



CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S SUPPORT TO
**WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
PEACE PROCESSES**



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The evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES). The IES team included Florencia Tateossian, Evaluation Specialist as Team leader; Clare Anne Castillero as Senior Evaluation Consultant, Luisa Maria Dietrich as Senior Evaluation Consultant and Tania Gatto, Evaluation Consultant.

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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION, AUDIT AND INVESTIGATION SERVICE (IEAIS)

Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

UN Women

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FOREWORD

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, strong evidence has shown that women's participation enhances the effectiveness of peace processes. Including women in security, protection, and recovery efforts is not only a matter of equality but also strengthens stability, development, and long-term peace. Yet, women remain underrepresented in peace negotiations and peacekeeping.

UN Women has been a strong advocate for change, ensuring women's organizations are included at all levels of peace processes, and their perspectives are influencing peace agreements. Through these efforts, UN Women continues to push for a more inclusive and effective approach to peace and security.

The evaluation found that UN Women contributed to results through five broad mechanisms including building partnerships and relationships; convening multiple stakeholders, developing awareness and commitment; supporting women's civil society influence; and embedding WPS and women's participation within institutions. Sustainable results were found mostly, where UN Women contributed to developing the institutions, policies and capacities that can support women's participation, even

in the face of significant setbacks. The evaluation found that supporting women's participation in peace processes is rooted in UN Women's unique mandate and leadership role and its strong relationship with women's civil society, which allows it to bring women's voices to peace processes in a way that no other agency can. Finally, the evaluation found that having politically and diplomatic skilled personnel, senior representatives, in-depth knowledge of the context, a decentralized presence, and enabling procedures were the most critical elements for UN Women to work effectively on peace processes.

The evaluation recommends for UN Women to strengthen its support for women's capacity in relation to peace processes, while increasing its efforts to build appetite for women's participation among key peace process actors. UN Women should work towards strengthening UN Women's political and diplomatic capacities at country level to advance this work and engage in effective partnerships to address women's needs

This evaluation confirms UN Women's commitment to learn from its experience and use evidence to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. We are hopeful that this evaluation will further advance UN Women's work on women, peace and security.



Lisa Sutton

Director, Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Service (IEAIS)

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ACRONYMS

BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DPPA	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
IEAIS	Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Services
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
NAP	National Action Plan on Resolution 1325
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nation Environmental Programme
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund
UNODC	United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WHPF	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

Photo: ©UNOPS/Alexis Stergakis

The corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to women's participation in peace processes was conducted by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS) as part of the UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan (2022–2025). This corporate evaluation covered the period from 2018 to 2023. It was initiated in December 2023 and completed in October 2024. Findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented in this report.

BACKGROUND

This evaluation assessed UN Women's support to women's participation in peace processes between 2018 and 2023, to understand what types of support worked, in which contexts and in what ways it worked, and for whom. The evaluation also examined the different factors that enabled or hindered UN Women's support for women's participation in peace processes and identified lessons learned. The evaluation provides recommendations to solidify UN Women's work in this area.

The evaluation was intended to inform strategic decisions, organizational learning and accountability, and future development of UN Women's Women, Peace and Security portfolio. The overall scope of the evaluation was informed by extensive internal and external stakeholder interviews, detailed portfolio reviews of UN Women's programmes and desk reviews of relevant evaluations, strategic documents and other key reports.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The uniqueness, complexity and dynamic nature of conflict contexts and peace processes, and the need for work in this area to be highly tailored to context, meant that standard evaluation approaches were not suitable for evaluating UN Women's support to women's participation in peace processes.

The evaluation therefore adopted a realist approach, which is based on a recognition that interventions function within complex and dynamic political and social systems that are subject to constant negotiation, resistance and adaptation. To address this complexity, the realist approach focuses on understanding an intervention's underlying generative mechanisms; the surrounding contextual factors that mediate the mechanisms; and the resulting pattern of outcomes. Using a realist approach, this evaluation went beyond simply assessing whether UN Women's support contributed to the desired impact, and instead sought to answer more specifically "Which elements of UN Women's support worked for whom, in what circumstances, and how?"

The evaluation employed a theory-informed, mixed methods approach and drew on primary and secondary data. It involved contribution analysis, comparative analysis, thematic analysis and applied a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach throughout the evaluation. The evaluation team carried out six country case studies and five issue-focused case studies looking at UN Women's work within a small universe of peace processes on which the Entity engages.

The evaluation was “utilization focused” so that the findings and the process itself are as useful as possible for UN Women’s personnel and work. It is important to acknowledge that the evaluation has drawn from a rapidly changing context in all case studies. For that reason, it has mainly drawn from the past, as in the case of Sudan and Syria¹.

CONTEXT

Advancing women’s participation in peace processes is a core element of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, and UN Women seeks to do this by supporting gender equality, women’s rights and women’s meaningful participation in all stages and levels of peace processes. However, this is also a particularly challenging element of the WPS agenda as peace processes are highly sensitive and political, and UN Women’s access to such processes has often been limited. Moreover, current global trends of backlash on gender equality and rejection of multilateral frameworks mean that, in many contexts, efforts to advance women’s participation in peacemaking face ever greater challenges. It is against this background that the evaluation assessed UN Women’s support in this area, seeking to understand how the Entity contributes to results across different contexts to deepen understanding about “what works” in advancing women’s participation in peace processes.

FINDINGS




Drawing on the realist evaluation concepts of context, mechanism and outcome, the evaluation investigated the most common mechanisms through which UN Women’s work contributed to change; how and why these mechanisms operated differently in different contexts; and which mechanisms are best suited to generate outcomes in different contexts. IES identified five broad mechanisms through which UN Women contributed to results. These were:

➔ **Convening multiple stakeholders and fostering collaboration:** A central element of such convening was bringing together diverse groups of women, resulting in the development of common agendas and action. This added value was visible in all contexts, but especially where women’s movements were weak and divided. UN Women also used convening to increase women’s access to key peace process duty bearers, a mechanism that was particularly effective where duty bearers already had commitments on WPS that could be leveraged.

This type of convening was often undertaken in relation to National Action Plan processes and gave duty bearers greater understanding of women’s experiences and priorities; provided opportunities for women to influence duty bearers; and created channels for duty bearers to provide information and be held accountable by women.

➔ **Increasing awareness, changing attitudes and building commitment on women’s participation in peace processes:** The most substantive outcomes from these mechanisms were found at national level, with various case studies illustrating how UN Women fostered awareness, commitment and ownership on women’s participation with government stakeholders, resulting in concrete actions. This awareness and commitment building often happened through UN Women’s wider WPS work, including through support to the development of National Action Plans and the establishment of national WPS structures and processes. At global level, UN Women’s work with the UN Security Council raises awareness about women’s experiences and perspectives in conflict and keeps these issues on the international agenda. UN Women also contributed to outcomes by raising awareness and shifting norms and attitudes at local level. However, work to address discriminatory gender norms that prevent women from participating in peacemaking was often ad hoc rather than as part of a comprehensive strategy. The impact of UN Women’s work to increase awareness and commitment was seen at regional and international level and within the UN system, for example in UN Women’s work with the African Union, and through engagement with the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) that resulted in a Secretary-General commitment for the UN to advocate for minimum one third of women in peace processes. It was also seen at country level, with some UN Women Country Offices playing a strong leadership role within the United Nations Country Team on women’s participation in peace, although other Country Offices lacked capacity to undertake such advocacy and leadership.

¹ After the 2019 coup that overthrown President Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese military took control. The same year, peace negotiations started in Juba, and a peace negotiation agreement started to be implemented in 2022. However, in April 2023, conflict relapsed with a civil war between Sudanese Army and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which led to a humanitarian crisis. The evaluation analyzed the work that UN Women undertook between 2018 and 2023, therefore mostly capturing the phase of the conflict prior to the most recent civil war. Please refer to Annex 8 for more details on the Sudan peace process.

-  **Supporting and accompanying women's mobilization:** This mechanism generated results most consistently across all contexts. The evaluation found that such support to women's civil society was most likely to contribute to change when it supported women to engage across different phases of conflict, including preparing in advance of any possible peace negotiations; engaging when peace negotiations are under way; maintaining pressure between rounds of negotiations; and influencing implementation of any peace agreement. This support was also more effective when it developed the capacities of women's organizations to effectively influence peace processes, something that was a strong focus across UN Women's work, often involving technical, organizational and leadership capacity development. The evaluation also found that support to women's civil society was more valuable when it linked women to opportunities for influence and empowered them to develop their own peace agenda.
-  **Embedding WPS and women's participation within institutional structures and processes that shape peacebuilding.** This mechanism was particularly effective in contexts where implementation of a peace agreement was under way. Such implementation tends to involve intensive institution building, thereby providing opportunities for UN Women to support the development of gender-responsive institutions and processes that are inclusive of women.
-  **Developing strategic relationships and partnerships for UN Women's work.** This was an important mechanism for results, which was most successful in contexts where UN Women had strong political understanding and was perceived as a valuable partner. Establishing relationships of trust has been critical for UN Women to gain access and influence for its work on women's participation in peace processes, while in some cases its failure to build effective relationships was said to have contributed to backlash. Collaboration with UN partners was an important pathway for results in some contexts, enabling UN Women to ensure greater outreach, scale and impact. However, in other contexts, collaboration with UN partners has not been effectively utilized. In particular, UN Women's engagement with the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) on the ground would benefit from being more consistent to more effectively have impact.

Sustainable policy environment for women's participation in peace processes. In terms of sustainability, the evaluation found that results were most likely to be sustained, even in the face of significant setbacks, where UN Women contributed to developing the institutions, policies and capacities that can support women's participation. Support for development of National Action Plans was a main way in which UN Women supported a sustainable policy environment for women's participation in peace processes, as well as support to institutional structures for women's participation. However, the most sustainable results came from UN Women's capacity development work with government and civil society, as these capacities remained in place and could be applied to emerging peace-related processes and opportunities over time. The evaluation found a strong focus on engaging young women in civil society WPS work which contributes to the long-term sustainability of this work.

The value added of UN Women's unique mandate. The evaluation found that UN Women's added value in supporting women's participation in peace processes comes from its unique mandate and leadership role and its strong relationship with women's civil society. This mandate gives it a special role to play in advancing women's participation in peace processes at all levels and means that it maintains a consistent focus on WPS, even in the most challenging contexts. Another central added value of UN Women was its unique relationship with civil society that allows it to bring women's voices to peace processes in a way that no other agency can.

UN Women applied the leave no one behind principle to amplify voices of diverse, marginalized and conflict-affected women in peace processes. In terms of the leave no one behind principle, the evaluation found that inclusion was advanced through local consultations with women's organizations, and proactive engagement with diverse groups such as young women, ethnic groups and groups with diverse gender identities. UN Women personnel were aware of the exclusionary patterns that result from working in capital cities and with established "elite" women's rights organizations, and some Country Offices reflect on how to meaningfully engage with a wider diversity of women.

Political and diplomatic skills and a decentralized presence. Lastly, the evaluation found that politically skilled personnel, senior representatives, a decentralized presence and enabling procedures are the most critical elements for UN Women to work effectively on peace processes. Given the political complexity involved, personnel require strong political, diplomatic and analytical skills, and in-depth knowledge of the context. Where Country Offices have such personnel, they can position themselves strategically in relation to peace processes, while the absence of such personnel results in weak outcomes. The presence of a senior level Country Representative, regional WPS adviser and sub-national offices in collaboration with women, peace and security experts at UN Women headquarters, are all valuable in enabling UN Women to operate with authority, expertise and context relevance to advance women's participation in peace processes. However, the evaluation heard that at times the limited clarity on how to apply UN Women's procedures related to working with partners in conflict-affected contexts are said to be a barrier to operate in volatile and restrictive contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1:

There were five broad mechanisms through which UN Women contributes to results: building relationships; convening multiple stakeholders; developing awareness and commitment; supporting women's civil society influence; and embedding WPS and women's participation within institutions. Although these mechanisms looked very different in different settings, together they contributed to most positive results from UN Women's work in this area.

There was significant variation in how effectively UN Women supports change through these mechanisms. In some cases, UN Women's engagement built on existing dynamics, processes and opportunities to successfully foster change through a given mechanism. However, in two case studies, UN Women faced challenges in fully accounting for existing local dynamics and interests while promoting change. These experiences highlight valuable lessons for more effective engagement. Excellent context awareness, strong networks, relationships of trust,

political skills and ongoing information gathering and analysis are crucial for UN Women to identify the most effective mechanisms for change in each context.

The extent to which the results fostered through these different mechanisms were sustained depended highly on context, and particularly on trajectories of conflict and peacebuilding. However, patterns did emerge in terms of what types of results were most likely to be sustained. Notably, where UN Women strengthened capacities within government and civil society, or where UN Women embedded WPS and women's participation within nationally owned policies and institutions, results were more likely to be sustained.

CONCLUSION 2:

UN Women's approach to leave no one behind in terms of women's participation within the women, peace and security context has been somewhat successful in engaging diverse, marginalized, conflict-affected and grassroots groups, and in employing participatory and bottom-up approaches.

UN Women's geographical presence at local levels; scale up of funding from the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) to women's grassroots peace efforts; and resourcing for women's networks, coalitions and alliances has contributed to amplifying more diverse women's voices. However, efforts to facilitate bottom-up consultations and amplify diverse women's voices at national, regional and global levels need to be accompanied by purposeful follow-up to ensure that women's contributions are both considered and acted upon by peace process decision makers.

CONCLUSION 3:

UN Women's widely recognized capacity, mandate and leadership on women, peace and security combined with its strong relationships with women's civil society, mean that the Entity, in partnership with DPPA and DPO, has the potential to lead² where it has a presence and to develop the agenda on women's participation in peace processes.

² It is important to note that DPPA and DPO are the UN's peace and security pillar; therefore, UN Women must work in partnership with DPPA and DPO on women's participation in peace processes.

UN Women is living up to this potential and delivering added value in some areas. For example, in keeping the issue of women's participation on the agenda at every level and across multiple spaces and processes; and in developing strong relationships with and support for women's civil society and acting as a trusted broker for women's civil society to engage with a range of stakeholders and duty bearers. UN Women is also providing thought leadership to advance the WPS agenda and connect it with different and emerging issues such as climate resilience, land rights, social justice and civil unrest, particularly at local level, although the Entity could do more on this or make its work in this area more visible.

However, there were areas where UN Women has potential to add value but was not doing so. In particular, UN Women does not systematically facilitate the sharing of learning and experiences, or always offer the technical expertise on gender and peace processes that others expect of it.

CONCLUSION 4:

UN Women has effective ways of working to support women's participation in peace processes. Politically skilled personnel, senior representatives, a decentralized presence and enabling procedures were the most critical corporate elements for effective work to support women's participation in peace processes. Navigating backlash against gender equality initiatives should be further explored.

Some elements of UN Women's structures were particularly conducive to producing results in conflict contexts, such as the presence of senior representatives and WPS regional experts. However, other elements hindered results, such as limited operational flexibility in fragile settings; limited guidance on security protocols for partners in volatile and restrictive contexts; and limited presence on the ground. In some cases, personnel were operating under severe limitations due to inadequate resourcing in relation to the complexity of settings, as well as lack of clarity on organizational processes that impede operations required for effective WPS delivery. Limited ability to navigate backlash undermine UN Women's ability to negotiate risk in conflict settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATION 1:

UN Women should maintain and strengthen its support for women's capacity in relation to peace processes, while increasing its efforts to build appetite for women's participation among key peace process actors in close coordination with other relevant UN entities.



RECOMMENDATION 2:

UN Women should ensure it has strong political and diplomatic capacities at country level to advance women's participation in peace processes and engage in effective partnerships.



RECOMMENDATION 3:

UN Women should continue to build on its WPS leadership role to share new lessons, approaches and models on women's participation in peace processes that others can take on and develop. This should be coupled with strengthening the production of data on WPS and monitoring its use for building a strong evidence base on women's participation and influence in peace processes.



RECOMMENDATION 4:

UN Women should continue operationalizing the leave no one behind principle and sharpen efforts to engage with marginalized groups in peace processes. By being more open to engaging with those that have critical or contrary positions, UN Women could strengthen and broaden its partnerships and increase the diversity of the women's voices that it supports.



RECOMMENDATION 5:

UN Women, in close coordination with other relevant UN entities should document analytical practices across offices to unpack "resistance to gender equality" and develop concrete action plans in line with the Push Forward Strategy and the UN System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.



Photo: ©UN Women/Allison Joyce

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope

The corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to women's participation in peace processes was undertaken as part of the Corporate Evaluation Plan 2022–2025. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess this portfolio between 2018 and 2023, to inform strategic decisions, organizational learning and accountability; and UN Women's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) portfolio as it contributes to the current UN Women Strategic Plan.

The overall scope of the evaluation was informed by extensive stakeholder interviews, detailed portfolio reviews of UN Women's programmes and desk review of relevant evaluations, strategic documents and other key reports. The evaluation paid particular attention to the different contexts in which UN Women operates to understand whether support contributed to results. The evaluation examined integration of gender equality considerations in understanding the causes that have led to different outcomes. The geographic scope covers six regions through a representative sample of Country Offices.

The evaluation will be presented to the UN Women Executive Board in 2025, accompanied by a management response. Preparation of the management response will be led by UN Women's Peace, Security and Resilience Section (which sits within the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division), in collaboration with other divisions as required.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, senior management, UN Women's Peace, Security and Resilience Section, and Regional and Country Offices operating in conflict settings, in addition to other personnel directly working on or with an interest in WPS.

1.2 Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation used a theory-informed, realist and "utilization focused" approach designed to ensure that both the findings and the process itself are as useful as possible for UN Women. A conceptual framework and a theory of change were developed for the evaluation and used to develop evaluation questions, guide the stakeholder analysis, design of data collection tools and inform fieldwork, as well as the analysis and triangulation of the different data sources.

The theory of change draws on UN Women documents that focus specifically on support for women's participation in peace processes, as well as a wider collection of documents related to UN Women's WPS work and information provided by UN Women personnel during the inception phase of the evaluation. See Figure 1 for further details on the reconstructed theory of change.³

In terms of overall scope of this evaluation, the team situates 'peace processes' as one aspect among others under the overarching WPS agenda. Therefore, other important UN Women workstreams on the adoption, implementation, and localisation of WPS National Action Plans, capacity-building, organisational strengthening and movement consolidation were explored only to the extent to which there is a direct link to peace processes.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The evaluation had the following objectives:



Assess the results of UN Women's support to women's participation in peace processes; **what worked where; in which contexts, for whom and in what ways**. It also assessed the different factors that enabled or hindered UN Women's support to contribute to the desired results.



Identify **best practices to scale up UN Women's support** to women's participation in peace processes.



Identify **lessons learned and provide action-oriented recommendations** to solidify work in this area.

³ The complete theory of change with notes can be found in Annex 12

FIGURE 1. Reconstructed theory of change



The evaluation applied a **realist approach**, which recognizes that interventions function within complex and dynamic political and social systems that are subject to constant negotiation, resistance and adaptation. To address this complexity, this approach focused on understanding an intervention's underlying generative mechanisms, the surrounding contextual factors that mediate the mechanisms, and the resulting pattern of outcomes. It answered the following question: **“Which elements of UN Women’s support worked for whom, in what circumstances, and how?”**

Given that conflict affected contexts are highly complex and dynamic environments, and that peace processes are extremely context specific, it is likely that UN Women’s support has played out quite differently in different contexts and for different groups within each context.

The evaluation relied on a mix of primary and secondary data. Primary data collection included direct observation; 215 key informant interviews (30 men and 185 women) including 5 focus group discussions; and 2 online surveys targeting 51 UN Women business units (65% response rate N=33/51), and 700 UN Women partners (34% response rate N=239/700).

