.

There have been successful examples of mobilizing funds at the global level to support and pilot country and regional-level EVAWG programming, such as the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative. Through such global initiatives, UN Women was able to pilot country-level EVAWG programming, which in some case study countries has expanded, been scaled-up and/or replicated through subsequent country-level initiatives. In Tanzania and Viet Nam, the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme inspired subsequent work to create safe spaces on educational campuses and safe transport to and from campuses for female students.

At the same time, UN Women's current funding model at the country level largely reflects project/programmes that are primarily donor driven, less predictable and short term in nature. UN Women personnel from across case study countries explained that "stop-start," short-term

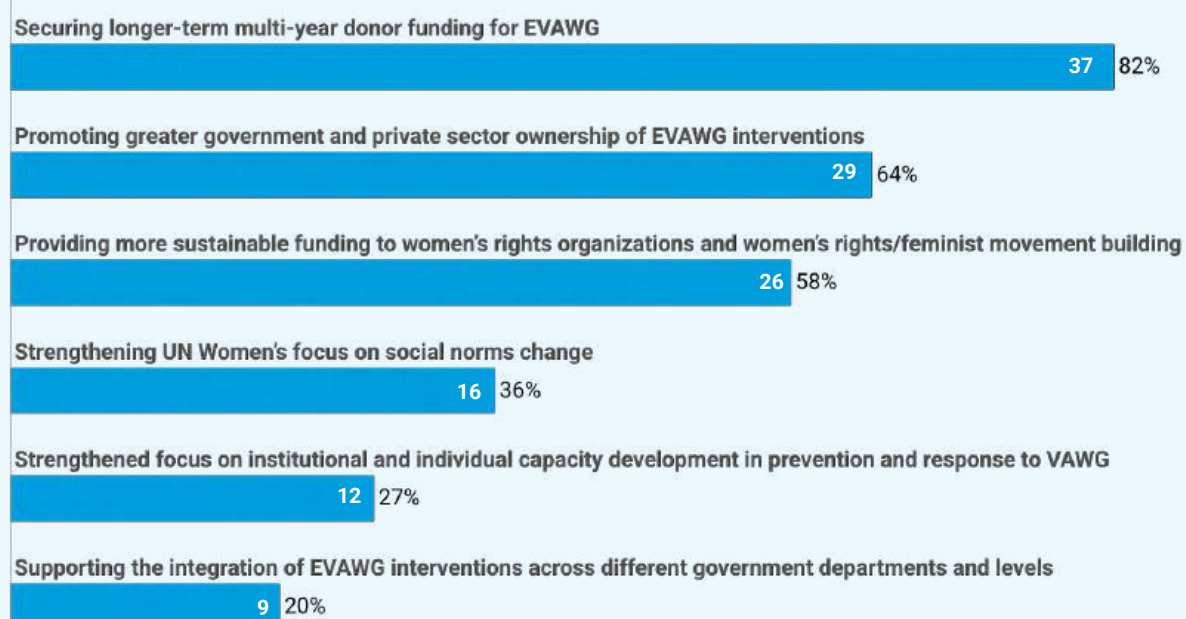
and disjointed projects that are funded and often driven by country-level donor interests make it extremely challenging for UN Women to develop coherent EVAWG strategies to generate synergies across results and achieve outcome or impact-level change. As mentioned above under section 4.2 on effectiveness, this is particularly the case with UN Women's social norms work which requires longer-term, consistent investment before behaviour changes can be seen and measured at the community level.

Interviewed UN Women personnel at the country level explained that securing larger, longer-term, multi-year funding is essential to increase the sustainability of EVAWG results at the country level. This perspective was validated by survey results where, as shown in Figure 10 below, 82 per cent (n=37/45) of surveyed UN Women VAWG personnel identified securing longer-term, multi-year funding as one of the key ways to make UN Women's VAWG work more sustainable.

UN Women's decentralized resource mobilization model places the main responsibility on country-level personnel to identify and negotiate country-level VAWG funding from donors. While this model provides significant autonomy to country-level personnel, it may limit the ability to harness the influence that UN Women holds at the organizational level. Within this context, while the growing trend of securing longer-term, multi-year funding for VAWG work through global efforts (as indicated in the portfolio analysis above) is promising for country-level initiatives, there is room to further link global and regional VAWG initiatives that have been negotiated using a more collective voice. Some personnel at the country level indicated a desire to receive more support from Regional Offices to coordinate outreach to potential donors. Within the current global context of considerable push-back against women's rights, providing further support to Country Offices and using a unified voice to negotiate with potential donors may be more important than ever.

