



UN WOMEN COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION
TIMOR-LESTE



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The evaluation team comprised five team members: Sabrina Evangelista, Regional Evaluation Specialist for the Asia and the Pacific region, as Team Leader; other team members included Arushi Pankaj Dubey, Regional Evaluation Analyst for the Asia and the Pacific region; Putri Vidya Dewi, Regional Evaluation Consultant; and Paati Purohit, Evaluation Research Intern.

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UN WOMEN COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION TIMOR-LESTE



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Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

UN Women

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ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IEAS	UN Women Independent Evaluation Service and Audit Services
IES	UN Women Independent Evaluation Service
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAP GBV	National Action Plan Gender-Based Violence
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identities and Expressions, and Sex Characteristics
SWAP	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan
T4E	Together for Equality
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN WOMEN COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION TIMOR-LESTE

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This report presents the main evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) of the UN Women Timor-Leste Country Office conducted between January and September 2024. A CPE is a systematic assessment of the normative, coordination and operational aspects of UN Women's contribution to development results relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level.

PURPOSE

As a high-level strategic evaluation, the CPE is primarily intended to be a formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the Country Office and national stakeholders' strategic learning and decision-making when developing a new Strategic Note. The evaluation is expected to have a secondary summative (retrospective) perspective, to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience. The CPE provides an independent and systematic assessment of UN Women's contributions to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level, as well as an assessment of organizational efficiency, to feed into learning on what strategies work well and what needs strengthening. This evaluation focused on the current Strategic Note cycle (2021–2025) and will be used to design the new Strategic Note (2026–2030). The CPE was conducted in coordination with other UN agencies which are conducting country programme evaluations in 2024, including UNICEF, UNFPA and the Resident Coordinator's Office-led evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

OBJECTIVES AND INTENDED AUDIENCE

The evaluation applied the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability) and also included a human rights and gender equality criterion. The evaluation had the following objectives:

1. Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women results in the country.
2. Assess the relevance and coherence of UN Women programmes, vis-a-vis the UN system; the added value of UN Women; and identify contributions to the Timor-Leste UNSDCF 2021–2025 outcomes.
3. Analyse how a human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of UN Women's work in Timor-Leste and how they contribute to transformative change and the sustainability of efforts.
4. Provide lessons learned and actionable recommendations to support UN Women's strategic positioning.

INTENDED USERS

The primary intended users of this evaluation are the UN Women Timor-Leste Country Office and its key stakeholders, including the government, civil society organizations, development partners and other UN agencies, as well as the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UN Women headquarters (including the Senior Management Team) and IES. The UN Country Team in Timor-Leste may also use the findings of this evaluation as key inputs to the new UNSDCF. The primary intended uses of this evaluation are to:

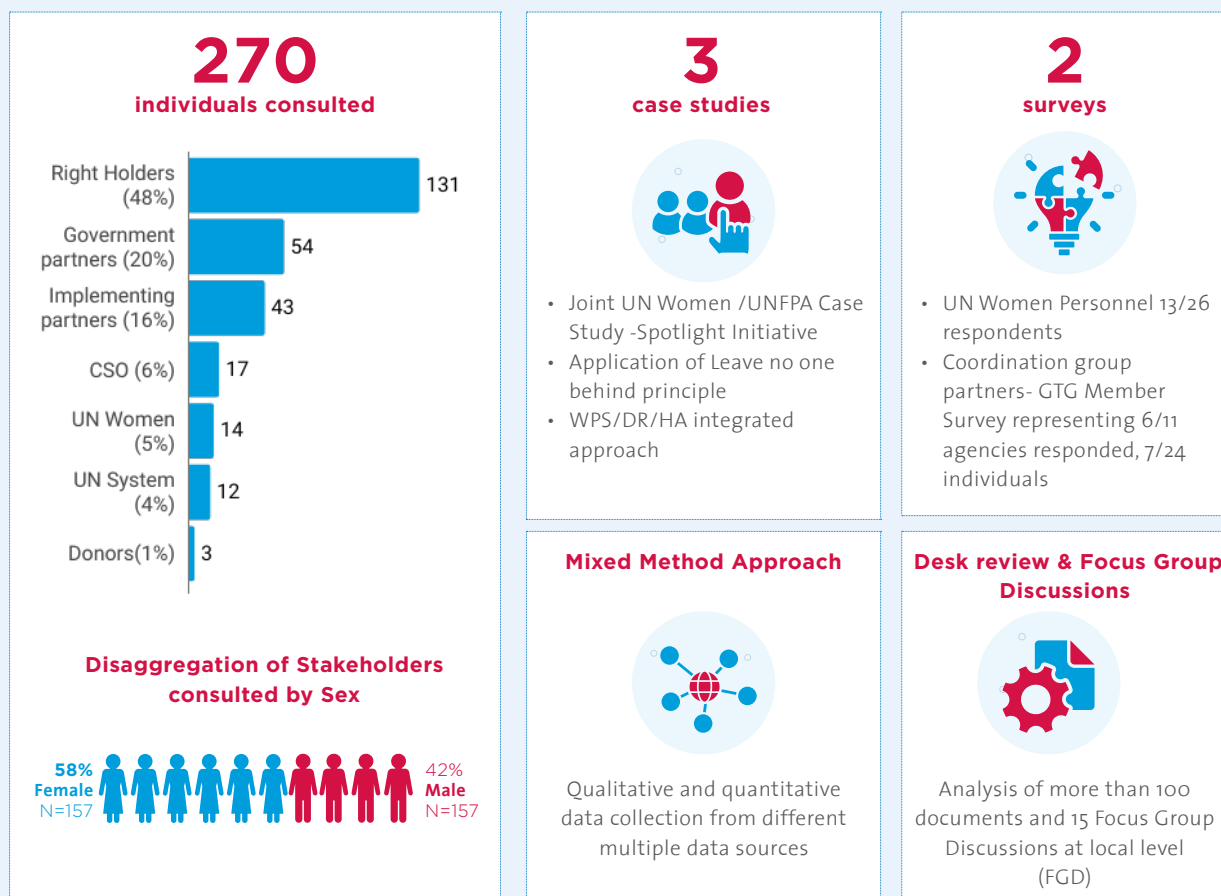
- Support decision-making regarding development of the next Country Office Strategic Note.
- Ensure accountability for the development effectiveness of the existing Strategic Note.
- Inform learning from effective, promising and innovative strategies and practices.
- Support capacity development and mobilization of national stakeholders to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in the country.

METHODOLOGY

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 OECD/DAC criteria, comprising relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, gender equality and human rights, and organizational efficiency. UN Women evaluations are gender-responsive and apply key principles of a human rights-based approach: they are inclusive, participatory and transparent; ensure fair power relations; and analyse the underlying structural barriers and social norms that impede the realization of women's rights. Multiple sources of data were obtained, and 270 stakeholders from across stakeholder groups were consulted (157 women and 113 men).

The CPE followed UN Women's procedures to ensure high-quality evaluation processes and products and ethical conduct as outlined in 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.

DATA COLLECTED FOR THE EVALUATION



BACKGROUND: UN WOMEN IN TIMOR-LESTE

Timor-Leste, Asia's youngest democracy, gained independence in 2002 and has made significant progress in advancing gender equality. However, despite these advancements, challenges persist. Violence against women and girls remains a critical issue with gaps in prevention and response services. Economic inequalities are significant, with women experiencing low labour force participation, limited access to decent employment and a pronounced gender pay gap. Women's underrepresentation in leadership and decision-making roles further emphasizes the need for more effective measures to address these ongoing issues. Timor-Leste is also highly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change, which disproportionately impact women, further complicating the nation's post-conflict recovery and development efforts.

The predecessor organization to UN Women, UNIFEM, had been present in Timor-Leste since 2001. At the country level, the Strategic Note is the main planning tool for UN Women's support to normative, coordination and operational work in Timor-Leste. The Strategic Note aims to ensure that women and girls in Timor-Leste, including the most marginalized, fully enjoy their rights and realize their potential in a fair, prosperous and gender equal society. The Strategic Note also aims to contribute to accelerating implementation of key normative frameworks, including the Beijing Platform for Action, and is aligned with the UNSDCF 2021–2025. UN Women's work in Timor-Leste during the current Strategic Note (2021–2025) focuses on the following areas: Global Norms and Standards, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG), Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Leveraging its coordination and normative mandate, the Country Office sought to support gender mainstreaming across all six UNSDCF outcome areas, and UNSDCF efforts to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular emphasis on SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8 and 16. The Country Office engaged in co-chairing key coordination mechanisms to advance gender equality and women's empowerment within the UN system.

UN Women's work in Timor-Leste is focused on responding to the Entity's three core mandates:

1. **Normative work:** to support the formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
2. **Operational work:** to support Member States in implementing international standards and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.

3. **Coordination work:** entails both work to promote the accountability of the UN system on gender equality and empowerment of women, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress, and more broadly mobilizing and convening key stakeholders to ensure greater coherence and gender mainstreaming across the UN.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation found that UN Women has made key contributions to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Timor-Leste across its triple mandate. The Strategic Note has been relevant and aligned with key national and international priorities for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Moving forward, the Country Office must translate normative progress into sustainable results for women and girls in all their diversity to maintain credibility and relevance. While the focus on Women, Peace and Security and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, with growing emphasis on Women's Economic Empowerment, has been relevant, the next Strategic Note should address emerging priorities for Timor-Leste. Systematic engagement with civil society at the project design phase will enhance accountability and support UN Women's added value within the UN system.

The evaluation concluded that UN Women's coordination mandate is critical for operating at scale in the country but must be leveraged strategically to maximize influence. The Country Office has taken on leadership roles in key coordination platforms on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Timor-Leste, such as the Gender Theme Group and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Coordination Group. However, the effectiveness of these platforms has been hindered by infrequent meetings and a lack of strategic focus. Moving forward, the Country Office needs to consolidate sharing of gender equality and empowerment of women efforts across partners, enhance knowledge-sharing and become the "go-to" knowledge resource for gender equality in Timor-Leste.

The Country Office's focus on advancing UN Women's normative mandate has resulted in key gains and established an enabling environment for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the country. However, programmatic strategies have been too varied in terms of target groups and geographic spread. A systematic capacity-building approach, including refresher training, mentoring, reflection and knowledge-sharing, must be embedded in the Country Office's strategy to ensure transformative change beyond the individual level.

The Country Office needs to work closely with partners to embed strong results tracking to measure the effectiveness of models and work towards scaling or adjusting programmes as appropriate in the next Strategic Note.

The Country Office has made efforts to design its portfolio in line with human rights and “leave no one behind” principles, including engagement with groups representing persons with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ persons. Deepening and systematizing approaches for inclusive programming and intersectional analyses will facilitate national ownership, concrete results and the sustainability of programming efforts. Additionally, there is a need to deepen engagement with key power brokers, such as the church, to address harmful social norms and stigma surrounding LGBTIQ+ individuals.

The Country Office has experienced significant growth since 2019 through successful joint programme resource mobilization efforts, but the outlook for the future remains uncertain. Developing a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy and seeking dedicated support for resource mobilization will be imperative for the next Strategic Note. Implementation of the Strategic Note has demonstrated the need for funding that permits flexible programming. In an environment of diminishing resources and increasing demands for evidence, it is critical that the Country Office prioritize strengthening its ability to design and implement strong learning and oversight systems. The Country Office should also enhance and systematize its approaches to monitoring and reporting beyond the activity level. This will build credibility and confidence among funding partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1:

In line with UN Women’s shift to a programmatic approach, the Country Office should clarify its vision, strategies and resources for achieving outcome-level change within UN Women’s triple mandate and emerging priorities of Timor-Leste – prioritizing the translation of policies and frameworks into action.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The Country Office should prioritize its coordination mandate in Timor-Leste by establishing a strategy, in consultation with the UNCT, to enhance coherence through coordination; ensure it fulfills its role as a knowledge hub and connector for gender equality and women’s empowerment; and ensure the coordination strategy is resourced accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

To translate normative gains into tangible results, the Country Office should pivot from awareness campaigns to incubating models with partners, including the government and civil society. These models must align with UN Women’s triple mandate, Gender Equality Accelerators and the broader development ecosystem and should include strong capacity-building methods and clear progress indicators to monitor progress and inform decisions on scaling or adjusting the models.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The Country Office should adopt a comprehensive strategy for designing and implementing its initiatives through an intersectional perspective, acknowledging the varied priorities and needs of the most marginalized stakeholder groups, especially rural women, women with disabilities and individuals of diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC). This approach should guarantee meaningful involvement, empowerment and representation for these groups.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

In consultation with civil society partners, the Country Office should establish a strategy to more systematically engage civil society, ensuring the most marginalized people are benefitting from UN Women’s efforts in Timor-Leste.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The Country Office should establish a resource mobilization and partnerships strategy in consultation with the Regional Office; seek dedicated support; and proactively engage donors in discussions to build a programme strategy.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Strengthen the Country Office’s results based management approach to enhance overall programme oversight and feed into enhanced learning and decision-making.



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INTRODUCTION

1. Timor-Leste country context

Timor-Leste – the youngest democracy in Asia and the Pacific – has made significant progress establishing gender responsive policy frameworks. The country has a land area of 15,000 square km and its 1.3 million population (51 per cent male/49 per cent female) is predominantly Catholic.¹ The majority of the population is rural and the country hosts the world’s youngest population.^{2,3} The role of the church is critical to development, with gender roles heavily influenced by religious bodies. Although the country is in post-conflict recovery, it has taken several important initiatives to build a consolidated democracy, including through key normative agreements in support of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Since 2015, Timor-Leste has expanded its policy commitments on gender equality, social inclusion and collaboration between government and civil society. Achievements related to advancement of gender equality include the establishment of the national gender equality machinery; adoption of quotas for women representation in the political parties’ lists of candidates; legislation against certain forms of gender-based violence; and gender parity in education enrolment.⁴ The ninth constitutional government established a five-year plan to accelerate development in the country. Within this plan, women and girls are considered a key pillar, both as duty bearers and rights holders.⁵

However, work remains to achieve gender equality in Timor-Leste. [Timor-Leste’s 2019 Voluntary National Review](#) reported that the country is not on track to meet the Agenda 2030 targets as also noted in the UN Common Country Analysis.

The review identified the need for greater action around key gender equality and empowerment of women issues, including:

- a. widespread violence against women and girls;
- b. low labour force participation, decent employment, skills and opportunities for women and youth;
- c. women’s low representation in leadership and access to justice; and
- d. the limited data and capacities of institutions to monitor and report on SDG progress.

The 2023 CEDAW Concluding Observations,⁶ 2019 SDG Voluntary National Review,⁷ UN Common Country Analysis⁸ and Beijing+25 Report all note positive policy measures, such as the second National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (2017–2021) but recognize the need for greater attention to preventing VAWG before it begins and holistic responses. Underlying this violence are harmful norms related to beliefs around masculinity and use of power over others by those with authority in families, institutions and in social settings. This is despite legal and policy progress such as the three National Action Plans on Gender Based Violence (NAP GBV) with a dedicated pillar on prevention, discriminatory social norms, attitudes and behaviours which contribute to gender-based violence. Factors such as disability, gender inequitable attitudes, childhood exposure to violence and men’s use of transactional sex, are some of the risk factors.⁹

¹ World Bank (2021). Population Total – Timor-Leste. Accessed from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POPTOTL?locations=ID>

² World Bank. World Urbanization Prospects: 2018 Revision. 2018. Available on [Rural population \(% of total population\) - Timor-Leste | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.UR.URV?locations=ID)

³ Accessed from the Administrative Division section of the Government of Timor-leste Website. Available on [Administrative Division « Government of Timor-Leste](https://www.government.tl/en/administrative-division)

⁴ OHCHR. (2023, May). Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women commend Timor-Leste on achieving gender parity in education, while noting need to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/05/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-commend-timor-leste>

⁵ UN Women. (2024). Timor-Leste: Gender equality and women’s empowerment. Retrieved from https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_timor-leste_en.pdf

⁶ UN Women. (2021). Timor-Leste country data. Retrieved from <https://data.unwomen.org/country/timor-leste>

⁷ UN Women. (2024). Timor-Leste: Gender equality and women’s empowerment. Retrieved from https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_timor-leste_en.pdf

⁸ United Nations, “Concluding observations on the 4th periodic report of Timor-Leste : Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women”, CEDAW/C/TLS/CO/4, 2023, Available on <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4013813>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ United Nations Timor-Leste. (2023). UN Common Country Analysis: Timor-Leste 2023. Retrieved from <https://timorleste.un.org/en/254777-un-common-country-analysis-timor-leste-2023>

¹¹ U.S Department of State, “United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally 2022”, Available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/united-states-strategy-to-prevent-and-respond-to-gender-based-violence-globally-2022/>

BOX 1:

Key statistics on gender equality and women's empowerment in Timor-Leste



Timor-Leste's Human Development Index has slightly decreased from 0.622 (2014) to 0.607 (2021).¹⁰ The Gender Development Index value for Timor-Leste has deteriorated from 1.041 in 2016 to 0.904 in 2022.¹¹



Domestic violence was outlawed in Timor-Leste in 2010 with the passing of the Law Against Domestic Violence.¹² However, in 2016, the Department of Health Services survey found that 33 per cent of women aged 15–49 years were subject to physical and sexual violence and the most common perpetrator was usually their husband or partner (87 per cent among married women).¹³



The role of women in decision-making is severely limited under traditional Timorese social systems.¹⁴ Although 36.9 per cent of seats in the National Parliament are held by women, the highest in the Asia Pacific region, women are still underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles nationwide and at the local level.¹⁵ Only 1 of 13 Presidents of the local authorities in 13 municipalities and special administrative regions, is a woman.¹⁶



The labour force participation rate was 30.5 per cent overall, with a sharp disparity between women (24.2 per cent) and men (36.9 per cent).¹⁷ The informal employment rate was distinctly higher for working women (80.4 per cent) compared to working men (75.3 per cent).¹⁸ A gender pay gap is prevalent, with women (US\$ 240) earning on average around 6.6 per cent less than men (US\$ 257).¹⁹



Timor-Leste is a highly disaster-prone nation and suffers from cyclones, earthquakes, wildfires and landslides as well as extreme weather events. Timor-Leste has an INFORM Risk Index of 4.2 and ranks 71 among all countries.²⁰ In 2021, when cyclone Seroja hit the nation bringing damage through floods, around 49 per cent of the total affected population were women.²¹



In terms of “leaving no one behind”, development and human rights analysis in Timor-Leste has identified specific population groups most marginalized by structural inequalities and discrimination. These include: women and children with disabilities and their (often female) caregivers; survivors of violence; adolescent mothers; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons; and women and men in rural areas working in vulnerable employment. The Rede Feto ASEAN SOGIE (2017) report found that 87 per cent of respondents from the LGBT community had experienced violence at some point in their lives, 72 per cent more than once, and more than 1 in 10 experience it daily.²² Currently, Timor-Leste does not have dedicated laws for the protection of individuals based on their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Source: developed by the evaluation team

¹⁰ UNDP, HDI, 2020, Available on [Human Development Index | Human Development Reports \(undp.org\)](https://data.undp.org/hdi/)

¹¹ UNDP, “Gender Development Index”, 2021, Available at <https://hdr.undp.org/gender-development-index#/indicies/GDI>

¹² SEM, “NAP GBV 2017 – 2020”, 2017, Available on <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAAsia/Docs/Publications/2017/10/170509-PAN-Eng-s.pdf>

¹³ Government of Timor-Leste, Demographic and Health (DHS) Survey, 2016. Available on <https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR244/SR244.pdf>

¹⁴ ADB, “Country Strategy and Program Update. 2003 – 2004, Democratic Republic of Timor Leste”. Available on https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32391/csp-tim-2003_o.pdf

¹⁵ IPU Parline. Available at <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=9&year=2023>

¹⁶ UNDP, “UN Women and UNDP Joint Effort for Women's Leadership and Participation in the Elections 2021-2025”, 2022, Available on <https://www.undp.org/timor-leste/press-releases/un-women-and-undp-joint-effort-womens-leadership-and-participation-elections-2021-2025>

¹⁷ ILO, “Timor-Leste Labour Force Survey, 2021, Available on https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms_863063.pdf

¹⁸ ILO, “Timor-Leste Labour Force Survey, 2021, Available on https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms_863063.pdf

¹⁹ ILO, “Timor-Leste Labour Force Survey, 2021, Available on https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms_863063.pdf

²⁰ European Union, “DRMKC INFORM Index Country Profile: Timor-Leste”, Available on <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/Inform-Index/Portals/0/InfoRM/CountryProfiles/TLS.pdf>

²¹ IOM, “TIMORESE WOMEN AS ACTIVE CHANGE-MAKERS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION”, 2023, Available on <https://roasiapacific.iom.int/stories/timorese-women-active-change-makers-disaster-risk-reduction-and-climate-change-adaptation>

²² Rede Feto and ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, “A Research Report on the Lives of Lesbian and Bisexual Women and Transgender Men in Timor-Leste”, 2017, Available on <https://aseansogiecaucus.org/images/resources/publications/ASC%20-%20Rede%20Feto%20-%20LBT%20Womens%20Lives%20in%20Timor%20Leste.pdf>

2. UN Women in Timor-Leste

BACKGROUND

The predecessor organization to UN Women, UNIFEM, had been present in Timor-Leste since 2001. At the country level, the Strategic Note is the main planning tool for UN Women's support to normative, coordination and operational work in Timor-Leste. During the current Strategic Note 2021–2025, UN Women's work in Timor-Leste is focused on the thematic areas of Global Norms and Standards; Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG); Women, Peace and Security (WPS); and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). UN Women's work is focused on responding to its three core mandates:

1. **Normative work:** to support the formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
2. **Operational work:** to support Member States in implementing international standards and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
3. **Coordination work:** entails both work to promote the accountability of the UN system on gender equality and the empowerment of women, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress, and more broadly mobilizing and convening key stakeholders to ensure greater coherence and gender mainstreaming across the UN.

