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# SYNTHESIS REPORT

## COUNTRY PORTFOLIO

### EVALUATION 2020-2024

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



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**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION, AUDIT AND  
INVESTIGATION SERVICES (IEAIS)**

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE (IES)

**UNWOMEN**

July 2025

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**Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service of UN Women.**

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# ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
<b>CEDAW</b>	International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CPE</b>	Country Portfolio Evaluation
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>EVAW</b>	Ending Violence against Women
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>IEAIS</b>	Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services
<b>IES</b>	Independent Evaluation Service
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>PADMPME</b>	Project to support the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>PBF</b>	UN Peacebuilding Fund
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>UNCT-SWAP</b>	United Nations Country Team-System-Wide Action Plan
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNSCR</b>	UN Security Council Resolution 1325
<b>UNSDCF</b>	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>WEE</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment
<b>WPP</b>	Women's Political Participation
<b>WPS</b>	Women, Peace and Security



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This evaluation report resulted from the valuable contributions of 83 participants, 61 per cent of whom were female. The support and active engagement of everyone involved in the consultation process were instrumental in making this report possible.

The evaluation team included Judicael Moutangou (Senior Consultant), Seke Kouassi (Researcher), Syreen Forest (Junior Researcher) and Romain Diatta (Evaluation Analyst). The evaluation team was led by Cyuma Mbayiha (Regional Evaluation Specialist).

We extend our sincere thanks to the Evaluation Management Group, which benefitted from the dedicated involvement of personnel from the UN Women DRC Country Office led by Adama Moussa (Country Representative) and Catherine Odimba (Programme Specialist). We also thank the M&E Team and other personnel for demonstrating their commitment to facilitating broad stakeholder engagement and supporting the evaluation process, their involvement was invaluable.

Special thanks also go to the Evaluation Reference Group, a key group of stakeholders who provided critical input

throughout the evaluation process and on its key products. This group included representatives from the Government of Sweden: Olivier Baliahamwabo (Programme Manager Swedish Embassy); the Norwegian Government: Mwamini Batumike (Norwegian Embassy); the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo: Cecile Lepira Tshibanda (Gender Director, Ministry of Gender) and Jean Mbo Nvanga (Planning Unit Ministry of Gender); as well as civil society representatives: Lyliane Moseka (DFJ Programme Manager), Ezra Kambale (DFJ) and Carine Kanku (Coordinator of Dynafec).

Their thoughtful feedback, insights and significant time investment greatly enhanced the evaluation's relevance and value.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Adriana Alegre, Catherine Simes, Ekaterina Dorodnykh and Ross Tanner for their inputs and expertise at key steps of the evaluation, as well as to Inga Sniukaite Kaplan (Chief of the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service) and Lisa Sutton (Director, Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services of UN Women) for their supportive leadership.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) of the UN Women Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Country Office. The evaluation was conducted between February and December 2024 and covered implementation of the Strategic Note 2020–2024. A CPE is an independent and systematic assessment of UN Women's contribution to development results relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level, covering its normative, coordination and operational mandates.

## Purpose, objectives and scope

The purpose of the CPE is to support learning, strategic decision-making and accountability for results, both for the Country Office and for key stakeholders in DRC. Specifically, the evaluation aims to:

- Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and integration of human rights and gender equality principles in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note;
- generate actionable lessons and recommendations to inform development of the next Strategic Note (2025–2028); and
- contribute to broader organizational learning and the strategic positioning of UN Women in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

The evaluation covered all five programmatic impact areas – Women's Political Participation (WPP), Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW), Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Gender in Humanitarian Action, as well as results under the Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework. The evaluation assessed interventions implemented between January 2020 and February 2024 at the national level and in selected provinces, with geographic limitations due to access constraints outside Kinshasa (see Section 1).

## Intended users and use

Primary users of the evaluation include UN Women personnel in the DRC Country Office, the Regional Office for West and Central Africa, UN Women headquarters and the Independent Evaluation Service. Government partners, civil

society organizations, donors and UN agencies are also key audiences. The findings will support:

- strategic planning and prioritization in the upcoming Strategic Note;
- strengthened accountability for results under the current Strategic Note;
- coordination and advocacy efforts within the UN system; and
- resource mobilization and national stakeholder engagement.

Evaluation results will be publicly accessible through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system.

## Methodology

The evaluation employed a theory-based, mixed-methods approach grounded in UN Women's evaluation principles, including gender-responsiveness, participation and human rights. Contribution analysis was used to assess the plausibility of UN Women's contributions to observed changes. The reconstructed theory of change (see Annex 2) provided the analytical foundation.

Data were collected from 88 stakeholders (62.5 per cent women) and 35 survey respondents across UN Women staff, partners, donors and UN personnel. Methods included document review (51 reports), key informant interviews, focus group discussions and surveys. Attention was paid to inclusivity and accessibility, although participation by persons with disabilities was limited (see Section 4).

## Background

DRC is characterized by protracted humanitarian crises, socio-political instability and persistent gender inequality. Women and girls face systemic barriers to education, economic opportunity, political participation and protection from violence. Only 16.8 per cent of girls complete secondary school, and women represent just 20 per cent of government positions, despite a constitutional commitment to parity. DRC ranks 179 of 191 countries on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (see Section 2).

The Strategic Note 2020–2024 outlined four impact areas

and cross-cutting priorities aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and national strategies such as the National Gender Policy and the National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence. The portfolio included 20 key projects, with a total budget of US\$ 37.1 million. Over 50 per cent of funds were allocated to WPS and humanitarian programming, followed by WEE (28 per cent), WPP (11 per cent) and EVAW (9 per cent) (see Section 3, Annex 7).

## KEY FINDINGS

**Relevance:** The portfolio is well-aligned with national priorities and international standards, including the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. Programming addressed critical needs in conflict-affected areas and supported women's leadership and economic inclusion. However, emerging issues such as violence against schoolgirls remain insufficiently addressed due to inter-agency coordination gaps (see Section 5).

**Coherence:** UN Women played a key role in gender coordination through the Gender Theme Group and inter-agency platforms. While synergies were identified across thematic areas, duplication in leadership training and geographic overlaps indicated the need for improved internal coordination. Only 23 per cent of UNSDCF indicators were gender-related, suggesting limited mainstreaming across the UN system (see Section 5).

**Effectiveness:** Contributions to electoral code reform, capacity-building of 2,550 women candidates and institutional engagement on gender-based violence (GBV) were noted. However, weak accountability for GBV crimes and limited follow-up on women's participation in peace processes constrained transformative impact. Many initiatives emphasized outputs (e.g. training numbers) over outcomes (e.g. behavioural change, income generation) (see Section 5).

**Efficiency:** Budget execution was strong (average 86.25 per cent) and advances over 12 months had been eliminated by 2021. However, delays in donor reporting, understaffing in WEE and humanitarian sectors, and high staff turnover affected continuity and institutional learning. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity was weakened by the resignation of the sole M&E officer (see Section 5).

**Sustainability:** Institutional partnerships were established (e.g. provincial secretariats for UNSCR 1325), but few projects had exit strategies or dedicated support for long-term capacity. Reliance on external funding without

diversification threatens programme continuity (see Section 5).

**Human rights and gender equality:** While the Strategic Note acknowledged marginalized groups, implementation often lacked tailored approaches. The needs of women with disabilities, indigenous groups and rural women were not consistently addressed. Monitoring frameworks rarely disaggregated data beyond sex and geographic location (see Section 5).

## Conclusions

### CONCLUSION 1:

The Country Office has contributed meaningfully to advancing gender equality despite operating in a complex, conflict-affected setting. Its alignment with global frameworks is a strength, but programming gaps and coordination inefficiencies limit deeper impact.

### CONCLUSION 2:

Strategic use of unearmarked funds enabled the Country Office to pursue priorities such as WPP, even when donor-funded projects did not. However, reliance on such workarounds reveals a misalignment between stated commitments and funded interventions.

### CONCLUSION 3:

While financial oversight improved, UN Women's impact in the country was constrained by output-focused programming, weak M&E systems and staff turnover. Persistent challenges include donor reporting delays, aged partner advances and partner sustainability risks, requiring strengthened outcome monitoring and staffing solutions.

### CONCLUSION 4:

Programmes did not consistently address the heterogeneity of Congolese women and girls. Inclusivity and sustainability require stronger targeting, disaggregated data and follow-through on commitments to "leave no one behind."

### CONCLUSION 5:

The absence of outcome-level indicators and weak M&E systems undermined learning, accountability and strategic planning, especially in terms of scaling effective models.

## Recommendations to UN Women DRC Country Office

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** (based on Conclusion 1): UN Women DRC Country Office should enhance the alignment of its portfolio with the DRC's socio-cultural dynamics, and prioritize gaps related to GBV and women's leadership. This includes expanding advocacy on violence against schoolgirls – within the framework of UN Women's coordination mandate – by working through the Gender Theme Group and in collaboration with agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO. Increased programmatic and financial focus on WPP should also be reflected in future strategies.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** (based on Conclusion 1): UN Women DRC Country Office should improve coordination and resource management across interventions to maximize synergies and avoid duplication. Improved project integration, joint planning among thematic teams and clear tracking of geographic and partner overlaps would help maximize synergies and avoid inefficiencies.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** (based on Conclusion 2): UN Women DRC Country Office should deepen its operational strategies and partnerships to ensure sustained impact, particularly in the areas of WPP, GBV and WPS. This includes scaling engagement with political parties and institutions; promoting women's participation in peace processes; and building sustained strategies for addressing structural barriers in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** (based on Conclusion 3): To sustain gains beyond the funding cycle, UN Women DRC Country Office should work with national partners to build institutional capacities and promote ownership of key initiatives. Efforts to diversify funding sources and support domestic resource mobilization should be prioritized to reduce reliance on external donors and reinforce long-term sustainability.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** (based on Conclusion 4): UN Women DRC Country Office should ensure inclusivity by systematically addressing the diverse realities of Congolese women and girls, especially marginalized groups such as women with disabilities. This includes designing tailored interventions for marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities and rural women, and reinforcing inclusive practices through staff training, civil society engagement and improved data collection strategies.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** (based on Conclusion 5): UN Women DRC Country Office should strengthen its results-based management approach by enhancing systems for results tracking, monitoring and reporting, with a focus on measurable outcomes rather than activity-based outputs. Enhancing staff capacities to design, track and report on results that reflect transformative change will be critical for future accountability and learning.





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# 1. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE



## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) is to identify overall successes and challenges relating to UN Women's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and, based on lessons drawn from this systematic assessment, use the information to inform the programme's new direction. The evaluation has two objectives, in line with the UN Women Evaluation Policy:

- (a) accountability to key stakeholders for UN Women's contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women; and
- (b) decision-making and to inform normative, operational and coordination work.

The evaluation's findings and recommendations are designed to be used by the Country Office to inform its new Strategic Note 2025–2028. Other primary users of this evaluation include the UN Country Team, for the development of joint programmes and the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and UN Women personnel in the Regional Office and headquarters. The evaluation is also intended to be used by UN Women's strategic partners, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and development partners. The results of the evaluation are publicly accessible through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system for learning.

More specifically, the CPE offers actionable recommendations and lessons learned based on its assessment of the relevance and coherence of UN Women's interventions at national level; the effectiveness, sustainability and organizational efficiency of the Country Office in achieving its expected results; and the extent to which a human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated into the design and implementation of the Strategic Note.

## 1.2 Scope

The scope of the evaluation is thematic, geographical and chronological. The evaluation covers the Strategic Note implementation period from 1 January 2020 to 28 February 2024.<sup>1</sup> The Country Office's workplan and integrated mandate was assessed, including UN Women's contributions in operational, coordination and normative

areas. While the geographic scope of the evaluation includes all regions of DRC, the evaluation team did not have the opportunity to travel beyond the capital city of Kinshasa. However, the interventions that fall fully within the scope of the evaluation are those designed to contribute to the Strategic Note 2020–2024 development results framework and the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

The Strategic Note includes a Development Results Framework and an Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework; both were considered in this evaluation. For each of the four impact areas, the Development Results Framework presents the outcomes, outputs, indicators with target values and achievement levels to date. The Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework includes performance indicators on UN system coordination and strategic partnerships, organizational effectiveness, knowledge management and financial management, which the evaluation used to assess organizational performance.

UN Women's organizational structures and systems outside the Country Office (such as the Regional Office) are outside the scope of this evaluation. References to these external structures were made selectively, focusing on cases where their influence is evident in the design and execution of the Country Office's Strategic Note.

In particular, joint programmes fall within the scope of this evaluation. In cases where joint programmes are included in the analysis, the evaluation took into account both the distinctive contributions of UN Women DRC and the benefits or costs associated with joint collaboration arrangements.

1. It took several rounds of reviews and revisions before the new DRC Strategic Note 2020–2024 was approved by UN Women headquarters in March 2022.





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## 2. COUNTRY CONTEXT



DRC is a vast country with a population estimated (in 2024) at 103.2 million inhabitants<sup>2</sup>, 50.4 per cent of whom were women. The population is very young, with almost 60 per cent under 20 years old. The vast majority (53 per cent) of the population live in rural areas. The population growth rate is 3.30 per cent.

DRC has enormous hydraulic, mining, agricultural, ecosystem and demographic resources. However, most people in DRC do not benefit from these riches. A long succession of conflicts, instability, political unrest and authoritarian regimes has led to a humanitarian crisis as severe as it is persistent: 73 per cent of the population live in extreme poverty on US\$ 1.9 per day. In 2022, approximately 62 per cent of the country's population lived on less than US\$ 2.15 per day.<sup>3</sup>

The economic situation in DRC has been characterized by real GDP growth, which has slowed in recent years. Economic growth increased to 8.9 per cent in 2022, decreased to 8 per cent in 2023 and is estimated at 7.2 per cent in 2024<sup>4</sup> due to the dynamism of its mining sector and the revival of the non-extractive sector, e.g. services.<sup>5</sup> Growth in non-mining sectors (notably services) reached 4.2 per cent in 2023, compared to 2.7 per cent in 2022. However, this growth has not significantly improved living conditions for the general population. DRC's human capital index stands at 0.37, below the average for sub-Saharan African countries (0.40).<sup>6</sup> DRC ranked 180 of 193 countries in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index in 2024.<sup>7</sup>

Women in DRC face significant obstacles to economic prospects, gender equality and women's empowerment, and face high levels of violence and discrimination. Only 16.8 per cent of girls complete secondary school, approximately half as many as boys.<sup>8</sup> Women's participation in the labour force in DRC was estimated at 62.67 per cent in 2023<sup>9</sup> and most work in agriculture<sup>10</sup>.

Women earn much less than men and have fewer assets. Several factors are behind the persistent and significant gender gaps in the country. Access to basic services and assistance for people affected by conflict is often limited and sometimes insufficient to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people.

Although the law treats women and men equally, a combination of socioeconomic factors and structural barriers make it more difficult for women to start and conduct business. Gender-specific factors amplify the obstacles that hinder the effective inclusion of women in economic sectors.

DRC has committed to promote gender equality by ratifying several international and regional conventions and protocols on gender equality and women's empowerment such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which reaffirms the principle of equality between sexes in articles 1 and 2; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); Beijing Platform for Action; Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights related to the rights of women in Africa or "Protocol on Women's Rights" (2003); Solemn Declaration of the African Union on equality between men and women (2004); Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development; and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In terms of policies and strategies, four main instruments define the strategic and political framework related to gender: (i) National Strategic Development Plan (2020–2024); (ii) National Gender Policy and its action plan (2009); (iii) National Strategy to Combat GBV (2009, revised in 2020); and (iv) the existence of a national plan for implementation of UNSCR 1325 on WPS. These strategic orientations and areas of intervention aim to remove barriers that hinder the social and economic well-being of women and girls, while increasing the value and impact of rural women's work in key productive sectors such as mining and agriculture.

Although DRC ratified CEDAW in 1986, women remain subject to the authority of traditional patriarchy. Congolese women are relegated to second place in the allocation of land and means of production.<sup>11</sup>

The school enrolment rate is improving, but many girls are interrupting their education due to factors that disproportionately affect girls: early marriages, GBV, lack of access to menstrual hygiene and cultural norms. Women are not sufficiently represented in decision-making.

2. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1041527/total-population-of-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

3. <https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/country/drc/overview>

4. African Development Bank Group, "Economic Outlook in the Democratic Republic of Congo",

<https://www.afdb.org/fr/pays-afrique-centrale-republique-democratique-du-congo/perspectives-economiques-en-Democratic-Republic-of-Congo>

5. African Development Bank Group, "Economic Outlook in the Democratic Republic of Congo",

<https://www.afdb.org/fr/pays-afrique-centrale-republique-democratique-du-congo/perspectives-economiques-en-Democratic-Republic-of-Congo>

6. <https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/country/drc/overview>

7. UNDP, "Human Development Insights", <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2023-24>

8. UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023.

9. [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/Female\\_labor\\_force\\_participation/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/Female_labor_force_participation/). See also International Labour Organization (ILO), [Statistics on Women](#).

10. Approximately 29.88% of female employment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is in the agriculture sector, [World Bank Open data](#), 2023

11. Despite the constitutional guarantee of equality (Article 17 of the DRC's Constitution states that women have the same rights as men), land tenure laws are often influenced by DRC's customary practices and frequently prioritize male inheritance and control over land thereby relegating women to secondary status.