⁶² Some of these accelerated efforts are outlined in the 2024 Final Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative.

FIGURE 10. UN Women EAWG personnel's perception on ways that UN Women's EAWG work could be made more sustainable (Total responses: 45)



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (September-October 2024)

Note: UN Women Personnel Survey (Question 24): Please select the top three ways that UN Women's EAWG work on prevention and response could be made more sustainable.

5. LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

LESSON 1. Importance of UN Women's ground-level presence when working with partners

The evaluation found that UN Women's ability to engage government partners and support CSOs was strongly facilitated by having a physical presence close to and with direct access to key partners. For instance, both UN Women personnel and government partners in Zanzibar explained that UN Women's ability to support the Zanzibar government was significantly strengthened once UN Women had created a dedicated office on the island of Zanzibar. By locating this office within the same building as the newly established Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Elders and Children, UN Women

had more regular contact with and could support government partners, and these partners felt at ease to reach out to UN Women. Government partners stated that UN Women's technical assistance and accessibility had been essential in facilitating the progress made on EAWG by the ministry and its partners. Similarly, in India, state governments expressed a desire for UN Women to establish offices at the state level to better facilitate direct collaboration with and support to state government actors.

LESSON 2. Usefulness of and continued need for corporate guidance to support country-level initiatives

UN Women EAWG personnel across case study countries stressed the importance and usefulness of corporate guidance, frameworks and tools to support country-level EAWG initiatives. Examples of useful global frameworks and guidance used by Country Offices and adapted to local contexts included the Safe Cities model, the RESPECT framework, the Essential Services Package and the Gender Responsive Policing Manual. UN Women personnel at the country level also identified the need for corporate frameworks, guidance and tools to address

complex country-level challenges, such as more support for strategies to address social norms change, providing EAWG prevention and response support across the HDP nexus, and strengthening support to hard to reach groups of women in situations of vulnerability. Without this guidance and support, Country Offices are left to develop their own approaches, requiring significant resources and a level of technical competence, which is not necessarily found at the country level across all UN Women programming countries.

LESSON 3. Opportunities to engage non-traditional partners through cross-thematic work

UN Women's EAWG work in India demonstrated how collaborating with its Women's Economic Empowerment work can create opportunities to partner with non-traditional partners, such as actors from the private sector. UN Women supported the institutionalization of improved procedures in private-sector companies across multiple sectors and regions, with the aim of creating safe spaces and eliminating sexual harassment across private-sector supply chains. While partnering with private-sector

companies is still an emerging area for UN Women, using both EAW and Women's Economic Empowerment entry points to diversify the donor base in relation to support for VAWG prevention interventions (e.g. by strengthening women's access to employment, savings and credit) can help to establish effective partnerships with the private sector and further expand UN Women's EAWG work into workplaces, including private-sector settings.

LESSON 4. Transforming patriarchal masculinities to end VAWG

UN Women's current Strategic Plan presents the engagement of men and boys as a strategy to advance its EVAWG work and to change social norms. However, the Entity has not developed comprehensive guidance in this area of work for gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women's Transforming Patriarchal Masculinities framework calls for a transformative approach, requiring deep, lasting changes not only in interpersonal gender relations within families and communities, but also in patriarchal institutions and the ideologies that sustain them. Currently, there is no dedicated indicator within

Strategic Plan reporting to measure changes among boys and men or changes in patriarchal masculinities. While guidance has been provided on comprehensive approaches to prevention (including evidence-based interventions shared in the RESPECT framework and its accompanying guidance), additional guidance is required within a more coherent overall approach to social norms change. This could include increased support to Country Offices working to implement strategies on the meaningful engagement of men and boys, and the transformation of patriarchal masculinities.

LESSON 5. Supporting CSOs and WROs within shrinking civic spaces

UN Women currently faces considerable challenges in providing direct financing to CSOs, WROs and community-based organizations due to increased government restrictions and a shrinking civil society space in many countries. Funding to smaller CSOs is also limited to some extent by the Entity's internal policies and procedures. Within this context, other types of support to CSOs become critical. There are opportunities for UN Women to further leverage its convening role and comparative

strengths to support CSOs through non-financial means (such as advocacy efforts and networking). Further support to CSOs and WROs is essential to safeguard EVAWG results and gains, as these organizations are key actors in holding governments accountable and continuing to push forward the EVAWG agenda, which is currently threatened by the global trend of increasing resistance to women's rights.



