



UN WOMEN RWANDA

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2019-2024



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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION, AUDIT AND INVESTIGATION SERVICE (IEAIS)

Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

UN Women

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ACRONYMS

CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GERAAS	UN Women Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics
MIGEPROF	The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WHO	World Health Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION OF RWANDA

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The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) conducted this country portfolio evaluation (CPE) to provide an independent and systematic assessment of UN Women's contributions to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in Rwanda between 2019 and 2024, which covers the Strategic Note period. The purpose of the evaluation is to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning to inform the next Strategic Note.

OBJECTIVES

The evaluation objectives were to:

1. Assess the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the country portfolio
2. Identify lessons learned and good practices that can be scaled.
3. Provide actionable recommendations to inform the development of the new Strategic Note.

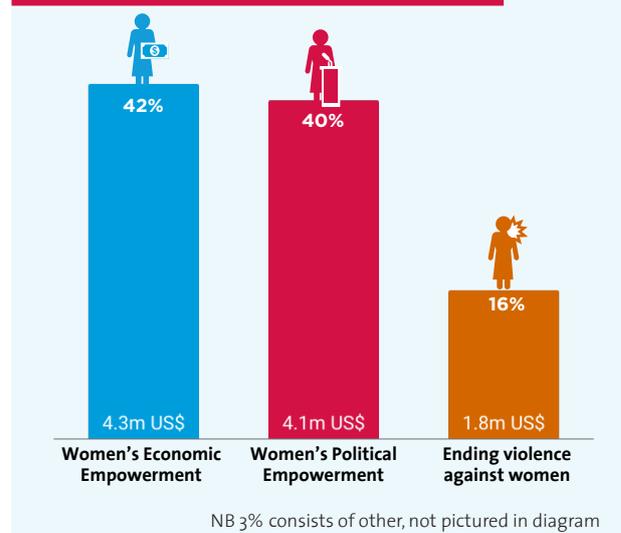
INTENDED USERS

The primary intended users of this evaluation are the Country Office which will use the findings to develop, design and implement its new Strategic Note. Secondary users are expected to be the UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office, relevant headquarters colleagues, national partners and other stakeholders working in Rwanda.

BACKGROUND ON UN WOMEN IN RWANDA

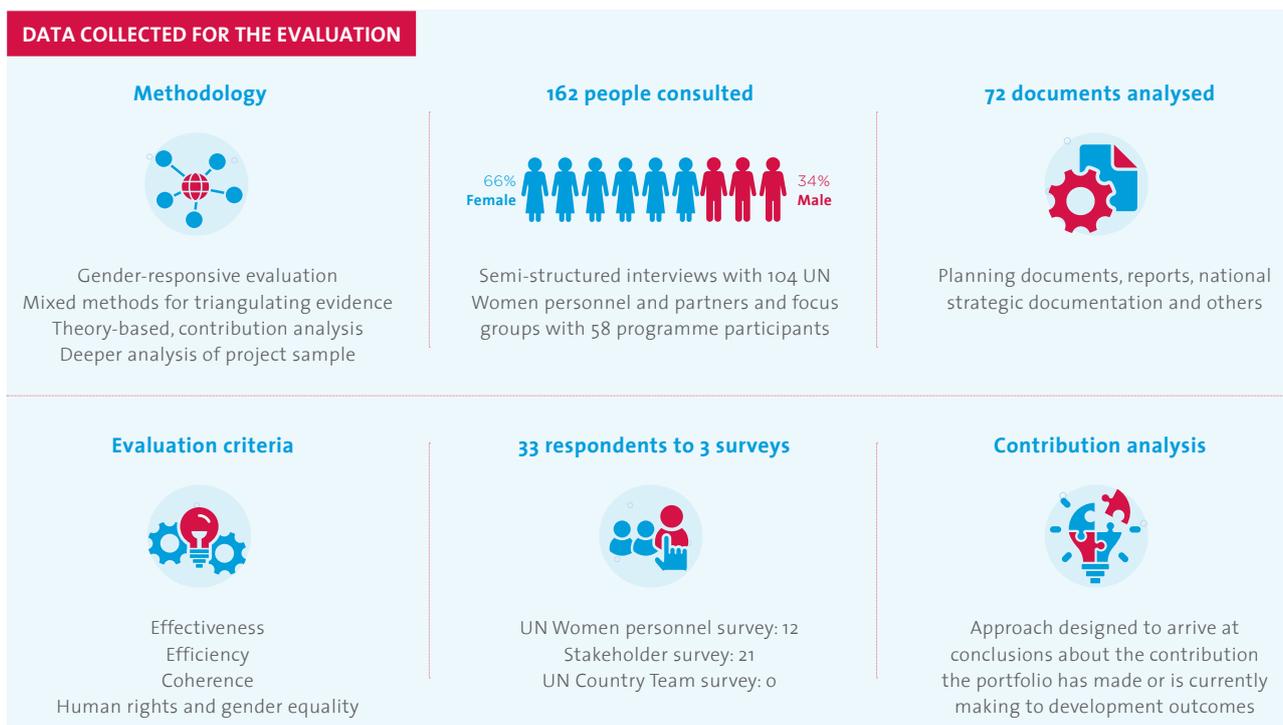
The Strategic Note is the main planning tool for the Country Office to articulate how it will implement UN Women's triple mandate across normative, coordination and operational work in Rwanda. The Country Office's budget between 2019 and 2023 was US\$ 16.2 million. The largest area of work in terms of financial investment is Women's Political Empowerment, accounting for 42 per cent of development results framework expenditure during 2019–23. This is followed by Women's Economic Empowerment (38 per cent) and Elimination of Violence Against Women (16 per cent).

DISBURSEMENT BY THEMATIC AREAS (2019–2023)



METHOD

This CPE employed a non-experimental, theory-based, gender-responsive approach. In consultation with the Country Office, a reconstructed theory of change was developed and used as the basis for contribution analysis. Evaluation questions were developed using the theory of change and assessed against the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, gender equality and human rights, and organizational efficiency. Multiple sources of data were obtained, and 197 stakeholders were consulted through interviews, focus groups and survey. The CPE was delivered in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Handbook. All evaluation products were subject to quality review by IES management, a peer reviewer, the Evaluation Reference Group and the Evaluation Management Group.



KEY FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

Are UN Women’s activities (normative, coordination, and operational) in Rwanda, including its thematic focus, relevant for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in Rwanda?

UN Women Rwanda’s comparative advantage in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment, compared with other UN entities and key partners was its (1) gender expertise and extensive experience in-country; (2) mandate, positioning and convening power as an independent voice; and (3) relationships with the government gender machinery and civil society. The Country Office’s normative, coordination and operational activities are aligned with its comparative advantage, generally well aligned with national strategies and government priorities, and mostly responsive to rightsholders needs. However, some short-term projects were less relevant to national priorities and to addressing rights holders’ needs. There are opportunities to strengthen its relevance by scaling up its normative and coordination work, its support to the women’s movement, increasing work with other ministries beyond the gender machinery, working more closely with sister agencies to achieve scale and focusing its operational work on areas that integrate UN Women’s triple mandate.

EFFECTIVENESS

Is the Country Office contributing to the target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in Rwanda?

The Country Office effectively contributed to target outcomes through its operational, normative and coordination work. In the area of Women’s Participation, Leadership and Governance, the Country Office contributed to forming a cohort of women leaders at local and national levels and changing perceptions of women as effective leaders and contributed to strengthened capacity of the national gender machinery to implement gender equality and women’s empowerment commitments. In the area of Women’s Economic Empowerment, the Country office contributed to women being able to access new economic opportunities, resulting in higher income streams for many participants, noted by interviewed participants. In the area of Ending Violence Against Women, the Country Office contributed to communities and service providers better able to prevent and respond to violence; communities changing their norms, attitudes and behaviours on gender equality and public safety; and stronger frameworks and procedures in place to address violence. UN Women contributed to these outcomes through capacity building, technical and financial support, supporting partners to provide legal services for Gender Based Violence victims, convening forums, holding awareness raising campaigns, linking women cooperatives to business opportunities, influencing policies, and providing inputs such as time-saving technologies.

The Country Office also effectively contributed to its target outcomes through its normative work. Key outcomes were achieved through UN Women's contributions, in terms of revising national laws and policies to strengthen gender equality; development of gender mainstreaming strategies across different sectors; reporting against international human rights conventions; and increasing the gender sensitivity of the COVID-19 response. There is opportunity for the Country Office to be bolder in strengthening policy advocacy on strategic and challenging issues.

In terms of coordination, the Country Office has effectively provided support to gender mainstreaming across the UNCT, including through the strengthened gender theme group, and has supported national gender coordination. While there are some synergies between UN Women Rwanda and other UN agencies across their gender work, there is room for UN Women to support stronger coherence across UN agencies' gender work and supporting more integrated joint programmes. The Gender Theme Group co-convened by UN Women with UNDP is a key UN structure that can be leveraged to strengthen systemwide accountability for gender mainstreaming within the UNCT. There is also a need to strengthen sector coordination at the national level: UN Women could achieve this by strengthening the national gender and family cluster's planning and coordination capacities to enhance collaborations across sectors and stakeholders.

The Country Office's interventions were well targeted and accessible, reaching vulnerable communities, including specific interventions targeting People With Disabilities (PWD), People Living With HIV (PLWHIV) and teen mothers. However, disability inclusion is not yet mainstreamed across all UN Women interventions and work with youth and LGBTQI+ groups remain limited to date.

The Country Office's partnerships were mixed in their effectiveness. Its strengths as a partner include its smooth operations, capacity-building, collaborative approach, and flexibility. However, in certain cases, UN Women's partnerships were affected by last minute planning, miscommunication, limited engagement and information-sharing.

EFFICIENCY

Did the Country Office have appropriate organizational structures, systems and capacity in place to ensure the efficient use of resources to maximize results?

The Country Office had the right technical capabilities to deliver results, although a more intentional approach to capacity-building is needed. However, Country Office capacity was insufficient to fully deliver its portfolio, especially in the areas of resource mobilization, human resources function and coordination. This was exacerbated by the number of projects and high personnel turnover. The resources mobilized have not been fully sufficient to deliver against the Strategic Note. The Country Office's resource mobilization capacity, structures and systems need to be strengthened to more efficiently and effectively raise funds to support portfolio delivery. Strong systems and structures were in place to manage resources to deliver results and manage risks. Some systems, such as the management of institutional knowledge and planning systems, need to be strengthened to support efficient delivery. Weaknesses in the management and delegation structure and the broad nature of the portfolio have affected the Country Office's efficiency and its ability to focus on strategic issues.

SUSTAINABILITY

How sustainable are the positive outcomes supported by the Country Office's programming?

The Country Office instituted good practices to support sustainability through anchoring its interventions within government priorities; working with local leaders and communities; supporting policy and norms change; and designing exit plans in some interventions. However, there are also weaknesses which affect the sustainability of outcomes, including short-term and small-scale projects with no exit plans; limited post-project monitoring; and capacity and funding gaps in UN Women's implementing partners. Across the Country Office portfolio there is some positive evidence that outcomes are likely to be sustained due to evidence of strengthened capacity; national, regional and local ownership; financial commitment; and systems such as local accountability and oversight mechanisms to support the continuation of activities.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1: The Country Office's country portfolio activities and thematic focus has mostly been very relevant to national priorities and the needs of rightsholders. The Country Office has effectively delivered key results across its thematic areas of focus. The Country Office's cross-thematic work and piloting of new approaches have been particular strengths. A key weakness has been that some projects have only been able to deliver on outputs due to the short time frame.

CONCLUSION 2: Interventions empowered vulnerable populations. In terms of addressing the root causes of gender equality, most of the sampled projects were gender responsive (targeting the specific needs of women) or with the potential to be gender transformative (where projects involved an element of policy or norm change to tackle the root causes of gender inequality).

CONCLUSION 3: As a result of the Country Office's good practices to support sustainability, there are positive indications that many of the outcomes achieved will be sustainable. However, the short duration and limited scale of some projects, lack of exit plan in certain initiatives, limited post-project monitoring, and some capacity and funding gaps for implementing partners hinders the likelihood of sustainability.

CONCLUSION 4: For the most part, the Country Office has delivered efficiently. Weaknesses in the Country Office's resource mobilization; certain systems, such as the management of institutional knowledge and planning system; management of partners; and the management and delegation structure have affected the level of resources mobilized and efficiency of delivery.

CONCLUSION 5: As a *Delivering As One* country, the Rwanda context provides great opportunities for strong coherence across the UNCT's gender programming. The Country Office has supported gender mainstreaming across the UNCT. There is an opportunity for the Country Office to further capitalize on this by strengthening the coherence of joint programmes, especially those it is leading, supporting other agencies with gender mainstreaming; strengthening the planning and coordination of gender advocacy, policy and normative work, including through the Gender Theme Group and other UN coordination structures; and convening and advocating for better information-sharing and greater links across the UNCT's gender work.

CONCLUSION 6: A significant proportion of the Country Office's capacity and resources are focused on operational work. The Country Office is delivering too many scattered, small, short-term projects across many partners. There are opportunities for the Country Office to further leverage its comparative advantage by rebalancing its work across UN Women's triple mandate and scaling its normative and coordination work. There is a need to better define the Country Office's focus areas and boundaries. This would also be supported by further consolidating its partnerships into more strategic, longer-term collaborations and increasing its work with grassroots organizations and the women's movement.

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATION 1.

Develop longer-term, more strategic partnerships aligned to the new Strategic Note objectives and time frame.



RECOMMENDATION 2.

Maximize comparative advantage by scaling up the Country Office's convening role around gender equality and women's empowerment issues and coordination of stakeholders advance gender responsive norms and policies at all levels.



RECOMMENDATION 3.

Build on the strong capabilities of the Country Office team and systems by further strengthening resource mobilization and the office's management structure; and review the strategies and systems in place for enhanced knowledge management, learning and the human resources function.



RECOMMENDATION 4.

Strengthen the relevance and sustainability of the Country Office's work by consolidating and focusing on targeted areas of work, moving away from short and scattered projects. These areas should build on UN Women's comparative advantage (integrated triple mandate), and lead to tangible impacts on the lives of women and girls.



Photo: ©UN Women Rwanda Country Office

1. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) is to deliver a systematic assessment of UN Women's work in Rwanda between 2019-2024. The intended uses of the evaluation are:

1. **Learning** on effective approaches to support improved decision-making.
2. **Accountability** for UN Women's contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The primary users of this evaluation are intended to be the UN Women Rwanda Country Office who will use the findings to inform the design of the new Strategic Note to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Rwanda and for accountability purposes. Primary users also include the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), which will use the findings and recommendations to feed into the development of a new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and to inform the design and implementation of joint programmes. Secondary users are expected to be UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office and headquarters colleagues, the Government of Rwanda, national partners and other stakeholders working in the country to identify what works to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, areas that need additional support and opportunities for strategic partnership.

The scope of the CPE is the Country Office's Strategic Note, (2019-24) including the Development Results Framework and the Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework. The period covered by the evaluation was January 2019 to December 2023. All activities included in the Strategic Note were considered, including joint programmes.

The specific objectives of the CPE are to:

- Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and gender responsiveness of the country portfolio, including UN Women's normative, coordination and operational mandates, and the extent to which human rights and gender equality have been addressed.
- Identify lessons learned and good practices that can be scaled.
- Provide actionable recommendations to inform the development of the new Strategic Note.



Photo: ©UN Women Rwanda Country Office

2. COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Government of Rwanda has prioritized gender equality and women's empowerment, and gender is widely mainstreamed in development frameworks. Rwanda has made advances with global and regional gender equality and women's empowerment commitments, which has also translated to national laws, policies and strategies that advance the implementation of these commitments. Institutional structures are also in place to advance gender equality and women empowerment in Rwanda. The dedicated national gender machinery institutions comprise the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), the National Women's Council (NWC), and the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum (FFRP).¹ The women's movement in Rwanda remains a key player in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment at grassroots and policy advocacy level.²

Rwanda has achieved remarkable gains in access to health, reductions in maternal and child mortality, HIV incidence and prevalence, and incidence of malaria. Rwanda has also achieved outstanding progress in terms of improving access to education and gender parity in primary and secondary education (see Annex 14 for further details).³

There has been significant progress in terms of women's business ownership, leadership and engagement in non-traditional sectors stemming from initiatives led by government and private sector. For example, the percentage of businesses owned by women in Rwanda has risen from 18.5% to over 25% from 2019 to 2023.⁴ However, more men than women participate in the labour market (67 per cent compared to 53 per cent); and women also have limited access to financial decision-making and financial products. Challenges remain in terms of societal expectations of women's roles; limited access to finance and control of resources for women entrepreneurs; and unequal distribution of care responsibilities. Equitable participation of men and women in private sector has also been limited.⁵

The 2003 Constitution stipulated quotas for women to fill at least 30 per cent of key decision-making positions, and Rwanda has significantly improved women's political participation and reduced gender disparities in leadership. However, there continues to be a gender imbalance, especially in executive and local governance institutions. For example, during the 2019/20 fiscal year, women comprised 33.3 per cent of the permanent ministry secretaries, 16.5 per cent of director generals in ministries, 24.3 per cent of directors of units, and 30.3 per cent of heads of public institutions. These figures are lower in local government.⁶ In 2023, 46 per-cent of seats in district councils were held by women.⁷

Rwanda has adopted national laws and ratified international laws that regulate gender-based violence and established various mechanisms to end gender-based violence. Despite these significant advances, gender-based violence remains an issue in Rwanda (see Annex 14 for statistics).

Although Rwanda has made significant strides in addressing poverty, women are still disproportionately affected. In 2016/17, 39.5 per cent of female-headed households were below the poverty line, compared to 37.6 per cent of male-headed households.⁸ This is often linked to other intersectional social and economic factors, affecting groups such as: women with disabilities; single mothers and widowed women; refugees and asylum seekers; and women living in rural areas.⁹

In terms of the UN system in Rwanda, the UN Country Team works alongside the Government of Rwanda, civil society and the private sector towards the nation's development and progress. Since 2008, Rwanda has been a 'Delivering as One' country.¹⁰ UN Women is a key member of the UNCT and co-chairs the gender theme group.

See Annex 14 for further details of the country context, along with additional references.

¹ [GMO. The State of Gender Equality in Rwanda from Transition to Transformation. 2023.](#)

² Inter-Parliamentary Union: <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking>:

³ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR); The Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census, Main Indicators Report, February 2023

⁴ Rwanda Development Board, 2023. <https://rdb.rw/>

⁵ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) [Rwanda], Ministry of Health (MOH) [GMO. The State of Gender Equality in Rwanda from Transition to Transformation. 2019.](#)

⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=RW>

⁷ Data from the National Electoral Commission report on local government elections.

⁸ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), National Gender Statistics Report 2021, September 2022

⁹ MIGEPROF. (2021). The fight against gender-based violence concerns every Rwandan. Kigali, Rwanda. Retrieved on December 8, 2023 [online] from < <https://www.migeprof.gov.rw/news-detail/the-fight-against-gbv-concerns-every-rwandan> >. National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) [Rwanda], Ministry of Health (MOH) [Rwanda], and ICF. 2021. Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20 Final Report. Kigali, Rwanda, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: NISR and ICF. Common Country Analysis. 2024.

¹⁰ UN Rwanda website: <https://rwanda.un.org/en> <https://rwanda.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>



Photo: ©UN Women Rwanda Country Office

3. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

3.1 Strategic Note overview

The Country Office's Strategic Note (2019-24) is UN Women's main planning tool to deliver its mandate of contributing to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in Rwanda. It covers the thematic areas of 1) Women Political Participation; 2) Women's Economic Empowerment; and 3) Ending Violence Against Women¹¹. As of 2023, the actual budget was US\$ 13.1 million. A theory of change was included in the Strategic Note and was tested by the evaluation using contribution analysis (see Annex 3).

