



COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

UN WOMEN NIGER 2018-2022



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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS)

Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

UN WOMEN

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
DRF	Development Result Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GATE	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IT	Information technology
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OEEF	Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
ONPG	Observatoire National pour la Promotion du Genre
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION UN WOMEN NIGER 2018–2022

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The evaluation of UN Women Niger’s portfolio seeks to address questions on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UN Women’s gender equality programmes in the country, as well as the cross-cutting question of how overall UN Women programming has been responsive to human rights and gender equality. The evaluation covers UN Women’s integrated mandate in Niger between 2018 and the second quarter of 2022. The evaluation serves a dual purpose: it looks back to assess the overall successes and challenges since 2018; and it also looks forward to anticipate new directions based on lessons drawn from implementation of the Country Office’s Strategic Note between 2018 and 2022.

Users of this evaluation are primarily expected to be decision makers and UN Women personnel at country, regional and headquarters levels. Additional users of this evaluation are actors directly working on, or with an interest in gender equality in the Niger Republic. Once issued by IEAS, this report will be disseminated among UN Women stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and development partners and uploaded to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system for global access.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The key evaluations questions were:

1. Do Country Office interventions target the underlying causes of gender inequality?
2. Is the Strategic Note aligned with priority concerns in the National Gender Policy?
3. What role has UN Women Niger played in response to major crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What was UN Women’s contribution to UN coordination of gender and towards the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Niger?
5. To what extent do UN Women’s human resources (both in size and capacity) support effective implementation?
6. Is the Country Office’s choice of implementing partners suitable to achieve its mandate for women?
7. To what extent has partner capacity been developed to ensure the sustainability of efforts and benefits? What local accountability and monitoring systems have been put in place to support continuity?
8. Was the Strategic Note implemented in accordance with the principles of inclusion/non-discrimination? To what extent did the country programme contribute to changing power dynamics in relations between different groups?

3rd

Niger holds the world’s third position in terms of gender inequality: its Gender Index is 0.835



38%

of women experience gender-based violence in their lifetime compared to 16.3 per cent of men



53%

of women aged between 20 and 24 have been married before the age of 18



EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation was led by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service Regional Evaluation Specialist for West and Central Africa with the support of an Evaluation Analyst and an external consultant. The Independent Evaluation Service (IES) provided oversight and quality assurance of the process. The evaluation team used a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach, in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy which is aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation.

The evaluation employed a qualitative approach, drawing upon both oral and written data collected from various sources to examine and triangulate diverse perspectives. This involved conducting open-ended interviews with a select yet representative group of participants. The desk review at inception stage helped understand the context and narrow down the main, relevant evaluation sources within the time period 2018–2022.

The evaluation analysed results using a detailed evaluation framework, taking into account people's perceptions of the progression of results over time. Reported changes were assessed against planned result pathways, as sketched in a reconstructed theory of change. Qualitative data was used for a more nuanced assessment of both internal and external factors that influenced performance.

In addition, the evaluation was conducted in compliance with UNEG Ethical Guidelines, the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluation and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

HIGHLIGHTS BY EVALUATION CRITERIA

RELEVANCE

In a context of reservations about the principle of equality between men and women, UN Women has pragmatically opted to focus on assisting the government and civil society in addressing specific gender inequality issues.

The Country Office's Strategic Note aligns with the country's national Gender Policy and mirrors the Policy's pillars in addressing women's political participation, violence eradication, economic empowerment, and peace and security. The Policy prefers using "gender equity" over "gender equality," acknowledging the specificity of the country's cultural norms. To tackle gender inequality shaped by deep-rooted norms, according to the shared perspective of both UN Women and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection, it was more pragmatic to address specific manifestations such as economic and political disparities and violence against women. The assumption is that incremental progress can lead to long-term social changes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Country Office adapted its work by modifying its annual plan to support vulnerable women in the informal economy in Niamey. This included awareness campaigns, training, and the distribution of food and cash transfers. While there were questions about the comparative advantage of food and cash aid, UN Women's commission of two studies assessing the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, and their protection needs was vital and informed Niger's response to the pandemic and its recovery plan. These studies fit more closely within UN Women's comparative advantage and expertise in gender statistics.

EFFECTIVENESS

UN Women in Niger has clearly demonstrated effectiveness in advancing women's representation in parliament and in ministerial positions. However, there are areas of concern and room for improvement.

Post-election initiatives in women's political participation need attention to prevent the potential erosion of progress. While efforts have been made in women's economic empowerment, sustained income improvements for rural women remain to be proven. Similarly, Women, Peace and Security initiatives require further documentation to clarify pathways to lasting peace and cohesion. Better synergy among UN agencies for implementation of activities is essential for addressing violence against women. Prior to gaining official Country Office status, UN Women faced challenges in coordinating gender efforts. With increased staffing and inclusion in key coordination frameworks, there is potential for greater influence within gender coordination mechanisms.

EFFICIENCY

The Country Office has increased its workforce following good progress in resource mobilization, enhancing its support for gender mainstreaming and UN coordination mechanisms.

However, this rapid growth has heightened expectations leading to excessive workloads, impacting staff onboarding and training. Additionally, the instability of employment contracts may affect staff retention. Staff awareness of IT security has progressed but compliance with UN Women's standards still falls short. Connectivity issues and power outages hamper online training. The Country Office works with specialized partners with proven expertise in specific areas: NGO Diko and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection are exceptions, as they engage in multiple impact areas. The former applies its women's economic empowerment expertise to peace and security initiatives, while the latter's institutional authority is key in supporting political participation and violence eradication.

SUSTAINABILITY

UN Women’s work in Niger demonstrates sustainability through various positive practices that include participatory and inclusive planning; institutional support for women farmer cooperatives through Dimitra Clubs; solidarity-based savings and credit mechanisms; and securing multi-year funding.

Challenges in maintaining facilities provided to communities may hinder sustainability: issues include under utilization of renovated centres, equipment malfunctions, water and electricity supply challenges, lack of explicit exit strategies and the need for monitoring systems that strengthen local accountability.

GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

UN Women did not afford sufficient attention to the challenges faced by socially marginalized women, including traditionally excluded groups who are subjected to practices such as “Wahaya”, involving forced domestic labour and sexual exploitation; and the specific needs of individuals living with disabilities.

Regarding women migrants, UN Women made valuable contributions in supporting rural communities to prevent migration and advocating for gender-responsive migration policies. However, there is a potential risk that the Country Office’s focus on promoting awareness about border crossing requirements, customs regulations, migration policy and legal frameworks may be interpreted as inadvertently prioritizing a dissuasive approach to migration, rather than paying attention to the protection and humanitarian needs of migrant women, their families and communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Country Office should continue its approach of influencing the country’s Gender Policy in a context of slowly evolving cultural norms. To address deep-rooted causes of gender inequality, the Country Office should initiate dialogues on the family code and related norms in collaboration with UNHCR and civil society partners, while maintaining its focus on specific manifestations such as economic and political disparities and violence against women.



RECOMMENDATION 2: To prevent the potential erosion of gains achieved during electoral processes, the Country Office should develop and implement post-election initiatives that focus on building upon the progress made in women’s political participation in Niger. To achieve this, the Country Office should undertake specific resource mobilization to establish a dedicated team to sustain progress in this area.



RECOMMENDATION 3: Given the ongoing instability in the country, it is imperative to strengthen collaboration among UN agencies to safeguard the physical well-being and livelihoods of women. This proactive approach is crucial to prevent an escalation in the prevalence of gender-based violence compared to what was experienced during times of peace. By working together more effectively, UN agencies can better address these critical issues within the context of humanitarian and security crises.



RECOMMENDATION 4: The Country Office should strengthen its commitment to results-based monitoring across its programmes and initiatives by systematically tracking progress related to gender inclusivity in peace dialogues, income generation from agricultural support programmes and the impact of cash transfer interventions on vulnerable women. To sustain the results of its interventions, UN Women should also implement clear exit strategies involving local stakeholders and authorities to ensure the maintenance and durability of facilities. By consistently measuring and assessing the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives, UN Women can enhance its ability to contribute to lasting peace, economic empowerment and the well-being of women in the communities it serves.



RECOMMENDATION 5: The Country Office could promote greater gender responsiveness and coordination within the UN system in Niger by revitalizing the Gender Theme Group. This would help focus on monitoring and implementing the Gender Score Card recommendations and enhance awareness of the Secretary-General’s Gender Parity Compact. Furthermore, the Country Office should assume a leadership role in fostering collaboration among UN agencies to more effectively address violence against women, particularly within the framework of the Spotlight Initiative. Minimum criteria for assessing gender integration in joint programmes should be established along with the dissemination and discussion of a gender mainstreaming tool with all UN agencies.



RECOMMENDATION 6: The Country Office could go beyond being non-discriminatory by ensuring its Strategic Note and programme proposals refer explicitly to disability and under-privileged groups to facilitate inclusiveness at programme implementation stage for the poorest and most marginalized.



Photo: UN Women/David Azria

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BACKGROUND

UN Women has operated in Niger since 2010 as a “Presence Programme Office” with key elements of its functions still performed from the Regional Office of West and Central Africa. With the end of its Strategic Note and its official recognition as a “Country Office,”¹ it was appropriate to conduct an evaluation of the entire country programme as an initial step towards the formulation of priorities for the strategic period 2023–2027. The Country Office dedicated the second half of 2022 to the development of its new Strategic Note. This coincided with the development of Niger’s new United Nations System Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2027.

The evaluation, conducted in February 2022, captures the entire evaluative process and results, including the purpose, objectives, methods, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the portfolio evaluation. It faced an interruption in June 2022 during the data analysis stage following the departure of a key team member. Despite this setback, preliminary findings were shared with the Country Office in October 2022, shaping the discussions for its strategic planning. It must be acknowledged that significant developments have transpired since then, potentially impacting the report’s accuracy. Recent shifts in the broader national and regional geopolitical landscape² are however reflected in the analyses of the report.

1.1 Objectives and scope

The purpose of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) is to identify overall successes and challenges relating to UN Women’s work in Niger and, based on lessons drawn from this systematic assessment, look forward to the programme’s new direction. The intended uses of the evaluation are:

- a. accountability for UN Women’s contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women; and
- b. learning about effective approaches to support improved decision-making.

The Country Office used and will use the findings and recommendations to design and implement the new Strategic Note. Other primary users of this evaluation are expected to be decision makers and UN Women personnel in the Regional Office and headquarters. The evaluation is also intended to be used by UN Women stakeholders, NGOs, UN agencies, civil society organizations and development partners. The results of the evaluation will be publicly accessible through the GATE system for global learning.

The scope of the CPE is the Strategic Note period from January 2018 to June 2022, including the Development Results Framework (DRF) and the Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework (OEEF).

More specifically, the CPE will offer recommendations and discern lessons learned and best practices by addressing a set of questions organized according to evaluation criteria:

- **Relevance:** Are we doing what is necessary according to national priorities?
- **Effectiveness:** Are the things we are doing actually working?
- **Efficiency:** Are we doing things right, especially by using limited resources in a rational manner?
- **Sustainability:** Are we contributing to sustainable changes?
- **Human rights and gender equality:** Do the things we do respect human rights and gender equality, including those of disabled individuals, vulnerable groups and marginalized individuals?

1.2 Evaluation method

The evaluation adopted a predominantly qualitative methodology, analysing results within a comprehensive evaluation framework (see Annex 5) and considering the perceptions of a representative population of respondents on the progression of results over time. The evaluation employed triangulation and validation techniques to ensure rigor and enhance the credibility of findings. Additionally, the evaluation incorporated gender-specific data collection and analysis, examining qualitative findings through a gender lens to account for the unique needs and perspectives of different respondents (e.g., gender). Moreover, some aspects of the analysis had a quantitative nature, leveraging corporate data indicators to corroborate evaluative statements.

Gender-disaggregated data were used throughout the evaluation to identify disparities and trends related to gender. The evaluation team was intentionally diverse, encompassing individuals with a balance of gender representation and varied expertise. This approach ensured that the voices and experiences of women were included in the formulation of key findings and recommendations, in line with gender-responsive evaluation principles.

¹ The Standard Basis Assistance Agreement was signed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 7 July 2021.

² On July 26, 2023, the Niger presidential guard ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, leading to General Abdourahmane Tchiani declaring himself president of the military group named ‘Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la patrie’ (CNSP) on July 28. In response, ECOWAS condemned the coup, imposing sanctions such as border closures, financial suspension, and travel bans on Niger effective July 30.