Leveraging its coordination and normative mandates, the Country Office sought to support gender mainstreaming across all six UNSDCF outcome areas, and UNSDCF efforts to advance the SDGs, with particular emphasis on SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8 and 16. The Outcomes cover the Country Office's four thematic areas, which contribute to UN Women's Strategic Plan (2021–2025): WEE aligned to UNSDCF Outcome 2, and EVAWG, WPS and Global Norms and Standards aligned to UNSDCF Outcome 5. These areas are aligned with the Economic Recovery, Protection and Social Protection pillars under the Timor-Leste COVID-19 UN Socio-Economic Response Plan (May 2020).

STRATEGIC NOTE 2021–2025

The Strategic Note aims at the empowerment of women and girls to claim their rights through accessible, accountable and gender-responsive governance systems, institutions and services at national and subnational levels. The Strategic Note aims to strengthen the capacity of government and non-governmental stakeholders to more effectively assess and report progress on the 2030 Agenda and other global normative and policy frameworks for gender equality and the empowerment of women, strengthening government accountability. The Strategic Note relies on three main thematic streams consisting of developing the WPS agenda; furthering action towards the elimination of violence against

women and girls; and advancing women's economic empowerment. These key streams are complemented by specific actions to advance the gender responsiveness of disaster risk reduction programmes.

At the national level, UN Women continued its partnership with Secretary of State for Equality, as the key government body responsible for the design, execution, coordination, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the country's gender equality policy. Since 2016, UN Women has supported coordination of development partners, primarily through the multi-stakeholder Gender Coordination Group co-chaired with the women's machinery (Secretary of State for Equality), which also involves civil society organizations (CSOs) and development partners. In support of the Humanitarian–Peace–Development nexus, the Country Office continued to lead the more recently established Gender and Protection Working Group (in collaboration with UNICEF) and made a link to the Humanitarian Partners Meeting as relevant (noting a Humanitarian Country Team is not currently active in Timor-Leste). At the municipal level, the Country Office worked through partners to support municipal gender working groups.

There have been multiple coordination mechanisms on gender equality and the empowerment of women, reflective of Timor-Leste's many gender equality and empowerment of women commitments. Within the UN and under the UN Country Team (UNCT), the Country Office continued to co-chair the UN Gender Theme Group (with UNFPA) and co-chaired the results Group 5 related to governance (with UNDP). The Country Office also co-chaired a Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Task Force with the Resident Coordinator's Office; co-chaired the Programme Management Team with UNICEF; is a member of the UN Communications Group in Timor-Leste, which is currently chaired by UNICEF; and is a member of the Monitoring and Evaluation Group. As of 2021, joint programmes represent over 30 per cent of the Country Office's Strategic Note and remained a key strategy for delivery of Country Office programming across thematic areas.

FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

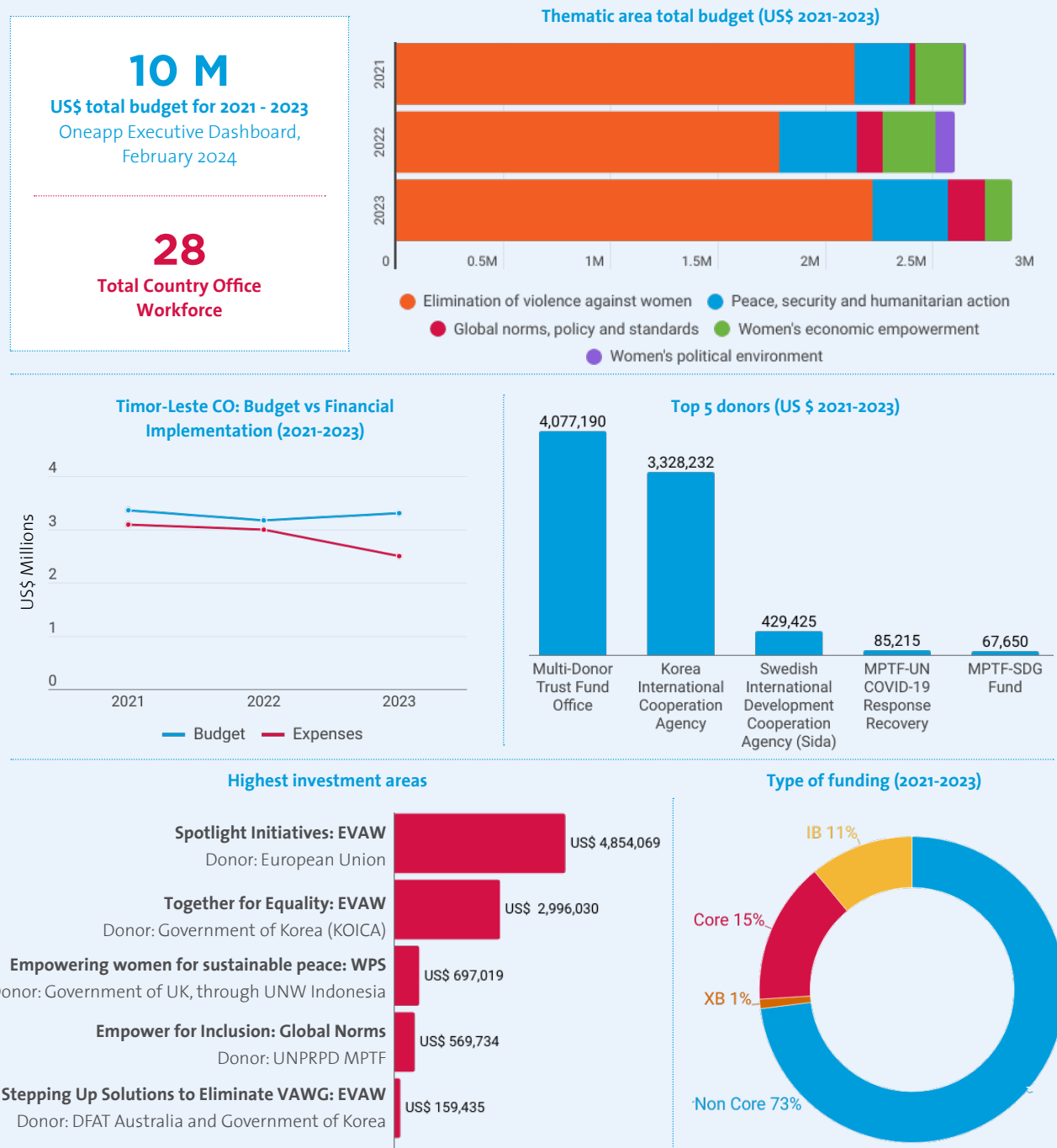
The Country Office's total budget for 2021–2023 was approximately US\$ 10 million, reaching a high of US\$ 3.35 million in 2021. UN Women Timor-Leste has a total of 28 personnel, comprising 9 staff and 7 other personnel including 6 Service Contracts, 11 consultants and 1 UN Volunteer. At the time of the evaluation data collection, there were 11 vacant positions which included six full-time assignments, four Service Contracts and one UN Volunteer. The Country Office reported that, as of October 2024, all positions had been filled.

KEY PARTNERS

Key partners include implementing CSOs such as Plan International, Alola, Rede Feto, Timor Aid, Ba Futuru, Fokupers, Judicial System Monitoring Programme and Asia Justice and Rights. Approximately nine CSO partners through the Spotlight Initiative and 23 (total) CSOs were engaged in the Spotlight Learning Consortium. Joint programmes were carried out with inter-agency partners UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP and IOM. Interministerial activities and UN Women’s support to ministries (Secretary of State for Equality, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social

Solidarity and Inclusion, Ministry of Education etc.) played a crucial role. A mapping of stakeholders was undertaken as part of the inception phase of the evaluation, identifying key duty bearers and right holders. The document review identified several UN agencies, CSOs and duty bearers, including the government. Organizations led by or focused on marginalized groups, such as LGBTIQ+ individuals and persons with disabilities were identified as more ad hoc collaborations/participants of UN Women events.

FIGURE 1: Timor-Leste Country Office overview



Source: evaluation team based on ATLAS and RMS data

3. Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope and methodology

PURPOSE

As a high-level strategic evaluation, the CPE was primarily intended to be a formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the Country Office and national stakeholders' strategic learning and decision-making when developing the new Strategic Note. The evaluation was expected to have a secondary summative (retrospective) perspective, to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience. The CPE provides an independent and systematic assessment of UN Women's contributions to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level, as well as assessing organizational efficiency, to feed into learning on what strategies work well and what needs strengthening.

EVALUATION SCOPE

The CPE focused on the current Strategic Note cycle (2021–2025). With the understanding that the current cycle will not be complete, the CPE analysed work completed through Q1 2024 and ensured a formative analysis of the Country Office's strategy moving forward, including the time remaining for implementation of the current Strategic Note. The timing of the CPE aimed to feed into the UNSDCF evaluation, which was scheduled to commence in 2024.

The geographic scope included all locations where UN Women Timor-Leste is operating, including Dili, Baucau, Lautem, Viqueque, Covalima, Ermera, Bobonaro, Aileu, Liquiçá, Manatuto, Manufahi, OeCusse and Ainaro.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with UN Women Evaluation Guidance, which is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system and related guidance.²³ The CPE's overall approach was non-experimental, theory-based and gender-responsive. The evaluation was transparent and participatory, involving relevant UN Women stakeholders and partners. It was carried out in accordance with internal and external guidelines, and explicit emphasis was placed on the integration of gender equality and human rights principles²⁴ in the evaluation process. The CPE undertook three case studies to allow for an in-depth analysis of these topics:

1. **Spotlight Initiative** – joint programming and contribution to joint results on ending violence against women.
2. **Country Office contributions to inclusion** – focus on disability projects.
3. **Results and lessons learned** about positioning of UN Women in Women, Peace and Security; Disaster Risk Reduction; and Humanitarian Action.

These selected case studies are specific to initiatives/projects across thematic areas to allow for a more in-depth look at the topic through the lens of several initiatives. Three districts, in addition to Dili, were selected for site visits based on concentration of programming efforts related to the case studies. The analysis is forward looking and provides an appreciative exploration of how the Country Office can best leverage these areas moving forward.

The Country Office's entire programme of work and UN Women's integrated mandate was also assessed, including the Country Office's contributions in operational, coordination and normative spheres.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The CPE employed several different methods for data collection, all driven by the key evaluation questions and selected with the aim of providing the most useful information possible to the Country Office. Primary data collection was largely qualitative, with some quantitative data collected (see Annex 4 for the evaluation matrix and Annex 6.5 for data collection tools). The use of participatory methods was carefully considered based on the local context and all health and security guidelines were followed. The evaluation methods were discussed with the Evaluation Management Group, Evaluation Reference Group and IES senior managers for feedback and were adapted, as appropriate.

Multiple sources of data were obtained: 270 stakeholders from across stakeholder groups were consulted (157 women and 113 men); two valid surveys were conducted: a UN Women personnel survey with a 50 per cent response rate (N=11 female, 2 male) and a coordination group partners survey with a 54 per cent response rate (N= six agencies, six female and one male).

²³ UN Women Country Portfolio Guidelines, revised 2022: UN Women country portfolio evaluations: Revised guidelines Guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluation, UN Evaluation Group, Mar, 2022: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/3050> and Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations, UN Evaluation Group, 2014: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1616>

²⁴ United Nations Evaluation Group, Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, (2016), available from: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>.

At community and school level, the evaluation team conducted participatory “most significant change” focus group discussions with one school in Ermera, one school in Bobonaro; and 13 focus group discussions with rights holders in Dili, Ermera, Baucau, Bobonara and Viqueque, related to Connect With Respect (Together for Equality [T4E] and Spotlight Initiative projects); Voice Against Violence; WEE; WPS; and anti-human trafficking.

In potential cases where the subject of violence against an individual being interviewed was raised, the evaluation was guided by the World Health Organization’s Ethical and Safety recommendations for intervention research on violence against women (2016) and UN Women’s Safe Consultations with Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls (2022) (see Annex 6.6). Before collecting any data, an explanation of the purpose and use of the evaluation and assurances about the confidentiality of the information was provided. Rights holders were consulted about whether they were in a safe space to speak, and their oral consent was requested in their local language. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to opt out of participation or skip any questions.

Multiple lines of evidence were fed into the contribution analysis, including desk review, case studies, quantitative and qualitative analysis (see Annex 6) using NVivo software (a data analysis tool) and UN Women’s financial and human resource analysis.

Gender analytical frameworks were employed to analyse the extent to which a gender transformative approach was applied. This included the Gender@Work and Diverse SOGIESC framework²⁵ to identify dimensions of gender equality, underlying strategies for transformative change and frameworks for analysing the principle of leaving no one behind. This principle recognizes that women and girls may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, dependent on the local context, including people that identify as disabled, LGBTQI+²⁶, black, indigenous, as well as migrants and refugees.

LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that progress is still ongoing towards delivering the current Strategic Note, which ends in 2025, and that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted overall progress.

Overall, the CPE consulted a large and diverse range of stakeholders. The main limitation was that the rights holders consulted at village level were identified by the programme partner, which may present a responder bias, as they may speak more favourably about the programme given their potential desire to continue receiving funds. To avoid bias, the information obtained was focused on rights holders’ life experiences before and during the project to bring forth stories of change, rather than solely assessing their perspective on the performance of project implementers. There was a low response rate to the civil society reference group survey, so the results are not referenced. Data collection was triangulated between sources and methods and was validated with the Country Office and Evaluation Reference Group to ensure validity and reliability. Due to multiple, large-scale joint programmes, it was not possible to validate results across agencies, therefore an understanding of the bigger picture is limited. To respond to this, a joint case study on the Spotlight Initiative was conducted with UNFPA to provide an in-depth analysis of joint programming and the project’s contribution to joint and interlinked results on EVAW.

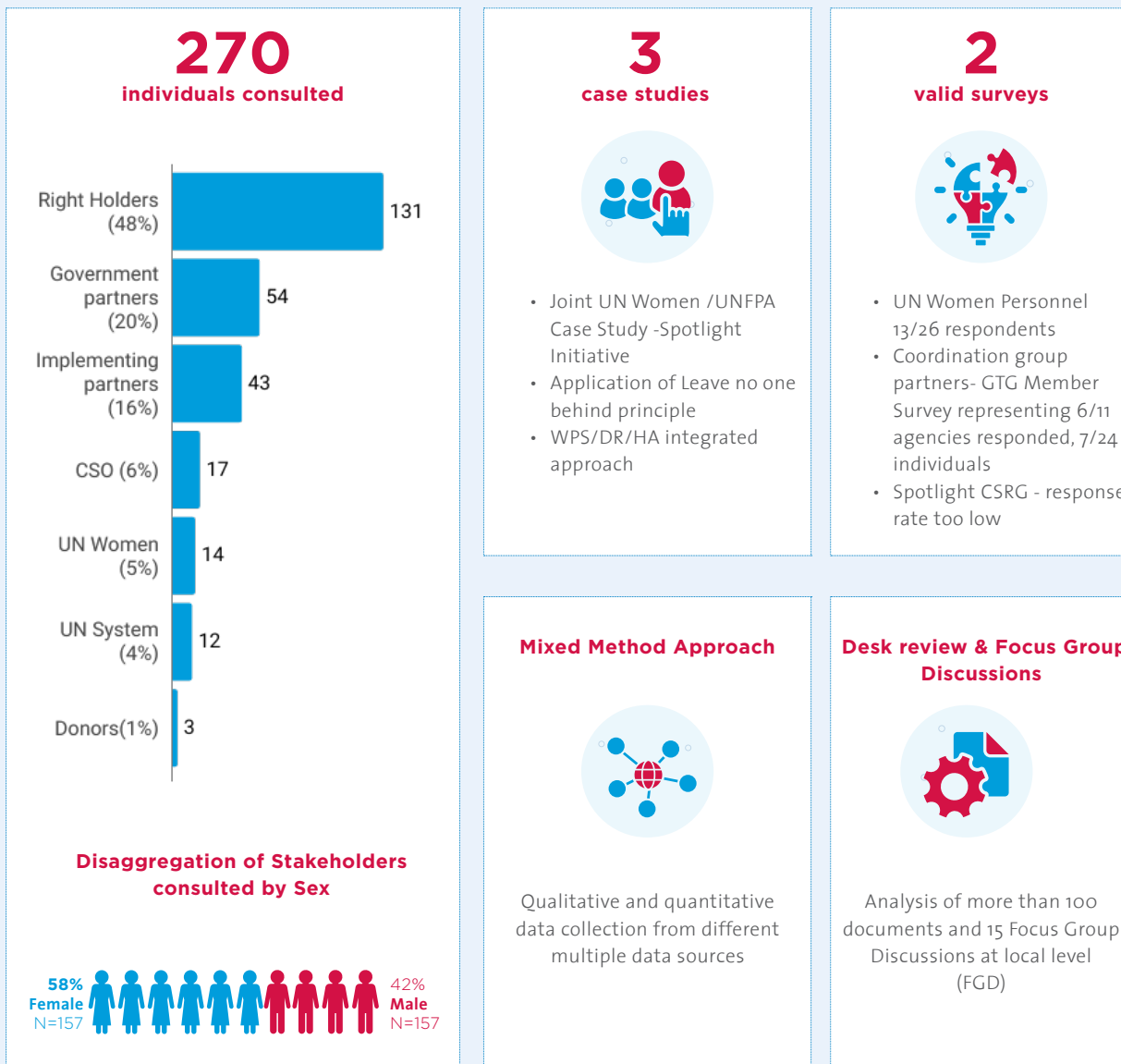
4. Evaluation governance and quality assurance

The UN Women Evaluation Report Quality Assurance (GERAAS) criteria is used to assure quality. All products are subject to quality review by the Evaluation Reference Group, IEAS senior management and the Evaluation Management Group. The Evaluation Reference Group for this evaluation included UN Women Programme personnel, national government partners, civil society representatives, development partners/donors, and UN and Resident Coordinator’s Office representatives. The Evaluation Reference Group was engaged to review the inception report, preliminary findings and the draft evaluation report. Its feedback was important to ensure the factual accuracy and accurate interpretation of contextual information and to identify gaps in the analysis. All feedback obtained was tracked for transparency.

²⁵ <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>

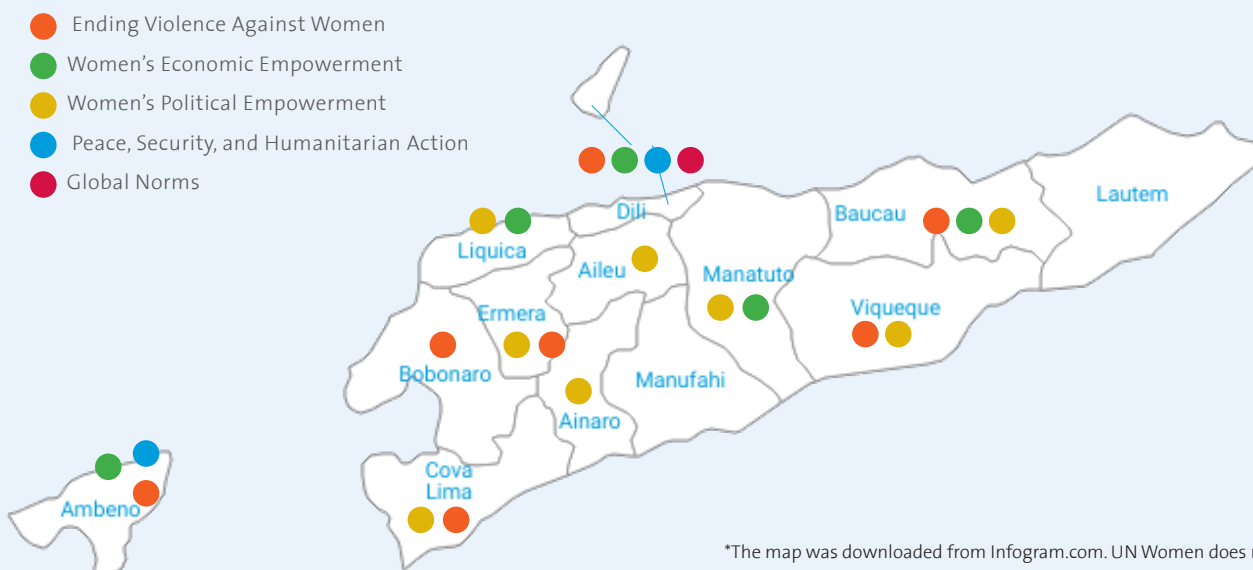
²⁶ LGBTQIA+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people. The plus sign represents people with diverse SOGIESC who identify using other terms or none. UN Women uses both ‘LGBTQIA+’ and ‘diverse SOGIESC’ where appropriate in global contexts, while respecting their distinctions. We note that neither term is universally applicable nor reflects the full diversity of sexual and gender formations, practices and identities that exist, that terms and their usage are constantly evolving, and that SOGIESC applies to all people. In practice, various culturally, linguistically and context-specific terms may be used, where appropriate.

