



FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT:

# **EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND PROMOTING  
SOCIAL COHESION IN ASEAN

*2021-2025*





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**FINAL EVALUATION REPORT**

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**Date of the report:** 17 December 2025

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organization
<b>EVAW/EVAWG</b>	ending violence against women and girls
<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer people and other identities
<b>LNOB</b>	Leave No One Behind principle
<b>NAP</b>	national action plan
<b>OECD/DAC</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PWD</b>	persons with disabilities
<b>RPA</b>	Regional Plan of Action
<b>ROAP</b>	UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
<b>TOC</b>	theory of change
<b>TOR</b>	terms of reference
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNDCO</b>	United Nations Development Coordination Office
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDPPA-DPO</b>	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNOCT</b>	United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council resolution
<b>WPS</b>	women, peace and security
<b>YPS</b>	youth, peace and security



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# FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT: **EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

The regional project “Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace – Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN” (WPS ASEAN project) builds on a long-standing partnership between UN Women and ASEAN and responds to the 2021 ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

Funded by the Governments of Canada, the Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the project was launched in February 2021 following an inception phase earlier that year. Hosted by UN Women’s Indonesia Country Office (CO), which also serves as the ASEAN Liaison Office, the project aims to consolidate the regional WPS framework, strengthen institutional capacities, and create an enabling environment for WPS implementation across ASEAN Member States. It operates through four outcome areas focused on enhancing regional policy development, institutional capacity-building, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and national-level implementation and monitoring of WPS policies.

At the regional level, the project has concentrated on supporting the development and implementation of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS (RPA WPS), enhancing the capacity of ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and civil society organizations (CSOs), and producing data and research to inform evidence-based policy. At the national level, activities have focused on building the capacities of governments, civil society, academia and media to develop and implement national action plans (NAPs) on WPS, as well as to strengthen the accountability of institutions and the engagement of disadvantaged groups. In its later stages, the project has prioritized the creation of communities of practice to sustain coordination, learning, and implementation of the WPS agenda across the region.

The evaluation was designed to inform strategic decision-making for future WPS programming, strengthen learning, and enhance accountability for achieved results. Its objectives included assessing the project’s relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and contribution to gender equality and human rights outcomes and impact. It also aimed to identify stories of change, innovative practices, and lessons learned to inform the future advancement of the WPS agenda. The primary users of the evaluation are ASEAN and UN Women who will use

the findings to guide the continued regional implementation of WPS and the design of a potential second phase of the project. Donors and other partners will use the results for accountability and to shape future programming. The evaluation covered both regional and national interventions across eight ASEAN Member States and one Observer State, focusing on the 2021–2025 implementation period.

Methodologically, the evaluation followed United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards and UN Women’s Evaluation Policy, applying a mixed-method, gender-responsive, and theory-based approach. Data were collected through document review, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and surveys involving 228 individuals (47 men and 181 women) and over 100 additional survey respondents. Field missions were conducted in Indonesia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and Viet Nam, while Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, and Malaysia were covered through remote interviews and secondary data. Ethical principles were rigorously upheld, including informed consent, data privacy, and the protection of participants. Overall, the evaluation employed participatory, inclusive, and gender-sensitive methods to ensure credible, rights-based findings that reflect the perspectives of women, men, and marginalized groups across ASEAN.

## FINDINGS

### Coherence

The evaluation found the project to be highly coherent, demonstrating strong alignment with the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS, the priorities of relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, and national commitments on gender equality and WPS. The project's design and implementation also align closely with UN Women's corporate strategic plan and the strategic notes of both the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and participating country offices, with clear evidence of country-level uptake. Initial coordination and reporting challenges – stemming from the establishment of the new regional unit in Jakarta, in addition to the Regional Office in Bangkok – have improved, thereby resulting in more integrated planning and delivery. Collaboration with other UN entities has been evident and complementary, but the collaboration has been limited to projects. There is space for more strategic and systematic coordination across the UN system to enhance collective impact and policy coherence on the WPS agenda.

### Effectiveness

The evaluation found the project to be highly effective, demonstrating rapid and measurable progress toward its intended results, with all planned targets achieved before project closure. This success was attributed to strong partner commitment, effective coordination, and consensus-building efforts across ASEAN and Member States. The project significantly enhanced the knowledge, skills, and confidence of ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, national institutions, and non-state actors through capacity-building initiatives, peer learning, and the development of policy tools. The establishment of the regional Knowledge Hub and regional events substantially increased access to WPS-related evidence and resources, generating strong demand for guidance on the regional and national action plans and non-traditional security issues.

At both regional and national levels, stakeholders reported clear gains in technical capacity and awareness, though translation of this knowledge into systematic WPS implementation remains uneven, constrained by institutional and contextual barriers. The most effective interventions combined high-trust convening and facilitation, localized toolkits, and consistent capacity development and communication efforts. Tailored community-level support and collaboration with NGOs and CSOs were identified as particularly impactful in driving uptake and ensuring

relevance of the WPS agenda. Overall, the project's results demonstrate strong effectiveness in building foundational capacity and policy engagement, with continued efforts needed to deepen and sustain implementation at all levels.

### Human rights and gender equality

The project mainstreamed the principle Leave No One Behind (LNOB) throughout design and delivery, intentionally engaging marginalized groups (persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, hilltribe and indigenous women, and survivors of gender-based violence). This resulted primarily in tangible access and participation, and to some extent in protection. Inclusion remained uneven across institutions and contexts, pointing to the need for resourced and more systematic approaches.

### Towards Impact

The evaluation found that the project has contributed to emerging impact across ASEAN, particularly in shifting perceptions and attitudes toward women's roles in peace and security. Through coordinated capacity-building, policy engagement, and advocacy, it fostered greater recognition of women as active peacebuilders and leaders, helping to normalize their participation in areas traditionally dominated by men. Women gained visibility and practical opportunities to apply WPS principles in conflict prevention, mediation, and community resilience efforts, leading to localized examples of empowerment and social norm change. Institutional capacities were strengthened, and policies increasingly reflected gender-responsive approaches. However, while attitudinal and institutional shifts are evident, the translation of these advances into sustained, community-level impact remains limited, requiring continued localization, resource investment, and systematic implementation of WPS frameworks to consolidate progress and achieve lasting change.

### Efficiency

The evaluation found the project to be efficiently managed, supported by a well-structured governance arrangement that included a joint steering committee with ASEAN, a dedicated team co-located in Jakarta, and regular dialogue with funding partners. This setup facilitated timely decision-making, strong coordination, and shared ownership. Despite relatively tight resources, the project team maximized efficiency through lean staffing, smart sequencing, and optimized delivery mechanisms, while some implementing partners managed to overcome administrative and budgetary constraints. The use of a standardized results

framework and dedicated monitoring personnel at both regional and country levels ensured consistent progress tracking and high-quality donor reporting. However, impact level data collection was not originally planned and data gaps from Member States – linked to limited national monitoring capacities – constrained the project’s ability to capture and analyse impact-level results.

### Sustainability

The project’s results and policy frameworks suggest a promising likelihood of sustainability, supported by strong political commitment from ASEAN and its Member and Observer States. The project deepened the strategic partnership between UN Women and ASEAN, enhancing both institutions’ leadership and visibility in advancing the WPS agenda and strengthening regional and national capacities to implement related commitments. However, the degree of institutionalization varies across contexts, and long-term sustainability will depend on embedding dedicated funding mechanisms, maintaining civil society engagement, and safeguarding progress amid political changes. Continued UN Women involvement is considered essential to sustain coordination, policy development, and the translation of institutional capacities into tangible and measurable outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

### Conclusion 1

The WPS ASEAN project successfully **elevated the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda** as a regional political and institutional priority within ASEAN, embedding it in the organization’s frameworks and enhancing UN Women’s convening role. However, participation among Member States remains uneven, requiring deeper national engagement, tailored technical support, and stronger regional-to-national feedback mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation.

### Conclusion 2

The project effectively **strengthened vertical alignment** between regional WPS policy commitments and national implementation through coordination structures, knowledge platforms, and training. Nonetheless, feedback loops between national and regional levels remain weak, and greater institutional mechanisms are needed to ensure bottom-up learning informs ASEAN-wide policy updates and actions.

### Conclusion 3

The project achieved **significant policy progress**, positioning ASEAN as a global leader in regional WPS policymaking. However, there is a growing risk of over-norming, as attention to developing frameworks and action plans may divert focus and resources from implementation, monitoring, and achieving tangible results for women at the local level.

### Conclusion 4

The project’s **capacity development efforts were transformational**, enhancing knowledge, confidence, and institutional culture toward gender-responsive peacebuilding. Sustaining these gains requires continued mentoring, follow-up training, and institutional integration of WPS modules to translate learning into consistent practice across ASEAN institutions.

### Conclusion 5

The project created a **solid foundation for sustainability**, strengthening institutional mechanisms, partnerships, and ownership within ASEAN. However, sustained results depend on continued investment, financial independence, and a second project phase to consolidate gains and ensure autonomous WPS implementation.

### Conclusion 6

The **co-location of the UN Women ASEAN team in Jakarta was instrumental** in the project’s success, fostering daily collaboration, rapid coordination, and policy coherence with ASEAN. Institutionalizing and potentially expanding this proximity model in future phases will be key to maintaining agility, trust, and high-level engagement across regional and national levels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that the WPS ASEAN project was jointly implemented by UN Women and ASEAN, the evaluation recommendations apply to both entities. With strengthened ownership by ASEAN and its Member States, these recommendations can be particularly valuable for their future implementation and sustainability efforts.

### Recommendation 1:

#### Develop a structured, ASEAN-led transition plan

ASEAN and UN Women should jointly design and implement a phased transition plan that strengthens ASEAN's institutional capacity to manage the WPS agenda autonomously, including clarifying roles of Sectoral Bodies, expanding staffing, revising terms of reference (TORs), coordinating communication procedures, and establishing a multi-source financing framework. The plan should include time-bound milestones, risk mitigation measures, strengthened links with the UN system, readiness support for Member States, and mechanisms to activate crisis-response and mediation capacities, ensuring that ASEAN can sustainably lead policy development, coordination, monitoring, and knowledge services beyond the current project cycle.

### Recommendation 2:

#### Expand national engagement and deepen involvement of Member States

ASEAN and UN Women should strengthen participation across all Member States by providing tailored technical and financial support to countries without WPS policies or with limited implementation capacity, engaging new stakeholder groups, facilitating South-South peer learning, and maintaining high-level political advocacy to reinforce national prioritization of WPS. A regular ASEAN-Member State reporting mechanism should be explored to incentivize accountability, address resource gaps, and ensure that regional commitments translate into concrete national action.

### Recommendation 3:

#### Strengthen vertical coherence between regional policy and national/subnational implementation

ASEAN should reinforce feedback loops between regional and national levels by building mechanisms for Member States to report on implementation, conducting joint monitoring missions, supporting monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems, aligning ASEAN and national planning calendars, and enhancing digital knowledge exchange through sustainable management of the Knowledge Hub. ASEAN and UN Women

should also continue exploring how rostered mediators and practitioners can support crisis-response functions, ensuring that regional commitments are grounded in field-level realities.

### Recommendation 4:

#### Consolidate capacity development and institutionalize learning systems

ASEAN and Member States should institutionalize WPS training by embedding modules into civil service and sectoral training curricula, establishing alumni networks, fostering mentorship arrangements pairing senior practitioners with emerging leaders, and conducting follow-up assessments to track the application of skills. These measures will transform one-off training into sustained institutional learning that supports long-term implementation.

### Recommendation 5:

#### Safeguard policy momentum and ensure practical implementation

ASEAN and the Members States should balance policy development with practice by ensuring each new WPS policy includes a costed implementation roadmap; piloting demonstration projects to operationalize regional frameworks; using indicators that track behavioural and institutional change rather than policy adoption alone; and conducting regular policy-to-practice reviews to monitor progress and address implementation gaps.

### Recommendation 6:

#### Maintain and institutionalize UN Women's co-location with ASEAN

UN Women's continued co-location at the ASEAN Secretariat should be sustained to preserve rapid coordination, policy coherence, and trust, supported by clear liaison TORs, strengthened internal coordination across UN Women offices, dedicated resources for presence and mobility, and documentation of lessons learned to inform broader replication of this successful embedded partnership model.

### Recommendation 7:

#### Manage localization to preserve coherence and strengthen implementation

ASEAN should guide and harmonize the development of localized and sectoral WPS plans by issuing alignment guidance, streamlining reporting into national systems, defining measurable implementation milestones, and supporting whole-of-government coordination structures that prevent fragmentation and ensure localized action contributes coherently to national and regional WPS commitments.



# 1

## INTRODUCTION

Influenced by global frameworks, even before the formal adoption of the Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (RPA WPS), ASEAN and its Member States laid important groundwork for the agenda through broader commitments to gender equality, human rights, and women's participation in peacebuilding.

Building on these foundations, ASEAN later institutionalized its approach through the RPA WPS, taking the leading regional role in strengthening women's meaningful participation, protection in conflict and crisis situations, and the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) across the region. On the United Nations' side, under the [ASEAN-United Nations Plan of Action \(2021–2025\)](#), UN Women is mandated to lead on the WPS agenda in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies, leveraging its coordination mandate to ensure the United Nations system delivers on gender equality and on the empowerment of women and girls. The regional project “Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace – Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN” (WPS ASEAN project) builds on the long-standing partnership between UN Women and ASEAN and responds to the recommendations of the ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security (2021). The project is funded by the Government of Canada, the Government of the Republic of Korea, and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office).

The project was launched on 24 February 2021, following an inception phase from 1 January to 1 October 2021, and implementation from 1 October 2021 to 30 November 2025. It is hosted by the UN Women Indonesia Country Office, which also holds the ASEAN liaison function.

The project aims to advance the WPS agenda in the region by consolidating the regional WPS framework, creating an enabling environment for implementing and strengthening the capacities of the different ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and entities of ASEAN Member States. To achieve this aim, the project engages with ASEAN and other stakeholders at the regional level, as well as national counterparts in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam. The project has four immediate outcomes.

#### Immediate Outcome 1

ASEAN Secretariat, Sectoral Bodies and institutions have increased access to gender and WPS expertise to develop regional policies on WPS and related frameworks.

#### Immediate Outcome 2

ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and institutions and non-state actors have strengthened capacity to implement the WPS agenda.

#### Immediate Outcome 3

A regional platform for cooperation and advocacy among ASEAN Member States, Observer States, Sectoral Bodies, and institutions as well as civil society and women's organizations is strengthened to promote good practices and evidence on WPS.

#### Immediate Outcome 4

ASEAN Member States, Observer States and non-state actors have increased knowledge and capacity to develop, implement and monitor WPS policy frameworks and test and upscale innovative approaches to implementing WPS agenda and conflict prevention at the national level.

At the ASEAN regional level, the efforts were focused on development and implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (RPA WPS) and building the capacities of ASEAN bodies and civil society organizations (CSOs) for implementation, conducting relevant research and providing data to drive actions. At the country level the support focused on building the capacities of national stakeholders (governments, CSOs, academia, media and others) for the development and implementation of national action plans (NAPs) on WPS. This included strengthening CSOs and disadvantaged groups to engage with governments and pursue accountability for the implementation of the WPS agenda. In the later phase, the project focused on the establishment of communities of practice to pursue implementation of the agenda at both regional and country levels.

# 2

## EVALUATION OVERVIEW

## Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the evaluation is to support strategic decision-making, foster learning, and enhance accountability for the results achieved so far. Specifically, it focuses on assessing the project results and examining its contributions to impact, sustainability, and capacity development. The evaluation also gathered lessons learned from implementation.

The **key objectives** of the evaluation follow.

- Assess the relevance and coherence of the project with respect to internal and external WPS initiatives related to ASEAN.
- Assess the effectiveness and organizational efficiency of the project in achieving expected results, including the extent to which the project has helped to build ownership, combining both technical and political engagement of the key stakeholders within ASEAN.
- Assess the sustainability of project results and the integration of human rights and gender equality.
- Collect stories of change from beneficiaries (both women and men), key government partners, and stakeholders, and identify and validate important lessons learned, best practices, innovative approaches, and strategies for replication, thereby providing actionable recommendations.

The primary users of the evaluation – ASEAN and UN Women – will employ the findings to strategize further advancement of the WPS agenda in the region and integration of gender into other sectoral priorities of ASEAN. This evaluation can also provide critical insights for designing a second phase of the regional project to support the implementation of the ASEAN RPA WPS.

Secondary users, including UN Women and ASEAN partners, will use the findings to identify effective approaches to advancing the WPS agenda. Donors may use the findings for accountability and to inform future decision-making and support.

## Scope

The evaluation focuses primarily on the 2021–2025 implementation period of the project, to identify lessons learned and actionable recommendations for future programming. It focuses on both regional-level efforts and the project's work in the involved ASEAN Member States and Observer States. The field data collection was organized in Indonesia, the Philippines, Viet Nam, Thailand and Timor-Leste. Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic were covered through selected online interviews, while information on Malaysia was pulled from the review of documents and interviews with UN Women.

## Evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions follow the objectives of the evaluation and OECD/DAC criteria and are presented below (Table 1). The evaluation approach also ensures human rights and gender equality perspectives are integrated in the approach.

**Table 1: Evaluation criteria and key questions**

Criteria	Key Question
<b>Relevance</b>	Q1. To what extent has the project been aligned with regional and national priorities and to international normative frameworks on WPS?
<b>Coherence</b>	Q2. To what extent has the project facilitated internal and external synergies and strengthened partnerships with other UN Women and ASEAN initiatives in the region?
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Q3. To what extent, and how, were the expected results achieved?
<b>Human rights and gender equality</b>	Q4. To what extent has the project supported achievement of long-term benefits for women and girls? To what extent has the project addressed the needs of the most marginalized groups and integrated human rights and a gender-responsive approach?
<b>Contribution towards impact</b>	Q5. To what extent has the project supported achievement of long-term benefits for women and girls?
<b>Efficiency</b>	Q6. To what extent were the resources allocated and implementation mechanisms set appropriate to support effective implementation?
<b>Sustainability</b>	Q7. To what extent has the project built political commitment to the WPS agenda and promoted ownership over the results and how likely are the results sustainable over the long term?

## 2.1 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\) Norms and Standards, Ethical Code of Conduct, UN Women Evaluation Policy and guidelines, UNEG Guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluations, and UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#). The evaluation used non-experimental, theory-based, and gender-responsive approaches as well as mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analytical approaches) to account for the complexity of gender relations in the project countries and to ensure culturally appropriate, participatory and inclusive processes.

The evaluation adhered to gender and human rights principles with questions focused on gender equality and the women's empowerment agenda integrated across the evaluation framework. While reflections on human rights and gender equality are mainstreamed throughout the report, a special section provides further insight and a summary of findings on how these perspectives were integrated in the project design and implementation. The evaluation reached women's CSOs and participants in the

field across the countries to obtain their perspectives on the relevance and transformative effects of the project. Gender-disaggregated data were analysed and presented.

### Data collection

Data were collected by the Evaluation Lead at the regional level and in coordination with ASEAN, UN Women ASEAN Liaison Office in Indonesia and ROAP. At the national level data were collected in-person in Indonesia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Thailand and Viet Nam, with a focus on the work of UN Women Country Offices, their government and non-governmental partners, and end beneficiaries in the field. One national consultant was engaged in each of the countries and conducted field data collection missions. Interviews in other countries (Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia) directly or indirectly affected by the project, as well as interviews with stakeholders not available during the missions, were conducted remotely and/or through documentation review.

In total, the evaluation reached 228 individuals (47 male, 181 female) through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs), and more than 100 individuals through online surveys.

