



**CORPORATE EVALUATION ON
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR
GENDER EQUALITY AND THE
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
Final Synthesis Report**



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The evaluation team consulted 261 stakeholders (212 women and 49 men), including UN Women staff and partners at the global, regional and country levels. We are grateful for their time and contributions, which enhanced the utility of this evaluation report. Interactive workshops at the country level were welcomed and enriched the evaluation process through dialogue between partners. The Internal and External Reference Groups were actively engaged throughout the evaluation process, providing critical feedback that strengthened and enhanced the relevance of the report.

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REPORT

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NEW YORK, JANUARY 2017

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CO	Country Office
CSAG	Civil Society Advisory Group
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DRF	Development Results Framework
EU	European Union
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
FPI	Flagship Programming Initiative
GEEW	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
HQ	Headquarters
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IPSTC	International Peace Support Training Centre
KEWOPA	Kenya Women Parliamentary Association
LAS	League of Arab States
MCO	Multi-country Office
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OEEF	Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PDO	Public Defender's Office
PGA	Partnership Governance and Accountability
RO	Regional Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPD	Strategic Partnerships Division
SPM	Secretariat for Policies of Women
TCCC	The Coca Cola Company
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
WEPs	Women's Empowerment Principles

FOREWORD

The advancements we have seen in gender equality and the empowerment of women are largely thanks to partnership. The women’s movement, a collective and organized action of constituents pursuing political and structural change, has been fundamental in influencing action and sustainable results around the world. UN Women was born from this partnership, thus, partnership is infused in the veins of the organization as a critical means to achieve its goals of transformative change.

This corporate evaluation of UN Women Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women could not have been timelier. Although partnership was built into the Charter of the United Nations, in recent years the UN has seen an even greater push for partnership, as it is now recognized as critical for achieving sustainable development. As we implement the Sustainable Development Agenda, this is a critical juncture that beckons critical analysis of what has worked, why, and how best UN Women and its partners can work together in partnership to achieve truly transformative change in gender relations and the structures that inhibit gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Independent Evaluation Office undertook this evaluation as part of its corporate evaluation plan, and assessed the relevance, effectiveness, organizational efficiency, and extent to which human rights approach and gender equality principles were integrated adequately in UN Women’s approach to its strategic partnerships across its integrated mandate: normative, operational, and coordination – at country, regional and global levels. We designed this evaluation with the aim of being useful to not only UN Women, but also to its current and potential partners.

Overall, the evaluation found that UN Women strategic partnerships have contributed significantly to advancing GEEW in the framework of the UN Women Strategic Plan. At their most effective, strategic partnerships have extended the reach, credibility, and influence of UN Women and its partner. Delivering on the promise of Agenda 2030 and other frameworks now requires a focus on fostering a shared UN Women vision for strategic partnerships, and consolidating a coherent and flexible organizational approach to implementing this vision. As UN Women’s organizational structures, operations systems and approach to risk were not originally designed with the explicit aim of supporting strategic partnerships, there is still a need for a comprehensive policy framework towards strategic partnerships. The evaluation points that UN Women’s strategic partnerships are consistently aligned to GE and HR principles, however, in field operations, the modalities of partnership available to UN Women offices warrant being adjusted to better suit the needs of smaller partners, especially rights holders’ organizations, and to fully reflect UN Women’s feminist values.

The evaluation makes eight recommendations, which the IEO has discussed with UN Women management. We look forward to seeing strategic partnerships at UN Women further strengthened.

Sincerely,



Marco Segone
Director, Independent Evaluation Office



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In its Corporate Evaluation Plan 2014-2017, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) committed to conduct a corporate evaluation of UN Women's work on fostering strategic partnerships. This Synthesis Report is the final product of the Corporate Evaluation on Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW). The evaluation was conducted by an external independent team between September 2015 and September 2016 and managed by the UN Women IEO.

The evaluation is intended to enhance UN Women's approach to strategic partnerships for the implementation of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan with the aim of ensuring that gender equality is reached by 2030. It is also expected to contribute to an understanding of how UN Women's strategic partnerships can facilitate a strong position for gender equality and women's empowerment within the current global development context and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030).

The objectives of this formative evaluation were to:

- a.** Assess the relevance of UN Women's approaches to strategic partnerships given the changing global development landscape.
- b.** Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of organizational results within the broader dynamic international context (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs], etc.), with attention to achievement of specific organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework (OEEF) results.
- c.** Determine whether or not the human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated adequately in UN Women's approach to its strategic partnerships.

d. Identify and validate lessons learned, good practice examples and innovations of partnership strategies supported by UN Women.

e. Provide actionable recommendations with respect to UN Women strategies and approaches to strategic partnerships.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation approach was three-pronged, comprising utilization-focused, theory-driven (realist evaluation) and gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches.

The evaluation established three main components/lines of evidence:

a. *UN Women's overall partnership approach analysis (Headquarters [HQ] assessment):* Including an assessment of five selected strategic partnerships at the global level.

b. *Portfolio analysis:* An in-depth analysis of 30 UN Women multi-country office (MCO)/regional office (RO)/country office (CO) partnerships and 5 HQ partnerships, selected on the basis of their representativeness of UN Women's partnerships portfolio and for their learning potential.

c. Decentralized case studies: Five case studies of selected strategic partnerships in Kenya, India, Egypt, Brazil and Georgia.

The evaluation used different qualitative data collection methods:

a. Document review of more than 500 documents.

b. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and workshops with 261 stakeholders (212 women and 49 men) at the global, regional and country levels.

c. Social learning that included the launch of a survey via the UN Women IEO Twitter account, which resulted in 1,650 Twitter followers.

Data were analysed using a combination of established qualitative methodologies. Key stakeholders actively contributed to the review and validation of evaluation findings at the global, regional and country levels.

Evaluation context

Partnerships and other forms of cross-sector collaboration have attracted attention as global governance mechanisms and have become a predominant way of structuring UN-stakeholder relationships over the last two decades. For UN Women, partnerships are fundamental in the specific global context of GEEW. In particular, the ability to partner is critical to UN Women's role in supporting the broader women's movement, which has historically led global action on gender equality and women's rights. The transformative vision of the sustainable development agenda (Agenda 2030) adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 places new demands on the scale, scope and ambition of UN Women's strategic partnerships to achieve transformative change by 2030. The expanded role of non-state actors in development also opens important opportunities for strategic partnerships.

A decline in Member States' funding for development, including GEEW, after the global financial crisis

also encouraged UN Women to expand its partnerships structure to make it more strategic in order to support UN Women to fulfill its mandate and meet the high expectations with substantially reduced funding. Financing for gender equality has been and remains a critical gap in development and humanitarian financing.

UN Women is still a relatively new organization that has undergone significant internal change on the way to becoming a fully established and operational Entity. The current Executive Director has brought renewed and strengthened attention to strategic partnerships, in particular with non-traditional partners and the corporate sector. The Flagship Programming Initiative (FPI) launched in September 2015 will shape UN Women country-level programming, resource mobilization and strategic partnerships in the future.

Other organizational developments include: the launch of a new matrix management approach between the Policy Division, Programme Division and Strategic Partnerships Division (SPD); the new Regional Architecture completed in 2015; the launch of the W20 Women's Group at the G20 in 2015; the roll-out of One App¹; the new Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) and communication strategies; and a draft Private-sector Strategy and a new Civil Society Strategy. Two related corporate evaluations (of Coordination and the Regional Architecture) also provided opportunities for synergies.

A model for strategic partnership

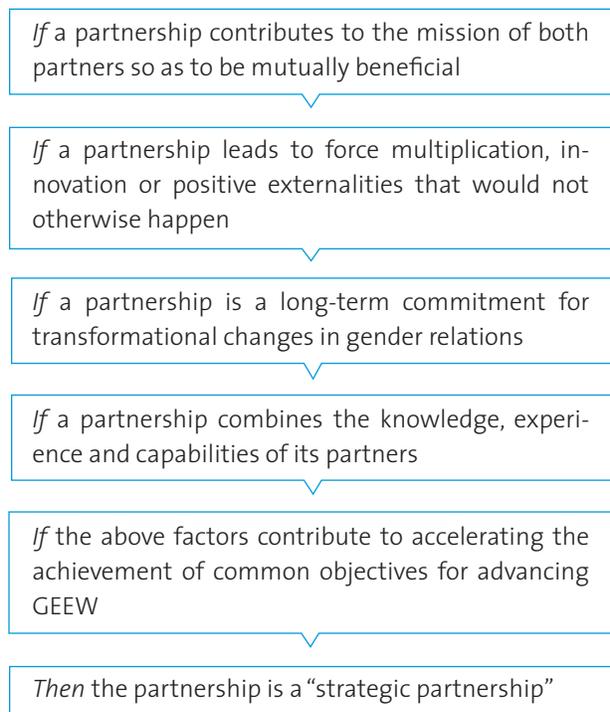
The evaluation developed a working model consisting of four elements, each of which was evolved through consultations with UN Women management and

¹ UN-Women is developing a group of dynamically linked Programme Information Management Systems that will enhance its planning, pipeline management, financial management, results management; human resources management and donor management functions. UN-Women's Programme Management Information architecture comprises four core systems that coupled, leading to seamless data exchange between them.

staff during the evaluation's HQ assessment and case study visits:

- a. Defining characteristics:** What makes partnerships strategic? What does UN Women look for from strategic partnerships that differentiates them from other types of working arrangements?
- b. Partnership modalities:** What are the partnership arrangements that are used by UN Women to govern strategic partnerships?
- c. Enabling factors:** What are the characteristics of effective partnerships?
- d. Results:** What are the typical results to which UN Women's strategic partnerships are intended to contribute?

The defining characteristics for strategic partnerships bring UN Women closer to a definition for strategic partnerships and were applied in the selection of partnerships for the evaluation. These characteristics were established based on consultations with UN Women staff:



Evaluation findings and conclusions

Effectiveness

The most significant added value of partnerships has been in extending UN Women's reach, influence and access to constituencies, and in leveraging interactions between operational and policy work. UN Women worked with partners from all sectors to help influence the main frameworks that will shape the work of the UN system at large over the next 20 years, including the SDGs, the Global Leaders Commitment to ending discrimination against women by 2030, and the new urban agenda (HABITAT III).

Strategic partnerships have contributed to the achievement of expected results, such as strengthening capacities and awareness among rights holders and duty bearers in favour of GEEW. There is also evidence of contributions to more advanced results, including gender mainstreaming in partners' and third parties' policies and programmes, and changed behaviours in favour of GEEW. Overall, the evaluation found that, wherever it is established, a formalized partnership governance framework correlates with partnerships that achieve higher-level results, such as mainstreaming gender in partners' policies and practices. As might be expected, there is less evidence at country and regional levels of partnerships contributing to complex and ambitious changes at this stage. The evaluation concurs with the Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan conducted in 2016 that there is a need for greater focus and coordination, including among global actors, in support of the gender equality agenda and to implement global GEEW standards (including the SDGs) at the national level.

Achieving higher-level results requires UN Women to overcome hindering factors to strategic partnerships, especially: resource constraints that limit the core capacity of the organization leading to time-pressure on over-stretched UN Women staff, the short-duration and project-based nature of many partnerships, internal coordination within the structural elements of the entity, and reliance on the capacity (and energy) of individuals.

Relevance

UN Women demonstrates a strong organizational commitment to working in partnership. UN Women's partnerships have reached a variety of partners, opened doors to untraditional partners, and have shown to be individually relevant in the current global context. Pragmatic approaches to partnerships and a responsive culture have enabled UN Women to innovate and maximize the potential of limited resources. Many achievements have been built through strategic partnerships with established actors, including all the processes related to normative gains in Agenda 2030 and the new urban agenda (HABITAT III).

While UN Women's partnerships increase its reach and influence, they also carry risks for UN Women's reputation and the sustainability of results that are not yet managed in a consistent way. The evaluation has identified an urgent demand for a more consolidated organizational approach for strategic partnerships that involves a common definition, rationale, principles, and indicators for engagement with (and across) diverse groups and in diverse contexts.

Greater attention must be paid to: balancing the organizational focus on engaging in new partnerships to meet emerging priorities with the need to maximize existing partnerships; prioritizing and linking partnerships; addressing uneven approaches to identifying and managing reputational risk based on lessons from experiences; and strengthening experience at the country level in navigating inherent tensions between different types of stakeholders, different partnership objectives, and different perspectives of women's empowerment and women's rights.

The evaluation points to the need for stronger internal clarity on strategic partnerships to ensure that UN Women continues to engage and invest over time in the most relevant and strategic partnerships to advance GEEW globally, regionally and at the country level.

Organizational efficiency

There are many different aspects to strategic partnerships that help to explain what works, where, for whom, and why. To date, despite effective partnering by UN Women on many fronts, several aspects have limited the realization of a coherent, effective and shared policy framework for operationalizing strategic partnership. These include: limited financial resources and human capital; multiple non-coordinated poles of responsibility for partnerships; and the expectation that partnership management is everybody's responsibility with limited dedicated capacities.

UN Women's structures, systems and processes (e.g., Programme Operations Manual, OEEF, results tracking systems, due diligence) have a major impact on UN Women's ability to work in partnership. They were not originally designed with the implications for partnership fully in mind.² In particular, SPD's roles, responsibilities and resourcing have not been clearly spelled out in relation to whether and how it will support the rest of the organization with the planning, coordination and operationalization of strategic partnerships, and how it will support the rest of the organization with the planning, coordination and operationalization of strategic partnerships.

To date, flexibility and dedication of individual staff at all levels has been required to navigate management systems to meet the requirements of strategic partnerships. In the absence of agreed guiding principles, UN Women is also reliant on extensive engagement by UN Women's leadership to select, design and set the tone of strategic partnerships on a case-by-case basis. Continuous negotiation of roles and responsibilities for each partnership is a barrier to a

² As examples: (a) the multiple-pillars of UN Women lead to a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities for initiating and managing strategic partnerships; (b) the current PCA is a one-size-fits-all modality for partnership that is not well suited to UN Women's strategic priorities at the country level; (c) audit recommendations to account for all expenditure run counter to the flexibility needed to work effectively with small human rights organizations; and (d) results-based management indicators do not track the long-term achievements from working with the same partner over multiple phases of a partnership.

shared organizational vision, incentive structure and resource-allocation model for strategic partnerships.

A sufficiently equipped and authorized SPD has the potential to provide the necessary coordination and strategic policy framework for UN Women's strategic partnerships. Such a framework is required to balance the current management incentives (i.e., for resource mobilization and spending) with recognition for managers who contribute to establishing catalytic partnerships that deliver results over the long-term horizon.

Human rights and gender equality

The aims of individual partnerships consistently reflect the priorities, principles and objectives of normative human rights instruments at both the global and country level. Globally, UN Women continues to build on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to convene traditional allies as well as new and emerging constituencies (including faith-based organizations, youth, academia and goodwill ambassadors).

However, UN Women's operations rules and tools, while conducive at the global level to establishing long-term partnerships, are not especially suited to provide flexible partnership entry points and modalities for smaller rights-holders' groups at the country level. The Joint Inspection Unit has made the case for developing a small-scale funding agreement and, possibly, a grant mechanism to better serve this constituency as part of a broader policy framework for partnerships. The evaluation has found significant evidence to support the urgency of this case.

In addition to the refinement of fiduciary accountability implied by these alternative partnership modalities, the evaluation also concludes that application of feminist values to strategic partnership governance requires that future partnership agreements establish mutual accountability for performance to equalize power relations, especially between UN Women offices and strategic implementing partners.

Innovations

The evaluation identified some emerging examples of positive innovations in UN Women's partnership approaches that could be further explored, extended and supplemented by future innovation. These include:

-  Working with non- or less traditional groups, diversifying the entry points to influence GEEW.
-  Applying an intersectionality approach (i.e., gender, race, age, ethnicity, etc.) to engage diverse voices.
-  Using low-investment communication-based strategies to leverage support for GEEW within the popular social narrative (e.g., HeForShe sign-up events, media delegations).
-  Using a focused selection of campaigns as an entry point for mobilizing prospective donors.
-  Recognizing the impact of HeForShe, which is emerging as an important asset for keeping partners engaged in a way that is both meaningful and manageable.

Good practices and lessons learned

The evaluation team identified emerging good practices and lessons from the strategic partnerships analysed.

-  Use a phased approach in partnerships, from more targeted to broader engagement.
-  Use mass and popular approaches for campaigns (HeForShe, UNiTE and national campaigns for ending violence against women [EVAW]).
-  Use an open or low-stake approach to initiate partnerships (especially with funding partners); the challenge is firming up the partnership after the initial exposure and prioritizing action.
-  Leverage UN Women's convening power to foster change through supporting multi-stakeholder

partnerships and platforms for GEEW. UN Women has been able to play a positive bridging role between government and civil society organizations (CSOs) and influence other governments and donors.

 Rely on partners' operational and administrative capacities for programming, in particular to engage with local and field CSOs and grass-roots organizations to maximize effective division of labor and strengthen opportunities to link field, policy and normative work.

 Build a wide range of activities together, including research and knowledge development, advocacy, shared analysis, to establish a partnership relationship that does not depend on funding.

Conclusions

Effective strategic partnerships are critical to UN Women's future ability to leverage transformational changes, address underlying causes and work with marginalized groups. Beyond the considerable achievements of bilateral strategic partnerships, UN Women's convening power also offers a significant comparative advantage for establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships by creating inclusive spaces, facilitating open dialogue and enhancing coordination of the gender equality movement.

In expanding the reach and inclusiveness of its strategic partnerships, UN Women is encountering new challenges in terms of how to address the shifting power dynamics between stakeholders. When partnerships are intended to contribute to gender mainstreaming, policy change and systemic coordination, then understanding and institutionalizing mechanisms to mediate different world views on GEEW and unequal distribution of power and influence is essential.

Despite having a culture that values partnership and numerous examples of innovation, UN Women has yet to fully articulate an organization-wide approach to strategic partnerships that is consistently applied at the global, regional and country level. While acknowledging that some strategies have already emerged to leverage

UN Women's comparative advantage, such as the new CSAG strategy and FPI, the evaluation concludes that there is a pressing need to unite UN Women's insights into a comprehensive policy framework for strategic partnerships in the next Strategic Plan.

Conclusion 1: UN Women strategic partnerships have contributed significantly to advancing gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW) in the framework of the UN Women Strategic Plan. At their most effective, strategic partnerships have extended the reach, credibility, and influence of UN Women and its partners.

Conclusion 2: UN Women efforts have focused on growing and diversifying its partnership base. These have resulted in important contributions to advancing the GEEW agenda, particularly in relation to mainstreaming gender into the new set of global and national development frameworks. While appropriate during its initial years, delivering on the promise of Agenda 2030 and other frameworks now requires a focus on fostering a shared UN Women vision for strategic partnerships, and consolidating a coherent and flexible organizational approach to implementing this vision.

Conclusion 3: UN Women's organizational structures, operations systems and approach to risk were not originally designed with the explicit aim of supporting strategic partnerships. Consequently, multiple non-coordinated poles of responsibility for partnerships at HQ and a wide range of different practices in field offices now exist. While some aspects that support the prioritization, assessment of risk and operationalization of strategic partnerships have been developed, there is still a need for a comprehensive policy framework towards strategic partnerships.

Conclusion 4: The stated objectives of UN Women's strategic partnerships are consistently aligned to gender equality and human rights principles outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, in field operations, the modalities of partnership available to UN Women offices warrant being adjusted to better suit the needs of smaller partners, especially rights holders' organizations, and to fully reflect UN Women's feminist values.

Conclusion 5: Civil society and the women’s movement have been and will continue to be essential strategic partners to UN Women. UN Women must continue to see partnerships with civil society—both the women’s movement and civil society more broadly—within the broader picture of building an inclusive movement for GEEW. Looking forward, ensuring that this approach is clear at all levels of UN Women and emphasizing the importance of mutual accountability in partnerships with civil society are the two main priorities.

Conclusion 6: There has been a rapid evolution of UN Women’s approach to corporate partnerships and some innovative methods are being used to build brand recognition, engender the footprint of the corporate sector, and fundraise for GEEW. These efforts have resulted in many successes and lessons, but also to substantial reputational risks. Given the contributions of these achievements and risks to UN Women delivering its ambitions, the number of private-sector specialists is far below the level required to address all of the demands placed on them.

Conclusion 7: UN Women’s relationships with UN entities (through UN coordination) provide an important means for coordinating more effective strategic partnerships outside of the United Nations. However, inconsistencies between the priorities and operational systems of different UN entities at the country level means different members of the UN Country Team are frequently found to be maintaining separate bilateral (and sometimes competitive) relationships with a single strategic partner, resulting in inefficiencies.

Conclusion 8: All relationships with Member States have strategic implications. UN Women would likely benefit from having a more coordinated approach to working in partnership with the various agencies of Member States with which it engages at the global, regional and country level.

Recommendations

The following eight recommendations to UN Women are based on the evaluation framework, the analysis

that informed findings and conclusions, and discussions held with stakeholders.

Recommendation 1: Establish a sufficiently resourced, integrated and commonly agreed framework for strategic partnerships as a central part of UN Women’s 2018-2021 Strategic Plan.

In support of this, UN Women requires a more clearly articulated definition, vision and set of principles for strategic partnerships that are owned, communicated and understood throughout the organization. This can build on the defining characteristics for strategic partnership elaborated in this evaluation. Three priority actions are recommended:

- a. Establish a strategic partnership policy framework with a clear definition, vision, set of principles and vocabulary for partnerships.
- b. Publish a clear statement of the risk appetite regarding performance, fiduciary and reputational risks from partnering, including establishing acceptable boundaries for innovation. This should be combined with the promulgation of the organizational risk management system at all levels.
- c. Commit sufficient staff time and attention to establishing partnership roadmaps for each strategic partnership.

Recommendation 2: Within the proposed framework for strategic partnerships, establish clarity regarding roles and responsibilities within the current UN Women structures that will best support strategic partnerships and explicitly recognize the corresponding importance of leadership capacities, skills and knowledge for partnership work.

Within the regional architecture and at Headquarters level, the evaluation recommends three actions to address the organization’s capabilities to develop and manage strategic partnerships:

- a. In the short-term, establish strategic partnership focal points in all parts of the Regional Architecture

and in each Headquarters section with responsibility for coordinating strategic partnerships in liaison with the Strategic Partnerships Division.

- b.** Leverage and extend the use of existing corporate relationship management software to create a system by which all contact with a partner organization is visible to other staff members of UN Women, linking it to the results tracking and financial reporting systems. Each UN Women business unit should be aware of the interactions between a partner and other business units in UN Women.
- c.** Specific skills, knowledge and practices are required by leaders at all levels of the organization if UN Women is to effectively work through partnerships. In the medium term, establish a set of competencies, components of leadership training programmes, and certifications focused on strategic partnership management for UN Women staff members. Ensure that these are specified in appropriate terms of reference, including directors, representatives and their deputies, and recognize the practice of these competencies in the staff review process.

Recommendation 3: Undertake a systematic process of integrating strategic partnership considerations in the day-to-day workflow and tools used by leaders, managers and staff at all levels.

It is recommended that while developing the overall framework for partnerships, UN Women undertake a review of operations tools, rules and processes to assess their impact on and relevance to strategic partnerships. Prior to such a review, the following three priority areas should be addressed.

Operational tools and modalities for strategic partnerships. UN Women has already explored options for adjusting partnership modalities in line with recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit and others. The evaluation recommends that UN Women moves forward with revising partnership modalities with a view to fostering long-term gender-responsive partnerships in the field by implementing the Joint Inspection

Unit³ recommendation to consider: “developing and adopting small-scale IP [Implementing Partner] agreements in line with appropriate delegation of authority; and whether a grant agreement would be useful in addition to such a small-scale agreement.” In addition to establishing a new small-scale funding agreement and/or grants mechanism that is appropriate to supporting small civil society organizations, UN Women is recommended to amend the existing project cooperation agreements to include a mutual accountability framework (with monitoring tools) in which UN Women and strategic implementing partners share accountability for both processes and results.

Indicators for partnership in the strategic plan integrated framework. Both parts of the integrated framework, the development results framework and the organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework, should be amended to reflect the findings of this evaluation.

Monitoring and reporting requirements for partnerships. The following changes are recommended:

- a.** Strategic partnerships and strategic implementing partners that are (or may be) covered by multiple governing documents (for example, a series of memorandums of understanding or a series of project cooperation agreements) should include within their results frameworks cumulative outcome indicators that are designed to capture the long-term contribution of the partnership to its ultimate goal (and not only outcomes that can be achieved within the time frame covered by each individual agreement).
- b.** Take concerted steps to minimize the burden of reporting and auditing on women’s civil society organizations through the adoption of more nuanced risk-based requirements.
- c.** Consider commissioning an annual survey of all UN Women partners and partnerships to collect data on perceptions, the functioning of partnerships, lessons and hopes.

³ Joint Inspection Unit. 2013. *Review of the Management of Implementing Partners in the United Nations System Organizations*. Accessible at: https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2013_4_English.pdf

Recommendation 4: Further leverage UN Women’s experience in using strategic partnerships to convene and mediate between different world views by shaping multi-stakeholder spaces and platforms for dialogue and innovation; this requires changes in incentive structures from both donors and within UN Women systems.

At the global level, UN Women has made effective use of multi-stakeholder strategic partnerships to advance its normative agenda. Yet country case studies and partnership mapping reveals that most partnerships (in terms of numbers) are currently bilateral. This creates a challenge in focusing management time on a few more strategic partnerships, something that the Flagship Programming Initiative should help to address. In the future, it is recommended that a greater proportion of partnerships should be held within multi-stakeholder platforms, shaping these to allow for creative tension and innovation to further enhance returns.

UN Women should consider where progress can be achieved by **combining bilateral partnerships into multi-stakeholder partnerships, winding down partnerships that are not working as planned, and carefully considering the cost-benefits of additional partnerships.** Priority should be given to partnerships that integrate multiple dimensions of UN Women’s mandate.

The current incentive structures in the donor system and in UN Women work against fully adopting such an approach: bilateral partnerships are more predictable and efficient regarding fundraising for UN Women, spending according to plans and achieving outputs. As a consequence, partnerships are likely to remain fragmented without an explicit change in these incentive structures.

UN-Women can do its part by revisiting its own **incentives structures**, especially for country representatives, to recognize and reward managers for progress towards two new objectives:

- a. Demonstrating contribution towards a sustainable outcome that is beyond the ability of UN Women or its partner to achieve if acting alone, and, therefore, indicates the realization of an effective strategic partnership.

- b. Demonstrating the generation of an innovative approach to advancing women’s human rights by a diverse multi-stakeholder partnership, thereby indicating an ability to creatively manage tensions between partners with different world views.

Recommendation 5: Extend UN Women’s global approach to movement-building to country-level work with CSOs to address the core capacity of women’s organizations to hold governments to account for national implementation of international GEEW commitments, especially Agenda 2030.

This evaluation has reconfirmed the criticality of UN Women’s relationship with women’s civil society to advancing GEEW within the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Beijing Platform for Action. At the country level, UN Women needs to work with women’s civil society to continue the strategic shift away from focusing on bilateral implementing partnerships towards movement-building in a way that addresses genuine concerns over insecure resources, overstretched capacity and reducing political space for action by:

- a. Supporting country offices, regional offices and global units to establish multi-year funding pipelines and to advocate to donors on the importance of providing strategic partners from civil society with core (un-earmarked) funds.
- b. Providing regular opportunities for structured and open dialogue between the leadership of UN Women and women’s civil society.
- c. Building the ownership and commitment of the leadership of the Trust Funds (both within UN Women and the wider UN system) as a visible model that symbolizes UN Women’s commitment to protect and build the women’s movement as an independent actor with inherent value.

Recommendation 6: Address the dual relationship with private enterprises and public companies as both funders and a target of advocacy by establishing clearer coordination between the policy, programme and private-sector teams to ensure an integrated approach to managing strategic partnerships and gradually

diversifying relationships beyond corporations to individual donors and foundations.

UN Women's corporate partnerships are making an important contribution to extending influence and advocacy for GEEW into new spaces. However, they require significant human resources to steward, and the legacy of structural decisions during UN Women's foundation means that a need exists for greater transparency around roles, incentives and responsibilities for fundraising and programming activities. While defining the appropriate roles and responsibilities for corporate sector engagement, as outlined under Recommendation 2, UN Women should consider the following:

- a. Move responsibility for the Women's Empowerment Principles and other substantive functions to the Bureau of Policy and Programme to strengthen work on supporting demand and capacity for internal change in the discourse and practice of the corporate sector.
- b. Enable the Strategic Partnerships Division to coordinate communication with corporate partners by integrating inputs and requests from across the house.
- c. Disaggregate and articulate different types of corporate partnerships, with appropriate levels of due diligence processes established for each category. Establish pre-approved mechanisms for engaging "corporate friends of UN Women", such as through signing-up to campaigns or running employee-giving schemes that require lower levels of due diligence and can be approved by regional offices (thereby relieving pressure on the central Headquarters' due diligence function).
- d. Strengthen support to National Committees and field offices to diversify corporate partners and to place greater emphasis on building relationships with individual donors and foundations.

Recommendation 7: Identify and address barriers to country-level coordination of relationships with strategic partners that work with multiple UN entities.

UN Women has an important leadership role to play in joint action with other UN entities to address practical barriers to UN coordination of strategic partnerships, especially with regard to advancing GEEW through the implementation of Agenda 2030. Exercising this leadership role effectively requires greater internal UN-Women coordination between partnership, coordination, intergovernmental and programme teams to be able to:

- a. Harmonize the Flagship Programming Initiative theories of change with the key models and theories of sister agencies to better provide the basis for joint programmes and advocacy initiatives.
- b. Encourage, through UN-Women's presence in the UN Country Team, joint management of relations and programming with strategic partners that are common to multiple UN entities to maximize synergies and benefit from the comparative advantage of other entities.
- c. At the global level, strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the UN Women Working Group on Agenda 2030 comprising of representatives from partnership, coordination, intergovernmental, executive offices and programme teams.

Recommendation 8: Establish a model for a strategic partnership between UN Women and the various agencies within a Member State that supports coordination between the role of that state in intergovernmental processes, regional mechanisms, global and local donorship, and the global economy.

UN Women often maintains multiple avenues and levels of partnership with different parts of a Member State's bureaucracy, including its delegations, development agencies and national women's machinery. On some occasions, there is scope to more precisely define how these multiple connections might be appropriately coordinated within the framework of a strategic partnership. It is also necessary to explore how the work of UN Women national committees and groups of friends can better complement the role of UN Women offices.

LIST OF FINDINGS

Finding 1—Internal clarity: Driven by its mandate and the need to be effective despite a large funding gap, UN-Women has had an organizational focus on growing partnerships since its inception. As part of this effort, many innovations have been tested at all levels of the organization. These innovations have been built on common sense, opportunity, pragmatism, individual expertise and good will. A shared organizational approach that can pull together all this experience into a coherent framework for strategic partnership has yet to fully emerge.

Finding 2—Overall approach: UN-Women staff members are forging complex and ground breaking partnerships in contexts that involve profound differences in world views about gender equality. The need for a shared vision and clear principles for prioritizing strategic partnerships within UN-Women makes it difficult for staff to focus their limited time and resources to maximize the impact of these efforts.

Finding 3—Fit for 2030: Since 2011, UN-Women has established more than 1,000 partnerships covering a broad and inclusive range of partners. While many of these are integral to UN-Women achieving its goals to advance GEEW, the uniqueness of each partnership arrangement combined with the large number of partners and persistent funding gap (that restricts UN-Women’s human resource capacity) means that an urgent need exists to consolidate, systematize and/or prioritize partnership management.

Finding 4—UN-Women as a relevant partner for GEEW: UN-Women brings technical strengths, its unique UN gender mandate, and convening power to mobilize diverse stakeholders behind partnerships for GEEW. UN-Women is seen as a relevant partner for GEEW, especially for the United Nations, governmental partners, wider civil society and the private sector.

Finding 5—Composite mandate: UN-Women’s partners consider its composite mandate to be an important comparative advantage. Most strategic partnerships

have integrated multiple elements of the mandate, especially operational and normative. However, outside of partnerships specifically with UN entities, country-level partnerships have not fully leveraged UN-Women’s coordination role within the UN system to fully benefit from this element of the mandate.

Finding 6—Contributions to intended results: Strategic partnerships have contributed to results larger than the sum of their parts. Good progress has been made in achieving planned results and signs show that many are on track to contribute to transformative change. Contributions have also been made to strengthening capacity to advance GEEW within the partner organizations, third parties and UN-Women itself.

Finding 7—Contributions to UN-Women’s Strategic Plan: Clear evidence exists of strategic partnerships contributing to all six of UN-Women’s Strategic Plan Impact Areas.

Finding 8—Organizational targets: UN-Women is on track in achieving its organizational targets concerning strategic partnerships. However, the current institutional measure of success for strategic partnerships reflects a focus on quantitative increases and is insufficient to incentivize the pursuit of catalytic outcomes.

Finding 9—Partnerships with key constituencies: UN-Women has established a wide and diverse base of strategic partnerships across all of its key constituencies, more or less effectively responding to diverse and sometimes conflicting expectations and using innovative, and at the same time evolving, partnership structures and mechanisms.