3.2 Results Framework

The Development Results Framework sets out indicators against the target outcomes and output set out below.



The Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework includes the following goals to support intended development results:

1. Enhanced coordination, coherence and accountability of the UN system for commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. Increased engagement of partners in support of UN Women's mandate.
3. High quality of programmes through knowledge, innovation, results-based management and evaluation.
4. Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results.

3.3 Results data

The results-based management system involves quarterly reporting against output indicators, bi-annual reporting against outcome indicators and annual reporting as per the UN Women template. A summary of the main results from the Results Management System and Annual Reports is set out in Annex 4. A sample of these results were validated as part of the evaluation (see Methodology Section).

3.4 Strategic Note interventions

Over the Strategic Note period, the Country Office delivered 48 projects. Of these, 11 were in the thematic area of ending violence against women; 12 in women's economic empowerment; 4 in women's political participation; 1 in women, peace and security; and 20 were cross-thematic. Annex 6 sets out the full list of programmes undertaken during the Strategic Note period, including national, regional, global and joint programmes, mapped against UN Women's normative, coordination and operational mandates.

¹¹ EVAW was added in 2021 after successful resource mobilization from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

3.5 Financial and human resources analysis

The financial and human resources analysis covers the period from January 2019 to December 2023.

The Country Office has been relatively successful with its resource mobilization. Its annual budget has increased from US\$ 2.3 million (2019) to US\$ 4.39 million (2022). However, the overall budget of US\$ 13.1m raised during 2019–23 falls short of the target of US\$ 16.2 million. To date, the Country Office has disbursed US\$ 11.8 million. Disbursement rates from 2019–2023 averaged 84 per cent.

The timeliness and quality of donor reporting has been strong, with 92 per cent of reports submitted on time between 2019 and November 2023 and the regional office rating the Country Office’s reports amongst the strongest in the region.

The largest area of work in terms of financial investment is Women’s Political Empowerment, accounting for 42 per cent of development results framework expenditure during 2019–23. This is followed by Women’s Economic Empowerment (38 per cent) and Elimination of Violence Against Women (16 per cent).

According to UN Women’s Country Office Assessment Tool (COAT) programme resource efficiency indicators, the Country Office’s management ratio use of core for staffing and operational ratio for 2019–22 are all rated “green” as per UN Women’s benchmarks. The Country Office’s non-core to core ratio at 156 per cent is rated “amber” as per UN Women’s benchmarks, signifying that there is opportunity to strengthen this ratio.¹²

In 2023, based on the organization chart accompanying the workplan, the Country Office employed 21 people in total, consisting of 8 people in operations/finance; 2 in communications; 2 in planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, 1 in planning and coordination, 2 senior managers and 6 in programmes. Of these, 10 are male and 11 are female. This has increased from the 18 employed in 2019, consisting of 5 people in operations/finance, 1 in communications, 1 in monitoring and evaluation, and 9 in programmes.

3.6 Stakeholder mapping

The Country Office’s main stakeholders include: governmental stakeholders, civil society organizations, research and academic institutions, the private sector, UN agencies, bilateral and foundation donors, other multilaterals/regional bodies and target groups of rights holders.

Annex 7 sets out additional information on the institutions included within each stakeholder group, including how they have engaged and their intended contributions to the Country Office’s Strategic Note.

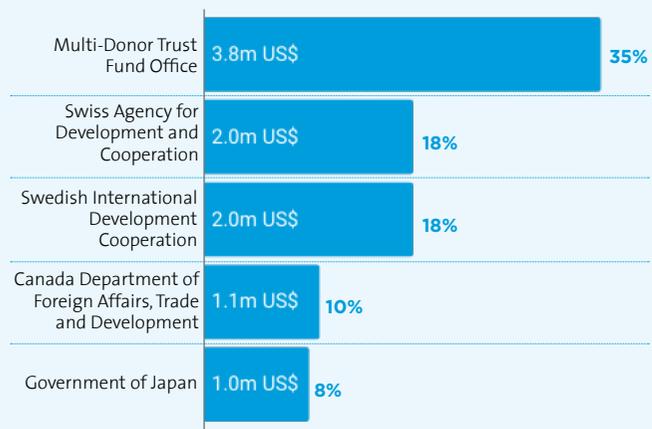
3.7 Human and financial resources analysis

Figure 1 below summarizes the analysis undertaken for the Rwanda Country Office.

¹² Country Offices are required to reach 300 per cent to be rated “green”.

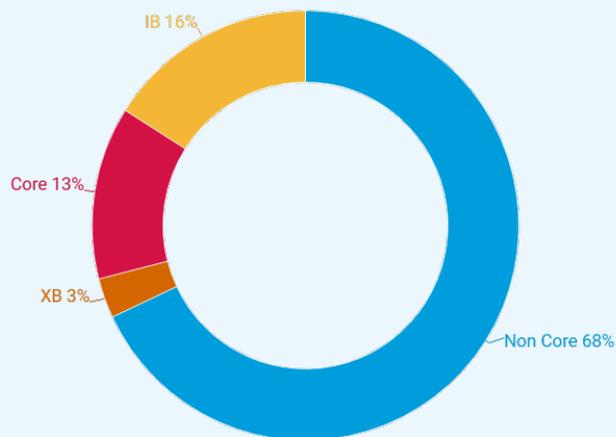
FIGURE 1: Human and financial resources analysis

**TOP DONORS TO THE COUNTRY OFFICE
(US\$) 2019–2023**



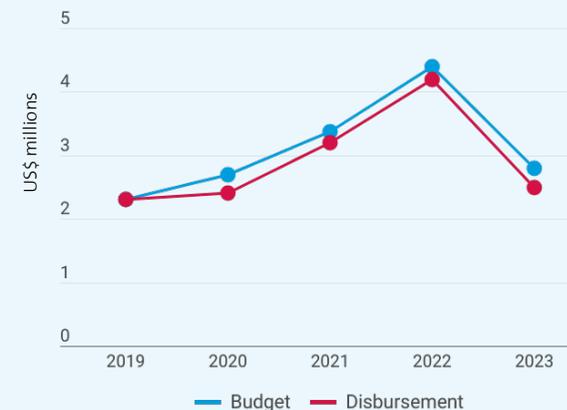
Source: UN Women Donor Agreement Management System

**TYPE OF FUNDING
(US\$) 2019–2023**



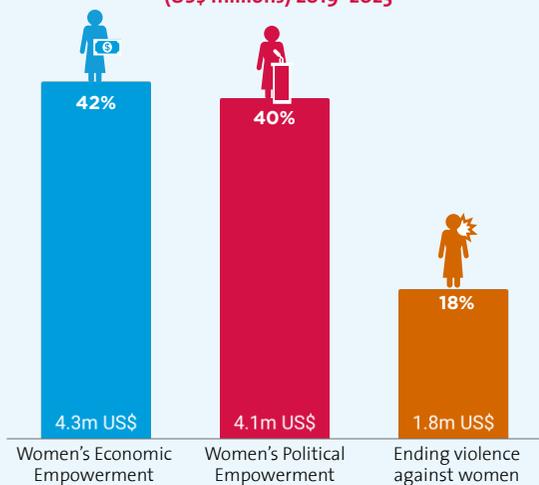
Source: UN Women Quantum

**ANNUAL BUDGET VERSUS DISBURSEMENT
(US\$) 2019–2023**



Source: UN Women Quantum

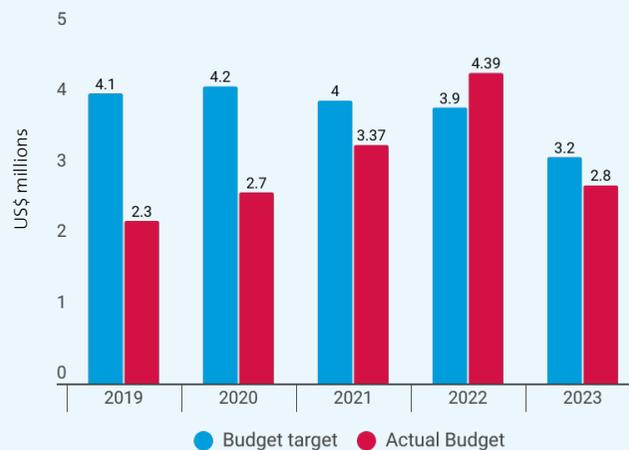
**DISBURSEMENT BY THEMATIC AREAS,
(US\$ millions) 2019–2023**



NB 3% consists of other, not pictured in diagram

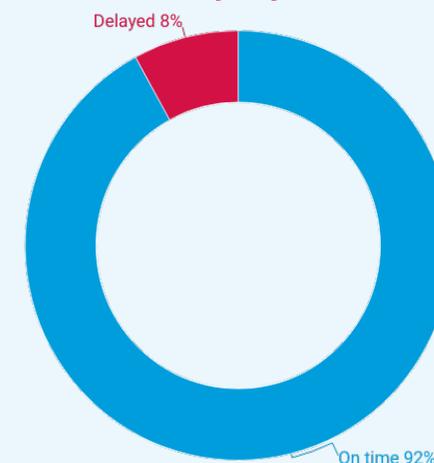
Source: UN Women Quantum

**RESULTS FRAMEWORK RESOURCE MOBILIZATION
(US\$) 2019–2023**



Source: UN Women Quantum (actual) and Results Management System (target).

**TIMELINESS OF DONOR REPORTING
2019–2023**



Source: UN Women One App, Donor agreements dashboard



Photo: ©UN Women Rwanda Country Office

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation approach was theory based and contribution analysis was used to assess UN Women's contribution to target outcomes as set out in the theory of change (see Annex 3). The evaluation used mixed methods, drawing on both quantitative data (primarily financial and from the survey conducted as part of the evaluation) and qualitative data (from document review, interviews and focus groups). Gender equality and human rights formed a critical component of the evaluation as detailed below.¹³

Stakeholder analysis and methodology: Stakeholder analysis was used to select a diverse group of stakeholders to engage in the evaluation, including women and men, and those who are vulnerable and may be difficult to reach. This included those with disabilities, female headed households, young people, and those with HIV/AIDS. Data was triangulated across different sources and stakeholders.

Evaluation criteria and questions: An evaluation criterion on gender equality and human rights was added, and associated evaluation questions developed. For the project review sample, the evaluation team assessed outcomes against the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale¹⁴ developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Reporting: Human rights and gender equality issues are covered in all sections of the report (findings, lessons learned, recommendations).

4.2 Evaluation questions

The evaluation sought to answer the following overarching questions.¹⁵

Relevance: Are UN Women's activities (normative, coordination and operational), including its thematic focus, relevant for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Rwanda?

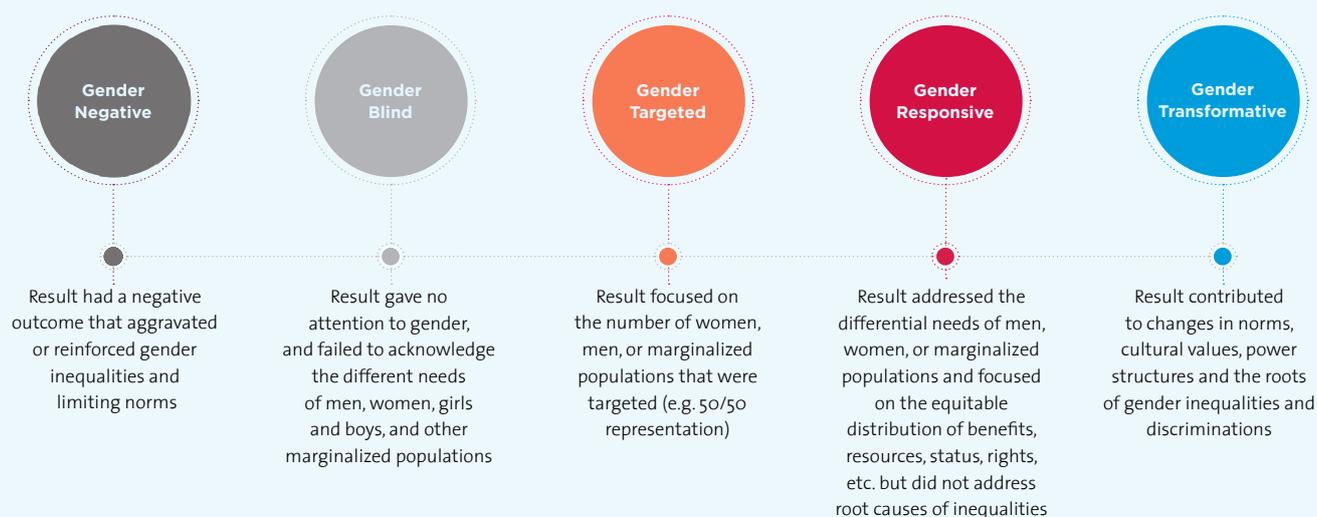
Effectiveness, coherence and human rights and gender equality: Is the Country Office contributing to the target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in Rwanda? How effective were its partnerships and what synergies are there across the UN Women Country Office portfolio and the UNCT?

Efficiency: Did UN Women have appropriate organizational structures, systems and capacity in place to ensure the efficient use of resources to maximize results?

Sustainability: How sustainable are the positive outcomes supported by UN Women programming?

Additional details are set out in the evaluation matrix in Annex 9. Annex 5 sets out the sampling approach used across projects and stakeholders to address these evaluation questions.

FIGURE 2: Gender Results Effectiveness Scale



Source: The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale.¹⁶

¹³ Building on the Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in 26 Evaluation – Towards United Nations Evaluation Group Guidance

¹⁴ UNDP Independent Evaluation Office. [The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale](#)

¹⁵ As per the Terms of Reference, CPEs are not expected to assess the achievement of impacts; therefore, impact has not been added as a criterion.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

4.3 Data collection

The evaluation team conducted a desk review of documents prepared by UN Women and other stakeholders on progress against gender equality and women's empowerment during the inception phase of the evaluation between January and February 2024. Annex 2 sets out the list of documents reviewed.

Interviews and focus groups with key informants were identified through the stakeholder analysis, most of which were conducted in person, between March and May 2024. Locations visited include: Gasabo, Kicukiro and Nyarugenge districts in the City of Kigali; Kamonyi and Gisagara districts, in Southern Province; Rulindo, and Musanze districts in the Northern Province; Kirehe and Ngoma districts in Eastern Province. Some interviews were conducted remotely in April, to accommodate stakeholder availability.

A survey of UN Women Country Office personnel, UNCT partners and other stakeholders was undertaken between 19 March to 31 May.

The data collection tools are set out in Annex 10.

In total, the evaluation team targeted a sample of 100 stakeholders. 197 stakeholders were reached, of which 67 were male and 130 were female. All data was disaggregated by sex where relevant. Programme participants' data was further disaggregated by geographical region, age and socioeconomic background. Four rights holders with disability were consulted as part of the evaluation. No specific questions on disability were asked of respondents in the focus group. The list of stakeholders consulted is set out in Annex 2. Data was managed as per the data management plan, set out in Annex 12.

4.4 Analysis

The evaluation matrix forms the framework for analysis. Qualitative data was analysed in a tabular analysis framework based on the evaluation matrix. Quantitative data was analysed in Stata to identify patterns and trends¹⁷.

The evaluation team used the debrief meeting with the Programme Specialist on 25 March and the presentation of preliminary findings to the Country Office on 24 May to validate the evaluation findings and to identify other perspectives and information to be incorporated in this report.

Contribution towards each target outcome was analysed using the format below.

Target Outcome		
Evidence for achievement		
Achievement – strength of evidence		
STRONG	MODERATE	WEAK
Corroborated by multiple sources and different types of stakeholders, with detailed examples	Corroborated by more than one source, but limited examples and/or general examples only	Only cited by one source, or by one type of stakeholder. No specific examples provided
Evidence for UN Women contribution		
UN Women contribution – strength of evidence (Strong / Moderate / Weak)		
STRONG	MODERATE	WEAK
Change explicitly attributed to specific UN Women activity, detailed explanation of <i>how</i> it contributed	General and non-specific link between outcome and specific UN Women activities	Link between the outcome and UN women activity unclear, limited explanation of how the activity supported change.
Contribution of other factors; testing of assumptions		

4.5 Ethics

The evaluation complied with the relevant United Nations Evaluation Group and UN Women standards on ethics,¹⁸ as set out below:

Integrity: The evaluators complied with the Code of Conduct and delivered the evaluation with honesty, professionalism and impartiality. The evaluators are independent from the programme delivery. Changes to findings made as a result of discussion between the evaluation team and the Country Office and following additional data collection have been documented.

Accountability: The evaluation followed a transparent process through the inception report and sampling approach. Analysis was carried out transparently using an analysis framework and Stata. All evaluation findings have been mapped to the evaluation objectives and evaluation questions, with references to the underlying evidence.

¹⁷ Stata is a statistical tool for analyzing quantitative data.

¹⁸ The evaluation adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group and UN Women Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct, United Nations Evaluation Group guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations with gender-responsive and human rights approaches integrated into the evaluation.

Beneficence: The evaluation team sought informed, oral consent. The team clearly explained the purpose of the evaluation and how the information would be used. The evaluators highlighted the potential benefits and harm to participating, and that participants could stop the interview or focus group discussion at any point. All responses have been anonymized, so there is no expected harm to participants.

Respect: The evaluation meaningfully engaged evaluation stakeholders not only as subjects of data collection. The evaluation team will share the evaluation brief with all evaluation stakeholders and respondents. To ensure fair representation of different voices, the sampling approach took into consideration coverage of different categories of stakeholders, including those hard to reach.

4.6 Limitations, challenges and mitigations

The limitations below are operational challenges faced during the evaluation.

Survey response rate: Despite several follow-ups, there were no responses to the UN Country Team (UNCT) survey. The evaluation team mitigated this by extensive interviews with key UNCT partners as identified by the Country Office.

Stakeholder availability: The evaluation team was unable to meet with certain government and UNCT stakeholders¹⁹ due to their commitments around preparing for the elections in July 2024 and other ongoing evaluations (UN agencies, government consultations, joint programme evaluation). The evaluation team held in-depth interviews with other UN agencies

and government stakeholders; reviewed relevant documents and meeting minutes (such as those of the gender thematic group); and reviewed the draft UN joint programme on gender evaluation²⁰, where some of these “missing” stakeholders were interviewed.

4.7 Dissemination and use

Table 1 below sets out the dissemination plan for the targeted primary and secondary users of this report. The evaluation team will track this data with the support of the Country Office.

The Country Representative will lead the follow-up process to facilitate the use of the evaluation findings and is responsible for issuing a management response within six weeks of finalization of the evaluation report.

4.8 Evaluation management and quality assurance

The Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) and Chief, Independent Evaluation Service (IES) reviewed and signed off on all evaluation products. Supported by the international and national consultants, the evaluation Team Lead was responsible overall for the CPE, including data collection, analysis and reporting. The evaluation will also be subject to the Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System process, which assesses the report quality.

The Evaluation Reference and Management Groups (see Annex 12) were responsible for providing technical review and ensuring a high-quality, transparent process. The peer reviewer provided another review.

TABLE 1: Dissemination plan for the targeted primary and secondary users of this report

Dissemination approach	How this will be tracked
Rwanda Country Office Evaluation team to share a two-page brief and host a meeting to discuss next steps.	→ Uptake of findings and extent to which results are met in concrete, actionable next steps.
UN Women Regional Office and headquarters colleagues Evaluation team to share a two-page brief and host a webinar.	→ Number of stakeholders the brief is shared with. → Number of attendees attending the webinar.
National partners and others working in the sector Evaluation team to share a two-page, external-facing brief.	→ Number of stakeholders the brief is shared with.

