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CORPORATE THEMATIC EVALUATION OF UN
WOMEN'S SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION:

INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

EVALUATION REPORT

MAY 2024



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report, and the overall evaluation process, was informed and enriched by the participation of more than 500 stakeholders, personnel and partners – many of whom actively contributed to the evaluation by serving as reference group members or key informants, attending focus group discussions, or completing comprehensive surveys. Without the support and active participation of these individuals, this report would not have been possible.

The evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES). The IES team included Tara Kaul, Evaluation Specialist as Team Leader; Eleanor Lucy Brown, Senior Evaluation Consultant; Aileen Allen, Evaluation Consultant; Anita Hasni Mohammad, Research Assistant and Soo Yeon Kim, Evaluation Analyst. The team received overall support and guidance from Inga Sniukaite, Chief of UN Women IES.

We are grateful to the Internal and External Reference Group members for their thoughtful comments and

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

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Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service of UN Women.

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ACRONYMS

DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

FOREWORD

With more than half the world's population projected to participate in elections, 2024 will be an important year for politics and democracy. Deeply entrenched discrimination continues to hinder women's ability to fully participate in political and electoral processes worldwide, which means critical decisions impacting women's daily lives and their rights are being made without them. Given current trends, UN Women estimates that gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years.¹

UN Women's efforts to advance women's political participation include promoting supportive legislative and institutional reforms; building the capacity of women political aspirants and leaders; monitoring, preventing and mitigating violence against women in politics; and encouraging social norms change to recognize women's political leadership. UN Women is also actively engaged in promoting women's political participation through coordination and advocacy efforts across the UN system, including with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Temporary Special Measures and the Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance.

This corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to women's political participation is a summative assessment of results achieved during the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, as well as a compilation of insights that can be used to support implementation of UN Women's current Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

In line with UN Women's growing emphasis on pivoting to countries and assessing impact at the country level, this evaluation collected data and evidence from a representative sample of 12 countries (Brazil, Colombia, Central African Republic, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) currently engaged in efforts to advance women's political participation.

The evaluation found that UN Women's work allowed for adaptation to various country contexts, while remaining strategically focused on accelerators of women's political participation. UN Women has also effectively built networks of influence through partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders across government, women's networks, UN partners and civil society organizations to support the Entity's initiatives related to women's political participation.

Overall, UN Women's efforts related to women's political participation have generated some progress in strengthening electoral frameworks and developing and sustaining a diverse cadre of women political leaders. This impact was due, in large part, to sustained investments in legal reforms, advocacy and strengthening of women's skills and capacities at all stages of their path into politics. UN Women's country-level programmes have also received useful and timely support from headquarters and several Regional Offices on matters related to women's political participation.

Nevertheless, UN Women continues to encounter challenges in advancing women's political participation and the evaluation presents five strategic recommendations that the Entity could consider. Among them, it is recommended that UN Women continue its efforts to address key barriers to women's political participation, with a focus on persistent constraints and forms of backlash such as violence against women in politics. The Entity should also strengthen its advocacy and convening role by providing more guidance on navigating and communicating with a diverse coalition of partners and should aim to develop strategic and long-term programmes to support women's political participation at the country and local level. There are also opportunities for UN Women to strengthen its guidance on effectively mainstreaming considerations of leave no one behind into women's political participation and to enhance the Entity's measurement of key results to better contextualize and demonstrate UN Women's impact.



Lisa Sutton

Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services

¹ https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#_edn2



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CORPORATE THEMATIC EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

EVALUATION REPORT

MAY 2024

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THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CORPORATE THEMATIC EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, WITH A FOCUS ON INSIGHTS FROM THE COUNTRY LEVEL. THIS EVALUATION WAS CONDUCTED BY UN WOMEN'S INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE (IES), PART OF THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS), WHICH UNDERTAKES INDEPENDENT CORPORATE EVALUATIONS WITH THE AIM OF ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY, INFORMING DECISION-MAKING AND CONTRIBUTING TO LEARNING. THE EVALUATION WAS INITIATED IN MARCH 2023 AND WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE UN WOMEN EXECUTIVE BOARD DURING ITS ANNUAL SESSION IN JUNE 2024.

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this independent corporate evaluation was to contribute to strategic decision-making, learning and accountability. To that effect, the evaluation aimed to examine the impact, effectiveness, relevance, coherence and sustainability of UN Women's support to women's political participation at the country level, in line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee's evaluation criteria.

The primary focus of the evaluation was the impact of UN Women's efforts to support women's political participation at the national (and subnational) level. Additionally, the evaluation identified lessons learned; examined the contribution of regional and global-level support/guidance; and tracked both positive and negative unintended consequences, including cases of backlash against women's political participation.

The evaluation time frame spanned from January 2018 to June 2023, and combined a summative assessment of results achieved during the previous UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021

period, with an exploration of insights to support implementation of the current UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The geographic scope covered UN Women's programming across all six regions through a representative sample of Country Offices. The focus and coverage of the evaluation were informed by extensive internal stakeholder interviews; detailed portfolio reviews of UN Women's programmes; and desk reviews of relevant evaluations, strategic documents and other key reports.

The evaluation is intended for use primarily by the UN Women Executive Board, senior management, UN Women's Governance and Participation section, and UN Women Regional and Country Offices designing and implementing women's political participation programming, in addition to other personnel directly working on or with an interest in women's political participation.

Evaluation questions

The key evaluation questions were as follows:



In what ways has UN Women's support been tailored to the local political context?



What is the impact of UN Women's support to women's political participation at country level?



How well does UN Women work with its partners (UN and others) on the ground?



How effectively is UN Women's triple mandate (normative, UN system coordination, operational) leveraged in support of achieving results at country level?



What aspects of equity are targeted by UN Women's interventions (leave no one behind and gender equality)?



What is UN Women's approach to safeguarding the sustainability of its impact and efforts in this area?

Evaluation approach

Adopting a theory-based approach, the evaluation team developed an evaluation framework (adapted from UN Women's theory of change for women's political participation: output 4 under Strategic Plan 2018–2021)² to map changes in key outcomes and impact across various stages of women's entry into

the political sphere. This included identification of contextual factors that have enabled or hindered women's political participation in different countries. Given the focus on country-level impact, the evaluation team consulted with key stakeholders to select a representative sample of 12 country case studies (Brazil, Colombia, Central African Republic, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) across all six regions. The sample of countries selected was heterogenous in terms of country size; political and economic context; proportion of women in parliament; extent of UN Women's programming; and types of implementing partners in the area of women's political participation. The evaluation team collected primary and secondary data from key informant interviews (virtual and in-person), online surveys, desk reviews of key documents and a portfolio review. Contribution analysis and qualitative comparative analysis were employed to analyse UN Women's key initiatives/approaches and related results for each of the country case studies.

The evaluation incorporated a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach that aligned with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards. More specifically, the evaluation aligned with the UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Ethical Guidelines, UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system and UNEG guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluation.



Key conclusions

Key conclusions (drawn from evaluation evidence and findings) were organized into three inter-related workstreams. These workstreams – Design and Approach, Delivery and Performance – relate to the key evaluation questions but also take into account synergies between UN Women's strategies and activities at the country, regional and global level.

DESIGN AND APPROACH WORKSTREAM



The "Design and Approach" workstream assessed the relevance of UN Women's approach to women's political participation; the extent to which strategies were tailored to local political

² The theory of change was developed for Strategic Plan 2018–2021 Priority Area 1 (Strategic Plan Output 4 on women's political participation).

contexts; and UN Women’s approach to sustainability in different contexts. This workstream explored how well UN Women’s programme design and approach aligned with the needs and nuances of the contexts in which programmes were implemented.

CONCLUSION 1.

The design and approach of UN Women’s work allowed for adaptation to country contexts, while remaining strategically focused on accelerators of women’s political participation. UN Women has aligned well with contextual drivers and worked with political actors to build networks of influence. As programmes scale efforts to bring women into politics, particularly at the subnational level, issues arise of how to effectively respond to growing needs.

The design and approach of UN Women’s programmes are strategically focused on the key drivers of improvements in women’s political participation: gender-responsive legal reforms; addressing social norms; building women’s confidence, knowledge and skills; and preventing and mitigating violence against women in politics. There is evidence that programmes are able to rapidly adapt to make best use of work with key political actors in each country context, particularly in mobilizing coalitions and partnerships to deliver changes in legal and policy frameworks.

During the evaluation period, UN Women (in coordination with UN partners and national stakeholders) advocated for and supported the passage and effective implementation of legislated quotas. In addition, there have also been intense efforts to invest in building women candidates’

confidence and skills. While these efforts have been successful in raising the number of candidates standing for election and being elected, there was some evidence that a more tailored approach is needed. Women value the wider benefits of learning about political participation: mentoring, social support and developing networks with other women candidates or women-led civil society organizations. Greater attention to women’s needs, motivations and experiences as they enter, participate and leave politics is needed to strengthen support.

CONCLUSION 2.

There was some evidence that knowledge and learning within UN Women’s programmes at country level worked well to enable consolidation and rapid implementation of successful practices and approaches. However, further strengthening of tools to measure progress will help to strengthen programme responsiveness and engage donors in critical areas of learning.

As programmes encounter persistent forms of opposition to women’s political participation, such as online bullying, and continue to focus on areas such as shifting social norms, or working at subnational level, there is a need to further strengthen use of data and tools, which is an area of ongoing work. Country programmes would benefit from guidance on what types of gender data in political participation to advocate for to address key gaps in information (such as sex disaggregated voter registration and turnout data) while working in collaboration with partners. Further use of evaluation and measurement tools, such as media

tracking surveys, and surveys of women’s participation in political parties, would help to improve the capacity of programmes to learn and focus on key areas of change. There are a few examples of such tools being used in some countries, but further consolidation would ensure a more consistent approach to measurement, where needed and appropriate.

Building on UN Women’s efforts to compile quantitative measures of women’s political participation, country programmes could consider context-relevant, additional measures (qualitative and quantitative) to demonstrate impact and progress. In some countries, programmes collect data on women’s confidence to participate in politics, which offers a broader view that could be strengthened. In general, feedback mechanisms need to be strengthened for women across their journeys into and out of politics.

The evaluation also found there was scope to increase donors’ appreciation of the importance of longer time periods required for training women political aspirants and the importance of working between election cycles. Improved reporting of results, sharing lessons learned and demonstrating impact is a key component of supporting long-term programmes.

CONCLUSION 3.

Resistance to women’s political participation remains a salient issue in many countries, requiring comprehensive and sustained efforts to preserve gains. UN Women’s approach at country level would benefit from developing longer-term, strategic programming that goes

beyond typical election cycle-based initiatives.

UN Women's support to women's political participation included sustainable approaches such as strengthening related legal frameworks, fostering national ownership and supporting networks of women leaders. However, programmes (and funding) tended to focus on election cycles, which was a concern raised by stakeholders in many countries.

Therefore, UN Women's approach at country level needs to go beyond election cycle-based programmes, to long-term and strategic country-level initiatives that support sustainable change. This should include a stronger emphasis on effective implementation of policies, protection against persistent forms of backlash³ including violence against women in politics; support for newly elected women leaders in the post-election phase; sustained support for young women leaders; grassroots, community and media engagement for social norms change; and strategies to tackle barriers to women's participation arising from resource constraints and resistance from political parties.

DELIVERY WORKSTREAM



The "Delivery" workstream focused on the coherence of UN Women's partnerships with UN and non-UN partners and included insights on leveraging UN Women's integrated mandate at the country level. This workstream also examined

which aspects of equity (leaving no one behind) are targeted by UN Women's interventions.

CONCLUSION 4.

Partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders across government, women's networks, civil society organizations and others have been critical to support various initiatives related to women's political participation. Partnerships between UN agencies at the country level have enabled mainstreaming of women's political participation into wider electoral efforts and partners recognize UN Women's value add, and flexible ways of working. While engagement with new partners in the context of social norms change and working at subnational levels will enable reach and access, any potential risks related to these partnerships should continue to be assessed.

UN Women has largely been valued, trusted and successful in working with broad coalitions. Many of the Entity's successes in legal and policy reforms have depended on building trusting partnerships, particularly with parliaments, government entities such as electoral management bodies, offices of registrar of political parties, and women's ministries and machineries. UN Women's reputation for being politically impartial, flexible and open has enabled the Entity to build broad coalitions with political actors. UN Women's political neutrality is viewed as

a critical value add, enabling the organization to play a strong convening role and brokering political access for women's civil society organizations and coalitions.

Programmes are now seizing opportunities to work at a subnational level, along with addressing social norms. Partnerships at the grassroots level offer the opportunity to tackle patriarchal barriers to women's participation in more effective ways. However, these partnerships (including with faith-based organizations and traditional leaders) could carry concomitant risks of being politically coopted or of reinforcing traditional gender-based norms which may be appealing to local audiences, but ultimately undermine women's broader political empowerment.

CONCLUSION 5.

At the global level, UN Women's triple mandate has been leveraged in support of advancing women's political participation. While the Entity's normative and operational mandates were leveraged concurrently across most countries, there is room to strengthen the coordination role at the country level, particularly in gender mainstreaming across UN programming on political participation.

At the global level, the evaluation found evidence of synergies between UN Women's normative, UN system coordination and operational mandates in the area of women's political participation. The Entity developed key UN system knowledge

³ According to Flood et al. (2020), backlash refers to any form of resistance to progressive social change. In the case of gender equality, it refers to resistance or opposition to gender equality initiatives; it is "an active pushing back against progressive and feminist programmes, policies and

perspectives." Backlash can take many forms, including denial, disavowal, inaction, appeasement, appropriation, co-option, repression and violence. For the purposes of this evaluation, in line with this definition, references to backlash encompass violence against women in politics. Flood, M.,

Dragiewicz, M. and Pease, B. (2020) 'Resistance and backlash to gender equality', Australian Journal of Social Issues, 1-16

products and hubs (including data and guidance documents); worked with inter-agency/intergovernmental mechanisms; and developed system-wide messaging on UN priorities, including temporary special measures and violence against women in politics. This global work was an important pillar in achieving results at the country level. However, the UN system coordination mandate was somewhat unevenly applied across countries and remains an area that requires strengthening. In comparison, UN Women's normative and operational mandates were leveraged relatively strongly in many countries.

While some challenges persist in coordinating efforts with other UN entities, UN Women is well-respected by UN partners and acknowledged as a leader on women's political participation due to its technical strength; the expertise of its staff; and its long-term and effective engagement with civil society organizations, women's organizations and governments. Therefore, UN Women is well positioned to play a stronger role in gender mainstreaming across UN programming on women's political participation.

CONCLUSION 6.

UN Women has worked to ensure that the 'leave no one behind' principle and the needs of marginalized groups were included in its programming by improving access to resources such as training and building more equitable representation. While committed to the principle of equity, less well-funded programmes would benefit from further guidance on the trade-offs between working

inclusively versus reaching more women at scale.

The 'leave no one behind' principle was a core concern of country programmes working on women's political participation, and there were several examples of work with specific marginalized groups, including a deep intersectional approach. There was evidence that, in some contexts, UN Women's support resulted in these groups having a strong voice and influence in political spaces. There was also evidence that UN Women's support pushed diverse actors (government and non-government) to consider the needs and work inclusively with groups such as younger women, people living with disabilities, poor, rural, indigenous and afro-descendant women.

However, both the survey results and country case studies showed that programmes needed to make difficult trade-offs. Some groups were difficult to include given the contextual environment (e.g. LGBTIQ+ groups) and programmes with fewer resources could not invest in reaching marginalized groups at the community level. This suggested that further guidance and sharing of good practices could support country programmes on ways to work inclusively, without having to reduce their reach to women political aspirants.

PERFORMANCE WORKSTREAM



The "Performance" workstream related to the impact of UN Women's support to women's political participation. The analysis under this workstream sought to measure and contextualize the real-world effects and contributions made by

the Entity in driving positive changes within the countries under review.

CONCLUSION 7.

UN Women's programmes have contributed to positive impacts on the legal and policy environment, and movement-building and capacity-building across various contexts. Legal reform, particularly legislated quotas, have been key drivers of higher numbers of women in political positions. Evidence from case studies showed that in some countries this was translating into gender-responsive policymaking. However, there was also evidence of gains stagnating or reversing in other countries, driven by a number of factors.

There has been strong progress to date in legal and policy reforms that have substantially facilitated women's access to political positions, and across several other long and short-term outcomes such as building women's skills and confidence and developing means to address and mitigate violence against women in politics. There were strong examples where broader impact has been achieved through UN Women programmes (for instance in Moldova and Tanzania). The evaluation also validated evidence of improvements in gender-responsive law and policymaking as a result of working with diverse stakeholders, including electoral bodies, parliaments and women's caucuses.

Data from country case studies suggested that progress in getting women elected has been relatively slow, particularly for countries that do not use legislated quotas. Even where legislated quotas were implemented, further increases in women's political participation were slow or stagnant, or, in a

few cases, reversed. While contextual factors played a strong role in preventing women's progress, often the experience, threat, or fear of violence against women in politics (and other forms of harassment) dissuaded many women from engaging in political and public affairs, pursuing or continuing a political career. In other cases, the targets set by quotas were not achieved, given a lack of quota enforcement mechanisms and effective implementation as well as other contextual and socioeconomic factors such as levels of insecurity or women's lack of resources.

CONCLUSION 8.

While progress has been made in areas of legal and policy reforms, support to women's participation from political parties remains a key challenge.

UN Women has made a strong contribution to legal and policy reforms which now include many provisions for gender equality, e.g. updates to constitutions, improved gender strategies for the management of electoral processes and improved mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of gender equality by political parties. Across the country case studies, a wide range of stakeholders indicated that political parties were the main barrier to women's inclusion in political participation, with interventions such as voluntary legislated quotas largely ineffective.

There was strong consensus among stakeholders that new ways of working to influence political parties need to be found. This requires partnering with key national stakeholders such as the office of the registrar of political parties, multi-party international foundations, UN entities leading the work with political parties (e.g. UNDP) and donors

to open up new areas of work. Promising practices were emerging in this area, such as working with non-governmental organizations that focus on political actors, women's political wings and with male allies. There were also examples of UN Women working directly with the executive branch and leaders in government to support messaging and advocacy on women's political participation.

Where inclusion of women is seen as a zero-sum game, meaning that men will lose power, further investments are needed to change wider political perceptions of women's inclusion, and on agreeing key advocacy messages to be endorsed beyond UN Women.

CONCLUSION 9.

Support from headquarters was well-tailored to country-level needs and contributed to the effectiveness of programmes. Technical support was responsive, learning was accessible and work on data and in developing standard models (e.g. for training) were also widely applied. However, regional level collaboration could be strengthened in some areas.

The evaluation found evidence that UN Women's support was well-tailored to the needs of programme personnel at the country level. Consolidation of learning, responsive technical support – especially in complex areas of legal reform and advocacy – and deployment of toolkits for training enabled programmes to rapidly hone their approaches. Work on research and data, such as Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.1b, enabled programmes to advocate for better representation at local levels.

There were some examples of cross-regional learning which were beneficial, such as the adoption of specific training curriculums. Some stakeholders indicated the need to strengthen regional-level technical support. Regional mechanisms and organizations had a strong influence on national stakeholders (e.g. the African Union, and the African Women Leaders Network) and UN Women has already leveraged these organizations for support and influence. However, some stakeholders advocated for stronger learning and collaboration within and across regions, particularly in countries where results were lagging behind regional counterparts.



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RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATION 1: UN Women should continue to address key barriers to women’s political participation, while including a focus on persistent constraints and forms of backlash, such as violence against women in politics.



RECOMMENDATION 2: UN Women should strengthen its advocacy and convening role by providing further guidance on navigating and communicating with diverse coalitions of partners in support of women’s political participation.



RECOMMENDATION 3: UN Women should aim to develop strategic and long-term programmes to support women’s political participation at the country level.



RECOMMENDATION 4: UN Women should strengthen guidance on effectively mainstreaming considerations of leave no one behind into women’s political participation, particularly as programmes scale and work with new partnerships for social norms change.



RECOMMENDATION 5: UN Women should enhance measurement of key results on women’s political participation to better contextualize and demonstrate the impact of its work at country level.



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1

BACKGROUND

1.1 Overview

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women's support to women's political participation, with a focus on insights from the country level. This evaluation was conducted by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES), part of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS), which undertakes independent corporate evaluations with the aim of enhancing accountability, informing decision-making and contributing to learning. The evaluation was initiated in March 2023 and will be presented to the UN Women Executive Board during its Annual Session in June 2024.

UN Women supports global, regional and country initiatives in the area of women's political participation with the aim of strengthening women's leadership and ensuring women's full and equal access to decision-making. These initiatives are bolstered by the Entity's alignment with and support to relevant global normative frameworks and international commitments.⁴

UN Women's key initiatives on women's political participation include: (a) promotion of legislative and institutional reforms to ensure women's equal participation in decision-making; (b) capacity-building support for women political aspirants and leaders; (c) support to reforms and advocacy to monitor, prevent and mitigate violence against women in politics; and (d) promotion of social norms change to recognize women's political leadership.

