EVALUATION SYNTHESIS

UN WOMEN'S PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE 2022–2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

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UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services

Independent Evaluation Service

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil society organization
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EVAW	Ending violence against women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IEAIS	Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
ILO	International Labour Organization
LEAP	Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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FOREWORD

As UN Women approaches the end of its current Strategic Plan 2022–2025, we do so in a time of heightened global complexity and uncertainty. The intersecting challenges of conflict and humanitarian crises, economic instability, climate change and environmental degradation and mounting pushback against gender equality and women's empowerment all threaten to derail progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, the Strategic Plan represents more than an institutional road map, it is a key instrument for articulating how UN Women plans to adapt and advance transformative change for women and girls globally.

The conclusion of the current Strategic Plan period provides a critical opportunity to reflect on and leverage our existing evidence. As part of this process, the Independent Evaluation Service conducted a synthesis of UN Women's evaluative evidence. Drawing on 175 evaluations conducted between 2020 and 2024, the synthesis analyses UN Women's performance across seven systemic outcomes. These outcomes serve as cross-cutting levers contributing to impact-level changes across UN Women's thematic priorities.

The findings affirm many of the organization's comparative strengths, including its normative influence and coordination role within the UN system. They also highlight the importance of investing in institutional and community capacity, implementing integrated programming and cultivating partnerships with governments, civil society and the private sector. Moreover, the synthesis emphasizes the centrality of addressing harmful social norms to advance gender equality.

At the same time, the synthesis identifies important areas for reflection and improvement. These include the need for greater integration across systemic outcomes, enhanced monitoring of longer-term results and more robust strategies to operationalize the principle of leaving no one behind. It also notes that short-term programming cycles, limited resourcing and siloed approaches have constrained the effectiveness and scalability of interventions in some cases.

This synthesis reflects UN Women's continued commitment to evidence-based decision-making, organizational learning and results-driven programming. As UN Women continues its work in an evolving and often challenging global environment, the insights generated through this synthesis will serve as a critical resource for guiding strategic direction, enhancing impact and strengthening accountability. Grounded in evidence, aligned with global norms and responsive to the urgent challenges of our time, UN Women's work must be both transformative and practical, delivering tangible results while shaping a more just and equal future for all women and girls.

Lisa Sutton
Director, Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 was developed to guide UN Women's work in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plan outlined how UN Women intended to catalyse action to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. As UN Women approaches the end of the Strategic Plan period, there was an opportunity to examine UN Women's performance against the Strategic Plan's goals through a synthesis of available evaluative evidence. The results from this synthesis are intended to help support development of the next Strategic Plan and implementation of UN Women's programming more broadly.

Supporting change at the impact level of UN Women's Strategic Plan are seven medium-term systemic outcomes intended to serve as building blocks "to address the root causes that are at the heart of gender inequality."[1] The seven medium-term outcomes are designed as cross-cutting levers, with the intention that work within these outcomes is integrated with other systemic outcomes and across the organization's four impact areas.

The synthesis explored the performance of the systemic outcomes in relation to supporting and contributing to UN Women's mandate and impact areas. The specific objectives were to:

- **Map evaluative evidence** within UN Women against the systemic outcomes and impact areas.
- **Analyse the results and contributions of the systemic outcomes** to UN Women's thematic work, and the key factors that enable or hinder these outcomes.
- **Examine the coherence of the systemic outcomes** within the Strategic Plan, with an emphasis on exploring their integrated nature.
- **Understand how the systemic outcomes have supported implementation of UN Women's triple mandate of normative support**, UN system coordination and operational activities.
- **Identify considerations or implications to advance UN Women's work** and inform the next Strategic Plan.

FIGURE A
UN Women's systemic outcomes

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strengthening of global normative frameworks, and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions	Financing for gender equality	Positive social norms, including by engaging men and boys	Women's equitable access to services, goods and resources	Women's voice, leadership and agency	Production, analysis and use of gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data and knowledge	UN system coordination for gender equality and women's empowerment

To achieve this, the following synthesis questions were explored:

1. To what extent does available evaluative evidence cover the systemic outcomes?
   a. Which systemic outcomes are linked to which impact areas?
   b. Are there notable evidence gaps?

2. To what extent have systemic outcomes contributed to UN Women's thematic impact area results?
   a. What are the key systemic outcome-level results achieved based on evaluative evidence?
   b. What are the enabling and hindering factors that contributed to the achievement of the systemic outcomes?
   c. To what extent have cross-thematic/integrated approaches been leveraged through the systemic outcomes?

3. To what extent has UN Women effectively implemented its triple mandate across the systemic outcomes?

METHODOLOGY

The exercise was a qualitative synthesis drawing on evaluation reports published by UN Women between 2020 and 2024. All evaluation report types were included: corporate, regional, country portfolio evaluations and project or programme evaluations. Reports must have received a GERAAS rating of good or very good. Overall, 175 evaluation reports met the criteria to be included in this synthesis.

With support from UN Women's Strategic Planning Unit, the synthesis team piloted use of the Evaluation Synthesis Assistant chatbot, an artificial intelligence tool, as an innovative mechanism to verify synthesized findings from NVivo analyses, refining language and ensuring alignment with evidence cited across multiple evaluation sources.

EVALUATION MAPPING

Of the 175 evaluations, 65 per cent were programme or project evaluations, 19 per cent were country portfolio evaluations, 9 per cent were regional thematic/programme evaluations and 7 per cent were corporate evaluations.

Women's Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women were the most frequently addressed impact areas, with 108 (62 per cent) and 109 (62 per cent) evaluations, respectively. Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction were addressed in 86 evaluations (49 per cent) and Governance and Participation in Public Life in 81 evaluations (46 per cent).

The number and percentage of evaluations by systemic outcome is presented in Figure B below

To identify possible evidence gaps, trends in evaluation reports were compared with UN Women's expenditure by impact area and systemic outcome. When examining evaluation gaps across systemic outcomes, there was a lower number of Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction-related evaluations compared to spending across several systemic outcomes. Lower coverage in Governance and Political Participation was seen particularly under systemic outcome 1, despite substantial spending in this area.

FIGURE B
Evaluation evidence by systemic outcome (*N* = 175)

	Systemic outcome	Count	Percentage
1	Norms, laws and policies	132	75%
2	Financing for gender equality	48	27%
3	Positive social norms	121	69%
4	Access to services, goods and resources	140	80%
5	Women's voice, leadership and agency	110	63%
6	Gender statistics	89	51%
7	UN System coordination	122	70%
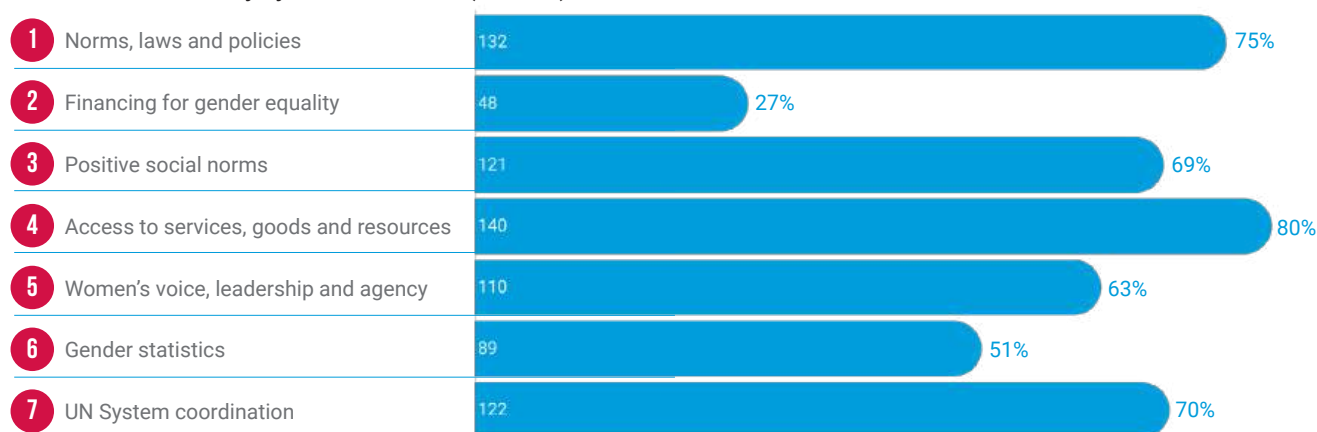
FINDINGS

The report presents results for each systemic outcome, including a description of the evidence base; background to the systemic outcome; contributions to UN Women's impact areas; enabling and hindering factors; and key insights. Results related to UN Women's work on leaving no one behind are presented after the outcomes.

SYSTEMIC OUTCOME 1

Systemic outcome 1 envisions a comprehensive and dynamic set of global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls that are effectively translated into transformative legal and institutional reforms at national and local levels.

Key contributions included support to legal reforms to enhance gender-responsive electoral laws and gender quotas for political representation; strengthening frameworks to promote women's economic empowerment; improving legislation to end violence against women and girls; and supporting implementation of National Action Plans for Women, Peace and Security and integrating gender perspectives into humanitarian and disaster risk reduction policies.

Enabling factors included data-driven policy advocacy; adaptive strategies to seize reform opportunities; strategic partnerships to support an enabling environment for legislative and policy change; and alignment with global normative frameworks.

Hindering factors included resource constraints for policy advocacy; insufficient monitoring of policy implementation; inconsistent inclusion of marginalized groups; and lack of sustained national ownership and commitment to legislative and policy reforms.

Key insights: UN Women's work to strengthen global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions is a core strength. Global frameworks have served as a key entry point for UN Women into important thematic areas that are led by others. At the same time, the integration of global norms into national and local contexts and using country-level evidence to further refine and advance global norms requires stronger capacity-strengthening efforts. Limited evaluative evidence is available on the long-term impact of these laws and policies on the lives of women and girls.

SYSTEMIC OUTCOME 2

Systemic outcome 2 focuses on increasing financing for gender equality by mobilizing public and private financial resources through gender responsive financing policies, strategies and instruments.

Key contributions included strengthening the adoption and use of gender-responsive budgeting practices in public finance; enhancing financial inclusion for women entrepreneurs; expanding sustainable finance initiatives with private and public financial institutions; and fostering public–private partnerships.

Enabling factors included UN Women's technical credibility within gender-responsive budgeting and sustainable finance, and strong relationships with government stakeholders and strategic leadership in promoting innovative partnerships.

Hindering factors included a decline in traditional financing sources for gender equality; limited private sector engagement and follow-through on Women's Empowerment Principles commitments; and challenges in operationalizing and tracking gender-responsive budgeting commitments.

Key insights: UN Women's work on gender-responsive budgeting and public financial management is a major strength in promoting systemic change and was most effective when multiple strategies were used. Emerging sustainable finance initiatives demonstrated potential across both public and private sectors, but require a clearer global road map. UN Women's comparative advantage in engaging the private sector through the Women's Empowerment Principles was notable, though sustaining and deepening corporate action remains a challenge. Financing for gender equality work was found to be siloed within the organization, with opportunities to better integrate financing strategies across UN Women's programming. There are also opportunities to strengthen partnerships with women's rights and feminist organizations and other civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly in sustainable finance, to advance the leave no one behind principle.

Systemic outcome 3 focuses on transforming discriminatory social norms, behaviours and practices to advance gender equality.

Key contributions included greater community understanding of women's right to participate in politics; reduced barriers to participation in economic activities and the workforce; changing norms around unpaid care work and distribution of domestic work; influencing norms and behaviours around ending violence against women (EVAW), such as through support to the development or implementation of national and local EVAW prevention strategies including through UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative; and influencing norms regarding the participation and leadership of women in peace processes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Enabling factors included inclusive stakeholder engagement including governments, CSOs, media, community leaders and community partnerships that promote awareness, capacity strengthening and local ownership.

Hindering factors included attempting to address longer-term norms change through short-term projects, often accompanied by a lack of comprehensive prevention interventions beyond one-off activities; limited engagement of men and boys as change agents; and insufficient standardized measurement frameworks to capture norms change. External barriers such as shifting political priorities and entrenched patriarchal beliefs also impeded progress.

Key insights: Addressing harmful social norms remains critical to sustaining progress across all impact areas. There is need for stronger organizational strategies that promote consistent social norms work across impact areas, improved measurement of social norms change and deeper integration of marginalized groups. There are opportunities for innovative approaches to community and institutional engagement.

Systemic outcome 4 focuses on ensuring women's equitable access to services, goods and resources by strengthening service delivery systems, improving access to justice, securing land rights and enhancing the capacity of women's organizations.

Key contributions included increased income, land ownership and business sustainability through skills training, access to markets and climate-smart agriculture interventions. UN Women strengthened the capacity of government and civil society actors to deliver survivor-centred EVAW services, improve legal processes and establish holistic response mechanisms. UN Women also supported Member States in launching new multi-stakeholder initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual violence, including sexual harassment in public and/or private spaces. UN Women enhanced protection services for women in conflict and humanitarian settings, including through CSO partnerships.

Enabling factors included strategic partnerships with service providers that expand the quality and reach of services; UN Women's adaptability to changing contexts such as COVID-19 to maintain or adapt services; and community buy-in from political, traditional and faith leaders, especially in socially or politically sensitive sectors.

Hindering factors included limited programme reach; insufficient access to land, financial resources and care support which hindered participation in agricultural and market-based activities; entrenched social norms; and pandemic-related disruptions were additional barriers.

Key insights: Evaluations highlight the effectiveness of combining guidelines and capacity strengthening to improve service quality; the value of holistic and integrated service models; and linking women entrepreneurs to broader networks and markets. There was widespread adoption of the leave no one behind principle to reach marginalized groups. Evidence on work within the care economy, including social protection policies and provision of care services, was more limited and there was a need for better monitoring of results in relation to equitable access to services, goods and resources.

Systemic outcome 5 aims to empower women and girls to exercise their voice, leadership and agency in public and private spaces.

Key contributions included increasing the number of women political leaders through capacity strengthening, legislative reforms and enhanced women's representation and bargaining power in workplaces and communities. UN Women contributed to reducing violence in political settings; providing safe spaces for women to exercise leadership; and strengthening women's roles in peacebuilding and disaster resilience efforts. UN Women strengthened the institutional, technical and financial capacity of civil society to engage in policy issues and intergovernmental forums and inform decision-making processes.

Enabling factors included partnerships with local civil society, feminist and women's organizations to enhance women's voice, leadership and agency; partnerships with political parties and institutions, including electoral commissions and parliamentary bodies; and community-level networks that supported women political aspirants were an important enabler in some contexts.

Hindering factors included challenging national contexts that limit participation of feminist and women's rights organizations; backlash and violence against women in politics; high barriers to women's participation, including limited access to resources to apply for office; and discriminatory gender and social norms on women's leadership and participation further impede women's participation in public and private spheres.

Key insights: UN Women fosters enabling environments for women's leadership and the importance of institutionalized capacity strengthening and training programmes for officials and women political aspirants. Findings highlight the need for context-specific strategies and the challenge of reaching marginalized women, particularly in political spaces, without compromising scale.

Systemic outcome 6 aims to institutionalize the production, analysis and use of gender data to inform policymaking and accountability for delivering gender equality and women's empowerment results.

Key contributions included leveraging gender data to promote gender-responsive political systems and providing data-driven insights that shape financial policies, labour market reforms and gender-responsive budgeting. UN Women contributed to strengthening data systems and institutional capacity to collect, analyse and use EVAW data and support gender-responsive monitoring systems to track women's participation in peace processes.

Enabling factors included partnerships with national statistical offices and researchers and increased government ownership and institutional commitment to gender data.

Hindering factors included weak coordination among national statistical offices, line ministries and CSOs which hindered the production, dissemination and use of gender statistics. Limited political will and lack of national ownership further hampered long-term sustainability and effective data utilization.

Key insights: UN Women successfully advances gender data through its triple mandate, although limited institutional capacity, fragmented coordination mechanisms and insufficient domestic investment in gender data systems remain challenges. Innovative data methodologies and knowledge-sharing, such as time-use surveys and global data platforms, have facilitated evidence-based decision-making and cross-regional learning.

Systemic outcome 7 focuses on strengthening UN system coordination for gender equality by enhancing accountability for the UN system to deliver on gender equality commitments, advocating for adequate resourcing and driving coordination for thematic results.

This includes leading the management and implementation of accountability frameworks such as the UN-SWAP and Gender Equality Marker, as well as leading and participating in inter-agency collaboration, integrated policy support and capacity-building for gender mainstreaming. While UN Women aims to accelerate and implement its coordination mandate through stand-alone Systemic Outcome 7, it is important to note that coordination mandates are also fully leveraged across all systemic outcomes and thematic areas.

Key contributions included strengthening the implementation of gender accountability frameworks within the UN system, such as UN-SWAP, and supporting the integration of gender equality into UN plans and programmes, including the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and Common Country Analyses. Thematic-level contributions include integrating gender equality into UN system-wide policy and guidelines that promote women's political participation; collaborating with other UN entities and a broad range of government stakeholders to strengthen linkages between gender and economic policies; developing and implementing a multisectoral, coordinated UN approach to the prevention and response to violence against women and girls; and integration of gender into national plans related to Women, Peace and Security, and UN Humanitarian Country Team response plans and strategies.

Enabling factors include UN Women's clear coordination mandate and institutional partnerships with clear areas for collaboration, roles and responsibilities. Inter-agency mechanisms and frameworks such as the UN-SWAP were key entry points or drivers of inter-agency coordination.

Hindering factors include unclear roles in joint programming; limited human and financial resources for coordination; and competition for funding among UN agencies.

Key insights: While UN Women has made significant strides in integrating gender into UN system policies, challenges remain in measuring the direct impact of the Entity's coordination efforts on women's lives, with limited systematic indicators for tracking results. UN Women has advanced gender mainstreaming within UN Country Teams (UNCTs) by strengthening accountability frameworks and mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment into strategic frameworks. Joint programmes enabled UN Women to leverage resources and influence, while also promoting the use of standardized approaches drawn from global norms and standards. By fostering collaborative, inter-agency knowledge generation, UN Women enhanced the coherence, dissemination and utilization of gender-related knowledge and data.

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The leave no one behind principle was integrated across all systemic outcomes, demonstrating a concerted effort to promote the inclusion of marginalized groups.

However, evaluative evidence suggests that while engagement with marginalized populations is often present – especially through participatory data collection and design, and the use of disaggregated data and targeted interventions – the causal link between inclusion and improved access to services, or adapted services to meet needs and expanded policies is not always systematically established. Some evaluations found that leave no one behind approaches fostered more inclusive programme delivery and visibility of underserved groups, but the degree to which this translated into measurable policy or service expansion varied depending on the context. Successful cases tended to involve robust institutional partnerships, data-informed planning and cross-sectoral collaboration. Challenges remain in ensuring sustainability, particularly where initiatives rely on short-term funding or lack institutional ownership. Embedding intersectionality and ensuring marginalized groups are consistently prioritized throughout implementation and monitoring and evaluation frameworks are critical for achieving systemic impact.

OVERALL INSIGHTS

Bringing together the analysis of each systemic outcome, integration across the systemic outcomes and application of the leave no one behind principle, the synthesis presents the following overall insights:

Evaluative evidence and evidence gaps

- The synthesis found limited evidence on UN Women's contribution to longer-term, outcome-level results across the systemic outcomes.
- The synthesis observed cases where evidence exists but where there are no, or limited, corresponding Strategic Plan indicators.

Systemic outcomes

- The conceptualization of the systemic outcomes is coherent; however, greater clarity is required on their implementation. Evidence for some systemic outcomes indicated the need for clearer organizational plans to support their implementation. The relationship between the systemic outcomes, gender equality accelerators, including those based on longstanding UN Women initiatives, and impact areas remains insufficiently defined, limiting strategic coherence and reporting clarity.
- Governance systems within UN Women do not always reflect the integrated intent of the systemic outcomes. At times, organizational governance structures were at odds with the integrated nature of the systemic outcomes, with related functions structurally and practically siloed.
- Harmful social norms, including institutional and political resistance, were frequently cited as a major impediment to gender equality and women's empowerment across systemic outcomes.
- Capacity strengthening is a core intervention approach of UN Women. Although embedded across the systemic outcomes, there is opportunity for capacity strengthening work to be more meaningfully integrated following a common organization-wide framework that bridges the array of capacity strengthening approaches employed by UN Women.

Triple mandate

- Evaluations identify normative work as a clear strength of UN Women across thematic areas. UN Women is viewed as a bridge builder across sectors/stakeholders with valued technical expertise to strengthen normative, legislative and policy frameworks.
- Evaluations found that UN Women has been effective in driving gender equality through its coordination role across the UN system, but to maximize its impact, clearer articulation of its mandate, stronger system-wide collaboration and more robust measurement of results are needed.
- Operationally, short-term projects are limiting efforts to realize and measure longer-term change and obtain sufficient reach to achieve impact at scale.

Photo: UN Women/Rashid Hamis Kindamba

EMERGING CONSIDERATIONS

The synthesis presents 10 considerations, which aim to support development of the next Strategic Plan and UN Women's programming more broadly. The first three address the systemic outcomes and Strategic Plan while the remainder focus on UN Women's triple mandate.

Considerations related to the systemic outcomes and Strategic Plan:

1   Clarify the relationship between the systemic outcomes, gender equality accelerators and impact areas.

2   Move towards a governance structure that supports the interconnected relationship between the systemic outcomes, gender equality accelerators and impact areas.

3   Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to effectively track and measure longer-term outcomes across the systemic outcomes.

Considerations related to UN Women's triple mandate:

4   Strengthen implementation, accountability and capacity related to gender-responsive normative frameworks and leverage UN Women's strength in normative work to respond to new challenges.

5   Strengthen UN Women's UN system coordination mandate by developing a clear theory of change with an operational plan.

6   Strengthen intersectionality and integration of the leave no one behind approach by designing programmes that systematically address the needs of women with different vulnerabilities.

7   Strengthen capacity-building efforts by developing tailored approaches that respond to specific national contexts and institutional needs.

8   Leverage, measure and refine UN Women's work on social norms.

9   Promote the sustainability of interventions by deepening engagement of duty bearers and service providers, including government institutions, CSOs and other service providers.

10   Strengthen strategic partnerships and funding mechanisms to ensure sustainable and impactful gender equality programming.

Photo: UN Women Morocco CO.