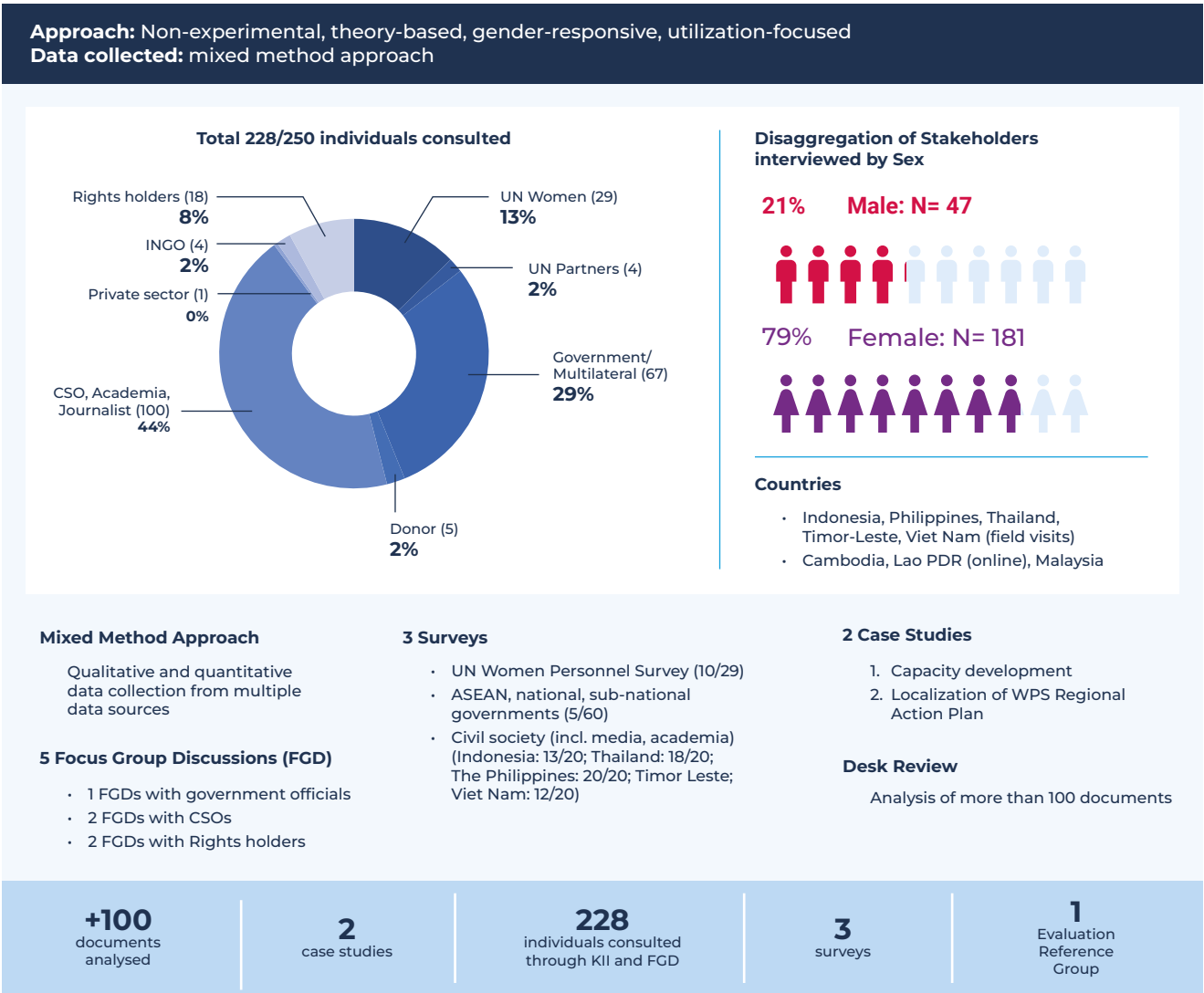
Data were collected through desk review of project documentation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and two surveys. Primary data collection was mostly qualitative, with some quantitative data from the interviews and surveys. More in-depth focus was given to capacity development and localization issues.

The choice of participatory methods was carefully considered based on the context, and ethical and security guidelines were followed. Secondary data were collected through review of project documents, data from the results management system and results matrix, and documentation collected from different stakeholders along with the evaluation.

Data Analysis

Evidence collected through multiple lines of inquiry was grouped according to the evaluation criteria and questions. An evidence map was used by all members of the Evaluation Team to standardize the approach and map information obtained from different sources regarding the same areas of inquiry, including both primary and secondary sources of information. Gender equality, human rights and LNOB perspectives will be integrated in the overall analysis, with an additional dedicated section on page 47.

Figure 1: UN Women ASEAN WPS evaluation overview of data collected



Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team

## Ethical considerations

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the [UN Women Evaluation Policy](#), [UNEG Ethical Guidelines](#) and [Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System](#). UN Women has developed a UN Women Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form for evaluators that must be signed as part of the contracting process and is based on UNEG Ethical Guidelines.

The evaluation was based on participatory and human rights principles, as defined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy and adhered to the United Nations norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations System. Involvement of stakeholders should not interfere with the impartiality of the evaluation. The evaluators have the final judgment on the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation report, and the evaluators must be protected from pressures to change information in the report.

Before collecting any data, an explanation of the purpose and the intention of the Evaluation Team was given, and explicit oral consent was sought. Focus group meetings and interview facilitators set a tone of informality, openness and rapport. Group interviews or focus groups were conducted to share the value of the WPS ASEAN project through personal validation and encouragement and to explore new ideas for the future. Information in the report is presented in an aggregate form without using either names or personal data anywhere in the report.

The personal data given to the Evaluation Team will remain the property of the person who provided it. While in safekeeping, all data will be held in accordance with the [UN Personal Data Protection and Privacy Principles](#) on secure password protected servers and computers that are only accessible to the Evaluation Team. Evaluation participants were informed that they could request the removal of their personal data at any time.

All data collected through this evaluation is subject to the UN Women Information Security Policy that sets out the basis for UN Women in protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of its data and to protect it against unauthorized usage, access,

modification, destruction, disclosure, loss or transfer, whether accidental or intentional. All UN Women staff, and other authorized individuals or entities, are responsible for maintaining appropriate control over information in their care and for bringing any potential threats to the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of that information to the attention of the appropriate management. Compliance with this policy is a condition of employment for all UN Women staff and a condition of contract for all other authorized individuals or entities, unless a prior (temporary) waiver is obtained. Failure to comply with this policy without obtaining a prior waiver shall be dealt with in accordance with Staff Regulations and Rules, or as appropriate, the contractual terms of UN Women's engagement of the authorized individual or entity.

## Evaluation constraints and limitations

The evaluation faced challenges affecting data collection, including parallel evaluation (Indonesia) and reviews (regional), that caused some stakeholder fatigue. Due to this fatigue, the Evaluation Team closely coordinated with other processes and collected part of the data jointly. Accessibility to women, girls and vulnerable groups was easier in Thailand and Timor-Leste, while in other countries their perspectives were collected through interviews with CSOs.

The risk of positive bias in interviews and focus groups was addressed through triangulation of different data sources (Table 2). Low survey response was offset by interviews, focus groups and document review, although it may have affected the scope of learning about how capacities were translated into implementation for a wider number of project stakeholders. In Viet Nam, recent state organizational restructuring led to personnel shifts that limited direct input from government ministries. Personnel changes at UN Women, and safety risks, did not significantly disrupt the process since stakeholders remained responsive and security procedures were fully respected. An in-depth look was not planned for Cambodia, Lao PDR and Malaysia and the Evaluation Team collected the data through a small number of targeted interviews and documentation review (Figure 1).

**Table 2: Risks and mitigation strategies**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Materialized</b>	<b>Mitigated</b>
<b>Evaluation, fatigue and other competing priorities</b>	<b>Partly</b>	Coordination with other evaluation/review efforts. Clear communication of evaluation, purpose and questions in advance (if necessary). Close cooperation with UN Women Country Offices. Low response to the surveys remained a challenge and relevant information collected through interviews, FGDs and desk review.
<b>Personnel change and institutional memory</b>	<b>No</b>	During the project, some stakeholders left their organizations or were about to leave. Regardless, they responded to calls for interviews.
<b>Limited accessibility to rights-holders (women and girls and vulnerable groups)</b>	<b>Partly</b>	Perspectives of rights-holders captured in all countries, either through their respective CSOs or directly through focus groups (particularly in Thailand, Timor-Leste).
<b>Safety considerations</b>	<b>No</b>	Evaluation coordinated with UN Women Country Offices and followed safety and security procedures. No field visits were cancelled due to security concerns.
<b>Positive bias</b>	<b>Partly</b>	Present in some interviews, mostly in the case of national government stakeholders. Addressed by deepening questions and probes, triangulation with the statements of other stakeholders and documentation review.

*Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team*

# 3

## EVALUATION CONTEXT

### 3.1 ASEAN AND WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

According to the [Global Peace Index 2024 Report](#), Asia and the Pacific remains the second most peaceful region globally, with a slight decline on the index chart in 2024. Despite overall regional progress, pockets of fragility and localized tensions persist, driven by factors such as political instability, violent extremism, and natural disasters that exacerbate humanitarian challenges and affect women's safety and security. Across parts of the region, protracted crises and recurring tensions continue to influence the security environment, with women and girls often disproportionately affected. In several contexts, women face restricted mobility, exposure to violence, and limited access to livelihoods, underscoring the importance of gender-responsive conflict prevention and peacebuilding measures.

Prior to 2017, the WPS agenda was often perceived as being primarily relevant to armed conflicts or conflict-affected contexts, and therefore not directly applicable to the ASEAN region. Support for the WPS agenda has grown gradually and both ASEAN and its Members States recognize the relevance of strong engagement to address traditional and emerging security challenges, such as climate change, natural disasters, three pandemics and violent extremism.

Some ASEAN Member States have for a long time been engaged with the WPS agenda as individual Member States of the United Nations. For example, UNSCR 1325 was adopted during Malaysia's tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Viet Nam took over leadership in 2009 in securing UNSCR 1889 calling for gender mainstreaming in all post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery processes and for participation and inclusion of women in peacebuilding and planning in the aftermath of conflict. Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand spoke in favour of UNSCR 2242 (2015) which reiterates the call to integrate WPS concerns and improve the implementation of the WPS agenda.

Indonesia championed the proposal for UNSCR 2538 (2020), the first resolution on women and peacekeeping.

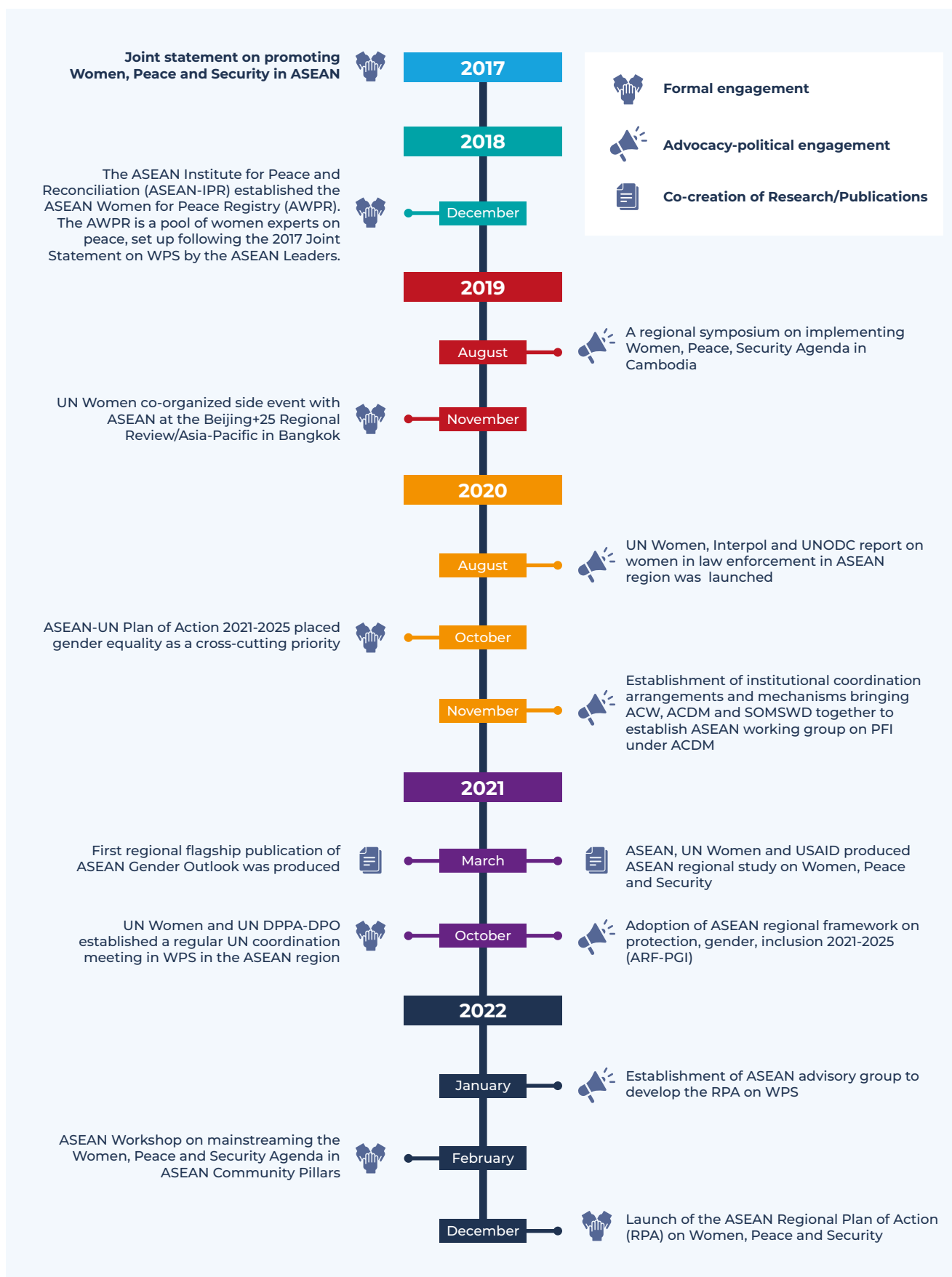
The Philippines adopted their first National Action Plan on WPS in 2010; Indonesia in 2014; Timor-Leste (Observer State) in 2016. National policies in other Members States have supported various pillars of the WPS agenda, such as the Measures and Guidelines on Women and the Promotion of Peace and Security in Thailand (2016), the Action Plan for Mainstreaming Gender in the General Commissariat of National Police (2019) in Cambodia and the Law on Participating in United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Operations of Viet Nam (2021). The WPS agenda was also addressed in national gender equality action plans across the region.

Strong momentum to advance WPS has been created at the regional level of ASEAN as well, following an already well-developed framework for protection from violence against women (VAW) and trafficking in human beings.<sup>1</sup> The WPS Agenda, consisting of UNSCR 1325 in October 2000 and nine subsequent resolutions on WPS (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467 and 2493), was recognized by ASEAN through the adoption of the [Joint Statement on Promoting WPS](#) (2017), and more recent developments including the [ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security](#) (2021), [ASEAN Regional Action Plan on WPS](#) (2022) and the [Localisation Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS](#) (2023) – with the last three supported by UN Women.

ASEAN acknowledges the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and the critical role women play in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping, as outlined in key United Nations Security Council resolutions and aims to advance gender equality, integrate gender perspectives in peace processes, protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict and build women's capacity as peacekeepers and peacebuilders. The Regional Plan comprehensively outlines actions across four pillars (prevention, protection, participation and relief and recovery), while the Toolkit provides guidance for promotion of national leadership, ownership and commitment to implementation of the agenda and enhancement of civil society capacities to hold national institutions and regional organizations, including the United Nations, accountable.

1 ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (2012), ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2015), ASEAN Manila Declaration to Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2017), ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Eliminating Violence Against Women, ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Eliminating Violence Against Children (2016-2025), ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals (2017), ASEAN Declaration against Trafficking in Persons Particularly Women and Children (2004) and others.

**Figure 2: Advancing WPS in ASEAN Timeline**



Source: UN Women Indonesia Country Portfolio Evaluation (2023)

The Regional Study (2021) notes WPS localization efforts are underway but scaling them up is necessary. While women's involvement in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding is emerging, significant gaps persist in leadership and governance within the security sector. A gender perspective is beginning to inform responses to violent extremism and non-traditional security threats, but protections against SGBV in conflict and crisis contexts remain inadequate. The study called for strong ASEAN leadership and a regional framework to institutionalize gender analysis, coordinate actions, and scale up initiatives across the region.

ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (IPR) and UN Women's report [Advancing gender-responsive conflict and crisis prevention in ASEAN](#) (2025) found that while a conducive policy environment is in place to promote greater participation of women in conflict/crisis prevention, there are gaps between policies and their implementation and a need for coordination mechanisms, capacity-building and additional financial and human resources. The report also identified some promising good practices such as women's leadership in preventing and countering violent extremism in Indonesia, women's participation in early warning community initiatives to enhance protection of women and marginalized groups in the southern Philippines and multi-stakeholder mechanisms that provide a critical space for women-led subnational conflict resolution in the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand. The report calls for more robust regional and national coordination, local and national data and evidence, stronger policy implementation, improvement of the allocation of financial resources and strengthening human capacities. The report also recommends the establishment of a regional conflict and crisis prevention mechanism, expansion of the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry, better coordination among national agencies under a common WPS framework and women's participation in such bodies.



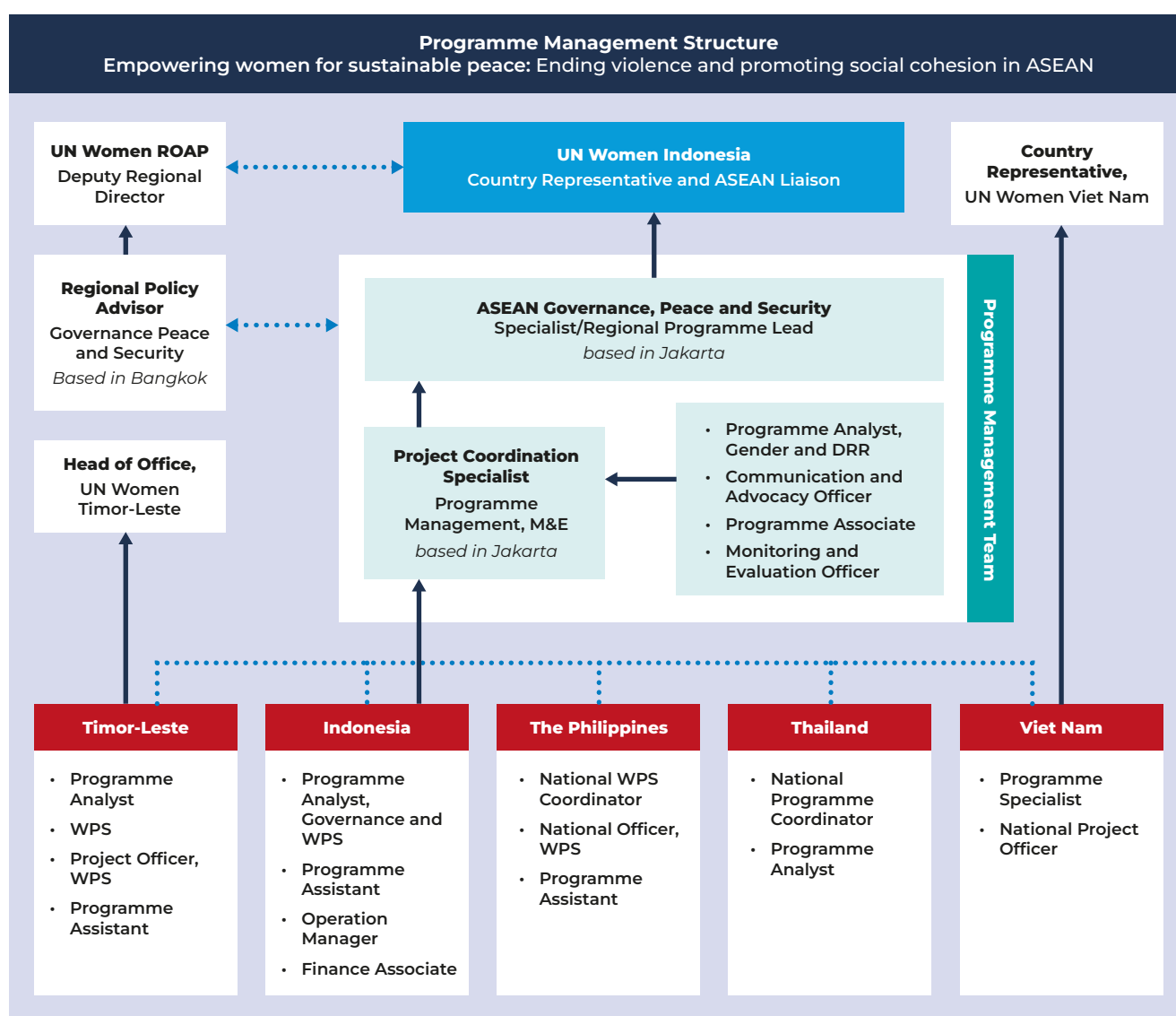
# 4

**PORTFOLIO  
OVERVIEW**

The WPS ASEAN project is managed by the UN Women Indonesia Country Office (CO), which also fulfils the ASEAN Liaison function and UN Women country personnel in the country offices. Indonesia CO further coordinates with the WPS team at the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) in Bangkok and the Project Steering Committee that provides strategic guidance and ensures effective collaboration among stakeholders. The Steering Committee includes the following: the Chair of

the ASEAN Committee on Women; the Chair of the ASEAN Commission on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women and Children; the Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management; the Senior Representative from ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation; ASEAN Secretariat; the Representative from Global Affairs Canada; the Representative from the United Kingdom; the Representative from UN Women; and the Representative from UN DPPA-DPO.