Finding 10—Enabling and hindering factors: Strategic partnerships are most effective when long-term engagement and commitment to GEEW in both partners is complemented by clarity between partners and responsiveness to the relevant contexts and

mutual needs. The main limiting factors are a constant time-pressure of under-resourced UN-Women teams and, as a result, short-term objectives, fractured working arrangements, insufficient internal communication, and reliance on the capacity (and energy) of a few individuals.

Finding 11—Governance and accountability: UN-Women can build on the lessons of the recent past to establish clear ways of negotiating and managing strategic partnerships to make them accountable and sustainable.

Finding 12—Human resources: UN-Women’s leadership, both globally and at the decentralized level (e.g., directors and representatives), plays a central role in fostering strategic partnerships, pursuing innovation, and dealing successfully with problems.

Finding 13—Structures: The Strategic Partnerships Division is insufficiently equipped and authorized to provide the necessary leadership and coordination of the overall portfolio and approach to strategic partnerships in UN-Women. Continuous negotiation of roles and responsibilities for each partnership is a barrier to a shared organizational vision, incentive structure and resource-allocation model for strategic partnerships.

Finding 14—Learning: Strengthening UN-Women’s systems for identifying opportunities and learning about how to make partnerships more effective can make a contribution to the gender equality movement as well as the organization.

Finding 15—Partnership mechanisms: UN-Women is continuing to develop a spectrum of partnership mechanisms covering the full range of its normative, coordination and operational spheres. Staff awareness about how to use these mechanisms, along with

clear policies for prioritizing partnerships and managing risks, are also necessary.

Finding 16—Alignment with norms: UN-Women’s strategic planning processes ensure programmatic alignment with normative instruments on GEEW at both the global and country level. The reality of a partnership approach requires UN-Women to continuously leverage its convening power so as to mediate the different power dynamics of its diverse constituencies. This has been done in a pragmatic and responsive way, but clear institutional direction is still needed.

Finding 17—Root causes: Partnerships are critical to UN-Women’s ability to leverage transformational changes, address underlying causes, work with marginalized groups, and influence the structural dominance of patriarchy. UN-Women’s rules and regulations are not well aligned to supporting long-term partnerships with small rights-holders’ groups.

Finding 18—Structural transformation: High numbers and diversity of strategic partners are posing challenges in terms of negotiating power within and across partnerships. Stakeholders emphasize the importance of equality in feminist partnerships, which could be improved through greater use of mutual-accountability frameworks.

Finding 19—UN-Women trust funds: The UN-Women Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund for Ending Violence Against Women are valuable ambassadors for strategic partnerships with civil society that strengthen women’s organizations as indispensable actors in their own right.



1

BACKGROUND

1. BACKGROUND

1.1

Introduction

The UN Women IEO conducts corporate evaluations of organizational performance to assess UN Women's capacity to efficiently manage its assets for the achievement of results and its capacity for innovation and change, while at the same time assessing contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment development results at global, regional and country levels. In its Corporate Evaluation Plan 2014-2017, the IEO committed to conduct a corporate evaluation of UN Women's work on fostering strategic partnerships.

The Synthesis Report is the final product of the Corporate Evaluation on Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The evaluation was conducted by an external independent team between September 2015 and September 2016 and managed by the UN Women IEO with active involvement of internal and external reference groups and external expert advisers.

The aim of the report is to provide overarching and synthesized analysis, findings, good practices and innovations, conclusions and recommendations based on data and information collected and analysed during the evaluation process.

The evaluation is intended to enhance UN Women's approach to strategic partnerships for the implementation of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan with the aim of ensuring that gender equality is reached by 2030. It is also expected to contribute to an understanding of how UN Women's strategic partnerships can facilitate a strong position for gender equality and women's empowerment within the current global development context and Agenda 2030.

The primary intended users of the evaluation findings and recommendations are UN Women's Executive

Board; the senior management and sections focused on strategic partnerships; UN Women staff at HQ, regional and country levels working on strategic partnerships; and present and potential strategic partners.

The evaluation will be presented at the First Regular Session of the Executive Board in 2017 and will be made publicly available on the UN Women Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system.⁴ In order to support institutional learning based on the evaluation report, the evaluation team in coordination with IEO will contribute to the development of articles to be published in the IEO magazine, "Transform".

The report is presented in six sections. Section 1 provides an overview of the evaluation purpose, objectives, process and limitations and a summary of the evaluation methodology. The context for the evaluation is provided in Section 2. Section 3 presents a model for strategic partnerships. Section 4 presents the evaluation findings organized around criteria and key evaluation questions. Section 5 presents examples of positive innovations in relation to UN Women's partnership approaches and emerging good practices identified from the analysed strategic partnerships. Sections 6 and 7 present conclusions and recommendations. Finally, an Evaluation Working Model is detailed in Section 8. Annexes are presented in a separate Volume II.

4 Available online at: <http://gate.unwomen.org>.

1.2

Evaluation objectives and scope

The objectives of this formative evaluation, as described in the Terms of Reference (Annex A) and validated during inception phase consultations, were to:

- a. Assess the relevance of UN Women’s approaches to strategic partnerships given the changing global development landscape—including, SDGs, Financing for Development, implementation of Beijing Platform for Action, Fit for Purpose, and Rights Up Front and other key developments on the global and regional scenes that can influence gender equality and women’s empowerment and the work of key stakeholders in these areas.
- b. Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of organizational results within the broader dynamic international context (e.g., SDGs, etc.) and with attention to achievement of the specific OEEF results, as defined in the 2011-2013 and 2014-2017 strategic plans and other key strategy documents.
- c. Determine whether the human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated adequately in UN Women’s approach to its strategic partnerships.
- d. Identify and validate lessons learned, good practice examples and innovations of partnership strategies supported by UN Women.
- e. Provide actionable recommendations with respect to UN Women’s strategies and approaches to strategic partnerships.

In terms of scope, the evaluation covers:

- a. Only partnerships that are strategic—i.e., partnerships that are intentionally selected for prioritized investment of UN Women’s limited

human and material resources due to their perceived potential to foster GEEW results.⁵

- b. UN Women’s approach to these partnerships, which is considered to encompass the identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of its strategic partnerships.
- c. All three levels at which UN Women works: country (including through MCOs), regional and global
- d. All dimensions of UN Women’s work, namely its integrated mandate (normative, operational and coordination roles) and its roles in convening, mobilizing and advocating.
- e. The period from the establishment of UN Women in 2011 through to the end of 2015.

The evaluation had a predominately formative nature, with a clear emphasis on: determining where UN Women stands at present with respect to strategic partnerships; learning from experiences to date, in particular what worked, what didn’t and how and where to improve; and what needs to be done to refine a relevant, effective and efficient approach to UN Women’s strategic partnerships in the coming years.

The evaluation focused on three main evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness and organizational efficiency) and assessed the integration of a human rights approach and gender equality principles in partnership identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation did not fully cover two of the standard Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee criteria: **impact**, because of the early stage of implementation of most

5 “Potential” includes “mutual added value, multiplier effects, substantive and catalytic engagement and transformational change”. No group of stakeholders has been pre-emptively and deliberately excluded from the scope of the evaluation, as long as partnerships with this group fulfill the strategic partnership definition and criteria.

partnerships, and **sustainability**, as partnerships are often time bound. However, an assessment of factors likely to affect the achievement of long-term and sustainable changes through strategic partnerships is included in the evaluation under the effectiveness criterion. The Evaluation Matrix, presented in Annex B, provides more detail.

The evaluation was tailored in order to not overlap (in terms of geographical coverage and partnerships selection) with two other corporate evaluations that were being conducted in the same period (evaluations of the Regional Architecture and UN System Coordination), taking into account the resulting evaluation fatigue.

1.3

Evaluation methodology

The following section summarizes the key features of the evaluation methodology, developed during an extended and highly consultative inception phase conducted between September and December 2015. For more details on the methodology please refer to Annex C and the Evaluation Inception Report.

1.3.1

Evaluation approach and theoretical basis

Approach and theoretical framework (evaluation design)

The overall evaluation approach is three-pronged comprising utilization focused, theory driven, and gender responsive and human rights based.

In alignment with the evaluation objectives, the evaluation used a conceptual framework inspired by a realist evaluation approach⁶. This theoretical framework was used to understand and assess how strategic partnerships contribute to achieving results in different contexts and what are these results. It comprised three elements: (a) context analysis framework, (b) an outcome hypothesis that identifies the key changes that UN Women and its partners want to achieve by engaging in strategic partnerships, and (c) a partnership diagnostic framework that identifies the main drivers of a partnership's performance. These components are described below.

Context analysis frameworks: Data on partnerships have been mapped to their relevant contexts whenever possible, to explore whether certain types or arrangements of partnerships are most relevant and effective in different contexts and what factors affect strategic partnership performance both positively and negatively.

Outcome hypothesis: Using a methodology adapted from outcome mapping,⁷ partnership effectiveness has been measured on the basis of progress along a continuum of pre-identified strategic partnerships expected results (including basic or short-term changes, good or medium term changes, and advanced or long-term changes), building towards the achievement of a hypothesized partnership outcome. The outcome hypotheses were validated during the country case studies, and used to map partnerships achievements.

Partnerships diagnostic framework: The evaluation adopted and adapted the partnerships diagnostic framework first defined by Zadek and Radovich⁸ for use with UN Women. The human rights and GEEW lens has been then applied.

Evaluation matrix

The evaluation was guided by an evaluation matrix (see Annex B) that was based on the four broad evaluation criteria and questions shown in Table 1. Sub-questions and indicators were developed by the evaluation team for each question.

6 Realist evaluation is a theory-driven approach that asks the following question: "What works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts, and how?" Developed by Pawson and Tilley (1997). Realist evaluation considers that an intervention works or not because actors make particular decisions in response to the intervention. The reasoning of the actors is the mechanism that leads to outcomes.

7 Earl, S., Carden, F., and T. Smutylo. 2001. "Outcome Mapping, Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs". IDRC 2001. See also: www.outcomemapping.ca.

8 Zadek, S., and S. Radovich. 2006. "Governing Collaborative Governance: Enhancing Development Outcomes by Improving Partnership Governance and Accountability." AccountAbility and the Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative, Working Paper No. 23. Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

TABLE 1.
Evaluation criteria and questions

Criteria	Questions
Relevance: <i>Extent to which the approach and objectives of strategic partnership are consistent with rights holders' requirements, country needs, global priorities and normative human rights policies.</i>	1. To what extent is UN Women engaging in partnerships that are relevant and strategic for moving the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda forward within the current development context, including Agenda 2030?
Effectiveness: <i>Extent to which strategic partnership objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance. Effectiveness assesses the outcomes of partnership.</i>	2. How effectively have UN Women strategic partnerships contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment results (normative, operational and coordination) at global, regional and national levels?
Organizational efficiency: <i>Reflects the continuous improvement of internal processes of the organization, such as organizational structure, culture and community.</i>	3. How have (or can) UN Women organizational structures, systems and processes enable an efficient implementation of its strategic partnerships approach?
Human rights and gender equality: <i>Extent to which strategic partnerships have integrated and supported inclusion, participation and social transformation.</i>	4. To what extent does UN Women's approach to strategic partnerships integrate human rights and gender equality principles (based on internationally agreed norms) and address the underlying causes of gender inequality?

1.3.2 Data collection and analysis methods

Evaluation components

The evaluation established three main components and lines of evidence to produce data to answer the questions and sub-questions in the evaluation matrix, allowing for triangulation of sources and across case comparison.

- a.** *UN Women's overall partnership approach analysis (HQ assessment)*, including an assessment of five selected strategic partnerships at the global level.
- b.** *Portfolio analysis* of 30 UN Women partnerships at the MCO/RO/CO levels (15 in case study countries/regions and 15 in 5 additional countries exclusively

through document review) and 5 HQ partnerships (through documents and interviews).

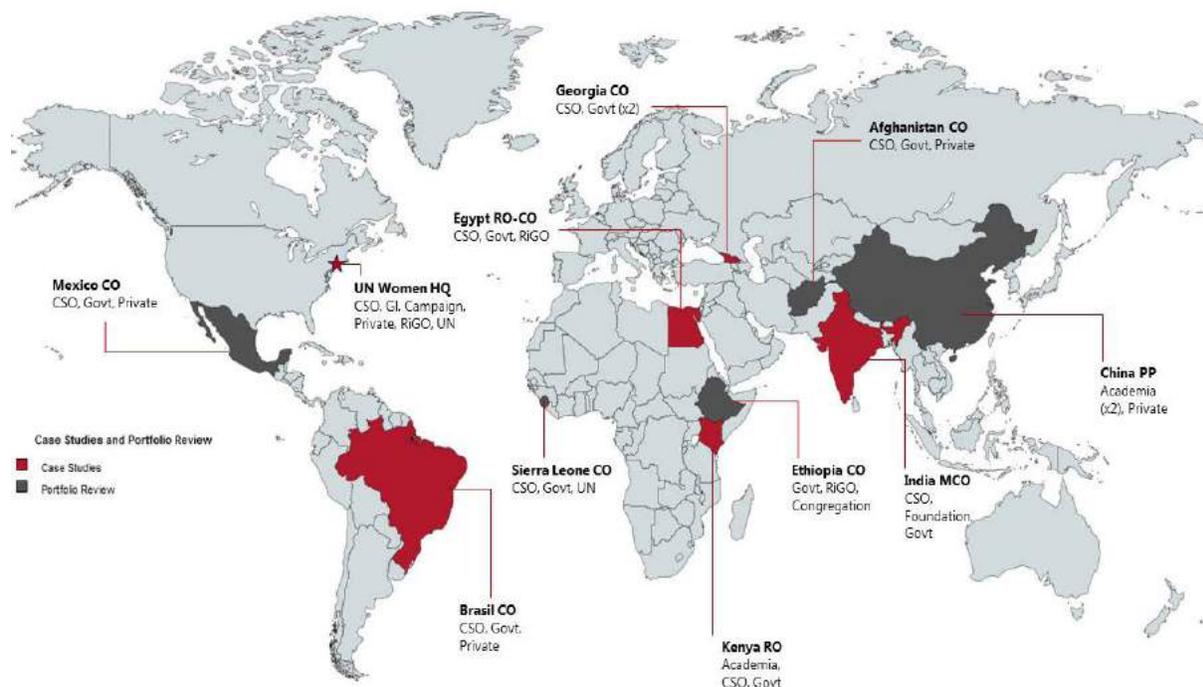
- c.** *Five decentralized case studies* covering the following UN Women offices: Kenya RO/CO, India MCO, Egypt RO/CO, Brazil CO and Georgia CO. For each case study, the evaluation team assessed both UN Women's overall approach to strategic partnerships and three selected strategic partnerships in each country/region.

Table 2 presents the list of countries and partnerships included in the evaluation sample. Figure 1 presents the geographic distribution of the sampled partnerships. For more details on the sampling strategy please refer to Annex C.

TABLE 2.
List of partnerships included in the sample

HQ/Global level				
The Coca Cola Company (TCCC)	European Union (EU)	UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)	Post 2015 Civil Society Engagement	HeforShe Impact 10X10X10
Case study countries				
Kenya: Kenyatta University, International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC), Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA)				
India: Jagori, National Foundation for India, Ministries of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj				
Egypt: Government of Japan, CARE Egypt, League of Arab States (LAS)				
Georgia: Ministry of Defense, Public Defender's Office, TASO Foundation				
Brazil: The Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM), TCCC; Promundo				
Portfolio analysis				
Ethiopia: Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs; Africa Union Commission – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; Ethiopian Orthodox Church – Development Wing and Dire Dawa Bureau of Women's Affairs				
China: Cheung-Kong Graduate School of Business; Communication University; Proya Cosmetics CO.				
Sierra Leone: Statistics Sierra Leone, Women in the Media, United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response				
Afghanistan: Kath Media Consulting Services, Afghan Women's Network, Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan				
Mexico: Pineda Covalin, Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico, INMUJERES				

FIGURE 1.
Geographic distribution of the overall sample of partnerships



METHODOLOGY

THE EVALUATION APPROACH WAS THREE-PRONGED, COMPRISING UTILIZATION-FOCUSED, THEORY-DRIVEN (REALIST EVALUATION) AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE AND HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES.

DATA COLLECTED FOR THIS EVALUATION

261 Interviews

UN, Govts, CSOs, Corps, Academia, and others



212 women
49 men
at global,
regional and
country levels

Case Studies

5 Decentralized Case Studies
2 COs/ROs
2 COs
1 MCO
1 HQ assessment

Portfolio review

35 Strategic Partnerships

5 HQ
15 from 5 case studies
15 from 5 additional countries

500+ 
documents

Social Learning

1,650 twitter followers
600+ readers,
online discussion

Sources of data and methods of data collection

The evaluation used the following different qualitative data collection methods.

Document review: More than 500 documents were reviewed by the evaluation team, including: UN Women corporate documents, relevant evaluations and relevant financial information; other UN agencies' documents on strategic partnership approaches; partnership-specific documents; relevant partners' and donors' reports; and relevant literature. A full list is provided in Annex D.

Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and workshops: The evaluation team consulted 261 stakeholders (212 women and 49 men) at the global, regional and country levels, through semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews, focus groups and outcome mapping workshops. Table 3 provides a snapshot of the types and numbers of stakeholders consulted. A full list is provided in Annex E.

Social learning: The evaluation experimented with a social learning approach to enhance opportunities for participation and engagement among key constituencies for the evaluation. A survey launched by the evaluation team via the UN Women IEO Twitter account resulted in 1,650 Twitter followers and more

than 600 people accessing the discussion opened by the evaluation team on the Gender Evaluation Forum.⁹

Data analysis

Data were analysed using a combination of established qualitative methodologies, including: synthesis of stakeholder interviews and documents using deductive and Nvivo text analysis; multivariate qualitative analysis of outcome hypotheses and partnership characteristics; organizational assessment and analysis; realist analysis of the combinations of partnerships context, mechanisms and outcomes; and contribution analysis of strategic partnerships to GEEW outcomes. In addition, comparative analysis of qualitative data¹⁰ was used to systematically compare and analyse evidence from the different evaluation components, taking into consideration relevant literature and research findings.

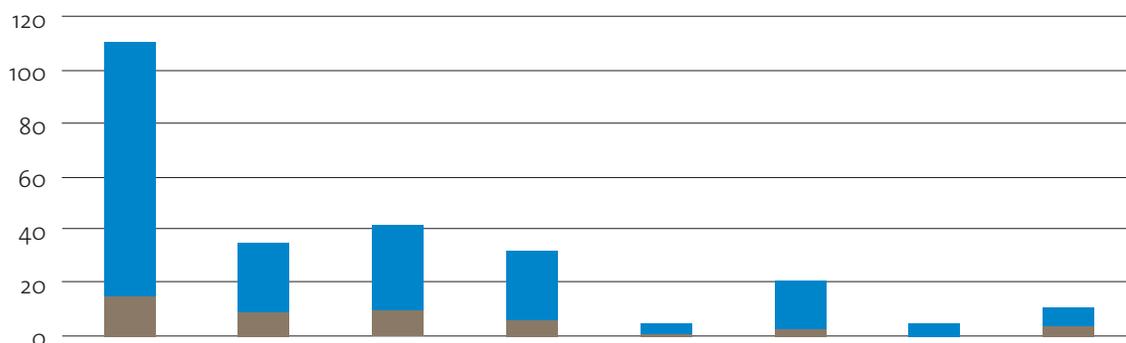
The evaluation matrix provided the overarching framework for data analysis across all evaluation components.

⁹ Available online at: <http://gendereval.ning.com/forum/topics/what-do-great-partnerships-for-gender-equality-look-like?>

¹⁰ For a discussion of configurational case study analysis, see: Byrne, D. and C. Ragin. 2009. "The Sage Handbook of Case-Based Methods". Sage Publications.

TABLE 3.

Stakeholder consultations (semi-structured interviews, focus groups and workshops)



	UN Women (tot. 110)	Other UN (tot. 35)	Public Sector (tot. 42)	Civil Society (tot. 5)	Private Sector (tot. 5)	NGO (tot. 21)	Academia (tot. 5)	Other (tot. 11)
■ Women	95	26	32	26	4	18	5	7
■ Men	15	9	10	6	1	3	0	4

Participatory validation

During the evaluation, key stakeholders have had the opportunity to actively contribute towards the review and validation of evaluation findings. At the global level, the Internal and External Evaluation Reference Groups were consulted at key moments of the evaluation processes and evaluation deliverables were shared with them for comments and feedback. In the five case study countries, the evaluation team validated preliminary findings through an end of mission meeting with an expert panel and the office staff.

1.3.3 Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy¹¹ and the UN Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System¹².

Independence and impartiality: Clear reasons for evaluative judgments and the acceptance or rejection of comments on evaluation products was provided in written “comment trails” for each version of the evaluation deliverables. All findings were triangulated by multiple team members.

¹¹ UN Women, UNW/2012/12, November, 2012. Evaluation Policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. Available online at: <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2012/11/unw-2012-12-un-women-evaluation-policy%20pdf.pdf?vs=1501>

¹² United Nations Evaluation Group, 2008. Ethical Guidelines, available online at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>; and UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System, available online at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

Credibility and accountability: The Inception Report and Final Report were subject to assessments and comments by a panel of independent experts.

Confidentiality, integrity and transparency: The evaluation respected stakeholders' rights to provide information in confidence and only after providing free and informed consent to participate in the evaluation. All information was used and represented only to the extent agreed to by its contributor.

Avoidance of harm: The evaluation team ensured that participatory processes and evaluation questions were responsive to the needs and sensitivities of participants. Facilitators set a tone of informality, openness and rapport in all meetings, interviews and focus groups as appropriate to the individuals participating.

Accuracy, completeness and reliability: All evaluation questions were answered through triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources and processed using multiple analytical tools. A comprehensive Evaluation Matrix was used to link each evaluation question to the related evidence.

1.3.4 Evaluation constraints and limitations

Limitations

The scope of the evaluation was broad and hard to define, as UN Women does not have an agreed definition of strategic partnerships or a theory of change for strategic partnerships. This limitation was partially mitigated through extensive consultations with UN Women management, staff and stakeholders during the inception phase to agree on a narrower focus and by developing an *ad hoc* working definition of strategic partnerships.

The evaluation process was undertaken in parallel with other ongoing corporate evaluations and evaluations of specific offices and partnerships. There was limited time allocated for data collection in country, especially when both ROs and COs were assessed (e.g., Kenya and Egypt) and when additional time was

needed for translation and internal travel (e.g., Brazil). This limitation was addressed by supplementing data collected in person with document reviews and extra Skype interviews when needed.

Overall the evaluation was faced with limited documentation available on partnership processes and results (by nature, partnerships are fluid and evolve, hence difficult to document), as documents focus on achievements within a reporting period and sometimes miss cumulative achievements of partnerships overtime. This limitation affected the portfolio analysis in particular. Because of the limited information available in the documents shared with the evaluation team by the COs and because of the lack of triangulation through other sources of data, the information derived from the portfolio analysis was used limitedly in the report and only to validate findings from other sources of information.

Implications of selected methods

A theory-based design, such as the design used in this evaluation, includes an inherent bias because it intentionally narrows the field of investigation based on initial assumptions (otherwise known as hypothesis-testing). This was mitigated by exploring alternative explanations for observations during contribution analysis and asking about unexpected outcomes.

This evaluation's chosen methods included appreciative inquiry, which intentionally looks to learn from what works. As a result, there was less evidence sourced from unsuccessful partnerships.

Finally, the nature of strategic partnerships precludes the possibility of using a counterfactual to understand the difference in results when partnerships are or are not used. The evaluation focused instead on understanding the mechanisms of partnerships to explain observed results with reference to international good practice and partnership theory.



2

EVALUATION CONTEXT

2. EVALUATION CONTEXT

2.1

Global context

Partnerships and other forms of cross-sector collaboration have attracted much attention as global governance mechanisms and have become a predominant way of structuring UN-stakeholder relationships over the last two decades. Such collaborative forms include alliances, coalitions, roundtables, public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder partnerships, all of which have different functions and involve different levels of participation and configurations of stakeholder engagement.

One key milestone in the partnership discourse was the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Type II Partnerships¹³ were hailed at the Summit as collaborations between national or sub-national governments, private-sector actors and civil society who form agreements to meet specific SDGs. Alongside the World Summit on Sustainable Development, another key contextual factor influencing partnership was the agreement reached around the eighth Millennium Development Goal from 2000-2015.

¹³ The Johannesburg negotiations concluded that Type II partnerships must meet seven key criteria: (a) they should be voluntary and based on shared responsibility; (b) they must complement, rather than substitute, intergovernmental sustainable development strategies, and must meet the agreed outcomes of the Johannesburg summit; (c) they must consist of a range of multi-level stakeholders, preferably within a given area of work; (d) they must ensure transparency and accountability; (e) they must produce tangible results; (f) the partnership must be new, and adequate funding must be available; and (g) a follow-up process must be developed (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003). The United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development took on the mandate to collate and monitor the impacts and effectiveness of these partnerships. Type II partnerships and other forms of multi-stakeholder collaborations have arguably shifted the notion of how society operates to meet social and environmental development demands; the idea being that these collaborative vehicles may create more participatory governance mechanisms to increase the implementation of sustainable development policy in collaboration with states, as well as international and local organizations (private or civil society), than could be done alone.

Goal 8 was focused specifically on developing a “global partnership for development” with targets. The new post-2015 development agenda has culminated in 17 SDGs with 169 targets. The High Level Political Forum leading up to the SDGs focused on partnership, and the SDG outcome document re-emphasizes the critical importance of partnership, stating that:

We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.

[The Agenda] will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources.¹⁴

Building on Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals, the final 17th SDG is to: “strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”. Within this goal there are targets set for finance, technology, capacity building and trade as well as for addressing systemic issues such as multi-stakeholder partnerships—all of which imply and encourage cooperation between different development sector stakeholders.

For UN Women, partnerships appear to be increasingly relevant in the specific global context of GEEW. In particular, the ability to partner is critical to UN Women’s role in supporting the broader women’s movement:

¹⁴ United Nations. General Assembly Resolution 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 25 September 2015.

There is a widespread sense that we are in an era of building our own organizations rather than movements, of implementing projects rather than processes of more fundamental change in gender and social power relations, and in professionalized research and advocacy, rather than building the base that demands the sort of policies such advocacy might yield. Formal organizations whose main purpose is to build and support movements may be categorized as movement-building organizations, or movement-support organizations. They exist apart from or outside the movements they build or support, though they work in close and sometimes integral partnerships with them.¹⁵

The transformative vision of the sustainable development agenda adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 places new demands on the scale, scope and ambition of UN Women's strategic partnerships to achieve transformative change by 2030.

In particular, Agenda 2030 sets unprecedented and ambitious goals and targets for GEEW (specifically the stand-alone gender Goal 5 and GEEW targets under the other goals) that will require the commitment of a wide diversity of stakeholders for their achievement.

The implementation of the Beijing +20 Agenda, the UN Secretary General's call for the UN system to be "Fit for Purpose" in June 2014, and the "expiry date" for gender inequality set by the UN Women Executive Director¹⁶ also set new demands on multi-stakeholder partnerships for GEEW.

Last but not least, a decline in Member States' funding for development, including GEEW, after the global financial crisis also encouraged UN Women to expand its partnerships structure, to make it more strategic in order to support UN Women to fulfill its mandate and meet the high expectations with substantially reduced funding.¹⁷

¹⁵ Batliwala, S. (2012) *Changing their World: Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements* (2nd Edition), Toronto, Mexico City, Cape Town: Association for Women's Rights in Development. P 15.

¹⁶ See UN Women Executive Director remarks in 2014. Available online at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/6/executive-director-closing-remarks-at-executive-board>.

¹⁷ UN Women's evolution since its creation in 2010 has taken place against the backdrop of chronic underfunding. The Gender Equality Architecture Reform Campaign—a global movement based on consultation with and building on the opinions of women worldwide at CSW in 2008—proposed an annual budget for the new agency of USD 1 billion, which was reduced by half on the recommendation of the Secretary General. According to the financial statement of the UN Women annual report, the contributions for 2014 were USD 322.9 million, an increase from USD 275.4 in 2013 and USD 215 million in 2012. This shows steady growth and slightly exceeds the resource mobilization target for 2014 (USD 310 million). However, UN Women has had to carry out its broad global mandate with one quarter to one third of the budget originally proposed by the advocates for the agency, and is still considerably short of the amount recommended by the Secretary-General at its inception. Although UN Women has found creative ways to function within these financial limitations, the funding shortfall is a constant underlying issue in the ability of UN Women to fulfil its mandate and meet the high expectations for it. "UN Women's System-wide and Interagency Mandate". Source: Charlesworth, H. and C. Chinkin. 2013. "The Creation of UN Women". RegNet Research Paper No. 2013/7. P 15.; UN Women. No date. "Mobilizing Resources for Women, Generating Returns for All: UN Women Strategy 2014-2017". P 3. The Inception Phase showed that UN Women's understanding and approach to strategic partnerships have been strongly influenced by its resource mobilization agenda.

2.2

UN Women Context

UN Women is still a relatively new organization that, over the years under review (2011-2016), has undergone significant internal change on the way to becoming a fully established and operational Entity. UN Women has an exceptional identity within the United Nations as the only agency established by and fully supported by the international feminist and women's movement. UN Women's establishment phase was concluded in 2013. The year 2013 also saw a renewal in leadership, with the arrival of a new Executive Director¹⁸ and the approval of a revised Strategic Plan for the period 2014-2017.¹⁹ The current Executive Director has brought renewed and strengthened attention to strategic partnerships, in particular with non-traditional partners (men and boys, faith-based organizations, youth organizations) and the private sector (the launch of the UN Global Compact²⁰ put a strong emphasis on resource mobilization and direct involvement of the Executive Director Office in steering strategic partnerships for UN Women).

Despite having limited resources, both financial and human capital, UN Women has built strategic partnerships with a variety of sectors aimed at generating transformative change in the social and cultural patterns between women and men. Strategic partnerships encompass the global normative and advocacy space, UN system partnerships, and civil society and private-sector mobilization. The wide spectrum and breadth of partners include civil society, government, UN system, private sector, academia, celebrities, foundations, media, sports, youth, men and boys, and faith actors. A youth strategy has been adopted and approved by the Executive Board while a strategy on

men and boys and the role of faith in advancing GEEW are in development.

Strategic partnerships at the political level embrace the G77 and China, Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States, Latin America and the Caribbean, African Union, La Francophonie, LAS, Gulf Cooperation Council and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Many of these partners are now seen as champions of GEEW by UN Women, illustrated by examples such as the G77 Santa Cruz Declaration, support to SDG 5 in Agenda 2030 negotiations, and the Samoa Pathway of Small Island Developing States. For the first time in history, the Global Leaders Commitment Summit held on 27 September 2015 brought together approximately 70 heads of state and government to commit to ending discrimination against women by 2030 and announce concrete and measurable actions to kick-start change in their countries. Similar summits were convened with CSO leaders and private-sector and foundation leaders on 25-26 September 2015 to jointly strategize on gender responsive implementation of the SDGs. These contributions have been recognized by donor assessments including the Multilateral Aid Review of UN Women by the Department for International Development (DFID).

Recently, UN Women has seen significant changes in management and senior management, with significant staff turnover, including a new Deputy Executive Director for the Policy and Programme Bureau and new directors of both the Policy and Programme Divisions appointed in the last year. Under the leadership of the new Deputy Executive Director for the Policy and Programme Bureau, UN Women launched the FPI²¹ in September 2015, which will shape UN

18 Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka replaced Ms. Michelle Bachelet, who had been the Executive Director since the creation of UN Women. See: UN Women/2013/6. Available online at: <http://undocs.org/en/UNW/2013/6>.

19 See: UN Women/2013/6. Available online at: <http://undocs.org/en/UNW/2013/6>.

20 UN Global Compact's General Assembly mandate (A/RES/70/224). Available online at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/224.

21 The 12 FPIs are: Women's Leadership in Politics; Women's Access to Justice; Climate-Resilient Agriculture; Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs; Income Generation and Security; EAW Prevention and Access to Essential Services; Safe Cities & Safe Public Spaces; LEAP in Crisis Response; Gender Inequality of Risk (DRM); Women's Engagement in Peace, Security, and Recovery; Gender Statistics for Localization of the SDGs; and Transformative Financing for GEWE. UN Women, 2015.

Women country-level programming, resource mobilization and strategic partnerships in the future.

Other organizational developments within the time frame of the evaluation include: the launch of a new matrix management approach between the Policy Division, Programme Division and SPD to enhance internal alignment, coherence, collaboration and horizontality within the organization and across UN Women's integrated mandate components;²² the disclosure of the new Regional Architecture (completed in 2015); the launch of the W20 Women's Group at the G20 in 2015; the roll out of One App²³; the finalization of new CSAG and Communication strategies; and the development of a new draft Private-sector Strategy and new Civil Society Strategy. In addition, two other related corporate evaluations²⁴ were underway in the same period, bringing opportunities for synergies and drawing on emergent findings of ongoing evaluations.

22 UN Women. 2015. "Interoffice Memorandum: Accountability for Interdivisional Collaboration and Synergy—Policy, Programme and Strategic Partnerships Directors". 1-8.

23 UN-Women is developing a group of dynamically linked Programme Information Management Systems that will enhance its planning, pipeline management, financial management, results management; human resources management and donor management functions. UN-Women's Programme Management Information architecture comprises four core systems that coupled, leading to seamless data exchange between them.