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation Guide, which itself aligns with the UNEG revised evaluation standards and guidelines (2016), its ethical guides and the OECD evaluation principles, notably those related to utilization, rigour, inclusivity, confidentiality and respect for the informed consent of participants. The UN Women Consultant Evaluation Agreement Form was signed by the evaluators.

Reports and studies commissioned by UN Women, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) or the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) were key to appreciate the context of the work of UN Women in Niger. The Framework for Gender and Socially-Inclusive Climate Resilient Agriculture³ was used to understand and interpret practices related to the Climate Smart Agriculture Initiative which is the most prevalent type of Women's Economic Empowerment intervention implemented in the West and Central Africa region, including Niger.

A total of 53 participants were engaged in interviews: 57 per cent women. The interviews encompassed semi-structured individual sessions conducted both on-site and virtually. Focus group discussions were also conducted in person, either at the UN Women Country Office in Niamey or at visited sites, including Zinder and Madarounfa in the Maradi Department, and Dosso and Wallam. During these field visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews at both village and “chef-lieu” (administrative centre) levels. Purposive sampling was used to select projects for focus interviews based on a set of criteria, such as level of investment, need for evidence of progress in an area of interest, etc. (see Annex 1).

1.3 Ethics and inclusiveness of the evaluation

The evaluation's main ethical and methodological framework is based on UNEG guidance documents.⁴ The evaluation followed strict guidelines to ensure respect for the dignity of all participants, including those who are disabled and/or marginalized. At the start of each interview, participants were provided with a clear understanding of the evaluation's purpose and how the information they shared would be used by the evaluators. The evaluators emphasized their independence, and participants were informed about their rights, including the option to decline participation and were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially. To maintain confidentiality,

transcripts from interviews did not refer to individual identities. Information gathered was stored in line with IES Data Management Guidance. To assess how the “Leave no one behind” principle and gender equality were taken into account in the design and implementation of gender equality and the empowerment of women initiatives, the evaluation drew upon Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality framework.

1.4 Limitations

The evaluation acknowledges that UN Women's contributions to gender equality and the empowerment of women outcomes, as well as its ability to execute its work programme, is subject to various influencing factors. These encompass socio-cultural norms, the prevailing political landscape, environmental conditions and security threats. The evaluation also recognizes its own limitations in measuring the extent to which the decade-long security concerns and political instability in Niger may have been detrimental to changes that would otherwise have resulted from UN Women's interventions (and those of its partners). Lastly, the evaluation encountered a disruption in June 2022 during data analysis due to the departure of a key team member. Acknowledging the impact of subsequent developments on report accuracy, the evaluation has ensured that recent shifts in the broader national and regional geopolitical landscape are considered in the analyses.

- 1. Data collection constraints:** Contextual factors, particularly security concerns, posed significant challenges to the evaluation team's access to targeted regions and participants. Even in relatively secure areas, resource constraints and time limitations prevented the evaluation from reaching all pertinent stakeholders. Consequently, the data gathered may fall short of the initial expectations for comprehensiveness, potentially diminishing the breadth and depth of insights derived from the study.
- 2. Lack of baseline data:** The absence of data collected prior and during the interventions made it challenging to accurately assess the effectiveness programmes. The alternative was to collect written reports of achievements or oral stories of success which can affect accuracy and the ability to make generalizations.

³ Huyer S, Simelton E, Chanana N, Mulema AA and Marty E (2021) - Expanding Opportunities: A Framework for Gender and Socially-Inclusive Climate Resilient Agriculture, *Frontiers in Climate*, 3, December 2021.

⁴ UNEG documents (Code of Conduct for Evaluation, Ethical Guidelines, Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluation, and Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation) and the UN Women Evaluation Policy.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 Political context

After the elections of December 2020, following his two-term constitutional limit, the incumbent president Mahamadou Issoufou stepped down without any civil unrest. However, President-elect Mohamed Bazoum was forced out of his palace by a military junta and remains in detention despite regional and international appeals for his release. Economic and financial sanctions that followed the coup are contributing to the deterioration of people's livelihood, health and safety.

2.2 Social and demographic context

Since the assassination of Muammar Gaddafi, armed trafficking from Libya has fuelled the influence of violent extremist armed groups moving across the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria, exposing Niger to continuous social and political unrest. Insecurity is also a cause of internal displacement. Niger is a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants and refugees linking West, Central and North Africa. In 2021, more than 530,000 refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons resided in Niger.⁵ Consequences for the protection of women were observed in the regions of Diffa, Maradi, Tahwa and Tilaberi with 52 new cases of violence against women reported in July 2023.⁶ Of a total population of 22 million,⁷ the prevalence of gender-based violence in people's lifetime is 38.2 per cent for women and 16.3 per cent for men.⁸ The prevalence of early marriage remains high in Niger, according to the national survey on gender-based violence carried out in 2021, with 53.4 per cent of women aged between 20 and 24 having been married before the age of 18. Niger holds the world's third position in terms of gender inequality: its Gender Index is 0.835.⁹

2.3 Policy and law context

Niger adheres to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and, with reservations,¹⁰ ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. These reservations explain why the country is not party to the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.¹¹ Yet the Government of Niger implements several strategies and action plans related to women rights: the Action Plan of the National Gender Policy (2018–2022), the Action Plan of the National Strategy For Women's Economic Empowerment (2018–2022), the Action Plan of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (2017–2021), the Action Plan to End Child Marriage (2019–2022) and the Action Plan for the National Women, Peace and Security Agenda (2020–2024).

3rd

Niger holds the world's third position in terms of gender inequality: its Gender Index is 0.835



38%

of women experience gender-based violence in their lifetime compared to 16.3 per cent of men



53%

of women aged between 20 and 24 have been married before the age of 18



⁵ UNSDCF 2023-2027, p.12

⁶ Bulletin Mensuel d'Analyse, July 2023, UNHCR, p.3

⁷ Niger Common Country Assessment, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, 2022, p.13

⁸ However, in the 12 months preceding the survey, the overall prevalence of gender-based violence was 4.8 per cent, i.e. 7.8 per cent among women and 2.0 per cent among men. Ibid., p.91. For these figures, the Country Common Assessment relies on UNFPA's study « Ampleur et déterminants des violences basées sur le genre au Niger, 2021 ».

⁹ Human Development Report, 2021-2022, p.289

¹⁰ Niger takes exception to Articles 2 and 16 of CEDAW, recognizing equality (of rights) between men and women. See Box-1 discussion of some of the contradictions between several institutional texts pertaining to women's rights.

¹¹ The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa,

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO

3.1 Overview of the Strategic Note

The Country Office's Strategic Note covers the impact areas of (a) Women's Political Participation; (b) Women's Economic Empowerment; (c) Elimination of Violence Against Women and the following thematic areas: (a) Women's Political Participation; (b) Women's Economic Empowerment; and (c) Women, Peace and Security. The Strategic Note was initially formulated to cover the period 2018–2021 but was extended until 31 December 2022,

to align its time frame with the one-year extension of Niger's Economic Development Plan along with the UN Development Assistance Framework.

Its results framework is structured as follows. Interventions subsumed under the Strategic Note are listed in Annex 2, which also provides selection criteria.



IMPACT AREA 1

Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems

OUTPUTS:

- More national and local plans and budgets are gender-responsive.
- More women of all ages engage fully with political institutions and leadership.



IMPACT AREA 2

Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy

OUTPUTS:

- More women own, launch and manage small and medium-sized enterprises.
- More women engage in rural development and climate-smart agriculture.



IMPACT AREA 3

Women and girls live a life that is free from violence

OUTPUTS:

- Strengthening women's voice and agency to advocate for the development and implementation of laws and policies on ending violence against women.
- Women, girls, men and boys at the community and individual level are mobilized for respectful relationships and gender equality.
- National and local authorities and partners have access to evidence-based international practices to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in private and public spaces



IMPACT AREA 4

Women and girls contribute and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and from humanitarian action.

OUTPUTS:

- More women play a greater role and are better served by humanitarian and recovery interventions.

3.2 Niger Country Portfolio Evaluation theory of change

The following change statement is made in the Strategic Note: *“If there is a critical mass of people at both the national and local levels who believe that gender equality and the empowerment of women are prerequisites for sustainable development, then this would create a supportive environment for family, community, and national-level engagement and leadership of women. With increased participation and leadership of women in various development areas in Niger, women could benefit from development interventions, influence development and peace processes.”* An attempt to reconstruct its underlying pathway was made through a diagram available in Annex 5 of this report.

3.3 Stakeholder mapping

UN Women works closely with a wide range of partners. A comprehensive list of stakeholders categorized by thematic area and type is accessible in Annex 3. The Ministry of Women’s Promotion and Child Protection is the primary partner and entry point for UN Women within the Government of Niger. This includes the authorities of the Government of the Republic of Niger, including ministries, communities, autonomous agencies, women’s organizations, research institutions, and bilateral and multilateral agencies.

The mapping of stakeholders revealed that several regions in Niger have been covered by UN Women’s interventions. The regions of Zinder, Tahoua and Tillabéry have benefitted from the highest concentration of interventions, followed by Dosso and Maradi. The Diffa and Niamey regions have benefitted from actions specifically oriented towards humanitarian efforts.

3.4 Budget and workforce

The financial resources available for the Strategic Note showed an upward trend between 2018 and 2021. According to figures available in Atlas in November 2021, the budget increased from US\$ 476,000 in 2018 to US\$ 6,300,000 in 2021 – more than 13 times the amount in 2018. Furthermore, during 2018–2020, budget execution rates remained at satisfactory levels (81 per cent in 2018, 78 per cent in 2019 and 69 per cent in 2020). At first glance, a cause-and-effect relationship could be established between the upward trajectory of the Country Office’s financial resources, which consistently increased throughout the period under consideration, and its human resources, with staff numbers growing from six employees in 2018 to 23 in 2019 and 26 in 2021. Additional information on budget and personnel can be found in Annex 4.



Photo: UN Women Niger

4

EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 Relevance

Do Country Office interventions target the underlying causes of gender inequality?
Is the Strategic Note aligned with the priority concerns in the National Gender Policy?
What role has UN Women Niger played in response to major crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

FINDING 1

The Strategic Note is aligned with the country's National Gender Policy and pragmatically prioritizes its efforts to support the government and civil society in addressing specific gender inequality concerns. Notably, it exhibits a commendable responsiveness to contextual shifts brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, actively safeguarding the hard-won progress made by women and girls.

The Country Office's Strategic Note is closely aligned with the National Gender Policy. The outcomes of the Strategic Note pertaining to women's political participation and the eradication of violence against women are in line with the second strategic pillar¹² outlined in the country's National Gender Policy (2017).

The policy's third¹³ strategic pillar finds resonance in the Strategic Note's outcome on economic empowerment. Furthermore, the Country Office's outcome on Women, Peace and Security is congruent with the priorities laid out in the first strategic pillar¹⁴ of the country's National Gender Policy (see Annex 12 for more details).

Table 1 – Alignment with the National Gender Policy

UN Women Country Office Niger Strategic Note	National Gender Policy
Women's Political Participation OUTCOME 1.1	Outcome 1.1 of the National Strategy aligns with the Politique Nationale du Genre's second strategic axis of Niger's 2017 National Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy.
Women's Economic Empowerment OUTCOME 2.2	UN Women's National Strategy for Niger aligns with the third strategic axis of the 2017 Politique Nationale du Genre in terms of women's economic empowerment activities. However, neither the 2017 Politique Nationale du Genre nor the 2015 Socioeconomic and Environmental Assessment includes any specific activities related to the situation of migrant women (internal or external). UN Women dedicates an entire outcome to this issue (Outcome 2.2): "Economic migration is safe and regular for women and girl migrants."
Ending Violence Against Women	UN Women's impact area on Ending Violence Against Women corresponds to the second strategic axis of Niger's 2017 Politique Nationale du Genre, which, in this national document, is combined with issues related to the "equitable participation of men and women in power management."
Women, Peace and Security	The impact area in UN Women's National Strategy on Women, Peace and Security aligns with the first axis of the Politique Nationale du Genre, and goes even further. The Politique Nationale du Genre focuses on "promoting (or advocating for) the participation and representation of women and youth in conflict mediation, prevention, and management processes" (Politique Nationale du Genre, p.38) or "advocating for improved participation and representation of women in mediation, conflict management, decision-making bodies, and peace and security missions" (Politique Nationale du Genre, p.39). The National Strategy dedicates an outcome to humanitarian issues, which is discussed in the third strategic axis of the Politique Nationale du Genre.

Source: prepared by evaluation team from reviewed documents

¹² Strengthening the institutional and legal framework for the effective application of women and girls' rights; the fight against gender-based violence; and the equitable participation of men and women in the management of political power.