**Figure 3: Project management structure**



Source: Indonesia Country Office – Project Team

PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

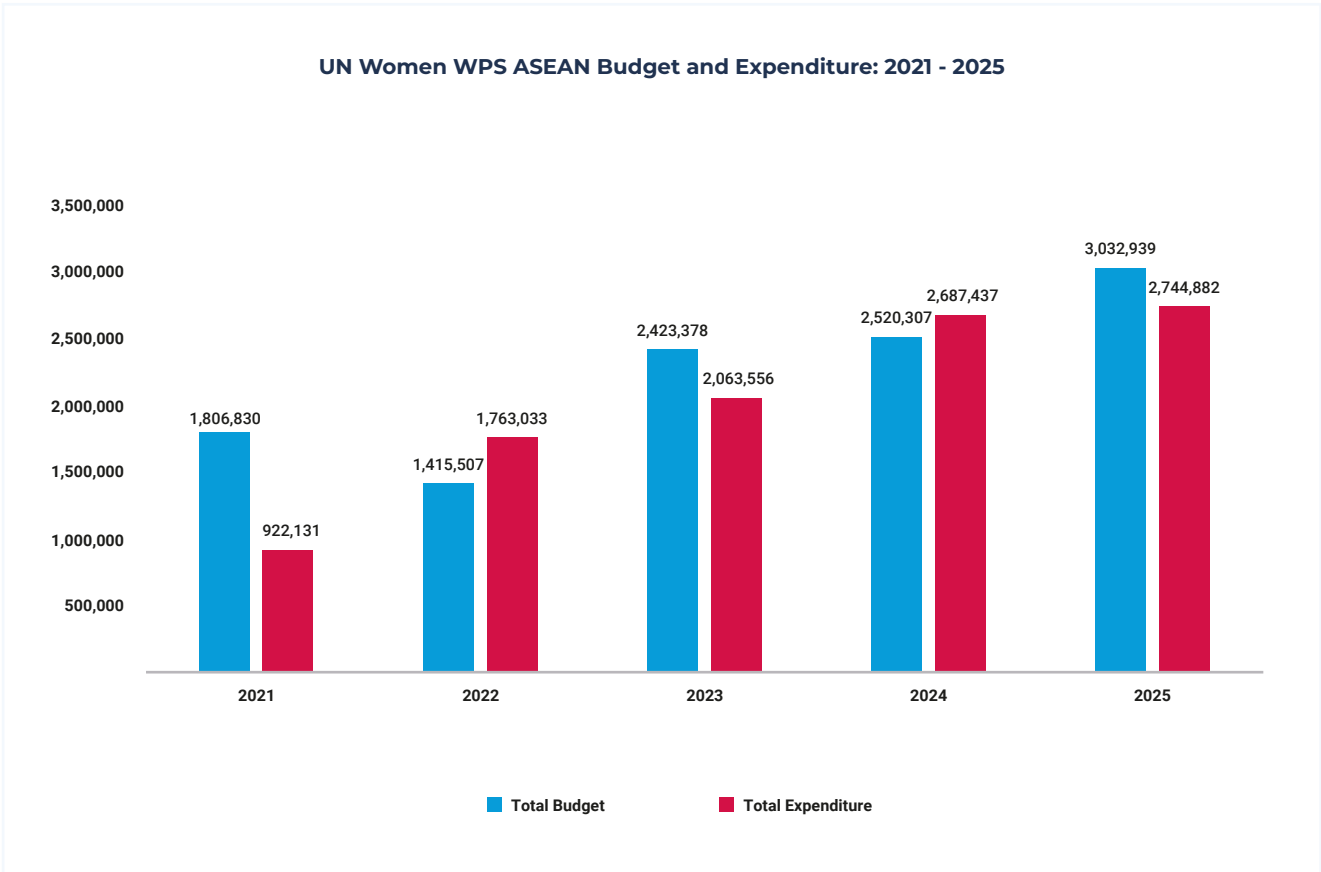
Financial portfolio

The total donor contributions to the project were USD 10,210,669, with funding by the Government of Canada giving approximately USD 5,786,240;<sup>2</sup> the Government of the Republic of Korea contributing USD 795,421; and the Government of the United Kingdom (UK Mission to ASEAN

and British Embassy to Viet Nam) donating approximately USD 3,629,008.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, the annual budgets and expenditures were lower in the initial years, due to the inception and planning stage and continuously increased in line with the intensity of implementation since 2022 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Annual budget and expenditures in USD



Source: Quantum, 4 September 2025, provided by Project Team

2 CAD 8.484.600,00  
3 GBP 3.194.784,00

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Regional Plan of Action development and implementation, and stakeholder engagement, has been fostered and strengthened in collaboration with Asia Foundation and ASEAN-USAID [Partnership for Regional Optimization with the Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Communities \(PROSPECT\)](#). In the work with non-state actors, the key collaboration has been with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and the Philippine Centre for Islam and Democracy (PCID).

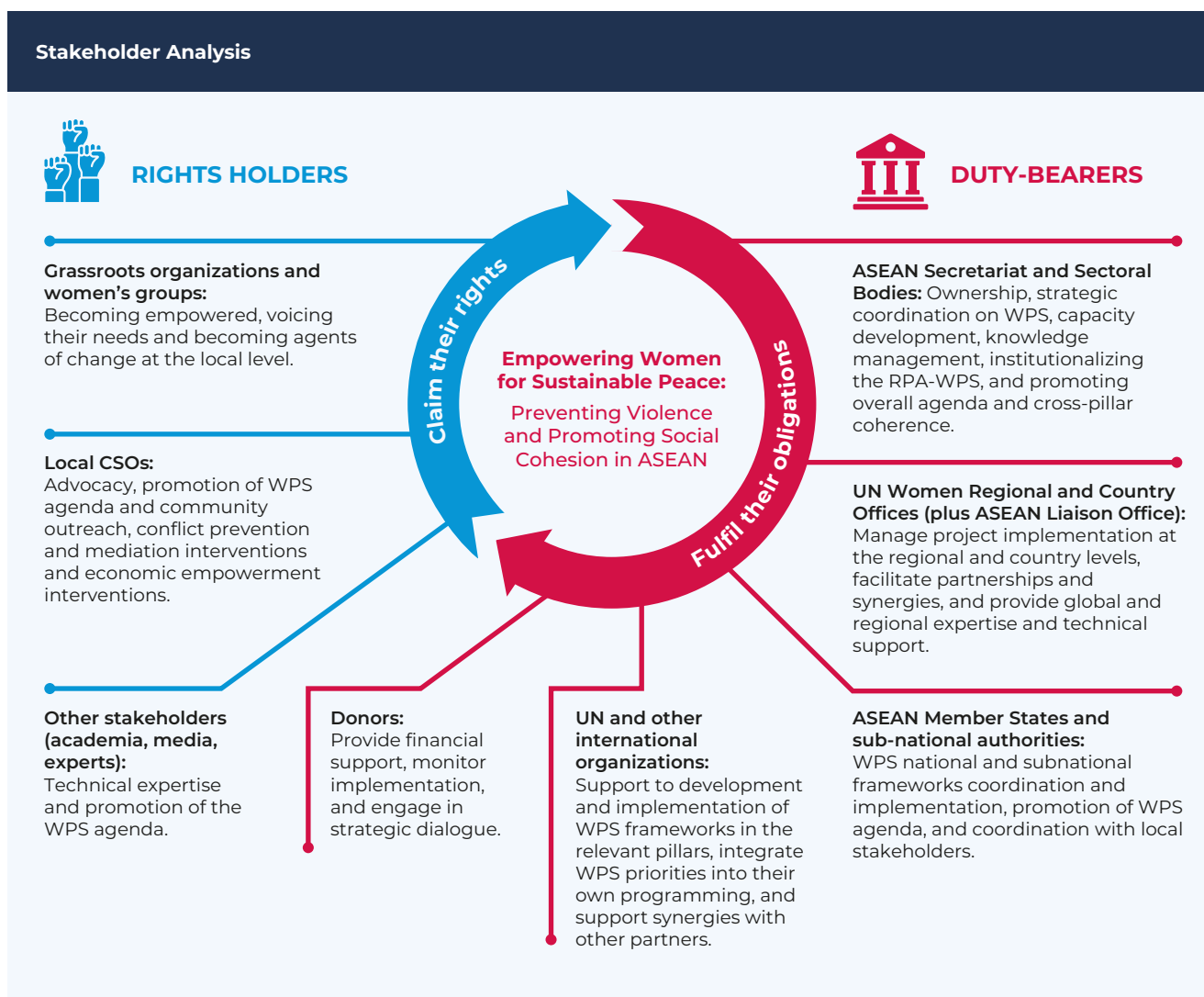
As a part of its United Nations coordination mandate, UN Women has facilitated engagement of the regional United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPPA) and Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

**At the national level**, partnerships with key government counterparts in advancing the localization of the Regional Plan of Action were fostered including:

- **Cambodia:** Ministry of Women's Affairs
- **Indonesia:** Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection; Coordinating Ministry of Human Development and Cultural Affairs
- **Malaysia:** Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
- **Philippines:** Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity; Philippine Commission on Women, Bangsamoro Women Commission (subnational)
- **Thailand:** Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security; Coordination Centre for Children and Women (CCCW) in Southern Border Provinces under the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC)
- **Timor-Leste:** National Parliament; Ministry of the Interior; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Defence; Secretary of State for Equality; National Police of Timor-Leste and FALINTIL-Defence Force of Timor-Leste (F-FDTL); Civil Protection Authority; Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons
- **Viet Nam:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Public Security; Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (now part of the Ministry of Home Affairs – the Department for Gender Equality and Youth Affairs)
- **Lao People's Democratic Republic:** Lao Women's Union.

**Rights holders** were involved through voicing their needs during the development of national actions plans on women, peace and security (WPS NAPs) and through capacity development initiatives and local empowerment actions, either directly or through their CSOs. Efforts with civil society and grassroots groups were more prominent in the Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste. Rights holder groups also included vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous and ethnic minority women, women living in conflict areas, LGBTQI+ persons and survivors of violence (Figure 5).

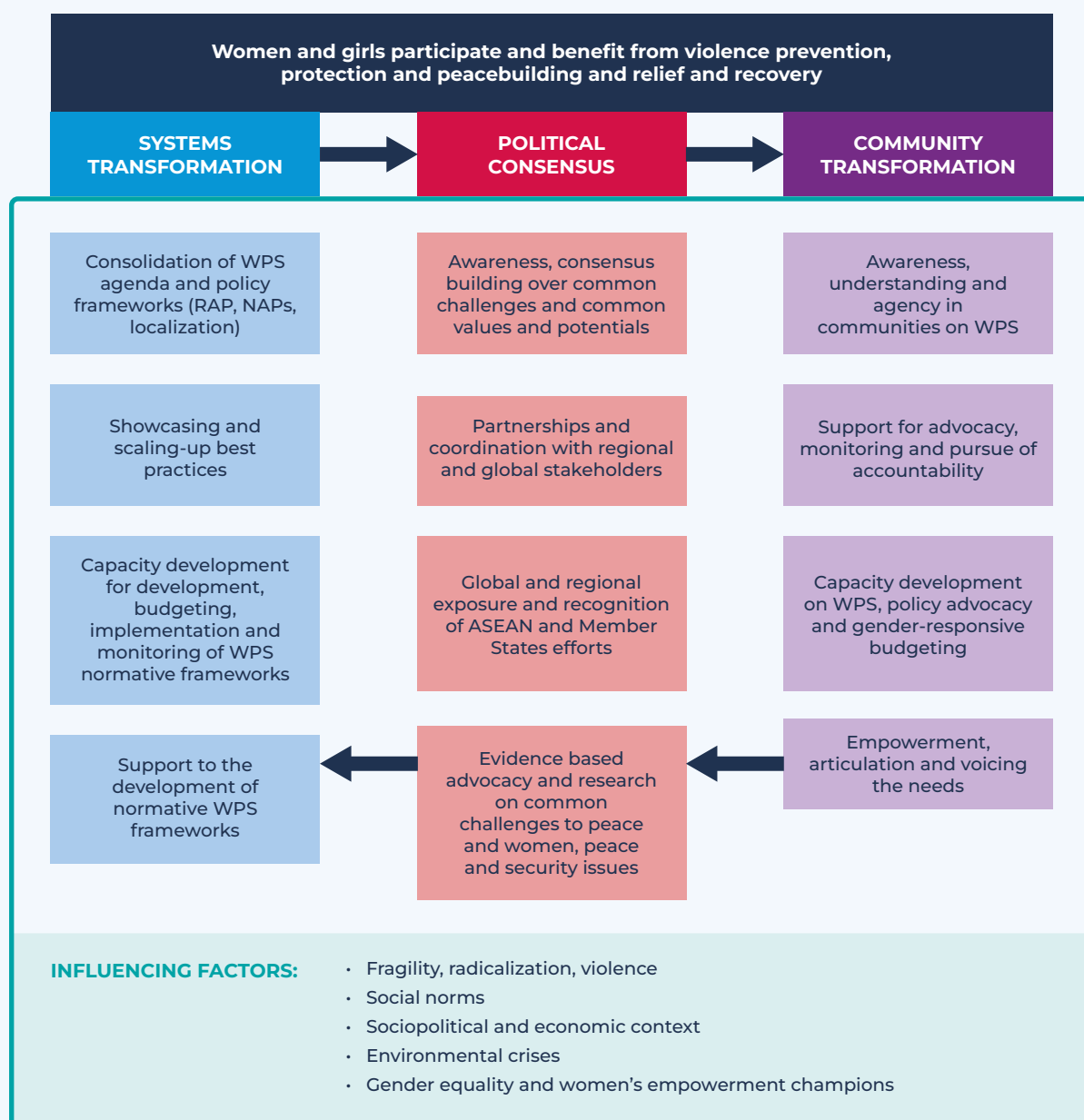
**Figure 5: Human rights-based analysis: Stakeholder mapping**



*Source: Developed by the Evaluation Team*

During the inception phase, the Evaluation Team organized a workshop to further expand on the theory of change outlined in the project design and to better understand how the project was influenced and interacted with the context (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Reconstructed theory of change**



**ASSUMPTIONS:**

- WPS commitments at different levels are adopted, costed, budgeted by duty bearers.
- Duty bearers pursue implementation of adopted commitments.
- Consensus and ownership over the WPS agenda is sustained and strengthened.
- Empowered rightsholders voice their needs, monitor and hold duty bearers accountable for implementation.
- Empowered rightsholders support implementation at the grassroots level.

**SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES:**

- Building on best local and international practices
- Gender responsive budgeting
- Data and statistics
- Economic empowerment initiatives
- Political participation and governance initiatives
- Ending violence against women initiatives
- Disaster risk reduction and humanitarian interventions

Source: Prepared by the Evaluation Team and UN Women personnel



# 5

## FINDINGS

## RELEVANCE



### TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT BEEN ALIGNED WITH REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND INTERNATIONAL NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS ON WPS?

#### FINDING 1:

The project is highly relevant across the asean regional level and at country level, aligning with regional and national priorities, commitments on gender equality and wps and earlier developed national frameworks, plans and sector strategies. While entry points vary, with stronger uptake in the philippines, thailand and timor-leste, the overall fit with regional and national priorities is strong.

The project stems from earlier UN Women engagement with individual Member States on the WPS agenda and was based on the learnings of the [ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security](#), also supported by UN Women. While the project design was based on evidence and lessons learned, it was not initially co-created with ASEAN. Therefore, a six-month inception phase took place in 2021 to further tailor the approach and pass the approval of Member States. The project was adjusted to the capacity needs of the ASEAN Secretariat and preparations for the development of the Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (RPA WPS) as well as the needs of participating countries.

At the regional level, the project focuses on strengthening institutional capacity and coordination on the WPS agenda by enhancing access to gender and WPS expertise within the ASEAN Secretariat and Sectoral Bodies, thus improving implementation capacity among both state and non-state actors and reinforcing a regional platform for cooperation and advocacy that promotes evidence-based good practices and multi-stakeholder collaboration (Immediate Outcomes 1-3). It directly strengthens the regional policy, institutional, and coordination architecture needed to advance the WPS agenda across all three ASEAN community pillars, taking a wider perspective on WPS and linking peace, development, and social inclusion.

Under the political-security community pillar, WPS is advanced through conflict prevention, peacebuilding, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, mediation, and disaster response, with a strong focus on women's participation, protection, and leadership in security decision-making. Within the socio-cultural community pillar, WPS is mainstreamed through gender equality, human rights, social protection, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and the promotion of women's leadership in communities,

including during humanitarian action and recovery. Through the economic community pillar, WPS is supported by strengthening women's economic empowerment, resilience, and access to livelihoods in conflict- and crisis-affected contexts, recognizing that economic inclusion is essential for sustainable peace. By linking these three pillars, ASEAN treats WPS not only as a security issue, but as a comprehensive regional agenda.

The regional component also provided opportunity to intensify ASEAN's capacity development for designing and implementing regional WPS frameworks, evidence-based policy research, mainstreaming gender across key peace and security priorities, such as violent extremism and disaster response, and establishing regional platforms for cooperation, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. By reinforcing ASEAN-led mechanisms and Sectoral Bodies' engagement on the WPS agenda, the project ensured that, in addition to policy adoption, WPS commitments are institutionalized, coordinated, and driven from the regional level.

The project is strongly aligned with global WPS frameworks anchored in UNSCR 1325 and its four pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. By centering women's full, equal and meaningful participation across the peace and security sector, and by treating protection as a peacetime as well as conflict-context obligation, the project advances the core premise that effective policies must respond to the differentiated needs and experiences of women and men, including those from marginalized groups. The project's attention to non-traditional and emerging threats – such as pandemics, cybersecurity, climate change and human trafficking – reflects ASEAN's expansive understanding of the WPS agenda as political, economic and sociocultural, and not merely as the absence of war.

Beyond UNSCR 1325, the project's relevance extends across complementary global instruments. It resonates with the Beijing Platform for Action (recognizing women as leaders in conflict prevention and resolution), reinforces CEDAW, and particularly General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and General recommendation No. 37 on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate. Further, the project contributes to Agenda 2030 through SDGs 5 (gender equality), 10 (reduced inequalities), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

The project also supported the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 (adopted in 2015) that does not explicitly reference the WPS agenda but does support many of its principles through its political-security and socio-cultural community pillars, while ASEAN explicitly integrated WPS into its Community Vision 2045.

At the national level, the project supports ASEAN Member States, Observer States, and non-state actors in strengthening their knowledge and capacity to develop, implement, monitor, and scale up WPS policies and innovative approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding within domestic contexts (Immediate Outcome 4).

At the country level, in **Indonesia** the project was aligned with the National Action Plans on the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children in Social Conflict (2014–2019) and (2020–2025), supporting guidance for subnational rollout by the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Regulation No. 10/2022 on Technical Guidelines for Local Action Plans (RAN P3AKS). It was also aligned with the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism 2020–2024 and the priorities of the Human Rights Action Plan 2021–2025.

In the **Philippines**, actions were aligned with the National Action Plan on WPS 2017–2022 and the latest one in 2023–2033. The project ensured wide consultations and supported the development of the Bangsamoro Regional Action Plan on WPS 2023–2028, led by the Bangsamoro Women Commission. The actions aligned with the country's overarching women's rights law and anchors gender mainstreaming across institutions as outlined in the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Plan 2019–2025.

In **Timor-Leste**, the WPS project was in line with the country's efforts to gain full ASEAN membership and its peace and stability commitments on that path. The project aligns with the first and second National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325. The project also supported the development and implementation of the second Gender Strategy of the National Police 2024–2028 (officially adopted in November 2024), and the National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons 2026–2030 (officially adopted in July 2025), which guided GBV prevention and response and complements WPS protection objectives.

In **Thailand**, the project is aligned with the Gender Equality Act (2015), 20-Year National Strategy (2018–2037), Action Plan on Women Development (2023–2027), National Security Policy and Plan (2023–2027), and the 4th National Human Rights Plan (2019–2022). The project was integrated with other relevant frameworks during the implementation, as part of an evolving policy strategy developed by the National Committee on the Promotion of the Development of Women's Status to promote gender equality in conformity with international commitments.