24 UN Women. Evaluation of UN Women Regional Architecture (2016) and UN Women contribution to the United Nations system coordination (2016)



3

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

3. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

3.1

A model for strategic partnership

Since its foundation, UN Women has stressed the importance of working through partnerships with both right-holders and duty-bearers to deliver on its composite mandate and achieve its goal for the advancement of GEEW globally, regionally and at the country level.

The achievement of gender equality and the full realization of women's rights is politically contested, culturally challenged, de-prioritized in policy and national governance, and fiscally under-resourced. This deeply challenged arena of issues is UN Women's mandate and UN Women's strategic partnerships must overcome these challenges and enable UN Women to add value.

While UN Women has published a number of statements²⁵ that seek to define strategic partnerships, it has not developed an overarching organizational approach to such partnerships (see Finding 1). Consequently, consultations with UN Women staff members and document review were combined with relevant partnership theory²⁶ and taken as the basis of a detailed working model of strategic partnerships at UN Women that was used to guide the evaluation analysis (see Figure 2).

The working model consists of four elements, each of which was evolved through consultations with UN

Women management and staff during the evaluation's HQ assessment and case study visits:

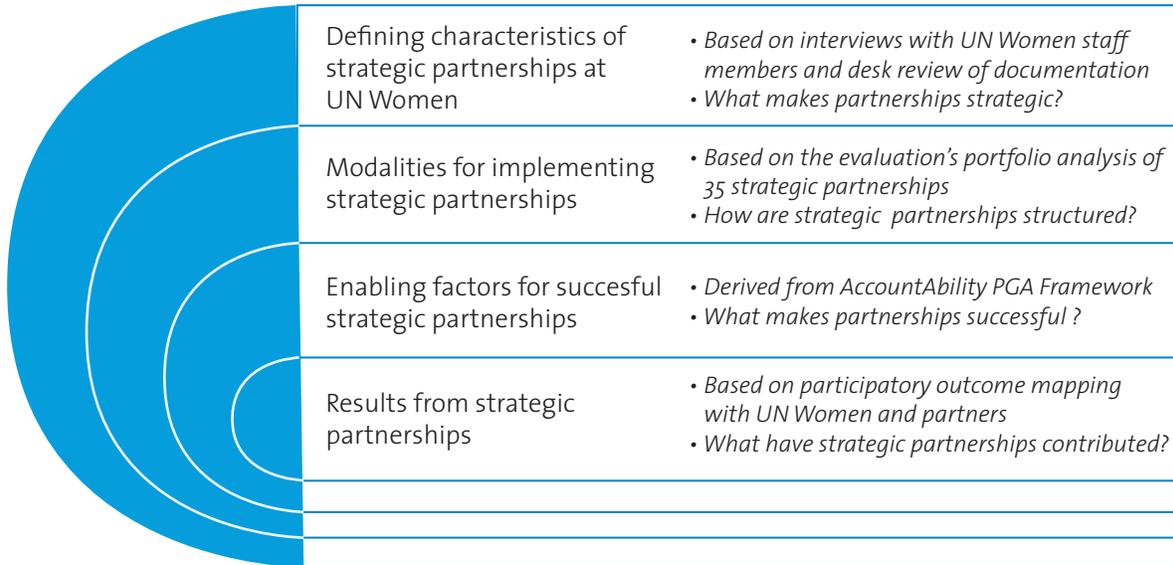
- a. Defining characteristics:** What makes partnerships strategic? What does UN Women look for from strategic partnerships that differentiates them from other types of working arrangements?
- b. Partnership modalities:** What are the partnership arrangements that are used by UN Women to govern strategic partnerships?
- c. Enabling factors:** What are the characteristics of effective partnerships based on the AccountAbility PGA Framework, selected during the inception phase of the evaluation due to its usefulness in developing concrete recommendations to enhance partnership working?
- d. Results:** What are a set of "outcome hypotheses" for strategic partnerships, i.e., the typical results to which UN Women's strategic partnerships are intended to contribute?

²⁵ These include: "UN Women Guidelines for Private Sector Donor Partnerships", revised January 2013; and "Premise and Promise of UN Women's Partnerships with Civil Society", 2015.

²⁶ This evaluation adopted the AccountAbility (<http://www.accountability.org/>) model for assessing the level of effectiveness of partnerships.

FIGURE 2.

A working model for strategic partnership at UN Women



DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The defining characteristics for strategic partnerships bring UN Women closer to a definition for strategic partnerships and were applied in the selection of partnerships for the evaluation. These characteristics were established based on consultations with UN Women staff:

If a partnership contributes to the mission of both partners so as to be mutually beneficial

If a partnership leads to force multiplication, innovation or positive externalities that would not otherwise happen

If a partnership is a long-term commitment for transformational changes in gender relations

If a partnership combines the knowledge, experience and capabilities of its partners

If the above factors contribute to accelerating the achievement of common objectives for advancing GEEW

THEN THE PARTNERSHIP IS A "STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP"

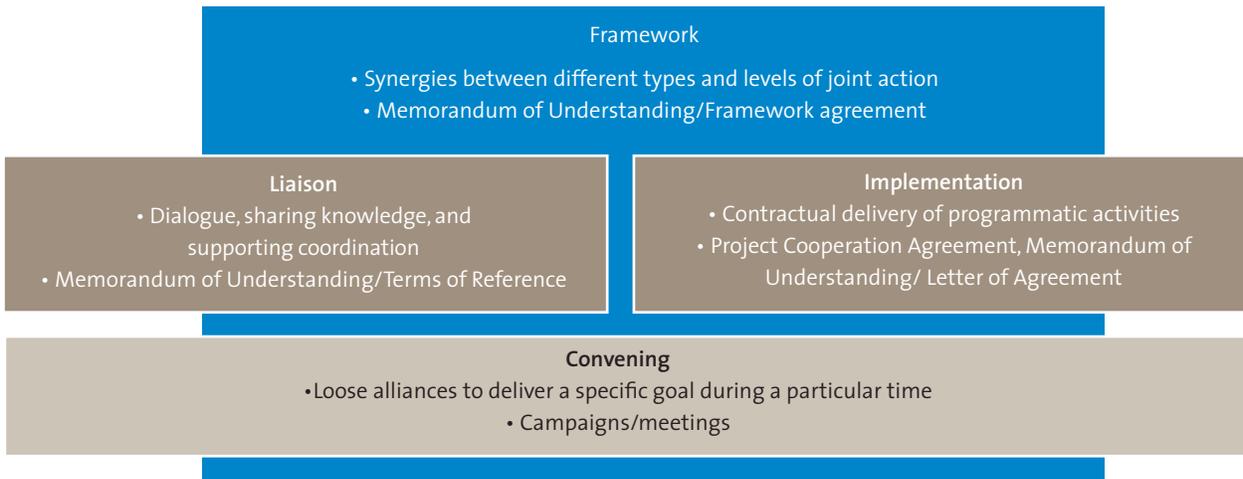
Partnership modalities at UN Women

The evaluation team aggregated the diverse partnerships in which UN Women engages into four “modalities” (see Figure 3) These modalities are used within UN Women for both strategic partnerships (based on the differentiating assumptions described above) and other types of partnership or relationship. As illustrated by Figure 3, there is a level of intersection across these modalities, and a partnership that is predominantly one modality can still exhibit some features of the others. The greatest level of intersection is for “framework-type” partnerships,

making them more predisposed to enabling strategic partnerships.

Convening: The most basic partnership modality is based on UN Women’s convening power—bringing different actors into the conversation in order to agree and advocate for a particular position. This is most often a loose arrangement with no formalized governance structure (although working committees may be established to coordinate particular activities).

FIGURE 3.
The spectrum of partnership modalities at UN Women



Partnership modality	Examples from HQ cases	Governance tools
Framework	European Union, Unilever, HeforShe Impact 10x10x10, The Coca Cola Company (background)	Memorandum of Understanding, framework
Liaison	CSAG, Private Sector Advisory Council, African Union, UN-Habitat	Memorandum of Understanding, Terms of Reference
Implementation	The Coca Cola Company (design), Safe Cities	Project Cooperation Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding
Convening	HeForShe, Post2015	Campaigns, meetings

Implementation: At the country and regional levels, the majority of UN Women’s partnerships fall into implementation modality. These partnerships tend to be project-based and often short term,²⁷ formalized through annual PCAs.²⁸

Liaison: The prime example of a liaison partnership is the CSAG. These partnerships are formalized but are focused on maintaining dialogue and engagement rather than delivering particular activities. In several cases, liaison-type partnerships run in parallel with implementation-type partnerships (e.g., a non-governmental organization that is a member of a CSAG also holding a partnership cooperation agreement). These parallel partnership-types with the same partner are not always synchronized with one another.

Framework: These are designed from the outset with a formalized governance structure that enables and progressively realizes multi-dimensional types of engagement between the partners. The EU partnership is an example of this. Some examples of formalized strategic partnerships at the decentralized level exist, for example with the LAS and with the Public Defender’s Office (PDO) in Georgia, which employ a framework modality. In particular cases (e.g., CARE Egypt, National Foundation for India) there is strong potential to transition a partnership to a framework modality due to the multidimensionality of the existing partnership, but this is hindered by existing governance tools (see organizational efficiency).²⁹

One modality that the evaluation found to be missing was a partnership arrangement that explicitly integrated a regional perspective. The evaluation heard evidence that ROs are particularly in need of strategic approaches to working with common partners in multiple countries.

Enabling factors for strategic partnership

The evaluation drew on the PGA Framework developed by AccountAbility as its theoretical basis. This was selected based on its usefulness in terms of supporting organizations to identify concrete options for effectively managing partnerships as compared with alternative frameworks.

PGA focuses on the governance of partnerships and the level and types of accountability established between partners. The framework defines accountability as encompassing the pressures or factors that impact on decision-making in terms of: being held to account (compliance), giving an account (transparency), and taking account (responsiveness). It defines governance as “the structures, processes, rules and traditions through which decision-making power that determine actions is exercised, and so accountabilities are manifested and actualized.”³⁰ The PGA Framework includes a set of enabling principles that were adapted to the purposes of the evaluation to include gender equality and human rights considerations (see methodology Annex C), and used for examining partnerships within the case studies (Figure 4).

27 There are examples of longer-term relationships—e.g., with SPM in Brazil and others that date back to UNIFEM (e.g. KEWOPA). In some cases, however, although the partnership has existed for a long time, it is still conceptualized as a succession of projects (e.g., KEWOPA).

28 This is partially due to the approach to partnerships with civil society inherited from UNIFEM in the countries in which UNIFEM had a strong presence before the establishment of UN Women. It is also due to the widespread development organization paradigm of implementation through local partners in which UN Women operates, in particular at the country level, and that is reflected in UN Women’s Strategic Notes and annual work plans, although some short-term, opportunistic relationships can be tactical and strategic.

29 The evaluation notes that the opportunity of the FPI is already being explored by some COs as a potential means to realize a framework approach to strategic partnerships at the country level.

30 Zadek, Simon, and Sasha Radovich. 2006. “Governing Collaborative Governance: Enhancing Development Outcomes by Improving Partnership Governance and Accountability.” AccountAbility and the Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative, Working Paper No. 23. Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

FIGURE 4.
Enabling factors for successful strategic partnerships



The intended results of strategic partnerships

To complete the working model, the evaluation synthesized UN Women’s existing literature and inception-phase interviews to establish a series of “outcome hypotheses”. These are the results that UN Women intends to achieve through strategic partnerships. Each result was described in simple language, alongside the features that would indicate whether or not it had been achieved. Three levels of results were validated with evaluation participants through a participatory process (see Figure 5).

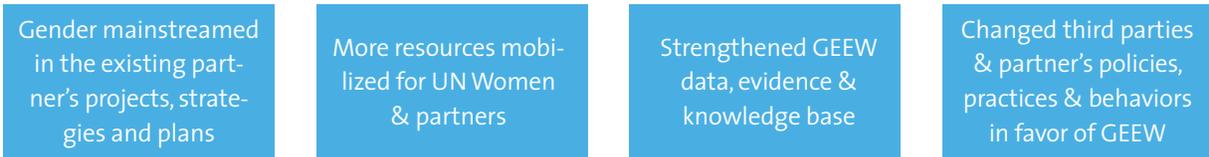
- a. Basic results:** Short-term results—expect to see changes (capacity, awareness, reach and multi-stakeholder dialogue).
- b. Good results:** Medium term—hope to see changes (changes in policies, practices and behaviours, gender mainstreaming and resource mobilization).
- c. Advanced results:** Long-term—love to see changes (influencing GEEW norms, action and coordination).

FIGURE 5.
The intended results of strategic partnerships

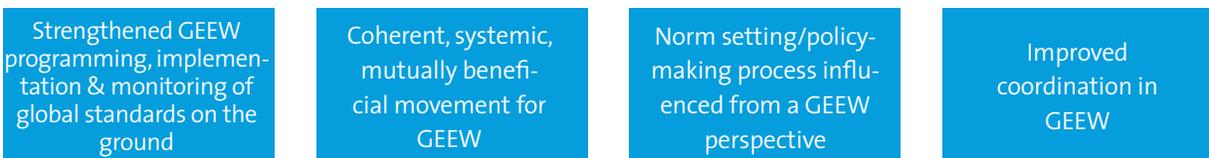
Basic



Good



Advanced





4

FINDINGS

4. FINDINGS

4.1

How fit-for-purpose is UN Women’s approach to strategic partnership?

RELEVANCE: To what extent is UN Women engaging in partnerships that are relevant and strategic for moving the gender equality and women’s empowerment agenda forward within the current development context, including Agenda 2030?

Finding 1—Internal clarity: Driven by its mandate and the need to be effective despite a large funding gap, UN Women has had an organizational focus on growing partnerships since its inception. As part of this effort, many innovations have been tested at all levels of the organization. These innovations have been built on common sense, opportunity, pragmatism, individual expertise and good will. A shared organizational approach that can pull together all this experience into a coherent framework for strategic partnership has yet to fully emerge.

UN Women has placed considerable attention on partnerships as a core approach and *modus operandi*. This is reflected in key corporate documents, UN Women’s management vision and discourse (at HQ and the decentralized level), and staff understanding of UN Women’s working modalities.

UN Women has developed several documents to guide partnerships with specific types of actors or for specific purposes. These include guidance on engagement with civil society and the private and voluntary sectors, resource mobilization and communication strategies,³¹ the revised CSAG Strategy, and the FPI. UN Women is also currently developing a new Private-sector Strategy and has started the development of a new Civil Society Strategy.³²

The evaluation heard evidence that the senior leadership of UN Women strongly emphasizes the importance of strategic and innovative partnerships.

HQ and case study interviews confirm that staff members fully subscribe to the view that UN Women has to work in partnership with a diversity of stakeholders that are crucial to take the GEEW agenda forward, because: UN Women has a broad composite mandate; GEEW cuts across sectors and themes; and UN Women is relatively small in size and resource base and has to be catalytic.

**BOX 1.
MAIN DOCUMENTS MANDATING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN UN WOMEN**

- United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/289
- UN Women Strategic Plans
- Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
- SDG outcome document
- Regional and country level strategic notes and annual work plans

³¹ “The Premise and Promise of UN Women’s Partnerships with Civil Society”; “A Strategy Note on Civil Society Outreach for the Post 2015 Agenda”; “Mobilizing Resources for Women, Generating Returns for All: UN Women Resource Mobilization Strategy 2014-2017”; “UN Women Strategy for Private and Voluntary Sector Resource Mobilization and Partnership 2012”; “UN Women Communications Strategy 2012-2013”.

³² Neither strategy was available during the course of the evaluation.

Despite this emphasis on partnerships, UN Women has not developed an overarching strategy and/or guiding document on strategic partnerships, including an overarching definition of strategic partnership and guidance on why and how to enter into one, with

whom, and what steps are needed to manage, maintain, and reassess strategic partnerships over time.

Beyond individuals' implicit understanding of partnerships (see Section 3) the evaluation found limited organizational clarity on how to distinguish a strategic partner from other types of partners (see also Finding 2) and what this entails in terms of modality and expectations of engagement. A wide range of different ideas are held within UN Women about strategic partnerships across its different levels (HQ, ROs, COs) and within levels. Demand for a clearer and consistent, while contextually adaptable, definition exists at both HQ and in regions and countries.

Challenges to establishing a coherent organizational approach to date have included:

- a. The transition from the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to UN Women and the inheritance of UNIFEM's partnerships³³ and partnership approach at the country level. In spite of the institutional change, strong involvement of former UNIFEM staff at senior levels seems to have helped the transition for UNIFEM partners.³⁴
- b. UN Women's senior management come from different UN agencies with different visions of what "partnership" means, as well as differing interpretations of what the feminist perspective is on issues, or with varying history of working with women's organizations.
- c. An inconsistent understanding among UN Women's management and staff of UN Women's primary accountability: to Member States—because of its nature as an intergovernmental agency—or to civil society (in particular the women's movement)—because of its history and *raison*

³³ Partners of UNIFEM had to readjust their expectations and their relationship with the transition to UN Women. From a business model (UNIFEM) that used to mainly deliver small grants to CSOs, UN Women was established as a full-fledged and self-standing UN entity that (aims to) operate like other UN funds and programmes through its operational activities.

³⁴ While a sample is too small to be scientific, continuity between UNIFEM and UN Women staff seems to ease the partnership transition.

d'être. This is further complicated by the fluid and heterogeneous nature of the women's movement.

- d. Diverse and sometimes conflicting drivers (incentives) for partnerships. A wide range of different ideas are held within UN Women about strategic partnerships, especially about whether the main driver should be resource mobilization (either directly or by appealing to donor priorities) or leveraging influence.
 - i. At the corporate level, because of UN Women's funding gap, interviews with key stakeholders and document review (e.g., of Strategic Partnerships and Resources Mobilization strategies developed at the regional and country level) show that there has been a tendency to conflate the strategic partnership and resource mobilization discourse, and to prioritize the latter.
 - ii. At the country level, increased access, strengthened visibility and credibility with new constituencies, and broader potential impact and reach are important drivers of partnerships. However, pressure to mobilize resources and show results skews the incentives for selection and engagement with partners and can result in a focus on shorter-term, projectized efforts to meet resource mobilization and delivery goals rather than more programmatic, longer-term strategic engagement with partners.
- e. Uneven power relations among key stakeholders' groups (civil society, private sector, governments), and internal diversity within key constituencies (e.g., women can be poor and marginalized, but also private-sector leaders, Members of Parliament, leaders of states). UN Women has not fully reflected on how to address uneven power dynamics and leverage internal diversity in its partnerships, especially multi-stakeholders' ones.

Within this context, UN Women's strategic partnerships have been built on common sense, pragmatism, individual expertise, and an implicit understanding among staff of certain elements that make a partnership strategic (see Section 2.2).

UN Women’s pragmatic approach to partnerships is reflected in responding to emerging opportunities and challenges and flexibility to changing contexts, priorities and needs, as well as to the historic legacy of partnerships established by UNIFEM.

However, pragmatism has also resulted in significant challenges including: difficulty in prioritizing among

partnerships; limited consistency and dependability of and with partners; low institutionalization of the partnerships; in some cases, weak alignment with UN Women’s priorities or across partnership priorities; and a limited understanding of UN Women’s overarching theory of change by partners. These challenges clearly emerged from interviews with internal and external stakeholders at global, regional and country levels.

Finding 2—Overall approach: UN Women staff members are forging complex and groundbreaking partnerships in contexts that involve profound differences in world views about gender equality. The need for a shared vision and clear principles for prioritizing strategic partnerships within UN Women makes it difficult for staff to focus their limited time and resources to maximize the impact of these efforts.

The evaluation found divergent views among UN Women’s leadership regarding which partnerships are considered strategic. This makes it difficult for the organization to agree on where to focus its time and resources. For example, a number of those consulted identified all relationships with Member States as strategic partnerships due to the importance of this constituency to furthering UN Women’s mission, whereas others strongly disagreed with this formulation (and in this evaluation, relations with Member States in intergovernmental fora fell outside of the working definition of strategic partnerships).

BOX 2. NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INDIA

The National Foundation for India was initially selected for its complementarity (synergies) with the UN Women MCO in India and women’s CSOs working on gender budget analysis. National Foundation for India brings with it a network of development CSOs, established sources of funding, and operations (grant making) capacity. The MCO brought technical expertise, brand power, and small grants. Despite this complementarity on paper, it took commitment and work by both partners to align expectations and establish coherent ways of working together.

Analysis of interview evidence suggests that two prevalent understandings of “strategic partnerships” exist, rooted in fundamentally different views of how change in gender relations is best realized. These

positions can be described as the “powerful allies” perspective and the “specific problems” perspective:

- a.** The **powerful allies** version of strategic partnerships is focused on identifying actors within UN Women’s theatres of interest that command authority and influence, and building relationships with these actors so as to apply their capacity and assets in the interests of gender equality. The underlying theory of change is based on “alliance building”—assembling a coalition of the willing that can combine efforts over time to pursue broad gender equality objectives. For example, developing a broad partnership with an international financial institution because of the general power and influence that institution has in a particular theatre relevant to GEEW.
- b.** The **specific problems** version of strategic partnerships takes, as its departure point, UN Women’s situation analysis of gender inequality and the priority points of leverage needed to advance gender equality indicators. Relationships are then built with the actors that are best placed to address and overcome these problems, which—if successful—will accumulate credibility and momentum that can be built upon to tackle bigger problems. For example, developing a very specific set of activities with a national institution that is identified as being best placed to deliver a UN Women Strategic Note result, such as introducing temporary special measures.

The evaluation encountered multiple types of tension between these perspectives and within the overall context of strategic partnerships for gender equality. UN Women’s constituencies hold fundamentally divergent world views on many key issues (see also Section 4.4 findings on human rights and gender equality).

In some partnerships, particularly with non-traditional partners³⁵, there tend to be low levels of coherence in partners’ approaches to achieving GEEW, including rather different understandings of GEEW. While these partnerships broaden the spectrum of capacities and reach of UN Women, theory and practice suggest that achieving transformational results³⁶ through partnerships requires at least a minimum level of practical and philosophical coherence between partners. Specific processes need to be in place to strengthen this over time.

Building bilateral partnerships places UN Women in the center of these tensions: navigating between the perceptions and demands of different partners even where these are at odds. These tensions inevitably impact UN Women’s internal organizational culture and communication (see Section 4.3). Strategies to minimize the effects of these tensions may help—such as using UN Women’s convening strength³⁷ to coordinate direct engagement between different constituencies, but they cannot be fully eliminated. It can be helpful to consider that tension is not always a negative force for organizations. In her work on tensions within organizations, Inglis concludes that “it makes sense to acknowledge the tensions and the positive role they [can] play as people and organizations adapt to internal and external pressures”.³⁸

35 The analysis points to the fact that in partnerships with unequal power relations (e.g., with implementing partners), there is higher expectation of full alignment to the stronger partner’s GEEW approach and provisions for corrective measures (e.g. capacity building) if this is not the case.

36 It should be noted that “tactical” results can be achieved by partnering with organizations that are not philosophically aligned with UN Women’s values (e.g., neutralizing stakeholders traditionally hostile to positive changes for GEEW).

37 In case studies and interviews, the evaluation found that, in the eyes of partners, UN Women brings valued technical strengths, a unique mandate, and convening power to partnerships—sufficient reason for them to partner with UN Women even when they hold strongly divergent positions to some of the Entity’s other partners.

38 Sue Inglis. *Journal of Sport Management*. “Creative Tensions and Conversations in the Academy”. Jan, 2007. Vol 21, Issue 1, pp 1-14.

An unspoken dimension of managing such tensions is that UN Women staff members are frequently exposed to (strong) critique of the Entity, especially by outsiders who see their own role as guardians of a particular agenda—such as UN reform, women’s human rights or economic growth.³⁹

Some staff appear better equipped to manage this than others, with defensive reactions being cited by evaluation interviewees as a potential barrier to partnership working. However, there is universal acknowledgement of UN Women’s excellence in convening and facilitating shared spaces. This suggests that building multi-stakeholder partnerships plays to the strengths of staff members in helping different constituencies to directly interact, discuss and negotiate their world views.

BOX 3. A PARTNER SUCCESS STORY

Weak coherence between the world views of partners can result in high partnership management costs and conflict between partners. The evaluation notes the example of UN Women’s partnership with The Coca Cola Company (TCCC), which relied on the intensive involvement, honesty and commitment of management teams from both partners (at both the global and country level) to successfully align very different organizational mindsets, systems, expectations, understanding, visions, and language. This process took about two years. The lessons from this experience are clearly shaping the current processes of developing new corporate partnerships, and there is a strong case for ensuring such knowledge is promulgated through both the Regional Architecture and to women’s civil society through the CSAGs.

39 Henry Mintzberg (1991) emphasizes that an effective organization will be able to manage these tensions with “a consistency of form” (p 66). There is no one best way to design partnerships, but careful consideration of the forces at play can help balance cooperation and competition in a way that avoids ineffective politics or suppresses innovation. Further exploring the theme of dealing with tensions, Bennett, Cook, and Pelletier (2003) propose that “a healthy organization is aware of and addresses the various tensions involved in maintaining levels of optimal health (e.g., serving internal and external customers)” (p. 73). A similar theme was put forward in the recent UN Women corporate evaluation of the Regional Architecture, in which the concept of “polarity management” was advanced as a recommended approach.

Finding 3—Fit for 2030: Since 2011, UN Women has established more than 1,000 partnerships covering a broad and inclusive range of partners. While many of these are integral to UN Women achieving its goals to advance GEEW, the uniqueness of each partnership arrangement combined with the large number of partners and persistent funding gap (that restricts UN Women’s human resource capacity) means that an urgent need exists to consolidate, systematize and/or prioritize partnership management.

Within its work to advance GEEW, UN Women engages at different levels and in different contexts with:

- a. Member States and bilateral donors
- b. Governments in countries where UN Women operates (national women’s machineries and line ministries)
- c. Civil society (women’s rights groups and gender advocates; other organizations including faith-based organizations, traditional leaders’ organizations, youth organizations, organizations representing boys and men, sports clubs, trade unions)
- d. UN agencies and international financial institutions
- e. Regional development banks and regional inter-governmental organizations
- f. Private sector (businesses, philanthropic foundations and high-net worth individuals)
- g. Academia and research institutions
- h. Media
- i. Parliaments
- j. UN Women National Committees
- k. Goodwill Ambassadors and celebrities

The evaluation mapped more than 1,000 documented partnerships at HQ, regional, multi-country and country levels. Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the key findings of this mapping exercise.

FIGURE 6.
Distribution of partnerships by types of partners

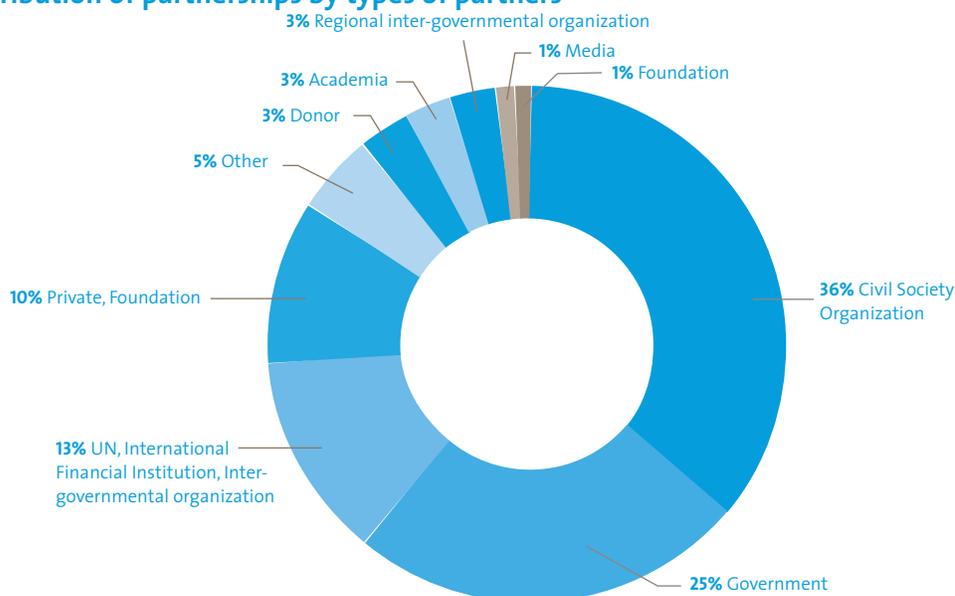
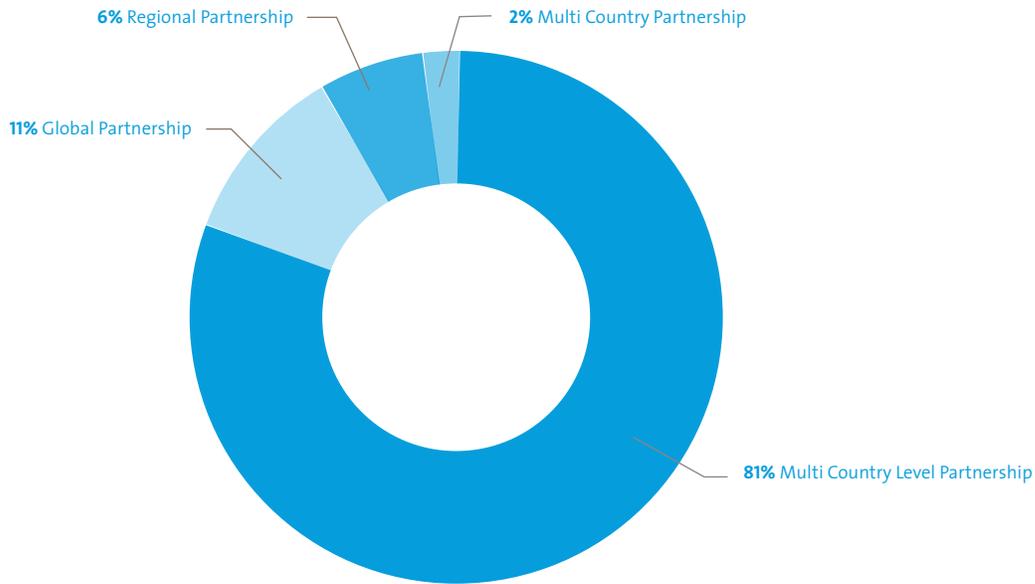


FIGURE 7.
Distribution of partnerships by geographic type



There is substantive evidence (from the Partnership Mapping, HQ assessment, case studies, and portfolio review) that UN Women’s partnerships are individually relevant in the context of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review⁴⁰ and the SDGs⁴¹. A considerable number of UN Women’s strategic partnerships have been established as a means to negotiate (and now mobilize resources to support the national implementation of) the SDGs⁴².

The reach and variety of partners is impressive and opens doors with relevant constituencies in different contexts. However, the number and diversity of UN Women’s

partnerships indicates an organizational focus on quantity and creates challenges in prioritizing work with the most strategic partners (something triangulated by interviewees). Prioritization is necessary to maximize the return on investment of UN Women’s time, brand power and resources. The absence of a unifying framework to achieve this has led to perceptions within UN Women of untapped potential in several partnerships (such as the HeforShe Impact 10x10x10 academic partnerships) and to overstressing current capacity for strategic partnership management (see also Finding 13).

40 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review encouraged partnerships with government, international financial institutions, civil society, the private sector and foundations, all of which UN Women maintains

41 The SDG outcome document re-emphasizes the critical importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in Agenda 2030.

42 By comparison, UN Women is still trying to build international momentum and support to the broader Beijing Platform for Action. While the Beijing Platform for Action has been a focus of UN Women’s communications (social media campaign, media campaign, Step it Up) and intergovernmental work (CSW 2015, Sept. 2015 High Level Summit), the fundraising potential available to operational partnerships is considerably higher in regard to development objectives (Millennium Development Goals, SDGs) than it is in regard to Beijing+20 objectives.

BOX 4. GENDER DATA PARTNERSHIPS

The FPI is currently being rolled out across UN Women, with recent success at the global level in working with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to establish a new \$80 million commitment to support improved gender data and analytics globally (including through UN Women). This builds on existing work undertaken with the UN Department of Statistics on the EDGE project and on Post 2015 indicators—providing a positive example of consolidating and extending existing strategic partnerships.

One of the aims of the current FPI and Strategic Notes process is to consolidate numbers of partnerships. There are, indeed, examples of consolidation of existing partnerships at both HQ (see Box 4) and the decentralized level. For example, UN Women Kenya CO

has embarked on a process to reduce its total number of partnerships with non-state actors. This is meant to reduce transaction costs and focus on most strategic partnerships on the basis of a new Non-State Actors Engagement Strategy that is currently being finalized.

Finding 4—UN Women as a relevant partner for GEEW: UN Women brings technical strengths, its unique UN gender mandate, and convening power to mobilize diverse stakeholders behind partnerships for GEEW. UN Women is seen as a relevant partner for GEEW, especially for the United Nations, governmental partners, wider civil society and the private sector.

The evaluation team’s consultations and outcome mapping process with UN Women’s partners at both the HQ and decentralized levels highlighted several incentives to partner with UN Women as a relevant

and highly valued organization to foster change for GEEW. Table 4 illustrates the main reasons why diverse stakeholders choose to engage in partnerships with UN Women.