The Constitution provides for parity, and the new electoral law<sup>12</sup> has a provision aimed at promoting gender equality: as a result, since the presidential election of 2018, there has been a slight increase in the representation of women in government, from 17 per cent in 2019 to 20 per cent in 2024.<sup>13</sup>

The gender index<sup>14</sup> in DRC of 0.373 is below the average of African countries (0.486). In other words, there is an overall gender gap of 63 per cent<sup>15</sup> between women and men.



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12. The law enacted in June 2022 exempts political parties from paying the required deposit fee if they submit candidate lists with at least 50 per cent women.

13. The Sylvestre Ilunga government (2019) had 10 women out of 65 ministerial positions (15.4 per cent). If including deputy ministers, the figure reached ~17-18 per cent. The June 2024 government (under PM Judith Suminwa) has 5 women out of 34 full ministers (14.7 per cent) in line with Presidential Decree No. 004/2024. With the inclusion of deputy ministers, women held under 20 per cent of posts in 2024 (Source: Central Election Commission, 2024; [DRC Presidency Portal](#)).

14. Source: Report on gender equality in Africa, African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) 2019

15. The gender gap represents the percentage of inequality remaining to achieve full parity, calculated as "1 minus gender index score".





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## 3. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS



### 3.1 Overview of the Strategic Note

UN Women's Strategic Note 2020–2024 is the Country Office's main planning tool to support achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in DRC based on the Entity's integrated mandate: normative, coordination and operational. It covers the impact areas of Women's Leadership and Political Participation,<sup>16</sup> Women's Economic Empowerment, Ending Violence Against Women, and Women, Peace, and Security and humanitarian action through national and regional interventions.

The Strategic Note includes a Development Results Framework detailing expected results and indicators with targets and baselines (see Annex 1). The Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework includes the following goals to support intended development results:

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

### 3.2 Strategic Note theory of change

The Strategic Note's theory of change is summarized in Table 1. The Country Office's overarching theory of change primarily centres on contributing to the six outcomes outlined in the UNSDCF 2020–2024, with a particular focus on coordinating the cross-cutting component related to gender equality and women's empowerment. While this emphasis on UNSDCF outcomes facilitates inter-agency collaboration by establishing a shared programme vision, the broad nature of these outcomes can sometimes make it difficult to assess UN Women's contributions.

While UN Women's Strategic Plan includes a clearly defined outcome on women's political participation aligned with its core mandate, the broader outcomes in the UNSDCF – such as those on democratic governance and security – cover a wide range of actors and issues. This broad scope makes it difficult to attribute progress specifically to UN Women's gender-focused work, potentially diminishing the visibility of its contributions. As a result, the Country Office may face challenges in aligning its activities, reporting and resource allocation while maintaining a focused approach to gender equality and women's empowerment. Similar issues are observed across other UNSDCF outcomes adopted by the Country Office.

**TABLE 1. Theory of change<sup>17</sup> for UN Women DRC Country Office programme 2020–2024**

Vision	An inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Democratic Republic of Congo where women, girls, boys, and men are free and secure; enjoy equal rights; and have equal opportunities to access a better life, make their own decisions, and improve their living conditions—contributing to sustainable peace, security, and the respect of human rights and women's rights, in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.
Impact	The country will be more inclusive and peaceful to ensure sustainable development
Key assumptions	If women fully and equally participate in leadership and decision-making and women and girls benefit from gender-responsive governance;
	If women, especially the poorest and most excluded have access to economic opportunities/resources/services and are economically empowered and benefit from development;
	If the environment is favourable for women's rights so that women live a life free of all forms of violence;
	If peace, security, humanitarian action and COVID-19 response are shaped by women's leadership and participation

16. This is also called "Leadership and Inclusive Governance" in the DRC Strategic Note.  
17. For the full theory of change see Annex 2.

Outcomes	Because (i) public institutions, media and civil society, at both central and decentralized levels, will effectively exercise their roles for an inclusive democratic governance that is conducive to women's participation and the strengthening of the rule of law
	Because (ii) an enabling legislative framework and policy environment will be in place and translated into action
	Because (iii) key actors in DRC will coherently and systematically contribute to progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as they provide a coordinated, rapid and effective development, peace and security and humanitarian response
	Because (iv) gender responsive land tenure systems will be in place and gender responsive affirmative agricultural policies will be in effect and have access to relevant skill building, financial services, and productive resources
	Because (v) favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours will be promoted to prevent VAWG
	Because (vi) vulnerable women and survivors will have equitable, quality and sustainable access to basic essential social services, including HIV/AIDS
	Because (vii) women will be empowered to effectively participate in decision making and governance processes as well in reconciliation, peace, security mechanisms at all levels.

Source: DRC Country Office Strategic Note 2020–2024

The above theory of change does not reflect the full scope of the Country Office's work as presented in the Strategic Note. The Country Office's programme results framework includes six UNSDCF outcomes. As they do not always have links to the impact areas<sup>18</sup> with which they are associated, nor are they consistently connected to outputs,<sup>19</sup> the theory of change cannot reflect the logical cause-and-effect chain of the Strategic Note. To better understand the logical flow between outputs and higher-level results, the evaluation

team developed a reconstructed representation of the underlying theory of change (see Annex 2) after it was discussed with programme personnel and key stakeholders during the inception workshop. This revised model places greater emphasis on the impact areas outlined in UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (including systemic outcomes), offering a clearer, more nuanced depiction of the organization's contributions and pathways to impact.

18. This is the case for Outcomes 5 and 6 (Ending Violence Against Women Impact Area), which broadly refer to vulnerable groups' access to basic social services. As such, Outcomes 5 and 6 do not contribute to the Ending Violence Against Women Impact Area and their indicators cannot be used to assess this contribution. However, Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4 are aligned with UN Women's impact areas.

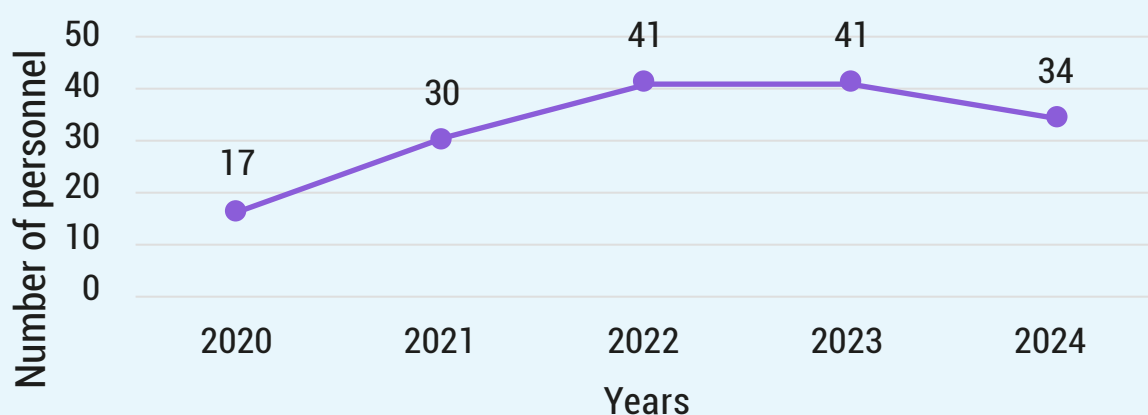
19. Outputs are directly linked to outcomes for only three of six outcomes. Several outputs are formulated not as tangible goods or services contributing to the achievement of outcomes, but in terms of behavioural change, which in essence is an outcome.

### 3.3 Human resource analysis

The Country Office doubled the number of personnel it employed during the Strategic Note period (2020–2024): from 17 employees in 2020 to 35 employees in 2024. This increase is mainly due to the functional analysis conducted in 2021, which resulted in the transformation of the Country Office from a medium to a large-sized office.

In terms of composition and categorization of positions, six employees are UN Volunteers, there is a Country Representative (P5), a Programme Manager (NOD), an Operations Manager (NOC), a Financial Officer (GS6), and a senior driver (GS3) (see Annex 22 for the organization chart). Two other employees have international professional membership contracts at P3 and P4 levels funded by resources other than core resources. The rest of the employees have non-staff contracts, e.g. service contracts, consultants.

**FIGURE 1. UN Women Personnel, 2020 - 2024**



Source: Prepared by the evaluation team, UN Women's corporate database RMS, 2024.

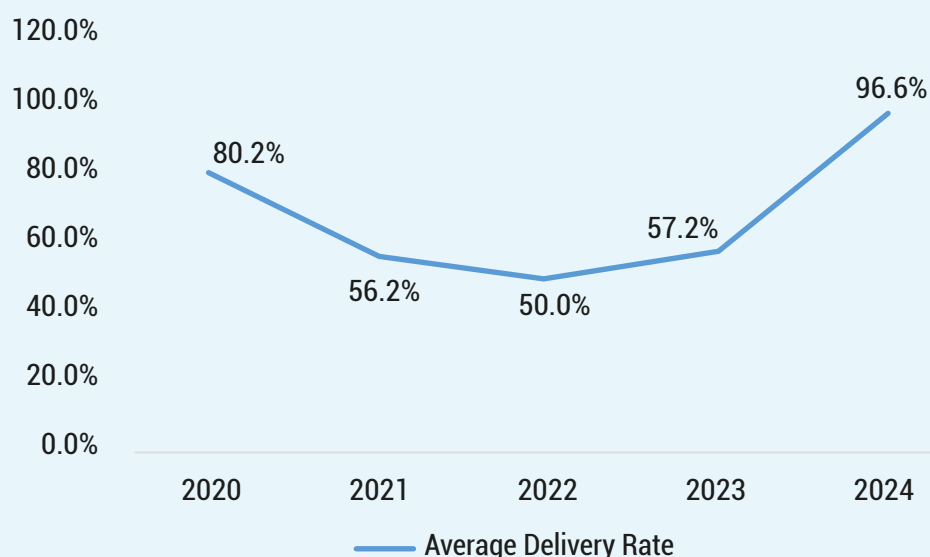
The majority of the personnel (48 per cent) are employed on service contracts, which reflects a precarious contractual situation for the workforce. Nearly half (48%) of personnel are on service contracts – a non-permanent arrangement – while others hold roles as UN Volunteers (17%), consultants (6%), or experts (3%).

### 3.4 Financial resources

Financial resource management shows clear strengths, with the Country Office achieving an average budget execution rate of 86.25 per cent between 2020 and 2023, peaking at 96 per cent in 2020. This demonstrates effective use of allocated funds, complemented by measures such as enhancing absorption capacity by training programme managers and programme partners, and by streamlining financial reporting and compliance processes.

Financial resource management shows clear strengths, with the Country Office delivering an average 86.3 per cent of its approved budget between 2020 and 2023 (peaking at 96 per cent in 2020). This high delivery rate signals solid absorption capacity, enhanced by training for programme managers and partners and by streamlined financial-reporting processes. However, budget execution alone is not a proxy for effective use of funds. The Effectiveness chapter assesses whether these expenditures translated into meaningful results.

**FIGURE 2. Average delivery rate for the Country Office, 2020 - 2024**



Source: Prepared by the evaluation team, UN Women's corporate database Quantum, 2024

Over the Strategic Note period, 20 key projects covering all thematic areas (WEE, EVAW, WPP, WPS and Humanitarian) were implemented (see Annex 8). WPS, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction received 51 per cent of the funds over the period or US\$ 10.06 million). A significant part of the budget was allocated to WEE (31 per cent or US\$ 6.22 million); and 13 per cent (or US\$ 2.6 million) of the budget was dedicated to EVAW and 5 per cent (or US\$ 1 million) to Governance and Participation in Public Life (see Annex 9 and Figure 3 below).

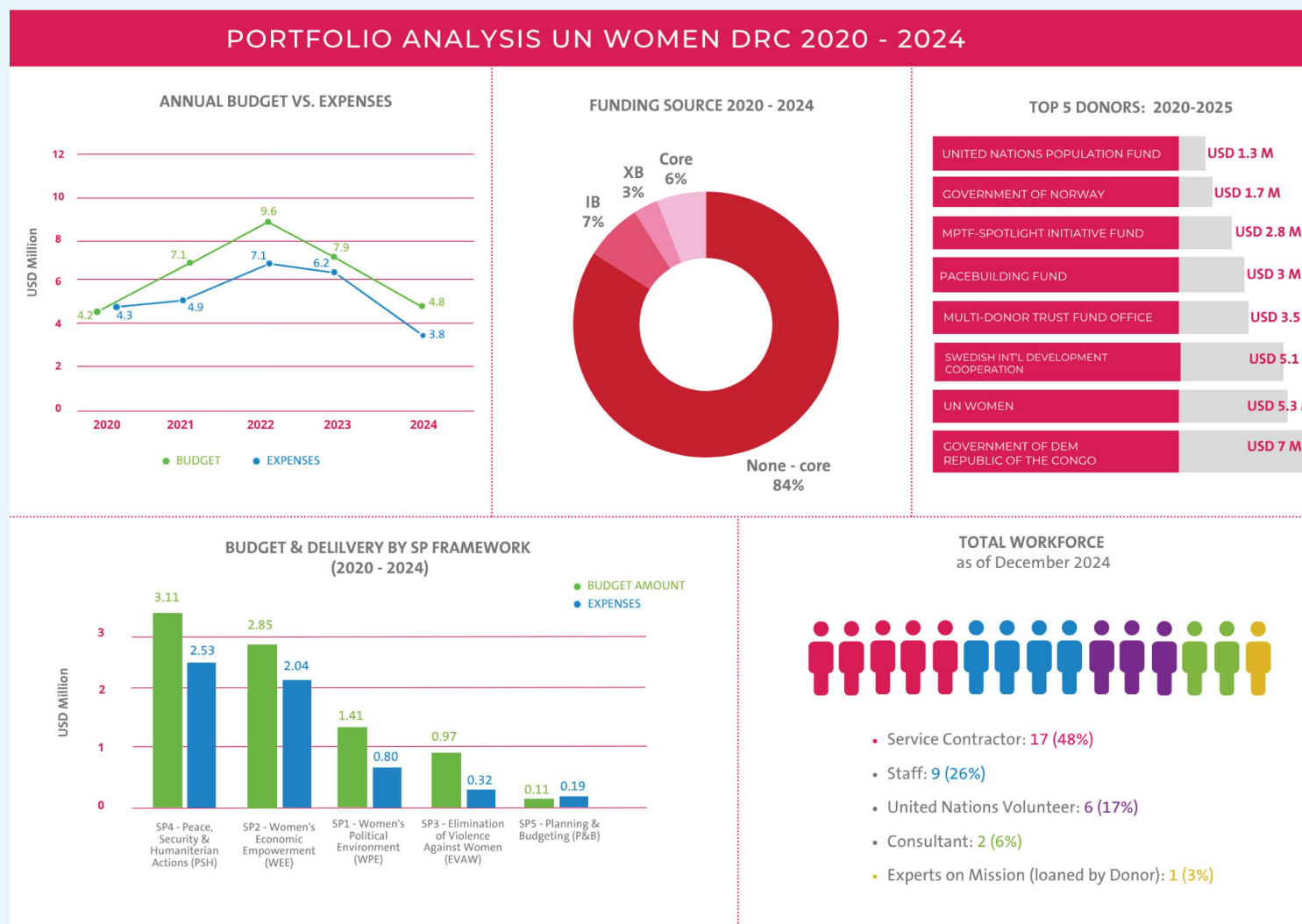
The largest donor to the Country Office's budget from 2020 to 2024 was the Government of the DRC as part of a loan from the World Bank, contributing US\$ 7 million or 28 per cent of the total funding.<sup>20</sup> The second largest donor was Sweden (17 per cent), followed by the Government of

Norway (15 per cent), UN Peace Building Fund (11 per cent), the Multi Donor Trust Fund (10 per cent) and the European Union (7 per cent) (see Figure 3).

The Country Office's total budget for 2020–2024 was US\$ 33.55 million: Non-Core funding had the largest share (84 per cent) of the total budget, followed by Institutional Budget (7 per cent), Core (6 per cent) and Extra-Budgetary funding.

20. US\$ 6.3 million was allocated to the PADMPME initiative, which ended in July 2023, causing a significant drop in the Country Office's budget.

**FIGURE 3. Portfolio analysis for UN Women DRC 2020–2024**





### 3.3 Stakeholder mapping and analysis

The Country Office collaborates with duty bearers from the public sector and civil society (see Annex 4) to implement its programmes for the benefit of its primary stakeholders. These stakeholders, recognized as rights holders, encompass women, girls, individuals living with disabilities, marginalized groups and community-based organizations, alongside grassroots networks.

The Country Office's advocacy efforts on policy and legal reform rely on partnerships with a spectrum of public institutions such as the Observatoire Genre de l'Administration Publique, the National Independent

Commission on Elections and the National Institute of Statistics.

In fulfilling its gender coordination mandate, the Country Office collaborates with sister agencies in joint programmes and engages with the UN Mission in DRC through key consultation mechanisms. Annex 4 outlines additional information on each stakeholder group, and their main contributions to the Country Office's Strategic Note.