In **Viet Nam**, the project reinforced the country's existing commitments to WPS by fitting into the country's national strategies and legal frameworks on gender equality, while strengthening work on priority areas like non-traditional security issues. It builds on Viet Nam's growing role in peace and defence efforts, including women's participation in peacekeeping, and ensures consistency with key policies such as the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021–2030, the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention, the Law on Civil Defense, and the country's efforts to develop the new NAP WPS.

In **Cambodia** (involved only since September 2024) and **Lao PDR**, the project supported foundational steps to localize the WPS agenda. In Cambodia, this aligns with a pivotal national moment as the country embarks on the preparatory phase for its first national action plan on WPS. This process involves conducting a comprehensive situation analysis on WPS to identify priority issues, building on existing frameworks such as the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (2019–2023) and the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims. This process involved conducting a comprehensive situation analysis on WPS to identify priority issues, building

on existing frameworks such as the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (2019–2023) and the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims. In Lao PDR, where there is no national action plan yet, the project served as a catalyst linking the actions to the existing policies and structures such as the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2021–2025) and the work of the Lao Women's Union.

While uptake was stronger in the countries with a longer tradition and investments in WPS – such as Indonesia, Philippines, Timor-Leste and Thailand – overall, interventions were also found highly relevant across all countries).

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## **FINDING 2:**

The project's participatory, and in some contexts adaptive, design combining policy engagement with wide coordination and bottom-up approaches in most of the contexts (including grassroots, civil society, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+, and youth organizations) with evidence-based research has strengthened contextual relevance. The project's flexible and multilevel approach enabled sustained relevance amid the COVID-19 pandemic, political transitions, and emerging security challenges.

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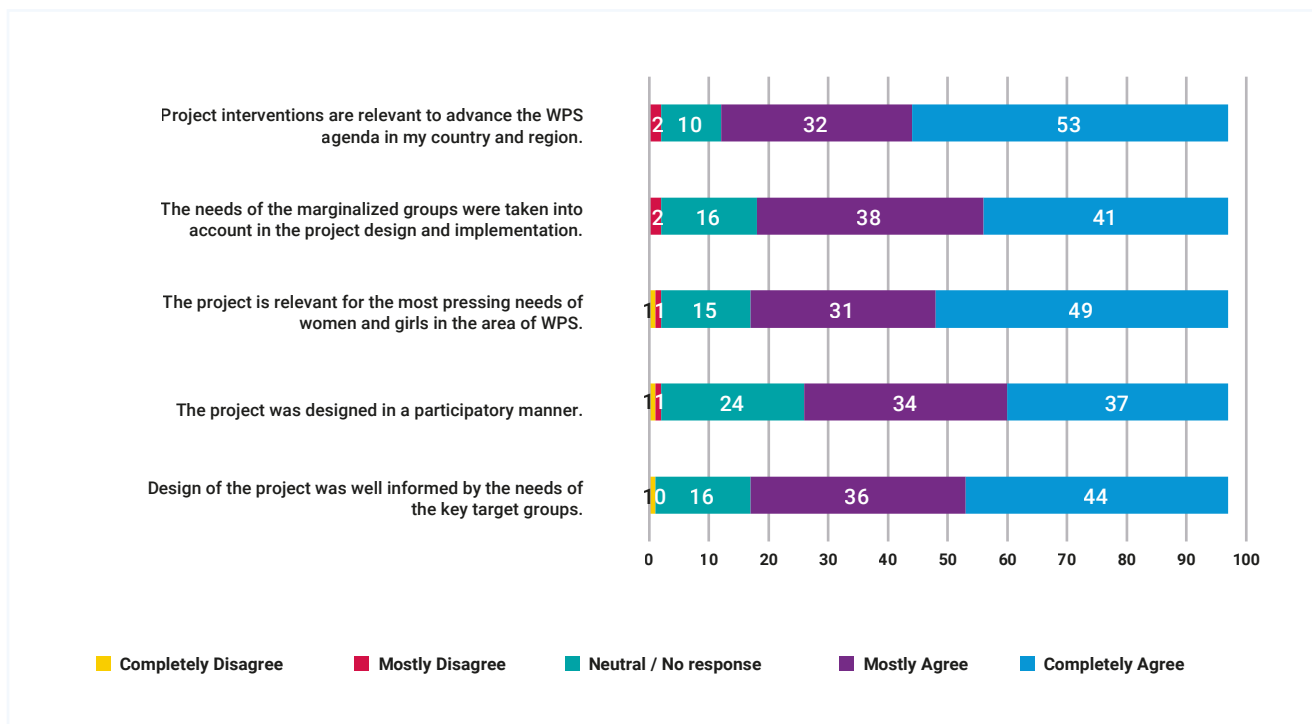
The project demonstrates strong and sustained relevance across diverse Southeast Asian contexts by translating regional commitments into concrete national and local actions that respond to evolving peace, security, and gender equality challenges. As identified by interviewed stakeholders, key strategies to ensure relevance at both regional and country levels were coordinated with national governments and included consultations engaging CSOs, women in conflict-affected areas, PWD, LGBTQI+ groups, youth, local authorities and communities. In implementation – along with support to formal government-led coordination mechanisms – direct, flexible funding and capacity support was provided to women's CSOs and mediator networks. As reported by UN Women, since 2023 around 13% of the total budget (USD 1,280,031.42) was allocated to CSOs).

For example, the development of the ASEAN RPA WPS was guided by a participatory, cross-pillar process. It was

overseen by the ASEAN Advisory Group on WPS, comprising key Sectoral Bodies on women, human rights, peace, security, counter-terrorism, and disaster management, with active input from civil society, women's organizations, youth groups, think tanks, and other partners. The process was further informed by technical consultations, regional and cross-regional lessons learned, and supported by research and gender data.

More than 80 per cent of non-UN Women respondents to the survey (ASEAN, governments, CSOs, academia etc.) completely, or mostly, agreed that the project was relevant to advancing the WPS agenda in their countries and the needs of women and marginalized groups, which is similar to UN Women's personnel responses where between 80 per cent and 90 per cent responded that way (N=10). A slightly smaller number of external stakeholders agree that the project was developed in a participatory manner.

**Figure 7: External stakeholder responses about project relevance (N=97)**



Source: Evaluation survey

At the country level, in **Indonesia** the project tackled peace and security issues where people experienced them at the intersection of conflict legacies (Aceh, Maluku, Poso) as well as communal conflict due to religious and socioeconomic tensions and sought to strengthen women's participation and leadership in peace processes and peacekeeping. The evaluation of the implementation of NAP 2019–2025 recommended expanding the context of WPS in the upcoming NAP to better integrate non-traditional and emerging security issues, such as disasters, and fast evolving risks like climate change, online harms and cyber security issues, trafficking and migration. Project design and UN Women's neutrality and convening power were assessed as highly relevant by the participating ministries, including the coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection and security stakeholders, CSOs and media.

With governments and public institutions, the project provided policy advice, capacity development and practical hands-on support for translating regional and global standards into national and local frameworks. CSO projects in Indonesia were about empowering women and marginalized communities to prevent conflict, respond to

violence against women, and lead peacebuilding efforts. They included advocacy, training, service delivery, and writing/storytelling to ensure that peace and security are not abstract policy goals but everyday realities. In Indonesia, some limits in participation were noted by the interviewees especially due to officer turnover at the governmental institutions, insufficient consultations with CSOs and limited youth participation in co-design.

In the **Philippines**, the project was also assessed by interviewers as highly relevant due to coordination nationally with key government stakeholders and reaching out to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), where peacebuilding support is most needed. By partnering with the Bangsamoro Women Commission and the Bangsamoro Ministry of Public Order and Safety, the project enabled the delivery of a women mediators programme supporting their active participation in formal and informal conflict resolution processes. BARMM women mediators link their daily work directly to the WPS pillars through engagement on participation, empowerment and protection in the application of the laws on violence against women and children, sharia provisions on marriage and inheritance, and the resolution of clan feuds, among others.

Since the fourth generation NAP WPS and third generation BARM RAP-WPS were developed at the time, project support helped re-open public space for CSOs after a period of relatively strained collaboration.

In **Thailand**, the project prioritized increasing gender and WPS expertise among policymakers, developing community-based solutions for conflict prevention and social norm change, and strengthening the capacity of key institutions such as the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, and the Coordination Centre for Children and Women in the Southern Border Provinces. It also sought to enhance the role of women CSOs as peace actors by financing their initiatives, building capacity on various topics such as gender equality, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), results-based management (RBM) and resource mobilization, and promoting participation in national and regional learning platforms to exchange best practices and share knowledge.

At the community level, the project supported setting up Women Empowerment and Learning Centres as community-based spaces for women run by local CSOs and female WPS champions. These centres supported local networking on WPS to facilitate women's engagement in policy work and helped develop practical tools, communication materials, and livelihood initiatives that linked economic recovery with peacebuilding. Special attention was given to mapping and engaging women's groups representing marginalized populations – GBV survivors, women with disabilities, women living in poverty, ethnic minority women and stateless individuals – ensuring interventions were locally grounded, evidence-based, and inclusive.

The relevance of the project has increased in the wake of border disputes that erupted in July 2025 and escalated fighting along the Thailand-Cambodia border. Although the project funds were not allocated to the response, women's groups that benefited earlier from the project – through the Women Empowerment Centre in Surin, Thailand – promptly demonstrated proactive leadership by setting up shelters and providing urgent assistance to refugees. Discussion about support to women in border areas was initiated in Cambodia as well, while at the regional level discussions on the proactive role of ASEAN in conflict prevention started.

In **Viet Nam**, stakeholders noted the project was relevant as it focused on new security concepts beyond traditional security, peacekeeping, diplomacy and military concerns, including non-traditional security issues such as climate change, cybercrime, human trafficking, food security, mental health, and job security in the context of artificial intelligence (AI) development. The project provided new knowledge and networking, improving stakeholder capacity in WPS. For the Women Entrepreneurs Council, the project was successful in improving women's capacity to protect themselves and their businesses in cyberspace.

For the National Academy of Politics, integrating WPS and NAP into the advanced political theory curriculum for senior leaders has been crucial for NAP implementation at all levels, ensuring leaders understand WPS for national and local implementation. In the case of journalists, the project increased attention on WPS issues, leading to reports on female soldiers and peacekeeping forces. CSOs were equipped with more comprehensive WPS knowledge so that they can integrate WPS into their activities.

The project had to modify its cooperation model due to new Government of Viet Nam regulations regarding the approval of foreign-financed projects. Since the project could not sign formal cooperation agreements with Vietnamese partners as initially planned, UN Women adapted by implementing the project through direct technical assistance. The project also adapted to the restructuring of state institutions, which commenced early 2025, when the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) was dissolved, and the Ministry of Public Security and the National Academy of Politics were engaged to ensure the WPS agenda was sustained within the government.

In **Timor-Leste**, as a post-conflict nation with political crises and social divisions, the project focused on support to the Government in conducting consultation for the NAP WPS and NAP to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons, promoting women's participation in peacebuilding, strengthening local mediation mechanisms and enhancing women mediators' leadership in community-based conflict prevention and resolution, and supporting inclusive governance efforts. Designed through a participatory process, the project actively engaged line ministries, CSOs, organizations of PWD, and community representatives in

dialogue and enhanced the capacity of trained mediators at municipal posts in community engagement and early conflict prevention. According to internal monitoring, the NAP was developed through consultations with 569 individuals across 13 municipalities and the Special Administrative Region of Oé-Cusse Ambeno (333 men, 233 women and three were non-binary, including three individuals with disabilities).

In **Cambodia** and **Lao PDR**, the project brought CSO, youth and grassroots women from diverse backgrounds to the table where they voiced their needs ahead of the development of the national WPS policy frameworks.

In **Malaysia**, UN Women encouraged the Government to consult CSOs in the drafting of the NAP WPS and facilitated and worked in close partnership with the Embassy of Canada in Malaysia.

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### FINDING 3:

The project's relevance, credibility and traction were maximized by UN Women's comparative advantages – neutral convening power, deep WPS technical expertise, and multilevel reach from global norms to local practice. These advantages were paired with ASEAN's role as a regional standard-setter and convener.

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The project's relevance and effectiveness were supported by the unique and complementary strengths of UN Women and ASEAN. UN Women's neutral convening power, deep WPS technical expertise, and multilevel reach – from global standards to local implementation – gave the project legitimacy and practical value. Its global mandate under UNSCR 1325, and leadership in gender equality and WPS, positioned UN Women as a trusted broker in sensitive peace and security discussions. This credibility enabled constructive dialogue among ministries, security institutions, civil society, and regional bodies, fostering consensus in politically complex environments. UN Women's comparative advantage lies in its ability to bridge global norms and local realities, offering governments and partners tangible tools for gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, and the development of localized WPS frameworks and training curricula.

In parallel, ASEAN's role as a regional convener and standard-setter enhanced ownership and ensured alignment across its Member States. Through its Sectoral Bodies – led by the ASEAN Committee on Women and the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation – ASEAN provided the political and institutional umbrella under which WPS efforts could thrive. Countries starting with the development of WPS policies, such as Cambodia and Lao PDR, assess the existence of the Regional Plan of Action as highly supportive to their efforts, while all recognize the significant value of ASEAN's regional commitment to WPS as well as knowledge generation and dissemination at the regional level.

In short, **ASEAN's participation in the project provided legitimacy, coherence, and political momentum, while UN Women supplied the technical expertise, evidence base, and facilitated operationalization of commitments.**



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*ASEAN's participation in the project provided legitimacy, coherence, and political momentum, while UN Women supplied the technical expertise, evidence base, and facilitated operationalization of commitments.*

## COHERENCE

### Q2

#### TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT FACILITATED INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SYNERGIES AND STRENGTHENED PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER UN WOMEN AND ASEAN INITIATIVES IN THE REGION?

#### FINDING 4:

Project interventions are highly aligned with the ASEAN RPA WPS and relevant Sectoral Bodies' priorities, country level gender equality and WPS commitments and map coherently to UN Women's corporate Strategic Plan and ROAP and Country Strategic Notes – with demonstrable country uptake. Past internal UN Women coordination challenges between regional WPS and ASEAN lines of work were noted but have been improved.

The project is tightly aligned with ASEAN and its Member States' legacy on WPS and its RPA WPS. Stakeholders confirmed alignment with the priorities of ASEAN's Sectoral Bodies, while mapping cleanly onto UN Women's Strategic Plan (SP) 2022–2025 and the Regional Office for Asia

and the Pacific (ROAP) and Country Strategic Notes. It advances Strategic Plan outcomes on peace, security and humanitarian action, ending violence against women, and leadership and governance.

**Table 3: Alignment with UN Women strategic documents**

UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025	UN Women ROAP Strategic Note 2023-2025	UN Women Country-level Strategic Notes
<b>Impact Area 4:</b> WPS, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction, but also impact on ending violence against women and leadership and governance.	<b>Outcome:</b> Women and girls in all their diversity, effectively contribute to, and benefit equally from, the full operationalization of global normative frameworks, policies, laws and financial instruments and inclusive governance systems and institutions at all levels (across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus).	<p><b>Indonesia (2021–2025):</b> Outcome 1 related to inclusive human development, and Outcome 3 related to natural and climate-related disasters.</p> <p><b>Thailand (2019–2024):</b> Strategic Priority 1: Advancing WPS to support further development of the WPS policy framework.</p> <p><b>Timor-Leste (2021–2025):</b> Priority area: women's leadership in peace and security.</p> <p><b>The Philippines (2019–2023):</b> Results related to regular migration, decent work and enhancing the positive development effects of human mobility; and implementation of international standards on violence against women and girls (2024-2028): results related to just transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient development and strengthened resilience to disasters and natural hazards; and results on increased resilience to economic, climatic, disaster, and public health risk through improved, equitable, and gender-responsive access to, and utilization of, quality social services, protection, healthy habitat, enhanced good governance and peace.</p> <p><b>Viet Nam (2022-2026):</b> Strategic Results: Cleaner and safer environment and a more just, safe and inclusive society.</p>

Source: Compiled by the Evaluation Team

Regionally, the project's focus on translating commitments into capacity (policy clinics, costing/gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), localization toolkits, knowledge dissemination, practitioner exchanges) mirrors the RPA WPS mandate to "mobilize the whole of ASEAN" for implementation under the four pillars. A core strength of the project, according to interviewed stakeholders, is its two-way link between regional, national and subnational streams. Mechanisms such as the NAP WPS Academy – co-run with ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation – equip officials and practitioners to carry the RPA WPS down to the local level; in turn, country cases and tools are fed back into regional guidance and peer learning.

Flagship regional convenings and training have helped convert ASEAN-level agreements into country uptake, while ensuring Member State voices have shaped regional products, which was confirmed by the new countries joining the programme, such as Cambodia and Lao PDR. National stakeholders have consistently affirmed that the ASEAN RPA WPS has been supportive of their national progress by providing guidance, regional legitimacy, and a clear framework for action. In countries such as Malaysia, Viet Nam and Lao PDR, the RPA WPS played a catalytic role in supporting the initiation of processes toward the development of the NAPs on WPS. At the same time, countries with a longer history of WPS engagement continue to rely on their own established national traditions and frameworks, yet still view the Regional Plan and

ASEAN's efforts as highly valuable for regional coherence, peer learning, and political reinforcement of national commitments.

Internally, some UN Women personnel noted initial coordination frictions between the ASEAN-focused portfolio in Indonesia and ROAP's governance, peace and security-unit. These issues were reportedly addressed over time and were mostly related to reporting, mixed advice and insufficient coordination. Mitigations were introduced during implementation, such as regular updates to the ROAP, joint mission planning, and discussions on when to work inside/outside the ASEAN umbrella. These efforts have reduced inconsistencies, but a coherence risk remains if parallel regional workstreams and messages are not continually knitted together.

There were no challenges reported related to coordination between the WPS ASEAN Project Team and the Country Offices (COs) and ASEAN WPS actions were largely connected to the existing WPS portfolios. Coordination among the COs was organized through the Project Team, rather than individual coordination among the offices. An evaluation survey with external stakeholders showed that more than 80% (N=97) agree and strongly agree that UN Women effectively coordinated with ASEAN (82%), national and subnational governments (89%) and civil society (88%).

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#### **FINDING 5:**

**Although there are notable collaborations between UN Women, ASEAN and other entities engaged on WPS, complementing the interventions of the WPS ASEAN project, there is space for more intentional and strategic coordination.**

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UN Women has had extensive cooperation with other UN entities on the WPS agenda, but in the WPS ASEAN project, this was not as prominent. Despite some strong examples of joint action, there were missed opportunities for coordination. This is particularly important as regionally the WPS agenda has a wider interpretation and includes many aspects over which other UN agencies have clear mandates (migration and refugees, transnational crime, violent extremism, terrorism, violence against women and girls, cybercrimes etc.).

At the regional level, UN Women maintained a longstanding and productive partnership with the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO). This collaboration built on the foundations laid by the 2017 ASEAN-UN Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security, which UN Women and DPPA/DPO jointly supported. Together, they worked with ASEAN to strengthen regional political commitment to the WPS agenda and include WPS priorities in the UN-ASEAN Plan of Action. Their cooperation continued under the current project through policy dialogue,

joint events, and regional consultations on WPS and youth, peace and security (YPS) agendas, such as the Lao PDR workshop co-organized with ASEAN IPR and the Lao PDR Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The UN Women-DPPA/DPO partnership was frequently mentioned by stakeholders as a model of effective collaboration where UN Women's technical expertise and normative authority complemented DPPA/DPO's political and peacebuilding leadership to achieve coherent, cross-pillar engagement with ASEAN.

More prominent complementary UN Women and ASEAN regional collaborations and partnerships included the Asia Foundation and the USAID Prospect project (particularly in the development of the Regional WPS study and the first years of the WPS project). Interviews and reviewed documentation confirmed these allowed for synergies created by UN Women's expertise on WPS, ASEAN's political leverage and the support of other partners in stakeholder engagement, communication, and regional outreach. Jointly, these partners also developed and implemented a regional communication and advocacy plan around the RPA WPS across ASEAN Member States and coordinated social media campaigns. Other relevant initiatives mentioned by stakeholders include those led by ASEAN IPR and CMI-Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation to build ASEAN's peacebuilding and mediation capacities and promote inclusive conflict prevention, closely aligned with WPS objectives.

At the country level, United Nations cooperation with other stakeholders was stronger in the settings with greater UN Women presence and portfolios. In general, unless the WPS ASEAN project was the only or dominant initiative, the national stakeholders were not able to differentiate project portfolios. The Evaluation Team distinguished portfolios based on the available data and outlined other key relevant initiatives supportive of the WPS agenda.