¹³ Economic empowerment and inclusive growth linked to sustainable environmental management, climate change, risk and disaster management, migration and humanitarian emergencies.

¹⁴ Improving the socio-cultural environment in relation to demographics, peace and security for greater equity between men and women.

The language utilized within the National Gender Policy concerning gender equality highlights the challenges faced by organizations and agencies striving to address the root causes of gender inequality, including UN Women. In keeping with the Niger Government's reservations regarding CEDAW,¹⁵ the National Gender Policy's statement of its guiding principles only indirectly recognizes the universal principle of equality between men and women. It explicitly emphasizes that the pursuit of gender equality does not mean that men and women are identical.¹⁶ From this understanding, the recurring terminology in the National Gender Policy is "equity and equal access of men and women" or "equity and gender equality" or in short "gender equity". These terms seem to be preferred alternatives to UN Women's motto of "gender equality and women's empowerment".

Cultural norms and social arrangements that have endured for centuries continue to shape gender roles across the country, albeit with regional or ethnic variations. Given this complex social landscape, addressing the cultural and ideological foundations of gender inequality directly may not yield productive results. According to insights from various sources, including local women's organizations, a more pragmatic approach is to focus on addressing specific manifestations of gender inequality, such as the unequal distribution of economic resources and political power between men and women. Or addressing various forms of violence against women in times of peace, conflict or natural disasters. The underlying assumption here is that practical and incremental changes can lead to cumulative progress over time, ultimately benefitting society in the future.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the country programme was proactively adapted in terms of its results and activities to ensure the continued relevance of UN Women's work in a changing environment. To prevent and mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic on women, while safeguarding previously attained results, modifications were made to the 2020 Annual Work Plan, including the following outputs:

- a. **4.2.6** New sources of income and economic opportunities created for women and girls through targeted education and development of capacities/skills in the context of COVID-19; and
- b. **4.2.7.** More marginalized women and young girls' access and benefit from financial and other immediate support as a rapid response to the crisis of Covid-19

In November 2020, UN Women, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), provided assistance to more than 1,000 vulnerable women operating in the informal economy of Niamey. This collaborative effort included the distribution of both food assistance and cash to women residing in the most vulnerable communities, who were already grappling with poverty and precarious living conditions (see Annex 11 for more details). These women were disproportionately affected by the prolonged period of confinement, restricted mobility and other preventive measures imposed by the authorities in response to the pandemic. Furthermore, 250 women who had lost their informal businesses reportedly¹⁷ received training in income-generating activities and were provided with start-up kits.

Box 1.

Equality between the sexes in Niger

Examples of reports prepared by UN Women to intergovernmental bodies on gender equality Article 22 of the Nigerien constitution stipulates that "the State shall ensure the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women, girls, and persons with disabilities, with public policies across all sectors guaranteeing their full development and participation in national progress," and a National Gender Policy was formulated with a vision for 2027, aiming "to collaboratively construct a discrimination-free society where both men and women, girls and boys, have equal opportunities to engage in its development and reap the benefits of its growth" (UNSDCF p.23). The overarching objective of the National Development Plan 2022 –2026 is "to contribute to the establishment of a peaceful and well-governed nation, characterized by a thriving and sustainable economy, as well as a society rooted in values of fairness and equitable sharing of progress." However, the failure to withdraw reservations to CEDAW remains a significant concern. Legal barriers also persisted in 2021, impeding progress toward equality, as the gender equality legislation was yet to be adopted. Therefore, while the state doesn't embrace equality between Nigerien men and women, it recognizes (as outlined in its National Gender Policy) by 2027 there should be equality in their contribution to and benefits from national development. Niger subscribes to the African Union's Agenda 2063, with Objective 17 aiming for "full equality between men and women in all aspects of life."

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

¹⁵ Niger has reservations about CEDAW's Article 2 (requiring the constitutional recognition of the principle of the equality of men and women) and Article 16 (applying the equality principle to marriage and family relations).

¹⁶ Guiding Principle IV of the National Gender Policy denounces universalism and states: «La réalisation de l'égalité des sexes ne signifie pas que les femmes deviennent identiques aux hommes, mais exige des mesures pour éliminer spécifiquement les inégalités entre les sexes, qui, en majorité sont en défaveur des femmes.»

¹⁷ The figure was shared during a focus group session with staff.

These alternative income-generating opportunities included the production of masks and other essential protective equipment. Other reported activities included raising awareness campaigns on COVID-19 prevention through radio broadcasts and mobile technology.

While the above-mentioned activities have relevance, it is worth noting that evaluation participants queried the alignment of providing food and cash with UN Women's comparative advantage. The consensus among respondents was that the COVID-19 pandemic compelled the Country Office to navigate unexplored terrain¹⁸. It prompts reflection on whether these initiatives truly leverage UN Women's comparative advantage, particularly given the modest figures: only 1000 women received food and cash, and 250 women received start-up kits training.

Notably, organizations like UNICEF, WFP, or others might have the capacity to reach a larger audience more efficiently. Additionally, it is likely that UN Women's cost to deliver these relatively small quantities was comparatively high.

On the other hand, the collaborative efforts required in conducting the *Rapid Gender Assessment on the Effects of COVID-19*¹⁹ and the *Analysis of the Protection Needs of Women and Girls Affected by the COVID-19 pandemic*²⁰, in partnership with the government, played a pivotal role in shaping Niger's response to the pandemic, laying the groundwork for the post-COVID recovery plan. These studies are more closely aligned with UN Women's expertise and serve as evidence-based advocacy tools.

4.2 Effectiveness

What was UN Women's contribution to the UN coordination of gender and towards the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Niger?

The exercise of UN Women's integrated mandate in Niger, including its coordination mandate, was examined in the following areas: Women's Political Participation, Women's Economic Empowerment, Eliminating Violence Against Women and Women, Peace and Security.

4.2.1 Contribution to UN coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment

FINDING 2

Prior to attaining its official status as a Country Office, UN Women encountered difficulties in sustaining the functionality of UN coordination mechanisms, such as the UN Gender Theme Group. Nevertheless, with increased staffing and the inclusion of UN Women as a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, there is potential for greater influence over key coordination frameworks and mechanisms.

In 2022, as the UNSDCF document was being drafted, UN Women led gender mainstreaming efforts through a gender analysis of the National Economic and Social Development Plan's three pillars.

In Niger, joint programming characterizes UN Women's interventions across all impact areas. The Entity is entrusted with implementation of key components within these collaborative initiatives. The Country Office assumes the role of co-chair in the UN Gender Thematic Group and participates as a member of the Programme Management

Team. These responsibilities aim to ensure that gender considerations are integrated into the UNSDCF and the formulation of joint programmes.

However, during evaluation interviews it was revealed that the Gender Thematic Group had rarely convened meetings, and its newsletter had not been issued for three consecutive years. The UN Country Team Gender Score Card exercise in 2021 had also highlighted the complete inactivity of the Gender Thematic Group since 2018.

¹⁸ Fourteen hundred beneficiaries had to be rigorously and fairly identified to receive food and cash for two months. Rapid consultations and procurement processes had to be conducted. It was the first time that UN Women Niger had delivered services in an urban environment (Niamey). In the past, all programmes were implemented in the capital.

¹⁹ This is a joint collaboration with UNDP, UN OHCHR, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health.

²⁰ Cellule d'analyse des Politiques Publiques et d'Évaluation de l'Action Gouvernementale, Secrétariat Permanent, Cabinet du Premier Ministre, Niger.

Box 2

Gender mainstreaming in key strategic documents

What is the footprint and focus of the UN Women portfolio in the UNSDCF?

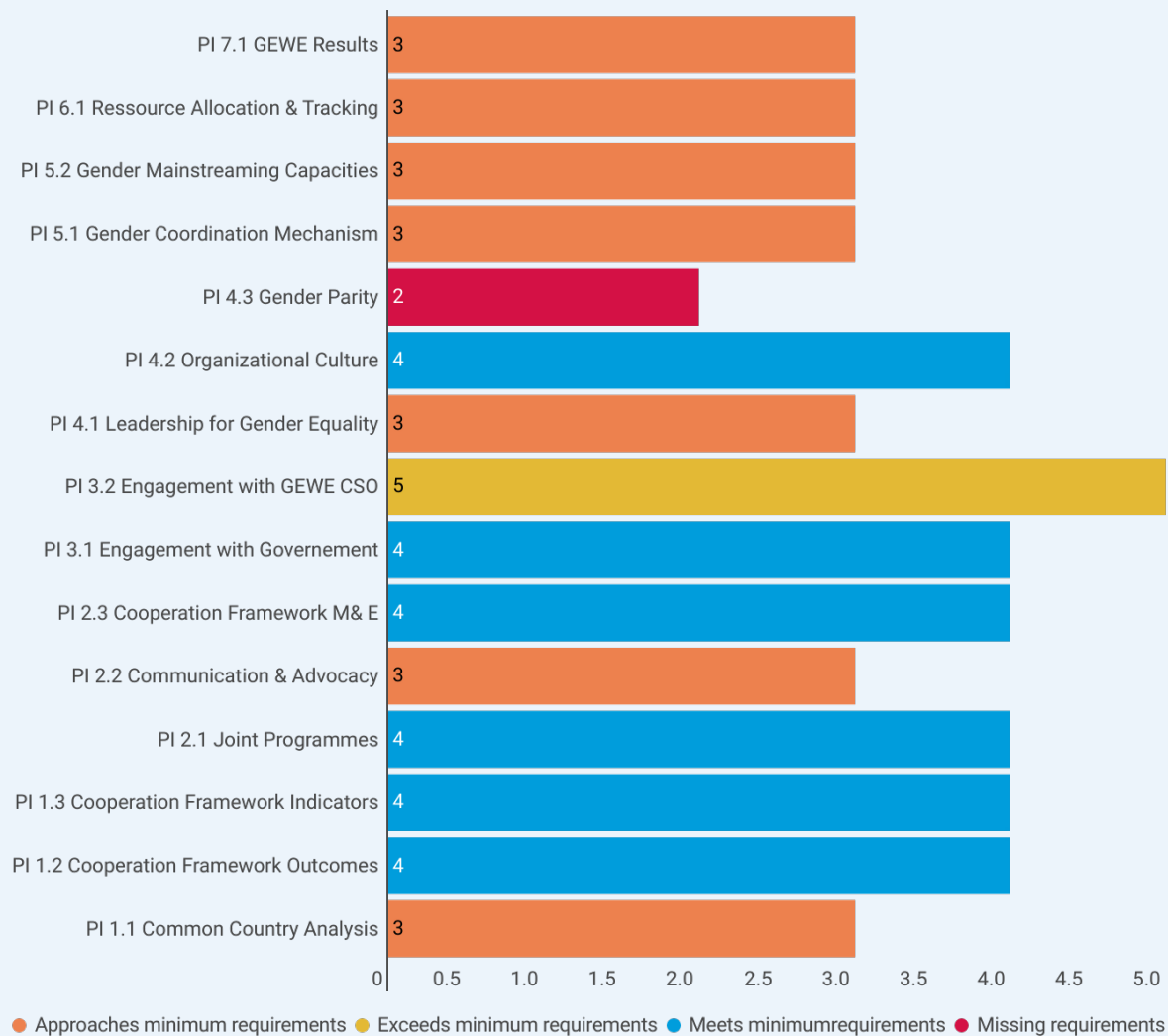
UN Women has contributed to the consideration of gender needs in the three priority areas of human capital, governance and security, and rural modernization by providing training on “Gender in the Coordination Framework”. Through a team of consultants, the Country Office, supported the process of collecting disaggregated data and gender analysis. National consultations were also held with women, in all their diversity, to feed into the drafting process. The Country Office is also the lead of the human capital group in the Niger National Development Programme. This is a strategic role to influence government policies for the next five years in this area.

Source: UN Women Strategic Dialogue on Niger

One of the explanations provided for this lack of activity was limited staffing (which may be understandable given UN Women’s limited physical presence in the country at this time), making it challenging to ensure adequate representation of UN Women in UN consultation mechanisms. This issue underscores the importance of addressing staffing constraints to enhance UN Women’s engagement and impact in gender mainstreaming efforts (see Finding 7). While UN Women holds a seat at the consultation table alongside other UN agencies, it does not currently lead any joint initiatives.

However, there are promising developments on the horizon. In 2022, UN Women signed its own agreement with the host country, signifying an increased level of autonomy and engagement. UN Women’s admission as a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a high-level humanitarian coordination forum, also in 2022, will further elevate its role and influence.