1

BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 was developed to guide UN Women's work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plan outlined how UN Women intended to catalyse action to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. As UN Women approaches the end of the Strategic Plan period, there was an opportunity to examine UN Women's performance against the Strategic Plan's goals through a synthesis of available evaluative evidence. The results from this synthesis are intended to help support development of the next Strategic Plan and implementation of UN Women's programming more broadly.

The synthesis builds on and complements existing accountability and learning processes related to the Strategic Plan. In particular, the midterm review of the Strategic Plan; consultations at country, regional and headquarters levels; and Independent Audit Service audits all provided findings and recommendations that informed the strategic planning process.

The synthesis was undertaken in the context of the Secretary-General's Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, which was launched in March 2024. UN Women was tasked with a strong leadership and coordination role for the plan. It is expected that lessons from this exercise will support UN Women's implementation of the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.

The intended users of the evaluation include personnel from SPU, SPRED and PPID, including Regional Strategic Planning Specialists, Impact Leads, Systemic Outcome Leads and others supporting development of the next Strategic Plan or engaged in programme implementation.

1.2 UN WOMEN'S SYSTEMIC OUTCOMES

Central to UN Women's approach to achieve results is leveraging its triple mandate of normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities. UN Women works across four impact areas: governance and participation in public life; women's economic empowerment; ending violence against women and girls; and women, peace and security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction.

Supporting change at the impact level are seven medium-term systemic outcomes which are intended to serve as building blocks "to address the root causes that are at the heart of gender inequality."[2] Positioned as key cross-cutting levers, actions within these outcomes are designed to contribute to impact-level changes across the four impact areas. The systemic outcomes are designed to be cross-cutting with the intention that work within individual outcomes is integrated with other systemic outcomes and across the organization's impact areas. The logic of the Strategic Plan stipulates that progress within the systemic outcomes is necessary to advance impact-level change and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Each systemic outcome includes a set of intended outputs, i.e. immediate changes attributable to UN Women such as improvements in the skills, abilities and capacities of individuals or institutions, and/or the availability of new products and services. Some of these outputs are thematic in nature, while others are cross-thematic. Table 1 presents each systemic outcome from the Strategic Plan. Annex 6 presents a more detailed description of each systemic outcome with examples of outcome and output-level changes.

TABLE 1:
Systemic outcomes

Systemic outcome	Description
Strengthening of global normative frameworks, and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions	A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is strengthened and translated into gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions.
Financing for gender equality	Public and private financing advance gender equality through gender-responsive financing policies, strategies and instruments.
Positive social norms, including by engaging men and boys	More men and boys, and women and girls, adopt attitudes, norms and practices that advance gender equality and women's empowerment, including those that promote positive social norms.
Women's equitable access to services, goods and resources	More women and girls have equitable access to high-quality public goods, services and resources that are responsive to their needs.
Women's voice, leadership and agency	Women and girls exercise their voice, agency and leadership, including through an enabling environment that supports women and youth organizations.
Production, analysis and use of gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data and knowledge	Gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data and knowledge are produced, analysed and used to inform policymaking, advocacy and accountability for delivering gender equality and women's empowerment results.
UN system coordination for gender equality and women's empowerment	The UN system coherently and systematically contributes to progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Source: UN Women. Strategic Plan 2022–2025. P. 14.

1.3 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SYNTHESIS QUESTIONS

The purpose of this exercise was to synthesize UN Women's evaluative evidence to inform the next Strategic Plan and UN Women's work broadly by examining key questions focused on the seven systemic outcomes.

The synthesis explored the performance of the systemic outcomes in relation to supporting and contributing to UN Women's mandate and four impact areas. The specific objectives were to:

- **Map evaluative evidence** within UN Women against the systemic outcomes and impact areas.
- **Analyse the results and contributions of the systemic outcomes** to UN Women's thematic work, and the key factors that enable or hinder these outcomes.
- **Examine the coherence of the systemic outcomes** within the Strategic Plan, with an emphasis on exploring their integrated nature.
- **Understand how the systemic outcomes have supported implementation of UN Women's triple mandate of normative support**, UN system coordination and operational activities.
- **Identify considerations or implications to advance UN Women's work** and inform the next Strategic Plan.

To achieve this, the following synthesis questions were explored:

1. To what extent does available evaluative evidence cover the systemic outcomes?
   a. Which systemic outcomes are linked to which impact areas?
   b. Are there notable evidence gaps?

2. To what extent have systemic outcomes contributed to UN Women's thematic impact area results?
   a. What are the key systemic outcome-level results achieved based on evaluative evidence?
   b. What are the enabling and hindering factors that contributed to the achievement of the systemic outcomes?
   c. To what extent have cross-thematic/integrated approaches been leveraged through the systemic outcomes?

3. To what extent has UN Women effectively implemented its triple mandate across the systemic outcomes?

Photo: UN Women/Miguel Varona

2

METHODOLOGY

2.1 SYNTHESIS APPROACH AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The synthesis followed relevant guidance and best practices, including the United Nations Evaluation Group Evaluation Synthesis Interactive Guidance (2025), Cochrane-Campbell Handbook for Qualitative Evidence Synthesis (2023) and Methodological briefs on evidence synthesis – Innocenti Research Briefs (2020).

In line with the synthesis questions, a conceptual framework was developed as a structured approach to review and synthesize the evidence base. Given the focus of the synthesis, the basis of the conceptual framework was drawn from UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and its Integrated Results and Resources Framework, including the seven systemic outcomes. See Annex 1 for the full conceptual framework used to support the synthesis.

2.2 SEARCH STRATEGY AND INCLUSION CRITERIA

The source of evaluations was UN Women's Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system, which contains all UN Women's evaluation reports. This database contains over 500 reports which were screened against the following inclusion criteria:

- **Agency**: The synthesis will include evaluations conducted or commissioned by UN Women.
- **Publication year**: Evaluation reports published between 2020 and 2024.
- **Report type**: All evaluation report types were included: corporate, regional, country portfolio evaluations and project and programme evaluations.
- **Quality**: Reports must have received a GERAAS rating of good or very good.[3]
- **Language**: Reports written in an official UN language.

After completing the evaluation search using these criteria, 175 evaluation reports were identified for the synthesis.

2.3 DATA EXTRACTION

Data extraction was completed in NVivo 14 using thematic coding. This extraction was primarily deductive, using a framework of codes addressing the synthesis questions. These codes were developed and refined through an iterative piloting process. See Annex 4 for the full codebook, including definitions. To mitigate challenges in retrofitting evaluative evidence from programmes implemented prior to the current Strategic Plan (which may lack explicit reference to UN Women's systemic outcomes), the team also developed a more detailed reference document based on relevant Integrated Results and Resources Framework indicators (see Annex 6). To support analysis, an analytical framework was developed which linked each synthesis question and its sub-questions to specific codes (see Annex 5).

2.4 USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence (AI) is currently being piloted across various UN evaluation offices to enhance data collection and analysis processes. As an emerging technology and, in its current state, AI is unable to substitute the contextual insights and nuances associated with human qualitative analysis, interpretation and reflexivity. There are also concerns about data privacy and the potential for AI hallucinations.[4] To overcome these challenges, the evaluation team worked with the Strategic Planning Unit to test and pilot an internal chat bot - Evaluation Synthesis Assistant based on ChatGPT. This chat bot was designed to help synthesize insights from UN Women's evaluations and provide responses by analysing Corporate, Regional, Decentralized and Country Portfolio Evaluations published between 2020 and 2024. It was expected that the Evaluation Synthesis Assistant could analyse the evaluation set and identify trends. Despite its promise, the Evaluation Synthesis Assistant demonstrated several limitations, particularly in the consistency and precision of its outputs. These shortcomings underscored the need for further fine-tuning of the tool and targeted training on UN Women's evaluation language and formats. In practice, the Evaluation Synthesis Assistant was most useful for quality assurance purposes, e.g. verifying synthesized findings from NVivo analyses, refining language and ensuring alignment with evidence cited across multiple evaluation sources.

In parallel, the evaluation team continued to explore the broader potential of combining qualitative software tools with generative AI. For instance, ChatGPT Pro was tested to synthesize coded data from NVivo, aiming to enhance pattern recognition and detect recurring themes across evaluation findings. These experiments represent a step towards integrating AI meaningfully into evaluation practice, while acknowledging that human judgment remains essential for nuanced analysis and validation.

2.5 SYNTHESIS CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations to the comprehensiveness and validity of the results. First, although there is a significant evidence base across most systemic outcomes, not all programme areas have been evaluated to the same degree, limiting the ability to form conclusions about some areas of UN Women's work. However, identifying these evidence gaps is an important objective of the synthesis.

Second, the synthesis timeline (2020–2024) does not fully align with the Strategic Plan 2022–2025. In the context of the synthesis, evaluation findings before 2022 might not fully speak to the outcomes of the Strategic Plan. However, given continuities in UN Women's work, insights from these evaluations can still be mapped to the current Strategic Plan's impact areas and systemic outcomes.

Third, evaluations that were completed at the beginning of 2025 were not included in the synthesis but are highly relevant to development of the next Strategic Plan. They should be reviewed and considered as planning unfolds.

Fourth, there was limited evidence of impact-level changes, making it difficult to draw conclusions on the contribution of systemic outcomes to impact-level results. Given the placement of the systemic outcomes at the outcome level, this is not unexpected; however, the analysis of impact-level results remains a challenge.

Finally, with the possibility of AI tools producing data hallucinations, including factual inaccuracies, inconsistent information or fabricated details, information produced by AI was fact-checked through manual coding and analysis. Manual coding and analysis remained the primary data extraction and analysis methodology used. These limitations point to the value of continued testing and refinement of generative AI tools to better align with the complex, interpretive nature of evaluation work, particularly for tasks requiring synthesis of qualitative insights across diverse and context-rich evidence bases.

Photo: UN Women/Askat Chynaly

3

EVALUATION MAPPING

3.1 EVALUATIONS BY TYPE, GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE AND REGION

Overall, 175 UN Women evaluation reports met the inclusion criteria and were included in the synthesis. Of these evaluations, the majority (66 per cent) were **Programme or Project Evaluations**, accounting for 115 evaluations. **Country Portfolio Evaluations** followed with 32 evaluations (18 per cent). **Regional Thematic/ Programme Evaluations** made up 9 per cent with 16 evaluations, while **Corporate Evaluations** were the least common, comprising 7 per cent or 12 evaluations.

Geographically, the highest number of evaluations were conducted in East and Southern Africa (35 evaluations, 20 per cent). Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa each accounted for 30 evaluations (17 per cent each). Other regions included evaluations from the Americas and the Caribbean (23 evaluations, 13 per cent), global evaluations (14, 8 per cent), Arab States (11, 6 per cent) and a small number categorized as multi-region (2 evaluations, 1 per cent).[5]

The highest concentration of evaluations was at country level (126, 72 per cent), followed by 18 regional evaluations (10 per cent), 17 multi-country evaluations (10 per cent) and 14 global evaluations (8 per cent).

FIGURE 1
Evaluations by type (*N* = 175)

115 (66%)	32 (18%)	16 (9%)	12 (7%)
Programme or project evaluations	Country portfolio evaluations	Regional thematic/ programme evaluations	Corporate evaluations
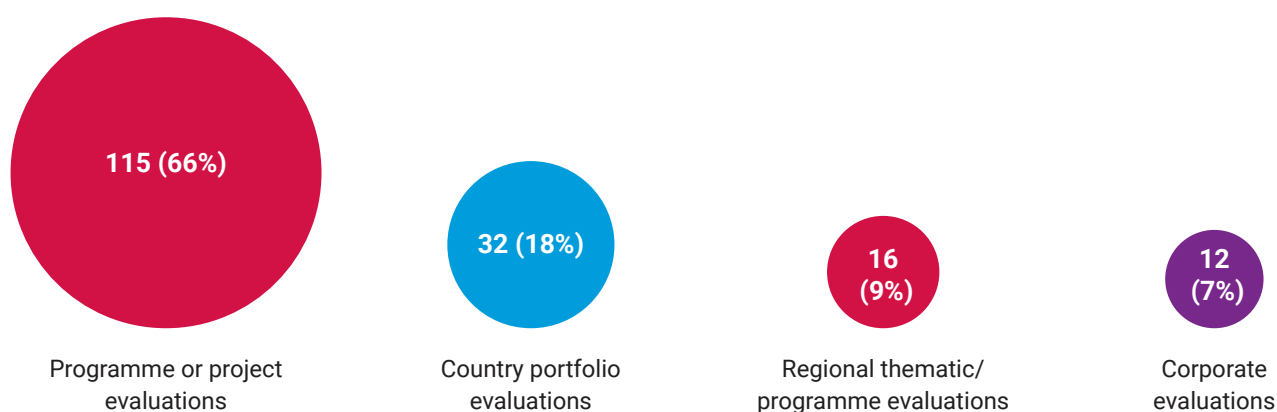
Source: Compiled by the evaluation synthesis team

FIGURE 2
Evaluations by region (*N* = 175)

Region	Number	Per cent
East and Southern Africa	35	20%
Asia and the Pacific	30	17%
Europe and Central Asia	30	17%
West and Central Africa	30	17%
Americas and the Caribbean	23	13%
Global	14	8%
Arab States	11	6%
Multi-region	2	1%
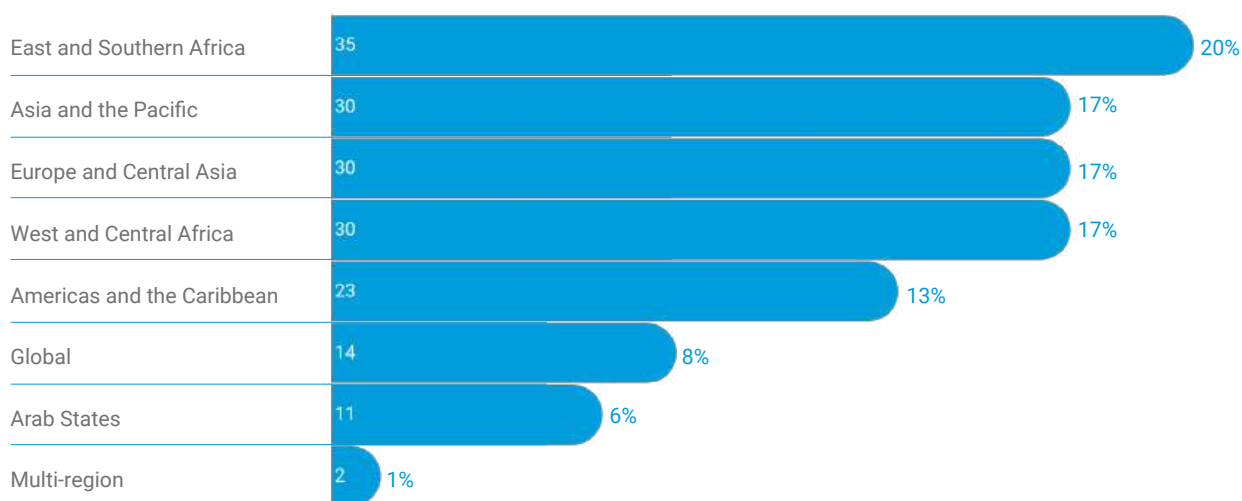
Source: Compiled by the evaluation synthesis team

FIGURE 3

Evaluations by geographic scope (*N* = 175)

Country	Global	Multi-country	Regional
126 (72%)	14 (8%)	17 (10%)	18 (10%)
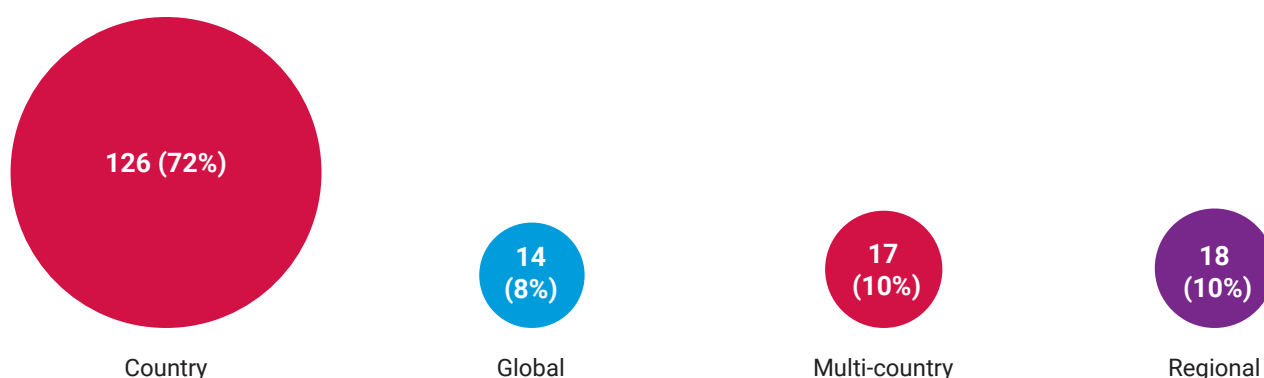
Source: Compiled by the evaluation synthesis team

3.2 EVIDENCE BASE – EVALUATIONS BY IMPACT AREA AND SYSTEMIC OUTCOME

This analysis reflects the number and per cent of evaluation reports with coded data related to each impact area or systemic outcome. The reports may not have a specific focus on a particular systemic outcome but they provide some relevant data towards the indicated impact areas or systemic outcomes.[6]

Among the 175 evaluations, **Women's Economic Empowerment** and **Ending Violence Against Women** were the most frequently addressed impact areas, with 108 (62 per cent) and 109 (62 per cent) evaluations respectively. **Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction** was addressed in 86 evaluations (49 per cent). **Governance and Participation in Public Life** was covered in 81 evaluations (46 per cent).

Among the 175 evaluations, **systemic outcome 4 – Access to services, goods and resources**, was the most frequently addressed and covered in 140 evaluations (80 per cent). This was followed by **systemic outcome 1 – Norms, laws and policies** with 132 evaluations (75 per cent), and **systemic outcome 7 – UN system coordination with 122 evaluations** (70 per cent). **Systemic outcome 3 – Positive social norms** was addressed in 121 evaluations (69 per cent), while **systemic outcome 5 – Women's voice, leadership and agency** appeared in 110 evaluations (63 per cent). **Systemic outcome 6 – Gender statistics** was featured in 89 evaluations (51 per cent), **and systemic outcome 2 – Financing for gender equality** was the least covered, mentioned in only 48 evaluations (27 per cent). This distribution reflects a strong emphasis on structural and systemic enablers of gender equality, such as access to services, goods and resources, policy frameworks and coordination while highlighting a relative gap in evaluations focused on financing for gender equality.

FIGURE 4

Evaluation evidence by impact areas (*N* = 175)

Impact 1 - Governance and participation in public life	81	46%
Impact 2 - Economic empowerment	108	52%
Impact 3 - Ending violence against women	109	52%
Impact 4 - Peace, security, humanitarian, and disaster risk reduction	86	49%
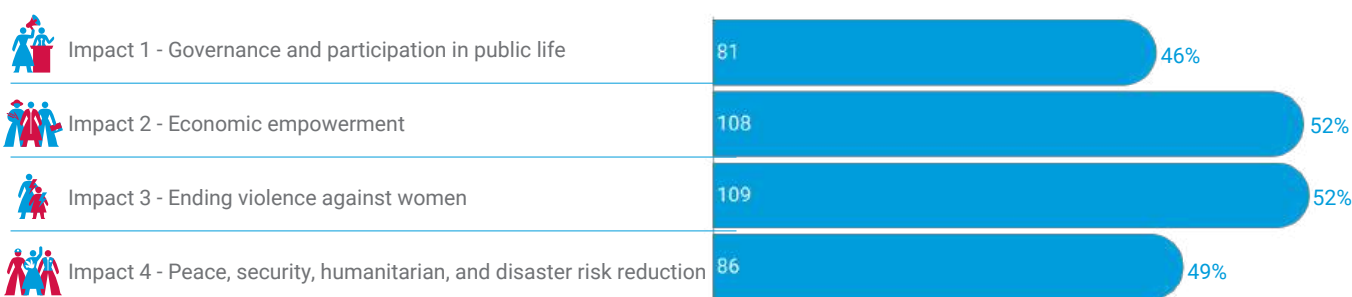
This graph depicts the number of evaluations report with coded data related to each impact area.

Source: Compiled by the evaluation synthesis team

FIGURE 5
Evaluation evidence by systemic outcome (*N* = 175)

1	Norms, laws and policies	132	75%
2	Financing for gender equality	48	27%
3	Positive social norms	121	69%
4	Access to services, goods and resources	140	80%
5	Women's voice, leadership and agency	110	63%
6	Gender statistics	89	51%
7	UN system coordination	122	70%
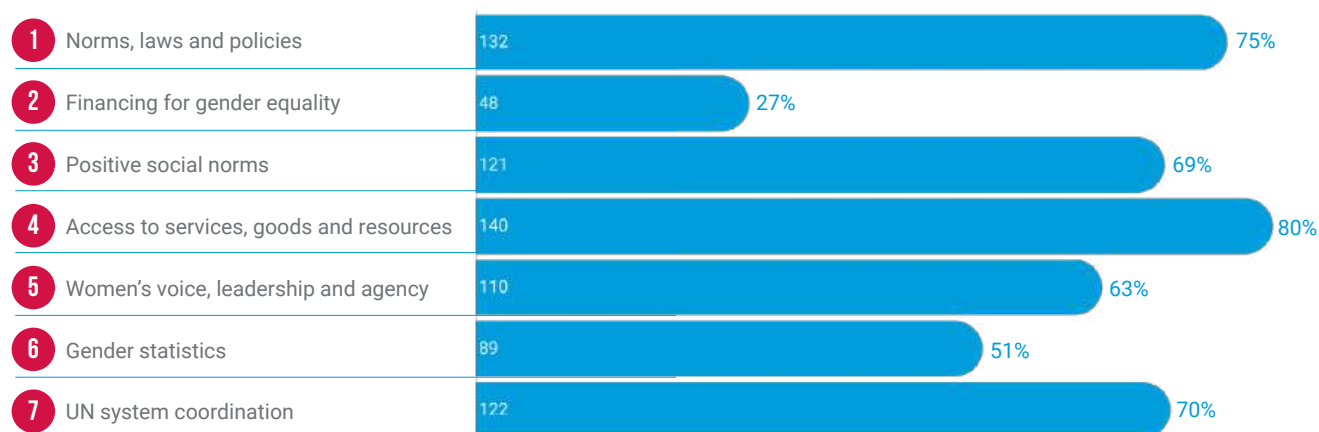
This graph depicts the number of evaluation reports with coded data related to each systemic outcome; the reports may not have a specific focus on that systemic outcome but do provide relevant data.

