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PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR WOMEN IN EGYPT, JORDAN AND PALESTINE: JOINT PROGRAMME, UN WOMEN AND ILO

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

JULY 2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women (IEAS) led this joint evaluation under the supervision of Chaitali Chattopadhyay (Regional Evaluation Specialist for the Arab States region). The evaluation team comprised three national evaluation experts: Awny Amer (Egypt), Ayesha AlRifai (Palestine) and Zein Soufan (Jordan). An international consultant, Wael Zakkar contributed towards a part of the evaluation.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations Against Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Services
ILO	International Labour Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RBM	Results Based Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WEPs	Women's Empowerment Principles

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE ILO–UN WOMEN JOINT PROGRAMME, PROMOTING PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR WOMEN IN EGYPT, JORDAN AND PALESTINE (WORK4WOMEN). THE EVALUATION COVERED THE PROGRAMME PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2019 TO NOVEMBER 2022. THE EVALUATION WAS CONDUCTED BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2021 AND NOVEMBER 2022.

The Joint Programme Work for Women

UN Women and ILO started implementing a multi-country Joint Programme in 2019 to promote decent employment opportunities for women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine by addressing the structural causes of inequalities that women face in the region.

The Joint Programme aimed to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, particularly target 5.4 to “recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate”, and SDG 8, specifically target 8.5 to “full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” and target 8.8 to “protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment”.

The Joint Programme started as a 48-month long programme, from January 2019 to December 2022. In November 2021, it received an extension until December 2023, making it a 60-month long programme. The total budget of the Joint Programme was US\$ 13.1 million, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Evaluation purpose, objectives and approach

The purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation was two-fold: (a) accountability, to assess the programme’s overall performance and achievements against planned results; and (b) learning, by studying the nature and processes of interventions to determine which strategies and elements were working well and in which context to replicate or scale up the successful interventions and innovations. Therefore, the evaluation was primarily formative in nature but also included summative elements within its scope.

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- a) Analyse the relevance of the Joint Programme’s objectives, intervention logic, strategy and approach at national and regional levels, as well as UN Women and ILO’s collaborative comparative advantage/added value in this area.
- b) Assess programme effectiveness in achieving planned programme outputs and outcomes, including unexpected results and factors affecting programme implementation and results (positively and negatively).
- c) Assess the efficiency of Joint Programme management, partnerships, governance and coordination mechanisms including the regional-level Joint Programme Strategic Coordination Committee and the National Joint Programme Steering Committees in progressing towards achievement of programme results.

- d) Review the strategies and mechanisms for outcomes' sustainability in the target countries as well as at the regional level.
- e) Assess the extent to which the programme was informed by gender, human rights and disability inclusion approaches and was contributing to gender transformative changes to advance and sustain gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- f) Identify and document lessons learned, good practices and innovations, success stories and challenges within the programme to inform future work.
- g) Provide strategic recommendations for the different key stakeholders for future programming.

Evaluation scope

The evaluation covered the programme period from January 2019 to November 2022* and all aspects of programme implementation. It included three countries where activities were being implemented: Egypt, Palestine and Jordan, and the regional initiatives taking place at the Arab States regional level. The evaluation was conducted between November 2021 and November 2022.

**The initial scope was from January 2019 to December 2021. Due to a delayed start of the evaluation, the scope was extended to November 2022.*

Evaluation design

The evaluation applied a theory-based approach and applied gender and human rights-based principles to evaluation, including a disability lens, through their incorporation into the evaluation questions and analysis approaches.



Conclusions and Recommendation

Conclusion 1:

The Joint Programme is well aligned with national, regional and international policies, normative frameworks and strategies for promoting women's productive employment and decent work. Its Theory of Change and intervention logic is valid in terms of identifying and addressing structural and systemic barriers to facilitate women's participation in the labour market and in the world of work across the macro (laws and policy), meso (institutions and networks) and micro levels (communities and individuals). The Joint Programme could consolidate its portfolio by prioritizing, refocusing and scaling up certain interventions. Prioritization might be necessary to bring about concrete outcomes, when taking into consideration the limits of the Joint Programme budget compared to requirements to expand implementation.

(Finding 1, 2, 5,6)



Recommendation 1: The Joint Programme should consolidate its portfolio of interventions by prioritizing what has worked well and focus on these aspects for the rest of the programme period. Normative work; work with the private sector, particularly through Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs); and addressing gender-based employment segregation are areas that the programme should prioritize and focus on during its next phase.



Recommendation 2: Continue to strengthen monitoring and learning systems: develop more ambitious indicators, including to better capture social and gender norms change and the impact of media outreach and advocacy, impact of capacity strengthening interventions as well as the Joint Programme's contribution to normative changes; and develop a results verification system to strengthen data independence and data quality.

Conclusion 2:

The Joint Programme's multi-pronged strategic approach to partnership has been instrumental in achieving key results. However, there is a need to break the "compartmentalized" form of partnerships to amplify and sustain the programme's results. The Joint Programme has also targeted a cohesive relationship with private sector companies to address the gendered employment challenges in the targeted countries as well as in the Arab States region, particularly through the WEPs. As a trusted partner, it has the potential to achieve scale and impact by facilitating better exchange and collaboration between its partners.

(Finding 6,9)



Recommendation 3: The Joint Programme should break the "compartmentalized" form of partnerships and facilitate regular and systematic exchange between its partners to facilitate their involvement beyond their own area of collaboration with the Joint Programme.



Recommendation 4: The Joint Programme target countries should develop a national WEP strategy and road map based on the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States' WEP Strategy to develop and sustain a gender transformative private sector in the region.

Conclusion 3:

The Joint Programme brought the comparative advantage of UN Women and ILO together and successfully built on the technical complementarities of both entities creating opportunities for added value by enhancing the visibility and legitimacy of gender and decent work on the national agenda of the targeted governments. The programme has filled the evidence gap and supported evidence-based policy and programming decisions. However, its joint governance structures and inter-agency collaboration needs improvement to achieve women's economic empowerment in the Arab States region beyond a specific joint programme.

(Finding 8, 10)



Recommendation 5: The regional leadership of both entities should engage more regularly at a strategic level, beyond current formal engagements (at the Steering Committee), to discuss lessons learned from the partnership to achieve women's economic empowerment and to address bottlenecks and challenges when needed.



Recommendation 6: The Joint Programme should facilitate more strategic dialogues and discussions with its Steering Committees at the national and regional level to support national commitments and institutional arrangements to sustain and amplify the results contributed to by the Joint Programme.

Conclusion 4:

The Joint Programme has adopted a gender transformative approach through its interventions that addresses all aspects of socioecological life. It has made a concerted effort to respond to the needs of some of the most vulnerable women, but it lacks systematic inclusion of women living with disability who are further left behind. There is room for more systematic inclusion following the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and mandate.

(Findings 13,14)



Recommendation 7: The Joint Programme should embed plans for disability inclusion, and implement and monitor them in the remaining phase of the programme.



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1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Empowering women in the economy and closing gender gaps at work are central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development committing to leaving no one behind. This is particularly reflected in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 5: to achieve gender equality, and Goal 8: to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all; and is reflected accordingly in other SDGs.

Moreover, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), relevant outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), such as resolution 54/4 on women's economic empowerment (2010) and ILO Conventions such as the Equal Remuneration Convention, No. 100 (1951); the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No. 111 (1958); and the Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 (2019) provide the necessary normative framework for strengthening women's right to work without discrimination.

In addition, ensuring equal access to decent work is one of the cornerstones of ILO and UN Women's work. This is evidenced by UN Women's Strategic Plans, Strategic Plan 2018–2021¹, under Impact Area 2: "Women, especially the poorest and most excluded are economically empowered and benefit from development," and UN Women's current Strategic Plan (2022–2025)² under impact Area 2: "Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy", as well as ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes³ and Centenary Initiative on Women at Work aiming to secure a better future for women at work.

1.1 Regional overview

World economic and political transitions, security challenges, declining oil prices, protracted regional conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic continue to weigh on the economic prospects of the Middle East and North Africa region. Economic growth in the Arab States has been slower than the world average and, despite having achieved near equal rates of primary school enrolment and a dramatic drop in illiteracy rates for both women and men, the region has struggled to translate this into participation in all aspects of political, social and economic life, particularly for women.⁴

The World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report of 2021 ranks the Middle East (and North Africa), as the region with the widest gender gap (60.9 per cent)⁵. Progress on women's Economic Participation and Opportunity in the Middle East has remained largely unchanged from 2020 i.e. second-to-last, ahead only of South Asia⁶ (see Figure 1).

The Arab region has the world's lowest rate of female labour force participation, 18.4 per cent compared to the global average of 48 per cent.⁷ By contrast, male labour force participation rates, at 77 per cent, are above the global average of 75 per cent.⁸ Female unemployment in the Arab States is at 15.6 per cent – three times higher than the world average.⁹ Arab women perform on average 4.7 times more unpaid care work than men, the highest ratio in the world.¹⁰ As a result of the COVID-19 socioeconomic crisis, it was estimated that Arab women could lose over 700,000 jobs particularly in the informal sector where they constitute 61.8 per cent of workers.¹¹

There are many barriers facing women in access to decent employment. Women tend to work in low-paying jobs and are prevalent in the informal sector, with 33 per cent of working women employed in informal

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/8/un-women-strategic-plan-2018-2021>

² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/un-women-strategic-plan-2022-2025>

³ [Jordan and Palestinian Decent Work Programme \(2018-2022\)](#)

⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021/in-full/gggr2-benchmarking-gender-gaps-findings-from-the-global-gender-gap-index-2021>

⁵ [ibid](#)

⁶ [ibid](#)

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2019/WCMS_670542/lang--en/index.htm

⁸ [ibid](#)

⁹ [ibid](#)

¹⁰ [The Care Economy in the Arab States: Towards Recognising, Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Care Work, UN Women Policy Brief No 1, 2020](#)

¹¹ https://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2019/WCMS_670542/lang--en/index.htm

employment (versus 23 per cent of men).¹² It remains rare for women to be employed in upper management or executive positions. Skills mismatch is another major impediment to obtaining decent employment.¹³ This includes the lack of well-trained, skilled and semi-skilled Technical and Vocational Education and Training workers who can meet the needs of the emerging sectors.¹⁴ Another critical skills mismatch is the number of overeducated (not necessarily over skilled) graduates, including females in the academic, higher education stream who have selected and studied programmes that are not in demand in the labour market, leading to unemployment or underemployment.¹⁵

Some laws (or their implementation) in Arab countries are also hindering women's economic participation, especially those related to working hours, taxation, parental benefits and retirement.¹⁶ Gender stereotypical norms such as considering women's income as secondary and care responsibilities as her key role also limit women's full participation in the labour market.

1.2 Country background: Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, and context of female employment

Consecutive economic crises in these countries have worsened the impact of political and security crises and have led to civil unrest, economic stagnation, fewer employment opportunities and a reliance on informal work. Young women, female heads of households and women refugees are among the most vulnerable cohorts in society, disproportionately affected by such crises. Combined with women's over-reliance on the informal sector, this results in women facing significant barriers to entry into the labour market.¹⁷

Egypt

Positive developments enhancing women's rights and economic empowerment have taken place in Egypt over the past few years. A National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030¹⁸ was developed in 2017, aiming particularly to address the gender pay gap. Although Egyptian labour law guarantees equal pay for work of equal value, women still tend to work in poorly paid employment, and are less likely to be promoted over the course of their working life. The strategy under the leadership of the Egyptian National Council for Women aims to "enforce the laws that protect working women and guarantee their rights with regard to working hours, maternity leave and equal wages, particularly in the private sector".¹⁹

The Egyptian economy has had serious difficulties over the last ten years in the context of two significant political changes since 2011; rising costs of food imports; stagnant Suez Canal income; and a dramatically devalued currency. Egyptian women continue to disproportionately experience major constraints in accessing employment opportunities. Egypt ranks 129 of 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index,²⁰ (it ranked 134 of 144 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap report²¹). Egypt also ranks 146 in the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex as of 2021.²² The female labour force participation rate in the country is 15 per cent compared to a 67.09 per cent male participation rate.²³ The female unemployment rate is 17.5 per cent, more than triple that of men²⁴ (see Figure 1).

The highest share of female employment is found in the services (69.1 per cent), education (23.7 per cent) and agriculture (21.1 per cent) sectors.²⁵ The lowest share is in industry (9.3 per cent), illustrating notable occupational gender segregation.²⁶ The percentage of

¹² According to the ILO, "vulnerable employment" comprises own-account workers and contributing family workers, two employment groups characterized by higher poverty rates and limited social protections.

¹³ Ahmed El Ashmawi, *The Skills Mismatch in the Arab World: A Critical View*, British Council-Egypt, Cairo Symposium 2015.

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ *Enhancing Women's Voice, Agency and Participation*, EBRD 2015

¹⁷ UN Women, ILO (2018), "Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine" Programme Document.

¹⁸ <http://ncw.gov.eg/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/final-version-national-strategy-for-the-empowerment-of-egyptian-women-2030.pdf>

¹⁹ National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, pp. 42 <https://ilostat.ilo.org>

²⁰ UN Women, ILO (2018), "Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine" Programme Document.

²¹ <https://ilostat.ilo.org>

²² CAPMAS. 2020. *Egypt in Figures – Work 2020*.

²³ CAPMAS Press Release 2022.

²⁴ <https://ilostat.ilo.org>

²⁵ *ibid*

women managers stands at 4.7 per cent and a large proportion of female employment is in the informal sector (53.2 per cent in 2019).²⁷

While most new labour market entrants in Egypt are affected by skill mismatches, structural issues around formal and informal work create structural impediments to decent work opportunities for women, including access to childcare, maternity leave and family-friendly working environments. The more readily available forms of employment also involve skill and educational mismatches. The most common third level degrees for women in Egypt are arts and humanities (24.9 per cent), and education (19.7 per cent), whereas for male graduates they are social sciences, journalism and information (27.1 per cent), or business, administration and law (17.4 per cent).²⁸ This highlights the importance of matching skills with formal employment opportunities to promote the inclusion of more vulnerable labour market participants, such as women and youth.²⁹

Oversupply of labour is often absorbed by the informal sector. While this sector was already significant in Egypt, it has now increased to almost 70 per cent of the size of the formal sector due to global and domestic factors.³⁰ Women in Egypt are highly represented in the public sector and informal labour markets. This dependency on informal work does not facilitate access to social protection such as social insurance or maternity leave, as well as being characterized by greater job insecurity, unregulated conditions and lower wages.³¹

The outbreak of COVID-19 affected women in social, economic and psychological terms, leading to the loss of jobs and income; decrease in women's participation at a higher level of education; as well as creating additional pressure on households. The pre-existing labour market challenges for women in Egypt were therefore exacerbated during the pandemic.³² The National Council for Women created a women policy tracker to monitor policies and measures introduced by the Egyptian government to promote the rights of women

during the pandemic, of which five editions have been released to date.³³ Egypt is implementing a "Closing the Gender Gap Accelerator" programme to advance women's economic empowerment through private and public sector collaboration. This initiative is the first of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa region and shows the government's prioritization of investment in human capital as key to Egypt's sustainable development.³⁴

Jordan

Jordan has also witnessed positive developments in recent years to enhance women's rights and economic empowerment. The most recent being a Constitutional amendment which states that "Jordanian men and women shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion."³⁵ The amendment is in line with the government's official goal to achieve gender equality by 2030.

In terms of policies, it has the National Strategy for Women (2020-2025), the recently approved Jordan National Economic Modernization Vision, 2022³⁶ and a strategy to mainstream gender in Jordan's Economic Modernization Vision 2022,³⁷ Mashreq Facility Plan³⁸ and Jordanian National Committee for Pay Equality. There is a strong national focus in Jordan on advancing gender-responsive labour laws. In this regard, in April 2019, the Jordanian Parliament ratified amendments to the Labour Law to facilitate women's employment and to support workers with care responsibilities. The newly amended labour law criminalizes non-adherence to strict guidelines on equal pay for work of equal value between women and men, with fines of up to 1,000 Jordanian Dinars (JOD).

The Jordanian National Committee for Pay Equality (established in 2011 with ILO's support) was instrumental in ensuring the above-referenced amendment to the labour law on equal pay. The Committee is co-chaired by the Ministry of Labour and

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ Egyptian National Competitiveness Council (ENCC) (2017), LABOR SKILLS, PRODUCTIVITY, AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STUDY; SUMMARY OF FINDINGS; EGYPT, OCTOBER 2017.

³⁰ African Development Bank, 2016. 'African Economic Outlook 2016'

³¹ African Development Bank, 2016. 'African Economic Outlook 2016'

³² <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/90501/Dads-in-quarantine-An-opportunity-for-change>

³³ <http://ncw.gov.eg/Pdf/476/Fifth-Edition-Women-policy-Tracker-on-Responsive-Policies-and-Programs>

³⁴ UN Women, ILO (2021), "Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine" Joint Programme Annual Report, Reporting Period: January-December 2020.