Cooperation was strong in the **Philippines**, where UN Women and UNDP co-implemented the Joint Programme "Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)" along with the WPS ASEAN project. This joint initiative operationalized the WPS agenda by linking ASEAN and national frameworks with the Bangsamoro Regional Action Plan. It provided targeted support for women mediators, strengthened local institutions, such as the Bangsamoro Women Commission and the BARMM Ministry of Public Order and Safety, and expanded access

for civil society and women leaders to formal peace and security mechanisms. The Philippines also benefited from broader United Nations coordination under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), ensuring that WPS outcomes were anchored in inter-agency commitments on peace, governance, and gender equality. Collaboration among UN Women, national and regional authorities, UNDP, and the Asia Foundation led to the development and adoption of the Philippines' fourth National Action Plan on WPS and the launch of the BARMM WPS Regional Action Plan (RAP-WPS).

In **Indonesia**, UN Women earlier collaborated with UNDP and UNODC under the UN Peace Hub, established by the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO), to advance peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This platform fostered synergies across governance, justice, and gender portfolios. Currently, UN Women and UNODC are developing a joint proposal on gender-responsive policing. In other WPS-related initiatives, UN Women also partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to develop research and strengthen the Protection from Gender-Based Violence sub-cluster within the Disaster Management framework. Joint workshops on mine action, GRB and security sector reform demonstrated practical inter-agency collaboration, supported by the broader UNSDCF architecture.

Still, initiatives remain limited to the project frameworks and there is no evidence of wider connections and coherence. According to interviewed stakeholders, UN coordination on WPS in Indonesia could have been stronger and other UN agencies could have born more ownership and responsibilities in line with their mandates.

In **Viet Nam**, UN Women supported the development of the country's first National Action Plan on WPS, with engagement from the UN Resident Coordinator and other UN Agencies such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO and ILO, which joined the consultation process during the development of the NAP.

In **Timor-Leste**, the WPS ASEAN project benefited from particularly strong United Nations collaboration. UN Women partnered with UNDP on GRB and governance, securing increased parliamentary allocations for WPS-related activities, and on the joint support for enhancing national police capacity on GBV response and community policing. The technical support to the National Commission

to Combat Trafficking in Persons has enhanced its institutional capacity and inter-sectoral coordination in addressing emerging security threats through prevention and response to trafficking in persons, linking community-level interventions and national policy advocacy.

Across Thailand, Cambodia, and Lao PDR collaboration with other United Nations agencies has been more ad hoc. In **Thailand**, UN Women collaborated with UNODC on issues related to security sector reform and countering and preventing human trafficking. **Cambodia's** WPS work focused on developing the country's first NAP aligned with the UNSDCF and the wider UN Country Team's gender and governance frameworks. In **Lao PDR**, cooperation was largely at the policy dialogue level, with UN Women, ASEAN IPR, and multiple UN agencies jointly contributing to regional consultations on WPS and YPS linkages.

Such examples of multiple WPS-related collaborations illustrated how UN Women's convening power and gender expertise could effectively align with other agencies' sectoral strengths to achieve measurable impact and strengthen sustainability; however, in most cases the WPS ASEAN project did not leverage these synergies.

Interviewed stakeholders – including donors and government partners – identified structural gaps that limit the full potential of inter-agency collaboration. Coordination has often occurred on a project-by-project basis, without formalized mechanisms or clear role definitions among

agencies. While ad hoc working groups were established at the start of the project – such as a UN coordination group on WPS chaired by UN Women ROAP and DPPA/DPO– these were neither sustained nor institutionalized. As a result, WPS was sometimes perceived externally as primarily a UN Women-led agenda, rather than a whole-of-UN priority. Other agencies engage indirectly through their peacebuilding, governance, or humanitarian mandates, but without a shared WPS strategy. Donors and ASEAN counterparts highlighted the need for stronger, system-wide coherence and joint planning to maximize resources and avoid duplication.

Overall, UN Women's cooperation with other UN entities in the WPS ASEAN project has been substantive but uneven. It has been characterized by successful joint initiatives (notably with UNDP, DPPA, DPO, and UNFPA) and thematic alignment across several countries, yet constrained by institutional silos and the absence of an overarching UN system approach to WPS. UN Women's comparative advantages – neutrality, technical depth, and convening capacity – has allowed it to lead and sustain these partnerships effectively. However, **the next phase of WPS implementation in ASEAN would benefit from a clearer inter-agency framework anchored in the UNSDCF, joint monitoring mechanisms, and collective advocacy to ensure that WPS is recognized not as a niche or UN Women agenda, but as a shared UN peace and security priority across the region.**

### Q3 TO WHAT EXTENT AND HOW WERE THE EXPECTED RESULTS ACHIEVED?

#### FINDING 6:

The project demonstrated rapid progress in achieving its intended results. Planned targets were met fully prior to the project's formal closure, thanks to strong partner commitment, coordination and consensus-building efforts, as confirmed in the interviews.

The project delivered results at an exceptional pace. As reported by UN Women in donor reports, by mid-2023 it had reached 83% of its targets, rising to 90% in 2024, and 100% by mid-2025 – even before formal closure of the project. Interviewees consistently attributed this acceleration to three reinforcing factors: (i) high partner commitment (ministries, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, CSOs, media, academia); (ii) disciplined coordination and consensus-building that kept multiple actors moving in step; and (iii) a design that paired regional norm-setting with national and subnational localization. In practice, this meant efficient conversion of commitments into concrete project planned outputs (policies, coordination mechanisms, toolkits, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) systems), while learning loops (training of trainers, alumni chats, communities of practice) sustained momentum between major project milestones.

On the policy front, four regional policies were finalized and socialized: the ASEAN RPA WPS (2022); the Regional Framework on Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Disaster Management (2021–2025); the coordination mechanism, baseline study and preliminary indicators for the RPA WPS (2025); and the Plan of Action on Enhancing Women's Political Participation and Leadership with its Matrix of Implementation (2024).

The project contributed to national efforts in the development or advancement of eight key policies and initiatives: Viet Nam's first NAP WPS (2024); Timor-Leste's second NAP WPS (2024) and second National Police Gender Strategy (2024) and NAP to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons (2026-2030); the Philippines' fourth NAP WPS (2023-2033), WPS MEAL Handbook (2024) and the BARMM RAP-WPS (2023–2028); Malaysia NAP WPS 2025-2030 (2025); Indonesia's NAP WPS ME framework; and Thailand's draft NAP WPS (2024); Cambodia completed

its WPS situation analysis; and Lao PDR initiated NAP discussions. These outputs anchored WPS within public institutions, clarified roles and accountabilities, and created the preconditions for budget tagging, training pipelines, and routine reporting.

As per UN Women internal reporting, capacity development involved a total of 15,278 individuals from ASEAN institutions, Member States and CSOs. This included 11,887 participants at the national level (7,581 women, 2,736 men, 29 others, 1,541 unidentified) and 3,391 participants at the regional ASEAN level (1,790 women, 872 men, 16 others, 713 unidentified).

Across the region, 220 training sessions and workshops, as well as 48 cross-sectoral dialogues, strengthened institutional and individual capacities to advance the WPS agenda. Post-event evaluations show consistent learning gains: 84 per cent of 4,624 respondents reported confidence in applying newly acquired WPS-related knowledge and skills within their institutions and communities. As per UN Women internal reporting, representatives from ASEAN bodies, Member States and CSOs accepted or completed offerings that ranged from the NAP Academy and localization toolkits to RBM, GRB, mediation, and MEAL.

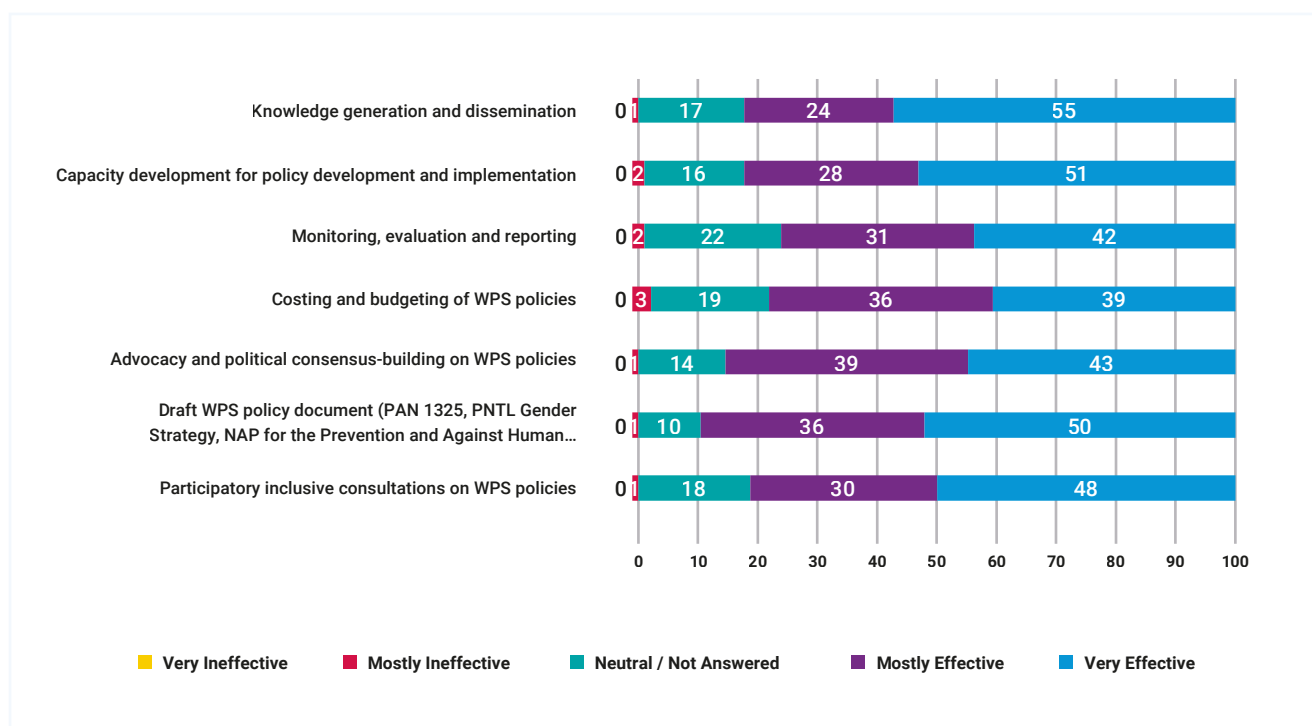
Crucially, a deliberate cascade model (training-of-trainers plus echo workshops) was useful to convert regional inputs into community practice. As reported by interviewees, alumni of WPS training in Viet Nam serve as national trainers on WPS with the opportunity to reach about 20,000 civil servants yearly. Twelve Philippine alumni completed a series of community sessions within four months. Media literacy and production labs yielded tangible outputs (articles, competition winners, an on-site reporting fellowship), raising WPS visibility in typically closed ASEAN spaces. The ASEAN WPS Knowledge Hub (<https://wps.asean.org>)

now hosts over 120 resources, accessed by 28,000 users and downloaded 3,500 times. Materials were picked up by ministries, training institutes, and CSOs for onward use.

An evaluation survey showed that most of the interventions were considered highly effective by external stakeholders,

with more than 80% of them (N=97) assessing them as somewhat effective and very effective. Slightly less effective were interventions on monitoring, evaluation and reporting and GRB, however results are still very high.

**Figure 8: External stakeholder perception of effectiveness of project interventions**



Source: Evaluation survey

The project also had catalytic power in resource mobilization for other national and subnational WPS projects, generating in total more than USD 9 million due to the project team's engagement in resource mobilization efforts and building on the momentum achieved. For example, these projects include the following: "Empowering women for sustainable peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao" (Global Affairs Canada, CAD 3.5 million); "Empowered Women for Sustainable Peace: Addressing the Peace Humanitarian Nexus to Enhance Community Resilience in Indonesia" (KOICA, USD 4 million); UN Women

Indonesia Strategic Note (SN) 2021–2025/UN UNSDCF Outcome 1 (the Netherlands, USD 1.27 million); and WPS prevention pillar support in Timor-Leste, supported by UN Women, UNDP and Committee F collaboration.

By engaging with diverse stakeholders, the reputations of both ASEAN and UN Women and their respective convening powers and personnel commitments, the project partners generated wide support for implementation and reached the expected targets.

## FINDING 7:

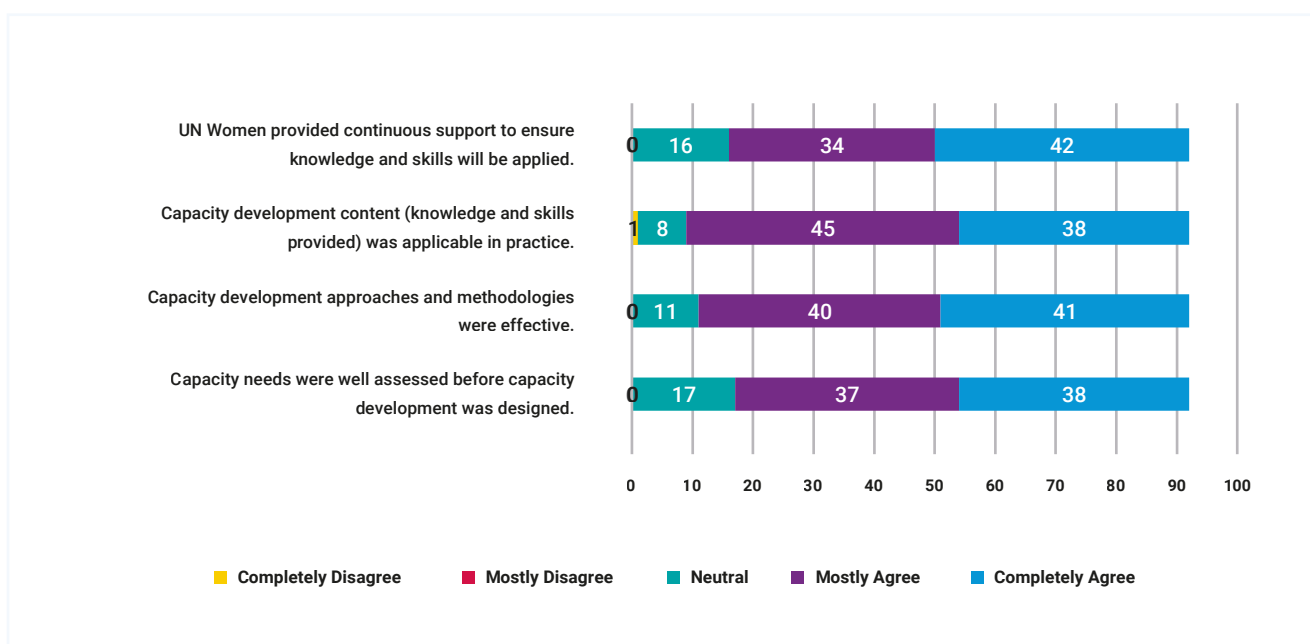
ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and institutions and non-state actors, demonstrate clear enhancement in WPS knowledge and confidence, driven by trainings, peer learning, and new policy tools. The regional Knowledge Hub and UN Women-ASEAN regional events have substantially expanded awareness and access to WPS evidence, with strong demand focused on the Regional Plan of Action, NAPs, and non-traditional threats, as well as knowledge products primarily applied in policy development and training. However, while progress is evident, documented spillover of this knowledge and confidence into broader practice remains limited.

Across ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and institutions, UN Women reported that the project generated clear gains in WPS knowledge, skills, and confidence (Outcomes 1110 and 1120). Evaluation survey and interview evidence shows a strong grasp of the WPS pillars (participation, prevention, protection, relief and recovery), with learning most often applied to policy design, institutional arrangements and continued capacity development. Interviewed stakeholders

across the ASEAN bodies demonstrated strong knowledge of WPS and a harmonized narrative about its relevance for the context.

External stakeholders in the evaluation survey greatly appreciated capacity development approaches with between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of respondents (N=92) positive about different aspects of it.

**Figure 9: Reflection of external stakeholders on capacity development efforts**



Source: Evaluation survey

These evaluation findings are consistent with project monitoring, which showed 140 of 141 ASEAN sectoral representatives (99.3%) reported increased knowledge and skills (109 women, 31 men). Of this number, 126 said they had some confidence applying new competencies, and 40 (28.4%) reported a high level of confidence (reference period until September 2025). In short, both resources confirmed knowledge has consolidated and that confidence is trending

upward, especially among women officials and practitioners who formed the majority of trainees.

These gains flowed from a structured learning architecture. Regionally, feedback from diverse stakeholders confirmed that the Knowledge Hub, NAP Academy, and recurrent training streams created a solid training offer for officials, CSOs, media, and youth which is to be sustained by ASEAN.

Nationally, partners adapted materials into echo workshops and sector curricula and subnational actors used toolkits to clarify roles, tasking, and reporting.

Implementation evidence, interviews and surveys indicated that institutions most often apply the agenda by disseminating knowledge onward: launching new courses, setting up focal point networks, and using project toolkits to guide policy drafting and institutional set-ups. Another largely reported use of knowledge was in the development of WPS-related policies.

The ASEAN-run Knowledge Hub increased its number of users and by the project's end 40,097 users had accessed the resources. UN Women reported that 80 respondents (64 women, 15 men, 1 undisclosed) rated products useful/very useful or intended to use them for work, information, or sharing with colleagues. The most read publications (based on the evaluation survey) are those related to the RPA WPS and NAPs WPS and cyber security (in the **Philippines** and **Viet Nam**). Publications are used mostly for policy development and further training delivery. Reading patterns are pragmatic – most users read relevant sections rather than entire publications – suggesting the library is functioning as a task-oriented reference that supports drafting, training on outline design, and briefings.

The project expanded and energized an informal cross-border WPS community of practice. Against a target of 100, as reported by UN Women, the practitioner network more than doubled to 275 (government, CSOs, media, youth). Interviewed stakeholders reported that the informal community of practice remains active through chat groups, and periodic UN Women-supported follow-ups. ASEAN consultations on the formal establishment and management of the community of practice are ongoing. The ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR), while predating the project, gained visibility when members were mobilized as speakers and resource persons.

Regional dialogues connected CSOs and journalists to representatives from ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and institutions, and representatives from ASEAN Member States aimed to translate ASEAN-level agreements into practical national and subnational steps.

Regional courses, peer learning and professional recognition was another project implementation strategy. The journalism and civil society awards raised the profile of WPS storytellers and community innovators and were frequently cited by stakeholders as smart levers for diffusion. Yet traction is uneven – due to insufficient connection with media outlets and journalist associations – which reduced the possibility for impact on editorial priorities and wider coverage of WPS issues.

Likewise, while the AWPR gained visibility and members participated as speakers, activation is pending due to ASEAN's non-interference policy. While the non-interference policy enables dialogue and consensual standards, it can limit overt regional action on contentious issues; therefore, many RPA-aligned practices may remain in policy and training spaces, with fewer documented instances of operational use (Outcome 1130).

Taken together, the key results of the WPS ASEAN project are in increased awareness, growing confidence and strong demand for practical tools, with emerging spillover into broader, everyday practice.

Additional to trainings, UN Women and ASEAN organized multiple conferences and events that resulted in reported high awareness by interviewed stakeholders on the trends and best practices in WPS across the region; however, limited evidence was found of the spreading of these practices. After participating in ASEAN-UN Women regional workshops (2022–2023), NAP Academies, the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics in **Viet Nam** integrated WPS and sexual harassment prevention into its civil service curriculum. **Indonesia** participated in the Regional NAP Academy for Southeast Asia (in 2024), co-organized by ASEAN-IPR and UN Women and subsequently announced its intention to develop a third-generation National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Reportedly, lessons learned were integrated into the design of Indonesia's upcoming third-generation NAP WPS; as well, additional priority topics were included in the plan and a detailed implementation action plan was developed.

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**FINDING 8:**

National and subnational institutions, together with non-state actors, demonstrate clear increases in WPS knowledge and confidence as a result of capacity development and technical support (Outcome 1140). However, this uplift has not automatically and equally translated into consistent WPS implementation across all groups. Gaps persist due to intersecting contextual, institutional and operational barriers.

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Across ASEAN Member States, national and subnational institutions, together with non-state actors, demonstrate marked increases in knowledge, skills, and confidence on WPS directly linked to the project's intensive capacity development and technical support. Outcome 1140 mirrors progress seen at the ASEAN Secretariat level; awareness and understanding of WPS have deepened significantly, but uptake and consistent implementation remain uneven. According to the interviewed stakeholders (governments, CSOs and UN Women), momentum is visible in policy design, coordination mechanisms and pilot initiatives but several contextual, institutional, and operational barriers continue to limit full translation of learning into sustained, system-wide change.