Figure 1 – Key Indicators of UN Country Team coordination on gender



Source: UN Country Team Gender Score Card (2021)

Nearly half of the Gender Score Card indicators met the minimum requirements, with one notable exception being the gender parity indicator. On a scale divided into four levels (absence, approaching minimum standards, meeting minimum standards, exceeding minimum standards), it appears that: 2 of 15 indicators do not meet the minimum required standards for gender equality and women's empowerment; 3 are close to meeting the minimum required standards; 10 meet the minimum required standards, with none of the indicators exceeding the minimum required standards.

Evaluation interviews with UN staff indicate a prevailing skepticism regarding any significant increase in the proportion of female UN personnel. Surprisingly, the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Compact remains largely unknown among UN employees. This Compact, which stands as a solemn commitment to fostering gender-sensitive recruitment opportunities, deserves greater attention within the UN system, particularly under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator.

In a positive development, UN Women in Niger has bolstered its workforce with new recruits, allowing it to contribute to the Humanitarian Country Team and various coordination mechanisms without facing concerns about staffing levels. When examining the UNSDCF, there are elements in its formulation that indicate the UN Country Team's commitment to gender equality. Notably, Outcome-2 of the UNSDCF (2023–2027) has been crafted in such a manner that it explicitly incorporates national gender budgeting mechanisms as a prerequisite for its successful implementation. Additionally, the UNSDCF (2023–2027) has devoted one of its three key outcomes to social protection, safeguarding against harmful practices and ensuring access to essential social services, which amounts to prioritizing the improvement of women's living conditions.

Another way of mainstreaming gender is joint programming. Joint programmes involving UN Women include:

- The “Spotlight Initiative” collaboratively implemented by UN Women, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- The “Programme Conjoint d'Accélération de l'Autonomisation Economique des Femmes Rurales” (Joint Programme to Accelerate the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women), implemented with the support of FAO, WFP, UN Women and IFAD.
- The “Women and Conflict Management Related to Natural Resources” programme implemented by UN Women and UNDP.
- The “Promotion of Social Cohesion Between Farmers and Herders (Both Men and Women) in the Regions of Dosso and Maradi Through a Gender and Diversity-Based Approach” programme jointly executed by FAO and UN Women.

UN Women is not the lead agency in any of the aforementioned joint programmes. However, being a participant agency does not necessarily hinder its ability to influence and promote the mainstreaming of gender considerations within joint initiatives. Nonetheless, there was limited clarity of the specific mechanisms through which UN Women contributed its technical expertise to effectively integrate gender perspectives across all UN joint programmes.

The joint programmes often entail a lengthy list of activities carried out separately by the participating agencies.²¹ As illustrated by the Spotlight Initiative, sometimes two different agencies are tasked with implementing similar activities, albeit in different locations of the country. Moreover, any of these agencies may delegate the same activity to various implementing partners, resulting in limited synergy between interventions.

²¹ This is echoed by a recent evaluation, “Most joint programs appear as a simple juxtaposition of agency activities. Their implementation is characterized by the dominance of the silo approach and parallel funding of activities. Synergies and complementarities between the activities carried out by the various agencies involved in joint programs are generally weak or nonexistent.” Niger UN Development Assistance Framework Evaluation, Office of the Resident Coordinator, Aug 2022, p.57

4.2.2 Women's Political Participation

FINDING 3

Between 2020 and 2021, UN Women played a key role in advancing women's representation in parliament and government. Regrettably, after the elections concluded, the Country Office has not undertaken any further initiatives²² pertaining to women's political participation. This raises concerns about the potential erosion of the progress made in this domain, particularly in light of ongoing resistance from political parties regarding implementation of the quota law.

Box 2

Women's representation

In 2015, women held 7 of 36 ministerial positions; by 2020, this number had fallen to 3 of 43 ministerial positions. Conversely, female representation in parliament saw a modest increase of 2 per cent in the legislative term ending in 2020. During 2011–2015, women occupied just 14 per cent of parliamentary seats (N=113). The introduction of a quota system on 7 June 2000 through Law 2000-08 for both administrative and elective roles marked a significant milestone. Its first revision in 2014 established quotas of 10 per cent for elective positions and 15 per cent for nominative positions. As of 2019, these quotas have been revised upward to 25 per cent for elective posts and 30 per cent for nominative positions.

Source : Report by the National Observatory for Gender Promotion, 2021

The progress witnessed in Niger, as highlighted in Box 2 below, in the area of Women, Political Participation, and UN Women's contribution to this progress, becomes more evident considering the cumulative efforts invested by various stakeholders over several years. A decade ago, UN Women's presence in Niger was minimal. Nonetheless, campaigns, primarily supported by UNDP and UN Women, were initiated to enhance women's representation from an initial 10 per cent to a more robust 15 per cent in both elective and nominal positions. UN Women's role in these efforts bore fruit in 2019, as the quota law was amended to reserve 25 per cent of elective seats and 15 per cent of nominative positions for women. This achievement underscores the sustained advocacy efforts of multiple gender-focused actors in collaboration with the government, spanning a period of 10–15 years.

These actors include civil society organizations, government entities and various UN agencies. While recognizing UN Women's important role, it is essential not to overlook the enduring contributions of UNDP, through its governance programme, and UNFPA, which has taken a leading role in combating gender-based violence, both of which have played crucial roles in driving recent transformative changes in Niger.

In preparation for the election period, the Country Office undertook normative actions to ensure the effective implementation of the quota law. Key collaborators in this thematic area included the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children, ONPG,²³ APAC,²⁴ CENI²⁵ and UNDP. As indicated by ONPG's analysis of the state of the law's application, the results have been positive. According to ONPG, the proportion of women candidates in legislative elections stood at 29.8 per cent (N=4727), and the representation of elected women reached 30 per cent (N=166), surpassing the mandated minimum requirement.

Regionally, this achievement was marked by the increased representation of women from Dosso (36.8 per cent [N=19]), compensating for the underrepresentation of women from Agadez (14.2 per cent [N=7]).²⁶ Additionally, more women (55 per cent of 7,446,556 potential voters) were biometrically registered for the 2020–2021 presidential elections. This outcome followed UN Women and UNDP's collaborative efforts, which included awareness-raising campaigns, discussion workshops and engagement with the government to promote women's political participation.

²² UN Women's involvement with Women's Political Participation-related activities was interrupted in 2022 after the contract of the consultant responsible for the Governance and Political Participation Programme expired.

²³ In April 2021, the Observatoire National pour la Promotion du Genre signed a partnership agreement to determine the level of application of the quota law during the 2020–2021 elections.

²⁴ African Professionals Communication Association.

²⁵ National Independent Electoral Commission.

²⁶ Report on implementation of the quota law, ONPG, 2021.

However, a persistent challenge remains in the form of limited commitment from numerous political parties when it comes to women's political representation. Sixteen political parties (of a total of 40) failed to adhere to the quota law for the allocation of regional councillor seats. Notably, five parties in 13 communes did not include any women candidates, not even as substitutes, in their lists.²⁷

Two additional components of the Country Office's Women Political Participation programme merit attention: first, collaborating with communities to facilitate the registration of women on electoral lists; and second, providing training to local elected women to equip them with the skills needed to advocate for women's interests. The importance of training cannot be overstated, as it serves as a critical means to compensate for the educational gaps experienced by many women due to social and cultural constraints that have historically excluded them from formal education.

However, the Women's Political Participation Programme had aspirations that extended beyond its relatively short duration of 15 months (2020–2021). Some of its outcomes²⁸ required sustained efforts both before and after elections. Regrettably, certain elements of the Strategic Framework, designed for the post-election period, had not yet been implemented. These include for instance, the envisioned training on gender-responsive planning and budgeting (Output 1.1.2); building capacity for women in leadership roles and functions (Outputs 1.1.5, 1.1.6); and preparing women to compete for political and leadership positions (Output 1.1.7). Similarly, despite dedicating an entire indicator²⁹ to the creation of a compendium highlighting the talented women of Niger, such a document remains pending.

Box 3

National Gender Policy from 2008 to 2017

Several changes were introduced to the National Gender Policy as a result of increased political commitment from the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children, alongside UN Women's advocacy:

Enhanced emphasis on gender equity: A noticeable contrast exists between the 2008 Gender Policy and its revised 2017 version, which benefitted from UN Women's technical and financial support. While the earlier iteration of the policy recognized the overarching principle of "equitable participation of men and women in the management of power," it did not effectively translate this principle into its stated objectives. In contrast, the 2017 revision explicitly articulates its second strategic component, emphasizing the empowerment of key stakeholders with a focus on promoting women's leadership and political engagement. While an update is anticipated, the 2017 National Gender Policy currently serves as the primary reference document for the government and all stakeholders.

Clearer commitment to women's political participation: The 2017 version of the policy takes a more direct approach to address the question of women's political representation. Unlike the 2008 version, which vaguely mentioned the effective application of quota laws in its strategic orientation framework, the 2017 version directly engages with political parties on this issue. This strategic shift aims to channel efforts towards critical areas where substantial progress is still needed in advancing women's political representation.

These changes reflect a concerted effort to align the National Gender Policy with the evolving landscape of gender equality and to empower women to play a more significant role in the political sphere.

Source: Comparative analysis by Evaluation Team of the 2008 Gender Policy and its revised 2017 version

²⁷ The parties are RDR Tchanji, RDP Jama'a, PDP Annour, CPR Ingantchi and RANAA.

²⁸ Outcome 2: Strengthen women's technical capacity to engage in leadership; Outcome 3: Ensure that women are registered to vote and that data on voter registration and turnout on election day is available and disaggregated by gender.

²⁹ Indicator 1.2.1A

4.2.3 Women's Economic Empowerment

FINDING 4

Despite four years of interventions aimed at Women's Economic Empowerment, there is insufficient evidence to confirm that rural women, who received support from UN Women in collaboration with other entities, have achieved sustained improvements to their income. However, with the recent acquisition of funding through a renewed multi-year agreement, the Country Office now has the opportunity to build upon the intermediate results achieved in Niger and work towards realizing tangible outcomes.

Regional influence in Women's Economic Empowerment

Concern about the detrimental impacts of climate change is evident through what was formerly referred to as a "flagship programme," recognized in the West and Central Africa region as Agriculture Femmes et Développement Durable (Agrifed).³⁰ In concert with five other countries in the West and Central Africa region, the Niger Country Office executed two programmes with a shared emphasis on bolstering agricultural resilience in the face of climate change. These initiatives included the "Joint Programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment" and the initiative to "Accelerate the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Niger." Both initiatives were executed in partnership with the NGO DIKO under formal agreements.

Climate-resilient agriculture programmes in Niger have a dual objective: to combine programmatic action with policy advocacy and reform efforts aimed at dismantling the structural barriers that hinder women's participation in agricultural value chains. These programmes prioritize enhancing women's access to essential resources, including land, financial support, market opportunities, skills and climate-resilient technology. Furthermore, they seek to bolster community resilience, and eliminate bottlenecks hindering women's involvement in rural value chains while minimizing risks, all within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To alleviate poverty among women and their families, these programmes incorporate community organization and capacity-building components designed to enhance agricultural productivity and promote the development of value-added products suitable for market consumption.

Local expertise plays a pivotal role in selecting climate-resilient seeds and enhancing irrigation methods, such as the implementation of the "drop-to-drop" system.

The practice of organizing women farmer groups into associations is a common approach among the five countries in the region implementing climate-resilient agriculture programmes. In Niger, rural women were mobilized to establish cooperatives and associations referred to as "Dimitra Clubs".³¹ The clubs were said to have potential benefits in several areas, for example they can help raise awareness about women's rights and offer learning opportunities that could contribute to improving the negotiating capabilities of women farmers. According to reports, several hundred farmer groups have benefitted from organizational capacity-building sessions.³² The range of skills covered during these sessions included awareness of land rights, gaining insights into market requirements about value added to agricultural products and financial literacy (including savings and accounting).

Observations from field visits

During an evaluation field visit to Ouallam, the evaluation team observed that members of the farmer groups utilize the equipment supplied through the Joint Programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment to extract groundnut oil, while repurposing the residual byproducts to feed their livestock.

Notably, the team witnessed how the introduction of donkey-drawn carts significantly alleviated the burden of fetching water manually. Furthermore, these carts are used to transport pregnant women to local health centres. This was said to contribute to a reduction in maternal mortality rates and an increase in the number of births officially registered with the local administration.

³⁰ Women's Empowerment in Climate-Resilient Agriculture Value Chains.