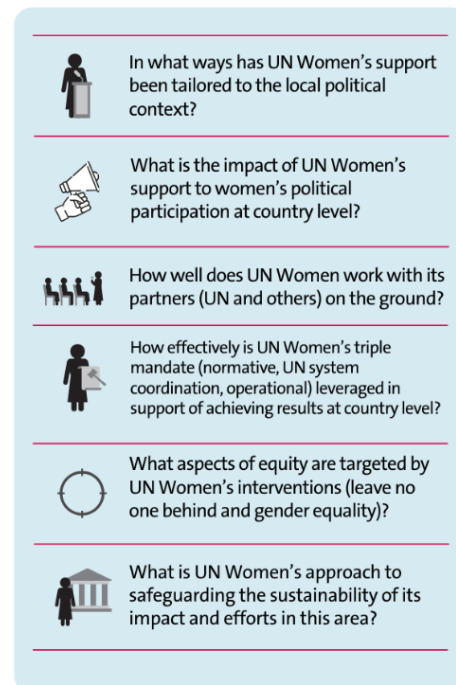
UN Women also supports the production of research, data and knowledge on women's political participation. The Entity works to advance Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) monitoring and international measurement standards on key topics including violence against women in politics, women in local government, women in executive/ministerial positions and women heads of state. Additionally, UN Women participates in coordination and advocacy activities across the UN system in this area of work, including through the Inter-Agency Task Force on Temporary Special Measures (as part of the Secretary-General's Call to Action on Human Rights), the







Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance and the Praia Group on Governance Statistics.

1.2 Purpose, objectives and scope

The purpose of this independent corporate evaluation was to contribute to strategic decision-making, learning and accountability. To that effect, the evaluation aimed to examine the impact, effectiveness, relevance, coherence and sustainability of UN Women's support to women's political participation at the country level, in line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee's evaluation criteria.⁵

The primary focus of the evaluation was the impact of UN Women's efforts to support women's political participation at the national (and subnational) level. Additionally, the evaluation identified lessons learned; examined the contribution of regional and global level support/guidance; and tracked both positive and negative unintended consequences, including cases of backlash against women's political participation. The key evaluation questions, which included an equity-focused lens (human rights, gender equality and leave no one behind), were as follows:



-  In what ways has UN Women's support been tailored to the local political context?
-  What is the impact of UN Women's support to women's political participation at country level?
-  How well does UN Women work with its partners (UN and others) on the ground?
-  How effectively is UN Women's triple mandate (normative, UN system coordination, operational) leveraged in support of achieving results at country level?
-  What aspects of equity are targeted by UN Women's interventions (leave no one behind and gender equality)?
-  What is UN Women's approach to safeguarding the sustainability of its impact and efforts in this area?

⁴ These include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 3, 13, 19, 20, 21); Convention on the Political Rights of Women; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; UN General Assembly Resolution 66/130 on Women and Political Participation; UN General Assembly Resolution on Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment (A/RES/73/148); Report of the Special

Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics (A/73/301); and the Commission on the Status of Women. Source: Gender Equality Accelerator hub, available at <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/Policy-Programming/ProgrammeDivision/SitePages/Signau.aspx>

⁵ Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

The evaluation time frame spanned from January 2018 to June 2023, and combined a summative assessment of results achieved during the previous UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, with an exploration of insights to support implementation of the current UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The geographic scope covered UN Women’s programming across all six regions through a representative sample of Country Offices. The focus and coverage of the evaluation were informed by extensive internal stakeholder interviews; detailed portfolio reviews of UN Women’s programmes; and desk reviews of relevant evaluations, strategic documents and other key reports.

The evaluation is intended for use primarily by the UN Women Executive Board, senior management, UN Women’s Governance and Participation section, and the UN Women Regional and Country Offices designing and implementing women’s political participation programming, in addition to other personnel directly working on or with an interest in women’s political participation.

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

1.3 Evaluation approach

Evaluation framework

To unpack the various strategies and approaches UN Women employs at the country level, the evaluation team adapted UN Women’s theory of change⁶ (see Figure 1) to map outcomes and impact across three stages of women’s entry into the political sphere; note changes and movement in outcomes over the short and long term; and identify contextual factors that have had a strong enabling or hindering effect on women’s political participation.

The theory of change describes in detail short-term expected outcomes at different stages of women’s political participation in relation to the legal/policy environment, capacities/confidence of women, mitigation of violence against women in politics and supportive social norms change. Specifically, at the stage of women entering politics, short-term outcomes include improved awareness and capacity to promote gender balance

among political parties and electoral stakeholders; enhanced capacities and confidence to enter civic spaces among women; measures to mitigate violence against women in politics; and an increased community and civic understanding of women’s right to participate.

At the stage of women standing for election, the expected short-term outcomes include strengthened legislative frameworks to promote gender balance; enhanced technical capacities of women candidates to engage, mobilize resources and run innovative/effective campaigns; violence against women in politics being monitored and mitigated; and enhanced awareness and capacities among key stakeholders to promote women’s leadership.

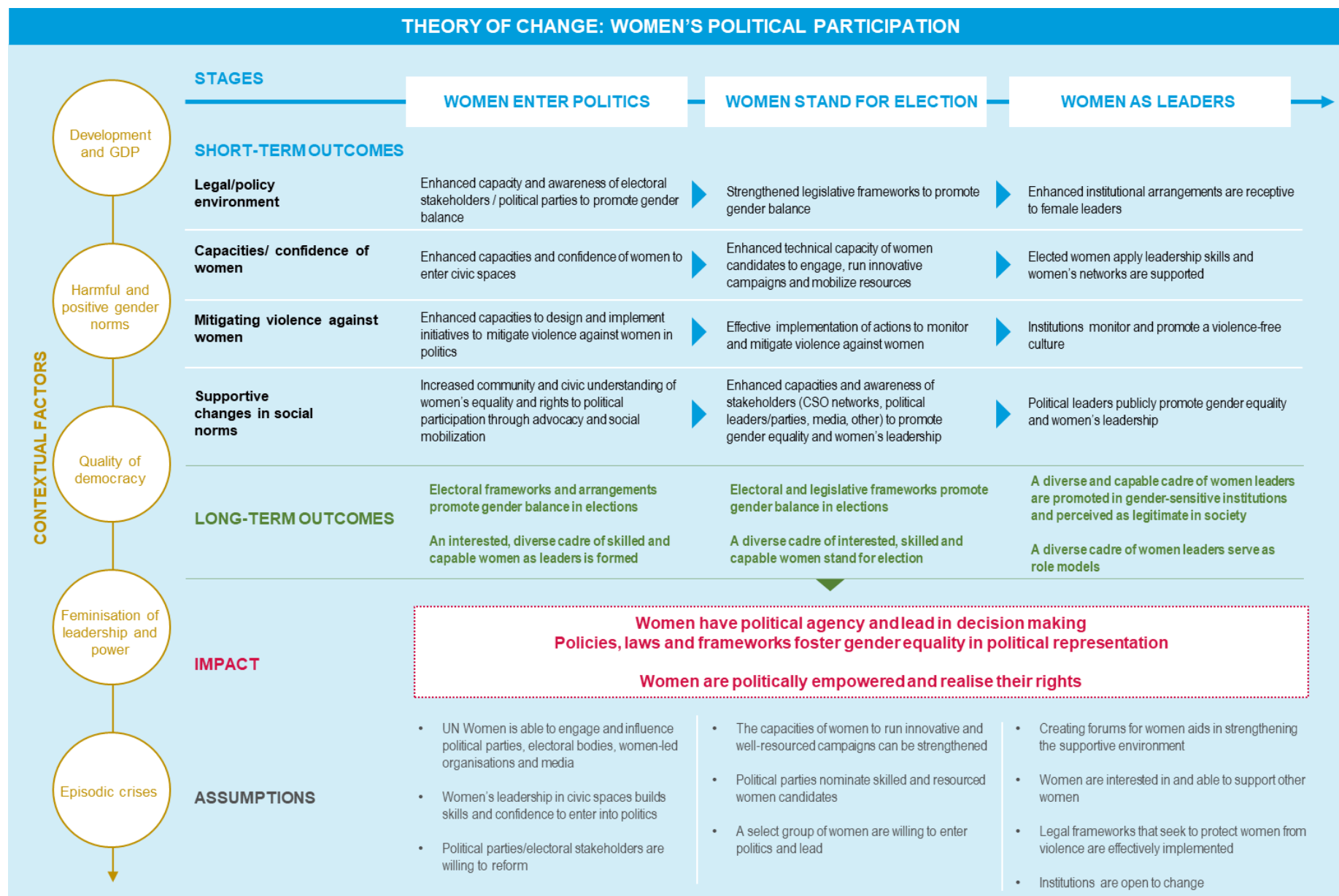
At the final stage of women’s political participation, when women are in leadership positions, short-term expected outcomes include enhanced institutional arrangements receptive of female leaders; women in power effectively apply leadership skills and can access networks of support; institutions monitor and promote a violence free culture in politics; and political leaders publicly promote gender equality and women’s leadership.

Long-term expected outcomes relate to supportive electoral frameworks and arrangements, and development of a cadre of skilled and capable women leaders. Specifically, at the stage of women entering politics, long-term outcomes include legislative frameworks and gender norms that are more supportive of women in decision-making positions and the emergence of a diverse cadre of women as leaders. At the stage of women standing for election, long-term outcomes include legislative frameworks that promote gender equity in elections, shifted gender norms around women candidates and women in power, and a strengthened cadre of women electoral candidates. Once women are in leadership positions, long-term expected outcomes include a diverse and capable cadre of women leaders that are promoted in gender-sensitive political institutions and serve as role models, and an electorate that perceives women’s leadership as legitimate.

As presented in Figure 1, the theory of change at the impact level posits that IF women enter politics, stand for election and assume leadership positions, THEN women will be politically empowered and realize their rights BECAUSE women will have political agency, will lead in decision-making, and legislative and policy frameworks will foster gender equality in political representation.

⁶ The theory of change was developed for Strategic Plan 2018–2021 Priority Area 1 (Strategic Plan Output 4 on women’s political participation).

Figure 1: Theory of change on UN Women’s support to women’s political participation



Evaluation methodology and data collection

Given the focus of the evaluation on country-level impact, the evaluation team, in consultation with key stakeholders, identified a representative sample of 12 countries (Brazil, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe)⁷ for a cross-comparative case-study approach⁸ using a robust combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools, methods and analysis.

The selected sample of countries was heterogenous in terms of country size, political and economic context, proportion of women in parliament, extent of UN Women's programming and implementing partners in the area of women's political participation.⁹ As per the World Bank's income classification,¹⁰ two of the countries selected were classified as low-income (Central African Republic, Liberia), seven were lower-middle income (Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe), and three were upper-middle income economies (Brazil, Colombia and Moldova). Women's representation in parliament also varied greatly with the smallest proportion of women in parliament in Papua New Guinea (2 per cent) and the largest in Moldova (41 per cent). The evaluation team also found variations in the size and scale of UN Women's programming on women's political participation, with some countries implementing large-scale programmes in phases across multiple years (e.g. the Wanawake-Wanaweza project in Tanzania from 2014 to 2022) and others implementing smaller and shorter programmes (e.g. training police on gender and how to respond to violence against women in politics in Zimbabwe for the 2018 elections). UN Women engaged with a diverse coalition of partners in these countries, including governments (e.g. electoral management bodies, parliaments), grassroots organizations, women's organizations, donors and other UN agencies (e.g. UNDP, DPPA-EAD, and UN peacekeeping or special political missions).

In developing the case studies, the evaluation team conducted semi-structured key informant interviews and focus group discussions with country-level internal and

external stakeholders (including government agencies, electoral management bodies, UN agencies, civil society implementing partners, women's organizations, donors, women political aspirants and leaders, elected officials, traditional leaders and the media) and fielded an online survey to a sample of women political aspirants and leaders (see Annex 3). The evaluation team undertook in-person data collection missions to Kenya, Moldova and Zimbabwe (see Figure 2), and collaborated with an ongoing IES field visit to Samoa to gather relevant data from stakeholders of mutual interest.¹¹ Overall, the evaluation team combined two theory-based methods – qualitative comparative analysis and contribution analysis¹² – to construct timelines for each of the 12 country case studies using evidence from desk reviews and interviews to capture the last five years of women's political participation, key contextual events (episodes or crises) and UN Women's activities/inputs (see Figure 2).

Concurrent with the 12 country case studies, the evaluation team conducted interviews with key stakeholders supporting the delivery of UN Women's portfolio on women's political participation at global and regional levels; fielded an online survey to UN Women personnel engaged with women's political participation at global, regional and country levels; and conducted desk reviews of strategic documents and monitoring and reporting data to examine linkages in programming and results across different levels of UN Women.¹³

In total, 224 stakeholders (81 per cent female, 19 per cent male) were engaged through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions – the majority of which were conducted virtually. The online survey sent to UN Women personnel received responses from 57 stakeholders (28 per cent response rate), while the external survey sent to women political aspirants and leaders received 351 responses (8 per cent response rate).¹⁴

⁷ Selection criteria included: level of investment, country context, strategic significance of programmes, potential for learning, sustainability and relevance to implementation of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, availability of data and evidence including monitoring data and evaluations.

⁸ Yin, R (2017). "Case Study Research and its Application: Design and Methods," SAGE.

⁹ Please see Inception Report Annex 1 for a comparative table on the selected countries.

¹⁰ <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html>

¹¹ Details on the regional distribution of stakeholders can be found in Annex 7.

¹² Qualitative comparative analysis is appropriate when measuring a specific/single outcome across different contexts. Necessity and sufficiency analysis can be conducted to generate richer insights into what is working (factors of success). Contribution analysis is an adaptable method which can be used in conjunction with others, including qualitative comparative analysis. Contribution analysis can be used to assess the impact/contribution of UN Women's initiatives operating in diverse and complex contexts.

¹³ The evaluation team collated and reviewed relevant results from the UN Women Results Management System (RMS) dashboard, Annual Reporting on women's political participation (2018-2022), Strategic Plan Indicator reports (2018-2022) and donor agreements and reports from the Donor Agreement Management System (DAMS; 2018-2021). These data, accompanied by budgets and delivery data from the OneApp Executive dashboard enabled the evaluation team to undertake a comprehensive portfolio review and prepare a representative list of country case studies (see Annex 5 for a list of key documents and databases consulted).

¹⁴ The survey was distributed in nine countries in eight languages: English, French, Kyrgyz, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish and Swahili. The response rate (by country) to the external survey ranged from 5.5 per cent at the lowest end to 41 per cent at the highest, with a large variation in the target sample in each country. The largest target sample corresponded to Colombia with 3,500 beneficiaries (response rate 6.3 per cent), and in Lebanon, the team was unable to field the survey due to operational constraints. The total response rate was 8 per cent and the average response rate was 17.8 per cent (considering the response rates for the survey in each language).

Figure 2. Sources and methodology for data collection



NOTES:

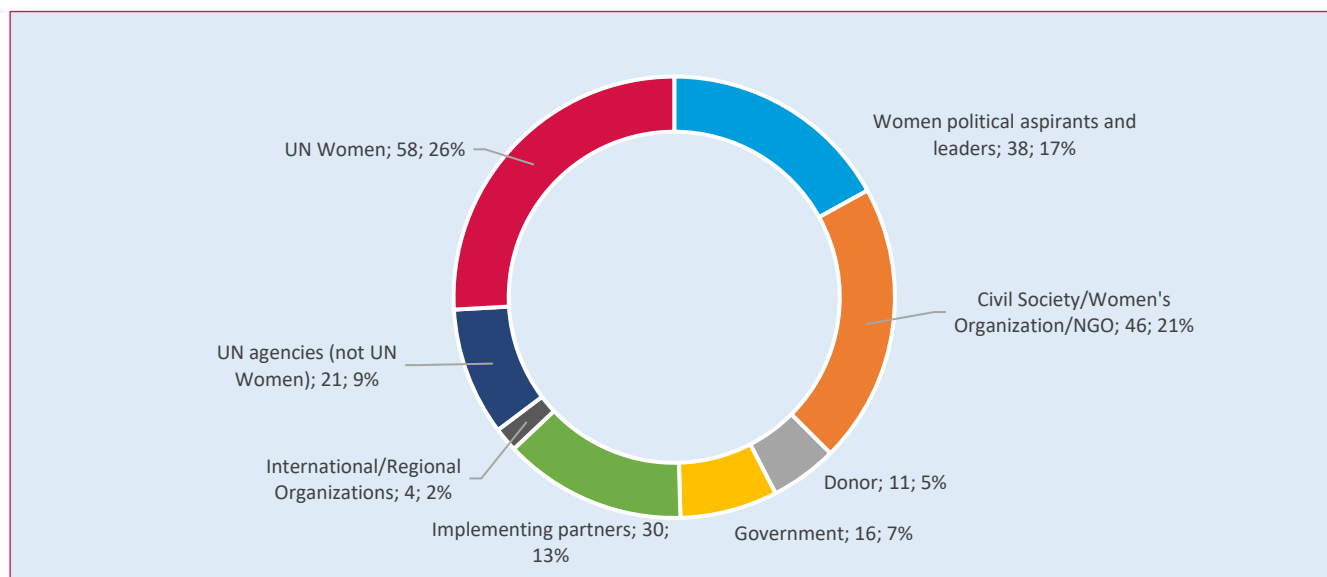
¹The team collaborated with an ongoing IES data collection visit to Samoa to gather relevant data from stakeholders of mutual interest.

²An IES field visit to Lebanon planned for October 2023 had to be cancelled due to the situation in the region.

³Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in English, French, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish.

⁴The Women Political Aspirants and Leaders survey was fielded in English, French, Kyrgyz, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish and Swahili.

Figure 3. Stakeholders interviewed by type (N = 224)



UN Women personnel at the global, regional and country level (26 per cent) made up the largest category of stakeholders interviewed, followed closely by partners from civil society organizations/women's organizations/non-governmental organizations (21 per cent) and women political aspirants and leaders (17 per cent) (see Figure 3 for stakeholders and Annex 3 for stakeholder mapping).

1.4 Ethics, gender equality and leave no one behind

As is standard IES practice, the evaluation incorporated a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach that aligned with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards. More specifically, the evaluation aligned with UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation,¹⁵ UNEG Ethical Guidelines,¹⁶ UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation¹⁷ in the UN system and UNEG guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluation.¹⁸

The methodology included a focus on issues of equity and aimed to capture perspectives of rights holders and under-represented/marginalized groups (e.g. women and girls by age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity/indigenous women, women with disabilities, ex-combatants). A particular effort was made to survey women political aspirants, candidates and leaders who had undertaken training and/or received support from UN Women. The survey was translated into eight languages and was tailored to all 12 countries, resulting in 351 responses.¹⁹

The rights, safety, welfare and confidentiality of stakeholders engaged in this evaluation were ensured by managing the data collection process systematically and with integrity, in accordance with IES Data Management Guidance.²⁰

1.5 Evaluation constraints and limitations

The evaluation team faced a small number of constraints and limitations in carrying out the present evaluation. There were some disparities in the types and quality of data available across case studies due to several reasons: in some countries virtual interviews were difficult due to ongoing elections (Colombia, Liberia and Zimbabwe), connectivity issues (Central African Republic and Liberia), relatively smaller programming on women's political

¹⁵ <https://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980>

¹⁶ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

¹⁷ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

¹⁸ <https://unevaluation.org/document/detail/3050>

¹⁹ Due to the outbreak of the Middle East crisis, the evaluation team decided it was best not to circulate the survey in Lebanon, to avoid overburdening the Country Office and to limit any duplication of efforts given that another survey was scheduled for their trainees before the end of the year.

²⁰ For details see the data protection protocols included in Annex 8.

participation (Papua New Guinea and Samoa) and unforeseen events, such as crises (Lebanon).

In a few cases, this entailed conducting a smaller number of interviews with key informants to complement the desk review and/or having less documentary evidence. In the case of countries from Asia and the Pacific, the evaluation team directly engaged relatively fewer stakeholders (five, equivalent to 2 per cent of the total); however, drew on primary evidence (key informant interviews of relevant stakeholders) collected by an ongoing IES evaluation in Samoa. In the case of the Arab States region, the in-person IES field visit planned for Lebanon in October 2023 had to be cancelled – although the evaluation team conducted substantial remote interviews to mitigate this limitation. While the team was able to interview women political aspirants and leaders engaged with UN Women’s initiatives in most countries, the team was not able to do so in all 12 cases. The evaluation team collaborated with fellow IES colleagues conducting field visits in countries of mutual interest to avoid evaluation fatigue for Country Offices that were contributing to ongoing evaluations on other topics, and to utilize resources efficiently.

Finally, while the evaluation team aimed to reach all stakeholders supported by UN Women during the period under review, for the external survey sent to women political aspirants, candidates and leaders, achieving a balanced sample and response rate was challenging due to *inter alia* connectivity issues, information gaps and local language issues.²¹ Response rates also varied substantially by country, as did the number of individuals the survey was sent to, skewing the geographic representation.²² Nevertheless, the survey was completed by 351 stakeholders and provides valuable information to triangulate the evaluation findings. UN Women Country Offices played an important role in supporting the outreach and implementation of the survey. The evaluation team were careful throughout the analysis to avoid generalizing based on the data or drawing geographic comparisons.