UN Women monitoring and final evaluation data confirm these patterns. Through September 2025, 3,280 stakeholders<sup>4</sup> or 91.9% of 3,569 who reported to the survey, reported increased knowledge and skills related to WPS implementation, and 2,920<sup>5</sup> (or 81.8%) expressed confidence in their ability to apply these competencies at the local level. **Evaluation interviews and surveys reinforced these findings: officials, CSO representatives, and sectoral actors in all participating countries demonstrated high levels of conceptual understanding of WPS – particularly in relation to gender-responsive policy design, inclusive mediation, and coordination structures.**

For example, in **Timor-Leste** the creation of a NAP Secretariat and its coordination mechanisms evolved from the project's technical coaching and training-of-trainers support. This initiative built institutional memory and empowered ministries to lead and coordinate with other line ministries and CSOs independently. Similarly, security and military personnel in several countries reported greater awareness of WPS principles and women's participation in peacekeeping, mediation, and local conflict prevention. In the **Philippines**, government stakeholders reported continuous strengthening of the capacities of the national coordination architecture anchored by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity

and the Philippine Commission on Women, network of the focal points across government institutions, and gender mainstreaming in peace and security policies. These measures included training, measures to increase women's participation in police, security and peacekeeping. At the subnational level, in BARMM, the Bangsamoro Women Commission reported on both awareness-raising regarding WPS across the government and the training of women mediators.

However, according to the data collected in the survey and direct interviews, the translation of knowledge into operational implementation remains uneven across different sectors and provides more examples of CSO delivery mechanisms supported by the presence of institutional champions. Field-level interventions in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Timor-Leste illustrate this dynamic.

In **Indonesia**, CSOs reported on the implementation of mediation, early warning, and community resilience activities under the national WPS framework and often in cooperation with the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection. In the **Philippines**, grassroots CSOs and mediators in BARMM operationalized WPS through peace dialogues, GBV prevention, and community-based conflict resolution, complementing the formal NAP and regional plan of action structures. In **Thailand**, WPS networks and Women's Empowerment Centres established in border regions served as localized coordination mechanisms and learning spaces linking women's networks, local government, and security agencies. This was an institutional innovation that positioned women as connectors in fragile settings. In **Timor-Leste**, community-level mediation and conflict prevention were institutionalized through CSO-government partnerships and trainings for the Ministry of Interior and National Police and Defence Force delivered by CSOs, while early stage capacity-building in **Viet Nam** began to prepare ministries and CSOs for NAP roll-out and local implementation.

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4 2,366 women, 903 men, 32 people of other gender identities.

5 2,107 women, 812 men, 30 people of other gender identities.

The external stakeholder survey (ASEAN, governments, civil society, academia, media) responses confirmed that respondents applied knowledge most frequently by looking at issues from the WPS perspective and by supporting community engagement and leadership, further knowledge-sharing and delivering training. Some stakeholders applied the knowledge in policy-making. Responses all focused on processes and no information was provided on the results of the application of this new knowledge.

Several factors have enabled this transition from capacity to implementation. First, there is now a shared understanding of WPS priorities among government institutions and civil society, shaped by years of structured dialogue between ASEAN and its Member States and stakeholders at national and regional levels and technical facilitation from UN Women. Across interviews, government stakeholders and CSOs demonstrated a shared understanding of the WPS agenda and its relevance and articulated consistent priorities for its implementation.

Second, the commitment of WPS champions – from ministries, parliaments, and the security sector to grassroots leaders – has sustained momentum and visibility.

Third, external financial support from UN Women and development partners (including Canada, UK Australia, Japan, and Korea) ensured continuity of activities and facilitated broad participation across regions.

Finally, improved CSO and government collaboration – once sporadic – has evolved into regularized consultation processes, joint monitoring and mutual accountability mechanisms in several countries, notably in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Intragovernmental communication has also improved, with more frequent communication and meetings reported in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand; however, the results of these are yet to be seen.

Persistent obstacles slow or fragment implementation. The most cited challenges include insufficient institutional ownership of the WPS agenda beyond gender mechanisms (ministries in charge of women's issues) or the main coordination stakeholders and those directly engaged by the project; limited human and financial resources; and coordination gaps across agencies. In many contexts, WPS still relies on project-based funding rather than integrated public budgets, making it vulnerable to political turnover or fiscal constraints (further details are provided under the Sustainability section).

While improvement of communication with governments was reported across contexts, CSOs and key implementers at the community level often face limited access to government mechanisms, and uneven reach in rural or conflict-affected areas. Funding challenges were reported by multiple stakeholders. The findings about capacities and financing echo the Indonesia NAP 2014–2023 implementation report, which noted patchy application of WPS measures, lack of systematic monitoring, and dependency on external actors for capacity and financing. Additionally, in Indonesia concerns were raised about the shrinking of civic space and in Viet Nam about how regulatory change for foreign-funded projects may affect development assistance in WPS area.

Institutionally, translation bottlenecks persist between national and subnational levels. While WPS coordination mechanisms exist, vertical communication channels are not always strong enough to convert policy into practice. Provinces and municipalities may lack operational guidance, localized indicators, or resources to sustain training and reporting cycles. Moreover, intersectional and emerging issues – such as climate-related security risks, cyber threats, and displacement – are unevenly mainstreamed, despite high conceptual awareness. This creates a gap between policy intent and the lived realities of women in affected communities.

## FINDING 9:

The combination of high levels of trust and facilitation framed around relevant non-traditional WPS areas and backed by evidence, the development of localized instruments (toolkits), and consistent capacity development, messaging and targeted communications proved most effective for fast policy uptake and capacity gains. Tailored and targeted support to community actions and reliance on NGOs and CSOs were the most effective approaches to implementation.

The evaluation finds that the most effective approaches of the WPS ASEAN project combined high levels of trust, evidence-informed dialogue, and localization through practical instruments. These strategies – anchored in mutual respect and political sensitivity – enabled rapid policy uptake, strengthened institutional capacities, and fostered meaningful collaboration across government, security, and civil society actors. What distinguished the project's success was not only what was delivered (plans, toolkits, trainings), but how it was delivered: through facilitation that bridged divides, translated regional norms into actionable tools, and broadened the WPS agenda beyond traditional peace and conflict boundaries to encompass non-traditional security issues such as climate change, cybersecurity and disaster resilience.

At the regional level, consensus-building spaces framed around mutual respect proved especially effective in navigating ASEAN's principles of non-interference and consensus, which often constrain direct engagement on

sensitive peace and security issues. The project's facilitation style – neutral, inclusive, and evidence-based – created a safe platform for dialogue among ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, government ministries, and non-state actors. Thematic framing around non-traditional security threats provided an entry point for countries less comfortable with the conflict resolution dimension of WPS, allowing them to engage under a broader, politically acceptable security narrative. This reframing also resonated with emerging national priorities – such as digital safety in Viet Nam, cross-border trafficking in Thailand, or climate resilience in Timor-Leste – thus strengthening alignment between global WPS norms and local realities.

Consistent strategic communication helped amplify ASEAN's leadership and visibility on WPS. Regular dissemination of success stories, visibility materials, and policy dialogues contributed to increased political support and awareness across ASEAN Member States and partners.

**Table 4: Effective strategies and limiting factors**

Strong strategies	External limiting factors
High-trust relationships between UN Women, ASEAN and governments	Uneven ownership and limited institutional budgets
Neutrality	Administrative rigidity and short project cycles
Localization and contextual adaptation of WPS (non-traditional security framing)	Limited spillover among the countries
Partnership with CSOs and cross-sector networks	Limited inclusivity and accessibility in some regional training activities (language barriers limits participation)
Evidence-based tools and knowledge products	Limited UN coordination and ownership
Skilled and responsive project management team	
Committed champions in partner institutions	
Strategic communication	
Hands-on capacity development, continuous technical assistance and community of practice	

Source: Developed by the Evaluation Team

The pairing of regional norms and practical how-to instruments was another key enabler of progress. Regional toolkits – such as the [ASEAN-RPA-WPS-Localization-toolkit-and-guidelines](#), regional NAP Academies, and MEAL frameworks – translated commitments under the ASEAN RPA WPS into operational guidance. These instruments helped countries develop or update NAPs, clarify coordination mechanisms, and embed GRB and monitoring systems. Their simplicity, adaptability, and visual format made them widely used across ministries and CSOs – from policy drafting in Viet Nam and Indonesia to local training in the Philippines and Thailand. Peer-learning platforms, such as informal community of practice and NAP Academy alumni networks, further accelerated uptake by creating an environment of horizontal exchange.

**Hands-on capacity development and continuous technical assistance from UN Women and partners were consistently identified as success factors in the evaluation.** Governments valued the project's iterative model that combined (i) data and evidence on needs, (ii) political consensus-building through dialogue, (iii) targeted technical assistance, and (iv) budget advocacy. This “strategy packaging” approach ensured that technical interventions were politically and financially viable.

For example, in **Timor-Leste**, two years of coaching for the Ministry of Interior led to the independent operation of the NAP Secretariat and the integration of WPS into the state budget, while the Ministry is currently developing a new national civic education for peace and development curriculum on the WPS and YPS agendas. In **Indonesia**, continuous engagement with Indonesian Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak – Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) – helped institutionalize coordination. The Ministry currently serves as the Secretariat of the Working Group for NAP implementation, including in the development of the next generation of the NAP. In the **Philippines**, the combination of evidence (MEAL system), advocacy, and hands-on training resulted in the approval of the 10-year NAP WPS and the adoption of the BARMM RAP-WPS.

At the community level, the most effective delivery approaches relied on partnerships with NGOs and CSOs, who served as trusted intermediaries between local communities and state institutions. These organizations translated policy principles into tangible community outcomes – training women mediators, supporting survivors of violence, conducting awareness campaigns, and mediating local disputes. Examples include the Women's Centres in Thailand's southern border provinces, CSO-led mediation in BARMM, and grassroots peace networks in Timor-Leste and Indonesia. CSO partnerships ensured that the project reached marginalized and high-risk groups – including women with disabilities, youth, and indigenous populations – while also enhancing local ownership and sustainability. However, **the evaluation also found that CSO effectiveness was constrained by limited funding and administrative burdens, underscoring the need for long-term partnership models and direct resource channels for local actors.**

Targeted communication, visibility, and knowledge management further amplified the project's effectiveness. The WPS Knowledge Hub, regional conferences, and media awards significantly increased awareness and the legitimacy of the WPS agenda within ASEAN and its Member States. These platforms were recognized by interviewed stakeholders as mechanisms for dialogue and evidence-sharing, strengthening the credibility of WPS as a cross-sectoral priority. However, while visibility was achieved, the evaluation notes that knowledge hubs and communities of practice now need to demonstrate tangible results by, for instance, tracking how shared knowledge translates into results beyond policy development.

Overall, **the evaluation concludes that the project's trust-based facilitation model – coupled with contextual framing, technical rigour, and inclusive partnerships – proved highly effective in accelerating policy adoption and strengthening institutional capacity. The approach's success lies in its balance: it respects ASEAN's diplomatic norms while delivering practical, locally relevant results.**



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## HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

Q4

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT SUPPORTED ACHIEVEMENT OF LONG-TERM BENEFITS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS? TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT ADDRESSED THE NEEDS OF THE MOST MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND INTEGRATED HUMAN RIGHTS AND A GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACH?

### FINDING 10:

The project mainstreamed LNOB throughout design and delivery, intentionally engaging marginalized groups (PWD, LGBTQI+ persons, ex-combatant women, hilltribe and Indigenous women, and survivors of GBV). This resulted primarily in tangible access and participation, and to some extent in protection. Inclusion remained uneven across institutions and contexts, pointing to the need for resourced and more systematic approaches.

The project achieved significant progress in gender mainstreaming and the integration of the LNOB principle across the ASEAN region. From its inception, the project adopted an inclusive design, ensuring that situation analyses and policy development processes explicitly addressed the needs of marginalized groups. Across participating countries, national and regional partners incorporated intersectional analysis to identify vulnerabilities and barriers faced by women, youth, ethnic minorities, PWD, and LGBTQI+ individuals and included them in policy consultations and their perspectives in the policy development processes. According to interviewees, this inclusive foundation helped position WPS not only as a gender agenda but also linked it to a human rights and social inclusion framework.

The project mainstreamed gender and LNOB principles into training curricula and leadership development programmes. ASEAN institutions and partners in **Timor-Leste** and **Viet Nam** reported integrating gender equality, disability inclusion, and youth empowerment into formal or informal curricula. These included the development of new gender-responsive training materials for peacekeepers, mediators, and civil servants, and the inclusion of women's leadership topics in regional forums.

At the national level, the integration of WPS in budgeting and policy frameworks has reinforced institutional accountability for gender equality. In **Thailand** and **Timor-Leste**, as confirmed by interviewed stakeholders, capacity-building activities on RBM and tracking WPS in the gender and development budget have strengthened the technical expertise of government actors to ensure that gender commitments translate into financed programmes for women. In the **Philippines**, following capacity development, the NAP monitoring and evaluation framework was significantly strengthened. The creation of evidence-based monitoring tools has also empowered CSOs and

government alike to track progress on women's participation and protection.

Active participation and the inclusion of the voices of marginalized populations became a defining feature of the project. Regionally and across countries, consultations engaged diverse groups – from conflict-affected widows and Indigenous women to youth activists and stateless populations – ensuring their perspectives shaped local and national policy outcomes. This engagement made marginalized groups more visible to government duty bearers and strengthened accountability to communities previously excluded from peace and security dialogues. The approach also enhanced government responsiveness, with several ministries integrating intersectional priorities into new policies. These participatory processes marked a turning point, enabling those most affected by conflict to influence decision-making and contribute meaningfully to WPS frameworks.

Despite these achievements, the evaluation identified some gaps in the consistency of inclusion across institutions and contexts. The participation of PWD and LGBTQI+ groups was sometimes more representational than transformative, reflecting deeper social and institutional barriers. Sensitive topics such as forced hijab, sexual violence, or female genital mutilation were under-addressed in some settings due to political sensitivities, while practical challenges such as limited childcare, accessibility, rural outreach or architectural barriers restricted participation for some women. Civic space constraints also limited continuous engagement among civil society organizations and coordinating ministries in several countries. These gaps underscore the need for more systematic inclusion strategies and stronger institutional accountability mechanisms to ensure sustained progress on LNOB commitments.

### FINDING 11:

Overall, UN Women and ASEAN efforts resulted in changes in perception concerning the importance of the WPS agenda and women's roles across all stakeholders at the regional and country levels. Locally, where women gained sustained platforms, visibility, and opportunities for hands-on practice, there were clear shifts in norms and empowerment. As a policy project, evidence of impact remains limited but emerging examples exist.

The strong policy emphasis of the project, and the early stages of development of WPS national frameworks (**Cambodia, Lao PDR** and **Viet Nam**) and RAPS on WPS, limit the scope of direct impact of WPS on women and girls. Still, there are some general shifts that the project contributed to as well as results and anecdotal evidence from individual interventions on the ground as collected by the Evaluation Team from the government, CSOs and grassroots women.

Coordinated capacity-building efforts and consistent messaging fostered a shared regional understanding of the WPS agenda. These initiatives helped align perspectives across regional and national stakeholders and contributed to shifting attitudes in favour of women's leadership and participation in peace and security processes. A similar shift was seen in government officials at the country level. Officials have direct contact with CSOs and women on the ground, and their support to local WPS initiatives is contributing to change as seen by the enlarged gender-responsive WPS team in the Bangsamoro Women Commission. Translation of this shift into practice, however, is still slow.

At the community level, in the **Philippines**, the project trained and mobilized 150 women mediators in the BARMM. These women, supported by the Ministry of Public Order and Safety and the Bangsamoro Women Commission, have demonstrated that women can successfully intervene in high-risk conflict situations such as *ridos* (clan wars). The mediators' growing recognition by local authorities and communities marks a tangible shift in social norms – from women viewed as passive victims of conflict to active peacebuilders. This visibility not only empowered the women themselves but also influenced local perceptions, opening up space for more inclusive peace processes. Reports from the ground illustrate that these mediators have gone beyond conflict resolution, tackling issues such as trafficking, and violent extremism, thus expanding their roles from peacebuilders to defenders of women's rights and security.

In **Indonesia**, there were examples of CSO-anchored work bringing inclusion to communities and consultations with local governments. Women champions have continuously raised awareness and advocated for WPS issues and stronger women's participation and leadership in the area. Still, several gaps surfaced: insufficient targeted prompts for specific minorities during consultations; knowledge products in academic formats that limited accessibility; and constrained resources for childcare, safeguarding, and retention that can disproportionately affect the participation of poor women, PWDs, and LGBTQI+ people. Stakeholders urged more systematic disability accommodations, clearer inclusion targets, and stronger local data to tailor responses and institutionalize mechanisms for women and women-led CSOs to influence policy-making and budgeting in support of WPS agenda implementation.

The WPS project in **Timor-Leste** has strengthened leadership, mediation, and protection mechanisms across multiple levels of society. Through targeted capacity-building, youth and women have been empowered to take active roles in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Trained youth facilitators now conduct sessions for government institutions. The Ministry of Interior has enhanced its commitments and capacity in implementing the WPS agenda with an increased budget and it has developed its Civic Education for Peace and Development Programme, with the support of UN Women.

Within the security sector, women's leadership has advanced notably since 2020 in the Defence Force, where women now hold command and operational positions – such as the first ever female captain in 2024 – demonstrating growing parity in combat roles and contributing to a gradual shift in institutional culture toward gender equality. Women's engagement in community outreach has strengthened protection for women and children against violence and disaster risks. Likewise, the National Police have expanded women's participation in leadership and operational functions, strengthened capacities in addressing GBV

cases, fostered social change by empowering women to challenge harmful norms and promoted gender-responsive community policing.

To promote women's leadership in decision-making roles in governance and diplomacy, UN Women organized multiple rounds of Women in Leadership and Diplomacy Forums,

with a high-level panel bringing together women leaders across governance, diplomacy, economic and other public sectors. Based on government inputs, at the community level, local mediators – many of them women – reportedly successfully mapped conflicts, reduced conflict and improved safety across municipalities, thereby contributing to a stronger local infrastructure for peace.

#### BOX 1

### WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT CENTRES

#### Women's Empowerment Centre in Surin:

The development of the Women's Empowerment Centre in Surin marked a significant achievement in promoting women's leadership and community resilience in Thailand's border areas. The project brought together a wide range of stakeholders – government agencies, local authorities, women's networks, and the private sector – to strengthen coordination and preparedness under the WPS agenda. Women village health volunteers, community leaders, and elderly women's groups played active roles in assessing GBV, developing operational systems, and reporting to the Centre. The project fostered strong strategic partnerships with the military and provincial government, leading to the establishment of the Surin WE Centre's operational plan with full endorsement from the Governor.

The effects of the project were particularly visible during the Thailand-Cambodia border conflict, when the WE Centre proactively coordinated rapid relief efforts for conflict-affected populations. Women leaders, equipped with new knowledge from WPS capacity-building activities, successfully led operations to provide shelters, food, sanitation, and safety for displaced and vulnerable groups, including children and the elderly. Skills developed through the project, such as public communication, monitoring misinformation, and inter-network coordination, proved essential for managing the crisis.

#### The Yuyo WE Centre mushroom farming initiative:

This initiative represents an example of community-based women's economic empowerment with culturally sensitive implementation. The intervention supported women's livelihoods in a context of economic

vulnerability, particularly among female-headed households and single mothers. UN Women's approach combined livelihood development with gender equality promotion, resulting in the registration of the mushroom farming group as a **community enterprise**. The project strengthened women's technical skills in mushroom cultivation – including improved pasteurization techniques – and facilitated access to materials, equipment, and local markets. The initiative also enhanced women's participation in local governance processes through the development of 13 community laws that established operational protocols for the enterprise.

The initiative contributed to increased income generation and strengthened social cohesion within the community. The group grew to 20 members, providing a peer-support structure that extended beyond economic activity to include mutual aid and childcare support. The initiative's success attracted new funding and donor engagement, marking the first time the community accessed UN funding through the CIVIC Women CSO. It also mobilized support from national and international partners, including the Governments of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Korea. Demand from local markets and hotels has driven continued growth, positioning the WE Centre as a locally owned, sustainable model for women's economic participation. While the initiative demonstrated tangible outcomes in women's empowerment and community solidarity, sustaining production scale and ensuring long-term market competitiveness will require continued capacity-building, investment, and coordination with regional economic actors.