TABLE 4.
Key drivers of partnerships with UN Women

UN Women expected added value	Valued in particular by
Unique gender mandate	All types of partners
Gender credibility	Governmental partners, broader civil society (non-gender advocates), private sector, UN agencies and international organizations, donors
Gender technical knowledge (on both norms and practices)	Governments, broader civil society, private sector, to some extent UN and donors
Access, influence, status, and convening power (e.g., around CSW)	Governments, women’s movement and broader civil society, and to some extent private sector and academia
Perceived neutrality and/or ability to play a broker role between different stakeholders	Governments, parts of civil society, some donors
Good linkages with both civil society and governments	Donors, UN and other international/regional organizations

A number of concerns were raised, in particular by donors and parts of the women's movement, about UN Women's perceived relevance and effectiveness as a partner for GEEW. These include:

a. For donors: Areas of concern are UN Women's operational capacities and its ability to manage a multitude of partnerships with limited resources and in very diverse thematic areas. While donors are interested in channeling funding through UN Women to support GEEW through specific projects or on specific themes, there is less appetite for non-earmarked funding support.⁴³

b. For the women's movement: Key concerns revolve around UN Women's understanding of its role in relation to the women's movement. See Section 4.4 findings on human rights and gender equality for a discussion of this issue.

In general, the evaluation encountered a strong feeling among partners (across levels and types of stakeholders) that UN Women needs to further clarify its value proposition, theory of change and purpose of partnerships when engaging with existing or potential partners.

Finding 5—Composite mandate: UN Women's partners consider its composite mandate to be an important comparative advantage. Most strategic partnerships have integrated multiple elements of the mandate, especially operational and normative. However, outside of partnerships specifically with UN entities, country-level partnerships have not fully leveraged UN Women's coordination role within the UN system to fully benefit from this element of the mandate.

Many partners at all levels and across types of stakeholders that were consulted by the evaluation consider UN Women's composite mandate an added value to their partnership, as it should allow for positive synergies and multiplier effects. However, not all partners, especially at the country level, have a good understanding of the three components of UN Women's mandate and their interactions, and tend to focus on the type of work in which they are directly engaged.⁴³

The evaluation found that 60 per cent of the sampled partnerships work to some extent across two components of UN Women's mandate (as shown in Table 5). The partnership with the EU is a good example of successful integration of the operational and normative mandates, both within the EU and in countries where the EU and UN Women both have a presence. The partnership includes collaboration on joint advocacy, policy dialogue and joint programming—including collaboration on EU-wide policy; specific programmes at the global, regional and country level; and informal and formal collaboration in intergovernmental negotiations

Outside of its partnerships with UN sister agencies to support implementation of standards at the national level (which were examined in the Corporate Evaluation on Coordination), there are few examples of partnerships working across three components. This is partially due to the characteristics of the evaluation sample⁴⁴, but it also speaks to observed difficulties in shaping and implementing multidimensional partnerships because of: the highly different skill sets and resources needed to work in each component, the possibly different stakeholders involved, different sets of incentives and bottlenecks, and the tendency of donors to invest more resources in operational work than in the normative and coordination components of UN Women's work. The partnerships with UN-Habitat and the LAS are the only ones in the sample explicitly designed to work across the three mandate components. Both of them have, however, faced some challenges.

While the work on Safe Cities should be an example of combining coordination (UN-Habitat, UNICEF), operational (Safe Cities FPI), and normative (HABITAT

⁴³ An issue that is not unique to UN Women but part of the general international development context.

⁴⁴ The evaluation team deliberately chose not to prioritize coordination-focused partnerships in the sample in order to avoid possible duplications with the UN Women contribution to the United Nations system coordination.

III, CSW) work, the partnership with UN-Habitat has been unable to realize this potential. Initial hopes for a joint global programme on safe cities were never realized, and within a challenging fundraising environment, the parties to the partnership began isolated attempts to mobilize resources for their own programmes. Within this context, evaluation respondents see the specific approaches to gender within the version of Safe Cities advocated by UN Women and UN-Habitat as having increasingly diverged.

The partnership between UN Women and the LAS has had a strong focus on improving the regional normative framework for GEEW and has succeeded in this respect, as described in Finding 6. It has also put emphasis on ensuring coordination of all relevant stakeholders to support normative advancements and eventually implementation of the new norms. The partnership has now entered a new phase with a stronger focus on the implementation of the normative framework (Cairo Declaration) in the member countries and a switch to more operational work. It is becoming apparent, however, that this is not an area in which LAS has sufficient experience and related capacities.

TABLE 5.
Sampled partnerships focus on UN Women’s mandate components

	Global					Egypt			Brazil			Georgia		India			Kenya					
Focus	HeforShe 10x10x10 Impact	European Union	Post 2015 CSOs	The Coca Cola Company	UN-Habitat	Embassy of Japan	CARE Egypt	League of Arab States	Secretariat Policies Women	The Coca Cola Company	Promundo	Ministry of Defense	Public Defender’s Office	TASO Foundation	Jagori (Safe Cities)	Ministries of RD and PR	National Foundation for India	IPSTC	KEWOPA	Kenyatta University		
Primary																						
Secondary																						

Normative Operational Coordination



UN Women took 350 girls from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to watch Olympic handball during the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. The girls are all participants in the One Win Leads to Another programme, which uses sport as a tool to reduce gender inequalities and build and maintain confidence in their lives. Photo: UN Women/Beatrice Frey

4.2

What have strategic partnerships achieved?

EFFECTIVENESS: How effectively have UN Women strategic partnerships contributed to GEEW results (normative, operational and coordination) at global, regional and national levels?

Finding 6—Contributions to intended results: Strategic partnerships have contributed to results larger than the sum of their parts. Good progress has been made in achieving planned results and signs show that many are on track to contribute to transformative change. Contributions have also been made to strengthening capacity to advance GEEW within the partner organizations, third parties and UN Women itself.

UN Women has established a wide spectrum of partnerships at the global, regional and national levels as well as with strategic partners from civil society, government, UN system, private sector, academia, celebrities, foundations, media, sports, youth organizations, men and boys, and faith actors. In addition, partnerships have been forged in the political space with G77

and China, Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States, Latin America and the Caribbean, African Union, La Francophonie, LAS, Gulf Cooperation Council and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. As a result, gender mainstreaming is evident in normative instruments such as the G77 Santa Cruz Declaration and Samoa Pathway of Small Island Developing States.

Qualitative analysis of the achievement of results from each sampled strategic partnership was undertaken along a continuum of change from basic to advanced level results. “Basic” expected results were met or partially met in nearly all cases; “good” results were at least partially achieved in the majority of cases; “advanced” results were achieved to some extent in approximately half of the partnerships (see Table 6).

Qualitative analysis⁴⁵ of partnerships shows that results have been achieved through partnerships that could not have been achieved by each organization alone or through contractual relationships.⁴⁶ Partnerships have contributed to positive changes in partner organizations and third parties, and to a lesser extent within UN Women itself.

a. Partners’ main gains have been in terms of increased awareness, capacities, knowledge, resources, reach and influence, changed policies and practices, and gender mainstreaming.

b. UN Women has mostly benefitted in terms of increased access, credibility and influence to broader constituencies and to a lesser extent in terms of knowledge, capacities and resources.

c. Partnerships have also contributed to significant positive changes within **third parties** (mostly duty bearers), with evidence of positive changes in their level of GEEW awareness and knowledge, and related changes in policies, practices and behaviours.

TABLE 6.
Detailed level of evidence for contributions to partnership results

Outcome results	Outcome hypothesis—expected partnership results	Level of evidence		Substantial Evidence
Basic	Expanded UN Women/partner’s reach/influence to new audiences	★★★★★	100%	65%
	Strengthened spaces for dialogue	★★★★★	95%	35%
	Strengthened GEEW knowledge/capacity of UN Women/partner/third parties	★★★★	95%	45%
	Raised partner/third parties’ awareness on GEEW and UN Women mandate	★★★★	90%	50%
Good	Changed third parties/partner’s policies, practices and behaviours in favour of GEEW	★★★★	85%	30%
	Strengthened GEEW data/evidence/knowledge base	★★★★	75%	20%
	More resources mobilized for UN Women/partner ⁴⁷	★★★	65%	55%
	Gender mainstreamed in the existing partner’s projects/strategies/plans	★★★	55%	50%
Advanced	Strengthened GEEW programming/implementation/monitoring of global standards on the ground	★★★	60%	15%
	Norm setting/policy-making process influenced from a GEEW perspective	★★★	60%	25%
	Improved coordination in GEEW	★	25%	5%

⁴⁵ Applying the methodology described in Section 1.3, the sampled strategic partnership results were represented in a “heat map”. Results were also assessed, using the same framework of expected partnership results, for the 15 selected strategic partnerships in the 5 non-visited countries. This assessment was exclusively based on document review, and information could not be validated through interviews and consultations. As a consequence, this information was used only to confirm findings emerging from the other 20 strategic partnerships, and not independently. The full heat map is presented in Annex H.

⁴⁶ In particular in cases in which partnerships allowed each partner to extend its areas of influence and operations to reach new audiences, mobilize new constituencies, work at a larger scale and across levels (e.g., policy and field) and build on synergies and complementarities in mandates, areas of expertise, capacities and resources.

⁴⁷ This calculation is adjusted to count the two TCCC cases as one.

4.2.1 Basic Results

Expanded UN Women and partners' reach and influence to new audiences

Strategic partnerships have been successful in extending UN Women and its partners' reach, credibility and, to some extent influence, to populations or new audiences they could not reach on their own: 65 per cent of partnerships have made substantial progress in expanding UN Women and its partners' reach (the highest score among the different results).

Achievements in this area have been as important for UN Women as for its partners. For example:

- a. Thanks to its partnership with CARE, UN Women gained access to rural populations in Egypt through the Village Savings and Loans Associations; and to small, community based self-help groups in minority areas and with internally displaced populations through the TASO Foundation in Georgia.
- b. The partnership with TCCC allowed UN Women to reach 34,000 cooperative members in 14 states of Brazil, bottling companies worldwide through the global partnership, and to be present at the World Economic Forum.
- c. Up to 100 million rural inhabitants were reached through the partnership with the Ministry for Rural Development in India.

Strategic partnerships have opened doors for UN Women to reach non-traditional, new partners or hard-to-reach stakeholders (e.g., the partnership between UN Women and IPSTC in Kenya has helped UN Women gain access to the Ministry of Defense, increasing UN Women's visibility and credibility with this ministry; the partnership with LAS has allowed UN Women to gain better access to and indirectly influence LAS Member States, some of which are not UN Women's countries of presence).

For governmental partners, working with UN Women has allowed them to gain better access to CSOs with whom UN Women tends to have strong ties and well established networks (e.g., PDO in Georgia; LAS in the Arab States Region, and to some extent UN-Habitat globally). Conversely, civil society partners, thanks to UN Women, have been able to gain better access and more visibility/credibility with relevant governmental actors (e.g., CARE in Egypt, National Foundation for India and Jagori in India, TASO Foundation in Georgia, Promundo in Brazil). For some of them (e.g., CARE and TASO Foundation) this has been one of the most important and strategic achievements of their partnership with UN Women.

Strengthened spaces for dialogue

Partnerships have been successful in creating and maintaining spaces for dialogue among different stakeholders as the basis for developing common positions for advocacy and implementation of GEEW standards:

- a. A global level example is the partnership between UN Women and UN-Habitat, which contributed to global spaces for dialogue on the new urban agenda through CSW and HABITAT III.
- b. At the regional level, the partnership between UN Women and LAS created unique opportunities for dialogue involving UN Member States and CSOs, private sector, and women Members of Parliament in developing, approving and implementing the Cairo Declaration.
- c. At the country level, there are many examples of partnerships increasing space for dialogue, and some of these were considered very important achievements by the involved parties. These include spaces for dialogue on gender responsive budgeting in Georgia created between TASO Foundation, community based organization, municipalities and UN Women; dialogue between corporations on WEPs in Brazil facilitated by the TCCC and UN Women partnership; and the strengthened dialogue between the national women's machinery in Egypt, various

line ministries, and CSOs supported by the UN Women and Government of Japan partnership.

Strengthened GEEW knowledge and capacity of UN Women, its partners and third parties

Ninety-five per cent of partnerships show evidence of progress towards strengthening GEEW knowledge and capacities of the different parties involved or affected by the partnerships (45 per cent substantive evidence and 50 per cent some evidence).

Working in partnerships has enabled UN Women to combine its capacities with partners' areas of expertise and "catchment areas" to strengthen GEEW knowledge and capacity for a diversity of actors, including UN Women, partners and third parties. The challenge faced by these partnerships is to ensure the sustainability of their results and the extent to which there are systems in place to follow up changes in behaviour and practices while at the same time avoiding dependency.

Raised partner and third parties' awareness on GEEW and UN Women mandate

Partnerships have been successful in raising GEEW awareness in UN Women's partners and third parties, with 50 per cent of the sampled partnerships showing substantive evidence of progress and 40 per cent some evidence.

A number of partnerships, usually (but not exclusively) the ones with GEEW advocates, have focused on and made significant progress in raising GEEW awareness of third parties, tapping into and sometimes expanding UN Women's and the partners' respective audiences:

- a.** The partnership with TASO Foundation in Georgia improved awareness in community-based organizations and local governments.
- b.** The partnership with Promundo developed greater GEEW awareness with recipients and providers of the government bolsa familia programme reaching thousands around the country.

- c.** The partnership between UN Women and CARE in Egypt made substantive contributions to raising awareness of gender inequalities and women's rights to safety in public spaces in Safe Cities communities in Cairo, including among groups highly at risk of being harassed (e.g., by *tuk tuk* drivers).

GEEW awareness has improved in the general public through joint media campaigns,⁴⁸ such as the ones conducted by UN Women in partnership with the Government of Japan in Egypt on EVAW. In several cases, GEEW awareness was enhanced directly in the partner. For example, TCCC in Brazil, Ministry of Defense in Georgia, and IPSTC in Kenya.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Partnership with sports organizations: The International Olympic Committee is a global level strategic partnership that had many local level activities in Brazil related to Rio Olympic Games but also activities at the global level related to sport and SDGs. Rugby and martial arts groups in Georgia have reached non-traditional audiences with messages of equality and prevention of violence against women. In Brazil, the partnership with Propeg, a private communications company, resulted in an estimated \$5 million worth of TV time, billboards and other forms of promotion of the anti-violence message and later, HeForShe, making the campaign highly visible throughout the country.

⁴⁹ Although TCCC in Brazil had a commitment to women's empowerment, it found that the partnership deepened their understanding of empowerment and human rights beyond their expectations. In Georgia, extensive training with the Ministry of Defense led them to move from gender focal points to full-time gender advisers in the armed forces, along with a gender adviser to the Minister, to enable them to better sensitize military personnel to gender issues and particularly UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The partnership with UN Women strongly increased IPSTC staff awareness of GEEW and more specifically on women, peace and security. At the global level, the HeForShe Impact 10x10x10 has contributed to raising additional awareness on GEEW among students and faculty members in the participating universities and about WEPS commitments among corporate partners.

4.2.2 Good results

Changed partners' and third parties' policies, practices and behaviours in favour of GEEW and gender mainstreamed in the existing partners' projects, strategies and plans

Strategic partnerships with duty bearers have influenced internal policies, practices and behaviours from a GEEW perspective, thus helping to advance implementation of global norms and standards.

- a. In the cases of ISPTC in Kenya and Ministry of Defense in Georgia, strengthened internal capacities and raised awareness on GEEW and women, peace and security have led to substantial changes in their internal policies and practices and to mainstreaming gender in existing programmes (e.g., IPSTC training programmes) in alignment with their commitments to the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- b. The partnership between UN Women and TCCC has led the company to better align its internal policies and practices with its commitment to the WEPs, to influence its subsidiaries in this direction (e.g., bottling companies), and to become a champion for WEPs with other corporations.

Strategic partnerships have also shown results in influencing third parties. Working together, UN Women and Jagori were able to influence key policies in India on safety in public transport and sexual harassment in line with Safe Cities and Agenda 2030 commitments. In Georgia, thanks to the partnership with UN Women, gender was mainstreamed in the PDO and it increased its proactiveness in monitoring and making recommendations to the government regarding its implementation of global norms on gender equality. In partnership with UN Women, the SPM in Brazil was able to work with the Ministry of Justice to introduce a law on femicide, based on the “Latin American Model Protocol to Investigate Violent Deaths of Women based on Gender (Femicide)”.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ United Nations Regional Offices of OHCHR and UN Women, “Latin American Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women”. Accessible at: <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/LatinAmericanProtocolForInvestigationOffemicide.pdf>

Strengthened GEEW data, evidence and knowledge base

Twenty per cent of the sampled partnerships showed substantial evidence of strengthening data and knowledge on GEEW. It appears that only the partnerships that had knowledge and data generation as one of their explicit objectives made strong progress in this respect (Promundo, PDO, Jagori, HeforShe Impact 10x10x10). In a number of cases, progress has been slower than expected, pointing to the need not only for specific resources and capacities for knowledge generation but also for systems in place to manage, use and leverage the knowledge within and through the partnership. For example in Brazil, the partnership between SPM and UN Women produced several studies and a significant body of knowledge that was used within SPM but was underutilized by other ministries and outside of government.

More resources mobilized for UN Women and its partners

Strategic partnerships have been successful in mobilizing resources for UN Women and its partners, both directly and indirectly (55 per cent made substantive progress in mobilizing resources for UN Women and/or its partners). The majority of sampled partnerships entailed direct financial support from UN Women to the partner, or vice versa. A number of partnerships also entailed joint financial or in-kind support to joint activities. The partnership with the EU has mobilized

BOX 5. PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Brazil illustrates both the potential and risks inherent in having a resource mobilization strategy heavily relying on strategic partnerships. While resource mobilization has been successful in the period under review, current events in Brazil (as this report is being written) show the risk of reliance on external resource mobilization: \$1 million a year from the government is in question now that the partner Ministry for Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights has been reduced to a department in the Ministry of Justice. The TCCC contract is also ending after its three-year term.

significant resources to GEEW through a combination of engendering spending by directorates, supporting UN Women programmes to access EU grants, and providing a basis for partnerships to be developed between EU delegations and UN Women COs.

Partnership with UN Women has helped some organizations, particularly CSOs and women's organizations, to both improve their capacity and gain access to and credibility with donors:

- a. The TASO Foundation was able to access funds from another donor to expand the work developed in partnership with UN Women. Additionally, community groups were able to access municipal funds through co-financed projects and gender budgeting.
- b. KEWOPA in Kenya was able to expand its donor base thanks to the institutional capacity strengthening provided by UN Women.
- c. National Foundation for India was able to leverage endorsement by UN Women (and UNFPA) to attract additional funds for budget analysis and GirlsCount.
- d. For LAS, the partnership with UN Women has been instrumental in securing funding from the EU Spring Forward for Women programme.

Partnerships have helped UN Women to strengthen its visibility and credibility in newer areas of intervention or with new stakeholders, thus leading to new funding. For example, the partnership with IPSTC in Kenya has led to new funding from Japan for the UN Women Kenya Country Office on women in terrorism. When strategic partnerships demonstrate early results they have been able to expand and extend the funding base. For example, Kenyatta University and UN Women Regional Office for Arab States have been able to jointly mobilize in-kind contributions and funding from Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation and the Gulf African Bank for the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership. In Egypt, the successes of UN Women and CARE's joint work on Safe Cities have led USAID to commit to a new multi-year

EVAW programme and to Japan providing funding for a joint education programme.

Some exceptions exist: for example, the Global Safe Cities programme was unsuccessful in mobilizing the intended joint resources that were originally intended. Interviewees revealed that weak joint fundraising efforts and tensions between the entities about fundraising led to UNICEF, and then UN Women and UN-Habitat separately pursuing their own paths. UN Women is now mobilizing resources through the positioning of Safe Cities as a flagship programme. Sample partners that were interviewed for the Corporate and university champions in the HeforShe Impact 10x10x10 initiative also expressed concern about transparency and parity between different partners in expectations for resource mobilization. This led to uncertainty amongst the different groups involved in this innovative initiative.

4.2.3 Advanced results

Strengthened GEEW action and programming at the country level and strengthened implementation and monitoring of global GEEW standards

Examples of partnerships contributing to stronger national implementation of global standards include:

- a. Scaling up existing GEEW programmes to benefit larger populations (e.g., Village Savings and Loans Associations in Egypt thanks to the partnership with CARE).
- b. Advancing the implementation of GEEW-supportive laws, policies and plans (e.g., Ministry of Rural Development flagship programmes in India and implementation of the Maria de Penha law with SPM in Brazil).
- c. Implementing global GEEW standards at the country level (e.g., support to the realization of the New Urban Agenda in a sample of 100 Smart Cities in line with Safe Cities and Agenda 2030 commitments by the Jagori in India).

- d. Strengthening monitoring of GEEW commitments (e.g., PDO in Georgia—see Box 6.)

BOX 6. PDO (GEORGIA)

The PDO is the ombudsman for women’s rights, supported and strengthened through partnership with UN Women. The partnership resulted in a gender strategy, mainstreaming gender throughout all areas of its work, and a proactive approach in monitoring government commitment to gender equality. This includes the development of a shadow report on CEDAW, a monitoring tool for the implementation of the Bangkok rules, and strong joint advocacy on the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul conventions.

Overall, 60 per cent of the case study partnerships show at least some evidence in this area, and 13 per cent show substantive evidence. There are multiple reasons for the modest evidence of this type of contribution, including the fact that several sampled partnerships are relatively new and have not yet been able to (substantively) influence longer term changes (e.g., IPSTC in Kenya). Furthermore, project-based implementation and monitoring arrangements are found to not be conducive to supporting and tracking outcome results over time (e.g., KEWOPA in Kenya, and Embassy of Japan in Egypt).

Some new partnerships show high potential for strengthening implementation of GEEW principles and standards on the ground. These have in common a shared long-term vision and a shared strategy to sustain transformative outcomes.⁵¹

⁵¹ This is the case for example in the partnership between UN Women and Kenyatta University in Kenya in which the partners share a long-term vision to build a critical mass of transformative African leaders that can influence GEEW in their respective countries. Partners are making deliberate efforts to translate this vision into long-term mutual commitments and a sustainable partnership strategy. To date, however, the implementation and tracking of the results of this partnership are still constrained by one-year planning and funding frameworks and related monitoring tools, showing a lack of organizational means to secure long-term institutional commitment.

Norm setting and policy-making processes influenced from a GEEW perspective

Global level

UN Women has consistently collaborated with elements of (women’s) civil society at the global level to influence the outcomes of the various Post 2015 processes, including the Open Working Group, the High Level Panel, and Financing for Development. This is built on—amongst others—historical relationships with civil society in predecessor entities, the Gender Equality Architecture Reform Campaign, the Rio+20 process, the CSAGs, consultations on Beijing +20 and the normal cycle of CEDAW and CSW. The Post 2015 process was particularly notable for the multi-dimensional nature of relationships and coordination with the UN system, Member States and civil society (both the women’s movement and other actors).⁵²

Comparative analysis suggests that strategic alliances have been most successful when built around focused objectives, for example in Financing for Development and the SDG indicator negotiations (11 of the 17 goals now have gender-responsive indicators). These two initiatives benefited from being more specialized, with smaller teams within both UN Women and civil society partners making it easier to coordinate and work together.

The main results include the stand-alone goal on gender equality (SDG 5) and the mainstreaming of gender across indicators for 65 per cent of the goals.

⁵² UN Women was involved in a large array of activities around the Post 2015 process, often working alongside the Women’s Major Group, the Post 2015 Coalition, and individual CSOs as part of an implicit partnership that, at particular stages, crystallized into a more structured partnership through working groups, specially convened consultative meetings, or a dedicated women’s conference (in the case of Financing for Development). While these arrangements were particularly informal around the Open Working Group, the engagement between UN Women teams and women’s groups was more structured during the Financing for Development preparations and conference and, later, in the process of developing SDG indicators.

BOX 7. UN WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE POST 2015 PROCESS

UN Women's decision to not develop a formalized strategic partnership (such as a global platform) between UN Women and specific women's networks limits the legacy of the Post 2015 process in building the capability and coordination of the women's movement. While UN Women consistently works with CSO constituencies in intergovernmental processes, the downside of not having a single platform is a higher transaction cost involved each time and the lost opportunity to build a deeper partnership. The upside is that it becomes easier to maintain the "trusted broker" status of UN Women among states' parties that are being challenged by women's human rights organizations, and it helps mitigate the risk of excluding civil society representatives that are not part of the major networks.

Country level

Substantive evidence of strategic partnership contributions to influencing policy was found in 20 per cent of the sampled decentralized case study partnerships.⁵³ These examples show how advanced level results are best obtained as part of an ecosystem of key stakeholders working in a complementary and coordinated fashion rather than in isolated partnerships, even if very strategic.

- a. The strongest contributions to influencing policy are by partnerships between UN Women and duty bearers—government ministries and agencies (e.g., SPM, PDO) and intergovernmental organizations (e.g., LAS).
- b. A number of partnerships with a strong advocacy focus have had some success in influencing policy and norm setting from outside of the government on behalf of rights holders. This was the case, for example, with CARE and the

⁵³ Percentages derived from the heat map in this section are based only on the 15 case studies at the regional/country level.

Government of Japan in Egypt in relation to the amendment to the Penal Code Sexual Harassment Article.

- c. In another case, the partnership between KEWOPA and UN Women was part of the conducive ecosystem of policy-advocacy and policy dialogue that UN Women supported over the years together with several other partners and that has led to improvements in the Kenyan legal framework in favour of GEEW.⁵⁴ However, it is not possible to directly attribute these types of results to the specific partnership with KEWOPA due to the complex multi-stakeholder processes and a project focus on short-term results.
- d. A strategic partnership between UN Women and the EU delegation in Georgia exerted significant influence on the government to adopt and enact laws and policies in line with global norms on GEEW, especially in the context of its aspirations to greater integration with the EU.

BOX 8. COUNTRY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

SPM (BRAZIL)

UN Women's partnership with SPM has contributed to strengthening GEEW by improving the quality, relevance and advocacy for legislation and policy favouring women's human rights. SPM has been able to provide solid, evidence-based legislative and policy proposals, backed by joint advocacy with UN Women, to have Congress adopt and implement laws involving other ministries—such as the Maria da Penha and the femicide laws with the Ministry of Justice, and the domestic workers law with the Ministry of Labour.



⁵⁴ Including the Affirmative Action Bill of 2015 and the passing into law of the Prevention Against Domestic Violence Bill—PADV Act on 14 May 2015 and the Matrimonial Property Act.

LAS

The partnership between UN Women the Regional Office for Arab States and LAS is a positive example of systemic effects in relation to influencing regional normative and policy frameworks, in a more progressive way than what UN Women had been able to achieve through its work with Member States. The partnership led to the Cairo Declaration for Women in the Arab Region and the Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security. The partnership's successes are built on clearly established mutual added value, reflected in a long-term institutional relationship.

Improved UN coordination of GEEW programming through partnership

A number of partnerships have made efforts to improve coordination among relevant stakeholders, including other UN agencies, but these are still nascent (e.g., UN Women-LAS Regional Coordination Mechanism for the implementation of the Cairo Declaration), or have not yet shown clear evidence of success (e.g., KEWOPA). Three of the sampled strategic partnerships (Jagori, PDO, and LAS) involved other UN agencies to some degree, and represented at least some positive contribution to furthering the coordination of GEEW in the UN system. The limited evidence of contributions towards improved UN coordination is also due to the characteristics of the partnerships sampled for this evaluation, which deliberately excluded partnerships that had coordination as their main focus to avoid overlap with the coordination evaluation.

Finding 7—Contributions to UN Women's Strategic Plan: Clear evidence exists of strategic partnerships contributing to all six of UN Women's Strategic Plan Impact Areas.

In the evaluation sample, the 35 strategic partnerships have made contributions to all six Impact Areas of UN Women's Strategic Plan, as shown in Table 7. There is particularly clear evidence that partnerships have supported UN Women in progressing towards the achievement of its outputs, and some evidence of contribution to outcomes. Examples of results obtained through partnerships by Impact Area are provided in Table 7. These are illustrative and not an exhaustive list of the results achieved.

Context appears to be an important factor that affects the contribution of strategic partnerships to UN Women's results, regardless of the Impact Area. Context includes the:

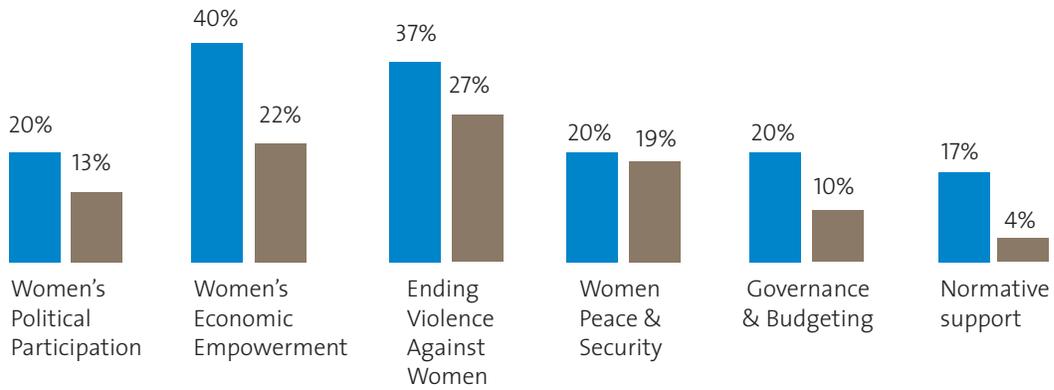
- a. Experience and expertise of UN Women in working in a certain Impact Area in each country and region.
- b. Relative level of prioritization of the different Impact Areas by UN Women COs and ROs.

- c. Relevance of the different Impact Areas to the needs and situations in various UN Women theatres of operation.
- d. Age and history of partnerships.
- e. Availability at the country and regional levels of specific expertise that UN Women can leverage.

The evaluation found some broad correlation between the percentage of partnerships that covered a Strategic Plan Impact Area from the sample and the proportion of programme expenses reported in the Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan (see Figure 8). However, three Impact Areas (norms, governance and economic empowerment) were notable in terms of being covered by significantly more partnerships than their allocation of programme expenses. This suggests that a large proportion of strategic partnerships that cover these Impact Areas are relatively small in financial terms.

FIGURE 8.

Correlation between coverage of strategic partnerships and programme expenses (2015)



While the role of partners is explicitly recognized in UN Women's Strategic Plans and DRF under all its Impact Areas, the DRF does not specifically disaggregate positive changes generated or influenced due to

partnership. For this reason, it is not possible to assess in overall terms the value-addition of strategic partnerships to each impact area using the current results tracking system.

TABLE 7.

Strategic partnership contributions to UN Women Impact Areas

Impact Area	Coverage of partnerships	UN Women programme expenses 2015	Example partnership results
1 Women's political participation	20%	13%	Kenya: Between March and September 2015, the percentage of women participating in debates in parliament increased from 2% to 12% and in county assemblies from 2% to 50% (KEWOPA). East Africa: In two years, the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership trained approximately 650 women politicians, senior officials in public service, and women in agribusiness and health care from 23 African countries.
2 Women's economic empowerment	40%	22%	India: The Ministry of Rural Development engendered the implementation and monitoring of four national economic empowerment flagship schemes covering 35 states and union territories. Brazil: Gender equality and human rights were integrated into training for 34,000 cooperative members in the supply chain; influencing corporate circles (e.g., gender specific chapter in the publication " <i>Sustainable Procurement Manual</i> " ⁵⁵) (TCCC)
3 EAW	37%	27%	Egypt: General public awareness on domestic violence and harassment was strengthened through a media campaign called "Mateskotoosh" ('Speak Up'), the first national media campaign on EAW (Embassy of Japan). Brazil: Promotion and implementation occurred of the very comprehensive Maria do Penha law on EAW, as well as being central to the adoption of a law on femicide. (SPM)
4 Women, peace and security	20%	19%	Georgia: Gender was incorporated into the specialized pre-deployment training for 3,500 peacekeeping forces serving in Afghanistan and the Central African Republic. The number of women in armed forces has increased by 24 per cent 2012-2015. (PDO) Kenya: The IPSTC Gender Policy was launched and a stand-alone objective on gender in the Centre's draft Strategic Plan for 2016- 2020 was included as well as revision of 16 IPSTC courses from a gender perspective.
5 Governance	20%	10%	India: 1700 officials at the national and sub national level trained on gender responsive planning, budgeting and implementation. Two expenditure reviews conducted from the perspective of the most marginalized women (women with disabilities and tribal women) (National Foundation for India).
6 Normative support	17%	4%	Arab States: The Cairo Declaration for Women in the Arab Region (2015) and the Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security (see also Finding 9) were developed (LAS).

⁵⁵ This is the standard procurement manual used by Members of the Brazilian Council for Sustainable Development by 70 companies in Brazil, accounting for 40 per cent of the GDP and directly employing more than one million people.

Finding 8—Organizational targets: UN Women is on track in achieving its organizational targets concerning strategic partnerships. However, the current institutional measure of success for strategic partnerships reflects a focus on quantitative increases and is insufficient to incentivize the pursuit of catalytic outcomes.

UN Women is achieving or likely to achieve the only organizational targets set for partnerships that are in the OEEF of the Strategic Plan (there are no established indicators in the DRF). Two indicators set targets for CSAGs and private-sector partnerships (Table 8).

At the time they were set, these quantitative indicators reflected the priorities of the organization to expand its partnership base in line with its mandate. However, their quantitative nature does not provide an indication of quality, relevance or impact from partnerships.