Source: Compiled by the evaluation synthesis team

3.3 EVALUATION MAPPING INSIGHTS

To identify possible evidence gaps, trends in evaluation reports were compared with UN Women's expenditure by impact area and systemic outcome. Expenditure data from UN Women's Transparency Portal was captured from 2022 to 2024 to align with the current Strategic Plan period. To facilitate comparison with evaluation reports, the average annual expenditure within 2022–2024 was used. There are certain limitations to this analysis. It is recognized that this does not fully overlap with the scope of the synthesis, which draws on evaluations from 2020 to 2024; however, systemic outcome expenditure data is only available for the current Strategic Plan period. Furthermore, expenditure figures offer only indicative trends, as they include all regional expenses without accounting for variations in project size or funding distribution across regions.

UN Women's expenditure versus evaluation reports by impact area

Programmatic expenditure was compared with the number of evaluation reports across impact areas (see Figure 6). While the difference in evaluation coverage across impact areas is not significant, there is a slight misalignment in the distribution of reports when compared to UN Women's expenditure (2022–2024). Some impact areas such as Women's Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women show strong alignment between the resources spent and evaluations conducted while others, especially Governance and Political Participation and Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction, may benefit from increased evaluation efforts to match their significant funding levels.

UN Women's spending versus evaluation reports by systemic outcome

Review of UN Women's spending (2022–2024) across the seven systemic outcomes (see Figure 7) showed that the distribution of evaluation reports broadly aligns with spending levels. For example, systemic outcome 4 had the second-highest level of spending and was also covered by the highest number of evaluation reports. Similarly, systemic outcome 1 had the highest spending and was covered by the second-highest number of evaluation reports; systemic outcome 2 had the lowest spending and was also the least covered by evaluation reports; while systemic outcome 6 on gender statistics and systemic outcome 7 on UN system coordination had relatively lower spending but received moderate evaluation coverage.

FIGURE 6

UN Women's average annual spending (2022–2024) compared with evaluation reports by impact area
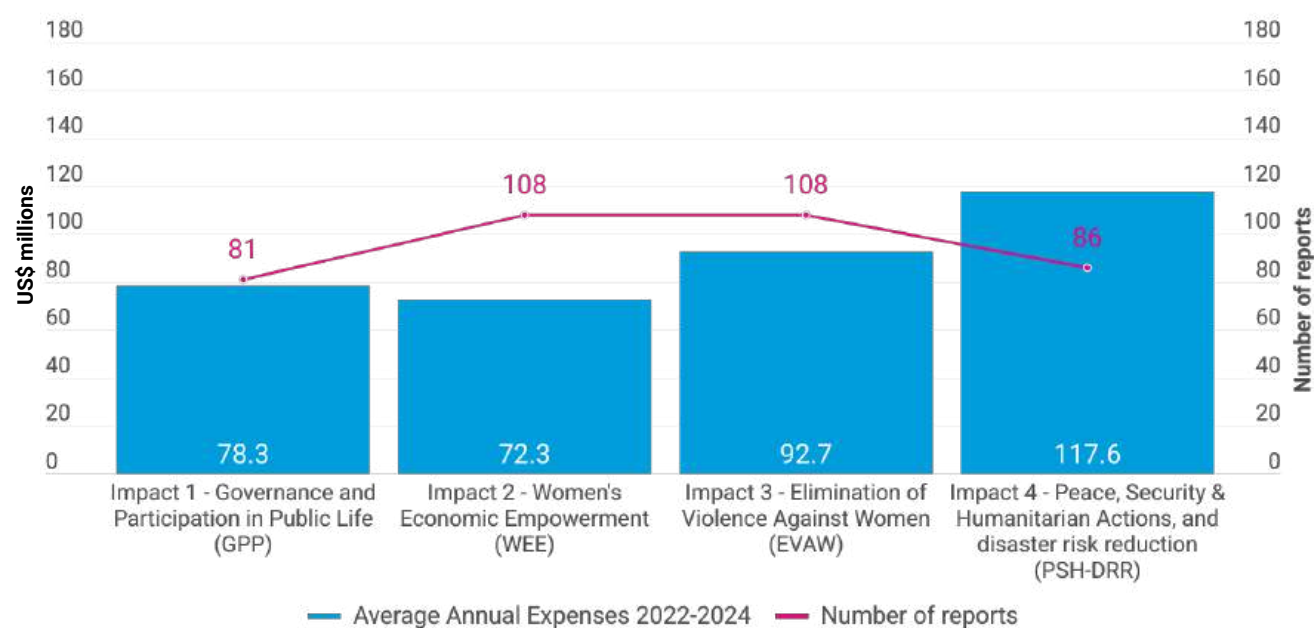
Source: Compiled by the synthesis team based on UN Women expenditure data from the UN Women Transparency Portal (accessed May 2025).

FIGURE 7

UN Women's average annual spending (2022–2024) compared to evaluation reports by systemic outcome
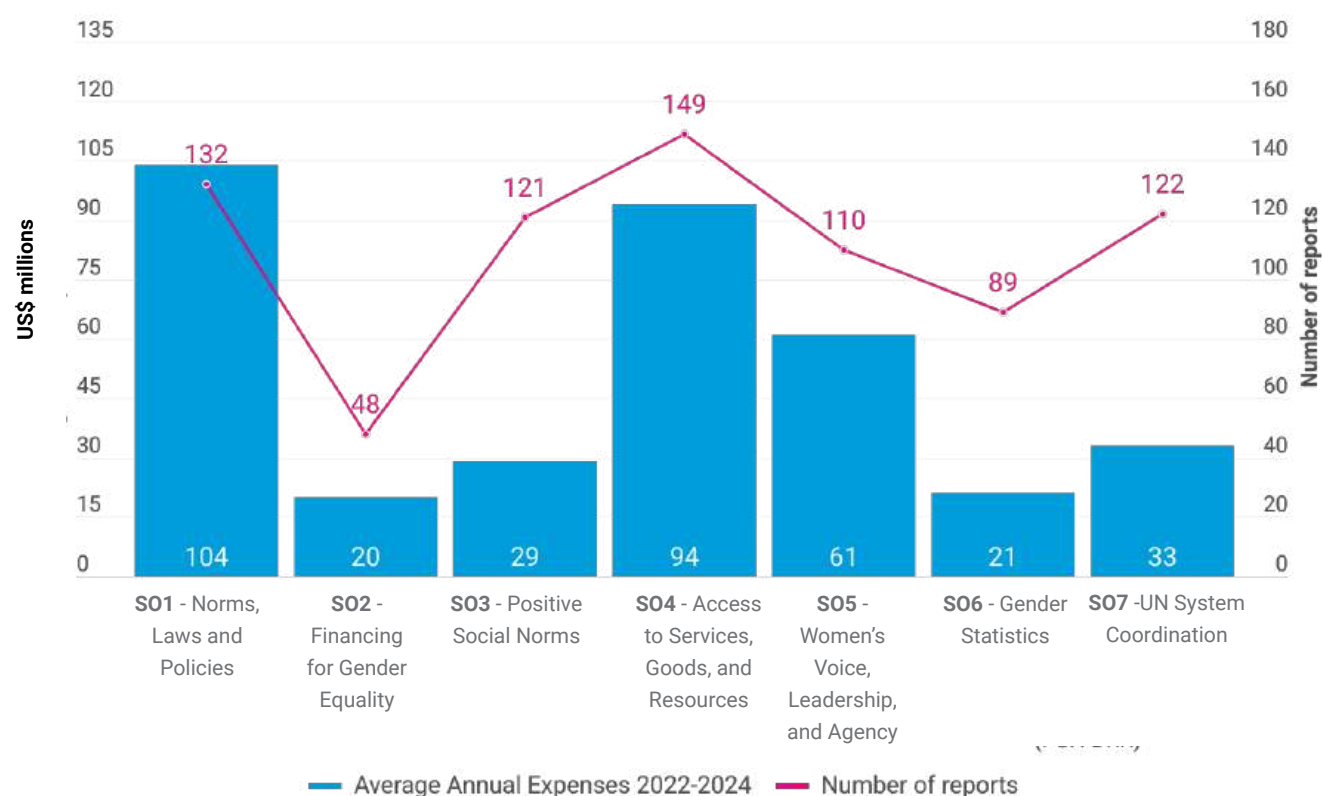
Source: Compiled by the synthesis team based on UN Women expenditure data from the UN Women Transparency Portal (accessed May 2025).

UN Women's spending versus evaluation reports by region

UN Women's spending at regional level was examined to identify potential gaps in regional evaluation coverage (see Figure 8). The analysis indicates overall trends and identifies areas for further exploration. In terms of regional-level spending versus evaluation coverage by region, there is some alignment overall. This includes the Asia and Pacific and East and Southern Africa regions, which had higher levels of spending along with the highest number of reports. However, the Arab States region has relatively fewer evaluations compared to similarly sized regions (West and Central Africa and Europe and Central Asia), indicating a possible regional evaluation gap.[7]

FIGURE 8

UN Women's average annual spending (2022–2024) versus evaluation reports by region
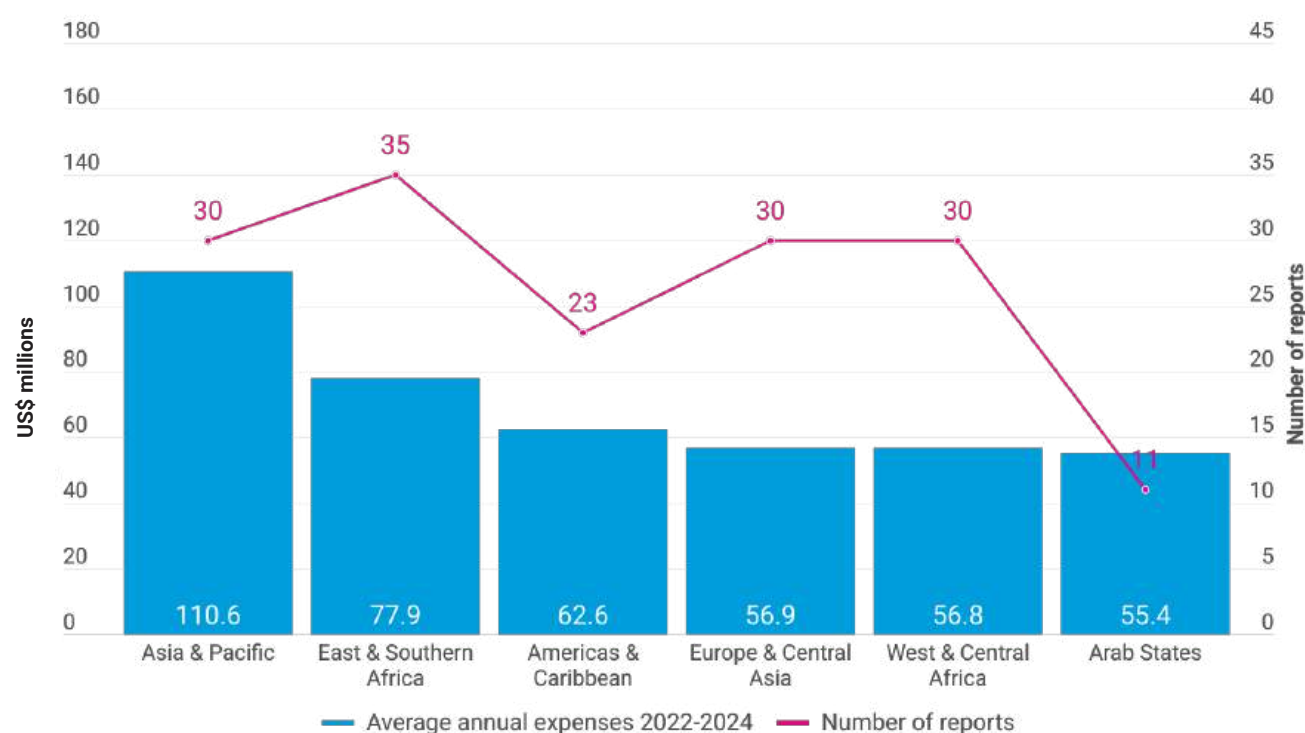
Source: Compiled by the synthesis team based on UN Women expenditure data from the UN Women Transparency Portal (accessed May 2025).

Evidence gaps

In summary, when examining evaluation gaps across systemic outcomes, there was a lower number of Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction-related evaluations compared to spending across several systemic outcomes (in systemic outcome 1, systemic outcome 4 and systemic outcome 6). Additionally, lower coverage in Governance and Political Participation was seen particularly under systemic outcome 1, despite substantial spending in the area. Regionally, the analysis suggests there may also be an evaluative evidence gap in the Arab States region.

3.4 PROGRESS AGAINST STRATEGIC PLAN INDICATORS

The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 captures development results at the impact, outcome and output level. Across the seven systemic outcomes, there are 34 outcome indicators that capture changes in institutional and behavioural capacities to which UN Women contributes. Each systemic outcome includes a set of output indicators that capture more immediate changes attributable to UN Women, such as enhanced capacities of individuals or institutions or the availability of new products and services.[8]

UN Women's Transparency Portal provides year-over-year results for each of these indicators. Figure 8 below provides a snapshot of progress for 2024. Of the outcome indicators, 38 per cent (13) met or exceeded

their milestones, 18 per cent (6) partially met their milestones and 3 per cent (1) were far from meeting the milestone. Thirty-two per cent (11) had reported results but no milestone for comparison, while 9 per cent (3) had incomplete data. Of the output indicators, 52 per cent (22) met or exceeded their milestones, 21 per cent (9) partially met their milestones, 10 per cent (4) were far from meeting their milestones and 17 per cent (7) had reported results but no milestones for comparison.[9]

The evaluation results discussed in this report do not necessarily correspond directly to these indicators; however, understanding the trends behind the Strategic Plan indicators is important in terms of situating the evaluation evidence discussed in this synthesis.

FIGURE 8:

Progress on Strategic Plan outcome and output indicators in 2024
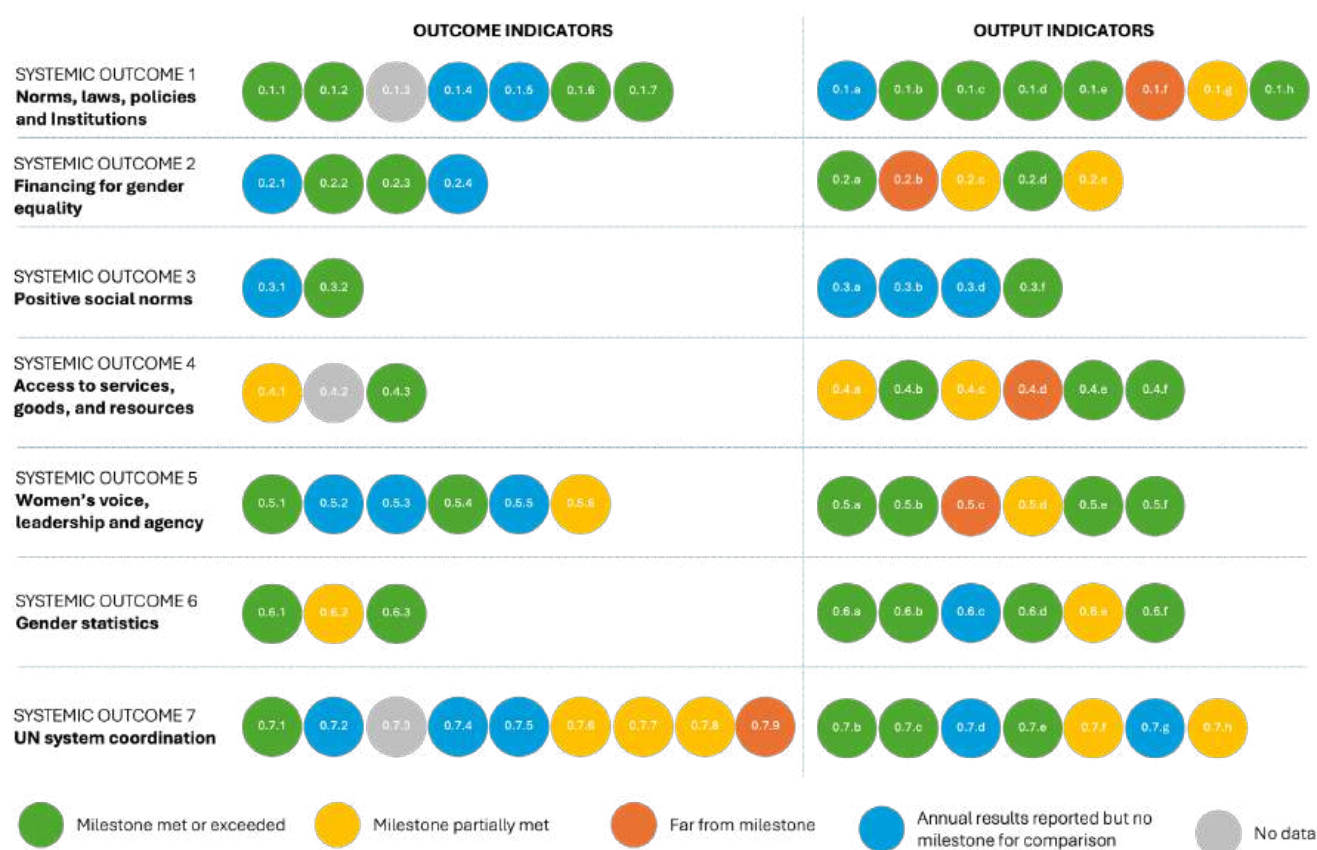
Source: Compiled by the synthesis team from the UN Women Transparency Portal (accessed May 2025).

Photo: UN Women/Naimuzzaman Prince

4

FINDINGS

The sections below present the synthesis results for each systemic outcome. These sections do not need to be read in order and readers are encouraged to jump to the systemic outcomes that are most relevant to their work.

While this section is structured around generating key insights under each systemic outcome, it is important to acknowledge the integrated nature of these outcomes and the interplay between them. Individual sub-sections may not explicitly highlight all instances of cross-cutting work, particularly where different systemic outcomes collectively contribute to results. For example, although UN Women's coordination mandate was leveraged across systemic outcomes, this work is captured largely under systemic outcome 7 and may not be consistently emphasized in each systemic outcome section. Finally, insights related to UN Women's triple mandate (normative, coordination and operational) were analysed holistically in Section 5 Overall Insights.

Each sub-section follows the same structure:

- **Evidence base** provides information about the evaluations relevant to that systemic outcome. These reports serve as the evidence base for the presented results. References to specific reports are provided when examples are given.

- **Background to the systemic outcome** briefly defines the outcome area and describes the work undertaken.

- **Contributions to impact areas** describes the main contributions UN Women has made to each impact area. This sub-section focuses on outcome-level results, but also includes key outputs and impact-level results, where available.[10] The availability of evidence for different results is indicated by the descriptors: "many evaluations" (10 or more reports), "some evaluations" (3–9 reports) and "a few evaluations" (1–2 reports).

- **Enabling factors** describe internal and external factors enabling progress towards the systemic outcome, while **hindering factors** describe internal and external factors impeding progress towards the outcome.

- **Key insights** provide a set of lessons or takeaways derived from analysis of all available data and serve to highlight ways to advance progress towards the systemic outcome. These insights were formulated based on evidence across many evaluation reports or, in some cases, a smaller number of key evaluations with a specific focus on the systemic outcome.[11]

Overall results related to UN Women's work on leave no one behind are presented after the systemic outcome results.