Primary data was collected through a combination of remote and in-person data collection. The evaluation conducted 6 country case studies (Georgia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, The Philippines, Colombia and Sudan) and five comparative thematic case studies (Navigating restrictive context Afghanistan-Myanmar; Women Advisory Boards Syria-Yemen; regional organizations – the case of Africa; the UN Women-DPPA partnerships; multi-track linkages)⁴. The evaluation undertook in person missions to three out of the 6 case study countries and the remaining data collection was undertaken virtually. It is important to acknowledge that the evaluation has drawn from a rapidly changing context in all case studies. For that reason, it has mainly drawn from the past, as in the case of Sudan and Syria⁵.

Secondary data consisted of an extensive document review, including relevant Strategic Notes and annual workplans, programme and project documents and donor reports, studies, country gender profiles and conflict analyses.

Data analysis included thematic narrative analysis based on data triangulated from interviews and desk reviews, as well as the surveys. All data and contribution analysis aimed to respond to the evaluation questions (see box 1). The sampling frame includes stakeholders as part of UN Women in headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices, UN entities including UN political and peacekeeping missions; regional intergovernmental and mediation bodies, governmental counterparts, member states and transitional bodies, other peace negotiation stakeholders, donors and resource partners, peace guarantors, women’s civil society organizations, and academia and research institutions, knowledge producers and WPS think tanks.

A gender-responsive and human rights-based approach has been applied throughout the evaluation process, in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Guidance for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality Perspectives in Evaluations in the UN System⁶. Section 2 of the evaluation questions has been purposely designed to address all gender equality and human rights concerns, as well as disability inclusion identifying what has worked for whom and in what ways.

⁴ See Annex 11 for country case study selection and Annex 8 for Key Milestones in Peace Processes for each country in the case studies.

⁵ After the 2019 coup that overthrown President Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese military took control. The same year, peace negotiations started in Juba, and a peace negotiation agreement started to be implemented in 2022. However, in April 2023, conflict relapsed with a civil war between Sudanese Army and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which led to a humanitarian crisis. The evaluation analyzed the work that UN Women undertook between 2018 and 2023, therefore mostly capturing the phase of the conflict prior to the most recent civil war. Please refer to Annex 8 for more details on the Sudan peace process.

⁶ UNEG (2024). UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations

BOX 1

Evaluation Questions

1

What were the outcomes/ results of UN Women’s support to women’s participation in peace processes in different contexts?

What worked where and why

1.1 In what contexts were they achieved and in what contexts were they not?

1.2 Why were they achieved, and why were they not?

EFFECTIVENESS, RELEVANCE

2

What were the outcomes/ results for different stakeholder groups?

What worked for whom

2.1 Were the outcomes the same for different groups/ and sub-groups and in different contexts?

2.2 Were there any groups for whom the results have not been effective? In what ways and why was it not effective for them?

HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY, LNOB, EFFECTIVENESS, RELEVANCE

3

What were the mechanisms through which outcomes were achieved?

In what ways it worked

3.1 When results were achieved, through what mechanisms/pathways were they achieved?

3.2 Were there unexpected mechanisms/pathways through which results were achieved?

3.3 Have the results been sustained over time? If so, how have they been sustained? If not, why not?

EFFECTIVENESS, COORDINATION, SUSTAINABILITY

4

How could outcomes/results have been improved?

4.1 What could UN Women have done better or differently to ensure that its results were achieved in different contexts and for all groups of beneficiaries?

4.2 What has been UN Women added value, in relation to other actors?

4.3 What else does the evaluation need to know to understand how UN Women’s results were achieved?

VALUE ADDED, WAYS OF WORKING

FIGURE 2. Sources and methodology for data collection

Mixed Method Data



Qualitative and quantitative data collection and triangulated. Sources: OneApp Dashboard, DAMs, ATLAS and RMS systems reviewed

215 stakeholders engaged



Internal 67 (9 men-58 women)
External 148 (21 men-127 women)

300+ documents reviewed



Desk review of evaluations, reports, prodocs, etc; portfolio analysis

11 case studies



6 Country case studies
5 Deep dive case studies

2 online surveys

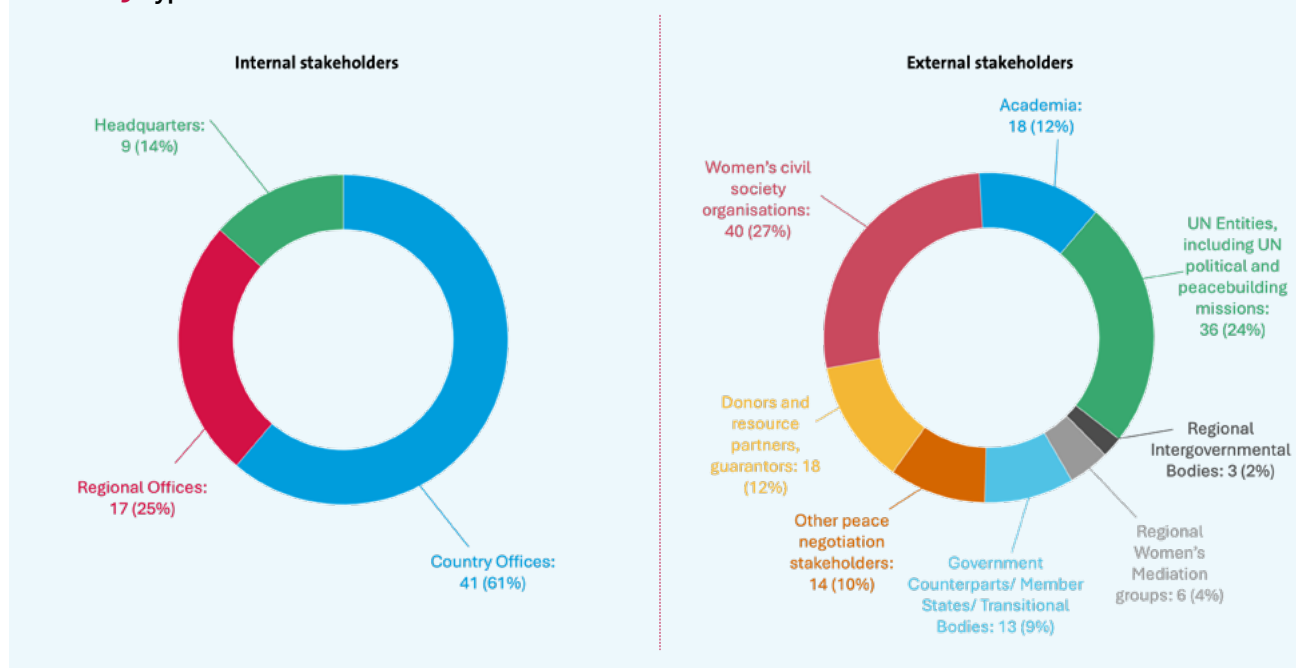


UN Women COs, ROs and business units (N= 33/51; 65% response rate)
UN Women’s partners (N= 239/700; 34% response rate)

5 Focus Group Discussions



1 in Libya, 1 in Colombia, 1 in DRC, 1 in Georgia, 1 in the Philippines

FIGURE 3. Types of stakeholders consulted

Developed by the evaluation team

1.3 Ethics, gender equality and no one left behind

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy,⁷ UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System.⁸ All members of the evaluation team signed and submitted an Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form indicating their individual commitment to these standards. The evaluation was based on gender and human rights principles, as defined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy and adhered to the UN norms and standards for evaluation in the UN system.⁹ The evaluation made explicit mention of ethical consideration in all its interview protocols, clarifying issues of confidentiality and consent. Given the particularity of this evaluation, where human rights defenders, conflict parties and other critical stakeholders were part of the data collection, these issues were managed with the utmost sensitivity and care. The evaluation took special consideration to be inclusive of all groups, utilizing translation services for online interviews and focus groups discussions, and respecting the times and locations preferred by groups interviewed.

1.4 Evaluation constraints and limitations

The collection of primary data was limited to a representative sample of countries and their contexts and did not allow for similar context comparisons. There was a small universe of countries where UN Women supports peace processes. The analysis also relied on existing data, which can be limited in terms of availability, accessibility and quality. The primary perception data from key informants has been essential, but can have its own limitations, especially where it is based on people's perceptions of past processes and events. The evaluation also covers interventions in different contexts, which have limitations in terms of extrapolating all-encompassing conclusions. A complete list of risks and mitigation measures can be found in Annex 16.

⁷ UN Women, Evaluation Policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNW/2012/12)

⁸ United Nations Evaluation Group, UNEG Ethical Guidelines, accessible at: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=102

⁹ United Nations Evaluation Group, Norms and Standards for evaluation in the UN system, accessible at: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>; UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations accessible at <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1616>.

2. EVALUATION CONTEXT

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and the landmark United Nations Security Council [Resolution 1325](#) (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security in 2000, there has been strong evidence that women's participation strongly contributes to the effectiveness of peace processes. Similarly, that including gender concerns and women's perspectives in the provision of security, protection, and relief and recovery is not just important from an equality and rights perspective, but contributes to wider stability, recovery and development goals. Despite this, women continue to be underrepresented in peace negotiations and peacekeeping, while only a small percentage of official development assistance in fragile states is targeted to gender equality. With growing and unprecedented challenges to global peace and security – from the huge increase in people in need of international assistance, to rising violent extremism and climate shocks exacerbating conflict – UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda remain critical for building sustainable peace.

UN Women's work on WPS is guided by a series of commitments to women's rights, of which UN Women has been an active promoter in its normative work. Through its recommendation in the Secretary-General reports, UN Women contributes to normative advancements in enhancing women's participation in peace processes. While the Security Council has adopted 10 resolutions on WPS,¹⁰ five resolutions are particularly relevant to the specific scope of the evaluation, which have guided the efforts of UN Women in this area: i.e. Resolution 1325 (2000), Resolution 1889 (2009), Resolution 2122 (2013), Resolution 2242 (2015) and Resolution 2493 (2019) (see Annex 9 for a summary). Other key normative reference points are the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and

Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16, which recognize the nexus between peace and security and sustainable development. The Secretary-General's recent New Agenda for Peace,¹¹ while not a normative framework, is also key as it paved the way for the Pact of the Future, which includes an Action on women's participation in all UN led peace processes, and it is an opportunity to agree on multilateral solutions for strengthening global governance.

UN Women works at global, regional and country levels to support women's participation in peace processes, implementing an integrated normative, coordination and operational mandate to respond to stakeholder needs.

UN Women plays a significant role in supporting peace processes by advocating for gender equality, women's rights and women's meaningful participation in all stages of peace processes. This includes advocating for the inclusion of women and women's organizations at all levels of decision-making in peace processes; mainstreaming gender in peace initiatives; producing and disseminating knowledge products; making expert resources available; providing technical expertise; convening peace networking spaces; supporting training for women mediators and peacebuilders; and building peace partnerships, supporting women's participation in the implementation of peace agreements.

¹⁰ Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019).

¹¹ Secretary-General's [New Agenda for Peace](#), July 2023.



Photo: ©UN Women/Mech Sereyrath

3. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

3.1 Financial analysis

The evaluation mapped the impact area on Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action from 2018 to 2023 which revealed a total budget of US\$ 569.9 million¹². This represents 17.5 per cent of total budget for all thematic areas in UN Women. Most of the funding comes from non-core resources (93 per cent versus 6 per cent of core resources). In terms of geographical areas, the largest budget is found in Asia and the Pacific, representing US\$ 128 million, with Afghanistan the second largest office with a budget of US\$ 35.3 million. Headquarters follows with a budget of US\$ 121.5 million, and West and Central Africa with US\$ 90 million. The Multi-Donor Trust Fund and Peacebuilding Fund are the top donors, followed by the government of Norway and Swedish International Cooperation (see Figure 5).

3.2 Key frameworks

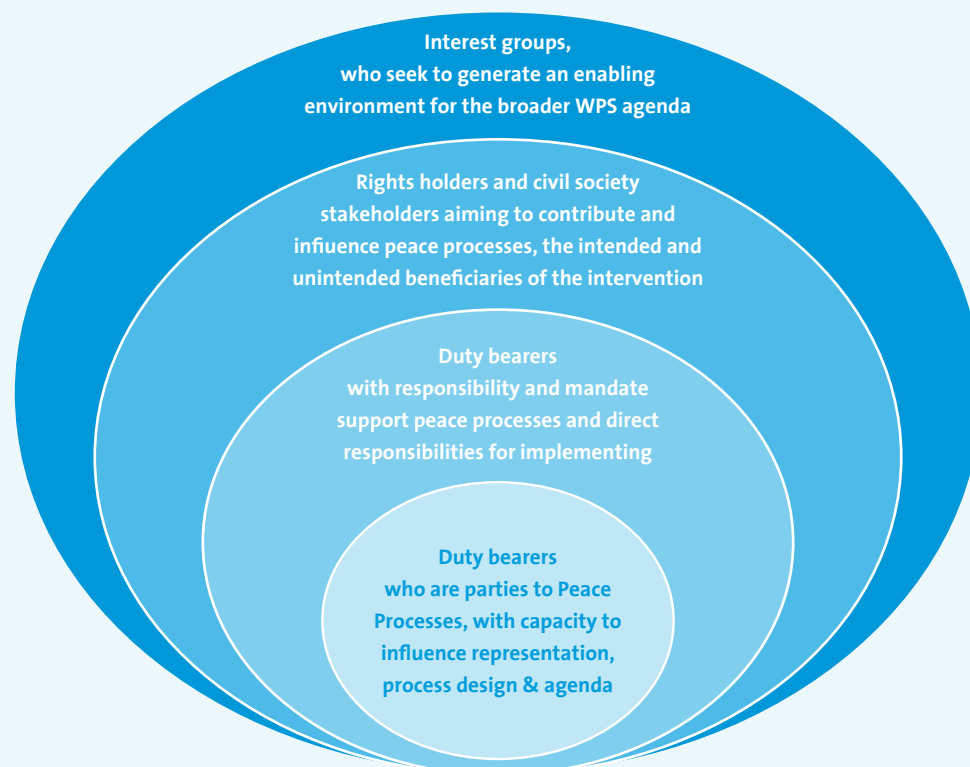
The evaluation used two UN Women strategic frameworks included in both the 2018–2021 and 2022–2025 Strategic Plans. It looked at outcome 5/output 13 in the 2018–2022 Strategic Plan on more WPS commitments implemented by Member States and the UN system, and

more gender equality advocates influence peace and security processes. In the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, the evaluation looked at impact 4/outcome 1 and 5 on global norms and standards on gender equality, and women and girls voice, agency and leadership. Specifically it looked at women mediators, negotiators and signatories in peace processes; National Action Plans and the level of influence of CSOs working in peace processes; and the dialogues, mechanisms, platforms and coalitions that enable the meaningful participation of gender equality advocates.

3.3 Key partners

The evaluation utilized an ecological model to map UN Women's key partners in this area of work. The ecological model allowed the evaluation to use the "peace process" as a unit of analysis, and identified the different roles assumed by stakeholders with respect to the peace process. Figure 4 shows the stakeholders mapped into the categories of duty bearers, interest groups and right holders based on their role in the peace process. Annex 7 includes the analysis of stakeholder roles according to the country case studies and ecological model.

FIGURE 4. Stakeholder mapping: an ecological model

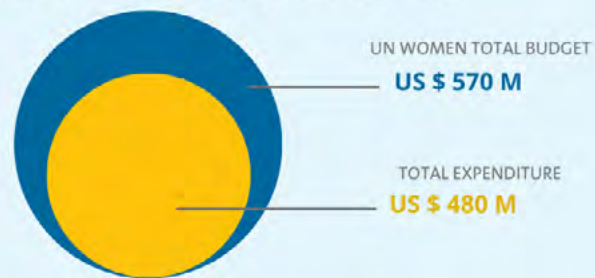


Source: Developed by the evaluation team

¹² It is important to note that UN Women's current systems do not allow to disaggregate the budgets based on specific areas of work. The financial data in this paragraph and in Figure 4 reflect the amounts allocated to the WPS-HA section as a whole and not to the specific work on women's participation in peace processes.

FIGURE 5: Financial analysis of the strategic impact area Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action 2018–2023

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (2018-2023) (IN US\$)

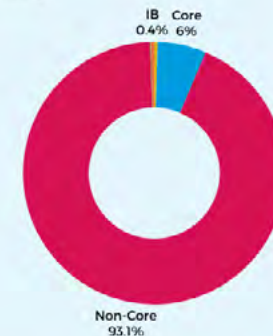


Source: OneApp, downloaded in December 2023

BUDGET BY FUNDING SOURCE (2018-2023)

The vast majority of funding comes from non-core resources:

- RB (0.04%) **US \$2 M**
- CORE (6%) **US \$34 M**
- IB (0.4%) **US \$2 M**
- NON CORE (93.1%) **US \$530 M**
- EXB (0.1%) **US \$740 K**



Source: OneApp, downloaded by the evaluation team in December 2023

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE BY REGION FOR WPS PORTFOLIO (2018-2023)

The majority of the budget was situated in the Asia and the Pacific, followed by HQ, and Western and Central Africa.



Source: OneApp, downloaded by the evaluation team in December 2023

TOP OFFICES BY BUDGET ALLOCATION ABOVE 10M (2018-2023)



Source: OneApp, downloaded in December 2023 and compiled by the evaluation team

TOP DONORS BY BUDGET ALLOCATION ABOVE 10M (2018-2023)



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team based on UN Women's One App system



Photo: ©UNLIREC/Luis Carrera

4. FINDINGS

EFFECTIVENESS, RELEVANCE

Evaluation questions 1 and 3: What types of support worked, with what results and in what contexts?

The realist evaluation approach focuses on the three key concepts of context, mechanism and outcome, with the aim of identifying which mechanisms are likely to operate in different contexts and the outcomes that will occur when they do.¹³

The evaluation identified five main mechanisms through which results were generated and the following analysis is structured around these mechanisms. While the evaluation included separate evaluation questions on outcomes, the evidence gathered mainly on intermediary outcomes¹⁴ has been integrated into the below analysis on mechanisms of change, as they are the primary focus of this realist evaluation.

FINDING 1

An important mechanism for results was convening multiple stakeholders and fostering collaboration. This contributed to outcomes in all contexts but was particularly valuable where women's mobilization was fragmented or where women lacked access to key decision makers.

UN Women's convening **brought together diverse groups of women, resulting in the development of common agendas and action. This added value in all contexts, but especially where women's movements were weak and divided (see Figure 6 for mechanism–outcomes linkage).** For example, in Libya UN Women convened women at national and sub-national level resulting in the development of common agendas; the establishment of the Libyan Women's Peacebuilding Network; and collaborative action by women from across the country.

Evidence from the Sudan country case study indicates that UN Women convened women to develop a shared agenda in advance of their participation in the Track II¹⁵ peace talks in Juba in February 2020 and April 2021. Meanwhile, in Colombia, where there is already a well networked women's movement, UN Women provided technical and financial support for a Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres to address implementation of the peace agreement. In some cases, convening focused on a specific issue rather than a broad peace agenda, such as in the Philippines where UN Women brought together Indigenous women to develop a common position on the draft Bangsamoro Indigenous Peoples Code.

Not only did convening diverse women help develop common agendas it also **changed women's attitudes and perceptions of each other in contexts where women are divided along existing conflict lines.** There was evidence of this in both Georgia and the Philippines, where UN Women supported women-to-women peacebuilding that helped to overcome misconceptions and distrust and enabled collaborative action across conflict dividing lines.

In Bangsamoro, UN Women convened women from the three main communities (Moro people, indigenous people and Christian settlers) for dialogue and capacity development, with stakeholders reporting that this resulted in them overcoming prejudices, understanding each other's perspectives and collaborating on common priorities. Meanwhile, in Georgia, UN Women supported online and in-person engagement between Abkhaz, Georgian and Ossetian young women activists, around issues of women's leadership, which was seen as a neutral topic. These women reported gaining a greater understanding of each other's issues and perspectives, although the value of this work raises some questions due to the political risks involved, limited potential to scale up and limited possibilities for sustained, meaningful collaboration across the administrative boundary line¹⁶.