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## 4. METHODOLOGY



## 4.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation approach is theory based, and contribution analysis was used to assess UN Women's contribution to targeting outcomes as set out in the theory of change<sup>21</sup> (see Annex 2). The evaluation utilized the underlying theory of change in the Country Office's Strategic Note to assess achieved results and understand the reasons behind observed changes. An inception workshop,<sup>22</sup> carried out at the beginning of the field mission, facilitated a theory of change discussion involving programme personnel and partners.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, drawing on both quantitative data (primarily financial data and survey data on participants' perceptions) and qualitative data (from document review, interviews and focus groups). In line with UN Women's Evaluation Handbook, this CPE embraces a gender-responsive approach: it assesses the extent to which power relationships shift due to an intervention using an inclusive, participatory and respectful process involving all stakeholders. Human rights and gender equality issues are covered in all sections of the report (findings, lessons learned, recommendations). A dedicated evaluation criterion was also adopted to assess specific contributions to gender equality, with specific reference to progress made against Universal Periodic Review<sup>23</sup> recommendations. The evaluation dedicated special attention to the Universal Periodic Review, a state-driven process facilitated by the Human Rights Council, as a unique opportunity to assess DRC's accountability to Treaty Bodies. By examining the actions declared by the country to improve its human rights situation (including gender equality and women's empowerment) the analysis relied on a mix of primary and secondary sources. The 17 documents<sup>24</sup> from the third and fourth Universal Periodic Review cycles included summaries of discussions, DRC's self-reported progress on human rights and comparative data from previous review cycles.

The method used to review UN Women's Strategic Note focus areas against priority issues derived from global normative frameworks such as CEDAW, employing comparative document analysis to identify gaps between national policies and international commitments. To ensure balanced perspectives, the analysis incorporated state submissions, non-state reports and inputs from international delegations. Given the depth of documentary evidence, the

methodology excluded interviews or stakeholder surveys on portfolio alignment with Universal Periodic Review outcomes, focusing instead on textual and policy analysis.

The gender-responsive nature of the evaluation characterized the evaluation process itself: the CPE was designed as an inclusive process to enable the active participation of all relevant stakeholders – including UN Women personnel, programme partners, national authorities, civil society members and project participants – fostering an environment where they could share their perspectives on both the achievements and shortcomings of the Country Office's work. The desk review of national documents on the country context mainly focused on progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. The evaluation relied on a stakeholder mapping exercise (see Annex 4) to identify suitable data collection methods for the full engagement of a diversity of stakeholders. Gender-responsive stakeholder analysis was used to select a diverse group of stakeholders to engage in the evaluation, including women and men, and those who are marginalized and may be difficult to reach. The evaluation team collaborated closely with Country Office personnel and partners to address any possible barriers affecting the participation of different groups of stakeholders.

The evaluation team made explicit attempts to encourage the participation of persons with disabilities by explaining the rationale behind this with both UN Women programme personnel and partners. The team asked relevant focal points for support in assessing and addressing possible obstacles and for their overall collaboration in facilitating the participation of programme participants with disabilities in data collection exercises. However, the evaluation was only able to consult a limited number of individuals with disabilities regarding the inclusivity of Country Office programmes. This limitation may stem from a lack of intentional efforts to address the specific needs of persons with disabilities. To assess how the "leave no one behind" principle and gender equality were considered in the design and implementation of initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment, the evaluation drew upon Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality framework.<sup>25</sup> Further details are presented in the gender, human rights and disability inclusion section of this report.

21. The Country Office's own theory of change emphasized its contribution to the six outcomes outlined in the UNSDCF 2020-2024. The CPE relied on a reconstructed theory of change (Annex 2) that is reflective of UN Women's thematic areas and corresponding outcomes.

22. Including an evaluability assessment (see Annex 5)

23. The Universal Periodic Review is a mechanism that reviews the human rights performance of all 193 UN Member States on a regular basis. Member States are encouraged to improve their human rights practices through dialogue, peer review and recommendations from other Member States. The process is part of the broader UN framework for monitoring human rights treaties and standards and is grounded in international human rights law, drawing from key conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In this report, the Universal Periodic Review provides an important reference to assess progress on gender equality, violence against women and other human rights issues in line with national commitments and international obligations, including those relevant to CEDAW and the SDGs.

24. For both Universal Periodic Review cycles of May 2019 and November 2024, the document review comprised UN information reports, national reports, stakeholders' information compilations, questions submitted in advance by other countries, working group reports, follow-up correspondence issued by the High Commissioner to Foreign Affairs Ministry.

25. Crenshaw, Kimberlé. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. University of Chicago Legal Forum, Vol. 1989, Article 8, pp. 139-167.

## 4.2 Evaluation questions

The evaluation sought to answer the following overarching questions:<sup>26</sup>

**Relevance:** Are UN Women's programme interventions aligned with national policies, international human rights standards and gender equality objectives, and are they adapted to the needs of women?

**Coherence:** Do the key interventions within the UN Women portfolio avoid duplication of effort and create synergies with the work of the UN Country Team and other national interventions?

**Effectiveness:** What factors promote or hinder the achievement of observed results, and how does UN Women contribute to the implementation of global norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment?

**Efficiency:** Does the Country Office's management structure and organizational architecture support efficient implementation of the country portfolio, and does UN Women have the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities to achieve the results envisaged in the Strategic Note?

**Sustainability:** Have capacities been developed and strengthened to ensure the sustainability of efforts and results? Is there national ownership, including champions and local accountability systems, supporting the portfolio?

**Human rights and gender equality:** Has the portfolio been designed and implemented in accordance with human rights and the principle of "leave no one behind", including consideration of disability?

The evaluation matrix (see Annex 6) explains how the evaluation questions were applied across projects and stakeholders

## 4.3 Data collection, analysis and ethical standards

The evaluation team conducted a comprehensive desk review of relevant documents on the country context and gender equality progress, beginning in the inception phase and continuing throughout the evaluation. It also conducted a documentary review contributing to data triangulation

and primary data collection. Annex 11 lists the documents reviewed. Data collection tools (see Annex 12) were developed for different stakeholder categories, and interviews were conducted with UN Women personnel, programme partners, UN system representatives, government officials, local authorities and members of civil society. The evaluation also reached a sample of project participants through focus group discussions. A survey involving 35 respondents (12 male, 23 female) was conducted, targeting programme partners and donors, UN system personnel and UN Women personnel.

The sampling strategy ensured representation from at least one project in each thematic area. The selected locations were chosen based on geographic accessibility and security considerations. In total, the evaluation engaged 83 stakeholders,<sup>27</sup> including 52 female respondents (see Annex 20).

The evaluation process<sup>28</sup> began with a comprehensive desk review during the inception phase, which included project documentation from UN Women DRC, strategic planning documents and contextual information on gender issues in the country. Data collection was carried out through multiple complementary methods. Key informant interviews were conducted with UN Women staff, programme partners, national stakeholders and UN system representatives to explore thematic and operational dimensions of the Strategic Note. To capture programme participants' perspectives, the evaluation team held focus group discussions, providing qualitative insights into their satisfaction with the design, implementation and outcomes of interventions. A survey was also deployed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from UN system personnel and UN Women staff. The survey helped to triangulate findings across stakeholder categories.<sup>29</sup> Despite some challenges – such as limited access to rural programme areas due to security risks and incomplete documentation – the team mitigated these risks through remote data collection and close collaboration with the Country Office to obtain additional materials.

The evaluation was conducted in line with UN ethical standards, ensuring respect for participants' dignity, including those who are marginalized or living with disabilities. Informed consent was obtained at the beginning of each interview, and participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and the evaluators' independence. To ensure the reliability of conclusions, the evaluation team analysed data against the evaluation matrix and applied contribution analysis to assess UN Women's added value relative to other influencing factors. A remote validation workshop with stakeholders allowed for

26. As per the terms of reference, CPEs are not expected to assess the achievement of impacts, therefore impact has not been added as a criteria

27. Including survey (MS Forms) participants.

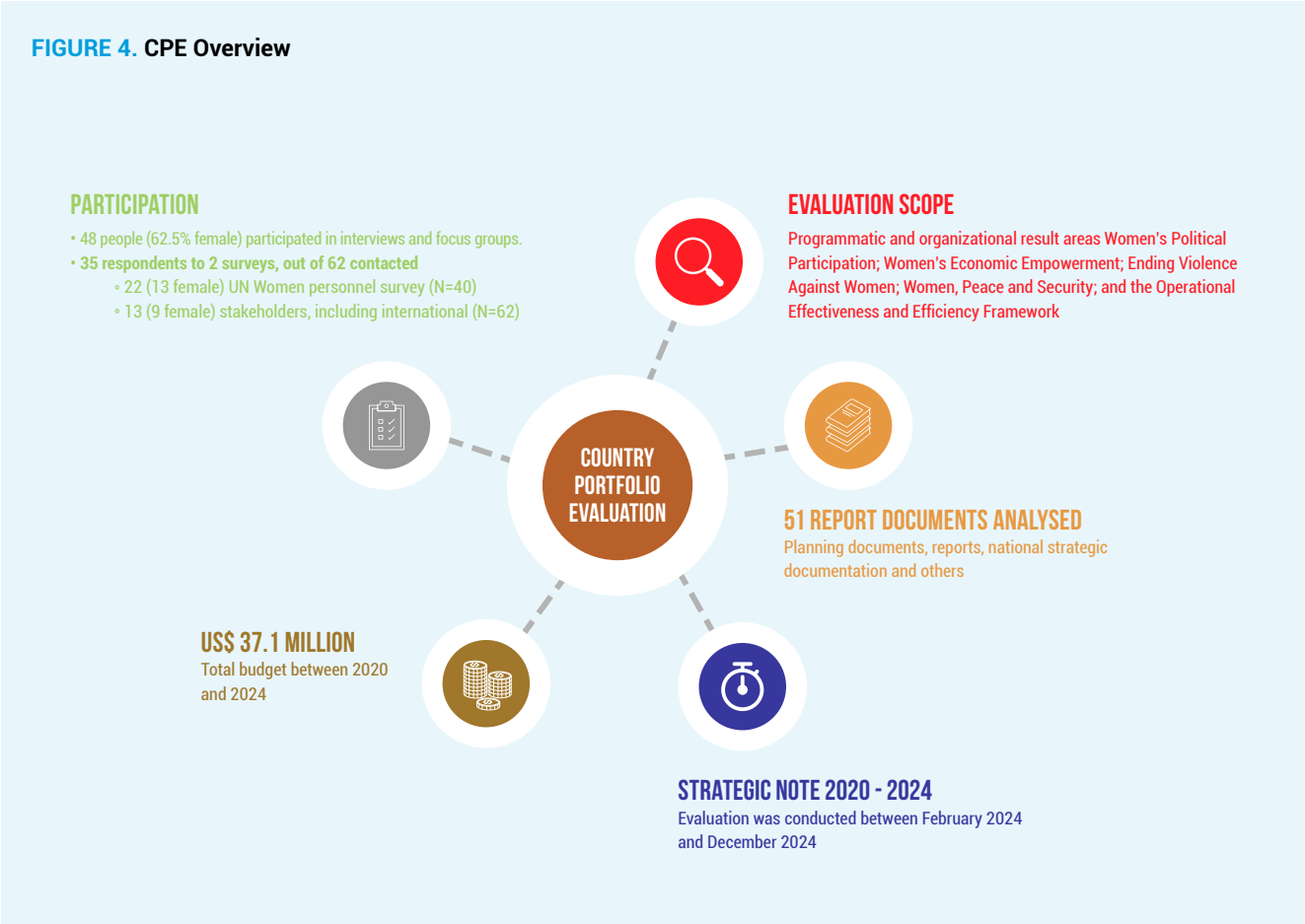
28. See Annex 21 for more details.

29. The personnel survey had a 55 per cent response rate, mostly from Programme staff, which lends an acceptable confidence to programmatic findings. The stakeholder survey, with only a 21 per cent response, may not provide a reasonably representative picture.

collective reflection on preliminary results and helped identify any remaining information gaps.

Findings will be disseminated through discussions with country, regional and global stakeholders, and use of the evaluation findings will be monitored through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system. The

evaluation was led by independent consultants under the supervision of the Regional Evaluation Specialist, and quality assurance was ensured through internal and external review mechanisms, including UN Women’s Independent Evaluation Service and a diverse Evaluation Reference Group composed of donors, programme partners and UN Women staff.







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## 5. FINDINGS

# RELEVANCE

**Are UN Women's programme interventions aligned with national policies, international human rights standards and gender equality objectives, and are they adapted to the needs of women?**

## FINDING 1

**The UN Women Country Office's portfolio tackles key issues within the frameworks of CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 and SDG 5, supporting the DRC National Gender Policy. Despite this, socio-cultural barriers and limited accountability for GBV crimes hinder sustainable gender equality. The Country Office's 2020–2024 programme aligns with international standards, focusing on women's participation in peacebuilding and aiding sexual violence survivors in conflict areas.**

UN Women's interventions in DRC are aligned with the country's National Gender Policy, key international human rights frameworks and global commitments to gender equality, particularly the SDGs and UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The Country Office's programming from 2020 to 2024 focused on promoting women's political participation, economic empowerment and combating GBV, in line with the CEDAW principles and other global standards.<sup>30</sup> In the WPS and Humanitarian Action impact area, UN Women's interventions are particularly relevant given the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crises in DRC. However, persistent socio-cultural barriers, and the need for greater accountability for GBV crimes and access to justice remain significant challenges.

### **Women's participation in the political arena and in peace processes**

The Country Office's Strategic Note (2020–2024) emphasizes the importance of women's participation in leadership and decision-making processes, which directly supports implementation of CEDAW Article 7 (eliminating discrimination in political and public life). Interventions aim to strengthen women's political participation at all levels of government, ensuring women's voices are represented in governance structures. For instance, UN Women supports implementation of DRC's gender strategy within the electoral framework, advocating for gender parity on electoral lists and strengthening the role of women in peace processes.<sup>31</sup> This includes localizing normative commitments: provincial

assemblies in Kasai and Ituri were supported to embed the 30 per cent women's quota in their standing orders, transforming national commitments into enforceable sub-national rules. Without such adaptive management, alignment risks remaining a procedural exercise rather than serving as a catalyst for lasting change. This work is also aligned with UNSCR 1325, which stresses the importance of women's participation in peace and security processes. As illustrated in several projects,<sup>32</sup> UN Women's efforts to ensure women's involvement in conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly in conflict-affected provinces, are essential for promoting sustainable peace in DRC.

### **Addressing violence against women and girls**

In addition to the two EVAW projects<sup>33</sup> explicitly focused on combating GBV, several other interventions<sup>34</sup> include components addressing EVAW. This is particularly critical in DRC, where violence against women<sup>35</sup> remains a pressing issue, especially in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu. These interventions are aligned with CEDAW Articles 1–3, which emphasize the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

DRC has long been plagued by sexual violence, often used as a weapon of war. UN Women's programming targets this issue by working to prevent GBV and improve access to justice for survivors. These efforts are critical in fulfilling international obligations under both CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, which call for the eradication of violence

30. For more details see Annex 19.

31. UN Women Strategic Note, p.15

32. Including: "Strengthening social cohesion and trust between the population and the authorities through community policing, dialogue and socio-economic revitalization" and "Strengthening the role of women and youth in local governance and peacebuilding in Kasai province" projects.

33. "Improving the Resilience of the Health System for Women and Girls" and "United for Gender Equality".

34. For instance, the project on "Preventing of electoral violence in the provinces of Haut Katanga, Lualaba and Kasai".

35. [Nearly 52 per cent of women are victims of domestic violence, 39 per cent of Congolese women reported having been threatened or injured and 27 per cent are victims of traditional, harmful practices.](#)

against women. UN Women's support for survivors, including access to legal aid, psychosocial services and health care, demonstrates a holistic approach to addressing violence.<sup>36</sup> Through these programmes, UN Women works to address both conflict-related and domestic violence.

### **Economic empowerment of women**

Economic empowerment is another key area of UN Women's programming that aligns with international standards. CEDAW Article 11 requires states to eliminate discrimination in employment and promote economic rights for women. UN Women's initiatives in DRC focus on empowering rural women; facilitating their transition from the informal to the formal economy; and providing them with access to financial services, markets and training.<sup>37</sup>

By promoting women's entrepreneurship and removing barriers to women's access to productive resources, UN Women is contributing to the realization of gender equality in economic participation, as outlined in SDG 5. These efforts are particularly relevant in DRC, where women's economic marginalization remains a significant barrier to achieving gender equality.<sup>38</sup>

UN Women's programmes align with international standards, but how well do they meet the specific needs of the Congolese population? Here are key areas where interventions are most needed.

### **Participation in the political arena and conflict resolution mechanisms**

DRC remains deeply affected by conflict, with women and girls disproportionately impacted by violence and displacement. Violence has also prevented women candidates from pursuing electoral campaigns.<sup>39</sup> A more peaceful environment is needed for the increased participation of women. UN Women's work in WPS is therefore relevant, particularly in the eastern provinces where interventions are designed to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding and transitional justice, aligning with UNSCR 1325.

Efforts to address the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and to engage women in humanitarian response are essential in these settings. Despite some progress made, women's participation in peace processes remains limited due to socio-cultural barriers and the lack of legal reforms to institutionalize their role. The persistent

impunity for perpetrators of GBV, particularly within state security forces, poses ongoing challenges.<sup>40</sup>

### **Addressing the needs of GBV survivors**

One of the most pressing needs in DRC is in addressing the ongoing sexual violence faced by women and girls in conflict zones. According to reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee, conflict-related sexual violence has increased in recent years, with both armed groups and Congolese security forces implicated in these crimes.<sup>41</sup> UN Women's efforts to provide support services for survivors, including health care, legal aid and psychosocial support, are crucial in responding to the needs of these women. By working with local communities and CSOs, UN Women helps to raise awareness of women's rights and build a supportive environment for survivors.<sup>42</sup>

However, challenges remain in ensuring accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence, particularly those within the military and police. Despite some progress made in terms of legal frameworks, many survivors still face barriers in accessing justice, and impunity for GBV crimes remains a critical issue.<sup>43</sup>

### **Economic inclusion and empowerment**

UN Women's focus on women's economic empowerment is highly relevant to the needs of the Congolese population. Many women in DRC, particularly in rural areas, are economically marginalized and lack access to formal employment, financial services and markets. UN Women's interventions aim to address these issues by promoting women's entrepreneurship, facilitating access to financial services and providing training in sustainable agricultural practices.