Photo: UN Women/Satu Bumi Jaya

Systemic outcome 1: Strengthening of global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions

EVIDENCE BASE

132

evaluation reports provided evidence relevant to systemic outcome 1

48 reports (36%) on Governance and Political Participation

45 reports (34%) on Women's Economic Empowerment

71 reports (51%) on Ending Violence Against Women

45 reports (34%) on Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and DRR

12 corporate evaluations (8%)

31 country portfolio evaluations (21%)

89 project, programme or regional thematic evaluations (71%)

Background to the systemic outcome

Systemic outcome 1 – Strengthening global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions – envisions a comprehensive and adaptive set of global standards that are effectively translated into transformative legal and institutional reforms at national and local levels. Progress under systemic outcome 1 is demonstrated through measurable results such as the adoption, revision or repeal of laws in order to promote gender equality; the integration of gender perspectives into national policies, action plans and institutional strategies; and the enhancement of national partners and institutions' capacity. It also includes the creation of tools, services or platforms that contribute to the advancement and implementation of gender-responsive normative frameworks. According to the Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan, UN Women has made substantial contributions to gender equality by supporting the development, revision and adoption of national and subnational policies, legislation and strategies aligned with international commitments. The review affirms that UN Women is widely recognized as a successful policy advocacy entity, with strong results in legal and policy reform efforts across its Country Offices and thematic areas.[12]

CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPACT AREAS

Governance and participation in public life

UN Women has contributed to legal reforms which enhance gender-responsive electoral laws, gender quotas for political representation and policies that promote gender balance in government institutions. Many evaluations found that technical support contributed to these policy changes. For example, in Brazil, UN Women provided technical inputs and evidence that contributed to the rejection of proposed constitutional amendments and bills that would have limited women's political participation. This included developing briefing notes and collaboration with UN entities and national institutions to inform parliamentary debates.[13] UN Women's advocacy in Malawi contributed to the amendment of the Political Parties Act to increase women's representation.[14] Some evaluations found that this work is complemented by advocacy for stronger legal protections against violence against women in politics; efforts to strengthen the capacities of women candidates; and motivation to overcome harmful social norms related to women in politics. For example, evidence from multiple countries points to UN Women's efforts to develop protective legislation and institutional mechanisms for women in politics; build capacities of women candidates through training and mentoring; and engage with media and political parties to challenge gender stereotypes.[15]

Economic empowerment

UN Women has worked at global, regional and national levels to strengthen economic frameworks and create a more inclusive environment for women's economic empowerment. Some evaluations found that UN Women contributed to aligning national frameworks with international labour standards, including ILO conventions, while addressing systemic barriers such as unpaid care work and occupational segregation. These achievements were made possible through strategic partnerships with governments, trade unions, employers' associations and multilateral organizations.[16]

For example, UN Women collaborated with ILO on decent work standards for domestic workers across several Caribbean countries, contributing to Jamaica's ratification of ILO Convention 189 and supporting policy reforms in Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda. UN Women also supported data-driven advocacy on unpaid care work through the Gender Equality Indicators and Multidimensional Poverty Indicators in Jamaica, Dominica, and Trinidad and Tobago, which informed social protection policies and contributed to integrating care economy considerations into national development plans.[17]

Ending violence against women

UN Women has contributed to legal and policy reforms to strengthen EVAW-related legislation and institutional frameworks. Many evaluations found that UN Women works to strengthen national alignment with global and regional frameworks such as CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention and the Maputo Protocol. To support implementation, UN Women has undertaken capacity strengthening for law enforcement, judicial actors and service providers, which has seen tangible results in some contexts. For example, UN Women's advocacy and coordination efforts have supported the formulation of joint programming and national and local strategies to address violence against women across countries, enhancing collaboration among UN agencies, national institutions and civil society partners.[18] Collaboration with the African Union advanced national action plans against harmful practices, supporting Egypt and Morocco in making legislative progress towards ratifying the Maputo Protocol.[19]

Peace, security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction

UN Women has supported development and implementation of National Action Plans for Women, Peace and Security and the integration of gender perspectives into national policies, peace processes and disaster risk reduction strategies. By embedding Women, Peace and Security priorities into national and sub-national development plans, some evaluations found that UN Women strengthened local ownership and sustainable implementation. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UN Women supported the development of entity-level action plans aligned with the national Women, Peace and Security framework, leading to increased local ownership and institutionalization of gender-sensitive security planning. In Uganda, UN Women's support helped integrate the Women, Peace and Security agenda into district planning processes, linking national priorities with local implementation and service delivery.[20] A few evaluations found that UN Women had enhanced early warning systems, gender-responsive climate resilience strategies and mainstreaming of Women, Peace and Security in national security frameworks. In the climate and disaster risk reduction space, UN Women strengthened institutional capacities for gender-responsive climate action by supporting national governments to mainstream gender into national climate change and environment-related plans (e.g. Nationally Determined Contributions) and to integrate climate change considerations into national gender action plans. UN Women also contributed to the review of the Gender Action Plan in June 2022 and the Enhanced Lima Work Programme in 2024 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.[21]

Cross-thematic

UN Women has contributed to the integration of gender and equity considerations into broader national and sectoral strategies, including national development plans and COVID-19 recovery frameworks. UN Women's policy advocacy has strengthened legal reforms, institutional frameworks and governance mechanisms, ensuring that gender equality commitments are translated into concrete actions. In many cases, these efforts have addressed multiple thematic areas simultaneously. For example, in Myanmar, UN Women's advocacy ensured the integration of both gender-specific priorities and gender as a cross-cutting issue in the longer-term COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Reform Plan in 2020, improving upon an initial draft that had lacked a gender perspective.[22]

ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS

Enabling factors

Internal enabling factors

Data-driven advocacy: UN Women has leveraged data and gender statistics as a core element of its policy advocacy efforts. Examples from Ethiopia, Tanzania and Viet Nam illustrate how improved availability and use of gender data has informed national decision-making and planning processes. In Ethiopia, collaboration with the Central Statistical Agency supported the development of disability-inclusive labour force statistics. In Tanzania, gender statistics disaggregated by age and disability were integrated into national databases, improving planning for marginalized groups. In Viet Nam, a gender data dashboard was developed to enhance data transparency and support national planning. These efforts contributed to an enabling environment for evidence-based advocacy, aligning gender statistics with national policy priorities.[23]

Adaptive strategies: UN Women's adaptive strategies – anchored in contextual flexibility and responsiveness – enabled the organization to seize reform opportunities by tailoring approaches to shifting legal and political dynamics. In Ethiopia, UN Women recalibrated its programming to align with emerging legal reforms, providing timely technical assistance and supporting the drafting of new gender-responsive legislation.[24] In Colombia, in the context of implementing the peace agreement, UN Women adapted its approach by intensifying coordination with CSOs and government institutions to influence legal frameworks and ensure women's participation, while providing timely technical inputs to support the development of gender-responsive public policies and the incorporation of gender perspectives into the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and other transitional justice mechanisms.[25]

Strategic partnerships: Partnerships with governments, parliamentarians, political parties, local elected representatives, civil society and other UN agencies have been pivotal in creating enabling environments for policy change.

External enabling factors

Global normative frameworks: Frameworks such as CEDAW, the SDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action have provided a strong foundation for integrating gender equality into national and regional legal and policy frameworks. These frameworks serve as essential tools for accountability and advocacy, enabling UN Women to mobilize political commitment, guide coherent policy development and align national reforms with international obligations. This alignment strengthens UN Women's positioning as a trusted adviser to governments and ensures that gender equality objectives are systematically embedded across sectors and governance levels.

Hindering factors

Internal hindering factors

Resource limitations: Resource constraints limited UN Women's funding and personnel capacity for sustained policy advocacy in some contexts. These limitations hindered the organization's ability to maintain consistent engagement, particularly at the subnational level. In several countries, staffing gaps and short-term project funding reduced momentum in advancing legislative reforms.[26]

Monitoring and evaluation: Insufficient monitoring and evaluation systems and methodologies, and inherent difficulties in measuring policy changes, made it difficult to assess whether laws and policies were effectively implemented. Gaps in data collection and limited follow-up capacity constrained evidence-based advocacy and learning.[27]

Efforts to include marginalized groups: Efforts to include marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities or indigenous women, were inconsistent, limiting the reach of normative gains. There was less focus on addressing informal systemic drivers of gender inequality, such as discriminatory norms and exclusionary practices.[28]

External hindering factors

Lack of sustained national ownership: Low government commitment in certain contexts threatened the sustainability of gender programmes. In some countries, initial commitments were not maintained over time, and without government leadership and investment, normative reforms risked stagnation or reversal.

The COVID-19 pandemic: COVID-19 disrupted capacity-building efforts, particularly in remote and vulnerable regions. Pandemic-related restrictions delayed legislative processes and limited engagement with local actors, slowing progress on legal reforms and capacity-building, especially in hard-to-reach areas.

KEY INSIGHTS

Strengthening global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions is frequently cited as a core strength of UN Women. Through technical inputs and engagement in intergovernmental processes, the drafting of key reports such as the Secretary-General's reports on gender equality and policy analysis, UN Women has shaped global normative frameworks that guide Member State commitments. UN Women's normative work at global and national levels is consistently recognized across thematic areas and is deeply interwoven with other systemic outcomes, reinforcing its central role in advancing gender equality. In the current context of escalating challenges – including not only growing backlash, but also regressive policy reversals, erosion of political will, shrinking civic space and the politicization of gender agendas – evaluation reports found UN Women's normative leadership to be highly relevant. These pressures risk undermining hard-won gains, making it essential for UN Women to leverage its normative mandate to safeguard progress, drive transformative reforms and sustain momentum for gender equality and women's empowerment in increasingly complex and contested environments.

Global frameworks have served as a key entry point for UN Women into important thematic areas. Through technical support and partnerships, UN Women has supported gender integration within areas of work led by other partners and entities (e.g. climate, environment, green economy, social protection and others). UN Women has also used frameworks such as CEDAW to promote gender integration beyond conventional gender sectors. For example, UN Women's technical assistance in El Salvador supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in preparing the CEDAW country report and conducting related consultations and workshops, which contributed to the mainstreaming of gender equality in various national policies.[29] Similarly, in Paraguay, UN Women leveraged CEDAW along with ILO conventions and the SDGs to position care policies as a national priority, resulting in the Inter-Institutional Group for Care Policy and its road map for establishing national care legislation.[30]

There are clear examples of UN Women's work to support implementation of national laws and policies; however, the integration of global norms into local contexts often requires stronger institutional capacity strengthening. Refining and systematizing training for duty bearers can help overcome turnover in trained officials. Promoting gender-responsive organizational cultures is also central to supporting policy implementation. For example, in Jordan, institutional capacity development initiatives with the Ministry of Social Development contributed to ministry-level gender policies and strategies, while training fostered a shift in attitudes towards gender equality, embedding gender-sensitive practices into organizational systems.[31] Similarly, in Uganda, partnerships with parliamentary associations led to gender strategies across multiple ministries, embedding gender responsiveness across government operations.[32]

Innovative and more tailored monitoring and evaluation approaches could be more systematically applied to measure and track policy change. The multifaceted and long-term nature of policy shifts poses a challenge for monitoring and evaluation but understanding how and when change happens is critical to advancing future normative work. Similarly, understanding the outcome and impacts of policy changes is a noted gap. In particular, the ability of legislative or policy change to address systemic barriers such as patriarchal social norms requires further study. More systematic, innovative and outcome-focused monitoring and evaluation is needed to assess policy changes and impacts. This includes both strengthening UN Women's internal monitoring and evaluation frameworks and promoting the adoption of accountability mechanisms by policymakers.

Systemic outcome 2: Financing for gender equality

48

evaluation reports provided evidence relevant to systemic outcome 2 [33]

11 reports (23%) on Governance and Political Participation

16 reports (33%) on Women's Economic Empowerment

11 reports (23%) on Ending Violence Against Women

7 reports (15%) on Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and DRR

6

corporate evaluations (13%)

17

country portfolio evaluations (36%)

25

project, programme or regional thematic evaluations (51%)
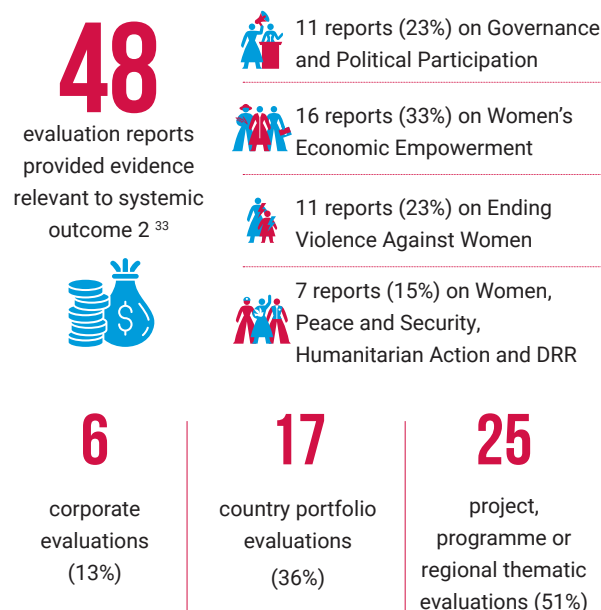
Background to the systemic outcome

Systemic outcome 2 – Financing for gender equality – focuses on increasing financing for the SDGs, with particular emphasis on SDG 5: the achievement of gender equality. Public and private financing is critical to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Under this outcome, UN Women supports efforts at local, national and international levels to ensure that all actors allocate and spend budgets in ways that advance gender equality goals. Progress under systemic outcome 2 is demonstrated through capacity development for women entrepreneurs; improved access to credit for women; and the promotion of national policies to recognize and regulate domestic and unpaid care work. It also includes building innovative partnerships and advancing gender-responsive policies and practices across regions and sectors. According to the 2024 Strategic Plan Midterm Review, UN Women's contributions included strengthening the management capacity of women entrepreneurs; improving conditions for women's financial inclusion; and promoting gender-responsive public and private financing mechanisms. [34]

CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPACT AREAS

Governance and participation in public life

Gender-responsive budgeting contributed to the development of gender-responsive budgets, plans, objectives and performance indicators by government partners in various ministries. Many reports found that gender-responsive budgeting was used to strengthen government capacity for producing and integrating gender indicators into budgets, laws and policies, and for developing strategic and legislative tools for sustainable implementation. For example, in Morocco, UN Women's comprehensive capacity development support enhanced implementation and monitoring of gender-responsive budgeting across several ministries, including through support to ministries to conduct sector gender analyses and integrate recommendations from these analyses. [35] In 2018, with UN Women's technical support, Albania introduced the Financial Management Information System along with key performance indicators to ensure efficiency; transparency of budget planning; and monitoring, execution and reporting on the impact of budgetary allocations on gender equality. [36] One evaluation found that capacity development on gender statistics and gender-responsive budgeting generated some of the most tangible results at an organizational level across multiple countries to support the development of gender-sensitive budgets, plans, objectives and performance indicators by government partners. [37]

Economic empowerment

UN Women engaged with private-sector actors to promote financial inclusion, advance sustainable finance and promote gender equality within the workplace. Some evaluations found that UN Women supported financial inclusion for women entrepreneurs by increasing access to credit and financial products. For example, UN Women facilitated financial access for women in rural areas in Tanzania through business associations and strengthened institutional accountability for gender-responsive budgeting. [38]

UN Women also made inroads into sustainable finance by filling knowledge gaps, engaging in key networks and supporting the creation of gender-responsive financial instruments. A few evaluations found that the Women's Empowerment Principles have been successfully used for engaging and influencing private-sector actors. For example, in Georgia, UN Women used integration of the Women's Empowerment Principles in a joint project to emphasize the role that the private sector could play in promoting gender equality and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable women.[39]

Ending violence against women

UN Women's policy advocacy initiatives around gender-responsive budgeting have contributed to improvements in legislation and increased investments in the provision of quality, multisectoral essential services to survivors. Some reports found that UN Women's advocacy initiatives around gender-responsive budgeting supported budget allocation for the prevention of violence. For example, in Albania, gender-responsive budgeting was a key tool in advocating for appropriate funding for municipal services for women survivors. Such synergies contributed to a broader stakeholder base for programme interventions.[40]

Peace, security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction

UN Women worked in fragile contexts to provide capacity development on public finance and budgeting and used gender-responsive budgeting as a tool for funding national action plans. A few reports found that gender-responsive budgeting generated sustainable funding for national action plans. For example, UN Women in South Sudan equipped female parliamentarians with basic knowledge on public finance and national budget processes to influence defence and security policies and bring together women from different political parties and sectors to discuss women's concerns on public finance management.[41] In Liberia, UN Women was launching a project that aimed to enhance the allocation of financial resources for implementation of the second national action plan through technical and financial support on gender-responsive policies, plans, programmes and budgets.[42]

Cross-thematic

UN Women used capacity strengthening on gender-responsive budgeting to generate results across all impact areas and enable evidence-based policymaking and implementation. Some reports found that EVAW and gender-responsive budgeting have been jointly utilized to operationalize legislative and policy commitments. For example, in Moldova, stakeholders recognized that UN Women's capacity development in gender mainstreaming public policies and gender-responsive budgeting was beneficial for all impact areas. This included the development of gender-responsive economic empowerment policies and legislation, and local budgets to support ending violence against women efforts.[43] UN Women, alongside OECD and UNDP, serves as a custodian agency for SDG Indicator 5.c.1: 'Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.' Evaluation evidence highlighted that UN Women has supported national governments in designing and implementing tracking systems to monitor gender budget allocations and ensure this information is publicly accessible.[44]

Photo:UN Women/Ploy Phutpheng

ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS

Enabling factors

Internal factors

UN Women's credible and positive reputation: UN Women's technical expertise and relationships with government institutions and stakeholders have supported financing for gender equality work. UN Women's reputation on gender issues lent credibility and legitimacy to projects, making it easier to engage stakeholders across public and private sectors.

Partnerships and collaboration: UN Women demonstrated leadership by fostering innovative collaborations among government institutions, private-sector actors, CSOs and academic institutions to advance women's economic empowerment. These strategic partnerships leveraged innovative approaches to expand women's access to competitive skills, work-based learning opportunities, funding, global best practices and professional networks. Through these efforts, UN Women played a key role in creating enabling environments that promote women's economic empowerment.

Hindering factors

Internal factors

Limited private-sector engagement: There is untapped potential for corporate involvement in social impact projects and adopting the Women's Empowerment Principles. While companies appreciate the Women's Empowerment Principles for being flexible, voluntary, free and linked to a self-assessment tool to guide implementation, less progress was observed on indicators associated with implementation of gender-sensitive practices.

External factors

Weak implementation, adoption and tracking of gender-responsive budgeting commitments: Gaps exist in operationalizing and monitoring gender-responsive commitments. Local stakeholders also often face barriers in implementing gender-responsive budgeting due to limited financial literacy and unrealistic assumptions about available resources.

Overall decline in traditional sources of financing for gender: Despite growing recognition of the importance of financing for gender equality, investments remain inadequate to achieve SDG 5. Addressing this gap involves mobilizing and influencing both public and private financial resources and collaboration across governments, financial institutions, civil society and the private sector.

Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

KEY INSIGHTS

Work within the financing for gender equality systemic outcome is siloed and less integrated and evaluated across impact areas compared to other systemic outcomes. UN Women implements financing for gender equality primarily within Governance and Political Participation (focused on the public sector) and Women's Economic Empowerment (focused on the private sector). A stronger governance model is needed to promote collaboration or integration of this outcome across UN Women's work. For example, initiatives supporting gender-responsive public finance are not always linked with private-sector engagement initiatives that aim to direct capital towards women-led businesses or inclusive value chains.

Gender-responsive budgeting has been widely used by UN Women to promote financing for gender equality and is most effective when multiple strategies are used. UN Women has supported the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting through a combination of approaches designed to address both the technical and institutional dimensions of public finance. These strategies typically include efforts to raise awareness and build political will for gender-responsive budgeting; strengthen technical capacity in the use of gender budgeting tools and methodologies; institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting processes within government systems; and empower CSOs to advocate for, monitor and hold governments accountable for gender-responsive policies and budget allocations.

Sustainable finance is a promising avenue for increasing financing for gender equality. UN Women's sustainable finance portfolio has achieved tangible results at global, regional and country levels. However, this work requires a refined and clearly communicated global roadmap of what UN Women aims to achieve in line with the global call for financing for development;

defined priorities against different industries and types of financing instruments; and a refined organization-wide sustainable finance roadmap with clear outcomes and metrics. UN Women would benefit from exploring the full spectrum of capital and financial instruments, including green and blended finance, to expand its work. Developing strategic partnerships with public and private-sector actors, especially with those that are value aligned, would allow UN Women to broaden its reach and impact.

UN Women used the Women's Empowerment Principles to effectively advocate for recognition of the role of private sector in financing for gender equality. UN Women actively used the Women's Empowerment Principles to engage with the private sector and to incorporate gender-responsive measures into policies and operations. While becoming a signatory to the Women's Empowerment Principles demonstrates a company's commitment to gender equality, the commitment does not automatically guarantee follow-through. Based on evaluation evidence, it is important to continue disseminating the Women's Empowerment Principles and providing tailored support to improve implementation of commitments by private-sector actors.

The effectiveness of leave no one behind principles within financing for gender equality work is mixed. The engagement of targeted populations and civil society has been more pronounced in financial inclusion work, including work with banks and other financial institutions to offer products suited to women business operators, village savings and loan programmes and other initiatives engaging women and youth entrepreneurs. In contrast, leave no one behind and civil society engagement has been less pronounced within more macro financing for gender equality initiatives, including sustainable finance. There is growing opportunity to engage targeted populations within this work.

Systemic outcome 3: Positive social norms, including by engaging men and boys

121

evaluation reports provided evidence relevant to systemic outcome 3

23 reports (19%) on Governance and Political Participation

45 reports (37%) on Women's Economic Empowerment

72 reports (60%) on Ending Violence Against Women

35 reports (29%) on Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and DRR

10

corporate evaluations (8%)

24

country portfolio evaluations (19%)

87

project, programme or regional thematic evaluations (73%)
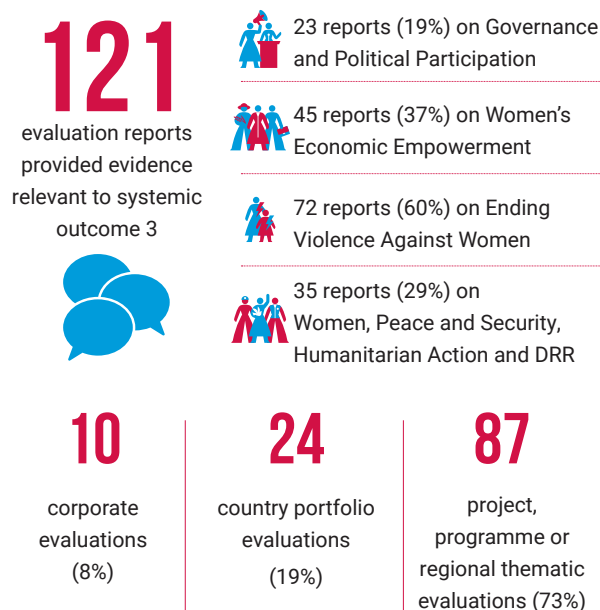
Background to the systemic outcome

Systemic outcome 3 – Positive social norms, including by engaging men and boys – focuses on transforming unequal power relations and discriminatory social norms, behaviours and practices that perpetuate gender inequality, while promoting those that advance gender equality and women's empowerment. This outcome reflects UN Women's commitment to adopting an integrated approach to tackle the root causes of inequality embedded in societal norms and power structures. Progress under systemic outcome 3 is demonstrated through policy reforms, awareness-raising initiatives, media campaigns and community engagement strategies aimed at addressing issues such as violence against women. While social norms change is inherently difficult to measure and is a gradual process, the Strategic Plan Midterm Review highlighted encouraging shifts in attitudes, norms and practices among men, boys, women and girls, contributing to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment across all impact areas.[45]

CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPACT AREAS

Governance and participation in public life

UN Women has contributed to a greater community understanding of women's right to participate in politics at national and subnational levels. Many evaluations found UN Women's efforts contributed to increased community and civic understanding of women's right to participate in politics. For example, UN Women advocated for positive social norms that recognize women as political and community leaders, particularly at the subnational level, through public awareness campaigns, youth engagement and capacity strengthening with key stakeholders including media, male champions, faith-based organizations and other CSOs.[46,47] In Tanzania, UN Women worked with village volunteers to promote women's leadership; and in Kenya this was undertaken through local faith-based organizations. In the Central African Republic, women in peace huts negotiated with rebels to allow women candidates to stand for elections and community volunteers mobilized at the local level and supported civic education campaigns and voting in favour of female candidates.[48] Community-level social norms change work often complemented institutional strengthening to provide an enabling environment for women candidates and leaders, and capacity strengthening for women candidates and political leaders aimed at providing candidates with the necessary skills and support to stand for election.