¹⁹ Including IOM, UNDP, FAO, UNHCR, NWC, MINALOC, MINEFOFIN, MAJ, MINISPORT, RCS and RNP.

²⁰ The evaluation was conducted by independent consultants and is accessible [here](#). The joint programme was led by the National Gender Machinery and One UN in Rwanda.

General objective

The evaluation is a systematic analysis of UN Women’s contributions to development results in gender equality and women’s empowerment in Rwanda at the national level, with a focus on strengthening learning, decision-making and accountability.

Evaluation Process

- 1 Design
- 2 Inception and portfolio analysis
- 3 Data collection
- 4 Data analysis and reporting
- 5 Monitoring and use

Methodology



Gender-responsive evaluation
 Mixed methods for triangulating evidence
 Theory-based, contribution analysis
 Deeper analysis of project sample

162 people consulted



Semi-structured interviews with 104 UN Women personnel and partners and focus groups with 58 programme participants

72 documents analysed



Planning documents, reports, national strategic documentation and others

Evaluation criteria



Effectiveness
 Efficiency
 Coherence
 Human rights and gender equality

33 respondents to 3 surveys



UN Women personnel survey: 12
 Stakeholder survey: 21
 UN Country Team survey: 0

Contribution analysis



Approach designed to arrive at conclusions about the contribution the portfolio has made or is currently making to development outcomes

Strategic Note 2019-2024

US\$
13.1
 million

Total resources between 2019 and 2023
 Evaluation was conducted between January and June 2024

Evaluation scope: programmatic and organizational result areas



Women’s Political Participation



Women’s Economic Empowerment



Ending Violence Against Women



Operational effectiveness and efficiency framework



Photo: ©UN Women Rwanda Country Office

5. FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

Evaluation Question 1. Are UN Women's activities (normative, coordination and operational) in Rwanda, including its thematic focus, relevant for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment?

FINDING 1

The Country Office's comparative advantage in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, compared with other UN entities and key partners was its (1) gender expertise and extensive experience in-country; (2) mandate, positioning and convening power as an independent voice; and (3) relationships with the government gender machinery and civil society.

- 1. Gender expertise and experience:** The Country Office's comparative advantage was in its expertise, specialist staff, and institutional and contextual knowledge as an agency. The Country Office was able to use its institutional and contextual knowledge and experience to deliver grounded and contextually relevant approaches.²¹
- 2. Mandate, positioning and convening power:** The Country Office's value add was also in its triple mandate, which provides the opportunity for UN Women to use a range of approaches, including institutional strengthening, facilitating policy reform and direct delivery. Its positioning enables the Country Office to be an independent voice; convene all relevant stakeholders on gender issues; and support government on setting and monitoring of gender priorities.²²
- 3. Relationships with government and civil society:** In Rwanda, UN Women is a credible and influential stakeholder within the women's empowerment field, building on its strong relationships with government gender machinery and civil society.²³ Donors and UN agencies felt it was impossible to work on gender equality without UN Women, and that partnering with UN Women could amplify the work. Partners also felt that the government listened when UN Women Rwanda spoke.

FINDING 2

The Country Office's normative, coordination and operational activities effectively leverage its comparative advantage. However, its relevance could be strengthened by scaling up its normative and coordination work, and its support to the women's movement. The Country Office could also strengthen its relevance by focusing its operational work on areas that integrate UN Women's triple mandate and by working more closely with sister agencies to achieve scale.

The Country Office's activities effectively leverage its comparative advantage. Its UN, government and civil society partners value its normative, coordination and operational work, as well as its strong partnerships with the national gender machinery. Seventy-six per cent of the external stakeholders surveyed (n=21) rated the Country Office's value add as very high across the areas of political participation and governance, Women's Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women. UN agencies highlighted the Country Office's support in supporting gender mainstreaming across programmes, the Common Country Analysis and development of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

The Country Office's current balance of work across UN Women's triple mandate does not enable the Country Office to fully leverage its comparative advantage. Increasing convening, coordination and normative work would enable UN Women to deliver at greater scale. The Country Office delivers strongly in the areas of providing technical expertise and operational delivery, but less strongly on advocacy and coordination of UN country team on gender equality and women's empowerment.²⁴ Country stakeholders felt that the Country Office was too focused in its operational work, whereas its comparative advantage is in its coordination and normative mandates.

²¹ Key informant interviews with UN agencies, donors, civil society and government.

²² Key informant interviews with donors, UN agencies, civil society and government.

²³ Key informant interviews with civil society, donors and UN agencies

²⁴ Interviews with donors and UN agencies.

UN agencies, donors and government partners noted that increasing UN Women's engagement at the strategic level particularly in planning and advocacy would enable the Country Office to better leverage its comparative advantage and value add. See Findings 8 and 9 on the Country Office's normative and coordination work.

The Country Office's resources are stretched across a large number of projects and operational areas. This would be better managed by setting a more defined strategy, focus areas and boundaries, and by focusing on operational work with direct synergies with its coordination and normative work, and by leading on the gender components of programmes with sister agencies to achieve scale. As gender equality is a broad area, donors and UN agencies noted that the Country Office's focus was too widely spread and needed to be better defined on areas where it can make significant change. Similarly, the country office's 2019 workplan identified a key lesson learned on the need to deepen impact by focusing on "transformative priorities". Donors and UN agencies felt that the Country Office's comparative advantage was not in operational delivery, in which it was competing with implementing partners in some areas; rather, the Country Office's added value is in working across its triple mandate and linking operational work to sector coordination and influencing policy. There are good examples of this, for example the Country Office's work on the

care economy, gender responsive budgeting and gender-based violence, where UN Women is working across operations and normative components. However, this is not yet the case across all of the Country Office's operational work. Donors and other UN agencies suggested that the Country Office could lead on the gender components of other UN agency led programmes, by delivering jointly on programmes (beyond the joint programmes coordinated through the RCO).

UN Women works more with government and established civil society than with grassroots organizations and activists, which presents a missed opportunity. In many other countries, UN Women is the main supporter of the women's movement. When the Country Office does engage with such organizations, civil society, donors and UN agencies felt that the Country Office tended to invite the relatively more established and well-known grassroots organizations and sometimes engage them on a more tokenistic basis. Engaging grassroots organizations and young feminist activists could add value to the Country Office's work by bringing innovative ideas and in-depth understanding of realities on the ground. Strengthening the women's movement can also help address discriminatory social norms²⁵ (see Finding 15 on partnerships). Working with grassroots organizations can support better reach to rural, vulnerable communities.²⁶

FINDING 3

The Country Office's portfolio is generally well aligned with national strategies and government priorities, including those of the gender machinery. However, its relevance to government priorities was affected by poor collaboration in some cases. There are also opportunities to strengthen UN Women's relevance to national priorities by supporting the government in monitoring and implementing gender equality and women's empowerment commitments; increasing work with other ministries beyond the gender machinery; and reviewing its priorities in terms of alignment to government priorities and where UN Women brings a particular value add.

Most survey respondents agreed that the Country Office's work was well aligned to government priorities, the causes of gender inequality and was aligned to the needs of women and girls in the country.

- **National Strategy for Transformation:** the Country Office's programmes align to the National Strategy for Transformation priorities, particularly in the areas of economic empowerment; strengthening women's political participation and financial inclusion; access to justice and promoting positive social norms for gender equality.

- **Law on gender-based violence:** the Country Office supports the prevention and response to gender-based violence as part of the implementation of the Law.
- **National Gender Policy (2021):** the Country Office contributes to the goals of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, including addressing harmful traditional practices; promoting equal participation in decision-making; combatting gender-based violence; and advocating for legal reforms.

²⁵ Interviews with donors, UN agencies, civil society organizations.

²⁶ Interviews with donors, UN agencies and civil society.

- **Rwanda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** the Country Office's portfolio aligns with specific SDG targets related to gender equality, women's empowerment, and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

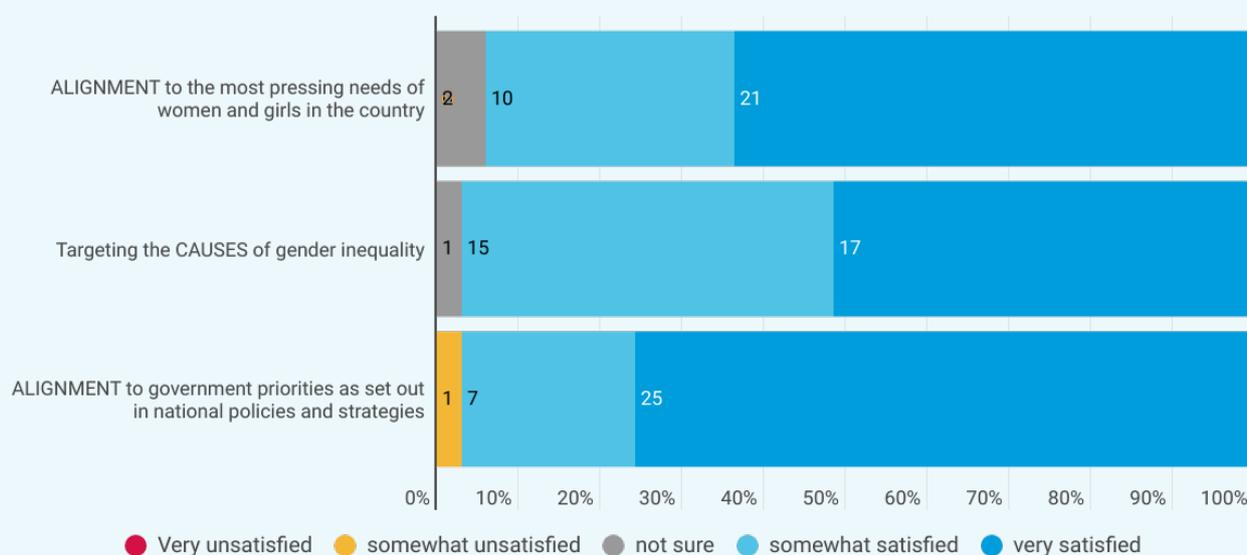
The Country Office's work also supports the mandates, objectives and strategies of government departments, across the gender machinery: MIGEPROF, GMO, Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum, Isange One Stop Centre and other departments such as the National Consultative Forum of Political Organizations and the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities.²⁷ For example, the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum noted that the Country Office's support to women in all parties from national to district levels was well aligned to its strategy.

However, government stakeholders noted that, in practice, in certain instances with poor collaboration, partnerships with the Country Office were less relevant to their priorities where short projects were planned at the last minute to meet deadlines for spending funds. In some cases, the Country Office engaged government partners too late during the planning phase, and hence these partners noted they were only able to provide limited inputs in terms of the scoping and planning of the programme, and that ultimately the project delivered were ad hoc and small, and not well aligned to government partners' priorities.

UN Women Rwanda's relevance would be strengthened by increasing its support to the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments in national and sector strategic plans. UN agencies and donors felt that as resources were reducing, gender was sometimes deprioritized. While gender is highlighted in policy documents as an important priority, it does not always trickle down into funding, activities and targets. The Country Office and partners prepared a policy brief with gender priorities to inform the Second National Strategy for Transformation. The brief noted that while there has been good progress in mainstreaming gender in national and sector strategic plans, additional efforts are needed to better define the gender gaps and specific target outputs and outcomes of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Country Office has an important role to play in advocating for specific targets in the Second National Strategy for Transformation, down to the sector levels, which would increase accountability.

The Country Office could increase its support to government in monitoring progress against key national gender equality and women's empowerment commitments and how gender policies and guidelines are implemented to support government accountability for its commitments. Donors and UN agencies noted that the Country Office is well placed to do this: the Entity's research during COVID-19 on gender gaps was critical for strengthening the gender responsiveness of the response.

FIGURE 3: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with UN Women's work regarding the following assertions?



Source: evaluation online survey Mar - Jun 2024 N =33 (external stakeholders and personnel)

²⁷ Government interviews, Strategic Note, government strategies.

The Country Office works mainly with the gender machinery. Scaling support to other ministries would directly support implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments across other government sectors. UN Women works very closely with the gender machinery but has also worked with other ministries such as the Ministry of ICT and Ministry of Education for the *Girls Can Code* project. However, there is opportunity to scale its work with the other ministries. For example, the Country Office supported the GMO to prepare thematic gender profiles. The Country Office could promote ownership and use of the thematic gender profiles prepared by engaging relevant ministries, through the gender machinery and in partnership with relevant UN agencies who may hold stronger relationships with these ministries. There are also opportunities to scale work with other ministries, supporting them to strengthen implementation of gender guidelines and gender budgeting.²⁸

To maximize relevance, the Country Office's new Strategic Note priorities need to be aligned to government, UN Women and UNCT priorities to deliver outcomes with the potential of effecting transformational change at scale. Some options include: financing for gender equality and engagement with the private sector; gender-responsive budgeting; women's economic empowerment – rural women, employability, care economy; ending violence against women – focusing on areas that can make an impact on the lives of girls, consider the contextual challenges and trade-offs between breadth and depth in terms of holistic support provided to GBV survivors; women's political participation – focusing on areas where women's representation and voice remains a challenge; and youth as a cross-cutting area. Annex 1 sets out the rationale for these areas, which are mapped against (a) government, UN Women and UNCT priorities; (b) ability to effect transformational change; and (c) alignment to UN Women's comparative advantage.

FINDING 4

The Country Office's target objectives and portfolio design were responsive to rightsholders' needs. The Country Office effectively adapted its portfolio and delivery modality to changing contexts, such as COVID-19. However, in practice, some short-term projects were less relevant in addressing rights holders' needs and not all projects targeted structural changes or disability inclusion.

The Country Office's target objectives and portfolio design were responsive to rightsholders' needs, building on the gender profiles that the Country Office supported in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics. Programmes addressed the needs of women and girls, including many who were vulnerable and hard to reach (see Finding 13). Rightsholders noted that the target objectives of women's economic empowerment, political participation and leadership and ending violence against women were aligned to their needs. The cross-thematic approach, where women's economic empowerment components were incorporated across many programmes, was highly relevant.

To remain relevant, the Country Office effectively adapted its portfolio and delivery modality to changing contexts, such as COVID-19. As set out below, the Country Office personnel and external partners agreed there was a high level of adaptation.

FIGURE 4: Internal and external stakeholders found a high level of adaptation to the evolving programmatic context



Source: Evaluation survey of UN Women personnel (n=12) and external stakeholders (n= 21)

²⁸ Interviews with UN agencies and government stakeholders.

The Country Office pivoted to address emerging challenges faced by women and girls, such as increased gender-based violence and economic vulnerabilities²⁹. The Country Office launched new initiatives, supporting women with safe spaces, financial assistance and training on coping mechanisms. It adapted to the Covid-19 restrictions, by supporting hotlines, delivering online services, and scaling its work with local leaders. The Country Office effectively supported donors, UN agencies, government and civil society to strengthen the gender-responsiveness of their Covid-19 response, through dissemination of knowledge products, such as the one on the gendered effects of Covid-19 done in partnership with UNFPA and MIGEPROF.³⁰

However, in practice, some short-term projects were less relevant in addressing rightsholders' needs, as they only delivered on outputs rather than targeted outcomes. For example, some projects delivered training without ongoing mentoring, which affected participants' ability to apply the skills they had learned. Other projects provided legal support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. However, when legal cases were unsuccessful, rightsholders were unable to benefit from the support and fully exercise their rights. Not all Ending Violence Against Women interventions included

psychosocial support and reintegration components, which are needed to strengthen the relevance and impact of this work.

Many, but not all projects targeted structural and normative changes to support gender equality or disability inclusion. Mainstreaming a men/community engagement approach to changing norms across the Country Office's programmes would support more sustainable, structural change. Programmes using this approach demonstrated contribution to norms change.³¹ Targeting disability inclusion can also increase the relevance of the Country Office's programming to all rightsholders. Complementing its programmes on responses to ending violence against women with more institutional and community prevention work would more effectively support structural change.³² The Country Office's approach also requires longer-term programming to see transformational impact. For example, the evaluation of the Joint Programme on Gender noted that the results of the programme remained at the output level, as the programme was too short to translate capacity-building, awareness raising and gender-related dialogues into impacts, such as decreasing rates of gender-based violence.

²⁹ Key informant interviews with civil society and government partners.

³⁰ Key informant interviews with donors, UN agencies, government and civil society.

³¹ Project reports and civil society partner interviews.

³² Key informant interviews with donors, UN Women personnel and donors.

EFFECTIVENESS, COHERENCE, GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Evaluation Question 2. Is the Country Office contributing to the target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in Rwanda?

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

FINDING 5

In the area of Women's Participation, Leadership and Governance, the Country Office effectively contributed to target outcomes. It contributed to forming a cohort of women leaders at local and national levels and changing perceptions of women as equally legitimate and effective leaders. The Country Office also contributed to strengthening the organizational capacity of the national gender machinery and implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments. The Country Office contributed to these outcomes through delivering capacity-building, technical and financial support, convening forums and holding awareness-raising campaigns. Other important factors include the role of the national gender machinery, government prioritization and a supportive policy and legal framework for gender equality.

Table 2 summarizes the outcome areas and rates the strength of evidence for the outcome achievement and UN Women Rwanda's contribution. Further detail is set out below (see also Annex 15 for the full contribution

analysis). Discussion on the contribution of other factors is set out in Finding 12. Annex 18 sets out progress against the results framework.

TABLE 2: Women's Political Participation Contribution Analysis

Outcome	Evidence of outcome (and strength of evidence)	UN Women's contribution to the outcome (and strength of evidence)
A diverse cohort of women leaders is formed to lead in governance	Strong evidence for this outcome – in terms of the number of women who ran and were elected, and young people able to secure roles in the public sector.	Moderate evidence for the Country Office's contribution – through its capacity-building and convening.
Women are perceived as equally legitimate and effective leaders as men	Moderate evidence for this outcome – in terms of changing norms around women's political leadership.	Moderate evidence for the Country Office's contribution – through awareness-raising campaigns.
Organizational capacities, outreach and convening power that promote women's leadership enhanced	Strong evidence for this outcome – strengthened government capacity on gender-responsive elections, gender budget statements, monitoring and certification for companies.	Moderate evidence for the Country Office's contribution – through capacity-building and technical and financial support to the national gender machinery.
Implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments strengthened	Strong evidence for this outcome – strengthened gender-responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming monitoring.	Moderate evidence of the Country Office's contribution – capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives.
Other factors contributing to outcomes	The country office's contribution has been rated amber across all these outcomes because of the strength of other contributory factors, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political will and commitment and a supportive legal and policy framework for women's participation in government Commitment and interest of women to actively participate Employment opportunities available in government 	

Against the target outcome of “A diverse cohort of women leaders is formed to lead in governance at local and national level”, the Country Office contributed to increased levels of women’s representation in government through training for future female politicians through the Women’s Leadership Institute election campaign support to female candidates; convening of the Rwanda Women Leaders Network; and mobilization of women voters through education and community outreach with the She Participates initiative, in partnership with the national women’s council.³³ Several of the donors interviewed noted that the Country Office played a key role in increasing the percentage of women who ran and were elected in the 2021 national, district and local elections, with 381 women elected and 46 per-cent of seats in district councils held by women, an increase from 43% which was the baseline value in 2019.³⁴ The women leaders elected during the 2021 local government elections were trained in leadership, gender quality principles, partnership and coordination. 231 women from 11 political parties were trained in political participation, campaigns and leadership. Several government partners interviewed noted that this training contributed to women leaders being able to deliver on their roles more effectively. All interns interviewed by the evaluation team also noted that the 120 internships run by the Country Office were a springboard for their careers, enabling them to transition to other positions within the public sector.