In **Thailand**, the project operationalized inclusion at scale with the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development serving as the key government mechanism at the national level to promote the participation and engagement of women in the localization of WPS. The Coordination Centre for Children and Women in the Southern Border Provinces and Women's Empowerment Centres serve as multi-stakeholder coordination platforms at the local level to bring together government agencies, CSOs, women leaders, and community representatives to address issues related to women's empowerment, gender equality, child protection, and peacebuilding in Thailand's conflict-affected southern border provinces (Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and parts of Songkhla). These centres also offer survivor-centred GBV referrals, legal aid (e.g., on land rights), home visits and policy engagement, while deliberately involving PWDs, and LGBTQI+ groups. Youth volunteers and CSO dialogues on cybersecurity expanded outreach and empowered women at risk of cyberattacks.

In **Viet Nam**, the project also achieved considerable results in improving knowledge and shifting perceptions about women's roles in security and peace. Through training and advocacy, key stakeholders moved beyond traditional views of women as passive beneficiaries to their recognition as active contributors to national security and peacekeeping. Increased visibility of women peacekeepers in the media has helped normalize their participation and highlight their competence in a traditionally male-dominated field. Capacity-building initiatives were reported to have raised awareness of gender equality and non-traditional security threats such as cybersecurity.

In terms of social norm change and empowerment, the project was visible in challenging gender stereotypes within the security sector. Public exposure to women peacekeepers and female officers contributed to shifting public attitudes and increasing acceptance of women in leadership and operational roles. The project also empowered women by improving their knowledge of digital safety and self-protection, particularly benefiting women entrepreneurs and strengthening self confidence in members of the LGBTQI+ community.

The evaluation noted, however, limited direct community-level impact so far, as most interventions focused on central and ministerial levels. While national frameworks and institutional capacities have been strengthened, it is expected that the tangible effects on local communities and vulnerable groups will materialize over the coming years once the NAP is implemented. During evaluation interviews, many public officials increasingly emphasized the policy need to localize WPS plans through subnational and individual action plans for ministries and departments. While this reflects the intention for strong national ownership and an encouraging effort to adapt regional and national frameworks to specific institutional contexts, the trend also carries the risk of fragmenting focus and diverting energy away from concrete implementation and towards over-norming.

### Q5

**TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THE RESOURCES ALLOCATED, AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS SET, APPROPRIATE TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION?**

#### FINDING 12:

The project governance set-up – Project Steering Committee with ASEAN, a dedicated team co-located in Jakarta, and close dialogue with funding partners – was an efficient and largely effective approach facilitating implementation, enabling quick decisions and sharing ownership.

The evaluation found that **the project's governance architecture – anchored in a joint Project Steering Committee with ASEAN, a dedicated UN Women team co-located with the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, and structured engagement with donors and implementing partners – is a largely efficient and effective set-up. This governance arrangement enabled rapid decision-making, strengthened coordination, and built a high degree of trust and shared ownership among ASEAN, UN Women, and funding partners. Stakeholders consistently cited this model as one of the project's comparative strengths and a key driver of its successful delivery, positioning it as a best practice example of regional collaboration under the WPS agenda.**

At the regional level, the ASEAN-UN Women Steering Committee emerged as a fit-for-purpose governance structure that combined formal coordination with strategic dialogue. It ensured alignment with ASEAN sectoral priorities and the RPA WPS, while also providing a venue for consensus-building among diverse partners. Regular consultations, joint reviews, and transparent reporting mechanisms fostered policy coherence, mutual accountability, and predictability in communication. The inclusion of ASEAN bodies, UN Women regional and country representatives, and donor partners created a balanced forum for both oversight and collaboration, reinforcing joint ownership of project outcomes.

The dedicated project team, co-located with the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, was consistently highlighted as a key asset for the project's success. Physical proximity to ASEAN's decision-making machinery allowed for continuous liaison, timely troubleshooting, and real-time alignment with ASEAN's consensus-based processes. The Jakarta-based team's ability to attend meetings in person, coordinate across Sectoral Bodies, and maintain daily communication with the ASEC Poverty Eradication and Gender Division

(PEGD) and the Political-Security Community Department significantly accelerated decision-making. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized that **"the project could not have been as effective or efficient without UN Women's presence in Jakarta,"** underlining the value of embedded partnership for political and operational agility. The establishment of focal points within ASEAN Sectoral Bodies supported a cohesive management structure that balanced strategic oversight with operational responsiveness during implementation.

Coordination and communication across partner groups were also described as consistently strong. Donors, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, and national stakeholders viewed UN Women as a responsive, transparent, and flexible partner that provided timely reporting, technical guidance, and proactive engagement.

Beyond ASEAN institutions, the project's partnership model effectively integrated a wide range of actors – including the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), national NGOs, and grassroots CSOs – into planning and implementation. This inclusive governance approach enhanced legitimacy and grounded the regional policy work in national realities. **Civil society partners described UN Women as "present," "approachable," and "solution-oriented," crediting this inclusive partnership model for reinforcing local ownership and ensuring that WPS commitments translated into tangible results across Member States.** Some CSOs noted that more grassroots reach by UN Women would be welcome as coordination was not always efficient between CSO networks or big organizations and the grassroots level.

While the governance system was largely effective, the evaluation noted some early internal coordination challenges between the ROAP-based WPS portfolio and the ASEAN-focused Jakarta team, as reflected in initial

overlaps in mandates and reporting dilemmas. Concerns were raised earlier by [UN Women IAS](#) (2025) and the [Indonesia Country Portfolio Evaluation](#) (2024) in terms of coordination and efficiency of the Indonesia Country Office with its additional role as Liaison Office. However, challenges in the arrangement remained more related to internal UN Women reporting and the share of responsibilities between the Regional Office and Country Office than to practical implementation of the project.

The issues were resolved through joint planning, clearer role delineation, and strengthened internal procedures. By 2024, coordination among the Regional Office, the Jakarta Liaison/ASEAN team, and COs improved. COs reported frequent coordination meetings with the Jakarta-based team, at least monthly or more, and typically related to operational implementation, updating and reporting. Continuous advisory support and capacity development for monitoring and reporting was highly appreciated and contributed to standardized quality reporting. More in-depth learning sessions were reported by some country offices, taking place at minimum twice a year.

The project's governance design directly contributed to its high implementation rate of 100 per cent of planned targets achieved by mid-2025; it combined strategic oversight, operational agility, and partner ownership. The model demonstrated that co-location and continuous dialogue are critical success factors for regional initiatives requiring political engagement and coordination across diverse actors.

Challenges identified were predominantly administrative rather than strategic. Partners cited procurement

bottlenecks, layered ASEAN and national approval processes for event participation (in some cases requiring two to three weeks to identify a participant), and occasional late notifications and invitations to major events as recurring but manageable issues. These concerns reflect the inherent complexity of operating across multiple ASEAN and national systems rather than weaknesses in governance design. Partners suggested that early event planning, stronger coordination among ASEAN bodies, streamlined approval workflows (concept notes, agendas, invitations), and enhanced administrative flexibility could further improve delivery efficiency in future phases and support broader participation. In this phase, flexible funding arrangements, as well as understanding and support by donors, were instrumental in allowing the project to adjust and deliver efficiently despite these procedural constraints.

At the national level, the governance model proved adaptable and effective across diverse contexts. In the **Philippines**, coordination with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), Bangsamoro Women Commission (BWC), and the Ministry of Public Order and Safety in BARMM (MPOS) was characterized as a trustworthy and sound technical collaboration, despite some administrative delays. In **Thailand**, structured CSO-government dialogues, WPS network dialogues, and decentralized WE Centres facilitated rapid policy-to-practice translation. In **Indonesia**, joint planning with ministries ensured efficiency in implementation, while in **Timor-Leste** and **Viet Nam**, lean teams and close communication reportedly led to efficient delivery. **Across all cases, partners emphasized that UN Women's approach – characterized by co-design, flexibility, and transparency – contributed to national ownership and faster implementation.**



*Stakeholders consistently cited this model as one of the project's comparative strengths and a key driver of its successful delivery, positioning it as a best practice example of regional collaboration under the WPS agenda.*



***“The project could not have been as effective or efficient without UN Women's presence in Jakarta” underlining the value of embedded partnership for political and operational agility.***

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**FINDING 13:**

Resources were sufficient but tight compared to the scope and operational demands of the project. The project team optimized delivery through lean staffing and smart sequencing, while implementing partners sometimes stretched budgets and absorbed administrative barriers.

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The evaluation found that project resources were sufficient but tight given the regional scope and complexity of the initiative. Despite these constraints, the project team demonstrated strong cost efficiency through lean staffing structures, smart sequencing of activities, and disciplined financial management.

Well-established financial and operational procedures at the outset – combined with consistent adherence to corporate standards – enabled effective planning, transparent budgeting, and timely disbursement of funds. Multi-donor financing was managed through separate project codes, allowing for clear financial tracking and accountability across funding streams. Regular financial reporting and audits were consistently delivered on time and rated by donors as both accurate and of high quality, reflecting robust fiscal discipline and credibility in resource stewardship.

While the project had a large complement of personnel across layers of implementation – 19 full and part time personnel (see Figure 3 in the Portfolio Overview section) – operationally, it optimized delivery by leveraging in-house technical expertise for coordination and support to partners. Proximity to the ASEAN Secretariat reduced travel and coordination costs while ensuring continuous engagement. Travel costs were still an important part of the budget as the project required bringing participants from across the ASEAN region to regional events and trainings.

Implementing partners, including CSOs and ASEAN bodies, occasionally had to stretch their budgets and absorb administrative delays – particularly related to procurement and national approval procedures – but did so without compromising overall delivery. Some inefficiencies arose from late participant confirmations, even with deadlines and reminders set by UN Women and ASEAN, and unavoidable event cancellations, leading to sunk costs in logistics and travel arrangements. Additionally, UN Women's institutional travel ceilings and recent travel approval policies were not always suited to the demands of a regionally mobile programme, occasionally limiting responsiveness and flexibility.

Nonetheless, partners consistently rated the core team's technical quality, responsiveness, and operational efficiency as high, noting that targeted expertise and close coordination compensated for resource constraints.

**Overall, the project's financial and operational performance demonstrated prudent use of limited resources, achieving strong results within a constrained budget framework.**



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**FINDING 14:**

A standardized results framework and dedicated personnel at regional and country levels enabled regular tracking and strong donor reporting. Some data gaps from Member States, due to their limited capacities in monitoring and reporting and light post-training follow-up, limited impact-level learnings.

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The project's monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system was generally well designed and effectively implemented, capturing results across ASEAN bodies, national and subnational institutions, and civil society partners. A dedicated MEL professional, working in close coordination with the regional team and COs, ensured coherence and consistency in data collection, reporting, and learning processes.

Regular capacity development sessions on MEL were highly appreciated across country offices. Interviewees reported the strengthened MEL skills of project personnel and implementing partners, reinforcing a shared understanding of indicators, data quality standards, and reporting requirements. The project applied sound methodologies for tracking progress and outcomes, and data were readily available and of good quality. These elements contributed

to a reliable evidence base that supported adaptive management and informed strategic decision-making across the regional portfolio.

However, several gaps and areas for improvement were identified. While the system successfully monitored implementation and output-level and immediate outcome-level results, it did not systematically capture post-training or post-engagement outcomes, particularly through alumni follow-up in capacity-building strands. Such an indicator was not set up in the project design and its monitoring framework. This gap limited opportunities for longitudinal learning and evidence of sustained behavioural or institutional change. It also reduced the chances for learning and adjustment if needed to support stronger practical implementation.

Light-touch follow-up surveys or periodic outcome harvesting exercises could address this weakness and strengthen evidence on impact. In **Viet Nam**, the absence of a dedicated MEL officer placed additional responsibilities on the programme manager and reportedly occasionally affected the depth and independence of monitoring activities. Further, some partners found existing data collection tools overly simplified, making it difficult to verify results or capture qualitative dimensions of change. Addressing these gaps through strengthened MEL resourcing, more robust verification mechanisms, and structured post-engagement tracking would enhance the project's capacity to generate and use evidence for learning, accountability and future programming.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Q6

**TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT BUILT POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO THE WPS AGENDA AND OWNERSHIP OVER THE RESULTS AND HOW LIKELY ARE THE RESULTS TO BE SUSTAINABLE IN THE LONG TERM?**

### FINDING 15:

The project's results and policy frameworks show a promising likelihood of sustainability, though with country-specific variations. ASEAN and its Member States and Observer States show strong political commitment, but sustainability depends on institutionalizing funding streams, ensuring CSO participation, and guarding against political shifts.

At the regional level, ASEAN and its Sectoral Bodies have shown strong political commitment to keep implementing the RPA WPS and to serve as a regional knowledge hub. Even under funding constraints, core activities are likely to continue such as policy dialogue, peer learning, and knowledge curation. Particularly strong commitment was seen at the ASEC Poverty Eradication and Gender Division (PEGD), ASEAN IPR and the Committee on Women. There is further space to build ownership over the agenda across all the Sectoral Bodies, and clearer articulation of the WPS agenda connection across four pillars, and in particular the economic pillar. **There is a real risk, however, that without predictable resources, the momentum, scope, and downstream effects will narrow, but not completely disappear. Logistically, during the project ASEAN relied to a large extent on UN Women's capacities. Future sustainability at this level requires diversified financing, plus a permanent regional secretariat to coordinate work on the RPA WPS.**

Country ownership remains uneven, and this directly affects sustainability. **Thailand**, the **Philippines** (including BARMM) and **Timor-Leste** display stronger government stewardship complemented by organized civil society and local networks; the connection of WPS to broader gender and development systems (e.g., budgets, social protection, DRR) increases the odds that WPS activities will be institutionalized rather than projectized. Timor-Leste shows stronger cross-ministerial commitment to becoming a full member of ASEAN. The WPS project contributed to the localization of the WPS agenda by strengthening institutional capacities on negotiation, capacitating women leaders in diplomacy, and aligning national priorities with regional and global WPS commitments.

In Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia and Viet Nam (with its early rollout), the WPS project results are promising but fragile, and will need further policy consolidation, explicit budget tagging, civil service engagement and institutional anchoring to sustain. It is critical to note that most of these

countries have been involved in the project only since 2024. In **Indonesia** stakeholders reported inclusive development of local action plans that brought the agenda closer to communities. They also reported capacity development in national institutions for implementation, yet implementation still relies heavily on CSOs due to limited public resources.

Financial sustainability is the most consistent pressure point. In **Timor-Leste**, stakeholders recognize that NAP 1325 delivery depends on recurrent domestic allocations; some security institutions have begun self-funding activities, while others remain donor-dependent. The **Philippines** is advancing a more durable model by embedding WPS into budgeting, training to tag and track WPS, and cascading modules through national learning institutions and Local Government Unit platforms – an approach that converts political commitments into routinized public expenditure. **Thailand's** WE Centres illustrate another path: leveraging provincial and municipal plans, gaining visibility with governors and SBPAC, and using that traction to access diversified funding and in-kind support.

At Member State level, the project helped institutionalize WPS through a mix of policy support and the development of institutional mechanisms. Still, stronger engagement and ownership across line ministries and government institutions, beyond coordinating ministries, needs to be developed.

Where more of the key aspects of sustainability are aligned (e.g., clear mandates, budget allocations, trained focal points and institutional coordination), translation of policies into practice is quicker and more consistent. If one element remains weak (e.g., no budget code or staff-turnover), progress slowed and depended heavily on external project cycles.

The project expanded and normalized government-CSO collaboration. Regular consultation formats, communities of practice, and regionally convened dialogues gave ministries a safer lane in which to engage women mediators, DPOs, youth, and LGBTQI+ groups which is critical for prevention, protection, and participation pillars. Importantly, several security actors began applying WPS lenses to their own standard operating procedures (SOPs), such as GBV referral, community policing, and disaster response, showing that capacity gains were not confined to gender units alone but had started to travel across institutions.

Overall, the depth of institutionalization of these mechanisms varies. Countries with pre-existing governance infrastructure for gender (e.g., gender budgets, training academies, decentralized planning) absorbed and sustained WPS capacities more readily; those earlier on their WPS journey (new NAPs, limited budget authority, high turnover) show promising but fragile gains that require continued accompaniment. ASEAN's political commitment is solid, but without multi-year financing and an agreed division of labour across UN entities, knowledge services risk becoming thinner, and coordination costs will creep back into individual ministries.

**A broader systemic risk identified, however, lies in shifting global and regional investment priorities – with increased defence and security spending reducing available development resources for gender equality, prevention, and peacebuilding. This is compounded with concerns about the shrinking of civic space and tightening regulatory frameworks on development aid in some contexts. In this case, the continued political commitment of ASEAN and the engagement of dialogue partners in supporting inclusive security and WPS remain critical to preserve and build upon the progress achieved.**

Risk management for sustainability requires planning for shocks such as political transitions, border incidents, disasters, and non-traditional threats (cyber, trafficking, climate). The most durable designs mainstream WPS into existing national systems (police/defence training, disaster agencies, local development planning) so delivery continues during turbulence. Priorities include integrating WPS modules into civil service and security academies; adopting joint SOPs for GBV and crisis response; and maintaining rapidly disbursed, small grant facilities so that local actors can pivot quickly as contexts change. Where NAPs are newly approved (e.g., Viet Nam), issuing clear implementation guidelines, assigning focal points, and establishing budget codes will convert plans into practice.

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**FINDING 16:**

The project significantly enhanced the strategic partnership between UN Women and ASEAN, strengthening both institutions' leadership and visibility in advancing the WPS agenda. It contributed to building regional and national institutional capacities to implement WPS commitments. While the depth of institutionalization varies across countries, continued UN Women engagement remains essential to sustain coordination, policy development, and translation of capacities into measurable results.

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The project significantly elevated UN Women's regional standing and convening leverage within the ASEAN region. By embedding the WPS agenda in ASEAN's own frameworks – particularly the RPA WPS – and working through existing Sectoral Bodies, the project transformed UN Women's role from that of an external technical adviser to a trusted co-architect of regional policy and practice. Stakeholders reported that this alignment with ASEAN's internal mechanisms created new entry points for collaboration and policy dialogue, opening doors that had previously been difficult to access. The project thus enhanced UN Women's political leverage, enabling cross-pillar conversations on gender equality, peacebuilding, and governance that extended beyond traditional gender sectors.

This strengthened positioning translated into tangible influence within ASEAN's institutional ecosystem. UN Women's partnership became increasingly recognized as a source of technical depth and regional convening power, capable of mobilizing a diverse array of actors – from defence and foreign affairs to civil society and academia – around shared WPS priorities. The organization's role in facilitating dialogue across political-security, socio-cultural, and economic pillars was repeatedly cited as a breakthrough, helping to mainstream gender perspectives across policy domains historically resistant to them. The project's success in sustaining these cross-sectoral exchanges demonstrated that strategic co-location, consistent engagement, and evidence-based advocacy can effectively bridge institutional silos and advance gender-sensitive governance at scale.

On the institutional side, the project significantly strengthened ASEAN's internal capacity to operationalize WPS commitments. Through practical mechanisms – such as the WPS Resource Centre, the NAP Academy, and regularized training streams hosted by Sectoral Bodies – the project established a predictable and sustainable infrastructure for knowledge-sharing, skills development, and peer-learning. These platforms served as a continuous pipeline of expertise, equipping ASEAN staff, national focal points, and partners with practical tools to translate policy into practice. The structured learning approach also fostered institutional memory within ASEAN, reducing reliance on external consultants and creating a cadre of practitioners conversant in WPS principles, monitoring frameworks, and gender-responsive programming.

These training and knowledge-sharing mechanisms evolved into recognized forms of continuing professional development within ASEAN and its Member States. Policy drafting clinics, gender-responsive budgeting refreshers, monitoring and evaluation workshops, and localization toolkits became regular parts of ASEAN's professional calendar, institutionalizing learning beyond the project's lifespan. Participants and partner institutions alike acknowledged that these initiatives not only improved technical capacity but also deepened understanding of how regional commitments translate into national and subnational operations. As a result, the project helped to embed WPS practice more deeply into ASEAN's institutional DNA, thus laying the groundwork for sustained ownership, policy coherence, and long-term integration of gender and peacebuilding priorities within the region's governance architecture.