The support provided to rural women, especially those transitioning from the informal to the formal economy, addresses a critical need for economic inclusion. By targeting women who are most vulnerable, such as those affected by conflict and displacement, UN Women is ensuring that its interventions reach those most in need.

### **Gaps in addressing education and gender-based discrimination in schools**

While UN Women's programming addresses several key areas of gender inequality, there are some gaps in

36. Ibid., p.16

37. Ibid., p.18, 19

38. *Obstacles and Opportunities for WEE in the DRC*, World Bank, June 02, 2022

39. Addressing the UN Security Council (on December 11, 2023) the head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Congo, Bintou Keita, said that "violent clashes between supporters of rival political parties [were] occurring in many provinces." She also said that women political leaders and candidates were experiencing "intimidation as well as physical and verbal misogynistic attacks," and that she was "alarmed by the proliferation of mis- and disinformation as well as hate speech, online and offline, in the context of the electoral campaign."

40. *United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in DRC Report, 2022*

41. DRC – UN Office of the Special Rapporteur, *S/2024/292 Security Council*

42. UN Women Strategic Note, p.29

43. Cfr. "List of issues and questions in relation to the eighth periodic report of the Democratic Republic of the Congo", CEDAW Seventy-third session (1–19 Jul 2019) and CEDAW Eighty-seventh session (29 Jan–16 Feb 2024).

responding to specific issues raised by CEDAW and CSOs. One such gap is the lack of focus on addressing gender-based discrimination and violence in schools. Reports indicate that schoolgirls in DRC face high levels of sexual violence at school or on their way to school,<sup>44</sup> and are at risk of being excluded from education due to early marriage and pregnancy.<sup>45</sup>

Although UN Women has made significant strides in promoting women's political participation and combating GBV, the specific needs of schoolgirls in terms of protection from violence and discrimination remain under-addressed. More targeted interventions, including through joint programmes with UNICEF and UNFPA, are needed to ensure that girls have equal access to education and are protected from violence within the school environment. Through this type of inter-agency collaboration, UN Women could engage with women-led organizations such as "Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises" which, the evaluation team learned from interviewed stakeholders, reportedly implemented a project on preventing sexual violence against schoolgirls.

### **Programming within constraints: contextual barriers and coordination**

#### **Structural and contextual barriers limiting programme effectiveness**

Despite its successes, UN Women's programming in DRC operates within a broader context marked by systemic challenges. Efforts to combat GBV have been extensive; however, persistent accountability gaps and limited access to justice for survivors continue to hinder the full realization of programme objectives. The widespread impunity enjoyed by perpetrators – particularly within security forces – reflects structural barriers that extend beyond the scope of UN Women's direct interventions, yet critically affect the effectiveness of violence-reduction efforts.

Socio-cultural norms and entrenched patriarchal attitudes also pose formidable obstacles to gender equality. While UN Women's work on gender-responsive governance and economic empowerment represents important progress, these initiatives must be embedded within a broader strategy for sustained social norms change to achieve transformative results.

#### **Gaps and trade-offs in programming and mandate delineation**

Some programming gaps reflect the realities of mandate delineation within the UN system. Discrimination in

education and sexual violence in schools are critical issues affecting girls' rights, but these fall primarily under the mandates of UNICEF and, to some extent, UNFPA. Accordingly, UN Women's limited operational focus on violence against schoolgirls is consistent with its institutional remit. However, consultations emphasized the need for stronger inter-agency collaboration. Given its coordination mandate – particularly through the Gender Theme Group – UN Women could play a more active advocacy role to ensure school-based GBV is addressed as a multi-agency priority requiring joint programming and response.

In terms of design, the evaluation also noted the absence of a dedicated pillar on gender-responsive budgeting in the Strategic Note. Instead, gender-responsive budgeting is addressed as a cross-cutting theme. This represents a missed opportunity for deeper institutional impact, particularly in light of persistent gender disparities in national budget allocations. Ranked 130 of 136 countries on the Gender-Related Development Index, DRC urgently requires targeted strategies to ensure equitable resource distribution. Gender-responsive budgeting is a critical tool in this regard, and given its technical expertise and positioning, the Country Office is well-placed to strengthen coordination efforts, advocate for reforms and support national capacities in this area.

#### **Coordination, strategic focus and stakeholder perceptions**

According to the stakeholder survey carried out as part of the CPE, 9 respondents out of 13 expressed satisfaction with UN Women's normative support, while the rest were a little dissatisfied.<sup>46</sup> Several donors praised UN Women's role as an independent and apolitical actor capable of shaping and monitoring national priorities on gender equality. Civil society and government actors highlighted UN Women's comparative advantage in supporting institutional reforms and bridging engagement across stakeholders.

However, several donors cautioned against overextending the Country Office's operational portfolio, urging UN Women to focus more selectively on areas aligned with its triple mandate. They stressed that UN Women's comparative advantage lies not in the direct delivery of services, but in reinforcing normative frameworks and coordination mechanisms. At the same time, staff and programme personnel noted that donor preferences often shaped the feasibility of this strategic focus. This lends itself to some focus on operational and humanitarian activities rather than normative and coordination work. This highlights the tension between maintaining strategic coherence and ensuring financial sustainability in a funding environment driven by earmarked contributions.

44. Reports indicate that 46 per cent of Congolese schoolgirls reported experiencing sexual harassment, abuse and violence committed by teachers or other school personnel, highlighting the urgent need for protective measures within educational institutions.

45. Ibid.

46. Only 13 of 62 stakeholders responded. The 21 per cent response rate calls for a cautious interpretation as the findings may not reflect the views of the broader stakeholder group. Of the 13 partners who responded to the survey, 3 are Government officers, 1 is from a donor embassy, the majority come from Civil Society Organizations (6) and the last 3 are UN personnel.



# COHERENCE

**Do the key interventions within the UN Women portfolio avoid duplication of effort and create synergies with the work of the UN Country Team and other national interventions?**

The UN Women DRC country portfolio 2020–2024 reflects a diverse range of interventions targeting WPS, GBV, Humanitarian Assistance and WEE.<sup>47</sup> While each programme area addresses specific issues within the context of DRC's socio-political landscape, synergies and occasional duplications exist across projects. This section explains how UN Women's interventions contributed to coherence both within the Strategic Note and the UN Country Team, and other partners' interventions. It also assesses whether the Strategic Note was implemented in a manner that leveraged synergies and reduced duplication.

## FINDING 2

**UN Women DRC's country portfolio (2020–2024) demonstrates coherence by leveraging synergies between interventions under various impact areas. Shared objectives and collaborative mechanisms across projects, such as integrated training sessions and coordinated advocacy efforts, contribute to this coherence. However, instances of duplication, particularly in leadership training, highlight the need for improved coordination.**

### Grounds for synergy

The evaluation found several grounds for synergy across projects stemming from shared objectives, complementary activities and common stakeholder engagements that could potentially reinforce the reach of interventions. From interviews with personnel, it appears that while programme managers have regular coordination meetings, programme partners involved in different projects did not have opportunities to interact and establish mutually beneficial collaborations. While different initiatives have common objectives and activities, timing is one of the limitations for establishing collaborations as project durations overlap for only one or two years.

WPS initiatives demonstrate coherence through shared objectives in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. For instance, projects "Strengthening WEE for peace"<sup>48</sup> and the "Promoting the WPS programme"<sup>49</sup> both focus on strengthening women's roles in peace processes, offering capacity-building in areas such as leadership and community mobilization. These projects aim to reinforce women's participation in peace negotiations, enhancing resilience in conflict-prone areas. In addition, the project on "Inclusive

Governance"<sup>50</sup> targeting the Kasai region promotes youth and women's involvement in peacebuilding, with an overlap in North Kivu, where both the other two projects operate. The three projects' alignment in objectives and geographic focus could have provided opportunities for resource sharing, collaborative training sessions<sup>51</sup> and joint advocacy despite the shorter duration of the "Inclusive Governance" project. Projects "LEAP" and "Strengthening WEE for peace" have the potential to unite efforts as they are geared towards economic rehabilitation of women affected by conflict in North Kivu and Ituri where the projects are located.

Both the "United for Gender Equality"<sup>52</sup> and "Health Resilience"<sup>53</sup> projects target GBV prevention through collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and community organizations for policy advocacy and GBV case tracking. A strategic opportunity exists to strengthen policy advocacy and GBV prevention/response through integrated data management under the UPEG program, leveraging the DEP/MINGEFAE's established national GBV database (the country's most comprehensive system, spanning all 26 provinces and tracking 64 indicators). Stakeholder interviews reveal the potential for synergy. The "United for Gender Equality"-funded equipment for the national GBV helpline ("Green Line 122") enables the integration of call

47. As explained in the Gender Equality and Human Rights section, investment in WPP was not sufficient during the 2020–2024 period.

48. "Strengthening the transformative role of women in peace building and their economic empowerment against the consequence of conflict, natural disaster and Covid 19 in the East of DRC", 2022–2023, funded by Japan.

49. "Promoting Women, Peace and Security in DRC", 2021–2024, funded by Norway.

50. "Project on strengthened role of women and youth in the local Governance of the Kasai Province", 2020–2022 funded by the Peace Building Support Office.

51. For instance, joint training for conflict resolution, integration with local governance and partnerships with CSOs such as Femmes Main dans la Main pour le Développement Intégral.

52. "United for Gender Equality", 2022–2026, funded by EU

logs and case files into the Ministry of Gender (DEP/MINGEFAE)'s database, enhancing real-time incident tracking. On the other hand, the "Health Resilience Project's granular, community-level GBV data from Kasai could enrich national statistics with localized insights.

Linking these sources<sup>54</sup> would improve data completeness, reveal geographic/demographic trends, and directly inform targeted prevention policies and resource allocation.

The *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses*<sup>55</sup> and *Biofortified cassava chain*<sup>56</sup> initiatives have complementary approaches to WEE. While *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* focuses on legal reform to remove barriers for women entrepreneurs, *Biofortified cassava chain* provides agricultural training and financial inclusion support, particularly in rural settings. In theory, these complementary strategies could reinforce each other: *Biofortified cassava chain* beneficiaries gain practical agricultural skills that *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses*' legal advocacy hypothetically helps protect by improving regulatory environments for women's businesses. Project effectiveness is a prerequisite for the above assumption to materialize.

### Instances of duplicative efforts

Certain duplicative activities within the portfolio may benefit from further integration to reduce parallel activities and instances of support redundantly delivered to similar beneficiary groups.

Across WPS initiatives, some duplicated activities are evident, particularly in training for peace leadership. The "*Promoting Women, Peace and Security in DRC*" and the "*Inclusive Local Governance*" initiatives may be potentially duplicative in the delivery of training sessions for women in leadership and peacebuilding in Kasai. Both provide leadership and peacebuilding training in this province, targeting similar audiences. Further, several WPS projects<sup>57</sup> independently support CSOs, such as *Femmes Main dans la Main pour le Développement Intégral*, to promote community-focused peacebuilding.

Both the "*LEAP*" and "*Strengthening WEE for Peace*" projects share a common goal of supporting the economic rehabilitation of women affected by conflict in North Kivu and Ituri. Funded by the same donor (Japan), both projects provide start-up kits and training in income-generating activities for displaced women in overlapping regions. While these efforts contribute to economic empowerment, the parallel distribution of similar resources within the same

geographic areas may potentially lead to redundancies. A joint geographic-mapping and work-planning exercise, convened by the Country Office with the donor and implementing partners, would allow projects to sequence activities, differentiate target groups, and ensure that overlapping resources reinforce rather than replicate each other. This would maximise benefits for women in North Kivu and Ituri.

Both the *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* and *Biofortified cassava chain* projects provide training to empower women economically, which might seem duplicative. However, the training contents are different. *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* targets legal literacy and entrepreneurship, while *Biofortified cassava chain* focuses on agricultural skills and group management of savings. Some beneficiaries in Kinshasa and other urban areas receive training from both projects, leading to potential inefficiencies.

Although both initiatives pursue women's economic empowerment through training, they address distinct skill sets: *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* builds legal literacy and entrepreneurship, whereas *Biofortified Cassava Chain* focuses on agricultural skills and group management of savings. Early design documents raised the possibility of beneficiary overlap in Kinshasa, yet recent consultations with project personnel indicate that, after security incidents linked to the "Mombondo" militia, the cassava project relocated activities from Mbakana (Kinshasa) to Nsumba (Kongo Central) and Mbinda Nseke (Kwango). Because the two projects now operate in non-overlapping provinces, the risk of the same women receiving duplicate training has effectively been removed.

### Existence of internal and external synergy

Although certain overlaps persisted, the Country Office nevertheless pursued internal coherence by taking deliberate steps to reduce duplication and foster programme synergies. Externally, consistency with the UN Country Team through the UNSDCF (2020–2024) reveals that efforts are still required<sup>58</sup> to the extent that only four (1.1; 1.2; 2.1 and 2.2) of the eight outcomes integrate gender equality and women's empowerment and only 34 (or 23 per cent) outcome and output indicators measure progress made in gender equality and women's empowerment.

Explicit measures (regular staff consultations, cross-team training sessions, the 2023 mid-term review, and annual retreats) were introduced to foster synergies and curb overlap. Nevertheless, instances of duplication across

54. Subject to technical review by the Ministry of Gender, Family and Child (MINGEFAE) to validate integration protocols, governance, and sustainability before implementation. The suggestion to link separate database initiatives was made by a consultant's observation recruited by the MINGEFAE to analyze "the functionality mechanisms of existing GBV databases". They mentioned: "at the current state of thing, it is difficult to envisage an integrated functionality and interoperability of these different data" (quoted at p.9 in the donor report of United for Gender Equality, April 2024).

55. "Reform and dissemination of laws favourable to women-owned businesses in 4 provinces of the DRC", 2021–2023, funded by the World Bank through a loan to the Government of DRC.

56. "Establishing a biofortified cassava chain to empower women in their communities", 2022–2024, funded by the Multi Donor Trust Fund.

57. Such as the "Women in leadership and peacebuilding in the Kasai" initiative (2021–2024) funded by the Peace Building Support Office, in addition to the previously mentioned WPS interventions.

58. Further work is needed to meet UN-SWAP standards, which call for gender equality to be either visibly mainstreamed across every UNSDCF outcome or addressed through a single, dedicated outcome.



thematic areas persisted, indicating that these efforts only partially mitigated the broader coherence challenges identified elsewhere in the evaluation. Consulted programme personnel from different pillars shared instances of synergies across thematic areas, including:

- Enhanced alignment between the ERAW component of the *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* programme (under the WEE pillar) and the broader ERAW programmatic pillar, reinforcing efforts to prevent and respond to GBV.
- Strengthened coordination on WPS issues in North Kivu by leveraging the interlinkages between the WPP and WPS programmatic pillars, particularly in gender-responsive coordination mechanisms.
- Institutional strengthening and improved access to gender-related information for national institutions, facilitated through the WEE, WPP, and WPS programmatic pillars. These efforts complemented the 16 Days of Activism campaign, supported by the ERAW pillar, by reinforcing institutional capacities to address gender equality and women's empowerment.
- The development of a comprehensive mapping of women CSOs, conducted by the WPP programmatic pillar in collaboration with the National Federation of Associations of People Living with Disabilities in Congo under the *Promoting the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and Their Full Participation* project. This joint initiative, implemented in partnership with the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNESCO and UN Women, strengthens the visibility and coordination of women's organizations working on disability inclusion across 10 provinces.
- Improved coherence in stakeholder engagement through the mapping exercise, which identified key national actors, including the National Institute of Statistics, the National Employment Office, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and CSOs, enhancing the integration of gender and disability considerations into national policies and SDG implementation. The mapping was supported by UN field offices and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, ensuring robust data collection and stakeholder coordination.
- Greater efficiency and coordination among women CSOs in peacebuilding and advocacy efforts. By identifying active CSOs and platforms, the mapping exercise helped create synergies among organizations, preventing contradictory advocacy positions within peace mechanisms – a challenge previously encountered due to differing donor and partner priorities.
- Harmonization of interventions across programmatic pillars, ensuring a more integrated approach to strengthening women's leadership (WPP), economic empowerment (WEE) and responses in conflict zones (WPS).

Coherence with UN agencies was achieved primarily through UN Women's leadership in gender coordination within the UN system. Beyond joint programming, UN Women played a key role in mainstreaming gender in inter-agency work. As Chair of the Thematic Group on Gender Equality and Permanent Secretariat of the Dialogue Group on Women's Empowerment, UN Women provided strategic leadership on gender issues. UN Women's active participation in key inter-agency platforms, such as the Programme Management Team, Operations Management Team, United Nations Communications Group, Thematic Group on M&E and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, allowed for gender-responsive approaches to be embedded in both humanitarian coordination and operational planning.

The Country Office also strengthened joint programming to ensure gender mainstreaming within the UNSDCF 2020–2024, thereby aligning its Strategic Note with broader UN system priorities. Over the evaluation period, the Country Office actively participated in eight joint programmes, working in close collaboration with key UN partners, particularly UNFPA and UNDP, as well as partner non-governmental organizations. These partnerships facilitated the operationalization of gender-sensitive interventions across multiple sectors, reinforcing a coherent approach to gender equality programming within the UN system.