Against the target outcome of “Women are perceived as equally legitimate and effective leaders as men”, all the participants and partners interviewed by the evaluation team noted that the Country Office’s work strengthened community and media knowledge and perceptions about the role of women in leadership positions. At the end of 2023, the Country Office reported that 536 male community and opinion leaders had been supported to advocate for women’s leadership, over the course of the strategic note. All interns interviewed by the evaluation team noted that the Country Office-managed internships changed their notions of gender roles, with land management no longer seen as a male only field.

Against the target outcome of “Organizational capacities, outreach and convening power of organizations and networks that promote women’s leadership enhanced”, the national gender machinery noted that the Country Office supported its capacity, including organizing gender-responsive elections and in capturing data to show the status of gender equality. Donor reports note that 148 personnel from 35 government institutions were supported. All government partners

engaged in this work who were interviewed by the evaluation team noted that capacity-building and the Parliamentary Guide for Gender-Responsive Budgeting has resulted in better quality gender budget statements with clear gender equality allocations mapped against priority areas of need. Government partners also noted the establishment of the Gender Equality Seal, with UN Women Rwanda and UNDP support, done in partnership with the Gender Monitoring Office and Private Sector Federation³⁵. Partners working in this area noted that the Gender Equality Seal is now owned by the Private Sector Federation, with nine companies initiating care provision in the workplace to support female employees, and 32 institutions committing to implementing gender equality and women’s empowerment plans and strategies. Partner reports note that private sector companies adopted gender action plans to promote women in business were adopted by private sector actors, and that this has contributed to reduction in gender pay gap, sexual harassment at work and also increased women in leadership positions.³⁶ The Country Office has played a key role in designing the gender mainstreaming strategy for the private sector although there is need to further scale this work.

Against the target outcome of “Implementation of gender equality and women’s empowerment commitments strengthened”, partners, donors and UN agencies noted that the Country Office’s technical support and capacity-building strengthened the monitoring of gender mainstreaming in government services and the strengthening of gender-responsive budgeting which can now be seen in sectoral plans. UN Women Rwanda also supported the National Gender Machinery in developing the Gender Mainstreaming and Accountability Minimum Standards, which guided gender mainstreaming and accountability efforts the Third Rwanda National Action Plan of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 2023/24–2027/28 and a Country Gender Status Report.³⁷ At the end of 2023, on average 27 per-cent of national and district budgets were allocated to gender equality and women’s empowerment, an increase from 14% and 5% at national and district level respectively at baseline.³⁸ Government partners highlighted UN Women’s support which contributed to this increase.

The Country Office’s contribution has been rated “moderate” against these outcomes, given the importance of other contributory factors including: the government’s commitment to gender equality and women’s participation in government; supportive legal and policy framework; the role of the national gender machinery; and the support of other institutions.

³³ Interviews with partners and donors, annual reports and donor reports.

³⁴ As of 2024, women form 61.3 per cent of the Chamber of Deputies and 37.4 per cent of the Senate. Data from the National Electoral Commission report on local government elections.

³⁵ Specifically, the Country Office supported the Rwanda Development Board to design the gender mainstreaming strategy in the private sector.

³⁶ Also noted in annual reports and donor reports.

³⁷ Reported by the national gender machinery and in annual reports.

³⁸ Government data

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

FINDING 6

UN Women Rwanda effectively contributed to changes in the target outcomes under the area of Women's Economic Empowerment. As a result of UN Women interventions, women were able to access new and increased economic opportunities, resulting in new and higher streams of income for many participants. UN Women contributed to these outcomes by delivering capacity-building and mentoring; setting up and linking women cooperatives to credit, markets and business opportunities; providing inputs such as time-saving technologies and seedlings; and influencing policies on the care economy and national agriculture.

Table 3 summarizes the outcome areas and rates the strength of evidence for the outcome achievement and UN Women Rwanda's contribution in this area. Further detail is set out below (see Annex 15 for the full

contribution analysis). The contribution of other factors is discussed in Finding 12. Annex 18 sets out progress against the results framework.

TABLE 3: Women's Economic Empowerment Contribution Analysis

Outcome	Evidence of outcome (and strength of evidence)	UN Women's contribution to the outcome (and strength of evidence)
New opportunities are unlocked for women to benefit from Rwanda's expanding private sector markets		
Women have enhanced skills and access to finance and markets, and increased access to remunerated off-farm employment	Strong evidence against this outcome – in terms of women with enhanced skills, access to credit, increased income generation and financial independence, leading to reduced rates of abuse.	Strong evidence of the Country Office's contribution – capacity-building, seed funding and credit access, childcare and awareness raising to change norms.
Leaders demonstrate increased understanding of and commitment to implement gender equality and women's empowerment practices	Moderate evidence of this outcome – verbal commitments from leaders to implement gender equality and women's empowerment practices following UN Women's support.	Strong evidence of the Country Office's contribution – UN Women delivered training and awareness-raising activities.
Women farmers and cooperatives' engagement in higher segments of the food and agricultural value chains is increased		
Women farmers and cooperatives' engagement in higher segments of the food and agricultural value chains is increased	Strong evidence for this outcome – supported cooperatives were able to develop long-term relationships with larger buyers who offered price premiums. Strong evidence of the Country Office's contribution – provision of agricultural extension services, cooperatives formation and training, linking to larger buyers and advocacy for policy change to support women-led small and medium-sized enterprises.	
Women agripreneurs' access to productive and transformative inputs, technologies and services strengthened	Strong evidence for this outcome – participants noted that UN Women support led to increased productivity and income, leading to enhanced family well-being and reduced unpaid care work.	Strong evidence of the Country Office's contribution – funding of infrastructure, tools, technologies and kits, and provision of training on how to use such inputs.
Other factors contributing to outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social norms change and community support Piloting of new approaches Government's political will and gender friendly policies Other initiatives strengthening participants' capacity Stable macroeconomic environment Expertise and existing relationships held by implementing partners Private sector partnerships 	

Against the target outcome of “new opportunities are unlocked for women to benefit from Rwanda’s expanding private sector markets” the Country Office partnered with the private sector to provide capacity-building and training, including through the Gender Action Learning System approach, financial literacy, gender-responsive procurement, entrepreneurship, land rights and land management, and production techniques for agricultural production. The Country Office also supported women with seed funding and support to access credit, childcare and awareness raising to change norms around women working outside the household. The Country Office worked with leaders to encourage them to commit to gender equality. For example, partners noted the training of 6,000 women on land rights and management; 584 rural women on the Gender Action Learning System methodology³⁹ who subsequently trained others in their communities; and 2,772 rural women accessed agricultural inputs and technologies as a result of UN Women’s support. UN Women also enhanced the entrepreneurship skills of 2,647 vulnerable women (including women sex workers, women with disabilities, women living with HIV and teen mothers).⁴⁰ Interviewed participants noted that this support increased their income generation through market opportunities and off-farm employment. Partner reports noted that, with the Country Office’s support aimed at developing skills and providing start-up capital, 356 women and girls accessed jobs; and 942 vulnerable women developed business plans and reopened their businesses following COVID-19. Women gained tenders to produce protective face masks, and women entrepreneurs signed export contracts and also secured contracts with schools, hotels and restaurants, and reopened their shops.⁴¹ Interviewed rural women also noted increasing their leadership role. Partner reports noted that 83 per cent of supported farmer groups were women-led. The Country Office’s work contributed to an increase in women-led businesses, from 33 per cent in 2017 to 37 per cent in 2020.⁴²

There were good linkages across thematic areas. The Country Office’s work with the mining sector used ending violence against women as an entry point but also contributed to Women’s Economic Empowerment outcomes. The Country Office’s awareness-raising campaign and training reached 576 members of the mining community.⁴³ One participant noted, “Based on entrepreneurship skills I learned during the training,

I started my small business around the area; I can also apply for any position in the mining sector now”. The partner report noted that the training contributed to 12 women securing mining jobs.

Several interviewed partners noted that the training helped young women to become more financially independent, which led to decreased rates of abuse and exploitation.⁴⁴ Additionally, as a result of the national policy dialogue led by the Country Office, 29 district planning directors and 4 province planning directors committed to incorporate unpaid care work in district planning and district development strategies.⁴⁵

Against the target outcome of “women farmers and cooperatives’ engagement in higher segments of the food and agricultural value chains is increased,” the Country Office supported interventions that provided time-saving technologies, childcare, strengthened women’s cooperatives and agricultural extension – including reducing production loss and childcare support. The UN Women [decentralized evaluation of the 3R Programme \(2022\)](#) noted that the programme successfully removed structural barriers to women’s economic participation by recognizing and reducing unpaid care work for 623 mothers. Interviewed participants noted increased quality and quantity of production. With the support of the Country Office in linking them with buyers, four farmer cooperatives were able to secure price premiums of up to 27 per cent above local markets for maize. As a result of The Country Office’s support, 77 Voluntary Savings and Loan Associations were able to mobilize US\$ 100,000 in savings.⁴⁶ Donor reports note that women farmers produced and sold 8,060 metric tons, through UN Women Rwanda facilitated linkages with buyers, and 11,459 women farmers accessed improved agricultural inputs and technologies. The Country Office supported this work by providing an agricultural extension service; forming and mentoring cooperatives; funding infrastructure, tools and kits, and training on how to use such inputs; and by promoting for greater investment in women-led small and medium-sized enterprises.⁴⁷ Partner reports also noted that 300 cooperative members (of which 261 are women) were supported through entrepreneurship training to access extension services, finance opportunities and market linkages. All cooperative members also confirmed this during interviews.

³⁹ GALs is a community-led empowerment methodology using specific participatory processes and diagram tools

⁴⁰ Annual report, donor reports, and interviews with UN Women and implementing partners.

⁴¹ Partner reports.

⁴² Most recent NSIR Business census (2020).

⁴³ Partner report

⁴⁴ Also noted in annual reports.

⁴⁵ Donor reports.

⁴⁶ Evaluation of the 3R Programme.

⁴⁷ Interviews with UN Women and implementing partners.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

FINDING 7

The Country Office effectively contributed to target outcomes in the area of Ending Violence Against Women. As a result of UN Women’s contributions, there was evidence of communities and service providers better able to prevent and respond to violence; communities changing their norms, attitudes and behaviours on gender equality and public safety; and stronger frameworks and procedures in place to address violence. There was evidence that this led to tangible impacts on the lives of women and girls through successful legal cases, access to testing and treatment after violence, and reintegration into communities. The Country Office contributed to these outcomes through the provision of legal support and services, capacity-building, training and technical support.

Table 4 summarizes the outcome areas and rates the strength of evidence for the outcome achievement and UN Women Rwanda’s contribution in this area. Further detail is set out below (see Annex 15 for the full

contribution analysis). The contribution of other factors is discussed in Finding 12. Annex 18 sets out progress against the results framework.

TABLE 4: Ending Violence Against Women Contribution Analysis

Outcome	Evidence of outcome (and strength of evidence)	UN Women’s contribution to the outcome (and strength of evidence)
Women and girls are free from violence as a result of increased safe spaces and better prevention and response	Examples of tangible impacts on the lives of women and girls include recovery of property rights, testing and treatment after sexual violence, systems for establishing paternity and teen mothers reintegration in society.	Strong evidence of the Country Office’s contribution – through legal support and medical services, social reintegration support, advocacy and counselling.
Communities and other stakeholders are better able to prevent and respond to VAWG and deliver essential services to survivors.		
Communities are better able to prevent and respond	Strong evidence for this outcome – communities with increased awareness of gender-based violence prevention and reporting and community-led groups set up to address gender-based violence.	Strong evidence of the Country Office’s contribution – capacity-building and awareness raising.
Service providers better able to prevent and respond	Strong evidence for this outcome – service providers and peer educators with strengthened service provision.	Moderate evidence of the Country Office’s contribution through its capacity-building support. Government prioritization and funding and other stakeholder-led initiatives also key contributors.
Attitudes and behaviours related to women and girls’ rights to enjoy spaces free from violence improved.		
Community improves attitudes and behaviours related to respectful relationships, gender equality and safety in public spaces	Strong evidence for this outcome – participants noted changes to gender norms, resulting in men increasing domestic work, reduction in domestic violence and increased sharing of household decision-making.	Strong evidence of the Country Office’s contribution – by providing training and mentoring and community engagement.
Formal operating frameworks and procedures in place to increase safety	Strong evidence for this outcome – a number of frameworks and procedures developed/ strengthened with UN Women support.	Moderate evidence for the Country Office’s contribution to support these processes, while also noting the contribution of government support and prioritization, and the support of other stakeholders.
Other factors contributing to outcomes	Strong political will and commitment at local and national levels Social norms and behaviour change, including as a result of national strategy and other interventions Funding from government and other stakeholders to support better service provision Partnership with strong and experienced partners and activists	

Against the impact area of “Women and girls are free from violence as a result of increased safe spaces and better prevention and response”, there was evidence of tangible impacts on women and girls’ lives. For example, interviewees highlighted key outcomes including the recovery of women’s rights to the couple’s property following separation; systems and mechanisms establishing paternity of a child; and testing and treatment after sexual violence, and support to arrest the perpetrator through implementing partners’ legal support and delivery of post-violence services in the Isange One Stop Centres and GBV centres. In total, Country Office annual reports noted that 35,586 victims of gender-based violence were supported with response services, including through the running of mobile clinics. Several interviewed partners noted that teen mothers have returned to school as a result of implementing partners’ legal, education, counselling and social support, and parent adolescent communication sessions.

Against the target outcome areas of “Communities and other stakeholders are better able to prevent and respond to violence” and “Community improves attitudes and behaviours related to respectful relationships,” the Country Office delivered capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives, such as mobile clinics, community outreach campaigns, mass sports, social media, radio and TV programmes. Peer educators also reportedly reached 7,186 of their peers on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and access to health services. Awareness-raising campaigns reached 5,496 local communities and tv programmes have reached 17,850 people on gender-based violence prevention and response.⁴⁸ Several implementing partners and participants interviewed noted that this increased awareness of gender-based violence prevention and reporting, also translated into action, for example, stakeholders in the mining sector established groups to address gender-based violence within the industry while trained men set up community advocacy groups. Several participants interviewed noted that changing gender norms also resulted in men increasing their share of domestic activities, a reduction in domestic violence, increased sharing of decision-making and women with increased self-esteem. Interviewed members of the mining community also noted a change after the Country Office’s training, where the company increasingly valued the role of women employees. This resulted in the company providing childcare and maternity leave, giving pregnant workers opportunities to work in other areas rather than being dismissed as they

had been previously, and stronger referral mechanisms for gender-based violence. Interviewed stakeholders within the mining industry management noted that the Country Office’s support contributed to a doubling of women employees. Donors, government and partners noted that the gender accountability days⁴⁹ which reached 3,999 community members⁵⁰ had been effective in raising awareness and changing norms, contributing to birth registration and increased support to vulnerable women and cases of teen mothers handled as a result. Several government stakeholders also noted that following the gender accountability days, village leaders are more aware of gender-based violence cases and the interventions required, increasing ownership of gender-based violence mobile clinics.

Against the target outcome of “Service providers better able to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls and deliver essential services to survivors”, interviewed service providers and peer educators reported being able to increase their gender-based violence prevention, response, referral and case management services as a result of the Country Office’s capacity-building and mentoring, and through the Country Office’s support on community-based monitoring tools. Security structures, such as the Police, District Administration Security Support Organ and the Community Night Patrol committed to protecting women and girls, as a result of the Country Office’s advocacy.⁵¹ The Country Office also worked with implementing partners to support 50 legal cases related to gender-based violence. In partnership with the Rwanda Investigations Bureau, the Country Office supported training to 78 Chief Investigators, 43 doctors, 46 gender-based violence officers, 33 psychologists and 29 ministry of justice officers on gender-based violence case management, including investigation, perseverance of forensic evidence, reporting and chain of custody.⁵² This is expected to have played a contributory role to the increased conviction rate for sexual and gender-based violence cases, from 82 per cent in 2021 to 85 per cent in 2023.⁵³ Additionally, the Country Office organized training for 20 providers of sexual violence services on gender-based violence screening, referrals and monitoring the quality of services provided at health centre facilities. This reportedly resulted in 1,451 female sex workers and 76 young women benefitting from these services.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Donor reports and partner reports.

⁴⁹ Initiative started by the Rwanda Gender Monitoring Office, and supported by UN Women, to improve institutional accountability to gender equality and Gender Based Violence (GBV) service delivery and raise awareness on gender accountability and GBV prevention and response.

⁵⁰ Total reach as reported in the donor report.

⁵¹ Donor reports.

⁵² Annual report and donor reports.

⁵³ NISR report.

⁵⁴ Donor reports.

Against the target outcome of “Formal operating frameworks and procedures in place to increase safety for women and girls, men and boys”, the Country Office supported the development/revision of the Gender-Based Violence Guidelines in the Sports Sector, the Men Engage Strategy, the Gender Management Information

System, and the strengthening of the Gender-Based Violence Management Information System, which has increased the gender data available to support planning and reporting of progress, and the Isange One Stop Centre strategic plan, tools and training manual.

FINDING 8

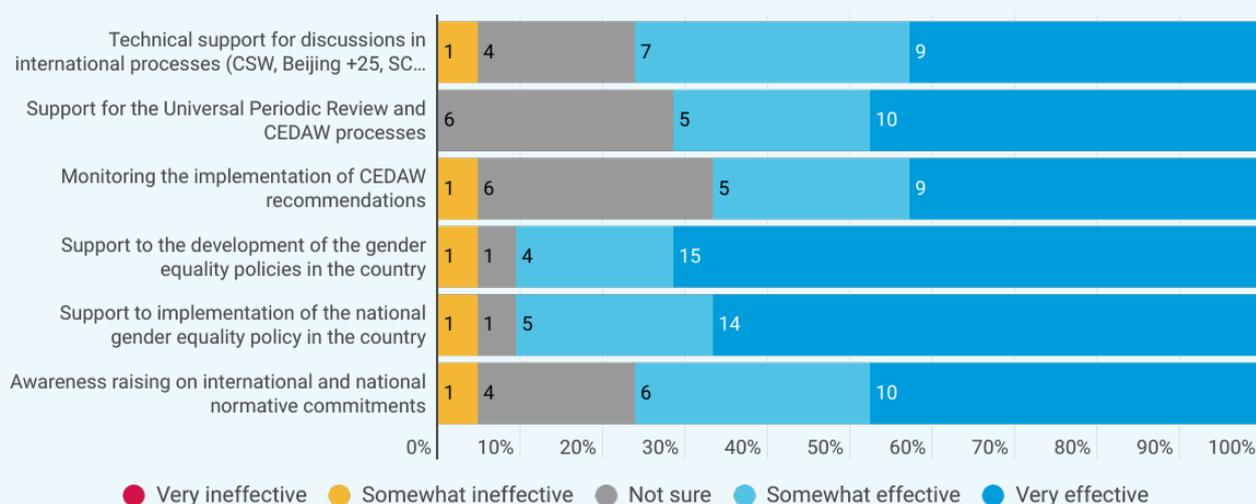
The Country Office effectively contributed to its target outcomes through its normative work. Key outcomes were achieved through UN Women’s contributions, in terms of supporting the revision of national laws and policies to strengthen gender equality; development of gender mainstreaming strategies across different sectors; reporting against international human rights and gender equality commitments; and increasing the gender sensitivity of the COVID-19 response. The impact of the Country Office’s normative work can be further strengthened by tracking implementation of the National Gender Policy; monitoring the actual effect of policy changes on women and girls; scaling its convening role to advocate on key issues affecting gender equality; and being bolder in speaking out on challenging issues.