³¹ FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP. Good Practices on Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment, 2022

³² Joint Programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment annual progress report 2020 for a total of 469 women's agricultural producer groups (or GPAs): 141 in Dosso, 127 in Djiratawa and 201 in Guidan Amumun.

Box 4

Village savings and loans mechanisms

According to the Joint Programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment Evaluation Report (May 2021), agricultural income is managed and utilized through a system known as the Village Savings and Loans Association. Within this system, funds are made available through a revolving mechanism, distributed to women and young beneficiaries within their respective groups, organized in cycles. The beneficiaries of the preceding phase bear the responsibility of repaying the funds they received at regular intervals, following agreed-upon mechanisms among all stakeholders. Once a cycle concludes, fresh beneficiaries gain access to the funds, perpetuating this process. To ensure transparency, a village committee is established to monitor the entire process.

In one case, it was reported that 100 metal caisses and 2,125 savings books were made available to eight farmers groups spanning two communes around Zinder. A cash box facilitates contributions and savings by association members. During group meetings, or upon completing training courses, members reportedly make modest contributions. Over time, these contributions purportedly add up, enabling the purchase of livestock, such as sheep, valued between 20,000 FCFA to 25,000 FCFA. The designated member then purportedly nurtures and fattens the sheep before selling it. From the resulting profit, the creditor should purportedly earn 50 percent, with the remaining portion contributing to the common cash box. Remarkably, "today, there are only two women in my village who do not own their own sheep." This arrangement is believed to likely improve the living conditions of all involved, if the security context remains stable.

An estimated 4,650 rural women in Niger purportedly had the opportunity to access these revolving funds, as per the information presented in the Joint Programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment Evaluation Report from May 2021. Before the inception of this revolving approach, it is reported that 50 members of the governing bodies, inclusive of 30 women members in each commune, purportedly underwent capacity-building sessions focused on management and entrepreneurial support. This occurred within the challenging backdrop of insecurity and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it is claimed that an additional 100 women received support through the Village Loan and Saving Association approach, which purportedly bolstered their income-generating activities. As a direct result, there is reported to be a notable 20 percent surge in the sales of agricultural products.

The savings and loan mechanisms described above under the Joint Programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment programme have also permeated into peace and security initiatives and efforts to mitigate emigration. A similar "revolving mechanism" was deployed in these initiatives to make funds accessible to group members, following a structured approach. Under this system, a monitoring committee facilitates the distribution of funds to group members in a rotational manner, even when beneficiaries from the prior phase are obligated to periodically repay the funds they have received. This cyclical process is then renewed with the inclusion of new beneficiaries, perpetuating the benefits of the initiative.

Following extensive group discussions, especially on the overarching framework of these interventions, it appears that change is driven by a two-stage intervention model. Initially, the focal point for subsequent initiatives lies within organized groups of women producers, also referred to as "Dimitra Clubs." These clubs not only serve as entry points but also facilitate dialogue and reflection between women and men. Subsequently, the insights garnered and the climate-adapted agricultural technologies adopted are gradually disseminated through these Dimitra Clubs.

During the evaluation team's field visit to Kantché, testimonials were gathered from participants, expressing their satisfaction with the outcomes of the training they received in composting and the use of organic pesticides. State service representatives noted that 500 women farmers received comprehensive training about peanut processing, product marketing, fertilizer usage and enhancements to irrigation systems. It was mentioned that women who received support for their economic activities, now possess the means to provide for their families; contribute to household expenses; and have enhanced their roles within their families.

However, the evaluation team was unable to independently verify these optimistic outcomes. Women beneficiaries in Kantché revealed that, as of the time of the visit, the activities had not yet yielded concrete economic results. Despite their diligent work, the organization they belong to meets twice a week to process groundnuts into oil, peanut butter

and cookies, but this has not translated into substantial individual income. Profits are reinvested to expand production, and the group members enjoy communal lunches during their bi-weekly working sessions. Furthermore, they clarified that training in processing techniques for tomatoes, onions and moringa was concentrated on just two individuals within the group, who were entrusted with the responsibility of transferring these skills to their fellow members. At the time of the visit, the project had already been closed and, until then, access to processing tools and equipment had been limited.

Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that through climate change resilience interventions, the Country Office has initiated preliminary steps toward establishing a stable and tangible income source for rural women. These steps include:

- Introducing climate-resilient farming practices, innovative equipment and improved seeds to enhance agricultural productivity and income.
- Imparting value-addition techniques for processing agricultural products to tap into market opportunities.
- Promoting community or bank savings practices.
- Raising awareness about land ownership rights and how to exercise these rights.
- Encouraging the use of improved stoves that consume 50 percent less energy, reducing wood consumption.

With the Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment extended for five years, the Country Office is advancing towards its goal of fostering economic empowerment for women.

For this to happen, it is imperative that an assessment is conducted of the effectiveness of previous training programmes provided to women farmers' organizations.

4.2.3 Eliminating violence against women

FINDING 5

UN Women's contribution to the elimination of violence against women in Niger mainly took place through its participation in the Spotlight Initiative, with some of its intended outcomes demanding substantial time and effort for full realization. However, to enhance the effectiveness of their contributions, it is imperative that UN agencies operate with greater synergy, as their current approach often results in isolated delivery, akin to working in silos.

UN Women's contribution to the elimination of gender-based violence in Niger is mainly channelled through the collaborative Spotlight joint programme. This initiative involves cooperation with UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, which has been traditionally responsible for gender-based violence issues within the UN system in Niger. The programme focuses on a network of 300 villages selected on the basis of their high incidence of gender-based violence, spanning across the regions of Maradi, Tahwa, Tilaberi and Zinder.

Several joint result pillars aim to influence national legal and policy frameworks for the eradication of violence against women. These encompass efforts to strengthen laws for the protection of girls and enhance women's representation (Pillars 1 and 2); norms challenging the perpetration of gender-based violence (Pillar 3); and improve statistical standards for gauging the extent of gender-based violence (Pillar 5).

Progress has been gradual

Progress towards achieving the Spotlight Initiative's intended outcomes has been gradual, with only one third of these outcomes reported as realized since the initiative was launched in 2019.³³ Under Pillar 1, Niger has taken significant steps by issuing Legal Government Orders that are likely to facilitate the protection of women rights and the provision of health and reproductive services. In the case of Pillar 4, the establishment of a functional multi-purpose facility managed by UNFPA is an achievement. The remaining outcomes of the Spotlight Initiative report predominantly process-related activities, and their attainment may require a considerable investment of time and effort to manifest tangible results, especially those positioned at a more strategic level. For instance, efforts to "establish a framework for consultations on how to coordinate efforts to address gender-based violence and comprehensively address harmful practices" and

to "develop a technical note to initiate a process that aims to institutionalize gender-sensitive planning and budgeting."³⁴

While these activities are pivotal for creating a conducive environment for combating violence against women and harmful practices, their direct impact on reducing, let alone eliminating, violence against women within a relatively short time frame of 5–10 years may not be immediately evident. The establishment of a coordination framework for consultations signifies the commitment to bringing together various stakeholders to collaboratively address gender-based violence and harmful practices. However, the influence of such a framework on actual reduction of violence may be indirect and long-term, i.e. it sets the stage for improved cooperation, information sharing and alignment of efforts. Similarly, the development of a technical note to institutionalize gender-sensitive planning and budgeting may not yield immediate results in terms of violence reduction, but it lays the groundwork for incorporating gender considerations into planning and budgeting processes.

In a context where addressing violence against women is a complex and multifaceted challenge, the Spotlight Initiative may not produce rapid results. It was designed to address long-term structural changes that are required for the elimination of violence against women in Niger.

Implementing in silos

One integral aspect of the Spotlight Initiative's Pillar 4 is related to the establishment of intervention sites that facilitate multiple types of services to survivors of violence against women. Only one such centre, managed by UNFPA in the Tilaberi region, is currently operational. The centres in Tahwa and Maradi were entrusted by UN Women to the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children but have yet to become operational.

³³ See Annex 12: The table of planned results outlines six pillars with reported results at Annex 13.

³⁴ Both activities are under Pillar 2 of the Spotlight Initiative Programme Document: "National and regional systems and institutions are empowered to plan, finance and implement multi-sectoral programmes to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls and harmful practices, including through the implementation of the SDGs".

The decision to delegate management of these centres to the ministry aligns with the goal of gradually transitioning them to government control, mirroring UN Women's successful experience with the Zinder multimedia centre, overseen by the Government Division for the Advancement of Women. During the evaluation team's visit, the Zinder centre was found to be fully functional, with young female students participating in digital literacy training as part of a social mobilization initiative against gender-based violence.

Interestingly, UNFPA's practice of operating its centre through an NGO has yielded a more functional centre. This approach, though initially outside the government's purview, helped ensure that the centre closely aligns with the Spotlight Initiative's guidelines. According to UNFPA, an NGO is more likely to lend itself to quality requirements. However, working with an NGO requires a coordinated exit strategy involving local government.

Beyond the choice of implementing partners, it's crucial to highlight disparities in the approach and management mechanisms among UN agencies,³⁵ even within the framework of a joint programme such as the Spotlight Initiative. As observed by the evaluation team, the management of multi-purpose centres, under the purview of UN Women and UNFPA, remains compartmentalized, hindering the establishment of meaningful synergies between UN entities involved in the programme.

In light of the suspension of funding from the European Union³⁶, the realization of the second edition of the Spotlight Initiative is now at risk. Increased level of collaboration among UN agencies is essential, particularly in the context of humanitarian and security crises, to effectively address and combat violence against women. The persistent instability in the country is likely to jeopardize the physical well-being and livelihoods of women, exacerbating the prevalence of gender-based violence beyond that experienced during times of peace.

4.2.4 Women, peace and security

FINDING 6

While there is routine documentation of the implementation of various Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) initiatives in Niger, including figures on female trainees and female conflict mediators, their outcomes for sustained cohesion and peace within and among communities remains uncertain and, if discernible at all, is primarily supported by anecdotal evidence.

Recognizing that access to water and arable land is a key factor of conflict, in collaboration with key UN agencies, UN Women concentrated its efforts on mitigating conflicts³⁷ related to these vital resources by supporting settlement mechanisms that are community-based, non-judiciary and inclusive of women.

The evaluation team visited Maradi, where the joint FAO-UNICEF project titled "Promoting Social Cohesion Between Farmers and Herders (both men and women)" is under way. At the grassroots level in the four communes where the project operates, dedicated land commissions have been established as part of the broader effort to foster social cohesion between farmers and livestock breeders. These land commissions are expected to address the unique challenges faced by herders, who require adequate space for grazing their livestock without encroaching on agricultural lands.

To facilitate this, the commissions have designated corridors adjacent to the agricultural fields, allowing animals to pasture without endangering crops. Additionally, they have instituted regulations governing the circulation of herds, limiting both the space and time for their movement. Any violations of these regulations are subject to fines, with land commissions having the authority to issue land deeds.

Local conflict management is said to have demonstrated increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness when compared to standard legal procedures. It is suggested that this approach notably has the potential to prevent land disputes and may contribute to the cohesion and economic well-being of rural communities.

³⁵ Cfr. analysis (at Finding 2 of this evaluation report) of joint programme coordination, along with a quote from the UN Development Assistance Framework evaluation for further context.

³⁶ Following the coup of July 2023 (described at Footnote 2), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) announced several sanctions on Niger until the latter returns to constitutional order. The EU also [suspended development and military cooperation](#) with the country. For this reason, no funding for the next edition of Spotlight Initiative (Niger) will be disbursed by EU.

³⁷ UN Women's agenda for Women, Peace and Security operates within the framework of Niger's Action Plan of Resolution 1325 (2020-2024) to carry out interventions targeting communities affected by conflict.

UN Women is actively advocating for an increase in the representation of women within these land commissions. The aim is to elevate the number of female commission members from the current two to four. This effort aligns with the broader mission of enhancing gender inclusivity and empowerment within local governance structures, ensuring that women's voices and perspectives are fully integrated into the decision-making processes that impact their communities.

The evaluation noted that there hasn't been a systematic effort to quantify the success of interventions such as that presented in the testimony. Currently, the available evidence primarily operates at the output level, where metrics can be tracked, such as the number of training courses, consultations and dialogues organized by the Country Office within its peace and security portfolio. Details such as the number of trainees and participants can be found in reports or gathered through interviews. For instance, as part of the programme on social cohesion between agriculturalists and pastoralists, it was reported that the number of fights has dramatically decreased "due to the combined efforts of various community structures, including 362 Dimitra Clubs, 60 land committees, and 600 women mediators, have contributed to the resolution of more than 483 community conflicts related to access and management of natural resources."³⁸ What is clearly known is the number of community mediators, men and women, trained in conflict management and reconciliation

awareness, with a particular focus on the border regions most impacted by the Sahel crises. It remains challenging for the evaluation to establish a lasting outcomes resulting from various dialogues and capacity-building sessions on peace and security, especially when considering the disruptive influence of armed rebel groups.