A key initiative in this effort was UN Women's leadership in commissioning the UNCT-SWAP Gender Dashboard in October 2023, which assessed the level of gender integration within the UNSDCF framework. The exercise revealed that gender equality and women's empowerment were explicitly reflected in only four of eight UNSDCF Outcomes (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, and 2.2). Among the 145 Outcome and Output indicators included in the UNSDCF results matrix, only 34 (23 per cent) were dedicated to measuring progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. Within this subset, eight indicators were gender-specific, focusing on issues such as GBV, targeted support for women, or the explicit inclusion of women, while 26 indicators were disaggregated by sex, allowing for a gendered analysis of broader development outcomes. Despite the efforts made, gender mainstreaming across the entire UNSDCF framework remains limited. Although notable progress has been made in integrating gender considerations within key outcomes, significant gaps persist, particularly in expanding the proportion of gender-sensitive indicators beyond the current 23 per cent threshold.

# EFFECTIVENESS

What factors promote or hinder the achievement of observed results, and how does UN Women contribute to the implementation of global norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment?

This section examines how UN Women has contributed to achieving planned outcomes and mitigating negative externalities and how UN Women's contributions supported the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in DRC. It analyses UN Women's contribution to the implementation of global norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment through the four impact areas.

## Women's leadership and political participation

### FINDING 3

While the Country Office contributed to revision of the Electoral Code for gender parity in DRC; established committees to monitor gender integration in elections; and conducted legislative advocacy and capacity-building to advance women's leadership and political participation, a significant gap persists between efforts and transformative change. Women's representation in political leadership falls short of the DRC Constitution's 50 per cent target, 18 per cent, while programmatic and financial misalignment suggests opportunities for increased emphasis on activities that directly support women's leadership and political influence.

The Strategic Note outlined ambitious goals for WPP, including:

"Inclusive Governance and Democratic Participation: By 2024, public institutions, media, and civil society were expected to promote effective, inclusive governance conducive to citizen participation, particularly for women (Strategic Note Outcome 1.1).

Empowerment of Women Leaders: Outputs aimed to strengthen women's participation in decision-making bodies and elections, build the capacity of electoral institutions to promote gender equality, advocate for policy

reforms, such as mandatory gender quotas" (Strategic Note, p. 15–18).

Key activities included harmonizing national legislation with international frameworks (e.g. Family Code reforms, gender parity laws); supporting the Central Election Commission to adopt a gender-sensitive electoral strategy; and enhancing the capacity of female aspirants and elected officials through training and mentorship programmes.

The reported results demonstrate progress but also highlight gaps in meeting the Strategic Note's ambitious goals (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. Reported results on women's leadership and political participation

Planned results	Reported results	Analysis
Increased women's participation in elections and decision-making.	Participation of women in elections remained low, with slight increases at the provincial and municipal levels (Annual report, 2023, p. 10).	While some progress was made, e.g. 18 per cent women in the National Assembly, the target of achieving parity (50 per cent) was not achieved.
Advocacy for gender parity laws and quotas.	Advocacy contributed to revisions in the Electoral Code, incentivizing 50 per cent female representation in candidate lists (Annual report, 2022, p. 5).	Legislative reforms represent a significant success, but implementation and enforcement mechanisms remain unclear.

Planned results	Reported results	Analysis
Capacity-building for female leaders and candidates.	Training provided to 2,550 women candidates through the Dynamic Women's Group for Democracy and Development; a directory of women candidates established (Annual report, 2022, p. 7).	These outputs are promising but lack evidence of impact, such as the number of trained candidates who successfully competed in elections.
Support for inclusive governance and institutional reform.	Strategic committees set up in four provinces to monitor gender integration in elections (Annual report, 2023, p. 9).	Establishing committees demonstrates systemic progress, although sustainability and influence on actual decision-making remain uncertain.

Source: Data from desk review as compiled by the evaluation team

Four projects<sup>59</sup> were implemented between 2020 and 2024 aimed at improving women's political participation. Two projects notably contributed: strengthening women's leadership for peace in Kasai and Kasai Central, and preventing electoral violence in Haut Katanga, Lualaba and Kasai Central. Two other projects indirectly contributed to broader development goals but were not primarily focused on political empowerment.<sup>60</sup>

Stakeholder consultations confirmed progress in several areas:

**Advocacy for legislative reforms:** Support to revise Article 13 of the Electoral Code, introducing incentives for gender parity, such as exemptions from electoral deposits for lists with 50 per cent female candidates.

**Capacity-building and resource development:** Training of reportedly 2,550 women candidates and establishment of a directory of female aspirants.

**Strengthening networks and institutions:** Creation of provincial-level gender committees and support to the Dynamic Women's Group for Democracy and Development.

However, critical gaps remain. While meaningful strides have been made in strengthening networks and institutions through the establishment of provincial gender committees

and support for the Dynamic Women's Group for Democracy and Development, persistent gaps continue to hinder progress. The main challenge remains women's political representation – fewer than one in five National Assembly seats were held by women in 2023,<sup>61</sup> falling far short of the constitutional mandate for equal gender representation. This disappointing outcome persists despite years of training programmes and advocacy initiatives, revealing deeper systemic barriers that remain unaddressed. The added difficulty is that the connection between training efforts and electoral success remains unclear, with little evidence showing how capacity-building translates into actual political victories for women candidates.

Despite incremental legislative gains, most political parties have yet to operationalise gender-equality commitments. A 2023 UN Women policy brief noted that the revised Electoral Law lacks credible enforcement mechanisms; parties able to pay candidacy-bond fees face little pressure to meet the 50 percent women threshold<sup>62</sup>. Consistently, IDEA's April 2024 figures rank the DRC 154th worldwide, with women holding just 12.8 percent of parliamentary seats<sup>63</sup>. Taken together, this evidence indicates that even though the Country Office's support has advanced awareness, skills and legal frameworks, the translation of these efforts into tangible political representation for women remains limited.

59. "Favorable environment for unlocking SDG financing" (MPTF-SDG, 2020-2022); "Strengthening women's leadership for peace in Kasai" (PBF, 2021-2024); "Promoting the full participation of PDs" (Multi Donor Trust Fund, 2023-2025); "Support for the prevention of electoral violence" (PBF, 2023-2024).

60. The projects aimed to create a favourable environment to identify and unlock the potential for additional financing of the SDGs in the DRC and to promote the inclusion of disabled persons and their full participation (UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

61. An early estimate of 13–14 per cent was reported in January 2024 by Radio Okapi, quoting civil society observers. However, the Independent Commission on National Elections published in February 2024 reported the "definite list of elected national deputies" in which 62 women (of 342 deputies) were elected.

62. UN Women, "Policy brief on Electoral Law Enforcement," 2023.

63. International IDEA, "Global State of Democracy Data Set," update April 2024.



## Programmatic and financial prioritization of WPP

In addition to the observed gaps in effectiveness, an analysis<sup>64</sup> of programmatic alignment and financial prioritization provides further insights into the extent to which the Country Office's interventions fully supported the Strategic Note's commitments to WPP.

## Programmatic focus on WPP

Reviewing the programmatic portfolio revealed that several projects categorized under the WPP impact area were not directly focused on political empowerment (see Table 3 below).

**TABLE 3. Projects categorized as WPP but not directly focused on political empowerment**

Projects found under WPP	Reason for limited alignment
Supporting the prevention of electoral violence	Indirectly supports WPP by addressing electoral violence but does not target women's political empowerment directly.
Creating an enabling environment for the SDGs	Focuses on unlocking SDG financing, not on WPP.
Strengthening women's leadership for peace	Primarily falls under WPS rather than WPP.
Promoting the inclusion of Persons with disabilities (UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)	Focuses on disability inclusion without a specific focus on women's political leadership.

Four initiatives were booked under the Women's Political Participation impact area yet they only partially operationalised the 2019 Women's Political Participation [Roadmap](#) which is the portfolio's primary reference document, co-developed by UN Women and the Embassy of Sweden. The roadmap sets out an integrated package of actions ranging from party-internal reforms and candidate mentoring to civic-education campaigns and parity-law enforcement. By contrast, the four projects highlighted at Table 3 concentrate on adjacent themes (electoral-violence mitigation, SDG financing, peacebuilding or disability inclusion) without embedding the roadmap's core political-empowerment measures. Thus, while they advance broader gender-equality goals, their design left several roadmap pillars unaddressed.

Programme staff clarified however that these design gaps were partially filled later: flexible resources, particularly Sweden's, were channelled into candidate-training workshops, party-level advocacy and other roadmap actions that were absent from the original donor-funded log-frames.

## Financial prioritisation of Women's Political Participation

The 2020-2024 Strategic Note clearly enunciates commitments related to Women's Political Participation as a standalone area of impact. Yet most Non-Core funding during the period was earmarked for electoral-violence prevention in Katanga, Lualaba and Kasai, leaving Sweden's untied contribution as the only pool that could flexibly support the broader WPP roadmap. Because both presidential and legislative elections also fell within these years, the evaluation needed to establish whether the Country Office's allocation of this unearmarked money matched its stated priority.

Using the Country Office project-delivery reports, we therefore compared each year's Swedish-funded WPP budget (W) with Sweden's total outlay (T) and expressed the result as a simple ratio ( $W \div T \times 100$ ). The higher the percentage, the more strongly WPP was backed in practice.

64. Inspired by Sara Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework, which emphasizes that true empowerment requires not only welfare improvements and access to resources, but also the dismantling of structural barriers to equality. Longwe emphasizes that while economic and social empowerment are critical foundations, political participation represents the ultimate stage where women can drive transformative social change. Longwe's framework remains influential more than 30 years after its introduction. For example, the 2021 paper Dimensions of Women's Empowerment by Kety Pulnamari et al. applies the framework to analyse various dimensions of empowerment, reaffirming its continued relevance in contemporary gender studies.

**TABLE 4. Sweden's flexible funding and WPP share (2020-2023)**

Year	WPP-SWE funding (US\$)	Total SWE funding (US\$)	Share of WPP-SWE
2020	64,601	662,914	9.7%
2021	315,399	993,191	31.8%
2022	348,785	2,175,859	16.0%
2023	348,785	1,190,879	29.3%

Source: data from DAMS and [project delivery](#) report was compiled by Evaluation Team

The results show a clear post-2020 increase, peaking at nearly one-third of Sweden's contribution, thus indicating that the Country Office progressively channelled its most flexible resources toward WPP, even when other donor grants did not.

#### Alignment between strategic commitments and funded projects

The Strategic Note set clear objectives to promote women's electoral participation; advocate for women's appointments to senior leadership roles; build campaigning capacities; and advocate for gender quotas. However, the project portfolio during 2020–2024 did not consistently translate these strategic ambitions into action. Projects primarily focused on broader development, peace or governance issues, rather than explicit political empowerment.

The training of 2,550 prospective women candidates with the Dynamic Women's Group for Democracy and Development aligned with the Strategic Note's Women's Political Participation roadmap, yet the costs were absent from annual work-plans and emerged only when they were later charged to Sweden's unearmarked contribution. This episode highlights the strategic value of Sweden's unearmarked funding: it allowed the Country Office to act quickly on a time-sensitive opportunity and sustain WPP ambitions even when specific budget lines had not been foreseen.

The absence of a dedicated WPP project design limited the systematic mainstreaming of women's political empowerment from the outset; however, Sweden's unearmarked funding later enabled the Country Office to pivot swiftly, financing key activities and showing its readiness to turn strategic intent into timely action even when non-core resources were already committed to other priorities.

## Ending violence against women

### FINDING 4

**UN Women DRC's EVAW programming has contributed to public awareness and promoted behavioural shifts toward gender equality and non-violence through community engagement and institutional advocacy. Interventions such as Positive Masculinity Clubs and collaboration with provincial assemblies on GBV-related legislation have helped challenge entrenched norms and elevate attention to GBV prevention. However, the magnitude of these gains cannot yet be verified: existing monitoring systems do not capture GBV incidence or trend data with sufficient coverage or consistency to demonstrate change. Moreover, key survivor-support mechanisms, such as the national GBV hotline and the case-management database, remain non-functional, limiting both service uptake and the evidence base required for tracking progress.**

The Country Office's interventions under the EVAW thematic area encompass two major projects,<sup>65</sup> each targeting key aspects of GBV prevention and response. These projects

aimed to address systemic barriers to gender equality by building institutional capacity, promoting behavioural change and improving access to justice and survivor services. While

65. Annex 19 provides detailed accounts of achievements for the following projects. "Improving the Resilience of the Health System Improvement of the Resilience of the Health System to ensure SRH (Sexual and Reproductive Health) for women and girls in the DRC" is a UNFPA-funded (ultimate donor: Canada) initiative. It is aimed at improving the sexual health and reproductive rights of women and girls in the targeted areas of Kasai, Kasai Central and Sankuru. Its two outputs are expected to increase women and girls' demand for services related to reproductive rights. The first output is aimed at "promoting gender equity norms and practices through engagement with women, girls, men, and boys, including community, religious actors, and women's organizations in matters of sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and adolescent health". We will refer to it as "Promoting gender equity norms and practices". The second output is about "mobilizing targeted national institutions, community actors, including traditional leaders, as well as men and boys to combat gender-based sexual violence, harmful practices, child marriage, and HIV and AIDS among women and girl". We will refer to it as "Mobilizing targeted national institutions and community leaders". The second project "United for gender equality" is part of the "Zero Tolerance Campaign" supported by the President of the Republic of the DRC. The aims of the project are to strengthen the leadership of the Congolese government in the fight against GBV by (a) building the capacities of institutional actors in the fight against GBV; and (b) supporting the effective implementation of the Immediate Zero Tolerance Campaign's national action plan.

the projects demonstrated success in certain areas, challenges persisted in achieving measurable outcomes and aligning activities with intended results.

UN Women's programming contributed to raising awareness and promoting behavioural change. Community-based activities, such as public awareness campaigns and training workshops, targeted diverse stakeholders, including traditional leaders, religious figures and youth groups, to foster dialogue around gender equity and non-violence. For instance, traditional leaders in Kasai Central signed commitment acts aimed at addressing harmful practices, including early marriage and excluding women from antenatal consultations. Similarly, it was reported that the establishment of 90 Positive Masculinity Clubs in Sankuru and Kasai Central engaged men and boys to challenge unequal gender norms.

Institutional engagement emerged as a strong component of the projects. Advocacy efforts led to the integration of gender considerations into legislative frameworks in Kongo Central and Haut Katanga, where provincial assemblies signed partnership protocols to ensure gender sensitivity in proposed laws. Steps were also taken to operationalize support mechanisms such as national databases and hotlines for GBV survivors. These mechanisms aimed to improve coordination and service delivery, although their full functionality and impact remain unclear<sup>66</sup>. Also worth noting, is the country office's quick adaptation to crisis realities, which helped pivot community protection networks first set up for electoral violence monitoring to repurposed GBV referral mechanisms during the Ebola outbreaks, ensuring services kept pace in a context where risk profiles were shifting<sup>67</sup>.

Efforts to support survivors included legal aid, psychosocial counselling and health services. Income-generating opportunities were also provided, aiding survivors financial independence and addressing marginalization.

Despite these achievements, critical gaps remain in ensuring the effectiveness of interventions. Reporting often focused on the number of workshops conducted or participants reached, rather than providing evidence of behavioural change or systemic improvements. For example, while the Positive Masculinity Clubs were widely

implemented, their impact on reducing GBV incidents was not measured. Similarly, economic empowerment initiatives (within the EVAW portfolio), while beneficial for participants, lacked scalability and faced challenges in market access and business formalization.

Institutionalising gender-equality frameworks remains a work in progress. The Immediate Zero Tolerance Campaign (CTZI) Action Plan (launched by the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo in June 2021 and validated through a multi-stakeholder review) set out a presidential roadmap for combating SGBV. Yet, by the time the "Unis pour l'Égalité" Initiative was launched, the CTZI measures were only partially embedded in regular ministerial workflows, with their intended institutional integration proving too ambitious<sup>68</sup>. Consequently, the timeframe allocated for these reforms has not yet allowed for sufficient evidence of reduced impunity to materialize, with only limited progress observed in addressing GBV-related crimes, particularly those involving state security forces. This limited systemic accountability continues to pose challenges for efforts to reduce violence and strengthen support for survivors.

Access to justice and survivor support services also encountered challenges. The operationalization of hotlines and data systems was uneven, with limited evidence of widespread usage or impact.<sup>69</sup> Survivors continued to face barriers in accessing justice, particularly in regions where legal frameworks remain underdeveloped or poorly enforced.

Also of note is the absence of consistency between implemented activities and intended results in one of the projects.<sup>70</sup> For instance, UN Women organized training workshops and income-related activities that did not clearly contribute to changes in sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health as originally intended in the UNFPA-led joint initiative. The project, which centred on mobilizing institutions and community actors to combat gender-based sexual violence and harmful practices, implemented several activities, such as income-generating projects and the establishment of resource kiosks, which had an indirect link at best to the results intended. While economic empowerment may support gender equality, there is little evidence connecting these activities to the reduction of violence or harmful practices.

66. Regarding the functionality of the hotlines and databases, as mentioned in the project donor report ("Rapport semestriel", Sept 2024, p.10): "at the current state of affairs, it is difficult to envisage integrated functionality and interoperability of these different data sources". The evaluation team confirmed that the hotline is non-operational and the database is inactive. This finding was also corroborated by personnel.