Overall, while there were some minor challenges in data collection, the evaluation team was able to effectively triangulate data from multiple, reliable sources to evaluate UN Women’s contribution to women’s political participation.

²¹ Despite having the survey available in eight languages, the evaluation team was not able to translate it into Shona and Ndebele in the case of Zimbabwe.

²² 64 per cent of the 351 answers were from Colombia. The response rates per language were as follows: Spanish – Colombia 225/3562 (6 per cent), Portuguese - Brazil 1/18 (6 per cent), French – Central African Republic 9/46 (20 per cent), English and Swahili – Kenya, Liberia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe 66/482 (14 per cent),

Romanian – Moldova 43/219 (20 per cent), Kyrgyz and Russian – Kyrgyzstan 7/17 (41 per cent). No data for Papua New Guinea and Samoa. Not distributed in Lebanon due to crisis. The total response rate was 8 per cent (351/4344) and the average response rate was 17.8 per cent (considering the response rates for the survey in each language).



Photo ©UN Women

2 EVALUATION CONTEXT

2.1 Global context

Women's political participation is a fundamental right enshrined in international and regional human rights instruments, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952) to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), reinforced by international political commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the 2030 Agenda. It is also a critical aspect of women's autonomy and capacity to freely make decisions that affect their lives under conditions of equality.

During the period under review, progress was made in women's political participation. The share of women parliamentarians in single or lower houses increased from 23.4 per cent in 2018²³ to 26.5 per cent in 2023²⁴ and at the local level, women currently hold 35.5 per cent of elected seats in deliberative bodies, up from 33.9 per cent in 2020.²⁵ The number of women Speakers of Parliament has also increased to 22.7 per cent in 2023²⁶ compared with 19.1 per cent in 2018.²⁷ Gender quotas have played a key role in such progress: on average, women's representation is 5 per cent higher in national parliaments and 7 per cent higher in local government in countries with legislated candidate quotas.²⁸ However, gender parity continues to be an exception: only six countries have 50 per cent or more women in their lower/single chambers of national parliaments²⁹ and three in local legislatures.³⁰ The number of countries where a woman is head of government increased from 11 countries in 2018³¹ to 19 countries in 2023.³²

Despite overall progress in terms of more women participating in political decision-making worldwide, gender equality in political participation remains elusive. Deeply entrenched discrimination persists worldwide and continues to hinder women's full participation in political and electoral processes.

While the countries selected for this evaluation are extremely diverse in their characteristics and contexts, common barriers emerged that are likely to relate to the underlying patriarchal structure in societies and institutions that continue to affect women's full enjoyment of their political rights. These barriers include issues such as illiteracy and lack of national identity documentation, to social norms that perpetuate gender stereotypes against women in politics. For those who decide to run for office, difficulties in accessing campaign funds, visibility in the media and obtaining better positions in electoral lists adversely affect women candidates, as well as exclusion from key decision-making spaces within their own parties and time constraints due to care work.

In some cases, the design of temporary special measures and lack of enforcement mechanisms to ensure their implementation also constitute key barriers; as do political parties, who often function as the main gatekeepers to women's political participation. Similarly, violence against women in politics is an issue of growing concern that affects women in politics and is cited as having a dissuasive and negative effect on women in terms of their entry and/or permanence in politics. Therefore, in its efforts to advance women's rights and gender equality, UN Women recognizes women's political participation as a key area of focus.

²³ <https://www.ipu.org/news/statements/2019-03/womens-political-leadership-striving-50-cent-balance-in-2030>

²⁴ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>

²⁵ <https://localgov.unwomen.org/data>

²⁶ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>

²⁷ <https://www.ipu.org/news/statements/2019-03/womens-political-leadership-striving-50-cent-balance-in-2030>

²⁸ <https://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2021/3>

²⁹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>

³⁰ <https://localgov.unwomen.org/data?indicator=Value&year=2023>

³¹ <https://www.ipu.org/news/statements/2019-03/womens-political-leadership-striving-50-cent-balance-in-2030>

³² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>

2.2 UN Women's key initiatives and partnerships for women's political participation

UN Women's key initiatives on advancing women's political participation during the period under review included developing and implementing legal frameworks and **constitutional and legislative reforms**;³³ advocating for **temporary special measures, including legislated quotas**; mainstreaming gender equality through **electoral management bodies**;³⁴ working with governments, national statistical offices and other partners to produce data (e.g. SDG 5.5.1b on women in local government, or prevalence surveys on violence against women in politics), implement laws, policies and programmes that **address violence against women in politics** at all levels; promoting **social norms change** to recognize women as political leaders; **expanding the pool of women considering running** for office and serve as elected officials through training and coaching; and **building the capacity of women office holders**, such as members of parliamentary committees and parliamentary women's caucuses, women elected in local government and women members of political parties.

UN Women led advocacy efforts and strategic partnerships to build a case for women's representation in local government as a means of measuring progress towards gender equality, and **Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 5.5.1b** ("Proportion of positions held by women in local government") was adopted as part of the SDG Framework in 2015. UN Women has since been the sole custodian of the indicator and has supported data compilation; coordinated national statistical capacity-building with UN Regional Commissions; developed a baseline for monitoring and analysing national, regional and global trends on women's representation in local government; and undertaken annual data compilation.

UN Women also supported normative advancements³⁵ and frameworks on women's political participation and ending violence against women in politics; and has leveraged its coordination mandate through partnerships with key UN agencies, including UNDP, DPPA and DPPA–Electoral Assistance Division, UNESCO, UN DESA, several Economic Commissions; and inter-agency mechanisms (including the Inter-Agency Mechanism on Electoral Assistance, the Praia Group on Governance Statistics, and the Inter-Agency Task Team on Temporary Special Measures).

The overarching and comprehensive framework (established by the General Assembly and Secretary-General decisions) that guides all UN electoral assistance, including related to women's electoral participation under which UN Women participates, includes the following aspects: 1) UN electoral support is provided only by request of the Member State concerned or by General Assembly/Secretary-General mandate; 2) the decision and parameters of UN electoral assistance are decided by the USG for DPPA as the designated UN focal point for electoral assistance matters; 3) the decision and type of electoral assistance is based upon an electoral needs assessment (which includes a substantial component on women's electoral participation), led by the Electoral Assistance Division; and 4) implementation is guided by UN electoral policy and in consultation with the various UN entities that are engaged in electoral support. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Electoral Assistance Division (DPPA-EAD) now systematically includes gender recommendations, including on the use of temporary special measures, in its Needs Assessment Mission reports. This presents opportunities for UN Women to be part of the consultation process at country level.

UN Women established enhanced partnerships with key stakeholders at global, regional and country levels (e.g. the Inter-Parliamentary Union; International Institute for

³³ As per reporting in UN Women's Annual Reports, between 2018 and 2022, UN Women supported 27 legal frameworks that promote gender balance in decision-making in 21 countries, (including parity laws, electoral and political parties' laws and other laws with parity provisions) in Argentina, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Malawi, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Republic of Moldova, São Tomé and Príncipe, Serbia, Sudan, Tunisia and Ukraine.

³⁴ As per UN Women's Annual Reporting, the Entity supported Electoral Management Bodies' institutional reforms such as gender policies and/or strategies, regulations and diverse protocols to promote inclusive and violence free elections in Bolivia, Central African Republic, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia,

Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe between 2018 and 2022.

³⁵ Key examples of normative advances on violence against women in politics include the UN General Assembly resolution on Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: Sexual harassment ([A/RES/73/148](#)) and the "Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics" ([A/73/301](#)).

Democracy and Electoral Assistance; National Democratic Institute; Interamerican Institute of Human Rights and its Center for Electoral Assistance and Promotion; Global Network of Electoral Justice; United Cities and Local Governments; the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Parlamento Latinoamericano y Caribeño; African Union; Pan Africa Parliament; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; and the European Institute for Gender Equality).

Furthermore, UN Women has built an extensive library of knowledge products related to women's political participation that is informed by regional and country-level inputs. Key knowledge products to date have included UN Women's *Political Leadership and Candidate Training Curriculum*, **programming guidebooks** (e.g. [Inclusive electoral processes: A guide for electoral management bodies on promoting gender equality and women's participation](#)), **guidance notes** (e.g. [Preventing violence against women in politics](#)), **action kits** (e.g. [Engaging parliaments in gender responsive budgeting; HeForShe Action Kit for Parliaments](#)) and **primers** (e.g. [A primer for parliamentary action: Gender sensitive responses to COVID-19](#)). In addition to the global knowledge hub on [Women in Local Government](#), UN Women led and contributed to several other global databases and hubs including the [UN Gender Quota Portal](#) developed within the framework of the UN Inter-Agency Task Team on Temporary Special Measures and [iKNOW Politics Platform](#) with UNDP, Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). In partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, UN Women publishes the "[Women in politics map](#)," to visualize data for women in executive positions and national parliaments. According to the 2023 publication, more women than ever before hold political decision-making posts worldwide, but gender parity is still far from being achieved.



Photo ©UN Women

3

PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

3.1 UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and Strategic Plan 2022–2025

UN Women’s current and preceding Strategic Plans present the Entity’s corporate approach to this area of work. UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021 included a detailed theory of change for women’s leadership in political decision-making and a Flagship Programme Initiative dedicated to women’s political participation. The current UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 presents a more cross-cutting approach, while continuing to emphasize governance and participation in public life as one of four key thematic areas for UN Women. Of the 10 newly established Gender Equality Accelerators developed to drive policy coherence and programmatic results, Gender Equality Accelerator 1 (Women’s Political Participation) directly aligns with women’s political participation. Gender Equality Accelerator 1 is a programmatic framework that aims to leverage UN Women’s normative, coordination and operational mandates to foster new knowledge and innovation, evidence-based programming, policy advice and system-wide accountability.

UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021 Integrated Resource and Results Framework served to monitor and report progress in promoting women’s political participation through the indicators under *Outcome 2: Leadership and Governance* and *Output 4: Encouraging greater participation, leadership, and involvement of women of all ages in political institutions and processes*. These indicators covered the promotion of gender balance in elections and decision-making bodies; gender equality reforms by electoral stakeholders; initiatives to strengthen women leaders and candidates to engage in political life; gender equality initiatives implemented by parliamentary bodies with UN Women’s support; and efforts to monitor violence against women in politics.

Throughout the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, indicators related to women’s political participation — consisting of one outcome indicator and four output indicators — reflected consistent progress, meeting or exceeding annual targets with only a few exceptions (see Annex 10, Table 1). By the end of Strategic Plan 2018–2021, all but two indicators (Outcome 2.1 regarding the

legislative framework for gender balance in elections and decision-making and Output 2.4.2 for capacity-building efforts focused on women in political life) were reported to have successfully met their targets. Outcome 2.1 and Output 2.4.2 demonstrated significant progress, with both reportedly achieving over 90 per cent of their targets.

Unlike Strategic Plan 2018–2021, which had stand-alone sub-thematic outputs (including one for women’s political participation), Strategic Plan 2022–2025 introduces seven cross-thematic, systemic outcomes and related output indicators. While UN Women’s progress on women’s political participation is being captured across all systemic outcome areas, indicators directly related to women’s political participation were incorporated as output indicators under Systemic Outcome 1 – Global Normative Frameworks and Gender-Responsive Laws, Policies and Institutions; Systemic Outcome 5 – Women’s Leadership and Agency; and Systemic Outcome 7 – UN System Coordination (See Annex 10, Table 2).

Based on the results reported by country, regional and headquarters offices in 2022, three indicators – legal frameworks promoting gender balance; increased institutional capacities; and violence against women in politics – reportedly reached their annual milestones. The new indicator on UN system-wide coordination related to women’s political participation in elections and temporary special measures reportedly did not reach its target. Key informants interviewed for the evaluation raised concerns about the challenges that the new Integrated Resource and Results Framework structure poses when trying to attribute and document progress and results related to women’s political participation.

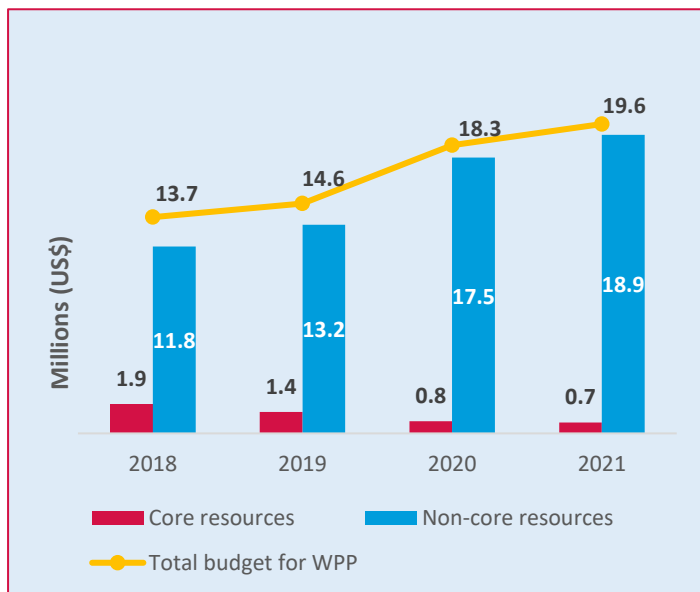
3.2 Financial analysis

UN Women’s annual budget for work on women’s political participation steadily increased between 2018 and 2021 (see Figure 4), with the highest total allocation at the end of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period (US\$ 19.6 million in 2021). Most of UN Women’s support to women’s political participation for Strategic Plan 2018–2021 was funded through non-core resources (93 per cent; US\$ 61.4

million), while 7 per cent (US\$ 4.7 million) was core funding.³⁶

At the regional level, East and Southern Africa reported the highest budget (US\$ 27.2 million) during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, followed by West and Central Africa (US\$ 12.8 million) and the Americas and the Caribbean (US\$ 9.1 million). The lowest budgets for women’s political participation were reported in the Arab States region at US\$ 2.8 million (see Figure 5).

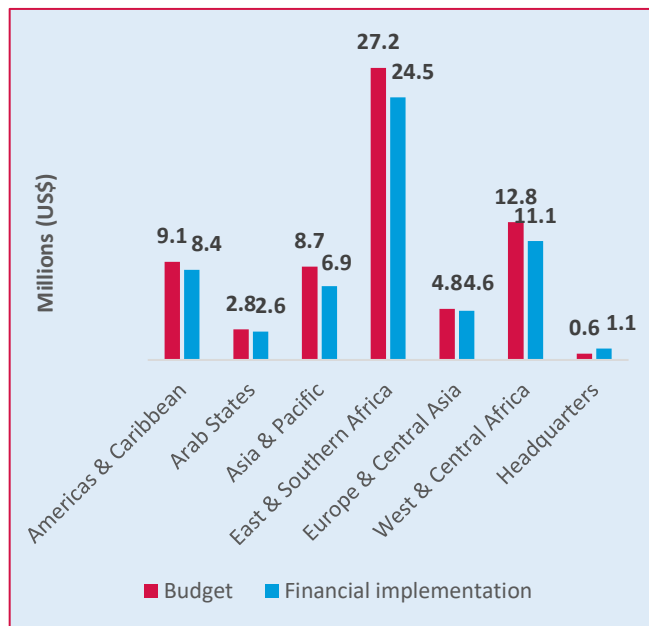
Figure 4. Annual budget (US\$) for women’s political participation by funding source (2018–2021)



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women’s OneApp Executive Dashboard.

The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 has changed the reporting methodology for UN Women’s support to women’s political participation. While UN Women activities/budget related to women’s political participation during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period were tagged to Strategic Plan Outputs D11, D12, D13 and D14, the current Strategic Plan includes cross-thematic reporting on activities/budget. This made it challenging for the evaluation team to compile comparable budget data on women’s political participation for 2022.

Figure 5. Budget and financial implementation for women’s political participation by region (2018–2021)



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team using data from UN Women’s OneApp project delivery dashboard.

Following the methodology used in other cases by UN Women’s Strategic Planning Unit, the evaluation team analysed historical data for the thematic area: Governance and Leadership (Outcome 2 in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021; Impact Area 1 in the Strategic Plan 2022–2025) and extracted the budgets for women’s political participation between the years 2018 and 2021 where women’s political participation was reported against previous Strategic Plan Outputs D11, D12, D13, and D14 to compute the average budget and average proportion across the four years. Using the average ratio for the years 2018–2021, the estimated budget for women’s political participation for 2022 was US\$ 25.1 million.

Between 2018 and 2023, UN Women’s key funding partners for women’s political participation included Sweden (US\$ 88 million), Canada (US\$ 17 million), the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (US\$ 12 million), the European Union (US\$ 12 million), and the Peacebuilding Trust Fund (US\$ 6 million).

³⁶ In 2018 and 2019, women’s political participation received an additional US\$ 56,097 per year through extra-budgetary resources (not reflected in Figure 5

due to rounding); however, following the discontinuance of these funds, no allocation was made post 2019.



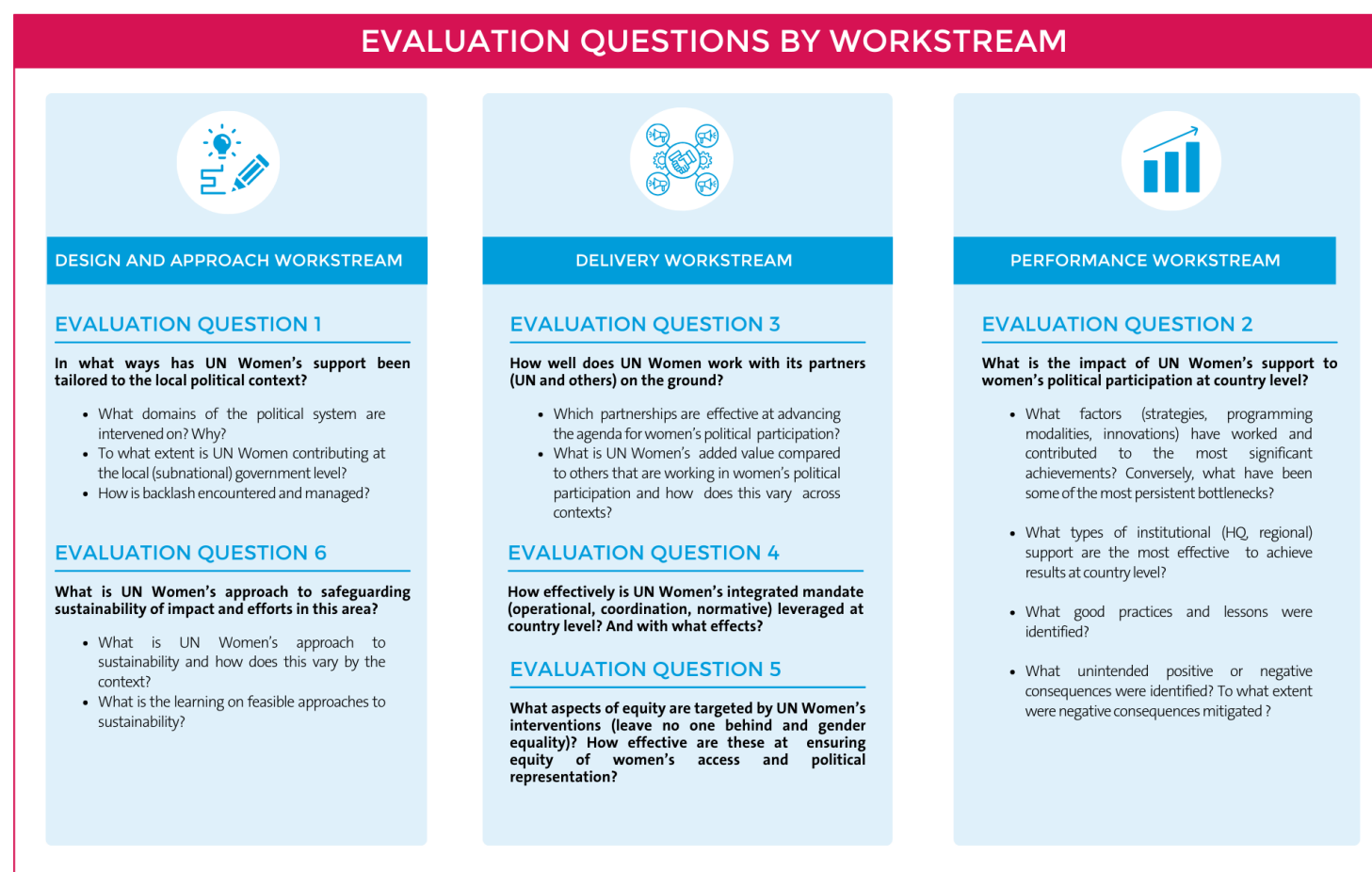
Photo ©UN Women

4 FINDINGS

This section presents the evaluation findings organized by key evaluation question. To facilitate analysis, the key questions were grouped into three workstreams (see Figure 6):

- **Design and approach workstream:** Relevance (extent of tailoring to the local political context) and sustainability of UN Women’s approach.
- **Delivery workstream:** Coherence of partnerships, effective leveraging of UN Women’s triple mandate and considerations of equity aspects (leave no one behind and gender equality) at the country level.
- **Performance workstream:** Impact of UN Women’s support to political participation at the country level.