The Country Office contributed significantly to its target outcomes through its normative work. Most surveyed stakeholders responded that they felt UN Women Rwanda had contributed effectively or very effectively across key areas of normative work.

The Country Office supported Rwanda in its reporting against international human rights and gender equality commitments (the Universal Periodic Review, report to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee and Beijing +30 report); **revising its national policies to strengthen gender equality** (including revision of the National Gender Policy and girls education policy, changes to paternity and maternity provisions and revision of the Family Law which increases women’s rights

in marriage and divorce, the National Strategy for Accessing Affirmative Finance Action for Women, and the development of mainstreaming strategies for various government departments); **supported gender-responsive budget** (through capacity-building of 25 institutions and developing a parliamentary guide on gender responsive budgeting); **supported the gender-responsiveness of the COVID-19 response** (through assessments of the gendered impacts of the pandemic and advocacy, resulting in the government strengthening the eligibility criteria for programmes to make them more gender sensitive); **and supported gender accountability days** (which contributed to changing social norms and supporting couples to get legally married) (see Annex 17.1).

FIGURE 5: How effectively has the Country Office contributed to normative work in the following areas?



Source: evaluation online survey Mar - Jun 2024 | N =33 (external stakeholders)

The Country Office has supported the reform of laws across its thematic focus areas to strengthen women's rights and gender equality provisions. This has contributed to the revision of the organic law governing elections, laws governing land and property ownership, the National Agriculture Policy and the Law on Gender-Based Violence (see Annex 17.2).

The Country Office has also promoted norms change by raising awareness through community campaigns on gender-based violence prevention and response. It reached more than 2,000 people to increase their knowledge on gender-based violence prevention, response and referrals, and also supported the development of strategies and tools to mainstream gender (see Annex 17.2 for detail and evidence sources, which include interviews undertaken by the evaluation team and partner and donor reports).

The Country Office supported a number of key research studies, which have been used to inform policy development and advocacy work. The Country Office supported NISR to publish 17 sectoral gender thematic reports. It also supported the Demographic and Health surveys to include a gender-based violence module and gender questions. This data has been used by the government to inform policies, including the National Gender Policy (2021), Gender-Based Violence Policy (2022), the National MenEngage Strategy and guidelines for the community reintegration of gender-based violence survivors. Its research on gender responsive procurement was also noted by partners to be informing policy changes around procurement. Survey respondents highlighted the research on the impact of COVID-19 and the care economy as the most useful. Survey respondents also highlighted the utility of the editorial package provided by the Country Office for International Women's Day and the country gender profile in 2019.⁵⁵

The Country Office is playing a limited role in convening stakeholders working on gender equality to monitor whether implementation of the National Gender Policy is on track and to track the actual effect of policy changes on women and girls. Donors and UN agencies felt that UN Women Rwanda's comparative advantage could be better leveraged by convening relevant stakeholders to monitor the country's implementation against gender equality and women's empowerment commitments. Donors noted that the Country Office could commission a national-level study to explicitly track progress against the gender policy commitments, with their funding support, building on studies such as the State of Gender Equality Report that was prepared by the Gender Monitoring Office with the Country Office's support, to inform the development of new national strategies.

There is opportunity for UN Women to scale its convening role and be bolder in speaking out on challenging issues.

Donors, civil society organizations and UN agencies note the Country Office's unique position to convene, influence opinion and amplify issues (see Finding 2). Many donors, UN agencies and civil society partners felt that the Country Office could do more to convene policy work, especially on challenging issues such as LGBTQI, sexual harassment and intersectional issues such as disability; on laws (such as contraception and the recent family law amendment); lend support to civil society-led campaigns; and convene gender equality and women's empowerment stakeholders for coordinated messaging. Partners felt that the Country Office's presence was missing from the recent family law debates, which had critical implications for women's empowerment. One partner noted, "One thing that we all want to see is UN Women... stepping up when there are strategic conversations that might affect the livelihoods of women".

⁵⁵ Other studies include foundation studies on affirmative procurement; the cost of gender equality gap in agriculture; women's movement building and negative social norms; and on understanding the root causes of violence against women, which were produced and used by the Country Office to strengthen its evidence-based programming and advocacy.

FINDING 9

The Country Office has effectively provided support to gender mainstreaming across the UNCT, including through the strengthened gender theme group, and has supported national gender coordination. There are opportunities for the Country Office to strengthen its contribution to UN coordination on gender by delivering more tailored training and advocating for and supporting other agencies with gender mainstreaming. There is a need to strengthen coordination of stakeholders working on gender: UN Women Rwanda could achieve this by supporting the national gender and family cluster stakeholder coordination efforts.

The Country Office has effectively provided support to gender mainstreaming across the UNCT, playing a lead role in ensuring the UNCT operates in line with the UNCT System Wide Action Plan and Gender Equality Scorecard. Seventy-five per cent of UN Women personnel agreed that UN Women has effectively fulfilled its coordination role on gender. Key achievements noted by the UNCT include:

- Incorporating gender equality principles in the UNCT annual reporting guidelines.
- Supporting gender focus in the Common Country Analysis and development of the new Cooperation Framework.
- Supporting the UNCT to enhance resources for gender equality priorities. During the fiscal year 2021/22, 39 per cent of total financial resources were earmarked for gender (level 3 and 2) expenditure.
- Leading the reviews of Gender Markers during the development of Joint Programmes, contributing to many activities marked as contributing to gender equality on a significant or principal level (59.8 per cent in 2020).
- In collaboration with the Resident Coordinator's Office, coordinating the UNCT's strengthened reporting on the UN System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP). The 2022 assessment showed that 80 per cent of indicators "Approaches Minimum Requirements" and 20 per cent "Met Minimum Requirements". In 2022, 12 of the 13 action plan activities recommended by the 2017 UNCT SWAP Scorecard assessment were fully implemented.
- Co-chairing the Gender Theme Group. Interviewed stakeholders noted that this has been much strengthened since becoming a stand-alone group. UN stakeholders value the group's clear action plan and role in planning for International Women's Day. However, stakeholders noted to further strengthen the group, the Country office needs to improve timeliness of communications, finalize the annual workplan and budget, coordinate the GTG retreat,

ensure the group is results-oriented and advocate for more high-level representation from other agencies in the group.

- Delivering training to the UNCT on gender mainstreaming and reporting. Attendees noted the training was a useful recap which prompted them to work with colleagues on gender reporting. However, many felt that the Country Office needed to work closely with the Resident Coordinator's Office to ensure the training reaches others beyond gender advisers (who were already familiar with the material) to make a difference. Participants also felt the material was generic which made it difficult to apply, and that tailoring and shortening the content (e.g. a specific session on gender-responsive communications for communications colleagues) would support uptake. A gender audit on UN capacity is planned in partnership with WHO to inform more tailored capacity-building, but there have been delays with the Country Office's management approval.

In terms of UN coordination, the following issues were highlighted as key areas to strengthen:

- **UN agencies stated it would be useful if the Country Office could support them with gender mainstreaming in their programming and policies**, including through sharing guidelines and tools. They urged the Country Office to focus on developing transformative tools, theories and models for policy intervention and programming. Recent evaluations of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and FAO also raised the need to strengthen gender-responsive programming that addressed gender norms.
- **UN agencies pointed out that UN Women could assist in encouraging the Resident Coordinator's Office and UNCT to prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment.** UN Women effectively delivered this during the development of the current cooperation framework⁵⁶. UN Women personnel noted it would be useful to advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment to be

⁵⁶ Feedback from UN agencies

a stand-alone item on UNCT meeting agenda, and for the Country Representative to engage in high-level coordination fora.

- **There is also an opportunity to set up an inter-agency accountability framework on implementation of the Generation Equality Commitments**, which was planned in the 2022–23 workplan but has not yet been implemented due to capacity constraints.
- **Other UN agencies noted that the SWAP results remain heavily focused on UN Women Rwanda results**, and that other agencies need to be supported to strengthen their gender reporting.

The Country Office has supported national coordination on gender. The Country Office's workplans set out the Country Office's ambition to leverage the National Gender Cluster (which UN Women co-chairs) to strengthen accountability, synergies and coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment. Donors, UN agencies and civil society partners noted that the Country Office had effectively co-chaired the gender cluster to support the 2021 national gender policy revision. Implementing partners also felt that the Country Office had effectively supported national coordination, especially through the Joint Action Development Forums and in bringing together women's cooperatives. The Country Office has in certain instances effectively convened stakeholders, through the position paper on the COVID-19 economic recovery plan, the Second National Strategy for Transformation policy brief development, 16 Days of Activism, and gender cafes.⁵⁷ Certain donors also valued the Country Office's quarterly newsletter, as it provided partners with visibility on UN Women's work and research, and supported coordination. There is opportunity to more widely and consistently disseminate this newsletter.

However, there has been a gap in gender coordination at the national level. In interviews, donors, civil society and UN agencies shared that the absence of a robust national gender coordination mechanism had resulted in some duplication of efforts and lack of clear vision for the sector. Donors felt more could have been done in preparation for the National Strategy for Transformation 2, to discuss, split and coordinate work more meaningfully; coordinate funding and technical assistance to the national gender machinery; and to agree on priorities and jointly advocate for specific gender targets. Development partners felt there was an opportunity to better coordinate work, such as with German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) on gender-based violence work, with FCDO on its research on unpaid care work, and on technical assistance and funding to the national gender machinery. Without a functional coordination platform,

donors have been relying on bilateral discussions to work together. Donors have expressed their perception that the opportunity to coordinate inputs to inform the government's development of the new national strategy has been missed. More recently, UN Women and interested development partners initiated the establishment of a development partners informal gender group (DPIGG) which aims to address this challenge.

The Country Office could scale up its convening and coordination work, better leveraging its comparative advantage and delivering on its mandate (see Finding 2). It has not fully seized the opportunity to support coordination of stakeholders working on gender equality and women's empowerment, using the gender cluster working group, especially during periods of national strategic planning, such as the Second National Strategy for Transformation. Other donors and civil society noted that no other actor was able to step into this role, as UN Women Rwanda was best placed to take this role given its mandate, and as the Country Office had expressed interest in this role. The Country Office brings added value in terms of its convening power and relationships with civil society, government and donors, and there is an opportunity for the Country Office to act as a bridge between these actors to strengthen coordination and amplify civil society voices. Donors also noted that there was a natural role for UN Women Rwanda, aligned to its mandate, to fill this coordination gap and support the national gender machinery with better planning, and by facilitating information-sharing on activities and funding flows.

The Country Office could advocate for a stronger role for the national gender and family cluster, which donors and UN agencies agreed was less consistent and well-structured compared to other sector working groups.⁵⁸ Several stakeholders were not aware that the cluster still remained operational. Donors and UN agencies noted that the Country Office could advocate for a stronger role for this cluster, learning from other sector working groups. There is opportunity for the gender cluster to bring together all relevant stakeholders, including donors, civil society, media and the government, including representatives from other sectors, while offering a framework for prioritization and coordination, and develop specific targets for the Second National Strategy for Transformation.

Stakeholders noted that the Country Office could strengthen its approach to organizing key gender events and meetings to ensure they are planned in advance, well communicated and have well-defined objectives. Several donors noted that International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism campaign were both

⁵⁷ Interviews with donors and partners.

⁵⁸ For example, health, education, social protection, governance.

planned somewhat at the last minute and could have been better organized. Donors noted it would be useful for the Country Office to provide a timeline of key events for the year to support better collaboration. Several donors also noted an opportunity for the Country Office to strengthen communications to let partners know how they can support and amplify events. Several donors and civil society partners felt that meeting objectives and the criteria for the selection of civil society organizations and activists to invite were not always clear. Partners also noted that meetings did not always have tangible

outcomes, with no concrete action points or follow-up. For example, one meeting ended with agreement on the need to address social norms, with no defined actions. One civil society organization noted that its expressed interest to document existing social norms as a follow up of the meeting faced significant resistance, due to concerns about potential sensitivities. Other donors and UN agencies shared experiences across other events⁵⁹ where an action plan was drafted, but no follow-up occurred.

FINDING 10

There are some synergies between UN Women and other UN agencies across their gender work in Rwanda, for example in joint programmes. However, there is room for UN Women Rwanda to support stronger coherence across UN agencies' gender work and supporting more joined up joint programmes.

There are many good examples of synergies between UN Women and other UN agencies in Rwanda. UN agencies noted that the Country Office was an active collaborator with other agencies and engaged with the spirit of Delivering as One. UN Women was noted to be a key partner on many joint programmes, including the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment, Disability Inclusion, working with small and medium enterprises, with UN Habitat, UNHCR, IOM and UNFPA, taking an active role on the steering committee and was involved in resource mobilization. UNDP also valued the Country Office's role in supporting government and private sector on implementation of the gender equality seal. Eighty-three per cent of the Country Office personnel surveyed felt its partnership with the UN system was somewhat effective (n=12). Many UN agencies noted a strong working relationship. For example, UNFPA noted working together like sister agencies, supported by strong country leadership and headquarters executive direction on how to work together. The Country Office also noted that its active participation in Result Group 3 on Transformation Governance supported inter-agency collaboration and joint reporting.

The joint programmes represent a good opportunity for strengthening coherence. A high proportion of UN Women's work in Rwanda is delivered through joint programmes (31 per cent of UN Women's budget in 2022–23)⁶⁰. For example, as lead agency on the Joint Programme on Gender, UN Women Rwanda brought together six UN agencies, national gender machinery institutions under the leadership of MIGEPORF and other government and civil society organizations. This was intended to provide a coordinated space for gender work and advocacy and

increase coordination in UN contributions to MIGEPROF/ GMO. Stakeholders noted positives in terms of each agency bringing its comparative advantage and creating a forum for joint design and to find synergies across activities. Across other joint programmes, UN agencies and implementing partners noted that the Country Office effectively participated in steering committees to co-lead interventions, coordinate partners and involve local communities, and mobilize resources.

However, the opportunity for using joint programmes to strengthen coherence is not fully maximized. UN agencies and partners noted that, in many cases, UN agencies were essentially operating in parallel and in silos, delivering different types of activities in different areas with little integration. The evaluation of the Joint Programme on Gender noted that the "jointness" nature of the interventions was not clear, with no budget set aside for joint activities. The evaluation also noted that planning and reporting seemed to have been carried out individually by agencies, except for the field visit. Each implementing partner had its own programme participants, which made it difficult to offer complementary services and a comprehensive package among programme participants. The evaluation also noted that reporting requirements were different for each UN agency and government partner, resulting in heavy reporting workload for implementing partners. On the Joint Programme Rural Women's Economic Empowerment, lack of coordination between different implementing partners working with the same programme participants resulted in heavy time involvement required from programme participants⁶¹.

⁵⁹ For example, the Women Deliver conference, gender dialogues and International Women Deliver session.

⁶⁰ Quantum system

⁶¹ Interviews with programme participants

The Country Office could strengthen its leadership on the Joint Programme on Gender alongside the Resident Coordinator's Office to increase coherence by increasing engagement with other agencies and government and doing this at an earlier stage.

UN agencies noted that capacity constraints and tight timelines affected the level of planning quality assurance, which consequently impacted the coherence of joint programmes. There have also been challenges with pooling of resources across entities, especially resources not directly earmarked for the Joint Programme by donors, resulting in it being difficult to agree on priorities to jointly fund and implement. Partner UN agencies, the government and civil society organizations noted that these issues could have been addressed through earlier engagement and planning to ensure ownership of the programme across all stakeholders and systems set up to facilitate joint planning and delivery. UN Women noted the need for clearer principles on the roles and responsibilities from each partner, including reporting and workplan requirements, and for more frequent joint planning meetings to review and adjust intervention plans. Agencies felt that the Country Office could do more to involve other participating agencies, especially gender advisers, in joint programme planning. They also noted that the Country Office could strengthen the coherence of the Joint Programme on Gender by calling more regular meetings to provide updates; undertaking more joint field visits; increasing the role of other agencies in steering committee meetings; and strengthening communications on joint activities. Some UN agencies also felt that joint programme reporting, especially on events such as International Women's Day, tended to highlight UN Women activities, and could better incorporate other UN agency activities.

Overall, there is room to strengthen coordination on gender work across the UN system in the country.

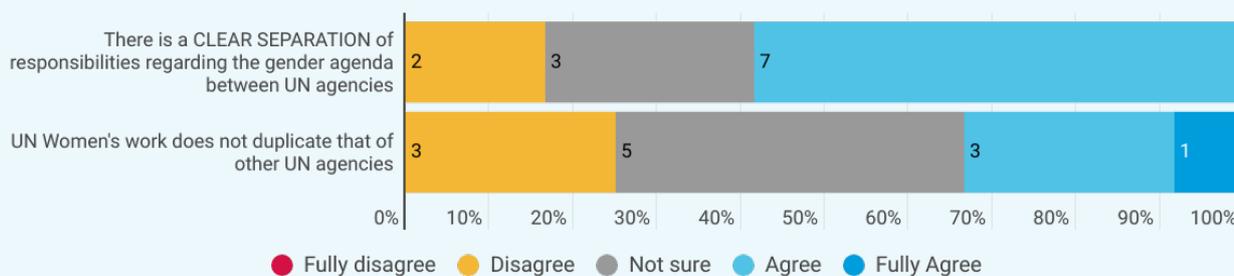
Gender work across the UN, including that within joint programmes, largely remains fragmented.

A majority of Country Office personnel surveyed felt there was a clear separation of gender responsibilities between UN agencies. However, a majority also felt that there was duplication between UN Women's work and that of other agencies in Rwanda (n=12). Donors also felt that UN agencies were not coordinating their gender work to see how their actions can work together to add value, resulting in effective fragmentation. Donors noted that the UN family needed to move away from competing for funds to speaking with one voice, with a coherent mandate and priorities, against country needs.

The Country Office is not yet playing a strong role in supporting coherence across UN agencies' actions on gender equality. As the only agency focused on gender, this is an important role for UN Women Rwanda to play.

The current UN Development Assistance Framework sets out the ambition for UN Women Rwanda to "coordinate and amplify the collective impact of UN agencies' programmes". The Secretary General's System Wide Gender Equality Acceleration plan also recognizes that greater impact of joint UN policy and programme work, and the need to strengthen coordination.⁶² The new Cooperation Framework is intended to strengthen UN coordination. Donors, UN agencies and the Resident Coordinator's Office agree that the Country Office can play a key role in coordinating UN gender work and infusing a gender lens. However, the Country Office's role remains limited in this area. Important areas to strengthen include (a) senior leadership direction and engagement in the results group; (b) convening information-sharing to facilitate collaboration; (c) translating headquarters collaboration (for example, between UN Women and WHO on gender-based violence) into action at the country level; (d) strengthening partnership with relevant UN agencies and building on their relationships with government to support gender equality and women's empowerment work where relevant; and (e) implementing the vision of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework planning process by strengthening joint analysis, policy engagements, advocacy and publications.⁶³

FIGURE 6: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding the Country Office's coordination role.



Source: evaluation online survey Mar - Jun 2024 N =12 (personnel)

⁶² [UN System Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan](#)

⁶³ Based on feedback provided by UN partners

FINDING 11

There were some unexpected negative and positive outcomes. The Country Office's legal assistance related support to survivors of GBV did not fully achieve the intended objectives when verdicts were not enforced and survivors were further exposed to violence as a result of the court case. On the other hand, there was also evidence of ongoing positive effects through participants continue to apply skills learned to other areas beyond the programme itself.