FIGURE 2: Country Portfolio Evaluation overview of data collected



Source: developed by the evaluation team

FIGURE 3: Geographic coverage*



*The map was downloaded from Infogram.com. UN Women does not endorse the borders indicated, this is for illustrative purposes only.



Photo: ©UN Women/Guilherme Valle

FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

Is UN Women's thematic focus and implementation strategy the most relevant and coherent for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Timor-Leste considering its added value vis-à-vis other development and coordination actors and its response to challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

FINDING 1

During its long history in Timor-Leste, the Country Office has established trusting relationships with key government line ministries and CSOs, which has ensured the work is relevant; driven by these partnerships; and aligned with national and international priorities for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Moving forward, more systematic engagement with civil society will ensure continued relevance and will build on UN Women's added value within the UN system.

Thanks to UN Women's long-term presence²⁷ during critical moments of the country's independence and nation-building process, key relationships and trust between the women's machinery, women's rights organizations and the Country Office have been built through sustained support and collaboration. The Country Office has provided technical support, convening power and advocacy that has helped to establish laws, policies and frameworks that advance gender equality and women's empowerment. This included the Country Office's support in drafting the Constitution of Timor-Leste, which enshrined equal rights between men and women. Figure 4 highlights key advancements that the Country Office has contributed towards through its support to the Government of Timor-Leste since 2010.

During the current Strategic Note period, the Country Office supported the key gender machinery – Secretary of State for Equality – by providing capacity-building to monitor and report on national and international commitments; and provided technical support on development and advocacy for the adoption of key national action plans for advancing gender equality in line with international commitments. The Country Office's financing of a consultant placed directly in the office of the Secretary of State for Equality, has proven to be a strategic way to ensure direct and relevant support throughout the partnership.

Since the establishment of a Secretary of State for Equality, the Country Office has consistently supported preparations for reporting obligations on key normative agreements including the Commission on the Status of Women and the submission of the State CEDAW Report, the last one occurring during this Strategic Note period in 2021.²⁸ In parallel, the Country Office supported the drafting of the UNCT confidential report and Oxfam Timor-Leste to submit the civil society Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee in 2022. In line with the government's long-standing commitment to integrate gender into the government's budget, the Country Office continued providing the Secretary of State for Equality with technical support and capacity-building related to gender-responsive budgeting, which stakeholders noted has been very valuable.²⁹

The partnership with the Secretary of State for Equality has been critical, and capacities have been built; however, several key partners and the CEDAW concluding observations highlight the need for further strengthening of the Secretary of State for Equality in terms of its "limited authority, budget and capacity, as well as the limited of capacity of the gender working groups in various ministries, which weaken the mandate of the Secretary of State for Equality to ensure that gender equality policies are effectively implemented and that gender is mainstreamed across all government departments."³⁰

²⁷ UNIFEM, UN Women's predecessor entity, had been in-country since 2001.

²⁸ CEDAW Concluding Observations, May, 2023; CEDAW/C/TLS/CO/4.

²⁹ Gender-responsive budgeting refers to the process of conceiving, planning, allocating and executing resources, monitoring, analysing and auditing budgets in a gender-responsive way. It involves analysis of actual government allocations and expenditure on women and girls compared to that for men and boys by integrating gender analysis into planning and budgeting processes. This can ensure the state's national and international commitments on gender equality are implemented. See the progress on gender-responsive budgeting in Timor-Leste between 2002 and 2019: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAAsia/Docs/Publications/2021/02/GRB%20book%20ENGLISH_Final.pdf

³⁰ CEDAW Concluding Observations, Para 17, May, 2023; CEDAW/C/TLS/CO/4.

FIGURE 4: Key normative agreements that the Country Office has contributed towards since 2010



Source: developed by the evaluation team

The partnership with the Ministry of Interior has also been fundamental for advancing the WPS (1325) agenda in Timor-Leste. In 2023, the ministry and UN Women established a Memorandum of Understanding outlining their commitment to working collaboratively to support implementation of the WPS agenda within the UN Women Strategic Note period.³¹ The foreword of the NAP 1325 2024–2028 thanks UN Women for its support with the previous and current NAP development and assessment processes.³²

During the Strategic Note period, the Government of Timor-Leste has been preparing for accession to ASEAN.³³ In response, the Country Office reported working closely with its key partner, the Secretary of State for Equality and the Office of the ASEAN Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Interior, and other line ministries by embedding technical support within the ministries and the national parliament; providing advisory support to enhance gender mainstreaming in all aspects of strategies and policies related to ASEAN; strengthening capacities for understanding and implementing international and regional normative frameworks related to gender equality, including the ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security; and contributing to implementation of Timor-Leste's road map for its accession to ASEAN.

With the aim of ensuring its gender equality work in Timor-Leste is responsive and represents the priorities of civil society, the Country Office has engaged with CSOs. Some stakeholders point to UN Women's ability to work with civil society as its value added. The Country Office has achieved this through two key strategies: (a) the development and monitoring of NAP processes (e.g. NAP GBV and NAP 1325); and (b) in a more project-oriented way during the design and implementation of the Country Office's work. This includes by convening multiple CSOs in designing the NAPs and through the Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Reference Group, which also engaged in limited monitoring of the work. The Country Office only had formal mechanisms to engage with civil society through the Spotlight Initiative, which integrated a strategy for engaging CSOs in the design of the programme, including CSOs representing diverse groups (i.e. persons with disabilities and LGBTIQ+). While this has resulted in civil society sitting at the table, the stakeholders consulted noted that the specific priorities or perspectives of civil society in how to implement programmes may not always be reflected. Stakeholders noted that inherent power dynamics between UN agencies and civil society persist, and identified the need for more systematic and participatory engagement which could strengthen the voice of civil society in the design of UN Women's programming efforts in the future.

³¹ The Country Office updated the evaluation team that a new Partner Agreement was signed in July 2024 to strengthen the collaboration with the Ministry of Interior to ensure UN Women's technical support in capacity development for implementation, M&R of the NAP 1325, enhancing the Ministry of Interior's institutional capacity to lead and coordinate NAP implementation with line ministries and carry out its roles under NAP 1325.

³² The Government of Timor-Leste, National Action Plan United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2024-2028; https://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/tl-c636-vi-final-nap1325-020224_english-s.pdf

³³ ASEAN, [ASEAN Leaders statement on the application of Timor-Leste for ASEAN Membership](#), 2022

FINDING 2

The overall focus of the Strategic Note has been relevant in the context of Timor-Leste, with an emphasis on Women, Peace and Security and Ending Violence Against Women, and growing emphasis on Women’s Economic Empowerment. To maintain credibility and relevance, it will be necessary to translate normative progress into sustainable results for women and girls in all their diversity while expanding into emerging priority areas for Timor-Leste.

BOX 2.

Alignment of national priorities with the Strategic Note 2021–2025

- The Government of Timor-Leste’s National Strategic Plan Development and SDG Agenda 2030 are the key frameworks guiding overall development in the country. Both recognize gender equality and the empowerment of women as key priorities for the country’s development agenda.
- Ending violence against women has continued to be a priority of the Government of Timor-Leste due to the high reported rates of violence and need for strengthening prevention and response services.
- Peace building also remains a key national priority, as the Minister of Interior stated, “there is continuing criticality of NAP 1325 in implementing a multi-stakeholder approach towards inclusive peace processes.” NAP 1325 identifies the “deep-seated trauma” that persists in the country leading to norms that encourage conflict and violence at familial and community levels, justifying the need to renew NAP 1325 as a means for deepening efforts to ensure women’s participation in peace building processes.
- The Government of Timor-Leste’s five-year plan – the Maubisse Declaration – focused on Women’s Economic Empowerment, specifically empowering rural women through access to finance, local industries, tourism, agriculture and fishing.

Source: Evaluation team based on UN Women reporting 2021–2023

Overall, stakeholders³⁴ agreed that the Country Office’s key areas of work are relevant and aligned with national priorities (see Box 2). The Country Office has emphasized supporting normative gains in Timor-Leste, which is a means to build an enabling environment for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. For example, during the current Strategic Note, the Country Office has worked closely with the Secretary of State for Equality and the Ministry of Interior through direct funding and technical support on monitoring, and the development of the new NAPs GBV and 1325. The Country Office also facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues between ministries and CSOs at both national and subnational levels. The relevance of these efforts is demonstrated by the co-financing of the human anti-trafficking efforts by the Ministry of Interior and UN Women.

Stakeholders across stakeholder types raised concerns about the lack of understanding about how normative gains have been translated into results for women and girls. During the current Strategic Note period, the Country Office expanded efforts to more districts in Timor-Leste (see Findings 6 and 8).

However, stakeholders and evaluators raised concerns about the sustainability of efforts at community level. Efforts linked with gender-responsive budgeting are tracking the allocation of budgets, but stakeholders noted a lack of understanding about how budgets are being utilized and what results these investments are realizing, which would be useful for advocacy. Therefore, sometimes key ministries are challenged on why they should continue to increase budgets for gender.

Some stakeholders noted that although the Country Office’s training and awareness-raising activities at community levels is an important step and relevant to work under the Strategic Note, social norms change requires long-term commitment. Fortunately, in the WPS area, there are funds to continue deepening the work for the foreseeable future.³⁵ However, in terms of EVAW, at the time of writing this evaluation report, there was still a lack of clarity on how the Country Office will continue these efforts past the closure of the large T4E programme. Therefore, there will be a need to pivot the EVAWG approach without losing the gains made through large investments (including the Spotlight Initiative). The Country Office may consider mainstreaming its EVAW work under other thematic areas to ensure progress.

³⁴ Across stakeholder types consulted in interviews and the Gender Theme Group survey.

³⁵ Funding from Japan was secured in late 2024.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Tropical Cyclone Seroja (2021) also brought to light the importance of being prepared for responding to crises from a gender lens (see Finding 3). The Country Office and stakeholders see opportunities for building capacities and programming related to gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action and resilience to climate change given the needs and normative mandate provided by NAP 1325 and donor interests.

With respect to WEE, the Country Office focused primarily on engagement of (mainly female) Tais weavers, by linking these efforts with the Maubisse Declaration. However, stakeholders identified opportunities to broaden the scope of WEE efforts to ensure a more holistic approach; linked with Timor-Leste's overall economic profile as a Least Developed Country with a weak private sector and the country's priorities, as outlined in the Maubisse Declaration; and which facilitates linkages between the Country Office's thematic areas.

FINDING 3

The Country Office demonstrated responsiveness in the face of key challenges, including COVID-19 and the 2021 flood response, by working with partners to contribute to coordination, pivoting programming and advocacy to strengthen the gender-responsiveness of the work.

Timor-Leste experienced significant challenges in 2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the April 2021 floods, yet the Country Office was able to demonstrate its responsiveness to these crises despite not having specific humanitarian expertise at country level. Stakeholders consulted noted that the Country Office's contributions to coordination efforts and its brief on COVID-19 were helpful for their own advocacy efforts.

Tropical Cyclone Seroja brought extremely heavy rainfall to Timor-Leste on 5 April 2021.³⁶ The Government of Timor-Leste, through the Secretariat of State for Civil Protection together with other ministries, led the humanitarian response and requested UNCT support. UN Women and UNICEF jointly co-chaired the Gender and Protection Sector, and the Country Office with Regional Office support provided key inputs to ensure gender mainstreaming in response efforts. The Country Office contributed to several key analyses and reports, drawing on the evidence shared through its analysis of

the COVID-19 pandemic about its effects on women in Timor-Leste.³⁷ The Country Office reported, and stakeholders confirmed that the sector meetings provided a platform to connect key actors and promote information and knowledge-sharing, and international standards on child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response in humanitarian actions. Through the joint Spotlight Initiative, the Country Office was able to contribute to advocacy and support for continued gender-based violence services. The Country Office's contributions also included the government-led Post Disaster Needs Assessment and the joint UNFPA, UN Women, UNICEF and Resident Coordinator's Office Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Report on Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection. Subsequently, through the Gender and Protection Working Group, the Country Office contributed to a gender-responsive preparedness plan in 2022 and, in collaboration with the Civil Protection Authority of the Ministry of Interior, led gender-responsive disaster risk reduction training for frontline responders.³⁸

³⁶ Estimated at 400 per cent the normal average rainfall, country-wide affecting approximately 151,835 people and displacing 14,181 persons, with 80 per cent of affected households in Dili; Relief Web, Timor-Leste Red Cross, 7 Jan, 2022; accessible at: [CVTL 2021 Flood Response \(7 Jan 2022\) - Timor-Leste | ReliefWeb](#)

³⁷ UN Women, Timor-Leste, In Brief: Women's Needs and Gender Equality in Timor-Leste's COVID-19 Response, 2020; [In Brief: Women's Needs and Gender Equality in Timor-Leste's COVID-19 Response | UN Women – Asia-Pacific](#)

³⁸ UN Women, February 2023, [Making sure disaster responses meet women's rights in Timor-Leste | UN Women – Asia-Pacific](#)

COHERENCE

To what extent is UN Women leveraging its coordination mandate to strategically position itself and contribute to a more gender-responsive approach by the UNCT and other development actors to catalyse transformative change for women and girls and achieve gender equality in Timor-Leste?

FINDING 4

UN Women has made important contributions to enhancing coordination for gender equality and the empowerment of women in Timor-Leste through co-leadership of key UN system coordination mechanisms, joint programmes and external coordination mechanisms. However, during the Strategic Note period, joint programme coordination took precedence over broader strategizing and UNCT mechanisms have not been sufficiently leveraged.

UN Women plays a leading role in multiple coordination mechanisms on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Timor-Leste. Within the UNCT, the Gender Theme Group is co-chaired by UN Women and UNFPA to promote, facilitate and support collective action by the UNCT to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

During the Strategic Note period, only three Gender Theme Group meetings took place in 2023; and the first meeting in 2024 took place after the evaluation team's visit in June. Overall evaluation evidence identified that the Gender Theme Group needed to be revitalized with a new strategy. Some stakeholders consulted explained that joint programme coordination may have taken precedence over the Gender Theme Group's efforts during the Strategic Note period. The evaluation team conducted a joint UN Women and UNFPA survey of Gender Theme Group members for their respective CPEs (see Annex 8), which highlighted that some Gender Theme Group members perceive UN Women and UNFPA as strengthening coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women effectively. However, across the survey results, several respondents indicated "not sure", which is concerning and may be related to the limited number of meetings that have taken place over the past few years. This may indicate the need to clarify the work of each agency and the Gender Theme Group.

The survey of Country Office personnel suggested that to strengthen the Country Office's role in coordination, additional human resources are needed and a greater focus on inter-agency collaboration to ensure more cohesive and integrated efforts. Additionally, involving national staff more extensively in coordination processes was suggested as crucial to leverage local knowledge and ensure more contextually relevant support.

Overall, the Gender Theme Group's support to normative progress specific to the Universal Periodic Review and CEDAW, and support for awareness-raising on international and national normative commitments had the most positive ratings.³⁹ The Gender Theme Group's support to the UNCT gender scorecard was also rated highly; however, there is uncertainty over accountability related to the scorecard, which is an area that should be followed up on. Stakeholders consulted also raised concerns that some agencies view the scorecard as a

BOX 3.

Timor-Leste Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework (OEEF) sample of indicator progress in relation to coordination efforts

STRATEGIC PLAN OEEF INDICATOR	REPORTED PROGRESS 2023
SP_D_o.7.b : Number of UN system coordination mechanisms in which UN Women is actively engaged that drive progress on gender mainstreaming mandates and commitments at global, regional and country levels.	The Country Office reported being actively engaged in four coordination groups.
SP_D_o.7.f Percentage of UN entities that track and report on allocations and/or expenditures on gender equality using gender equality markers and are allocating substantial resources to programmes with gender equality as their principal objective (derived from QCPR indicator 1.4.19).	The Country Office reported that the UNCT uses the gender equality markers to track allocations.

Source: developed by the evaluation team

³⁹ N=4/7 (57 per cent) of respondents rated Gender Theme Group support or advocacy related to the Universal Periodic Review and CEDAW processes as "Very Effective."

“tick the box” exercise, which has not been sufficiently leveraged in a strategic manner to mobilize change in Timor-Leste.

Three areas of Gender Theme Group support received lower ratings from survey respondents: encouraging discussions and consultations on priority topics; providing capacity-building and training activities; and guiding and reviewing joint workplans on an annual basis. Feedback on UN Women and UNFPA’s coordination role also revealed a mixed response, with some respondents indicating possible duplication of work between the two agencies.

Survey respondents highlighted the following to improve the Gender Theme Group’s support for coordination efforts: (a) sharing more information in advance about any gender-related workplan and action plans ahead of Gender Theme Group meetings, including achievements; (b) regularly following up with Gender Theme Group members and organizing regular meetings; and (c) maintaining communication between agencies and ensuring programme implementation is well communicated. The agencies consulted and the survey identified the need to ensure the Gender Theme Group is leveraged beyond joint work planning and completion of the gender scorecard to ensure strategic prioritization of gender equality and the empowerment of women policy issues, and coordinated and sustained engagement with partners. Some suggested the need for a higher level of seniority in the Gender Theme Group, which may help to ensure discussions are held at a more strategic level and decisions can be made in a timely manner.

With the Secretary of State for Equality, the Country Office also co-chaired the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Coordination Group – a multi-stakeholder coordination group involving bilateral, multilateral development partners and UN agencies – which serves as a forum for development partners working to support advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Timor-Leste. During the current Strategic Note period, the group also supported discussions on Timor-Leste’s integration into the ASEAN region.

The Country Office conducted a recent survey (May–June 2024) of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Coordination Group members. Therefore, to avoid burdening members, the evaluation team did not conduct another survey. The survey conducted by the Country Office revealed that 4/10 respondents had limited understanding of UN Women’s work. This indicates that the Country Office should enhance its communication efforts. The same survey identified that the area that would most enhance development partners work is “access to gender data and research” (N=6/10 respondents) and more “regular national gender policy updates” (N=7/10). Consultations with key partners confirmed this and suggested the need for the Country Office to consolidate efforts across partners on gender equality and the empowerment of women more proactively and enhance knowledge-sharing on key priorities through regular meetings, preparing policy briefs and being the “go-to” knowledge base/resource for gender equality in Timor-Leste. The Country Office’s leadership of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Coordination Group is a key mechanism and should continue to be leveraged for high-level strategy, common advocacy messaging and knowledge-sharing.

The Country Office also engages in other coordination mechanisms, including co-chairing the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Task Force with the Resident Coordinator’s Office, co-chairing the Governance Results Group with UNDP and co-chairing the Gender and Protection Working Group with UNICEF.

Overall feedback from stakeholders familiar with UNCT coordination and based on a joint analysis session between evaluation teams, identified that overall UNCT coordination has been dormant and weak in Timor-Leste due to a high sense of competition between agencies resulting in a tense environment, and a lack of transparency and trust.⁴⁰ Stakeholders see opportunities for the new UNSDCF to mobilize agencies and act as a catalyst to move forward as one UN.

⁴⁰ Draft UNSDCF evaluation, UNFPA CPE, UNICEF CPE team’s joint analysis session July and September 2024.

FINDING 5

The Country Office's leadership of joint programmes in the EVAWG area has enhanced UN system coherence on gender equality and the empowerment of women–EVAWG (Spotlight + T4E). Work is still needed to ensure the added value of a joint approach is fully realized.