Figure 6. Evaluation questions by workstream



Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

4.1 IN WHAT WAYS HAS UN WOMEN'S SUPPORT BEEN TAILORED TO THE LOCAL POLITICAL CONTEXT?

DESIGN AND APPROACH WORKSTREAM

FINDING 1: UN Women's approach to designing country-level programmes on women's political participation was adaptive and allows flexibility to leverage contextual drivers and to work strategically with political influencers and actors. The Entity is also starting to make inroads at the subnational level in some contexts.

The representative sample of countries studied for this evaluation were all in complex, fast-changing environments. Contextual factors, including persistent patriarchal political power structures, can work to rapidly undermine gains in women's political participation and rally opposition to women's progress. Across all the countries under review, there were multiple instances of key actors evading political commitments to include women or actively working to suppress women's political participation. Given these challenges, and in order to succeed, programmes need to be flexible, select political partners wisely and be able to rapidly adapt when encountering challenges to reflect and reconvene. This entails working in 'politically smart' ways, using a mix of long and short-term strategies.

Drawing on key informant interviews with various groups of external and internal stakeholders from the 12 country case studies, the evaluation team undertook a barriers analysis and found remarkable consistency in the types of gender-based barriers faced by women entering and/or continuing to participate in politics across very different contexts.³⁷ These included a need to develop skills and confidence; limited time availability due to the unequal distribution of care work; lack of equal access to resources; and the effect of deterrents such as violence and sexual harassment and negative imagery of women in politics. Across all contexts, political parties emerged as the main gatekeepers to women's political participation.

There was evidence that UN Women's approach to women's political participation, as represented in key strategic documents (and the accompanying theory of change), identified the right barriers and effectively allowed programmes to be tailored to national priorities and contexts. This was evident, for instance, in the area of legal reform. In each country context, where possible, UN Women's country programmes have been able to forge partnerships with key political actors, such as electoral management bodies, parliamentarians and others to improve policy and legal frameworks enabling access for women candidates. The latter included measures such as supporting the development of gender strategies that require political parties to move towards gender parity.

In many country contexts, though not all, UN Women country programmes were able to mobilize large coalitions and use existing constitutional provisions to advocate for more specific and stronger legislation to support women's political participation. For instance, in Liberia, UN Women supported in-depth legal analysis leveraging provisions in the constitution to argue for legislated quotas for women; and in Brazil, UN Women supported a legal strategy before the Supreme Court of Justice that led to a constitutional amendment stipulating that parties earmark at least 30 per cent of public campaign funds for women. Subsequent High Electoral Court rulings enforced said allocation of funds as well as airtime for women candidates, and for afro-descendant candidates.

³⁷ A rapid barriers analysis was performed as part of the analysis of how UN Women's support to women's political participation is tailored to context and to what extent it is addressing the right barriers which prevent women from being politically active (See Annex 9). This was based on the qualitative key

informant interviews in selected country case studies and is complementary to the qualitative comparative analysis. This method does not analyse the quality or effectiveness of the response but complements other evaluation methods which do.

While many countries are signatories to international legal commitments for gender equality such as CEDAW, and these are effectively used to advance women's political participation, the evaluation team found that advocating for women's political inclusion using national laws and regional policy goals was still needed. For instance, national level laws which have stated gender equality goals can be more effective at mobilizing political support than international instruments. Stakeholders also indicated the persuasiveness and importance of using regional instruments, such as the African Union's 'Agenda 2063' in support of women's political participation. This was challenging in contexts that were strongly patriarchal with weak gender equality laws, but the evaluation team found examples of UN Women using appeals to local, national or regional instruments as justifications for advocating for advancing women's political participation.

The evaluation team also found evidence in some countries of a shift towards working at subnational level, with training of candidates to stand for election in state governments or councils and for local level governance positions (e.g. village chiefs). In Moldova, for instance, UN Women focused strategically on supporting the capacity development of women vying for local positions and has set up the Women's Mayor Network to foster support for elected female officials. In Lebanon, the training and mentoring package targeted local elections. While these models offer promise, there is a risk of not being able to achieve scale, or of over-stretch owing to operating constraints. There was some evidence that initiatives which focused on specific subnational areas could be an alternative approach. For instance, in Kenya, the programme focused on specific geographic areas that were less developed socially and economically, which allowed for deeper use of local social networks to support women being elected or in power. In Brazil, this approach enabled UN Women to support women's engagement in local and state level policy processes and to make inroads at a time when progress at the national level proved challenging.

The focus on social norms has also brought many examples of successfully engaging local actors, particularly at the community or village level. In Tanzania, for instance, UN Women reportedly worked extensively with village volunteers to promote women's leadership,³⁸ while in Kenya this was done through local chapters of faith-based groups. In the Central African Republic, women in peace huts were able to negotiate with rebels so that women candidates could stand for election and community volunteers mobilized at the local level supported civic education campaigns and voting in favour of female candidates. There were also good efforts to embed institutional support for women's leadership into local governance structures. For instance, in Tanzania and Kenya, community mobilization efforts included working with community development officers (who reported to the state/provincial government but were responsible for all community development work), as well as working with local religious and village leaders. Working through local partners and faith groups has been critical in maintaining a politically neutral identity.

³⁸ Evaluation of the Tanzania Women's Leadership and Political Participation Project, (WLPP) "Wanawake Wanaweza" Phase II (2017-2021), UN Women 2023.

FINDING 2: The Entity's support to women political aspirants and leaders was relevant and responsive to the strong demand from stakeholders. Scaling this support can be a challenge, but there was some evidence of strategic models of engagement that could be more widely replicated.

Standardization of approaches to training and other areas of support to women political aspirants and leaders has consolidated learning and allowed UN Women Country Offices to rapidly adapt their strategies and interventions. This has enabled women's political participation programmes to reach substantial numbers of political candidates, leaders and journalists with effective training packages.³⁹ In Moldova, for instance, UN Women reported training over a thousand (1,057) women candidates in 2019, of which 25 per cent were elected for office; and, in Tanzania, 730 women were trained, 17 per cent of whom were elected as MPs in the national election (2020).

Evidence from both the qualitative interviews and the survey with women political aspirants and leaders demonstrated that the training for political candidates enabled women to build confidence, skills and capacities which were relevant to their political context. In the survey with women political aspirants and leaders, most respondents (96 per cent, $n=194/203$) agreed that the training was of high quality.⁴⁰ In terms of relevance of skills gained, 79 per cent ($n=163/206$) of respondents reported putting into practice the knowledge gained on gender equality and women's empowerment; while 62 per cent ($n=128/206$) reported application of leadership skills. Figure 7 below presents further details on the use of skills and capacities gained through training supported by UN Women.

In qualitative interviews, women mentioned that the training had improved their skills, capacities and knowledge, particularly on gender equality, capacity to advocate and knowledge of laws. They also reported improved confidence and skills to be able to engage in political spaces. There was some evidence of the training

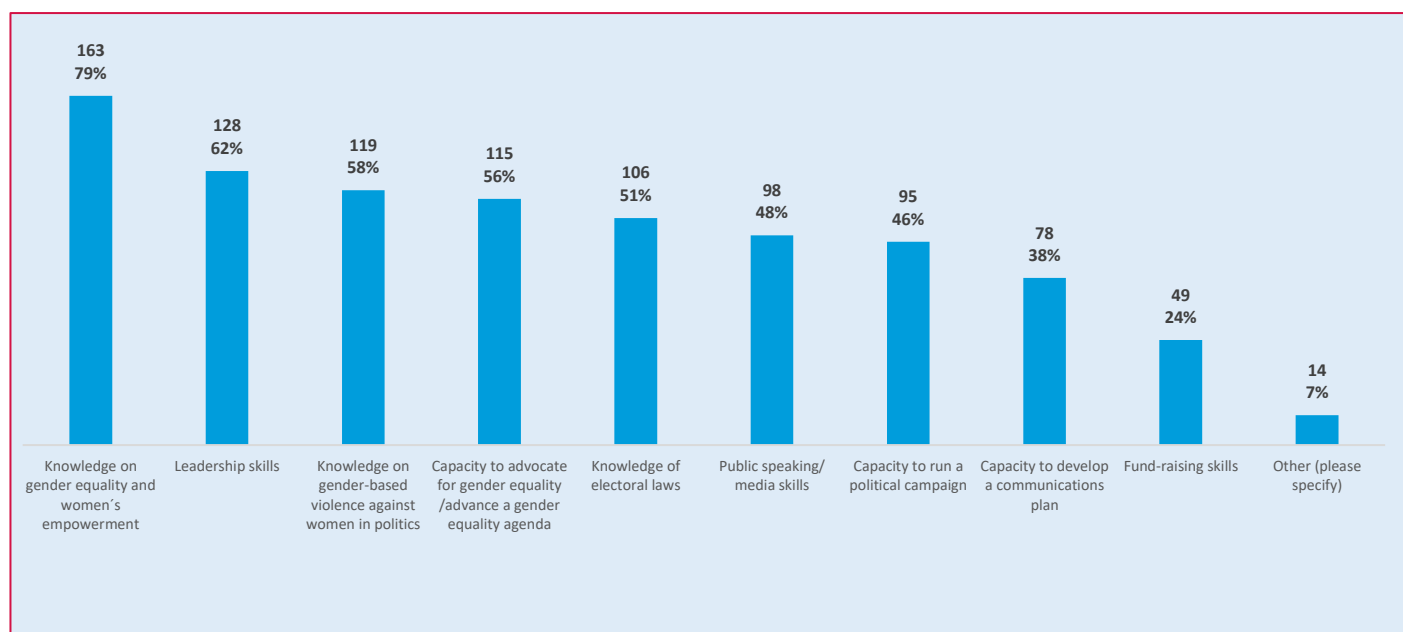
being adapted to better suit local contexts, for instance, in Kyrgyzstan, trainers adapted the training to give practical tips on campaigning; use local sayings and proverbs to show women's political participation as positive concepts; and shift norms on women's subservient position. Women who were interviewed for this evaluation deeply valued this combination of skills and confidence building along with providing emotional support and bonding. These approaches also built important cross-party allegiances among female political candidates. Similarly, in the Central African Republic, more in-depth mentoring and psychological support was provided to candidates to build their confidence from very low levels, and to be able to manage the stress of candidacy in a hostile environment. In Colombia, UN Women partnered with the national Public Administration School and the national women's machinery to institutionalize the Political Training School for women, ensuring territorial reach.

However, in some contexts, more in-depth training and mentoring models were under development. In Lebanon, a two-tiered approach reportedly trained over 800 women (in the context of local elections) but also focused on a core group of fifty women who received in-depth mentoring, creating safe spaces for women and building their emotional resilience for entering politics. Some countries have developed comprehensive training programmes, for instance, the Women 4 Leadership academy in Moldova delivered a nine-month training curriculum. There was some evidence that these variations are more responsive to women's needs in each context. Respondents to the online survey indicated that mentoring (55 per cent, $n = 37/67$); opportunities to meet other women and women's civil society organizations (49 per cent, $n = 33/67$); and addressing violence against women in politics (43 per cent, $n = 29/67$) were the most useful types of support.

³⁹ As reported in the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 reporting for Output 2.4.2 Number of women leaders, candidates and aspirants with strengthened capacities to engage in political life, with UN Women's support. See Annex 10, Table 1.

⁴⁰ This was in response to Question 8 in the external survey. Please see Annex 4 for details.

Figure 7. Women political aspirants and leaders’ views on use of skills and capacities gained through training supported by UN Women (Total responses: 206)



Note. External Survey Question 9 - Which of the following capacities, skills and/or knowledge that you gained as a result of the training, if any, did you put into practice? Please select all that apply. Source: Women political aspirants and leaders online survey conducted by evaluation team (October-November 2023).

The trade-off in training between depth versus scale was raised by some external stakeholders. For instance, in the country case studies, the qualitative interviews with trainees revealed that some viewed the training as “light-touch” and reported that a more in-depth approach was needed in complex and challenging environments where women have less access to basic education and less political experience. A major obstacle to this has been funding cycles, which were often short-term and tied to elections. In several countries funding arrived late, and training was therefore undertaken in a rushed manner, often overlapping with campaign periods. In response to the external survey question on timing of training and support received from UN Women, 60 per cent ($n = 122/205$) reported having been trained within 12 months prior to an election; 20 per cent ($n = 40/205$) reported receiving support in between election cycles; and 17 per cent ($n = 34/205$) reported receiving support soon after elections (within 12 months).⁴¹ There was a clear

consensus that longer-term approaches were needed to better support women in their candidacy. In a few cases, survey respondents highlighted the lack of follow-up post-election.

Other evidence suggested that the training approach has not tackled some barriers to women’s participation. Lack of resources and capacity to fundraise was a strong barrier to women’s candidacy. In many contexts, women did not have the resources to pay candidacy fees, hire staff to manage campaigns or pay for transport. Women interviewed in the country case studies also indicated that their strategies to garner local support, versus male candidates who tended to be well resourced, took a longer time. This underlines the critical need for longer lead in times to elections, providing women with the opportunity to both fundraise and develop their profiles. Legal and policy reforms to improve financing for women are also critically important. In some countries, the politically neutral resources (such as information, education and communication materials) provided by UN Women received mixed reviews as they were found to be

⁴¹ The remaining 3 per cent reported receiving training at other times (in response to external survey question 7).

of limited utility or were not provided in sufficient number.

Addressing violence against women in politics and women being able to take steps to protect themselves was one of the aspects of training that was highly valued. However, evidence is now emerging of the growing impact of cyber-bullying and violence as a deterrent to women. In some cases, this prevented women from engaging with social media. Some countries, such as Zimbabwe, have anti-cyber bullying laws, which offer valuable entry points to further work.

Work with women who have unsuccessfully stood for election emerged as an area of potential further work and need. Relatively few country programmes made concerted attempts to follow up with this cadre of women. This is important, as the experience in areas with

low or stagnant numbers of women being elected suggests that negative examples of women in politics can directly affect women's motivation to stand for election themselves. Follow-up support, using relatively simple methods, such as Telegram or WhatsApp groups, could provide important means of continuing to motivate and engage with women interested in politics and of learning from those who decide to withdraw. In Kyrgyzstan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, UN Women organized national celebrations of women in politics, which included those who stood for election but did not win. This suggested a need to rethink training only approaches, with a focus on follow-up and providing sustained support for women political aspirants and leaders.

4.2 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF UN WOMEN'S SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AT COUNTRY LEVEL?

PERFORMANCE WORKSTREAM

FINDING 3: UN Women's programmes on women's political participation have contributed to progress in strengthening electoral frameworks and developing and sustaining a diverse cadre of women political leaders. In some countries, this is translating into more gender-responsive policies and legal reforms. This progress was due, in large part, to sustained investments in legal reforms, advocacy and strengthening women's skills and capacities at all stages of their path into politics.

During 2018–2021, UN Women reported significant progress in the number of legislative frameworks promoting gender balance in elections and decision-making bodies. This was reflected in the 94 per cent achievement rate for the related outcome indicator (Outcome 2.1).⁴² Output indicators related to women's political participation similarly reported high rates of achievement: UN Women reportedly supported 11,579 women political aspirants/candidates/leaders (across 50 countries) to strengthen their capacities to engage in political life.⁴³ This reflects a 96 per cent achievement rate over the target number of 12,000 women. UN Women also reported 110 gender equality reforms being developed/implemented by electoral stakeholders in 51

countries (140 per cent achievement rate); 241 gender equality initiatives being implemented by parliamentary bodies with UN Women's support in 30 countries (114 per cent achievement rate); and 149 initiatives developed/implemented to monitor violence against women in politics with UN Women's support in 40 countries (150 per cent achievement rate).

Drawing on comparative analysis across the 12 country case studies, the evaluation validated UN Women's contribution to progress on women's political participation in several countries. During the period January 2018– June 2023, UN Women's programming on women's political participation focused primarily on

⁴² Refer to Strategic Plan reporting numbers in Annex 10, Table 1.

⁴³ Detailed data available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/strategic-plan/outcome-area-2>

translating global norms into applicable guidance, standards and toolkits; strengthening legal support and advocacy; social norms interventions; building women's skills, confidence and capacities; and building the capacities of key institutions. The evidence triangulated by the evaluation team suggests that these investments have contributed to results in terms of gender-responsive legislation and policy; strengthened capacities among women political aspirants, candidates and leaders; mitigation of violence against women in politics; and increased awareness of women's political rights and the need to promote gender equality and women's leadership.

Regarding the **legal/policy environment**, the evidence from case studies shows that UN Women contributed to enhanced awareness and capacities of electoral stakeholders (including political actors) to promote gender balance in 8 of the 12 country case studies. For instance, in Tanzania, UN Women supported the women's caucus and women's organizations to contribute to reforms of the Political Parties Act (2019) which included greater provisions for gender equality. In Kyrgyzstan, in 2021, UN Women (in close coordination with UN Gender Theme Group members) supported lobbying efforts to preserve the previous gains in electoral legislation on the gender quota in party lists. This included providing safe dialogue platforms, expert support and facilitating the process of joint appeals to the President accompanied by an advocacy campaign on social media. In Lebanon, UN Women contributed to promoting innovative models of voluntary legislated quotas in select political parties and convened coalitions to raise awareness on the need for further support to women's political participation. UN Women also contributed to legal and policy reforms by electoral stakeholders and strengthened legislative frameworks to promote women's political participation in 6 of the 12 countries studied; for example, campaign finance reform in support of women in Brazil through a constitutional amendment and similar rulings by the High Electoral Court to enforce such change. As validated by external stakeholder interviews, UN Women played a significant role in supporting legislation in Moldova for a 40 per cent quota of women in national and local government and advocating for placement provisions to ensure full implementation of the quota. Similarly, in

Kenya, UN Women supported the Office of Registrar of Political Parties to carry out a comprehensive review of the Political Parties Act 2011, with a focus on gender and inclusion as well as improving transparency and accountability in political parties' processes. This support culminated in a consultative forum with stakeholders, including policymakers, to harmonize submissions on the amendment of the Political Parties Act (2011) from different actors in the country. Currently, UN Women is providing technical and financial support to the multisectoral working group mandated with proposing a framework for the two-thirds gender rule at the national level in Kenya.

UN Women contributed to strengthening **capacities/confidence of women** across all stages of their political life (as aspirants, candidates and leaders) in 11 of the 12 countries studied, providing support through different training modalities for women running for political office; support to women leaders in promoting gender-sensitive legislation and policies; and through networking to advance gender equality. For instance, in Kenya, women political aspirants and leaders validated the contribution of UN Women's capacity-building and training approach in the context of the 2022 elections. In addition to training candidates, UN Women also supported media training and media exposure for female aspirants and their communications teams, which was highlighted as a key component for women to gain confidence. In Moldova, UN Women provided exceptional support to women leaders and aspiring candidates, including at the local level through its support to the Women 4 Leadership Academy. The Entity also supported women leaders' networks and mentoring (including women's caucus) at the local and national level, including supporting newly elected women (training, study tours, peer-to-peer learning); political schools (including for young leaders); and monitoring how women candidates are represented in the mass media. Evidence from the documentation and key informant interviews of contribution in this area of work was validated by the external survey data, with 97 per cent of women aspirants and leaders agreeing that the training provided them with skills and capacities useful for their work in politics.⁴⁴

UN Women also contributed to **mitigating violence against women in politics** across all stages of their

⁴⁴ 97 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that the training gave them skills which were useful for their work in politics (200/206 respondents) and that the training content was relevant to their work (196/202 respondents). This was in response to "Question 8 - Please tell us about the extent





to which you agree with the following statements: The training was high quality / The training provided me with skills and capacities which are useful for my work in politics / The training built my confidence to take part in politics / The training content was relevant to my work as a woman in politics."

political life. More specifically, the Entity contributed to enhanced capacities to design and implement initiatives to mitigate violence against women in politics in 6 of 12 countries, as illustrated by the Central African Republic, where UN Women enabled the establishment of the 'green line' 1325 phone line to respond to women who were experiencing violence. UN Women also contributed to the effective implementation of actions to monitor and mitigate violence against women in politics in 5 of 12 countries and to institutions monitoring and promoting a violence free culture in two of the countries reviewed. For instance, in Liberia, UN Women made a strong contribution to this outcome, working in collaboration with the National Election Commission to develop a violence against women in politics protocol.

Finally, UN Women contributed to **supportive changes in social norms** in terms of greater community and civic understanding of women's right to participate in politics (7 of 12 countries) and enhanced the capacities and awareness of key stakeholders to promote women's leadership when standing for elections (9 of 12 countries). In Zimbabwe, UN Women worked with the media (including print and radio journalists) to better represent women in politics and address relevant social norms. The Entity also worked with the Zimbabwe Council of Churches at the grassroots level on social norms around women's political participation. Evidence of UN Women's contribution to political leaders publicly promoting gender equality and women's leadership was validated in two countries, as illustrated by the high-level forum convened by UN Women in Kyrgyzstan in 2021, which brought together women aspirants, candidates and leaders along with relevant stakeholders to showcase the diversity of women's leadership and women's significant contributions to development in the country.