¹³ Drawn from Westhorp, G. 2014. Realist Impact Evaluation: An Introduction. London: ODI

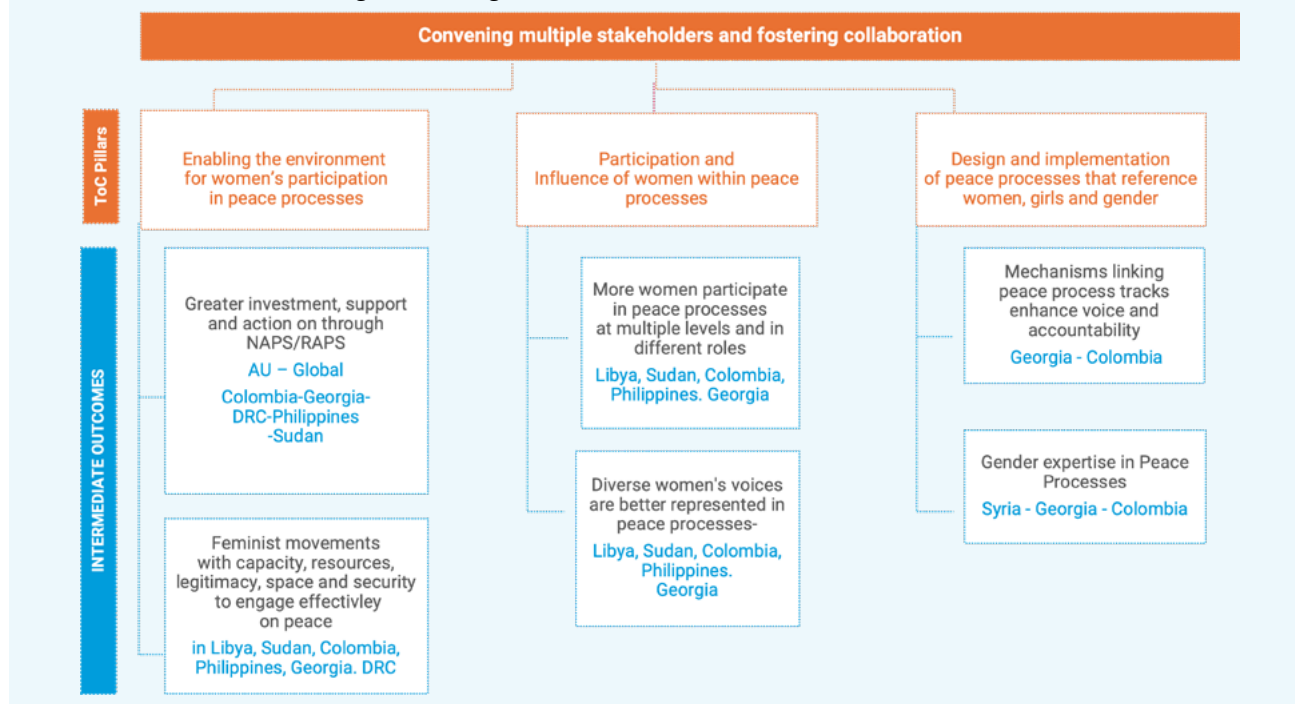
¹⁴ Intermediary outcomes respond to the three pillars of the theory of change (see Figure 1 and Annex 12): Enabling the environment for women's participation in peace processes; participation and influence of women within peace processes; and design and implementation of peace processes that reference women, girls and gender.

¹⁵ A peace track is a peace process initiative that takes place at a specific level of society, or "track", and can include a variety of activities: Track I refers to formal peace processes;

Track II refers to dialogue/advise/mediation;

Track III refers to local peace committees, community mediation programmes

¹⁶ It should be noted that this intervention did enable UN Women to successfully fundraise from MFA Denmark and receive funds for continued work to develop a more elaborate cross-administrative boundary line programme for young women from 2024 onwards.

FIGURE 6: Mechanism of change: convening stakeholders

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

UN Women used convening to **increase women's access to key peace process duty bearers, a mechanism that was particularly effective where duty bearers already had commitments on WPS that can be leveraged.** This type of convening has given duty bearers greater understanding of women's experiences and priorities; provided opportunities for women to influence duty bearers; and created channels for duty bearers to provide information and be held accountable by women. It was often undertaken in relation to National Action Plan processes, where UN Women acts a bridge between government and civil society. The Geneva International Discussions and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism dialogue mechanism in Georgia was the most structured and sustainable example of convening women together with duty bearers (see Box 2). However, another strong example of this type of convening is UN Women's work with the African Union to bring Sudanese women's voices to key regional actors and decision makers. Throughout the period evaluated, this convening effort included organizing virtual meetings between women and African Union, UN and other leaders after the Sudan crisis began in 2019;¹⁷ bringing women from Sudan and the diaspora to consultations in Kampala and facilitating production of a declaration; and organizing for the African Union High Level Panel to meet women on the ground in Sudan. This convening work contributed to WPS issues being integrated into the African Union's response to conflict in Sudan.

Interviews with stakeholders and document review indicates that UN Women also **connected women with both conflict parties and peace negotiation actors and spaces, although, in most contexts women were not able to translate this access into meaningful influence.** For example, in Sudan, UN Women supported women to engage with conflict parties and key actors involved in the Juba peace process. Similarly, in Colombia, UN Women is supporting preparations by women's civil society to engage with the National Liberation Army as part of the current peace initiative.

The Women's Advisory Board in Syria is an example of a structured mechanism for women to engage with the UN Special Envoy, who is a key peace process actor. UN Women acts as the technical secretariat and has to date facilitated approximately 50 Women's Advisory Board meetings, four round table discussions; 73 meetings with high-level stakeholders; 14 meetings with the Special Envoy; and 15 meetings with the Deputy Special Envoy. In terms of substantive contributions, Women's Advisory Board members have developed over 19 joint statements or position papers; a series of thematic papers on constitutional principles including on education, legislation, economy, centralization/ decentralization;¹⁸ and provided tangible advice to the Special Envoy on early recovery and scenarios to help to unlock the political process (see Box 3).

¹⁷ See Annex 8 for Key Milestones in Peace Processes for all countries in case studies.

¹⁸ Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women (IEAS), 2023. UN Women Syria Programme Evaluation Report, (Authors: Chaitali Chattopadhyay, and Rosie Aubrey)

BOX 2.**Convening conflict-affected women and peace process actors in Georgia**

In Georgia, UN Women contributed to the establishment of structured, effective and sustainable mechanisms to connect conflict-affected women with key peace process duty bearers, enabling them to voice concerns and receive information about the peace process.

Recognizing the limited participation of women in the Geneva International Discussion (GID)/Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) UN Women established parallel dialogue platforms where women can engage directly with Georgian authorities through regular meetings tied to peace process discussions and contributed to the establishment of regular engagement with the GID co-chairs. For over 16 years, these mechanisms have provided civil society, particularly women, with essential insights into the GID and IPRMs. Now integrated into Georgia's National Action Plan, the meetings with the Georgian authorities are owned and managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ensuring their sustainability.

Alongside establishing these dialogue mechanisms, UN Women supported conflict-affected women at the grassroots level to advocate for their needs through the dialogue mechanisms. This included supporting women to develop common agendas; strengthening women's capacity to speak in public and advocate for their needs; supporting women to undertake needs assessments within their communities; training women on relevant topics; and supporting women to represent their communities in the dialogue mechanisms. As a result of this work, these conflict-affected women are able to effectively present their perspectives and advocate for themselves within the dialogue mechanisms. However, a significant challenge remains the lack of feedback from the Georgian authorities regarding how women's concerns are addressed. This has led to frustration, as women feel their inputs are unacknowledged and repetitive. A 2020 study highlighted that while the dialogue mechanisms are valuable, their effectiveness is limited by the broader challenging context of the Geneva International Discussion process, limiting women's influence, and peace process actors' accountability to women, within peacebuilding efforts.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

BOX 3:**Women's Advisory Boards**

UN Women supports women's participation in peace processes through various inclusion modalities, including Women's Advisory Boards and gender technical committees.¹⁹ Such inclusion mechanisms have emerged in contexts including Syria, Yemen, and Iraq²⁰ and have been under consideration in Georgia. They can enhance women's representation and influence the design of the peace process as well as the substantive areas for discussion in UN-led/co-led peace processes.

The Women's Advisory Board to the UN Special Envoy in Syria:²¹

- Brings together women from diverse geographic, ethnic and sectarian backgrounds, who can be highly polarized.
- Enables substantive engagement with the content that is discussed in peace negotiations, such as constitution-building, local governance and transitional justice²².
- Provides opportunities to influence stakeholders, such as the UN Special Envoy and other UN leadership.
- Enhances women's representation in other governance bodies, acting as a "door-opener" to the wider political process, in contexts where they have the necessary peace and security expertise and capacity.²³

¹⁹ Christine Bell, and Catherine Turner, (2020). Models for Women's Inclusion in Track One Mediation in Peace and Transition Processes. Cairo, UN Women; UN Women, 2021. Meeting Report Women's Meaningful Participation In Peace Processes Modalities And Strategies Across Tracks 29-30 November 2018 Geneva, Switzerland.

²⁰ The Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics for Iraq was established in March 2019.

²¹ UN Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women (IEAS), 2023. UN Women Syria Programme Evaluation Report.

²² More specifically, the different avenues to work on substantive content include: developed in the course of eight in-person WAB meetings (between April 2021 and September 2022), and four roundtable discussions on (on education, mediation, local governance and constitution building, as well as de/centralization and the economy), and official submissions to the OSE (including constitutional principles, 2021/2022; governance and public authorities, 2022; or transitional justice (2022); developing four scenarios to unlock the political process.

²³ For example the Constitutional Committee, which consists of 150 members, of which 45 representatives are part of a smaller drafting committee. Twenty-eight per cent of the Committee are women (45) and the smaller drafting Committee of 45 comprises 29 per cent women (13). This represents an unprecedented number of women in the political process, both for Syria and the broader Middle East region. Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women (IEAS), 2023. UN Women Syria Programme Evaluation Report,

Women's Advisory Boards/ committees work better when they:²⁴

- Are not the only mechanism to allow for women's participation in formal negotiation processes, and there are open channels of communication with other women's bodies and mechanisms, as well as formalized linkages between women's civil society and the advisory board
- Respond to the demands of the peace process, have direct communication lines into the mediator team, the negotiating delegations, means to engage with the negotiation process and have equal access to draft agreements (alongside experts and advisory entities and civil society organisations).
- Have a clear mandate, explicit terms of reference, monitored workplans and adequate operational and technical support.
- Have a transparent selection criterion, and members are appointed based on experience, expertise and past record of advocacy in gender and women's rights issues; members have established roles and responsibilities and are rotated; and there are established principles/code of conduct and procedures to manage tensions.

The consultations and review of literature²⁵ captured the following criticisms of Women's Advisory Boards:

- Advising a mediator is not the same as participating in the talks, meaning that Women's Advisory Boards can perpetuate a glass ceiling for women that keeps them excluded from the main negotiation process.
- Continued activities of the Women's Advisory Board in the context of a stalled process creates an "illusion of progress", without necessarily advancing tangible peace outcomes.
- Representation criteria seen as 'flawed', overgeneralizing affiliation and sidelining inner-group differences. Members of the Women's Advisory Board are often established political women, with positions that can, but do not necessarily mean that they advocate for gender equality and women's human rights priorities.
- Confidentiality clauses disconnect Women's Advisory Board members from their constituencies and prevent them from sharing information.
- Gender perspectives on agenda items are sometimes missing which limits possible influence on gender equitable peace outcomes.
- Members of the Women's Advisory Board face pressures related to defamation campaigns, security threats and responsibilities from their own organizations and families, without adequate support or means to respond.

Despite the above criticisms of Women's Advisory Boards, they remain one modality that can contribute to enhancing women's representation, influencing capacity and the content of the substantive discussions alongside meaningful participation in gender-responsive peace processes. UN Women is well positioned to contribute to formation of advisory boards, and provide technical secretariat and advisory support functions to members.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

The evaluation identified a gap in UN Women's efforts to convene those women, mainly from conflict parties, who are already at the peace negotiation table. Engaging with members of political or combatant negotiation delegations, and those included on their technical working groups is well within the scope of the WPS agenda and "one of the four ways in which women have direct modalities of inclusion, but is currently not actively pursued."²⁶ Data collection indicates that women affiliated with armed movements have had limited engagement with UN Women during the active negotiation phase, and only tend to develop closer working relations in

implementation phases. The WPS-Humanitarian Action Compact 2022 report explicitly observes that a limited number of Member States reported on specific actions to advocate with conflict parties to ensure delegations included women.²⁷ One positive example was UN Women's engagement with armed actors in Colombia, during the Gender-Sub Commission at the Havana Peace talks, which enabled a fruitful partnership with the insurgent group and contributed to the successes of the peace agreement, with provisions referencing women, girls and gender.

²⁴ This section also incorporates recommendations in Christine Bell, and Catherine Turner, (2020). *Models for Women's Inclusion in Track One Mediation in Peace and Transition Processes*. Cairo, UN Women.

²⁵ Asad, Rula, 2022. *The Syrian Women's Advisory Board – lessons to be learned*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung. (26 January 2022). Zahar, Marie-Joëlle, 2022. *Seeking Inclusion, Breeding Exclusion? The UN's WPS Agenda and the Syrian Peace Talks*. Peace Track Initiative, To Be Foundation, and Women Solidarity Network, 2018. Briefing Paper: 10 Lessons from Syria to ensure effective inclusion of women at peacebuilding in Yemen.

²⁶ United Nations, Department of Political Affairs, 2017. *Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies*. New York, United Nations, available at <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/1.%20English%20-GIMS.pdf>;

²⁷ UN Women, 2022. *Generation Equality Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Annual report 2022*.

Similarly, UN Women Sudan adapted its Strategic Note to add an outcome on engaging political parties, which resulted in a partnership with the Women's Association of the Sudan Revolutionary Front (the women's wing of the Sudan Revolutionary Front) signatory of the Juba Peace Agreement.²⁸ Subsequently, key interviews with stakeholders confirmed that UN Women, with the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan and UNDP²⁹ facilitated a series of workshops to strengthen the capacities and skills of 200 women from the Women's Rights Group, Gender Advisory Committee, women from political parties, peace signatories, resistance committees and civil society on negotiations to influence the peace/political process led by the tripartite mechanism³⁰ aiming to get the transition to civilian governance and the peace agreement back on track.

Data collection in Sudan and Colombia further indicate that while tensions within women's movements are likely to emerge with an enhanced engagement with

women affiliated to armed factions, more nuanced, diversified and politically savvy engagements could address these tensions. Interviews from case studies indicate that supporting work among divergent and opposing conflict/political factions, even when there is strong disagreement, could be leveraged towards a common gender-related issue, such as the consequences of sexual violence in conflict.

However, it is important to note that convening and bridging different stakeholders (who would otherwise not engage with each other) to contribute to peace processes was among the lower ranked pathways of change in the survey, with only 27 per cent (N= 41/153) of partners and 23 per cent (N= 7/31) of UN Women personnel rating this as a pathway of change to a large extent. This may reflect that UN Women's ability to successfully convene a range of peace process stakeholders is dependent on its credibility and networks, which in some contexts are weak.

FINDING 2

Increasing awareness, changing attitudes and building commitment on women's participation in peace processes were important mechanisms that generated outcomes at multiple levels, although most strongly at national level.

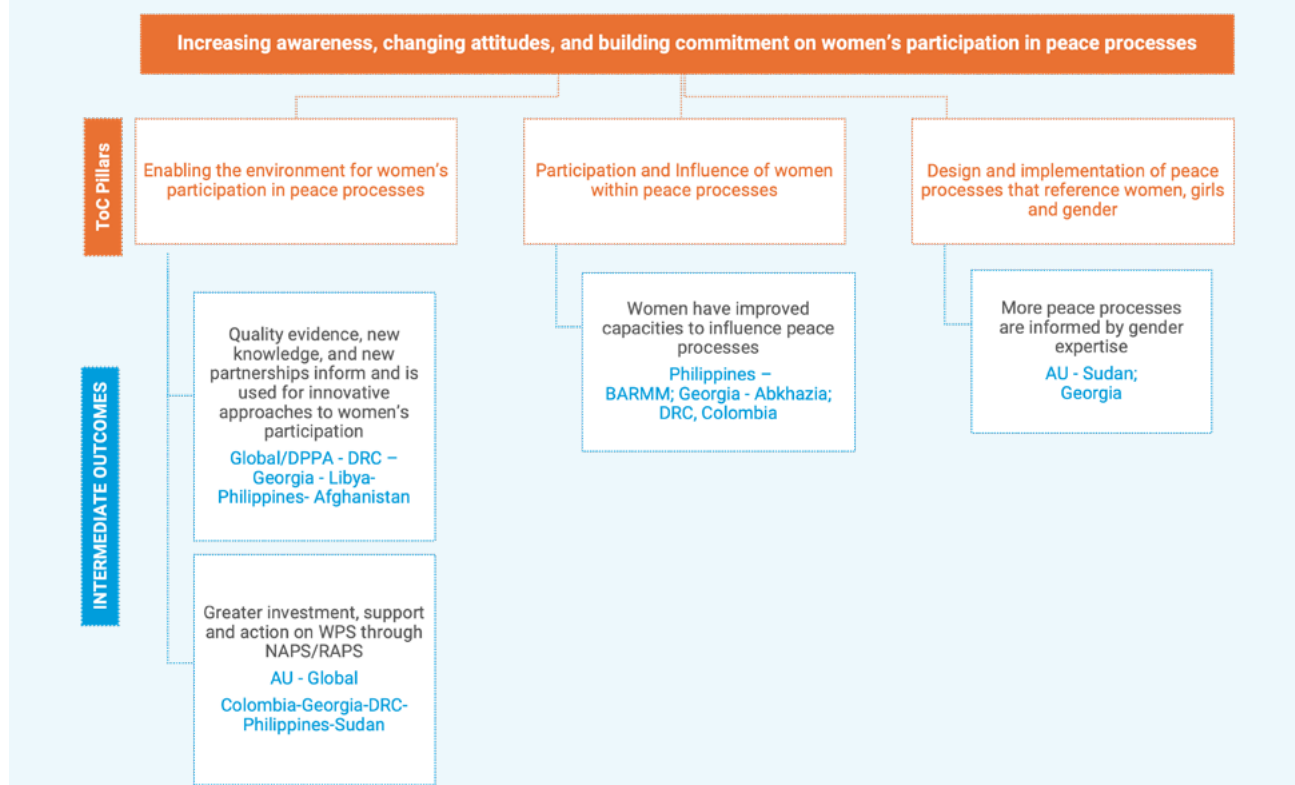
The most substantive outcomes from these mechanisms were found at national level, with various case studies illustrating how **UN Women fostered awareness, commitment and ownership on women's participation with government stakeholders, resulting in concrete actions** (see Figure 7 for the mechanism–outcomes linkages). This awareness and commitment building often happened through National Action Plan-related work, a finding that reflects the Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Support to WPS National Action Plans, which concluded that "UN Women is effective in facilitating national NAP processes that build awareness and consensus" (UN Women 2021). Evidence of this was found in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where UN Women helped

build government commitment to establish the 1325 Secretariat in the Ministry of Family, Women and Children. Similarly, in The Philippines, where UN Women's support to development of the National Action Plan contributed to generating commitment within the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity on women's participation and appetite to expand WPS work to other conflict-affected zones. Meanwhile, Georgia is a good example of how UN Women has fostered government awareness, commitment and ownership on WPS and women's participation through relationship building, private advocacy and public awareness raising, taking advantage of emerging entry points.

²⁸ UN Women Sudan, 2020 annual report.

²⁹ In a SIDA-funded project through Folke Bernadotte Academy (UN Women 2022, Annual Report).