There have been some unexpected negative outcomes as a result of implementing partners' provision of legal support. Legal enforcement of court orders remains a challenge. Participants who received legal supported from Haguruka shared in interviews with the evaluation team cases where local authorities did not enforce court orders. In such cases, several participants also spoke about being harassed by the perpetrators for trying to bring such a case to court. Designing the programme so

that more comprehensive support is provided beyond taking the case to court, but also supports with enforcement, would help support tangible outcomes.

There have also been some unexpected positive outcomes through UN Women funded programmes. Across different programmes, implementing partners noted many examples of staff and women leaders who now serve as role models and ongoing mentors for new generations/new staff, without additional resources.

FINDING 12

There were a range of internal and external factors that both positively and negatively contributed to the achievement of outcomes. Internal factors included the Country Office's expertise, systems and project durations. External factors included political will, national ownership, partnerships and other complementary initiatives. Contextual factors included the economy, the policies and strategies in place and the funding available.

The evaluation found evidence to corroborate key assumptions in the theory of change. Other factors identified have been added to the theory of change (see Annex 3).

Internal factors

- Partners noted that the Country Office's personnel expertise, smooth operations and internal systems (financial, reporting, results monitoring, partner management) facilitated programme delivery (see Findings 16 and 18).
- Implementing partners and government partners noted that short project duration and small scale, scattered partnerships affected the ability to effect structural change in complex areas, increased transaction costs and reporting/ management time, and also made it difficult to track outcome change. The project scale and duration were affected by funding availability and the funding agreements with donors.

- Partners noted that cross-thematic, holistic programming worked very well. For example, stakeholders in the extractive sector interviewed by the evaluation team noted that the Country office's work has helped address gender-based violence issues while also increasing the number of women working in the mining sector.
- The Country Office and UN partners noted that "One UN" joint programmes and collaboration was a key enabler, which supported more effective delivery and resource mobilization for UN Women.

External factors

- Political will and commitment at local and national levels to empower women politically and economically, resulted in a supportive policy framework, legislation and resources to create an enabling environment for UN Women Rwanda interventions.⁶⁴
- Strong partnerships between UN women and the national gender machinery key line ministries and government ownership of programmes was a key enabler. However, the Country Office and partners

⁶⁴ For example, gender budget statements and gender equality and women's empowerment commitments across government institutions.

noted that government staff turnover and capacity limitations were often barriers to effectiveness. In certain instances, delayed implementation affected the timing and budget available for future phases, further squeezing timelines. Certain communication issues that led to partners feeling disengaged also affected effectiveness of some interventions (see Finding 15).

- Strong civil society and private sector partners brought expertise and existing relationships with communities which supported effective delivery. Partnerships with the private sector was a key enabler of the Gender Equality Seal programme.
- Norms change contributing to behaviour changes was another key enabler. Partners and participants noted that the Country office effectively contributed to norms change, which also led to behaviour change in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment (see Findings 5–7), alongside the impact of the National Strategy (Men Engage) and other interventions.

Women's Economic Empowerment:

- Stable macroeconomic environment with continued GDP growth and stable export market, was noted by stakeholders as a key enabler throughout, though the economy was affected by COVID-19.
- Piloting of new initiatives, such as time and energy-saving equipment and technologies, contributed to target outcomes (for example, through reducing women's care burdens).

Women's Participation in Leadership and Decision Making:

- Commitment and interest of women to actively participate in decision-making processes.
- Varying levels of employment opportunities affected the extent to which programmes could contribute to employment. Interns interviewed by the evaluation team noted that the success in securing government employment opportunities varied significantly across districts.

Ending Violence Against Women:

- Implementing partners and the Common Country Analysis noted that though there was a strong enabling environment resulting from government commitment to ending violence against women, weaknesses remained in the referral system and enforcement of legal decisions. Limited legal aid or lengthy court processes was noted to, at times, discourage survivors from seeking justice. Inconsistent legal enforcement of court decisions was noted to affect the ability of legal decisions to make tangible impacts on the lives of women and girls.
- Funding from government and other partners such as GIZ to translate increased capacity and awareness into better service provision.
- Partners noted that incomplete data availability on the prevalence and types of violence against women can make it challenging to effectively target interventions and measure progress. Additionally, not all cases of gender-based violence are recorded.

Normative and Coordination

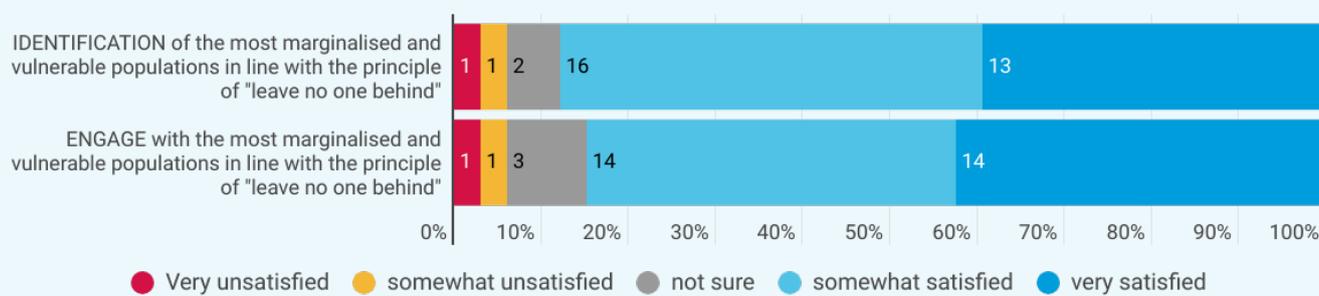
- Partners noted that **engaging key stakeholders including government from the start** to build buy-in was key in supporting the effectiveness of advocacy work around discriminatory laws.

FINDING 13

The Country Office's interventions were well targeted and accessible to vulnerable communities, including specific interventions targeting those with disabilities, HIV and teen mothers. There are several opportunities for the Country Office to increase the inclusivity of its work. It is not yet including and tracking inclusivity targets. Disability inclusion is not yet mainstreamed across all UN Women's interventions in Rwanda, nor is The Country Office working on normative and coordination components of disability inclusion. Its work with youth and LGBTQI+ groups remain limited to date.

UN Women's interventions in Rwanda were well targeted to reach vulnerable communities, across intersectional factors, and were designed to support participants' engagement in programmes.

FIGURE 7: Level of satisfaction with UN Women's work: please indicate your level of satisfaction with the Country Office's work regarding the following assertions?



Source: evaluation online survey Mar - Jun 2024 | N =33 (external stakeholders and personnel)

Over eighty per cent of the external stakeholders and the Country Office personnel surveyed were satisfied with UN Women's identification and engagement of the most vulnerable populations in Rwanda (n=33). Partners agreed that UN Women Rwanda's interventions were well targeted to reach the particularly vulnerable, including survivors of gender-based violence, teen mothers, street vendors, female sex workers, widows, and female-headed households. The Country Office's focus on rural areas, with high levels of disparity, especially for its women's economic empowerment programmes, was noted by partners as key to advance gender equality. The Country Office also included women and girls with disabilities in its events and worked closely with the umbrella Organization of Women Living with Disability (UNABU) and the Organization of People living with HIV (RRP+) to deliver focused interventions on disability and HIV. The Country Office's interventions were designed to facilitate access. Interventions provided food, transportation facilities and other necessities, as well as some laptops, to minimize barriers to participating. Partners

noted that this was unique. Now all donors fund these measures to increase accessibility. Civil Society Advisory Group membership was also revised to ensure better representation of the interests of those with a disability, and youth.

UN Women Rwanda also delivered specific interventions targeting those with a disability, HIV and teen mothers. Table 5 below highlights some examples.

There is opportunity to include and track inclusivity targets. Partners noted that the Country Office's interventions were well targeted to reach vulnerable communities. However, the inclusivity of interventions was not tracked through indicators, and no specific targets were set. Civil society partners felt the Country Office could support them to strengthen disability inclusion by sharing inclusion policies and drawing on the support of specialist partners to provide training and cross-learning for all partners on HIV, disability and LGBTQI+ inclusion.

TABLE 5: UN Women Rwanda interventions with vulnerable groups

Category of rightsholders	UN Women interventions ⁶⁵
Women and girls with disability	<p>Provided entrepreneurship training in partnership with the Organization of Women Living with Disability (UNABU)</p> <p>Joint programme on disability with UNDP and UNICEF, strengthening gender mainstreaming capacity of 17 Organizations of People with Disabilities (OPDs)</p> <p>Delivered training on transformative social norms and radio theatre episodes on double discrimination against women and girls with disabilities</p> <p>Developed the Community Led Monitoring Tool, which has been very effective for communities to strengthen disability inclusion accountability</p> <p>Through the <i>Strengthening Disability Inclusion Accountability and Coordination</i> project identified specific challenges faced by those with disabilities.</p>
Women and girls with HIV	<p>Delivered a project with RRP+ using social media to support norms change and engaged men to strengthen harmony in families living with HIV. Provided agricultural training and financial support to programme participants living with HIV.</p> <p>In partnership with the Rwanda Biomedical Centre and UN agencies, mobilized resources to address gender inequalities in HIV/AIDS prevention and response.</p>
Teen mothers	<p>Supported 400+ teen mothers through a comprehensive reintegration package (including psychosocial counselling, family conflict resolution and income generation).</p> <p>During COVID-19, provided start-up capital to 942 teen mothers to set up income-generating activities.</p>
Ex-combatants with disability	<p>UN Women supported ex-combatants with disabilities in the reintegration camp, providing land, training and tools to set up cooperatives and supported building of trust between ex-combatants and communities.</p>
Systems and structures	<p>UN Women supported the government to establish a multi-stakeholder disability platform in 2022, disability mainstreaming strategy with the Private Sector Foundation, and a disability management information system which was rolled out to 15 districts in 2023/24.</p>

The Country Office has more work to do to strengthen its disability inclusion programming and work towards mainstreaming it across all interventions. Disability inclusion was not explicitly mainstreamed across all interventions but was included as stand-alone interventions. The Country Office noted that disability inclusion is a new area for UN Women, and that it was looking to strengthen its work in this area by exploring the structural social and economic challenges and specific needs of people with disabilities. While the *Strengthening Disability Inclusion* project did not address structural challenges for people with disabilities, but it was effective in providing a safe place for people with disabilities to articulate challenges they face, such as communication, forced marriage and violence, and the gaps in accessibility provisions offered by service providers.

The Country Office should step up its support to the government to support disability inclusion. Women with disabilities are at greater risk of gender-based violence. Specific focus on this could be useful; for example, users noted that the Isange One Stop Centres could improve their accessibility and how women are received. Partners also noted that disability inclusion programmes could better consider intersectional factors. Women's umbrella

organizations and people with disabilities note that current debates around the review of the Family Law do not cover disabilities.

Normative and coordination work on disability would complement the existing operational work. Women's umbrella organizations and people with disability noted that there is no national discussion on disability inclusion in the current debates about the review of the Family Law. They noted there is an opportunity for the Country Office to play a role to support normative discussions on disability inclusion, and by supporting the convening of umbrella organizations that are more inclusive of people with disabilities.

There is room for UN Women to scale its work with youth and LGBTQI+ groups. None of the projects visited included particular targets on LGBTI programme participants or considerations of youth, which will be key priorities going forward. The Country Office has worked with the Ministry of Youth and Culture, for example, through the Youth Connect summit, which could form the foundation of further collaboration. The Country Office has not yet partnered with organizations who target LGBTQI+ communities.

⁶⁵ Information derived from UN Women annual reports and donor reports, which was also verified with implementing partners and a sample of programme participants.

FINDING 14

Against the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale, most of the sampled projects were gender responsive (targeting the specific needs of women and those with intersectional vulnerabilities) or with the potential to be gender transformative (where projects involved an element of policy or norm change to tackle the root causes of gender inequality). In a few projects, unintended negative outcomes that reinforced gender inequalities were noted (see Finding 11).

FIGURE 8: Gender Results Effectiveness Scale

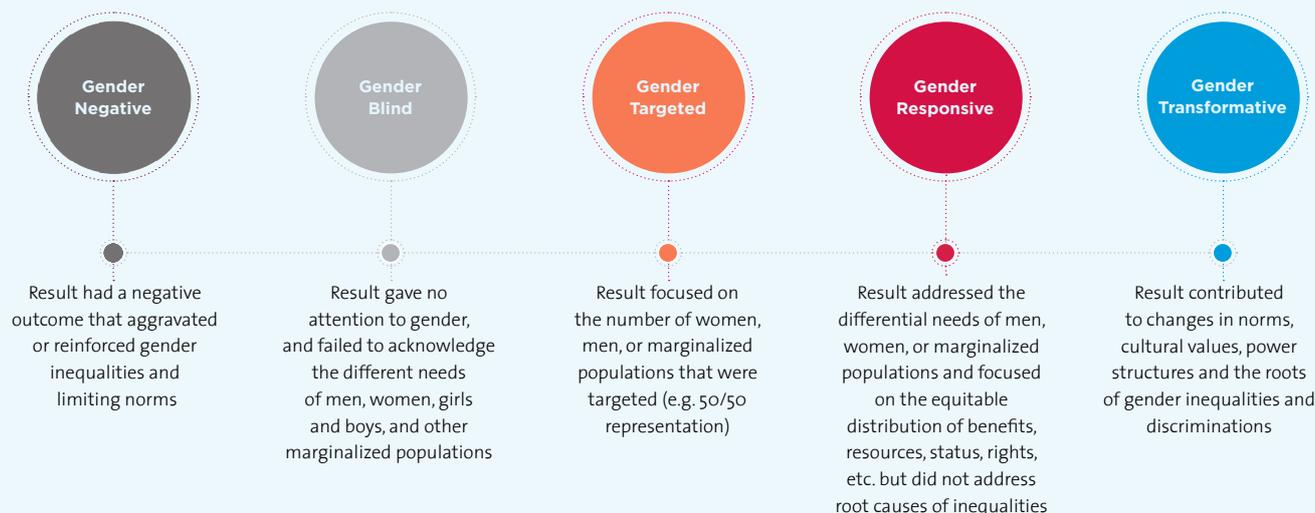


TABLE 6: sampled projects and the evaluation's rating of the project against the gender results effectiveness scale

Sampled project	Gender results effectiveness
Strengthen the capacity of the GMO to promote Gender accountability	Potential to be transformative: The intervention supports changes to power structures by facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues to empower communities to hold leaders accountable and identify and respond to cases of gender-based violence.
Professional internships in leadership in local government	Responsive: The intervention addresses the differential needs of men and women by providing professional internships for women, but does not address the root causes of gender inequalities.
Advocating for women's rights in HIV response in Rwanda	Responsive: The intervention addresses the differential needs of people with HIV by supporting a more gender-responsive response to HIV in Rwanda. However, it does not identify the causes of gender inequality.
Joint Programme Rural Women's Economic Empowerment: Accelerating progress towards women's economic empowerment in Rwanda	Potential to be transformative: The intervention addresses the underlying/root causes of gender inequality by supporting gender-friendly policies to support women-led micro-businesses, including by linking them with market players and providing working capital, and supporting increased recognition of unpaid care work.
Strengthening disability inclusion accountability and coordination	Responsive: The intervention addresses the differential needs of those with a disability by targeting communication challenges, but did not directly address the root causes of gender inequality.
SDG Fund Rwanda: Accelerating	Potential to be transformative: Partners noted that the intervention influenced the National Agriculture Policy and gender-responsive frameworks, helped women's cooperatives articulate their contributions to the agricultural sector, and improved women's participation in the economy, thereby addressing some of the structural causes of gender inequality, in terms of national policies and frameworks.
Legal assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence	Responsive: The interventions focused on the specific needs of survivors of gender-based violence through providing legal assistance; support to the Isange One Stop Centres through strengthening their service delivery to survivors; building the capacity of staff; and collaborating on public awareness campaigns to educate communities about gender-based violence referral mechanisms. The interventions address immediate needs and do not address prevention issues or the root causes of gender inequality (Isange One Stop Centre is response level only). There were some unintended negative outcomes reinforcing gender inequalities resulting from the interventions (see Finding 11)
Comprehensive support provided under the Isange One Stop Centre model	
Work in the extractive industry	Potential to be transformative: The intervention supported the Rwanda Extractive Industry Workers Union to introduce a gender-based violence programme in the mining sector, leading to advocacy on gender equality and gender-based violence prevention, supporting the establishment of committees, and research on gender-based violence and gender imbalance with the aim of identifying the root causes of such violence in the mining sector.

FINDING 15

UN Women Rwanda’s partnerships were mixed in their effectiveness. Its strengths as a partner include its smooth operations, capacity-building, collaborative approach, flexibility and communications. However, in certain cases, the Country Office’s partnerships were affected by last minute planning, miscommunication, and limited engagement and information-sharing. There is opportunity for the Country Office to deepen its partnerships by moving to more strategic partnerships, including identifying ways to collaborate beyond funding arrangements; review its partnership base to ensure good coverage across different communities and interests; increase its support to grassroots organizations; better use its Civil Society Advisory Group; and scale its media and private sector partnerships.

Table 7 below summarizes the evaluation’s analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of UN Women’s partnerships in Rwanda.

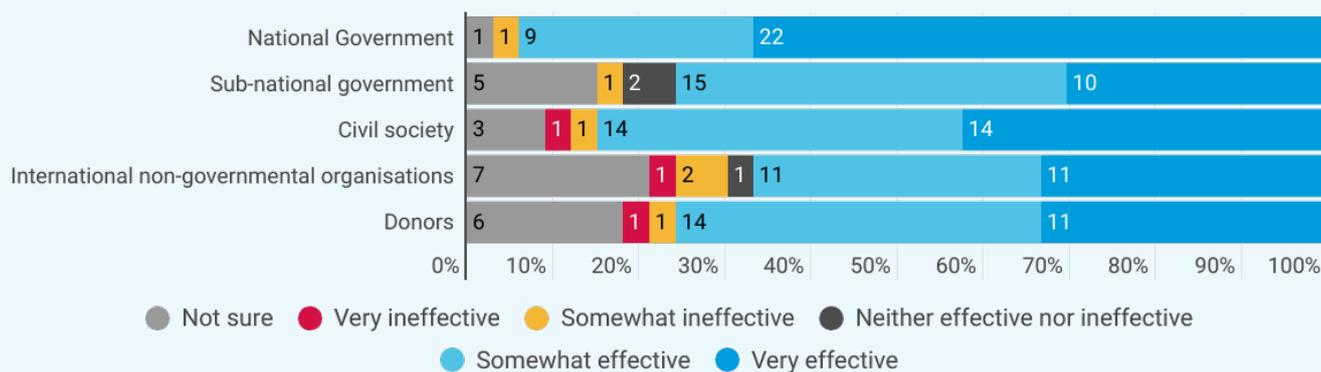
The Country Office’s partnerships were mixed in terms of their effectiveness. Across different stakeholder groups, on average, 41 per cent of external stakeholders and UN Women personnel felt that the Country Office partnerships were very effective, and 38 per cent felt they were somewhat effective.

UN Women Rwanda was an effective and valued partner. Civil society partners noted that the Country Office set clear expectations, brought strong expertise and provided technical assistance and capacity-building. Its operation processes were clear, and the Country Office valued its partners and did not micromanage. The Country Office was noted to be a flexible, supportive and understanding partner. They also appreciated the Country Office convening its partners to provide opportunities to discuss and cooperate, and meet donors. Rightsholders mentioned that UN Women Rwanda was able to work at the grassroots level, directly with communities and organizations with limited institutional capabilities.