Through joint programmes, the Country Office has demonstrated its value in inter-agency coordination, engaging in five of nine joint programmes in 2023 and taking on a leadership role as Technical Coherence Lead under the EU–UN Spotlight Initiative (2020–2023) and as Administrative Agent and Convening Agent for the Joint UN KOICA Gender-Based Violence Project (2020–2024). The stakeholders consulted noted that UN Women's leadership of these joint programmes catalysed coordination of UN system efforts on EVAWG during the Strategic Note period due to intensive joint work planning and coordination platforms with government and civil society. The Country Office personnel survey identified that joint UN programmes on gender and accountability on gender were perceived as particularly effective, with most respondents (61.5 per cent; N=8/13) rating it as "very effective" or "somewhat effective." Nevertheless, the joint case study on the Spotlight Initiative in Timor-Leste identified key challenges to realizing the added value of a joint approach across the five Responsible UN Organizations. The case study identified that the five organizations had succeeded in working to their strengths, but activities were mostly implemented in silos. While there are positive examples of coordinated work, including in relationships with the government and exchange of expertise on gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Responsible UN Organizations' parallel administrative systems (per the Spotlight Initiative requirements) meant that ministries and CSO partners had to deal with multiple partnership agreements simultaneously, which was a burden.

Moreover, the effectiveness of a joint approach to EVAWG was not fully optimized in all outcome areas, such as the prevention area where the Spotlight Initiative case study identified that opportunities for layering interventions in the same communities were lost due to a focus on reducing duplication between the Responsible UN Organizations and partners. Nevertheless, as a high-profile multi-stakeholder programme, the Spotlight Initiative succeeded in raising awareness and the profile of VAWG and strategies for ending gender-based violence considerably. Given that the Spotlight Initiative has ended and T4E is ending in 2024, stakeholders suggested that the Responsible UN Organizations should strategize about how to maintain the momentum of inter-agency coordination.

BOX. 4

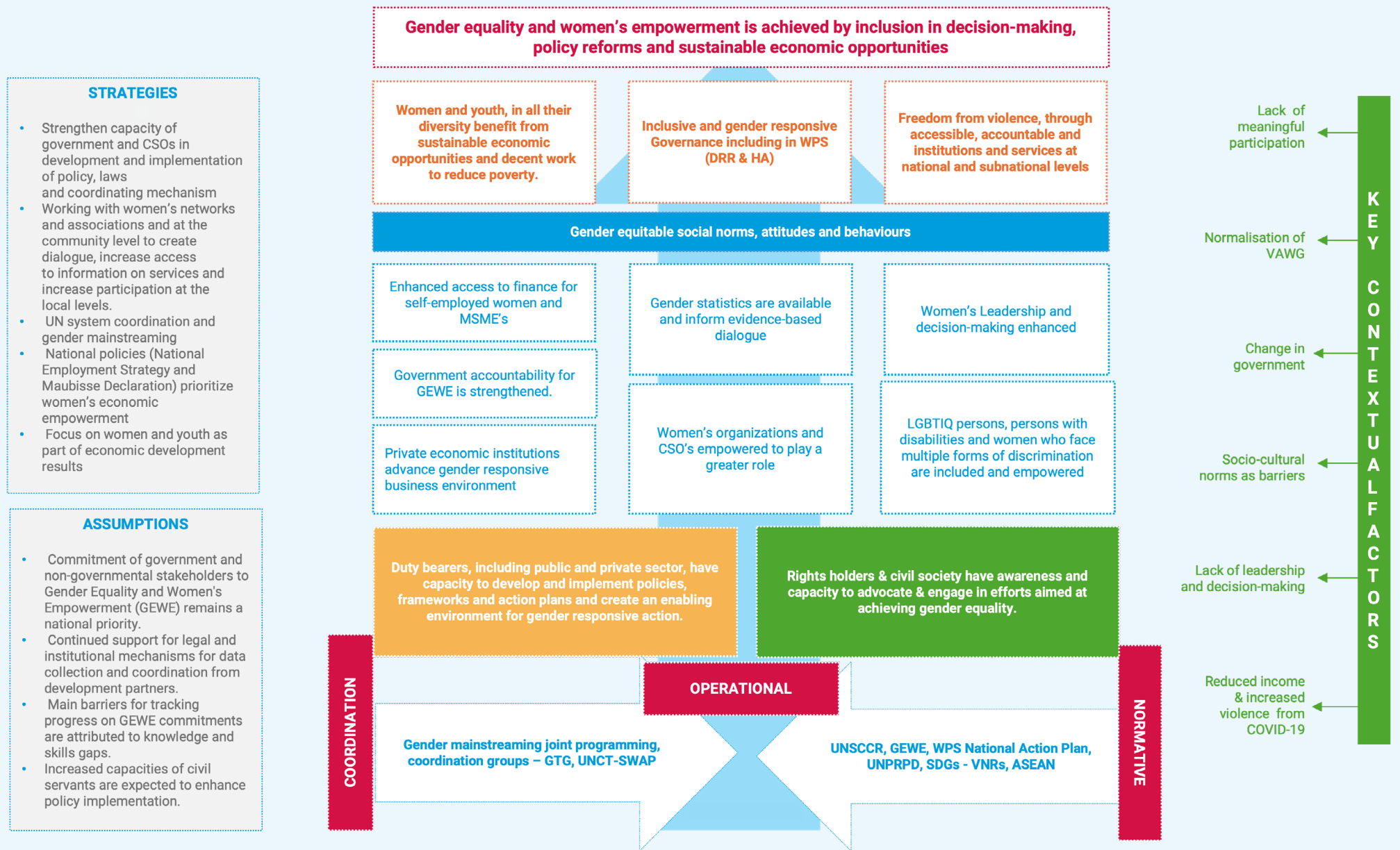
Joint UN Women UNFPA Spotlight Initiative Timor-Leste Case study assessment on overall contributions to EVAWG:

The Spotlight Initiative in Timor-Leste, was part of a global programme launched in 2017 in 25 countries across 5 regions, with approximately US\$ 500 million funded by the EU. The Spotlight Initiative in Timor-Leste lasted from 2019 to 2023 in a partnership between the Government of Timor-Leste, the UN and civil society to end all forms of violence against women and girls. A joint case study of the Spotlight Initiative was undertaken as an integral part of the concurrent Country Programme Evaluations of two of the implementing Responsible UN Organizations: UNFPA and UN Women (the others could not participate). Key findings include:

- The Spotlight Initiative led to increased awareness of and raised the profile of VAWG and approaches to EVAWG in Timor-Leste.
- The programme contributed to clear achievements, albeit with some limitations, under Outcome 1 (Laws and Policies) Outcome 2 (Strengthening Institutions) and Outcome 4 (Quality Services).
- Progress was made in the provision of services including safe spaces and Victim Protection Units to gender-based violence survivors; strengthening of the referral network for responding to cases; and supporting the legal process.
- Key steps have been taken under Outcome 5 (Data) but have not yet added up to a coherent and reliable system for quality data production on gender-based violence.
- Achievements under Outcome 3 (Prevention) are less clear, and behaviour change in particular is widely seen as the weaker link in programme outcomes. In the absence of up-to-date outcome-level data on the prevalence of violence against women and girls, it is challenging to counter these concerns. Concentration of efforts would have allowed for deeper engagement with communities creating a more optimal environment for social norm change and identification of what works for preventing and responding to VAWG.
- Leave no one behind: The programme created important spaces for diversity through better inclusion of marginalized groups in programme implementation and in advocacy and advisory roles – including LGBTIQ+ groups and organizations representing people with disabilities.
- Government leadership will support the sustainability of achievements. However, at community levels, it is less clear how prevention/social norms change activities can be continued in order to consolidate and expand whatever inroads have been made into shifting social norms.

Source: developed by the evaluation team

FIGURE 5: Reconstructed theory of change: UN Women Timor-Leste



Source: developed by the evaluation team

EFFECTIVENESS

To what extent have UN Women's contributions to outcome-level progress across its integrated mandate advanced gender equality and the empowerment of women in Timor-Leste, including through the UN system and the Timor-Leste UNSDCF 2021–2025 outcomes?

The reconstructed theory of change shown in Figure 5 was developed during the evaluation's inception phase. Triangulation of data (field data collection and desk review) provided evidence that this theory of change was an accurate reflection of the pathways of change envisioned by the Country Office.

It is important to recognize and consider how key external factors may affect the progress of UN Women and its partners' efforts. Examples of enabling and constraining factors for contributions to results are outlined in Box 5.

BOX 5.

Country-specific enabling factors and constraining factors affecting achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Timor-Leste

THEMATIC AREA	ENABLING FACTORS	CONSTRAINING FACTORS
WPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Interior strong ownership and leadership. Positive buy-in from justice actors such as the national police, community mediators and community leaders. Security Council 1325, CEDAW and related international norms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff turnover, especially in government institutions. Parallel informal justice system based on tradition/custom which limits the use of national alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
EVAW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from influential stakeholders such as church leaders. 2022 was the year of Presidential Elections, resulting in political attention to issues of gender-based violence. CEDAW and related international norms. Donor support and inter-agency collaboration on joint programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patriarchal norms that normalize violence within the home and deter reporting. Religious beliefs that deter women from seeking divorce even in situations of violence. Traditional practices of the women's family paying a bride price for marriage. Informal justice systems that run in parallel to formal justice. Changes in political structure and political parties.
WEE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong CSO ownership and leadership in advocating for Tais weaving preservation. CEDAW and related international norms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited private sector and domestic market with narrow economic structure, and growth is largely reliant on government spending. Access to finance. Impact of family care responsibilities.

Source: developed by the evaluation team

FINDING 6

UN Women has made key contributions to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in Timor-Leste across its triple mandate, with progress concentrated at the normative level. Country Office support to normative processes and their implementation at national level has contributed to key frameworks/action plans and their institutionalization within government, including through gender-responsive budgeting. This has provided an enabling environment for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the country.

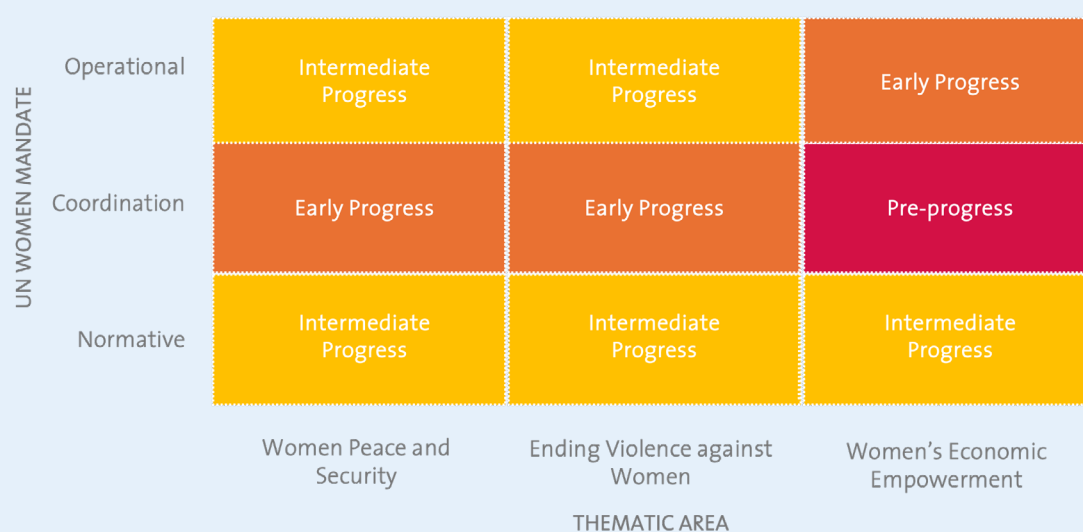
The evaluation assessed progress across UN Women’s triple mandate in Timor-Leste, using the Building Blocks Framework. The framework aligns the Strategic Note’s existing theory of change against UN Women’s integrated mandate and identifies the enabling factors or building blocks of change. Figure 6 presents the scale for measuring progress using this framework.⁴¹ The subsequent findings provide further details on this assessment.

The evaluation identified that most progress was made in the normative sphere across all thematic areas. Overall, technical support at the normative level was the most visible and well established in terms of support to the Secretary of State for Equality and the Ministry of Interior. The Country Office has supported the development of strategic policies and guidelines pertinent to the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment in Timor-Leste. Placement of consultants within government offices, technical advice and advocacy have been key, long-standing Country Office strategies.

Programmatic (operational) implementation saw intermediate progress in EVAWG and WPS, while WEE is at an early stage of progress. At subnational level, the Country Office has worked with local government, civil society,

faith-based organizations, schools and others. At community and individual level, seeds have been planted for change: awareness has been raised across the country, yet the evaluation evidence pointed to risks that the sustainability of these efforts is limited without concrete long-term strategies. Overall, Country Office efforts at this level were spread thinly (i.e. across multiple activities, target groups and/or geographic areas) and time frames for activities were too short for meaningful engagement or change. For example, in a sample of 40 training activities that the evaluation team analysed, most consisted of 1–3 days’ training and were delivered as one-off training/workshops. The evaluation consulted a sample of participants which revealed that while they appreciated the training and acknowledged an increase in their knowledge, they stated they still find it difficult to fully apply or share the knowledge learned with a wider audience. A systematic capacity-building approach which includes refresher training, mentoring/coaching, reflection and knowledge-sharing needs to be embedded in the Country Office’s strategy to ensure that the new knowledge and skills gained by participants are retained and applied to create transformative change beyond the individual level.

FIGURE 6: Heat Map: progress on UN Women SN Impact Areas across UN Women’s triple mandate



⁴¹ The scale for measuring progress using the Building Block Framework provides a structured approach to assess success across various enabling building blocks. It outlines four levels of progress: Level 0 (Pre-Progress), where changes are ad hoc and short-term; Level 1 (Early Progress), which sees piecemeal and opportunistic changes to individual blocks; Level 2 (Intermediate Progress), where root causes are systematically addressed to build a conducive environment; and Level 3 (Advanced Progress), which reflects deep-seated institutional change supporting behavioral transformations and shifts in social norms.

During the Strategic Note period, the Country Office initiated several models under EAWG and WEE areas, which were adapted to the Timor-Leste context, e.g. Connect with Respect (see Figure 9) and Safe Spaces – including markets, universities and weavers networks, etc.. Due to the challenges raised above with respect to efforts being spread too thinly and the challenging context for implementation, there is not yet enough evidence regarding the effectiveness of these models. A systematic evaluation of these models which looks at fidelity and impact was not embedded in programme design. While it is important to ensure the sustainability of these efforts through adoption by the government or the relevant institution, these models need to be deepened and systematically tested

prior to scale-up to ensure that the model is fit for the Timor-Leste context and able to deliver the results as expected.

The evaluation identified several risks that were outside the Country Office's control but have a bearing on the effectiveness of the office's efforts and the sustainability of results (see Box 5). These included: social norms that conflict with legal frameworks; informal justice systems that run in parallel to formal justice; changing government personnel and staff turnover that usually follows a change in government. There is a need to strengthen Country Office capacities in planning for and mitigating these risks as a vital part of programming.

FINDING 7

The Country Office has made contributions across the UNSDCF outcomes with most results concentrated under Outcome 5 related to Women, Peace and Security and Ending Violence Against Women. More substantive progress was made at national level through the adoption of key national action plans and at the individual level through awareness raising.

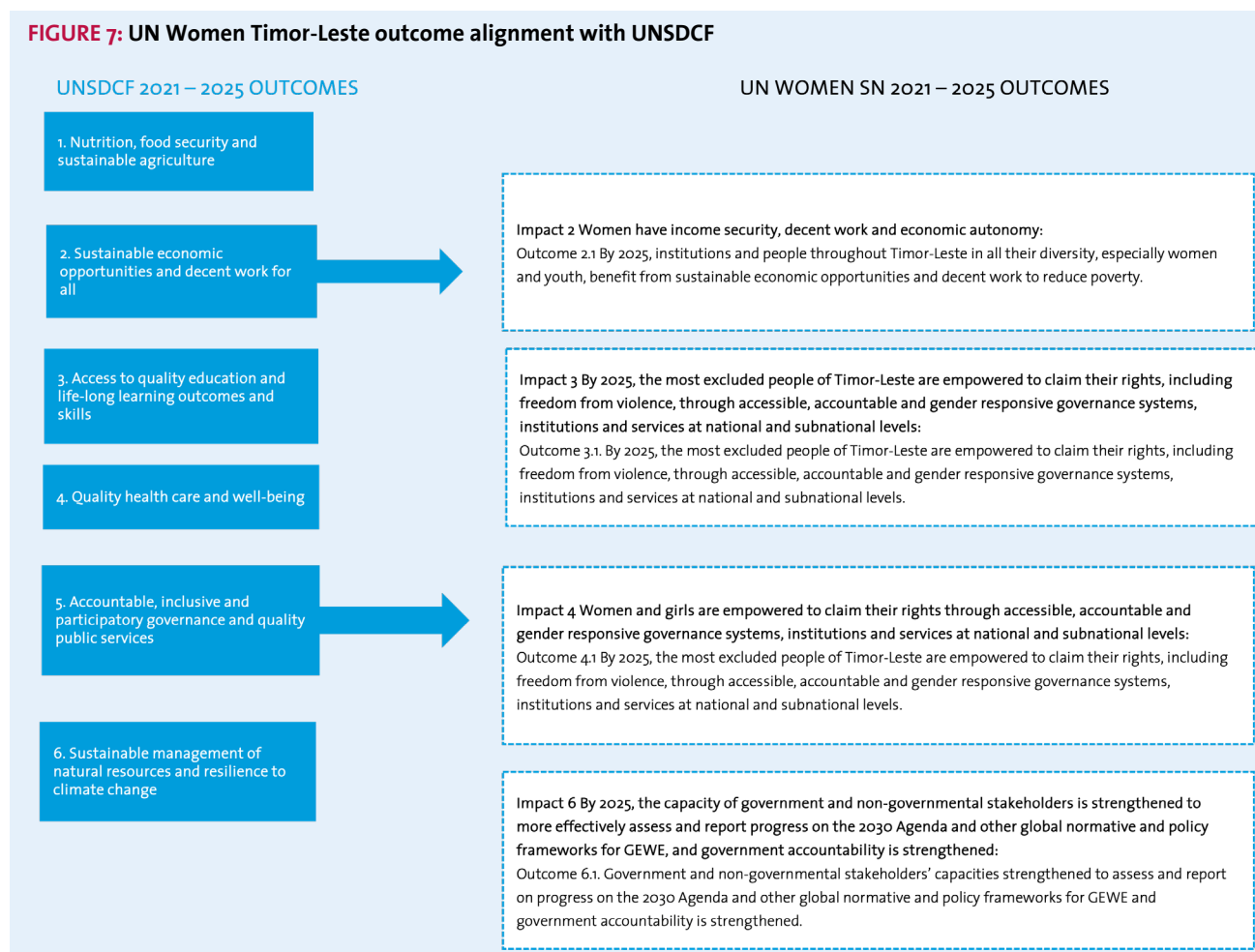
In line with UN Women corporate guidance, the Country Office has aligned the Strategic Note 2021–2025 outcomes with the Timor-Leste UNSDCF Outcomes, particularly Outcome 2: Sustainable economic opportunities and decent work for all; and Outcome 5: Accountable, inclusive and participatory governance, and quality public services. The evaluation team observed challenges for the Country Office in its ability to report against outcome-level progress given the reliance on national statistics. It should be noted that even when the Country Office reported progress, it was often not aligned with the meaning of the indicator, as it is only reporting on UN Women's specific contribution and not capturing national-level progress. Nevertheless, the following contributions towards outcome-level progress (against the UNSDCF/Strategic Plan) have been validated through the evaluation process.

The Country Office's WEE interventions contributed to UNSDCF Outcome 2, particularly UNSDCF Outcome Indicators 2b. and SDG Indicator 8.5.1 (average monthly earnings of female and male employees, by age group). At the normative level, the Country Office reported contributions in the development and implementation of the second Maubisse Declaration.

The Country Office also reported, and the evaluation team validated, generating a total income of US\$ 33,432.50, benefitting some groups of women weavers who are members of the Tais weavers network, within the first five months of opening a Tais weavers shop in Dili in 2023 (See Finding 11).

Through WPS and EAWG interventions, the Country Office contributed to UNSDCF Outcome 5. At the normative level, the adoption of NAP WPS and NAP GBV directly contributes towards UN Women Strategic Plan outcome indicators regarding the number of countries and/or other actors with a comprehensive and coordinated violence against women prevention strategy, and the number of adopted NAPs on WPS with monitoring indicators.

However, UNSDCF indicators are linked with progress against the SDGs, which are more difficult to measure given they are based on national statistics which are not regularly updated. For example, UNSDCF Indicator 5.c (SDG Indicator 5.2.1) proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the previous 12 months, has not been updated since 2018; therefore, there has been no reported change despite the huge investment in EAWG initiatives. UNSDCF Indicator 5.2.1 (SDG Indicator 5.c.1) tracks whether Timor-Leste has systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment, and the Country Office has reported, and the evaluation team validated, progress through its contributions to facilitating the uptake of gender-responsive budgeting.