67. The "cellules de veille" and electoral mediators involved in monitoring electoral violence were engaged in identifying and referring cases of gender-based violence to victim support organizations ("Preventing Electoral Violence", Apr. 2024, p.12)

68. Their institutional integration was acknowledged as incomplete. Project "Unis pour l'Égalité" documents that the CTZI's implementation "encounters implementation problems in terms of coordination, monitoring, and communication of results". Also acknowledged is the "weak appropriation of the campaign by key institutional actors at both national and provincial levels". ("Unis pour l'Égalité du Genre", Oct. 2022, p.15)

69. Project on "Ensuring SRH for women and girls in the DRC" (Canada, 2021-2024) reported the establishment of a hotline. The evaluation team repeatedly called the 122 hotline and found it non-functional. Additionally, the United for Gender Equality project planned to use a database for GBV data. At the time of evaluation data collection, the database for GBV data was unavailable.

70. See detailed analysis in Annex 20.



## Women's Economic Empowerment

### FINDING 5

UN Women DRC's WEE programming contributed to building women's skills and fostering partnerships with government agencies, CSOs and community leaders to establish a supportive environment for economic empowerment, including enhanced women's technical and entrepreneurial skills in agriculture; advocating for gender-sensitive business laws; and establishing centres for resource-sharing and value-added production. However, a lack of access to financial services limited women's ability to expand their businesses and achieve long-term economic stability.

UN Women's economic empowerment initiatives in DRC from 2020 to 2024 aimed to address systemic barriers in women's access to economic resources, promote entrepreneurial activities and increase women's economic autonomy. Initiatives included the *Laws for Women-Owned Businesses*,<sup>71</sup> intended to create a business-friendly environment for women entrepreneurs, and the project on *Biofortified Cassava Chain*,<sup>72</sup> which focused on agricultural skill-building and community empowerment through biofortified cassava production. While each project had specific goals, this portfolio-level evaluation synthesizes common findings, achievements and challenges across both initiatives to assess UN Women's overall impact on women's economic empowerment in DRC.

#### Reported achievements and key merits

Across the two projects, UN Women reportedly achieved notable success in empowering women through capacity-building, community mobilization and creating supportive infrastructure. Evaluation interviews indicated overall satisfaction among programme personnel and programme partners with their performance.

##### Skill development and capacity-building

One of the primary reported achievements across both initiatives was building women's technical, agricultural and entrepreneurial skills. The *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* initiative reportedly trained over 180 institutional actors and thousands of women on gender-sensitive business practices, aiming to create a supportive business environment and enhance female entrepreneurship in urban centres;<sup>73</sup> while the *Biofortified Cassava Chain* programme claimed to have trained 420 women in biofortified cassava cultivation and related agricultural skills, stating that this improved participants' capacity to produce, process and sell products in local markets.<sup>74</sup> This skill-building aligns with UN Women's objectives of enhancing women's income-generating potential.

##### Community and institutional partnerships

The initiatives reportedly strengthened ties with government agencies, CSOs and community leaders, fostering an enabling environment for gender-sensitive reforms. For example, *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses*' collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and local CSOs reportedly led to the 2022 entrepreneurship law in DRC, claimed to include gender provisions to improve women's business opportunities.<sup>75</sup> *Biofortified Cassava Chain* also reported collaborations with PRONANUT (the National Nutrition Programme) and local leaders, integrating nutrition awareness with agricultural initiatives led by women. According to programme sources, these partnerships supported programme sustainability and helped ensure alignment with national priorities.<sup>76</sup>

##### Establishment of infrastructure and economic networks

Both programmes reportedly facilitated the creation of infrastructure supporting economic empowerment. *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* claimed to have helped establish regional alliances for women's entrepreneurship, connecting women with networks and

71. "Reforms and dissemination of Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses", 2021-2023, funded by DRC Government.

72. "Establishing a biofortified cassava chain to empower women in their communities", 2022-2024, funded by the Multi Donor Trust Fund.

73. *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* report, July 2024.

74. *Biofortified Cassava Chain* report, July 2024.

75. *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* report, July 2024.

76. *Biofortified Cassava Chain* report, July 2024.

resources to support their businesses.<sup>77</sup> *Biofortified Cassava Chain's* establishment of two agrified centres was described as enabling women to access facilities for cassava processing, providing a base for collective resource-sharing and value-added production. These centres were said to have fostered a community environment where women could share resources and build resilience, contributing to a sustainable empowerment model.<sup>78</sup>

### Limitations and challenges

Despite these reported successes, several limitations impacted the effectiveness of the *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* and *Biofortified Cassava Chain* initiatives, particularly in terms of long-term economic empowerment. Challenges in financial access, fragmented implementation and outcome tracking were recurring issues.

**Limited financial services:** A significant challenge across both programmes was the lack of financial mechanisms to support women's business expansion and resilience. Although UN Women was not expected to provide capital directly, stronger arrangements with financial-service providers could have been established to ensure participants could secure the investments they needed. This gap limited participants' ability to scale their activities, invest in equipment or stabilize their incomes amid economic uncertainties.

**Emphasis on outputs over measurable outcomes:** A limitation in both initiatives was the focus on outputs (e.g. number of workshops held, participants trained) rather than tracking concrete economic outcomes such as income increases or business formalization rates. *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses*, for instance, focused on recording participant numbers in gender-sensitive business training but lacked data on if this had improved business formalization rates among women. Similarly, *Biofortified Cassava Chain* highlighted participant training and awareness-raising activities without providing measurable indicators on income gains or market expansion.

**Logistical delays and programmatic adaptations:** Both programmes faced logistical challenges impacting timelines and adaptability. *Biofortified Cassava Chain's* delayed launch prevented the timely planting of biofortified cassava, leading to an adaptation to alternative crops. While this pivot allowed some continuity, it was acknowledged that the change did not align with the original economic goals centred around cassava production.<sup>79</sup> *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* also cited delays in funding disbursement and operational challenges in aligning partner contributions, which affected programme efficiency and responsiveness to participants' needs.<sup>80</sup> These logistical challenges limited the ability to achieve certain planned outcomes.



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77. *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* report, July 2024.

78. *Biofortified Cassava Chain*, July 2024 report.

79. *Biofortified Cassava Chain*, July 2024 report.

80. *Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses* report, July 2024.

## Women, Peace and Security

### FINDING 6

By promoting community security, women's leadership and socioeconomic stability as pathways to peace, the Country Office contributed to the establishment of community policing units, local peace forums and governance structures to bridge community and government relations for conflict prevention. However, the absence of follow-up data on the practical outcomes of these initiatives – such as sustained trust between communities and security forces or women's active roles in governance – limits the ability to assess long-term impact. Persistent challenges, including armed conflict, displacement and unresolved protection needs, further constrain the realization of WPS objectives in the region.

The Country Office's WPS interventions aimed to enhance women's roles in peacebuilding, improve community security and foster local governance structures supportive of community cohesion and gender equality.

#### Strengthening community security and local governance

Across the Country Office's WPS projects, a consistent theme was the establishment of community policing units, local peace forums and governance structures intended to

bridge community and government relations and to integrate women into peace processes. The *Strengthening Social Cohesion project*<sup>81</sup> reportedly trained approximately 200 officers in community policing and gender-sensitive security, exceeding the initial target of 120.

**TABLE 5. Country Office results in community security programming**

Objective	Planned target	Reported results
Community police training	Train 120 officers	200 officers trained
Establishment of local peace forums	Peace forums created in conflict zones	Peace forums established
Capacity-building for women leaders	100 trained women in leadership	80 women trained
CSO mapping	1,000 CSOs mapped	1,500 CSOs mapped
Vocational training for youth	100 youth supported in income-generating activities	100 youth trained, including 36 women
Community trust-building campaigns	Communities engaged in peace efforts	Claim of 15 per cent trust increase with police

Source: Data from desk review as compiled by the evaluation team

81. Strengthening social cohesion and trust between authorities and the population through community policing, dialogue and socio-economic revitalization, funded by PBF, 2020-2022



This was seen as a step towards improved community–police relations: public trust would increase following improved police behaviour after benefitting from the rounds of training. The assumed results will need to be established over time with evidence collected locally on sustained security.

Another intervention, “*Strengthening women role in peace governance*”<sup>82</sup> focused on community peace structures and governance by setting up peace forums in the Kasai region. The project report claims that these forums facilitated trust-building between the community and security forces. While there were no details, oral or written, on the specific outcomes of these forums, the evaluation team understood from the interviews conducted, that the peace forums continued to exist long after the intervention ended. While there were reports of increased trust, interview respondents were unable to confirm whether this trust continued in the targeted locations after the project’s conclusion.

### Capacity-building for women's leadership

Training and capacity-building were central to these initiatives, particularly in two projects (“*Promoting WPS*” and “*Women leadership in Kasai*”) aimed at enhancing women's leadership in peace and security efforts.<sup>83</sup> The “*Promoting WPS*” project was reported to have trained 45 female CSO leaders, slightly below the target of 50, but with claims of improved engagement in peacebuilding initiatives. Support to the National Action Plan on Resolution 1325 was provided through the National Ministry of Gender, Family and Children and the provincial divisions of Gender, Family and Children in North Kivu. It allowed the mapping of 1,500 women-led and women's rights CSOs active in WPS in eight provinces of the country; development of an online resource platform on WPS, including a database of 800 women-led CSOs active in WPS in all 26 provinces of DRC; institutionally

supported the operationalization and development of 3 Provincial Secretariat plans on Resolution 1325 in North Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika; and produced and disseminated gender-sensitive advocacy tools.

In the “*Women leadership in Kasai*” project, only 80 of the planned 100 women reportedly completed leadership training, reflecting a partial shortfall.

Despite the reported achievements, both projects lacked sufficient follow-up data on the practical impact of the training, such as whether women took active roles in community decisions post-training.

### Socioeconomic empowerment as a path to peace

In some projects, socioeconomic support was provided as a means of preventing violence, with a focus on training youth and women in income-generating activities. For instance, the “*Strengthening social cohesion*” project was reported to have provided vocational training for approximately 100 youth, including 36 women, to offer alternatives to violence. While it is claimed that violence can be prevented through economic stability, there is a lack of outcome data on post-training employment or income generation to confirm economic empowerment, let alone reduced violence in communities.

Among factors hindering the achievement of results, the evaluation identified long-standing insecurity and large-scale displacement in parts of North and South Kivu, particularly Masisi Territory, as noted in Country-Office situation analyses<sup>84</sup> and recent humanitarian updates<sup>85</sup>. Repeated movements of internally displaced persons have stretched host communities' limited resources, curbing access to services and livelihoods and constraining the sustainability of programme gains.

## Humanitarian initiatives in DRC (2020–2024)

### FINDING 7

**The Country Office's humanitarian initiatives achieved meaningful short-term economic resilience for women within highly challenging environments. However, limited sustainability, due to dependency risks through reliance on resource distribution without financial tools and insufficient outcome monitoring, hindered the potential of programmes to achieve the desired nexus between humanitarian aid and long-term development.**<sup>86</sup>

82. “Strengthening the role of women and youth in local governance and peacebuilding in Kasai province”, funded by PBF, 2020–2021.

83. “Promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda in DRC”, funded by Norway, 2022–2024 and “Strengthening women leadership in the Kasai” funded by PBF, 2021–2023.

84. In 2019, “extrajudicial killings and summary executions increased to 1,459 cases, including of 324 women and of 114 children. Armed groups were responsible for the majority of the killings.”, UN Women DRC Strategic Note 2020–2024, p.6

85. Eastern DRC Displacement Overview, OCHA's update as of 27 February 2025.

86. The Strategic Note (2020–2024) proclaims having drawn lessons from previous strategic experience as “the office designed and implemented interventions within the peace, humanitarian, and development nexus together with its programme partners.” p.9

UN Women's humanitarian initiatives<sup>87</sup> in DRC from 2020 to 2024 were designed to enhance resilience among crisis-affected women, promote economic empowerment, strengthen social cohesion and address GBV. The initiatives supported women in high-risk regions of DRC, primarily focusing on economic empowerment, social cohesion and the integration of gender considerations within humanitarian frameworks. Despite varied approaches, each programme encountered similar challenges that limited their ability to achieve long-term outcomes, although short-term results were generally positive.

UN Women's humanitarian initiatives prioritized economic resilience by providing women with income-generating activity kits and training. In the Programme on Peace Building and Economic Empowerment, training in financial literacy and business skills reportedly reached 165 women and 30 girls, exceeding the original target and showcasing the programme's adaptability to local demand.<sup>88</sup> These interventions aimed to mitigate the economic vulnerabilities of women affected by conflict and displacement. However, there were limitations to this approach as a resilience mechanism: reliance on income-generating activity kits without accompanying financial tools, such as credit access, raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of these economic activities.

Another core focus was embedding gender considerations into humanitarian frameworks, consistent with UN Women's mandate to promote gender-responsive approaches in crisis management. For instance, the programme on Localized Gender Accountability established Gender in Humanitarian Action working groups and strengthened partnerships with local women rights organizations to advocate for women needs in humanitarian planning. Although there were indications that these structures were established, the programme fell short in documenting the impact of these frameworks on actual improvements in GBV accountability and local crisis response.

Community-level support was facilitated by forming solidarity groups that fostered mutual assistance and resilience among women. For example, the Programme on Peace Building and Economic Empowerment initiated solidarity groups which reportedly promoted social cohesion, strengthening community bonds and psychological support networks. However, while this is crucial in conflict settings, the report indicates that the programme formed fewer groups than planned, limiting the reach and potential impact of these social networks.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, interviewed participants stated that the solidarity

groups were beneficial in fostering community-level resilience and helping women establish support systems in the face of persistent instability.

According to Programme personnel, factors such as adaptability to local needs were behind the achievement of the above-mentioned results, as seen in the Peace Building and Economic Empowerment Programme's decision to expand its reach to additional women beyond initial targets. Local ownership was emphasized in the programme on Localized Gender Accountability by working closely with community-based groups, and using these partnerships to inform and coordinate humanitarian response actions.

However, several hindering factors posed challenges to the achievement of long-term results. Security limitations in areas such as North Kivu and Ituri repeatedly disrupted programme activities, preventing consistent access to beneficiaries and delaying implementation of critical services such as the psychosocial support centres as part of the LEAP programme. Dependency risks were another significant limitation. By focusing on resource distribution, such as income-generating activity kits, without including sustainable financial tools, there was a potential for dependency among beneficiaries who might find it challenging to continue economic activities without ongoing external support. The reliance on resources distributed through the programmes raised concerns about the sustainability of the interventions. This issue was particularly noticeable in conflict-affected areas where financial tools are limited and alternative income sources are scarce, which could ultimately affect the resilience these programmes aimed to promote.

Despite the intention to link economic empowerment with peacebuilding, limited evidence showed a direct connection between these objectives, particularly in the Peace Building and Economic Empowerment programme. The programme's focus remained largely on economic outputs without clear pathways linking activities to peacebuilding outcomes, highlighting the need for more integrated approaches in future programming.

Finally, the lack of outcome-oriented monitoring indicators limited the ability of programmes to measure the real impact of interventions on long-term resilience or social change. Although the programme on Localized Gender Accountability is said to have trained 1,778 humanitarian responders,<sup>90</sup> there was limited evidence that the training translated into improved GBV accountability or tangible shifts in gender-sensitive crisis response, as the programme did not track the application of these skills in real crisis situations.

87. Namely (a) Strengthening the transformative role of women in peace building and their economic empowerment against the consequence of conflict, natural disaster and Covid 19 in the East of DRC, hereafter "Peace Building and Economic Empowerment Programme"; (b) Promoting Localized Gender Accountability to Address Inequality and GBV in Humanitarian Crisis, hereafter "Localized Gender Accountability Programme"; (c) "Promoting the Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) of Women & Girls affected by conflict, severe drought and forced displacement in Uganda and DR Congo (LEAP III JSB, Uganda and DRC), hereafter "LEAP Programme".

88. Programme on Peace Building and Economic Empowerment, Mid-term report, June 2023, p. 5

89. Ibid.

90. Localized Gender Accountability Mid-Term Report, June 2024, p. 7

# EFFICIENCY

**Does the Country Office's management structure and organizational architecture support efficient implementation of the country portfolio, and does UN Women have the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities to achieve the results envisaged in the Strategic Note?**

## FINDING 8

**The Country Office's financial oversight and day-to-day efficiency improved markedly with the rollout of the Quantum platform; transitional reconciliation issues observed in 2023 were largely resolved once the system became fully operational in 2024. However, challenges persist in results monitoring and timely donor reporting. High staff turnover, driven by heavy reliance on service contracts, and understaffing in key areas such as WEE and humanitarian programming still require careful attention.**

This analysis integrates insights from project design and reporting documents alongside findings from a detailed assessment of governance, human resources and results-based management. It examines key dimensions of efficiency, including financial monitoring<sup>91</sup>, personnel allocation and the use of results-based systems, identifying strengths, challenges and areas for improvement.

Training on results-based management and the Quantum system enhanced operational efficiency. Mismatches between project-proposal budgets and preliminary figures generated by Quantum occasionally complicated reconciliation during 2023, a year in which the new system was still being rolled out and did not yet provide fully reliable data. Variances between OneAPP (PGAMS, DAMS) reports and early Quantum outputs thus largely reflected this transition period rather than underlying accounting weaknesses, and they were resolved once Quantum became fully operational in 2024.

However, the high number of service contract holders<sup>92</sup> compromised job stability and personnel retention. Key areas such as WEE and Humanitarian programmes were also understaffed, limiting equitable implementation. Oversight and progress tracking were affected by recurrent

M&E staffing shortages, notably the 2020–2022 vacancy and the 2024 resignation of the M&E officer. Though a new officer assumed the role in April 2025, institutional knowledge transfer remains ongoing.