³⁰ The tripartite mechanism is made up of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

FIGURE 7: Mechanism of change: increasing awareness

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

UN Women also contributed to outcomes through **raising and shifting awareness on women's participation at local level. Change in social norms towards the inclusion of women in peace processes was reported** in the survey as a result by 66.3 per cent (N= 122/184) of UN Women partner respondents and by 84 per cent (N= 27/32) of UN Women personnel respondents, although interestingly neither UN Women personnel nor partners ranked change in social norms as a common pathway of change.³¹

In the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines, UN Women engaged with men who were religious and community leaders to help overcome opposition to women's participation in peacebuilding and develop WPS training materials that were culturally acceptable. An evaluation of this work found that "adapting key messages to the religious context makes a narrative which is understandable and accepted by the target audience. Women Peace Facilitators reported how they adapted their messages to the Quran."³²

In DRC, UN Women supported women's organizations to advocate and raise awareness for the National Action Plan at provincial level and within communities as part of the National Action Plan's mobilizing process. Meanwhile, in Libya, UN Women's work to develop networks of women collaborating across different parts of the country

contributed to male leaders recognizing the value of engaging with these women on a range of local issues. However, the evaluation found that work to address social norms was often carried out in limited and ad hoc ways rather than as part of a comprehensive strategy.³³ Given the scale of resistance and backlash faced in many contexts, more systematic efforts are required to address the discriminatory gender norms that prevent women from participating in peacemaking.

The evaluation also found that, in some contexts, UN Women's support had changed women's perceptions of their own role in peacemaking. For example, grassroots women that UN Women had supported in Abkhazia and BARMM reported that they had developed new perspectives on how they can contribute to advancing peace and women's rights. Similarly, women in DRC reported that they had gained confidence from being involved in local peacebuilding work supported by UN Women. Meanwhile, women in Colombia see themselves as entitled to full participation in the current peace initiative with the National Liberation Army because of their extensive involvement in the previous peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (Spanish: *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo*, FARC–EP or FARC), in which they were supported by UN Women.

³¹ Only 27 per cent (N=42/155) of partner respondents and 40 per cent (N=12/30) of UN Women respondents reported change in norms and attitudes to be a pathway of change to a large extent.

³² Final Project Evaluation of "Promoting conflict prevention, social cohesion and community resilience in BARMM in the time of COVID-19"

³³ See recent Feminist Collaborative Evaluation on Social Norms.

The outcomes of **awareness raising and commitment building can be seen in UN Women’s engagement with regional and international actors**. For example, it was reported that UN Women’s consistent and strategic advocacy with the African Union on the Sudan conflict contributed to several results including the African Union’s Chairperson committing that the Sudan process will include youth and women; the African Union appointing a High-Level Panel for Sudan that includes a woman; and the establishment of a gender advisory group to advise this panel.

UN Women has also used continuous behind the scenes engagement, advocacy and briefings to build commitment among the Geneva International Discussion co-chairs (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, European Union and United Nations) to integrate WPS into the Geneva International Discussion and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism processes. Meanwhile, at global level, UN Women’s work with the UN Security Council raises awareness about women’s experiences and perspectives in conflict and keeps these issues on the international agenda. Apart from regular briefings by UN Women’s Executive Director to the Security Council, UN Women acts as the secretariat of the Security Council’s Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, where these issues are discussed in greater detail, and where Council Members have the opportunity to be briefed by senior UN leadership on the current status of women’s participation in ongoing peace efforts, including barriers and opportunities. This has been the case in most situations on the agenda of the Security Council in recent years, including Sudan, DRC, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Colombia, and others. In the case of Sudan, for example, UN Women briefed the informal Expert Group on the Juba process, highlighting the lack of women negotiators and mediators in this process and gaps in gender provisions within the Juba Agreement.

UN Women also used **advocacy and awareness raising to strengthen commitment to women’s participation in peace processes within the UN system**. Interviews from multiple UN stakeholders indicated that UN Women constantly “pushes” the UN system to be more ambitious in supporting women’s participation in peace processes. At DPPA headquarters, personnel reported that UN Women successfully leveraged its role to step up UN commitments on women’s participation, including through the DPPA, DPO and UN Women (2024) Options Paper on “How the UN System Can Advance Tangible Results on Women’s Participation in Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding by 2030” and the Secretary-General’s (2023) commitment to advocate for a minimum of one third of women in peace processes (S/2023/725, para 104), and that UN Women continually promotes progress on WPS within the UN.

The evaluation also found that in some country contexts UN Women plays a strong role in leading and mobilizing the UNCT on WPS and women’s participation. For example, in Georgia, UN Women contributes to bringing the UNCT together for the annual WPS Open Day, while colleagues from the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office in Tbilisi reported that UN Women also provides strong leadership on WPS issues within the UNCT. However, in other contexts, such as the Philippines and Libya, UN partners reported that UN Women lacks capacity to advocate and lead on WPS within the UNCT.

By examining unexpected ways in which results emerged, the evaluation identified cases where **UN Women’s work generated greater commitment and action than had been foreseen**. For example, UN Women’s engagement with the African Union on Sudan generated unexpected levels of support and appetite within the African Union, resulting in the organization’s Peace and Security Council requesting the development of a framework for the promotion of women’s participation in Sudan’s peace process. Meanwhile, the Geneva International Discussions and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism dialogue mechanisms in Georgia demonstrated to duty bearers the value of consulting with women’s civil society and contributed to the State Minister of Reconciliation and Civic Equality’s decision to establish a WPS Consultation Platform of women experts to advise the ministry, which was an unforeseen outcome.

Similarly, in Colombia and the Philippines the evaluation found there was unexpected demand for UN Women to work on new issues in relation to women’s participation in peace. In Colombia, unforeseen opportunities emerged such as plans to support political dialogue between Colombian and Venezuelan political women leaders as part of a capacity strengthening initiative for mediation and negotiation across the political divide. Meanwhile in the Philippines, the national governments’ strong discourse on leave no one behind created unexpected space for UN Women to advance issues of inclusion within its WPS work in BARMM; there was greater openness than expected from the BARMM authorities on issues of women’s participation; and there has been unexpected demand from local partners to address climate change and WPS, which UN Women is responding to through joint programming with UNDP.

The evaluation found that **knowledge generation can play an important role in this pathway of change**, as the development of evidence that highlights women’s experiences, demonstrates the value of their participation or provides guidance on gender-responsive peace processes, contributes to increasing awareness and commitment.

Examples of using knowledge generation to promote awareness and commitment include UN Women's collaboration with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to develop a series of technical briefs to inform the peace negotiations in Doha, as well as UN Women's reports from its quarterly consultations with women in Afghanistan. In Libya, UN Women conducted a study on gender mainstreaming within the economic track of the peace negotiations, which informed discussions.³⁴ Similarly, in Georgia, UN Women developed a range of knowledge products related to the Geneva International Discussions and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism process that key peace process actors reported to be useful.³⁵ Meanwhile, research emerging in the context of the regional programme Enhancing Women's Leadership for Sustainable Peace in Fragile Contexts in the Middle East and North Africa, has also been relevant for informing efforts to advance women's leadership in the region. The range of knowledge products that UN Women produces in relation to peace processes are diverse, including documentation of lessons learned and best practices; reports from high-level regional and global convenings, peer-exchange and workshops; and research into thematic issues such as gender mainstreaming ceasefires or gender-inclusive national dialogues.

Survey results on the use of knowledge products revealed that more than half of partner respondents (56 per cent N=103/184) said they had used UN Women's research and knowledge products to advance women's participation in peace processes. Many stakeholders used the products to conduct capacity development activities, as a reference for their activities and to inform policymaking, advocacy strategies and educational campaigns. Data suggested that some UN Women tools have been particularly useful for stakeholders. As an example, *The Progress of the World's Women* series was mentioned multiple times as providing critical, in-depth information that drives action and policy. While some other key global products were referenced, many partners found country-level research, briefs, surveys and assessments to be useful for their work on the ground.³⁶

BOX 4

Knowledge Production: Insights from Afghanistan

After the de facto authorities (DfA) takeover in August 2021, UN Women decided to stay in the country and amplify diverse women's voices through the development of a series of knowledge products. Since August 2022, UN Women has collaborated with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and IOM to develop the Afghanistan Quarterly Consultations that capture women's voices, their perspectives, concerns and priorities regarding the peace process. These consultations have been used to inform stakeholders with influence over decisions affecting the lives of Afghan women, including the UN Security Council discussions for Afghanistan and the UN-led Doha format. In meetings of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on WPS, these quarterly consultations with diverse women have been described as (currently) the only path to keep women's agency and leadership alive and active.³⁷ UN Women has continuously expanded its reach to engage women in five different provinces and convened online and in-person sessions, in English, Dari and Pashto³⁸.

Other knowledge products include the Sustaining Peace Briefs (2020 and 2021), where UN Women partnered with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to inform the delegations in Doha on gender-responsive ceasefires, constitutions and implementation mechanisms.³⁹ In 2021, the UN Country Team Afghanistan, embarked on a Gender-Responsive Conflict Analysis, with punctual input from UN Women, that also resulted in a Guidance Note on Gender-Responsive Conflict Analysis (2022).⁴⁰ In 2024, UN Women published the Afghanistan Gender Country Profile,⁴¹ including a section on the WPS agenda, and Unstoppable Women - The Afghan Women's Movement - a collaboration between a journalist and artist who co-produced an illustrated report, which features interviews from four advocates across the movement speaking out on behalf of the women who cannot.⁴²

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

³⁴ Research paper: Gender Mainstreaming in the Economic Track for Libya, UN Women, 2022

³⁵ These include the 2019 'Needs Assessment of the Population Residing Along the Administrative Boundary Lines in Georgia', the 2020 study 'Benchmarks, Barriers and Bridging the Gaps: Enhancing Women's Meaningful Participation and Contribution to Peace Processes in Georgia', as well as other types of knowledge products.

³⁶ Many examples were mentioned such as Gender Alert on the Conflict in South Lebanon (2023), *Las mujeres, la paz y la seguridad: directrices para la implementación nacional* (2012), *l'étude Leadership des organisations de femmes pour la paix et la sécurité au Sahel* (2020), showing UN Women's strong role in generating knowledge which empowers local and international partners to tailor their WPS interventions more effectively.

³⁷ (S/2023/207)

³⁸ October 2022, March 2023, June 2023, September 2023, August-October 2023

³⁹ UN Women 2021. Gender responsive ceasefires and ceasefire agreements

⁴⁰ UN Women Afghanistan, 2022. Gender-Responsive Conflict Analysis, A Guidance Note. Women, Peace and Security Section.

⁴¹ UN Women. 2024. Gender Country Profile: Afghanistan. Kabul: UN Women Afghanistan, with sections on gender equality in Afghanistan, challenges and opportunities for Afghan women; gender-based violence; health, economic and social rights; advancing equal participation and leadership.

⁴² UN Women (2024). "Unstoppable Women" The Afghan Women's Movement.

In some contexts, UN Women has developed strategies and partnerships to disseminate knowledge on WPS in ways that have potential to build awareness and commitment at greater scale and over time. This includes developing an advanced course on WPS together with the Bangsamoro Peace Institute in BARMM; supporting the info1325.org platform in DRC; and establishing the WPS Open Days in Georgia.

While the production of knowledge was referenced as a pathway to raise awareness in some contexts, it was also referred to as a limitation when it comes to the availability of robust quantitative data. The evaluation found differences in developing quality evidence and new knowledge for peace processes. Specifically, Quantitative data collected at the country level is used for the Secretary-General Annual WPS reports and Informal Expert Groups on WPS, but stakeholders indicated limited use of this

data for country-level interventions. Women Count has increased the production and access to WPS statistical data and pushed for new data on the impact of conflict on women and girls through rapid gender assessments. The Women Count Dashboard includes WPS indicators, but their usage within UN Women is unclear. UN Women and partners are developing a **Women in Peace Processes Monitor** to monitor trends in women's participation and the gender-responsiveness of peace agreements to address existing data gaps; however, this has not yet been fully developed. This also aligns with results from the survey where fewer UN Women partners and personnel perceive that knowledge production is a pathway through which results were achieved: 29 per cent (N=44/153) of partners and 28 per cent of personnel (N=8/30) reporting this to be an effective pathway to a large extent.

FINDING 3

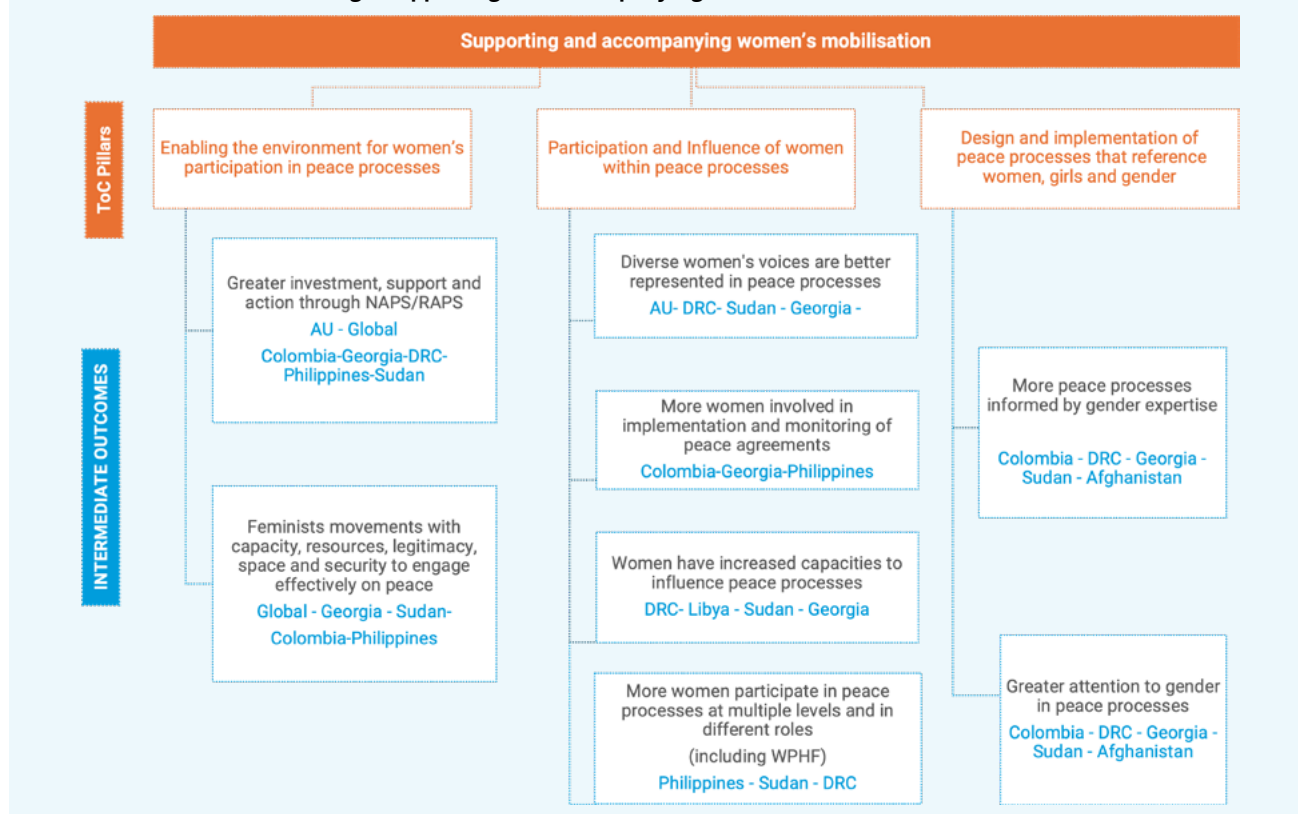
The mechanism that most consistently generated results across all contexts was supporting and accompanying women's mobilization, with outcomes stronger when this was conducted in a sustained, meaningful and empowering way.

The evaluation found that in all contexts UN Women supports women's civil society to develop agendas, access spaces and exert influence in relation to peace processes. This work is viewed by all stakeholders as a core element of UN Women's WPS work and a clear added value. In the survey, this was identified as the most common pathway of change by both UN Women personnel 65 per cent (N=20/31) and partners 48 per cent (N=77/161). The evaluation found that while this type of work is undertaken at different levels and in different ways, there are some common elements that make it more likely to contribute to outcomes.

Support and accompaniment of women's civil society is more likely to contribute to change when it is **sustained over the long term and supports women to engage across different phases of conflict and peacebuilding** (see Figure 8 for the mechanism–outcomes linkages). Although much of UN Women's support for women's civil society mobilization focused on moments of active peace negotiations, multiple stakeholders suggested that it is also critical to support women's civil society to be prepared in advance of any possible peace negotiations; to follow up and

maintain pressure between rounds of negotiations; and to influence implementation once a peace agreement has been reached.

While such sustained support for women's civil society engagement was not the norm, the evaluation found some positive examples of UN Women supporting both preparation and follow-up to peace processes. In terms of preparation, in the context of the stalled peace process in Georgia, UN Women is building women's capacities and networks so they are ready to exert influence whenever progress within the peace process becomes possible. Similarly, in Myanmar, UN Women is using flexible funding arrangements to help maintain women's CSOs in this highly restrictive environment so they are prepared to engage if the context allows. Meanwhile, in terms of sustaining support for women's civil society after a peace deal is concluded, UN Women has supported women's civil society in BARMM to successfully lobby for gender provisions within post-conflict policy frameworks and institutions and to be involved in local level peace implementation.

FIGURE 8: Mechanism of change: supporting and accompanying women's mobilization

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

However, the evaluation also identified cases where support to women's civil society was not sustained, resulting in momentum being lost. For example, in Sudan, UN Women provided valuable support for women delegates to attend preparatory meetings and peace dialogues in Juba, but did not accompany these women to facilitate their engagement with key stakeholders; did not support them to remain in Juba throughout the process; and did not provide adequate follow-up, mainly due to lack of resources and foresight.

The evaluation found that support and accompaniment of women's civil society contributed to results when it **connected women in meaningful, politically smart and timely ways to real opportunities for influence**. Evidence of this includes UN Women's support for Sudanese women's civil society to share their perspectives with the African Union in various forums, resulting in the organization taking concrete actions to address women's concerns (see Box 5). It was also seen in UN Women and the African Women Leaders Network's support for Congolese women's civil society presence at the sidelines of the Nairobi III peace consultations, facilitating their engagement with key actors and providing follow-up support to develop a road map to guide future work. Similarly, UN Women supported women's civil society in Bangsamoro to engage in a timely, informed and relevant way in consultations on a range of peace implementation issues.

However, in Libya, evidence suggests that support for women's civil society to engage with opportunities for influence was not politically smart or timely. UN Women

supported civil society women from Libya to attend the Palermo conference in 2018, the Berlin conference in 2020 and the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in 2020. While facilitating women's participation in these events was considered an achievement, the criteria for selection of these women was unclear, resulting in them lacking credibility with their male counterparts. Meanwhile the last-minute nature of UN Women's support meant there was no time for these women to build a meaningful agenda for themselves.

Developing the capacities of women's organizations and activists to effectively influence peace processes and actors is central to the success of this mechanism. The evaluation found this to be a strong focus across UN Women's work, often involving technical, organizational and leadership capacity development. Evidence on this includes work to develop the knowledge, confidence and capacity of grassroots women in Georgia, which enabled them to present their perspectives convincingly in the Geneva International Discussions and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism dialogue mechanism, and resulted in duty bearers recognizing the value of consultation with women's civil society. It also includes UN Women's work to strengthen capacities and networks of women in DRC to increase their ability to influence peace processes resulting in clear road maps to drive the WPS agenda; and supporting the creation of the national WPS network "Synergie des femmes pour la paix et la sécurité" resulting in a convergence of women's WPS group agendas.

BOX 5

Partnership with the African Union

The Regional Office of Eastern and Southern Africa's collaboration with the African Union exemplifies a strategic approach to enhancing women's participation in peace processes. In addition to partnering with the African Union's gender department, the Regional Office engaged with the organization's Political Affairs, Peace and Security Unit, which directly handles peace processes, and its Special Envoy on WPS. This partnership initially focused on the Sudan conflict but has potential for broader regional application.

The Regional Office bolstered the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Unit's limited gender capacity, fostering leadership commitment to include women in consultations. Ongoing collaboration between the unit and UN Women involves informal analyses, stakeholder mapping and strategic discussions. Joint efforts have amplified Sudanese women's voices within regional institutions.