Box 5

Livelihood support

Credit unions

"These credit unions were widely used in another UN Women project targeting the communes of Abalak and Tchintabaraden in the Tahwa region. It is in these areas that the departure and return routes for internal and external displacements from Niger converge. Providing 51 groups with economic kits comprising sheep kits, leather goods, basketry and sewing kits is one way of encouraging local people to stay. According to the monitoring team sent by the Country Office, only one group in Droum received support, consisting of two sewing machines, 10 scissors, 2 rolls of fabric, 1 tin of machine oil, thread and needles. In handicrafts, two groups were supported with thirty skins, 10 scissors, 4 tins of colours and thread, each per village, and two weaving groups (maquenorie) received thread and palm doum leaves, each per village."

Source: Excerpt from evaluation report of "Promouvoir et protéger les droits des femmes Tahoua, au Niger"

MEDIATION STORY FROM THE FIELD (rural commune of Fabidji, Dosso region)

The evaluation team heard about a story that unfolded in a rural area known as Fabidji in the Dosso region of Niger. In that place, farmers heavily rely on their fields for their livelihoods, and any harm to their crops can lead to serious problems. It was said that one night, in complete darkness, a wandering herder with his 31 cows and 7 goats caused significant damage by trampling the field belonging to a farmer and consuming the millet within.

It was reported that the villagers, realizing they couldn't allow the group of cows and goats to roam freely after causing chaos, decided to gather them and keep them within the community until their owner came forward. Interestingly, in this area, there's a rule: if this kind of damage happens at night, the fine is 10,000 francs CFA for each animal, but if it occurs during the day, it's only half that amount.

According to the information we received, when the owner of the cattle heard about the trouble he was in, he got upset and started making threats. Word quickly spread, and people realized it was time to mediate and find a peaceful solution. It was reported that the mediators, serving as peacemakers in the community, stepped in before things got worse. Initially, they managed to lower the fine to 200,000 francs, and with some adept negotiation, the women managed to exempt the goats and an ox from trouble. It was mentioned that it took a lot of patience to make both parties see reason.

As per what we were told, the person responsible for the damage could only come up with 50,000 francs. The mediators reportedly used that money to convince the other person that accidents can happen to anyone. The person who owned the livestock supposedly promised that he would ensure this kind of mess didn't happen again.

Thanks to the mediators, as the story goes, the wise people of Village-VIII forgave and forgot. They reportedly shook hands, agreed to the terms, and moved on. It was said that this was a good outcome because who knows what would have happened if they hadn't found a solution? According to what we were told, sometimes, it's the people who step in between conflicts and bring everyone together who keep the peace in these areas. And that is how problems are said to be solved around here.

³⁸ «Proposal-1 - PBF12696 - 113233»: Promotion de la cohésion sociale entre agriculteurs et éleveurs (hommes et femmes) dans les régions de Dosso et Maradi à travers une approche basée sur le genre et la diversité

Table 2 – Contributing factors to change as per reconstructed theory of change

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	
Favourable commitment of institutions and political parties	The evaluation has highlighted the commitment from government institutions to address gender disparities in political representation through changes in laws and regulations. The amendment of the quota law to reserve seats for women is a clear example of such commitment. However, some political parties demonstrated resistance to the emergence of female candidates.
General acceptance of women's leadership	The evaluation has mentioned positive developments in women's political participation, with the proportion of women candidates and elected women exceeding the mandated minimum requirement. This suggests a degree of general acceptance of women's leadership in political roles as a factor of success.
Capacity to produce gender data	A large-scale study was conducted by the National Observatory for Gender Promotion in 266 communes and 8 regions. It analysed the level of implementation of the quota law. This utilization of gender-related data has informed awareness-raising campaigns, workshops and engagement with the government to increase women's representation.
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	
Cooperation of local authorities	The evaluation noted a collaborative effort involving local authorities in Niger to support women's economic empowerment. Municipal leaders participated in key decisions regarding the execution of agricultural initiatives within their localities. As an illustration, in the Women and Conflict Management Project, leaders of Ouallam sector, encompassing both political and religious figures, played important roles in the decisions made both prior to and during project implementation. Their active involvement has been a contributing factor by promoting a sense of responsibility for the results achieved in the project.
Capacities of rural women's cooperatives	The role of rural women's cooperatives (referred to as "Dimitra Clubs") in enhancing women's economic empowerment has been highlighted. These cooperatives serve as a platform for women to empower other women with the necessary skills and knowledge on various aspects, including agricultural productivity, market awareness, financial literacy, learning about land rights and enhancing organizational skills for rural women's groups. The evaluation has emphasized the need for continued evaluation of training programmes to ensure sustained economic empowerment.
ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	
Progressive evolution of social norms against gender-based violence	While commendable efforts were made under Pillar 3 of the Spotlight Initiative to promote gender-equitable social norms, attitudes and behavioral change both at the community and individual level, including the organization of campaigns targeting 40,000 people to foster positive behaviour against gender-based violence and the active engagement of religious leaders in challenging and transforming traditional norms, it is important to acknowledge that progress in changing these deeply ingrained norms and cultural perceptions of gender relations has been slow. Work in this area persists with the assumption that if education is maintained over time, the gradual pace of change may result in better dispositions towards gender equality.
Political will against gender-based violence	The introduction of government decrees to safeguard the rights and well-being of young girls and establish authorized contraceptive methods reflects a commitment to aligning Niger's legal and policy framework with international human rights standards regarding violence against women and girls. Steps were taken by the Government of Niger, including the issuance of laws to protect women's rights and provide health and reproductive services. This indicates a degree of political will to address gender-based violence.
WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY	
Willingness of authorities to include women in peace and security mechanisms	By instituting the minimum female membership in land commissions at the grassroots level, the government has demonstrated its commitment to the gender inclusiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms. These commissions were adopted as a quick and cost-effective alternative for managing conflicts related to resource use, particularly between farmers and livestock breeders.

Source: Evaluation team's analysis (prepared by the evaluation team on the basis of evidence collected and analyzed)

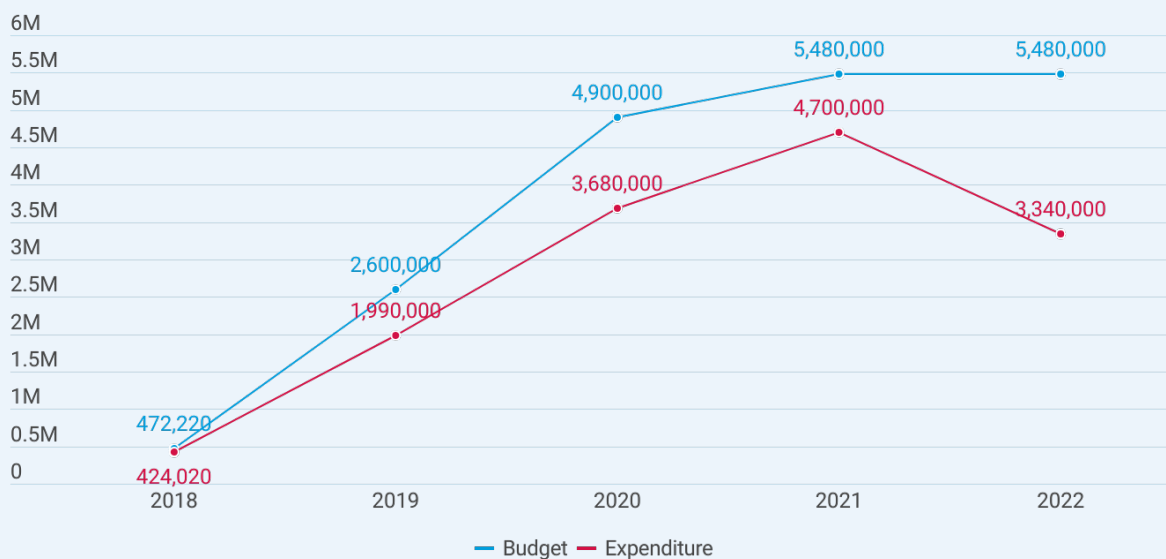
4.3 Efficiency

To what extent do UN Women’s human resources (both in size and capacity) support effective implementation?
Is the Country Office’s choice of implementing partners suitable to achieve its mandate for women?

In 2018, three donors contributed an average of US\$ 129,431 to the Country Office’s “Non-Core” funds. However, by 2021, the number of donors had multiplied by more than four, resulting in a total contribution that exceeded 13 times the amount in 2018. Throughout the 2018–2022 period, the Country Office maintained an average expenditure rate³⁹ of 77 per cent. These figures shed some light on the challenges faced by the Country Office and its partners in terms of their capacity to utilize the funds mobilized. Interestingly, the drop in the expenditure rate coincided with the surge in available resources. During this period, the Country Office significantly expanded its team, growing from six members in 2018 to a staff of 25 by 2022.

Even though it holds the status of a Country Office, UN Women Niger receives administrative and financial assistance from the Regional Office. Since 2020, UN Head of Operations and a Procurement Officer have overseen operational functions (finance, human resources management, logistics, procurement, etc.) in Niger. The country’s status is currently transitioning from a “Programme Presence” to that of a “Country Office.”

Figure 2 – Evolution of annual expense rate (US\$)



³⁹ The term “delivery rate” is preferred to “expenditure rate” by Operations Services, to avoid confusion with the level of disbursements. The delivery rate means the proportion of available funds that have not been disbursed or, if disbursed, have not yet recorded proof of use (or “justification” by means of a form known as the “Face Form” which traces the history of authorization and confirmation of expenditure).

4.3.1 Significant resource mobilization

FINDING 6

The Country Office has achieved considerable success in mobilizing resources, resulting in an expansion of its workforce sixfold over the past four years. This facilitated its support of gender mainstreaming in national actions and its presence in UN coordination mechanisms. However, increased expectations stemming from this growth have created a workload surplus constraining the time required for staff onboarding and training. Furthermore, the instability inherent in employment contracts has the potential to adversely impact staff retention.

Country Office staffing at UN Women Niger has undergone significant growth, increasing from just four personnel in 2018 to 25 by the end of 2022. Within the Country Office, currently four individuals have fixed-term contracts (comprising two international and two national staff members) and an additional 21 contract holders are classified as “non-staff” (consisting of 19 Service Contracts and two Special Service Agreements). In 2018, UN Women’s presence in Niger was limited to a “Programme Presence,” including a Programme Coordinator (P4, TA), two Programme Officers (SB3), a Finance Assistant (G5, SC), two drivers (G2, SC), and consultants hired for assignments spanning three to six months. Some responsibilities were delegated to the Regional Office during this period. Despite the departure of two Programme Specialists, the Country Office has effectively filled numerous vacant positions, reflecting its commitment to maintaining a robust and capable team.

Table 3. UN Women Niger workforce over the past 4 years

YEAR	STAFF	NON-STAFF	TOTAL
2018	1	3	4
2022	5	19	24
2023	4	21	25

Source: Data from HR unit as compiled by the evaluation team

The expansion of staff capacity in the Country Office has enabled it to assume leadership within UN coordination mechanisms on gender and address various operational challenges, including programme monitoring. The introduction of new programme management specialists has filled the gaps in gender coordination efforts, reinvigorating the Gender Theme Group, and amplifying UN Women’s presence in UN and national government consultation mechanisms.

In 2021, the recruitment of a Head of Operations, responsible for both Niger and the Central African Republic, apparently streamlined operational processes. The appointment of a Knowledge Management Officer has opened up the possibility of preserving institutional memory.

Notably, Niger is one of only two countries to have recruited a Chief Economist, tasked with advancing normative aspects of the Women’s Economic Empowerment portfolio.

However, staff turnover is a predictable challenge due to the nature of “non-staff” contractual arrangements. A considerable 80 per cent of staff salaries rely on ‘Non-Core’ funds, contingent upon donor responses to resource mobilization efforts. During the evaluation visit, a prevailing sense of anxiety was observed within the Country Office, driven by both ongoing and imminent contract expirations, as well as the relocation of the Country Representative to another Country Office. For instance, the Economic Empowerment unit experienced a loss of three personnel of a total of six. Additionally, the role associated with Governance and Women’s Political Participation, while active during the 2020 elections, could not be sustained beyond February 2022, remaining vacant until August 2022. During this period, the Women’s Political Participation portfolio was placed under the responsibility of a programme manager dedicated to the Women, Peace and Security impact area, which in turn increased the workload in this impact area. As the position had not yet been filled at the time of evaluation, this double role will increase the risk of stress.