### Results-based management systems

The Country Office demonstrated strong adaptive management practices, ensuring continuity despite challenges such as political instability and the COVID-19 pandemic. Many projects demonstrated timely implementation, such as "United for Gender Equality"<sup>93</sup> which rolled out training programmes and established service centres on schedule. Nonetheless, delays in activities, such as leadership training under WPP projects, were attributed to prolonged procurement processes and coordination challenges with provincial authorities and implementing partners responsible for nominating participants and securing training venues.

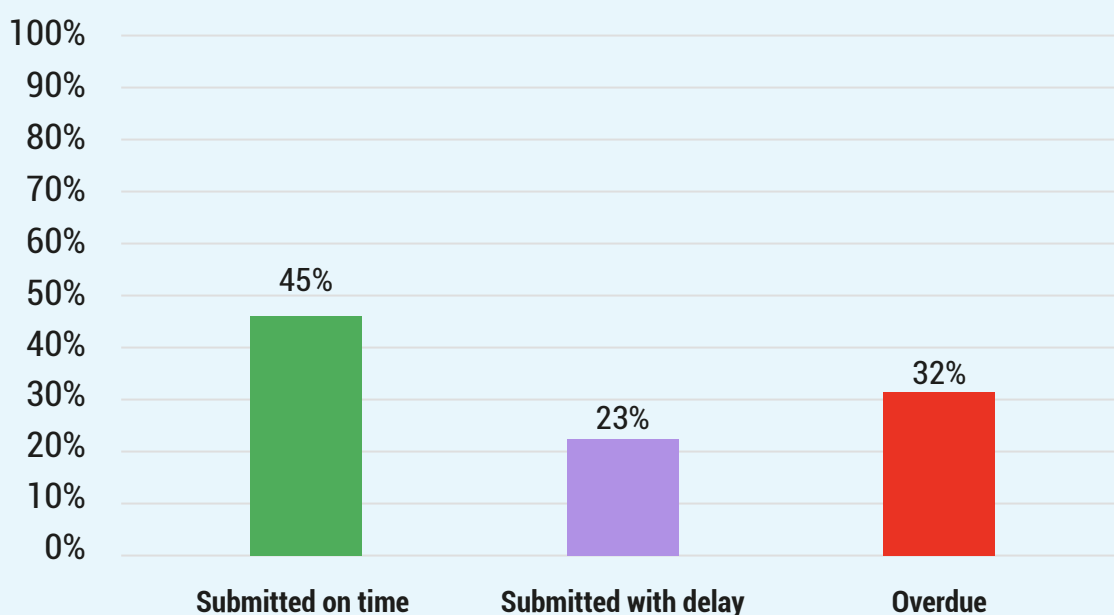
Reporting timeliness remained a concern, with low submission rates for donor reports (27 per cent submitted late in 2023) and only 45 per cent of donor reports were submitted on time in 2024. Late submissions accounted for 23 per cent of all reports, while 32 per cent of reports were classified as submitted beyond normal timelines.

91. We received partner advance data from the CO but could not analyze without further contextual information.

92. 28 members of personnel had unstable contractual arrangements.

93. "Unis pour l'égalité de genre," funded by EU, September 2022–September 2026.

**FIGURE 6. Timeliness of donor reports (N=22)**



Source: CO compilation of data available on DAMS, December 2024

While showing promise, efforts related to results-based management were limited by weak linkages between projects and Strategic Note indicators. As previously discussed (see Section 3.2), the Strategic Note indicators were framed primarily in alignment with UNSDCF outcomes, which prevented attribution of progress specifically to UN Women's interventions. Crafted largely around broad UNSDCF results, the indicators (and corresponding baselines) were worded at the broad sectoral or national level making it difficult to establish clear linkages between project-level achievements and Strategic Note outcomes.

Monitoring activities primarily consisted of monthly coordination meetings with field offices and programme partners. For instance, a monitoring mission conducted with the Canadian delegation and UNFPA in January 2023 highlighted some efforts in tracking progress at the project level, but these were not consistently implemented.

Key limitations include:

- **Output-focused indicators:** Reports emphasized output-level achievements, such as the number of women trained, rather than outcome-level changes, such as increased political participation or economic self-reliance.

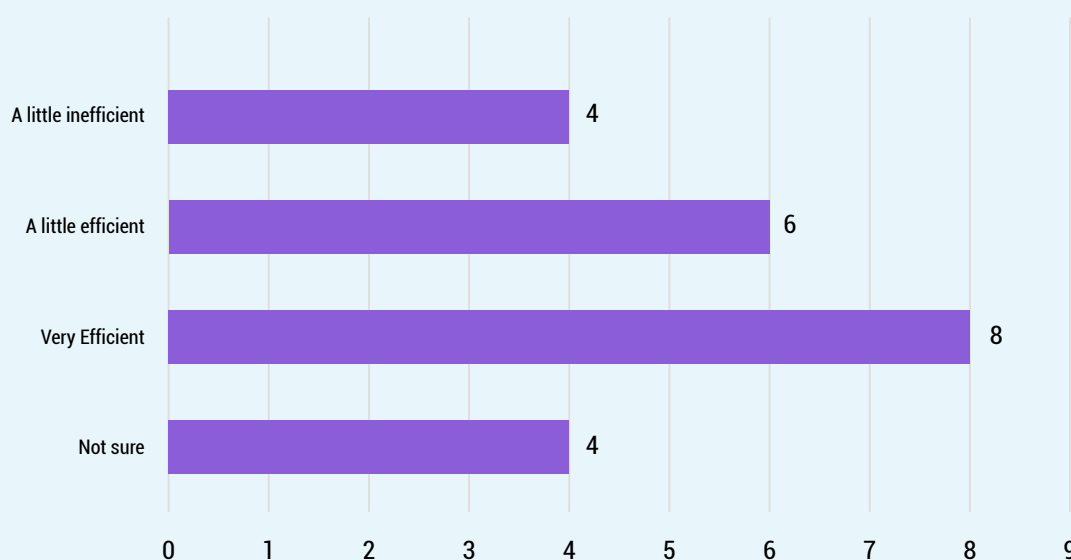
For instance, the Laws Favourable to Women-Owned Businesses project relied exclusively on output and activity-level indicators. The absence of outcome-level measurements limited the assessment of broader impacts, such as increased political participation or economic independence for women.

- **Absence of baseline data:** The lack of baseline data hindered the measurement of change over time, and the ability to assess progress effectively, or identify areas requiring adjustment.
- **Inadequate M&E capacity:** The M&E function was reduced to project management duties, and the sole M&E officer for the Country Office resigned in September 2024. The interim role, filled by the deputy, further strained M&E capacity and reduced the Country Office's ability to conduct thorough evaluations. The position was successfully filled in June 2025, restoring dedicated M&E capacity to the Country Office.

A staff survey showed that only 8 of 22 respondents regarded the Country Office's M&E system as "very efficient". Other respondents mentioned difficulties in generating actionable insights or applying knowledge gained from monitoring activities.



**FIGURE 7. Personnel's perceptions of the Country Office's M&E system (N=40)**



Source: Survey conducted by the evaluation team.

This reflects a need for improved tools, training and personnel to enhance the effectiveness of results-based management. Despite these challenges, the Country Office is working to

improve the quality of regular monitoring by conducting thorough mid-term and annual programme reviews.

# SUSTAINABILITY

Have capacities been developed and strengthened to ensure the sustainability of efforts and results? Is there national ownership, including champions and local accountability systems, supporting the portfolio?

## FINDING 9

While the Country Office's programming has demonstrated initial progress towards sustainability, notably through operationalization of provincial secretariats to advance the women's agenda on UNSCR 1325, significant gaps remain that threaten the long-term viability of its initiatives. There are concerns regarding the institutional capacity of partners to sustain activities beyond the project cycle and dependency risks related to financial support for initiatives.

The sustainability of the Country Office's programmes in DRC was evaluated across UN Women's thematic areas, focusing on the potential continuity of results achieved beyond 2024 by examining factors such as national ownership, the existence of national champions and other structural elements that support sustainability. The CPE also identified strengths and challenges related to programme sustainability at the project and portfolio level.

### National ownership

#### Integration in national frameworks

The Country Office participated in resource mobilization through various funds, including the Humanitarian Fund of the DRC, the Multi-Donor Humanitarian Fund and the Coherence Fund for Stabilization. These efforts support provincial stabilization strategies and action plans for North Kivu, South Kivu and Eastern Province. In terms of WPS, projects such as *Promoting the WPS Agenda* have collaborated with provincial secretariats to institutionalize gender-sensitive governance practices under the National Action Plan 1325. The narrative report indicates that three provincial secretariats were operationalized to advance the WPS agenda.<sup>94</sup> However, it remains unclear whether these secretariats have the resources to maintain their functions independently after 2024. Similarly, the "*Women leadership in Kasai*" project established peace forums to resolve conflicts at the community level, and although the forums

are declared integrated into local governance structures, little information is available on their operational or financial viability after the end of the project.

### Local accountability mechanisms

In the area of GBV, the *United for Gender Equality* project collaborated with the Ministry of Gender to establish a national database on GBV, aiming to improve monitoring and responses. Once completed,<sup>95</sup> this initiative could improve the ministry's GBV case monitoring and support lasting systemic change. However, there is no information on funding or long-term capacity for maintenance.

In the area of WPP, capacity strengthening for women in politics, including leaders, candidates, voters and officials, is an important step towards sustainability as it involved training on electoral law, conflict prevention, electoral violence against women and incident reporting. Lasting capacities are supported by knowledge-sharing through networking mechanisms at national and provincial levels, such as the African Women Leaders Network and Dynamic Women's Group for Democracy and Development.

In the area of WEE, The Community Alliance for Women's Entrepreneurship is reported to serve as a monitoring system to help learners apply the knowledge acquired through effective integration of gender considerations into managerial decisions regarding women's empowerment.

95. The evaluation found that the database located at the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children is currently out of service. Contacted personnel mentioned that donor support is expected for a new national data collection, management and reporting system.

However, the tight evaluation time frame did not permit verification that the Community Alliance served as a structure promoting appropriation and sustainability.

### National champions

The sustainability of advocacy efforts often relies on the presence of individuals or institutions capable of extending the results obtained beyond the project cycle. Across the portfolio, champions have been identified, but their influence and institutional capacity vary.

**Civil society organizations (CSOs):** Several projects involved local CSOs as programme partners and advocates, positioning them as essential actors for sustainability. For example, the Promoting the WPS Agenda project reportedly mapped more than 1,500 CSOs in eight provinces, exceeding its initial goal of 1,006. While it was reported that these CSOs were trained and involved in advocacy efforts, there were no details on their funding or technical capacity to maintain the activities in the long term.

Peace incubators were established as platforms to empower women leaders in conflict mediation and advocacy<sup>96</sup> but there is no clear evidence that these leaders were integrated into broader political or governance structures to amplify their impact.

**Government partnerships:** Government agencies, particularly at the provincial level, contributed to programme implementation. For instance, the “Strengthening Social Cohesion” project<sup>97</sup> involved local authorities in training programmes designed to enhance community–police relations. While these initiatives fostered trust, the long-term sustainability of the partnerships, including their institutionalization and self-funding, remains uncertain.

**Other sustainability factors:** Several cross-cutting factors influence sustainability, including capacity-building, community engagement and systemic integration of programme objectives.

- **Capacity-building:** Capacity-building activities were central to the portfolio, with numerous training sessions for women leaders, CSOs, police officers and local authorities. For example, the Promoting the WPS Agenda project trained 45 female CSO leaders in advocacy and governance, while the “Women leadership in Kasai” project trained 80 women in leadership and peacebuilding. However, narrative

reports do not include monitoring data on the use of acquired skills.

- **Community Engagement:** Initiatives such as the Local Governance and Peace Strengthening project focused on community-led peace efforts, creating forums to resolve local conflicts and build trust. Although these efforts have improved community cohesion, there is no data on their integration into local governance systems.

### Challenges

Despite the above evidence of sustainability, many initiatives under the Country Office's portfolio continue to rely heavily on external donor funding – a reality often beyond the direct control of the Country Office. Nevertheless, the limited identification of alternative funding sources, coupled with the absence of clear exit strategies, poses risks to the continuation of gender-related achievements, particularly in national and provincial coordination mechanisms. Proactive planning, including earlier development of transition plans and domestic partnerships, would help to secure long-term gains.

Insufficient monitoring and the absence of follow-up data on the knowledge acquired by individuals who have received training, and the performance of established structures also hinder the evaluation of long-term impacts and the sustainability of interventions.

96. “Women leadership in Kasai” project report, June 2024 p. 8.

97. “Strengthening social cohesion and trust between the population and the authorities through community policing, dialogue and socio-economic revitalization”, funded by PBF, 2020-2023

# HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

Has the portfolio been designed and implemented in accordance with human rights and the principle of "leave no one behind", including consideration of disability?

## FINDING 10

While the Country Office's Strategic Note (2020–2024) recognizes the importance of inclusivity and "leaving no one behind," the evaluation revealed inconsistencies between this principle and its practical application. The tendency towards generalized approaches that do not consider the diverse experiences of Congolese women and girls, especially women with disabilities, is a concern. Furthermore, despite its demonstrated commitment to WPP, the evaluation identified a misalignment between programmatic focus and resource mobilization, suggesting insufficient donor attention to activities directly supporting training and advocacy for women's leadership and political influence.

Women's empowerment is a central goal of UN Women's work, but achieving it requires addressing both diversity and political participation. Drawing from Sara Hlupekile Longwe's empowerment framework<sup>98</sup>, this analysis assumes that empowerment cannot be achieved without political participation (which, according to Longwe, represents the highest level of empowerment) and without inclusiveness, i.e. ensuring no one is left behind. Overly generalized approaches to women's issues risk marginalizing specific groups, such as women with disabilities, rural women and those in vulnerable settings, thereby undermining the principle of "leave no one behind." This section evaluates the alignment of the Country Office's Strategic Note 2020–2024 and related projects with this understanding. It highlights how the portfolio's inclusiveness, disability integration and programmatic prioritization of WPP interact to support or hinder women's empowerment.

### Programme inclusiveness in the 2020–2024 period

A key limitation of the Country Office's previous<sup>99</sup> Strategic Note was its lack of differentiation in addressing the diverse social categories of Congolese women and girls. By systematically using the generic term "women," an implicitly assumed homogeneity among women potentially led to overlooking important distinctions, such as urban versus rural women, business owners versus workers,

literate versus illiterate women, young versus older women and Indigenous peoples (including Batwa communities) of the Congo Basin versus non-Indigenous peoples. This abstraction risked undermining the principle of "leaving no one behind," central to the SDGs. While the previous Strategic Note mentioned specific groups, such as micro-entrepreneurs and women in informal cross-border trade, it did not provide sufficient detail on tailored approaches to address the unique challenges faced by each of these specific groups of women.

The updated Strategic Note 2020–2024 offers improvements by acknowledging vulnerable women, such as those living with disabilities, female heads of households and survivors of GBV. However, it remains vague on how interventions will be adapted to meet their needs effectively. This generalized approach limits the Country Office's ability to address deep-rooted inequalities perpetuated by traditional cultural norms and religious practices, which often justify subordinate roles for women. Without explicitly targeting these inequities or accounting for the diversity of women's experiences, the Strategic Note risks falling short of its intended impact and reinforcing a one-size-fits-all approach that may exclude marginalized groups.

The evaluation team reviewed the portfolio of projects implemented by the Country Office during 2020–2024 to assess whether the diverse categories of Congolese

98. See footnote 60

99. For more details on its evaluation: <https://gate.unwomen.org/EvaluationUnit/FullDetails?EvaluationUnitId=146>



women and girls were recognized and taken into account. It appears that many of the projects explicitly acknowledge the heterogeneity of women's life predicaments and experiences. Projects addressing WPS and EVAW demonstrate distinct focuses on specific groups of women. Under the WPS impact area, the project on *"Promoting the WPS Agenda of Women, Peace, and Security in DRC"*<sup>100</sup> prioritizes women in conflict-affected areas. It specifically targets vulnerable groups such as displaced populations and women in remote provinces, aiming to enhance their participation in decision-making structures. In contrast, the EVAW-focused project *"United for gender equality"*<sup>101</sup> explicitly addresses the needs of survivors of sexual violence by acknowledging the intersecting barriers these women face in accessing justice and support services, ensuring that their unique challenges are central to its interventions.

However, other project designs stop short of articulating differentiated implementation strategies tailored to these distinct groups. For instance, a project dedicated to rebuilding social cohesion and trust between populations and security forces,<sup>102</sup> while aiming to promote women's political participation, does not clearly distinguish between urban and rural women, or between educated candidates and those requiring foundational capacity-building support. Another project in the economic empowerment area<sup>103</sup> references micro-entrepreneurs but uses broad categories such as "women producers" and "women farmers" interchangeably, without addressing specific socioeconomic characteristics, such as access to markets or ownership of land. Across multiple projects, the use of generic terms such as "women leaders" or "women entrepreneurs" suggests a blanket approach that risks overlooking critical disparities among targeted beneficiaries.