Economic empowerment

Through awareness-raising activities and campaigns on social norms, UN Women contributed to reducing barriers to participation in economic activities and the workforce, and to changing norms around unpaid care work and the distribution of domestic work. Some reports found that UN Women's efforts influenced social norms around the disproportionate share of unpaid care work carried out by women and girls. For example, in Egypt and Palestine, UN Women challenged social norms around the distribution of unpaid care work at home by leveraging different media platforms.

Some evaluations provided evidence of social norms change within the private sector. For example, a regional evaluation in Asia and the Pacific found that nearly half of UN Women's economic empowerment projects in the region at the time engaged women's organizations and the private sector to challenge discriminatory norms on women's economic participation and support women's leadership.[49]

Ending violence against women

UN Women has undertaken significant work to influence norms and behaviours around EVAW, including through support to the development or implementation of national EVAW strategies with a focus on prevention. Many reports found that this work includes making public spaces and transportation safer; working to eliminate harmful practices such as female genital mutilation; ending violence against women in politics; and promoting prevention strategies. Various interventions have been used, such as media and public campaigns to reach communities, intergenerational dialogues and engaging civil society, religious leaders and community champions. For example, in Albania, UN Women partnered with Anabel magazine to produce the "Love Doesn't Hurt" mini-series on social media, raising awareness about early signs of relationship violence and inspiring women to share their own stories of leaving abusive situations.[50] The UNITE to End Violence Against Women Campaign also leveraged social media and mass media to advocate for preventing violence against women and girls.[51]

UN Women engaged male champions as role models to challenge toxic masculinity and promote gender equality, leading to shifts in attitudes, community by-laws and increased awareness of gender-based violence through campaigns such as HeForShe. For example, UN Women facilitated dialogues with over 300 traditional leaders across sub-Saharan Africa to address gender-based violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation.[52] In Somalia, UN Women's actions under the LEAP III project aimed to tackle female genital mutilation and other harmful practices through education and community engagement. These efforts contributed to the reduced prevalence of

female genital mutilation as many families abandoned the practice.[53] In addition, a few evaluations identified efforts contributing to institutional norms change. In Lebanon, one evaluation highlighted interventions targeting sexual harassment that combined policy development with implementation support, including training sessions. Similarly, in Malawi, a project evaluation noted enhanced capacity among local institutions to collect and use evidence in promoting positive shifts in social norms, attitudes and behaviours.[54]

Peace, security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction

UN Women contributed to influencing norms regarding the participation and leadership of women in peace processes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Some reports found that UN Women trained military personnel to value women's contributions to peace processes and empowered women and marginalized groups in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. For example, UN Women used a radio programme in Nigeria to reach the public on the important role women can play in peace and security.[55]

Cross-thematic

One of UN Women's cross-thematic contributions to social norms work is through the development of research and knowledge products that challenge stereotypes across all areas of work. UN Women's research and knowledge products explore how social norms change and their measurement could be improved. For example, many evaluations cited a wide body of UN Women-published EVAW research, programme guidance and tools that integrate social norms. For example, the "Voices against Violence" curriculum provides interactive, child and youth-centred ways for young people to talk about relationships, gender equality and abuse, within a safe and supportive environment. Meanwhile, "Connect With Respect" is a teacher guide for early secondary education on preventing gender-based violence and promoting respectful relationships.[56]

ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS

Enabling factors

Internal factors

Community-level stakeholder engagement: UN Women focused on building ownership by bringing diverse perspectives and experiences and the commitment of local stakeholders and local authorities to ensure the sustainability of projects/programmes around social norms change. UN Women actively involved cultural and religious leaders to promote positive masculinity; increase acceptance of positive gender norms and practices; and reduce community resistance.

Hindering factors

Internal factors

Short project duration: Short-term projects and pilots linked to donor funding, often accompanied by a lack of comprehensive prevention interventions beyond one-off activities, tend to be less impactful in achieving long-term norms and perception changes. Changes in social norms require sustained, long-term engagement across multiple levels of society, including families, communities, schools, religious institutions, the media and policymakers. Short-term results achieved within the project lifespan can dissipate in the absence of additional efforts to consolidate the gains made.

Limited engagement of men and boys: Transforming unequal gender power relations requires long-term time frames and engaging men and boys as agents of change rather than merely as beneficiaries of activities. While there is a recognition of the importance of engaging men as beneficiaries, mentors or champions, their participation within UN Women programmes often remains limited.

Absence of suitable measurement indices for tracking social norm changes: The lack of consistent approaches to measurement limits UN Women's ability to adequately capture, track and learn from gender transformative changes. The absence of a suitable set of measurement indices also limits accountability for donors and partners and impedes progress on social norms change.

External factors

Shifts in political and institutional priorities: UN Women's ability to transform discriminatory social norms and promote gender equality is highly dependent on the political and institutional environment in which UN Women operates. Shifts in government priorities away from gender equality can significantly weaken the traction and sustainability of programmes aimed at changing harmful social norms.

Deep-rooted social norms and patriarchal beliefs: Cultural biases and anti-gender sentiments remain significant obstacles across impact areas, including resistance from traditional and religious leaders, which often curtails programming efforts. Long-term efforts are needed to transform discriminatory attitudes, including sustained and structured advocacy and awareness-raising.

Photo: UN Women/Volodymyr Shuvayev

KEY INSIGHTS

Systemic outcome 3 requires a clearly articulated implementation plan to facilitate more coherent and consistent work across impact areas. Evaluations highlighted that positive social norms were necessary to achieve results across all impact areas. The positioning of social norms change as a systemic outcome also highlights the importance of this area and provides an opportunity to integrate social norms work across impact areas. However, there is room to enhance cross-thematic work on harmful social norms through strengthened coordination, clearer institutional structures and capacity strengthening around clear and cohesive organizational approaches to social norms.

Addressing social norms from the global to institutional to community level is critical to achieving gender equality goals. Harmful social norms are not only persistent barriers to progress but are also increasingly cited by many evaluations as the root causes behind the growing backlash against gender equality movements. This evidence highlights the need to continue to challenge harmful social norms at all levels, i.e. at global, institutional and community level. UN Women could further introduce creative solutions targeting cultural norms and barriers, such as engaging male leaders and parliamentarians and working with private-sector leaders and elected male representatives to challenge stereotypes and support women's active participation across all impact areas. Fostering gender-responsive organizational cultures can also support positive norms at an institutional level, contributing to stronger policy implementation and service provision.

Community leaders, including traditional leaders, religious leaders, sports figures and other influencers and champions can play an important role in upholding and influencing social norms within a community. Similarly, further engagement of men and boys on harmful social norms, including patriarchal masculinities and gender discrimination, should be integrated across more UN Women programmes.

Stronger measurement of social norms change is required. There are several key barriers to enhancing the measurement of social norms. These include a lack of standardized measurement indices; lack of baseline data for many projects; a focus on output reporting; and short project time frames. There is a need to develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks for social norms strategies to support longer-term impact. UN Women could look to measure change through both project-level initiatives and broader periodic and longer-term data collection exercises. There is an opportunity to use more innovative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation approaches and to learn from existing work on social norm measurement.

Results on the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups have been mixed but linkages between social norms work and marginalized groups can be identified and leveraged. UN Women's work on intersecting issues such as LGBTIQ+ rights, patriarchal masculinities, racial justice and disability inclusion has often been fragmented and limited by contextual sensitivities, with some evaluations highlighting the need for clearer strategies, practical tools, disaggregated data and deeper analysis of systemic power structures. UN Women could further strengthen implementation of the leave no one behind principle by more deliberately embedding target populations into its social norms work.

Photo: UN Women/ Tasfiq Mahmood

Systemic outcome 4: Women's equitable access to services, goods and resources

EVIDENCE BASE
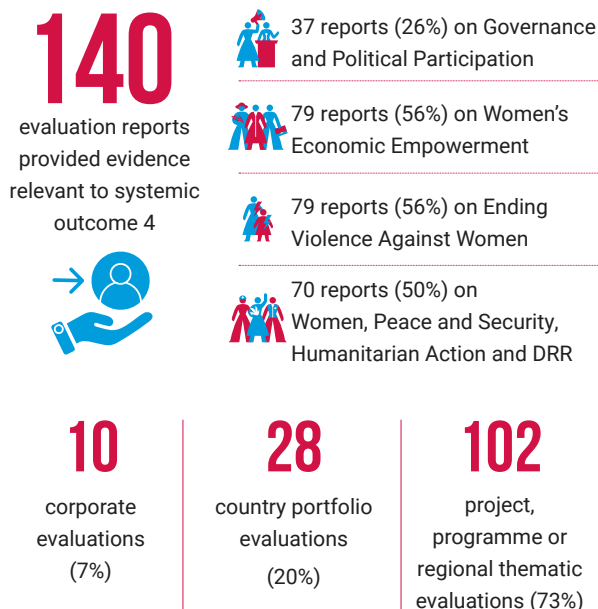
140

evaluation reports provided evidence relevant to systemic outcome 4

37 reports (26%) on Governance and Political Participation

79 reports (56%) on Women's Economic Empowerment

79 reports (56%) on Ending Violence Against Women

70 reports (50%) on Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and DRR

10

corporate evaluations (7%)

28

country portfolio evaluations (20%)

102

project, programme or regional thematic evaluations (73%)

Background to the systemic outcome

Systemic outcome 4 – Women's equitable access to services, goods and resources – aims to create access to better and more tailored public goods, services and resources for all women and girls, increasing ownership or secure rights over agricultural land and increasing access and ownership of economic resources. This outcome includes strengthening the provision of essential services, goods and/or resources; supporting initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual violence; improving access to justice services; improving social protection services; and increasing the capacity of women's organizations to deliver and monitor the quality of those services, resources and goods. According to the Strategic Plan Midterm Review, UN Women's work under this outcome contributed to tangible improvements at both institutional and service delivery levels, helping to ensure that women benefit more equally from social protection systems and essential services across diverse contexts.[57]

CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPACT AREAS

Governance and participation in public life

Compared to other impact areas, evidence of equitable access to services, goods and resources related to governance and participation in public life was limited. Of the existing evidence, one evaluation found that the legal services made available during a nomination period enabled women political candidates to complete the nomination form more easily. This support contributed – among other interventions and factors – to the increased number of women candidates in Liberia during the 2023 general election.[58]

Economic empowerment

UN Women strengthened women's capacities and access to resources and networks that support women's economic empowerment. Some reports found evidence of impact-level changes such as increased household income; improvements to children's nutrition and education; and increased ownership of land due to UN Women's interventions.[59] Many reports found that skills training and capacity strengthening were successful at supporting women entrepreneurs develop and sustain a business, especially when capacity strengthening was linked with other support, such as connections to local markets, mentorship and broader networks. Linking women to Women's Empowerment Principles signatories was also found to be a promising practice in one report. In Georgia, these linkages were used to help women entrepreneurs develop business partnerships; gain access to value chains or find the market for their production; benefit from mentoring and experience sharing.[60] Some reports found that women's groups or cooperatives successfully supported capacity strengthening, network formation, access to markets and access to credit. For example, in Rwanda, women farmers and cooperatives increased their engagement in higher segments of food and agriculture chains.[61]

Some evaluations found increases in productivity and quality of produce through climate-smart agriculture programmes. Interventions focused on access to extension services, access to technology and capacity strengthening. For example, in Malawi, UN Women supported women and youth smallholder farmers to access climate-smart agriculture extension services in horticulture and innovative solar powered greenhouses, resulting in increased yields and income.[62]

In some cases, UN Women contributed to strengthened institutional capacities to improve the provision of services, goods and resources related to economic empowerment. A few evaluations noted success in capacity strengthening with government technical services to provide them with new agricultural skills and knowledge for the community. Another evaluation noted that training of local Land Commissions was undertaken in gender aspects within the framework of sustainability.[63] In Rwanda, an evaluation found that UN Women's work to influence the care economy and national agriculture policies removed structural barriers to women's economic participation by recognizing and reducing unpaid care work for 623 mothers.[64]

Ending violence against women

UN Women strengthened service provision for women survivors of gender-based violence and improved their access to justice services. Many evaluations found that UN Women's capacity strengthening work was a contributor to improved services by government and non-governmental service providers and duty bearers. In some countries, capacity development with CSOs supported the delivery of services and improved the ability of women's rights organizations to identify and report potential gender-based violence cases. For example, in Malawi, through the Spotlight Initiative, women's movement members were empowered to identify and report cases of gender-based violence and follow up on cases with the police and social welfare offices.[65] Other evaluations reported that women had increased knowledge about protection services and support following community awareness work, with one report finding that there was stronger recognition among men and women of legally mandated rights and penalties regarding gender-based violence.[66]

Many evaluations demonstrated improvement in legal services for women through capacity and network strengthening. For example, an evaluation of a programme in Kenya found that the capacity strengthening of judicial officials contributed to improved management and handling of gender-based violence cases, such as stronger steps to protect survivors and witnesses and faster case processing.[67] Regarding support to private-sector service providers, a few evaluations noted strengthened capacity of lawyers providing services to survivors of gender-based violence and family law services. For example, in the Western Balkans and Turkey, this capacity strengthening resulted in ongoing communication among trained lawyers, and the training was provided alongside support to women to receive free legal aid services.[68] A few evaluations highlighted the role of mobile courts in increasing opportunities for women to access justice services. For example, in Malawi, mobile courts increased for survivors' access to justice more quickly and easily through reduced distance and transport costs.[69]

Some evaluations found contributions to improved services through enhanced guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures; strengthened capacities of CSOs to monitor and/or deliver quality services to respond to violence against women and girls; strengthened holistic responses; and enhanced referral networks. For example, in Brazil, UN Women developed guidelines, protocols and operating procedures to strengthen EVAW services tailored to the national context; and protocols to investigate femicides in Brazil; and offered scholarships to child marriage survivors in Malawi.[70]

Peace, security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction

UN Women strengthened service provision for women in conflict and humanitarian settings, including refugees and internally displaced people, and the capacity of duty bearers to respond to gender-based violence. Strengthened services were primarily for survivors of gender-based violence and included training to service providers and duty bearers, including security personnel, and enhancing referral pathways. For example, a regional programme in the Arab States supported multisectoral protection services and provided training to police, judges and prosecutors on responding to violence against women and increased awareness of service availability.[71] Another programme in Uganda established a legal aid clinic to offer counselling and legal services to sexual and gender-based violence survivors.[72]

Cross-thematic

Enhancing service delivery related to gender-based violence has relevance across impact areas, with the strongest integration occurring within the peace, security, humanitarian and disaster risk reduction impact area. Evaluative evidence on women's access to services, goods and resources related to women, peace and security, humanitarian Action and disaster risk reduction focused on strengthening service provision for women in conflict and humanitarian settings, including refugees and those internally displaced. For example, in Kenya, UN Women's technical support and collaboration with local leadership increased access to effective services and protection mechanisms for vulnerable women and girls through social spaces in refugee and host communities.[73] Dialogue with policymakers and practitioners also resulted in the region's first multisectoral response plan to prevent and respond to child marriage in Ethiopia.[74]

ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS

Enabling factors

Internal factors

Strategic partnerships for service delivery: Partnerships with service providers, especially government institutions, women's organizations and CSOs supported strengthening of services at greater scale. A regional evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean found that strategic partnerships with CSOs enabled UN Women to respond to COVID-19, disasters (e.g. the 2021 earthquake in Haiti), conflict situations (e.g. in Colombia and Guatemala) and displaced, migrant and refugee women (e.g. Venezuelan migration flows to Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador) with services for women.[75] For instance, in Malawi, the selection of well-established and experienced civil society service providers was based on long-term, existing experience of working with faith leaders, traditional leaders and other community structures to enhance reach at the community level to facilitate access to services.[76]

UN Women's ability to adapt to external contexts: UN Women programmes benefitted when the Entity was able to maintain access to services, or introduce new services, in response to changing external contexts; for example, by readjusting and responding to the challenges and needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. In Brazil, UN Women's response included provision of small grants and food cards to women disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including indigenous women, domestic workers and girls from marginalized communities of Rio de Janeiro favelas.[77] In Rwanda, the Country Office launched new initiatives, supporting women with safe spaces, financial assistance and training on coping mechanisms in response to the pandemic.[78]

External factors

Community buy-in and commitment: Commitment by political leaders, traditional/community leaders and faith leaders supported access to services, especially in socially or politically sensitive sectors. This included raising awareness of available services and the identification of potential service recipients. For example, in Malawi and Zambia, community buy-in supported implementation of a programme to end child marriage, including the development of life skills for positive behavioural practices among girls and young women, and provision of scholarships and school enablers such as 520 bicycles, notebooks, pens, mathematical instruments and scientific calculators for child marriage survivals, community members and parents.[79]

Hindering factors

Internal factors

Limited programme reach: At times, despite reporting positive results, small programme reach limited overall impact and contribution to gender equality goals. One evaluation highlighted a trade-off between depth and scale, finding that some trainees viewed capacity strengthening initiatives as light-touch and felt that a more in-depth approach was needed in complex and challenging environments where women have less access to basic education and less political experience.[80] Strategic partnerships were a noted method for improving reach and sustainability, while short-term projects and limited funding hampered efforts to reach more participants.

External factors

Limited access to land, financial resources and care support: Insufficient access to land, land ownership and financial resources impeded women's ability to fully develop and execute agricultural and market-based economic activities. Unpaid care work also continues to serve as a barrier to women's economic participation.

Social norms are a persistent barrier: Patriarchal attitudes and harmful beliefs around women's economic participation hampered economic empowerment, care initiatives and the distribution of domestic work. Harmful norms at community and institutional levels around violence against women were also key barriers to accessing services for survivors of gender-based violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic: The pandemic impacted project timelines, supply chains and the ability to provide services, goods and resources to women and girls. For example, market-based events were often cancelled, hurting business and networking opportunities. In one project, the diversity market fairs that were meant to bring together women entrepreneurs from different districts and ethnicities were suspended.[81]

KEY INSIGHTS

Developing guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures and strengthening the capacities of civil society and service providers to deliver and monitor quality services have been successful strategies. Development and capacity strengthening on guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures were used to improve the provision of essential services, including those provided by shelters, law enforcement and specialized units responding to gender-based violence. Similarly, capacity strengthening proved effective in many countries for enhancing the ability of organizations to provide gender-responsive services. For example, strengthening women-led organizations has resulted in better gender-based violence prevention and response service delivery and accountability in several countries. Combining the development of guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures with capacity strengthening of duty bearers and service providers was effective at improving the quality of services.

The implementation of holistic or integrated services has demonstrated effectiveness. These initiatives, often delivered jointly with other UN entities, were found to be better equipped to deliver a range of services and respond to the multiple, interrelated needs of rights-holders. Such initiatives include, for example, one-stop hubs for gender-based violence survivors; integration of psychosocial support into gender-based violence interventions; combined vocational training with financial support and market access; and integration of EVAW interventions and/or and male engagement into economic empowerment initiatives. There was a noted trade-off in programme reach in some cases between more in-depth service provision and lighter touch intervention.

Efforts towards ensuring women's access to justice are centred on ending violence against women and girls but are also relevant for other sectors. There is limited evaluative evidence on access to justice services regarding women's right to land and other economic resources, political participation, and sexual and reproductive health, among others, presenting a potential opportunity for future legal assistance work.

Linking women entrepreneurs to other services can increase the chance of success and enhance outcomes for women. Although challenging in many contexts, climate-smart agriculture can be enhanced when coupled with interventions that secure or increase land ownership by women. Support to women's businesses can be enhanced through access to loans and other gender-responsive financial and banking products. Similarly, linking women entrepreneurs with networks, cooperatives or mentors can support business development.

The leave no one behind principle was widely adopted in making progress towards systemic outcome 4. Groups targeted include women with disabilities, indigenous women, women migrants, host community members, refugees, rural women, domestic workers, home-based workers, LGBTIQ+, girls and adolescents, among others. Some evaluations found opportunities to increase engagement with specific populations, including holistic support to migrant women and refugees. For example, a programme in Chile engaged indigenous communities, government representatives and private-sector actors at national and local levels to promote the economic empowerment of indigenous women.[82]

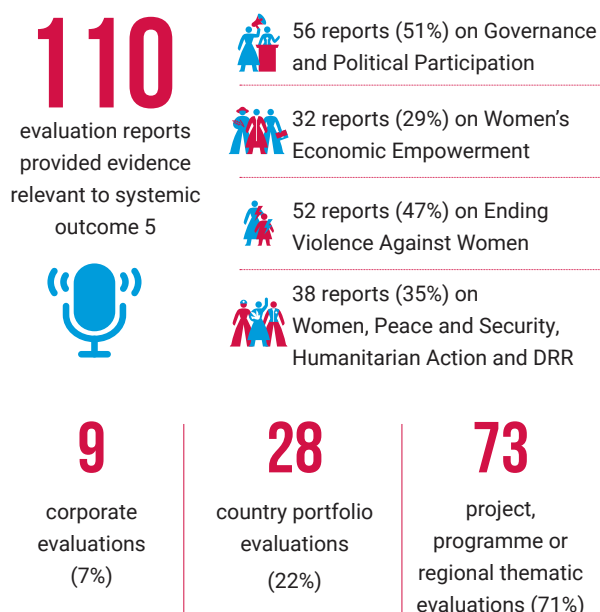**There was limited evaluative evidence available on unpaid care work.** Evaluation of social protection policies and services, the provision of care services, advocacy activities to reduce women's domestic responsibilities and other related interventions are needed to better understand the effectiveness of different care interventions and their effect on increasing women's economic participation.