³⁵ <https://www.jordantimes.com/opinion/lena-aloul/today-history-was-made-January-2022>

³⁶ <https://www.jordanvision.io/en>

³⁷ <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/womens-empowerment-key-pillar-jordans-economic-modernisation-vision%C2%A0>

³⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/mashreq-gender-facility>

the Jordanian National Commission for Women, and includes representation from employers' organizations, workers' organizations and other members of civil society. The Women's Workers Directorate in the Ministry of Labour, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Employment and Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council, has a gender action plan, focused on improving the number of women undertaking vocational courses of all types. According to the World Bank's 2020 Doing Business Report, Jordan was fourth in the acquiring credit index of 134 countries. Only 33 per cent of adults (27 per cent of women) are considered to have a financial account – higher than in the Middle East and North Africa region but low in comparison to global standards.³⁹

Despite some of the above-indicated positive developments, challenges remain. Jordan has been dealing with political and socioeconomic challenges for a decade since the economic downturn of 2010. Since then, the Jordanian economy has not fully recovered which in turn demonstrates the fragility of the economy. Most recent World Bank data reveals that Jordanian GDP retracted by 1.6 per cent in 2020, as compared to 2019.⁴⁰ The economy grew by 1.8 per cent in the first half of 2021 despite the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic.⁴¹ The Syrian conflict has had a serious economic impact in the region and Jordan has been disproportionately hit by the associated refugee crisis and now hosts the largest refugee community in the world.⁴² Nine years into Syria crisis, Jordan continues to host more than 1.36 million Syrian refugees,⁴³ a significant number for a country with a relatively small population and limited natural resources and economic growth.

In every economic crisis, women are at greater risk of job losses or wage cuts, and this is true in the case of Jordan. Jordan ranks 131 of 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index (in 2017, Jordan ranked 135 of 144 countries overall in the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap report).⁴⁴ The country also ranks 133 on the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex as of 2021. Women's participation in the labour force stands at 15.6 per cent, compared to 60 per cent for men.⁴⁵ The 2021 unemployment rate was 30.7 per cent

among females and 22.4 among males.⁴⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic's socioeconomic impact has aggravated these aspects of the Jordanian labour market.⁴⁷

In Jordan, most of the population resides in urban settings, Amman (the capital) has the highest population density.⁴⁸ Jordan has the fourth highest rate of urbanization in the Middle East and North Africa region. From 2010 to 2020, Jordan's rate of urbanization amounted to 91.42 per cent.⁴⁹ Having such a high rate of urbanization contributes to the reduction in women's access to jobs due to the dislocation of families and subsequent loss of childcare support via the extended family.

In late 2020, Jordan's new parliament had a reduced number of women delegates (from 20 to 15), with no woman elected outside of the quota system. This setback in gender inclusion is likely to have a considerable effect in terms of regulatory reform during a period where two gender-related labour articles are open for reform (violence and harassment in the world of work and closed occupations, and working hours for women). The parliament has a considerable role in achieving such labour-related legal reforms and introducing and enacting gender-responsive budgeting tools.⁵⁰ According to an OECD assessment, Jordan has achieved significant progress in increasing women's participation in decision-making bodies during the last 15 years, but the rate of change is modest owing to "discriminatory societal norms and the adoption of temporary special measures for women outside the quota".⁵¹

The challenge of Syrian refugees in Jordan is also relevant in terms of women in the workplace. Despite efforts by government, donors, the UN and non-governmental organizations, the impact on women in refugee and host communities remains acute. Some 39 per cent of Syrian refugee households are headed by women, who are widows, divorcees or relatives facing additional challenges in accessing assistance and decent work.⁵² For Syrian refugee women in Jordan, the rate of female participation in the labour force stands at 7 per cent compared to 51 per cent for men, which is much lower than the national female rate of participation.⁵³

³⁹ Central Bank of Jordan (2021) Financial Inclusion Report 2018-2020

⁴⁰ World Bank (2021) GDP Growth (Annual %) - Jordan

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² UNHCR (2021) Jordan. Population Trends.

⁴³ Jordan Response Plan to the Syria Crisis 2020-22. <http://www.jrp.gov.jo/#:~:text=Led%20by%20the%20Ministry%20of,the%20S,yria%20crisis%20on%20Jordan>

⁴⁴ World Economic Forum (2021) Global Gender Gap Report 2021

⁴⁵ <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo>

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ World Population Review (2021) Jordan Population Density Map

⁴⁹ O'Neill, A. (2021) MENA Countries: Urbanization 2020. Statista.

⁵⁰ UN Women, ILO (2021), "Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine" Joint Programme Annual Report, Reporting Period: January-December 2020.

⁵¹ <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/womens-political-participation-in-jordan.pdf>

⁵² *ibid*

⁵³ *ibid*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Jordan's economy faced multiple challenges with little available funding for social protection, despite increased demand for such support and services. Unemployment rates during the pandemic jumped from 19.1 per cent in 2019 to 23.9 per cent in 2020.⁵⁴ Women's unemployment increased to 33.6 per cent in 2020 (a jump of 6.1 percentage points), while men's unemployment rate increased to 21.2 per cent, (a jump of 4.1 percentage points) in the same period.⁵⁵ The disproportionately high increase in women's unemployment is of particular concern when it is noted that women's employment was only 10.3 per cent in 2019.⁵⁶ Time-use estimations for Jordan show a considerable unpaid care work gap between men and women, reaching a ratio of 17:1⁵⁷ with a likelihood of increased demands of unpaid work on women's time during the pandemic due to school closures, suspension of market services (increased demand for household production of goods and services), and higher risk of illness for the elderly (increased caring demands).

Palestine

Palestine has also made progress in recent years, with the government's National Policy Agenda (2017–2022) emphasizing that a positive enabling environment for working women is a national priority. The document stipulates that all government departments and agencies must ensure that all policies across all areas are gender responsive.⁵⁸ The National Action Plan to implement UN Security Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2016, illustrating the government's commitment to including women in peacebuilding and nation-building, and social, political and economic reform and growth. The Financial Inclusion National Strategy 2018–2025⁵⁹ was also launched in 2018, which forms foundational objectives for providing equal opportunities for women and men.

Female labour force participation in Palestine remains extremely low in terms of global and regional standards despite high levels of educational attainment. The unemployment rate among labour force participants in Palestine reached 26 per cent in 2021, and the total labour underutilization is 34 per cent.⁶⁰ There is a large

gap in the labour force participation rate between males and females. Approximately 7 in 10 of males participate in the labour force, compared with 2 in 10 females. There is also a large disparity in the labour force participation rate between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, reaching 39 per cent in the Gaza Strip compared to 46 per cent in the West Bank.⁶¹

In 2015, 42.6 per cent of public sector positions were held by men: this sector represents 26.6 per cent of the female labour force.⁶² Current fiscal reforms and austerity measures are leading to reduced government spending, particularly affecting Gaza, and reducing the public sector's capacity to engage new entrants in the world of work. The structure of female employment represents strong horizontal market segmentation. Women are primarily employed in agricultural (13.1 per cent) and the service sector (62.9 per cent).⁶³

The Palestinian Government's Labour Sector Strategy 2017–2022 highlights the need to foster an enabling environment for integrating women into the labour market and reduce female unemployment. Success in this goal would improve household incomes; bolster the national social security system; promote entrepreneurialism; and ensure that the economy has greater resilience in the face of projected future age-dependency ratios.

In the COVID-19 era, an economy that was already in challenging circumstances, suffered from further difficulties, exacerbated by the pre-existing lack of freedom of movement and goods. During the first COVID-19 lockdown, approximately 150,000 Palestinians lost their jobs; 42 per cent of households faced reductions in income of 50 per cent; and just 31 per cent of households were able to cover family expenses, 40 per cent of which were households headed by women.⁶⁴ Based on data provided by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, almost 3,900 complaints were received from women workers in the first quarter of 2020, with 70 per cent of such complaints about wage reductions and 30 per cent about forcible dismissal, forced resignation and unpaid leave.⁶⁵

⁵⁴ Department of Statistics Directorate of Household Surveys (2020) Unemployment Average Quarter 3

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ <https://jordan.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/covid-19-and-women-policy-recommendations>

⁵⁸ State of Palestine (2016). National Policy Agenda. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/npa_english_final_approved_20_2_2017_printed.pdf

⁵⁹ <http://fsd-mena.org/news/palestine-launches-financial-inclusion-strategy-advancing-towards-inclusive-sustainable-development/>

⁶⁰ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Labour Force Survey, 2021

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² PBCS, (2016) 'Women and Men in Palestine: Cases and Statistics' (original in Arabic)

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ PCBS, 2020

⁶⁵ PCBS, 2020

In June 2020, UN Women conducted a rapid gender assessment in Palestine,⁶⁶ which found that school closures led to an increased childcare burden on women and girls. A survey by the Arab World for Research and Development found that 58 per cent of women reported that their household duties had increased, compared to 40 per cent of men; and 41 per cent of women stated that their childcare duties had increased, compared to 32 per cent of men.⁶⁷ These increased responsibilities make it more difficult for women to find employment or other means to generate income. This period was also marked by increased economic violence against women (such as unpaid or partially paid salaries), especially in private sector employment and the informal economy. A 2020 survey conducted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs showed that 45 per cent of women faced economic violence⁶⁸. Ministry of Social Development data for the period January–April 2020 showed that violence against women at the household level increased during the pandemic (including economic violence).⁶⁹




⁶⁶ Findings of a Rapid Gender Analysis of COVID-19 in Palestine April 2020, UN Women

⁶⁷ *ibid*

⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁹ *ibid*

Figure 1: Key regional and national data on gender equality and women's empowerment and women's economic empowerment

KEY REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DATA ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT				
	REGIONAL	EGYPT	JORDAN	PALESTINE
 <p>KEY DEVELOPMENT RANKINGS</p>	<p>Region with the widest gender gap (60.9).^[70]</p>	<p>129th out of 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index.^[71]</p> <p>146th on the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex as of 2021.^[72]</p>	<p>131st out of 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index.^[73]</p> <p>133rd on Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex as of 2021.</p>	<p>Data not available</p>
 <p>KEY WEE DATA</p>	<p>Female labour force participation rate 18.4 % compared to the global average of 48 %.^[74]</p> <p>Female unemployment in the Arab states 15.6 % – three times higher than the world average.^[75]</p> <p>33 % of working women employed in informal employment compared to 23 % of men.^[76]</p> <p>Arab women perform on average 4.7 times more unpaid care work than men.^[77]</p>	<p>Female labour force participation rate 15% compared to 67.09 % male participation rate.^[78]</p> <p>Female unemployment rate 17.5%, more than triple that of their male counterparts.^[79]</p> <p>Approximately half of working women employed in informal employment.^[80]</p> <p>Women spend nine times more time than men on unpaid care work.^[81]</p> <p>In the private sector, 7.1 % of managerial posts^[82] and 16.7 % of board of directors' positions are occupied by women.^[83]</p>	<p>Female labour force participation rate 15.6 % compared to 60% for males.^[84]</p> <p>Unemployment rate 30.7% amongst females and 22.4% amongst males as of 2021.^[85]</p> <p>Unpaid care work ratio between men and women 17:1.^[86]</p>	<p>Female labour force participation 17 % compared to 69 % for males.^[87]</p> <p>26.6 % of the female labour force in public sector positions compared to 42.6 % held by men in 2015.^[88]</p> <p>53% of female with advanced degrees unemployed across the West Bank and Gaza, compared to 16% of male.^[89]</p> <p>Participation rate of women with disabilities in the Palestinian labour force only 2 per cent of women vs. 23 per cent of men with disabilities.^[90]</p>
 <p>KEY NATIONAL COMMITMENTS ON GEWE AND WEE</p>		<p>National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 (2017).</p> <p>The Egypt Vision 2030.^[91]</p> <p>The National Project for Development of Egyptian Family (2021).^[92]</p> <p>The Presidential Initiative of Haya Karima (Decent Work) (2021).^[93]</p> <p>Closing the Gender Gap Accelerator.</p>	<p>National Strategy for Women (2020-2025). Mashreq Facility Plan.^[94]</p> <p>Jordanian National Committee for Pay Equality (JNCPE), 2011</p> <p>Jordan National Economic Modernization Vision, 2022.^[95]</p> <p>Engendered Strategy of Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV), 2022. Labor laws including flexible work arrangements, employer-provided childcare, and prohibition of gender discrimination in wages.</p>	<p>Palestinian government's National Policy Agenda (2017-2022).</p> <p>Financial Inclusion National Strategy 2018-2025.^[96]</p> <p>The National Development Plan (2021-2023).</p> <p>The Gender Equality Sector Strategy (2021-2023).</p>

[70] [Global Gender Gap Report 2021](#)

[71] *ibid*

[72] *ibid*

[73] *ibid*

[74] [World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2019](#)

[75] *ibid*

[76] *ibid*

[77] [The Care Economy in the Arab States: Towards Recognising, Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Care Work, UN Women Policy Brief No 1, 2020](#)

[78] CAPMAS. 2020. [Egypt in Figures – Work 2020](#).

[79] CAPMAS Press Release 2022.

[80] *ibid*

[81] UN Women and Economic Research Forum, ELMPs 2018 data

[82] Labour Force Survey. (2019)

[83] The American University in Cairo School of Business Egypt Women on Boards Observatory. (2021). [Egypt Women on Boards Observatory 2021 Annual Monitoring Report](#).

[84] <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo>

[85] *ibid*

[86] <https://jordan.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/covid-19-and-wee-policy-recommendations>

[87] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Labour Force Survey, 2021

[88] PBCS, (2016) 'Women and Men in Palestine: Cases and Statistics' (original in Arabic)

[89] <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/09981130622220953/pdf/IDU0864241720fd0f04d5a094d009ba1a46de97d.pdf>

[90] UN System in Palestine (2022) United Nations Common Country Analysis for the Occupied Palestinian Territory

[91] <http://sdsegypt2030.com/?lang=en>

[92] [The National Project for Family Development \(2021\)](#)

[93] [The Presidential Initiative of Haya Karima \(2021\)](#)

[94] <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/mashreq-gender-facility>

[95] <https://www.jordanvision.jo/en>

[96] <http://fsd-mena.org/news/palestine-launches-financial-inclusion-strategy-advancing-towards-inclusive-sustainable-development/>

[87] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Labour Force Survey, 2021

1.3 The Joint Programme Work for Women

It is against this background that UN Women and ILO as the Participating United Nations Organizations developed and started implementing a four-year (2019–2022),⁹⁷ multi-country Joint Programme to promote decent employment opportunities for women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine by addressing the structural causes of inequalities that women face in the region.⁹⁸

The Joint Programme aimed to contribute to SDG 5, particularly target 5.4 to “recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate” and SDG 8, specifically target 8.5 to “full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” and target 8.8 to “protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment”.

The programme aimed to address barriers through a comprehensive approach that worked at the macro, meso and micro levels, aimed at enhancing productive employment and decent work for women in the region by promoting equitable laws and policies; engaging the public, private and community actors; and reducing the uneven burden of unpaid care work.

The Joint Programme started as a 48-month long programme, from January 2019 to December 2022. In November 2021, it received an extension until December 2023, making it a 60-month long programme. The total budget of the Joint Programme was US\$ 13.1 million, of which US\$ 10.5 million was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). In November 2021, additional SEK 20 million (US\$ 2,281,282.08) was mobilized from Sida bringing the total secured budget to a total of US\$ 13 million. With this instalment, the financial gap of the project for the Phase I covering 2019–2023 was closed.

The budget distribution between UN Women and ILO was carried out based on the outputs that each agency was leading on under the three Joint Programme outcomes. Accordingly, 60 per cent of the budget was for UN Women and 40 per cent for ILO.

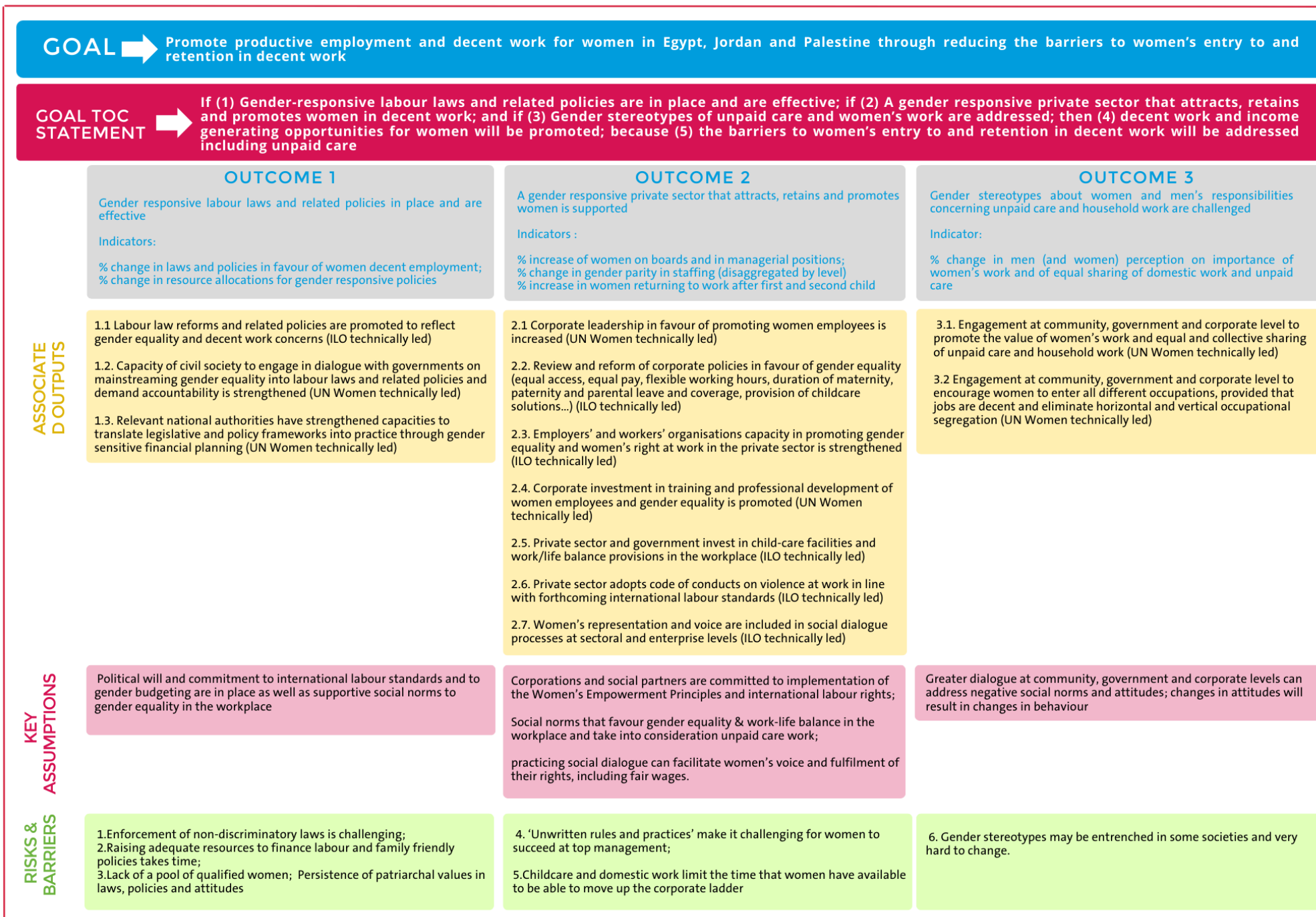
The Joint Programme theory of change was as follows:

*If (1) Gender-responsive labour laws and related policies are in place and are effective;
if (2) A gender-responsive private sector that attracts, retains and promotes women in decent work; and
if (3) Gender stereotypes of unpaid care and women’s work are addressed;
then (4) decent work and income generating opportunities for women will be promoted;
because (5) the barriers to women’s entry to and retention in decent work will be addressed including unpaid care.*

⁹⁷ With a costed extension for one year, making it a five year programme.