Photo: ©Delegation of the EU to the UN in Geneva

6. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions draw on the findings and analysis from primary and secondary data collected as part of this corporate evaluation. The evaluation included an assessment of UN Women's support to VAWG prevention and response initiatives between 2020 and 2024. The analysis included a particular focus on contributions to systemic outcomes related to positive social norms and women's access to services, goods and resources. The Spotlight Initiative and the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women were outside the scope of the evaluation.

CONCLUSION 1.

UN Women's EVAWG approach has been responsive to changing contexts and growing forms of violence. By leveraging established areas of work, the Entity was particularly agile in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some Country Offices working in development contexts were able to respond to other emerging crises and the increase in TF GBV, there is scope to further strengthen and expand strategic guidance, frameworks and tools to support these areas of work.

(Findings 1, 2, 3, 4,7)

As evidenced through regional and country case studies, UN Women's EVAWG approach was flexible in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in supporting existing government and WRO/CSO partners to continue with VAWG service provision throughout the pandemic; supporting the integration of VAWG considerations into government pandemic response plans at national and local levels; supporting partners to move activities online and shifting towards online stakeholder engagement; and advancing data/evidence generation and highlighting the shadow pandemic.

While in some regions and countries, UN Women's EVAWG programming responded to climate and humanitarian/refugee crises to some extent, personnel at the country level indicated the need for strategic guidance and tools to

work effectively across the HDP nexus. Commonly identified impediments in responding quickly to crises included limited availability of immediate funding, constraints due to administrative processes and disparities in humanitarian expertise at the country level.

In the emerging area of TF GBV, UN Women's efforts at the global level have focused on advancing international norms and standards by informing intergovernmental policy processes and outcomes. UN Women has also contributed to knowledge generation on TF GBV, focusing on normative frameworks; safe technologies for supporting victims/survivors of violence; mapping of existing evidence; and methodological approaches for data collection at the global and subnational level to advance evidence-informed policy and programme action. At regional and national levels, the absence of normative frameworks to address TF GBV is a particular gap UN Women is working to address. In some case study countries, UN Women had taken initial steps with government partners to raise awareness around the importance of addressing this issue and to strengthen governments' capacity to work in this area. UN Women's overall approach has been to integrate TF GBV across its EVAWG programming as it is conceived as part of the continuum of violence experienced by women and girls. While efforts have been made by headquarters to promote an Entity-wide exchange of information, the linkages between global, regional and country levels in this area are still being established.

CONCLUSION 2.

UN Women's EAWG work has been effective in advancing normative changes and strengthening the provision of survivor-centred services. Successful strategies included engagement of diverse coalitions of EAWG actors (including multiple key line ministries); identifying strategic opportunities to strengthen implementation of laws; and focusing on women's access to justice. While various initiatives have supported VAWG prevention efforts, including through community mobilization, awareness-raising and piloting interventions in male-dominated sectors, work on social norms change for EAWG needs to be strengthened. This includes strengthening strategies to engage men and boys to transform patriarchal masculinities at community and institutional levels.

(Findings 4, 5,7,12)

UN Women has successfully positioned itself and gained important trust and credibility in supporting partners with the establishment and implementation of EAWG laws, frameworks and policies at national, state and municipal levels. The Entity's multi-pronged approach to engaging stakeholders (including across different key line ministries), supporting institutional capacity-building and strengthening referral/access to justice systems contributed to improving access to essential services for women and girls, including those in situations of vulnerability.

With respect to VAWG prevention work, most case study countries had successfully implemented and adapted the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Flagship Initiative model (focused on creating safe public spaces for women and girls in cities) to local contexts, with many countries expanding the model to spaces such as educational institutions, private-sector supply chains and other male-dominated sectors.

UN Women piloted some successful strategies and entry points to change social norms in the case study countries, including promoting community-level discussion and awareness-raising through media campaigns, participatory theatre, couples counselling and positive parenting workshops, among others. While there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach for social norms work, there

were limited efforts to replicate/exchange and contextualize some of the successful initiatives across different regions. A recent corporate evaluation on social norms change concluded there is a need for UN Women to clarify and strengthen its overall approach to social norms work.⁶³ Similar challenges were noted in this evaluation, as UN Women's social norms work on EAWG was seen to lack a clear implementation plan; a measure of what actual attitudinal and behavioural change means (not just reach); and sufficient funding to support the achievement of planned VAWG social norms results. In addition, the strategic focus on transforming patriarchal masculinities and the engagement of men and boys in changing social norms was found to need further strengthening.