TABLE 7: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of UN Women’s partnerships in Rwanda

 <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth operations • Capacity building and convening • Supportive and understanding partner • Collaborative nature for long-term programmes 	 <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term, last minute projects • Lack of collaborative planning in these projects 	 <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening partnerships with private sector and grassroots organizations, building on a landscape and partner review • Sharing strategy with partners • Building more strategic partnerships that extend beyond funding partnerships 	 <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of CSAG not optimized • Loss of trust with certain partners due to misunderstandings
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FIGURE 9: Please assess the effectiveness of the Country office's MANAGEMENT OF PARTNERSHIPS with the following actors in order to effectively fulfil its mandate.



Source: evaluation online survey Mar - Jun 2024 | N =33 (external stakeholders and personnel)

There are opportunities for the Country Office to strengthen its partnerships in the following ways:

- 1. Increasing opportunities for feedback and reflection with partners:** Some partners felt communication could be strengthened with regular reflection meetings, listening to feedback and holding “technical” rather than “ceremonial” meetings.
- 2. Many partners suggested moving from funding partnerships to longer-term, more strategic, impact-based partnerships, with a small number of partners** under a Memorandum of Understanding with a defined strategy and vision for the collaboration. The Country Office and these strategic partners could then work together to mobilize resources. The overall partnership vision and strategy could provide the framework for short-term, donor-funded projects, which would help support sustainability. Partners also called on the Country Office to engage partners in the design of programmes.
- 3. Consider carefully how the partner portfolio is constructed and further consolidate the Country Office's implementing partner base:** While there is value in a competitive process in identifying effective partners, this can also result in heavy workload and a scattered partner base. This was a lesson learned by the Country Office, which resulted in efforts to consolidate its partner base in 2023. To strengthen this effort, a strategic review of the Country Office's current partners is needed to check that different communities and interest groups are covered, e.g. disability organizations, young women leaders focusing on different areas and LGBTQI+ groups. This would support more intentional partnerships in terms of project partners. Such a review could draw on the mapping work already carried out by other donor organizations.
- 4. Increasing support to grassroots organizations and activists and those taking an intersectional approach:** Several civil society organizations and donors noted that many young activists and grassroots organizations feel that more established

civil society organisations do not represent their interests. To strengthen civil society capacity and ensure its programming is inclusive, the Country Office might consider how to bring onboard less established grassroots organizations with particular expertise, including through using sub-grant arrangements. Partners also noted the Country Office could lend support to women's rights organizations and the women's movement by increasing its engagement in forums such as the Rwanda Women Alliance, Rwanda Feminist Forum and Rwanda NGO forum, to more strategically identify the right people to engage with.

- 5. Supporting sustainability of partners:** The Country Office could consider how it can support partners in terms of financial stability, through capacity building and support to access other financing mechanisms, such as social enterprise and income-generating streams. Several implementing partners noted that financial instability affected its operations.

The value add of the Civil Society Advisory Group is unclear; the Country Office has not articulated what it wants to achieve from the group. Civil Society Advisory Group members agreed that the group could be strengthened with a clearer vision, as the Country Office was already engaging the group bilaterally when needed. Members felt they could help with priority setting and informing programme design; they were frustrated by the amount of time they had invested and lack of visible results.

There was mixed feedback on the effectiveness of government partnerships and communications. Many government partners, such as the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum, National Consultative Forum of Political Organizations and GMO valued UN Women's flexibility, capacity-building support and strong communication to keep all parties informed and aligned. However, other government partners noted misunderstandings which affected the relationship and trust between partners.

For example, there were some misunderstandings between government stakeholders and the Country Office about the funds available for the Joint Programme on Gender, and respective responsibilities for resource mobilization. Certain government ministries also felt that, in some cases, the Country Office only engaged them for the launch event rather than the full initiative, thereby giving the impression that the government was working more closely with the Country Office than was actually the case.

The Country Office needs to engage government partners more frequently to strengthen partnerships, continuing engagement beyond specific funded projects to provide regular updates and support strategic partnerships. Government partners noted that this would support more collaborative and earlier joint planning. Several donors noted that the Country Office could better manage expectations on both sides by transparently sharing its own Strategic Note to form the basis for discussing areas of collaboration. Country Office personnel noted they needed to strengthen partnership coordination with government.

The Country Office could better engage donors to amplify UN Women's work. Several donors noted that the Country Office could proactively ask them to support and amplify UN Women's work in Rwanda, for example, through joint events and messaging such as International Women's Day and prevention of gender-based violence week. Donors also felt that the Country Office could be better at sharing information, for example, about its support to government to strengthen coordination (see Finding 9).

The Country Office's partnerships with the media and private sector have grown significantly over the Strategic Note period⁶⁶ and should be further strengthened in the next Strategic Note.

The relationships between media partners and UN Women have strengthened over the Strategic Note period.⁶⁷ The media published more the Country Office stories, including those developed jointly between UN Women and newspapers. Country Office personnel noted opportunities to strengthen this relationship and publish additional stories through capacity-building, for example on gender-responsive reporting.

There have been good collaborations between the private sector and UN Women, for example, with the Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs and the Private Sector Foundation. The Country Office has partnered with UNDP to work with the private sector through the UNDP-led Gender Equality Seal Initiative to strengthen accountability for gender equality commitments. Since

the launch of the Gender Equality Seal in 2017, 19 of 32 enrolled private companies and government agencies were recognized by the programme for instituting gender accountability mechanisms and promoting a gender-responsive work environment. The Joint Programme on Gender supported rightsholders to open bank accounts through partnerships with financial institutions. UN Women also collaborated with the United Nations Capital Development Fund to link rural women entrepreneurs to private financial institutions. The New Strategy for Transformation highlights the important role of the private sector. UN Women has initiated a partnership with Equity Bank and meetings with other banks. UN Women also supported financial institutions, including the sector-based savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) to adopt guidelines regulating toolkits and loan facilities for women⁶⁸. Stakeholders (donors, UN Women and UN agencies) agreed this is an area that should be scaled up through the new Strategic Note.

The short duration and small scale of some partnerships and programmes affected delivery, and the ability to plan together, monitor progress and deliver impactful activities. Civil society and government partners noted that many projects were planned at very short notice, and, at times, it was difficult to partner with the Country Office, as the short-term nature of projects (lasting between one to six months) required intensive work to absorb the budget and reach targets. Civil society organizations also pointed to the challenges this raised for their staffing and turnover. Partners noted that their collaboration with the Country Office would be strengthened by developing exit strategies and setting projects within larger, longer-term strategies.

The Country Office could strengthen its partnerships by committing to more regular communication and information-sharing and by identifying opportunities to engage beyond funding. All categories of partners noted that regular engagement outside programme/funding work can contribute to more strategic rather than funding-based partnerships, resulting in opportunities for non-funding-based collaboration on joint events, messaging, advocacy work and coordination to increase synergies.

The Country Office's Strategic Note had not been shared with donors or implementing partners, and they explained this made it difficult to know how best to collaborate with the Country Office. Partners noted that a Strategic Note launch event and a session where evaluation findings are taken forward and discussed, would form a good foundation for future collaboration.

⁶⁶ Partner reports and donor reports, interviews with UN Women personnel, media partners and private sector partners.

⁶⁷ UN Women personnel and media partners.

⁶⁸ Donor reports

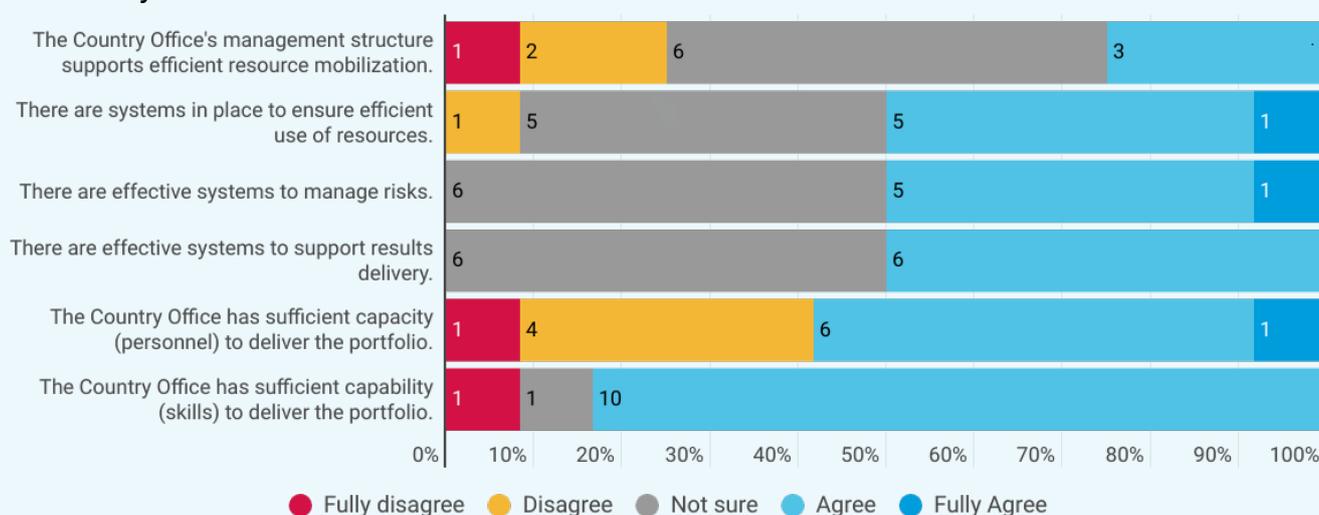
EFFICIENCY

Evaluation Question 3. Did the Country Office have appropriate organizational structures, systems and capacity in place to ensure the efficient use of resources to maximize results?

FINDING 16

The Country Office had the right technical capabilities to deliver results, although a more intentional approach to capacity-building is needed. Country Office capacity was insufficient to fully deliver its portfolio, especially in the areas of resource mobilization, the human resources function and coordination. This was exacerbated by the number of projects and high personnel turnover.

FIGURE 10: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding the Country Office's efficiency



The Country Office had the right technical capabilities to deliver results in terms of thematic, operational, monitoring and communications capacity and experience.

Most of the Country Office personnel surveyed agreed that the Country Office had the appropriate skills to deliver the portfolio (n=12). Donors and other UN agencies also noted that the team was technical, capable and experienced, with a good pulse on the changing needs of the country. Annual reports and donor reports demonstrated the Country Office's strengthened monitoring and reporting skills.

Personnel capacity-building needs to be strengthened.

The Country Office's personnel capacity-building plan is a strong initiative despite being hampered by lack of budget, formal capacity needs assessment and incorporation into office and individual learning plans, as envisaged in the biennial workplan. There is currently no systematic induction programme. Country Office personnel also noted that more training on operational processes and systems, communications and resource mobilization is needed.

There were challenges in terms of Country Office capacity.

The Rwanda Country Office has a total workforce of 21, of which 8 are staff, 3 are consultants, and 10 are service contractors. Annual reports note that the Country Office has filled all planned positions. The office has also grown since 2019, filling in vacant positions and creating new positions in the areas of monitoring and reporting, planning and coordination, programme management specialist and additional communications capacity. However, workplans noted that the office size was inadequate to deliver its portfolio⁶⁹. Forty-two per cent of the Country Office personnel surveyed (n=12) disagreed that the Country Office had sufficient capacity. The office has delivered well given its size, but capacity limitations affected what it could deliver in terms of resource mobilization, coordination and leadership on gender issues.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The 2020 Annual Report noted that a capacity needs assessment and road map had been prepared; however, this was not shared with the evaluation team, so it is unclear how it was used to inform the office structure.

⁷⁰ Interviews with donors and UN agencies.

There were particular challenges in the functions without dedicated personnel, including resource mobilization, human resources, and functions requiring inputs from multiple personnel, such as coordination. These functions require inputs from multiple personnel, but roles and responsibilities were not well defined. For example, the planning and coordination specialist focuses on UN coordination, but coordination with government and other gender stakeholders remains a key responsibility across all thematic areas. The human resources function

is currently partially filled by the executive associate, with limited capacity to support on areas such as consultant performance reviews and personnel capacity building.

Country Office capacity was further affected by the large number of projects and personnel turnover. The Country Office personnel noted that the scattered, small projects require significant resources to coordinate and deliver. Additionally, they noted that high turnover, in part resulting from many personnel on short-term contracts, affected continuity and institutional knowledge.

FINDING 17

The resources mobilized have not been fully sufficient to deliver against the Strategic Note. The Country Office's resource mobilization capacity, structures and systems need to be strengthened to more efficiently and effectively raise funds to support portfolio delivery. This includes developing a resource mobilization strategy; clarifying the roles and responsibilities for resource mobilization; investing in ongoing relationship management; working with other UN agencies; and engaging non-traditional funders and new financing mechanisms.

The effectiveness of resource mobilization to provide sufficient funds to deliver the Strategic Note has been mixed. The resources mobilized have led to significant contributions against the Strategic Note (see Findings 5, 6 and 7 on effectiveness) and UN Women has also effectively participated across many UN joint programmes⁷¹ thereby increasing the resources mobilized. Figure 1 sets out the annual target budget versus actual resources mobilized. The Country Office has been moderately successful with its resource mobilization. Its annual budget has increased from US\$ 2.3 million (2019) to US\$ 4.39 million (2022), though dropping to US\$ 2.8 million (2023). The overall budget of US\$ 13.1m raised during 2019–23 falls short of the target of US\$ 16.2 million. There is still a significant amount to raise for the new Strategic Note: currently, only the Women's Economic Empowerment portfolio has funding to 2025. Government, UN agencies and donors noted that the Country Office needs to strengthen resource mobilization to be an effective partner. In particular, there has been insufficient resources to deliver on UN Women's coordination mandate.

It is important to contextualize these challenges within the resource mobilization landscape. Rwanda's progress in gender parity, resulting in donors moving gender funding to other countries or providing direct budget support. Some donors fund UN Women headquarters directly, limiting the available funds for in-country

fundraising. Additionally, many donors are moving away from stand-alone gender programmes to mainstreaming gender (EU and GIZ) or moving to new areas of work such as climate, trade and migration (Sweden).

The Country Office did not have a resource mobilization strategy for the period of the Strategic Note. While the Country Office has gathered donor intelligence, this has not been used to develop a resource mobilization strategy, resulting in scattered fundraising efforts.

The lack of a resource mobilization strategy has also resulted in the structure and responsibilities of personnel to mobilize resources being unclear. Seventy-five per cent of the UN Women personnel surveyed disagreed that the Country Office's management structure supported efficient resource mobilization. There is no dedicated capacity for resource mobilization (which is now partly the responsibility of the planning and coordination specialist). The role of programme personnel in maintaining current and potential donor relationships, beyond funding agreements, is not articulated in job descriptions nor fully understood by personnel.

⁷¹ In part, facilitated through UN Women's review of joint programmes against the gender equality marker.

Systems and approaches to resource mobilization that could be strengthened include:

- **Strengthening relationship management:** There are missed opportunities to engage with potential, existing and previous partners and donors over a longer-term basis, even if they do not directly result in funding opportunities. Beyond submitting funding proposals, this could include inviting them to events, sharing information, hosting gatherings and accepting invitations. Partners noted that the Country Office declined invitations to informal meetings (Swedish and German embassies, GMO, partners on Joint Programme on Gender), which represents a missed opportunity to strengthen relationships, exchange ideas and gather information. Visibility of donors can also be strengthened. Materials such as publications and pamphlets rarely included donor logos.
- **Increasing collaboration with UN agencies:** The Country Office is involved in a large number of joint programmes. However, beyond joint programmes, there are a limited number of programmes where the Country Office is collaborating with other agencies. Donors are reducing the number of stand-alone gender programmes and requesting a more coherent UN approach to gender funding. The new Cooperation Framework commits to having UN entities resource mobilization strategies fully aligned to the Cooperation Framework. UN agencies agree there is an opportunity for the Country Office to increase its role on gender components of other agency-led programmes. UN agencies note that the Country Office's communications on its current work and opportunities need to be strengthened to facilitate this.
- **Engaging non-traditional funders and use of innovative financing mechanisms:** The Country Office primarily relies on institutional donor funding. Approaches to non-traditional funders, such as foundations have been limited.⁷² While the Country Office's workplans have set out the ambition of working with the private sector and development banks and using blended finance, bonds and loans, this has not yet materialized, in part due to the lack of expertise within the Country Office (see Annex 1).

FINDING 18

Strong systems and structures were in place to manage resources to deliver results and manage risks. Operations were generally smooth, though there were some problems with roll-out of the new Enterprise Resource Planning system, Quantum. Some systems, such as the management of institutional knowledge and planning systems, need to be strengthened to support efficient delivery. Challenges in the management and delegation structure and the broad nature of the country portfolio have affected the Country Office's efficiency and its ability to focus on strategic issues.

Overall, strong systems were in place to support resource management and risk management, including the internal control framework, results-based management, risk management framework, programme procedures and policies, and finance and operational systems. Personnel agreed that corporate systems were generally implemented effectively and efficiently in-country. The recruitment of a designated monitoring, reporting and evaluation specialist has strengthened the results-based management system, evidenced through annual reports and donor reporting. The Country Office has implemented common services through UNDP since 2020, which has reduced costs and enabled service delivery.⁷³

Operations were generally smooth, though there were some problems with roll-out of the Enterprise Resource Management system, Quantum. Partners noted that the Country Office's systems were efficient; expectations on operational and financial requirements were clear; and support and payments were timely. Partners also appreciated UN Women's capacity-building on its systems. This supported positive working relationships and effective delivery. There were some issues with payment disbursements and the accuracy of financial information during the Quantum roll-out which affected the timeliness of delivery, which have now been resolved.

⁷² Foundations interested in social norms work and male engagement include the Global Innovation Fund, Mastercard Foundation, Ford Foundation and Fred Hollows Foundation.

⁷³ Financial reports and UN Women personnel interviews.

Management of institutional knowledge needs to be strengthened. The Country Office did not have a knowledge management system in place, and does not track how publications are used. Document management systems appear to be weak. The Country Office was unable to locate key documents, such as the report on the 2023 office restructure and 2020 capacity needs assessment, which is likely to be hampering implementation of these plans.

There is also room to further strengthen the following planning and monitoring systems:

- **Events calendar:** The lack of an events calendar for the year is hampering planning.⁷⁴ Last-minute communication affected the extent of collaboration possible – both with external partners (in terms of joining events and amplifying key messaging) and with internal partners (such as communications team to support events).
- **Monitoring, reporting and learning:** Programme learning meetings remain infrequent. More regular meetings would support programme adaptation. While donor reports have been strengthened in terms of moving beyond a description of activities, there is still an opportunity to increase the focus on results.⁷⁵
- **Programme planning:** The planning system does not allow activities in the pipeline to be put into the system without funds received, which is hampering planning. While donor agreements are often short (lasting 1–2 years), in many cases, UN Women’s processes in setting up the programme and identifying partners further reduces the time partners have to deliver. In some cases, this is as short as six months, which affects what is possible to achieve in terms of sustainable change. There is a need to see how UN Women’s budget planning cycles can be managed to support longer-term partnerships.

The Country Office has also faced challenges in terms of its management and delegation structure and the broad nature of its portfolio. The broad nature of the portfolio and large number of partners resulted in a heavy management load. The current management structure and decision-making processes involve insufficient delegation, resulting in the Representative and management having too heavy a workload. This has resulted in significant management time spent on “firefighting” and reacting to emerging challenges, rather than focusing on strategic issues. This has also affected the efficiency and timeliness of delivery. Other UN agencies noted that delays in leadership approval hindered delivery, with many things getting “stuck” while waiting for sign-off, such as the Gender Thematic Group workplan and budget, training plan, retreat and needs assessment, and joint initiatives. This was noted to result in late communications, affecting the quality of work and collaboration with partners. Management needs to delegate more to others in the office to increase efficiency. The appointment of a programme management specialist is expected to address some of these issues.