Using contribution and timeline analysis, the evaluation team mapped the results from the country case studies against outcomes in the theory of change and assessed the strength of evidence for each one, as reflected in Box 1 below. The mapping largely validated UN Women's theory of change for women's political participation, finding strong coherence between the domains of change (key areas of work) and outcomes. In countries with sustained and comprehensive programmes (including Moldova and Kenya) the evaluation found advocacy and legal reforms improved the number of women elected to national governments, and that these women contributed to gender-responsive legislation such as revised care policies, gender-responsive budgeting and improving social and health care policies.

Box 1. Domains of change

DOMAINS OF CHANGE	ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS	AREAS TO STRENGTHEN
<p>POLICY/Legal ENVIRONMENT</p> 	<p>EMBEDDED PROGRESS</p> <p>Gains in legal reforms, evidenced in the temporary special measures implemented, including legislated quotas; enhanced capacity and gender awareness of electoral stakeholders; removal of barriers to women's participation; and promotion of gender balance in women's political participation, especially through electoral management bodies.</p> <p>In some countries, evidence of legislative frameworks (constitutional reforms, ratification of legislated quotas, strengthening policies around gender equity for electoral management bodies) fostering gender inclusion and greater political representation.</p> <p>Validated in 11 of 12 country case studies (Brazil, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Samoa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).</p>	<p>Strengthen legal accountability mechanisms, especially monitoring of political party compliance with commitments/legal provisions on gender equality.</p> <p>Strengthen legislative frameworks for women as leaders, for instance, work with electoral bodies to address equitable funding mechanisms.</p>
<p>BUILDING WOMEN'S CAPACITIES, CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS</p> 	<p>EMBEDDED PROGRESS</p> <p>Investments in building women's capacities and strong take up across diverse settings. In many countries, targets for supporting women political aspirants/leaders standing for election, were exceeded. Women leaders were supported directly (training, media profiles) and by working with women's caucuses.</p> <p>Evidence of women political aspirants and leaders being supported to apply leadership skills and to serve as role models. However, in some cases, negative perceptions of women leaders may have dissuaded other women from standing for election.</p> <p>Validated in 11 of 12 country cases (Brazil, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).</p>	<p>Strengthen support to women's networks and movements and employ deeper engagement on a tiered basis (aspirants, leaders, unsuccessful candidates) to develop women's confidence and skills.</p> <p>Strengthen communications and advocacy strategies to support women as leaders (including countering negative perceptions of the political legitimacy of women appointed in quota-based systems in some countries).</p>
<p>VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS</p> 	<p>CONSOLIDATING PROGRESS</p> <p>Examples of gains in policy/legal reforms, institutional strengthening of key actors, awareness raising and clarification of pathways to report incidents.</p> <p>Evidence in some countries of reporting mechanisms being strengthened, women using means of redress and violence against women in politics being tracked and monitored to some extent.</p> <p>Validated in 8 of 12 country case studies (Brazil, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).</p>	<p>Strengthen community-based social norms work to support prevention of violence against women in politics.</p> <p>Strengthen engagement with political actors and wider stakeholders to actively support a violence-free culture.</p> <p>In fragile settings, strengthen the approach to addressing violence against women in politics and elections (e.g. conceptual clarity, sanctioning and/or reparatory mechanisms, etc.)</p>
<p>SOCIAL NORMS</p> 	<p>CONSOLIDATING PROGRESS</p> <p>Examples of improved civic understanding of women's right to engage with politics, including through grassroots engagement and work with the media. Support from wider stakeholders, such as male allies, political agencies and faith-based networks in challenging damaging gender norms.</p> <p>Evidence in some countries of women being promoted to higher leadership positions, either within political parties, or in government institutions.</p> <p>Validated in 11 of 12 country cases (Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).</p>	<p>Strengthen work with male champions/allies, media houses and women's organizations to support women's rights as legitimate leaders at all stages of their paths into and out of politics.</p> <p>Identify and strengthen concerted messaging on women's right to be politically active.</p> <p>Improve metrics and monitoring of community partners working on social norms.</p>

Note: Areas of progress were assessed as being 'Embedded' where there was longer-term and more sustained change which had in some cases also translated into higher-level outcomes (either longer-term or impact level changes). The evaluation used a detailed theory of change that enabled this more robust assessment of levels of change. This was combined with evidence ranking to assess the strength of claim for each outcome. Areas of progress were assessed as 'consolidating' if there was well validated evidence of work in each domain being programmed with evidence of some short or long-term outcomes being achieved, but with issues of scale or design issues still to be addressed. For instance, social norms programming often achieved some short-term outcomes, but there was limited evidence of scaling or impact.

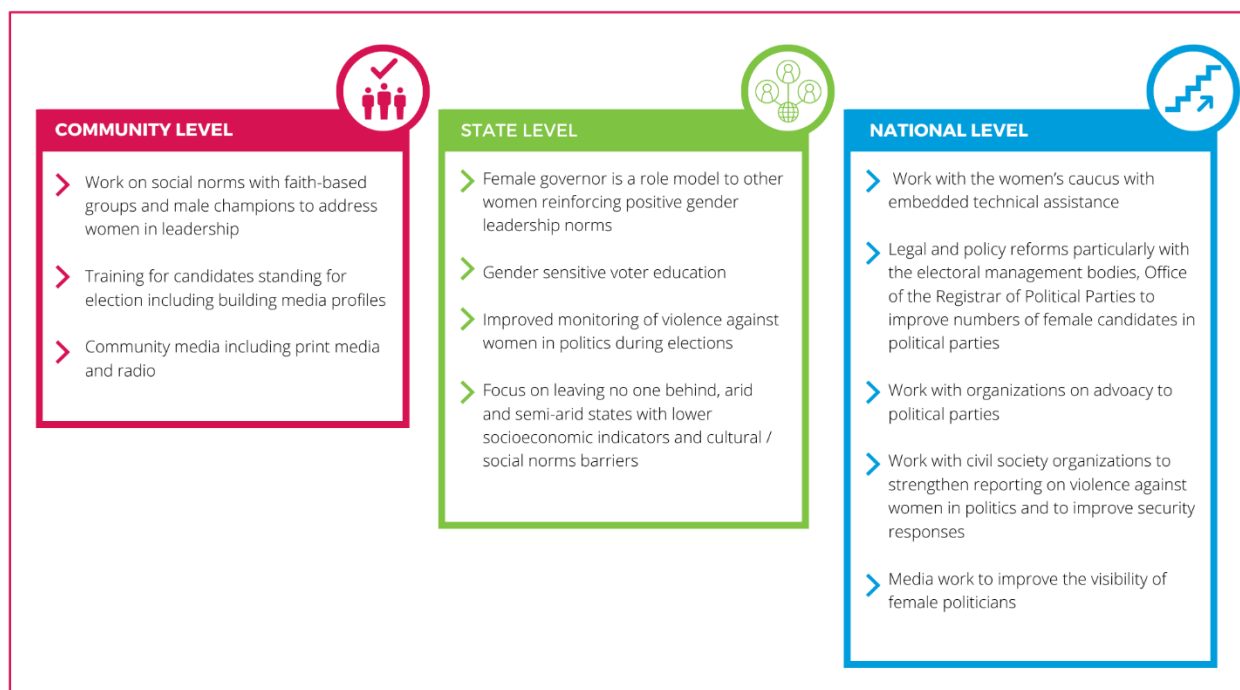
The trend analysis⁴⁵ looking at reported changes in women’s political participation across countries broadly found an increase in the number of women candidates standing for election, with slower increases or stagnation in the number of women elected. While not attributable entirely to UN Women’s efforts, the Entity was found to have contributed to these wider improving trends in women’s political participation. Legal reforms such as legislated quotas were a key driver of increases in women’s representation, though not all countries with quotas had fully achieved them. Some countries also saw reversals or stagnation in women’s political participation. In terms of UN Women’s direct support to aspirants, there was a high level of variability between countries in the training success rate (how many trained candidates go on to win elections). Contextual factors strongly accounted for these differences, suggesting that some country programmes may have had better targeting mechanisms for women who were more likely to be elected.

The country case studies showed strong interrelationships between the domains of change mentioned above. For instance, grassroots work on social norms change to support women’s political participation also brought opportunities to build opposition to violence against

women in politics. In Kenya, the women’s political participation programme had a strong national and targeted state level focus. Figure 8 shows how this worked at multiple levels (community, state and national) to achieve progress. This strong geographical lens deepened community-level work on social norms by working with religious and male leaders. Similarly, in Liberia, work with the National Council of Elders and Chiefs ensured their endorsement for women’s participation in elections at community level, as reported by external stakeholders. This may also have contributed to a reduction in violence against women in politics.

Finally, the evaluation confirmed that achieving outcomes in women’s political participation remains complex and evolves dynamically. While there was evidence of progress, there was also evidence of political opposition rallying and finding new ways to exclude women from decision-making, or new means of attacking them (e.g. online violence). As in other evaluations of women’s political participation, contextual factors such as political will were found to mobilize actors and rapidly implement changes, or conversely, slow down or reverse progress.

Figure 8. Illustrative example of domains of change by level (community, state and national) in Kenya



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team

⁴⁵ See Annex 9 for further details.

FINDING 4: UN Women’s country-level programmes have received effective and timely support from headquarters and multiple Regional Offices to support women’s political participation. Technical support and learning were accessible and well utilized, evidenced by improved programming practice. However, further support and guidance on advocacy and communications strategies could be developed, in addition to addressing some operational issues which limit UN Women’s effectiveness.

Evidence from the survey and the key informant interviews found that the current package of technical and learning support was responsive to UN Women personnel’s needs at the country level. In the internal survey, 70 per cent ($n = 40/57$) of respondents indicated that knowledge management and learning, followed by technical support (68 per cent; $n = 39/57$), data and knowledge products (58 per cent; $n = 33/57$), guidelines and programming tools⁴⁶ (56 per cent; $n = 32/57$) and financial support (56 per cent; $n = 32/57$) had been the most useful types of support.⁴⁷ Internal stakeholders indicated there was increased uptake of specific guidance such as training packages for media and journalists, as well as technical guidance on issues of political negotiation, particularly around legislated quotas. The evaluation found evidence that seed funding from headquarters rapidly plugged some gaps to mitigate reversals in women’s political participation and kept country programmes running when funding had ended. This flexible type of funding was clearly vital, especially in ‘high need’⁴⁸ and fragile settings.

From the regional perspective, there was some variance in the level of support country programmes received. Countries in regions with dedicated women’s political participation specialists were found to make stronger regional linkages and support achievement of country-level results. For instance, in West and Central Africa, the regional women’s political participation specialist supported the regional programme on women’s political participation in Central African Republic, Liberia, Nigeria and Guinea. In addition to supporting legal and policy reforms, the programme created links for action at the regional level by convening women political leaders from project countries to meet and exchange experiences. In the Arab States, a regional programme in Jordan, Lebanon

and Iraq on capacity-building for women political aspirants (including a key strand on women with disabilities) is being developed in partnership with UNDP, supported by the regional specialist. Regional specialists provided technical support and facilitated exchange of knowledge across country programmes. In Europe and Central Asia, the regional specialist facilitated the exchange of knowledge on capacity-building, by supporting trained women parliamentarians from Moldova to provide training and lessons in Kyrgyzstan. In East and Southern Africa, the regional specialist provided technical support to country programmes, liaised with the regional economic commission and coordinated at a regional level with the African Women Leaders Network. In contrast, some country-level stakeholders in the Asia and the Pacific region indicated a lower level of overarching support, due to the absence of a dedicated regional specialist for women’s political participation.

An area for further development was in advocacy and communications. Some country teams indicated a need for further guidance and support on developing a country-specific advocacy and communications strategy. As programmes have started to include social norms programming, there was potential for wider use of more catalytic approaches in some settings. For instance, the evaluation found persuasive evidence in many countries that male allies and champions can be impactful both at community and national executive level, which validated a key assumption in the theory of change. Male champions who are parliamentarians can advocate through informal power routes and several examples were provided of national leaders reversing their decisions to oppose legislated quotas after advocacy which included male champions as well as leading female

⁴⁶ Examples of ‘programming tools’ include specific training manuals for women political aspirants, databases such as the ‘Women in Politics Map (2020)’ produced by UN Women with the Inter-Parliamentary Union which shows women in executive, parliamentary and government positions, as well as regional and country-level guidance in technical areas, such as advocating for gender quotas.

⁴⁷ Internal Survey Q8: In your view, what types of institutional support from HQ and/or regional offices are the most effective in contributing to advances in

women’s political participation at the country level? Please select the three most relevant areas. Total responses 57.

⁴⁸ ‘High need’ setting here refers to countries where there was a lack of funding (e.g. donors having withdrawn) as well as difficult contexts where the ‘traditional’ drivers of women’s political participation were less present (e.g. women’s higher education, participation in the workplace etc.).

advocates. However, this was not a concerted strategy across all settings.

Lastly, some operational issues were cited by key stakeholders across different countries. Partners at times perceived some of UN Women's financing and

procurement policies to be a barrier to effective working. In some settings, issues such as per-diems and transport policies were said to have impacted work with marginalized groups and to have limited efforts to mobilize some stakeholders.

FINDING 5: As progress is made across various types of initiatives to support women's political participation, many countries are encountering new, complex and intractable challenges. UN Women should continue to adapt its programmes and focus on responding to these persistent barriers to women's political participation.

In some of the case studies, stakeholders reported encountering complex and evolving patterns of resistance. Progress across all domains of change, but particularly in legal reform, emphasized the critical role that political parties play as gatekeepers to women's ability to truly be 'politically empowered.' This means that fundamental assumptions of the theory of change – that political parties would be willing to engage, or to nominate skilled and trained women – were not found to be truly valid and may undermine the effectiveness of the approach. In many settings, practices of 'negotiated democracy,' where women were removed from standing for election in favour of a male candidate,⁴⁹ were widely practiced. UN Women has attempted to counter these practices by pushing for candidate lists to be made public or holding parties accountable for submitting more gender equal candidate lists. In some countries, this resulted in a good uptake of 'zebra lists' where alternate male and female candidates are submitted.⁵⁰ Work with electoral management bodies and registrars for political parties have been instrumental in this advocacy. While stakeholders strongly identified UN Women's work on advocacy to political parties as a key area for strengthening, there has been some success in building women's participation in decision-making positions within parties, voluntary codes of conduct and development of gender strategies. It is important to strategize how best to sensitize political parties and work collaboratively to develop women's leadership from within parties, while at the same time continuing to strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure political parties are

held accountable when not complying with gender-sensitive legal or regulatory provisions, such as those around financing.

One area of strong progress in terms of awareness-raising and policy development has been in mitigating violence against women in politics. The mapping of the theory of change found evidence of awareness-raising and working with women's parliamentary caucuses and electoral management bodies to ensure that violence against women in politics is recognized, tracked and monitored. For instance, in Zimbabwe, UN Women supported the Zimbabwe Gender Commission to monitor violence against women in elections to assess responses and provide redress to women who had suffered violence or been excluded for any political reason. In Brazil, efforts to raise awareness of violence against women in politics also led to the inclusion of data by the Observatory of Women in Politics led by the Women's Secretariat of the Lower House of Congress. Furthermore, the national women's machinery trained the national gender-based violence response line on violence against women in politics, so that women could obtain quick access to services and report cases to the electoral management bodies.

Persistent forms of violence were one of the unintended consequences of women's political participation. Recriminations, verbal and other abuse were observed by UN Women personnel and key stakeholders as visible reactions to women's coalitions being built in both Lebanon and Brazil, for instance. Online cyber-bullying was a rising concern and a deterrent in several settings

⁴⁹ 'Negotiated democracy' is where seats are allocated to candidates before elections, and this practice often impairs women candidates who are asked to move out of seats which have a higher likelihood of political parties gaining votes, in favour of male candidates (Oxford Reference online, accessed 01/04/24,

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191828836.001.0001/acref-9780191828836-e-238>).

⁵⁰ A 'zebra list' or 'zipper system' has been advocated as a mechanism to ensure that there is gender parity in political candidates so that there are equal numbers of men and women in each political party.

where levels of stigma were already high for women in politics. UN Women supported a response to this in some countries. For instance, in Moldova, there were levers against online and cyber-bullying such as supporting laws prohibiting cyber-bullying; UN Women worked with women's platforms on strengthening reporting; and supported the endorsement of policies on prevention of violence by electoral bodies. In general, enforcement remained a challenge though some innovations were observed. For instance, in Lebanon, a partnership with Meta enabled women to report online abuse and an application was developed (yet to be rolled out) for reporting incidents of violence against women in politics. Innovative ways of responding to violence against women in politics such as these are potentially promising practices that could be more widely studied and applied, as relevant.

The evaluation also agreed with findings from the 10-year internal review of the Strategic Partnership Framework

programme⁵¹ that data for women's political participation need to be strengthened. Data on women in local government, for instance, was catalytic in re-focusing on the subnational level, which was now being targeted as a 'way in' for women in a number of countries. There were excellent examples of data being critically useful for women's political participation such as: sex disaggregated data produced by electoral management bodies; studies of attitudes towards electoral bodies and women's participation; and better access to violence against women in politics data. In Colombia, for example, UN Women supported the Office of the National Registrar of Civil Status to publish information on women's participation for the first time. Moreover, as part of ongoing efforts to advance comparative data collection on violence against women in politics, UN Women's political participation team at headquarters has developed, fielded and continues to support surveys to measure violence against women political candidates and office holders, including at the local level.

FINDING 6: UN Women's approach to relationship-building with diverse partners was found to be a key driver of success. There was some evidence that in fragile and more challenging political contexts, phrasing of approaches and better articulation of how to work with different political actors would be beneficial.

The evaluation team gathered evidence on the drivers of success from each of the 12 country case studies. In very different country contexts, UN Women's ability to make trusting and long-term relationships with political actors was critically important in building broad-based coalitions, underscoring its convening power and legitimacy as an interlocutor on women's political participation. This was validated in key informant interviews with external stakeholders (including government partners, implementing partners, donors) in many contexts. However, there was some evidence from fragile and difficult contexts that either a more phased approach or a re-thinking of the 'metric of success' would be beneficial. Stronger partnerships may take longer to establish but can lead to mobilization of support in areas of complex change, such as the willingness of political parties to support women's candidacy. Differences across the 12

countries in UN Women's ability to establish and maintain partnerships was also driven by variance in the size of the Country Office and the availability of resources for women's political participation.

The trend analysis undertaken for the selected countries showed that in difficult and fragile settings there was decline and stagnation in women's political participation, which included some countries with legislated quotas. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the proportion of elected women had declined over the past two elections, despite legislated quotas being present. Key informant interviews indicated that, in some settings, levels of stigma and public attacks were so high that they acted as a deterrent to other female candidates; key stakeholders raised strong concerns that declines in women's participation were now entrenched. Women appointed to reserved

⁵¹ The Political Participation Team commissioned an internal review of the 10-year implementation of the SIDA-funded programme Strategic Partnership Framework efforts on women's political participation, resulting in the 2022 internal publication

of An internal review of the impact of the Strategic Partnership Framework on UN Women's work on women's political participation 2012-2021.

seats tend to be side-lined and perceived as having less decision-making power, as reported by key stakeholders in interviews (including women political aspirants and leaders). In the Central African Republic, for instance, support to the peacekeeping mission and mobilization of women's networks resulted in successfully advocating for a quota. While there was an increase in women elected in the most recent election (from 8 per cent to 12 per cent), the quota (35 per cent of candidates must be female) could not be met due to the insufficient number of women candidates. The criteria for candidacy also removed barriers, such as the required level of education and even literacy. Longer-term approaches, such as building younger women's political skills, or identifying women with existing leadership skills may be more impactful, as well as a tighter geographic focus to enable a more concerted approach to building women's political leadership. For instance, in the Central African Republic, an approach that focuses on certain subnational regions (as undertaken in Kenya) could enable the programme to work more systematically with a core group of women candidates and leaders.

In fragile and difficult settings, work on women's political participation was closely linked with women, peace and security programmes. This has brought added value, particularly in terms of reaching women to get them into politics and electoral processes. In the Central African Republic, for instance, UN Women reported that it supported approximately 20,000 women in obtaining the right documentation to be able to register as voters. Integration with women's peace and security work also enabled setting up a national system to respond to incidents. UN Women worked with electoral security forces to set up incident rooms and establish a 'green line' phone line for women to report any violence. Women's Peace Huts also negotiated with rebel groups for women to be allowed to stand for election. However, ultimately, the very high levels of violence in this setting and the weakness of the security system meant that the incident response could not always effectively protect women. This case study highlighted that while integration with peacekeeping missions can be effective, more phased/long-term approaches are needed to build up women's political participation.

4.3 HOW WELL DOES UN WOMEN WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS (UN AND OTHERS) ON THE GROUND?

DELIVERY WORKSTREAM

FINDING 7: UN Women's partnerships at country level to advance women's political participation have deepened, become more strategic over time and have worked to address key barriers to women's progress in politics.