Of the Country Office personnel, only five are considered staff members, who are entitled to various social benefits such as retirement pensions, extended annual leave and employer-backed health insurance schemes. The remaining 19 personnel operate on short-term “service contracts,” and four are UN volunteers. Under these conditions, retaining personnel not classified as staff members will prove challenging.

Another factor contributing to the mounting pressure experienced by UN Women’s workforce is the increased visibility of UN Women, which, in turn, has raised expectations both in terms of UN gender coordination and within the national gender activism landscape. As pointed out by a member of the personnel, the Office was consistently requested for input, either by other UN agencies, headquarters, or the Regional Office. However, they pointed out that their involvement in numerous tasks was becoming overwhelming.

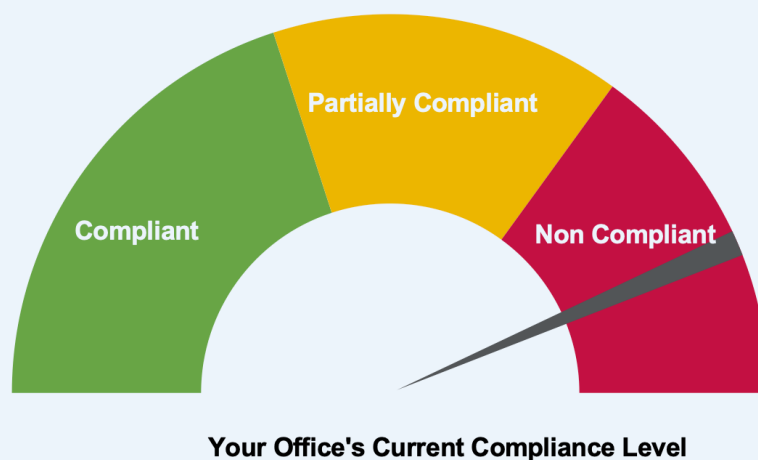
It was expressed that the Country Office lacked the capacity to handle all the responsibilities. According to the information shared, the workload had increased significantly, and they found it challenging to allocate time for training. They even mentioned that, at times, basic staff orientation had to be postponed due to the rapid pace of recruitment and the heavy workload. The evaluation team had the opportunity to confirm the matter in a focused group discussion.

Moreover, online refresher training or induction processes take longer to complete due to connectivity challenges and power outages. In this respect, the Country Office has had to rely on the support of the Regional Office because it lacks specialized staff in information and communication technologies.

Despite the low level of compliance with UN Women's IT standards, as shown in Figure 3, progress must be acknowledged in this area. In early 2022, the Country Office's completion rate for the Information Security Awareness online course stood at 60 per cent.⁴⁰ However, according to the Regional IT Focal Point, this rate has surged to 95 per cent in 2023. Similarly, the Country Office's compliance rate with IT security standards increased from 18 per cent in June 2020 to 63 per cent in September 2022. Nevertheless, while this rate of completion remains below 80 per cent, the Country Office's level of IT compliance with UN Women's security standards will still be considered insufficient.

Figure 3 – Level of compliance with UN Women's information technology standards

	Overall	Meeting	Comm	Inventory	Special account	Office Network	PC	Software	Security	User
Current	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	56%	25%	62%
Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



Source: Information systems and telecommunication report, Quarter 1, 2021

⁴⁰ Infosec compliance tracking report issued by UN Women's Information Systems and Telecommunications in March 2022.

4.4 Sustainability

To what extent has partner capacity been developed to ensure the sustainability of efforts and benefits? What local accountability and monitoring systems have been put in place to support continuity?

FINDING 8

Generally, the projects executed by the Country Office exhibit a series of commendable practices that promote the enduring preservation of lessons and accomplishments. However, a noteworthy area for improvement is the need to enhance the capacities of the communities being served, empowering them to assume greater responsibility for the infrastructure, facilities and equipment provided to them.

Good practices

Based on the evaluation team's field observations, the sustainability of UN Women's work in Niger is evident through several notable good practices:

- **Participatory and inclusive planning:** A participatory, inclusive, and rights-based approach has characterized strategic planning processes supported by UN Women. Civil society organizations took part in the development of the Ministry for Gender Promotion's gender strategic plan with UN Women's support. Additionally, government stakeholders were engaged during the implementation of agricultural projects within their communities. For example, in the Women and Conflict Management Project,⁴¹ the Wallam community's municipal authorities, including political and religious leaders, were involved in key decisions before and during project implementation. This approach fosters ownership of project outcomes.
- **Support for women farmer cooperatives:** It was reported⁴² that four Communal Networks comprising 120 Dimitra Clubs with a total of 3,600 members had been established since 2018, the majority being women and girls. Communities use Dimitra Clubs as platforms for mutual learning on women's rights and sustainable solidarity using village saving schemes. An evaluation⁴³ indicated that the clubs have played a catalytic role in challenging harmful cultural practices, enhancing social cohesion and promoting a communal vision of economic empowerment. As such, they represent a lasting achievement for women as they are likely to remain after the life cycle of the projects that created them.

- **Solidarity-based savings and credit mechanisms:** UN Women supported the introduction of solidarity-based savings and credit mechanisms in rural areas. These mechanisms facilitated the circulation of funds among the 4,650 members of village credit and savings associations as part of an agricultural programme.⁴⁴ This has enabled members to access funds for investments and family needs. Importantly, these savings practices are expected to remain ingrained within the communities even beyond the project's life cycle.
- **Continuity of funding:** Sustainability is also influenced by the continuity of funding. Following the global evaluation of the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment, one of the recommendations was to secure multi-year funding. In line with this, Niger, unlike Liberia, has been granted a second edition of the Joint Programme for the period 2022–2027. This extension offers an opportunity to reinforce the sustainability of achievements from the previous phase and apply valuable lessons learned from the evaluation process.

Limits of sustainability

Whether in women's economic empowerment projects or the Spotlight Initiative joint programme, challenges have emerged in maintaining the facilities provided to local authorities. For instance, the "Maison de la femme," a centre managed by the local government in Maradi, underwent renovation and received computer equipment from UN Women in 2019. However, since its reopening, only two training sessions have taken place (in 2020 and 2021), and electrical issues have caused computer malfunctions. Due to limited resources, some of the equipment remains unrepaired, rendering the centre less functional.

⁴¹ *Projet Femmes et gestion des conflits liés aux ressources naturelles*, ATLAS ID: 00119458

⁴² FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP. *Good Practices on Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment*, 2022, p.7

⁴³ FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP. *End-term Evaluation of the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women*, 2021, pp.36, 170

⁴⁴ UN Women Regional Office for West and Central Africa, *Regional Thematic Evaluation on Women Economic Empowerment*, 2023, p.33

During the evaluation team's visit to one of the Spotlight Initiative-funded holistic centres dedicated to assisting victims of violence with various services (medical, psychological, legal, etc.), it was evident that UN Women had refurbished and furnished the centre before handing it over to the municipality in October 2021. During the field mission, the centre's equipment, including furniture, kitchen facilities, air conditioning and technological devices such as computers, was functional. However, the centre had limited users due to the pending allocation of government health and administrative staff. The centre's caretakers highlighted significant challenges related to water and electricity supply for its operation. Although electricity was available at the time of the evaluation team's visit, there was no water in the hygiene facilities.

The team identified instances where an explicit exit strategy should have been developed. In Zinder and Maradi, for instance, despite the recognized achievements of the Rural Women's Economic Empowerment agricultural project, certain work equipment provided to communities was at a standstill. Sustainability was compromised due to the lack of maintenance and the remote location of spare parts shops, hindering the partial agriculture mechanization process. Additionally, limited income from farming made it impossible for communities to replace faulty parts. This highlights the need to establish or strengthen local accountability and monitoring systems.

4.5 Gender equality and human rights

Was the Strategic Note implemented in accordance with the principles of inclusion/non-discrimination? To what extent did the country programme contribute to changing power dynamics in relations between different groups?

UN Women's interventions in Niger are guided by principles of gender equality and women's empowerment, as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW. The expert committee of the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴⁵ has also provided guidance on ensuring the rights of persons living with disabilities. In addressing the evaluation question on gender equality and human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women interventions are examined through the lens of Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality.⁴⁶ The broad notion of "women" in the phrase "women's empowerment" can be broken down using intersectionality to understand the specific categories or groups of women that may be overlooked.

The evaluation's task is to determine whether women in the country have been treated as a homogenous group or if differences among them based on physical conditions (disabled or not), income (rich or poor, business owners or unemployed), geographic location (urban or rural), and cultural or ethnic diversity have been taken into account. This approach allows the evaluation to assess whether the leave no one behind principle has been adequately integrated into programme design and implementation. By exploring the intersecting dimensions of their identity-based exclusion,⁴⁷ the evaluation hopes to uncover any programme coverage gaps and determine if the particular needs of women resulting from these intersections have been addressed.

⁴⁵ Cfr. UN Women (2017): Making the SDGs Count for Women with Disabilities. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/6/issue-brief-making-the-sdgs-count-for-women-and-girls-with-disabilities>. And also Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016): General Comment No. 3 on Women and Girls with Disabilities. CRPD/C/GC/3. <https://undocs.org/en/CRPD/C/GC/3>.

⁴⁶ The inclusion of women from underprivileged groups in a development programme can be understood through the lens of Kimberlé Crenshaw's analysis of the US anti-discrimination law. Crenshaw advocated for legal reform as she discovered, in a particular complaint about job discrimination, the frequency of discrimination appeared to be higher for black women, while black men and white women had no discrimination complaint. Crenshaw observed that there was no legal provision for people who were both black and women. Legal procedures against discrimination were therefore processed either on the basis of discrimination for being black or for being a woman, not for being both.

⁴⁷ It is not uncommon for individuals to bear multiple identities that are socially perceived as disadvantageous. For example, a woman may be born into the role of a 'wahaya' (a domestic worker treated as a slave) and also live with a disability.

4.5.1 Migrant women

FINDING 9

UN Women’s has provided support to rural communities for migration prevention and leveraged its normative mandate to advocate for gender-responsive policies on migration. This contribution, while valuable, has the potential to appear primarily informed by or driven by a dissuasive approach to migration, particularly if it overlooks the protection and humanitarian needs of migrant women and their families or communities.

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The majority of migration in the region is internal to the continent of Africa, with a significant portion consisting of seasonal migration within Niger and regional migration within the ECOWAS and CEMAC zones.⁴⁸ In 2021, the population of international migrants in Niger was 348,056, with 53.5 per cent female migrants.⁴⁹ Two years later, this figure has seen a significant decline of 40 per cent, as reported by a monthly update from OCHA.⁵⁰

While the principle of “leaving no one behind” is not explicitly mentioned in the Country Office’s 2018–2022 Strategic Note, the evaluation recognizes that the office has devoted a portion of its planned results to a specific group of vulnerable individuals, i.e. migrants, who make up 1 per cent of Niger’s population approximately. UN Women implemented the “Making Migration Safe,” programme which aims to raise awareness among government institutions and civil society organizations specializing in migration. This programme conducts advocacy efforts for gender and human rights-sensitive migration management, policies and laws on the basis of data collected on the migration situation. Making Migration Safe also supports a television programme targeting female migrants to provide information about safe and orderly migration conditions, the rights protecting their work and available services to combat sexual violence and human trafficking.

A similar initiative, the “Reducing the Negative Effects of Migration” programme, seeks to mitigate poverty-induced migration by providing agricultural inputs and technologies to rural communities. UN Women’s contribution to preventing migration by enhancing agricultural productivity, strengthening the normative framework at administrative and sectoral levels, and providing information to women migrants as rights-holders is relevant and aligns with UN Women’s comparative advantage. This Migration programme primarily focuses on investing in the agricultural practices of several rural communities while also providing capacity building and organizational strengthening. It remains incomplete as long as it does not address the essential needs of migrants and their children, including support for migrant organizations⁵¹ advocating for migrant rights.

The Country Office’s approach to migration appears to have a dissuasive nature, as reflected in its Development Results Framework, which includes an output against migration.⁵² However, without access to shelter or food, migrants may not be able to focus on messages about their rights or attend workshops on border crossing requirements, customs regulations, the legal framework and migration policies. By mobilizing the capacities of specialized agencies in protection and humanitarian aid, such as WFP, UNFPA, OCHA, etc. for the benefit of migrant women, UN Women could help address the vital needs of migrant women and their families, particularly in terms of essential emergency provisions such as food, reproductive health and medical care.