Photo: UN Women Africa

Systemic outcome 5: Women's voice, leadership and agency

EVIDENCE BASE

110

evaluation reports provided evidence relevant to systemic outcome 5

56 reports (51%) on Governance and Political Participation

32 reports (29%) on Women's Economic Empowerment

52 reports (47%) on Ending Violence Against Women

38 reports (35%) on Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and DRR

9

corporate evaluations (7%)

28

country portfolio evaluations (22%)

73

project, programme or regional thematic evaluations (71%)

Background to the systemic outcome

Systemic outcome 5 aims to empower women and girls to exercise their voice, leadership and agency in public and private spaces. UN Women fosters an enabling environment that supports civil society, including feminist, women and youth organizations, to engage in policy issues and intergovernmental forums and inform decision-making processes. The Entity supports inclusive and violence-free political processes and institutions; monitors women's representation in public life, including online; and helps to strengthen cadres of diverse women political leaders, candidates, elected and appointed officials. In 2023, UN Women disbursed US$ 109.6 million to CSOs working towards the achievement of women's rights across 57 countries through funding mechanisms such as the Spotlight Initiative, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UN Trust Fund), and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, among others.[83]

CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPACT AREAS

Governance and participation in public life

UN Women contributed to an increase in the number and capacity of women political aspirants and leaders at subnational and national levels. Many evaluations found that UN Women was effective at designing and implementing training for newly elected women and women candidates and leaders, some of whom went on to be elected to office. Similarly, many evaluations found UN Women engaged in other effective support services, including mentoring, peer to peer support and support to women's leaders networks. For example, in Moldova, UN Women provided women political aspirants and leaders with relevant skills through Leadership Academies, support to women's caucus, political schools and peer to peer learning opportunities. Over 1,000 political aspirants were trained, of which 25 per cent were elected to office in 2019.[84] In Mali, UN Women provided a space for discourse; engaged women's organizations to advocate for gender equality legislative reforms; and provided with tools, evidence and knowledge on the importance of gender equality, which shifted the perception of women's participation in political institutions and bodies and increased their participation in elective and nominative positions.[85]

Some evaluations found UN Women led training for journalists and the media to influence how women leaders were portrayed in the media and increase media exposure for women political aspirants. For example, in Zimbabwe, UN Women worked with the media (including print and radio journalists) to better represent women in politics and address relevant social norms.[86] One evaluation found that this work was often targeted at individual journalists; however, there were some examples of engagement with women-led media organizations and larger media organizations. For example, in Colombia, UN Women partnered with a major media group to raise awareness on women's political participation and the need for parity in political representation.[87]

UN Women also supported legal strategies and analysis of existing provisions, which some evaluations found contributed to the implementation of legislative quotas. Many reports found that through joint work, UN Women contributed to advocacy efforts to mainstream gender in electoral processes, implement Temporary Special Measures and advocate for national gender-responsive laws and policies to promote women's political participation. Several stakeholders felt UN Women's grassroots approaches ensured that women's voices were reflected in the development of gender-responsive policies. For example, in Tanzania, UN Women supported the women's caucus and women's organizations by contributing to reforms of the Political Parties Act (2019) which included greater provisions for gender equality. Similarly, UN Women played a significant role in supporting legislation in Moldova for a 40 per cent quota of women in national and local government and advocating for placement provisions to ensure full implementation of the quota.[88]

Economic empowerment

UN Women engages public and private partners to advance gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and the community. A few evaluations found that UN Women engaged the private sector to increase companies' commitment to advancing women's voice and gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and the community, although evaluative evidence in this area was more limited. In the workplace, UN Women supported companies in adopting gender-responsive policies for flexible work arrangements, reporting sexual harassment at work, enhancing inclusion of people with disability and procuring women-made products. For example, in Indonesia, UN Women facilitated the participation of Indonesian companies in sharing good practices for developing gender-responsive policies and encouraging women's leadership.[89] In Jordan, two Women's Empowerment Principles signatories revised their recruitment and procurement processes to be gender-sensitive and promote representation of women in their workforce.[90] Some evaluations found that UN Women had empowered women to leverage their voice and influence policies that increase their representation and bargaining power. For example,

the Markets for Change programme in the Pacific strengthened representative bodies for market vendors, who were empowered to influence policies governing the market space, which ultimately strengthened the networking and collective bargaining of women market vendors and increased their representation and voice in local decision-making processes.[91]

Ending violence against women

UN Women worked to reduce violence for women who wished to exercise their voice, leadership and agency. Some evaluations found that UN Women embedded approaches to tackling violence in its training with women political candidates and leaders and developed helplines to report incidents via telephone. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, communications strategies targeted community-level engagement, with social and conventional media campaigns aimed at influencing the perception of women's roles; the acceptability of talking about domestic violence; and the role of boys and men in EVAW. These interventions resulted in several successful legislative, policy and local practices.[92]

Peace, security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction

UN Women empowered more women to engage in conflict resolution, peace processes and disaster risk reduction decision-making processes. Some evaluations found that UN Women enabled civil society and women's participation in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. For example, in Colombia, UN Women funded projects focused on women's participation in peacebuilding initiatives and capacity strengthening of local CSOs and displaced women through the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund. In Guatemala, UN Women facilitated implementation of the national action plan and convened governmental institutions and civil society actors to establish the parameters for victim reparations of the armed conflict and peacebuilding for women in the affected territories. Through the Safe and Fair Programme, UN Women successfully empowered women migrant workers to actively engage, use their voices and connect with one another, ultimately establishing formal support networks and unions.[93]

In Colombia and Guatemala, the focus was on providing culturally sensitive responses to conflicts, including specificities related to Afro-descendant, indigenous and rural communities.[94] In the disaster risk reduction space, an evaluation of the EmPower programme found that the programme bridged and facilitated interactions between national and local-level women's groups on policy issues to support women's groups to influence climate change and disaster risk reduction decision-making processes.[95]

UN Women also sought to change the public perception of the role of women in peace and security processes. One successful example is in Nigeria, where women mediators advocated for an increase in their participation in peace and security mechanisms, which resulted in at least 45 women being inaugurated into local leadership councils, actively participating in traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.[96]

Cross-thematic

UN Women and the UN system together support strengthening the institutional, technical and financial capacities of civil society. For example, civil society projects to prevent violence against women, increase access to services and strengthen implementation of laws have been funded jointly by UN Trust Funds and UN Women. In Papua New Guinea, a CSO Capacity Development Hub was established to strengthen institutional and technical capacities of 15 CSOs to support women's movements in promoting gender equality. The hub was developed to address the strong operational and technical gaps that emerged from the preliminary needs assessments of implementing partners.[97]

ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS

Enabling factors

Internal factors

Partnerships with governance institutions: Some national electoral commissions and parliamentary bodies partnered with UN Women to strengthen institutional capacities and combat violence against women in politics. For example, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and Ministry of Women's Affairs partnered with UN Women to build the capacities of key institutions for a sustainable approach to promote women's political participation and ensure that elections are free and safe for women to participate.[98]

Innovative approaches: UN Women's openness to testing innovative approaches to advance women's voice, leadership and agency has led to advancements in women's participation and representation. For example, the regional WeEmpowerAsia programme provided a key entry point to test innovative approaches to working with the private sector in seven countries and helped to move towards a regional blueprint for advancing women's participation and leadership.[99] In Lebanon, a partnership with Meta enabled women to report online abuse and an application was developed for reporting incidents of violence against women in politics.[100] UN Women's complementary approach to funding civil society projects through UN Trust Funds enabled programming to prevent violence against women, increase access to services and strengthen implementation of laws.

External factors

UN Women's positive reputation: Stakeholders including government, civil society, feminist organizations and the private sector view UN Women as a key convener, which fosters spaces for women's participation and leadership.

Community-level networks: Local networks supported women political aspirants. At times, networks helped counteract scarce campaign resources and limited visibility of women political aspirants.

Hindering factors

Internal factors

Limitations of corporate indicators: In some cases, limited availability of outcome-level and output-level indicators has led to gaps or inconsistencies in reporting for results. For example, key results on women's political participation that better contextualize and demonstrate UN Women's impact at country level are under-reported. The current set of Strategic Plan indicators also does not adequately capture the contributions of UN Trust Funds to corporate achievements.

Measurement of longer-term outcomes and impact: There was limited longitudinal data demonstrating the long-term outcomes and impact of UN Women's efforts to increase women's voice, leadership and agency. Many interventions were short-term and implemented only once. There was also limited data following individual women leaders to see if they continued in their leadership roles or faced new or additional challenges once appointed/elected.

External factors

Challenging contexts for local partners: Many CSOs, including feminist and women's rights organizations, operate in difficult national contexts where they are challenged, under-resourced or under threat.

Backlash and violence against women: Violence against women, particularly those engaging in politics, remains a persistent and critical barrier to women exercising their voice, leadership and agency.

Fragmented messaging: At times, the fragmented voices of multiple organizations working towards promoting women's voice, leadership and agency hindered progress.

High barriers to entry for women: There were multiple and high barriers for women to enter spaces where their voices and leadership are currently missing. For example, women who engaged in politics had limited access to resources for applying for political candidacy and funding and running their campaigns.

Discriminatory gender and social norms: Gender and social norms continued to impede women's opportunities and psyche, which discouraged many from using their voice, agency and leadership. While UN Women's work with local organizations is considered a strength, understanding social norms and defining strategies for tackling discriminatory social norms with civil society could be strengthened.

KEY INSIGHTS

UN Women's advocacy and convening role can contribute to creating enabling environments that amplify women's voices. UN Women's perceived value add included fostering strong networks, capacity strengthening and convening grassroots organizations, national civil society and government-level actors. Stakeholders valued UN Women's role in providing a space for discourse; engaging women's organizations to advocate for gender-responsive legislative reforms; and providing tools, evidence and knowledge on the importance of gender equality in various contexts, including in challenging environments.

Building strong and diverse partnership networks can offer support services that enable women to engage in primarily male-dominated spaces. Institutionalized capacity-building (e.g. establishing or supporting academies for leadership) and comprehensive training programmes (often through partnerships) promise greater sustainability. These comprehensive models of engagement have the potential to target a wider range of women; however, in some countries, civil society and other stakeholders raised concerns about the consolidation of in-country training expertise within one institution (typically government) and questioned the inclusiveness of subsequent programmes. UN Women's engagement the of media has been a promising area of work. Broader partnerships with women-led media organizations, larger media houses can further advance this work.
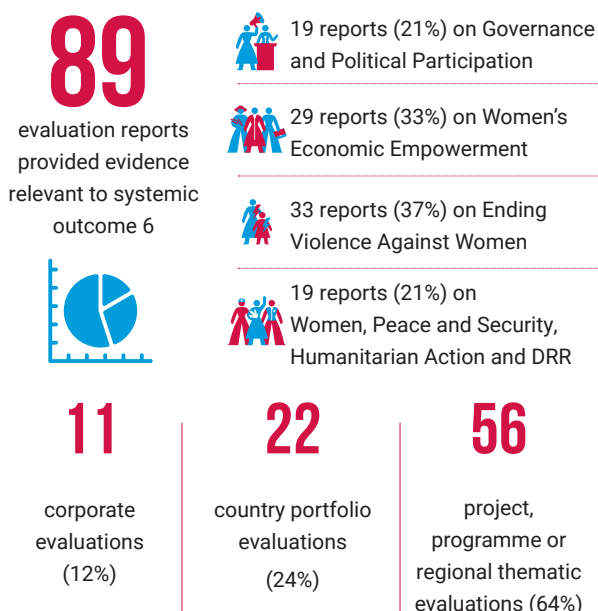
UN Women's work on capacity strengthening contributes to improving women's confidence at individual levels, thereby positively contributing to women's voice, leadership and agency overall. Individual-level empowerment is important for collective action for gender equality. It is also recognized that achieving transformative change requires going beyond individual empowerment to address the systemic drivers of gender inequality.

UN Women's ability to remain agile and adaptive to changing and challenging contexts has led to advancements in increasing women's voice, leadership and agency. UN Women's adaptive approach to designing country-level programmes on women's political participation, and in other thematic areas, allows flexibility to leverage contextual drivers and to work strategically with local influencers and actors, including at the subnational level in some contexts. The Entity works effectively with CSOs to adapt and tailor strategies for specific territories, priority populations, availability of resources, and institutional and political contexts.

UN Women has been instrumental in advocating for the most marginalized and vulnerable women through the principles of leave no one behind; however, many groups remain underrepresented, particularly in political spaces. UN Women is committed to improving equity of women's access to political processes, but it will require a more comprehensive and sustainable strategy to achieve impact. Smaller programmes also often face challenges in assessing the trade-offs of operating at scale versus reaching the most marginalized groups.

Systemic outcome 6: Production, analysis and use of gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data and knowledge

EVIDENCE BASE

89 evaluation reports provided evidence relevant to systemic outcome 6

19 reports (21%) on Governance and Political Participation

29 reports (33%) on Women's Economic Empowerment

33 reports (37%) on Ending Violence Against Women

19 reports (21%) on Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and DRR

11 corporate evaluations (12%)

22 country portfolio evaluations (24%)

56 project, programme or regional thematic evaluations (64%)

Background to the systemic outcome

Systemic outcome 6 focuses on the production, analysis and use of gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data and knowledge to inform policymaking, advocacy and accountability for gender equality results. This outcome reflects UN Women's commitment to institutionalizing gender data as a foundational element of evidence-based decision-making. UN Women has leveraged global policy advocacy, multi-stakeholder collaboration and national capacity-building to improve gender data systems. Expected results under this outcome include increased national capacities to collect, analyse and apply gender data; and greater use of gender statistics in policy design, monitoring and budgeting. UN Women's contributions have focused on enhancing the availability, accessibility and practical application of gender data to inform decision-making. This includes supporting initiatives such as time-use surveys, care economy indicators and dashboards for monitoring women's political participation. In humanitarian and crisis settings, UN Women has also facilitated the integration of disaggregated gender data, strengthening accountability to gender equality commitments.[101]

CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPACT AREAS

Governance and participation in public life

UN Women has contributed to leveraging gender data to improve campaign financing, track funding allocated for women candidates and advocate for political party reforms to enhance accountability for gender equality. UN Women has supported the use of and advocated for gender statistics and data measures to promote gender-responsive political systems.[102] This includes support for the development of indicators and monitoring systems to track women's participation in elected and appointed offices, informing political party reforms and institutional accountability frameworks for gender equality.[103] In Mozambique, UN Women contributed to more inclusive governance and evidence-based policymaking by supporting national gender data systems that promote women's political participation. By working with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action and the National Institute of Statistics, UN Women helped institutionalize the production and use of gender-disaggregated data. This enhanced national reporting on the SDGs, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action.[104]

Economic empowerment

UN Women has played a role in advancing women's economic empowerment by leveraging gender statistics to provide data-driven insights that shape financial policies, labour market reforms and gender-responsive budgeting. In multiple contexts, UN Women has worked through UN Country Teams and inter-agency mechanisms to strengthen national statistical systems, ensuring gender data informs economic and social policymaking. For example, in Uganda and Kenya, UN Women supported coordinated efforts to integrate gender into national statistical development plans, while partnerships with UN agencies such as ILO and UNDP advanced joint analysis on unpaid care work, time-use surveys and gendered dimensions of the SDGs. These efforts have enhanced the visibility of women's economic contributions and structural barriers, informing inclusive and equitable economic policies.[105]

Ending violence against women

UN Women's work on violence against women (VAW) data spans both its gender statistics initiatives and broader EVAW programming. A key initiative in this area was the Global Joint Programme on VAW Data (2018–2022), implemented in partnership with WHO, which played a critical role in advancing methodologies, standards and institutional capacity for VAW data collection and use. The Programme significantly contributed to increasing the availability, accessibility and application of quality VAW data across global, regional and national levels, and was later integrated into the Women Count programme.[106] UN Women's work contributed to strengthening institutional capacity and accountability in addressing violence against women and girls by expanding technical expertise and dedicated personnel on EVAW and gender data. UN Women's effectiveness was supported by trusted partnerships with national statistical offices, responsiveness to government priorities, and the timely mobilization of technical expertise, particularly in politically sensitive contexts.[107] Some evaluations found that assessing existing systems and supporting the creation or strengthening of VAW data systems has been fundamental to addressing evidence gaps across prevention, protection and accountability efforts. Through the Women Count programme, UN Women advanced its technical capacity on gender-based violence data, building a core group of experts and developing knowledge products to support evidence-informed programming. At the country level, UN Women's programming also contributed to strengthening institutional accountability by expanding technical expertise and personnel on VAW data. Under the Spotlight Initiative, for example, national gender-based violence data systems were strengthened and aligned with SDG monitoring and CEDAW reporting frameworks, as seen in Papua New Guinea where improved data sharing helped inform multisectoral prevention strategies and service coordination.[108]

In parallel, UN Women's EVAW programmes have advanced data production and use through various channels. For example, the Essential Services Programme has helped strengthen institutional capacity to collect and use administrative data on criminal cases, including cases on violence against women; prevalence data, generated through national surveys, has informed legal and policy reforms; and prevention programmes have produced data to understand and address the root causes of violence.[109] For example, the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative used gender statistics to assess urban safety and the effectiveness of survivor support services, contributing to greater municipal-level accountability.[110]

Peace, security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction

UN Women's gender statistics initiatives have strengthened women, peace and security and humanitarian efforts by aligning data production and use with global frameworks and building capacities for gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis across sectors.[111] Through Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans, UN Women supported countries in developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the plans by providing technical expertise on indicator development, monitoring frameworks, and budgeting.[112] In humanitarian and disaster contexts, UN Women has worked to build gender-responsive data systems that support more equitable crisis planning and response. In Viet Nam, for instance, the national disaster risk reduction monitoring system was made more gender responsive, enabling authorities to plan and act using improved data on vulnerable households in climate-affected areas. These efforts demonstrate how embedding gender in national systems better enables programmes to address women's roles and vulnerabilities in crisis settings.[113]

Through the EmPower programme, UN Women advanced gender mainstreaming in policies on climate change, DRR and the environment by supporting the identification of new gender indicators and targets. In the Asia-Pacific region, pilot countries including Viet Nam, Cambodia and Bangladesh adopted gender-responsive approaches to national climate and DRR frameworks. EmPower's collaboration with regional platforms such as the Asia-Pacific Gender Stakeholder Group led to visible changes in DRR policies and plans. The programme also facilitated the development of methodologies, guidance and knowledge products that enhanced awareness of women's roles in responding to protracted and sudden-onset crises. In Viet Nam, funding schemes for women-led enterprises in

renewable energy and climate-resilient livelihoods were established through stakeholder consultations, exemplifying how data-informed and inclusive DRR strategies can contribute to sustainable efforts.[114]

Cross-thematic

UN Women's gender statistics initiatives have increasingly generated cross-thematic outputs that bridge multiple impact areas, particularly linking governance, economic empowerment, violence prevention and humanitarian response. For example, in Malawi, with UN Women's support to the National Statistics Office, gender-disaggregated data were institutionalized in national surveys and fully integrated into four major planning frameworks by 2021, including Malawi Vision 2063 and the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. These efforts have strengthened the link between gender data and inclusive policy design, while new gender-sensitive indicators developed for local councils are beginning to extend this approach to district-level planning.[115] Similarly, the Safe and Fair Programme in ASEAN integrated data collection on labour migration and violence against women migrant workers, producing 140 research studies and knowledge products that informed both Women's Economic Empowerment and EVAW programming across the region.[116] At the regional level, UN Women's support to the African Union Gender Observatory enabled monitoring of gender equality commitments across UN Women's thematic areas. By compiling national data on issues such as violence against women, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health, the Gender Observatory facilitates integrated reporting and policy action aligned with both the SDGs and Agenda 2063.[117]

ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS

Enabling factors

Internal factors

Strategic positioning of gender statistics: Aligning gender statistics with SDG monitoring and national development agendas has increased government ownership and institutional commitment to gender data.

Strategic partnerships for EVAW data: Partnerships with international organizations and regional bodies have played a central role in advancing the gender data agenda and securing intergovernmental support for new data frameworks. UN Women co-led the global violence against women data programme with WHO and collaborated with UNODC on femicide statistics. It also partnered with the World Bank to improve gender data on women's poverty with ILO on women's participation and with regional statistical commissions such as ECLAC and ECA to strengthen gender data systems aligned with the SDGs. Through active engagement in global forums such as the UN Statistical Commission, UN Women has established itself as a leading actor in closing gender data gaps on emerging issues, including technology-facilitated violence against women and femicide.[118]

External factors

Sustained donor engagement and investment: Multi-year funding and strategic donor partnerships have ensured technical expertise, capacity-building and long-term sustainability of gender statistics initiatives. The Women Count programme, supported by donors such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, exemplifies this enabling factor.

Hindering factors

Internal factors

Weak coordination and stakeholder engagement: Fragmented coordination among national statistical offices, line ministries, CSOs and development partners has hindered the effective production, dissemination and uptake of gender statistics. In many contexts, the absence of formalized mechanisms for inter-agency collaboration reduces the coherence of data collection efforts and limits the demand for gender data from policymakers. Insufficient engagement with key stakeholders, including women's rights groups and sectoral actors, further weakens the feedback loop needed to ensure that gender statistics are relevant, actionable and responsive to policy needs.

Limited internal capacity at the country level: While UN Women has made important investments in technical expertise for gender statistics work, internal capacity gaps remain. Regional specialists play a critical role in translating normative work into country-level implementation, but they are not sufficiently resourced to meet the full demand for technical assistance. At the country level, limited investment in learning and training for UN Women staff has constrained confidence and capacity, with most efforts focused on government counterparts rather than internal staff development.

External factors

Limited technical and financial resources: Many countries continue to rely on external funding to support their gender statistical systems, which undermines long-term sustainability and national ownership. Despite increased investments, gaps in technical expertise and limited national capacity at the country level persist, particularly in the areas of advanced methodologies for collecting complex gender data, data analysis and quality assurance. This limits the scope and depth of the gender statistics produced, often resulting in incomplete data sets that cannot fully inform policymaking. Without stable domestic financing and technical capacity development, countries struggle to maintain the regular production and use of gender data.

Institutional and political resistance: Low levels of political will continue to impede the institutionalization and effective use of gender statistics. In some cases, government actors may deprioritize gender data initiatives due to competing agendas or perceive them as politically sensitive. Bureaucratic hurdles and limited accountability mechanisms further slow the adoption of gender-responsive data systems, delaying the use of evidence in policy formulation and undermining progress towards gender equality objectives.

Persistent data gaps and methodological barriers: Despite progress in expanding the range of gender statistics, significant gaps remain, particularly in emerging areas such as unpaid care work, climate impacts and gender-based violence. Methodological challenges, including inconsistent definitions and lack of standardized tools, contribute to data that are not fully comparable across countries or sectors. These barriers hinder the integration of gender statistics into broader policy frameworks and limit their utility in tracking progress towards international commitments such as the SDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action.