Looking across the 12 country case studies, UN Women's partnerships in support of women's political participation involved a complex calibration of relationships with diverse stakeholders who may have had competing priorities and needs. There was evidence that UN Women's ways of working – providing technical support, playing a strong convening role, being flexible to stakeholder needs – were highly valued by partners. Most stakeholders in the key informant interviews said that partnerships were effective and were starting to yield results. Partnerships and movement-building in Brazil, for instance, working with black and indigenous women's organizations, built a credible and influential voice which

influenced government policymaking and contributed to increasing the number of black and indigenous women elected to office.

The ongoing collaboration between DPPA and UN Women, and the importance of UN Women's gender expertise combining women's political participation and women, peace and security programmes was a good example of convening and coordination in this area of work. UN Women country teams were more concertedly involved in supporting needs assessments and integrating specific initiatives, such as tackling violence against women in politics. Women's peace and security

programming offered a critical ‘window of opportunity’ to push for women’s presence in decision-making and peacebuilding in contexts where this would be more difficult at a later stage. Examples where this was working include the Central African Republic, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Liberia.

The evaluation also looked at partnerships with other UN agencies, the most important of which was with UNDP, followed by UNESCO and UNFPA. There were some examples of successful partnership working with UNDP, supported by recognition of UN Women’s value in bringing a strong gender lens to work supporting electoral processes and in women’s peace and security. UNDP was often engaged with the same government partners, and good collaboration led to both strengthened electoral processes and consolidated messaging on the importance of including women. For example, in Latin America, both the Brazil and Colombia Country Offices partnered with UNDP on the Atenea initiative,⁵² generating evidence and advancing awareness on the need for gender parity in politics. Other partnerships, for instance with UNFPA and UNESCO, have also been successful (as highlighted by external partners) in working with adolescents in politics and decision-making, and with the media respectively. However, further work in these areas should be explored, as both areas are critical to enabling a long-term, systemic approach to women’s political participation.

As UN Women’s work in women’s political participation evolves, it has become increasingly clear that high-level engagement with the leaders of political parties, national

executives and government leaders is needed. Stakeholders pointed out that political will was one of the key enablers of women’s political participation, but this may require more concerted partnerships working with other UN agencies especially to engage very high levels of the executive.

Across the 12 case studies, the evaluation found evidence that UN Women has been largely effective in establishing partnerships with key government stakeholders that deliver progress on women’s political participation, which have become progressively more strategic and focused on priority areas. Many of the country programmes have achieved demonstrable progress in terms of mainstreaming gender within electoral management bodies, parliamentary committees and the legislature.

Similarly, in some countries, partnerships working with women’s caucuses have progressed well, especially where there is embedded technical support which can respond flexibly to women parliamentarians’ needs. This has allowed UN Women to provide strategic inputs into gender responsive law-making. Key informant interviews with female parliamentarians emphasized their ongoing technical support needs. Many of the female parliamentarians that the evaluation team spoke with were new to office, for instance, and had an urgent need to develop skills and capacities. They may lack the powerful social networks and established political alliances that men have, and so this type of partnership work was critical to building internal representation and collaboration across party lines.

⁵² Atenea is a joint initiative led by UN Women, UNDP and IDEA International to advance women’s equal political participation in Latin America and the Caribbean. It has devised a Political Parity Index to measure the actual state of women’s political rights and the minimum conditions required for their exercise and performance, which consists of 40 indicators in 8 dimensions, measured on a 1-100

scale, where a full democracy would receive 100 points (i.e. full parity between men and women both in the law and in practice). For additional information see <https://ateneaesparidad.com/>

FINDING 8: UN Women's partnerships, particularly with civil society and women's networks, have enabled effective advocacy, essential to progress in women's political participation. While partnerships have yielded new ways of working and enabled an expansion of reach into grassroots levels, new partnerships at times caused friction with existing partners.

Partnerships with civil society organizations and women's political networks have been critical to advocacy efforts, particularly on legal reforms and advocating for temporary special measures. UN Women greatly facilitated the inclusion of these organizations, i.e. to 'have a seat at the table' and be able to engage in dialogues and advocacy forums on the importance of supporting women's political participation.

Partnerships with women's organizations also provided unique opportunities and challenges. Women's networks and coalitions were key partners in all 12 country case studies, as important allies with incredibly valuable voices arguing for women's political participation. For instance, in Brazil, support for black and indigenous women's networks contributed to strengthening their political participation both as advocates and candidates and to advance their political agendas, while contributing to movement building at the national level.

However, in some contexts, relations appeared fractious and difficult to manage. Particularly in settings with low capacity and high competition for resources, expectations of UN Women's support in terms of funding, technical inputs and organizational development far exceeded programme personnel's capacity to provide. In a few cases, programme teams decided to create some distance from women's coalitions, allowing them to set their own advocacy agendas, as they were aware of the restrictions that a closer relationship would place on their advocacy

strategies. In a few cases, these organizations appeared to limit UN Women's ability to engage with other key partners. For instance, in Lebanon, work with male allies was abandoned due to objections from women's civil society organizations. This suggests that having a concerted and well-articulated partnership strategy is needed to clarify exactly how UN Women can support partners, and where the limits are.

Partnerships with local civil society organizations enabled UN Women to have reach into communities at the subnational level, capitalizing on existing relationships of trust with local stakeholders. In several countries (including Kenya and Zimbabwe), partnerships with faith-based groups were found to have greater traction with influential local stakeholders and provided a better way of promoting women's leadership and engaging male allies. This type of grassroots and community-based work with faith-based organizations also offered greater promise of longer-term sustainable shifts in social norms, for instance, through using religious-based grounds to argue for greater decision-making power and political leadership for women. However, it also carried risks of reinforcing regressive social norms of women in politics, such as reinforcing their reproductive and traditional gender roles rather than rights to autonomy. As highlighted in some key informant interviews, this suggests that closer follow-up and monitoring is needed even as trusting partnerships develop and that always framing work within a human rights and gender equality perspective is critical.

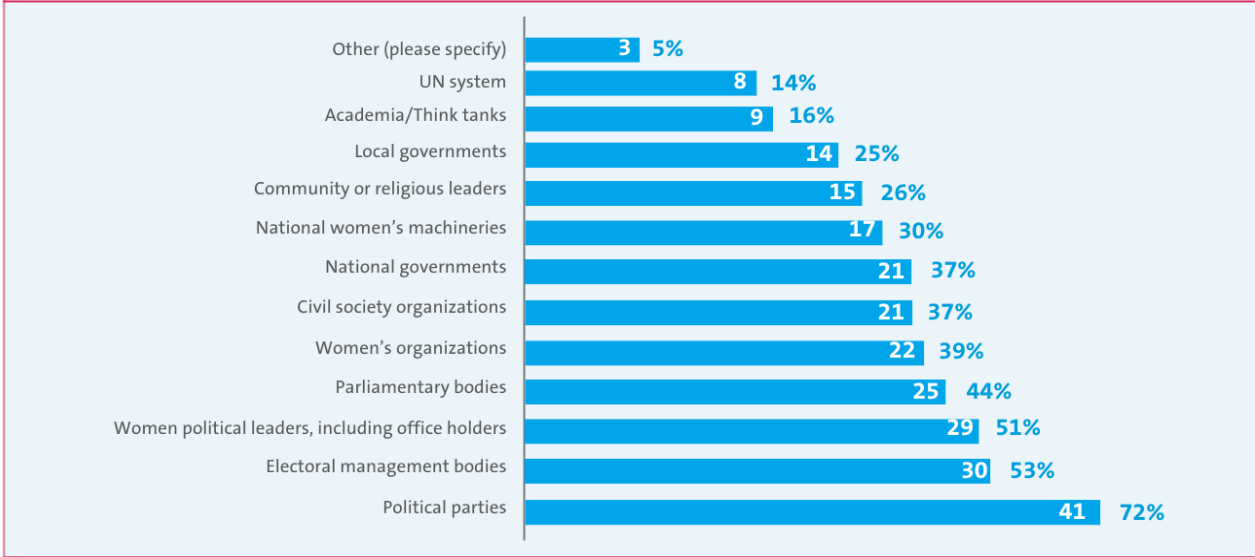
FINDING 9: New ways of influencing and advocacy towards political parties were essential in addressing barriers to progress. Media engagement strategies, while promising, could also be further developed and clarified.

Responses from the internal survey (see Figure 9) indicated that political parties were the most important stakeholder for delivering progress on women’s political participation – 72 per cent (n = 41/57) of respondents in the internal survey cited them as the most ‘influential actor.’ Political parties were also consistently identified as the most persistent block to women’s progress in women’s political participation by partners and women political aspirants and leaders. Even in contexts where candidate list quotas and other measures (such as tighter regulation of public financing) were in place, political parties found workarounds. However, working directly with political parties is sensitive and could put UN Women’s impartiality at risk. Currently, the Entity engages with political parties through representational organizations, and almost always in partnership with electoral management bodies and the offices of political registrars. Further models of engagement with cross-party women leaders’ organizations (including women’s caucuses) could be explored. Partners in this space are finding ways of influencing political parties while

remaining politically neutral, for instance, by developing guidance on working with women within political parties.⁵³

While UN Women’s work with the media has been an important component of the support to women’s political participation, it tended to be training-based and often targeted individual journalists. In a few cases, partnerships with women-led media organizations produced good results, validated through key informant interviews with journalists and media personnel in Kenya, Lebanon and Zimbabwe. Further partnership models with media houses, targeting those with power such as editors, and including online social media, are needed. This is important to support positive perceptions of women as leaders in the media as well as to find new ways to respond to violence against women in politics. A good example in this regard was UN Women’s partnership with a major media group in Colombia to raise awareness on women’s political participation and the need for parity in political representation.

Figure 9. UN Women personnel’s perceptions of influential actors in advancing women’s political participation (Total responses: 57)



Note. Question 2 - Which types of partners and stakeholders do you think are the most influential actors in advancing women’s political participation? Please select up to three types of partners. Source: UN Women personnel survey conducted by evaluation team in October 2023.

⁵³ An example of this is the National Democratic Institution’s ‘Win with Women Political Party Assessment’ (2019), available from <https://www.ndi.org/win-with-women-building-inclusive-21st-century-parties>, accessed 15/01/23

4.4 HOW EFFECTIVELY IS UN WOMEN'S TRIPLE MANDATE (NORMATIVE, UN SYSTEM COORDINATION, OPERATIONAL) LEVERAGED AT COUNTRY LEVEL?

DELIVERY WORKSTREAM

FINDING 10: UN Women played a key role in advancing normative change, operational work and UN system coordination at the global level to support women's political participation. This "trickled down" effectively in many contexts and was an important pillar in supporting the Entity's efforts at the country level. At the global level, UN Women has drawn on its normative, UN system coordination, and operational mandates to advance women's political participation. UN Women's role in highlighting areas such as violence against women in politics and data on women's representation in local government, is widely acknowledged by partners. UN Women-led knowledge products and hubs such as the Gender Quota Portal and Women in Local Government Global Hub were identified as critical in supporting research and advocacy to advance women's political participation.

UN Women supported normative advancements and frameworks on women's political participation and ending violence against women in politics. This included working with intergovernmental (e.g. Commission on the Status of Women) and UN inter-agency mechanisms (e.g. Inter-Agency Task Team on Temporary Special Measures) both at global and regional levels. UN Women also supported the preparation and negotiation of the Agreed Conclusions for the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (focused on women's leadership), resulting in new language agreed by member states to achieve women's full participation and decision-making, setting for the first time a numerical target of 50/50 gender balance in elected positions and defining actions for member states to monitor and prevent violence against women in politics. This facilitated advocacy at country level, strengthening the call to member states to push for parity. UN Women's role in supporting the commission to achieve a strong set of agreed conclusions to be implemented at the country level was validated by external stakeholders.

Through various UN inter-agency task teams/mechanisms, UN Women has worked to develop system-wide messaging on issues such as temporary special measures and the impact of violence against women in politics. UN Women currently co-leads the pillar within the [Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights](#) on increasing the use of temporary special measures and is also leading coordinated UN efforts to devise a UN strategy on temporary special measures, working together with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Electoral Assistance Division,

DPPA to ensure that election briefing materials by senior UN officials and country teams provide country-specific information on the application of temporary special measures. Working with DPPA, UN Women has successfully advocated for language on parity in ministerial cabinets in the congratulatory letter from the Secretary-General to Heads of State and Heads of Government.

UN Women played an important role in the UN system on gender mainstreaming in electoral assistance. With UN Women's advocacy, the UN Guideline on United Nations Electoral Needs Assessments incorporates requirements for assessing whether legislated quotas or any other types of temporary special measures exist or are implemented in countries where UN electoral assistance is requested. Gender equality concerns are now substantively integrated into policy directives issued by the UN focal point on electoral assistance, which guide country-level operational support on elections. UNDP and DPPA typically lead on electoral work at the country level and UN Women's involvement varies by context, drawing in part on the agencies' relative capacities.

UN Women's global role in supporting women's political participation (including through the development of substantial knowledge products/guidance documents/tools, advocacy on key normative issues, coordination with UN partners) was identified by internal stakeholders as foundational in successfully supporting actors at the country level. For instance, UN Women's programme in Liberia benefitted from guidelines and support from headquarters on advocacy for legal reform on the New Election Law. The guidance ensured the

technical strength of the work, based on thorough and sound analysis and evidence. Partners suggested that UN Women’s role in advocacy and influencing messaging from the UN system on women’s political participation

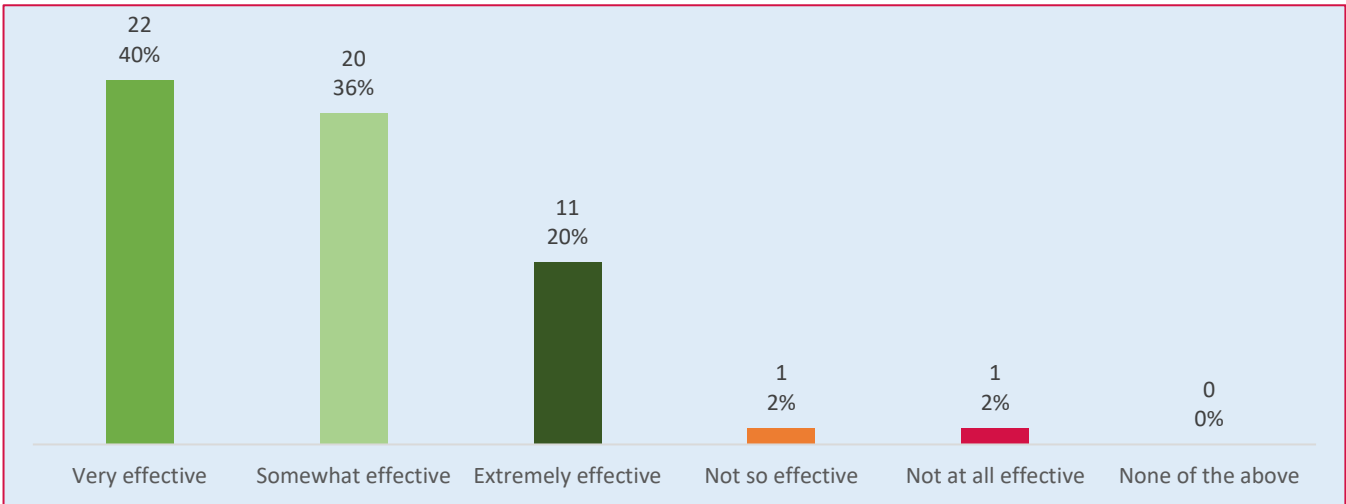
(including from the offices of the Secretary-General and Resident Coordinators) was effective and should be leveraged further.

FINDING 11: The importance of UN Women’s triple mandate in advancing women’s political participation was clear and evident, though there was variance in the extent to which countries leveraged all aspects of the triple mandate. While UN Women’s inclusive approach was appreciated by UN partners, the Entity could play a stronger coordination role in gender mainstreaming across UN programming on political participation.

Internal stakeholders, by and large, expressed the view that UN Women is effective in leveraging its triple mandate in support of women’s political participation (see Figure 10). UN Women’s leading role in providing technical support and advocacy on legislation relating to women’s political participation was validated by external stakeholders interviewed across all contexts. For instance, in Moldova, the strong and sustained integration of UN Women’s normative and operational work was effectively

leveraged to support gender-responsive policies and effect real change in women’s political participation. Normative work at the country level is politically sensitive and requires a deep understanding of the context and political environment. While bolstered by UN Women’s capacity at headquarters and regional levels, results can be difficult to achieve without country-level expertise, as was evident across the countries reviewed.

Figure 10. UN Women personnel’s perceptions of UN Women’s effectiveness in leveraging its triple mandate to support women’s political participation (Total responses: 55)



Note. Question 9 - In your view, how effectively has UN Women been able to leverage its triple mandate to support women’s political participation? Source: UN Women personnel survey conducted by evaluation team in October 2023.

Across the 12 country case studies, UN Women was involved in joint programmes with UN agencies, particularly with UNDP. In Kenya, UN Women's role in substantially mainstreaming gender in budget allocations and across all key activities for the *Deepening Democracy* joint programme (with UNDP and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR]) was strongly validated by external stakeholders. In Kyrgyzstan, UN Women provided technical support to the design of the UNDP-led Electoral Support Project implemented in collaboration with the Central Election Commission. In Papua New Guinea, UN Women and UNDP implemented the Women Make the Change project to address barriers to women in leadership. While UNDP was responsible for engagement with Parliament and political parties, UN Women led capacity-building efforts and contributed to the establishment of the Political Leadership Academy for Women, a safe forum for women to participate and be trained on leadership. In addition, UN Women and OHCHR jointly facilitated a gender and human rights sensitization training for the Bougainville House of Representatives. In Samoa, UN Women and UNDP implemented the Women in Leadership in Samoa project (2018–2022), which aimed to remove barriers to women's political representation and civic engagement in their communities. In Moldova, the UN Women–UNDP joint programme on women's leadership led to the creation of the women's caucus in the national parliament.

In Brazil, UN Women and UNDP, together with International IDEA, jointly implemented the Atenea initiative aimed at advancing women's equal participation and representation in politics for the effective exercise of their political rights. This initiative reportedly contributed to the availability of data based on the Political Parity Index and informed the public dialogue/political debate on women's political participation, political parity and violence against women in politics at the national level. Similarly, in Colombia, UN Women also partnered with UNDP to implement the Atenea initiative, contributing to knowledge on women's political participation and to position parity in the political agenda. In Zimbabwe, UN Women collaborated with UNESCO in terms of the media, communications and training journalists on women's political participation.

As managing joint programmes can be challenging at times due to a variety of factors, UN Women's inclusive approach was seen as a strength in many countries. UN Women's key value add was its ability to gather and

influence diverse partners to advance normative and policy agendas. Programmes supported by UN Women brought together diverse stakeholders, including governments and legislatures, electoral management bodies and political parties, community and faith-based leaders, as well as civil society and women's rights organizations.

UN Women also played a key role in country-level coordination mechanisms to advance women's political participation. In the Brazil Country Office, UN Women established a dedicated personnel position focused on advancing normative and coordination work, which helped the Entity to lead on areas including women's political participation. Through leadership of the UN Country Team Gender, Race and Ethnicity Thematic Working Group in Brazil, UN Women provided technical support to promote gender equality with an intersectional approach. In Kenya, UN Women played a critical role as co-chair of the UN Development Assistance Framework/UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework governance group, which contributed to the overall design of joint programming, as well as bringing in financial support. In Liberia, UN Women chairs the International Coordination Group on Women's Political Participation, holding regular meetings to strengthen coordination and share best practices with partners, including UNDP. The UN Women Country Representative for Liberia was also a member of the National Steering Committee on Elections, where UNDP formed the Secretariat. In Colombia, UN Women is the permanent secretariat for the International Cooperation Gender Working Group (Mesa de género de la cooperación internacional), which has *inter alia* issued a Parity Counter that monitors party lists to track whether they include 50 per cent of women candidates in compliance with voluntary commitments by political parties. In the Central African Republic, UN Women helped establish the gender and elections working group that included government stakeholders, UN stakeholders, civil society organizations and some donors.

While all stakeholders highlighted the importance of the coordination and convening role played by UN Women in bringing together different types of actors; maintaining long-term relationships in-country; and bringing in external expertise (from headquarters and the region), most internal stakeholders surveyed felt that the coordination role (relative to normative and operational) needs to be further strengthened. In qualitative responses to the internal survey, the most frequently cited aspect to

strengthened was UN Women's coordination role (30 per cent, 14/43 respondents)⁵⁴.

Over and above coordination through the governance structures of joint programmes, stakeholders highlighted the need for further guidance on effective coordination for women's political participation.

The issue of duplication of effort with other UN agencies (such as developing similar tools and guidance) was raised by multiple external partners. This is in part due to a

perception (among internal and external stakeholders) of a "race between agencies" to establish dominance in key areas of work and secure funding. While there have been modest efforts through facilitation within the UN system (including Gender Theme Groups) to collectively advocate and mobilize resources for women's political participation, challenges persist in some contexts. External stakeholders also felt that UN Women could play a much stronger role in effectively mainstreaming gender across the programmes led by other UN agencies working in this area.

4.5 WHAT ASPECTS OF EQUITY (LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND AND GENDER EQUALITY) ARE TARGETED BY UN WOMEN'S INTERVENTIONS?