CONCLUSION 3.

UN Women's EAWG work included some cross-thematic approaches, particularly with Women's Economic Empowerment. However, synergies with other thematic areas were uneven in some cases and not consistently applied across all EAWG areas of work. Efforts were hindered to some extent by the Entity's thematic structure and thematic funding modalities.

(Findings 6, 13)

Efforts to create linkages between EAWG and Women's Economic Empowerment were noted in several case study countries. However, cross-thematic collaboration was not consistently applied across UN Women's EAWG work. Commonly identified barriers included UN Women's primarily thematic structure and focus on thematic funding models. Some strategies that facilitated cross-thematic collaboration included holding regular cross-office meetings to identify cross-thematic entry points; building programming portfolios that integrate cross-thematic elements/outcomes (e.g. Safe Cities); leveraging linkages with diverse government ministries (including through coordination committees); implementing different thematic programmes within the same geographic space to promote cross-synergies; and strengthening Strategic Note and annual planning to identify common entry points and synergies across thematic areas.

⁶³ 2024 IES Feminist Collaborative Evaluation of UN Women's Approach to Social Norms Change.

CONCLUSION 4.

UN Women continues to play a pivotal role in advancing global norms, developing guidance documents and supporting programming and data frameworks related to VAWG prevention and response. Collaborating with various stakeholders, UN Women has advanced and tailored global frameworks and promoted more coordinated EAWG initiatives at the country level. While joint programming and collaboration among UN agencies continue to be critical for developing comprehensive EAWG initiatives, challenges with the coherence of internal systems and resource allocation persist.

(Findings 4, 7, 8)

UN Women has played a key role in shaping global EAWG frameworks, such as the Essential Services package, the Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence and the RESPECT framework. This has entailed working with a wide range of stakeholders to draw on global and national evidence and adapt frameworks to local contexts. UN Women has engaged with UN agencies (including UNOPS, ILO and the World Bank) to develop guidance and tools integrating EAWG approaches into other thematic areas such as infrastructure, transport and climate action. UN Women has continued to leverage its knowledge and thought leadership through engagement in intergovernmental processes, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, among others, to highlight VAWG issues.

UN Women's engagement in joint programmes (particularly with UNODC, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO) at the country level has resulted in more comprehensive programmes addressing VAWG. At the same time, there remains room to expand UN Women's partnerships with a wider variety of UN agencies to help its EAWG programming enter new spaces and address complex thematic issues. Success in implementing joint initiatives relies to a great extent on open communication and agencies' willingness to collaborate. Additional challenges, such as differences in reporting systems, disagreements over areas where mandates overlap and competition for resources remain. Despite these obstacles, resource partners favour funding more integrated approaches and joint programmes, indicating a strong demand for coordinated efforts.

CONCLUSION 5.

UN Women plays a key role in strengthening WROs and CSOs, particularly by acting as a convenor and amplifying voices from the women's movement. UN Women worked closely with these organizations in advocating for EAWG laws and policies; participating in data collection/research; raising awareness and community mobilization to address social norms; building capacity for VAWG prevention and response; and other co-creation processes related to EAWG programming. There is a need to better support smaller, community-based organizations, especially in challenging contexts, and further invest in movement building at national and grassroots levels.

(Findings 5, 9)

UN Women is widely recognized for its strong relationships with WROs, and its efforts to facilitate networking and amplify these organizations' voices at global, regional and national levels. However, stakeholders expressed the need for more convening, networking and advocacy opportunities; and support in diversifying funding sources, particularly as VAWG is one of the ways backlash against women's rights and gender equality occurs, and given the context of shrinking civic spaces in some countries. Support to WROs and movement building is critical to advance EAWG prioritization across stakeholders, hold governments accountable and resist pushback. This is well reflected in UN Women's strategic and programming documents, but evidence from the case study countries suggests that support to WROs and women's rights movement building requires further support at national and grassroots levels, including through a diversified donor base. Owing to changes in regulations, direct funding from UN Women to CSOs may no longer be feasible in some contexts. However, the Entity's role as a convenor of diverse stakeholders remains highly valued. Stakeholders perceived some constraints, due to internal policies and procedures, on the types of partners that could be engaged in different contexts. This issue was particularly highlighted in engagements with small, informal organizations and new types of partners.