As a consequence, the current indicators do not incentivize strengthening or maintaining existing partnerships, and they do not capture “catalytic outcomes”—leveraging support to the wider GEEW movement. Programmatically, however, UN Women is increasingly emphasizing the importance of catalytic outcomes. Success in this regard is captured by some offices in the narrative section of their annual reports, but this is not systematic. UN Women does not have a means to account for, celebrate or incentivize offices that mobilize support to the GEEW movement (such as resources mobilized by UN Women partnerships in Brazil through Avon/ELAS) unless these monies pass through UN Women’s accounts.

BOX 9. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN THE OEEF

The OEEF of UN Women’s Strategic Plans for 2011-2013 and 2014-2017 include indicators to track strategic partnerships. They are meant to measure Output 1.2: Effective partnerships between UN-Women and major stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and regional and international organizations continue to play a critical role in advancing the normative and implementation agenda.

TABLE 8.
Progress toward OEEF targets

Indicator	Target (2015)	Progress
Number of CSAGs set up	51 CSAGs established and functioning	42 CSAGs set up (Dec 2015): 1 global, 6 regional, 3 multi-country, 32 national. (9 CSAGs in the process of re-establishing/renewing themselves).
Number of private-sector partnerships set up	12 (at corporate level)	12 (based on MOU or financial contributions)



The Jamaica AIDS Society for Life (JASL), one of UN Women’s partners, staged a civil society Silent Protest to end violence against women and girls. Photo: UN Women/Khristina Godfrey

Finding 9—Partnerships with key constituencies: UN Women has established a wide and diverse base of strategic partnerships across all of its key constituencies, more or less effectively responding to diverse and sometimes conflicting expectations and using innovative, and at the same time evolving, partnership structures and mechanisms.

Civil society

There is an impression within UN Women that partnership with the women’s movement (CSOs and women’s machineries) is both essential and natural: according to the evaluation’s preliminary partnership mapping, CSOs constituted the largest group of UN Women’s partners (36 per cent). At present, most partnerships with CSOs are based on project implementation (through a PCA), or alliances (either loose, such as in the Post 2015 negotiations, or temporary such as in Financing for Development and Rio+20).

Changing relationships in the context of transition from the grant-based business model of UNIFEM to the programmatic model of UN Women, combined with a shrinking space for an already underfunded sector, have resulted in many unresolved expectations among civil society partners, in particular in relation to what role UN Women should play in/with the women’s movement.

Civil society itself is also diverse and heterogeneous—and divergent views exist within both UN Women and the women’s movement about who to engage with. A study undertaken by Oxfam in 2011 based on interviews with 100 organizations in 75 countries found that women’s organizations overwhelmingly thought that UN Women should work in close, transparent partnership with CSOs, and in a manner different from the traditional UN agency.⁵⁶ CSOs were also in the forefront of advocating for the formation of UN Women, and as such have had expectations of their continuing role.

The Gender Equality Architecture Reform Campaign, a coalition involving more than 300 women’s, human rights and social justice organizations worldwide, sought formal civil society participation on the Executive Board, which was not acceptable to many Member States or consistent with the governance arrangements of other entities. In the end,

56 Oxfam, VSO. 2011. “A Blueprint for UN Women”. P 20.

civil society was mentioned only in general and vague references to consultation.⁵⁷ UN Women staff members remain inconsistent in interviews about its level of accountability to the women's movement⁵⁸ (see Finding 1), and mixed expectations were found between representatives of women's CSOs that are more and less familiar with working in the UN system.

A recent evaluation of UN Women's Coordination mandate noted: "UN Women's relationship with CSOs varies widely across contexts and is dependent on a number of factors including, among others: the strength and positioning of CSOs in the national context, the emphasis placed on civil society in the UN Women country strategy, previous relations with CSOs under UNIFEM, and the political alignment on key gender equality policy issues." While the relationship was generally positive, the report noted areas for concern. For example, where UNIFEM used to fund CSOs, some find themselves now competing for funds with UN Women, and the role of the CSAG is not clear. This has led, in some cases, to confusion and disappointment to the point where members have resigned. The report doubted that this mechanism was being leveraged consistently in spite of its potential.⁵⁹

UN Women's partnership with civil society operates on two levels: first, the consultative relationship with civil society and the women's movement through structured meetings, most notably through the CSAG or extended gender working groups; and second, implementing partnerships around specific themes or issues may be a practical and sustainable approach to achieving desired outcomes. In the former case, credibility depends on broad representation, discussion and transparency. In the latter, UN Women has more flexibility to select and develop more in-depth relations with specific strategic partners and to develop non-traditional partnerships to further specific innovative directions.

57 Charlesworth, H. and C. Chinkin. 2013. "The Creation of UN Women". RegNet Research Paper No. 2013/7. P 15.

58 As noted elsewhere in the report, many of UN Women's senior staff come from agencies with different experiences in relations with CSOs and bring this experience into UN Women. UNIFEM staff had developed a form of relating to CSOs that was a positive asset in relating to them as UN Women.

59 UN Women IEO. 2016. "Coordinating for Gender Equality Results: Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to UN System Coordination on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women". P 88.

BOX 10. CASE STUDY OF UN WOMEN AND WOMEN'S CIVIL SOCIETY IN POST 2015

UN Women's engagement with civil society in the Post 2015 processes is characterized by three main types of partnering, all of which took place under an overall convening modality:

- **Structured global working groups:** These are seen as the most effective examples of UN Women working in partnership with civil society, and include the Financing for Development Conference and process, SDG indicator development, and advocacy with the Women's Major Group for commitment to a stand-alone gender goal in the Rio+20 outcome document. These initiatives also represented the closest integration of UN system coordination and civil society partnerships.
- **Loose global alliances of the women's movement:** The Open Working Group process typifies the type of arrangement in which UN Women is "in the room" with other gender advocates but without having a pre-agreed strategy or coordinated set of tactics. Greater communication with selected CSOs and representatives of the Women's Major Group and Post 2015 coalition was seen later on in the process, as were efforts to convene civil society and Member States.
- **Consultation and communication at all levels:** At both the global and country level, UN Women continuously engages in consultations and shares information with specific women's groups through CSAGs, CSW side events, and structured consultation for Beijing +20. While this generated information and knowledge relevant to Post 2015, participants did not see how it was used or connected to the other types of global partnerships.

These different types of partnership created an evolving "ecosystem" of different intersecting relationships with different parts of the women's movement but did not converge into a single platform for common action due to concerns about inclusiveness and the viability of doing so.

Given the enormous diversity of civil society, there is significant variation and disagreement on priorities and tactics that UN Women has to take into account. Most notably, in some countries there is some controversy in the established women’s movement about how much priority should be given to organizations that work with men and/or masculinity, and in some cases, sports teams—both of which are important to UN Women’s HeForShe Campaign.

It is important for UN Women to continue partnership with the women’s movement. This has strong potential to strengthen the advocacy capacity of both partners—lending UN Women the voice of the women’s movement and lending the women’s movement the profile, prestige and, in some cases, protection of the United Nations. This is a partnership based on shared long-term vision, complementarity, mutual interest, advocacy and collective knowledge. On a pragmatic level, partnership with individual CSOs can provide very specific advantages. For example, while Promundo is not part of the traditional women’s movement in Brazil, it provides access to particular global knowledge and experience in addressing masculinities. In Georgia, the TASO Foundation provides UN Women with access to grass-roots experience and knowledge for learning and advocacy. Partnership with both the women’s movement and individual organizations has the high level potential for being strategic.

At the global level, a CSAG was established as a pioneering approach in 2012 to respond to the demand to formalize UN Women’s relationship with civil society and, in particular, the feminist/women’s movement. Realizing this vision encountered practical challenges, especially in terms of organizing regular meetings

and maintaining representativeness over time. To address these challenges, the global CSAG is being re-established as a smaller group, on a rotational basis, providing direct advice to the Executive Director as a “thinking circle”.

UN Women has also created CSAGs at the regional and country level to address the issue of shrinking space for civil society and the need to redefine UN Women’s relationship with the women’s movement. As of December 2015, 6 regional, 3 multi-country and 32 national CSAGs were established, including in all offices visited during the evaluation case studies. These CSAGs have however experienced different levels of success (see Table 9).

CSAGs

CSAGs should be an important nexus for strategic partnership, but the evaluation case studies and the CSAG survey (conducted by UN Women in 2015) suggest that to date it has primarily been a liaison mechanism and has not yet been integrated into the organizational fabric of UN Women decision making. CSAGs have, however, provided a useful forum for UN Women to help maintain a strong institutionalized relationship with civil society (e.g., in Brazil) and a good information and knowledge sharing mechanism (in India and Brazil). The presence of a strong civil society movement in Brazil and India is seen as an important factor in making the CSAG work. In Georgia, where civil society is not very strong, consulted CSAG members valued it as a needed space for discussion, solidarity and mutual support, and as a forum for exchange of information to avoid duplication and developing common messages.

TABLE 9.
CSAG status in evaluation case study countries

Country/region		CSAG status
Brazil Georgia	★★★★	Despite some challenges, these offices are making the CSAGs work.
India	★★★	The CSAG is perceived as useful (in particular for knowledge sharing), but is not yet clearly integrated with programme strategies or partnership development.
Eastern and Southern Africa Region and Egypt	★★	The CSAG exists, but there is limited use to date.
Kenya and Arab States	★	CSAGs were suspended because of limited perceived relevance and usefulness.

Many challenges have limited the effectiveness of the CSAGs at all levels, as emerged in UN Women's CSAG survey and confirmed by the evaluation's HQ assessment and case studies. UN Women staff and partners at the decentralized level generally perceive CSAGs as a one-size-fits-all model "parachuted" from HQ, which also failed to provide sufficient direction and clarity on several important aspects including the following:

- a. Unclear role and purpose:** The advisory role of the CSAG has not been clearly and coherently understood by UN Women staff across levels and CSOs. This was due to unclear guidelines combined with very different contexts and interpretations. For some respondents, CSAGs' main role is to share information, while for others it is to advise and thus influence UN Women's work. Other interpretations pointed to jointly working on advocacy messaging and strategies. Some CSOs even saw the CSAG as a conduit to UN Women's funding. There are different interpretations on whether the CSAGs should focus on normative or operational work, or a combination. There is also unclear understanding on whether and how CSAG's advice should be incorporated into UN Women actions (there is currently no clear system to do so).
- b. Undefined accountabilities:** It remains unclear what UN Women expects from its CSAG members (e.g., specific deliverables) and what members expect from UN Women. Also the level and mechanisms of mutual accountability are not clear.
- c. Difficulties in defining membership:** In particular, how and to what extent can the CSAGs be made representative (which can be especially complicated in large and diverse countries).
- d. Contextual adaptability:** UN Women staff and partner CSOs questioned the extent to which having a CSAG made sense in all different contexts (e.g., where other coordination and consultation mechanisms between UN Women and CSOs already exist, such as expanded gender thematic and working groups that include civil society) and how it should or could be adapted to contexts with a strong civil society and supportive

environment, and contexts with an underdeveloped civil society and hindering environment. In some cases, unclear and competitive interactions with other existing CSO networks and other types of CSO engagements and relationships with UN Women were reported.

- e. Logistics and communications:** The main challenges concerned how to come together and communicate on a regular basis, especially for regional and multi-country CSAGs.

UN Women SPD is aware of these challenges and has made efforts to address them by conducting a survey of CSAG members and developing a new CSAG Strategy in December 2015. The strategy will seek to address the majority of concerns voiced by stakeholders in visited countries and by survey respondents. As this strategy is new, it remains to be seen how it will affect CSAG effectiveness in the future and how the CSAGs will be integrated into the life of UN Women, without making the Entity formally accountable to these structures.

Corporations

Since its creation, UN Women has increasingly engaged with the private sector (in particular corporations). As of 2014, it had set up 12 global partnerships with private-sector organizations. In addition, pro-bono relationships with two public relations firms (Ogilvy Dubai and Publicis Dallas) support UN Women corporate branding and development of HeForShe. More recently, 10 corporate champions have joined the HeForShe Impact 10x10x10 initiative and UN Women is in the process of launching the Gender Equality Line, a cause marketing platform. WEPs signatories under the Global Compact include 1,226 corporations around the world. A global Private-sector Advisory Council has been established as a liaison-type partnership mechanism.

At the global level, the evaluation heard evidence that major partnerships are still identified and introduced by the Executive Director's Office, but that there is increasingly space being made to ensure that the design process for these partnerships is more inclusive of other parts of UN Women and involves a more



UN Women Civil Society Advisory Group meeting with UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka during the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Photo: UN Women/Julia Weeks



UN Women's inaugural HeForShe Parity Report was announced at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where the heads of these Fortune 500 companies gathered alongside Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson. Photo: UN Women/Celeste Sloman

assertive and shared set of demands from other parts of UN Women (for example, in the selection criteria for HeforShe Impact 10x10x10 corporate champions).

At the country and regional level, case studies show that private-sector partnerships are pursued in all countries and regions to different degrees, but mostly in a rather tentative way and with many uncertainties on how to make them work.

- a.** India MCO and Brazil CO: these UN Women offices are the most advanced, with several examples of innovative partnerships with the private sector. These are mainly intended to: mobilize resources (all), influence corporate practices from a women's economic empowerment perspective (e.g., TCCC), and leverage capacities and networks for awareness raising (e.g. Avon, PROPEG, GLOBO TV).
- b.** Kenya CO, Egypt CO, Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, Regional Office for Arab States: UN Women in these countries/regions has identified the private sector as a potential strategic partner, in particular to expand its spaces of influence and mobilize resources. UN Women offices feel a corporate pressure to engage with the private sector, but modalities are still unclear and capacities have not yet aligned. Various examples of initial engagements with the private sector exist, but they remain *ad hoc* and mostly short-term (with the exception of TCCC in Egypt). Examples include: Gulf-African Bank in relation to African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership and extractive industries in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region; Intel in Kenya; and SHELL, Egypt Stock Exchange and Vodafone in Egypt.
- c.** Georgia: The UN Women CO has only recently started to explore the possibility of partnerships with the private sector. In the current Georgian context however, they are not perceived as highly strategic.

The evaluation observed a higher degree of resolution in UN Women on the importance of working with the private sector than was found in previous

relevant evaluations. At the same time, there are divergent views on the relative weight of the two primary purposes for engaging with the private sector (influencing internal changes through, for example, the WEPs, or mobilizing resources for programmatic work). The case for working with the private sector is no longer disputed among UN Women staff members, but it is frequently presented with a degree of cognitive dissonance (the main logic of working with corporations being to influence their “footprint” on the world, but the main activities being orientated towards fundraising).

Despite recognizing the direct role of the corporate sector as change agent, key UN Women stakeholders suggest that the ultimate driver of current strategic partnership strategies with this constituency remains resource mobilization.⁶⁰ This is at odds with available evidence on the limits of corporate contributions to UN Women and to the United Nations more broadly. Despite steady growth in private-sector contributions to UN Women (\$11.8 million in 2015), these continue to represent a small fraction of UN Women's funding (3.8 per cent of total voluntary contributions in 2015). Total voluntary contributions from corporations, private foundations and other non-state institutions may grow further in 2016, especially with a forthcoming grant to the Data Flagship Programme from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and commitment from Alibaba to provide support to achieve GEEW globally by 2030. However, data from other UN agencies⁶¹ suggests that corporate contributions will never be sufficient to meaningfully address the structural underfunding of GEEW and more broadly UN work. For example, between 2009 and 2013, private companies contributed 0.5 per cent of all financial contributions to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). By comparison, the UNICEF National Committees (that mostly fundraise from private citizens) provide around

⁶⁰ This also affects the allocation of human resources. For example, there is only a single dedicated staff member in UN Women to the WEPs and a consultant in the Global Compact for the WEPs paid by UN Women

⁶¹ Adams, B. and J. Martens. 2015. “Fit for Whose Purpose? Private Funding and Corporate Influence in the United Nations”.

one third of that agency's budget—\$1.4 billion in 2015.⁶² In 2015, UN Women National Committees contributed 0.5 per cent of the entity's budget, \$1.7 million, suggesting that this partnership has high potential that has not been fully leveraged.

The United Nations and multilateral institutions

UN coordination has a critical intersection with strategic partnerships. Not only can UN entities act as strategic partners to UN Women (such as UN-Habitat in regard to Safe Cities), but the capacity and reach of the UN Country Team is a significant (and often underutilized) asset in developing and supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships for GEEW.

Limited evidence was found at the country level on UN Women's role in UN coordination positively or negatively influencing strategic partnerships and vice versa. However, where UN entities are coordinated and can manage to avoid fundraising competition, synergies with strategic partners can be more easily realized (such as around the Girls Count campaign in India). Where UN entities are not coordinated, fundraise bilaterally, or articulate different conceptual perspectives on the same theme (e.g., Safe Cities globally), partners tend to lose confidence and are cautious in fully committing to partnerships.

Adopting a “communications and convening approach” to mobilizing and developing partnerships that include UN agencies has shown great promise in a number of countries (e.g., India, Brazil). However, the evaluation repeatedly heard evidence that the number of campaign brands (UNiTE, Step It Up, 16 Days of Action, HeForShe, etc.) is becoming confusing, starting to result in partner fatigue, and risks diffusing the potency of individual messages.

UN Women has also been exploring partnerships with international financial institutions. UN Women has a framework partnership with the World Bank, but the potential of this is reportedly under-realized

because of insufficient programme capacity to follow-up systematically at the country level and imbalances in financial, human and political capital between the partners.

Looking forward, evaluation respondents generally agree that the greatest challenge for strategic partnership across UN Women's stakeholder groups (but especially in coordination with other UN entities) will be supporting national implementation of the SDGs and Beijing Platform for Action. At the country level, flagship programmes could provide a useful framework for UN Women to combine its coordination, normative and operational mandates if they are approached as a partnership modality (rather than as direct implementation).

Member States and regional intergovernmental organizations

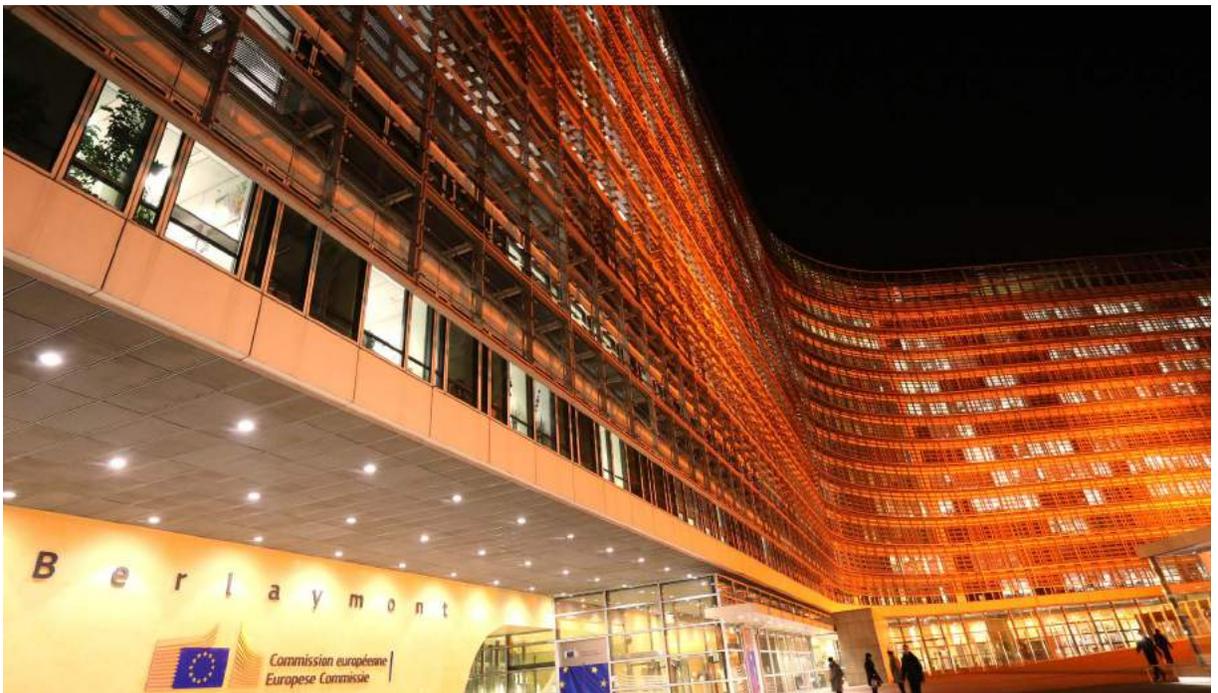
UN Women's integrated mandate implies multiple types and levels of engagement with governments. These include (but are not limited to) relations with Member State delegations in intergovernmental processes; partnerships with government ministries and agencies in programme countries; and relationships with bilateral donors at the global, regional and country levels. Given the working model used by the evaluation, not all of these relationships can be considered strategic partnerships, although many of them have important strategic elements (see Finding 2).

For example, the evaluation considers that Member State delegations in intergovernmental processes cannot automatically be considered as strategic partners since they are concerned with the purposes of the intergovernmental meetings, rather than forming strategic partnerships with UN Women to implement normative commitments in the national policy framework. There is, however, a case for supporting better strategic coordination between foreign and domestic ministries (and civil society) so as to implement gender equality norms, and a strategic partnership with one (or more) government departments could form the basis of this coordination.

62 For more information, see: http://www.unicef.org/spanish/about/execboard/files/2016-ABL5-MTR_of_Integrated_Budget-ACABQ_report-10June2016.pdf and http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Annual_Report_2015_En.pdf



In Mexico, UN Women commemorated International Women's Day by inaugurating 50 women-only buses, known as Athena, in support of the Safe Cities programme. Photo: UN Women/Juan Luis Cedeño



On 25 November 2016, the headquarter building of the European Commission (Berlaymont) in Brussels, Belgium is lit up in orange to support the Orange the World campaign to end violence against women. Photo: EU/Francois Walschaerts

Similarly, relationships with bilateral donors vary in substance, from pure donor-recipient relationships to more multifaceted strategic partnerships that go beyond resources. Examples of UN Women and donor governments exchanging and building on each other's knowledge, capacities, influence and access include liaison offices with Japan and the EU, and Sida in the Regional Office for Arab States and Kenya. The case studies reveal that building these types of relationships requires leadership engagement on both sides and a shared vision for jointly working towards transformational change in GEEW. It also requires sufficient time for what has been described as a courting process, not necessarily starting off with a financial contribution but with other types of engagement and collaboration (e.g., joint events, campaigns).

The evaluation found evidence of important results achieved by strategic partnerships with bilateral donors, in particular in terms of amplifying the impact and reach of programmes through increased resources, relevant expertise and supportive networks (see Finding 6). These partnerships, however, tend to experience an unequal power balance between UN Women and the donor given UN Women's continuing shortfall in financial resources, despite the comparative advantage of UN Women's universal mandate. This has led to examples of skewing partnership priorities towards the donor's perspective, including in terms of the sector of joint work and the selection of key stakeholders to involve.

National women's machineries, as the institutional GEEW champion in each country, remain one of UN Women's "natural" but also mandated partners in all countries. While this approach remains relevant and aligned with UN Women's values and culture, the context can mean that these partnerships may not be the most strategic in terms of their potential to create transformational change for GEEW (e.g., when the women's machineries are extremely under-resourced or have no clout within the government).

Overall, the case studies reveal that, in order to address these challenges and leverage diverse opportunities to influence GEEW, UN Women is increasingly diversifying its partnerships with governments at the country level. Women's machineries are still natural

partners, but more partnerships are now being forged with line ministries, including in non-traditional sectors of engagement for UN Women where there is strong potential for change in favour of GEEW. These include: ministries of defense to work on women, peace and security; ministries of the interior (e.g., police) and justice on EAW; economic ministries (e.g., agriculture, extractive industries) on women's economic empowerment; and central ministries (finance, budget, foreign affairs, decentralization) on gender responsive budgeting and governance issues.

There are many examples of positive results of these partnerships (see Finding 6). However, they also pose new challenges, particularly in terms of ensuring sufficient practical and philosophical alignment between UN Women and its partners, speaking the same language, and having appropriate capacities to work together. There are some positive examples from Brazil (SPM) and Georgia (PDO) and Egypt (National Women's Council) co-strategizing beyond specific joint activities and projects (e.g., mutually influencing national priorities), but this has yet to be fully institutionalized and systematized (e.g., in the way UN Women develops its strategic notes). Once again, flagship programmes may prove a good opportunity to rationalize and integrate national partnerships if planned in a participatory manner.

UN Women has also more or less successfully engaged in partnerships with regional intergovernmental organizations. The partnership with the EU enables UN Women to contribute to policy development by a regional body, specific advocacy activities (such as on EAW), in addition to accessing joint programming and financial cooperation and developing country-level partnerships between EU delegations and UN Women COs as well as HQ. This has been successful in large part due to information and programmatic support from the UN Women liaison office in Brussels and subsequent outreach by COs and HQ. Another partnership, with the African Union, is held by a single UN Women staff member that is also a Country Rep and primary liaison to UN Economic Commission for Africa. In a resource-constrained environment, both the African Union and UN Women have experienced challenges in leveraging the potential of the partnership to deliver strategic results.

Finding 10—Enabling and hindering factors: Strategic partnerships are most effective when long-term engagement and commitment to GEEW in both partners is complemented by clarity between partners and responsiveness to the relevant contexts and mutual needs. The main limiting factors are a constant time-pressure of under-resourced UN Women teams and, as a result, short-term objectives, fractured working arrangements, insufficient internal communication, and reliance on the capacity (and energy) of a few individuals.

The HQ assessment and country case studies identified a number of factors that, in the different contexts of operations of UN Women, tend to support or hinder the effectiveness of strategic partnerships. For a complete list see Annex I. The evaluation team subsequently mapped these factors against the PGA Framework used by the evaluation. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 shows that supporting factors relate to compliance-type accountability in the PGA model. Conversely, hindering factors relate to transparency and responsiveness dimensions of accountability. This indicates that UN Women and its partners put most emphasis on the compliance dimension of partnership governance. However, this is insufficient, and partnerships require the other dimensions of accountability (transparency and responsiveness) to be successful.

TABLE 10.
Factors supporting and hindering UN Women strategic partnership performance

Enabling factors	Supporting factors	Hindering factors
Shared long-term vision and commitment (being held to account)⁶³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of UN Women’s and partners’ leaders • Strategic alignment of vision, roles and mandates • Complementary strengths • Open, transparent communications • Institutionalization of the partnership • Strong governance structure • Sufficient time spent on planning and maintenance • Long-term commitments • Documenting results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misalignment and misunderstanding of organizational values and cultures • Limited staff time and capacities for partnerships • Short-term project-based funding and implementation
Inclusiveness, transparency, trust and mutual accountability (giving account)⁶⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient time spent on planning and maintenance to ensure mutual benefit • Communications • Documenting results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited staff time and capacities for partnerships • Reliance on individual staff to maintain relationships • Internal organizational silos • Limited transparency in internal communications and decision making
Responsiveness and leadership (taking into account)⁶⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalization of the partnership • Supportive external context • Engagement of UN Women’s and partners’ leaders • Strong governance structures • Strategic alignment of vision, roles and mandates • Complementary strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hindering external contexts • Reliance on individual staff to maintain relationships • Misalignment and misunderstanding of organizational values and cultures • Internal organizational silos • Misalignment between global priorities and the local context

63 Focuses on assessing the ways that UN Women holds itself to account through embedding the human rights and GEEW principles into key partnership management approaches and on how partners hold each other to account in order to work in an effective partnership and also to demonstrate human rights and WEPS.

64 Focuses on internal and external clarity about how progress is communicated and how decisions are taken.

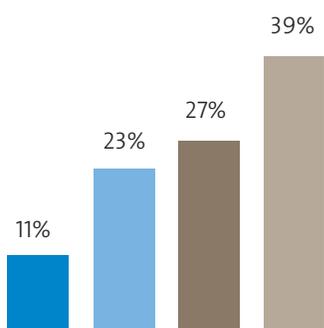
65 Focuses on responding to relevant contexts, each others’ needs and concerns in relation to the partnership and the transformative outcomes it can deliver.

Twitter polls and an online discussion conducted by the evaluation also explored which factors are the most important for effective partnerships for GEEW. These emphasized the importance of the responsiveness and transparency dimensions of partnership governance to ensure positive outcomes in a partnership (see Figure 9). Respondents to the online discussion highlighted the importance of the following elements to ensure a successful partnership for GEEW:

- a. Partner organizations reflecting on how to apply their own values within their partnership working arrangements, especially with regard to what counts as indicators of success.
- b. Mutuality and respect.
- c. The need to explicitly address power differences.
- d. Leadership that exercises feminist values.
- e. Long-term commitments and a shared vision.

FIGURE 9. Factors that support and hinder effective gender equality partnerships (Twitter poll results)

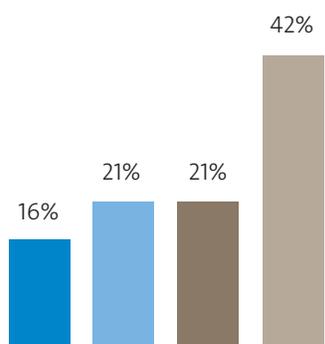
Supportive factors



725 VOTES

- Multi-stakeholder
- Responsiveness
- Transparency
- Feminist values

Hindering factors



492 VOTES

- Poor decisions
- Unclear roles
- Vague mission
- No accountability



Khatia Dzadzua is displaced from Abkhazia, Georgia. She is a leader of locally set up community based organization - which originated from the women's self-help group set up with initial help of UN Women and Taso Foundation. Photo UN Women/Maka Gogaladze

4.3

How well geared is UN Women towards strategic partnership?

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY: How have (or can) UN Women organizational structures, systems and processes enabled an efficient implementation of its strategic partnerships approach?

Finding 11—Governance and accountability: UN Women can build on the lessons of the recent past to establish clear ways of negotiating and managing strategic partnerships to make them accountable and sustainable.

Assessment of the current performance of partnerships using the PGA Framework diagnostic (Table 11) shows that UN Women's strategic partnerships are strongest in terms of formal governance structures and financing. These relate to the first aspect of accountability—compliance (being held to account). The main areas for improvement relate to engaging, evaluating and communicating around partnerships to build trust and improve decision-making. These relate to the other

two aspects of accountability—transparency (giving an account⁶⁶), and responsiveness (taking account).

The evidence is mixed at the global level in terms of whether more formalized partnerships are more effective. The EU partnership, framed by an MOU, has led to a range of activities that include informing the development of regional policy, delivering

⁶⁶ The results tracking system is the first step in addressing the measure and performance of partnerships (giving an account). However, the evaluation concludes that current performance metrics (OEEF indicators) for partnerships will need to be revised if they are to incentivize catalytic outcomes.

TABLE 11.

Strengths and weaknesses of UN Women strategic partnerships using the PGA indicators

PGA diagnostic indicators	Current performance
Adopting a legitimate and credible form of governance	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Assuring financial integrity	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Determining a clear mission and identity and gain commitment from partners	★ ★ ★ ★
Undertaking strategic planning to consider critical success factors and risks	★ ★ ★
Evaluating and communicating performance	★ ★
Engaging with stakeholders to help manage risks, increase trust and improve decision-making	★

communications and advocacy campaigns, and supporting country-based programming around the world. These various activities have positively reinforced each other and are enabled by a dedicated UN Women team in Brussels.

By comparison, UN Women’s relationship with UN-Habitat, also formalized by an MOU, has had more mixed results. While the UN Women-supported Advisory Group on Gender Issues has been successful in mainstreaming gender into UN-Habitat’s Strategic Plan, the envisaged joint programming on Safe Cities stalled in the operational domain and up until HABITAT III in the normative domain (with, for example, both entities promoting different perspectives on the Safe Cities concept).

The arrangements that have worked for UN Women in governing partnerships include steering groups and working groups. Having individual focal persons has not been an effective approach. Most importantly, there needs to be a consultative process within UN Women during the partnership negotiations, a mechanism for conflict management, an exit or transition strategy in place before it is needed, and the attention of senior decision makers. A good example of this is the Unilever partnership.

The evaluation found a strong case for establishing greater transparency and engagement of stakeholders (inside and outside the organization) around UN Women’s decisions about whom the organization partners with on a global basis. This does not mean

getting stakeholders involved in such decisions, but being open about what UN Women’s strategy is and why it is making the decision to partner with certain organizations.

There are strongly held views of women’s human rights advocates and trade unions towards corporate partners, but this issue also applies to work with particular Member States and wider civil society outside of the women’s movement. While it is both the prerogative and mandate of UN Women to partner with any stakeholder of its choosing, top-down instigation of partnerships, unclear principles within UN Women guiding strategic partnership, and low-levels of internal coordination carry a high risk in terms of public relations.

While means for achieving greater clarity around partnership formation have previously been discussed with women’s civil society, a clear system or process of implementation has yet to be established for doing so. Given UN Women’s comparative advantage of convening and promoting dialogue among diverse groups of actors the evaluation considers that UN Women could be more open with the wider gender equality community about potential partnerships before they are publicly launched. If there is an explicit strategy to influence structurally important actors to influence change from within, then this can also be better communicated to gender advocates. Such approaches could lessen the extent to which UN Women itself becomes the focus for tensions between external actors.

Finding 12—Human resources: UN Women’s leadership, both globally and at the decentralized level (e.g., directors and representatives), plays a central role in fostering strategic partnerships, pursuing innovation and dealing successfully with problems.