UN Women has established a strong rapport with the African Union's Special Envoy on WPS, facilitating solidarity missions and supporting conflict-affected women in shaping common agendas and access decision-making spaces. Notably, UN Women helped develop the African Union Continental Results Framework for monitoring the WPS agenda in Africa. In 2023, a joint event on WPS in Sudan led to the formation of a steering group to enhance collaboration among UN Women; the African Union's Political Affairs, Peace and Security Unit and Special Envoy; and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, highlighting UN Women's technical contributions and connections to women's civil society. UN Women personnel identified relevant entry points and took advantage of opportunities to develop a strong relationship with the African Union. It was based on a strong understanding of regional dynamics, key power holders and ongoing developments within the African Union. UN Women became a valued and influential partner to the African Union because it brought both strong technical expertise and connections to women's civil society at country level.

Source: developed by the evaluation team

UN Women also supported the strengthening of Sudanese women's capacities to analyse information, develop and voice key demands and take action, such as attempts to engage with key decision makers in the run-up and during the Juba peace process. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, UN Women is developing the capacity of Indigenous women to develop an agenda and speak in public, to influence consultations on the Bangsamoro Indigenous Peoples Code. Survey results also confirmed that increasing the capacity of women to effectively contribute to peace dialogues ranked as a top result by UN Women personnel 97 per cent (N=31/32) and partners 72 per cent (N=132/184).

The evaluation found that **support for women's civil society is more effective if undertaken at multiple levels and in a joined-up way**. For example, UN Women's work to advance Sudanese women's voices has involved supporting women's capacity and engagement across local, national and regional levels. Similarly, UN Women's work in the Sahel connected support for local and national women peacebuilders to regional-level initiatives. This included supporting the capacity of women and youth groups at local and national level; building on this to support the development of regional networks of women civil society leaders; and facilitating engagement between women's civil society in Sahel countries and visiting Economic Community of West African States missions. Critically, the evaluation found that where UN Women had a sub-national presence (Colombia, DRC, Georgia and the Philippines) this significantly strengthened the Entity's ability to support grassroots women's organizations; connect them to other levels; and enable them to have their voices heard in relation to peace processes. In addition, the evaluation identified that while there could be benefits from linking support for women's participation in peacebuilding with wider work on women's political participation – for example by supporting grassroots women working on peace to enter local politics, or connecting women in politics and women peace activists at multiple levels – opportunities were sometimes overlooked and there was insufficient connection between work on WPS and women's political participation (as mentioned by stakeholders in Georgia). Another element of this mechanism is support for grassroots women's civil society to undertake peacebuilding and conflict resolution work at the local level. Evidence of this can be found in DRC and the Philippines where women have been supported to engage in community-level peacebuilding through conflict mediation, early warning, awareness raising and preventing/countering violent extremism related activities. The evaluation heard that this work by grassroots women not only contributes to building peace at community level, it also increases women's local-level credibility, leadership and influence; gives them greater access to local power holders; and connects them to wider networks of women involved in peace work, thereby increasing the voice and agency of grassroots women in shaping peace processes. This was also confirmed in the surveys, where "Women supported to do peace building initiatives on the ground" is ranked as an effective result by partners 65.7 per cent (N=121/ 184) and UN Women personnel 87 per cent (N=28/ 32).

The evaluation found that the WPHF was an important source of funding for such grassroots women's peacebuilding work in Colombia, DRC, the Philippines and Sudan (see Box 6).

BOX 6

Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund support for women's participation in peacebuilding

The WPHF is a multi-partner trust fund managed by UN Women, supporting local and grassroots women's civil society in conflict and crisis settings. It aims to increase women's representation and leadership in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. The evaluation found that WPHF funding significantly benefits small grassroots women's organizations, which would normally be too small for UN partners to work with. Key findings include:

Organizational strengthening: In the Philippines, WPHF funds reportedly helped develop and formally register over 100 women's grassroots CSOs.

Capacity strengthening: In Sudan, over 560 women (including internally displaced people, host communities, pastoralists) reportedly received support on techniques for networking, communication, peacebuilding and collective organizing and advocacy. This support reportedly led to the creation of the "Women Inclusive Stand Platform" comprising 260 local women in Darfur; provided spaces for women to influence local peace processes; and contributed meaningfully to peacebuilding efforts

Support for remote areas: Projects in Sudan, the Philippines and Colombia supported women in remote areas and facilitated grassroots consultations and agenda building.

Valued partnerships: WPHF partners appreciated the funding, guidance and opportunities to share experiences provided by UN Women.

Challenges identified include short-term funding (sometimes just 10 months); complex bureaucratic processes preventing direct access to funds for grassroots organizations, but only as partners of bigger CSOs, undermining the WPHF's goal of empowering women's organizations on the frontline; and slow fund transfers requiring pre-financing by target populations.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

Support for women's local-level peacebuilding has potential to influence higher-level peace processes. However, in complex negotiations, with reduced UN mediation roles, grassroots women's influence is often limited to gatherings or awareness-raising efforts and can be easily dismissed. The evaluation therefore identified a need for UN Women to document successful local women's peacebuilding and mediation experiences and support connecting these women with higher-level peace processes; and undertake strategic engagement and tailored support to amplify the voices and priorities of grassroots women in higher-level peace processes.

However, survey results show a positive perception of UN Women's efforts to link track I, II and III, with UN Women partners (44 per cent N62/142) and UN Women personnel (45 per cent N=14/31) somewhat agreeing that grassroots women's concerns are being integrated into national dialogues and formal peace negotiations. When asked for specific examples, open-ended responses referred principally to the strength of UN Women at community level, which could indicate that respondents focused on that aspect rather than linkages with formal peace processes.

UN Women's support to women's civil society was most valued where it focused on empowering women to develop their own agenda and speak for themselves. For example, evidence from Colombia and the Philippines showed that UN Women had a strong focus on facilitating space for women's voices, while being very careful not to take to this space itself. Meanwhile, in Georgia, capacity development for grassroots women's organizations strengthened these women's ability to speak for themselves rather than be represented by elite women's CSOs, although some stakeholders raised concerns that UN Women sometimes sets the agenda for its civil society partners. In Libya, women who were supported to participate in peace conferences were not supported to develop their own agenda in advance, but were expected to promote an agenda that had been largely developed by UN Women. Similar perceptions were reported in DRC.

In highly restrictive contexts, UN Women supported women's organizations to "hold the line" allowing them to operate in contexts of displacement, where spaces for women are closed and peace agreements are frozen. For example, in Myanmar, UN Women has contributed to resourcing women's networks after the 2021 military takeover, and in Afghanistan UN Women contributed to investments in over 100 women's organizations across all 34 provinces with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable populations in areas where there is minimal support.⁴³ Insights from Afghanistan and Myanmar indicate that navigating restrictive contexts requires operational flexibility, (re-)building trusting relations and taking bold decisions of prioritizing quality over quantity, even if engagements are at a smaller scale or take longer.

Furthermore, UN Women's support has also enabled women's organizations to continue operating in displacement and diaspora activism. These efforts have helped keep women's demands on the agenda in countries such as Sudan, Yemen and Syria.⁴⁴

⁴³ At the time of writing, in its fifth round, 86 partners have been supported, 168 applications received and over 350 WSCO staff trained (65 per cent women) in 19 of 34 provinces, and US\$ 1.78 million in grants awarded. UN Women Afghanistan 2023, Rebuilding the Movement's Movement in Afghanistan, Programme Brief

⁴⁴ UN Women 2023 Annual Report

FINDING 4

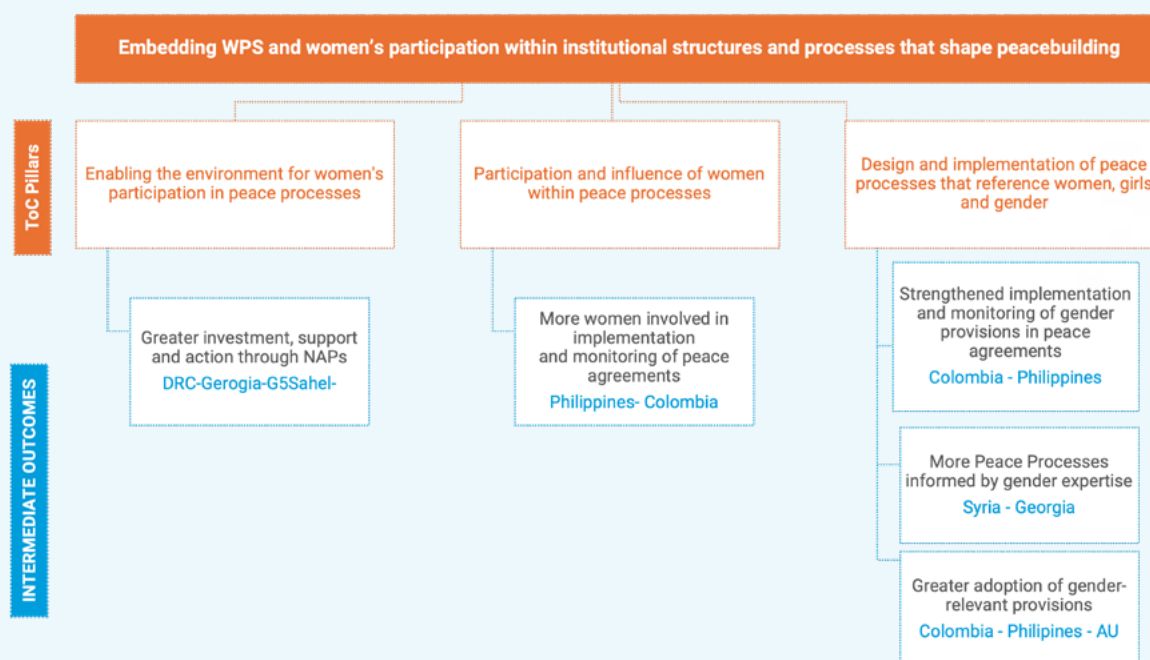
Outcomes were generated by embedding WPS and women's participation within institutional structures and processes that shape peacebuilding, a mechanism that was particularly effective in contexts where a peace agreement had been reached.

The evaluation found that UN Women influenced institution-building processes to embed WPS issues and women's participation within formal institutions with responsibility for peacebuilding. This was ranked in the survey as the second most common pathway of change by UN Women personnel (65 per cent N=20/31) and partners (46 per cent N=74/161). Critically, this mechanism emerged as **particularly relevant and effective in contexts where implementation of a peace agreement was under way, as such implementation tends to involve intensive institution building**, thereby providing an opening for UN Women to support the development of gender-responsive institutions (see Figure 9).

In the Philippines, UN Women supported integration measures to advance women's participation in the institutions that emerged from the 2014 Comprehensive

Agreement on the Bangsamoro. This included supporting women's advocacy for the inclusion of gender provisions within the foundational Bangsamoro Organic Law that established the BARMM and its new institutions.⁴⁵ It also included capacity development and technical support to these institutions – including the BARMM Ministry of Public Order and Safety, the Bangsamoro Women's Commission and the Bangsamoro Youth Commission – to embed gender issues within their mandates, structures, policies, plans and programmes. For example, UN Women supported the Ministry of Public Order and Safety to develop the Bangsamoro Peace Institute; supported the Bangsamoro Women's Commission to develop the third WPS Regional Action Plan; and promoted the inclusion of indigenous women's issues in the draft Bangsamoro Indigenous Peoples Code.

FIGURE 9: Embedding WPS and women's participation with institutional structures and processes that shape peacebuilding



Source: Developed by the evaluation team

⁴⁵ The gender provisions within the Bangsamoro Organic Law include a reserved seat for women in parliament and the council of leaders; a dedicated Gender and Development budget; recognition of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; and commitment to gender mainstreaming.

Similarly, in Colombia, UN Women provided technical, advisory and financial support for key institutions created by the 2016 peace agreement, which contributed to their gender-responsive approach. This included support to the Commission for Monitoring, Promoting and Verifying the Implementation of the Final Agreement, which monitors and promotes implementation of the peace agreement. It also included support to the Colombian Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, both key institutions for implementing the peace accord.⁴⁶ In addition, UN Women supported the establishment and work of the *Instancia Especial de Mujeres*, which stands out as a best practice example of institutionalizing women's issues within peace implementation (see Box 7). In this way, UN Women contributed to embedding women's participation across various national-level institutions with responsibility for peace implementation.

UN Women also contributed to results through **embedding WPS and women's participation within institutions in ongoing conflict contexts** where no peace agreement is in place. For example, evidence shows that in DRC UN Women supported establishment of the Secretariat 1325 in the Ministry of Women. This Secretariat is fully resourced and functional, and with UN Women's support, it has undertaken activities such as mapping CSOs across the country, which has been useful in identifying women's organizations working on WPS. Meanwhile, in Georgia, the Geneva International Discussions and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism dialogue mechanisms are now institutionally owned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an integral part of its work related to the peace process.

Results were also fostered by **integrating WPS and women's participation into regional-level peace and security institutions**. One example is the support provided by the Regional Office for West and Central Africa to the G5 Sahel mechanism for development and security cooperation, which was established in 2014 (and dissolved in 2023⁴⁷). Recognizing the establishment of this new mechanism as an opportunity to embed WPS within regional-level structures, the Regional Office for West and Central Africa engaged with key actors and raised funds to establish a platform of women as part of the G5 Sahel structure; support the G5 Sahel to develop a gender policy and WPS plan; ensure the G5 Sahel had a gender adviser; and provide capacity development to the G5 Sahel on WPS issues.

⁴⁶ UN Women Colombia Annual reports 2019 and 2022.

⁴⁷ The G5 Sahel mechanism for development and security cooperation was effectively dissolved in 2023 because several member states, primarily Burkina Faso and Niger, withdrew from the alliance following military coups in their countries, citing its failure to achieve its objectives and alleging that it served foreign interests to the detriment of their people. This left only Chad and Mauritania remaining, leading to the practical dissolution of the organization

⁴⁸ The Macro Case 11 of Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for peace will investigate gender-based violence, sexual violence, reproductive violence and other crimes based on prejudice against sexual orientation or gender identity. <https://www.jep.gov.co/macrocasos/caso11.html>

⁴⁹ UN Women Colombia's annual report 2019 highlights the financial support provided to four non-governmental organization to develop their formal submissions to the Truth Commission. UN Women Colombia, 2019. Annual Report

⁵⁰ Brics Policy Center, 2022. Una Aproximación a la Instancia Especial de Mujeres para el Enfoque de Género en la Paz en Colombia, BPC Policy Brief v.12, n.2.

BOX 7:

Embedding WPS in Institution Building: Colombia

In Colombia's post-agreement context, UN Women works closely with the UN Verification Mission in Colombia and has enable gender-responsive implementation of the peace agreement through the provision of technical and financial assistance to new institutions. Among them, the three institutions of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Repitition, which comprises the Truth Commission, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Unit for the Search of the Disappeared Persons.

UN Women supported (a) **institutional set-up**, facilitating gender-specific training for personnel, developing gender-responsive methodological guidelines and supporting tailored analysis of information and data collected; (b) **territorial outreach** of transitional justice institutions to enable the registration of women's victims organizations to claim their rights, participate in truth-seeking activities (such as public audiences) and/or to submit reports to these institutions; and (c) **women-centred implementation** of the institution's mandate. For example, UN Women supports four so-called macro-cases prioritized by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, including a case on conflict-related sexual violence,⁴⁸ as well as the development of a dedicated women/ LGBTIQ+ chapter of the Truth Commission Report.⁴⁹

In addition, UN Women holds the technical secretariat for the *Instancia Especial de Mujeres* (Special Instance of Women)⁵⁰ an innovative women's participation mechanism that mandates civil society women to monitor implementation of gendered provisions of the Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace. Currently in its second cohort, this women-only body is composed of 17 civil society women – including farmers, indigenous women, afro-descendant women, LGBTIQ+, women victims and a female representative from the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) – ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard and acted upon, i.e. on the extent to which implementation of the peace process effectively transforms women's lives in the territories. UN Women, through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund enabled the operational aspects of the Special Instance of Women, despite considerable funding shortages.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

Some **key factors which create space and opportunity for UN Women to influence institution building** include: strong government commitment and ownership of the WPS agenda, as seen in Colombia, Georgia and the Philippines; institutional stability and the ability of UN Women to work with institutions over time; and strong

alignment between UN Women's programming and the priorities of the institutions that it seeks to influence. The absence of these facilitating factors in some circumstances may explain in part why it has not been possible to embed gender within peace-related institutions in contexts such as Libya or Sudan.

FINDING 5

Developing strategic relationships and partnerships for UN Women's work was an important mechanism for results, which was most successful in contexts where UN Women was perceived to have had strong political understanding of the context and conflict dynamics, and was perceived as a valuable partner.

Building relationships of trust has been critical for UN Women to gain access and influence for its work on women's participation and was particularly important in highly sensitive contexts. In Colombia, UN Women built a relationship of trust with the women's movement and is viewed as a highly valued ally and partner. In Georgia, UN Women has developed a valuable working relationship with the co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussion and its work on women's participation is valued by them. Meanwhile in BARMM, UN Women personnel have invested in building relationships of trust with local stakeholders over time, recognizing that in this context trust levels are low, and interactions are highly personalized. In all three of these contexts, UN Women also has a close working relationship with government stakeholders, which has been critical for promoting women's participation.

In contrast, backlash against UN Women's work on the National Action Plan in Libya that happened in 2021 was cited by some stakeholders partly because the Country Office had not developed effective relationships among key actors within civil society, government and wider stakeholders, and was unaware of their perspectives, priorities and interests. In Myanmar, UN Women was working to slowly build trust among women, within a context of deep suspicion of international actors, including the UN. In DRC, UN Women has been devising ways to regain trust with key UN players to work collaboratively on women's formal participation in peace processes.

Developing partnerships with strategically important actors to advance women's participation has been an important mechanism to achieve outcomes at multiple levels, and specifically at national level (see Figure 10). This was highlighted in the survey, with 42 per cent (N= 13/31) UN Women personnel and 41 per cent (N= 66/160) partners ranking partnership and collaboration with key players as the fourth most common pathway of change. A successful example of such partnership was seen in the collaboration between UN Women and the African Union

(see Box 5), and also UN Women's partnership with the Gender Development Centre of the Economic Community of West African States, with whom it worked on a variety of WPS issues. The evaluation found that these partnerships with African regional bodies generated tangible entry points to advance women's participation in peace processes through solidarity visits and consultations, high-level panels and conferences for women peace-builders active in different countries and processes, including Sudan, DRC or the Great Lakes region, among others. Meanwhile, an example of a strategic partnership on a very local level is UN Women's partnership with a Non-Violent Peace Force to support women ex-combatants in BARMM, which has provided access to the Normalization Track of the peace process (that relates to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration), from which UN Women is otherwise entirely excluded.

Coordination and collaboration with other UN entities was an important pathway for results in some contexts, but has not been effectively utilized in others. In some cases, joint programming with UN partners enabled UN Women to ensure greater outreach, scale and impact. This was particularly true in the Philippines, where UN Women has undertaken much of its WPS programming in partnership with other agencies including UNDP, UNODC and UNFPA. One evaluation of this work found that "Collaboration worked well from a thematic and political point of view, where different agencies brought their expertise and added efforts to target the same vulnerable groups. The different agencies delivered shared, related outputs to reach the same outcome."⁵¹ Other positive examples of collaboration for greater impact included UN Women's joint project with UNDP and UNEP in the Blue Nile state of Sudan, which resulted in women's active participation in local decision-making spaces,⁵² as well as collaboration with the Gender Unit of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC to support consultations between women delegates in Nairobi, and women in Kinshasa and other provinces during the Nairobi III process.