⁴⁸ Most African migration occurs within the continent as migrants seek employment opportunities in neighbouring regional economic hubs on the continent, a pattern that can be expected to continue as regional economies become more integrated. [Africa Center for Strategic Studies](#), January 9, 2023.

⁴⁹ UN DESA Migration Data Portal (consulted in June 2023).

⁵⁰ “Overview of Niger’s humanitarian needs”, OCHA, January 2023.

⁵¹ Civil society associations were approached as part of the “Making Migration Safe” programme to set up a migrant women’s organization but declined the offer made by UN Women. UN Women Niger, MMS, Final Report, December 2022.

⁵² UN Women Niger, Development Results Framework, Output 2.1.4

4.5.2 An excluded group of women

FINDING 10

The Strategic Note (2018–2022) overlooks the challenges faced by socially marginalized women, particularly those with disabilities or who belong to traditionally excluded groups in Niger. It fails to address the “Wahaya” practice, which involves forced domestic labour and sexual exploitation of marginalized women.

The Country Office’s Strategic Note 2018–2022 provides a general overview⁵³ of the challenging situation faced by women in Niger, including demographic data on factors such as age at marriage, fertility rates and literacy rates. It does not explicitly address the vulnerabilities experienced by women who are socially marginalized due to disabilities or their membership in groups traditionally excluded by Niger’s social norms.

In the context analysis presented in the Strategic Note, there is mention of the number of displaced women in Niger. Some indicators⁵⁴ in the Development Results Framework count the number of survivors of sexual violence. However, there is no specific mention of the number or proportion of women who become victims of gender-based violence while belonging to socially excluded categories. Among those excluded in Niger are women subjected to the traditional practice of “Wahaya.”

The term “Wahaya”⁵⁵ refers to the practice of appropriating women after a commercial transaction for forced domestic labour and sexual exploitation. These women, known as the fifth wife, are “married” clandestinely and are responsible for all household work, regardless of the number of legal wives the master has, which is limited to four in accordance with Islamic prescriptions. The practice, though legitimized by tradition, has been strongly condemned by anti-slavery associations,⁵⁶ particularly during campaigns such as the “16 Days of Activism.”⁵⁷ The Common Country Analysis for Niger also acknowledges

the persistence of harmful customary practices such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, “Wahaya” and discrimination in matters of inheritance.⁵⁸

In October 2021, during the 38th session of the Universal Periodic Review, the Working Group recommended that Niger adopt legislative provisions prohibiting the practice of “Wahaya” and recognized it as a form of slavery, subject to punishment under existing laws.⁵⁹

The issue of “Wahaya” remains challenging to discuss at local authority meetings. However, at the national level, the President of the Republic indirectly raised the issue with traditional chiefs during a symposium on demographic-transition.⁶⁰ Some saw this as an institutional opportunity for a joint initiative involving various United Nations agencies, including UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, UN Women and others. The specific practice of “Wahaya” remains a sensitive topic, and reforms addressing harmful practices in general may not necessarily apply to those living in conditions of slavery as long as it remains a taboo subject.

Additionally, the issue of disability is not explicitly addressed in the documentation for the 2018–2022 Strategic Note, both in the narrative note and accompanying results matrix. While this does not imply that persons with disabilities have not benefitted from UN Women Niger’s support, explicitly targeting and dedicating specific efforts to people with disabilities would have enabled better monitoring⁶¹ of the support provided to vulnerable groups and highlighted UN Women’s commitment to the principle of “leaving no one behind.”

⁵³ UN Women Niger, Strategic Note, 2018–2020, p.4

⁵⁴ Indicators 3.1.5, 4.1.2B; 4.1.1; 4.1.3

⁵⁵ It means “5th wife in the court of the traditional chieftaincy”. Enslaved women are otherwise known as ‘konho’ or ‘sadaka’.

⁵⁶ Including ‘Timidria’ which issued 10 testimonies in a book entitled “Wahaya. Domestic and Sexual slavery in Niger”. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/ForcedMarriage/NGO/AntiSlaveryInternational1.pdf>

⁵⁷ On International Human Rights Day in 2018, the Timidria Association with the support of Oxfam-Niger organized a day of activism in the village called Zanguon Abillo where hundreds of survivors of the Wahaya practice have found refuge.

⁵⁸ Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Niger, Niger Common Country Analysis, March 2022, p. 88

⁵⁹ Under the terms of Act No. 2003-25 of 1 June 2003, which amended the Criminal Code to include the offences and crimes of slavery” (United Nations Council, 38th Session of the Universal Periodic Review, May 2021, Paragr. 93). At the following Universal Periodic Review session, Niger was expressly asked “to define the practice of wahaya as a criminal offence, subject to the same penalties as other forms of slavery” (Universal Periodic Review Working Group Report of October 2021, Res. 122.134).

⁶⁰ A declaration signed by the Traditional Leaders emerged from the Symposium of 22-23 November 2021. At the end of the Symposium, the Traditional Leaders resolved (1) “not to give (sic!) a girl under the age of 18 in marriage” and (2) “not to take (sic!) a girl under the age of 18 themselves”.

⁶¹ UN Women could emulate IOM’s good practice of regularly updating its migration database. The database provides information on the size of Niger’s migrant populations and at the same time specifies the number of people living with a disability, disaggregated by sex and age.

5. CONCLUSIONS

UN Women Niger has navigated a complex normative context posing formidable challenges to the promotion of the principle of equality between men and women. Despite this, UN Women and its partners have successfully initiated interventions that attract support from the highest levels of the government. One of the most significant achievements resulting from this collaboration is implementation of the Quota Law which allowed a significant increase in women's representation (Finding 3). The government's political will, along with donors' substantial funding support has presented a promising landscape for UN Women. By joining with other UN agencies to implement major joint projects such as the Spotlight Initiative, the Rural Women's Economic Empowerment programme and key peace and security interventions, UN Women used the influx of resources to expand its staffing (Finding 7) and increase its engagement in key coordination frameworks (Finding 2).

Nevertheless, there is optimism that UN Women can leverage renewed funding for agricultural initiatives to build on intermediate results and work towards tangible outcomes. This endeavour will depend on the availability of quality staffing with stable contract arrangements and a continued reliance on specialized implementing partners and the Ministry of Women's Promotion and Child Protection (Finding 7). Ensuring that partners adequately equip and maintain facilities and tools will enhance the sustainability of project outcomes (Finding 8).

Lastly, the evaluation identified shortcomings in UN Women's stated commitment to non-discriminatory practices (Finding 10). A more proactive approach is needed to collaborate with other UN agencies in addressing the persistent marginalization of vulnerable groups, including traditionally enslaved women, migrant women and women with disabilities. UN Women can enhance its positive influence by leading joint programmes and implementing systematic quality assurance measures in equity, human rights and gender equality mainstreaming across collaborative initiatives. This multifaceted approach will contribute to more inclusive and equitable outcomes for all.

Despite these successes, some limitations remain:



UN coordination on gender: Gender mainstreaming within UN joint initiatives is hindered as various agencies tend to implement activities in isolation and UN Women has yet to take the lead in joint programmes (Finding 2).



Women's Political Participation: Questions surround the noted resistance by political parties to implement the Quota Law, as highlighted by the Gender Observatory Study.⁶² The absence of post-election initiatives could potentially erode the progress made so far (Finding 3).



Women, Peace and Security: The impact of increased female involvement in localized conflict resolution mechanisms is mostly based on anecdotal evidence and requires a more comprehensive assessment (Finding 6).



Women's Economic Empowerment: Despite four years of interventions to support sustainable income generation and community recovery through climate-resilient agriculture, it remains unclear if the rural women who received UN Women's support have experienced lasting improvements in their income (Finding 4).

⁶² «Étude sur le niveau d'application de la loi des quotas», Observatoire National pour la Promotion du Genre, Mai 2021

6. LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON LEARNED 1

In a context of deeply entrenched cultural norms that contradict the principle of equality between men and women, it pays off to pragmatically prioritize addressing specific manifestations of gender inequality, such as the unequal distribution of economic resources and political power between men and women.

As evidenced by the progress made in the realm of Women's Leadership and Political Participation, it may not be the most effective approach for gender activism to engage in confrontations with traditional authorities or conservative segments within the government, solely based on a universal understanding of human rights. Instead, a more pragmatic approach can yield better results by focusing on addressing specific instances of gender inequality. These include disparities in the distribution of economic resources and political influence between genders, as well as the various forms of violence against women during peacetime, conflict or natural disasters. The underlying assumption here is that practical and incremental changes can lead to cumulative progress over time, ultimately making gender equality a tangible reality rather than just a theoretical concept.

LESSON LEARNED 2

Fostering women's leadership in politics requires comprehensive engagement. In pursuing the advancement of women's leadership and political participation, it is insufficient to solely focus on high-level national government interactions.

While UN Women and partners' advocacy efforts for gender quota laws have yielded some success, the comprehensive study conducted in 2021 by the National Observatory for Gender Promotion has shown that most political parties have found ways to work around the mandatory requirement of ensuring 15 per cent representation for women among their candidates. Learning from the insights gained from UN Women's experiences in the DRC elections in 2018 and the Nigeria elections in 2019, one of the most significant reasons why women are not equally represented in politics is the way power is wielded within political parties. If power dynamics within these parties are not inclusive and do not promote the participation of women, it becomes a major barrier to women's involvement in politics.

LESSON LEARNED 3

The presence of UN Women as a participating UN organization in joint programmes does not guarantee gender mainstreaming in the interventions.

Despite UN Women's involvement in five UN joint programmes, the desired progress in gender mainstreaming was not realized. This was primarily due to each agency independently pursuing its own agenda. One key contributing factor was that UN Women did not assume the role of an Administrative Agent in any of the joint programmes in which it was involved. This absence of leadership hindered the UN Country Team's collective efforts in gender integration. Another factor is the lack of guidance on how to mainstream gender in joint programming.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were drafted by the evaluation team and presented to Country Office personnel, including the Country Representative.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Based on finding

1

Urgency



Complexity



The Country Office should continue its approach of influencing the country's Gender Policy in a context of slowly evolving cultural norms. To address deep-rooted causes of gender inequality, the Country Office should initiate dialogues on the family code and related norms in collaboration with UNHCR and civil society partners, while maintaining its focus on specific manifestations such as economic and political disparities and violence against women

RECOMMENDATION 2

Based on finding

3

Urgency



Complexity



To prevent the potential erosion of gains achieved during electoral processes, the Country Office should develop and implement post-election initiatives that focus on building upon the progress made in women's political participation in Niger. To achieve this, the Country Office should undertake specific resource mobilization to establish a dedicated team to sustain progress in this area.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Based on findings

5 & 6

Urgency



Complexity



Given the ongoing instability in the country, it is imperative to strengthen collaboration among UN agencies to safeguard the physical well-being and livelihoods of women. This proactive approach is crucial to prevent an escalation in the prevalence of gender-based violence compared to what was experienced during times of peace. By working together more effectively, UN agencies can better address these critical issues within the context of humanitarian and security crises.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Based on findings

6,4,1 & 8

Urgency



Complexity



The Country Office should strengthen its commitment to results-based monitoring across its programmes and initiatives by systematically tracking progress related to gender inclusivity in peace dialogues, income generation from agricultural support programmes and the impact of cash transfer interventions on vulnerable women. To sustain the results of its interventions, UN Women should also implement clear exit strategies involving local stakeholders and authorities to ensure the maintenance and durability of facilities. By consistently measuring and assessing the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives, UN Women can enhance its ability to contribute to lasting peace, economic empowerment and the well-being of women in the communities it serves.

RECOMMENDATION 5*Based on finding***2****Urgency****Complexity**

The Country Office could promote greater gender responsiveness and coordination within the UN system in Niger by revitalizing the Gender Theme Group. This would help focus on monitoring and implementing the Gender Score Card recommendations and enhance awareness of the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Compact. Furthermore, the Country Office should assume a leadership role in fostering collaboration among UN agencies to more effectively address violence against women, particularly within the framework of the Spotlight Initiative. Minimum criteria for assessing gender integration in joint programmes should be established along with the dissemination and discussion of a gender mainstreaming tool with all UN agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 6*Based on finding***2****Urgency****Complexity**

The Country Office could go beyond being non-discriminatory by ensuring its Strategic Note and programme proposals refer explicitly to disability and under-privileged groups to facilitate inclusiveness at programme implementation stage for those poorest and most marginalized.

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

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

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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