There is recognition among UN Women staff of the importance of the organization’s formal leadership (Under Secretary-General, Assistant-Secretary General, directors and representatives) to strategic partnerships, both during the initial negotiations and in maintaining positive relationships. Despite this, there is no systematic leadership training on strategic partnerships.

In very few cases, a dedicated team manages a strategic partnership, such as with the EU. In a number of other cases (such as the relationships with the African Union, LAS, and UN economic commissions), management of the partnership is assigned to a particular position within the UN Women structure (alongside the other responsibilities of that position).

For the large majority of partnerships, however, the management of the relationship simply falls to the member of the professional staff that was involved in acquiring the relationship. As in the case of leadership, there is no systematic training in partnership management or competency development for these staff members. Since partnership account management is not a recognized competency in UN Women, the managers of partnerships tend to be appointed on an *ad hoc* basis and frequently change with staff movements.⁶⁷

- a. Overall, the evaluation observed that experience and capacity in managing partnerships is highly individualized, with strong leadership roles

played by the Executive Director Office, Deputy Executive Director⁶⁸ and SPD at the global level, with specific expertise in SPD. Similarly, at the decentralized level, Country Representatives, Regional Directors and their deputies have played critical roles in establishing and supporting strategic partnerships.

- b. At the country level, the evaluation found the prevalent notion that responsibility for partnerships is assigned to staff in relation to their thematic portfolio. This reflects, to some extent, the absence of strategic partnerships as a specific functional area within the Regional Architecture (which may not be inappropriate in itself).
- c. UN Women staff allocated the management responsibility for partnerships overwhelmingly report having limited time to engage substantively in the partnerships they manage due to both the number of relationships and management tasks involved. Overstretched staff cannot dedicate sufficient time to make partnerships as effective as they wish. The evaluation mapped more than 1,000 partnerships across UN Women, with 81 per cent of these at the country level. As of June 2016, UN Women had 581 professional (D/P/N) staff,⁶⁹ including 366 outside of New York. On average this means that every member of the professional staff across UN Women has to manage at least 1.7 individual partnerships, with country-based staff managing at least 2.2

67 There remains, for example, a commonly held view among members of CSAGs that one of their roles is to provide commentary on UN Women strategies and partnerships, and that this commentary will be taken into account by UN Women. This view has been reinforced, in the past, by specific statements by representatives of the organization implying that UN Women is (at least morally) accountable to women’s civil society. As a consequence, some CSAG members feel aggrieved when they do not see UN Women’s decisions reflecting their commentary. It is the considered view of the evaluation that this reflects a need for UN Women to establish sufficient opportunities for dialogue with stakeholders specifically about strategic partnerships, to be seen to listen and to acknowledge concerns, and to be transparent about the reasons for establishing major partnerships before they are launched.

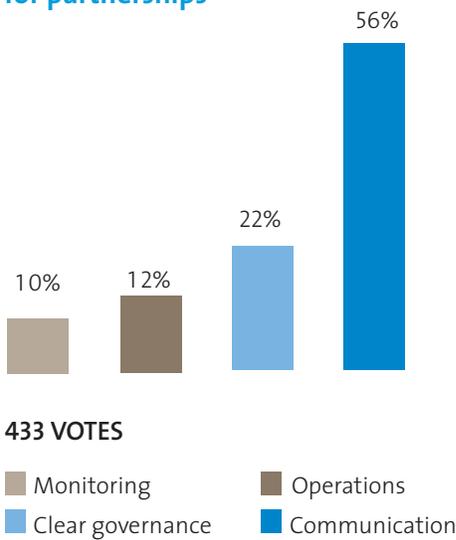
68 The roles of the senior leadership have been critical to building and maintaining global partnerships, for example, representatives of CSOs cited the importance of the convening power of senior leaders to help develop momentum behind the gender equality agenda in the Rio+20 and the Financing for Development process. They also felt it was critical that senior leaders were seen to be listening and engaging with the concerns of the women’s movement around other Post 2015 processes and in responding to the unexpected announcement of a partnership with Uber (which was opposed by civil society based on ethical concerns regarding labour rights in Uber’s business model).

69 According to a staff list as of end of June 2016 provided by Human Resources.

partnerships each. The number of partnerships is beginning to exceed the management capability available to the organization. In a specific example, recent work by the Boston Consulting Group on UN Women’s private-sector partnerships requires a team of 11 specialists to deliver on the potential of this area; currently the private-sector team is 3 people.

- d. Furthermore, working in partnership requires specific skills and, in some cases, specific knowledge (e.g., private-sector partnerships) that are not necessarily those of a project officer. A Twitter poll and social learning discussion commissioned by the evaluation both firmly emphasized good communication as the most important organizational competency for maintaining effective partnerships (see Figure 10).

FIGURE 10.
Most important organizational competencies for partnerships



There are three main implications of the current situation that are reported by partners:

- a. The experience of being in partnership with UN Women is heavily influenced by the individual member of UN Women staff that is involved, including the extent to which a women’s human rights perspective is forcefully advocated (or not) and whether organizational bureaucracy is successfully navigated (or not).
- b. In the majority of cases there is insufficient institutionalization of the partnership ownership and communications beyond the immediate manager in UN Women, leading to gaps and high transaction costs during periods of succession.
- c. The commitments and agreements made by UN Women’s leaders can exceed the capabilities of the entity to systematically follow-up—leaving partners in a state of uncertainty and risking the reputation of UN Women. For example, minutes of agreements made at a meeting between representatives of women’s civil society and the UN Women Executive Director during the Post 2015 process were received by UN Women from civil society representatives but were seen to have never been formalized as it was understood they would be. Commitments asked of the HeforShe Impact 10x10x10 academic champions during 2015 for the parity report launch at the World Economic Forum were not used, with the launch of this data only taking place at the General Assembly as this evaluation report was being finalized.

Finding 13—Structures: The SPD is insufficiently equipped and authorized to provide the necessary leadership and coordination of the overall portfolio and approach to strategic partnerships in UN Women. Continuous negotiation of roles and responsibilities for each partnership is a barrier to a shared organizational vision, incentive structure and resource-allocation model for strategic partnerships.

UN Women inherited a complex web of relationships from its predecessor entities, alongside an aspiration (and mandate) to build partnerships for gender equality with multiple audiences (civil society, Member States, corporations, individuals, the UN system, and others). The structural arrangements and practices of UN Women reflect this complexity. As a result, all units and offices across UN Women at all levels (global, regional and country) develop and manage partnerships on a largely autonomous basis.

Of the three management pillars⁷⁰ in UN Women, the Strategic Partnerships, UN Coordination and Intergovernmental Support Bureau (Pillar A) is a key focal point for UN Women’s efforts to promote strategic partnerships, especially at the global level. The Bureau has taken a direct role in developing and maintaining strategic partnerships, in addition to providing staff support to colleagues (mostly at the global level) regarding partnerships with UN entities, civil society, private sector, donors, Member States and Executive Board members, and the media.

Most global partnerships managed by Pillar A originated within the Bureau itself (primarily in the case of civil society and the UN system) or in the Office of the Executive Director (primarily in the case of corporations, heads of state, and academic institutions). Partnerships that originated within the Policy and Programme Bureau (Pillar B), including at the regional or country level, are managed within that pillar.

Regardless of whether partnerships have been initiated under the Executive Director’s Office, Pillar A or Pillar B, they have mostly been established in response to a moment of opportunity. UN Women is currently missing:

- a. A common roadmap of the type or balance of strategic partnerships that UN Women as an organization is seeking to develop over the course of the Strategic Plan.
- b. An agreed set of criteria and guiding principles for determining how strategic a potential partnership is.
- c. A corporate relationship management system for establishing a global view of which UN Women staff members speak to which staff members of partner organizations.

A single partner organization can be involved in multiple types and levels of partnership with UN Women business units. In many cases, the evaluation found that the partnership “on paper” did not fully describe the nature of the partnership as envisaged by the UN Women staff involved.⁷¹ The evaluation proposes that the corporate prevalence within UN Women of thinking in terms of “partnerships” rather than “partners” creates a barrier to integrated working: individual instances of relationships with a common partner are often managed separately by different business units, sometimes spanning across the globe. At present, there is no common system to coordinate or “account manage” relationships with a partner other than through the rare appointment of dedicated liaison

70 Pillar A: Strategic Partnerships, UN Coordination, and Intergovernmental Support Bureau; Pillar B: Policy and Programme Bureau; Pillar C: Management and Administration Division.

71 For example, a CSO may be seen as an important national player, with a UN Women CO seeking to support this capability by directing funds through an implementing partner arrangement. Rather than simply being a responsible party for delivering UN Women’s development results, however, the CSO is likely to be contributing its own credibility, expertise and resources. Representatives of the organization may simultaneously be members of a national, regional or global CSAG; may be in receipt of a trust fund (Fund for Gender Equality or UN Trust Fund for ERAW) grant; and may be part of women’s coalitions, such as the Women’s Major Group or Post 2015 Coalition (and thereby engaged with UN Women’s Policy Division or Intergovernmental Support Division at global level). GROOTS Kenya is an archetype example of such a multidimensional and complex arrangement, with “partnerships” of various types with multiple parts of the UN Women “house”.

officers (such as for the EU⁷² and, to a far more constrained extent, the African Union).

The highly effective central coordination and support of the partnership with the EU that is provided by the UN Women Brussels Liaison Office shows that a priority need exists to maintain up-to-date central intelligence on all branches of partnership. This is the core purpose of corporate relationship management software, which the evaluation finds is a critical gap in UN Women's information infrastructure.

Leadership of such "partnership service functions"⁷³ should ideally be held by the SPD. There have been some attempts to do this (such as the Civil Society Strategy and the Private-sector Strategy). In reality, however, much of the division's time and staff resources have been absorbed by the demands of directly managing an increasing number of individual partnerships (such as TCCC, International Olympic Committee, WAGG [Girl Guides], Valencia Football Club) as part of an organizational drive to diversify its funding base beyond Member States.⁷⁴

Within a vacuum (in terms of specific policies, cultural norms, guidance or performance measures) the rational response of individuals is to respond to the incentive structure around them that does exist. As a result, the choice and design of partnerships is influenced primarily by incentives that are not aimed specifically at creating effective strategic partnerships. The evaluation has observed five prevalent incentives for managers (at the country, regional and global level) in UN Women, most of whom work under Pillar B:

- ➔ **Incentive 1:** Raising resources.
- ➔ **Incentive 2:** Spending resources as planned (delivery rate).
- ➔ **Incentive 3:** Generating headline examples of specific results (often outputs) that can be used as stories of success.
- ➔ **Incentive 4:** Furthering the agenda of the Senior Managers and/or a direct line manager.
- ➔ **Incentive 5:** Demonstrating success in terms of the quantified integrated framework indicators (DRF and OEEF).

In each of these cases, the current incentive for managers is to use partnerships as a means to achieve a particular measure of success that is not related to the health of the partnership itself. The evaluation found little evidence of formal incentive structures in place to recognize or reward the effective stewardship of strategic partnerships, or to sufficiently account for the catalytic effects of these partnerships.⁷⁵

The balance of HQ and decentralized responsibilities

There is a strong recognition within UN Women that successful strategic partnerships at the global level require a "whole-of-house" approach. For this reason, matrix reporting was introduced for senior managers in 2015, and major partnerships involve team members from both Pillar A and Pillar B. Since the approach to organizing the management of strategic partnerships at the global level is not specified anywhere, UN Women staff members report that policy, regional and country colleagues may be simultaneously (but separately) approaching the same partner (albeit at a different level) to explore opportunities for resource mobilization or other forms of partnership.

So far, the HQ arrangement of the SPD in a separate pillar to the Programme Division has presented enough of a structural barrier to inhibit the development of a common understanding of what makes a partnership

72 The UN Women Brussels Office has staff members dedicated to the partnership with the EU. The UN Women Country Representative to Ethiopia also holds responsibility for the partnerships with the African Union and UN Economic Commission for Africa.

73 Setting a common framework for defining "strategic" partnerships; refining partnership modalities; providing technical guidance, opinions and inputs; coordinating and integrating strategic partnerships with each other and the other elements of UN Women's work; and establishing corporate relationship management systems.

74 This policy of expanding the number of global strategic partnerships has been set outside of the SPD and is reflected in the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

75 Such as mobilizing resources, coordination or political will around an issue rather than for UN Women directly.

“strategic”. Different teams take direct responsibility for partnering with stakeholder groups using their own strategies, frameworks and tools. However, without specific organizational mechanisms in place to coordinate strategic partnerships, the structures to allow harmonization of approaches across these teams are too high with the bureaucracy to be practicable for day-to-day coordination.

By comparison, coordination across partnerships within the Regional Architecture is made easier by the fact that there are fewer people involved to coordinate and that no equivalent structural barriers exist within ROs, COs or MCOs. In practice, the evaluation observed that at the decentralized level the majority of partnerships are identified and managed from a project-management perspective.⁷⁶ The current Regional Architecture does not include regional or country-level partnership specialists or focal points.

While the evidence available to the evaluation is limited on the question of links between COs and specific HQ business units, a general pattern did emerge in some of the key informant interviews. These suggest that the provision of virtual communities or guidance documents were less valued and less likely to be accessed by field-based staff than opportunities for direct interpersonal support from specialists within UN Women (either through physical visits, phone-calls or email).

If it is the vision of UN Women for specialist business units (such as the civil society section, private-sector team, communications section, and legal section and audit coordinators [under the Division of Management and Administration]) to play a service-provision role to support strategic partnerships managed by staff members in the field, then it is vital that they are sufficiently provisioned and given clear responsibility for doing so. For at least 89 per cent of existing partnerships (that are country-based or region-based), the evaluation finds no realistic alternative to partnership management within the current UN Women structures by the Programme Division working with the support and guidance of Pillar A HQ units.

Allocation of management responsibilities for the remaining 11 per cent of (global) partnerships that are currently spread across the Executive Director Office, Pillar A and Pillar B will also be a significant consideration in determining the level of resourcing required by specialist business units if they are to have the necessary capacity to fulfill a service-provision role to the field. Given the modalities of global partnerships, one criterion for rationalizing which units are responsible for the account management for global partners could be whether partnerships are primarily focused on resource mobilization or establishing strategic positioning (allocated under Pillar A) or addressing a specific programmatic objective (allocated under Pillar B).

⁷⁶ I.e., the establishment of joint programmes, commissioning of implementing partners, or undertaking joint advocacy. However, it must also be acknowledged that some strategic partnerships are maintained outside of the project structure, especially with national women’s machineries, CSAGs, the UN system, and—increasingly—representatives of the private sector.

Finding 14—Learning: Strengthening UN Women’s systems for identifying opportunities and learning about how to make partnerships more effective can make a contribution to the gender equality movement as well as the organization.

In the space of five years, UN Women has built the infrastructure of a UN entity and an abundance of partnerships at breakneck speed. In doing so, it has already become a pioneering entity within the UN system in terms of the advisory group mechanisms (for both civil society and the private sector) and embracing innovation such as the HeforShe Impact 10x10x10 Initiative and the Gender Equality Line.⁷⁷ Somewhat inevitably, within this rapidly changing reality, opportunities for reflection, learning and coordination on strategic partnerships between different parts of the house (even within the same division) have been largely informal.

Despite shared awareness—at all levels—that more should be done to document effective practices and lessons emerging from partnerships and to circulate them within each office and across offices, this requires allocation of specific staff time and resources to do so. At present, only limited levels and detail of documentation on partnership processes exist (including lessons from both successful and underperforming partnerships).

There are exceptions to this observation, which illustrate the potential of institutional learning from previous challenges. These include the new CSAG strategy, the process to develop the Unilever partnership, and links to EU delegations in UN Women programme countries.

Some documented lessons have emerged from global and regional partnerships (e.g., Post 2015, Safe Cities, TCCC), which usually have budgets allocated for this purpose, but lessons are often thematic and not specific to partnership processes and mechanisms⁷⁸. Overall, there have been few opportunities for critical

reflection on what makes partnerships ‘good’ or strategic within the integrated mandate of UN Women, or how to address specific problems such as how to best partner in non-traditional areas (e.g., peace and security, private sector, communications and marketing, men and boys, or religious leaders). Many of these issues are unusual for a gender equality organization to be engaged in and are likely to have lessons for the women’s movement as well as in-house programming.

Results-based management

UN Women’s results-based management system includes an integrated framework (the DRF and OEEF) for its Strategic Plan and strategic notes, annual work plans, and a results tracking system. The contribution of strategic partnerships is recognized in four main places within this system:

- a. The narrative sections of strategic notes, results tracking reports and annual reports.
- b. Outputs and outcomes to which partnerships contribute in DRFs and annual work plans.
- c. Quantitative indicators on the establishment of CSAGs and private-sector partnerships in the OEEF.
- d. Donor reports and evaluations.

The results tracking system is collecting a range of data on results that have been generated through partnerships. However, the majority of this data is related to the activities, outputs and outcomes of country-level projects aggregated under the DRF of each MCO and CO. It is not possible, at present, to extract a view of how well UN Women is performing with regard to partnerships themselves (for example, whether partnerships are more or less strategic, more or less functional, and achieving more or less in terms of sustainable results).

⁷⁷ A cause marketing platform that raises awareness and income through a licensed brand.

⁷⁸ The evaluation also observed sporadic examples of innovations being adopted beyond a specific partnership (e.g., the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership model in Eastern and Southern Africa Region).

It is important to recognize that the results-based management system has been developed in a highly compressed period of time and only recently deployed. Many other changes were taking place in parallel, including (but not limited to) the deployment of the Regional Architecture, promulgation of the CSAG structure, revision of the Strategic Plan, and development of the FPI. Key informant interviews and the Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan suggest that organizational priorities have changed considerably over a short span of time, and indicators that were previously appropriate may already be in need of revision. The evaluation agrees with this analysis.

As reported under the discussion of effectiveness, the evaluation found that the indicators within the current results-based management system have been rapidly outgrown by the context and are now insufficient to assess future performance of strategic partnerships in terms of sustainable results for gender equality. There is a clear need emerging among key stakeholders for a revised set of indicators on partnership that are sufficient to measure progress in regard to the following dimensions:

- a. Indicators that encourage and recognize partnerships that contribute to sustainable results, including catalytic impacts (for example, in terms of movement-building).
- b. Indicators that capture the change in UN Women’s “boundary partners” as a consequence of partnership, and that track how these changes lead towards *Planet 50:50*.

- c. Indicators that disaggregate results from partnerships based on direct implementation and national implementation.
- d. Indicators that account for the full cost and social return on investment of individual partnerships (including contributions to development results, available resources and UN Women’s brand-power), including encouraging and recognizing partnerships that maximize this return.
- e. Tracking long-term results of strategic partnerships (e.g., the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership at Kenyatta University) by assessing the cumulative and indirect results.
- f. Documenting partnership processes and lessons.

It was observed in the case studies that many of UN Women’s current partners—particularly grass-roots organizations—experience chronic capacity gaps in regard to monitoring systems, experience and culture. Not all UN Women COs have the capacity and skill set to address these gaps among potential partners, but all are reliant on the monitoring data and reporting of implementing partners to complete the results tracking system. A more sophisticated set of indicators within the Strategic Plan integrated framework will inevitably, therefore, require additional capacity development of monitoring at the country level.

Finding 15—Partnership mechanisms: UN Women is continuing to develop a spectrum of partnership mechanisms covering the full range of its normative, coordination and operational spheres. Staff awareness about how to use these mechanisms, along with clear policies for prioritizing partnerships and managing risks, are also necessary.

The conceptual framework found in Section 3 identified four modalities by which partnerships are implemented. It is important to recall that UN Women’s partners may be involved in more than one type of partnership, with multiple mechanisms active at different times (for example, holding a PCA, being a member of CSAG, being involved in a normative alliance, and being part of a joint communications campaign). These mechanisms are not exclusive to any of the four modalities and instead can be considered tools for implementing any of them.

The evaluation found a wide spectrum of different governance mechanisms being pursued by different business units within the organization. These governance and accountability mechanisms are supported to varying degrees by other functions in UN Women that are critical to enabling partnership, including due-diligence, fundraising, communications, monitoring, legal, audit, evaluation and administration. However, until now, UN Women has not assembled and integrated these elements into an overarching policy framework for strategic partnerships.

Consequently, the evaluation observed multiple instances at the country level in which staff members who were directly managing partnerships were not sufficiently familiar with the operations rules and requirements of each of these mechanisms to ensure that the most appropriate approach was applied. For example:

- a. During country case study visits, several cases were identified in which PCAs were being established with relevant civil society implementing partners under the pretext of an open call for proposals—an approach that is not required by the Programme Operations Manual other than for procurement.
- b. Differences were found in the way that new partnering modalities—such as the FPI—are practiced. The evaluation heard evidence that the participatory development of FPI as partnership-based programmes is leading to successful

fundraising, whereas direct implementation of FPI as a project by some COs does little to attract additional resources.

This is consistent with the evaluation’s observation that there is considerable scope for a policy framework that encompasses the full spectrum of knowledge and practice of strategic partnership approaches and mechanisms. It is essential to emphasize that systematization is not synonymous with centralization. As country contexts make certain mechanisms more effective than others, the evaluation encountered strong evidence to continue the process of developing decentralized capacity.⁷⁹

PCAs

While the PCA is only one of several partnering modalities, it is the main instrument used to engage CSOs as “partners” and represents a large number of the partnerships that were mapped by the evaluation—especially at the country level, where 81 per cent of partnerships are located:

- a. A PCA is frequently used to channel resources to a partner that is well placed to advance gender equality in a thematic or geographic area in which UN Women wishes to build a presence more quickly than it could by acting alone.

⁷⁹ For example, the centralization of due diligence for all levels of risk (combined with a binary yes/no assessment) is leading to a number of challenges at the country and regional levels: (a) unpredictable delays and uncertain negotiating positions during partnership discussions; (b) conflicts of interest due to HQ-based staff not having contextual knowledge and thus relying on COs to supply the information used for assessing risk; and (c) little real scope for working with corporations such as extractive industries that could begin to reform through the practice of mechanisms such as WEPs. One positive step in addressing this challenge has been the establishment of a HQ committee to review only those cases that are “deemed to pose a possible reputational risk to UN Women” in November 2015. However, while due diligence of high-risk partnerships may always need to be a centralized function to ensure consistency, the evaluation found a strong case for suggesting that due diligence of country-based partnerships considered to be low-risk should be decentralized to ROs as a means of improving responsiveness and contextual relevance.

TABLE 12.

Comparison of the PCA requirements of selected UN entities (adapted from Ahmed and Cordell, 2015)

	UNHCR	WFP	UNICEF	UNDP	UNFPA	UN Women
Substantive reporting	6 months	3 months	6 months	6 months	3 months	As agreed
Financial reporting	3 months	1 month (food dist.)	3 months (FACE)	3 months (FACE)	3 months (FACE)	3 months (FACE)
Audit requirements	On demand by UNHCR or Office of Internal Oversight Services	On demand by WFP or agent	Independent audit to UNICEF standards on demand	At least once independent audit to UNDP standards	Risk-based (threshold + random) independent audit to UNFPA standards	At least once by HQ Global Audit Firm

Note: UNHCR indicates the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; WFP, World Food Programme; FACE, financial reporting.

- b.** PCAs are being used to support a CSO that a UN Women office identifies as having the potential to lead long-term sustained change in a particular theatre of operations.

The application of the PCA to strategic partnerships is, while possible, not an ideal match. A majority of civil society partners interviewed by the evaluation reported that the transaction costs and small grant sizes involved with working with UN Women mean that they contribute a significant amount of their own resources (especially time) to implement PCA-based partnerships. The evaluation repeatedly heard evidence at the country level⁸⁰ about a number of critical shortfalls in the practice of using PCAs as the basis for strategic partnerships:

- a.** The PCA establishes an upwards accountability of one partner to another rather than mutual accountability (which would be more consistent with feminist values and principles of good donorship).
- b.** The Joint Inspection Unit has recommended that UN Women develop a small-scale funding arrangement, and possibly a small grants modality.
- c.** While it is possible to include core support to CSOs within budget lines as a means to develop their capacity, the practice found by the evaluation is to attach budgets to short-term activities that must be completed and reported for monies to be transferred (this is often dictated by the terms of grants that have been received by UN Women).

⁸⁰ PCAs were not examined at the regional or global level.

- d.** Similarly, while it is possible to sign multi-year PCAs, the majority of COs are still funded based on annualized grants—meaning that PCAs are only designed for one year at a time. This means that activities are necessarily short-term (rather than strategic), time is lost at the beginning and end of each year for planning and reporting (leading to only 7-8 months of actual work), and CSO partners are hesitant to commit long-term resources since continued funding is not dependable.
- e.** Civil society partners consistently told the evaluation that the requirements of UN Women PCAs were considered heavier than those demanded by equivalent UN entities, e.g., UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP. A comparison of the reporting requirements of these entities reveals that the main difference on paper is with regard to audit requirements.⁸¹ UN Women is the only one of six entities reviewed to not accept local independent audits by default—a heavy requirement on partnerships with rights-based organizations and women’s civil society (see Table 11). In addition, the evaluation also consistently heard evidence from CSOs in partnership with multiple UN agencies that UN Women COs are requiring a larger percentage of physical voucher submissions than other entities in their financial reporting requirements (normally 100 per cent).

⁸¹ Ahmed and Cordell Social Development Consulting. 2015. “A Comparison Review of UN Project Partnership Agreements for NGO Implementation of Humanitarian Projects”. Available online at: https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/UN%20Partnership%20Agreement%20Review%201%20June%202015.web_.pdf.

Especially in the case of large countries and rural areas, this places a major burden on partnerships.

The case for a clarified approach to managing risk

UN Women began a staged roll-out of a corporate risk assessment process in 2014. However, the evaluation found that this is not part of a broader framework for risk management in which a risk statement is defined, and risk is incorporated into all stages of identifying, designing, planning, implementing, monitoring, and reporting partnerships. Without this universal framework, there is an uneven level of risk-appetite for partnerships expressed at different levels of the organization:

- a. At the country (and regional) level,** a risk-averse culture pervades UN Women when interpreting and applying the Programme Operations Manual to actuate strategic partnerships (manifested, for example, in the over-application of open calls and full audits to PCAs). This is partly being driven by demands from Member States to address recommendations by UN Women’s international auditors on accounting practices without due consideration of the impact on UN Women’s effectiveness when working with rights-holders’ organizations.
- b. At HQ level,** a high degree of reputational risk has been taken on by publicly launching major partnerships at early stages and before design processes were complete or sufficient numbers of staff were on board to manage required activities (the most recent example being the HeForShe Impact 10x10x10 Initiative in which academic and private-sector champions interviewed suggest UN Women was not fully prepared).⁸²

There is thus a need to expand UN Women’s adoption of a risk management system to optimize the approach to risk associated with partnerships at different levels of the organization. At the country level, where most partnerships are held, a comparison with similar entities—especially UNICEF—indicates

⁸² Not all HQ partnerships followed this pattern. For example, the hesitance in formalizing an advocacy or policy partnership platform with the Women’s Major Group and Post 2015 Coalition can be construed as aversion to the risks of excluding other actors and/or to be perceived by some Member States as adversarial.

that there is considerable scope for more practice of “risk management” and less “risk minimization”. UN Women’s current approach to risk assessment focuses on assessing the risk to itself of engaging with a specific partner. Many large international non-governmental organizations, by comparison, undertake joint partnership risk assessments with their partners on the risks they may encounter together (through their partnership) and then develop appropriate mitigation strategies together.

A clearly articulated statement of the organization’s “risk appetite” within a wider policy framework and training on the expectations of leaders and managers to balance risks within the context of strategic partnerships is needed—especially one that references the full spectrum of partnering mechanisms (there are only five cited in the existing Programme Operations Manual) and that empowers staff to apply the full range of these appropriately.

Approaches to prioritizing partnerships

Throughout the organization, UN Women staff members are actively asking questions and being challenged by partners on how to better prioritize partnership opportunities in a strategically relevant way. These include:

- a.** Should UN Women be focusing on a smaller number of larger partners, or a larger number of smaller partners?
- b.** Should UN Women be focused on channeling resources to women’s organizations or building alliances with wider non-traditional partners?
- c.** Can the potential or return on investment of partnerships be triaged into different levels (gold, silver, etc.)?
- d.** Should UN Women be regularly surveying partners?
- e.** Should UN Women be focusing exclusively on women’s human rights?
- f.** Which governance options are most relevant to the highest priority and lower priority partnerships?

BOX 11. TIPS FOR PRIORITIZING PARTNERSHIPS AT UN WOMEN

The evaluation does not have clear answers to all of these questions. However, the evidence does point to some implications that can contribute to developing these answers.

- ➔ The current **number of partnerships is already high in comparison with the staff complement** of UN Women. This cautions against having more small partnerships, unless they are through intermediary organizations (an approach already being used by some COs).
- ➔ **Partnerships do not have to be “big” to fit the evaluation’s working definition of strategic.** Given that part of UN Women’s credibility stems from its inclusiveness and its “origin story” in the Gender Equality Architecture Reform Campaign, the evidence also cautions against prioritizing only a few large partnerships.
- ➔ Many partners need the validation of being described as strategic and to have the attention of UN Women’s senior leadership—the **language used in any segmentation of partners will be loaded** with meaning for the partners to whom it is applied and needs to be selected and communicated carefully.
- ➔ Given UN Women’s convening prowess and coordination mandate, the key question may not be about how to prioritize bilateral partnerships, but **how to shift to creating self-organizing multi-stakeholder partnership platforms outside of UN Women.** An inherent tension will likely always exist between parties founded primarily to advance women’s human rights and parties for whom interest in women’s empowerment is primarily conceived as of instrumental benefit to their wider objectives. The evaluation found that maintaining bilateral partnerships has a tendency to “import” this tension into relationships between different parts of the UN Women “house”.
- ➔ The evaluation found that **the process and transparency of prioritizing partners might be considered even more important than the final outcome,** and that, at present, there are insufficient opportunities for UN Women to engage its full partnership base in open dialogue—specifically about its plans and rationale for partnerships. UN Women is an independent actor that can legitimately forge partnerships with any other actor within its mandate and for any reason that it chooses through a legitimate process. However, this does not negate the strongly held (and divergent) views of many of UN Women’s existing partners about what it should be focusing on in terms of strategic partnerships. At the country level, this can lead to UN Women being accused of favouritism for particular CSOs or of betraying the women’s movement by working directly with non-traditional groups (especially men and boys or conservative groups). At the global level, this has exposed UN Women to the critique of being co-opted by the neo-liberal agenda.



Through a grant from UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality, partner PREM works with rural women's cooperatives in Guinea to support the generation of income and improved community life. Photo: UN Women/Joe Saade

4.4

Have strategic partnerships reflected UN Women's values?

GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: To what extent does UN Women's approach to strategic partnerships integrate human rights and gender equality principles (based on internationally agreed norms) and address the underlying causes of gender inequality?

Finding 16—Alignment with norms: UN Women's strategic planning processes ensure programmatic alignment with normative instruments on GEEW at both the global and country level. The reality of a partnership approach requires UN Women to continuously leverage its convening power so as to mediate the different power dynamics of its diverse constituencies. This has been done in a pragmatic and responsive way, but clear institutional direction is still needed.

A review of the documents of sampled partnerships found consistent reference to normative instruments for gender equality in the situation analyses—either directly or through reference to UN Women's annual work plans (which are based on strategic notes or the Strategic Plan and explicitly reference normative instruments). The primary reference for partnerships at country level is the concluding observations of CEDAW,

with frequent reference to the Beijing Platform for Action, and in specific cases to UN Security Council Resolution 1325/1820.

At the global level, the evaluation found partnership documents made wider references, including to CSW agreed conclusions (HeforShe Impact 10x10x10, UN-Habitat), the Women's Charter and Article 23 of

the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU), and the UN-Habitat Gender Resolution (24/4). At the national level, work with the PDO, and the Ministry of Defense are clear cases where UN Women partnerships promote women's rights, and in the latter case, UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In Brazil, for another example, in partnership with the SPM, UN Women was able to ensure that the standards of the Latin American Model Protocol to Investigate Violent Deaths of Women based on Gender (Femicide) was incorporated in the national legal system.

Some of UN Women's civil society partners in normative processes (such as the negotiations of Agenda 2030) and engaged as partners in programmes express a desire for UN Women to be more forthright in using the language of women's human rights and feminism. Another emerging demand is to expand UN Women's intellectual analyses to encompass LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex) rights and to mainstream within its programming the concept of intersectionality.

Within a context of shrinking space for civil society UN Women is seen by these constituents to be adopting various political tactics to convey acceptable gender equality messages to its non-traditional and politically conservative stakeholders. At the same time, its other stakeholders (including civil society and evidence from independent evaluations) emphasize that maintaining the asset of UN neutrality has been particularly important for UN Women interventions in contexts of fragility and conservative power structures.

The current political economy of global affairs and the context for women's human rights demands that the evaluation examine the implications of this tactical caution in the overt expression of women's human rights language within the scope of strategic partnerships. This context was described by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in his presentation to the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council in June 2016 (see Box 12.)

BOX 12. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS' STATEMENT ON CURRENT AFFAIRS

"And yet the workable space in which we function as one community—resolving disputes, coming to consensus—is under attack. The common sets of laws, the institutions—and deeper still, the values—which bind us together are buckling. And suffering most from this onslaught are our fellow human beings—your people—who bear the brunt of the resulting deprivation, misery, injustice, and bloodshed.