⁵¹ Final Project Evaluation of the project "Promoting conflict prevention, social cohesion and community resilience in BARMM in the time of COVID-19"

⁵² PeaceBuilding Fund Factsheet 2023

BOX 8:

Collaboration with DPPA

UN Women and DPPA personnel reported that the relationship between the two entities at headquarters level has strengthened in recent years, enhancing the collaboration based on their 2011 Joint Strategy on Gender and Mediation. This strengthened relationship was considered attributable to positive leadership within UN Women’s Peace, Security and Resilience team and DPPA’s Gender, Peace and Security team; clear focal points and regular engagement between teams on WPS issues; clarity on mandates; and the priority given by the Secretary-General’s office and DPPA’s senior leadership to strengthen its gender WPS work. However, it was noted that more consistency is needed between UN Women and DPPA at the field level to ensure effective coordination in advancing inclusive peace process design. Strengthening collaboration between UN Women and DPPA missions at the country level presents an opportunity to build on the positive partnership observed at headquarters as well as some mission contexts in the field.

The evaluation heard positive examples of collaboration where there was clarity on mandates, trust between personnel, effective information-sharing and strong reputations and capacities within UN Women Country Offices. Examples included the relationship between UN Women and the UN verification mission in Colombia during the period under evaluation, and the Women’s Advisory Board initiative in Syria which was appreciated by DPPA, with a UN Women staff member seconded to the Office of the Special Envoy (2021).

However, challenges also remain. Examples of challenges at country level included:

Sudan: The relationship between UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan and UN Women faced challenges in 2021, due to limited sharing of information, which led to perceptions of insufficient collaboration (2021).

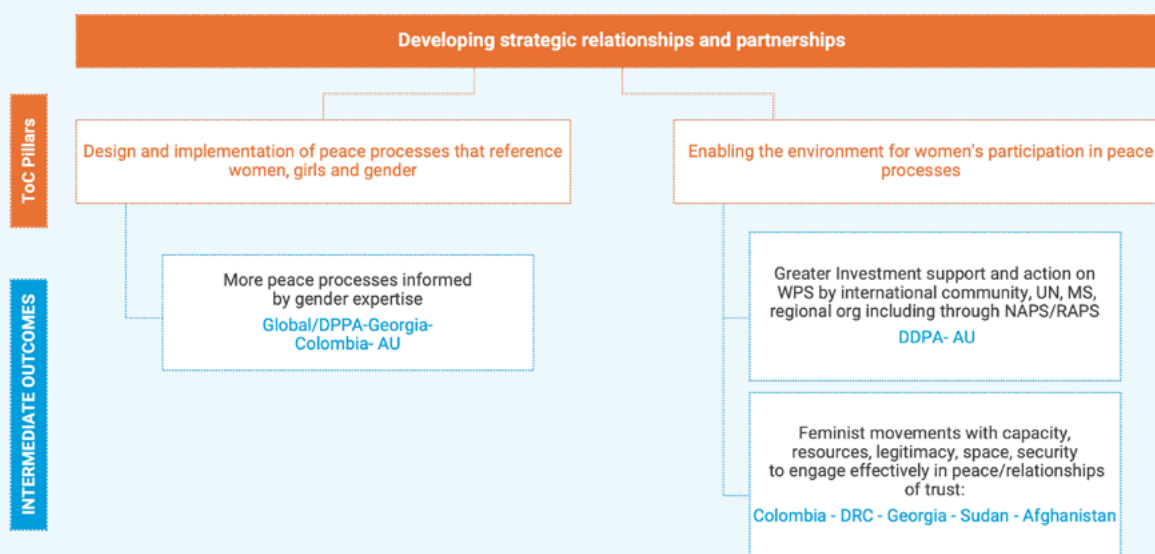
Libya: Since 2021 the UN Support Mission in Libya’s engagement with UN Women has been limited, due to concerns regarding reputational issues faced by UN Women in Libya, as noted by UN and other international stakeholders in Libya.

Key factors contributing to challenges in collaboration included perceptions of competition over leadership roles in facilitating women’s participation in peace processes in a context of financial resource scarcity; inconsistent division of roles based on mandates between DPPA and UN Women at the country level, differing institutional approaches; and perceptions among some DPPA personnel regarding the need for UN Women to enhance its capacity and expertise in political and peace processes.

To strengthen the consistency of collaboration at the country level, UN Women should proactively reach out to DPPA missions; provide information about its mandate and work; develop structured and consistent information-sharing and regular engagement that addresses political priorities; and collaboratively strategize on how best to advance women’s participation within specific peace processes and country contexts. UN Women should also participate fully in UNCT engagement with DPPA missions, recognizing this as an important channel for access and influence. Ultimately, efforts to strengthen collaboration must be driven by leadership both at headquarters and critically in the field, involving engagement with DPPA’s regional desks as well as its Gender Peace and Security Unit.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team, based on key informant interviews and the evaluation survey

FIGURE 10: Mechanism of change: developing strategic relationships and partnerships



Source: Developed by the evaluation team

BOX 9

Key enabling and hindering factors for women's participation in peace processes

As the global context for women's participation in peacemaking is changing, the evaluation explored the key enabling and hindering contextual factors that affected these changes and the implications for UN Women's work. Country case studies and survey responses were triangulated and are consolidated in the table below.

Key enabling factors	Key hindering factors
Presence of solid and vital civil society and women's movement	Restrictive social norms, democratic backsliding shrinking civic space, harmful social norms and backlash
Existence of strong national gender equality policies, WPS frameworks and governments' political commitments to peace	Conflict and volatile context, stalled processes and insecurity

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team

However, UN Women's partnership with DPPA has been inconsistent, with less engagement between DPPA and UN Women in some countries in part due to challenging relationships and local dynamics (see Box 8). Similarly, the evaluation learned that in some countries UN Women did not fulfil its full UN system coordination mandate in relation to work on WPS, often due to lack of capacity within the Country Office, including with regards to WPS capacities and in contexts where there was demand from other UN entities for UN Women to play a stronger coordination role.

Finally, it is important to note that while strengthened partnerships with DPPA are crucial, the UN is receiving fewer mandates to lead or co-lead mediation processes⁵³. Increasingly member states regional organizations and private mediation actors are pursuing their own mediation or diplomatic initiatives, including some of which UN Women has had very limited engagement. UN Women personnel recognized that this presents a challenge for advancing women's participation in peace processes and will require the Entity to identify how it can build relationships and seek to influence these actors.

BOX 10

An unexpected enabling factor

In some contexts, **new opportunities or increased support have emerged because of external factors**, including geopolitical dynamics. The most notable example of this among the evaluation case studies is in Georgia, where the war in Ukraine created greater interest among international partners in security issues in Georgia, and an unexpected increase in engagement by European member states on WPS. For example, Denmark has recently opened an embassy in Tbilisi and will provide UN Women with EUR 3 million for multi-year WPS work, while the UK embassy has been a strong and vocal supporter on WPS. Another example of external factors driving support was seen in the Philippines, where it was reported that government interest in securing a seat on the UN Security Council has been a driver for it to enhance international leadership on WPS, including through the international WPS conference that took place in 2024, which UN Women was involved in.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

⁵³ Many academic resources are analysing the current trend which sees the rise of new mediation actors, replacing the role of the United Nations as well as "traditional" mediation countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway and Finland. This trend was also highlighted by many stakeholders interviewed.

Academic reference can be found here: [More States Are Vying to Mediate Conflict — What Does it Mean for Global Peace?](#), C. Brewer. United States Institute of Peace, 2024; [Diversified mediators, mandates and ambitions](#). Conciliation resources, 2024

FINDING 6

UN Women relied more on strategic connections, personnel’s context knowledge and relationships with women’s movements than on formal analysis to ensure context-relevant interventions. While these connections were critical, enhancing in-house capacity for timely, recurrent and quality gender and conflict analysis with follow-up, monitoring and learning is necessary.

UN Women’s understanding of political, conflict and gender dynamics varied across settings and relied more on relationships than robust gender and conflict analyses. Survey results revealed that only half of the country offices consulted produce gender-sensitive conflict analyses, with 6 per cent (N=6/32) unsure.

This evaluation found that local personnel used contextual knowledge and information from women’s movements and local actors to identify priority issues, enhancing intervention relevance, as seen in Georgia, the Philippines and Colombia. They leveraged relationships with key trusted government and/or peace process stakeholders to access key information, trends analysis of research institutions and observatories, influencing the relevance of interventions. Personnel in Sudan, the Philippines and Colombia reported that their offices kept communication lines open with different (territorial) members of women’s movements and women’s rights organizations and undertook recurrent information gathering, also relying on opportunities such as training and meetings with grassroots partners. This was less common in Libya, Syria, DRC or Yemen, due to varying capacities and presence.

The quality and use of formal gender, context and conflict analyses varied. The evaluation found that while some offices conducted formal analyses, they were not always of adequate quality or used by partners. The Regional Office for the Americas and Caribbean integrated gendered analyses into standardized research to identify project entry points, using written guidance, tools and collaboration with consultants. UN Women Colombia conducted internal assessments but often refrained from developing stand-alone written analyses due to specific WPS time, resource and rapidly changing context limitations. The African Union’s Political Affairs, Peace and Security Unit and UN Women collaborated on informal analyses and stakeholder mapping to advance the WPS agenda. In Georgia, conflict analyses were embedded in commissioned research, highlighting barriers to women’s participation and human security needs. In the Philippines, context analyses were updated annually to reflect changing

dynamics. In 2021, UN entities in Afghanistan collaboratively developed a gendered conflict analysis, showcasing effective inter-agency coordination and collaboration to pool resources within One UN. This exercise led to the development of a guidance note on gender-responsive conflict analysis by the UN Women Afghanistan office.⁵⁴ At the global level, UN Women provides periodic updates and analysis on women’s participation in specific processes via the Security Council’s Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, which has conducted 73 meetings since 2016⁵⁵. Anyhow, the evaluation was told that, in some contexts such as Libya and Myanmar, the lack of appropriate context awareness and stakeholder engagement contributed to negative outcomes, such as exposing women peacebuilders to risks.

In line with this, the evaluation found that UN Women’s internal programmatic guidance on security risk management for the partners it works with (mainly women human rights defenders) and internal guidance for personnel in countries facing gender backlash has been poorly socialized or is not yet available. The corporate “Push Forward Strategy” aimed at addressing backlash against women’s rights and advocates, was developed by the UN Women Civil Society Division in November 2023 and launched at Commission of the Status of Women; however, the UN Women Evaluation on Social Norms⁵⁶ found that the strategy was not optimally disseminated and socialized within UN Women. This is important, especially for personnel operating in fragile contexts, and a weak application of the “do no harm” principle. Similarly, an internal guidance note on supporting women human rights defenders was published in 2020, but its recommendations have not been implemented.

In summary, while UN Women offices conducted some gender, conflict and context analysis, its quality and application were inconsistent. This leads to limited understanding of potential risks for UN Women personnel and partners in a context of increased backlash against gender equality.

⁵⁴ UN Women Afghanistan, 2022. Gender-Responsive Conflict Analysis, A guidance Note. Women, Peace and Security Section.

⁵⁵ Background notes can be found here: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/un-security-council>.

⁵⁶ Feminist Collaborative Evaluation of UN Women’s Approach to Social Norms Change, UN Women, 2024

INCLUSION, HUMAN RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY

EQ2: What were the outcomes/results for different stakeholder groups?

FINDING 7

UN Women applied the leave no one behind principle to amplify voices of diverse, marginalized and conflict-affected women in peace processes. This, together with country-level, context-specific and bottom-up approaches, ensured that interventions were somewhat inclusive, although inclusivity remained limited by resources and power imbalances.

Across the different countries, this evaluation found evidence of UN Women being somewhat **inclusive in its interventions and enabling more diverse voices being heard**. This was observed mostly in interventions where UN Women supported local consultations with women's rights groups, women-led groups and other community-based groups, convening multiple stakeholders or engaging women briefers in global advocacy efforts. Interviews with key UN entities and other partners identified that UN Women has the capacity to engage with marginalized, conflict-affected and grassroots women and can navigate intersectional barriers to enable their involvement.

In terms of inclusion of diverse groups, evidence from case studies across some regions showcased UN Women's proactive engagement of young women's groups, organized ethnic groups and people of diverse gender, sexual orientation and gender identity and expressions in peace processes. This is also confirmed by the survey of UN Women personnel and partners, where the perception is that UN Women is inclusive of these groups, mostly when working on track II and track III processes.

In terms of engagement of young women's groups, key examples included UN Women's support in the facilitation of inter-generational exchanges among women peacebuilders in Georgia; as well as supporting emerging young feminist initiatives in Sudan. In Libya, dedicated consultations with civil society resulted in a policy brief advocating for the inclusion of youth in the peace and political process, while in the Philippines interventions to support young women's participation in peace processes brought them together across community lines. Conversely, lack of engagement with women and youth affiliated with ethnic minorities in Myanmar was highlighted as a missed opportunity and an issue to consider in future interventions. Survey results showcased that UN Women supported engagement of young women in track II and track III processes by UN Women partners (56 per cent N=86/152; 63 per cent N=96/152) and UN Women personnel (67 per cent N=18/27; 85 per cent N=23/27).

Evidence from case studies also suggested UN Women's strong support to engage **organized ethnic groups** affected by armed conflict, including indigenous and afro-descendant stakeholders. In Colombia, evidence showcased how UN Women has supported these groups, working to amplify their lived experience and specific peace interests, as well as documenting ancestral knowledge of self-protection. In the Philippines, UN Women interventions strengthened the capacity and participation of Moro women based in Bangsamoro through its WPS work, while also consistently focusing on those who have been left out of the peace agreement; populations living outside the BARMM territory; Moro diaspora communities; and those on smaller islands. Survey results confirmed that organized ethnic groups were mostly engaged in track II and III processes according to both UN Women's partners (53 per cent N=71/135; 59 per cent N=79/135) and UN Women personnel (67 per cent N=16/24; 87 per cent N=21/24).

In terms of diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity and expressions, the evaluation found that UN Women has increasingly involved the LGBTIQ+ population and organizations to engage with peace process stakeholders, particularly when a more active civil society participation is encouraged and the existing legal frameworks are favourable, as seen for example in the Philippines and Colombia. In contexts, where backlash was likely from conservative stakeholders, such as in Yemen, Libya or Myanmar, UN Women pursued a "do no harm" approach and tailored support on a case-by-case basis considering risks. This was reflected by the survey results which show that LGBTIQ+ groups are among the less included groups, but were still more engaged in track II and III processes according to both UN Women's partners (58 per cent N=40/69; 43 per cent N=30/69) and UN Women personnel (80 per cent N=4/5; 80 per cent N=4/5).

The evaluation did not find sufficient evidence on UN Women's engagement with women with disabilities in peace processes either through support in including their voices to influence peace processes, or that their concerns were included in peace agreements. Similarly, groups of women with disabilities in Yemen or in Colombia have also been mentioned as not having been appropriately reached to include their voices.

This evaluation finds that **UN Women is largely aware of exclusionary patterns** that result from working in capital cities and with established "elite" women's rights organizations. Critical reflections on ways to meaningful engage women peacebuilders with different educational levels, by using local languages; working with both registered and unregistered organizations; and by easing operational requirements were identified in Colombia, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Libya. The evaluation identified tangible efforts by UN Women to address power inequalities in terms of ethnicity, class and urban/ rural divide, which is also highlighted in the growing body of critical feminist research.⁵⁷

Among the more promising approaches to operationalize the leave no one behind principles were efforts to scale up territorial presence and offices, as seen in Colombia, the Philippines, Afghanistan and DRC. UN Women also engaged with **networks, coalitions and alliances**, which often have chapters in remote areas where UN Women is not present, to enable a broader reach and diverse representation, which might otherwise not have been reached. Furthermore, project partnerships with other UN entities, such as in Blue Nile state in Sudan have enabled engagement with women from historically marginalized groups, while also enhancing women's participation in decision-making spaces at community level. In addition, **WPHF funds** have been a conducive means to resource diverse constituencies, often in fragile and conflict-affected areas, though the funding process is still described as overly bureaucratic and burdensome, particularly for small, emerging and remote organizations.

The evaluation identified two challenges for UN Women's engagement of women civil society in relation to operationalizing leave no one behind principles in the context of peace negotiations. First, the constraints to reaching those in more remote areas, due to contextual factors such as the security situation, movement restrictions or (tribal) segmentation of the settings, as seen in Colombia, DRC, Libya and Yemen; and second, generating tangible opportunities for local peace demands to be heard, considered and acted upon in contexts where formal track 1 processes exist. Consequently, UN Women's enhanced efforts to apply leave no one behind principles may at best amplify marginalized women's voices but have limited prospects of leading to more inclusive peace process design and outcomes.

In addition to understanding leave no one behind as inclusion principle, this evaluation identified entry points for UN Women to embrace leave no one behind as an approach to challenge power inequalities that restrict women's representation and meaningful participation in peace processes. In contexts of democratic backsliding, closing spaces for civil society initiatives and backlash against gender equality, women's civil society partners expect UN Women to assume bold and principled positions of adherence to human rights and gender equality. In contexts such as Afghanistan, where more than 50 per cent of the population (women and girls) are at "risk of being left behind";⁵⁸ in Iraq⁵⁹ and Libya,⁶⁰ where there is resistance to using the word "gender"; or in Colombia,⁶¹ where resistance to 'gender ideology' has posed challenges for advancing peace, advancing the principle of, leave no one behind holds the potential to challenge structural power inequalities. The UN's Clarion Call as part of the new UN system-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan constitutes a timely opportunity to connect leave no one behind principles to peace negotiations by advancing measures to prevent rollback on gender equality.⁶²

⁵⁷ A growing body of critical feminist work engages with ways in which the WPS agenda "produces participants in racialized, sexualized and classed ways, while rendering invisible and troubling others"; and the problem of "western saviour politics" embedded the WPS agenda's engagement in the global south. See, Martin de Almagro (2017) Producing Participants: Gender, Race, Class and Women, Peace and Security, in *Global Society*, October 2017. Crystal Whetstone and Luna K. C, 2023. Disrupting the Saviour Politics in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Global South: Grassroots Women Creating Gender Norms in Nepal and Sri Lanka. *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 1 –27

⁵⁸ Human Rights Council Fifty-fifth session, 26 February –5 April 2024, Agenda item 2m Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Report of the Special Rapporteur about human rights in Afghanistan

⁵⁹ Amnesty International, 2023. Iraq: Authorities must immediately reverse media ban on the terms of 'homosexuality' and 'gender', <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/iraq-authorities-must-immediately-reverse-media-ban-on-the-terms-homosexuality-and-gender/>

⁶⁰ Libya Observer, 2023. Libya's Sharia Research and Studies Council says using term gender is "Haram" <https://libyaobserver.ly/news/libya-sharia-research-and-studies-council-says-using-term-gender-haram#:~:text=Economy,Libya's%20Sharia%20Research%20and%20Studies,using%20term%20gender%20is%20%22Haram%22&text=The%20Libyan%20Sharia%20Research%20and,rendering%20it%20as%20%22Haram%22.>

⁶¹ Fundación Ideas para la Paz <https://ideaspaz.org/publicaciones/opinion/2016-10/la-ideologia-de-genero-un-spoiler-para-la-paz>

⁶² In particular the commitments "to stand unwavering and united to uphold a strong policy stance on gender equality everywhere (1.1) and to provide support to and to protect women's human rights defenders in accordance with international norms and standards (1.4)" UN Clarion Call reference

Within the UN system, UN Women's leadership is also required on such issues as navigating "male chaperone" requirements (i.e. the mandatory accompaniment of women by men in public in Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen); promoting a principled stance for LGBTIQ+ rights everywhere; and operationalizing effective risk-sharing with women human rights defenders on the frontlines of the fight for women's rights in conflict-affected settings.⁶³

This evaluation finds scope for UN Women to engage with women's rights stakeholders who are critical of the peace negotiation process and its set-up, and UN Women itself. In line with calls to sharpen its political profile, UN Women should step up engagements with women-led

organizations with contrary positions, as well as critical feminists. Areas of exploration could include deeper engagements on substantive discussions around the negotiation table, and strategic deliberation around contentious topics that generate tensions within women's movements.

Internal strategizing is needed to shift from case-by-case engagement to a consistent position that embraces leave no one behind as both an inclusion principle and a power issue, working in broad alliances to address barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace processes.

FINDING 8

Sustaining results was challenging in conflict contexts, but results were most likely to be sustained where UN Women contributed to developing the institutions, policies and capacities that can support women's participation.