KEY INSIGHTS

UN Women's triple mandate has been instrumental in institutionalizing gender statistics as a critical tool for advancing gender equality. However, progress is tempered by persistent challenges. Through its normative mandate, UN Women has championed the recognition of gender data as essential to tracking progress towards SDG 5 and other international commitments. The Entity's coordination and operational roles have also contributed to building technical capacity and integrating gender statistics into national decision-making processes, helping to improve policy accountability. However, this progress has not been without challenges. Evaluations consistently highlight that many countries still face limited institutional capacity, fragmented coordination mechanisms and insufficient domestic investment in gender data systems. The overreliance on external funding, coupled with technical expertise gaps, threatens the sustainability of the gains made. In contexts where political will is weak, or data is seen as politically sensitive, progress towards institutionalizing gender data has been uneven. Moreover, while UN Women has supported capacity development, evaluations note that short-term training is often insufficient to ensure lasting impact without structural investments in statistical institutions.

Strengthening partnerships could enhance UN Women's role as a convenor, driving more coherent gender statistics efforts across specific sectors and regional platforms. UN Women's convening power has been a recognized strength, particularly in mobilizing multi-stakeholder platforms that foster dialogue and action on gender data. Collaboration with entities such as the African Union, regional statistical offices and national governments has led to the creation of harmonized data platforms such as the African Union Gender Observatory, which supports regional monitoring of EVAW and harmful practices. Nevertheless, evaluations note that coordination remains uneven across contexts. Fragmented stakeholder engagement and limited collaboration between national statistical offices and line ministries continues to hinder the coherent production and use of gender statistics. Strengthening partnerships with civil society, feminist economists, academia and regional bodies can improve data harmonization; enhance the quality and relevance of gender statistics; and promote data uptake and use by policymakers.

Innovative data methodologies and knowledge-sharing, including time-use surveys, policy-driven research and global data platforms have facilitated evidence-based decision-making and cross-regional learning. Improved tools and methodologies can enable more robust intersectional analysis. Expanding the scope and granularity of gender data is critical for advancing intersectional analysis, which examines how gender intersects with other identity factors such as age, disability, ethnicity and migration status. Improving data collection tools, standardizing methodologies and enhancing accessibility through user-friendly platforms will make gender statistics more actionable for policymakers. Ensuring that data users – and not just producers – have the capacity to interpret and apply gender data is important. UN Women's work to build the capacity of policymakers, CSOs and journalists helps bridge this gap, turning data into meaningful insights that inform evidence-based decision-making and drive policy change. Strengthened accessibility and user engagement are key to maximizing the transformative potential of gender statistics. Global data platforms and cross-regional learning initiatives have further enabled countries to share experiences and adopt good practices. However, evaluations emphasize the need to continuously update tools and methodologies to reflect emerging data demands.

There is a need to diversify funding sources and strengthen institutional technical capacity to ensure the long-term sustainability of gender statistics initiatives. While donor funding has played a catalytic role in developing gender statistics capacities, heavy reliance on external financing poses risks to the continuity of these efforts. Evaluations caution that when donor funding ends, countries often lack the domestic financial and human resources to sustain progress. Investing in long-term capacity development for national statistical systems is essential to mitigate this risk. Building institutional capacity goes beyond one-off training and requires systemic reforms, including embedding gender statistics into core national budgets; improving data governance structures; and enhancing the skills of statisticians and policymakers alike. UN Women's role in promoting these institutional investments will be vital to ensuring that gender data remains central to policymaking and development planning.

Systemic outcome 7: UN system coordination for gender equality

122

evaluation reports provided evidence relevant to systemic outcome 7

27 reports (22%) on Governance and Political Participation

37 reports (30%) on Women's Economic Empowerment

49 reports (40%) on Ending Violence Against Women

44 reports (36%) on Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and DRR

12
corporate evaluations (9%)

32
country portfolio evaluations (23%)

78
project, programme or regional thematic evaluations (68%)

Background to the systemic outcome

Within the UN system, UN Women is mandated to lead, promote and coordinate efforts to enhance accountability and results for gender equality and women's empowerment. By having a stand-alone systemic outcome on UN system coordination, UN Women aims to strengthen its UN coordination efforts. The key areas of work being tracked and monitored through the Strategic Plan indicators under systemic outcome 7 include leveraging UN Women's leadership role in promoting UN system accountability for gender equality through inter-agency coordination bodies and mechanisms at global, regional and national levels; supporting gender mainstreaming across all UN system policies and programmes by providing guidance and capacity-strengthening services; and developing accountability frameworks based on harmonized and commonly agreed standards.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO IMPACT AREAS

Governance and participation in public life

By working with a wide range of UN partners, UN Women has led efforts to integrate gender equality into UN system-wide policy and guidelines that promote gender balance and women's political participation. Many reports found that, through joint work, UN Women contributed to advocacy efforts to mainstream gender in UN system-wide processes. For example, one evaluation found that, at the global level, in collaboration with UN entities such as UNDP, UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs-Electoral Assistance Division and UN DESA, UN Women has generated UN system-wide knowledge and contributed to system-wide messaging; and worked with inter-agency and intergovernmental mechanisms (including the Inter-Agency Mechanism on Electoral Assistance and the Inter-Agency Task Team on Temporary Special Measures). This has resulted in gender equality being reflected in UN electoral assistance guidelines and policy directives.[119]

Some evaluations also noted that successful joint initiatives led to key results at the country level and found that partnerships with other UN entities have enabled the mainstreaming of women's political participation in broader electoral efforts. UN Women has worked closely with UN partners, including UNFPA and UNDP, to facilitate the passing of electoral codes and laws that promote women's political participation and eliminating violence against women in politics. For example, in collaboration with UNDP, UN Women supported capacity-building for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to enhance women's participation in elections, which led to increased women's representation.[120] Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan in coordination with UN Gender Theme Group members, UN Women supported lobbying efforts to preserve electoral legislation on gender quotas in party lists.[121]

Economic empowerment

UN Women strengthened the linkages between gender and economic policies, raising awareness and supporting policy change by collaborating with other UN entities and going beyond gender ministries to engage a broader range of government stakeholders and policymakers. Several evaluations found that UN Women fostered synergies with other UN actors at both the regional and country levels, successfully integrating gender perspectives into economic policies. For example, UN Women, in partnership with ECLAC, UNDP and ILO, elevated unpaid care work as a critical issue in the Americas and Caribbean region and contributed to the development of laws and policies that improved the rights and working conditions of domestic workers. In Lebanon, UN Women partnered with UNICEF, ILO and WFP to support the Government of Lebanon in developing a national road map for social protection, effectively leveraging each organization's expertise.[122]

Ending violence against women

UN Women contributed to strengthening the prevention and response to violence against women by developing and implementing a multisectoral, coordinated UN approach. This was achieved through the roll-out and implementation of UN frameworks, such as the Essential Services Package and the RESPECT framework, further strengthened by strategic partnerships and tailored approaches. These efforts were implemented through joint programmes such as the UN Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, in partnership with UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC, as well as UN Women's EVAW programmes at all levels. For example, in Asia and the Pacific, an evaluation found that regional initiatives such as the Stepping Up programme and the Spotlight Initiative (in collaboration with other UN organizations) supported governments in the Pacific Islands in their joint commitment to implementing a multisectoral approach to gender-based violence.[123] Further, by partnering with other entities, UN Women expanded beyond its traditional partners when it worked with UN-HABITAT and Cairo's transport authority to integrate gender considerations across sectors by co-designing the Arab States region's first gender-responsive rapid bus transit system to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in public spaces and curb congestion and $CO2$ emissions.[124]

Peace, security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction

UN Women led the integration of gender into national plans related to Women, Peace and Security and UNCT response plans and strategies by collaborating with gender focal points in humanitarian spaces and other entities such as OCHA. Some evaluations found that these efforts resulted in gender inclusion in sectoral analyses; the use of sex-disaggregated data; the incorporation of gender-sensitive performance indicators; and the development of humanitarian responses that address gender-based vulnerabilities, empowerment and awareness. For example, in response to the protracted crisis in Northeast Nigeria, UN Women worked with gender focal points in humanitarian spaces to successfully incorporate gender into the Multi-Year Humanitarian Response Plan (2019–2021) and the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview.[125]

In addition, some evaluations found that UN Women contributed to inter-agency forums and processes related to climate change and disaster risk reduction, ensuring that gender considerations were effectively mainstreamed into UN strategic plans. These efforts strengthened UN entities' capacity to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into disaster risk reduction, resilience and recovery initiatives. For example, the corporate formative evaluation of UN Women's work on climate change highlighted the consistent engagement of UN Women's Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience team with the Inter-Agency Team on Disaster Risk Reduction, coordinated by UNDRR. This collaboration has played a key role in developing a unified UN system plan to support implementation of the Sendai Framework, ensuring that gender-responsive approaches are embedded across the UN's disaster risk management strategies.

Cross-thematic

UN Women leveraged its coordination mandate to strengthen implementation of gender accountability frameworks within the UN system, such as UN-SWAP and the Gender Equality Marker, and provided technical support to UN entities at headquarters, regional and country levels. With UN Women's support, gender-related performance indicators were better tracked and monitored within UNCTs through existing UN system-wide mechanisms such as UNCT-SWAP, and updated guidance on key tools, including the UNCT Gender Equality Marker.

Many evaluations found that in drawing on its thematic expertise on gender, UN Women promoted the integration of gender equality into UN plans and programmes, such as the UNSDCFs and Common Country Analyses.[126] Notable examples include Albania where UN Women's leadership in coordinating gender equality across the UNCT contributed to the inclusion of the first stand-alone gender equality outcome and saw gender mainstreamed across other outcomes in the UNSDCF 2022–2026. [127] In Tanzania, UN Women used findings from the 2018 Gender Equality Scorecard to spark dialogue within the UNCT, resulting in the establishment of a Gender and Human Rights Coordination Mechanism in 2020.[128]

ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS

Enabling factors

Internal factors

UN Women's coordination mandate: UN Women's coordination mandate on gender equality and women's empowerment has positioned the organization to strengthen system-wide accountability ; foster UN-wide collaboration; and promote an integrated, multisectoral approach to gender-related issues. When UN Women's coordination mandate is well understood and recognized by UN partners – and combined with the Entity's technical expertise in gender – evaluations found that gender is more effectively mainstreamed, and UN Women's convening role across diverse sectors and actors more pronounced, leading to more collaborative and coherent work on gender.

Institutional partnerships with clear areas for collaboration, roles and responsibilities: Institutional partnerships with clearly defined areas of collaboration have accelerated joint efforts and inter-agency agreements, increasing efficiency and impact. Where roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated, often through Memorandums of Understanding, joint strategies or joint programmes, and where there is a shared understanding of comparative advantages, collaboration has been more strategic and sustained. Examples include the Global Joint Programme on VAW Data with WHO, which enhanced global standards and institutional capacity for data collection and use; and collaboration with UNFPA on joint programming, advocacy and knowledge products — evident in the agreed division of roles under the Essential Services Global Programme

and the UNiTE Campaign in Asia and the Pacific, as well as in the joint management of programmes in countries where UN Women lacks a physical presence.[129]

External factors

Existing inter-agency mechanisms as key entry points for UN system coordination: Inter-agency mechanisms and accountability frameworks such as the UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard and Gender Equality Marker, and other thematic coordination and inter-agency processes such as Gender Theme Groups, UNSDCFs and joint programmes have served as critical entry points for UN Women to lead coordination efforts. At the global and regional levels, inter-agency collaboration frameworks and joint programming initiatives have contributed to the development of transformative tools, models and programming guidance, with potential for replication and adaptation at the country level.

Leadership buy-in and commitments: Strong support from senior leadership within the UN system, demonstrated through commitment to inter-agency collaboration and active engagement, was identified as a key enabler. For example, the Resident Coordinator's Office supporting UN Women's coordination role at the UNCT level facilitated stronger partnerships and enhanced resource mobilization and visibility of gender equality priorities across the UN system.

Hindering factors

Internal factors

Unclear institutional partnerships: Without clear institutional arrangements, the effectiveness of UN Women's coordination relies on personal qualities and individual initiatives, leading to less sustainable and potentially inconsistent coordination initiatives. This, coupled with ad hoc initiatives that capitalize on immediate opportunities rather than strategic priorities, undermines the consistency and long-term effectiveness of coordination efforts. Taking on ad hoc roles or opportunistic interventions in joint programmes and joint initiatives, particularly where UN Women has fewer comparative advantages was also cited as a risk factor.

Limited human and financial resources: Even in cases where UN Women is well-represented in key strategic spaces within the UN system, limited human and financial resources particularly at the country level sometimes hindered the Entity's ability to fully deliver on

its coordination mandate. There is evidence that, due to its relatively limited financial position compared to other UN agencies, UN Women has faced challenges in maintaining its strategic position and operational relevance. Funding constraints also impact UN Women's capacity to recruit highly technical staff, further limiting its ability to fulfil its coordination mandate, especially at the country level.

External factors

Unclear roles and responsibilities: UN Women's technical expertise on gender is widely acknowledged; however, in some cases, more clarity was requested on roles and responsibilities, including with regards to implementing gender-related outcomes at the UNCT level and gender-related programming, or roles and responsibilities in implementing joint programmes.

Competition for funding among UN agencies, coupled with overlapping mandates: At times, limited funding and overlapping mandates have limited UN Women's capacity to effectively lead and implement gender-focused programmes, particularly in contexts where the Entity's programme footprint is smaller.

KEY INSIGHTS

There are limited systematic indicators to capture development results achieved through UN system coordination with UN Women's support. While there is an outcome-level result that captures UN Women's work within the UN system, including the strengthening of accountability frameworks for gender and the integration of gender in UN programmes and policies, there are limited corporate indicators to capture the results of UN Women's coordination work. This may be due to inherent challenges related to measuring the direct impact of coordination efforts on women's lives. Long-term results, such as decreased violence against women during elections, improved livelihoods for women and enhanced social cohesion, were broadly reported in a few evaluations.[130] Apart from thematic results captured through joint evaluations of joint programmes, there is limited evidence of changes or key results achieved by the UN system that stem from UN Women's contributions to system-wide coordination efforts, including

support to intergovernmental processes and initiatives to strengthen UN system capacity on gender equality.

UN Women has advanced gender mainstreaming within UNCTs by strengthening accountability frameworks and mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment into strategic frameworks such as the UNSDCFs. Many evaluations highlighted UN Women's contributions and engagements within UNCTs, particularly through its leadership in gender-focused groups such as Gender Theme Groups. Through various coordination mechanisms at all levels, UN Women provided normative support, policy advice, operational support and capacity development efforts on gender equality at all levels. At the same time, some evaluations identified challenges in coordinating for gender across UNCTs, such as a lack of political will, competing mandates and limited resources for gender programming, which have contributed to fragmented or inconsistent levels of coordination for gender at the country level.[131] Evaluations also noted the need to clarify UN Women's role relative to other UN organizations, including following up and implementing gender mainstreaming plans and gender-related outcomes.

There is a need for more active coordination to support gender integration in additional thematic areas and emerging UN system priorities. UN Women spearheads global inter-agency coordination efforts and manages funding mechanisms dedicated to gender equality. UN Women also actively participates in inter-agency processes to incorporate gender perspectives into broader UN system-wide initiatives led by other UN entities. These inter-agency platforms, especially at the global and regional levels, have proven effective in delivering normative guidance, fostering knowledge creation and bolstering capacity development. At the same time, evaluations highlighted the need for UN Women to identify and engage more proactively in new and existing coordination mechanisms and joint initiatives, especially emerging priority areas such as climate change, social norms, humanitarian action and the prevention of violent extremism.

By bringing other entities together, UN Women has been more effective in fostering political buy-in and advancing gender equality by leading joint policy advocacy initiatives and advocacy campaigns. Many evaluations underscored UN Women's partnerships with various UN counterparts, encompassing informal working groups and joint programmes where joint knowledge products and joint policy recommendations were developed, further amplifying policy advocacy efforts with national partners. Notable examples include UN Women's partnership with UNDP, ILO and ECLAC in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, which augmented regional policy advocacy for care work policies. Similar collaborative policy advocacy efforts were seen at the country level, such as in Nigeria, where UN Women, UNODC and ILO created a working group to collaboratively review national labour migration policies, ensuring the thorough integration of a gender perspective throughout the review process.[132]

Joint programmes enabled UN Women to leverage resources and influence, while also promoting the use of standardized approaches drawn from global norms and standards. UN Women leads gender-focused joint programmes in collaboration with other UN entities and supports gender mainstreaming in other joint programmes. Partnerships established with UN agencies through joint programmes have also enabled UN Women to further leverage resources and its influence in a context of constrained funding for gender. At the same time, there are inherent challenges related to joint programmes, including limitations in reporting systems; the resource-intensive nature of joint planning and collaboration; and parallel or differing internal processes within participating organizations. Further, there is a need for clear operational plans and systemic approaches to support UN system coordination across UN Women's key programmatic interventions, such as the gender equality accelerators (Flagship Programme Initiatives under previous Strategic Plans).[133]

By fostering collaborative, inter-agency knowledge generation, UN Women enhanced the coherence, dissemination and utilization of gender-related knowledge and data. Evaluations frequently highlighted UN Women's contributions to joint studies and policy briefs, programming guidance on gender issues and efforts to integrate gender components into broader thematic areas. Evaluations noted their wide reach and dissemination, often reinforced by follow-up events and capacity-building initiatives. Several notable initiatives exemplify UN Women's collaborative approach. In partnership with WHO and the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data, UN Women produced national, regional and global estimates of intimate partner violence. These findings were disseminated to national partners through global and regional events, publications and technical support.[134]

Photo: UN Women Europe and Central Asia

Leave no one behind

WHAT'S WORKING

Inclusive participation and community-centred design: Some evaluations found that participatory and tailored leave no one behind approaches have strengthened gender-responsive programming and improved the representation of marginalized groups in policy and service delivery frameworks, as well as in UN Women programmes targeting specific marginalized groups. UN Women's engagement with historically excluded populations – such as indigenous women, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ communities, ethnic minorities and refugees – has helped ensure that their needs and experiences are directly reflected in the design and implementation of programmes. These efforts are most effective when supported by civil society partnerships, community-led mechanisms and localized planning processes. For example, in Guatemala, UN Women facilitated implementation of the National Action Plan by supporting governmental and civil society collaboration on reparations for victims of the armed conflict, including support to Q'eqchi women in advancing the Sepur Zarco sentence. This example reflects how culturally grounded justice processes can help integrate indigenous women's rights into national peacebuilding efforts.[135] Similarly, in Kenya, UN Women's programming targeted three identified vulnerable groups — persons with disabilities, women and youth — to support implementation of the affirmative procurement law at both national and county levels. UN Women contributed through supply and demand-side interventions, including development of a simplified pocket guide; capacity development and M&E training for government offices; and a handbook and training programme for women, youth and persons with disabilities on accessing procurement opportunities.[136]

Data-driven policy and cross-sectoral integration: Some evaluations found that intersectional, disaggregated data has played a critical role in operationalizing leave no one behind commitments and shaping responsive public policies. UN Women has supported the use of gender, age, disability and ethnicity-disaggregated data to identify intersecting vulnerabilities and inform policy design, particularly in crisis contexts. Gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data and knowledge have been used to inform policymaking, advocacy and accountability for delivering gender equality and women's empowerment results.[137] Data-driven approaches, when coupled with sustained engagement, can ensure marginalized groups are not only visible in statistics but prioritized in policymaking. The strategic alignment of leave no one behind data with broader governance and development frameworks has contributed to increased institutional accountability for equitable outcomes.

CHALLENGES

Uneven reach, fragmented inclusion and limited sustainability: Some evaluations found that while leave no one behind engagement has been a priority, the depth and consistency of inclusion remain uneven across contexts and population groups. Despite progress in reaching marginalized communities, many interventions still fall short in ensuring the long-term, meaningful participation of targeted populations. Challenges persist in making programme design truly accessible, sustaining outreach efforts and tailoring interventions to the diverse needs of excluded groups. In some cases, leave no one behind is approached as a checklist rather than an integral lens throughout the programme cycle, leading to inconsistent results. For instance, in Georgia, while women with disabilities were included in COVID-19 response assessments, the 2023 EVAW project evaluation highlighted ongoing challenges for women and girls from vulnerable social groups, who are facing increased risk of violence, deepened by the economic and social crisis brought on by the pandemic.[138]

Financial sustainability: Lack of financial sustainability hampers the long-term impact of leave no one behind-related initiatives, particularly those focused on gender data systems and accountability mechanisms. Without consistent investment and government buy-in, promising initiatives risk becoming fragmented or ad hoc. For example, in Viet Nam, while efforts were made to reach marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, limited institutional capacity and reliance on

under-resourced implementing partners — combined with insufficient investment in monitoring and data systems — undermined the consistent application of leave no one behind principles.[139]

Limited application of intersectionality: Programmes often address vulnerabilities in isolation – targeting women with disabilities, for instance, without accounting for overlapping identities such as ethnicity or displacement status. This fragmented approach undermines the effectiveness of service delivery and policy reform efforts. For example, the 2021 JAWE Programme Evaluation in Georgia noted that while economic empowerment initiatives reached vulnerable groups such as rural women, internally displaced persons, and ethnic minorities, structural barriers remained, and there was limited evidence of a systematic approach to addressing the compounded disadvantages faced by women with intersecting identities.[140]

Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaizer

LESSONS LEARNED

Embedding intersectionality, strengthening institutions and leveraging data for equity: Some evaluations found that embedding intersectionality into programme design and implementation significantly enhances the inclusivity and responsiveness of leave no one behind initiatives. When interventions recognize the overlapping vulnerabilities faced by individuals – such as gender, disability, ethnicity and migration status – they are more effective in responding to the complex and intersecting barriers experienced by marginalized communities. For instance, in El Salvador, the participatory development of the National Policy for Rural, Indigenous and Campesina Women represented a significant step forward in addressing the intersectional nature of discrimination and ensuring that public policy reflected the lived experiences of diverse groups of women.[141]

Institutional ownership: Sustainable leave no one behind outcomes require institutional ownership and integration into national systems. Short-term, donor-driven projects often struggle to achieve lasting impact unless they are institutionalized through local capacity-building and budgetary commitment. Finally, some evaluations highlighted that the strategic use of disaggregated gender data is essential to driving accountability and equity. Strengthening national data systems to capture the realities of diverse marginalized groups enables more targeted policymaking, resource allocation and monitoring.

Photo: UN Women/Kwanju Kim

5

OVERALL INSIGHTS

Drawing on analysis across systemic outcomes, the synthesis developed a set of overall insights that have broader applicability to UN Women's mandate, strategic planning and work across impact and outcome areas.