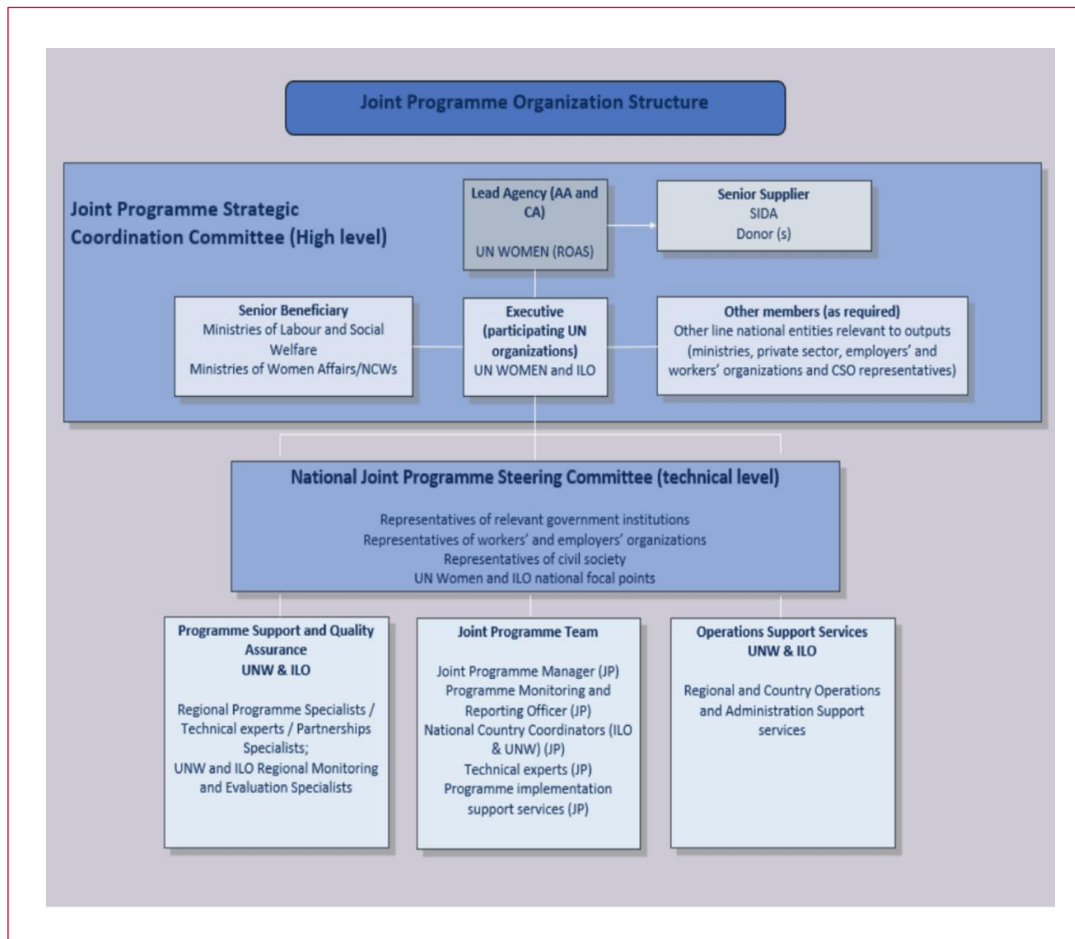
⁹⁸ In November 2021, the programme was extended until December 2023.

Figure 2: Joint Programme Theory of Change



The Joint Programme operated under the United Nations Development Group Guidance on Joint Programming⁹⁹ on the basis of the pass-through modality with UN Women as its Administrative Agent and Convening Agent. A Joint Programme Strategic Coordination Committee was responsible for regional coordination and strategic direction. The committee operated at the regional level and focused on the strategic level. The Joint Programme also had National Joint Programme Steering Committees that operated at the national level, met annually and focused on the technical and implementation side of the programme (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Joint Programme management and implementation arrangements



⁹⁹ [UNDG Guidance on Joint Programming, 2014](#)

The Joint Programme had a regional management structure operating from the UN Women Regional Office in Cairo. It comprised 16 personnel and had a mix of full-time (eight) and part-time personnel (eight) from both agencies. The management structure benefitted from an additional seven personnel ([approximately] and not covered financially by the Joint Programme) at the regional and country levels from both agencies, who provided technical and programme oversight and support.

The Joint Programme Manager was responsible for overall management of the Joint Programme, including providing technical and financial oversight of interventions as well as ensuring coordination and knowledge sharing across the three countries, so that the Joint Programme was fully integrated with agency work at the local level. The Joint Programme included a Monitoring and Reporting Officer and a 50 per cent programme, financial and operational support, assigned from the UN Women Regional Office. It also had recourse to technical expertise from the Arab States Regional Offices of both partner entities.

Each country had a Coordination Focal Point, the national officer of UN Women, who managed the programme at the country level. The country Coordination Focal Points, and ILO national programme coordinators reported to the Joint Programme Manager on technical aspects. Monthly coordination meetings were organized to provide oversight on programme progress; facilitate exchange between the target countries; and to address any difficulties that emerged.



Photo ©UN Women

2 EVALUATION APPROACH

2.1 Purpose, objectives, questions and approach

This was a planned Mid-Term Evaluation as per the Joint Programme agreement. The purpose of which was two-fold: (a) accountability, to assess the programme's overall performance and achievement against the planned results; and (b) learning, by studying the nature and processes of interventions to determine which strategies and elements were working well and in which context to replicate or scale up the successful interventions and innovations. Therefore, the evaluation was primarily formative in nature but also included summative elements within its scope.

Specifically, the objectives of this evaluation were to:

- (a) Analyse the relevance of the programme objectives, intervention logic, strategy and approach at the national and regional level as well as UN Women and ILO's collaborative comparative advantage/added value in this area.
- (b) Assess the programme's effectiveness in achieving the planned programme outputs and outcomes, including unexpected results and factors affecting programme implementation and results (positively and negatively).
- (c) Assess the efficiency of Joint Programme management, partnerships, governance and coordination mechanisms including the regional-level Joint Programme Strategic Coordination Committee and the National Joint Programme Steering Committees in progressing towards the achievement of programme results.
- (d) Review the strategies and mechanisms for sustainability of outcomes in the target countries as well as at the regional level.
- (e) Assess the extent to which the programme was informed by gender, human rights and disability inclusion approaches and was contributing towards gender transformative changes to advance and sustain gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- (f) Identify and document lessons learned, good practices and innovations, success stories and challenges within the programme, to inform future work.
- (g) Provide strategic recommendations for the different key stakeholders for future programming.

The key evaluation questions were:

EQ1. To what extent are the Joint Programme's interventions aligned with regional and country contexts, and address the priorities of stakeholders?

EQ2. To what extent has the Joint Programme contributed to bringing forth gender-responsive legal and policy changes, building a gender-responsive private sector and changing gender stereotypes about women and men's care roles and responsibilities?

EQ3. Has the Joint Programme been efficient in achieving the planned results in a cost-effective and timely way while optimally using processes and systems to achieve its planned results?

EQ4. To what extent is the Joint Programme gender transformative in nature and is adhering to the principle of leaving no one behind?

EQ5. To what extent are national partners willing and capable of continuing the Joint Programme orientations and interventions in favour of women's decent employment?

This was a joint evaluation, and the evaluation management and governance structure reflected the joint partnership between UN Women and ILO. The evaluation followed the United Nations Evaluation Group Joint Evaluation Guidelines.¹⁰⁰

2.2 Scope

The evaluation covered the programme period from January 2019 to November 2022¹⁰¹ and all aspects of programme implementation. It included three countries where activities were being implemented: Egypt, Palestine and Jordan, and the regional initiatives taking place at the Arab States regional level. The evaluation was conducted between November 2021 and November 2022.

The geographical scope of the evaluation was predominantly capital focused where most of the Joint Programme's normative work was centred and to a large extent the programmatic activities were implemented. In case of Palestine, West Bank and Gaza were the focus. A sample of implementing partners and beneficiaries from the Alexandria governorate in Egypt were also involved through telephonic/virtual key informant

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.uneval.org/document/download/2111>

¹⁰¹ The initial scope was from January 2019 to December 2021. Due to a delayed start of the evaluation, the scope was extended to November 2022.

interviews. However, as per the Terms of Reference, a systematic assessment of the long-term impact of interventions on beneficiaries and their context was not part of the scope of this evaluation as this type of analysis would require resources and methods beyond its design.

2.3 Design of the evaluation

The evaluation applied a theory-based approach¹⁰² and applied gender and human-rights based principles to evaluation, including a disability lens, through their incorporation into the evaluation questions and analysis approaches.

The evaluation applied the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria and used the evaluation matrix with key questions and sub-questions to articulate areas of evaluation focus (see annex 1 for Evaluation matrix).

The evaluation followed United National Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guiding Principles, including particular consideration of the following: 1) respect for dignity and diversity; 2) right to self-determination; 3) fair representation; 4) ethical protocols for vulnerable groups; 5) redress; 6) confidentiality; and 7) avoidance of harm. To operationalize these principles and UN Women policies, a Data Management Plan guided the evaluation team on the ethical protocols adopted during data collection and how data was managed and stored.

It used Contribution Analysis to assess the extent to which Joint Programme interventions contributed (or not as the case may be) to the achievement of the expected results and outcomes. It was underpinned by the Gender and Social Norms Analytical Framework¹⁰³ and Gender and Work Framework.¹⁰⁴ Training related interventions were assessed using the Kirkpatrick four-step training evaluation framework¹⁰⁵ and the Bellwether's policy evaluation method¹⁰⁶ was applied to assess the Joint Programme's contribution to normative changes. The evaluation applied the Guskey+¹⁰⁷ analytical model to assess the effectiveness of the Joint Programme's knowledge management. The

evaluation also used the policy influencing approaches model by Start and Hovland (2004)¹⁰⁸, to conceptualize and analyse the Joint Programme's approaches to normative changes and its initiatives relating to influencing policy and legal matters.

2.4 Sampling, data collection and analysis

A purposive sampling was used through a consultative approach with the Joint Programme team to ensure that the sample had a good representation of various Joint Programme interventions, and generated perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders. A stakeholder mapping exercise was carried out by the evaluation team during the inception phase that was reviewed and finalized through a consultative workshop with the Joint Programme team.

Individual bellwethers were selected in a consultative manner with the programme team, based on a range of characteristics, including their content expertise, gender, decision making and decision influencing position (for government representatives), and cross-sector (public and private) experience. Bellwethers included seven groups: (a) policy makers from government (legislative and executive); (b) advocates (multilateral organizations, international non-governmental organizations); (c) academia; (d) media; (e) private sector experts; (f) donors; and (g) religious establishment.

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach of qualitative as well as quantitative data collection and analysis methods. It carried out the content analysis and did comparative analysis by synthesizing the similarities, differences and patterns among the three countries to facilitate learning and understanding of how and why particular programme approaches, or sequences of approaches and interventions were successful or unsuccessful. It applied triangulation to validate the data

¹⁰² Theory-based approaches to evaluation use an explicit theory of change to draw conclusions about whether and how an intervention contributed to observed results. For more information, refer to [Government of Canada: Theory-based Approaches to Evaluation: Concepts and Practices](#), 2012

¹⁰³ [Social and Behaviour Change and Gender: Models and Frameworks](#)

¹⁰⁴ http://gender.careinternationalwikis.org/media/resource_3_rao_2006_gender_at_work_integrated_framework.pdf

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/the-kirkpatrick-model/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://archive.globalfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/advocacy-and-policy-change/evaluating-an-issue-s-position-on-the-policy-agenda-the-bellwether-methodology>

¹⁰⁷ The Guskey model for professional development evaluation builds on the New World Kirkpatrick Model 8 and is broad enough to be applied to any type of engagement and learning activity. Guskey outlines an additional organizational component to the New World Kirkpatrick model, which is pertinent to this evaluation. See Guskey et al. (2002) Gauge impact with 5 levels of data. Available at: <https://tguskey.com/wp-content/uploads/Professional-Learning-1-Gauge-Impact-with-Five-Levels-of-Data.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/126763/5252.pdf>

through cross verification from multi-data sources and tested the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments.

Specifically, the evaluation covered the following sample:

- A review of more than 80 documents, including key policy documents and Joint Programme documents.
- Progress reports, annual workplans, national reports and data.
- 123 key informant interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders from government, private sector, trade unions, development partners, academia and civil society organizations as indicated in the stakeholder list in [Annex 2](#).
- Seven focus group discussions with the Joint Programme personnel at UN Women and ILO, civil society organizations, sample of training participants, sample of gender unit beneficiaries at the Ministry of Manpower (covering thirty-five respondents).
- One case study on the extent to which the Joint Programme’s normative work has influenced policy and legislative changes using the Bellwether approach – 29 bellwethers approached with 18 responses (62 per cent response rate), [see Annex 3](#).
- Three country case studies (Egypt, Palestine and Jordan), [see Annex 5](#).

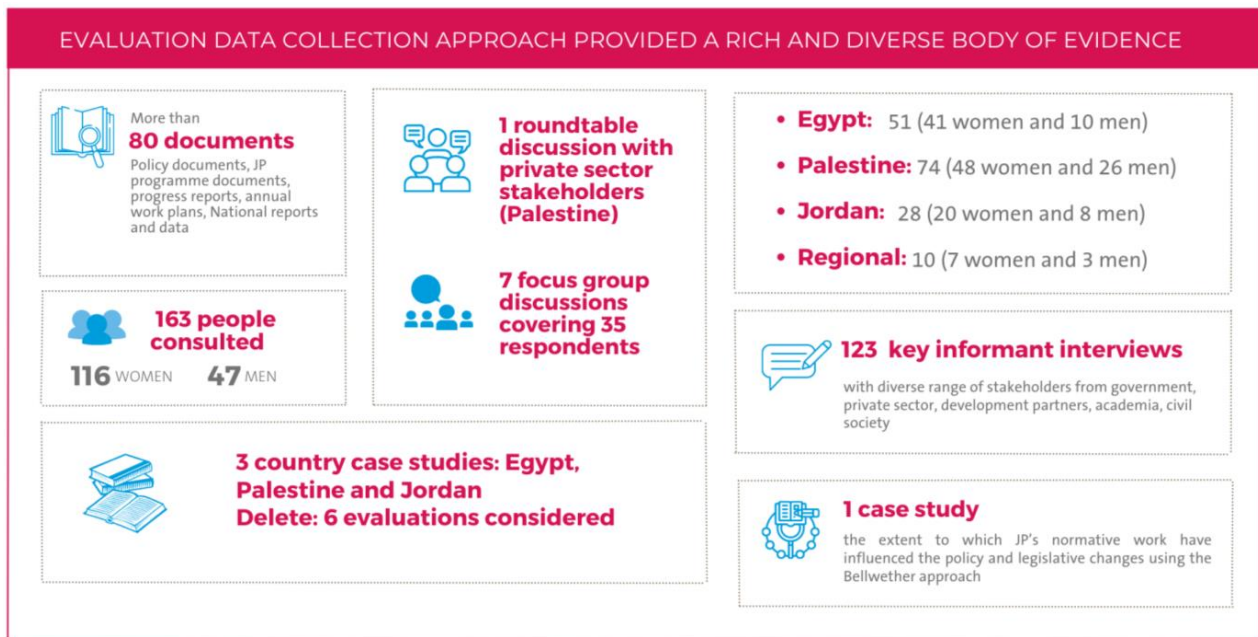
- One roundtable discussion with private sector stakeholders in Palestine (covering five participants).
- Financial analysis using the programme expenditure data.