Whether results in advancing women's participation in peacemaking can be sustained over time is **highly dependent on wider political and conflict dynamics and the success of peace processes**. This was clearly illustrated by contexts such as Sudan, where a relapse into conflict reversed the progress women's civil society had made in influencing peacebuilding trajectories and pushed many women leaders into exile. Similarly, in Afghanistan, where regime change in 2021 brought an end to peace dialogues and shut down any space for women's political and public participation. It was therefore not possible to plan for sustainable results in this area of work in the same way as in other areas.

However, despite these caveats, the evaluation found that **supporting policy development, institution building and capacity strengthening was most likely to contribute to sustainable results** that could be maintained even in the face of significant setbacks. Meanwhile, other types of support such as bringing women to advocate on the sidelines of peace negotiations or in international forums produced less sustainable results, although may be valid strategies to take advantage of opportunities and promote breakthroughs.

Support for **development of National Actions Plans was the main way in which UN Women supported a sustainable policy environment for women's participation in peace processes**. This was identified in the survey, in which 63 per cent (N= 89/142) of partner respondents and 84 per cent (N=26/31) of UN Women personnel respondents reported that work on National Action Plans contributed to sustaining results. It was also identified in various case studies. For example, in DRC, Georgia and the Philippines, UN Women supported the development

of strong, inclusive and nationally owned National Action Plans that contained an emphasis on women's participation and included localization strategies, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and budgets for implementation. UN Women also supported the inclusion of women's priorities within other aspects of the peace related policy framework; for example, by promoting the incorporation of gender into the 2020–2023 Territorial Development Plans in Colombia, and supporting the incorporation of gender elements into the Bangsamoro Organic Law and the Bangsamoro Indigenous People's Code in BARMM.

Where UN Women supported institutional structures for women's participation this contributed to sustainable conditions for women's participation. This was noted in the cases of the Philippines and Colombia, where evidence confirmed that UN Women promoted gender within post-conflict institution building, as discussed above. However, it was also seen in Georgia where UN Women created dialogue mechanisms that have come to be institutionally owned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in DRC where UN Women supported the establishment of the Secretariat 1325 within the Ministry of Women. However, in some cases, support for institutional structures did not result in sustained results as institutions became ineffective or collapsed. For example, UN Women provided extensive support to the G5 Sahel mechanism to make it more gender responsive, but this mechanism was dissolved for geo-political reasons in 2023. In the evaluation survey, 55 per cent (N=17/31) of UN Women personnel and 54 per cent (N=77/142) of partner respondents reported that the creation of WPS institutions contributed to sustainability.

⁶³ (S/2023/725)

The evaluation found that **the most sustainable results came from UN Women’s capacity development work with both government and civil society**, as capacities remain in place and can be applied to emerging peace-related processes and opportunities over time. With government, sustainable capacity development has involved strengthening the ability of duty bearers at multiple levels to deliver on WPS commitments and facilitate women’s participation. For example, by building capacity on WPS within the Ministry of Women and its 1325 Secretariat in DRC, or within the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity in the Philippines, the Bangsamoro Women’s Commission and the Bangsamoro Peace Institute in the Philippines. Meanwhile, sustainable capacity development with civil society has involved going beyond technical capacity development to strengthen women CSOs’ funding-raising, organizational and implementation capacities, and their ability to respond to changing conflict situations. In some cases, sustainability has also been enhanced by supporting women activists working on peace to form organizations and to formally register as CSOs, as occurred in the Philippines and Colombia.

The evaluation found based on a representative sample of case studies that **where women’s civil society capacity is supported in a holistic way over the long term, it may be sustained despite setbacks**. This was evidenced in Sudan, where women’s capacities that were developed during peacebuilding are now being used to address the current conflict. Similarly in Afghanistan and Myanmar, where some of women’s capacities were able to remain even in contexts of extreme repression and are used to address current challenges and respond to future openings or peace initiatives.

However, it emerged that **capacity development for women’s civil society was not always carried out in a sustainable way**. In some cases, support for women CSOs involved in peace work was very short term and project oriented (notably WPHF support, see Box 6). In some contexts, such as Georgia and DRC, UN Women’s support for CSOs was also reported as needed to improve on supporting women’s civil society to develop their own sustainable agenda. In some cases, it was reported that UN Women develops grassroots women to become local leaders, but then there is no pathway for these women to engage in formal political or civil society structures, resulting in many giving up their activism or political work. It is important to acknowledge that the pathway for women to engage in formal political and civil society structures is not entirely under UN Women’s control and might entail factors that are external to the organization. In Georgia, some stakeholders suggested that one solution for this could be better connection between support for women’s WPS leadership and opportunities for women’s political participation.

BOX 11

The Women Speakers Bureau in Bangsamoro

A strong example of support for women’s civil society capacity and leadership on peace processes can be seen in the Women Speakers Bureau initiative in Bangsamoro, the Philippines. This initiative was developed in response to reports from UN Women’s grassroots partners that women did not have information about the Bangsamoro Organic Law that would establish the entity of BARMM and was being put to a plebiscite. In particular, that women were not aware of the implications of the law and the proposed transition process for women and their communities.

To address this gap, in 2018, UN Women developed a group of grassroots women leaders to become “speakers” who could advocate for peace and build awareness within communities about the Bangsamoro Organic Law. UN Women provided these women with knowledge, capacities and tools for this advocacy work, and connected them to networks and opportunities for influence. These women speakers went on to advance women’s issues within multiple spaces and processes related to peace and transition, as well as to provide information on peace and transition processes and WPS to communities.

The Women Speakers Bureau produced results at multiple levels: communities were informed about the Bangsamoro Organic Law and were mobilized to vote in the plebiscite; bureau members gained knowledge, confidence, skills and networks; members engaged remote communities who had been cut off from information about the peace and transition process; and members became resource people on women’s issues in their communities and for government and security agencies. Crucially, various Women Speakers Bureau members have gone on to work in civil society, the newly formed BARMM governance institutions or local media and continue to lead on WPS issues from these positions, as well as maintain strong relationships with UN Women.

The development of this cadre of grassroots women leaders who can advance women’s issues in different spaces and at multiple levels within peace and transition processes is a valuable model. It has been recognized as of significant value by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, which would like UN Women to roll out a similar model in other conflict-affected areas of the Philippines

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

Finally, the evaluation found that across most of the case studies UN Women had a deliberate focus on **engaging young women in WPS work and supporting young women's voices to be heard within peace processes**. For example, in DRC, UN Women has a strong youth WPS agenda; in Libya, UN Women partnered with UNFPA to advance the role of young women in peace and security; while in Georgia, UN Women has developed initiatives to support young women's participation in WPS work and in women-to-women peacebuilding. The survey also supports this finding, with 65 per cent (N= 93/142)

of partner respondents and 68 per cent (N=21/31) of UN Women personnel respondents identifying a strong focus on working with youth CSOs as contributing to sustainability. This focus on youth can contribute to the long-term sustainability of civil society work on WPS, by fostering a new generation of women peacebuilders and regenerating the women's movement to include younger women's perspectives. It is particularly relevant given that women's movements are perceived to be often led by older women and there is a need for younger women to take ownership of the WPS agenda.

VALUE-ADDED; WAYS OF WORKING

EQ 4: How could outcomes/results have been improved?

FINDING 9

UN Women's added value in supporting women's participation in peace processes came from its unique mandate and leadership role, and its strong relationship with women's civil society

UN Women's unique mandate on WPS gave it a special role to play in advancing women's participation in peace processes at all levels, including through bringing these issues to the attention of the UN Security Council and leading the UN system in this area. This was reflected in the evaluation survey in which the added value of UN Women's mandate on gender equality was ranked 6.2 of 7 by UN Women personnel respondents and 6.5 of 7 by partner respondents. This mandate and leadership role meant that **UN Women had a consistent focus on WPS**, keeping issues of women's participation in peace on the agenda; maintaining pressure for progress; and holding duty bearers to account in this area. This was reflected in the partner survey, in which advocacy to support women's participation in peace processes scored 6.39 of 7 as an added value. Various stakeholders reported that UN Women, unlike any other agency, consistently pushes for women's participation even in the most challenging contexts. For example, donor representatives in Libya reported that UN Women raises issues of women's participation even in the most difficult discussions with government when other international actors avoid doing so. However, in some contexts, such as Sudan, Libya and Afghanistan, it was also reported that UN Women could do more to provide leadership on WPS within UNCTs and among international partners.

An important element of this leadership role was **providing thought leadership to drive the WPS agenda forward** within international spaces and the UN system, as well as at regional and country level. Such thought leadership was noted as an added value of UN Women by various stakeholders. Examples included innovations such as the peace tracker at global level; UN Women's regional-level efforts in Latin America to advance thinking on the connections between WPS and issues such as land rights, crime and civil unrest (see Box 12); UN Women's support for the inclusion of non-traditional issues, such as climate, cybersecurity and intersectionality in the current Philippines National Action Plan; and UN Women's joint programme with UNDP in Sudan's Blue Nile state that combined climate resilience, WPS and women's participation in community decision-making and leadership.

However, some UN Women personnel believed that the Entity could go further in leading thinking on the connections between the WPS agenda and other issues such as the humanitarian-peace nexus, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and small arms, cyber-violence, widespread violations of women's rights, addressing masculinities and preventing and countering violent extremism.

BOX 12.

Every-day peace building: Insights from Latin America

Latin America and the Caribbean is often perceived sidelined in conversations on women's participation in peace processes, given the limited existence of formal track I negotiation processes, with the exception of Colombia. Nonetheless, several countries in the region have adopted WPS National Action Plans or are in the process of doing so. Insights from Latin America showcase the importance of longer-term and everyday peacebuilding and the relevance of extending WPS engagements to "low intensity" conflicts, as well as consolidation of peace outcomes. Several countries in Latin America are grappling with situations of political fragility, social polarization, civil unrest and gendered backlash compounded by humanitarian and climate change crises and other localized resource-based conflicts. Furthermore, organized crime, gang violence, urban violence and general insecurity, have brought about human rights crises with a differential impact on women and girls in the region, including femicides, human trafficking and attacks against women human rights defenders. Countries emerging from armed conflict, who have had formal peace agreements in the past, such as Guatemala, or El Salvador, continue their long-term work on consolidating peace and resisting backlash against women's rights and their leadership, while advocating for justice for survivors. Most importantly, women peacebuilders in these contexts continue to mobilize under the WPS agenda, actively mediating local resource-based conflicts and engaging with armed actors to rescue youth from gang violence, often in high-risk settings, and at high costs for their personal integrity and well-being – this despite their activism not being "visible at the UN Security Council," as highlighted during data collection.

UN Women has a role to play in standing with women peacebuilders and mirroring "formal" peace process interventions in these "informal" settings. For example, Guatemala and Colombia relied on the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and Caribbean's convening power to organize intergenerational encounters and peer-exchanges of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, when Indigenous grandmothers involved in the Sepur Zarco case (2011–2016) met women from Villavicencio, Meta to exchange and deliberate on truth and access to justice. In Ecuador, between 2019 and 2022, UN Women was actively involved in facilitating and providing mediation support in localized resource-based conflicts, supporting (Indigenous) women's mobilizing and enabling spaces for women's joint agenda development. In another example, the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and Caribbean, jointly with Colombia, organized an exchange of women leaders from Venezuela and Colombia across political divides, involving former ex-combatants and women's alliances, to exchange, build mediation capacities and prepare for participation in dialogues. UN Women, DPPA and the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, in cooperation with the UNDP-DPPA Joint programme, also supported an exchange of women peacebuilders from South and Central America in Colombia in December 2022 which included a field visit to the conflict affected Department of Cauca.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

Part of driving the agenda forward at country level **should involve sharing approaches, experiences and best practices from other contexts**. The evaluation found that stakeholders are not aware of UN Women efforts to do this in any systematic way. This is despite the existence of recent resources in this area as well as significant appetite for such experience sharing at country level, including demand to learn about the experience of Women's Advisory Boards; successful experiences of gender-responsive peacebuilding in contexts such as Colombia; strategies for managing backlash; and about what works in supporting women in highly restrictive contexts such as Afghanistan. In the survey, just 29 per cent (N= 9/31) of UN Women personnel reported that lessons are consistently documented and shared. Peer exchange and experience sharing is therefore an important area where UN Women has unique potential to add value, because of its mandate and global presence and because it is currently not doing so.

Given its mandate and leadership on WPS, UN Women **should be able to provide excellent technical capacity on gender and peace processes**, but the evaluation found mixed results. In some contexts, UN Women was reported to have strong technical capacities and provided valuable inputs to peace-related processes. For example, in Colombia, UN Women engaged with strong technical knowledge across all peace issues, while African regional actors reported that UN Women has excellent technical expertise in relation to women's participation in peace processes. However, in other contexts, such as DRC (2022) and Libya (2021), some stakeholders reported a perception that UN Women had limited political skills and capacities to successfully advance in particular cases of women's participation in peace processes. In the survey, both UN Women personnel and partners rated UN Women's technical capacity on peace agreements as the fifth most valuable added value (giving it a score of 5.75 of 7 for personnel, and 5.3 of 7 for partners, where 7 is the highest score).

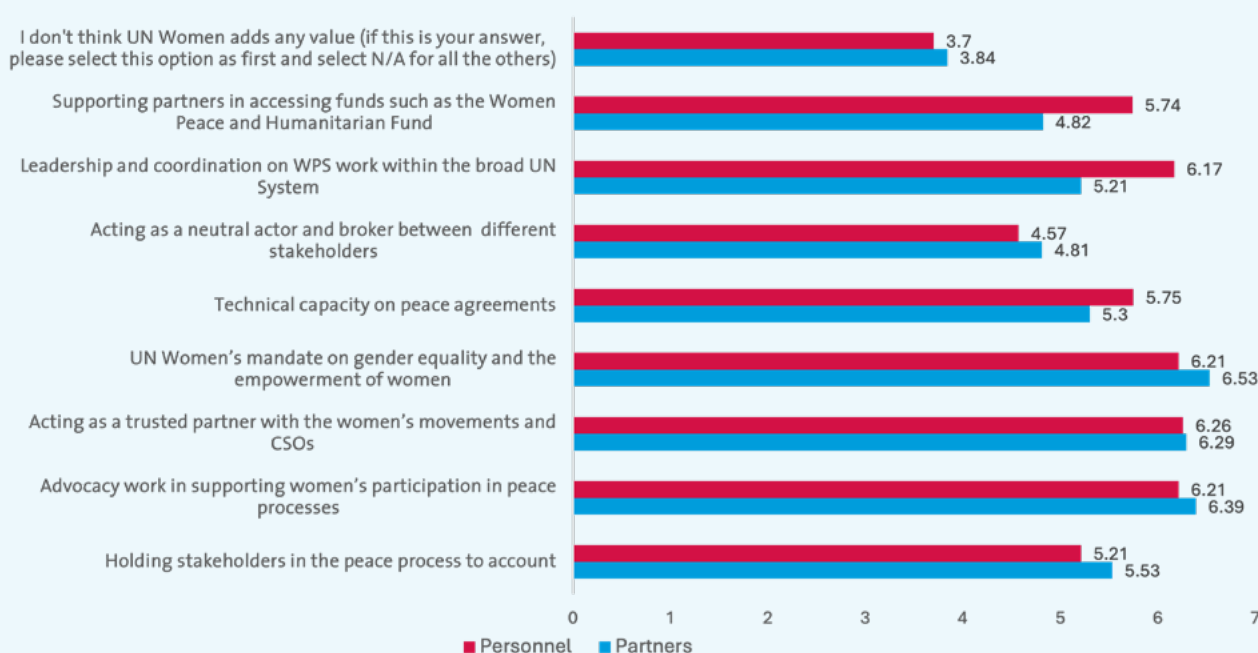
Another key added value of UN Women was its **strong relationship with women’s civil society, and its support and accompaniment to women’s organizations**, as previously discussed. It was widely reported that this is unique and allows UN Women to bring women’s voices to peace processes in a way that no other agency can. Stakeholders noted that this relationship is a result of UN Women’s sustained, long-term engagement with women’s civil society both before and during conflict, as well as during peacebuilding and beyond. In the survey, UN Women personnel rated acting as a trusted partner to women’s movements as the greatest added value (score 6.2 of 7), while partners rated it as the third greatest added value (score 6.3 of 7).

UN Women’s intense focus on developing the capacities of women’s civil society was also reported to be unique, in particular its support to strengthen the organizational and technical capacities of grassroots women’s CSOs and ensure their sustainability. For example, in Colombia, UN Women set up an innovative partner accompaniment model for women’s organizations to enter into

contracts with the state, providing political credibility and supporting sound financial auditing processes; while in the Philippines, UN Women developed the organizational capacity of grassroots women’s groups that other agencies can then work with, taking civil society strengthening to the next level.

Finally, due in large part to its mandate and its strong relationships with women’s civil society, in many contexts **UN Women was sometimes valued as a neutral and trusted broker**. For example, in Georgia, stakeholders reported that UN Women is highly valued for its neutrality and for its ability to open doors with its brand. In the Philippines, various stakeholders reported that no other agency has the high levels of trust and confidence with all actors on the ground in BARMM that UN Women does. While in Sudan and DRC, UN Women was also reported to be a trusted partner for a wide range of stakeholders. However, while this added value was highlighted in some case studies it was ranked relatively low in the survey, being scored 4.5 of 7 by UN Women personnel and 4.8 of 7 by partner respondents (see Graph 1 below).

GRAPH 1: Survey responses to the question “What was UN Women’s added value in supporting women’s participation in peace processes?” Ranking 1 (lowest added value) to 7 (highest added value) by UN Women personnel and UN Women partners



Source: Developed by the evaluation team from the personnel and partner survey

FINDING 10

Politically skilled personnel, senior Representatives, a decentralized presence and enabling procedures were the most critical corporate elements for effective work to support women's participation in peace processes.

Data collected through interviews, desk review and case studies showed that the complexity of conflict settings requires a mindful selection of the personnel deployed in the country. A strong capacity to read and engage with the nuances of political processes and a deep cultural sensitivity and understanding are fundamental ingredients to effectively contributing to work on peace processes. Case studies showed that wherever an office is sufficiently resourced with experienced WPS personnel who can engage regularly with both the conflict context and the political arena, the contribution to results seems to be stronger. This was the case in Colombia, where an in-depth knowledge of the context and long-term engagement of the team, with stakeholders in country, allowed the Country Office to obtain a fine reading of the political environment and strategic positioning within the peace process. In addition, strong presence of national and international personnel, as well as diversity within the office, can add value to UN Women's work, ensuring different groups are represented, local languages are spoken and perspectives from local and international personnel are integrated. However, the evaluation team found as part of the case studies of this evaluation and an HR analysis, that this was not always the case in other contexts: examples from case studies have showed that some Country Offices required more WPS personnel with WPS skills to engage in complex, fragile and rapidly changing conflict settings. The skills needed for the WPS work are in addition to the technical skills on gender equality issues necessary for UN Women personnel, as they also require **political acumen, strong analytical skills, a deep understanding of cultural and social phenomena and the ability to navigate restrictive contexts**. The size of the office, the personnel and the extent of resources available to UN Women Country Offices did not always reflect what was needed in the country in relation to the WPS agenda, leading offices to potentially underestimate the complexity of the context.

Two roles have said to be particularly crucial in contributing to positive results: **a senior level country Representative and the regional WPS adviser**. The presence of a politically astute senior country Representative is fundamental to ensuring that UN Women is considered a valuable partner within political and peace processes. Case studies indicated that seniority allowed UN Women to leverage its position in relation to peace discussions, ensuring women's issues were incorporated and securing spaces for women to access peace tables. Another very relevant position is the WPS regional adviser. WPS regional advisers play a pivotal role in supporting and

advising Country Offices on broader WPS work. Their role provided an added value when they were well connected with different stakeholders on the ground; deeply aware of regional and country contexts and dynamics; and provided tailored support based on the specific needs of the countries concerned. Case studies appeared to show that, for both positions, personalities and personal advocacy work played a considerable part in achieving results. Transferring knowledge and modus operandi allows results to be sustained and ensures continuity of the work.