DELIVERY WORKSTREAM

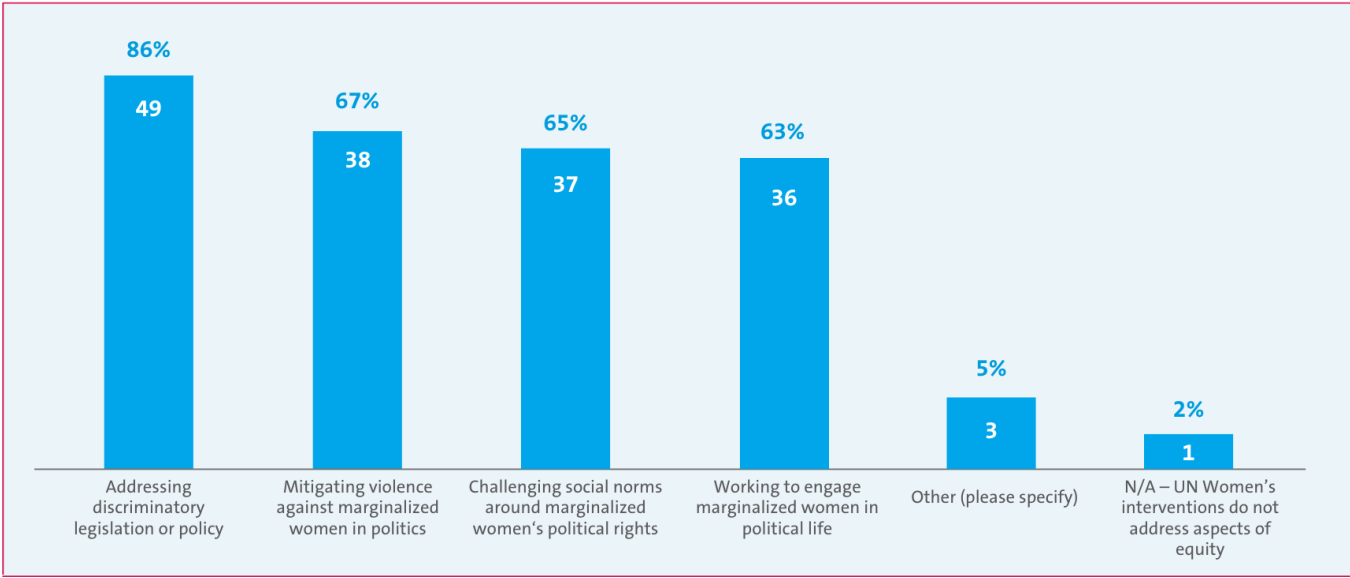
FINDING 12: UN Women has been instrumental in advocating for incorporating principles of leave no one behind and gender equality into women's political participation and there was evidence that equity of women's access to the political process was a key focus. While there were good examples of marginalized groups being included in political spaces, the strategy for improving equity of women's representation needs further guidance.

In many of the country case studies, equity concerns were evidently integral to UN Women's work on women's political participation. In terms of different aspects of equity, UN Women respondents to the internal survey indicated a strong focus on discrimination in legislation or policy (86 per cent; $n = 49$); followed by mitigating violence against women in politics (67 per cent; $n = 38$); and challenging social norms (65 per cent; $n = 37$) (see Figure 11 below). The evaluation found good examples of work addressing legal barriers to women's participation through, for example, removing requirements to have property or land; reversing or lowering high candidacy fees; and strongly advocating for transparency in electoral processes which exclude women (e.g. publishing candidacy lists).

While working across several equity dimensions, the country case studies showed that UN Women has made robust efforts to include diverse groups of women in training for candidacy. The groundwork laid through the policy developments with electoral management bodies has enabled training to become more open to a wider range of women. There was evidence that training would not have been as inclusive had UN Women not been present. This was further strengthened by a shift towards reaching more rural areas and working at subnational levels. Many key stakeholders prioritized reaching poorer, rural women and to deepening their engagement at the grassroots level and addressing negative social norms. Excellent examples of working inclusively included in Moldova, where UN Women advocated for including Roma women and women with disabilities in training. In the resulting election, six Roma women and seven women with disabilities won local political positions.

⁵⁴ Qualitative responses to Internal Survey Question 10.

Figure 11. UN Women personnel’s perception of aspects of equity targeted by UN Women’s interventions (Total responses: 57)



Note. Question 6 - In your view, which of the following aspects of equity are targeted by UN Women’s interventions? (Choose any/all that apply) Source: UN Women personnel survey conducted by evaluation team in October 2023.

In some cases, strengthening equity goals also had a clear link to more strategic and longer-term investment in developing women’s political participation. There were some excellent examples of work with younger women, either through targeting them for candidacy training, or through mentorship schemes, as well as providing civic spaces for younger women to participate in public forums on women’s political participation. Evidence from multiple case studies showed that these investments in younger women can result in higher numbers of candidates relatively quickly. For instance, in Liberia, investments in concerted training and mentorship for young women have now started to pay dividends in terms of the number of younger female candidates. Youth-specific education models are also developing in the Central African Republic and Papua New Guinea. For example, in Papua New Guinea, the Young Women Leadership Programme was specifically developed to encourage younger women to stand for election. There was also evidence that UN Women was making concerted efforts for its programming to be inclusive of people with disabilities. Many key stakeholders highlighted strategies such as making training accessible, including key messages about people with disabilities in civic rights training, and working with electoral bodies to make adjustments so that voting stations were accessible.

There were also good examples of UN Women’s work providing civic spaces and forums for representation of

other marginalized groups. In Brazil, for instance, UN Women supported and fostered black and indigenous women’s networks to greatly increase the representation of black and indigenous women; strengthened their advocacy efforts; and raised the profile of the movement to claim their rights. In Lebanon, UN Women convened a feminist platform that included groups which represent people with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

However, possibly as a reflection of many of the challenges that UN Women faces in working with women’s civil society organizations, in many contexts the approach to equity could not be viewed as being truly intersectional. Respondents in the survey and in the key informant interviews indicated that working with LGBTIQ+ groups was very difficult in their country contexts. In a few cases, there was evidence from key informant interviews with external and internal stakeholders of backlash due to raising issues related to this agenda which negatively impacted on the wider participation of women. A few respondents in the survey said that the leave no one behind principle can become tokenistic or programmed in as an afterthought. Emerging models to address these types of challenges include having a specific geographic focus in ‘harder to reach’ or socioeconomically deprived areas (as in Kenya) which enables deeper integration of equity with work on social norms.

FINDING 13: In some cases, country programmes faced difficult trade-offs between working at scale versus working truly inclusively. The consistency and availability of resources and data remain major barriers, but a tiered approach (working more in-depth with some groups), could be effective in some settings.

Women’s political participation is an area of complex change and, in some cases, programmes faced trade-offs between working harder to reach marginalized groups versus reaching scale. While the inclusive approach taken to making training accessible is commendable, having outreach or other means to address deep socio-cultural barriers to the participation of people with disabilities requires a level of investment that many already over-stretched programmes did not have: this requires further thought as programmes start to expand to target subnational levels.

There was also evidence from several very different contexts in the country case studies, including training participants themselves, that mass training needed further thought on how to target differing needs. In some cases, this was an issue of language or making materials more visually accessible. However, some women political aspirants and leaders felt that candidacy training programmes, while inclusive, were not suitably targeted to different capacities and likelihood of election success. This issue may be more acute in country settings with greater inequalities in women’s socioeconomic and literacy status, especially in rural areas. Some stakeholders advocated for a two-tiered approach, to work more deeply with specific cohorts of women who were more likely to be elected and could more rapidly advance in leadership skills.

Many country-level key stakeholders also felt that, in some instances, women’s lack of resources was an equity issue which had remained largely unaddressed. In some countries, this interacted strongly with issues such as negotiated democracy or political patronage networks, which excluded women due to their lack of resources. In some cases, there was evidence from key informant interviews that women took part in training but were then unable to afford candidacy fees and felt under-resourced in terms of campaigning support and materials.

In countries where more women were standing for elections, there was an emerging gap in being able to address the needs of women who stood for election but lost. This was often viewed as a missed opportunity to engage with a cohort of interested women, but the lack of follow-up was particularly concerning in settings where women faced severe repercussions in standing for elections. There were some strong exceptions to this, for instance, in the Central African Republic, a team of psychologists was on hand to address women candidates’ mental health needs, due to the insecure and often violent context. In Brazil, women candidates came together to share their experiences and were provided with self-care elements for their mental health, in addition to being supported in their activism beyond the elections. However, evidence from other countries also suggested that women may have lost resources, such as savings; faced discrimination from their families and community; and were the target of verbal and physical attacks. A ‘do no harm’ approach to clearly spell out how equity concerns will be addressed is needed to ensure that programmes have considered how to fully mitigate these types of repercussions, going beyond immediate cases of violence against women in politics.

Lastly, the lack of data greatly restricted UN Women’s analysis of its efforts to address equity. There were examples of joint work with UNDP to improve the paucity of sex disaggregated data on voters and voter turnout, candidates and numbers elected, which is commendable. However, there were very few studies on the socioeconomic profile of those elected versus the candidates, and studies found that more educated women with higher socioeconomic status still tend to occupy elected seats.⁵⁵ Further strengthening of UN Women’s work on data is needed to accompany its work on equity.

⁵⁵ For instance, the analysis of election results by the Electoral Management Board in Lebanon (produced with the support of UNPD) reveals the higher professional status of elected women and female candidates. Available online at:

<https://www.undp.org/lebanon/publications/2022-lebanese-parliamentary-elections-key-results>

4.6 WHAT IS UN WOMEN'S APPROACH TO SAFEGUARDING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ITS IMPACT AND EFFORTS IN THIS AREA?

DESIGN AND APPROACH WORKSTREAM

FINDING 14: While sensitive to the fragility of gains in women's political participation, UN Women's approach could benefit from a stronger emphasis (across all contexts) on effective implementation of women's political representation policies. In some countries, the Entity was making efforts towards fostering national ownership and sustaining partnerships with key national institutions and women's organizations/movements.

In several countries, through technical support and advocacy, UN Women contributed to improving legal frameworks on gender equality and specific legislation/policies on women's political representation (including through temporary special measures, women's placement on political party nomination lists, political party financing guidelines for women candidates, etc.). While improvements in legislation and policies can lead to sustainable change, implementation of these legal provisions remained a challenge. When comparing across countries, it was evident that if voluntary codes for political parties or guidelines were unclear and had weak enforcement they were unlikely to be effective. For instance, in the Central African Republic, UN Women supported multiple provisions such as the removal of the requirement of land ownership for women politicians, lower registration fees and the development of the electoral code 'encouraging' political parties to have 35 per cent female candidacy. While these could lead to sustainable change, uncertainty remains around whether political parties will adhere to the requirement unless the electoral code is improved to make it a condition of party registration. Therefore, any programme focusing on legal reforms should include a strong emphasis on implementation. UN Women has tackled this in some contexts by working closely with electoral management bodies, and other government entities mandated to monitor political parties. In Colombia, the Entity monitored and made visible political parties' actions to increase the participation and selection of women candidates. This included tracking the use of public funds received by political parties for the effective inclusion of women in politics and supporting the gender equality ranking of women and men within political parties, together with UNDP, which assessed different aspects of

support to women candidates by political parties (campaign support, capacity-building, party leadership roles, etc.).

Another sustainable approach was UN Women's focus on building key partnerships that support national ownership. This included strengthening the institutional capacities of electoral commissions and supporting networks of women leaders and wider women's movements. For instance, UN Women's work with national electoral commissions and parliamentary bodies resulted in establishing well embedded protocols and committees to combat violence against women in politics in Liberia. In Zimbabwe, the Entity's approach to sustainability predominantly focused on building the capacities of the key institutions (Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Ministry of Women's Affairs) to promote women's political participation and ensure that elections are free and safe for women to participate in. In Tanzania and Moldova, UN Women has provided sustained support to the women's caucus to build capacity to mainstream gender and support gender-responsive policymaking. While UN Women worked with the women's caucus in many countries, the level of support varied and was limited by the availability of funding for this sustained support. UN Women also institutionalized capacity-building in some countries by setting up and supporting academies for leadership. For instance, in Tanzania work with the University of Dar Es Salaam for the training of women candidates was seen to be sustainable, as the University continues to be very active in debates and forums on women's leadership and has made materials freely available. In Colombia, UN Women supported a comprehensive training programme for women (instead of isolated short workshops) through the School for

Political Training and partnered with the Institute for Public Administration to institutionalize this. These comprehensive models of engagement have the potential to target a wider range of women – including younger women – which is critical from a sustainability perspective. However, in some countries, civil society and other stakeholders raised concerns about the consolidation of in-country training expertise within one institution (typically government), questioning the inclusiveness of subsequent programmes.

Some aspects of UN Women’s approach to sustainability show promise but need further work. The Entity’s approach to working with the media in Lebanon, Kenya and Colombia was promising and suggested that working directly with media houses could lead to sustainable change in how women leaders are perceived and presented. Social norms are slow to change, but there was some evidence of sustainable change by working with traditional leaders (religious leaders, elders, chiefs) on community awareness related to women’s political participation and the prevention of violence against women in politics.

FINDING 15: UN Women’s programmes supporting women’s political participation tended to be based on election cycles and were relatively short term. The Entity should consider developing more strategic, long-term programming at the country level. This would require UN Women’s internal capacity to be strengthened.

Many of UN Women’s programmes on women’s political participation, while effective, were seen to be workshop-based and short term, with less emphasis on following up to preserve the gains achieved. The focus on raising funds primarily around election cycles had implications for the sustainability and impact of programmes. For instance, implementing partners raised the issue of receiving funds too close to the election cycle, with significant delays in some cases. Another issue raised was the need to further support women political aspirants and leaders between election cycles. This included support to newly elected leaders, as well as women candidates who were unsuccessful.

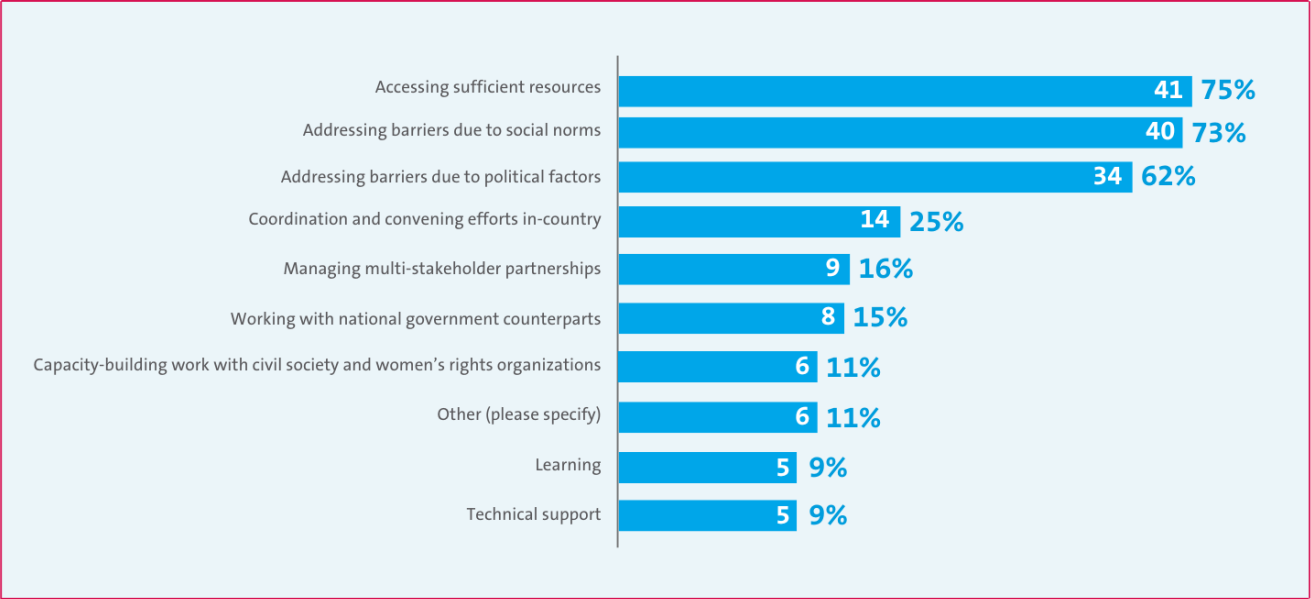
The Women’s Political Participation section’s deployment of its seed funding modality to support engagements in many countries was acknowledged as pivotal, but internal stakeholders highlighted the need for the Entity to go beyond this approach and make a strong case to fundraise for women’s political participation between election cycles. This was also reflected in the survey responses from internal stakeholders on UN Women’s greatest challenges in this area, as seen in Figure 12 below.

Several donors appreciated UN Women’s strong leadership role in this area of work and indicated that the Entity should pitch its support at a more strategic and

long-term level. To achieve this, UN Women would need to increase the availability of personnel to support delivery in country, as well as strengthen the reporting of results at impact or higher outcome levels. The need to strengthen measurement of the impact of the substantial work being undertaken by UN Women to support women’s political participation at the country level was strongly validated in interviews with internal stakeholders. Further, the evaluation team found that many rich details of progress, regressions and contextual factors impacting UN Women’s work in this area, could not have been gleaned from corporate reporting channels, such as the results monitoring system. It is important to highlight these factors in overall reporting to provide a more complete view of the Entity’s efforts.

The need for UN Women to continue its work on women’s political participation in country was unanimously voiced by external partners (governments, civil society and women’s organizations, women political aspirants and leaders). This included demand for UN Women to work more at local/rural/municipal levels. Effectively supporting this demand would require UN Women to strengthen its regional architecture supporting this area of work.

Figure 12. UN Women personnel’s perceptions of areas where the Entity faces the greatest challenges in successfully supporting women’s political participation at the country level (Total responses: 55)



Note. Question 1 - In which of the following areas does UN Women face the greatest challenges in successfully supporting women’s political participation at the country level? Please select the three most relevant.

Source: UN Women personnel survey conducted by evaluation team in October 2023.

FINDING 16: Support to newly elected women leaders in the post-election phase; sustained support for young women leaders; grassroots/community engagement for social norms change; and a focus on tackling barriers to women's participation arising from resource constraints and resistance from political parties were identified as critical areas for sustainability.

Supporting the women's movement and networks of women leaders to become self-sustaining is critical, particularly at the post-election stage, and stakeholders view UN Women as the "right" agency to provide this support. In Moldova, UN Women brought together parliamentarians and women mayors on policy issues such as the refugee crisis and COVID-19 response and ensured a significant focus on promoting gender-responsive legislation and policies in training for political aspirants and newly elected leaders. UN Women's support to women mayors, particularly newly elected mayors, was impactful and helped "set them up for success" and to serve as role models for other women. UN Women also supported newly elected members of parliament with training on legislation and gender-responsive budgeting.

UN Women has also supported national, regional and global networks of support for women leaders. For instance, the African Women Leaders Network has been instrumental in leveraging regional knowledge, experience and resources for women leaders across countries. In Kyrgyzstan, stakeholders appreciated UN Women's support to high-level forums that brought together women political aspirants, candidates, and leaders to discuss progress and challenges unique to women's engagement in politics.

While UN Women's support to women leaders was highly appreciated in several countries, partners raised concerns about the need for continuous engagement, not just in the year before elections. This was validated in qualitative survey responses from and key informant interviews with women leaders and aspiring candidates, highlighting a strong demand for sustained support, particularly post elections.

Another good practice was enhancing inter-generational dialogue with young leaders through mentoring and peer-to-peer exchange with women leaders and elected members. For instance, in Liberia, UN Women emphasized developing youth capacities and developed institutions such as the National Young Women Political Council to continue to advocate for young women in politics.

In several contexts, stakeholders raised the need for UN Women to continue civic engagement, especially at the grassroots level. There was some evidence of sustained social norms change being well embedded in the local governance and social fabric (e.g. with elder groups, religious leaders and others). While this appears to be a promising area, UN Women should strengthen monitoring to protect against unintended consequences and ensure that it does not reinforce other patriarchal norms.

Unequal access to resources for women political aspirants/leaders and resistance from political parties remain the key barriers to entry for women across all countries. In terms of resources, UN Women should continue to support development of electoral codes and reforms supporting financing for women candidates. For instance, an innovative approach employed by UN Women's partner, the Echo Network in Kenya, included linking up with the [democracy trust fund](#) to help women candidates save for campaigns. Working with political parties remains a sensitive issue (and is led by UNDP in most cases), but UN Women could investigate developing further partnerships with national bodies (such as Offices of the Registrar of Political Parties) and international organizations (e.g. International IDEA) that can facilitate work with political parties.



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LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES



Lesson 1: Mentoring, learning and training: Supporting women's path to political participation.

The evaluation found that women highly valued support and training related to 'soft skills' (such as emotional and social support), ongoing learning and the chance to strengthen relationships with other women and women-led organizations. Focusing further on mentoring and offering safe spaces for women may enable programmes to become more strategic and offer benefits such as developing cross-party allegiances between women candidates. Online learning, leadership academies and building youth participation are all models that broaden and deepen access. Once in power, some women parliamentarians expressed the need to develop leadership skills and continue to build alliances.