2.5 Governance and quality assurance

This evaluation was led by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service and the Arab States Regional Evaluation Specialist, who is a member of the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) and acted as the team lead for this evaluation process. The ILO Regional M&E specialist was part of the Evaluation Management Group as per the United Nations Evaluation Group Joint Evaluation Guidelines.¹⁰⁹

An Evaluation Reference Group was established to enhance the participatory approach and national ownership of the process and for validation purposes. It included a representative sample of key stakeholders from Sida, three target governments, the Arab States Regional Office of both entities and the Joint Programme

Figure 4: Evaluation data collection approach, prepared by the evaluation team



¹⁰⁹ <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/uneq-resource-pack-joint-evaluations>

Country Offices. This evaluation report was validated by the Evaluation Reference Group.

The evaluation was quality assured by the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS), specifically by the Chief of Independent Evaluation Service (IES) and Director of UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS).

2.6 Challenges and limitations

Due to COVID-19 pandemic related challenges, in-person data collection was not feasible in some contexts. Therefore, a hybrid model was applied for data collection. Jordan and Palestine data collection included in-person data collection, whereas data collection in Egypt and the Regional Office was conducted virtually.

At the regional level, the identified and contacted Bellwethers did not respond to the requests. As per evaluation follow-up protocol, three follow-ups were carried out but with no outcome. Therefore, the report could not capture their perspective.



Photo ©UN Women

3 FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent are the Joint Programme interventions aligned with regional and country contexts, and address the priorities of stakeholders?

Finding 1: The Joint Programme was aligned with regional and national women’s economic empowerment policy frameworks in all three targeted countries. The programme was relevant to international commitments to women’s economic empowerment and labour standards and was in line with UN Women’s strategic goals and ILO’s Decent Work programmes.

The Joint Programme was relevant to and aligned with the women’s economic empowerment commitments and priorities of the governments of Egypt, Jordan and Palestine. In Egypt, the Joint Programme was well aligned with and contributed towards the Government of Egypt’s Sustainable Development Strategy/Vision 2030, National Women’s Strategy 2030 with a dedicated pillar on women’s economic empowerment, the Haya Karima initiative,¹¹⁰ which was targeted to improve standards of living for rural communities including dedicated training and entrepreneurship, as well as the Egyptian Family Development Initiative,¹¹¹ targeted at rural and urban women to expand their participation in the labour market.

Similarly, in Jordan, the Joint Programme was aligned with Jordan 2025 – A National Vision and Strategy focusing on economic growth and seeking to promote a more diversified and competitive economy, including commitment to strengthen women’s political, economic and social participation. It was also aligned with the Jordan National Employment Strategy (2011–2020) aiming to create employment, increase wages and benefits, and maximize productivity by focusing on both the demand-side (job creation) and supply-side (providing a skilled labour force), as well as on institutional development.

The Joint Programme in Palestine operated in the context of the Labour Sector Strategy 2017–2022 which highlighted the need to foster an enabling environment for integrating women into the labour market and reduce female unemployment. Further, in Palestine the

Joint Programme was also aligned with the Ministry of Labour National Employment Strategy 2021–2025 as well as its plan to Mitigate the Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Workers.

Multiple components of the Joint Programme were aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 (Gender Equality), with a particular focus on Target 5.4 which calls for “recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of different services and promote different measures”, and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), with a particular focus on Target 8.5 “Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men with equal pay and equal value” and Target 8.8 “protect labour rights and secure working environments for all workers”. Through its different interventions, the Joint Programme was also aligned with other SDGs such as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced inequality) and SDG 17 (Partnerships to achieve the Goal).

The Joint Programme was found to be aligned with the international instruments for women’s empowerment – the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and relevant outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), such as resolution 54/4 in 2010 on women’s economic empowerment. It was also based on the International Labour Standards encompassing different ILO conventions, protocols and recommendations as shown in [Table 1](#).

¹¹⁰ https://www.hayakarima.com/about_en.html

¹¹¹ <https://mped.gov.eg/singlenews?id=404&type=previous&lang=en>

Table 1: The Joint Programme’s alignment with various International Labour Standards prepared by the evaluation team.

C122	Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)	C087	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
C144	Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)	C154	Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154)
R189	Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998 (No. 189)	C081	Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)
C095	Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95)	C155	Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)
C131	Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131)	C102	Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)
C100	Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	R202	Employment Policy Convention/Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)
C111	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	C158	Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158)
C190	Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)	C156	ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)
C183	ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)	C189	ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)

The Joint Programme was also aligned with and contributed to the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and subsequent United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for each country, ILO’s Decent Work programmes, ILO’s Centenary Initiative on Women at Work and UN Women’s Strategic Plans.¹¹²

The stakeholders consulted reaffirmed the relevance of the Joint Programme’s area of focus indicating the urgent need to focus on the issue of women’s economic empowerment and decent work in the target countries as well as across the region. In a similar vein, the Bellwethers consulted as a part of the evaluation corroborated the relevance of the Joint Programme’s areas of work by indicating access to decent work (92 per cent), equal wages (71 per cent) and childcare facilities (67 per cent) as the top three priority areas for gender equality in the targeted countries (see Annex 3 for details).

¹¹² UN Women Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021, Outcome 3: Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy and UN Women Strategic Plan (2022-2025), Impact 2: Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy.

Finding 2: The Theory of Change was relevant and reflected the Joint Programme's underpinning logic to identify and address structural and systemic barriers to facilitate women's participation in the labour market and in the world of work. It captured the Joint Programme's intervention logic to create change across the macro level (laws and policy), meso level (institutions and networks) and micro level (communities and individuals). However, the Theory of Change did not capture the role of the Joint Programme's regional management structure, operating from the UN Women Regional Office in Cairo. By design, the programme intended to carry out a wide range of interventions – posing a risk of spreading itself too thinly with the given limited resources.

The Joint Programme was technically designed to address structural causes of inequality through a triple pronged approach with three mutually inclusive outcome areas: (1) removing discriminatory laws and fostering a gender-responsive policy environment; (2) creating a gender-responsive private sector that attracts, retains and promotes women; and (3) challenging gender stereotypes about women and men's responsibilities concerning unpaid care and household work to create a better understanding of the importance of women economic empowerment at home and at work. The Joint Programme's Theory of Change and associated Programme Monitoring Framework (see Figure 2) captured its approach and design.

The evaluation noted that the Joint Programme's intervention logic to creating change across the macro level (laws and policy), meso level (institutions and networks) and micro level (communities and individuals), was underpinned by the socioecological model,¹¹³ to achieve and sustain women's economic empowerment. It considered the contextual realities and provided a holistic view of how the programme planned to address some of the deeply rooted challenges that women faced in participating in the labour market and decent work activities.

While the Joint Programme's Theory of Change was an accurate reflection of its key interventions and its logic, it did not capture the functions of the regional management structure that was responsible for cultivating partnerships, facilitating cross-country programme learning, and acting as a knowledge hub. Most of the stakeholders consulted by the evaluation team indicated that the Joint Programme is a regional programme with a dedicated function at the regional level, but there are no accountability frameworks with performance indicators and data to know whether the regional chapter is working effectively.

The programme design also reflected a wide range of interventions (outlined in the form of multiple outputs – see Annex 6) which might have been unpinned by an intention to make the programme comprehensive but posed a risk of spreading the programme too thinly with the given limited resources. Specifically, the private sector component had seven types of interventions across the targeted countries and the evaluation noted that some interventions had either not started at the time of the evaluation or were at a relatively nascent stage.

¹¹³ Socio-ecological model

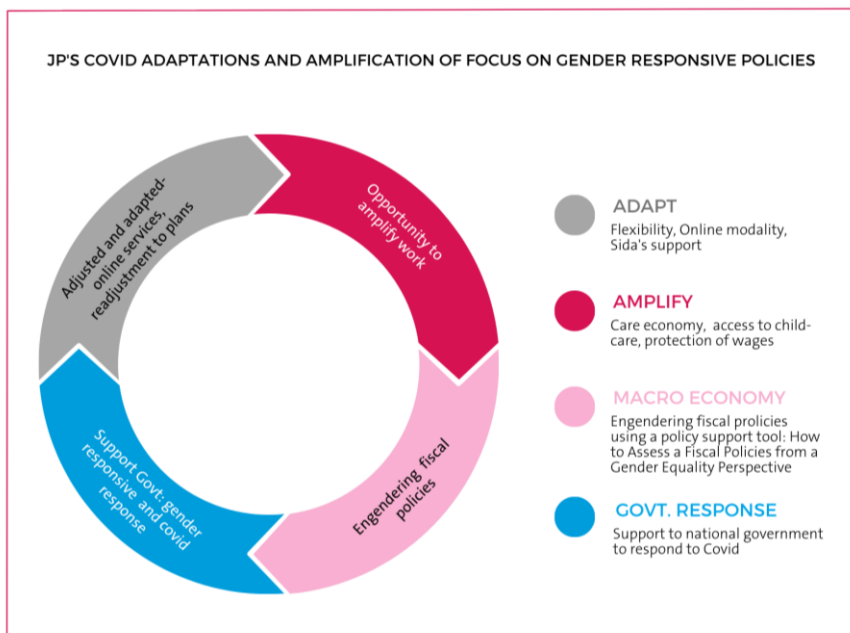
Finding 3: The Joint Programme not only demonstrated its adaptability and agility to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic but also managed to use the pandemic as an opportunity to reiterate its messages on gender transformative economic empowerment principles and practices.

Nearly half of the Joint Programme was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation noted that the programme adapted its plans to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19 by showing flexibility and modifying its style of work. Most capacity building activities were moved online, and the programme supported women who were adversely affected by the pandemic in accessing government services. The stakeholders interviewed particularly appreciated the Joint Programme’s support to female business owners in accessing services from the Ministry of National Economy in Palestine. Similarly, the female owners of private kindergartens and schools in Jordan appreciated the programme’s support during the COVID-19 pandemic in helping them access the wage subsidy package launched by the government.

At a strategic level, the evaluation noted that the Joint Programme was able to support a gender-responsive national response to COVID-19 (see Figure 5). It adapted its plan to invest in COVID-19 pandemic related policy research

and data to influence government policies for a gender-responsive response. It also used the evidence to facilitate policy dialogues with government partners and other tripartite constituencies to strengthen a gender-responsive Covid-19 response. For instance, in Palestine, the Joint Programme support for the “Feminist Economic Analysis on the Impact of Covid-19 in the Palestinian Economy,” was particularly appreciated by government partners. According to the partners, the Joint Programme’s support in generating meaningful evidence helped them to design and implement a gender-responsive COVID response. In Egypt, stakeholders appreciated the Joint Programme’s support for the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker which helped to generate data on government responses that integrated a gender lens to tackle the pandemic. The stakeholders consulted indicated that the data and lessons learned provided guidance for policymakers and evidence for advocates to ensure a gender-sensitive COVID-19 policy response in Egypt.

Figure 5: Joint Programme’s COVID-19 adaptations and amplification of focus on gender-responsive policies, developed by the evaluation team



The evaluation took note of the Joint Programme’s work with unions and workers’ organizations to call for attention to workers’ rights and gender equality during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. For instance, in Egypt, the Joint Programme’s policy advocacy work to ensure pay equality, maternity leave and childcare facilities for health-care workers was appreciated by stakeholders. The Joint Programme developed a policy paper on the negative impacts of COVID-19 on health workers (led by the “Syndicate of health workers”) and the need to address gender discriminatory issues. In Palestine, union members appreciated the Joint Programme supported report - Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Labour Market in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.¹¹⁴ According to them, this piece of evidence was useful to highlight workers’ rights and gender equality during the pandemic and subsequently. Similarly, in Jordan, female owners of private kindergartens and schools appreciated the Joint Programme’s technical support to launch the National Committee of Independent Kindergartens to protect their rights during COVID-19 and beyond.

The evaluation also noted that the Joint Programme was able to use the pandemic to reiterate and amplify messages on the need for macroeconomic, gender transformative actions, with particular attention to the care economy, flexible working hours as well as gender equal wages. Some initiatives acknowledged by stakeholders included assessment of the fiscal stimulus packages from a gender equality perspective using the “Engendering fiscal policies tool: How to Assess Fiscal Policies from a Gender Equality Perspective;”¹¹⁵ Assessment of macroeconomic response policies to COVID-19 in the Arab region and potential implications of gender-blind macroeconomic responses and investments;¹¹⁶ as well as round-table policy dialogues on the role of the care economy in promoting gender equality based on the findings of “Progress of Women in The Arab States 2020: The Role of the Care Economy in Promoting Gender Equality report”.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_774731.pdf

¹¹⁵ https://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_766991/lang--en/index.htm

¹¹⁶ <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/10/assessing-macroeconomic-response-policies-to-covid-19-in-the-arab-region>

¹¹⁷ <https://egypt.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/unpaid-care-report>

3.2 Effectiveness

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent has the Joint Programme contributed to bringing forth gender-responsive legal and policy changes, building a gender-responsive private sector and changing gender stereotypes about women and men's care roles and responsibilities?

Finding 4: Policy and legislative reforms were key results of the Joint Programme. Partnerships with government institutions; the ability to leverage political will, technical expertise and investment to generate policy evidence; and engagement with the tripartite constituency¹¹⁸ were key success factors. However, there was room to improve the “contribution story” of these policy and legislative reforms and increase visibility of the normative agenda. The Joint Programme also needed to strengthen its focus on implementation of policy and legislative reforms and systematically track and report on them, including the resource allocations for gender-responsive policies.

Normative changes emerged as key successes of the Joint Programme. According to programme monitoring data,¹¹⁹ the Joint Programme contributed to more than 17 policy and legislative introductions or amendments on gender equality during 2019–2021 in the targeted countries (including laws, articles, decrees and decisions). The evaluation validated these normative changes through multiple sources¹²⁰ and noted that the Joint Programme had surpassed its overall planned target of achieving 12 normative changes by the end of 2023.¹²¹ According to the stakeholders consulted, the legislative and policy reforms facilitated by the Joint Programme have the potential to influence and make change at scale. For a comprehensive list of normative amendments and the Joint Programme's contribution, see [Annex 4](#) and refer to the country chapters in [Annex 5](#).

Some of the key normative changes highlighted by stakeholders included the Ministerial Decrees (No. 43 and 44) issued by the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower providing women with the right to work in any job or profession regardless of their gender (Ministerial decree 43/2021) and

allowing women to work in any facility at any time of the night if they desire it and the required precautions are taken to preserve their health (Ministerial Decree 44/2021).

In Jordan, the Joint Programme's contribution to the Maternity Social Protection regulation under the Social Security Law was widely appreciated as it enabled working mothers to return to work by securing childcare for their children either at a childcare facility or at home.¹²² Stakeholders acknowledged the Joint Programme's support to operationalize this regulation by designing and launching the “Ri'aya Programme” (in Arabic “Care”) in 2021.¹²³ The evaluation noted that the result of this programme was recognized by the International Social Security Association in March 2022.¹²⁴ According to the Ri'aya records as of December 2021, of 9,163 eligible mothers, 5,484 had applied for assistance, and 4,757 received it.

In Palestine, the Joint Programme's contribution to raise the national minimum wage through a Cabinet Resolution was highlighted by the stakeholders consulted. Similarly, its contribution to the National Employment Strategy (2021–

¹¹⁸ The tripartite structure allows governments and the social partners of the economy of its Member States to openly debate and elaborate labour standards and policies. ILO is the only tripartite UN agency with government, employer and worker representatives.

¹¹⁹ Joint Programme Annual Report 2021.

¹²⁰ Checking the actual Gazette Policy documents through the government websites (national Ministries of Labour, Manpower, Youth and National Economy; National Council for Women; and other national stakeholders' websites as well as websites of

UN Women, ILO, WEP website, social media etc.), interview and group discussions with policy makers.

¹²¹ Programme has surpassed its target of total 12 policy amendments (programme indicator 1.1).

¹²² It also allowed for registered childcare centres to receive direct cash benefits to cover operational costs.

¹²³ [Assessment of the Maternity Insurance in Jordan](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_776223/lang--en/index.htm)
https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_776223/lang--en/index.htm

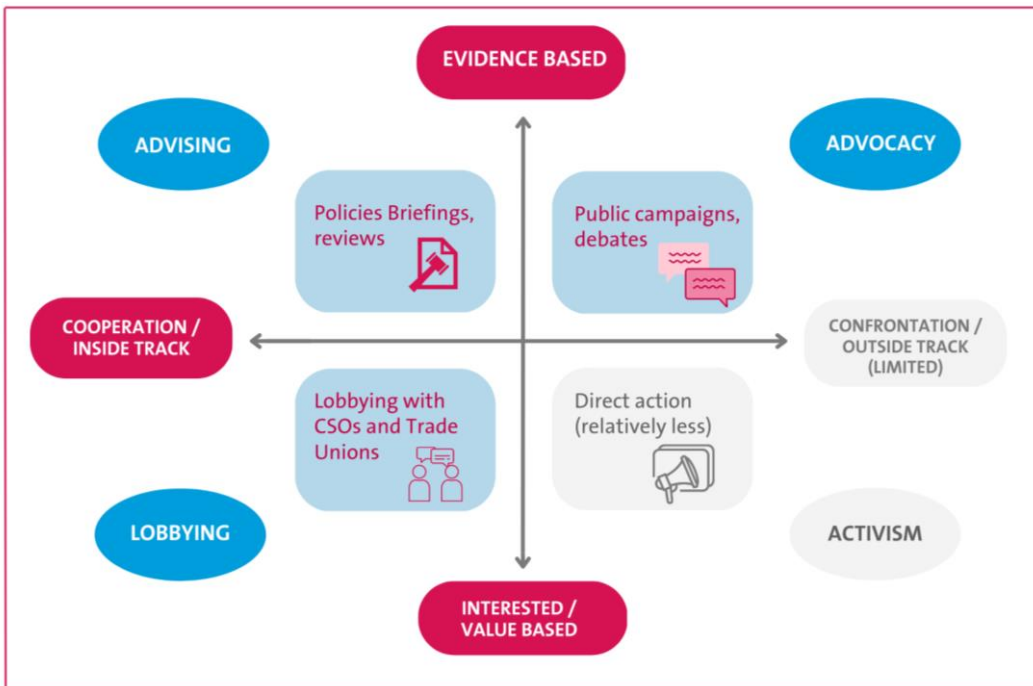
¹²⁴ Joint Programme Annual Report 2021

2025) with a commitment to improve future employment prospects and social protection coverage for all workers was widely acknowledged by stakeholders.