FIGURE 7: UN Women Timor-Leste outcome alignment with UNSDCF

Source: developed by the evaluation team

The Country Office has reported progress against UNSDCF Indicator 5.1.1 (SDG Indicator 16.3.1) related to the proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms. In 2023, the Country Office reported that according to the data shared by the National Directorate of Community Conflict Prevention, as of 31 December 2023, 4 of 174 cases of disputes identified for mediation (among other types of disputes, e.g. martial art group disputes, disputes over natural resources) were related to sexual violence (2.3 per cent) and that there was no change in the progress. Given the very low number of reported cases when compared to the high number of women and girls aged 15–49

reporting being subjected to physical or sexual violence (28 per cent⁴²) in the previous year, this indicates that women are not reporting the violence they experienced.

At the individual level, through its EAWG interventions, the Country Office has reached out to various stakeholders: women, students, youths, community leaders, church members, LGBTQIA+ and people with disabilities to raise awareness of gender equality and the empowerment of women, contributing to UNSDCF Indicator 5.4.1 (percentage of population who think it is justifiable for a man to subject his wife/intimate partner to violence, by age and sex) (See Finding 10 for WPS and Finding 9 for EAWG).

⁴² UN Women Data Hub, based on 2018 official statistics: <https://data.unwomen.org/country/timor-leste>

FINDING 8

Progress on ending violence against women and girls has been made at the national level thanks to two large joint programmes, and contributions to institutional-level change occurred through gender-responsive budgeting. Work at community level was heavy on awareness raising and progress was made at the output level, targeting various geographical areas and groups, including youth, children, teachers, parents, media and the church community. However, data is lacking to enable an assessment of the extent to which Country Office efforts led to outcome-level changes for women and girls.

BOX 6:

Sample of UN Women reported output results with respect to ending violence against women-related efforts:*

- 1,571 (958 women and 559 men) attended the [Women's Safety Audit Walk Report](#) and seminars including 276 government officials (143 women and 133 men) from the Ministry of Public Works Baucau, Dili, Covalima Municipal Authorities and REAOA, which exemplifies the organization's substantial contribution.
- 73 per cent increase in the allocation for gender-responsive budgeting in Covalima municipality, with the budget rising from US\$ 20,296 in 2023 to US\$ 35,140 for 2024.
- The Ministry of Public Works and Baucau Municipal Authority increased the allocation of gender-responsive budgeting for the 2023 budget. The Ministry allocated US\$ 40,000 compared to US\$ 0 budget for the 2022 budget year and the Baucau Municipal Authority allocated US\$ 8,000 compared to US\$ 3,000.
- The Spotlight Initiative reported 23,683 women and girls (345 persons with disability and 466 members of the LGBTI community) had knowledge of essential gender-based violence services and 1,750 had knowledge of recovery services.
- 439 individuals (257 women, 170 men and 12 LGBTIQ+ members) were empowered to speak out against violence through Voice Against Violence.
- 143 journalism students and journalists (including 85 women and 58 men) are equipped with the skills to report on gender-related issues responsibly.
- 1,317 individuals across all nine faculties at National University of Timor-Leste attended learning sessions on gender-based violence and sexual harassment prevention.
- In 2023, 40 clients accessed counselling service at the National University of Timor-Leste, including 10 sexual harassment and gender-based violence-related cases. This marked a substantial increase in accessibility compared to only two cases recorded in 2022, indicating a positive impact on service uptake.

*Source: UN Women Annual Reports 2021–2023, downloaded from UN Women RMS

The Country Office's EVAWG work is aligned with key UN Women Strategic Plan (2022–2025) actions related to EAWG. In particular, the Country Office has made notable progress pertinent to the UN Women Strategic Plan output indicators, including: (a) Number of countries with a process to design and implement violence against women prevention strategies, or with prevention interventions based on global norms and standards; and (b) Number of countries supported to revise, develop or implement guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures to improve EAWG services in line with the global Essential Services Package. The Country Office implemented EAWG efforts primarily through the joint Spotlight Initiative and joint T4E programmes.

At the normative level, the Country Office has supported the design and implementation of NAP GBV and strengthened advocacy for gender-responsive budgeting under the EAWG area of work. The Country Office reported that advocacy for gender-responsive budgeting contributed to reversing a downward trend seen between 2019 and 2020 in budget allocation to gender equality initiatives: the budget dropped from 0.6 per cent of the overall budget (US\$ 10.4 million) to 0.1 per cent (US\$ 1.4 million) in 2020. By 2023, budget allocation to gender equality and social inclusion had increased to US\$ 203.78 million in 2022 and US\$ 259 million in 2023, or 8.2 per cent of the overall budget. In this process, 18 sub-programmes included the Promotion of Gender Equality as a main aim.⁴³

⁴³ 2023 Annual Report; 2021 Annual Report; Spotlight Initiative Compendium of Innovative and Good Practices and Lessons Learned 2024.

However, key stakeholders informed the evaluation team, and the joint Spotlight Initiative Timor-Leste case study report noted that although there has been an overall rise in allocations to gender equality, caution may be needed when interpreting these budget allocations due to the lack of clarity/precise details about the rise in gender budget allocation.⁴⁴ The case study found that, according to the State Budget 2022, a new Programme Budget for the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Programme was approved for approximately US\$ 233 million. Under this, US\$ 58 million of the GESI programme is provision for social security (contributory and non-contributory). Approximately US\$ 5 million of the total GESI budget was also allocated from the Infrastructure Fund.⁴⁵

In support of its coordination mandate, the Country Office strengthened the women's movement through the Spotlight Initiative's mobilization of national actors. In partnership with Asia Justice and Rights, Asosiasaun Chega! Ba Ita and the National NGO Forum, the Country Office worked to strengthen CSO capacity in programme management and advocacy. The training focused on programme management, financial management, advocacy, strategies for women's empowerment, participatory action research, gender justice, discussion and training on how to shift gender inequitable attitudes, behaviours and beliefs, cultural transformation and organizational development. Consultations with stakeholders who participated in the training confirmed that they benefitted from the capacity-building initiatives and some organizations reported that after being coached in developing proposals they had successfully mobilized resources.

The Country Office conducted various interventions on EVAWG/gender-based violence, gender equality, women's empowerment, and LGBTIQ+ rights, targeting diverse groups across Timor-Leste (See Figure 8). While the reach of these interventions may have been high, the evaluation evidence points to lost opportunities for testing and deepening models through a more concentrated and layered approach, which is necessary for prevention-related efforts. For example, the Spotlight Initiative case study found that most respondents perceived prevention work related to change in attitudes and behaviours (which UN Women was focused on) as the weak link with respect to the initiative's contribution to EVAWG. This may be due

in part to the short duration of actual project implementation (compared to the intergenerational nature of attitude and behaviour change) and in part to missed opportunities for synergising prevention activities. For example, benefits may have been amplified by targeting the same school or community given that the UNICEF and UN Women curricula were complementary. Figure 9 explains the Connect with Respect curriculum that the Country Office implemented as part of both the Spotlight Initiative and T4E. The teachers consulted (who had taken part in the Spotlight Initiative training) noted that as a complex and new curriculum the training and support may not have been sufficient to deliver the curriculum with confidence. Awareness-raising sessions for students were delivered as an extra-curricular activity for small groups – not integrated in the regular school programme. The evaluation team's visit to the school observed that the school setting may not have been conducive for reinforcing messages learned through the curriculum given the limited access to services.

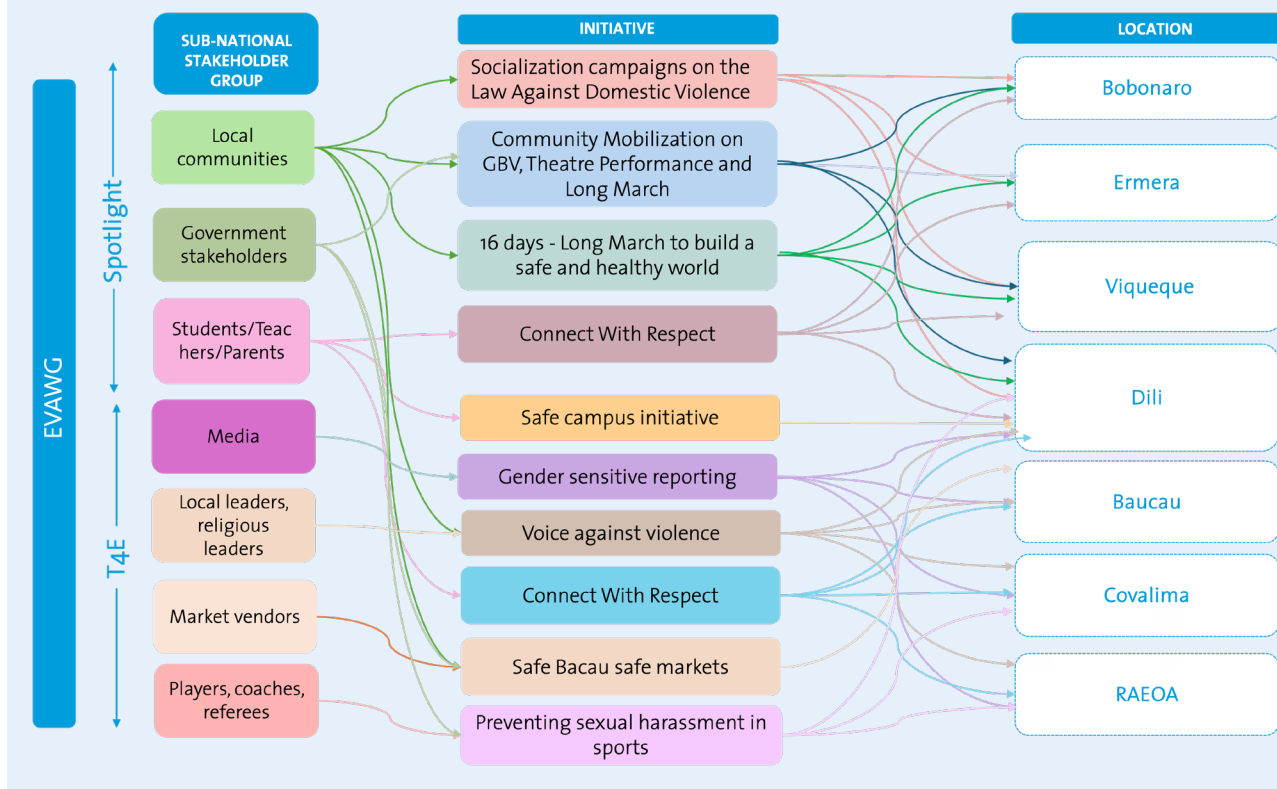
Given that the Spotlight Initiative/T4E were major expansions of EVAWG efforts, it was necessary to demonstrate a model that could be scaled depending on results. However, efforts were spread too thinly, and baseline/monitoring data was not sufficient to provide robust information on what worked and a rationale for scaling the programmes. Despite the lack of data on the effectiveness of the initiative, the Country Office reported that it is working with the government to integrate Connect with Respect into the national curriculum.

Another challenge is the broader support system for applying knowledge. The Country Office worked with faith-based organizations in Timor-Leste for prevention advocacy during the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The Country Office reported supporting a three-day gender advocacy event including a Sunday sermon addressing victims of gender-based violence and training for 100 church group members on violence prevention and response. However, participants noted that applying their knowledge requires support from community leaders. Due to the strong culture of patriarchy and lack of community support, participants often felt hesitant to interfere in gender-based violence cases because of potential backlash.

⁴⁴ Spotlight Initiative Timor-Leste – Joint UN Women and UNFPA Case Study Report, 2024

⁴⁵ The Country Office updated the evaluation team in October 2024 that the government had released an updated gender-responsive budget analysis in late 2024.

FIGURE 8. Illustration of initiatives, target groups and locations where EVAWG is implemented



Source: developed by the evaluation team

FIGURE 9: Connect with Respect Model

WHAT?

CWR is a curriculum tool developed by the Regional Offices for Asia and the Pacific of Plan International, UN Women, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and others to support prevention of school-related gender-based violence. The CWR is a school-based intervention focused on developing skills and networks to change harmful social norms, through arts and educational programmes, engaging male and female students between 11-14 years of age, their teachers, parents and the wider community.

WHO?

Between May 2022 to July 2024:

- ❑ The Together 4 Equality project implemented by Plan international in 40 pre-secondary schools across Dili, Baucau, Covalima and RAEAO.
- ❑ The Spotlight project implemented by Fundasaun Alola in 15 schools across Ermera, Viqueque and Bobonaro.

HOW

- ❑ 5 days teachers training followed by mentoring by implementing partner during delivery of sessions (however, in at least one case it was delivered in 4 days), 1 day training for parents delivered by implementing partner.
- ❑ CWR material is delivered to students as extra-curricular activity.
- ❑ Technical Working Groups established as coordination and advisory bodies and to act as referral pathways for addressing gender-based violence within communities

UN Women reported Results

Project Name	Students reached	Teachers reached	Parents reached
Together 4 Equality	923 students (499 girls and 424 boys)	113 teachers (47 women and 66 men),	848 parents (546 women and 302 men)
Spotlight	450 (225 boys; 225 girls)	30 teachers	452 parents
Total	1373 students	143 teachers	1300 parents

Source: developed by the evaluation team

Under the T4E programme, the Country Office also sought to raise awareness and action around women's safety in public spaces. This consisted of three key efforts: Safe Campus in Dili, Safe Markets in Bacau and Women's Safety Audits conducted in 24 public spaces (See Box 8). Across these initiatives, seeds for change were planted. However, as raised above, the short duration of awareness-raising efforts meant that the sustainability of results may be limited. While some efforts have been institutionalized (e.g. establishment of the Market Vendors Association), stakeholders noted that due to changes in government leadership, the sustainability of these initiatives is at risk.

BOX 7**Testing Outcome 1 (Output cluster 2: EVAWG) theory of change assumptions**

The theory of change assumed that there would be continued support for EVAWG among key government stakeholders. This has been validated by the Country Office's close relationship with the Secretary of State for Equality in terms of technical inputs and capacity-building on legislation and protocols, and with the Ministry of Education in term of piloting Connect with Respect in schools.

The theory of change also assumed the capacity of non-state actors to continue effective engagement on EVAWG. While partners have informal networks to implement projects at the grassroots level, efforts are spread too thinly across different type of interventions, stakeholders and locations. As a result, while the Country Office reached many rights holders, longer-lasting change, e.g. change in mindset and behaviour, remains to be measured

Source: developed by the evaluation team

BOX 8**Together for Equality – Safe Spaces**

The Women's Safety Audit, part of the safe space's initiative, was implemented with Rede Fete and local CSOs to generate advocacy evidence for safer public spaces. However, the May 2024 safety audit report lacked sex-disaggregated data, and may have affected the credibility of the Country Office.⁴⁶

The Safe Campus initiative in Dili, in partnership with the National University of Timor-Leste and Fokupers, included awareness sessions, a counselling room, staff training, a University Code of Conduct, and reporting mechanisms. Service accessibility increased from two cases in 2022 to 40 in 2023, but client satisfaction data is not collected.

The counselling unit, limited to academic psychology and spiritual assistance, is designed to refer clients to other service providers. However, consultations identified that this referral mechanism has not been implemented, and cases are still handled by the unit. Without the right skillset, survivors may not receive appropriate advice or services. For instance, key stakeholders familiar with the programme noted a survivor of violence was advised to gather evidence independently instead of being referred to legal aid services for comprehensive advice. Additionally, although beyond the programme/UN Women's control, the evaluation team noted that the main counsellor is a male priest, which may deter women survivors from accessing the service or seeking further services through the counselling unit.

The Country Office supported the Safe Bacau and Safe Market programme, focusing on gender-responsive market policies, budgeting, and capacity development in local government to integrate women's participation and safety in urban planning and public infrastructure. The evaluation team's consultations with the Market Vendor's Association and the market site visit found that market vendors appreciated the establishment of the association and understood the importance of mobilizing and having their voices heard. However, the Market Vendor's Association faced issues with government consultation and the existing market remains unsafe due to budget constraints, and the new market is isolated and not built to GESI standards. Although the Country Office was not involved in building the new market, Market Vendor Association members associated it with the Country Office and expected continued support. Managing expectations and risks associated with the new market is crucial. Despite the challenges, stakeholders recognized the safe markets model as holding potential for future strengthening and scale up due to its linkages with the Maubisse Declaration, WEE and EVAW.

Source: developed by the evaluation team

⁴⁶ UN Women Timor-Leste, Women's Safety Audit Report. Perception of Timor-Leste's Public Spaces; 09 May 2024; <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/05/perception-of-timor-lestes-public-spaces#:~:text=39%25%20found%20public%20spaces%20frightening,and%20inadequate%20walk%20path%20conditions>.

FIGURE 10: Summary of EAWG efforts undertaken by the CO (2021-2023)

Budget amount of US \$ 6 million (approx.) between 2021-2023 towards EAWG

**KEY STREAMS OF WORK:**

- Supported the design and implementation of the NAP GBV and strengthened advocacy for gender-responsive budgeting under the EAWG area.
- Engaged various groups (women, youth, students, community leaders, LGBTQIA+, PWD, church members) in awareness-raising and implemented interventions on EAWG/GBV and LGBTQIA+ rights across districts in Timor-Leste.
- Provided training on sexual assault case management and interviewing to improve case handling.

**KEY OUTPUT INDICATORS:**

- Number of countries with a process to design and implement VAW prevention strategies, or with VAW prevention interventions based on global norms and standards.
- Number of countries supported to revise, develop, or implement guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures to improve EAWG services in line with the global Essential Services Package.

**KEY INITIATIVES:**

- **Spotlight Initiative, Together for Equality, Stepping Up Solutions, Community-based gender responsive and survivor-centered prevention and response to human trafficking and Empower for Change projects with the key aim of enhancing women's capacities claim their rights through accessible, accountable and gender responsive governance systems, institutions and services at national and subnational levels.**

Source: developed by the evaluation team

FINDING 9

The Country Office has contributed to significant progress on Women, Peace and Security at the national level, including the adoption of the National Action Plan, development and institutionalization of guidelines, and establishment of key government coordination mechanisms. Implementation at lower government and community levels has great potential to serve as a model; however, a systematic capacity-building strategy, regular engagement and enhanced monitoring of results with both the government and civil society partners is needed to capture and understand outcome-level change and sustainability.

BOX 9**Sample of UN Women reported output results and reach with respect to WPS-related efforts:***

- The first National Mediation Network of Timor-Leste ("Rede Nacional Mediasaun") was established on 31 July 2023 and 142 key actors (55 women; 87 men) from Dili, Liquica, Ermera Municipalities and Oecusse were trained in community-based alternative dispute resolution processes.
- Mediators from the National Directorate of Community Conflict Prevention resolved 164 cases in 2023 (of 313 cases registered – 52.3 per cent of cases resolved) as compared to 146 cases in 2022 (of 319 cases registered – 45.8 per cent of cases resolved).
- The number of women national mediators in National Directorate of Community Conflict Prevention increased from 32 per cent of 31 mediators in 2019 to 47 per cent of 40 mediators in 2023, reaching towards gender parity.
- Four Community Mobiliser Networks were established in Dili, Bobonaro, Covalima and Oecusse in partnership with the Ministry of interior and Judicial System Monitoring Programme to promote gender-responsive, community-based prevention and response to people trafficking.
- 130 community members and 89 community leaders are reported to have increased their capacity to identify and respond to potential cases of exploitation or trafficking.
- 78 women-owned enterprises (78 women) received business equipment through the Country Office for sustaining or scaling up their businesses and mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on their businesses.
- 20 women received solar-powered carts.

*Source: UN Women Annual Reports 2021–2023, downloaded from UN Women RMS

The Country Office's WPS work is aligned with key UN Women Strategic Plan (2022–2025) actions related to UN Security Council resolutions on WPS, including resolutions 1325 and 2242. In particular, the Country Office has made notable progress pertinent to the UN Women Strategic Plan output indicators as follows: (a) Number of partners that have increased capacities to advance gender equality and women's empowerment through national and/or local (multi) sectoral strategies, policies and/or action plans; (b) Number of justice and security institutions with strengthened capacities to mainstream gender perspectives and promote the rights of women and girls in localized conflict, post-conflict and other crisis situations; and (c) WPS actors have stronger knowledge and networks to support gender-responsive conflict-resolution mechanisms and improve accessibility of justice services, through analysis, monitoring and facilitation of community dialogue and alternative dispute resolution processes. The Country Office's WPS work is also aligned with national commitments, including the previous and current NAP 1325.