While interviewed personnel admitted the limited differentiation, they advised that the evaluation team should not focus solely on project design because, at implementation stage, several projects demonstrate activities that take into account women's diverse living conditions and realities. For example, the Local Governance and Peace Strengthening project<sup>104</sup> focuses on establishing multi-service centres in rural areas, targeting women with limited access to health and justice systems. This is a promising step in addressing the geographical and socioeconomic barriers rural women face. The *"Promoting the Agenda of Women, Peace, and Security in DRC"* project works with peace incubators that actively involve both young women and those from marginalized communities, recognizing the layered vulnerabilities that influence women's

participation in peacebuilding. However, this project does not always operationalize diversity consistently, as it trained women in leadership and advocacy but did not provide any data or insights into how the programmes were tailored to reach marginalized groups such as women with disabilities, Indigenous peoples (including Batwa communities) of the Congo Basin or illiterate women.

A rather generalized approach to women's empowerment is also evident in project monitoring frameworks. Across thematic areas, they reveal a limited focus on capturing disaggregated data. While many result frameworks cite overall participation figures, such as the number of women trained or services provided, few document the socioeconomic, educational, geographic or ethnic diversity of the women reached. For example, the *PADMPME project*<sup>105</sup> reports the number of micro-entrepreneurs supported but does not analyse how support varied between rural versus urban women or across age and education levels. In addition, the *"Promoting the WPS agenda"*<sup>106</sup> project cites an increase in women's representation but does not disaggregate data to reflect progress among historically excluded groups. This lack of disaggregated reporting makes it difficult to evaluate whether projects effectively addressed the unique needs of diverse groups or adopted a one-size-fits-all approach.

### Disability inclusion in the Strategic Note

The Strategic Note demonstrates an awareness of the need to prioritize women with disabilities as a distinct and vulnerable group<sup>107</sup> but the acknowledgment of women with disabilities is referenced broadly with limited exploration of the specific challenges faced by women with disabilities, such as accessibility, stigma or systemic exclusion. By not clearly distinguishing between the needs of women with different types or levels of disabilities, the Strategic Note may lead to a one-size-fits-all approach.

In the area of WPP, the Strategic Note commits to increasing women's participation in decision-making and electoral processes. However, there is no specific mention of targeting women with disabilities as part of WPP initiatives, despite their significant underrepresentation in political spaces. The lack of tailored capacity-building or advocacy for women with disabilities is a missed opportunity as this limits the potential for inclusive political empowerment.

There is also limited focus on disability around EVAW. While the Strategic Note acknowledges survivors of violence with

100. "Promoting the Agenda of Women, Peace, and Security in DRC," Norway, January 2022–December 2024.

101. "Unis pour l'égalité de genre," EU, September 2022–September 2026.

102. "Renforcer la cohésion sociale et la confiance entre la population et les autorités à travers la police de proximité, le dialogue et la revitalisation socio-économique", PBF, 2020-2023.

103. Establishing a biofortified cassava chain to empower women in their communities", UNCDF, 2020-2023.

104. "Renforcer le rôle des femmes et des jeunes dans la gouvernance locale et la consolidation de la paix dans la province du Kasai", PBF, 2020-2022.

105. Biofortified Cassava Chain report, July 2024.

106. "Promouvoir l'agenda Femmes, Paix et Sécurité en RDC, Norway, January 2022–December 2024.

107. The Strategic Note highlights women with disabilities as a key target group in several thematic areas. For example, it emphasizes economic programmes that target women in rural and peri-urban areas, including those living with disabilities. It commits to supporting women living in "situations of vulnerability and multiple discrimination," explicitly including women with disabilities in these terminologies (Strategic Note, p. 18).

disabilities as a key group and commitments are made to ensure access to justice and support services for survivors of violence, including those with disabilities, there is little detail on how services will be made accessible to women with disabilities, such as through physical infrastructure, communication tools or trained personnel.

Economic empowerment programmes are one of the few areas where the Strategic Note explicitly identifies women with disabilities. It includes women with disabilities as part of broader programmes targeting marginalized groups in rural and peri-urban areas. While the intent is clear, the Strategic Note does not provide concrete strategies for addressing barriers specific to women with disabilities, such as lack of accessible workspaces or tailored vocational training.

One significant limitation of the Strategic Note is the absence of a clear commitment to collecting disaggregated data on women with disabilities. Most targets are framed in terms of overall participation rates, without specifying how many programme participants are expected to be women with disabilities. Without disaggregated data on disability, it will be difficult to assess whether initiatives have meaningfully benefitted women with disabilities.

### Disability integration in Country Office projects

The Country Office's project documents were reviewed to assess whether disability was meaningfully considered in the design, implementation and reporting phases. The analysis highlighted strengths, gaps and opportunities to improve inclusivity for women with disabilities.

### Recognition of disability in project designs

Across several projects, there is a noticeable effort to acknowledge women with disabilities as a priority group:

- The "Promoting Women, Peace and Security"<sup>108</sup> project identifies displaced and marginalized women, including those with disabilities, as part of its efforts to enhance participation in decision-making structures in conflict-affected areas. This reflects an intent to integrate disability considerations within peacebuilding initiatives.
- The "United for Gender Equality"<sup>109</sup> project explicitly mentions survivors of sexual violence with disabilities as a target group, recognizing their heightened vulnerability and

unique barriers to accessing justice and support services.

- The project on biofortified cassava<sup>110</sup> makes reference to vulnerable women, including those living with disabilities, as beneficiaries of economic empowerment activities, such as vocational training and access to microfinance.
- While women with disabilities are acknowledged in project designs, this recognition is unspecific. References to disability are frequently broad and do not provide specific strategies for addressing the distinct challenges faced by women with disabilities. There is limited evidence of consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities or disability advocates during project design, which could have strengthened the inclusivity of interventions.

### Implementation practices

Certain initiatives demonstrate concrete efforts to reach women with disabilities. The "United for Gender Equality" project includes provisions for accessible support services, such as ensuring physical access to safe spaces and multi-service centres. These efforts acknowledge the practical barriers faced by women with disabilities. Vocational training programmes implemented within the framework of the project on biofortified cassava reportedly aimed to accommodate participants with disabilities by offering flexible formats and targeted outreach to marginalized groups.

Despite these efforts, the extent to which disability considerations are operationalized remains unclear. Few projects provide data on the actual number of women with disabilities reached or the specific adaptations made to ensure their inclusion. The absence of monitoring frameworks that could help track disability-related results limits the ability to evaluate whether the projects effectively addressed the needs of this group.

Lastly, most project reports, while acknowledging disability as a factor, do not disaggregate data to reflect results related to women with disabilities. For instance, when they report on the number of women trained in leadership and advocacy, they do not indicate how many participants were women with disabilities. Or when reports highlight support for survivors of sexual violence, there is no indication about how many survivors with disabilities benefitted from these services. The lack of detailed reporting on disability-related interventions limits opportunities to identify and replicate good practices in future programming.

108. Promouvoir l'agenda Femmes, Paix et Sécurité en RDC, Norway, January 2022–December 2024.

109. Unis pour l'égalité de genre, EU, September 2022–September 2026.

110. Establishing a biofortified cassava chain to empower women in their communities, UNCDF, 2020–2023.



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## 6. LESSONS LEARNED



The evaluation revealed insights into UN Women's efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment within a complex socio-political and cultural context. Building on findings from the current evaluation and reflections from the previous CPE cycle, the following key lessons emphasize the importance of aligning strategies with changing contexts; fostering coherence through effective coordination; prioritizing inclusivity; strengthening institutional capacity; and ensuring alignment between programmatic focus and financial resources.

**Context-responsive alignment, not just formal alignment, is essential for relevance and sustainability.**

The alignment of the Country Office's strategies with international and national frameworks, such as CEDAW and the National Gender Policy, reflects its relevance. However, entrenched customary norms, conflict-related insecurity in eastern provinces, and uneven enforcement capacity show that alignment on paper does not on its own deliver durable gender-equality gains. Sustainable results emerged only when that high-level consistency was continuously translated into barrier-focused, context-specific action<sup>111</sup>.

**Coordination mechanisms to prevent redundancy**

The Country Office's portfolio effectively leverages synergies across impact areas through integrated training and advocacy efforts. However, instances of duplication in training and resource allocation across overlapping regions underline that when coordination mechanisms are not supported by robust frameworks, programme efficiency and coherence are compromised.

**Inclusivity requires targeted approaches and data**

The evaluation underscores the importance of differentiated programming for marginalized groups. Generic approaches fail to address the unique needs of women with disabilities, rural women and indigenous populations. When data disaggregation and tailored strategies are not prioritized, interventions risk excluding the most vulnerable and undermining the principle of "leave no one behind".

**Institutional capacity shapes delivery**

The recurring issue of insufficient staffing, high turnover and weak knowledge management systems points to the critical role of institutional capacity. When internal resources are stretched too thinly and institutional memory

is not maintained, the ability to ensure accountability, learning and long-term programme sustainability is compromised.

**Strategic focus and financial prioritization drive impact**

The misalignment between programmatic focus and financial resources, particularly for WPP, can dilute transformative impact. However, when donor-funded projects did not fully align with the Country Office's programmatic priorities, the office proactively leveraged core funds to finance activities directly related to the Strategic Note. This included training 2,550 women candidates through the Dynamic Women's Group for Democracy and Development and establishing a directory of women candidates.<sup>112</sup> This flexible use of core funding highlights the importance of aligning financial resources with strategic priorities to maintain the momentum of key interventions, even when earmarked funding falls short.

111. See Findings 1&4 where localising normative work and pivoting to crisis realities are described, respectively.

112. UN Women DRC Country Office Annual Report, 2022, p. 7





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## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation findings across the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and alignment with gender equality and human rights underscore the Country Office's commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment amid DRC's multifaceted socio-political and security challenges. The Country Office's portfolio aligns with key national and international frameworks, demonstrating a strategic focus on addressing gender equality issues while navigating a fragile and often unpredictable operating environment.

Progress is evident in areas such as UN Women's contributions to peacebuilding efforts, women's economic empowerment and political participation, even when operational and contextual limitations have posed challenges

to fully realizing intended outcomes. The Country Office's adaptability and coordination efforts have strengthened its relevance, although opportunities remain to refine and deepen programmatic approaches to ensure more targeted and sustainable impacts.

While notable strides have been made, critical areas for enhancement include tailoring interventions to the diverse realities of women and girls; securing the long-term sustainability of results amid resource constraints; and addressing gaps in M&E systems. A continued focus on inclusivity, strategic partnerships and data-informed decision-making will be essential to achieving transformative and enduring outcomes for women and girls across DRC.

## CONCLUSION 1 (LINKED TO FINDINGS 1,2):

The Country Office's portfolio is well aligned with international frameworks such as CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 and SDG 5, addressing key gender equality issues and supporting the National Gender Policy. Despite recognizing WPP as crucial, the portfolio's programmatic focus and financial prioritization lack sufficient alignment, reducing the potential for impactful results for women's leadership

and political influence. The portfolio's coherence is demonstrated through synergies across interventions, such as coordinated advocacy efforts. However, socio-cultural barriers and weak accountability for GBV hinder sustainable progress, while duplication in leadership training and resource allocation highlight gaps in coordination that could limit effectiveness.

## CONCLUSION 2 (LINKED TO FINDINGS 3-6):

The Country Office demonstrated strengths in empowering women economically and politically through initiatives such as RENAFER, an umbrella organization of female farmers and the Dynamic Women's Group for Democracy and Development, a network of female political candidates. However, the Country Office's capacity to address GBV and

WPS issues was limited by operational challenges<sup>113</sup>; insufficient direct engagement with political structures; and a lack of sustained effort to secure women's participation in peace processes. This reflects the broader challenge of translating intent into sustained impact in a fragile, conflict or post-conflict environment.

## CONCLUSION 3 (LINKED TO FINDINGS 7-9):

The Country Office's focus on outputs over measurable outcomes, weak M&E systems and high staff turnover hindered progress in tracking and threatened institutional

memory. While advances were cleared, risks related to delayed donor reporting and partner sustainability remain.

113. For instance, non-functional core GBV service systems: the national GBV hotline and the case-management database are not working (Finding-1); Access & security constraints: repeated displacement and security limitations in North Kivu, Ituri, Kasai (Finding-4); Funding issues: high reliance on earmarked short-cycle grants implied gaps in gaps in GBV/WPS work, sometimes difficult to fill by the main source of untied funds, Sweden (Finding-6).

#### CONCLUSION 4 (LINKED TO FINDING 10):

While the Strategic Note acknowledges the need for inclusivity, its practical application remains constrained by generic approaches that do not adequately address the intersectional realities of Congolese women. The lack of targeted strategies for marginalized groups, such as women

with disabilities and indigenous women, undermines the commitment to "leave no one behind" and limits the transformative potential of interventions. Tailored, data-informed programming is essential to fully align with the principles of human rights and gender equality.

#### CONCLUSION 5 (LINKED TO FINDING 8):

The absence of outcome-level indicators, weak integration between project results and Strategic Note objectives, and insufficient M&E capacity undermined the Country Office's ability to drive results-based learning and strategic planning.

While adaptive management ensured operational continuity under pressure, the prevailing focus on outputs - such as the number of trainings delivered - weakened the organizational learning and strategic use of data.





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## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS



The recommendations presented below are the result of a comprehensive consultative process aimed at addressing existing gaps and capitalizing on emerging opportunities. This process began during the data collection phase, where preliminary findings were discussed with key stakeholders. A presentation on the preliminary findings was held with both the Management and Evaluation Reference Groups in March 2024, and their insights helped shape the final recommendations. The recommendations were also drafted in consultation with Country Office management and personnel, further refining

the direction outlined here. The recommendations were reviewed by both the Evaluation Management and Reference Groups, and subsequent revisions were incorporated as appropriate.

Ultimately, these recommendations are to be implemented by the Country Office, in collaboration with and through consultation with relevant national stakeholders in DRC, ensuring that the actions taken are aligned with local priorities and contexts.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

**The Country Office should enhance the alignment of its portfolio with DRC's socio-cultural dynamics and expand its scope to address critical gaps in GBV and leadership support.**

BASED ON CONCLUSION 1

PRIORITY

HIGH

DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Q1 2026

TO BE LED BY: Country Representative and Programme Personnel

### Suggested actions:

- Develop targeted interventions addressing socio-cultural barriers and enhancing accountability for GBV crimes.
- Collaborate with UNESCO, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education to include programming on GBV in schools.
- Increase financial prioritization for activities supporting women's leadership and political participation.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

**The Country Office should improve coordination and resource management across interventions to maximize synergies and avoid duplication.**

BASED ON CONCLUSION 1

PRIORITY

MEDIUM

DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Q2 2026

TO BE LED BY: Country Representative and Programme personnel

### Suggested actions:

- Strengthen coordination mechanisms to avoid duplication in leadership training and resource distribution. .
- Establish a centralized database to track overlapping regions and ensure complementary efforts among partners.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

**The Country Office should strengthen operational strategies and partnerships to ensure sustained impact, particularly in the areas of political participation, GBV and WPS.**

BASED ON CONCLUSION 2

PRIORITY

HIGH

DIFFICULTY

HIGH

Q2 2026

TO BE LED BY: Country Representative and Programme Personnel

### Suggested actions:

- Enhance advocacy for women's participation in peace processes
- Initiate engagement with political structures.
- Build long-term strategies to address operational challenges, ensuring focus on both economic and political empowerment.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

**The Country Office should strive to ensure stability in staffing critical areas. Strengthening contract stability for key personnel, where possible and strengthening programme reporting would help to reinforce organizational efficiency.**

BASED ON CONCLUSION 3

PRIORITY

HIGH

DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Q2 2026

TO BE LED BY: Country Representative and Operations personnel

### Suggested actions:

- Implement a streamlined financial reporting system integrated with the Quantum system to ensure financial and programmatic alignment.
- Address HR issues by transitioning staff to more stable contracts and increasing staffing in critical areas such as WEE and Humanitarian programmes.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

The Country Office should ensure the long-term viability of programmes by building partner capacity and diversifying financial support mechanisms.

BASED ON CONCLUSION 3

PRIORITY

MEDIUM

DIFFICULTY

MEDIUM

Q3 2026

TO BE LED BY: Country Representative,  
Programme and M&E personnel

### Suggested actions:

- Invest in capacity-building programmes for institutional partners to ensure self-sufficiency.
- Diversify funding sources and encourage local resource mobilization to reduce dependency on external financial support.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

The Country Office should promote inclusivity by tailoring programmes to address the diverse experiences and needs of women and girls in DRC, especially marginalized groups such as women with disabilities.

BASED ON CONCLUSION 4

PRIORITY

HIGH

DIFFICULTY

LOW

Q2 2026

TO BE LED BY: Country Representative,  
Programme and M&E personnel

### Suggested actions:

- Design and implement differentiated approaches tailored to the diverse needs of Congolese women and girls, including targeted initiatives for women with disabilities.
- Train staff and partners to integrate inclusivity comprehensively into programme design and execution.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

The Country Office should strengthen its results-based management approach by enhancing systems for results tracking, monitoring and reporting, with a focus on measurable outcomes rather than activity-based outputs.

BASED ON CONCLUSION 3

PRIORITY

HIGH

DIFFICULTY

HIGH

Q2 2026

TO BE LED BY: Country Representative,  
Programme and M&E personnel

### Suggested actions:

- Strengthen institutional M&E capacity by integrating outcome-level indicators into programme design templates and enhancing the use of disaggregated data (e.g. by gender, age and disability).
- Conduct practical workshops for personnel and programme partners on results-based monitoring and the effective collection and analysis of disaggregated data.





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# ANNEXES

ANNEXES ARE AVAILABLE  
IN VOLUME II OF THE  
REPORT.

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Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit and Investigation Services under the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (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 ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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