Hate is becoming mainstreamed. Walls—which tormented previous generations, and have never yielded any sustainable solution to any problem—are returning. Barriers of suspicion are rising, snaking through and between our societies—and they are killers. Clampdowns on public freedoms, and crackdowns on civil society activists and human rights defenders, are hacking away at the forces which uphold the healthy functioning of societies. Judicial institutions, which act as checks on executive power are being dismantled. Towering inequalities are hollowing out the sense that there are common goods."

High Commissioner for Human Rights in his presentation to the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council in June 2016

The evaluation found evidence of UN Women's strategic partnerships exploring a number of avenues in response to this context:

To frame partnerships pragmatically in specific regional contexts where interpretations of women's empowerment are more or less based on women's human rights and gender equality: UN Women is choosing to frame its cases in terms that are locally acceptable so as to bring parties "to the table" and advance dialogue between them. This is a similar approach to work being undertaken with corporations.

- a. To frame partnerships pragmatically in specific regional contexts where interpretations of women’s empowerment are more or less based on women’s human rights and gender equality:** UN Women is choosing to frame its cases in terms that are locally acceptable so as to bring parties “to the table” and advance dialogue between them. This is a similar approach to work being undertaken with corporations.
- b. To frame the principle outcome of partnerships as “movement building”** (such as in the CSAG strategy, 2015): supporting better organization of the women’s movement and coordinating with other progressive movements (such as the environmental movement, anti-poverty movement and LGBTIQI movement) in order to better counter patriarchal narratives and forces.
- c. To focus on an individual level:** making the case that pragmatically empowered women are better positioned to pursue and realize their human rights, and to build the political momentum to respect, protect and fulfill these rights.

The Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan conducted in 2016 emphasizes the first two of these strategies as the organization’s preference for future strategic partnerships: “UN-Women’s partnership with gender equality advocates has played a key role in achieving results. The importance of engaging the non-committed is also essential to transformative change. There is a need for greater focus and coordination, including among global actors, in support of the gender equality agenda.”⁸³

The evaluation case studies found a significant body of evidence to suggest that strategic partnerships are beginning to focus on coordination and that UN Women’s convening power, staff and mandate give it a comparative advantage over other UN entities in this regard. However, it is not without risks. One of these is that UN Women is getting caught in the headwinds of anti-equality forces, and by tactically mediating women’s human rights language, it is making space

for other narratives. (The counter argument is that not taking this approach will lead to defunding and the irrelevance of UN Women’s voice in any case.)

Regardless of the strategic argument (which is outside the scope of this evaluation), the evaluation heard evidence from several of UN Women’s natural allies in the women’s movement that the move to engage the non-committed through more mediated language is being seen by respected members of the women’s movement (both globally and at the country level) as a sign that UN Women is increasingly defining its agenda as a development agency and retreating from vocal leadership of women’s human rights. If the opposite is true, then it is vital that UN Women’s strategic partnerships mechanisms with the women’s movement can support discussion of these concerns and the articulation of a shared vision. Some interviewees report that this perception is beginning to risk the trust of progressive CSOs in UN Women’s ability to offer leadership of the women’s movement.

Addressing this challenge within the existing predominance of bilateral strategic partnerships between UN Women and its various audiences presents a conundrum of requiring inconsistent language and theories of change in different parts of the Entity. The evaluation has not been able to identify an institutionalized framework within UN Women for mediating conversations between the different world views in which its partners operate. However, there is significant evidence that UN Women has been able to convene and facilitate dialogue directly between different constituencies (for example, Safe Cities, Post 2015, TCCC, and many other examples at the country level).

The evaluation finds that this convening power represents an important opportunity to bring different world views into conversation with each other around points of common interest (these could be, for example, the SDG goals) rather than trying to mediate the tension within UN Women itself.

⁸³ UN Women. 2016. “Midterm Review of the UN Women Strategic Plan”.

Finding 17—Root causes: Partnerships are critical to UN Women’s ability to leverage transformational changes, address underlying causes, work with marginalized groups and influence the structural dominance of patriarchy. UN Women’s rules and regulations are not well aligned to support long-term partnerships with small rights-holders’ groups.

The root causes of inequality in gender relations exist at multiple levels and in multiple dimensions, including (but not limited to): the macro structures of the economy, political systems, cultural arrangements, religions and social norms; the meso structures of organizations, community narratives, local behavioural norms, media, education systems, and traditions; and the micro structures of family and household dynamics, interpersonal and sexual relationships, etc.

If acting alone, UN Women is considered unlikely to be able to exert direct influence or impact either because it does not have the power (macro), the scale (meso), or the legitimacy (micro). By comparison, the evaluation found that strategic partnerships can and do enable UN Women to increase its reach to influence these root causes, both through rights holders and primary duty bearers (such as CARE Egypt or GirlsCount India) and with state parties as principal duty bearers (such as the IPSTC in Kenya).

In particular, strategic partnerships increase UN Women’s ability to influence norms and policies at the municipal, country, regional and global levels from a women’s human rights perspective (example cases include LAS Egypt, Post 2015, HABITAT III, and the Indian Ministry of Rural Development).

Alongside evidence of the relevance and effectiveness of UN Women’s strategic partnerships in addressing the root causes of marginalization and inequality, the evaluation identified the value of medium- and long-term commitments to fostering this transformational change.

As noted under findings on organizational efficiency, however, the partnering mechanisms available to UN Women that include an element of fund-transfer (primarily PCAs and letters of agreement) are frequently constrained by UN Women’s funding pipeline to short-term, project-focused agreements and results indicators creating power dynamics (dependency, insecurity, asymmetrical accountability) that constrain

effective partnership. Attempting to replicate long-term agreements through a protracted series of short-term projects was found to be an insufficient work-around, with implementing partners suffering from funding uncertainties and vulnerabilities (especially community based organizations).⁸⁴

Not all partners have the same understanding of or commitment to addressing the root causes of inequality. While genuine, the primary motivation of the Ministry of Defense in Georgia is compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Different government partners may be equally concerned with compliance rather than root causes. Private corporations may consider public image and/or internal efficiency rather than root causes when partnering with UN Women. These differences do not make partnership any less valuable, as long as UN Women keeps a long-term vision on addressing root cause. Conversely, UN Women has the potential to influence partners to look more deeply into the reasons for inequality. Spokespersons for the TCCC in Brazil, for example, noted that while they thought they had a strong women’s empowerment approach, it was through its partnership with UN Women that it was able to recognize the need for, and develop, a more rights-based approach.

⁸⁴ Furthermore, current systems and tools are orientated around formalized concepts of capacity. For example, the current capacity assessment for PCAs favors professional non-governmental organizations with a track record and ability to prepare high quality proposals, thereby tending to exclude looser coalitions of rights holders from partnering with UN Women even if they are better placed to address a particular root cause. It is not impossible for UN Women to work with such groups (they can be identified and justified as having a comparative advantage), but the evaluation found little evidence of this in practice. In reality, a risk-averse management culture (outside of the Senior Management Team) is leading to interpretations of UN Women’s capacity, audit and reporting requirements that frequently create transaction costs too high for an entity that aspires to work with representatives of marginalized groups.

Finding 18—Structural transformation: High numbers and diversity of strategic partners are posing challenges in terms of negotiating power within and across partnerships. Stakeholders emphasize the importance of equality in feminist partnerships, which could be improved through greater use of mutual-accountability frameworks.

The social learning element of the evaluation strongly emphasized that gender equality partnerships need to exhibit feminist values—in particular respect and mutuality—if they are to be successful. However, the evaluation did not find evidence of a concerted whole-of-organization process within UN Women to reflect and agree on how feminist values should be interpreted and applied in the approach to strategic partnerships. In this case, it can be helpful to consider international feminist membership organization AWID’s work on the manifestation of feminist values, including women’s human rights, within partnerships for the women’s movement (see Box 13).

The rapid growth in number and diversification of partnerships, including strategic partnerships, held by UN Women has created uneven power dynamics and divergent views on which constituency should be prioritized when tension is encountered. As a consequence, the evaluation found that issues of power and influence were being acknowledged and approached differently by different parts of UN Women and among different constituencies of partners.

Insufficiently addressing power disparity makes it a challenge to effectively bring together UN Women’s partners into multi-stakeholder partnerships. For

BOX 13. FEMINIST CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Their agenda is built from a gendered analysis of the problem or situation they are confronting or seeking to change.

- Women form a critical mass of the movement’s membership or constituency, women are the subjects, not objects or targets, of the movement.
- They espouse feminist values and ideology. Gender equality, social and economic equality, the full body of human rights, tolerance, inclusion, peace, non-violence, respectful spaces and roles for all, etc., even if they don’t call themselves feminist or articulate these values in more culturally specific ways.
- They have systematically built and centered women’s leadership in the movement. This is in contrast to movements that treat women’s participation instrumentally—in the sense of adding the strength of numbers at rallies and marches, or to promote a more inclusive, gender-sensitive image of their movement but not giving women any real decision-making power or meaningful leadership roles.
- The movement’s political goals are gendered. They seek not only a change in the problem, but a change that privileges women’s interests and seeks to transform both gender and social power relations.
- They use gendered strategies and methods. Strategies that build on women’s own mobilizing and negotiating capacities, and involve women at every stage of the process.
- They create more feminist organizations, i.e., organizations that create more transparent systems and structures, consciously address the distribution of power and responsibility across roles, build a feminist practice of leadership (e.g. Batliwala, 2011), strong internal and external accountability and learning systems, and actively experiment with change within their own structures.

Note: Excerpted from: Batliwala, S. (2012) *Changing their World: Concepts and Practices of Women’s Movements* (2nd Edition), Toronto, Mexico City, Cape Town: Association for Women’s Rights in Development. P 6.

example, there is a perception that corporate partners are offered a “less demanding standard” for partnership because of the financial resources that they can contribute.

There is a need, therefore, to more explicitly assess partnerships using feminist and political economy analysis to understand and address power and influence, especially with the shift towards multi-stakeholder partnerships. Examples of current risks from uneven power dynamics include:

- a. Holding corporations to account for commitments to implementing the WEPs while increasingly seeking corporate donations and goodwill (e.g., HeForShe Impact 10x10x10 Initiative champions).
- b. Remaining true to women’s human rights principles in culturally and politically acceptable ways when working in partnership with Member State institutions and CSOs that do not (fully) share the same philosophical standpoint.

In particular, the evaluation observed a tendency within partnerships that are focused primarily on resource mobilization to implicitly juxtapose “women” (as the target beneficiaries of gender equality interventions) with the “other” (corporations, Member States, philanthropic foundations that are being engaged to support women as beneficiaries). Given that women also constitute part of the “other”—as makers and inheritors of money, leaders of nations and managers of businesses—the evaluation finds that strong scope exists to invest in women even when looking for resources.

The Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan conducted in 2016 identifies South-South and triangular partnerships as a comparative advantage for UN Women. The evidence seen by this evaluation suggests that connecting women-to-women could be added to this list (i.e., supporting women to step beyond the identity of their institutional roles and connect with one another as individuals, and to use this connection as the basis for building solidarity between different organizations).

Finding 19—UN Women trust funds: The UN Women Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund for EAW are valuable ambassadors for strategic partnerships with civil society that strengthen women’s organizations as indispensable actors in their own right.

The Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund for EAW enable UN Women to establish and support strategic partnerships with civil society through five main features:

- a. Providing an avenue for donors to support women’s civil society as a valuable actor in its own right to pursue locally and nationally identified demands.
- b. Providing multi-year support to civil society partners with a higher degree of flexibility and responsiveness than is available under most country-level resources received by UN Women.
- c. Going beyond resource transfers to include capacity development of grantees and fostering international interaction between grantees.

- d. Visibly demonstrating UN Women’s commitment to directly supporting the capacity and priorities of the women’s movement within a shrinking space for civil participation and action.

- e. Learning from the work of innovative partners to stay relevant to gender equality issues at the grass roots—sharing existing knowledge and enriching it with intensive, local, evidence-based innovation.

The trust funds are generally valued and appreciated by civil society partners (whether they are recipients of support or not) but receive mixed reactions from UN Women staff members. The evaluation identified a number of possible explanations for this more muted level of endorsement:

- a. There appears to be a correlation between COs based in countries with long histories of indigenous activism and civil society within the national life and appreciation of the trust funds for supporting strategic partnerships—COs where there is a lower level of organized civil society in the national life were more concerned that grants from the trust funds are not directly supporting the achievement of their DRFs.
- b. The nomenclature of “trust fund” begets comparisons with other trust funds within the UN system, which can include pure financing mechanisms designed to channel money through the equivalent of the Regional Architecture rather than the capacity to operate independently (in terms of grant management, technical support and communications) available to the two funds hosted by UN Women.
- c. Not all members of UN Women staff are in regular direct contact with global representatives of women’s civil society and thus cognizant of the value placed on the two trust funds as a public statement of UN Women’s commitment to supporting the women’s movement as a self-organizing group of actors, resulting in higher credibility of UN Women.

CSOs report that the trust fund model of demand-led multi-year financing to civil society is a more strategic, more gender responsive, and more effective approach to partnerships than the (often short-duration) PCAs

available to COs. In a context of shrinking space for civil society and the broadening base of partners engaged with UN Women, the evaluation finds that the form of support offered by the trust funds is increasingly important in terms of demonstrating UN Women’s gender equality and human rights principles in action.

However, it was also noted that the trust fund decisions are made from HQ and may reflect global priorities over national ones. These decisions are seen in some cases to bypass country level consultations between UN Women and the CSAGs or other mechanisms of consultation.

This finding does not negate the case for enhancing synergies between UN Women strategic notes (including strategic partnerships) and trust fund grants. The evaluation found a number of examples of how this has already been achieved. For example, the UN Trust Fund for EAW originally supported work on the Safe Cities programme in India as part of a larger global grant to a Canadian organization. Money, technical assistance and access to the global community enabled Jagori—an Indian CSO—to begin working on EAW in public spaces in Delhi. Recognizing the importance of addressing violence against women in public spaces, the UN Women MCO in India was able to build on these initial steps, eventually helping to position Jagori as a technical resource provider to the state government (an unusual achievement for a CSO). Working together has provided Jagori with a launch pad to expand a gender responsive approach to safe cities to new urban areas of India.



Actual Google search on 08/03/2013

women should |

- women should **stay at home**
- women should **be slaves**
- women should **be in the kitchen**
- women should **not speak in church**

women should have the right to make their own decisions



unwomen.org

Actual Google search on 08/03/2013

women need to |

- women need to **be put in their place**
- women need to **know their place**
- women need to **be controlled**
- women need to **be disciplined**

women need to be seen as equal



unwomen.org

Memac Ogilvy & Mather Dubai, developed for UN Women (2013).

5

WHAT WORKS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

5. WHAT WORKS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

5.1

What modality of strategic partnership works best?

The full realist evaluation question is “what works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts, and how?” A starting assumption is that there is no single “right” answer for strategic partnerships, and what is required is the most effective arrangement for the context and intended results. The evaluation assessed an abbreviated version of the realist question (what works, in what context, to what extent) using data gathered during the case studies and portfolio analysis.

Patterns were identified in the combinations of context (partner, purpose/mandate), mechanism (modality, enabling factors), and results (basic, good, advanced) found in the portfolio analysis. While the resulting statements are inevitably affected by the sample used for the evaluation, they do indicate a number of useful considerations for the design of strategic partnerships:

- a. Any strategic partnership with coordination as a primary purpose is best constituted as a framework-type partnership, but a liaison-type partnership with a strong focus on transformational change can deliver basic-level intended results.
- b. Convening-type partnerships only ever achieve basic-level intended results.
- c. Working with government organizations at the policy level when there are high levels of enabling conditions (at least three of four enabling factors rated high, always including “complementarity” of the partners) is the only way to achieve high levels of advanced-level intended results.

- d. For partnerships with CSOs through implementing-type arrangements, advanced-level intended results are only seen when all enabling conditions are high.
- e. For partnerships with corporations through implementing-type arrangements, high levels of basic-level and good-level intended results are achieved with lower levels of enabling conditions than required for other actors.
- f. Framework-type partnerships contribute to all intended results even with low levels of enabling factors.

These patterns have been used to develop a decision tree (Figure 11) that can be used to indicate what is likely to be the effective archetype modality for a strategic partnership across a range of different contexts.

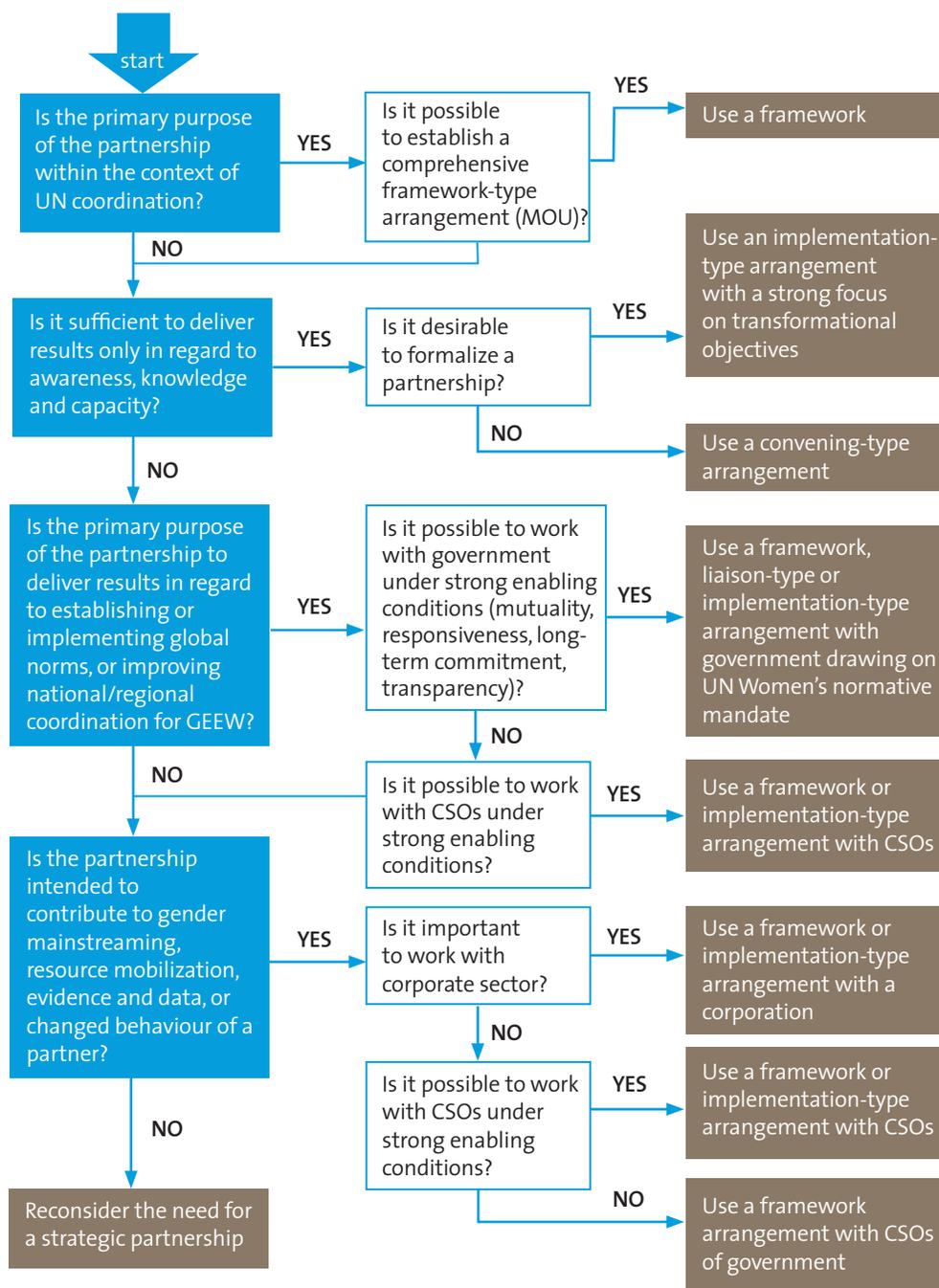
Overall, the evaluation found that, wherever it is established, a formalized partnership governance framework correlates with partnerships that achieve higher-level results.⁸⁵ There are significant constraints on the potential for loose alliances (such as the Post 2015 work)

⁸⁵ Based on the evidence available about the TCCC partnership (there is a dedicated evaluation planned), it reflects one of the key insights regarding effective strategic partnership at the global level: that focusing on delivering specific and narrower results helps to lay the groundwork for higher-level work. In the case of TCCC this involves establishing multi-stakeholder policy-level partnerships at the country level, in particular in South Africa and Brazil. A similar methodical approach to build-out the partnership (from narrower to larger results) is also reflected in the success of the EU partnership. The difference between the EU and TCCC governance arrangements is that the MOU for work with the EU envisaged this expansion, whereas the first MOU with TCCC did not make full provision for this (a lesson that has subsequently informed the design of the Unilever MOU).

or partnerships that launch straight into achieving a broad set of goals (such as the UN Women and UN-Habitat MOU) to achieve higher-level (advanced) outcomes. This suggests that the HeforShe Impact

10x10x10 frameworks will be most successful if they start by focusing on delivering specific lower level results well before expanding on that success.

FIGURE 11.
Decision tree for bilateral strategic partnership arrangements in various contexts



5.2

Innovations

The evaluation's findings on organizational efficiency highlight the importance of "creative tensions" to the process of effective innovation and highlight that maintaining an enabling environment requires balancing forces that pull towards chaos and forces that pull towards stability (or rigidity). These two forces were observed at play within UN Women, with some interviewees calling for greater looseness, while others emphasized a need for stronger norms. The evaluation proposes, based on the discussion of innovation theory under Finding 16, that juxtaposing a "consistent approach" to partnerships with "anarchic innovation", as if one excludes the other, is a false dichotomy.

Open and relatively unstructured experimentation with partnerships, which has formed the basis of UN Women's current implicit approach, is one particular approach to strategic partnerships. It is roughly equivalent to the "venture approach" to innovation prevalent within the technology sector. The evaluation finds that this venture strategy alone is not best matched to UN Women's context since it makes a number of assumptions that can be readily challenged:

- a. It is broadly based on allowing large numbers of partnerships to be piloted but allowing most of these to fail in order to discover a few really effective examples.
- b. Since gender equality is not fungible, building two highly successful partnerships that advance gender equality in their theatres of operation does not create a public good that substitutes for the 998 places where the other partnerships "failed".
- c. There is no mechanism in place for recognizing and stopping partnerships that are not working (fail fast).
- d. There is no evidence that donors have tolerance for this level of risk.

A more balanced approach to managing creative tensions is therefore required, with structures being put

in place to mediate between chaos and stability. The evaluation has identified some emerging examples of positive innovations in UN Women's partnership approaches that could be further explored, extended and supplemented by future innovation. These include:



Working with non or less traditional groups:

Diversifying the entry points to influence GEEW in relevant ways given the different contexts—e.g., youth, men's networks, sports clubs, media, private sector, transgender movement, cultural activists (India and global), faith-based groups and traditional leaders.



Applying an intersectionality approach (i.e., gender, race, age, ethnicity, etc.) to engage diverse voices (e.g., Brazil).



Using low-investment communication-based strategies to leverage support for GEEW within the popular social narrative:

E.g., limited investment in supporting HeForShe sign-up events (e.g. India, Egypt) or sending media delegations (to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP21 in Paris, Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, and SDGs in New York).



Using a focused selection of campaigns as an entry point for mobilizing prospective donors:

Global and local campaigns have been increasingly used to attract potential partners, rather than starting the conversation with fundraising for programme work (although a proliferation of campaigns can add confusion).



Building upon HeForShe:

UN Women offices report that one of the challenges is knowing how to maintain partnerships that may not be fully strategic, but that still have potential to generate a valuable contribution to GEEW. HeForShe is emerging as an important asset for keeping such partners engaged in a way that is both meaningful and manageable.

5.3

Good practices and lessons

The evaluation team identified the following emerging good practices and lessons from the analysed strategic partnerships.

 **Use a phased approach in partnerships** (from more targeted to broader engagement). UN Women's partnership with National Foundation for India was intentionally phased to build experience and evidence before expanding the work. In Kenya, the partnership with IPSTC was the first step of a broader strategy of engagement with the peace and security sector.

 **Use mass and popular approaches for campaigns:** HeForShe, UNiTE and national campaigns for EAW have undertaken innovative approaches to reaching new audiences, particularly through popular sports figures (strong masculine role models) and events (Olympics) as well as mass media (Propeg) to get the message out.

 **Use an open and low-stake approach to initiate partnerships** (especially with funding partners). In India, UN Women approached partnership development through the lens of a communications campaign to generate interest for collaboration and the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office used sharefairs to

mobilize diverse stakeholders. The challenge to this approach is firming up the partnership after the initial exposure and prioritizing action.

 **Leverage UN Women's convening power** to foster change through supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships and platforms for GEEW. UN Women has been able to play a positive bridging role between government and CSOs (HQ, Egypt, Brazil) and influence other governments and donors (EU, other European bi-laterals, etc.).

 **Rely on partners' operational and administrative capacities for programming**, in particular to engage with local and field CSOs and grass-roots organizations to maximize effective division of labor and strengthen opportunities to link field and policy/normative work (National Foundation for India, TASO Foundation, CARE).

 **Build a wide range of activities together**, including research and knowledge development, advocacy, shared analysis, etc. as appropriate to establish a partnership relationship that does not depend on funding (UN Women's partnership with the PDO in Georgia in which they share research and have a joint advocacy plan).



6

CONCLUSIONS

6. CONCLUSIONS

Effective strategic partnerships are critical to UN Women's future ability to leverage transformational changes, address underlying causes and work with marginalized groups. Beyond the considerable achievements of bilateral strategic partnerships, UN Women's convening power also offers a significant comparative advantage for establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships by creating inclusive spaces, facilitating open dialogue and enhancing coordination of the gender equality movement.

In expanding the reach and inclusiveness of its strategic partnerships, UN Women is encountering new challenges in terms of how to address the shifting power dynamics between stakeholders. When partnerships are intended to contribute to gender mainstreaming,

policy change and systemic coordination, then understanding and institutionalizing mechanisms to mediate different world views on GEEW and unequal distribution of power and influence is essential.

Despite having a culture that values partnership and numerous examples of innovation, UN Women is yet to fully articulate an organization-wide approach to strategic partnerships that is consistently applied at the global, regional and country level. While acknowledging that some strategies have already emerged to leverage UN Women's comparative advantage, such as the new CSAG strategy and FPI, the evaluation concludes that there is a pressing need to unite UN Women's insights into a comprehensive policy framework for strategic partnerships in the next Strategic Plan.

Conclusion 1

UN Women strategic partnerships have contributed significantly to advancing GEEW in the framework of the UN Women Strategic Plan. At their most effective, strategic partnerships have extended the reach, credibility and influence of UN Women and its partners. (Based on Findings 6 to 10)

The most significant added value of partnerships has been in extending UN Women's reach, influence and access to constituencies, and in leveraging interactions between operational and policy work. UN Women worked with partners from all sectors to help influence the main frameworks that will shape the work of the UN system at large over the next 15 years, including the SDGs, the Global Leaders Commitment to ending discrimination against women by 2030, and the new urban agenda (HABITAT III).

Strategic partnerships have contributed to the achievement of expected results, such as strengthening capacities and awareness among rights holders and duty bearers in favour of GEEW. There is also evidence of contributions to more advanced results, including gender mainstreaming in partners' and third parties' policies and programmes, and changed

behaviours in favour of GEEW. Overall, the evaluation found that, wherever it is established, a formalized partnership governance framework correlates with partnerships that achieve higher-level results, such as mainstreaming gender in partners' policies and practices. As might be expected, there is less evidence at country and regional levels of partnerships contributing to complex and ambitious changes at this stage. The evaluation concurs with the Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan conducted in 2016 that there is a need for greater focus and coordination, including among global actors, in support of the gender equality agenda, and to implement global GEEW standards (including the SDGs) at the national level.

Achieving higher-level results requires UN Women to overcome hindering factors to strategic partnerships, especially: resource constraints and limits to the core capacity of the organization leading to time-pressure on over-stretched UN Women staff; the short-duration and project-based nature of many partnerships; sub-optimal internal coordination within the structural elements of UN Women; and reliance on the capacity (and energy) of individuals.

Conclusion 2

UN Women efforts have focused on growing and diversifying its partnership base. These have resulted in important contributions to advancing the GEEW agenda, particularly in relation to mainstreaming gender into the new set of global and national development frameworks. While appropriate during its initial years, delivering on the promise of Agenda 2030 and other frameworks now requires a focus on fostering a shared UN Women vision for strategic partnerships and consolidating a coherent and flexible organizational approach to implementing this vision. (Based on Findings 1 to 5)

UN Women demonstrates a strong organizational commitment to working in partnership. UN Women's partnerships have reached a variety of partners, opened doors to untraditional partners, and have shown to be individually relevant in the current global context. While UN Women's partnerships increase its reach and influence, they also carry risks for UN Women's reputation and the sustainability of results that are not yet managed in a consistent way. The evaluation has identified an urgent demand for a more consolidated organizational approach for strategic partnerships that involves a common definition, rationale, principles, and indicators for engagement with (and across) diverse groups and in diverse contexts.

Pragmatic approaches to partnerships and a responsive culture have enabled UN Women to innovate and

maximize the potential of limited resources. Many achievements have been built through strategic partnerships with established actors, including all the processes related to normative gains in Agenda 2030 and HABITAT III.

Greater attention must be paid to:

- a. Balancing the organizational focus on engaging in new partnerships to meet emerging priorities with the need to maximize existing partnerships.
- b. Prioritizing and linking partnerships.
- c. Addressing uneven approaches to identifying and managing reputational risk based on lessons from experiences such as with Uber.
- d. Strengthening experience at the country level in navigating inherent tensions between different types of stakeholders, different partnership objectives, and different perspectives of women's empowerment and women's rights.

The evaluation points to the need for stronger internal clarity on strategic partnerships to ensure that UN Women continues to engage and invest over time in the most relevant and strategic partnerships to advance GEEW globally, regionally and at the country level.

Conclusion 3

UN Women's organizational structures, operations systems and approach to risk were not originally designed with the explicit aim of supporting strategic partnerships. Consequently, multiple non-coordinated poles of responsibility for partnerships at HQ and a wide range of different practices in field offices now exist. While some aspects that support the prioritization, assessment of risk and operationalization of strategic partnerships have been developed, there is still a need for a comprehensive policy framework towards strategic partnerships. (Based on Findings 11 to 15)

The commitment, energy and creativity of UN Women's leadership and staff are what currently make strategic partnerships work. While established practices have emerged to address some gaps, such as due diligence processes, these are still in need of a coherent organizing framework to help UN Women prioritize strategic partnerships based on an agreed statement of the Executive Board's risk appetite. Strengthening UN Women's ability to deliver effective strategic partnerships requires the roll-out of the risk management framework, revision of organizational incentives to coordinate across

UN Women's structures, and strengthened leadership capabilities within the decentralized offices.

There are many different aspects to strategic partnerships that help to explain what works, where, for whom, and why. To date, despite effective partnering by UN Women on many fronts, several aspects have limited the realization of a coherent, effective and shared policy framework for operationalizing strategic partnership. These include: limited financial resources and human capital, multiple non-coordinated poles of responsibility for partnerships, and the expectation that partnership management is everybody's responsibility with limited dedicated capacities.

UN Women's structures (Pillars, Regional Architecture), systems and processes (Programme Operations Manual, OEEF, results tracking systems and due diligence) have a major impact on UN Women's ability to work in partnership. They were not originally designed with the implications for partnership fully in mind. In particular, SPD's roles, responsibilities and resourcing have not been clearly spelled out in relation to whether and how it will support the rest of the organization with the planning, coordination and

operationalization of strategic partnerships, and how it will work with the Executive Director Office in ensuring a coordinated approach.⁸⁶

To date, flexibility and dedication of individual staff at all levels has been required to navigate management systems to meet the requirements of strategic partnerships. In the absence of agreed guiding principles, UN Women is also reliant on extensive engagement by UN Women's leadership to select, design and set the tone of strategic partnerships on a case-by-case basis. Continuous negotiation of roles and responsibilities for each partnership is a barrier to a shared organizational vision, incentive structure and resource-allocation model for strategic partnerships.

A sufficiently equipped and authorized SPD has the potential to provide the necessary coordination and strategic policy framework for UN Women's strategic partnerships. Such a framework is required to balance the current management incentives (for resource mobilization, spending and headline targets) with recognition for managers who contribute to establishing catalytic partnerships that deliver results over a long-term time horizon.

Conclusion 4

The stated objectives of UN Women's strategic partnerships are consistently aligned to gender equality and human rights principles outlined in CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, in field operations, the modalities of partnership available to UN Women offices warrant being adjusted to better suit the needs of smaller partners, especially rights holders' organizations, and to fully reflect UN Women's feminist values. (Based on Findings 16 to 19)

The aims of individual partnerships consistently reflect the priorities, principles and objectives of normative human rights instruments at both the global and country level. Globally, UN Women continues to build on the CSW to convene traditional allies as well as new and emerging constituencies (including faith-based organizations, youth, academia and goodwill ambassadors).