At the normative level, in 2020–2022, the Country Office provided extensive technical support to the Ministry of Interior and other participating line ministries, and CSOs to develop the second NAP 1325. The Country Office provided support to the Ministry of Interior-led NAP 1325 Secretariat, Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group and the line ministries (Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice, National Police of Timor-Leste, Secretary of State for Equality and the Timor-Leste Defence Force) to formulate, implement, finance and monitor the WPS agenda. The Country Office also supported development of the M&E framework for the new NAP, including monitoring instruments and delivering training to the focal points and steering committee. Under the framework of NAP WPS, although some line ministries had allocated funds to implement the NAP, by the time of evaluation, some line ministers had not approved the budget to implement the activities. The stakeholders consulted revealed that, in their opinion, the Ministry of Interior did not allocate sufficient budget, and without sufficient funding it is unlikely that the NAP would be fully implemented. Therefore, some activities, such as capacity-building, are still funded by the Country Office.

The Country Office has built key partnerships and supported the Ministry of Interior to establish a coordination mechanism with the government and CSOs throughout the review of the first NAP and development of the second. The Country Office reported, and

was validated by stakeholders, that it had supported convening and consultation between 13 line ministries and eight CSOs at both national and municipal levels as input to drafting the NAP, which was enacted in February 2024. However, coordination with UN agencies in this area remains limited with a lack of engagement from the UN system in development of the second NAP.

At institutional level, to support implementation of NAP 1325, the Country Office also extended its technical support to the national security force – the National Police of Timor-Leste – in strengthening its capacities in gender mainstreaming policies and implementation of its obligations under the national WPS agenda through finalization of the joint assessment of the first National Police Gender Strategy, and development of the second Gender Strategy 2024–2028. The Country Office also provided language training and training to enhance national police officers' knowledge and awareness of the WPS agenda, and gender issues including conflict-related sexual violence and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in conflict settings to provide potential police officers with the skills and knowledge required for their upcoming UN Peacekeeping Operations examinations.

The Country Office provided substantial technical support to the National Directorate on Community Conflict Prevention under the Ministry of Interior in strengthening its institutional capacity to increase women's access to justice through state-facilitated mediation. In December 2020, standard guidelines for the National Directorate of Community Conflict Prevention's gender-responsive mediation and its decree were approved. The Country Office supported implementation of the decree during the current Strategic Note period, including development of the Directorate's case management system and database (manual version) to facilitate systematic management and registration of cases at both national and municipality levels; and 51 state mediators across all municipalities were trained on the use of the guidelines, as confirmed by the evaluation team through consultations with a sample of mediators and partners. The Country Office also reported it had supported the establishment of the National Mediation Network in Timor-Leste⁴⁷ and supported training workshops to over 142 key actors (55 women; 87 men) in community-based alternative dispute resolution processes, who worked under the member institutions of the National Mediation Network from Dili, Liquiçá, Ermera Municipalities and OeCusse, including the community police, and mediators from the Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment National,

⁴⁷ The National Mediation Network is comprised of government institutions and an NGO working in the justice sector and alternative disputes resolution to promote youth and women's participation in mediation and peace processes and to ensure equal access to justice for all, including the most vulnerable groups. The National Mediation Network members include: Ministry of Interior – SoECP – Civil Protection Authority – National Directorate of Community Conflict Prevention; Ministry of Justice/Secretary of State for Land and Property – DNTP; Public Defenders; Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion – DGSSI – DNIRC; Ministry of State Administration – DNAAS – Community Leaders; Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice (Provedoria Direitos Humanos e Justiça); Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment – DNRT; National Police of Timor-Leste – Community Police – OPS; NGO – Belun. Terms of Reference National Mediation Network, 2023.

Directorate for Land and Property, Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion, and staff from Public Defenders and Ombudsman (Provedoria dos Direitos Humanos e Justiça and NGO Belun. The Country Office reported that the networks resolved 164 cases in 2023 and 146 cases in 2022. The evaluation team's consultations with mediators identified that from the mediators' experience, most cases related to land disputes. They also noted that recent government changes had caused some mediators to be assigned to another position, leaving gaps in national mediation network capacity. Stakeholders explained that there is a need to provide continuous support to the network as they will have to recruit new mediators to close any gaps. Additionally, the training participants that the evaluation team consulted emphasized that they had not been able to practice their skills because there is limited support from the broader community, such as Suco leaders, indigenous leaders and religious leaders, whom community members often trust to resolve their cases. This broader community-based support is needed, despite recognition that the process and resolution from this mediation may not be gender-transformative because of the continued practice of traditional justice systems, which was also raised in the latest CEDAW observations.⁴⁸

At coordination level, engagement of other UN agencies is limited. While the Country Office has facilitated CSO engagement in the development of the NAP WPS and the National Mediation Network, partners consulted noted that their voice is still limited due to power dynamics. For example, in the National Mediation Network, only one CSO was engaged as a member of the network.

Under the WPS thematic area, during the 2022 election, the Country Office delivered 16 workshops targeting female and male emerging leaders at the community level, as well as current leaders in the local governance structure, including Suco Chiefs and Aldeia Chiefs from eight municipalities. While the Country Office reported an increase in women voter turnout of approximately 14,194 in the Presidential Election in 2022, the extent to which the intervention resulted in increased women's participation in leadership and decision-making roles was not systematically documented.

In 2023, the Government of Timor-Leste co-financed a Country Office initiative to strengthen the prevention of human trafficking through enhancing women and community-based engagement. This co-financing demonstrates the Government of Timor-Leste's confidence in the Country Office's efforts.

Given the limited funds and short duration of this initiative (one year), the Country Office noted that the focus was on increasing the community's awareness and knowledge. The evaluation team consulted a sample of training participants who revealed they had not heard about any human trafficking case since the training. However, it is unclear whether this is because the community is aware of the risks around human trafficking and decided not to engage in such activities or because they now realize that human trafficking is wrong and therefore the community does not speak about it openly. The Country Office needs to conduct more systematic data collection to understand these results.

Additionally, with Country Office support, four community mobilizer networks were established. However, the participants consulted were not aware of this network, who the members are, or the function of the network.

BOX 10

Testing Outcome 1 (Output cluster 1: Women, Peace and Security) theory of change assumptions

The theory of change assumes that the WPS agenda continues to be seen as key to sustaining peace and social cohesion; there continues to be demand among duty bearers and rights holders to promote localization of the WPS global normative framework; that the WPS agenda continues to be a clear government priority; and there is continued political will to advance the agenda at the national level.

Government stakeholders and programme partners noted the following key contributions from UN Women in this area: localization of the NAP, and its translation to the field through the development of gender-sensitive mediation guidelines; strengthened capacity of national mediators and local communities; gender mainstreaming and strengthened capacity of the National Police of Timor-Leste.

Source: developed by the evaluation team

⁴⁸ CEDAW Concluding Observations, Para 14, May, 2023; CEDAW/C/TLS/CO/4.

FIGURE 11: Summary of WPS, WPE and Global norms and policies efforts undertaken by the CO (2021-2023)

Budget amount of US \$ 1.3 million (approx.) between 2021-2023 towards WPS/WPE and Global norms and policies

KEY STREAMS OF WORK:

- Supported development and implementation of the second NAP WPS (1325), including capacity building and coordination with civil society organizations.
- Supported the integration of emerging security risks like cybersecurity, climate change and human trafficking into the second NAP.
- Provided technical assistance for the development of the PNTL's second Gender Strategy and delivering training on gender issues and conflict-related sexual violence.

KEY OUTPUT INDICATORS:

- Number of justice and security institutions with strengthened capacities to mainstream gender perspectives and promote the rights of women and girls in localized conflict, post-conflict and other crisis situations.
- WPS actors have stronger knowledge and networks to support gender-responsive conflict-resolution mechanisms and improve accessibility of justice services, through analysis, monitoring and facilitation of community dialogue and alternative dispute resolution processes.

KEY INITIATIVES:

- **Empowering women for sustainable peace, building a safe and equitable mediation system for Timor-Leste and COVID-Resilient Elections in Timor-Leste**

Source: developed by the evaluation team

FINDING 10

The Country Office is working towards a more integrated approach to Women, Peace and Security; Disaster Risk Reduction; and humanitarian action, with National Action Plan 1325 providing an enabling environment. Moving forward, the Country Office will need to translate this into operational-level action with key partners.

At the normative level, the Country Office provided extensive technical and advisory support to the Ministry of Interior in strengthening its capacity to advocate for the integration of emerging security risks in the second NAP 1325 draft, including climate change-induced disaster risks, human trafficking and its nexus to cybercrimes. The new NAP further reduces the structural barriers to women participating in peace and justice processes. The incorporation of newer and non-traditional areas such as climate change and cybersecurity is expected to improve women's access to services in this area.

At institutional level, the Ministry of Interior's overarching portfolio includes disaster risk reduction and response. Therefore, the Country Office also helped to ensure that disaster risk reduction was integrated into the national mediation guidelines implemented by the national mediators' network. The Country Office also supported the Civil Protection Authority in integrating gender equality and protection concerns in disaster response.

At operational level, the Country Office reported that it had supported the Civil Protection Authority in delivering a workshop to local communities at Suco Manleuana, sub district of Dom Aleixo, in Dili (which was severely

affected by the 2021 April flash floods) to promote inclusive and gender-responsive disaster risk management. The Country Office reported that as a result of increasing awareness of gender equality in humanitarian response, the Civil Protection Authority took the initiative and added gender equality to the agenda of the national Civil-Military-Police Inter-agency Workshop hosted by the Civil Protection Authority and Australian Civil-Military Centre, and requested that the Country Office provide a training session for focal points from the National Police of Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste Defence Force and Civil Protection Authority, regarding key considerations and protection concerns in disaster response.

Although initial steps towards a more integrated approach to WPS, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response has been taken at the normative level, coordination and implementation will need to be strengthened in the next Strategic Note period. For example, focus group discussion respondents appreciated the knowledge they had gained about humanitarian response, but pointed out that there is no formal coordination mechanism between the mediators and key actors in disaster risk reduction/humanitarian action, which limits their ability to act.

FINDING 11

The Country Office has begun to make progress on Women’s Economic Empowerment; however, it remains very small-scale. A broader vision is required which clearly aligns UN Women’s triple mandate and key priorities for Timor-Leste in advancing economic empowerment; partnerships with the UN system; and interlinkages with other thematic areas, such as Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

BOX 11

Sample of UN Women reported results under Women’s Economic Empowerment*

The Country Office reported that it equipped 668 informal workers (534 women and 134 men), mainly Tais weavers from Covalima, Baucau and RAEOA, as well as market vendors from Baucau with the knowledge and skills needed to improve their economic participation and income generation.

A retail store launched in Dili, generated total revenue of US\$ 33,432.50 from August to December 2023.

112 women entrepreneurs in food and agricultural sectors from the municipalities of Manatuto, Liquica and Dili increased their knowledge and skills on business planning, financial literacy, marketing and e-commerce trading.

*Source: UN Women Annual Reports 2021–2023, downloaded from UN Women RMS

The Country Office’s work on WEE is aligned with key UN Women Strategic Plan (2022–2025) actions related to this thematic area. In particular, the Country Office has made progress pertinent to the following key Strategic Plan output indicators: (a) self-employed women and women-owned MSMEs have enhanced opportunities to develop entrepreneurship skills, benefit from social empowerment and access to finance and employment networks; and (b) number of women entrepreneurs supported to access finance and gender-responsive financial products and services, with UN Women’s support. The Country Office’s work in this area is also aligned with national commitments to strengthen rural women’s economic participation as committed to in the Maubisse Declaration.

The Country Office reported some WEE interventions under its EAWG programme, T4E and some under the WEE impact area utilizing core resources. In partnership with Timor–Aid and the Alola Foundation and in collaboration in Baucau with TOMAK, the Country Office has focused on economically empowering Tais weavers for collective voice, enhancing business opportunities and providing tailored training programmes on financial literacy, skill-based training and marketing.

At the normative level, the Country Office reported providing technical support in mainstreaming gender and enhancing the M&E framework of Phase III of the Maubisse Declaration. It is important for the Country Office to strengthen its support in this area to ensure the declaration is funded, implemented and monitored in alignment with relevant gender equality and empowerment of women laws, policies and strategies to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach, as noted in the CEDAW observations.⁴⁹

As a contribution to mobilization of national actors, under the T4E programme, the Country Office and partners formalized six weavers’ networks in OeCusse, Covalima, Bobonaro, Lautém, Baucau and Viqueque. The Country Office also provided legal support to register the organization of Tais weavers as a National Association ‘Rede Soru Na’in’; and provided a platform for weavers to voice their needs and concerns, leading to recognition by local governments and opening up opportunities for collaboration between group members.

The Country Office and its partners under T4E have connected these networks to relevant stakeholders such as the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Commerce and other development partners. However, no formal collaboration or coordination mechanism with other development partners has been established.

Key partners also identified a need to further engage with national stakeholders and development partners to understand the emerging priorities and interlinkages between WEE and other pressing issues such as gender-based violence and climate change to enable the Country Office to position itself more strategically.

At operational level, the Country Office supported the establishment of the ‘Rede Soru Na’in’ weaver’s shop inaugurated in Dili in August 2023. The evaluation team observed the shop in operation and met with weavers. The weavers identified key benefits realized from the initiative including: increased economic opportunity (an overall income of US\$33,432.50 was reported by the Tais weavers shop between August to December 2023); increased skills for diversifying products for modern consumption; increased market access through the store; and that collectivization had supported production because some weavers were able to utilize different pieces from other

⁴⁹ CEDAW Concluding Observations, Para 44, May, 2023; CEDAW/C/TLS/CO/4.

members of the cooperative. However, to what extent the store has benefitted the members equally needs to be further examined. The evaluation found that members receive money only when the products they produced are sold. Therefore, it depends on the popularity of the items and only some networks may be benefitting.⁵⁰ The funds received go to the network, and tracing the money to individual producers is less clear. Therefore, there is a risk that the head of the network may not distribute the money accurately, although there have been no reports of this happening. Additionally, a ten per cent deduction from sales will be used to fund the network, including to fund the store. It is important to study to what extent this system is sustainable.

Some stakeholders highlighted that Tais weavers represent a relevant group for reaching rural and marginalized women from the informal sector, and that the approach celebrates and preserves cultural heritage. Others noted opportunities for expanding the project beyond weavers, as it may be seen as reinforcing traditional roles for women as weavers. Other concerns relate to the sustainability of the groups and access to markets. These stakeholders noted that sustained and broader support would be needed, such as market analysis and financial access for scaling to export markets. Interviews with stakeholders also indicated challenges in building the capacity of Tais weavers to run the National Association by themselves. Therefore, a manager and finance officer to run the Tais Weavers National Association will be required. Some partner organizations consulted raised concerns about whether the initiative had prepared the weavers in case of backlash or gender-based violence by intimate partners, family or within the community that could result from increased economic empowerment. While the initiative engaged male partners in capacity-building for the prevention of gender-based violence, there were no formal mechanisms for reporting cases of backlash or violence.

The stakeholders consulted noted the positive gains for the Tais weavers and their national recognition given that the President of the Republic and the Secretary of State for Equality attended the opening of the store.⁵¹

The stakeholders also encouraged the Country Office to consider thinking more broadly about the WEE agenda in Timor-Leste. The Asian Development Bank, for example, highlighted that environmental degradation and climate change pose challenges to food security and sustainable development in Timor-Leste⁵² as the country is vulnerable to various geophysical and climate-related hazards. The impacts of which have far-reaching effects on the livelihoods and food security of the poor, given their existing vulnerabilities and limited state capacity. As two-thirds of the population depend on agriculture for subsistence, improving and strengthening agricultural resilience and productivity is vital. WEE could then be embedded into the broader context of climate resilience and food security. Moving forward, the Country Office will need to ensure that its WEE initiatives are clearly linked to UN Women's triple mandate and relevant to the country's economic priorities.

BOX 12

Testing Outcome 2 (Women's Economic Empowerment) theory of change assumptions

One of the key assumptions of the WEE theory of change is the willingness of the public and private sectors and women entrepreneurs to cooperate. The underdeveloped private sector in Timor-Leste creates a challenge in engaging the private sector in WEE. Nevertheless, the Country Office supported gender mainstreaming in the development of the third Maubisse Declaration to improve the lives of rural women and girls, the targets of which include policies that ensure 30 per cent of those employed on public infrastructure projects in rural areas are women; greater participation of women-owned businesses; and improved disaggregated data for better monitoring of public infrastructure project implementation.

The Country Office supported a nation-wide network of Tais weavers, enabling them to improve product quality and diversification, and access wider markets. This plants a seed to increase women's participation in the economy. However, the Country Office needs to reflect on how it can further support the implementation and monitoring of the Maubisse Declaration, ensuring coordination with wider stakeholders, including the UN system and public and private sectors.

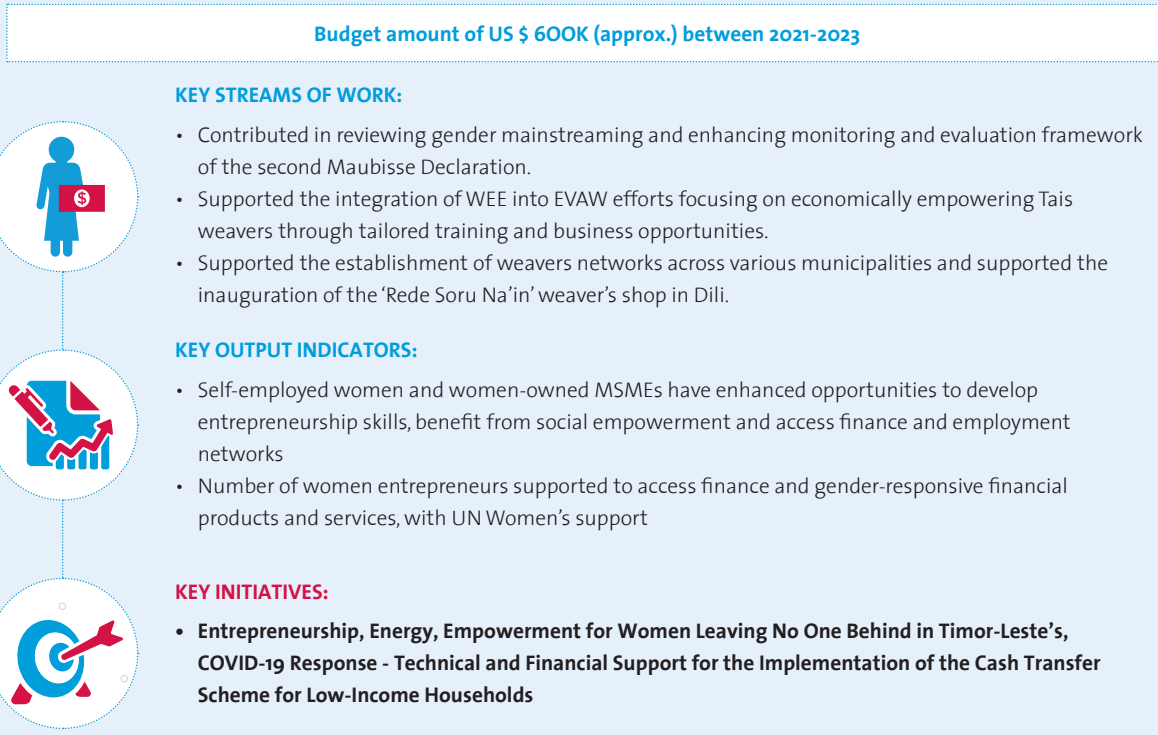
Source: developed by the evaluation team

⁵⁰ For example, in focus group discussions with weavers' networks, a range of earnings was reported: one group earned US\$ 2,400 in six months, another US\$ 4,400 in nine months, Another group earned US\$ 11,400 in nine months.