The evaluation took specific note of the Joint Programme’s overarching normative work to influence recognition of, and investment in, the care economy at the macroeconomic level. According to the evaluation respondents, the Joint Programme was instrumental in facilitating policy dialogues on the care economy, using evidence such as the “Progress of Women in the Arab States 2020: The Role of the Care Economy in Promoting Gender Equality”. The Joint Programme’s technical support to identify public investment needs in the care economy sectors;¹²⁵ estimate investment costs for addressing these needs; and assess economic returns to such investments in the short and long term were acknowledged and appreciated.

Based on the standard policy influencing approaches model by Start and Hovland (2004),¹²⁶ the evaluation noted that the Joint Programme primarily used three key approaches: Advising, Advocacy and Lobbying. Further, it used four standard mediums: evidence/research, cooperation (using trust and inside track), common interest and value-based engagement, with some lobbying (outside track with civil society organizations and trade unions) to influence normative changes (see Figure 6 reflecting the Joint Programme’s policy influencing approaches).

Figure 6: Joint Programme’s policy influencing approaches model, prepared by the evaluation team



¹²⁵ Namely public health, long-term care, early childhood care and development, and education.

¹²⁶ <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/126763/5252.pdf>

The Joint Programme's use of a diverse and complementary set of approaches, contributed towards these results. The Joint Programme's convening power as a trusted government partner to facilitate policy dialogue; its ability to leverage political commitments on women's economic empowerment; technical expertise such as the ability to review labour policies from a gender equality perspective; use of social dialogue between the tripartite representatives to facilitate normative and legislative changes; as well as strategic investment to build quality evidence emerged as key success factors for achieving the set of gender-responsive policy and legislative reforms (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Joint Programme's successful contributory factors influencing normative changes (prepared by the evaluation team)



In addition, the evaluation noted the Joint Programme's systematic input to strengthen institutional capacities to develop and implement gender-responsive policies and programmes for economic empowerment in the targeted countries. Some notable results acknowledged by stakeholders include the Joint Programme's contribution to establish and support Gender Units such as within the Ministry of Manpower in Egypt, the Ministry of National Economy in Palestine, and in Ministry of Labour in Jordan. In this respect, stakeholders appreciated the training of government staff on gender-responsive policy making and on prevention of violence and harassment in the workplace at the International Training Centre of the ILO and its contribution to developing a cadre of labour

inspectors from the Ministry of Labour to conduct gender-sensitive labour inspection (in Egypt and Jordan).

Despite these successes, some areas needed further attention and improvement. The evaluation noted that the national government's commitments to operationalize normative changes such as through earmarked budget, were not well evident and reported. This was an area where the Joint Programme needed to continue to strengthen its focus to ensure that policy and legislative changes were effectively implemented, monitored and reported. In this respect, the evaluation recommended that data against outcome 1 indicator " % of change in resource allocations for gender responsive policies " needed to be systematically collected and reported.

The planning and monitoring of the Joint Programme's normative work also needed some attention and improvement. The Joint Programme's plans did not systematically spell out the specific normative changes it was targeting to amend/change, making it difficult to assess which normative amendments the Joint Programme was planning to target versus what was achieved. The Joint Programme also built on some ongoing interventions of other ILO and UN Women programmes – a good practice in terms of efficiency and sustainability – but its planning did not always indicate the stage at which the Joint Programme was joining the pathway of normative change and therefore what it would be focusing on to achieve the intended change. The Joint Programme's monitoring systems did not systematically track and document the process of achieving planned normative changes, which made it challenging to assess whether, or how far, the Joint Programme's actions influenced or contributed towards the planned normative changes alongside other agencies or programmes. Although a clear attribution to such changes was challenging to assess, the Joint Programme's monitoring and learning frameworks should have included plans and methods to document its contribution towards these changes.¹²⁷ Similar concerns were noted in the Bellwethers' response. The Bellwethers consulted unanimously rated women's economic empowerment and decent work at the top of the policy agenda reaffirming the relevance and importance of the Joint Programme's work. However, the evaluation noted the Bellwethers were not aware of UN Women and ILO's specific contribution towards normative changes through the Joint Programme. They viewed both entities as advocates for normative changes but saw other players including World Bank and women's organizations as key stakeholders. According to some of Bellwethers, normative changes were a critical step, but equal attention needed to be paid to implementation and monitoring of implementation and impact. Most saw social institutions, including religious institutions, as the main opponents of the intended changes, suggesting that more work was needed on the social norms change related to gender roles (for more details on the Bellwethers' view, [see Annex 3](#)).

Testing Theory of Change assumptions: Evidence shows that the Joint Programme's intervention logic to provide technical support to the government for normative changes and its use of social dialogue between the tripartite representatives to facilitate normative and legislative changes was valid and yielded successes. However, the assumption that the strengthened capacities of national authorities to support translation of legislative and policy frameworks will translate into gender-sensitive financial planning was yet to be established and proved.

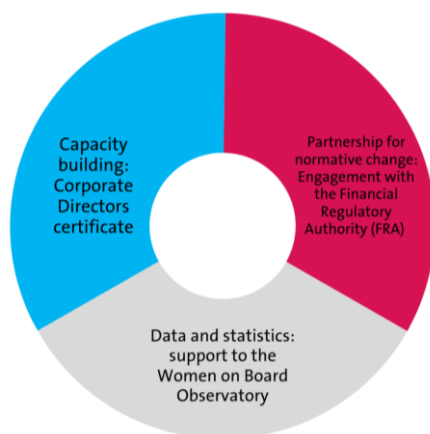
¹²⁷ See for example, [Monitoring and evaluation of policy influence and advocacy, ODI Working paper- 395](#)

Finding 5: Multiple Joint Programme interventions supported transformation of gender equality in the private sector. Some interventions were beginning to yield results but were being implemented at a relatively small scale, whereas others were still at a relatively nascent stage. Moving forward, the Joint Programme needed to consolidate, prioritize and focus on the interventions that had worked well, and scale them up.

The Joint Programme used a wide range of interventions to support transformation of gender equality in the private sector. Joint Programme design included a total of seven different interventions to transform the private sector (see [Annex 6 on evaluability assessment](#)). The evaluation noted that some interventions were beginning to yield results, but they were being implemented at a relatively small scale. This included work to increase women on boards of companies and banks in Egypt; the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) approach; partnership with the Federation of Egyptian Industries to train industries and companies in gender-responsive HR policies;¹²⁸ and gender-responsive Collective Bargaining Agreements through tripartite social dialogue.

The Joint Programme’s model to increase women’s leadership in the private sector through the Women on Board initiative in Egypt was working well. According to the Women on Boards monitoring report, there was an increase in women’s representation on boards from 10 per cent in 2019 to 16.7 per cent in 2021.¹²⁹ According to the stakeholders consulted, the Joint Programme played a key role in this area by embracing three approaches that collectively contributed towards this (see [Figure 8](#)).

Figure 8: Women on Boards: Joint Programme’s approaches in Egypt



¹²⁸ HR and Gender Academy post assessment reports.

¹²⁹ Developed by Women on Board of Observatory at the American University in Cairo School of Business. The report has an aggregated figure and disaggregated data by sector on the percentage of women on boards.

¹³⁰ 2021 Joint Programme annual progress report-Year 3

¹³¹ 3 were placed on corporate boards in Egypt, 11 nominated to IFC Directors’ Centre in New York and 20 for board list.

Stakeholders noted the capacity building approach through the Corporate Directors Certification Programme had helped to expand the pool of women to be placed on company boards. The evaluation noted that in Egypt the Joint Programme had succeeded in getting a total of 67 women employees¹³⁰ with a management and corporate directors’ certificate till the end of 2021 of which 50 per cent (34) had received a placement on various corporate boards¹³¹. The certified graduates of the programme consulted by the evaluation provided positive feedback on the relevance and use of the programme.

At the same time, the Joint Programme worked in close partnership with the Financial Regulatory Authority and the National Council for Women in Egypt to facilitate normative changes that resulted in Financial Regulatory Authority issuing a decree¹³² to enhance the representation of women on boards of non-bank financial companies. The new decree made it mandatory for women’s representation to make up at least 25 per cent, or at least two women members to be on the boards of non-bank financial institutions.¹³³

The Joint Programme also invested in generating meaningful data and statistics on women’s representation on boards by supporting the Women on Board Observatory at American University Cairo, School of Business. The Women on Board of Observatory produced annual Women on Boards monitoring reports¹³⁴ and the Egyptian Board Ready Women database, a list of senior women leaders in senior positions. According to the stakeholders consulted, the data helped to form an evidenced-based approach to strengthen women’s leadership in private sector institutions.

The evaluation noted the Joint Programme’s tripartite social dialogue approach to include women’s representation and voice at the sectoral and enterprise level for developing gender-responsive collective bargaining agreements. For instance, in Palestine, two collective bargaining agreements were reached with gender mainstreaming between

¹³² No.110 of 2021

¹³³ The Financial Regulatory Authority Board had issued decrees (number 123 and 124) in 2019 that required both listed companies and non-bank financial institutions to have at least one woman on the board by the end of 2020.

¹³⁴ The report has an aggregated figure and disaggregated data by sector on the percentage of women on boards.

enterprises and the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions. The stakeholders consulted indicated the collective bargaining agreements reflected a joint commitment by employers and trade unions to address gender inequality by ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, providing for parental and family leave and addressing gender-based violence at work.¹³⁵ The stakeholders also indicated that the collective bargaining agreements with gender mainstreaming were instrumental in promoting an inclusive, sustainable and resilient COVID recovery, ensuring economic security.

Training industries and companies in Egypt to amend their HR policies to be more gender inclusive through the Joint Programme's partnership with the Human Resources and Gender Academy of the Federation of Egyptian Industries was beginning to yield results. The evaluation noted that all of the trained companies (15 companies, original target was 10) successfully reviewed their HR policies to be more gender inclusive. This partnership by design had a modest target, but it showed success indicating that the existing partnership and institutional arrangement had a potential to deliver results at a larger scale.

And finally, the WEP approach applied by the Joint Programme proved to be one of the successful approaches at the regional and country level with a potential for scale up. This is covered under Finding 6.

The evaluation noted overall positive feedback from stakeholders about these models indicating their potential to strengthen women's representation in decision-making positions in the private sector. However, the evaluation noted that the design of the Joint Programme had a lot of planned interventions (14 interventions) to support the transformation of gender equality in the private sector, some of which, even though relevant, were either at a nascent stage or had yet not started. According to some of the stakeholders, this posed a risk of the Joint Programme spreading itself too thinly, rather than prioritizing and focusing on some key areas to demonstrate sustainable results at scale. For instance, based on the 2021 Joint Programme performance data, the evaluation noted that work related to the private sector adopting codes of conduct on violence at work in line with international labour standards (Output 2.6) had yet to materialize in Egypt and

Palestine.¹³⁶ Similarly, the Joint Programme's work on private sector and government investment in childcare facilities and work/life balance provisions in the workplace¹³⁷ had started in Egypt only recently (in partnership with UNICEF with the launch of evidence on the 'Business Case for Employer Supported Childcare in Egypt'¹³⁸).

Overall, some approaches and models were yielding results but were being implemented at a small scale and could be considered for potential scale-up. But the Joint Programme was focusing on a wide range of interventions and moving forward, it will need to prioritize the interventions that worked well, go deeper, and scale them up to consolidate its gains and sustain the results achieved.

Testing Theory of Change assumptions: Evidence showed that the Joint Programme's intervention logic of using a multifaceted approach to develop a gender-responsive private sector such as by increasing women in leadership positions, reforming corporate policies in favour of gender equality, strengthening employers and workers' organizations partnership through gender-responsive collective bargaining agreements as well use of WEP was valid, that was beginning to show results. However, the ambition to work on multiple interventions presented a risk of spreading the programme too thinly.

¹³⁵ Similar views have been documented indicating how gender-responsive collective bargaining agreements can advance gender equality and foster inclusion. See https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_843973/lang-en/index.htm

¹³⁶ Joint Programme Annual Progress Report 2021. This work has been successful in Jordan where it was made obligatory by internal bylaws.

¹³⁷ Planned in Egypt and Jordan only. In Jordan, it has been strong as it was obligatory by law for companies to provide paternity leave and flexible work arrangements in the selected sectors.

¹³⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/egypt/press-releases/employer-supported-childcare-significance-employees-and-early-childhood-development>

Finding 6: The Joint Programme was able to demonstrate ways to develop a gender-responsive private sector in the targeted countries as well as in the Arab States region through the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs). However, more efforts were needed in the region to turn the WEPs into transformative actions, take the interventions to scale and sustain the results. Special attention was also needed towards smaller private sector companies.

The Joint Programme promoted the role of private sector companies in the targeted countries through WEPs as a global network of gender champions. This was reflected in the increase in signatories to the WEPs in all Joint Programme targeted countries from 2018 to 2021: Egypt 22 to 42; Jordan 7 to 61; and Palestine 7 to 14. At the regional level, the Joint Programme also contributed to an overall increase in number of WEPs signatories, rising from 174 in 2018 to 338 in 2021. It also contributed to the Egypt and Palestine stock exchanges joining the WEPs in 2021.

The stakeholders consulted acknowledged that the Joint Programme had demonstrated a concrete model through the WEPs to implement gender equality and women's empowerment practices in the private sector. In this regard, they appreciated the Joint Programme's approach to providing technical and capacity building support to translate their commitments into action and to facilitate gender-responsive policies and an enabling working environment. The evaluation noted the Joint Programme's assistance to companies to assess their organizations' gender equality performance through the WEP gender gap analysis tool,¹³⁹ technical guidance and coaching to the gender focal points to lead the development and implementation of gender action plans for mainstreaming gender in their corporate policies.

The evaluation also noted the emerging results translating WEP commitments into concrete action. For instance, in Palestine, six WEP signatories adopted gender-responsive policies reflecting flexible working arrangements; online complaint mechanisms on sexual harassment in the workplace; HR policies to enhance inclusion of people with disability; and procurement procedures in favour of women-made products. In Jordan, two WEP signatories revised their company's processes (recruitment and procurement) to be gender-

sensitive and promote representation of women in their workforce.

The evaluation noted some good examples of knowledge sharing and collaboration between like-minded WEP signatories, such as the WEP Jordan Network. Preparation for a similar network was under way in Palestine. It was expected that these networks will help to share experience and knowledge in the future.

There were however some limitations. As evident from the Joint Programme performance data, the WEP signatories, except in Jordan, were relatively modest in number, indicating the need for scale-up of the approach. In Jordan, a dedicated private sector specialist was cited as one of the key reasons for the high number of WEP signatories in the country. Further, the stakeholders indicated that signing the WEPs was the beginning and more needed to be done to implement the commitments, particularly among smaller private sector companies. According to them, more in-depth work was needed to provide technical support to the WEP signatories, e.g. through coaching, training, peer network and exchange to translate commitments into action.

The evaluation also noted that the Joint Programme was missing a road map to guide and oversee the translation of WEP commitments into actual actions within a given set of timelines. The UN Women Regional Office had developed a regional strategy for the WEPs and a road map with estimated timelines of engagement (see Figure 9). The Joint Programme needed to operationalize this strategy at the country level by developing a national action plan, annual progress mapping of WEPs against the road map and reporting against it. This would have helped it to provide better

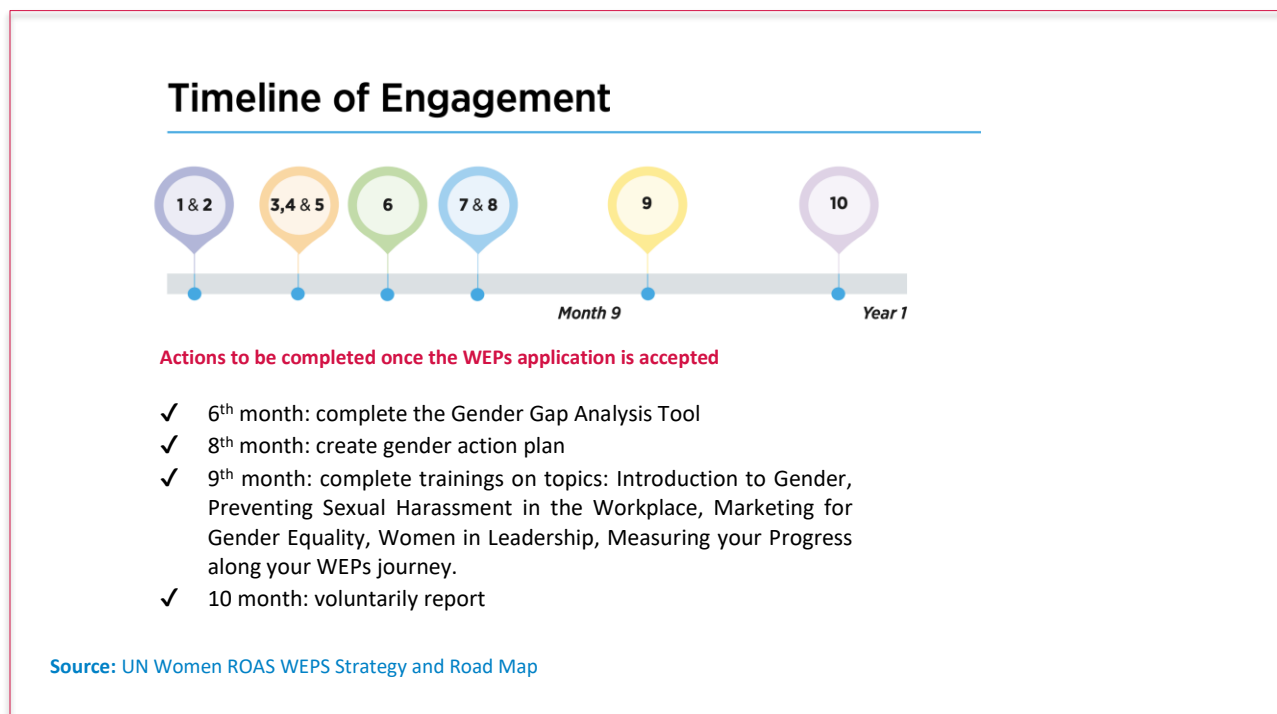
¹³⁹ <https://weps-gapanalysis.org/>

oversight of the WEP signatories' journey and reach a larger scale.