Another element facilitating UN Women's achievement of results was **its presence on the ground**. Case studies indicated that having sub-offices at local levels is conducive to achieving results, particularly an enabling environment for women's participation in peace processes. Despite some very positive examples – such as in the Philippines, where having half of the personnel, including a WPS expert, located in the conflict area of Bangsamoro allowed UN Women to become an influential actor in the peace talks – this is not standard for UN Women, and different stakeholders, both internal and external, agreed that more presence on the ground is needed to enhance UN Women's impact in this area.

The evaluation also gathered evidence on stakeholder's perceptions on ways of working across UN Women. Evidence suggested that a close relationship and strong collaboration between Country Offices, Regional Offices and headquarters are conducive ways of working to achieve better results. Fifty nine percent (N= 18/31) of UN Women personnel reached through the survey agreed "there is consistent sharing and support between HQ, ROs and COs". Case studies showed that a regular information flow between Country Offices and Regional Offices, as well as the support provided by the headquarters WPS section to both Regional and Country Offices, facilitate work on the ground and increase the efficacy of interventions. When available, having a dedicated headquarters focal point has been reported as particularly useful. However, there was a missed opportunity in terms of knowledge exchange among Country Offices, which is confirmed by the survey results suggesting that "Lessons learned are sometimes documented and shared" (62 per cent – N=19/31 of UN Women respondents). Despite the context peculiarities, there are many good practices, strategies and lessons learned, for instance on how to operate in restrictive contexts, that would contribute to institutional learning and might be adapted to facilitate operations on the ground.

Enabling procedures are also required to operate in volatile and restrictive contexts, as well as the agility to adjust in case of conflict relapse. In different contexts, UN Women experienced many restrictions to its work, such as the inability to transfer funds due to banking restrictions in the country; working with unregistered organizations whenever registration entails risks; or the inability to cover costs when country restrictions require women to travel with a chaperone. In some cases, UN Women was able to use waivers and informal means to support its partners and continue its operations; however, the lack of clarity on procedures about how to act in restrictive contexts, together with limited knowledge and strategy sharing among Country Offices on how to navigate

such limitations, was said to have strongly hindered UN Women's ability to work and especially to reach marginalized groups and human rights defenders active on peace issues. As an example, many stakeholders reported challenges with the WPHF, e.g. its complex and bureaucratic processes meant that grassroots organizations could not access WPHF funds directly, but only as partners of bigger CSOs, something that undermines the WPHF goal of empowering women's organizations on the frontline. In addition, target populations of WPHF funding reported that the transfer of funds can be very slow so they have had to pre-finance their activities (see Box 6).

5. LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation identified six lessons that could be applied to other contexts in relation to UN Women's work on support to women's participation in peace processes.

LESSON 1

Advancing women's participation in peace processes is a highly political endeavour, which is different in nature to other more development focused aspects of UN Women's work.

Effective engagement in this area therefore requires a "political lens" that focuses on how the power, conflict dynamics and political interests at play within peace processes shape opportunities for women's participation, and which understands that UN Women is a political actor within this space. This political lens is necessary for work in this area at all levels, from global advocacy around women's participation, to work on specific conflicts and peace processes at national and sub-national level.

LESSON 2

Engaging with peace processes requires working with a range of political, conflict and peace process actors that might be outside UN Women's usual interlocutors, such as armed groups or peace mediators.

Identifying and building relationships with these actors can be challenging and can be supported by engaging collaboratively with political and peacekeeping missions and taking an "ecological" approach to stakeholder mapping that centres the peace process as the unit of analysis to understand which are the most relevant peace process actors for the purpose of advancing women's participation.

LESSON 3

A promising practice is the development of context-specific mechanisms that can channel women's voice and demands to key peace process actors.

The evaluation found that in various contexts UN Women has developed bespoke mechanisms to link women to peace processes, which have helped to ensure that women's voices are heard by peace process actors. Crucially, these mechanisms have been designed to fit with and build upon existing peace structures and processes, which contributes to their acceptance and effectiveness.

LESSON 4

Sustained support for grassroots women peacebuilders has an important role to play in creating the conditions for more inclusive peacemaking.

Supporting grassroots women's work in areas such as conflict mediation or community awareness raising not only helps build peace at community level, it also contributes to the development of grassroots women's peace agendas and gives grassroots women credibility and legitimacy to engage with power holders and in the peace arena. However, for this to contribute to more inclusive peacemaking, it is important that support for grassroots women peacebuilders is combined with work to meaningfully connect them to wider women's networks and track 2 peace processes, in order for their voices to be heard.

LESSON 5

Bringing women together across conflict lines can be of significant value in overcoming prejudices; identifying common experiences and concerns; and developing shared agendas and actions in relation to peace processes.

Fostering women's engagement across conflict lines not only has value in advancing goals related to women's participation and WPS, but can also advance broader peace goals, as women may maintain such dialogue even when negotiations among men from different sides of the conflict has broken down. While this is a promising area of work that could be scaled up, it is important that this is conducted in a way that advances women's rights priorities as well as allows the women involved to engage in sustained dialogue or common action, as simply providing one-off opportunities for engagement across conflict lines that cannot be followed up has limited value.

LESSON 6

Global trends of backlash on gender equality and women's rights and rejection of international norms and multilateral institutions are preventing progress on women's participation in peace processes and threatening to reverse achievements.

It is critical to understand and address these trends, and the ways in which they interact with local patterns of power, conflict and gender discrimination to shape resistance to women's inclusion in specific peacebuilding contexts. While UN Women has strong awareness of the challenge of backlash and resistance, its response is often ad hoc, and a more systematic and organization-wide approach could be valuable.

6. CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1

There were five broad mechanisms through which UN Women contributes to results: building relationships; convening multiple stakeholders, developing awareness and commitment; supporting women’s civil society influence; and embedding WPS and women’s participation within institutions. Although these mechanisms looked very different in different settings, together they contributed to most positive results from UN Women’s work in this area.

There was significant variation in how effectively UN Women supports change through these mechanisms. In some cases, UN Women’s engagement built on existing dynamics, processes and opportunities to successfully foster change through a given mechanism. For example, through embedding gender in peace implementation processes and institutions in Colombia and Philippines; developing structured and sustainable platforms for convening women and duty bearers in Georgia; or engaging key actors within the African Union for partnership and influence. However, in two case studies, UN Women faced challenges in fully accounting for existing local dynamics and interests while promoting change. These experiences highlight valuable lessons for more effective engagement. For example, in Libya, a more politically informed approach to WPS and women’s participation could have enhanced impact. Similarly, ensuring a more cohesive strategy with UN partners in supporting women’s presence at the third consultation round of the Nairobi process (Nairobi III) under the East African Community (EAC-led Nairobi process) could have strengthened their influence on the peace process.

The extent to which the results fostered through these different mechanisms were sustained highly depended on context, and particularly on trajectories of conflict and peacebuilding. However, patterns did emerge in terms of what types of results were most likely to be sustained. Notably, where UN Women was able to embed WPS and women’s participation within nationally owned policies and institutions, results were more likely to be sustained over time and without further support. However, the most sustainable results came from the strengthened

capacities within government and civil society. Examples from various cases studies indicated that where women’s capacities are developed, they continue to use these skills to influence peacebuilding whatever trajectory the conflict takes – whether that is peace consolidation in the Philippines or a return to conflict in Sudan.

Excellent context awareness, strong networks, relationships of trust, political skills and ongoing information gathering and analysis all emerged as crucial for UN Women to identify and support the most realistic and effective mechanisms for change in a given context.

CONCLUSION 2

UN Women’s approach to leave no one behind in terms of women’s participation within the women, peace and security context has been somewhat successful in engaging diverse, marginalized, conflict-affected and grassroots groups, and in employing participatory and bottom-up approaches.

UN Women’s territorial presence; the scale up of WPHF funding for women’s grassroots peace efforts; and the resourcing of women’s networks, coalitions and alliances amplified the voices of diverse women across various case studies. While successful in facilitating bottom-up consultations and amplifying diverse women’s voices at national, regional and global levels, these efforts must be accompanied by purposeful follow-up to ensure women’s contributions are considered and acted upon by peace process decision makers and their supporters.

At higher level, UN Women needs to balance efforts on the “supply” side of the WPS agenda – supporting women’s knowledge, capacities and skills – with efforts on the “demand” side, which involves engaging with gatekeepers, holding UN counterparts accountable and challenging stakeholders and partners with differing views. This requires addressing power dynamics and understanding gendered hierarchies within peace processes, as well as pushing back against patriarchal diversion strategies that suggest women lack the necessary capacities, networks or expertise to participate.

CONCLUSION 3

UN Women's widely recognized capacity, mandate and leadership on women, peace and security combined with its strong relationships with women's civil society, mean that the Entity, in partnership with DPPA and DPO, has the potential to lead⁶⁴ where it has a presence and to develop the agenda on women's participation in peace processes.

UN Women is living up to this potential and delivering added value in some areas. For example, in keeping the issue of women's participation on the agenda at every level and across multiple spaces and processes; and in developing a strong relationship with women's civil society, supporting the development of civil society and acting as a trusted broker for women's civil society to engage with a range of stakeholders and duty bearers. UN Women is also providing thought leadership to advance the WPS agenda in some contexts and in relation to some issues, although the Entity could do more on this or make its work in this area more visible.

However, there are areas where UN Women has potential to add value but is not doing so. Despite being uniquely placed to share learning and experiences (both internally and externally) on WPS and women's participation in peace processes, UN Women is not visibly and systematically doing this although efforts exist. This is despite significant demand from Country Offices for this type of experience sharing, and the value it could bring in terms of consolidating and strengthening UN Women's work in this area. UN Women does not always have adequate capacity on gender and peace processes in some contexts to meet expectations and demand.

CONCLUSION 4

UN Women has effective ways of working to support women's participation in peace processes. Politically skilled personnel, senior representatives, a decentralized presence and enabling procedures were the most critical corporate elements for effective work to support women's participation in peace processes. Navigating backlash against gender equality initiatives should be further explored.

Some elements of UN Women's structures were adequate and conducive to producing results in conflict contexts, such as the presence of senior representatives and WPS regional experts. However, there were other elements that hindered those results, such as limited flexibility to operate in fragile settings; lack of clarity on programmatic security protocols for partners; and limited presence in some critical areas. In specific cases, UN Women effectively combined the human resources and flexibility needed to navigate fragile contexts, with strong intentionality in recruitment and a deep understanding of the context, which allowed Country Offices to overcome barriers and achieve results. However, some cases demonstrated that personnel are operating under severe limitations due to the inadequate resourcing of offices compared to the complexity of the settings, as well as some organizational processes that were perceived to impede operations required for effective WPS delivery.

The lack of clarity on standardized programmatic security protocols to manage the risks of the safety of both personnel and the rights holders with whom UN Women works needs to be addressed to safely work in restrictive conflict contexts. The ability to navigate backlashes against gender work was another element not fully incorporated into UN Women's risk preparedness.

⁶⁴ It is important to note that DPPA and DPO are the UN's peace and security pillar; therefore, UN Women must work in partnership with DPPA and DPO on women's participation in peace processes.



Photo: ©UN Women/Ploy Phutpheng

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

UN Women should maintain and strengthen its support for women’s capacity in relation to peace processes, while increasing its efforts to build appetite for women’s participation among key peace process actors in close coordination with other relevant UN entities.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

Steps that could be taken for maintaining and strengthening support for women’s capacity

- Consistently connect women’s civil society with peace process actors in meaningful, politically smart and timely ways to provide real opportunities for influence.
- Ensure that support for women’s civil society provides sufficient space and time for women to develop their own agenda, and that diverse women’s voices and rights are included in developing this agenda.

Steps for building appetite for women’s participation among key peace process actors.

- Develop stronger and more consistent collaboration with DPPA. This should be driven by senior leadership at headquarters level but also critically in the field, it also requires that Country Offices proactively reach out to DPPA missions and demonstrate how they can add value to DPPA-led political peace processes. UN Women should develop internal guidelines for country offices on how to work with DPPA and DPO, identifying the key counterparts and enabling the building of trust among parties.
- Establish or strengthen relationships with peace process key actors. These could include member states undertaking peace mediation, regional bodies involved in mediation, NGOs and other mediating actors as well as national government counterparts involved in negotiations, or parties to conflict. This requires liaising effectively with Special Political Missions and Peacekeeping Missions, as well as effectively leveraging gender analysis to inform political and conflict analysis, and linking up civil society partners with political processes, and the ability to demonstrate UN Women’s relevance.
- Leverage the UN’s advocacy, support and convening roles to advance women’s participation in peace processes. Identify and advance concrete measures (i.e., targets and implementing measures) and mobilize support for women’s participation and rights. These will be different in each context, but could include developing opportunities for influence through providing technical support or funding to peace process actors, or demonstrating how supporting women’s participation can help meet peace process actors’ own goals
- Develop compelling evidence that demonstrates the value of women’s participation and use this as a basis for strategic advocacy with key peace process actors.

TO BE LED BY: PPID/Peace, Security and Resilience Unit; Regional Offices with WPS Advisers, Country Offices in conflict settings (as per internal UN Women systems).

IMPACT: HIGH – Creating appetite for women’s participation alongside supporting women’s capacity would enable more women to enter and influence peace process spaces.

DIFFICULTY: HIGH – Influencing peace process actors will be highly difficult given UN Women position in peace processes and the limited number of peace processes that the UN currently leads. Strengthening support to women’s civil society should be of medium difficulty as UN Women has extensive expertise and experience in this area, including examples of good practice that it can draw on.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: Women will continue to be excluded from peace process spaces, and limited to seeking to influence these from outside. Women’s mobilization to influence peace processes will be undermined by lack of consistent, high-quality support.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

UN Women should ensure it has strong political and diplomatic capacities at country level to advance women's participation in peace processes and engage in effective partnerships.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Ensure that personnel in Country Offices operating in conflict-affected settings have the necessary political and diplomatic skills to engage with political actors, including mediator parties to the peace process. This could include providing mandatory gender sensitive conflict analysis and political negotiation training for personnel operating in conflict settings.
- Ensure the Country Office develops context, gender and politically informed conflict analysis that will inform, on an ongoing basis, ways to engage with political actors. This would strengthen UN Women's position in the peace process field, and enable Country Offices to engage in politically informed and context relevant ways with a wider range of actors.
- Invest UN Women personnel's time in building relationships of trust with key actors engaged in peace processes beyond UN Women's usual interlocutors.
- In addition to context, gender and conflict analysis, UN Women should develop an organization-wide approach to map stakeholders according to their position in the peace process. This will help Country Office personnel to deepen their understanding of the context and engage in strategic relationship building actions with key actors.

TO BE LED BY: PPID/ Peace, Security and Resilience Unit and Regional and Country Offices in conflict settings.

IMPACT: Strengthening the political and diplomatic skills of UN Women personnel in Country Offices operating in conflict-affected countries, coupled with systematic context, gender and conflict analysis, will help UN Women to be recognized as a trusted partner to create demand for women's participation in peace processes.

DIFFICULTY: Medium as it will require additional personnel in country offices with political and diplomatic skills.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: UN Women will likely have fewer opportunities to participate as a political actor in major UN mediated peace processes.

RECOMMENDATION 3

UN Women should continue to build on its WPS leadership role to share new lessons, approaches and models on women’s participation in peace processes that others can adopt and develop. This should be coupled with strengthening the production of data on WPS and monitoring its use for building a strong evidence base on women’s participation in peace processes.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Ensure regular and systematic information-sharing about UN Women’s work on women’s participation in peace processes. This could be in the form of country exchanges on specific experiences or mechanisms of change.
- Ensure that UN Women contributes leadership to the thinking in emerging areas of WPS, such as climate and WPS, and cybersecurity and WPS. This could be done by systematically documenting and sharing good practices; facilitating exchanges at multiple levels on emerging areas; and ensuring that UN Women personnel have the technical expertise to advance these issues.
- Continue to strengthen the production and dissemination of data, for example through the Women Count platform and the development of the Women in Peace Processes Monitor.

TO BE LED BY: PPID/ Peace, Security and Resilience Unit and Regional and Country Offices in conflict settings.

IMPACT: Increased visibility and clarity of UN Women’s contribution to emerging WPS areas related to women’s participation in peace processes. Strengthening knowledge-sharing of best practices and lessons learned from UN Women’s work on peace processes across UN Women. Increased production and use of data related to WPS to inform women’s participation in peace processes.

DIFFICULTY: Medium as it requires an effort across the organization to manage its internal knowledge and share it in a concerted and coherent way to adequately inform Country Offices in conflict settings.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: Risk of losing a potential position in the WPS landscape that could hinder the further strengthening and increase of women’s participation and influence in peace processes.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

UN Women should continue to operationalize the leave no one behind principle and sharpen efforts to engage with marginalized groups in peace processes. UN Women also needs to proactively engage with peace process decision makers to ensure diverse women's contributions are considered and acted upon. By being more open to engaging with those that have critical or contrary positions, UN Women could strengthen and broaden its partnerships and increase the diversity of the women's voices it supports

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeframe

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- UN Women Country Offices should continue to leverage territorial presence, scale up WPHF funding to reach the most marginalized groups including ethnic, disability and LGBTIQ+ groups while documenting and sharing good practices across regions and countries.
- UN Women Country Offices should draft a context-specific, tailored engagement road map with young women, ethnic minority women, women with disabilities and the LGBTIQ+ community to ensure their priorities are integrated into the road map and their needs are considered in eventual peace processes.
- UN Women should develop more diversified engagements with stakeholders who are critical of the peace negotiation process and its set-up, and UN Women itself. This should be a joint collaborative process among Regional and Country Offices, with inputs from headquarters and in conjunction with other entities.

TO BE LED BY: PPID/ Peace, Security and Resilience Unit and Regional and Country Offices in conflict settings.

IMPACT: Strengthened inclusivity and representation of marginalized groups, enhanced engagement with key stakeholders and more effective interventions in peace processes. Strengthened ability to address power dynamics and promote gender equality.

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM-HIGH – Requires coordinated efforts across various levels and effective partnership management, alongside ongoing assessments and strategic adjustments.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: Risk of continued exclusion of marginalized groups and ineffective engagement with key stakeholders. Missed opportunities for more equitable and impactful interventions in peace processes. Risk of perpetuating power imbalances and failing to address critical issues related to gender equality and representation.

RECOMMENDATION 5

UN Women in close coordination with other UN entities should also document analytical practices across offices to unpack “resistance to gender equality” and develop concrete action plans in line with the UN Women Push Forward Strategy and the UN Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.

Priority

HIGH

Timeframe

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Initiate an agency-wide consultation with women’s movements and allies at Country Office level and develop tailored plans to address resistance to gender equality, harmful gender norms and push back against women’s rights in peace negotiation contexts.
- Map and explore partnerships with stakeholders involved in protection of women human rights defenders and leverage UN Women’s coordination mandate for quarterly reports on peace operations and reporting efforts under the UN Clarion Call for Gender Equality.
- Update guidance and internal protocols for protecting women human rights defenders, integrating these into UN Women’s processes and training of relevant personnel. Disseminate research findings, such as efforts in Colombia on indigenous and afro-descendants’ ancestral knowledge of self-protection.
- Set up an in-house working group on navigating backlash that captures good practices across contexts; documents and disseminates advances; and is available to advise and serve as a sounding board to different Country Offices.

TO BE LED BY: PPID/Peace, Security and Resilience Unit, with PSMU and Civil Society.

IMPACT: Improved systemic approach to countering harmful gender norms, enhanced protection for women human rights defenders, better contextual understanding and more effective engagement with key stakeholders, leading to increased women’s participation and reduced backlash.

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM-HIGH – Requires changes to current practices, coordination across various levels and update of current guidance and policies.

IF NOT IMPLEMENTED: Missed opportunities to effectively address gender norms, risk to women human rights defenders, potential for continued ad hoc and fragmented approaches and ongoing challenges in achieving meaningful women’s participation and protection in fragile contexts.

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

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



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