⁵¹ Secretary of State for Equality attends the launch of the "Rede Soru Na'in" Tais Weavers' Association shop, August 16, 2023; <https://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=33506&lang=en&n=1>

⁵² ADB Country Partnership Strategy: Timor-Leste, 2023–2027 — A Strategy for Economic Recovery, Inclusive Development, and Climate Resilience, 2022, September 25, 2024; <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/806246/cps-tim-2023-2027.pdf>

FIGURE 12 :Summary of WEE efforts undertaken by the CO (2019-2022)



Source: developed by the evaluation team

FIGURE 13: Gender@Work framework

INDIVIDUAL		INDIVIDUAL	
I N F O R M A L	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raising awareness among individuals, including government and non-government stakeholders, about global gender equality norms and policies such as CEDAW, Beijing PFA, UNSCR 1325, and the SDGs. 2. Enhance knowledge and skills in monitoring, tracking, and reporting on progress related to gender equality commitments. 3. Initiatives to support male and female Youth Gender Activists, promote positive gender norms, increase men’s engagement, and enhance visibility of gender equality leaders. 4. Learning and sharing knowledge within the Country Office (CO), such as building on past investments in specific areas like women’s economic empowerment and gender statistics. 5. Diverse women and youth leaders have enhanced visibility, skills and networks to participate in leadership roles and contribute to decision-making at sub-national levels. 	F O R M A L	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training materials on person with disabilities for the advocacy work and capacity building of the ending violence against women and children with disabilities, rights of persons with disabilities and CRPD, guidelines on integrating disability in law and policymaking, planning 2. Knowledge material for youth and women on GBV and rights, strengthened civil society capacity to analyse and advocate for government funding addressing GBV 3. Access to support for survivors of GBV, PwD, members of LGBTIQ+ and other marginalised communities 4. Resource Book for Trainers on Effective Prosecution Responses to Violence against Women and Girls 5. Educational curricula and programmes are on GBV and integration into formal and non-formal education, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights and human rights content and messages have been integrated into the Basic Education curriculum for students in grades 1-9, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) 6. Organisational development support to CSO and helping them monitor the delivery of the scheme 7. Supporting low-income household on financial growth, cash-for-work to farmers, NGOs/CSOs working with PwD, survivors of GBV, LGBTQIA+ and other marginalised communities
I N F O R M A L	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion of equitable social norms, challenge harmful gender norms, and address intersecting forms of discrimination. 2. Engagement with community leaders, youth, men and boys, religious groups, health and education sector personnel, and the media. 3. Transforming attitudes, behaviours, practices, norms and ultimately the power dynamics that contribute to gender-based violence 	F O R M A L	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connection between national actions and municipal efforts 2. National Action Plans to address GBV, 3. Inter-Ministerial NAP GBV Commission under Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SEII) 4. Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) to promote gender equality and addressing discrimination and barriers to women’s participation in economic and income generation activities 5. Technical assistance and capacity-building support, to government and non-government stakeholder 6. Strengthening institutional capacities, improving implementation and enforcement of legislative and policy frameworks
SYSTEMATIC		SYSTEMATIC	

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Has the portfolio been designed and implemented according to human rights and leave no one behind principles, including disability perspective, social and environmental safeguards and development effectiveness principles (ensuring national ownership and sustainability of programming efforts)?

FINDING 12

The Country Office has made efforts to engage marginalized groups, including women with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ persons, through awareness-raising, advocacy and collaboration with relevant CSOs. While steps to ensure the leave no one behind principle is integrated into programming approaches have been initiated, further efforts are needed to deepen programmatic initiatives that actively involve marginalized groups in a meaningful and proactive manner and collect disaggregated data to ensure they are being reached.

Effort at various levels – individual, systemic, formal and informal – are required to ensure long-lasting positive changes to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment. The evaluation team used the Gender@Work Framework as an analytical tool to map where the planned Strategic Note efforts (see Figure 13).

A large part of the Country Office’s work planned to focus on the “formal” quadrants of the Gender@Work Framework, i.e. changes in individual conditions and formal rules and policies. Supporting the NAPs on WPS and gender-based violence, and national and subnational authorities in policymaking, including capacity-building for integrating disability into law and policies, have been key areas of focus. At the individual level, through specific workshops, training, awareness sessions and capacity-building/knowledge-sharing, some planned projects during the Strategic Note period specifically target marginalized individuals from diverse SOGIESC or people with disabilities. Strengthening the capacity of civil society to monitor and track gender equality commitments, facilitate conflict resolution and support CSOs working with marginalized communities was also a key Country Office strategy. Some efforts have also been directed towards gender-sensitive reporting in the media.

To enhance individual awareness, the Country Office engaged partners to undertake extra-curricular training of elementary students aimed at increasing understanding of gender-based violence, challenging gender stereotypes and promoting respectful attitudes among youth. Efforts were also made to raise awareness about human trafficking and the rights of women and girls to live free from violence.

The Country Office has sought to raise awareness about global normative gender equality agreements and engaged with youth gender activists to support their networks and enhance visibility.

At the systemic level, the Country Office aimed to promote equitable social norms in schools through an approach that targeted teachers, parents and students.

The Strategic Note identifies specific population groups that are most marginalized by structural inequalities and discrimination⁵³ and explicitly mentions LGBTIQ+ persons and people with disabilities as programme participants in the EAW and WEE related areas of work. The Country Office has reported significant efforts in engaging marginalized groups through various initiatives. For instance, older women and women in rural areas have been engaged through the Tais weavers’ networks for training. Women with disabilities have been engaged through women-led organizations, focusing on advocacy and stakeholder engagement. The Country Office also planned for increased visibility, advocacy and coalition building for the LGBTIQ+ community, including participation in Pride marches and awareness campaigns.

The evaluation team analysed the extent to which projects were aware of different marginalized groups (SOGIESC, women with disabilities, indigenous/rural women/ethnic minorities and youth) in project design and implementation (see Figure 14).⁵⁴ As also noted in the Gender@Work analysis, specific projects that focus on inclusion (Empower for Inclusion, Empower for Change) are initial steps for systematically identifying and engaging marginalized groups. The focus on youth was prominent, with six of eight projects demonstrating awareness of youth issues in their design and five of eight maintaining this awareness during implementation. While five of eight projects were designed with awareness of the needs of women with disabilities, only three maintained that awareness throughout project implementation.

⁵³ These include women and children with disabilities and their (often female) caregivers, survivors of violence, adolescent mothers, LGBTIQ persons, as well as women and men in rural areas working in vulnerable employment

⁵⁴ This analysis is based on the mandate proposed by the Strategic Note and by reviewing projects documents and donor annual reports.

FIGURE 14: Analysis of the extent to which projects were aware of different marginalized groups

Thematic Area	Project	SOGIESC		Women with disabilities		Indigenous/rural women/ethnic minorities		Youth	
		Design	Implementation	Design	Implementation	Design	Implementation	Design	Implementation
EVAW	Stepping Up Solutions	☺	✖	☺	✖	☺	✖	☑	☑
	Together for Equality	☑	☺	☑	☺	☑	☑	☑	☑
	Spotlight Initiative	☑	☺	☑	☺	☺	☺	☑	☑
WPS	Human Trafficking	✖	✖	☺	☺	☑	☑	☑	☑
Governance	Empower for Inclusion	-	-	☑	☑	-	-	☑	☺
	Empower for change	✖	✖	☑	☑	☑	☑	✖	✖
	COVID Cash Transfer	✖	☺	☑	☑	☺	☺	☺	☺
	Resilient Elections	-	-	-	-	-	-	☑	☑

Aware
 Somewhat aware
 Unaware
 - Data not available

Source: developed by the evaluation team

While efforts were made to incorporate awareness of LGBTIQ+ persons or persons with disability in the design of projects, there is scope to do more, as the Country Office reported it had only reached a low number of individuals during implementation of the projects. For instance, the T4E project identified increased access to services for LGBTIQ+ persons and persons with disabilities as a key output for which the Country Office was responsible, including through supporting civil society outreach and training these communities to advocate for safe public spaces. However, the reach of these efforts has been limited. In 2023, while the T4E programme’s impact reportedly⁵⁵ extended to 25,216 direct beneficiaries, this included only 16 persons with disabilities, and 12 LGBTIQ+ individuals.

Without specific indicators in the Strategic Note that track the number of rights holders (women with disabilities and persons of diverse SOGIESC) reached through Country Office interventions in line with project proposals, capturing results that fully measure the impact of activities contributing to the leave no one behind principle remains challenging.

The joint Spotlight Initiative case study identified that engagement of CSOs, including at least one representing LGBTIQ+ groups and issues (CODIVA), and two organizations working with persons with disabilities, led to increased attention and awareness of diversity issues, and contributed to increased awareness of the importance of engaging with these organizations. For example, during implementation of the Spotlight Initiative, CODIVA became a member of the gender-based violence referral

networks coordinated by the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion. The joint Spotlight Initiative case study identified that the Country Office played a pivotal role in establishing this representation, and its coordination of the initiative was significant in driving awareness of and contact with marginalized groups among partners (especially LGBTIQ+) – several UN, government and CSO stakeholders mentioned the Country Office as a key figure in this regard.

While 92 per cent (N=12/13) of UN Women personnel respondents to the survey stated they were either satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the Country Office’s efforts regarding identification and engagement with the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, there was room for improvement. Some partners consulted, including those representing marginalized groups, identified the need to ensure meaningful engagement and to empower the voice and agency of marginalized individuals and organizations in Country Office efforts. These stakeholders noted that power dynamics persist, and while participation in meetings is a good first step, more work is needed to ensure equal voice and agency in these meetings. While the Country Office’s initial efforts were made through capacity-building of CSOs, stakeholders emphasized the need to further deepen engagement with key power brokers, e.g. the church, to address harmful social norms related to stigma surrounding LGBTIQ+ individuals; and to enhance grassroots efforts in rural areas, especially for women with disabilities, where infrastructure and available budget may be insufficient. The need to emphasize work on social norms was also highlighted in the most recent CEDAW observations.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ T4E, Annual Narrative Report (1 January 2023– 31 December 2023)

⁵⁶ United Nations. (2023, May 31). Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Timor-Leste. <https://www.undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=CEDAW%2FC%2FTLS%2FCO%2F4&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Does UN Women Timor-Leste have appropriate governance, capacity and capability to ensure good use of resources (personnel, funding and assets) to deliver results?

FINDING 13

The Country Office has had a stable budget since 2021; however, the large EVAWG programmes are ending in 2024 and there is a lack of clarity about how these efforts will be sustained. Although the Country Office has engaged with donors, the absence of a resource mobilization strategy and secured funds for 2025 is a key risk to the sustainability of Country Office efforts.

Overall, the Country Office's portfolio has grown since 2019 through successful resource mobilization efforts. The Country Office's total budget for 2021–2023 was approximately US\$ 9.97 million, with a high of approximately US\$ 3.35 million in 2021 increasing from US\$ 1.7 million in 2019 and US\$ 2.4 million in 2020 (see Figure 1). The EVAWG area of work has had the highest allocation of funds thanks to two key projects: Spotlight initiative (EU) and T4E (KOICA). Of the total budget for 2021–2023, US\$ 3.9 million or 38 per cent was dedicated to EVAWG.

The Spotlight Initiative ended in December 2023, while T4E will end in November 2024. The Country Office participated in the resource mobilization training delivered by

the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and consulted with the Regional Office on its resource mobilization efforts. However, at the time of the evaluation, a final resource mobilization strategy was yet to be developed. The only non-core budget that the Country Office is likely to receive in 2025 is for WPS, leaving the sustainability of EVAWG and WEE activities uncertain. A strategy and dedicated support for resource mobilization may assist in more strategic engagement and Regional Office or headquarters expertise could also be leveraged to ensure the Country Office can engage in new areas where it may not have adequate expertise.

FINDING 14

The Country Office has a strong commitment to implement a results-based management system. However, there have been limitations in the Country Office's ability to ensure objective reporting and integration of lessons learned.

Monitoring

The Country Office has instituted multiple measures to ensure programme oversight. However, monitoring has not been carried out systematically by an independent source (even internal M&E support) and monitoring of progress is predominantly conducted through document review, based on reports submitted by programme partners.

The Country Office delivered induction training to partners and tailored capacity-building was offered during implementation of projects. The training included results-based management, introduction to the reporting templates and sharing of good practices for monitoring and reporting. However, each programme team developed their own reporting template for their partners and were often not used consistently even within the same project. For example, while one partner provided stories of change, other partners did not.

The Country Office provided the evaluation team with examples of the quarterly reporting submitted by partners and reported that it reviewed the documents and provided feedback to improve the quality of the reports and implementation of projects. Nevertheless, partners noted that more continuous support on monitoring and reporting requirements, such as through regular coaching and refresher training, would ensure that partners collected high quality results information more systematically.

The evaluation team noted an overreliance on programme partners to monitor and provide accurate reporting. The Country Office did not have full-time onsite M&E personnel⁵⁷ who could conduct regular monitoring and validation visits or provide more regular and continuous support for monitoring and reporting. Only 10 of 33 mission reports between 2022 and 2023 that were shared with the evaluation team included M&E activities, which were completed in parallel to activities related to programme implementation (i.e. they were not dedicated

⁵⁷ Due to challenges recruiting a full-time local staff member, the Country Office hired a home-based international consultant.

M&E missions). Given that partners are the front line in terms of providing quality data that will feed into the Strategic Note and donor results reporting, it is important for M&E personnel to conduct data quality assessment and validation visits. The limited monitoring visits carried out by the Country Office also means limited engagement with rights holders and visibility of UN Women in the intervention area. More direct contact is required, or a third party could be engaged to provide more objective assessments.

Reporting

A key challenge to the quality of reporting is the lack of focus on results-based management from the project design phase, which has resulted in monitoring at the activity level, leaving little room to understand and track the long-term contributions of interventions (e.g. monitoring the application of knowledge and skills, implementation of policies and guidelines, and behavioural changes among the target groups).

The Country Office reported on 79 per cent of its Development Results Frameworks Indicators in 2023. Of 89 Development Results Frameworks Indicators, 18 per cent were self-assessed as “no progress”, 29 per cent were self-assessed as “some progress”, 10 per cent were self-assessed as “significant progress” and 21 per cent were reported as having been reached or surpassed. Twenty-one per cent of the indicators were not reported on because the data is not available, e.g. Strategic Plan indicators, UNSDCF indicators and Spotlight Initiative Outcome Indicators. Interviews with stakeholders indicated that they were aware some of the indicators were either irrelevant for the Country Office or beyond its control and some of the data would therefore not be available. However, they noted that they were required to adopt these indicators. As a result, it was also observed that the information provided in the annual report about progress against the indicators was not always consistent with indicator statements and targets, and the same results were registered as progress for more than one indicator. Ultimately, this reduces the validity of the annual report submitted by the Country Office.

Reporting is still project and activity driven, which has resulted in difficulties tracking and compiling results in a coherent manner across funding streams. There was no clear standard in terms of the structure and quality of the reports submitted by programme partners across different projects. Lack of common tools and oversight means that programme partner reports are inconsistent. The assessment conducted by the evaluation team identified that, at the output level, the reports show weak output indicators that do not allow for understanding changes at the output level, and only include activity indicators, such as the number of people trained. When training results are reported, they are not reported in a

consistent manner with some partners reporting the knowledge change measured by pre-post test, while some partners reported participants’ self-assessment of knowledge gained after the training, which is not an objective measure. Some programme partners included brief stories of change and results based on focus group discussions with participants. However, given that the programme partners themselves were leading these discussions, responses may be biased. Such assessments are not documented systematically or linked to the overall approach to measure change and were not systematically validated by the Country Office or an independent third party.

Knowledge exchange

The programme partners consulted acknowledged that the Country Office facilitated peer learning within projects (between partners) and between teams through regular meetings. Under the WPS area, for example, the national mediators network meeting also served as an opportunity for network members to share their experiences, discuss the challenges they faced and options to resolve such challenges. The joint programmes facilitated reflection through the annual review meeting. T4E, for example, conducted in-person reflection meetings which promoted effective communication and exchanges between its partners. The Spotlight Initiative formed a Civil Society Reference Group and Learning Consortium, which regularly met to review progress, provide feedback and exchange ideas to improve project implementation. The Spotlight Initiative Learning Consortium convened 23 CSOs, under the overall co-leadership of Asia Justice and Rights, Asosiasaun Chega! Ba Ita and the National NGO Forum, with the overall objective of collaboration and coordination for EVAWG through improved CSO networking, sustainability and learning. The joint Spotlight Initiative case study noted that while it is difficult to assess the contribution made to programme outcomes by the Consortium, CSOs in general played significant roles in VAWG prevention activities; benefitted from capacity-building initiatives; and found the Consortium model effective. Some partners consulted suggested that the Country Office facilitate more critical assessment and reflection sessions rather than just sharing progress.

Responses to the Country Office personnel survey suggested that knowledge and lessons learned were shared within the Country Office, with 53.8 per cent of respondents fully agreeing and 38.5 per cent agreeing that knowledge and lessons learned are shared in useful ways. Survey respondents also stated that the Country Office provided opportunities for personnel to participate in knowledge exchange and learning opportunities in the office.

LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation has brought the following key lessons into focus:



In terms of efforts to prevent violence against women and girls, it is necessary to assess the readiness and incentives for stakeholders and programme partners to take on complex initiatives, considering the country context and enabling environment, and test models that build on a whole-of-community approach and synergies between development partners.



It is critical to plan for impact evaluation at the project design phase when testing new models so that the organization can confidently understand the results and factors that supported or challenged the initiative prior to scale up or shifting the strategy. This will also enhance UN Women's ability to assess contributions to outcome and impact-level progress.



Moving beyond training, adoption of a broader capacity-building approach spanning the enabling environment is required to assess how institutional and individual capacity can support sustainability. Stakeholders should be supported to retain and apply the knowledge and skills learned, including through refresher training; mentoring when applying new skills within their workplace or in their community; and having the opportunity to learn from each other.



Even when projects are designed using an intersectional lens, its systematic application in terms of implementation is not guaranteed. Proactive and dedicated support to UN Women personnel and partners in understanding how to engage diverse perspectives and reach the most marginalized is critical. Systematically collecting information related to these groups should become part of regular practice.



Partnerships with other UN agencies through joint programmes are not only imperative but provide an opportunity for ensuring coherent, holistic, long-term efforts and efficiency gains. However, synergies between agency efforts must be carefully planned at the beginning. This entails identifying how to leverage each agency's skillsets and reach to diverse target groups and geographical areas by layering approaches within targeted areas so that depth is prioritized during the initial stages.



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CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation found that UN Women has made key contributions to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Timor-Leste across its triple mandate. Progress is concentrated at the normative level, with significant achievements in the development and implementation of key national action plans and frameworks. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of integrating emerging priorities into the next Strategic Note, such as a broader vision for women's economic empowerment, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action, and resilience to climate change.

The sustainability of Country Office efforts at the community level remains a challenge due to the short duration of awareness-raising activities and the need for more systematic capacity-building approaches. This situation is compounded by the lack of current funding prospects for 2025, risking the sustainability of the gains made. To address these challenges, the Country Office will need to proactively engage with key funding partners and seek expertise from within UN Women to ensure the continuity of its programming.

CONCLUSION 1

The overall focus of the Strategic Note has been relevant and is aligned with key national and international priorities for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Country Office's ability to translate normative progress into sustainable results for women and girls in all their diversity will determine the continuing credibility and relevance of UN Women's efforts in Timor-Leste. While the focus on WPS and EVAWG, with growing emphasis on WEE, has been relevant, the next Strategic Note should address emerging priorities. Engaging civil society systematically at the project design phase will enhance UN Women's value within the UN system.

Based on findings 1, 2 and 3

UN Women's dedicated work in Timor-Leste has translated into long-standing and trusted partnerships with key government line ministries and CSOs. In combination, these key partnerships have contributed to an enabling environment for advancing women's human rights in Timor-Leste and ensured the relevance of the Country Office's work. This enabling environment provides the Country Office with opportunities to continue to closely align its work with national and international priorities for gender equality and women's empowerment.

During the current Strategic Note period, the COVID-19 pandemic and a climate-induced disaster brought to light the necessity of being responsive to emerging priorities. Moving forward, a broader vision clearly aligned with UN Women's normative, coordination and operational

mandates is necessary to pivot, deepen and scale efforts related to WPS, WEE and EVAWG. The Country Office will need to demonstrate the ability to articulate results and sustain efforts. It will need to continue leveraging partnerships with the government, UN, civil society and development partners to achieve this at scale.

With limited funding for the EVAW portfolio, the Country Office must make tough decisions to ensure continuity. Integrating EVAW efforts into the WEE area by highlighting thematic interlinkages is an opportunity. For instance, the Safe Markets initiative could be expanded to include rural farmers while maintaining its focus on safety. This would align with the national Maubisse framework on rural economic empowerment and national priorities.

There is an opportunity for the Country Office to continue to strengthen its relationships with civil society through meaningful collaboration in programme design and implementation. The Secretary General's Gender Equality Action Plan provides a further basis for strengthening UN Women's meaningful engagement of women's rights organizations.⁵⁸

As Timor-Leste is prone to a wide range of climate-induced hazards, planning for disaster risk reduction, resilience to climate change and humanitarian action should be prioritized for the future Strategic Note through linkages with NAP 1325. While resources will need to be mobilized and expertise recruited, this will be a critical area for the Country Office to support given the potential impact of climate-related disasters on gender and social inequalities.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Secretary General Gender Equality Action Plan, August 2024.

⁵⁹ The Post Disaster Needs Assessment for the Tropical Cyclone April 2021, produced at the request of the government with development partner support.

CONCLUSION 2

UN Women’s coordination mandate is critical to the Entity’s ability to operate at scale but must be leveraged strategically to maximize its influence. Moving forward, the Country Office will need to be more proactive and consolidate the sharing of gender equality and empowerment of women efforts across partners; enhance knowledge-sharing on key gender equality and empowerment of women priorities through regular meetings; and become the “go-to” knowledge resource for gender equality in Timor-Leste.

Based on Findings 4 and 5.