According to some of the stakeholders consulted, the Joint Programme was also missing a national institutional arrangement, such as a national committee, to provide oversight and follow-up of WEP commitments. In this regard, the evaluation noted a forward-looking example in Egypt. The Joint Programme in Egypt had worked to connect the WEPs to closing the Gender Gap Accelerator¹⁴⁰ initiative hosted by the Ministry of International Cooperation and the National Council for Women. By becoming a member of the Accelerator, the companies were endorsing and signing the WEPs, and the National Council for Women as the national coordinator for the platform was overseeing progress against the WEP commitments. Such institutional arrangement, if implemented well, could be replicated in other countries.

Testing Theory of Change assumptions: *The Theory of Change assumption that partnership with government and private sector will catalyse large scale impact and systemic change is partially true. While the Joint Programme's intervention logic is strong, the actual results have not yet been fully realized.*

Figure 9: Standard road map for companies in the Arab States towards Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)



¹⁴⁰ [Closing Gender Gap Accelerator Action Plan: Egypt](#)

Finding 7: The Joint Programme involved both men and women around social norms change related to unpaid care work and household work. However, whether and/or to what extent social norms have changed because of the programme intervention could not be established due to the absence of social norms change data. The Joint Programme’s model to challenge and change gender-based occupational segregation were steps in the right direction but needed longer-term engagement and follow-up interventions.

The Joint Programme applied a gender-transformative approach¹⁴¹ by involving men, women and institutions (community, companies etc.) around social norms change. Specifically, it focused on promoting the value of women’s care work and equal and collective sharing of unpaid care and household work and encouraging them to enter different occupations to eliminate horizontal and vertical occupational segregation. This work relied heavily on advocacy and public awareness-raising initiatives mainly through awareness campaigns. The programme monitoring data from the 2021 annual report indicated that the Joint Programme reached approximately 310,000 people with this information, surpassing its target. However, the “reach data” was limited in indicating the impact of campaign outreach and advocacy or even capturing qualitative reactions of the campaign- viewers’ comments, discussions, likes or shares. It was limited in its ability to indicate the extent to which the campaigns created change in knowledge, attitude, behaviour or social norms. The evaluation noted that the Joint Programme had not yet embraced a comprehensive social norms measurement¹⁴² approach and subsequently social and gender norms measurement tools and data were missing.

The Joint Programme used a range of approaches to challenge gender occupational segregation to increase women’s access to non-conventional jobs and the labour market. In Jordan, the Joint Programme worked with the Ministry of Youth to support women’s entry into the sports sector. In Egypt, it focused on training Technical and Vocational Education and Training students (according to

management, a total of 274 students have been trained since the start of the Joint Programme)¹⁴³ and in Palestine it supported a youth-led advocacy campaign on the importance of equal participation of women in non-traditional job sectors. According to the stakeholders consulted, these approaches were creative, appealed to younger people and inspired them.

However, there was very limited evidence of the impact of these interventions on the attitudes, behaviours and actual social norms. The evaluation also noted their relatively small-scale nature to influence sustainable gender transformational change. These interventions could be considered first steps in the right direction of challenging and changing gender social norms on occupation segregation but needed more longer-term engagement and follow-up. Moreover, according to stakeholders some of the initiatives needed to be institutionalized in the government (such as the Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Egypt as well as partnership with the Ministry of Sports in Jordan) for sustainability and impact as the Joint Programme probably could not continue to invest in individual skills building.

The evaluation noted the Joint Programme’s work to influence the recognition of and investment in the care economy at the macroeconomic level (covered under **Finding 3**).

The evaluation also noted that the Joint Programme coordinated closely with the Men and Women for Gender Equality programme, funded by their common donor, Sida,

¹⁴¹ Gender-transformative approaches to programming are key to building lasting, positive development outcomes based in equality among women, men, girls, boys and gender minorities. These approaches seek to engage communities in examining how gender inequalities intersect with other inequalities. They create opportunities to challenge gender norms, promote positions of social and political influence for women, and address power imbalances between different genders. Such programming is often complex and nuanced, particularly where the goal is changing negative attitudes and eliminating harmful practices. Empowering marginalized women and girls is central to gender-transformative approaches. Working with men and boys as allies and champions of change by challenging harmful notions of masculinity is also vital.

¹⁴² [Review of Practices in Measuring Social Norms Change, July 2019](#)

¹⁴³ In 2021, 83 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students acquired advanced skills and employment competencies and were certified in the electricity works subsector, enhancing their self-confidence and increasing their readiness for the labour market. A total of 274 TVET students have been trained since the start of the Joint Programme. Sixty-two female students in the electric works sector entered the labour market through accessing internships in private companies and will receive employment facilitation support by the Vocational Training and Employment Centre.

and was implemented in many Arab countries including the Joint Programme targeted countries. Although the Joint Programme worked with this programme particularly on public awareness raising work, there was scope to bring more clarity and complementarity between both programmes to collectively influence gender social norms change work. It would have been useful to articulate the Joint Programme's target group clearly vis-a-vis the target of the Men and Women for Gender Equality programme. For instance, according to some of the stakeholders consulted, the Joint Programme was better placed to influence the care economy at the macroeconomic policy level, whereas Men and Women for Gender Equality was better positioned to focus on the community and individual level changes to promote the value of care work such as by increasing the time of men and boys spend on caregiving and household responsibilities. This would also have helped the Joint Programme to focus on a few critical areas where it could demonstrate transformative and sustainable results.

Testing the theory of change: The intervention logic of changing gender-based occupational segregation in addition to promoting women's participation in the labour market was valid. However, it needed to focus on scale and sustainability. The intervention logic of other interventions for social norms change and assumed pathways of change specifically through the use of advocacy and public awareness-raising initiatives were noted as weak as they did not adopt comprehensive social norms change model and did not collect the meaningful data to capture and assess the intended changes.

Finding 8: The Joint Programme produced evidence-based knowledge products to inform and influence policies and programmes; however, it was missing a knowledge and learning strategy and a dissemination plan to ensure the knowledge products and learning reached their intended audience. There was also room to improve measurement of the Joint Programme's knowledge and evidence uptake, use and impact on the intended audience. The Joint Programme's knowledge products also needed clear branding guidelines.

The Joint Programme produced evidence-based knowledge products to inform and influence relevant policies and programmes. From 2019 to 2021, approximately 41 evidence and knowledge products were generated by the Joint Programme, mainly made up of policy briefs, research/studies and case studies to provide critical and comparative policy analysis (see Table 2 and Annex 5 for a list of knowledge products).

Table 2: Joint Programme knowledge products by type, prepared by the evaluation team

Type of knowledge product	Regional	Palestine	Egypt	Jordan
Policy analysis/briefs/papers		3	6	5
Research/study reports	4	11	3	4
Case studies/human stories		2		3
Total (41)	4	16	9	12

The evaluation applied the Guskey+¹⁴⁴ analytical model to assess the knowledge management effectiveness of the Joint Programme (see Figure 10 for a summary of the evaluation assessment).

Figure 10: Assessment of knowledge management effectiveness of the Joint Programme: Guskey+ framework, prepared by the evaluation team

	1. OUTPUT	2. ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT	3. ACCESS	4. REACTION	5. USE OF KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING	6. CHANGE CREATED
INDICATOR	No & type of knowledge products	Evidence that UN Women knowledge dissemination mechanisms function effectively	No. of access and by whom	No. of knowledge product users that found the knowledge products engaging and relevant	Evidence of increased knowledge/capacity amongst target groups	Evidence of knowledge changing practice
DATA SOURCE	Document review	Document review & KIs	Document review & KIs	KIs	Document review & KIs	Document review & KIs
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of different types of dissemination pathways noted (Publishing policy briefs, Press releases, Presentations/briefs at key meetings and conferences Posting on website and social media, gender data/statistics reports, placing of articles in relevant journals) Absence of a knowledge and learning strategy and dissemination plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluators received positive feedback regarding accessing knowledge products amongst the stakeholders consulted No systematic way of capturing access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluators received Positive feedback about the relevance and quality of knowledge products amongst the stakeholders consulted No systematic way of capturing reaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluators received Positive feedback about increased knowledge and capacity amongst the stakeholders consulted No systematic way of capturing increased knowledge, capacity amongst the stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluators received Positive feedback about use of them for normative changes Feedback also indicated need for more work to reflect the generated evidence and data in the national documents referencing JP No systematic way of capturing evidence of knowledge changing practice

The evaluation noted that the Joint Programme used different types of dissemination pathways: publishing policy briefs, press releases, presentations/briefs at key meetings and conferences, posting on websites as well as the use of social media. It also noted the positive feedback from stakeholders who spoke highly of the knowledge products developed by the Joint Programme in terms of their relevance and quality. Stakeholders appreciated the contribution made by the Joint Programme to generate evidence to set the agenda for policy change. At the same time, some suggested that more work was needed to reflect the generated evidence and data in the national documents referencing the Joint Programme – a testimony of recognition by the national authorities.

However, the evaluation noted that the absence of a knowledge and learning strategy and dissemination plans for the programme’s knowledge and evidence products made it challenging to assess the extent to which the knowledge products and learning reached their intended audience. The Joint Programme needed to build a knowledge generation and dissemination plan specifying the target audience (who?), mapping how the dissemination pathways will reach these groups and

clarifying how this will contribute to the Theory of Change at each micro, meso and macro level (what and how to do it?), the most appropriate and efficient calendar (when?) and the available resources (human and financial resources).

An assessment of the effects of knowledge products on practice and behaviour was also not carried out systematically. The Joint Programme needed to develop its monitoring and learning systems to capture and measure the access, uptake, use and impact of the evidence and knowledge products/outputs on the intended audience. Methods for assessing the impact of dissemination pathways such as Bean counting,¹⁴⁵ recording website hits, citation analysis, documentation of target audience changes, follow-up telephone calls to document feedback, use and change stories are highly recommended.

Another challenge noted by the evaluation related to the branding of the Joint Programme’s knowledge products vis-a-vis entity-specific branding. The knowledge and evidence products shared with the evaluation team did not have consistent branding (see Figure 11). The stakeholders consulted also shared the same view and explained that this

¹⁴⁴ The Guskey model for professional development evaluation builds on the New World Kirkpatrick Model 8 and is broad enough to be applied to any type of engagement and learning activity. Guskey outlines an additional organizational component to the New World Kirkpatrick model, which is pertinent to this evaluation. See Guskey et al. (2002) Gauge impact with 5 levels of data. Available at: <https://tgsuskey.com/wp-content/uploads/Professional-Learning-1-Gauge-Impact-with-Five-Levels-of-Data.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ Dissemination pathways and indicators of impact on development: a literature review

challenge was more pronounced when the products were developed through a cost-sharing arrangement with other programmes and donors. It would have been useful for the Joint Programme to have clear guidelines around its branding in relation to its knowledge products to avoid any such confusion and to strengthen its brand and identity.

Testing the Theory of Change: The Joint Programme’s intervention logic that investment to generate relevant, meaningful and quality knowledge and evidence products will support its work, particularly on normative amendments was a valid one. The evaluative evidence validated this. However, it needed to develop and implement a systematic approach towards its knowledge production, dissemination, and measurement.

Figure 11: Snapshot of Knowledge products branding supported by Joint Programme, prepared by the evaluation



Finding 9: The Joint Programme developed partnerships with a range of entities, particularly at the national level. This was useful for coordination, building ownership of the programme and for sustainability of results. However, for some countries, there was limited effort to facilitate regular exchange between its partners leading to a rather “compartmentalized” form of partnership. Further, the programme’s partnerships at the regional level needed more attention from the perspective of regional knowledge and experience exchange.

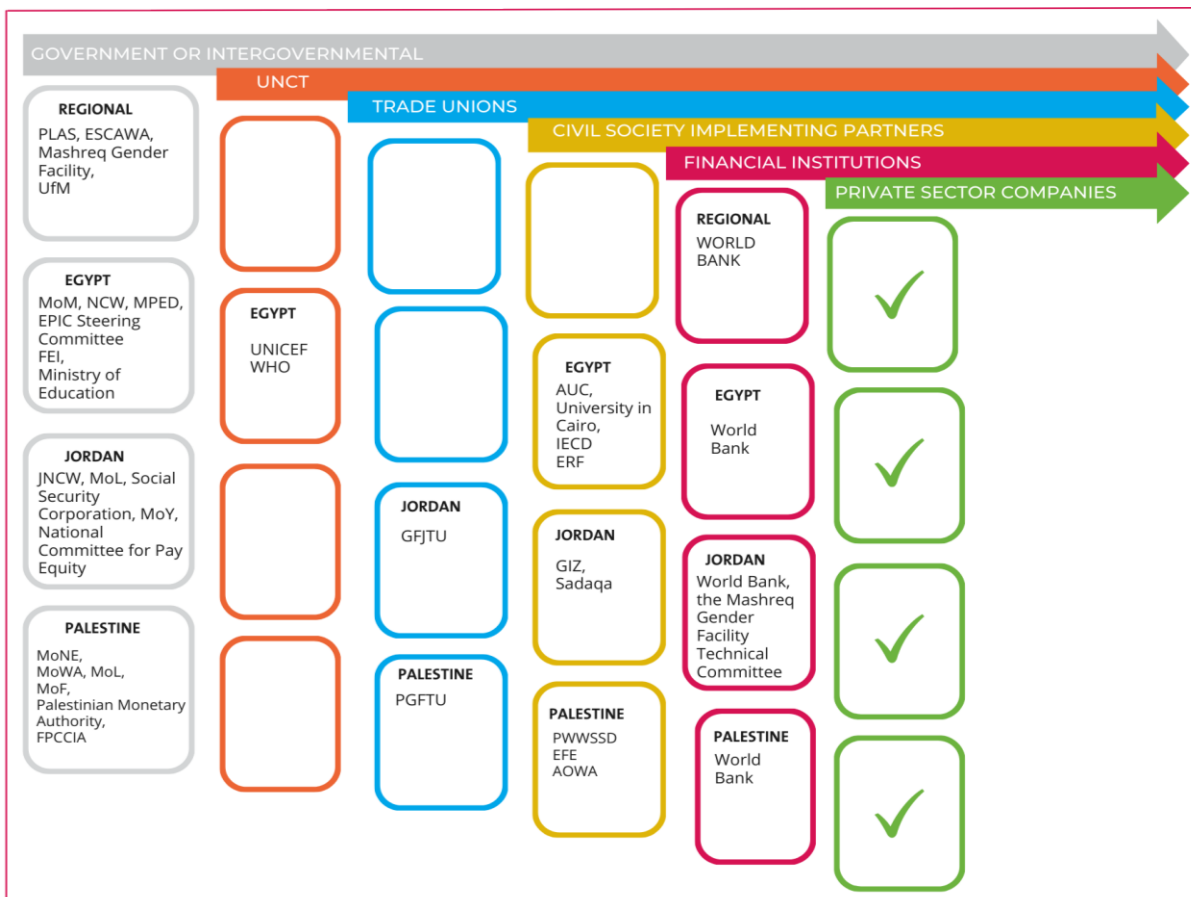
The Joint Programme has built up a rich set of development partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders to deliver various components of the programme. It built on ILO’s core approach of tripartism and social dialogue to promote the democratic involvement of employers’ organizations, trade unions and government to promote gender equality and decent work. It also extended the partnerships to civil society organizations, other UN partners and private sector entities across the targeted countries and at the regional level. The intention of these partnerships was to catalyse systemic changes for gender-responsive work at the micro, meso and macro level.

In Egypt, the Joint Programme worked closely with the Ministry of Manpower and the National Council for Women, which reviewed and signed off on the Joint Programme action plans.

It strengthened partnerships with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development focusing on equal pay in the aftermath of Egypt joining the Equal Pay International Coalition and taking up a place on the coalition’s Steering Committee. The Joint Programme also worked with the Federation of Egyptian Industries to shape gender inclusive policies for small and medium enterprises and collaborated with the American University in Cairo, the School of Business’ “Women on Board Observatory”, the European Institute for Cooperation and Development, and the Economic Research Forum. It also engaged with the Ministry of Education to eliminate gender segregated occupation through its Technical and Vocational Education and Training interventions (see Figure 12).

In Jordan, the Joint Programme worked with more than 22 partner agencies in a coordination role, while also collaborating and sharing knowledge with the World Bank,

Figure 12: Joint Programme multi-channel partnership (prepared by the evaluation team)



the Mashreq Gender Facility Technical Committee, GIZ Employment in Jordan 2030 committee, and the Technical Committee of the National Strategy for Women in Jordan (2020–2025). However, the work with civil society was still at a nascent stage and the evaluation team was informed that it will be undertaken in the remaining phase of the programme (see Figure 12).