CONCLUSION 6.

UN Women's approach to EVAWG incorporates an intersectional lens, focusing on addressing intersecting forms of discrimination that various groups of women may experience, and which heighten their risk of experiencing violence. Key progress has been made in disability inclusion and outreach to rural women, though challenges remain in scaling interventions and strengthening knowledge exchange. There is also a need for more comprehensive guidance on addressing specific groups in situations of vulnerability, including those that are the most difficult to reach due to cultural sensitivities or other factors.

(Findings 10, 11)

UN Women's EVAWG frameworks and guidance documents and other knowledge products emphasize the importance of an intersectional approach and the leave no one behind principle in addressing VAWG prevention and response. UN Women implemented diverse, context-specific interventions to address the needs of women in situations of vulnerability. Disability inclusion was fairly consistently (though not universally) incorporated, reflecting corporate-level emphasis in this area of work and demonstrating the progress made in recent years. Successful initiatives to reach rural women were also seen across several case study countries. Areas for improvement include ensuring that leave no one behind approaches are scaled effectively across different regions and contexts, and increasing the availability of data.

Several guidance documents and studies on reaching specific groups within EAW programming have been developed in recent years. While these resources are published and disseminated through various channels, country-level stakeholders identified a need for further guidance on balancing leave no one behind approaches with political and social constraints in some contexts.

CONCLUSION 7.

UN Women's efforts to embed sustainable programming elements into its EVAWG work are likely to support and safeguard gains in some contexts. Successful strategies included institutional capacity-building and support to leveraging and expanding domestically available

funding for VAWG prevention and response. However, reliance on relatively short-term funding in some countries is hindering the development of programming that is holistic and able to contribute towards sustainable change.

(Findings 9, 12, 13)

UN Women's EVAWG programming has made concerted efforts to integrate sustainable programming elements to increase the likelihood of results enduring beyond project/programme completion. Particularly successful strategies included supporting normative change; building capacities within government/public institutions (e.g. shelters, police, etc.) to implement existing laws and delivery of services; making use of existing government EVAWG budgets/funding; and supporting the additional allocation of government funds towards EVAWG work through gender-responsive budgeting.

UN Women's reliance on funding models that are primarily donor driven and based on short-term projects limits the extent to which Country Offices can develop comprehensive EVAWG strategies that lead to impact-level change. Although cumulative funding for EVAWG within UN Women has increased during the current Strategic Plan period, more consistent, flexible and longer-term funding is required. This is particularly the case for social norms programming, which requires longer-term, consistent investment. Building on successful fundraising through key programmes (such as the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, Essential Services Package and the ACT programme) provides scope to leverage UN Women's collective voice and expertise in further support of country-level fundraising efforts. Through such global initiatives, UN Women was able to pilot country-level EVAWG programming, which in some case study countries has subsequently expanded, been scaled-up and/or replicated. Securing funding for cross-thematic work and Strategic Note implementation appears to be a resource mobilization strategy that supports more holistic programming. However, work with the private sector to create violence-free workspaces has yet to translate into broader resource mobilization in support of EVAWG programming. Finally, the global pushback against women's rights presents a threat to the sustainability of gains, underscoring the need to further invest in supporting WROs and movement building at multiple levels.



Photo: ©UN Women/Johis Alarcón

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed from the findings and conclusions emerging from this evaluation, in consultation with key evaluation stakeholders. To ensure the proposed actions are carried out, each recommendation is accompanied by priority status, timeline, responsible actors, impact, difficulty and a description of what could happen if the recommendation is not implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 1.

Continue to refine and roll out existing guidance, and develop further corporate guidance, frameworks and tools to adapt and strengthen EAWG programming in response to persistent and emerging priorities (e.g. across the HDP nexus and in response to growing TF GBV).

Based on

CONCLUSIONS 1, 4, 6

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

MEDIUM/LONG-TERM

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Continue to refine and develop guidance documents, frameworks and tools on priority areas, identify knowledge gaps and further adapt as needed to country and regional contexts. Key areas could include:
 - Addressing TF GBV (e.g. through normative work, measurement/data, youth outreach and awareness-raising campaigns).
 - Continuing to advance measures to effectively address the needs of all women and girls in situations of vulnerability, including those that are hardest to reach due to the remoteness of locations or social/political sensitivities (e.g. indigenous women, women living with HIV, women in the informal sector, women with diverse SOGIEC and others).
 - Clarifying UN Women's strategic positioning and value-add in EAWG programming across the HDP nexus (also drawing on lessons learned through implementation of multistakeholder initiatives and other EAW partnership work across the HDP nexus).
- Further strengthen collaboration with key UN partners (e.g. UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, UNODC) to align guidance and approaches, while also leveraging the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.