⁷⁴ UN Women personnel, donors and UN partners.

⁷⁵ Review of donor reports and feedback from donors and UN agency partners.

SUSTAINABILITY

Evaluation Question 4. How sustainable are the positive outcomes supported by UN Women Rwanda's programming?

FINDING 19

The Country Office instituted good practices to support sustainability through anchoring its interventions within government priorities; working with local leaders and communities; supporting policy and norms change; and designing exit plans in some interventions. However, there are also weaknesses which affect the sustainability of outcomes, including short and small projects with no exit plans; limited post-project monitoring; and capacity and funding gaps in UN Women's implementing partners.

The Country Office instituted good practices to support sustainability, including:

- **Anchoring its interventions within government priorities:** the Country Office's interventions are well aligned to national development frameworks and strategies. National stakeholders noted in interviews that the government is well positioned to take over and continue the programmes, if UN Women Rwanda funding ceases.
- **Working with local leaders and partners rooted in communities:** Working with local structures fosters ownership and increases the chances of sustainability. For example, one partner noted that they continued to work closely with the same communities even after the end of UN Women funding and will stop by to check whether outcomes have continued, and any additional support required to sustain outcomes.
- **Supporting policy and social norms change:** UN Women's support to structural changes facilitates the sustainability of outcomes. For example, civil society partners said that UN Women's awareness raising on the legal support available to survivors of gender-based violence supported sustainable change through increasing the number of survivors seeking legal support.
- **Designing exit plans in some programmes:** Some projects, though not all, included exit plans to support sustainability. For example, paralegals were trained to provide legal aid to survivors of gender-based violence, who can continue this work after the end of the intervention. The 3R Unpaid Care Work Programme was designed to scale down support to participants over the programme phases – the subsidy was decreased from 100 per cent in phase one to 67 per cent in phase two as part of the exit strategy.

Some weaknesses in the Country Office's systems that hinder the sustainability of outcomes include:

- **Short project durations and small project scale:** Some projects are too short and small to lead to sustainable change. For example, projects lasting six months do not enable partners to build relationships with a broad range of stakeholders (youth, community leaders, local authorities, religious leaders) and change social norms. As community ownership and changes in norms is required to achieve sustainable outcomes, these short, small projects are leading only to output-level change.⁷⁶ Several implementing partners noted that, for some projects, the Country Office's expectations were not aligned to the financial resources, resulting in scattered resources across many areas which meant little could be achieved.
- **Post-project monitoring:** Lack of follow-up data, especially for short projects, means it is difficult to assess the sustainability of positive results. For example, it is unclear whether supervision of medical support to survivors of gender based violence sessions resulted in positive changes once supervision stopped or whether teen mothers stayed in school.
- **The ability of civil society organizations to continue interventions:** After the end of the Country Office's support, some implementing partners are unable to continue interventions due to capacity and funding gaps. Exit plans that consider the capacity of partners to continue activities and mobilize resources after the end of the Country Office's support is needed to ensure the long-term impact of projects.

⁷⁶ Review of partner project reports, partner interviews.

FINDING 20

Across the Country Office portfolio there is some positive evidence that outcomes are likely to be sustained due to evidence of strengthened capacity; national, regional and local ownership; financial commitment; and systems such as local accountability and oversight mechanisms to support the continuation of activities.

Formalized women's networks and organizations:

the Country Office effectively supported more formal women's networks and organizations, which have been sustained after the end of interventions. Government partners noted in interviews that women's wings in political parties are now well established with the Country Office's support, and that political parties and the government have committed to supporting such groups. Partners noted in interviews that trained women leaders have also become role models for others, passing on what they have learned through training.

Policy, processes and systems: the Country Office effectively supported policy change (see Finding 8), in a range of areas including land and property ownership and maternity rights. These policy changes are expected to support sustainable change in terms of increasing women's rights. Government partners and the Country Office personnel noted that the Country Office also contributed to changes in processes and systems. For example, the Country Office supported the development of policies and handbooks for partners to strengthen gender-responsive practices. The Country Office has also supported the launch of the Gender Equality Seal certification in the private sector, enhancing the gender responsiveness of Rwandan business and work environments. The Country Office also linked up trained women farmers with buyers and financiers through a digital platform (Buy from Women), which partners noted was likely to be sustained due to good uptake and linkages with government systems.⁷⁷ It has also supported the gender machinery to strengthen management information systems, which partners noted were likely to be sustained by the government. The UN's Joint Programme on Youth Employment developed tools that have been posted on the e-Regulations online platform. These online tools have equipped policymakers with a global overview on the application of laws and guidelines that support small and medium-sized enterprises in their business development.

Strengthened capacity of women and government stakeholders:

There was evidence of participants applying new skills as a result of capacity strengthening initiatives, which is likely to support sustainability. For example, implementing partners noted that their staff are applying the gender-responsive approaches acquired through the Country Office's support in peacebuilding programmes and are mentoring new colleagues on such approaches. Women farmers trained under the Buy from Women initiative on agricultural techniques noted during interviews with the evaluation team that they are applying these skills and accessing more fertilizers than male counterparts. Partners said that paralegals trained by UN Women have continued their legal aid work even after the end of the project. Civil society partners noted that women and girls trained under the *African Girls Can Code Initiative* have applied their digital literacy and entrepreneurship skills. Government partners also noted that the skills women leaders obtained will be sustained and will help them be competitive in elections and effective while in post.

National, regional, local ownership and financial commitment of partners:

There was evidence of ownership of programme initiatives. For example, some provinces and districts now own and budget for the Gender Action Days. MIGEPROF and Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities have started budgeting for female university graduate internships within their annual action plans. The government has full ownership and finances over the Isange One Stop Centres which provide services to survivors of gender-based violence.

Norms change: There was also evidence of changes in norms, leading to sustainable changes in behaviour. Partners mentioned changes in the perceptions of women workers in the mining sector and community changes in perception around the role of women in the workplace, which contributed to tangible changes in behaviour, such as the provision of childcare and maternity leave and increased support to women working outside the home.

⁷⁷ The UN Women Corporate Evaluation on innovation found "Buy from Women" platforms worked best where they were well integrated in government systems.

6. LESSONS LEARNED

This section provides general lessons learned across the operational, coordination and normative areas of UN Women's mandate for potential application to other contexts. Details on the source of the lessons is included in Annex 19.



Joint programmes do not automatically generate synergies. A concerted effort is required to plan for synergies in a programme (for example, through agencies delivering similar projects in different areas; delivering different projects with the same programme participants and partners; or linking normative and operational work). Additionally, agencies and government also need to deliver joint planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting, and harmonize their systems and reporting templates. This is needed to maximize the potential of joint programmes.

Linked to Finding 1



A strategic approach is needed to manage open, competitive selection of partners to avoid high transaction costs arising from a large number of partners and also ensure good coverage in terms of partners with different expertise. Open calls for proposals aids selecting effective delivery partners. It is important to carefully consider the extent to which it is possible to consolidate calls for proposals to avoid scattered partnerships and high transaction costs. It is important to ensure good coverage with partners working across different geographies, vulnerable groups and intersectional factors. Some effective ways to do this include adding in requirements around experience with and representation of particular vulnerable groups and experience working in different geographies, especially in more remote areas. Undertaking a mapping exercise to identify such organizations and ensuring they are invited to submit proposals can also help.

Linked to Findings 15 and 18



Integrated programmes that work across thematic areas can increase effectiveness and contribute to transformative change. Women's economic empowerment programming can be a good entry point for other thematic areas and support sustainability through providing financial resources for participants to continue engaging with the programme.

Linked to Findings 6, 7 and 12



Active participation in the Resident Coordinator's Office can support resource mobilization through greater awareness and involvement in joint proposals and proposals led by other UN agencies. For example, reviewing proposals against the Gender Equality Marker can give UN Women information on upcoming joint proposals.

Linked to Findings 10 and 17



Photo: ©UN Women Rwanda Country Office

7. CONCLUSIONS

In the implementation of its Strategic Note, the Country Office has made important strides in its support to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The national policy framework and government's commitment to gender equality; the momentum and space around initiatives such as Women Deliver; and the positioning of UN Women in Rwanda provides opportunity for the Country Office's growth to achieve greater impact at scale.

CONCLUSION 1

The Country Office's country portfolio activities and thematic focus has mostly been very relevant to national priorities and the needs of rightsholders.

The Country Office has effectively delivered key results across the thematic areas of Women's Economic Empowerment, Ending Violence Against Women, and Women's Participation, Leadership and Governance through its operational, normative and coordination work. It contributed to key outcomes, including strengthened organizational capacity of the national gender machinery; women with new and higher streams of income; communities and service providers better able to prevent and respond to violence; and revision of national laws and policies to strengthen gender equality.

The Country Office's cross-thematic work and piloting of new approaches have been particular strengths. A key weakness has been that some projects have only been able to deliver on outputs due to the short time frame, for example, training programmes without ongoing mentoring which affected participants' ability to apply the skills learned.

Relevance and effectiveness. [Linked to findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15](#)

CONCLUSION 2:

Interventions empowered vulnerable populations.

The interventions targeted and were accessible to vulnerable communities. Disability is a new area for UN Women, and the Country Office has delivered well, though it should continue to strengthen this by tracking the inclusivity of its interventions and ensuring disability inclusion is mainstreamed across its programmes.

In terms of addressing the root causes of gender equality, most of the sampled projects were gender responsive (targeting the specific needs of women) or gender transformative (where projects involved an element of policy or norm change to tackle the root causes of gender inequality). Increasing the duration of projects; mainstreaming a community/family approach targeting norms change; and complementing its Ending Violence Against Women programme with more institutional and community prevention work would strengthen the Country Office's ability to support sustainable structural and social norms change.

Gender Equality and Human Rights. [Linked to findings 13 and 14.](#)

CONCLUSION 3:

As a result of the Country Office's good practices to support sustainability, there are positive indications that many of the outcomes achieved will be sustainable.

For example, the government has taken on ownership and financially committed to many initiatives. Many provinces now own and budget for the Gender Accountability Days; and several government departments have started budgeting for women graduate internships. The UN Women supported the Gender Equality Seal certification are now widely adopted.

However, the short duration and limited scale of some projects, lack of exit plan in certain initiatives, limited post-project monitoring, and some capacity and funding gaps for implementing partners hinders the likelihood of sustainability.

Sustainability. [Linked to Findings 19 and 20.](#)

CONCLUSION 4:

In terms of efficiency, for the most part, UN Women had appropriate organizational structures, systems and capacity in place to ensure efficient use of resources to maximize results, especially considering resource and capacity gaps and the large number of projects.

Its systems are strong and its operations smooth. Partners value the Country Office's support and expertise.

Challenges in the Country Office's resource mobilization and in certain systems, such as the management of institutional knowledge and planning system; management of partners; and the management and delegation structure have affected the level of resources available and efficiency of delivery.

Efficiency. [Linked to Findings 16-17](#)

CONCLUSION 5:

As a Delivering As One country, the Rwanda context provides great opportunities for strong coherence across the UNCT's gender programming.

The Country Office has supported gender mainstreaming across the UNCT, including through strengthening the Gender Theme Group. The Country Office has also benefitted from leading and participating in many joint programmes. However, in practice, the UNCT's gender work remains loosely linked, even within joint programmes.

There is an opportunity for UN Women to further capitalize on this by strengthening the coherence of joint programmes, especially those it is leading, supporting other agencies with gender mainstreaming; strengthening the planning and coordination of gender events; and convening and advocating for better information-sharing and greater links across the UNCT's gender work.

Coherence. Linked to findings 9 and 10.

CONCLUSION 6:

The Country Office's comparative advantage is its gender expertise and experience; its mandate and convening power; and relationships with government and civil society. However, a significant proportion of the Country Office's capacity and resources are focused on operational work.

There are opportunities for the Country Office to further leverage its comparative advantage by rebalancing its work across UN Women's triple mandate, and scaling its normative and coordination work, through allocation of sufficient resources across these areas of work. The Country Office's normative work could be strengthened by using its convening role to boldly advocate on key issues affecting gender equality and monitoring the effect of policy changes. A key success was in convening the sector on the COVID-19 position paper, which led to the government strengthening the gender responsiveness of its COVID-19 response plan. The Country Office should bolster its coordination work by strengthening the gender sector working group.

The Country Office is delivering too many scattered, small, short-term projects across many partners, with personnel overstretched across many operational areas. The Country Office needs to better define its focus areas and boundaries by targeting areas of work likely to significant change, supporting implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments and plans, and measuring tangible changes to the lives of women and girls. This would also be supported by further consolidating its partnerships into more strategic, longer-term collaborations and increasing its work with grassroots organizations and the women's movement.

Relevance and Effectiveness. Linked to findings 1, 2, 9, 10, 15.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Presentation of the preliminary findings and discussion on the recommendations, feasible actions and the way forward took place with the UN Women Rwanda Country Office to inform the recommendations presented below. Each recommendation is linked to corresponding finding(s). The level of priority and timeline for implementation are indicated below each recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 1.

Develop longer-term, more strategic partnerships aligned to the new Strategic Note objectives and time frame.

Based on Findings 4, 12 and 15.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- As part of development of the new Strategic Note, review the Country Office's partners against its new priorities and identify where it is possible to consolidate, and identify any gaps (in terms of expertise, key geographies/vulnerabilities), building on existing civil society mappings.
- Consider scaling partnerships with the private sector as well as grassroots organizations, e.g. with expertise on disabilities.
- Strengthen the Civil Society Advisory Group, through a clearer articulation of what the Country Office wants to achieve from it.
- Increasing support to other ministries (including through the gender machinery) to implement gender guidelines.
- Share UN Women's strategy with identified partners and discuss areas for collaboration. Establish Memorandums of Understanding that align to the Strategic Note period and objectives (not specifically linked to funding arrangements) and set out a vision for the partnership, respective roles and responsibilities, capacity building plans and exit strategy.
- Align funding proposals to these strategic Memorandums of Understanding where possible.
- Convene partners to identify areas of collaboration.

To be led by: *Senior Management Team*

Rationale: Fewer, more strategic partners will reduce operational workload and facilitate stronger collaboration and shared vision with partners. Building this on a full sector mapping exercise will ensure partners are aligned to UN Women's work and are representative and inclusive.

RECOMMENDATION 2.**Maximize comparative advantage by scaling up the Country Office's work on convening stakeholders working on gender (coordination) and policy work (normative).***Based on Findings 1, 2, 3, 9 and 10*

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

LONG-TERM**Suggested steps to be taken:**

- Review the balance and integration of work across its triple mandate in the new Strategic Note, and consider the personnel capacity and funding required to deliver its normative and coordination work.
- Advocate for the creation of a stand-alone gender sector working group and continue to strengthen the national gender and family cluster as the current gender coordination mechanism. As co-chair, support the government to strengthen this cluster, drawing lessons from other sector working groups.
- Consult with the national gender machinery, development partners group and civil society bodies, on how UN Women can best support national coordination work, as part of the new Strategic Note planning process.
- Develop a list of short, medium and long term priorities) along with key target outcomes in terms of its normative and coordination work and include specific outcomes and actions into the performance objectives of programme staff.
- Work with the Resident Coordinator's Office to strengthen early, joined-up planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of joint programmes.
- Proactively identify opportunities to explore collaborations around joint programmes led by other UN agencies.
- Use the development partners gender group to enhance coordinated approach to partnerships between the UN and donors.

To be led by: The Representative, with the support of the programme management specialist and coordination specialist.

Rationale: Many stakeholders felt the Country Office's comparative advantage was in its coordination and normative work, and that the Country Office was interested in this role but had not yet fully embraced it. They felt that UN Women could advocate/support a stronger national gender coordination mechanism, which would increase the effectiveness of multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnership for GEWE, and that the Country Office could also be bolder in speaking out on challenging issues, including lending its support to selected civil society causes. The roles and responsibilities for supporting UN coordination and national coordination on gender can be reviewed. National coordination on gender currently sits with the Women's Political Participation team, whereas it is relevant for all thematic areas.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

Build on the strong capabilities of the Country Office team and systems by further strengthening resource mobilization and the office's management structure; and review the strategies and systems in place for knowledge management, learning and human resources.

Based on Findings 16, 17 and 18

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

Resource mobilization

- Develop a strategy for resource mobilization, including the roles and responsibilities of country office personnel. Build resource mobilization into job descriptions and performance management of relevant personnel.
- Build and maintain relationships with both current, previous and potential donors, and non-traditional donors (foundations, private sector, multilaterals), bringing in external expertise as needed.
- Work closely with the UNCT to explore options for joint programmes.
- Continue to mobilize the development partners working group as a key platform to coordinate UN gender requests and to keep abreast of donor priorities.
- Develop resource mobilization plans in Memorandums of Understanding with strategic implementing partners.

Management structure

- With the new positions of the programme management specialist and programme specialist, revisit the delegation structure to ensure personnel are empowered and UN Women is able to deliver efficiently and in a timely manner.
- Set up a timeline for the year, covering key events, that can be shared externally. Bring in relevant functions such as Communication, M&E and Coordination to support timely planning.

Knowledge management, learning and the human resources function

- Undertake capacity assessment to identify needs and allocate budget for capacity-building.
- Consider the office's current structure, strategy and responsibilities for knowledge management, learning and the human resources function to identify where these can be strengthened.

To be led by: The Representative, with the support of the management team

Rationale: Systems are generally strong, although a few key areas need to be strengthened in order to deliver more effectively and efficiently, which will help translate into stronger gender results. Strengthening resource mobilization to increase the available resources would enable UN Women to expand its work in country. Refinement of the management structure and earlier planning of key advocacy and campaigns would enable the Country Office to deliver in a more timely manner. Strengthening the knowledge management and learning function would strengthen the effectiveness of programming. Strengthening the human resources function would enable sufficient expertise and capacity to manage performance and support continuous development of employees.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

Strengthen the relevance and sustainability of the Country Office's work by consolidating and focusing on targeted areas of work, moving away from short and scattered projects. These areas should build on UN Women's comparative advantage (integrated triple mandate), and lead to tangible impacts on the lives of women and girls (see Annex 1).

Based on Findings 1, 2, 3, 13, 19, and 20.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Advocate with donors for longer-term funding.
- Limit the number of short-term projects and projects that are mainly focused on outputs
- Align short-term funding to longer-term programmes (e.g. building on work in the same geographical area/community).
- Where possible, increase partner engagement in needs assessment, planning and monitoring of interventions.
- Ensure all projects have clear exit plans.
- Key areas to consider mainstreaming across all interventions include: male engagement, norms change, and disability inclusion. Consider how disability work can be strengthened through considering developmental, economic and sector-specific needs and supporting government to strengthen policies.
- Use the Strategic Note to define targeted areas of work, based on the Common Country Analysis, Cooperation Framework, National Strategy for Transformation, the State of Gender Equality Report, discussion with development partners and other partners (to understand who is best placed to deliver what) (refer to Annex 1 for potential areas).

To be led by: The Representative, with the support of the management team and programme team

Rationale: Certain projects are sustainable (e.g. longer-term projects such as the project with the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum). Certain projects which are short term and small are making limited impact, and only delivering outputs. The funding context is also moving, with donors interested in new areas of work. The Country Office's portfolio is scattered. There is a need to move to consolidate programmes in fewer areas, that will be impactful and significant change, considering the scale of UN Women's work in Rwanda. Fewer, longer-term projects would also help consolidate the amount of management time needed from personnel.

ANNEXES

Annexes are available in Volume II of the report [here](#).

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

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TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

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



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