However, UN Women's operations rules and tools, while conducive at the global level to establishing long-term partnerships, are not especially suited to provide flexible partnership entry points and modalities for smaller rights-holders' groups at the country level. Both UN Women's own internal reviews and the Joint Inspection Unit have made the case for developing a small-scale funding agreement and, possibly, a grant mechanism to better serve this constituency as part of a broader policy

⁸⁶ As examples: (a) the multiple-pillars of UN Women lead to a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities for initiating and managing strategic partnerships; (b) the current PCA is a one-size-fits-all modality for partnership that is not well suited to UN Women's strategic priorities at the country level; (c) audit recommendations to account for all expenditure run counter to the flexibility needed to work effectively with small human rights organizations; and (d) results-based management indicators do not track the long-term achievements from working with the same partner over multiple phases of a partnership.

framework for partnerships. The evaluation has found significant evidence to support the urgency of this case.

In addition to the refinement of fiduciary accountability implied by these alternative partnership modalities,

the evaluation also concludes that application of feminist values to strategic partnership governance requires that future partnership agreements establish mutual accountability for performance to equalize power relations, especially between UN Women offices and strategic implementing partners.

Conclusion 5

Civil society and the women’s movement have been and will continue to be essential strategic partners to UN Women. UN Women must continue to see partnerships with civil society within the broader picture of building an inclusive movement for GEEW. Looking forward, ensuring that this approach is clear at all levels of UN Women and emphasizing the importance of mutual accountability in partnerships with civil society are the two main priorities. (Based on Findings 9, 18 and 19 and Section 5)

This evaluation has highlighted how bilateral strategic partnerships between UN Women and CSOs have contributed to delivering important changes in the lives of individual women, households, national policies and international norms. However, the global context of shrinking space for civil society across the world means that UN Women now needs to go beyond these bilateral partnerships if the implementation of the SDGs is to be interpreted and pursued by governments as a transformative agenda for gender equality.

UN Women’s convening power has been demonstrated as a significant comparative advantage for establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships by creating inclusive spaces, facilitating open dialogue and enhancing coordination of the gender equality movement. Some strategies have already emerged to leverage this comparative advantage, such as the new CSAG strategy and FPI. The evaluation concludes that there is a pressing need to build on successes at the global level and to push forward with creating such spaces for meaningful dialogue between women’s civil society and other partners at country level.

Making these spaces effective, however, would require aspects of the relationship between UN

Women and the women’s movement to be revisited, including ensuring a mutual accountability framework. The current flow of funding from donors, through UN Women, to civil society in the form of annual commitments inhibits the development of strategic national capacity and positioning. In a difficult international environment, making the case to Member States to channel a more predictable pipeline of resources into the women’s movement has not been able to address the structural underfunding of GEEW. In some instances, UN Women offices even end up competing with women’s CSOs for the same sources of funds.

For some women’s organizations that are starved of resources and political space, the change from UNIFEM (as a funder of CSOs) to UN Women (as a strategic partner) has represented a major challenge to their sustainability. The central challenge of continuing this strategic shift to movement-building is, therefore, to ensure that women’s civil society not only has a platform to speak with other actors, but also has the resources, capacity and political backing to do so effectively. Addressing this challenge can only be done with the women’s movement, not for it.

Despite these challenges, however, a number of good practices and promising opportunities exist that can be built upon. Direct and open dialogue between the leadership of UN Women and women’s civil society has led to mutual understanding and the formation of influential coalitions (such as for Rio+20 and Financing for Development). The CSAG structure continues to grow and to evolve by listening to women’s organizations. And, finally, the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund for EAW are

already valuable ambassadors for UN Women’s commitment to strengthening the women’s movement as an indispensable actor in its own right.

This evaluation has reconfirmed the criticality of UN Women’s relationship with women’s civil society to advancing GEEW within the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Going forward, the context demands stronger, consistent and sustainable partnerships that support movement building for gender equality across the UN Women’s offices. All of UN Women, and not only some of its parts, must be coherently and resourcefully supporting strategic alliances and partnerships with civil society to strengthen the feminist agenda at national regional and global levels.

Conclusion 6

There has been a rapid evolution of UN Women’s approach to corporate partnerships, and some innovative methods are being used to build brand recognition, engender the footprint of the corporate sector, and fundraise for GEEW. These efforts have resulted in many successes and lessons, but also substantial reputational risks. Given the contributions of these achievements and risks to UN Women delivering its ambitions, the number of private-sector specialists is far below the level required to address all of the demands placed on them. (Based on Finding 9 and Section 5)

A major feature in the changing nature of strategic partnerships over the course of the time period covered by this evaluation has been the high-level organizational focus on expanding the number, scale and depth of UN Women’s partnerships with corporations. This intentional strategy has sought to massively expand the reach of UN Women’s influence through both the corporate “footprints” (employees, supply chain, customers) of these strategic partners and the financial resources, capabilities and access that they might contribute to support UN Women’s Strategic Plan.

All UN entities face a potential conflict of interest inherent in fundraising from the corporate sector while also holding it to account for human rights norms and standards covered by their mandates. This is particularly profound in the case of women’s human rights, where market economics is identified as one of the key factors associated with entrenching the marginalization of women, disadvantaging particular social groups, and obstructing the accountability of governments to civil society.

Both of these positions remain relevant in the pursuit of “change-from-within” the corporate sector, and UN Women’s emerging strategic partnerships through HeForShe Impact 10x10x10 reflect an explicit attempt to balance these tensions between fundraising for GEEW and holding corporations to account for their position on women’s human rights.

UN Women is cognizant of these challenges and engaged in active internal debate on how best to address them. It has a due diligence system for the selection of private-sector partners and increasingly involves active participation of interested parties across UN Women in the design of corporate strategies. UN Women’s leadership is also committed to engaging corporate partners to secure effective stewardship of WEPs in their own business (and increasingly their supply chain) and to support enhanced standards and norms in the business sector.

The evaluation has found that three areas merit consideration to increase the clarity surrounding what can be sometimes perceived as potential conflicts of interest:

- a. The WEPs have been managed by the private-sector engagement team otherwise responsible for corporate funding. As a programme approach, the evaluation concludes that it would be best for WEPs to be integrated into the Policy and Programme Bureau, ensuring close coordination but not subordination to the resource mobilization agenda when engaging individual companies, including those engaged through the Executive Director Office, HeForShe, etc.

- b. The reliance on new sources of funding considering limited core commitments has compelled UN Women to emphasize corporate partnerships. However, corporate partnerships require more capacity for their effective stewardship than similarly sized agreements with Member States, because each corporate partnership involves unique teams, structures and administrative requirements. UN Women's partnership management resources are, therefore, increasingly stretched.
- c. Evidence from across the UN system increasingly indicates that the ceiling of corporate giving is far

lower than expected while private foundations and individual giving offer far more potential for resource mobilization. UN Women has, so far, privileged corporate partnerships over individual and private giving because of the low availability of human and capital resources needed to see long-term return on investment in the latter. The case for strengthening the capacity of National Committees and UN Women offices to raise private and individual giving needs to be reviewed, and government donors may be willing to expand their investment if proven to leverage substantial further giving over time (as has been the case in other UN entities).

Conclusion 7

UN Women's relationships with UN entities (through UN coordination) provide an important means for coordinating more effective strategic partnerships outside of the United Nations. However, inconsistencies between the priorities and operational systems of different UN entities at the country level means different members of the UN Country Team are frequently found to be maintaining separate bilateral (and sometime competitive) relationships with a single strategic partner, resulting in inefficiencies. (Based on Findings 9 and 15 and Section 5)

The evaluative evidence firmly concludes that effective strategic partnerships are critical to UN Women's ability to leverage transformational changes, address underlying causes, and work with marginalized groups. In particular, where strategic partnerships are intended to contribute to gender mainstreaming, policy change and systemic coordination, then being able to convene and mediate different world views on GEEW and unequal distribution of power and influence is essential. In many cases, other UN entities hold the critical relationships, trust and capabilities that are essential to making this possible.

Data from the UN Development Group reveals that gender is the number one area for joint programmes, with 105 joint gender programmes out of the more than 300 joint programmes implemented across UN Country Teams. However, while UN Women effectively enters into country-level partnerships with UN

entities to deliver on the UN Development Assistance Framework, the evaluation case studies found limited evidence of UN agencies collaborating in managing relations with non-UN strategic partners. More often, different members of the UN Country Team were found to be maintaining separate bilateral (and sometimes competitive) relationships with the same strategic partner. While there was no clear evidence of this resulting in duplication, more frequent joint management of relations and programming with strategic partners (such as major CSOs in a country) would help to enhance synergies and reduce transaction costs.

The evaluation found limited evidence of country-level strategic partnerships (designed before the FPI) having been designed to maximize the advantage of UN Women's UN coordination role to promote such integration. Maintaining strategic partnerships through UN coordination (such as coordinated relationships with a non-UN organization, common support to a CSO through a joint programme, or leveraging the strategic partnerships held by other UN entities to advance GEEW) were found to be subject to several practical barriers that need to be overcome. For example, the auditing requirements of different UN entities for PCAs are not aligned (see Finding 15). In other cases, the underlying theories of change used by UN entities operating in the same space emphasize different approaches (such as the different concepts of safe urban spaces used by UN-Habitat and UN Women that prevailed

until HABITAT III). UN Women has an important leadership role to play in prioritizing joint action with other UN entities in order to address practical barriers to UN

Country Teams coordinating their relationships with strategic partners that are pertinent to implementing GEEW commitments at the national level.

Conclusion 8

All relationships with Member States have strategic implications. UN Women would likely benefit from having a more coordinated approach to working in partnership with the various agencies of Member States with which it engages at the global, regional and country level.

(Based on Finding 9 and Section 5)

Member States have a unique role and relationship regarding UN Women—providing the mandate, accountability and majority of the Entity’s resources. All relationships with Member States therefore have strategic implications.

Partnerships with Member States are already pursued through building relationships with regional and sub-regional groups that operate at the United Nations, as well as groupings like the Non Aligned Movement and the G77 and China. Partnerships are also pursued by UN Women with intergovernmental organizations such as the LAS, EU, African Union, Organization of Islamic Conference and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

It was found that UN Women often maintains multiple avenues and levels of partnership with different parts of a Member State’s bureaucracy, including its delegations, development agencies and national

women’s machinery (through its programme offices, support to intergovernmental forums, representation by UN Women National Committees, or liaison with Groups of Friends).

While these multiple connections might be brought together to advance commonly agreed strategic objectives (such as ERAW in a complex regional emergency), no single clear model for framing and governing this in terms of a strategic partnership was found to exist. Establishing more clearly defined strategic partnerships with Member States could, in theory, make a significant contribution to UN Women’s ability to pursue structural transformation in cases where the various agencies of Member States are themselves well-coordinated.

With increasing diversification of its partnership base and increasing emphasis on the value of multi-stakeholder partnerships, UN Women is facing new challenges in terms of needing to better address the power dynamics at play between stakeholder groups. Establishing a coordinated approach to working in partnership with the various agencies of its Member States, in this context, could potentially help UN Women to magnify the reach of national gender machineries to advocate for GEEW on a state-to-state basis.



7

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following eight recommendations to UN Women are based on the evaluation framework, the analysis

that informed findings and conclusions, and discussions held with stakeholders.

Recommendation 1

Establish a sufficiently resourced, integrated and commonly agreed framework for strategic partnerships as a central part of UN Women's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan.

(Based on Conclusions 1, 2 and 3)

The evidence from the evaluation indicates that strategic partnerships have worked best when they are geared towards achieving specific shared goals and where there is alignment between the vision and systems of the partners. Establishing this firm foundation and managing effective partnerships takes time, staff commitment and organizational focus.

In a constrained overall financing environment for GEEW, UN Women has successfully leveraged strategic partnerships to help deliver its integrated mandate. Given the management load implied by the ratio of staff to partnerships, the evaluation recommends that the next UN Women Strategic Plan (2018) should emphasize the core capacities needed to effectively prioritize and steward strategic partnerships.

In support of this, UN Women requires a more clearly articulated definition, vision and set of principles for strategic partnerships that are owned, communicated and understood throughout the organization. This can build on the defining characteristics for strategic partnership elaborated in this evaluation:

- a. *If a partnership contributes to the mission of both partners so as to be mutually beneficial*
- b. *If a partnership leads to force multiplication, innovation or positive externalities that would not otherwise happen*
- c. *If a partnership is a long-term commitment for transformational changes in gender relations*

d. *If a partnership combines the knowledge, experience and capabilities of its partners*

e. *If the above factors contribute to accelerating the achievement of common objectives for advancing GEEW*

f. *Then the partnership is a "strategic partnership"*

Three priority actions are recommended to implement this approach:

a. Establish a strategic partnership policy framework with a clear definition, vision, set of principles and vocabulary for partnerships in UN Women.

i) This should include guidance on processes and techniques for elaborating clear and commonly owned partnership goals, and selecting appropriate governance structures for different types of partnership (frameworks, liaison, convening, implementation).

ii) Given the way that information is disseminated in UN Women, all programme and operations guidance should be revised so as to include concrete examples of how to apply this toolkit within their scope.

b. Publish a clear statement of the risk appetite of UN Women regarding performance, fiduciary and reputational risks from partnering, including establishing acceptable boundaries for innovation. This should be combined with the promulgation of the organizational risk management system at all levels.

- c. Commit sufficient staff time and attention to **establishing partnership roadmaps** for each strategic partnership using the PGA Framework:
 - i) “Planning for the partnership’s development over an agreed planning period, thinking about what this means for stakeholders and resource needs.
 - ii) Segmenting into distinct development stages to assist in planning how to upscale resources and impact.
 - iii) Identifying key governance and accountability elements from the PGA Framework most relevant for each of the partnership’s stage of development.
- iv) Engaging stakeholders in the co-design of its governance and regular accountability assessments based on the Framework.
- v) Defining timed, measurable targets linked to each stage of development of the partnership’s governance and accountability.
- vi) Embedding the roadmap into the partnership’s strategic and operational plans, managers’ key objectives, and Board-level and external reporting.
- vii) Periodically reviewing and revising the roadmap.”⁸⁷

Recommendation 2

Within the proposed framework for strategic partnerships, establish clarity regarding roles and responsibilities within the current UN Women structures that will best support strategic partnerships, and explicitly recognize the corresponding importance of leadership capacities, skills and knowledge for partnership work. (Based on Conclusions 1 and 3)

Within the context of a UN entity, such as UN Women, the provision of strong and successful leadership for strategic partnerships requires the existence of a supportive structure. Given the interconnectedness of partnerships with other organizational functions, it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to recommend a specific arrangement and terms of reference for positions within UN Women HQ. The evaluation does advise, however, that an effective structure—in whatever arrangement—depends on having clearly articulated and commonly understood roles and responsibilities and means for coordination.

Most importantly UN Women requires clarity on the roles and responsibilities for internal communication and coordination between different UN Women business units regarding the account management of strategic partnerships. The SPD, a natural candidate for leading this process, has not so far been equipped with

the human resources or clarity of mandate necessary to take on the required role. It is recommended that supporting coordinated communication with all strategic partners (including those led by the Executive Director Office) should be a clearly mandated role of the SPD, with sufficient human resources allocated to deliver this. Doing so implies that it should be a primary role of SPD to provide a suite of strategic partnership services (information, knowledge, legal, technological, monitoring) that support other parts of the organization.

The evaluation proposes that UN Women establish a clear set of roles and responsibilities for the HQ business units regarding coordinating and communicating the relationship with each type of strategic partner or multi-stakeholder partnership. Overall, within the Regional Architecture and at HQ level, the evaluation recommends three actions to address the organization’s capabilities to develop and manage strategic partnerships:

- a. In the short-term, **establish strategic partnership focal points** in all parts of the Regional

⁸⁷ Zadek, S., and S. Radovich. 2006. “Governing Collaborative Governance: Enhancing Development Outcomes by Improving Partnership Governance and Accountability.” AccountAbility and the Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative, Working Paper No. 23. Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. P 22.

Architecture and in each HQ section with responsibility for coordinating strategic partnerships in liaison with the SPD. Do so in unison with synergistic efforts to strengthen coordination capacity. Through these focal persons, provide specific training and refresher training for all relevant global, regional and country level staff on applying the Programme Operations Manual appropriately to support strategic partnerships, including in humanitarian, trans-national and regional contexts.

- b. To facilitate better coordination of partnerships across UN Women, prioritize a single **corporate relationship management information technology system**. This does not imply creating a single gate-keeper or account manager for each partner but a system by which all contact with a partner organization is visible to other staff members of UN Women. Leverage and extend the use of existing corporate relationship management software,

linking it to the results tracking and financial reporting systems. Each UN Women business unit should be aware of the interactions between a partner and other business units in UN Women.

- c. Specific skills, knowledge and practices are required by leaders if UN Women is to effectively work through partnerships, especially strategic partnerships operating with a broader context of great uncertainty and complexity. UN Women's leaders exist at all levels of the organization, in both formal positions in the structure and informally through experience and/or technical excellence. In the medium term, **establish a set of competencies, components of leadership training programmes, and certifications focused on strategic partnership management** for UN Women staff members. Ensure that these are specified in appropriate terms of reference, including directors, representatives and their deputies, and recognize the practice of these competencies in the staff review process.

Recommendation 3

Undertake a systematic process of integrating strategic partnership considerations in the day-to-day workflow and tools used by leaders, managers and staff at all levels. (Based on Conclusions 3 and 4)

The evaluation continually encountered evidence of the limited time available to UN Women staff to undertake their core tasks and responsibilities. Within this context, only requirements that are included within this core day-to-day “work stream” are likely to receive sufficient attention at all levels of the organization.

It is recommended that while developing the overall framework for partnerships, UN Women undertake a review of operations tools, rules and processes to assess their impact on and relevance to strategic partnerships. Prior to such a review, three priority areas should be addressed: the operational tools and modalities for strategic partnerships (including risk appetite and management), the indicators for partnership in the Strategic Plan integrated framework, and the monitoring and reporting requirements for partnerships.

With regard to operational tools, UN Women has already explored options for adjusting partnership modalities in line with recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit and others. The evaluation recommends that UN Women moves forward with revising partnership modalities with a view to fostering long-term gender-responsive partnerships in the field by implementing the Joint Inspection Unit recommendation to consider: “developing and adopting small-scale IP [Implementing Partner] agreements in line with appropriate delegation of authority; and whether a grant agreement would be useful in addition to such a small-scale agreement.”⁸⁸ In addition to establishing a new small-scale funding agreement and/or grants mechanism that is appropriate to supporting small CSOs, UN Women is strongly recommended to amend the existing PCAs to include a mutual accountability framework (with monitoring tools) in which

⁸⁸ Joint Inspection Unit. 2013. *Review of the Management of Implementing Partners in the United Nations System Organizations*. Accessible at: https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2013_4_English.pdf

UN Women and strategic implementing partners share accountability for both processes and results. With regard to the Strategic Plan, it is proposed that both parts of the integrated framework, the DRF and the OEEF be amended to reflect the findings of the evaluation.

With regard to the reporting and monitoring of partnerships, the following changes are recommended:

- a. Strategic partnerships and strategic implementing partnerships that are (or may be) covered by multiple governing documents (for example a series of MOUs or a series of PCAs) should include within their results frameworks cumulative outcome indicators that are designed to capture the long-term contribution of the partnership to its ultimate goal (and not only outcomes that can be achieved within the time frame covered by each individual agreement). For example, the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership is founded on a theory of change that implies a multi-decade strategy. There is a case for continuity in higher-level outcome indicators in all future partnerships covering the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive

Leadership so as to track the realization of this strategic impact.

- b. Take concerted steps to minimize the burden of reporting and auditing on women’s CSOs through the adoption of more nuanced risk-based requirements. These should include matching the most civil-society friendly standards of UNICEF and UNFPA (and ideally establishing a common approach through UN Women’s application of a Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers). It is recommended that audit requirements are reviewed and adjusted to a risk-based system, with greater acceptance of local audit reports from UN-recognized firms. Assess possibilities for shifting to electronic submission of vouchers using mobile applications with cameras, especially for civil society partners operating in remote locations.
- c. Consider commissioning an annual survey of all UN Women partners and partnerships to collect data on perceptions, the functioning of partnerships (according to the AccountAbility framework), lessons and hopes. Use this survey as an opportunity for engagement and transparency by reporting back the results to partners.

TABLE 13.
Proposed changes to the representation of strategic partnerships in UN Women’s results frameworks

Framework	Changes	Potential indicators
OEEF	Replace the existing count of CSAGs and private-sector partnerships with indicators based on the performance and governance of strategic partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social return on investment of partnerships (including contributions to development results, available resources and the influence of the women’s movement). • Percentage of partnerships that stay on track towards their goals. • Number of partnerships that have generated learning processes and products between the partners. • Number of partnerships that have fostered innovation to address new opportunities and challenges. • Alignment of partnership governance with feminist principles.
DRF	Disaggregate the contribution of direct implementation and national implementation to existing results. Measure changes as a result of being in partnership—through a tool such as an annual survey of partners—including specific lines for “catalytic” impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in the capacity, reach and influence of UN Women’s “boundary partners” as a consequence of partnership and how these changes lead towards <i>Planet 50:50</i>. • Long-term cumulative and indirect results of strategic partnerships (e.g., the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership). • Sustainability of results, including catalytic impacts (for example, in terms of movement-building).

Recommendation 4

Further leverage UN Women’s experience in using strategic partnerships to convene and mediate between different world views by shaping multi-stakeholder spaces and platforms for dialogue and innovation; this requires changes in incentive structures from both donors and within UN Women systems. (Based on Conclusions 1, 4 and 5)

At the global level, UN Women has made effective use of multi-stakeholder strategic partnerships to advance its normative agenda. Yet country case studies and partnership mapping reveals that most partnerships (in terms of numbers) are currently bilateral. This creates a challenge in focusing management time on a few more strategic partnerships, something that the FPI should help to address. In the future, it is recommended that a greater proportion of partnerships should be held within multi-stakeholder platforms, shaping these to allow for creative tension and innovation to further enhance returns.

UN Women should consider where progress can be achieved by combining bilateral partnerships into multi-stakeholder partnerships, winding down partnerships that are not working as planned, and carefully considering the cost-benefits of additional partnerships. Priority can be given to partnerships that integrate multiple dimensions of UN Women’s mandate. Managing the tensions between world views within these spaces, as was evidenced in recent political processes underpinning the normative work, can become a key competency and value-proposition of UN Women—with the organization coordinating direct dialogue between diverse partners.

There is a need to state in clear and unambiguous terms which of UN Women’s commitments are to be considered as the most urgent priority when streamlining existing—or establishing new—strategic partnerships under the UN Women Strategic Plan results framework, including (but not limited

to): resource mobilization (for UN Women and/or the gender equality movement); and national capacity to implement the SDGs, the Beijing Platform for Action, or specific human rights frameworks (e.g., CEDAW, UN Security Council Resolution 1325). This can change over time to ensure that UN Women maintains a balanced portfolio of strategic partnerships.

The current incentive structures in the donor system and in UN Women work against fully adopting such an approach. Bilateral partnerships are more predictable and efficient regarding fundraising for UN Women, spending according to plans and achieving outputs. As a consequence, partnerships are likely to remain fragmented without an explicit change in these incentive structures.

UN Women can do its part by revisiting its own incentives structures, especially for country representatives, to recognize and reward managers for progress towards two new objectives:

- a. Demonstrating contribution towards a sustainable outcome that is beyond the ability of UN Women or its partner to achieve if acting alone, and, therefore, indicates the realization of an effective strategic partnership.
- b. Demonstrating the generation of an innovative approach to advancing women’s human rights by a diverse multi-stakeholder partnership, thereby indicating an ability to creatively manage tensions between partners with different world views.

Success in both of these areas (a powerful example of sustainable impact and innovation through dialogue) could represent a unique value proposition for UN Women—one that can be leveraged to attract greater future support and resourcing.

Recommendation 5

Extend UN Women’s global approach to movement-building to country-level work with CSOs to address the core capacity of women’s organizations to hold governments to account for national implementation of international GEEW commitments, especially Agenda 2030. (Based on Conclusion 5)

This evaluation has reconfirmed the criticality of UN Women’s relationship with women’s civil society to advancing GEEW within the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Beijing Platform for Action. At the country level, UN Women needs to work with women’s civil society to continue the strategic shift away from focusing on bilateral implementing partnerships towards movement-building in a way that addresses genuine concerns over insecure resources, overstretched capacity, and reducing political space for action. Revision of the operational tools under Recommendation 3 will help support a more gender-responsive approach to working with civil society.

- a. Support COs, ROs and global units to establish multi-year funding pipelines and to advocate to donors on the importance of providing strategic partners from civil society with core (un-earmarked) funds.

- b. Provide regular opportunities for structured and open dialogue between the leadership of UN Women and women’s civil society. These could include: an annual UN Women conference on the back of CSW to allow multiple stakeholder groups to interact, discuss common positions, provide feedback to UN Women and mobilize the women’s movement; strengthening the role of CSAGs in terms of ensuring the responsiveness, transparency and practice of values in UN Women’s partnership portfolio; and periodic institutionalized consultations as needed or appropriate in relevant contexts. UN Women should commit to institutionalizing the results of these convening efforts more than it has done with existing events.

- c. Build the ownership and commitment of the leadership to the trust funds (both within UN Women and the wider UN system) as a visible model that symbolizes UN Women’s commitment to protect and build the women’s movement as an independent actor with inherent value.

Recommendation 6

Address the dual relationship with private enterprises and public companies as both funders and a target of advocacy by establishing clearer coordination between the policy, programme and private-sector teams to ensure an integrated approach to managing strategic partnerships and gradually diversifying relationships beyond corporations to individual donors and foundations. (Based on Conclusion 6)

UN Women’s corporate partnerships are making an important contribution to extending influence and advocacy for GEEW into new spaces. However, they require significant human resources to steward. The legacy of structural decisions during UN Women’s foundation means that a need exists for greater

transparency around roles, incentives and responsibilities for fundraising and programming activities. While defining the appropriate roles and responsibilities as outlined under Recommendation 2 for the corporate sector engagement, consider the following:

- a. Move responsibility for the WEPs and other substantive functions to the Policy and Programme Bureau to strengthen work on supporting demand and capacity for internal change in the discourse and practice of the corporate sector.
- b. Enable SPD to coordinate communication with corporate partners by integrating inputs and requests from across the house (including

Executive Director Office, private sector, civil society, intergovernmental, UN system coordination, communications, and field office teams).

- c. Disaggregate and articulate different types of corporate partnerships, with appropriate levels of due diligence processes established for each category. Establish pre-approved mechanisms for engaging “corporate friends of UN Women”, such as through signing-up to campaigns or running

employee-giving schemes that require lower levels of due diligence and can be approved by ROs (thereby relieving pressure on the central HQ due diligence function).

- d. Strengthen support to National Committees and field offices to diversify corporate partners and to place greater emphasis on building relationships with individual donors and foundations.

Recommendation 7

Identify and address barriers to country-level UN coordination of relationships with strategic partners that work with multiple UN entities. (Based on Conclusion 7)

UN Women has an important leadership role to play in joint action with other entities to address practical barriers to UN coordination of strategic partnerships, especially with regard to advancing GEEW through the implementation of Agenda 2030. Exercising this leadership role effectively requires greater internal UN Women coordination between partnerships, coordination, intergovernmental, executive offices and programme teams.

- a. Harmonize the FPI theories of change with the key models and theories of sister agencies to better provide the basis for joint programmes and advocacy initiatives.

- b. Encourage, through UN Women’s presence in the UN Country Team, joint management of relations and programming with strategic partners that are common to multiple UN entities to maximize synergies and benefit from the comparative advantage of other entities.

- c. At the global level, strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the UN Women Working Group on Agenda 2030 comprising of representatives from partnerships, coordination, intergovernmental, executive offices and programme teams. The Working Group concept is essential to mobilizing and coordinating an effective multi-stakeholder and multi-agency approach to support the integrated implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Beijing Platform for Action at the national level: making the “pie bigger” rather than competing for a “bigger slice”.

Recommendation 8

Establish a model for a strategic partnership between UN Women and the various agencies within a Member State that supports coordination between the role of that state in intergovernmental processes, regional mechanisms, global and local donorship, and the global economy. (Based on Conclusion 8)

UN Women often maintains multiple avenues and levels of partnership with different parts of a Member State’s bureaucracy, including its delegations,

development agencies and national women’s machinery. On some occasions, there is scope to more precisely define how these multiple connections might be appropriately coordinated within the framework of a strategic partnership. It is also necessary to explore how the work of UN Women National Committees and Groups of Friends can better complement the role of UN Women offices.



8

EVALUATION WORKING
MODEL

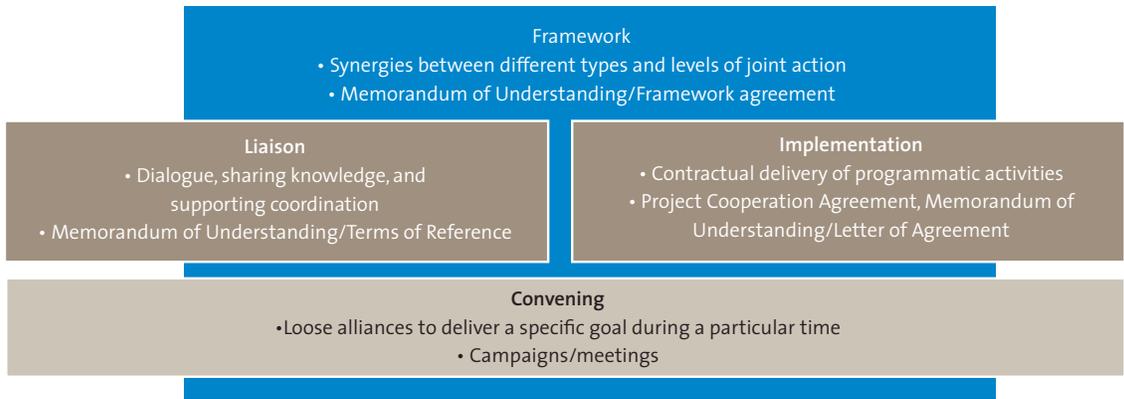
8. EVALUATION WORKING MODEL

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

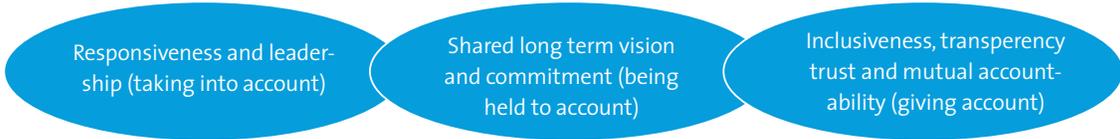


Accelerate achievement of common objectives for advancing GEEW

MODALITIES



ENABLING FACTORS



OUTCOME RESULTS

<i>Basic</i>			
Raised partner/third parties' awareness on GEEW & UN Women mandate	Strengthened GEEW knowledge, capacity of UN Women, partner & third parties	Strengthened spaces for dialogue	Expanded UN Women & partner's reach & influence to new audiences
<i>Good</i>			
Gender mainstreamed in the existing partner's projects, strategies and plans	More resources mobilized for UN Women & partners	Strengthened GEEW data, evidence & knowledge base	Changed third parties & partner's policies, practices & behaviors in favor of GEEW
<i>Advanced</i>			
Strengthened GEEW programming, implementation & monitoring of global standards on the ground	Coherent, systemic, mutually beneficial movement for GEEW	Norm setting/policy-making process influenced from a GEEW perspective	Improved coordination in GEEW

EXTERNAL ADVISORS REVIEW OF THE EVALUATION



SRILATHA BATLIWALA

Partnership falls within the spectrum of important but abstract and amorphous concepts – like democracy, leadership, equality – that are extremely hard to pin down conceptually and strategically. As someone who has worked on and with abstract concepts like power, empowerment, and leadership, and their practice in the women’s rights and gender equality arena, I can appreciate how difficult it is to unpack – much less evaluate! - the concept and practice of strategic partnerships for a complex system like UN Women. The evaluation team is to be congratulated for taking on this very challenging task with both conceptual rigor and thoroughness. The sheer scale and scope of the evaluation process commands respect. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are both comprehensive and nuanced – and could provide valuable guidance to a broader range of social justice actors, where partnerships in the shape of networks, alliances and coalitions have become a critical mode for amplifying their voice and impact. This evaluation provides very valuable insights, principles and guidelines that constitute an excellent roadmap for UN Women to design its future partnership strategy. I strongly urge UN Women to create a user-friendly manual or toolkit based on this evaluation that would be welcomed by a much broader audience.



SARAH EARL

As a formative evaluation, the users and intended uses of this evaluation were explicitly identified as internal to UN Women. A strength of the evaluation process was the engagement of them throughout. The design of the evaluation was realistic, practical and more than adequate to respond to the evaluation questions. The approach recognized the limitations of documentation and employed a variety of methods to gather evidence from a wide variety of sources. The inclusion of innovative methods like the use of twitter is a good example of how the evaluation looked to engage widely and get a variety of perspectives. The evaluation grappled with the complexity of the topic of strategic partnerships and provided nuanced understandings of the issues. Depending on the evaluation approach, values are not always easy to include and assess. This evaluation framed the sections on feminist values in a very solid way. The evaluation provided many concrete and actionable conclusions and recommendations that the organization can use to further institutionalize and improve its strategic partnership work.

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

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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