To be led by: UN Women's EAW section/Programme, Policy and Intergovernmental Division, in consultation with other thematic sections, systemic outcomes leads and Country and Regional Offices.

Impact: Strengthened frameworks and guidance for EAW programming, including across the HDP nexus, will increase the organizational coherence and effectiveness of UN Women's EAWG interventions. Tools and practical guidance in priority areas will also improve UN Women's capacity to lead and support emerging areas of work.

Difficulty: This is within UN Women's control, at the same time, it will require substantial technical expertise and alignment among diverse stakeholders to roll out and implement corporate-level frameworks/strategies.

If not implemented: It may result in fragmented approaches to UN Women's EAWG programming, missed opportunities to address emerging forms of GBV and inconsistent application of the leave no one behind principle into EAWG programming.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

Further enhance global, regional and country-level support to WROs and grassroots/smaller CSOs working on VAWG prevention and response, including through a diversified donor/partner base.

Based on

CONCLUSIONS 5, 7

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

SHORT/MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Review and develop strategies to strengthen engagement with WROs in difficult/evolving operating contexts.
 - Continue to share lessons and good practices from successful engagements with grassroots organizations, WROs and CSOs.
 - Continue to assess the adequacy of UN Women's internal policies and procedures to facilitate direct engagement with smaller CSOs (including unregistered organizations) and new types of partners.
- Support CSOs to engage alternative resource partners such as domestic donors, coalitions/networks of non-governmental organization partners, and the private sector to support implementation of their work, especially in contexts where UN Women is less able to provide direct funding support.
- Mobilize other development partners to review the feasibility of supporting local WROs as a necessary component in EAWG programming.
- Continue to provide support to leverage women's rights advocacy on EAW and to amplify the voices of women and marginalized groups.

To be led by: UN Women's EAW section/Programme, Policy and Intergovernmental Division, in consultation with other relevant sections, and Country and Regional Offices.

Impact: Enhanced investment and collaboration with WROs and grassroots CSOs will strengthen their capacities to lead the EAWG agenda; support the achievement of UN Women EAWG results across outcome areas; and further improve the sustainability of UN Women's EAWG programming.

Difficulty: This is within UN Women's control and can be initiated through existing initiatives. However, it will require effort to review policies, streamline processes and coordinate with relevant units for implementation.

If not implemented: It may risk weakening partnerships with WROs and grassroots organizations, limiting the reach and effectiveness of UN Women's EAWG programming. Administrative delays and the inflexibility of UN Women's internal procedures may further prevent grassroots and smaller CSOs from contributing to UN Women's EAWG interventions at country and community levels.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

Continue to roll out comprehensive frameworks on prevention and response that include a focus on social norms change at multiple levels, and further refine and/or develop new tools/guidance to further support institutional norms change, including through multiple strategies to engage with men and boys.

Based on

CONCLUSIONS 2, 5

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

MEDIUM/LONG-TERM

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Further synthesize lessons learned from concerted approaches to change social norms at multiple levels (individual/community/institutional) in the area of EVAWG, including through engagement with experts in networks on prevention, non-governmental organization consortia of partners on EVAWG and UN global initiatives (e.g. essential services, gender-responsive policing, and safe cities and safe public spaces networks).
- Review corporate guidance and tools on social norms and gender equality and explore refinement and/or development of further guidance and tools. Socialize new guidance and tools with Country Offices on social norms, including through webinars and technical accompaniment to programming initiatives; and contribute to stakeholder capacity strengthening efforts with respect to the planning, implementation and measurement of social norms work (within comprehensive approaches of prevention and response to VAWG).

To be led by: UN Women's EVAW section/Programme, Policy and Intergovernmental Division, in consultation with systemic outcomes leads and Country and Regional Offices.

Impact: Changes in social norms regarding VAWG and particularly behaviour change among boys and men will have a direct positive impact on EVAWG.