EVALUATIVE EVIDENCE AND EVIDENCE GAPS

The synthesis found limited evidence on UN Women's contribution to longer-term, outcome-level results across the systemic outcomes. Several contributing factors limit greater outcome-focused reporting. First, monitoring and evaluation methodologies, particularly at project or programme level, are often output focused with limited use of baseline and endline data. There is opportunity for more innovative data collection methodologies, especially mixed-method approaches, to capture longer-term changes. Second, within the Strategic Plan, there are limited outcome-level indicators that systematically capture UN Women's contribution to longer-term thematic or impact-level results. Although linkages between cross-thematic outcomes and thematic or impact areas have been intentionally made — through thematic disaggregation and methodological guidance — there may be gaps in consistent application or implementation of this approach. This may have contributed to challenges in capturing thematic-level results across different systemic outcomes. The introduction of evaluable outcome indicators can facilitate relevant evidence generation from future project and programme evaluations. Finally, the synthesis identified gaps in capturing the full scope and results of UN Women's work. Some examples identified in the synthesis include: limited monitoring of policy implementation and impact; limited evaluative evidence on addressing discrimination and stereotypes; a lack of longitudinal data on the outcomes of efforts to increase women's participation and leadership; limited data tracking of results achieved through coordinated UN system efforts; and lower evaluative coverage of Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction work compared to other impact areas.

The synthesis observed cases where evidence exists but where there are no, or limited, corresponding Strategic Plan indicators. This was particularly true for decentralized evaluations at the programme/project level or country-level evaluations. While it is not expected that corporate-level indicators will capture all work undertaken, this may result in potential under-reporting or limited aggregation of UN Women's results at the corporate level. For example, thematic-level results achieved through UN system coordination work or social norms outcomes per thematic area may not be fully captured.

SYSTEMIC OUTCOMES

The conceptualization of the systemic outcomes is coherent; however, greater clarity is required on their implementation. Evaluative evidence highlights areas where systemic outcomes are leveraged across impact areas and where systemic outcomes are integrated through key programmes. However, evidence for some systemic outcomes indicated the need for clearer organizational plans to support their implementation. The relationships between systemic outcomes, gender equality accelerators and impact areas remain insufficiently defined, limiting strategic coherence and reporting clarity. Clarifying and strengthening these interlinkages would support more integrated planning, implementation and measurement frameworks.

Governance systems within UN Women do not always reflect the integrated intent of the systemic outcomes. At times, organizational governance structures were at odds with the integrated nature of the systemic outcomes with related functions structurally and practically siloed. Clear governance approaches (such as matrix management and clear connections between Regional and Country Offices and headquarters) are needed to fully realize the integrated nature of the systemic outcomes. A comprehensive review of indicators and clearer reporting mechanisms would support alignment across UN Women's strategic components and better reflect progress on results.

Harmful social norms, including institutional and political resistance, were frequently cited as a major impediment to gender equality and women's empowerment across systemic outcomes. Recent evaluations highlighted the importance of this work considering the growing backlash against gender equality in many global and national contexts. Social norms work is relevant, needed and already central to UN Women's work across impact areas. Strengthening capacity, common approaches, and monitoring and evaluation of social norms work were identified as avenues to improve the effectiveness of this area.

Capacity strengthening is a core intervention approach of UN Women across systemic outcomes. Capacity strengthening with duty bearers and rights holders is used to facilitate the implementation of laws and policies, improve services to women and girls, and enhance the capabilities of CSOs. Evaluations highlighted that UN Women's work on capacity strengthening contributes to improving women's confidence at individual levels, thereby positively contributing to women's voice, leadership and agency overall. Strengthening the capacities of civil society and service providers has been a successful strategy for delivering gender-responsive services and improving access for women and girls. Although embedded across the systemic outcomes, there is opportunity for capacity strengthening work to be more meaningfully integrated following a common organization-wide framework that bridges the array of capacity strengthening approaches used at UN Women.

TRIPLE MANDATE

Normative work is a clear and unique strength of UN Women that must continue to be leveraged. Evaluations consistently found that, across all impact areas, UN Women's normative work is a strong comparative advantage for the Entity. UN Women is viewed as a bridge builder across sectors and stakeholders with valued technical expertise to strengthen normative, legislative and policy frameworks. The value of UN Women's normative mandate in times of pushback and regression on gender equality was particularly noted. Civil society and government engagement were noted strengths. Key challenges include monitoring the longer-term outcomes and impacts of the Entity's normative work, as well as the difficulty in furthering the translation of global and regional frameworks into funded and actionable national legislation and policies.

UN Women has been effective in driving gender equality through its coordination role across the UN system, but to maximize its impact, clearer articulation of its role, stronger system-wide collaboration and more robust measurement of results are needed. UN Women plays a key role in advancing gender equality through UN system coordination but faces challenges in clearly defining its role and capturing the full scope of its contributions. UN Women has promoted synergies and coherence across the UN system by mainstreaming gender in policies and programmes, creating a multiplier effect. It has strengthened accountability and measurement through gender mainstreaming in UNCTs, UNSDCFs and system-wide mechanisms such as UNCT-SWAP. UN Women's leadership in coalitions, networks and coordination mechanisms has served as a platform to advocate for gender equality and expand the Entity's influence into new sectors. However, some evaluations also highlighted the need to define and consistently communicate UN Women's role and responsibilities in coordination mechanisms and inter-agency processes, as well as better articulate the results of the Entity's coordination efforts. While evaluations found that joint programmes have supported multisectoral interventions and enabled UN Women to engage with non-traditional partners and stakeholders, in some cases, evaluations found that UN entities continued to operate in silos, lacking systemic coordination and communication mechanisms to promote greater complementarities and collaborative work.

Operationally, short-term projects are limiting efforts to realize and measure longer-term change and obtain sufficient reach to achieve impact at scale. Individual, short-term projects can serve important purposes (such as piloting new approaches); however, longer-term programmes are required to contribute to more sustainable and measurable outcome and impact-level changes. For example, achieving outcome-level results, such as policy change and implementation, or changing underlying patriarchal norms, requires sustained institutional investments and advocacy. A shift from a short-term project focus to a programmatic focus can also foster greater alignment with Country Office Strategic Notes and UNSDCFs. This would require advocacy with donors, flexible programme approaches, greater use of joint programming, partnership strategies and application of stronger monitoring and evaluation methodologies to demonstrate clear results and return on investment.

Photo: UN Women / Marina Mestres Segarra

6

EMERGING CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the results and insights across systemic outcomes, a number of emerging considerations were developed. They are not formal recommendations, but are intended to inform strategic planning processes and UN Women's work at impact and outcome level more broadly.

6.1 CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THE SYSTEMIC OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIC PLAN

Clarify the relationship between the systemic outcomes, gender equality accelerators and impact areas. Clearly outline these relationships and linkages in the Strategic Plan 2026–2029 results framework. Continue to ensure that Strategic Notes at the regional and country level are aligned with UN Women's Strategic Plan and its systemic outcomes areas, including through key areas of work, programmatic approaches and indicators. Articulate UN Women's interventions and programmatic approaches under each systemic outcome, clearly linking them to each relevant gender equality accelerator, including at regional and country levels. Sufficient guidance should be provided to UN Women offices at the country level to define and position key areas of work through the Strategic Note development process, ensuring clear linkages between the Strategic Note, its results framework and UN Women's Strategic Plan.

Move towards a governance structure that supports the interconnected relationship between the systemic outcomes, gender equality accelerators and impact areas. More clarity on implementation strategies and governance around the systemic outcomes would support further cross-thematic work, integration among the systemic outcomes and better outcome measurement. Governance structures, including human resources and accountability paths, should reflect and support the integrated nature of the systemic outcomes. This could take several forms, including formal teams built around a systemic outcome, creating networks or informal communities among colleagues (at head-quarters, Regional and Country Offices) connected to each systemic outcome, or another form. Pilot, test and refine structures.

Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to effectively track and measure longer-term outcomes across systemic outcomes. Review Strategic Plan indicators and identify where UN Women's results may not be fully captured or where outcome measurement could be enhanced. Based on a clarified understanding of the relationship between the systemic outcomes, gender equality accelerators and impact areas, consider developing outcome-level indicators that capture underreported areas of UN Women's work. Ensure that indicators used at country and programmatic levels (Strategic Note indicators and gender equality accelerator indicators) are aligned with Strategic Plan indicators.

6.2 CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THE SYSTEMIC OUTCOMES AND TRIPLE MANDATE

Strengthen implementation, accountability and capacity related to gender-responsive normative frameworks and leverage UN Women's strength in normative work to respond to new challenges. Enhance the effective implementation of gender-responsive legislation and policies through technical support and capacity strengthening with duty bearers and evidence-based policy work. Strengthening monitoring and accountability mechanisms can help track the implementation and impact of laws and policies, and expanding knowledge-exchange platforms will facilitate learning and sharing of best practices across contexts. Monitor emerging issues to leverage and adapt UN Women's normative response to new challenges, such as the backlash against gender equality, the digital divide, climate change and others.

Strengthen UN Women's UN system coordination mandate by developing a clear theory of change with an operational plan. This could include success indicators and clearly defined roles across inter-agency coordination mechanisms, including UN Women's role as the Secretariat of the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan and the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, as well as its leadership in Gender Theme Groups at the country level. In addition, ensure that UN Women's coordination mandate, along with its other mandates, is fully leveraged and incorporated into the Entity's key programmatic frameworks, such as the gender equality accelerators. Leverage and revitalize inter-agency mechanisms focusing on gender; define priority areas where UN Women will lead or mainstream gender; and develop tools to enhance joint programming, including guidance on roles, reporting and best practices. Clarify roles, mandates and complementary capacities for joint programming with other UN entities; foster greater buy-in from these entities through clear articulation of UN Women's value added; and promote a coherent and coordinated approach to gender equality. Strengthen measurement and reporting on coordination, including improved tools for aggregating gender-related data at UNSDCF level.

Strengthen intersectionality and integration of the leave no one behind approach by designing programmes that systematically address the needs of women and girls in their diversities and with different vulnerabilities. Leveraging its triple mandate, UN Women should advance the perspectives of marginalized groups, ensuring they are integrated across policy and programming work. Efforts to enhance inclusion in programming to end violence against women and girls must also be strengthened, with targeted strategies that provide tailored support and improve access to essential services for marginalized groups.

Strengthen capacity-building efforts by developing tailored approaches that respond to specific national contexts and institutional needs. Anchor these approaches in organization-wide capacity development frameworks and approaches and focus on sharing lessons learned and scaling up successful pilot initiatives. To maximize accessibility and effectiveness, capacity-building initiatives should incorporate practical tools and training in local languages, align with local needs and leverage innovative practices such as digital literacy. Further strengthening is required in areas such as institutional capacity development to justice institutions and service providers to improve their ability to handle cases of gender-based violence and ensure access to justice for vulnerable groups; support to newly elected women leaders in the post-election phase; and building capacity for the use of intersectional and inclusive data.

Leverage, measure and refine UN Women's work on social norms. Continue to integrate and scale social norms change across impact areas (and/or within gender equality accelerators). Identify and leverage UN Women's comparative advantage in social norms work at global, institutional and community levels. This includes engagement of men and boys, traditional leaders and other community champions. Similarly, leverage work that promotes gender-responsive institutional and organizational cultures to support policy implementation and effective service delivery. Clarify governance and accountability of systemic outcome 3 to facilitate further integration of social norms work. Develop understandings of how social norms change happens and innovate and test approaches to norms change at individual, community and institutional levels.

Promote the sustainability of interventions by deepening engagement of duty bearers and service providers, including government institutions, CSOs and other service providers. Enhance local ownership and commitment to sustainability by developing comprehensive exit strategies that guarantee continuity of services and resources for target populations; integrate capacity strengthening and training within regular institutional processes; and promote talent pipelines for elevating women's leadership and political participation.

Strengthen strategic partnerships and funding mechanisms to ensure sustainable and impactful gender equality programming. This includes refining partnership strategies for key areas of work, building multi-stakeholder partnerships and securing predictable funding for long-term initiatives. Investing in meaningful collaboration with women-led organizations and civil society groups is essential for advancing gender equality at community level, with a focus on participatory approaches that align with local needs and proactively address backlash, particularly for marginalized groups. Grassroots and community engagement (including male engagement) should be prioritized to drive social norms transformation. Finally, engaging the private sector can promote innovative mechanisms for financing gender equality as well as institutional norms shifts.

Photo: UN Women/Shainur Monir Shimul

ENDNOTES

1 UN Women. Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 (2021), 14.

2 UN Women. Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 (2021), 14.

3 Newer reports that have yet to be rated will be included.

4 An AI hallucination is a phenomenon where a large language model generates outputs that are false or inaccurate. This can occur, for example, when a generative AI chatbot perceives patterns or objects that are nonexistent. See: What Are AI Hallucinations? | IBM

5 One multi-region evaluation included countries in West and Central Africa and East and Southern Africa; the other multi-country evaluation included countries in Asia and the Pacific, East and Southern Africa, Americas and the Caribbean and Arab States.

6 Report numbers were based on the number of reports that had at least some coded data related to the Systemic Outcome. The density of available information varied by report, with some reports having a focus on the Systemic Outcome while others provided more focused/limited analysis or some relevant examples.

7 In the Arab States region, there were eight project or programme evaluations, two country portfolio evaluations and one regional thematic evaluation.

8 UN Women. Integrated Results and Resources Framework of UN-Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (2022)

9 Home | UN Women Transparency Portal

10 UN Women, UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation (2022), 11.

11 These evaluations include corporate and regional thematic evaluations with a topic corresponding, or closely related, to a systemic outcome.

12 UN Women, Meta-Analysis of Existing Evidence and Lessons Learned: Workstream of the Midterm Review of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (2024), 20-21.

13 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation of UN Women Brazil (2022), 28

14 UN Women, Malawi Country Portfolio Evaluation 2018–2021 (2022), 4

15 UN Women, Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN Women's Support to Women's Political Participation – Insights from the Field (2024), 23, 34

16 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Support for Women's Economic Empowerment by Advancing Gender-Responsive Laws, Frameworks, Policies and Partnerships (2023), 31.

17 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation of the UN Women Caribbean Multi-Country Office (2011–2019) (2023), 25

18 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's UN System Coordination and Broader Convening Role in Ending Violence Against Women (2021), 23.

19 UN Women, Evaluation of the Partnership between UN Women and the African Union Commission (2024), 29.

20 UN Women, Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN Women's Support to National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security (2020), 62-65.

21 UN Women, Corporate Formative Evaluation of UN Women's Work in the Area of Climate Change (2023), 17

22 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation on UN Women's policy advocacy (2022), 26

23 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation on Gender Statistics (2023), 29, 30.

24 UN Women, Midterm Evaluation of Equal Participation and Leadership – Ethiopia (2020), 22, 29.

25 UN Women, Colombia Country Portfolio Evaluation (2020), 31.

26 UN Women, Corporate Thematic Evaluation of Support to Women's Political Participation – Insights from the Field (2024), 53.

27 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation on Policy Advocacy (2022), 11.

28 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation on Capacity Development (2023), 10.

29 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – El Salvador (2020), 33.

30 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Paraguay (2020), 14–15.

31 UN Women, Jordan Country Portfolio Evaluation (2023), 13, 41.

32 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Uganda (2020), 33, 34.

33 Three reports were not coded with a specific thematic area code but instead were coded as "cross-thematic." For Systemic Outcome 2, the draft report of UN Women's Formative Evaluation of UN Women's Work in Sustainable Finance (2025) was also used to inform the results. At the time of publication, the final version of this report was available: https://gate.unwomen.org/Evaluation/Details?EvaluationId=11821

34 UN Women, Meta-Analysis of Existing Evidence and Lessons Learned: Workstream of the Midterm Review of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (2024), 39.

35 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation on Capacity Development (2023), 33.

36 UN Women, Corporate Portfolio Evaluation: Albania, Synthesis Report (2021), 38.

37 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation on Capacity Development (2023), 33.

38 UN Women, Evaluation of TCO SN Note 2017-2021 (2022), 12.

39 UN Women, Final evaluation of the project "A joint action for Women Economic Empowerment in Georgia". (2020), 7

40 UN Women, Corporate Portfolio Evaluation: Albania, Synthesis Report (2021), 9, 30.

41 UN Women, Endline Evaluation of the Project "Promoting Women, Peace and Security Agenda through the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan" (2022), 27.

42 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Support to National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security (2021), 62.

43 UN Women, Corporate Portfolio Evaluation: Moldova, Synthesis Report (2022), 26.

44 UN Women, Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's support to Gender Statistics 2018-2022 (2023), 18

45 UN Women, Meta-Analysis of Existing Evidence and Lessons Learned: Workstream of the Midterm Review of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (2024),32.

46 UN Women, Final Evaluation Wanawake WLPP Project Phase II (2023), 40.

47 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Papua New Guinea (2020), 21

48 UN Women, Corporate Thematic Evaluation on UN Women's Support to Women's Political Participation: Insights from the Field (2024), 31.

49 UN Women, Evaluation of UN Women's contributions to women's economic empowerment through private sector engagement (2022), 45.

50 UN Women, Corporate Portfolio Evaluation: Albania, Synthesis Report (2021), 44.

51 UN Women, Evaluación del Programa País: Paraguay. (2020), 26.

52 UN Women, Evaluation of the Partnership between UN Women and the African Union Commission (2024), 29.

53 UN Women, End of Program Evaluation: LEAP III Programme on Strengthening protection of women and girls from the disproportionate and adverse gendered impacts of drought and famine in Somalia (2024), 54.

54 UN Women, Corporate Feminist Collaborative Evaluation of UN Women's Approach To Social Norms Change (2024), 28

55 UN Women, End of project evaluation of the programme on women, peace and security in Nigeria (2022), 4-5.

56 UN Women, Feminist collaborative evaluation of UN Women's approach to social norms change (2024), 20.

57 UN Women, Midterm Review of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (2025), 16.

58 UN Women Final report of the endline evaluation of the project Promoting Inclusive Political Participation and Elimination of Violence Against Women in Politics (2024), 61.

59 UN Women, Economic Empowerment of Women Home Based Workers and Excluded Groups in Pakistan (2020), 11; UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Malawi (2022), 66; UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Bolivia (2022), 19-23; UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Mali (2024), 25.

60 UN Women, Final evaluation of the project "A Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia" (2020), 51.

61 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Rwanda (2024), 21.

62 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Malawi (2022), 45.

63 UN Women, Executive summary: Midterm evaluation report of the project: Women's access to means of production for climate change resilient agriculture (AGRIFED) in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou, Mopti and Sikasso (2021), 9.

64 UN Women, Independent evaluation: Transformative approaches to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work in women's economic empowerment programming (2024), 42.

65 UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Malawi (2022), 48.

66   UN Women, Safe Cities Evaluation Final Report (2022), 47.

67   UN Women, Final evaluation report: Let it not happen again project (2024), 78.

68   UN Women, Final evaluation: Ending violence against women in Western Balkans and Turkey – Implementing norms, changing minds (2020), 9.

69   UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Malawi (2022), 49.

70   UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Brazil (2022), 34. End of project evaluation for the IBSA Project: Eliminating child marriages in Malawi and Zambia and offering scholarships to child marriage survivors – pilot project (2020), 26.

71   UN Women, End term programme evaluation of UN Women regional programme women peace and security in the Arab States Phase II (2019-2022) (2023), 34.

72   UN Women, Evaluation Report: Women lead and benefit from sustainable and inclusive peace and security in Uganda 2018-2021 (2022), 15.

73   UN Women, Final evaluation report of the women's leadership, empowerment, access, and protection (LEAP) project (2024), 34.

74   UN Women, Final evaluation of POWER - Programme on Women's Empowerment in SRMNCAH rights in humanitarian settings in the Horn of Africa Region (December 2019-June 2022) (2023), 50.

75   UN Women, Evaluation of civil society engagement in Americas and Caribbean (2023), 21.

76   End of project evaluation for the IBSA Project: Eliminating child marriages in Malawi and Zambia and offering scholarships to child marriage survivors – pilot project (2020), 24.

77   UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Brazil (2022), 23.

78   UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Rwanda (2024), 18.

79   End of project evaluation for the IBSA Project: Eliminating child marriages in Malawi and Zambia and offering scholarships to child marriage survivors – pilot project, 24.

80   UN Women, Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN Women's Support to Women's Political Participation- Insights from the Field (2024), 33.

81   UN Women, Addressing Sexual Bribery Experienced by Female Heads of Households, including Military Widows and War Widows in Sri Lanka (2020), 24.

82   UN Women, Informe final evaluación de medio término Programa Originarias: Empoderamiento de las mujeres indígenas del norte de Chile para el desarrollo sostenible 2016 – 2018 (2020), 21.

83   Data from the UN Women Transparency Portal (accessed November 2024) https://open.unwomen.org/en/global-results/sp-outcomes/SP_D_0.5/2022-2025?year=2023.

84   UN Women, Corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women's support to women's political participation – Insights from the field. (2024), 32, 35.

85   UN Women, Corporate evaluation of UN Women's policy advocacy work (2022), 36.

86   UN Women, Corporate Thematic Evaluation on UN Women's Support to Women's Political Participation: Insights from the Field (2024), 36.

87   UN Women, Corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women's support to women's political participation – Insights from the field. (2024), 45.

88   UN Women, Corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women's support to women's political participation – Insights from the field. (2024), 35.

89   UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Indonesia (2024), 27.

90   UN Women, Productive employment and decent work for women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine: Joint programme, UN Women and ILO (2023), 36.

91   UN Women, Evaluation of WEE through private sector engagement in Asia and the Pacific (2022), page 2.9.

92   UN Women, Country Portfolio Evaluation – Bosnia and Herzegovina (2020), 38.

93   UN Women, Midterm evaluation of the ILO-UN Women Safe and Fair programme: Realizing women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region (2018-2022) (2021), 48.

94   UN Women, Evaluation of civil society engagement in Americas and the Caribbean (2023) 16.

95   UN Women, Joint evaluation of the EmPower: Women for climate resilient societies regional project on gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction (2018-2022) (2022), 23.

96   UN Women, End of project evaluation of the programme on women, peace and security in Nigeria (2022), 44.

97   UN Women, Corporate evaluation on Capacity Development (2023), 47

98   UN Women, Zimbabwe Country Portfoilo Evaluation (2022), 10

99 UN Women, Evaluation of UN Women's contributions to women's economic empowerment through private sector engagement (2022), 21.

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