UN Women's programmes were starting to broaden their views of 'political participation' and encourage women into local decision-making positions to develop their leadership experience. There was relatively less work on creating more supportive workplaces for women in politics.

Taking a more systematic view of women's entry into power, and considering their needs and experiences at each stage, can both broaden access and encourage women into power. Greater attention to women's routes into leadership and power, their experiences of it and reasons for leaving will improve how programmes support and retain good women leaders.



Lesson 2: Addressing barriers to political participation.

Barriers to women's political participation are complex, but qualitative interviews highlighted two consistent barriers across several diverse political contexts: access to financial resources and time, in addition to resistance due to patriarchal social norms.

Women's access to resources was a critical issue that limited their capacity to apply for candidacy, run campaigns and be perceived as good leaders once elected. Ways of addressing this need further consolidation, testing and development. Good practices included training on the effective use of social media and media profile building.

While women standing for election often do not possess the same resources as men, they counteract this by building local networks, engaging and listening to citizens, and by being seen to be responsive to local concerns. This was expressed in key

informant interviews by women political aspirants and leaders across multiple contexts. To do this effectively, women need time, which is often lacking in the rushed election-driven cycle. Therefore, longer programming time frames are needed to allow women the time to build confidence and trusting relationships with their constituencies.



Lesson 3: Social norms and achieving scale.

The evaluation found evidence of progress on social norms to address perceptual barriers to women's participation. There were good examples of this work happening across multiple constituencies and at different levels of the political system. However, programmes often faced trade-offs between depth versus breadth and long and short-term programme components.

UN Women's work with media, male champions and civil society organizations (including faith-based organizations) broadened access, but further consolidation and phasing of approaches to enable better monitoring and support to social norms work could strengthen country strategies. Work with male champions and political leaders, especially in parliaments/legislatures and on community-level social norms change, has the potential to be impactful and could be more widely replicated.



Lesson 4: Research and data.

The evaluation noted the important role gender data played in revealing patterns of exclusion and suppression of women. The progress in gender data on women's participation in local government has been impactful in re-focusing programmes on where important gains can be made. This is an ongoing area of work at the global level.

The evaluation also found that country programmes were advocating for further gender data to better support women's political participation, as important gaps remain. Sex disaggregation of voter registration and voter turnout, for instance, was often not available. Studies of perceptions of women in leadership, and of electoral stakeholders, have provided important insights into how women can appeal to voters. Media tracking surveys and monitoring of social norms could also improve understanding of the extent to which perceptions of women as leaders are shifting. Further guidance in this area could support the use of rapid and cost-effective methods.



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6

CONCLUSIONS



DESIGN AND APPROACH WORKSTREAM

CONCLUSION 1.

The design and approach of UN Women’s work allowed for adaptation to country contexts, while remaining strategically focused on accelerators of women’s political participation. UN Women has aligned well with contextual drivers and worked with political actors to build networks of influence. As programmes scale efforts to bring women into politics, particularly at the subnational level, issues arise of how to effectively respond to growing needs.

FINDINGS 1, 2, 16

The design and approach of UN Women’s programmes are strategically focused on the key drivers of improvements in women’s political participation: gender-responsive legal reforms; addressing social norms; building women’s confidence, knowledge and skills; and preventing and mitigating violence against women in politics. There is evidence that programmes are able to rapidly adapt to make best use of work with key political actors in each country context, particularly in mobilizing coalitions and partnerships to deliver changes in legal and policy frameworks.

During the evaluation period, UN Women (in coordination with UN partners and national stakeholders) advocated for and supported the passage and effective implementation of legislated quotas. In addition, there have also been intense efforts to invest in building women candidates’ confidence and skills. While these efforts have been successful in raising the number of candidates standing for election and being elected, there was some evidence that a more tailored approach is needed. Women value the wider benefits of learning about political participation: mentoring, social support and developing networks with other women candidates or women-led civil society organizations. Greater attention to women’s needs, motivations and experiences as they enter, participate and leave politics is needed to strengthen support.

CONCLUSION 2.

There was some evidence that knowledge and learning within UN Women’s programmes at country level worked well to enable consolidation and rapid implementation of successful practices and approaches. However, further strengthening of tools to measure progress will help to strengthen programme responsiveness and engage donors in critical areas of learning.

FINDINGS 1, 4, 15

As programmes encounter persistent forms of opposition to women’s political participation, such as online bullying, and continue to focus on areas such as shifting social norms, or working at subnational level, there is a need to further strengthen use of data and tools, which is an area of ongoing work. Country programmes would benefit from guidance on what types of gender data in political participation to advocate for to address key gaps in information (such as sex disaggregated voter registration and turnout data) while working in collaboration with partners. Further use of evaluation and measurement tools, such as media tracking surveys, and surveys of women’s participation in political parties, would help to improve the capacity of programmes to learn and focus on key areas of change. There are a few examples of such tools being used in some countries, but further consolidation would ensure a more consistent approach to measurement, where needed and appropriate.

Building on UN Women’s efforts to compile quantitative measures of women’s political participation, country programmes could consider context-relevant, additional measures (qualitative and quantitative) to demonstrate impact and progress. In some countries, programmes collect data on women’s confidence to participate in politics, which offers a broader view that could be strengthened. In general, feedback mechanisms need to be strengthened for women across their journeys into and out of politics.

The evaluation also found there was scope to increase donors' appreciation of the importance of longer time periods required for training women political aspirants and the importance of working between election cycles. Improved reporting of results, sharing lessons learned and demonstrating impact is a key component of supporting long-term programmes.

CONCLUSION 3.

Resistance to women's political participation remains a salient issue in many countries, requiring comprehensive and sustained efforts to preserve gains. UN Women's approach at country level would benefit from developing longer-term, strategic programming that goes beyond typical election cycle-based initiatives.

FINDINGS 9, 14, 15, 16

UN Women's support to women's political participation included sustainable approaches such as strengthening related legal frameworks, fostering national ownership and supporting networks of women leaders. However, programmes (and funding) tended to focus on election cycles, which was a concern raised by stakeholders in many countries.

Therefore, UN Women's approach at country level needs to go beyond election cycle-based programmes, to long-term and strategic country-level initiatives that support sustainable change. This should include a stronger emphasis on effective implementation of policies; protection against persistent forms of backlash,⁵⁶ including violence against women in politics; support for newly elected women leaders in the post-election phase; sustained support for young women leaders; grassroots, community and media engagement for social norms change; and strategies to tackle barriers to women's participation arising from resource constraints and resistance from political parties.



DELIVERY WORKSTREAM

CONCLUSION 4.

Partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders across government, women's networks, civil society organizations and others have been critical to support various initiatives related to women's political participation. Partnerships between UN agencies at the country level have enabled mainstreaming of women's political participation into wider electoral efforts and partners recognize UN Women's value add, and flexible ways of working. While engagement with new partners in the context of social norms change and working at subnational levels will enable reach and access, any potential risks related to these partnerships should continue to be assessed.

FINDINGS: 6, 7, 8

UN Women has largely been valued, trusted and successful in working with broad coalitions. Many of the Entity's successes in legal and policy reforms have depended on building trusting partnerships, particularly with parliaments, government entities such as electoral management bodies, offices of registrar of political parties, and women's ministries and machineries. UN Women's reputation for being politically impartial, flexible and open has enabled the Entity to build broad coalitions with political actors. UN Women's political neutrality is viewed as a critical value add, enabling the organization to play a strong convening role and brokering political access for women's civil society organizations and coalitions.

⁵⁶ According to Flood et al. (2020), backlash refers to any form of resistance to progressive social change. In the case of gender equality, it refers to resistance or opposition to gender equality initiatives; it is "an active pushing back against progressive and feminist programmes, policies and perspectives." Backlash can take many forms, including denial, disavowal, inaction, appeasement, appropriation, co-option, repression and violence. For the purposes of this evaluation, in line with this definition, references to backlash encompass violence against women in politics. Flood, M., Dragiewicz, M. and Pease, B. (2020) 'Resistance and backlash to gender equality', Australian Journal of Social Issues, 1-16

Programmes are now seizing opportunities to work at a subnational level, along with addressing social norms. Partnerships at the grassroots level offer the opportunity to tackle patriarchal barriers to women's participation in more effective ways. However, these partnerships (including with faith-based organizations and traditional leaders) could carry concomitant risks of being politically coopted or of reinforcing traditional gender-based norms which may be appealing to local audiences, but ultimately undermine women's broader political empowerment.

CONCLUSION 5.

At the global level, UN Women's triple mandate has been leveraged in support of advancing women's political participation. While the Entity's normative and operational mandates were leveraged concurrently across most countries, there is room to strengthen the coordination role at the country level, particularly in gender mainstreaming across UN programming on political participation.

FINDINGS: 10, 11

At the global level, the evaluation found evidence of synergies between UN Women's normative, UN system coordination and operational mandates in the area of women's political participation. The Entity developed key UN system knowledge products and hubs (including data and guidance documents); worked with inter-agency/intergovernmental mechanisms; and developed system-wide messaging on UN priorities, including temporary special measures and violence against women in politics. This global work was an important pillar in achieving results at the country level. However, the UN system coordination mandate was somewhat unevenly applied across countries and remains an area that requires strengthening. In comparison, UN Women's normative and operational mandates were leveraged relatively strongly in many countries.

While some challenges persist in coordinating efforts with other UN entities, UN Women is well-respected by UN partners and acknowledged as a leader on women's political participation due to its technical strength; the expertise of its staff; and its long-term and effective engagement with civil society organizations, women's organizations and governments. Therefore, UN Women is well positioned to play a stronger role in gender mainstreaming across UN programming on women's political participation.

CONCLUSION 6.

UN Women has worked to ensure that the 'leave no one behind' principle and the needs of marginalized groups were included in its programming by improving access to resources such as training and building more equitable representation. While committed to the principle of equity, less well-funded programmes would benefit from further guidance on the trade-offs between working inclusively versus reaching more women at scale.

FINDINGS: 12, 13

The 'leave no one behind' principle was a core concern of country programmes working on women's political participation, and there were several examples of work with specific marginalized groups, including a deep intersectional approach. There was evidence that, in some contexts, UN Women's support resulted in these groups having a strong voice and influence in political spaces. There was also evidence that UN Women's support pushed diverse actors (government and non-government) to consider the needs and work inclusively with groups such as younger women, people living with disabilities, poor, rural, indigenous and afro-descendant women.

However, both the survey results and country case studies showed that programmes needed to make difficult trade-offs. Some groups were difficult to include given the contextual environment (e.g. LGBTIQ+ groups) and programmes with fewer resources could not invest in reaching marginalized groups at the community level. This suggested that further guidance and sharing of good practices could support country programmes on ways to work inclusively, without having to reduce their reach to women political aspirants.



CONCLUSION 7.

UN Women's programmes have contributed to positive impacts on the legal and policy environment, and movement-building and capacity-building across various contexts. Legal reform, particularly legislated quotas, have been key drivers of higher numbers of women in political positions. Evidence from case studies showed that in some countries this was translating into gender-responsive policymaking. However, there was also evidence of gains stagnating or reversing in other countries, driven by a number of factors.

FINDINGS: 3, 7, 16

There has been strong progress to date in legal and policy reforms that have substantially facilitated women's access to political positions, and across several other long and short-term outcomes such as building women's skills and confidence and developing means to address and mitigate violence against women in politics. There were strong examples where broader impact has been achieved through UN Women programmes (for instance in Moldova and Tanzania). The evaluation also validated evidence of improvements in gender-responsive law and policymaking as a result of working with diverse stakeholders, including electoral bodies, parliaments and women's caucuses.

Data from country case studies suggested that progress in getting women elected has been relatively slow, particularly for countries that do not use legislated quotas. Even where legislated quotas were implemented, further increases in women's political participation were slow or stagnant, or, in a few cases, reversed. While contextual factors played a strong role in preventing women's progress, often the experience, threat, or fear of violence against women in politics (and other forms of harassment) dissuaded many women from engaging in political and public affairs, pursuing or continuing a political career. In other cases, the targets set by quotas were not achieved, given a lack of quota enforcement mechanisms and effective implementation as well as other contextual and socioeconomic factors such as levels of insecurity or women's lack of resources.

CONCLUSION 8.

While progress has been made in areas of legal and policy reforms, support to women's participation from political parties remains a key challenge.

FINDINGS: 3, 5, 6, 9

UN Women has made a strong contribution to legal and policy reforms which now include many provisions for gender equality, e.g. updates to constitutions, improved gender strategies for the management of electoral processes and improved mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of gender equality by political parties. Across the country case studies, a wide range of stakeholders indicated that political parties were the main barrier to women's inclusion in political participation, with interventions such as voluntary legislated quotas largely ineffective.

There was strong consensus among stakeholders that new ways of working to influence political parties need to be found. This requires partnering with key national stakeholders such as the office of the registrar of political parties, multi-party international foundations, UN entities leading the work with political parties (e.g. UNDP) and donors to open up new areas of work. Promising practices were emerging in this area, such as working with non-governmental organizations that focus on political actors, women's political wings and with male allies. There were also examples of UN Women working directly with the executive branch and leaders in government to support messaging and advocacy on women's political participation.

Where inclusion of women is seen as a zero-sum game, meaning that men will lose power, further investments are needed to change wider political perceptions of women's inclusion, and on agreeing key advocacy messages to be endorsed beyond UN Women.

CONCLUSION 9.

Support from headquarters was well-tailored to country-level needs and contributed to the effectiveness of programmes. Technical support was responsive, learning was accessible and work on data and in developing standard models (e.g. for training) were also widely applied. However, regional-level collaboration could be strengthened in some areas.

FINDINGS: 1, 2, 4, 10

The evaluation found evidence that UN Women’s support was well-tailored to the needs of programme personnel at the country level. Consolidation of learning, responsive technical support – especially in complex areas of legal reform and advocacy – and deployment of toolkits for training enabled programmes to rapidly hone their approaches. Work on research and data, such as Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.1b, enabled programmes to advocate for better representation at local levels.

There were some examples of cross-regional learning which were beneficial, such as the adoption of specific training curriculums. Some stakeholders indicated the need to strengthen regional-level technical support. Regional mechanisms and organizations had a strong influence on national stakeholders (e.g. the African Union, and the African Women Leaders Network) and UN Women has already leveraged these organizations for support and influence. However, some stakeholders advocated for stronger learning and collaboration within and across regions, particularly in countries where results were lagging behind regional counterparts.




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7

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed from the findings and conclusions emerging from this evaluation. The recommendations were developed in consultation with key evaluation stakeholders, including the Evaluation Reference Group and the Governance and Participation section at UN Women. To ensure the proposed actions are carried out, each recommendation is accompanied by priority status, timelines, responsible actors, impact, difficulty, and a description of what could happen if the recommendation is not implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 1 	
UN Women should continue to address key barriers to women’s political participation, while including a focus on persistent constraints and forms of backlash such as violence against women in politics.	
CONCLUSIONS: 1, 7	
Priority: High	Timeline: Medium-term
Suggested steps that could be taken:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake analysis of growing/persistent constraints across different socio-political contexts, including resource constraints faced by women candidates. • Knowledge products focused on strategies to address financial and resourcing barriers for women, and advocacy for alternative funding mechanisms. • Strengthen focus on backlash, including violence against women in politics encountered by women political aspirants and leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include support to unsuccessful political aspirants, through psycho-social support. • Strengthen support to women’s networks for political aspirants and leaders. • Strengthen linkages with broader work on ending violence against women in politics, particularly in the emerging area of online violence and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. • Strengthen focus on social norms work to combat resistance to women’s political participation. 	
To be led by: Women’s Political Participation (Governance and Participation section), cascading to Regional and Country Offices.	
Impact: High – Addressing key barriers would enable more women to enter and remain in politics.	
Difficulty: Medium – UN Women can use existing practices and provide guidance for further replication, but technical development of the approach to addressing resource barriers for women would need to be developed.	
If not implemented: Women will continue to face barriers to women’s political participation.	

RECOMMENDATION 2



UN Women should strengthen its advocacy and convening role by providing further guidance on navigating and communicating with diverse coalitions of partners in support of women's political participation.

CONCLUSIONS: 2,4,5,8

Priority: Medium

Timeline: Medium-term

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Develop an overarching technical communications plan outlining key messaging on women's right to political participation for all levels of the UN.
 - Create communications technical support resource to work with Regional and Country Offices to develop country-level communications plans.
- Develop an overarching approach to advocacy and engagement by drawing on lessons and good practices, with specific guidance on effective approaches for key groups of stakeholders.
 - Include specific approach for entities (government and non-governmental) mandated to work with political parties, donors, new groups of partners (male allies, traditional leaders) etc.
 - Potential to undertake regional-level analysis and synthesize lessons on advocacy related to legislated quotas, legislative changes for increasing women's political participation, introducing legislation related to violence against women in politics, etc.
 - Develop tools for gender-sensitive political economy analyses that can inform contextually driven advocacy efforts.
- Undertake consultation with country-level stakeholders on advocacy approaches/needs and lessons from convening and coordination efforts with multi-stakeholder coalitions.
 - Draw on technical expertise and leverage the coordination role to further strengthen gender mainstreaming across UN programming in this area.

To be led by: Women's Political Participation team (Governance and Participation section), in consultation with Country and Regional Offices.

Impact: Medium – Country-level advocacy strategies will clarify how work with different constituencies will lead to change.

Difficulty: High – UN Women can provide global guidelines and recommended practices, but further work is needed to support country programmes to adapt advocacy strategies to each political context.

If not implemented: Advocacy approaches will lack evidence for planning, political actors not mobilized to address key issues, interventions such as media work not properly monitored.

RECOMMENDATION 3



UN Women should aim to develop strategic and long-term programmes to support women's political participation at the country level.

CONCLUSIONS: 2,3

Priority: High

Timeline: Short-term

There is a strong demand from diverse stakeholders across countries for the Entity to continue and strengthen longer-term support in this area of work.

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Strengthen internal technical, delivery and monitoring capacities at country level to support development of strategic programming.
- Develop donor outreach approaches at country level to position programming at a strategic, long-term level as opposed to being based on election cycles.

Renew focus on policy implementation, sustainability of support (including to young women leaders) and protection against backlash, including violence against women in politics.

To be led by: Women's Political Participation team (Governance and Participation section), by providing support to relevant Country Offices.

Impact: High – Developing longer programmes on women's political participation is a strategic area for UN Women that draws on the Entity's strengths.

Difficulty: Medium – UN Women is in a good position to push for strategic programmes.

If not implemented: Gains in women's political participation will be difficult to protect.

RECOMMENDATION 4



UN Women should strengthen guidance on effectively mainstreaming considerations of leave no one behind into women's political participation, particularly as programmes scale and work with new partnerships for social norms change.

CONCLUSIONS: 1,4,6

Priority: Medium

Timeline: Medium-term

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Consult with country programmes to synthesize lessons from diverse approaches to leave no one behind and working with marginalized groups.
- Map and analyse costs/benefits of reaching different groups from the perspective of diverse country programmes.
- Develop specific guidance for country programmes seeking to broaden work at subnational levels and on community-level social norms change.
- Develop guidelines on working inclusively across different types of activities, such as technical support; advocacy to different levels of the political system; and finding and working with coalitions of civil society and women's organizations.

To be led by: Women's Political Participation team (Governance and Participation section), in consultation with relevant Country and Regional Offices.

Impact: Medium – UN Women can pool approaches, emerging and established practices and provide clear guidance on how to work inclusively in different types of political contexts.

Difficulty: Easy/medium – It is possible for UN Women to rapidly use its knowledge management function and expert advice to provide guidance.

If not implemented: In some countries, leave no one behind principles will be implemented in ad hoc and ineffective ways.

RECOMMENDATION 5



UN Women should enhance measurement of key results on women's political participation to better contextualize and demonstrate the impact of its work at country level.

CONCLUSIONS: 2,9

Priority: Medium

Timeline: Medium-term

Suggested steps that could be taken:

- Consider a pilot initiative to review and strengthen results measurement and metrics of success in selected countries, including assessing the impact on women's confidence to participate in politics (e.g. understanding systems and processes of government, confidence in public speaking, participation in decision-making forums).
- Map and support country-level data gaps and needs, including availability of key statistics for women's political participation and representativeness of elected/appointed officials (with suitable disaggregation from the perspective of leave no one behind).
- Develop tools that can be adapted for rapid assessments (e.g. on women in political parties, representation of women leaders in traditional and social media) and promote the use of qualitative tools.
- Share learning externally on the realized and potential long-term impact of sustained investments in this area, drawing on UN Women's efforts in specific countries.

To be led by: Women's Political Participation team (Governance and Participation section), in consultation with other relevant sections as needed.

Impact: High – UN Women Country Offices will be able to identify effective practices and demonstrate impact.

Difficulty: Easy/medium – Data and research mapping can be rapidly undertaken and existing tools and methods can be provided. Further tools and guidance will require technical inputs and resources to develop.

If not implemented: Programmes will fail to collect adequate data on ways to improve programming and will not be able to monitor progress or mitigate any harm for women arising from their participation.



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ANNEXES

Annexes are available in Volume II of the report.

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

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



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