Recognizing that, currently, external factors may not be supportive of coordination efforts in Timor-Leste,⁶⁰ as identified by the draft evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Framework for Timor-Leste, it is even more important to utilize key coordination platforms and accountability tools for gender equality and the empowerment of women to ensure progress.

The Country Office has led key coordination platforms on gender equality and women’s empowerment in Timor-Leste, co-chairing the Gender Theme Group with UNFPA within the UNCT. Despite positive contributions, the group’s effectiveness has been hindered by infrequent meetings and a lack of strategic focus. Identifying key policy issues and generating evidence to advance them could mobilize the group. The Gender Theme Group’s support for the UNCT gender scorecard, though rated highly, was seen as procedural rather than impactful. To enhance effectiveness, the group must strategically prioritize gender equality issues, mobilize partner engagement, and address gaps in capacity-building and joint work planning.

The Country Office’s co-chairing of the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Coordination Group with the Secretary of State for Equality has fostered a collaborative forum involving various partners dedicated to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in Timor-Leste. This leadership remains important and should continue to be leveraged for high-level strategy formulation, common advocacy messaging and comprehensive knowledge-sharing.

The Country Office engaged in several large-scale joint programmes, showcasing its leadership in gender equality and women’s empowerment in Timor-Leste.⁶¹ These programmes are important tools for coherence within the UN system but require careful planning to maximize their value. The Country Office, along with the UNCT, must strategize to ensure joint programmes achieve collective impact beyond individual agency perspectives.

CONCLUSION 3

The Country Office’s focus on advancing its normative mandate has resulted in key gains and established an enabling environment for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. During the Strategic Note period, the Country Office’s programmatic strategies have planted seeds for change; however, they were too varied in terms of target groups and geographic spread to be considered effective models that can be confidently scaled in the next Strategic Note.

Based on Finding 6-11.

Output-level progress has led to increased awareness and action on the Country Office’s key focus areas (WPS, EVAWG, WEE); however, outcome-level change remains a work in progress. A systematic capacity-building approach, inclusive of refresher training, mentoring/coaching, reflection and knowledge-sharing must be embedded in the Country Office’s strategy to ensure that new knowledge and skills gained by target groups of its efforts are retained and applied to create transformative change beyond the individual level.

Strengthening the Country Office’s capacities in embedding approaches to social norms and addressing structural barriers to progress, such as within the legal frameworks and informal and formal justice systems; and mitigating risks, such as changes to the government and associated staff turnover, is essential as part of the Country Office’s programming strategy.

The Country Office will need to work closely with partners to embed strong results tracking to measure the effectiveness of models and work towards scaling or adjusting programmes as appropriate in the next Strategic Note.

⁶⁰ The draft evaluation of the UNSDCF Timor-Leste identified, “Unhealthy competition for limited resources among UN Agencies as well as their primary accountability to their corporate priorities rather than towards the CF, leaves little space for meaningful collective actions as modus operandi.”

⁶¹ The Draft evaluation of the UNSDCF Timor-Leste indicated, “Gender mainstreaming is high in the agenda of UNCT and it was tabled as a strategic discussion point with the Government of Timor-Leste not least due to processes initiated under the Spotlight Initiative.”

CONCLUSION 4

The Country Office has made a concerted effort to design its portfolio in line with human rights and leave no one behind principles, including engagement of groups representing persons with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ persons. Deepening and systematizing approaches for inclusive programming and intersectional analyses by ensuring meaningful engagement will facilitate national ownership, concrete results and sustainability of programming efforts.

Based on Finding 12.

The Country Office has aligned its portfolio with human rights and leave no one behind principle, engaging groups that represent persons with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ individuals. Recognizing that power dynamics and harmful social norms persist, meaningful engagement requires the Country Office to empower the voice and agency of marginalized individuals and organizations representing their perspectives within its efforts.

Timor-Leste's recent accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2023 presents a valuable opportunity for the Country Office to enhance its engagement in disability rights and inclusion. The Country Office can leverage this development to deepen its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, aligning with international standards and fostering greater inclusivity in its programming.

Although the Country Office has initiated capacity-building efforts with CSOs, stakeholders stressed the need to deepen engagement with key power brokers, such as the church, to address harmful social norms and stigma surrounding LGBTIQ+ individuals in Timor-Leste. The urgency of emphasizing work around social norms was also highlighted in the most recent CEDAW observations. Additionally, there is a call to bolster grassroots efforts in rural areas, particularly for women with disabilities, where infrastructure and budget constraints may hinder progress.

By addressing these concerns, the Country Office can enhance its approach to inclusivity, ensuring that its initiatives not only reach but also empower the most marginalized populations, thereby fostering equitable progress in Timor-Leste.

CONCLUSION 5

Implementing the Strategic Note has shown the need for flexible funding. With diminishing resources and increasing demands for evidence, the Country Office must prioritize strong learning and oversight systems to produce robust evidence. This will inform decision-making and build credibility with funding partners, advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Timor-Leste."

Based on Finding 13 and 14.

Since 2019, the Country Office has grown significantly due to successful joint programme resource mobilization. However, the outlook remains uncertain, risking sustainability. The COVID-19 pandemic and flooding highlighted the need for flexible funding to adjust programmes to emerging demands. Developing and finalizing a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy, seeking dedicated support, engaging development partners in shaping funding strategies and leveraging expertise from the Regional Office or headquarters will be crucial for entering new areas for the next Strategic Note.

The Country Office has established several mechanisms to ensure programme oversight, such as delivering induction training to partners and providing tailored capacity-building during implementation of projects. However, the Country Office has not employed systematic monitoring by an independent source or even internally through M&E support, mainly relying on document reviews of the reports submitted by programme partners. This translates into a significant dependence on programme partners for monitoring and reporting accuracy.

Without full-time onsite M&E personnel, the Country Office has been unable to perform regular monitoring and validation visits or offer continuous support for monitoring and reporting. The Country Office's limited monitoring has also resulted in limited engagement with rights holders and reduced UN Women's visibility in intervention areas. To address these challenges, it is critical that the Country Office enhance direct contact or engage a third party to provide more objective information.

A significant challenge affecting the quality of Country Office reporting is the lack of emphasis on results-based management at the project design phase. This has led to a focus on activity-level monitoring, limiting the Country Office's ability to track the long-term impact of interventions. Inconsistent reporting of progress against indicators and overlapping results across multiple indicators compromise the validity of the Country Office's annual reports. Reporting remains project-driven, complicating result tracking across funding streams.

The Country Office's efforts to facilitate peer learning and knowledge exchange through regular meetings and joint programmes have been critical for fostering collaboration and advancing awareness. However, some partners suggested that the Country Office could facilitate more critical assessment sessions rather than merely sharing progress. The Country Office's ability to demonstrate its commitment to strong results orientation and use of evidence for programming will assure donors that their money is being wisely invested.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

The presentation of the preliminary findings and discussion on the way forward took place with members of the Evaluation Reference Group in August 2024 and fed into the final recommendations presented below. The recommendations were reviewed by the Evaluation Management Group and the Evaluation Reference Group. Subsequent changes were integrated as appropriate. The bullet points below the recommendations represent potential key actions for consideration by the Country Office, based on feasibility within the office's current programme of work and available resources. The level of priority and suggested time frame for implementation are indicated below the recommendation. Feedback from the Evaluation Management Group and Evaluation Reference Group on factual errors in the evaluation report was tracked for transparency.

RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

BASED ON CONCLUSION 1

RECOMMENDATION 1

In line with UN Women’s shift to a programmatic approach, the Country Office should clarify its vision, strategies and resources for achieving outcome-level change within UN Women’s triple mandate and emerging priorities of Timor-Leste – prioritizing the translation of policies and frameworks into action.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

Q2 2025

Key actions for consideration:

- Ensure the Country Office’s theory of change reflects the new priorities and dynamic realities of Timor-Leste while recognizing the deeply entrenched norms linked with religious and traditional systems.
- With respect to the Country Office’s impact areas, identify how UN Women’s corporate Gender Equality Accelerators can be leveraged to ensure coherent programming across the UN Women Strategic Plan, UNSDCF and Country Office Strategic Note .
- Engage a diverse range of partners in discussing gender equality and empowerment of women priorities through the Strategic Note development process, and map where synergies and partnerships can be forged. With respect to civil society, the Country Office should continue to include organizations representing marginalized groups, and engage these groups more systematically at a strategic level to ensure voice and agency during critical project design phases.
- Clarify the strategy for fulfilling the Country Office’s role as a knowledge hub for gender equality and women’s empowerment in Timor-Leste (gender equality profile, supporting data and statistics efforts, knowledge exchange, etc.).
- **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls** remains critical, yet funding may be dwindling. Therefore, EVAWG may need to be embedded within other areas. Models for prevention of violence against women have not yet been solidified and will require more robust efforts to deepen and learn what works. Continued collaboration related to strengthening the coordination of quality services will require safeguarding, which could be prioritized through key partnerships with UN Gender Theme Group and Secretary of State for Equality.
- **Women’s Economic Empowerment** is a nascent area, with a lot of potential given the current momentum based on national and donor interest. There is an opportunity to ensure a broader vision for WEE and better linkages of efforts with other thematic areas and UN Women’s triple mandate.
- **Women, Peace and Security** is a long-standing strength at normative level, efforts should now double down on implementation of NAP 1325 and ensure linkages with disaster risk reduction, and humanitarian action and resilience.

TO BE LED BY: Country Office senior management in consultation with all personnel

IMPACT: Sustained relevance of the Country Office’s efforts, particularly around women’s empowerment and aligning with Timor-Leste’s evolving priorities. The Country Office’s influence and credibility will be strengthened as it continues to engage a diverse range of partners across thematic areas.

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM. Achieving consensus among diverse stakeholders, including government entities, civil society and development partners may be challenging due to varying priorities and expectations. Aligning these interests while maintaining a coherent strategic direction for UN Women’s mandate could result in delays in the Strategic Note development process.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: Without a clear, collaborative and strategic vision, there is a risk that efforts (especially in WEE and other emerging areas) may be fragmented and unsustainable and lack ownership from key national duty bearers.

BASED ON CONCLUSION 2

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Country Office should prioritize its coordination mandate in Timor-Leste by establishing a strategy, in consultation with the UNCT, to enhance coherence through coordination; ensure it fulfills its role as a knowledge hub and connector for gender equality and women's empowerment; and ensure the coordination strategy is resourced accordingly.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

Q3 2025

Key actions for consideration:

- **UN coordination platforms:** Revitalize the existing coordination platforms and facilitate strategic-level exchange of information and action for all areas of work on gender equality and the empowerment of women (e.g. WPS, WEE, EVAWG, WPP). Identify priority policy issues, joint products and events that groups can mobilize around.
- **Joint programmes:** Continue to engage with UNCT members to identify opportunities for joint programmes. During the design phase of such programmes ensure efforts are focused on maximizing synergies, build on each agency's value added and embed strategies for maximum impact and sustainability.
- **UNSDCF:** Advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment through related UNSDCF processes (i.e. Common Country Analysis, new UNSDCF framework, Country Gender Equality Profiles) and integrate recommendations from the UN Secretary General's Gender Action Plan, CEDAW observations and the UNCT Gender Scorecard.

TO BE LED BY: Country Office Senior Management in consultation with thematic leads.

IMPACT: Enhanced capacity of the Country Office to lead on gender equality efforts in Timor-Leste and reinforce its role as the gender equality and empowerment of women expert.

DIFFICULTY: LOW. Building effective coordination requires a strategic level of information exchange and synergy, which can be challenging to maintain if partnerships are not properly aligned.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: Failure to prioritize coordination will limit the Country Office's ability to operate at scale, leading to a fragmented approach across key thematic areas and missing opportunities for collaboration across the UN system.

EFFECTIVENESS

BASED ON CONCLUSION 3

RECOMMENDATION 3

To translate normative gains into tangible results, the Country Office should pivot from awareness campaigns to incubating models with partners, including the government and civil society. These models must align with UN Women’s triple mandate, Gender Equality Accelerators and the broader development ecosystem and should include strong capacity-building methods and clear progress indicators to monitor progress and inform decisions on scaling or adjusting the models.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

Q2 2025

Key actions:

- Prioritize which models to implement with partners based on evidence. While several initiatives hold promise, they all require significant investment of time, resources and local representation to ensure a robust model and that “do no harm risks” are accounted for. Evidence from other countries indicate that the following models have potential:
 - Safe Markets: Provides an opportunity to link across EVAWG, WEE, Leadership and normative level efforts. The weavers’ initiative could also be linked with this initiative.
 - Community-based efforts (across thematic areas) with religious institutions: There is a critical need to focus on engaging key power brokers to analyse pathways of change to shift towards positive social norms related to women’s empowerment.
- Move away from one-off training courses towards long-term capacity-building by adopting a capacity-building approach to strengthen consistency in methods and the systematization of information collected on progress across efforts. This is in line with the Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s approach to capacity development⁶² – see Recommendation 7 on strengthening results-based management.

TO BE LED BY: Country Office Senior Management in consultation with thematic leads.

IMPACT: A deeper integration of normative gains into sustainable, community-based programmes, driving long-term empowerment and systemic change.

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM. Resource investment is needed for capacity-building and in overcoming resistance from entrenched societal structures, especially local power brokers. It is necessary to invest in building robust monitoring systems to enable assessment of progress and impact.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: The Country Office risks continuing short-term interventions, missing the opportunity for impactful, lasting change, and undermining progress towards gender equality.

⁶² UN Women, Independent Evaluation Service, Corporate evaluation of UN Women’s support for capacity development of partners to respond to the needs of women and girls at national level, 2023, <https://gate.unwomen.org/EvaluationDocument/Download?evaluationDocumentID=9987>

SUSTAINABILITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

BASED ON CONCLUSION 4

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Country Office should adopt a comprehensive strategy for designing and implementing its initiatives through an intersectional perspective, acknowledging the varied priorities and needs of the most marginalized stakeholder groups, especially rural women, women with disabilities and individuals of diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC). This approach should guarantee meaningful involvement, empowerment and representation for these groups.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

Q4 2025

Key actions:

- Develop and integrate clear, measurable indicators into the Strategic Note to monitor and track the reach and impact of Country Office interventions on marginalized groups, ensuring comprehensive documentation of results and effectiveness.
- Programmes should clearly analyse geographic selection and population targeting to make clear why certain groups are prioritized (based on an analysis of marginalization).
- Deepen engagement with key power brokers. Engage with influential community figures, such as religious and traditional community leaders on how to shift social norms.
- Strengthen grassroots efforts. Focus on supporting CSOs and the government to enhance grassroots initiatives in rural areas, especially for marginalized populations. This includes addressing structural barriers, infrastructure limitations and budget constraints to ensure sustainable and impactful interventions.
- Ensure a regular process of reflection with respect to approaches for integrating human rights and gender equality in programming. Systematically collect disaggregated data on the reach and impact of Country Office interventions, ensuring that progress towards inclusivity and the principle of leave no one behind is effectively measured, reflected upon and reported.

TO BE LED BY: Country Office Senior Management in consultation with the Global lead on Disability/LGBTIQ+.

IMPACT: Enhanced inclusivity of UN Women's programming, ensuring that marginalized groups are prioritized, can lead to long-lasting social transformation in vulnerable communities.

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM. Engaging multiple marginalized groups requires building trust and addressing sensitive cultural norms, especially in rural and traditional settings. Resource constraints and capacity gaps at the grassroots level could pose a challenge.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: Failure to apply an intersectional approach risks alienating key populations and reinforcing existing inequalities.

BASED ON CONCLUSION 1 AND 4
RECOMMENDATION 5

In consultation with civil society partners, the Country Office should establish a strategy to more systematically engage civil society, ensuring the most marginalized people are benefitting from UN Women's efforts in Timor-Leste.

Priority
HIGH
Timeframe
Q2 2025
Key actions:

- Facilitate meaningful engagement of diverse CSOs, including led by and for persons from marginalized groups (SOGIESC, people with disabilities and youth), in key policy and coordination spaces. This will entail providing capacity-building (see below point).
 - Work through the UNCT to establish a strategy for building the capacity of CSOs given that many work with the same partners. Continue and expand capacity-building efforts for CSOs in a coordinated manner, including those representing LGBTIQ+ groups and persons with disabilities, to amplify their advocacy and outreach capabilities.
 - Identify an existing platform (and perhaps extend its scope) or create a new platform that allows for regular engagement with CSOs regarding gender equality and women's empowerment. This space could be leveraged to meaningfully engage in co-creation of priorities and programme concepts.
 - Ensure meaningful engagement of civil society in the prioritization of programmes and strategies through systematic engagement at all stages of programme design, implementation and review, ensuring their voice is heard and accountability for achieving the planned outcomes is assured.
-

TO BE LED BY: Country Office Senior Management

IMPACT: A structured approach to engaging civil society is established, especially those representing marginalized groups, which will ensure more inclusive dialogue, advocacy and decision-making for women's rights.

DIFFICULTY: Low. Aligning diverse civil society groups and ensuring their meaningful participation in programme design requires long-term commitment. Coordination across various groups may face resistance from more conservative factions.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: Without meaningful engagement with civil society, particularly marginalized groups, UN Women's efforts may fail to achieve broad-based support, and programmes may lack the depth required to tackle systemic discrimination.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY

CONCLUSION 5 INFORMS RECOMMENDATIONS 6 AND 7

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Country Office should establish a resource mobilization and partnerships strategy in consultation with the Regional Office; seek dedicated support; and proactively engage donors in discussions to build a programme strategy.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

Q1 2025

Key actions:

- Develop a detailed resource mobilization strategy that aligns with both current and emerging priorities. This strategy should include mechanisms for flexible funding to adapt to crises and changing demands, such as Strategic Note funding which will support flexibility and the key resources required for strong programme implementation.
- Engage experienced personnel or consultants dedicated to resource mobilization efforts. This dedicated support will focus on identifying potential funding partners, crafting compelling proposals and ensuring continuous engagement. Utilize the strategic insights and expertise available within the Regional Office or headquarters to explore new areas for funding and to address any gaps in expertise within the Country Office. This collaboration would help the Country Office to enter new domains of work where internal expertise may currently be lacking.
- Proactive engagement with donors should happen both during programme conceptualization and throughout implementation. Engagement should entail sharing of information but also critical reflection processes outlining the key challenges to implementation and how efforts could be strengthened, demonstrating to donors that the Country Office is committed to learning and accountability. Such proactive engagement would foster stronger partnerships, shared accountability and sustained funding.
- Regularly review the implementation challenges faced during the Strategic Note period to improve future resource mobilization efforts. Incorporate lessons learned into the new resource mobilization strategy to enhance resilience and adaptability.

TO BE LED BY: Country Office Senior Management in consultation with the Regional Office

IMPACT: Sustained funding and programmatic flexibility, enabling the Country Office to expand its work and address emerging challenges effectively. Engaging donors throughout the process will foster stronger partnerships and shared accountability.

DIFFICULTY: Low. Developing and maintaining a comprehensive strategy requires significant planning and coordination with donors and the Regional Office.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: The Country Office risks programme continuity, especially in critical areas such as ERAW and WEE.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Strengthen the Country Office's results based management approach to enhance overall programme oversight and feed into enhanced learning and decision-making.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

Q4 2025

Key actions:

- Establish a M&E function and consider engaging third-party monitoring to provide objective and unbiased information. This will help reduce the significant dependence on programme partners for the accuracy and quality of monitoring and reporting.
- Implement a plan for regular monitoring and validation visits by the M&E function to provide continuous support and ensure real-time data collection. This will enhance direct engagement with rights holders and increase UN Women's visibility in intervention areas.
- Emphasize results-based management during the programme design phase to shift the focus from activity-level to impact-level monitoring. This will facilitate tracking the long-term impact of interventions.
- Develop consistent reporting templates linked with the Strategic Note results framework to ensure systematic and uniform reporting of progress against indicators. This will address issues of inconsistent reporting and overlapping results across multiple indicators. In line with this, build the capacities of partners to systematically collect and report on results data.
- Enhance peer learning and knowledge exchange by organizing more critical assessment sessions both internally and externally. This will allow partners to engage in deeper analysis and reflection on challenges and successes, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration.
- Continue to provide opportunities for Country Office personnel to participate in peer learning and knowledge exchange sessions, reinforcing the importance of collaboration and continuous improvement.

TO BE LED BY: M&E team with Country Office Senior Management and operations.

IMPACT: Enhanced oversight, data-driven decision-making, and outcome-focused rather than activity-driven programmes due to robust M&E. This will allow UN Women to track long-term impacts and communicate successes to stakeholders, which can also drive resource mobilization.

DIFFICULTY: Low. Some resource and time investment is needed for the requisite capacity-building on results-based management, dedicated M&E personnel and to ensure consistent monitoring.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: The Country Office risks continuing its focus on short-term activities rather than outcomes, potentially weakening the overall accountability of its interventions.

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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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GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

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



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