In Palestine programme partners were selected from a diverse mix of entities that included government, private sector and civil society actors whose areas of work fell within the domain of productive employment and decent work. While the main government partners were Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Women's Affairs,¹⁴⁶ Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Finance and the Palestinian Monetary Authority, the Joint Programme also fostered meaningful partnership with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and women's organizations such as the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, Education for Employment, and the Association of Women's Action for Training and Rehabilitation (see Figure 12).

According to the stakeholders consulted, the partnership modality encouraged their active engagement and helped to strengthen local/national ownership. Nonetheless, in Jordan and Palestine, the programme partners asserted there had been minimal communication, meetings or briefings between the partners. A widely shared notion was that partnerships were crafted in a rather compartmentalized manner that did not foster horizontal sharing of knowledge, nor did it promote cross-fertilization of ideas or collective intelligence. The evaluation also noted that the Joint Programme did not seem to have any concrete plan concerning this.

In some cases, even the national Steering committee members of the Joint Programme expressed that they were not aware of the full picture of the Joint Programme's partnership and its achievements. Although the Joint Programme undertook actions such as distributing its annual report in Arabic there was a need to facilitate creative ways of raising awareness and sharing of knowledge and exchanges among the programme partners such as by producing some periodic messages/newsletters that showcase progress and existing achievements and harness on the collective expertise of its partners.

At the regional level, the Joint Programme collaborated with key existing partners under the regional Women's Economic Empowerment portfolio, e.g. the League of

Arab States, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, Mashreq Gender Facility, Union for the Mediterranean. However, according to stakeholders, this work was not substantial and the Joint Programme needed to do more strategic work with its regional partners, particularly the League of Arab States¹⁴⁷ from the perspective of regional knowledge and experience exchange.

Overall, the evaluation noted that the Joint Programme did not adequately leverage the most from its diverse partnerships by catalysing the additional value created by partnerships to create maximum impact. There was room for improvement in bringing multiple actors together to work through collective action to tackle complex challenges through system transformation.

Testing Theory of Change assumptions: *The Theory of Change assumption that the tripartite partnership between employers' organizations, trade unions and government as well as with civil society organizations and private sector entities will catalyse systemic changes for gender-responsive work at the micro, meso and macro level was found to be valid. While the programme's intervention logic was strong, the implementation fell short of generating significant value addition to deliver greater impact and net value to all partners.*

¹⁴⁶ Although not a formal partnership under the Joint Programme, the programme coordinates closely with the ministry on all the Joint Programme interventions, at UN Women and ILO levels.

¹⁴⁷ Including with the League of Arab States' Committee for Women's Empowerment.

Finding 10: The Joint Programme brought the comparative advantage of UN Women and ILO together and built on the technical complementarities of both entities. Both agencies worked for the successful execution of this programme. However, there were areas where the Joint Programme could have achieved ‘more than the sum of their parts’ and the joint functioning and cross-entity learning could have been improved with more systematic involvement of the senior regional leadership of both entities.

From the beginning, the Joint Programme developed a common vision and programme design building on the comparative advantage of each entity. The Joint Programme’s Theory of Change and its Performance Monitoring Framework captured the collective vision in the form of three distinct yet comprehensive outcomes, to build a gender-responsive ecosystem for women’s economic empowerment. ILO’s expertise on normative frameworks related to international labour standards; support for the empowerment of women in the workplace, including protection against violence and harassment at work; and its tripartite approach whereby governments, workers’ organizations and employers’ organizations work in partnership to deliver decent work outcomes complemented UN Women’s knowledge and expertise on women’s economic empowerment; relations with national women’s machinery and the private sector through the WEPs; as well as civil society organizations, in particular women’s organizations to strengthen decent work and the economic empowerment of women.

The Joint Programme also established a standard joint governance structure and clear operational arrangement on how it would be administered along with clear lines of responsibility about day-to-day management of the programme. The joint modality created opportunities for added value by enhancing the visibility and legitimacy of gender and decent work and placed the economic empowerment of women on the national agenda of the targeted governments. The evaluation noted examples of gender equality being raised on the political and policy agenda and legislative and governance reforms being stimulated as outlined in the effectiveness section of this report.

The evaluation also noted that personnel from both entities acknowledged the value addition of the technical expertise coming from both agencies and appreciated how the Joint Programme had opened doors for new partnerships. For

instance, ILO had an opportunity to work more closely with national women’s machinery and as did UN Women with the ministry dealing with labour and economic empowerment issues.

Nevertheless, there were areas where the Joint Programme could have achieved ‘more than the sum of their parts’. The evaluation noted limited interaction and exchange between the regional leadership of both entities at a strategic level to distil and discuss lessons learned from the partnership as well as to address bottlenecks and challenges when needed. Efforts to renew the commitment of both partners to strengthen coherence was also limited. As past evidence demonstrates,¹⁴⁸ joint programmes need systematic steps to develop a common spirit, particularly with involvement of the leadership. They should also be held accountable for harmonization, over and above delivering results against programme targets. These components were, in general, missing. The evaluation team appreciates that at times the clear division of responsibility and a target driven approach to joint programmes could result in and reinforce a siloed way of working, but there should have been a conscious commitment to bring the teams together, such as through retreats, learning events, etc. to nurture the spirit of sharing and coordination.

The evaluation also noted situations where there were significant “ideological differences” between the country leadership of both entities about the means to achieve gender transformation. Transformation of gender equality remains a complex issue and differences of opinion about the pathways to achieve is not unusual. However, such matters were not dealt with through open dialogue and discussion and, at times, resulted in breakdown of communication. This could have been avoided by proactive facilitation from the regional leadership. Although the respective teams continued to deliver on the programme targets, the Joint Programme management arrangements were perceived to have encouraged parallel instead of joint implementation.

¹⁴⁸ Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System Final Synthesis Report November 2013

The Regional and Country-level Steering Committees were seen as a useful mechanism both to ensure government engagement and to create a space for dialogue between UN Women, government and civil society. Some interviewees also saw a value in the given architecture to bring together various ministries which were not natural allies, such as the Ministry of Women and Ministry of Labour. However, the interviewees were of the opinion that the committees could have been more meaningfully engaged and utilized at a strategic level to collectively make decisions on the issues of women's economic empowerment as well as to support national commitments and institutional arrangements to sustain and amplify the results contributed by the Joint Programme. Currently, their engagement was often limited to reviewing reporting from the Joint Programme team members and approving their annual plan.

3.3 Efficiency

Evaluation Question 3: Has the Joint Programme been efficient in achieving the planned results in a cost-effective and timely way while optimally using processes and systems to achieve its planned results?

Finding 11: As a regional programme, the Joint Programme was not successful in diversifying its funding beyond its current and only donor. At the country level, it leveraged resources from other sources to complement and/or build on some of the Joint Programme components. While this was positive, the attribution of results to the respective funding stream and reporting of the same needed improvement for better accountability.

The total budget of the Joint Programme was US\$13.1 million, of which the Joint Programme received US\$ 10.5 million from Sida at the beginning of the programme. As a result, the programme started with a funding deficit, which led to some delays in initiating some programme components. The COVID-19 pandemic added to the inception challenges. Despite these challenges, the Joint Programme reports to have expended its funds over the 2019–2021 period (see Table 3).

Table 3: Joint Programme budget versus expenditure (2019–2021)

Implementation year	Budget (US\$)	Expenditure (US\$)
2019	900,569	900,569
2020	1,506,033	1,506,033
2021	2,411,648	2,411,648
2022	4,723,311	--
2023	3,207,643	--
Total	12,876,696	4,818,250

Source: 2021 Joint Programme Annual financial report

The Joint Programme had a resource mobilization strategy that was applied to both the regional and national level. In November 2021, the Joint Programme mobilized an additional US\$ 2,281,282 (20 million SEK) from Sida, bringing the total secured budget to US\$ 13 million with a cost extension until 2023. However, Sida remained the sole donor of the Joint Programme regional programme.

At the country level, the programme leveraged additional resources from other sources to expand or replicate some of the Joint Programme components, but these were not formally considered under the Joint Programme and were instead part of other programmes. For instance, in Egypt, UN Women raised funding from the Korean International Cooperation Agency¹⁴⁹ to expand work with the private sector to accelerate women's employability (Joint Programme outcome 2) and on challenging gender stereotypes (Joint Programme outcome 3). The Joint Programme also sought support from the Swiss Development Cooperation to deliver different policy tools to (a) support national governments to scale up investments in care service provision; (b) support relevant ministries (e.g. trade, industry, planning) to adopt sectoral and industrial policies that address occupational and sectoral

segregation of women; and (c) enhance political consensus to adopt macro-level economic policy accelerators that support gender-equitable inclusive growth. Similarly, in Jordan, the Joint Programme received funding from the Government of Norway to expand work with the private sector to the private health and education sector while utilizing Joint Programme funds from Sida to focus on banking and share-holding companies. In Palestine, the Joint Programme capitalized on existing resources of the Italian government-funded national decent work programme and ILO internal resources to deliver mutually supportive, complementary interventions. UN Women secured funding from Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the Government of Norway, as a COVID-19 emergency response, short-term Joint Programme (with UNDP, FAO and WFP¹⁵⁰) to complement the Joint Programme interventions in partnership with the Ministry of National Economy.

While these interventions helped to amplify or scale up various components of the Joint Programme at the country level, the attribution of results to specific funding streams and reporting of the same needed improvement as the Joint Programme was not a pooled fund.

Finding 12: As the lead Administrative Agent and Convening Agent for the Joint Programme, UN Women was appreciated for fulfilling this expected responsibility. Joint Programme personnel were considered qualified on women's economic empowerment; and the Joint Programme regional team acted as the centre of the learning and knowledge exchange, and facilitated linkages between country programmes. However, the Joint Programme's results-based management systems and practices needed improvement.

The regional nature of the programme allowed for the UN Women and ILO Country Offices to engage and share information more closely and regularly. The Joint Programme regional team acted as the centre of the learning and knowledge exchange and facilitated cross-country knowledge and learning exchange on a regular basis by organizing and facilitating regular monthly meetings. A success story noted by the evaluation team was the support provided by the Jordan programme to the Egypt programme to create a maternity insurance fund in Egypt.

The Joint Programme's technical knowledge and expertise at the regional and country level emerged as a relevant asset from interviews with both regional and national stakeholders. Joint Programme personnel were appreciated for the technical inputs and advice provided to stakeholders, including the government and private sector partners.

The programme's human resources model was based on a number of fixed-term agreements and temporary contracts, such as service contracts issued for the duration of the programme (see Table 4).¹⁵¹ Comprising a total of 16¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Government approval received end of 2021

¹⁵⁰ The Joint Programme was implemented for the period August 2021-April 2022 by UNDP, UN Women, FAO and WFP.

¹⁵¹ The above information as well as Table 4 reflect the staffing arrangements for the period 2019-2021. 2022 saw minor changes due to turnover of staff and amendments

to the programme management structure of the agencies, resulting in a reduction in staff.

¹⁵² The Women's Economic Empowerment Regional Thematic Adviser in the UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States and the Gender Specialist and Technical Adviser at

personnel, the programme had a mix of full-time (8) and part-time personnel (8) from both agencies. The programme benefitted from an additional number of approximately seven personnel (not covered financially by the Joint Programme) at the regional and country levels from both agencies providing technical and programme oversight and support.

Based on stakeholder consultation as well as desk analysis of UN Women’s Administrative and Convening Agent function, the evaluation noted that UN Women had fulfilled the required functions. It managed the financial/administrative management processes, including the donor reporting with no major bottlenecks. UN Women’s communication with the Joint Steering Committee was also reported to be fruitful. UN Women carried out standard operational and programmatic coordination diligently (e.g. annual work planning and reporting functions).

Table 4: Joint Programme core team at the regional and country level

The oversight, coordination and quality assurance team	Women’s Economic Empowerment Regional Thematic Adviser (UN Women) Gender Specialist and Technical adviser (ILO)	FTA FTA (not funded by the Joint Programme)
Core Joint Programme team at the regional level	Joint Programme Manager (1)	FTA
	Monitoring and Reporting Officer (1)	SC
	Programme Management Support Officer (1)	SC
Joint Programme core team at the country level	1 focal point (UN Women)/Country 1 focal point (ILO)/Country 1 finance/admin support (UN Women)/Country 1 finance/admin support (ILO)/Country	All fixed term or service contracts

Regarding risk management, the Joint Programme prepared an annual risk register including the political, social, economic, governance, institutional, programmatic,

coordination, operational and fiduciary risks. These risk areas covered political instability and conflict situations, de-prioritization of women’s economic empowerment issues by the government and private sector, discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes, limited funding and/or resource mobilization, lack of implementing partner capacity, inadequate operational support, lack of functional coordination, fiduciary risks and COVID-19 pandemic related risks. The register was monitored and updated annually as part of the annual reviews and workplan development process but there was scope to improve risk mitigation and management by monitoring risks on a quarterly basis, as part of the quarterly reviews on implementation of the Joint Programme’s annual workplans.

Regarding the Joint Programme’s results-based management, the programme followed a good practice of earmarking >3 per cent of programme budget for monitoring and evaluation activities (in case of the Joint Programme it was 6.3 per cent of the programme budget – US\$ 846,534 of US\$ 12,959,694). This included budget for regional monitoring and reporting personnel as well as country monitoring and evaluation activities (US\$ 96,875 for each country amounting to 11.4 per cent of the total monitoring and evaluation budget). A mid-term evaluation and final evaluation were included in the approved programme document.

The Joint Programme had a Monitoring & Evaluation framework, or the Performance Management Framework developed by an external consultant. This was established during the Joint Programme’s inception phase following close consultation with the programme team. The process included determining baselines and targets for indicators. Subsequently, the Joint Programme recruited dedicated monitoring and reporting personnel towards the end of the first year of the programme (in November 2019) following a donor recommendation. The technical support received from the regional team for monitoring and reporting on programme results was well appreciated by country teams.

An evaluability assessment found that some factors continued to impede the programme’s monitoring such as too many indicators at the output level, missing baseline data,¹⁵³ missing outcome-level data for two of six outcome indicators.¹⁵⁴ Data on two outcome indicators included in the Theory of Change were also missing – % increase in women returning to work after their first and second child and % change in resource allocations for gender-

ILO Jordan provide technical oversight and advice to the Joint Programme. The Women’s Economic Empowerment Regional Thematic Adviser is partially paid by the Joint Programme, while the ILO Gender Specialist and Technical Adviser is not funded by the programme.

¹⁵³ Missing baseline values in the Performance Management Framework- JOR 2.7.3, # of members of trade unions and workers’ organizations trained on gender mainstreaming (baseline year 2020) and PAL 1.1.1, # of new provisions introduced/recommended to

the labour law that promote gender equality and non-discrimination in the workplace (baseline year 2018).

¹⁵⁴ Missing outcome indicator data: Indicator 1.2: Extent of change in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment among programme parties and Indicator 3.1: % of men and women with positive perception on the importance of women’s work and on equal sharing of domestic work and unpaid care

responsive policies. The Performance Management Framework was also missing social norms change indicators, outcome indicators related to training, knowledge products and campaigns (see Annex 6 on evaluability assessment for more details).

Further, the Joint Programme collected data on indicators related to policy and legislative changes, but its contribution analysis towards normative changes needed to be mapped and documented more systematically. The Joint Programme's contribution and attribution analysis vis-a-vis other programmes needed to be more explicit to allow partners and stakeholders to better understand programme results.

Some of the Joint Programme's targets were also unrealistic to achieve whereas other targets were quite modest to facilitate scale and impact. For instance, outcome indicator 3.1, % of men and women with a positive perception of the importance of women's work and on equal sharing of domestic work and unpaid care had a target of at least a 20 per cent increase by the end of 2022. It was a rather ambitious target for a country such as Egypt, with a population of 105 million. At the same time, as indicated before, too many outputs associated with "modest targets" posed a risk for the Joint Programme in spreading itself too thinly and not achieve results at a minimum scale.

The Joint Programme team submitted its progress reports on an annual basis, but the progress data was mainly self-reported. The Joint Programme national team sometimes shared evidence of data validation in the form of pre-post tests, satisfaction surveys and quotes from participants but overall, the system and practice of data verification had not yet been established and standardized. The stakeholders consulted indicated that work was ongoing on the development of tools and quality assurance processes for

data collection, validation and reporting.¹⁵⁵ It is recommended that this work is accelerated.

Annual reports were submitted to donors in June of the following year and went through an internal review and quality assurance process by the Joint Programme regional programme team and the Regional Office before submission. While donor feedback on the reports was mostly good, there was an increasing interest and demand for reporting on the Joint Programme's impact (and scale of impact) at the beneficiary level. Accordingly, in its 2021 annual report, the Joint Programme started to report on some of the impact level data, for example, number of women who entered the job market, number of employees benefitting from the WEPs etc. The evaluation recommends that such impact results reporting should be accompanied by a methodological note outlining the measurement methodology to ensure uniform understanding of the data and to facilitate data harmonization and comparability.

At a more operational level, due to the lack of data reporting, analysis and visualization platform, the reporting process became a time-consuming coordination endeavour.

¹⁵⁵ In 2021, the Monitoring and Reporting Officer conducted a monitoring visit in Egypt and conducted focus group discussions with the women participating in the training to

seek their feedback. While not a typical verification visit, Sida visited the Jordan and Egypt programmes in 2021.

3.4 Gender and human rights based approach

Evaluation Question 4: To what extent is the Joint Programme gender transformative in nature and is adhering to the principle of leaving no one behind?