Difficulty: This is an area where UN Women is well placed to take a stronger leadership role. It will, however, require substantial technical and financial investment to support localized behaviour-change initiatives adapted to different contexts. Medium to long-term programming will be needed to support measurable changes.

If not implemented: Behaviour change is at the root of VAWG prevention and response. Without fully tackling social norms change, other results cannot be sustainably achieved.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

Strengthen and adapt approaches to foster more comprehensive and longer-term EVAWG programming at the country level.

Based on

CONCLUSIONS 3, 4, 7

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

MEDIUM/LONG-TERM

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Explore creative financing opportunities, such as:
 - Prioritizing Strategic Note funding to encourage holistic programming and cross-thematic synergies (including as part of the Beijing+30 Action Agenda).
 - Continuing to develop cross-thematic proposals (including through the incorporation of EVAW linkages with investment pathways of the six SDG transitions at country level).
 - Further leveraging domestic government funding, and reaching out to new types of resource partners in the private sector.
- Further leverage the Entity's collective voice/influence to secure longer-term funding for more holistic VAWG work, particularly at the country level. This could include increased support to Country and Regional Offices to negotiate with resource partners using a unified voice and support on demonstrating contribution to impact from comprehensive/longer VAWG programming.
- Develop and share lessons/strategies from recent engagements of UN partners across different contexts. This could include reviewing systems to better align joint reporting. Continue to explore partnerships with a wider variety of UN agencies that have an interest and capacity to further expand VAWG entry points as part of collective efforts to address complex multi-thematic issues.

To be led by: UN Women's EVAW section, in consultation with Country and Regional Offices, and other relevant divisions.

Impact: This will enable more sustainable and diversified funding for holistic, longer-term VAWG programming. Prioritizing Strategic Note funding will lead to cross-thematic synergies, which can foster more comprehensive efforts to address VAWG.

Difficulty: While the approach can be initiated within UN Women in consultation with different units, there may be broader challenges in navigating a limited pool of interested funding partners and finding alignment with UN partners for joint programming and reporting.

If not implemented: Short-term funding limits UN Women's ability to support comprehensive, impactful VAWG programming. Without improved alignment and partnership with other UN entities, there may be missed opportunities for resource mobilization and comprehensive efforts to address VAWG.

RECOMMENDATION 5.

Building on UN Women's role as convener in the EVAWG space, continue to strengthen the multi-stakeholder approach and scale up successful pilot initiatives at the country level.

Based on

CONCLUSIONS 2, 4,

LESSONS LEARNED

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

MEDIUM/LONG-TERM

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Continue to strengthen the Entity's role as a convener and knowledge partner on EVAWG, bringing together government, UN and civil society stakeholders. Actions could include:
 - Further alignment/strengthening of UN Women's in-country EVAWG expertise with country needs and capacities, with priorities varying across middle income countries/lower income countries/least development countries/small island developing states.
- Continue to support and adapt catalytic initiatives on creating safe public spaces, improving access to services and support for the implementation of laws and policies. Examples include:
 - Supporting legal aid clinics; leveraging existing government budgets (national, regional and local level) for EVAWG prevention and response; institutionalization of EVAWG across policies in government entities (e.g. police services, culture, economic development, transportation, recreation, environment); supporting partners in ending harassment and other forms of GBV in the world of work; and engaging women, men, youth, community leaders and religious leaders as local champions for EVAWG.

To be led by: UN Women EVAW section, in consultation with Country and Regional Offices.

Impact: Aligning in-country expertise with specific needs and capacities can improve the effectiveness of UN Women's EVAWG programming, while synthesizing insights from countries with similar contexts will enable scalable and context-relevant solutions. Catalytic initiatives can improve access to services, strengthen institutional responses and foster community-level engagement for social norms change, promoting sustainable progress in addressing VAWG.

Difficulty: While it can be implemented within UN Women, replicating catalytic initiatives will require continuous investment and collaboration with other partners, including local governments and external stakeholders.

If not implemented: It may risk a fragmented approach to EVAW efforts, reducing the efficiency and effectiveness of programming. There would also be missed opportunities to replicate successful catalytic initiatives, and countries may struggle to address specific challenges effectively.

Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit and Investigation Services under the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS). 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.

© 2025 UN Women. All rights reserved.

Disclaimer: The analysis and recommendations of this report are those of the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women. This is an independent publication by the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS).

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

www.unwomen.org
www.facebook.com/unwomen
www.x.com/un_women
www.youtube.com/unwomen
www.flickr.com/unwomen