Finding 13: The Joint Programme demonstrated a commitment to gender transformative change, with interventions that addressed multiple socioecological structures and challenges. However, its monitoring and learning systems did not adequately capture and track the transformative changes.

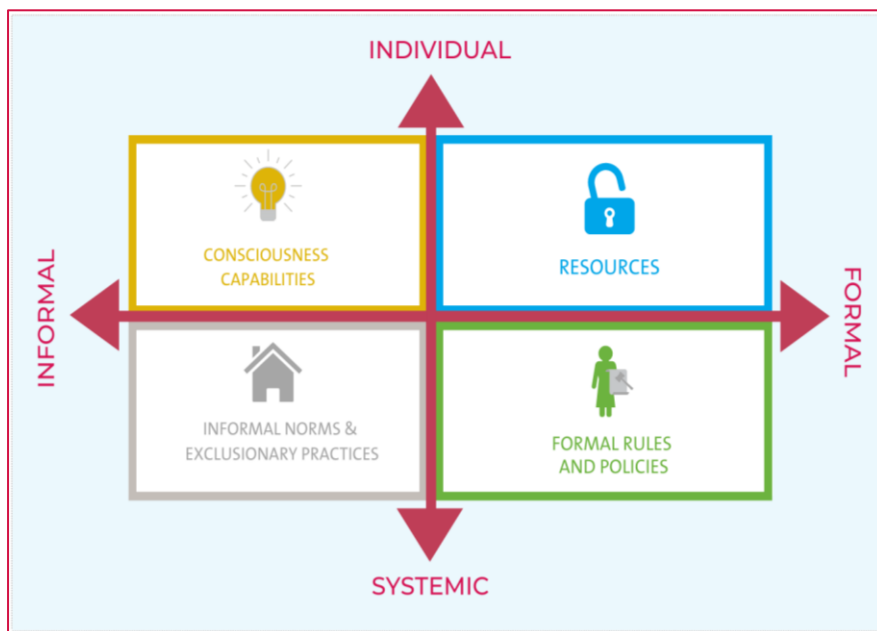
The Gender at Work Framework¹⁵⁶ allows for an evaluation of the holistic nature of a gender equality and women's empowerment portfolio, assessing impact and the interrelationship between gender equality, organizational change and institutions, and the power dynamics within communities.

When the Joint Programme was viewed across the four quadrants, it was evident that the programme targeted each of the four quadrants, and targeted both formal and informal structures through a variety of interventions. Regarding the formal quadrants, it was clear that the normative improvements in legislation, policy and adherence to international conventions were positively impacted by the Joint Programme's work. It had also worked to strengthen empirical evidence – both data and research.

Similarly, the Joint Programme also made gains related to service delivery and the resources available to women and girls through engaging with the private sector; strengthening the individual capacity of women to move into leadership positions; work on financial inclusion and entrepreneurship; and supporting service providers to deliver gender-responsive decent work and services.

The Joint Programme made efforts to influence the social norms that impede women's meaningful participation in the labour market through challenging and changing the gender segregation of occupations and by focusing on recognition of the unpaid care economy, with an equal distribution of responsibility at the household level. However, this work was far from complete.

Figure 13: Gender at Work Framework



¹⁵⁶ <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>

The tangible contribution of the Joint Programme towards creation of decent work employment (job creation) or job retention was not fully evident. Similarly, its work on social norms change was at a relatively nascent stage and needed long-term investment and engagement. Its monitoring and learning systems also did not adequately capture and track gender transformative changes, such as social norms change by capturing for instance, resistance to change, the existence of sanctions, men's engagement in household duties or evidence of religious and community leaders speaking out. Establishing a means of capturing and analysing this data will support the Joint Programme's transformation efforts. Almost all stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation process indicated work remains to change prevailing attitudes and perceptions concerning women's economic empowerment.

Finding 14: The Joint Programme intentionally targeted impoverished women but required more structured consideration of disability inclusion as per the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)¹⁵⁷ to ensure no one is left behind.

Leave No One Behind is a fundamental principle driving the work of UN agencies and a critical element of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Joint Programme identified specific target groups that had intersections mainly between gender and poverty. For instance, in Palestine, the Joint Programme contributed to making the "Economic Empowerment Fund" more accessible to vulnerable women. As a result, the fund's eligibility criteria proactively prioritized vulnerable women from fragile areas damaged by wars, close to settlements, close to the border, rural and underserved by institutions. The Joint Programme also proactively targeted women with disability managing their small businesses from the West Bank and Jerusalem and provided them with assistance to participate in programme interventions. The programme also contributed to making the "Economic Empowerment Fund" more accessible to women with disabilities.

In Egypt, the Joint Programme reached out to women in upper Egypt and rural areas through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme. However,

the evaluation noted some missed opportunities, such as the Women on Boards intervention that required the Joint Programme to engage in recruiting qualified participants; however, women in vulnerable groups were not actively sought out. Therefore, the programme missed the opportunity to include the most vulnerable groups including women with disabilities.

In Jordan, no specific interventions to target women with multiple vulnerabilities such as women with disabilities were established.

Overall, the Joint Programme had some good examples of targeting the most vulnerable women, but it has the potential to systematically strengthen inclusion of women with disability as per the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>

3.5 Sustainability

Evaluation Question 5: To what extent are national partners willing and capable of continuing the Joint Programme orientations and interventions in favour of women's decent employment?

Finding 15: The Joint Programme did not have an explicit sustainability/transition strategy, making the assessment of handover timelines unclear to ensure the continuity of the action and its benefits at the regional and national level. However, its work particularly around normative reform had embedded sustainability principles.

The Joint Programme did not have an explicit sustainability/transition strategy, making assessment of handover timelines unclear to ascertain the continuity of the action and its benefits at the regional and national level.

However, the evaluative evidence indicated the Joint Programme's approaches to normative changes had embedded sustainability principles. Its focus on facilitating normative changes were complemented with strengthening national institutions and integration of various Joint Programme supported tools and products into national institutions. For instance, the programme's work with the gender units of various partner ministries to strengthen their institutional capacity on gender-responsive policy making (including gender action plans, budgets and services) or with the National Wages Council on the Equal Pay International Coalition were embedded within national authorities' work and institutions and were highly likely to continue. There was also strong ownership of the Joint Programme facilitated normative work by one or more government bodies, including recognized institutional partners.

According to the stakeholders consulted, the creation of national steering committees or coalitions with representatives of workers and employers' organizations enhanced the capacities of tripartite partners for social dialogue and collective bargaining. As a result, these interventions were likely to have a positive bearing on sustainability. Other such interventions included the youth networks with improved capacity to organize, lead, negotiate and advocate for women's access to economic opportunities and decent work; normative changes in the private sector companies; and the increase of women in corporate leadership roles.

However, the evaluation noted that evidence of increased knowledge and capacity of women entrepreneurs to expand and sustain their businesses were anecdotal and not

collected systematically through follow-ups. The sustainability of private sector engagement, particularly through the WEPs could also have been strengthened by establishing institutional oversight arrangement to oversee and monitor commitments towards the WEPs and gender-responsive corporate social responsibilities.

Sustainability of the Joint Programme's work at the community or individual level to bring about social or gender norms changes was difficult to determine due to the absence of evidence.

The Joint Programme was not successful in diversifying its donors and raising funding beyond December 2023, risking the sustainability of its interventions and achievements so far.

Overall, the Joint Programme needed to define a clear exit/transition strategy at the regional and country level through a consultative process to ensure that the gains made remained sustainable.

4. KEY LESSONS LEARNED

1. Joint programmes between UN entities need systematic steps to develop a common spirit, particularly with involvement of their respective leadership.

Joint programmes are considered an effective modality to achieve catalytic development result that build upon the comparative advantages of the participating UN organizations. It requires not only co-creation of programmes with a strategic intent but also needs to consciously nurture a team spirit of jointness between the partner agencies for a catalytic effect that is over and above delivering results against programme targets. In the case of the Joint Programme, proactive investment was made to develop a common vision and programme design to leverage the comparative advantage of each entity. However, limited initiatives to systematically bring the teams together to nurture the spirit of sharing and coordination impaired delivering ‘more than the sum of their parts’.

2. Emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic could be turned into opportunities to address pre-existing structural gender inequalities and to amplify the focus of transforming economies with gender-responsiveness and inclusion to counter future shocks and crises.

The pandemic brought into the spotlight perennial issues of pre-existing structural gender inequalities such as the disproportionate burden of care work on women; the gender biased nature of labour market; and the importance of flexible working, social security and work–life balance. While the Joint Programme worked with national partners to address and mitigate the short-term impacts of the pandemic, it also used the crisis as an opportunity to draw attention to the need to address long-term structural drivers of gender inequality and to transform economies by designing and implementing fiscal policies with a gender lens. The lessons learned from this experience, such as the importance of pre-existing infrastructure to respond to the crisis and the need to invest in public services and gender-responsive social protection systems to increase resilience to future crises and shocks could prove useful in the future.

3. Focusing on gender-based employment segregation, beyond female labour force participation, is important for improving job quality and gender equality¹⁵⁹.

Gender-based employment segregation, horizontal as well as vertical, is often a product of structural gender inequalities at the household, institutional and macro level. Employment segregation often leads to gender disparities in labour market outcomes such as wage gaps, overcrowding of limited occupations with low wage as well as gender-based differential access to assets and skills influencing employment and growth trajectories. Therefore, focusing efforts to promote greater female labour force participation alone may not increase gender equality. In fact, it may risk reinforcing gender stereotypical norms and push women into poor quality job markets. Based on this premise, the Joint Programme’s interventions focused on eliminating gender-based employment segregation, beyond female labour force participation. It targeted the supply-side of gender gaps by focusing on the choice of educational stream by promoting access to STEM fields, equal distribution of intra-household work and by promoting positive role models. At the same

¹⁵⁹ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/483621554129720460/pdf/Gender-Based-Employment-Segregation-Understanding-Causes-and-Policy-Interventions.pdf>

time, the programme focused on demand-side factors focusing on gender-responsive recruitment and retention practices, career growth and promotion opportunities, as well as influencing a gender-responsive workplace culture.

4. Signing of the WEPs is an important steppingstone to build a gender-responsive private sector. However, a longer-term strategy for engagement and a clear road map is needed to influence and support tangible and concrete changes in the private sector to create and sustain a gender-responsive work environment.

Signing of the WEPs demonstrates the motivation and commitment of the private sector to achieving gender equality through the seven WEP guiding principles. While signing the WEPs is the first step, the signatories need to have a clear long-term vision, strategy and a tailored action plan to achieve the desired impact of the WEPs. WEP signatories, particularly small and medium-sized companies, need systematic support to identify and address the barriers they face to implement commitments such as through coaching, training, peer network and exchange. They also need support to gather and analyse relevant data to make data and evidence-driven decisions. The experience of the Joint Programme has also shown that for the WEPs to be sustainable and scalable, it is useful to establish a nationally owned institutional arrangement such as a national WEP oversight committee that can monitor, review and provide technical guidance for WEP implementation.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides overall conclusions and corresponding recommendations. The recommendations have been drafted following a consultative approach with the Evaluation Reference Group. Presentation of the preliminary findings and the way forward took place in a workshop with the programme management team to inform the recommendations presented below. Each recommendation is tied to corresponding conclusions and includes actions for consideration by the Joint Programme. The level of priority and responsibility for action are indicated with each recommendation.

Conclusion 1

The Joint Programme is well aligned with national, regional and international policies, normative frameworks and strategies for promoting women’s productive employment and decent work. Its Theory of Change and intervention logic is valid in terms of identifying and addressing structural and systemic barriers to facilitate women’s participation in the labour market and in the world of work across the macro (laws and policy), meso (institutions and networks) and micro levels (communities and individuals). The Joint Programme could consolidate its portfolio by prioritizing, refocusing and scaling up certain interventions. Prioritization of the portfolio might be necessary to bring about concrete outcomes, when taking into consideration the limits of the Joint Programme budget compared to requirements to expand implementation. *(Finding 1, 2, 5,6)*

Recommendation 1: The Joint Programme should consolidate its portfolio of interventions by prioritizing what has worked well and focus on these aspects for the rest of the programme period. Normative work; work with the private sector, particularly through the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs); and addressing gender-based employment segregation are areas that the programme should prioritize and focus on during its next phase.

Responsible Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional Office ● Country Offices
High Priority	
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draw a reconstructed Theory of Change and reflect the role of the Regional Office. ● Carry out a re-prioritizing exercise to sharpen the focus and depth of Joint Programme interventions taking into consideration monitoring data and evaluation findings. ● Establish and communicate clear complementarities with other programmes, particularly the Men and Women for Gender Equality programme focusing on social norms change, including the care economy.

Recommendation 2: Continue to strengthen monitoring and learning systems: develop more ambitious indicators, including to better capture social and gender norms change and the impact of media outreach and advocacy, impact of capacity strengthening interventions as well as the Joint Programme’s contribution to normative changes; and develop a results verification system to strengthen data independence and data quality.

Responsible Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional Office ● Country Offices
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed #ccc;"/>	
High Priority Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve social and gender norms measurement tools including to better capture resistance to change and potential backlash. ● Capture the impact of capacity strengthening initiatives, knowledge uptake and use and impact of media outreach and advocacy initiatives. ● Capture the Joint Programme’s contribution to normative changes using methodologies such as contribution analysis. ● Strengthen results verification systems for the Joint Programme.

Conclusion 2

The Joint Programme’s multi-pronged strategic approach to partnership has been instrumental in achieving key results. However, there is a need to break the “compartmentalized” form of partnerships to amplify and sustain the programme’s results. The Joint Programme has also targeted a cohesive relationship with private sector companies to address gendered employment challenges in the targeted countries as well as in the Arab States region, particularly through the WEPs. As a trusted partner, it has the potential to achieve scale and impact by facilitating better exchange and collaboration between its partners.

(Finding 6,9)

Recommendation 3: The Joint Programme should break the “compartmentalized” form of partnerships and facilitate regular and systematic exchange between its partners to facilitate their involvement beyond their own area of collaboration with the Joint Programme.

Responsible Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional Office ● Country Offices
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed #ccc;"/>	
Medium Priority Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collectively develop a long-term vision on women’s economic empowerment with the programme partners to promote buy-in and shared ownership. ● Facilitate sharing of knowledge and exchanges among the programme partners.

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- Produce periodic messages that showcase the Joint Programme's progress and achievements.
 - Strengthen the Joint Programme as a brand, including through publishing brand guidelines.
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Recommendation 4: The Joint Programme target countries should develop a national WEP strategy and road map based on the UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States' WEP Strategy to develop and sustain a gender transformative private sector in the region.

Responsible Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional Office ● Country Offices
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Medium Priority

Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Joint Programme target Country Offices should develop a national action plan for WEPs in alignment with the regional WEP Strategy and a clear road map. ● Monitor the progress of each WEP signatory against the WEP road map on an annual basis (this does not have to be made available in the public domain but for internal oversight, learning and management). ● Establish and strengthen the network of WEP signatories and facilitate regular dialogues and knowledge exchange. ● Support formulation of an institutional arrangement, such as a national committee responsible for following up on WEP commitments. ● Strengthen documentation of the WEP signatories' journey to ensure a gender-responsive private sector in the region.
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Conclusion 3

The Joint Programme brought the comparative advantage of UN Women and ILO together and successfully built on the technical complementarities of both entities creating opportunities for added value by enhancing the visibility and legitimacy of gender and decent work on the national agenda of the targeted governments. The programme has filled the evidence gap and supported evidence-based policy and programming decisions. However, its joint governance structures and inter-agency collaboration needs improvement to achieve women's economic empowerment in the Arab States region beyond a specific joint programme. **(Finding 8, 10)**

Recommendation 5: The regional leadership of both entities should engage more regularly at a strategic level, beyond current formal engagements (at the Steering Committee), to discuss lessons learned from the partnership to achieve women's economic empowerment and address bottlenecks and challenges when needed.

Responsible Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional leadership of both entities (Regional Office) ● Country Offices
<hr/>	
High Priority	
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Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The regional senior leadership of both entities to engage more regularly at a strategic level beyond the current formal engagements. ● Develop a spirit of jointness through a conscious commitment to bring the Joint Programme team together, such as through retreats, learning events, etc. ● Include accountability towards harmonization over and above delivering the results against programme targets. ● Have a joint approach to resource mobilization. ● Organize dialogues with donors beyond formal reporting.

Recommendation 6: The Joint Programme should facilitate more strategic dialogues and discussions with its Steering Committees at the national and regional level to support national commitments and institutional arrangements to sustain and amplify the results contributed to by the Joint Programme.

Responsible Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional Office ● Country Offices
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Medium Priority	
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Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Modify the Steering Committee meeting modalities from formal reporting to a more dynamic engagement and strategic discussion. ● The Joint Programme could use the forum to seek advice, commitments and support for sustaining its results.

Conclusion 4

The Joint Programme has adopted a gender transformative approach through its interventions that addresses all aspects of socioecological life. It has made a concerted effort to respond to the needs of some of the most vulnerable women, but it lacks systematic inclusion of women living with disability who are further left behind. There is room for more systematic inclusion following the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and mandate. **(Findings 13,14)**

Recommendation 7: The Joint Programme should embed plans for disability inclusion and implement and monitor them in the remaining phase of the programme.

Responsible Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional Office ● Country Offices
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Medium Priority	
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Actions

- Identify and embed planned interventions for inclusion of women living with disability.
 - Collect data and evidence to learn about what is working well and what needs to be changed.
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DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN.
A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN
AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS
ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE
PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS
WORLDWIDE.

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



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