# 6

**LESSONS  
LEARNED**

<p><b>1. Co-location and embedded partnership drive political traction, policy coherence and efficiency.</b></p>	<p>The WPS ASEAN project demonstrated the high strategic value of physical proximity and embedded partnership. Co-locating the UN Women project team within the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta proved indispensable for effective coordination, trust-building, and rapid decision-making. This arrangement allowed for real-time alignment with ASEAN's consensus-based processes and accelerated the translation of technical inputs into policy outcomes. Future regional initiatives should consider institutional co-location or secondment models to strengthen ownership, responsiveness, and continuity in intergovernmental settings.</p>
<p><b>2. Inclusive governance enhances legitimacy and sustainability.</b></p>	<p>The project demonstrated that engaging a broad ecosystem of partners – ASEAN bodies, national governments, CSOs, and grassroots actors – creates legitimacy and resilience. Their integration ensured that the regional WPS agenda remained grounded in local realities and ensured continuity even amid varying levels of government engagement. An inclusive approach fostered mutual accountability and sustained momentum even amid administrative challenges.</p>
<p><b>3. Wider 'security' interpretation to include non-traditional risks unlocks entry points and leverages application.</b></p>	<p>WPS positioned as a practical response to climate shocks, disasters, cyber harms, trafficking, migration, violent extremism and other contemporary challenges opens doors. This framing brought in powerful actors (finance, interior, ICT, energy, environment, private sector) and normalized cross-sector solutions. Linking WPS with broader ASEAN priorities also supported policy traction. The project demonstrated that connecting WPS to ASEAN priorities – such as the care economy, climate resilience, and governance – helped broaden its relevance and institutional acceptance. Integrating WPS into cross-sectoral frameworks (on disaster management, human rights, transnational crime) facilitated ownership and reduced perceptions of WPS as a niche or external agenda.</p>
<p><b>4. Early effective localization efforts support vertical coherence and initiatives.</b></p>	<p>Relevance strengthens when regional guidance is paired with NAPs and immediately translated into subnational actions. Early agreement on role-mapping across levels, embedding of gender-responsive budgeting tags, and creation of simple localization toolkits with costed menus of actions contribute to effectiveness. Periodic local-to-national feedback loops can keep government and policies responsive to on-the-ground realities.</p>
<p><b>5. High-level political projects bear high financial costs.</b></p>	<p>High-level political regional projects require continuous presence, responsiveness and engagement with a wide spectrum of institutions. Although the project operated with tight resources relative to its regional scope, it achieved strong delivery rates through high personnel engagement, clear prioritization, and coordination with partners. Predictable multi-year financing and multi-donor flexibility are essential mitigators, as indicated by the WPS project and support from the Governments of Canada, Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom.</p>
<p><b>6. A strong MEL system underpins adaptive management and learning.</b></p>	<p>Dedicated MEL expertise and close coordination across regional and national levels allows for consistent data collection and timely course correction. The absence of such systematic alumni tracking limits longer-term outcome measurement and adjustments related to support for capacity development.</p>

# 7

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE EVALUATION TEAM

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## CONCLUSION 1:

Engaging with ASEAN on the WPS Agenda elevated political prioritization and institutional legitimacy, though participation remains to be developed.

— Based on findings 1-3 and 16

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The WPS ASEAN project – “Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace – Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN” – successfully positioned the WPS agenda as a regional priority, elevating its political profile and institutional legitimacy within ASEAN. By anchoring WPS in ASEAN’s own frameworks, most notably the RPA WPS, and engaging Sectoral Bodies across pillars, the project transformed WPS from a thematic niche into a recognized component of ASEAN’s peace and security architecture. This shift gave both UN Women and ASEAN new gravitas in convening regional dialogues and influencing policy trajectories. The project’s co-ownership model, emphasizing shared accountability and co-creation and strengthened ASEAN’s credibility as a regional driver of gender-responsive peacebuilding.

Strong project relevance led to solid government uptake of the WPS agenda across ASEAN Member States as reflected in the rapid adoption and advancement of national WPS policies. Beyond policy commitments, some governments also demonstrated concrete operational uptake mostly reflected in more robust coordination, further capacity development and the promotion of women in security and peacebuilding. In the **Philippines**, national coordination mechanisms were strengthened and women mediators trained in BARM; in **Viet Nam**, WPS was integrated into the national civil service curriculum and national trainers now reach tens of thousands of officials; in **Indonesia**, ministries

formalized coordination structures while CSOs and security actors expanded mediation and early warning initiatives; in **Timor-Leste**, a NAP Secretariat was established, WPS integrated into budgeting, and community mediators trained; while in **Thailand**, Women’s Empowerment (WE) Centres anchored community-level WPS action in border regions. **Cambodia** advanced through a national WPS situation analysis, and **Lao PDR** initiated its first NAP discussions, supported by new institutional knowledge gained through regional learning. Despite significant momentum, gaps remain. Implementation is uneven across sectors and regions, coordination between national and subnational levels is often weak, many institutions lack sustained financial and human resources, and WPS uptake still relies heavily on external funding and committed champions—leaving room for deeper institutionalization and more consistent operational practice. Further, for countries developing their NAPs WPS for the first time, the regional component of the project was a driving force while for those with longer traditions in the implementation of the WPS agenda, country and local level support and engagement gained greater traction. Future programming should thus deepen national-level engagement, particularly in countries not yet fully involved, through tailored technical support, flexible funding modalities, and stronger regional-to-national feedback mechanisms. This would ensure that WPS gains at the ASEAN level translate into consistent national action across all Member States.

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## CONCLUSION 2:

Vertical alignment between policy and practice has improved but needs further support.

— Based on findings 4 and 5

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One of the key achievements of the project has been its success in bridging regional policy commitments with national and subnational implementation. The establishment of structures, such as the WPS Knowledge Hub and the NAP Academies, alongside regularized training and coordination mechanisms, strengthened the vertical linkages between ASEAN frameworks and Member State action plans. This coherence allowed for

mutual reinforcement between policy formulation and field-level practice, resulting in more consistent application of WPS principles across levels. In countries, like Thailand and Indonesia where policy-to-practice pathways were explicitly developed, this vertical integration facilitated faster decision-making and tangible results.

Nonetheless, the vertical coherence between regional commitments and localized implementation still requires refinement. While mechanisms exist for information exchange, systematic feedback loops that ensure lessons from national and subnational levels inform regional policy updates remain underdeveloped. Moreover, localized implementation remains dependent on the capacity and

resources of national institutions, which vary widely across Member States. Strengthening this vertical coherence will require ASEAN and UN Women to formalize mechanisms for bottom-up learning – such as regional knowledge-sharing platforms, monitoring exchanges, and joint planning cycles – to ensure continuous alignment between regional policy priorities and country-level realities.

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### CONCLUSION 3:

**Policy achievements have been substantial, but there is a risk of over-norming at the expense of implementation.**

– Based on findings 6-9, 14

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The project made remarkable progress in advancing policy development and institutional frameworks for WPS across ASEAN. Through sustained advocacy, technical accompaniment, and evidence-based dialogue, ASEAN now possesses a comprehensive RPA WPS and an expanding network of sectoral and national-level strategies. These achievements have positioned ASEAN as a global reference point for regional WPS policymaking and demonstrated the organization's capacity to translate normative commitments into structured, cross-sectoral policy processes. **Stakeholders acknowledged that the project not only provided the intellectual and technical foundation for these policies but also succeeded in creating a shared regional vocabulary for WPS – an accomplishment that**

**significantly elevated coherence and legitimacy across the ASEAN architecture.**

However, the evaluation also highlights a growing risk of over-norming – that is, placing disproportionate focus on frameworks, guidelines, and statements of intent, at every level while concrete implementation and monitoring at the national and local levels lag behind. While ASEAN's policy achievements represent genuine progress, there is concern that excessive emphasis on policy production could divert attention and resources away from operationalization, field-level learning, and demonstrable change in women's security and participation.

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### CONCLUSION 4:

**Capacity development was transformational at individual and policy levels but requires sustained support for implementation.**

– Based on findings 7-11, 14-16

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The project's capacity development investments produced a clear paradigm shift across ASEAN institutions and Member States. Through systematic training, policy clinics, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, stakeholders developed a shared understanding of the WPS agenda, gender-responsive governance, and women's leadership in peacebuilding. These interventions not only enhanced individual competencies but also began to transform institutional cultures, moving WPS from the margins of gender discourse to a mainstream governance priority. Participants increasingly recognized women as agents of peace rather than passive beneficiaries, reflecting a substantive shift in both perception and practice.

Despite these gains, the sustainability and depth of applied learning remain a challenge. While ASEAN and national counterparts now possess stronger conceptual knowledge, many still require ongoing support to translate skills into consistent, institutionalized practice. In some Member States, turnover of trained personnel and limited operational budgets have constrained the application of new tools and approaches. To consolidate the gains of this paradigm shift, the next phase should focus on structured follow-up mentoring, peer learning, and institutional embedding of training modules into official curricula, thereby ensuring that WPS capacity becomes a permanent feature of ASEAN and national institutional development.

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## CONCLUSION 5:

**Sustainability gains are evident but require continued investment and a follow-on phase.**

— Based on findings 15-16

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The project established a strong foundation for sustaining WPS achievements across ASEAN through institutional mechanisms, knowledge platforms, and enduring partnerships. The creation of the WPS Resource Centre, the institutionalization of training pipelines, and ASEAN's increased policy ownership all indicate positive progress toward long-term sustainability. Moreover, the high degree of trust and coordination built among ASEAN, UN Women, and donor partners provides a durable platform for ongoing collaboration. The project's design, anchored in ASEAN's own systems rather than parallel structures, enhanced prospects for continuity beyond the project cycle.

Nonetheless, sustainability remains fragile without continued investment and strategic follow-up. While there is a strong commitment to pursue implementation of the Regional Plan of Action – in particular within the ASEC Poverty Eradication and Gender Division (PEGD), ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation and the Committee on

Women – and the capacity to run the agenda independently, there is a real risk that without predictable resources, the momentum, scope, and downstream effects will narrow. Still, even in that scenario, the momentum would not completely disappear.

Logistically, the current level of WPS activity would require further expansion of human resources at ASEAN as well. Financial sustainability, in particular, is a concern as many activities rely on donor funding rather than ASEAN core resources. Similarly, maintaining the momentum of WPS mainstreaming efforts requires continued advocacy, capacity support, and dedicated technical accompaniment.

**A second phase of the project would be essential to consolidate achievements, deepen institutionalization, transfer full ownership to ASEAN, and ensure that regional structures are fully capable of sustaining WPS implementation autonomously.**

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## CONCLUSION 6:

**Close cooperation and co-location were critical to project success.**

— Based on findings 12-13

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The co-location of the UN Women ASEAN team within the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta was a decisive factor in the project's effectiveness. This physical proximity enabled daily interaction, rapid troubleshooting, and real-time alignment with ASEAN's processes and priorities. It also fostered a high-trust working relationship, allowing UN Women to serve not just as a technical partner but as an embedded facilitator of ASEAN's WPS agenda. Stakeholders consistently emphasized that the project's agility, responsiveness, and visibility were direct outcomes of this arrangement. The ability to engage face-to-face with ASEAN officials, participate in internal meetings, and respond swiftly to emerging opportunities proved indispensable to the project's success.

Given the complexity of ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making and the importance of sustained in-person engagement and daily interaction in regional diplomacy, maintaining this co-location is vital for future programming. The proximity model has demonstrated clear advantages in ensuring policy coherence, accelerating approvals, and embedding gender considerations across sectors. For subsequent phases, the arrangement should be institutionalized and potentially expanded through structured liaison mechanisms across the Jakarta-based team, ROAP, and Member State focal points. This effort will sustain the benefits of close cooperation while enhancing coherence across all levels of the ASEAN-UN Women partnership.



# 8

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that the WPS ASEAN Project was jointly implemented by UN Women and ASEAN, the evaluation recommendations apply to both entities. With strengthened ownership by ASEAN and its Member States, these recommendations can be particularly valuable for future implementation and sustainability efforts.

## RECOMMENDATION 1:

Develop a structured, ASEAN-led transition plan co-designed with UN Women to ensure continuity, mitigate risks, and progressively build the institutional capacities and infrastructure required for long-term sustainability.

— Based on all conclusions

**Priority:** High

**Recommended time frame:** Q1–Q4 2026, and continued into the second phase of the project

**Complexity:** Complex – Requires full engagement of ASEAN secretariat, continued engagement of UN Women and the donor community, the expansion of teams, and the building of equal ownership across the ASEAN structure.

## Rationale

The evaluation confirms strong political commitment within ASEAN to sustain the WPS agenda, yet also identifies uneven institutional capacity, high reliance on UN Women's technical and coordination functions, and insufficient predictable financing for ASEAN-led mechanisms. The recommendations focus on development and implementation of a deliberate sustainability plan, the risk of gains narrowing once project funding ends and the enhancement of ASEAN's ability to autonomously manage WPS policy development, monitoring, coordination, and knowledge services.

## Actions to consider

- Review and consolidate the vision of WPS agenda management at ASEAN, including the WPS Advisory Group, the roles of the Sectoral Bodies, ACW and ACWC, and the stronger units such as ASEAN IPR and the ASEC Poverty Eradication and Gender Division (PEGD).
- Agree on expansion of the WPS agenda and what it means for each of the sectoral pillars and ensure stronger ownership in other Sectoral Bodies as required.
- Analyse the capacities and plan for expansion with a dedicated WPS staff member/team.
- Agree on time-bound transitional milestones (articulating the first co-led phase, the ASEAN-led phase from the second year on and the transition to autonomous ASEAN implementation towards the end of the project).
- Map risks to sustainability (considering those identified by this evaluation, such as financial, institutional, political, operational) and define mitigation strategies.
- Strengthen or revise terms of reference for ASEAN bodies engaged in WPS in line with the plan.
- Review coordination and communication protocols and address the challenge of lengthy approvals and late external communication and notifications (for example, on key deliverables and major events).
- Map donors, establish a donor coordination body and develop a multi-source financing framework to ensure sustainability. Consider national allocations.
- Jointly leverage UN coordination for advancement of the WPS agenda, particularly with the wider scope of definition and with agencies having mandates in connected issues such as transnational crime, migration, climate change, disaster risk reduction, health and protection, humanitarian action etc.
- Ensure targeted support for sustainable capacities in ASEAN for policy development and harmonization, monitoring, evaluation and data management, further strengthening of knowledge generation and capacity development.
- Develop a plan for activation of the regional crisis response, mediation capacities and communities of practice.
- Plan country level actions to ensure Member State readiness for an ASEAN-led system.

## RECOMMENDATION 2:

For stronger impact, expand national engagement to remaining ASEAN Member States and deepen involvement with those currently implementing the WPS agenda.

– Based on all conclusions

**Priority:** High

**Recommended time frame:** Q1–Q4 2026

**Complexity:** Medium – Requires diplomatic engagement and coordination but builds on existing structures.

### Rationale

While the project successfully elevated WPS as a regional priority, participation and ownership among Member States remain uneven. Some governments are not yet translating regional commitments into national policies or action plans. Those implementing the WPS agenda often have financial and human resources constraints and limited monitoring, evaluation and learning.

### Actions to consider

- **Develop tailored support packages** for Member States without NAPs, or with weak WPS frameworks, focusing on institutional readiness and interministerial coordination, and for those already implementing, including financial support to boost implementation.
- **Use flexible funding modalities** like small grants or catalytic funding to incentivize engagement from underrepresented stakeholders, including academia, media and civil society.
- **Involve other non-traditional stakeholders**, such as businesses, religious/faith-based organizations, and traditional leaders.
- **Facilitate peer exchange among countries** with advanced and emerging WPS frameworks to promote South-South learning and mentorship.
- **Continue high-level political engagement and advocacy** through the ASEAN Secretariat and Sectoral Bodies to encourage ASEAN Member States without national WPS policy frameworks to prioritize WPS as part of their governance and security commitments.
- **Consider the establishment of a regular reporting mechanism on WPS** between Member States and ASEAN.

## RECOMMENDATION 3:

Strengthen vertical coherence between regional policies and national/subnational implementation.

– Based on conclusion 3

**Priority:** High

**Recommended time frame:** Q1–Q4 2026

**Complexity:** High – Coordination-intensive, requires political buy-in, data harmonization and financial and human resources.

### Rationale

The project made significant progress linking ASEAN-level policies to national action but needs more robust feedback loops to ensure lessons from practice inform regional policy.

### Actions to consider

- **Create mechanisms within ASEAN's WPS governance structure for Member States to report** not just on compliance but on implementation experiences and lessons learned.
- **Engage in joint monitoring missions** and conduct periodic ASEAN–UN Women field reviews to observe how regional commitments are being operationalized at local levels.
- **Provide support to monitoring, evaluation and reporting.** Support in-country monitoring and reporting as well as vertical connection between Member States and ASEAN in terms of reporting on implementation of the regional commitments.

- **Consider integrated planning cycles and synchronize ASEAN annual reviews** with national WPS planning and reporting calendars to reinforce alignment (to the extent possible, considering planning and reporting calendars in Member States).
- **Support digital knowledge exchange.** Strengthen ASEAN's ownership and sustainability of the WPS Knowledge Hub and consider supporting connection to national databases and expanding user-generated

content. In the future, consider advancing to an interactive platform that enables practitioners from national and regional level to connect, collaborate, and actively exchange experiences and learning.

- Continue discussions on the potential of the engagement of ASEAN Women Peace Registry Members in crises in the region through neutral modalities – dialogue, facilitation, and impartial mediation.

#### RECOMMENDATION 4:

**Consolidate capacity development by institutionalizing training and follow-up mentoring.**

– Based on conclusion 3 and 4

**Priority:** High

**Recommended time frame:** Q2–Q4 2026

**Complexity:** Medium – Technically feasible but requires modest investment and long-term commitment.

##### Rationale

The project successfully shifted mindsets and built shared understanding of WPS but sustained application of learning still needs support.

##### Actions to consider

- **Continue institutionalization of training programmes** and embedding WPS-related modules into ASEAN and national civil service training curricula to ensure continuity.

- **Establish regional and national alumni networks** for trained officials, CSOs, and mediators to maintain peer learning and exchange.
- **Promote mentorship and coaching** by pairing senior ASEAN or government practitioners with emerging leaders to reinforce practical applications of WPS skills.
- **Conduct light-touch follow-up surveys and outcome harvesting** to assess how training and other forms of capacity development are applied over time.

#### RECOMMENDATION 5:

**Safeguard policy momentum while avoiding over-norming and under-implementation.**

– Based on conclusion 3 and 4

**Priority:** High

**Recommended time frame:** Q2–Q4 2026

**Complexity:** Medium – Relies on policy alignment and structured monitoring and on allocation of human and financial resources.

##### Rationale

ASEAN's policy gains are significant, but excessive focus on normative frameworks risks overshadowing practical implementation and results.

##### Actions to consider

- **Balance policy and practice** by requiring that each new policy or guideline be accompanied by an implementation roadmap and indicative budget.

- **Support demonstration projects and pilot interventions** in Member States to showcase practical applications of ASEAN WPS policies.
- **Monitor focus shift, including outcome-oriented indicators** that track behavioral or institutional change, not just policy adoption.
- **Conduct regular policy-to-practice reviews** by continuing ASEAN WPS reflection sessions that examine what has been implemented and not only what has been adopted.

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## RECOMMENDATION 6:

Maintain and institutionalize UN Women's co-location and close cooperation with ASEAN.

– Based on conclusion 6

**Priority:** High

**Recommended time frame:** Q1–Q4 2026

**Complexity:** Low–Medium – Operationally straightforward, largely dependent on sustained funding and staffing stability.

### Rationale

Proximity to the ASEAN Secretariat proved a critical success factor for coordination, trust, and visibility. Maintenance of this arrangement is essential for continuity. Since the creation of this new regional commitment, and the resultant reputational and political benefits for both partners, continued engagement between UN Women and ASEAN is a logical way forward.

### Actions to consider

- **In line with the regional UN Women agenda, sustain an official ASEAN-UN Women liaison mechanism** with clear terms of reference for communication, joint planning and decision-making.
- **Enhance coordination with ROAP and Country Offices** and regularize internal coordination protocols to ensure smooth flow of information and to avoid duplication.
- **Invest in presence and mobility by securing resources** for continued staff presence in Jakarta and for timely travel across ASEAN to sustain engagement.
- **Document good practices by capturing and disseminating lessons on co-location** to inform replication in other regional or intergovernmental contexts, through UN Women.

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## RECOMMENDATION 7:

Manage the localization trend to preserve coherence and focus on implementation.

– Based on conclusion 3

**Priority:** Medium

**Recommended time frame:** Q1–Q4 2026

**Complexity:** High – Requires national-level coordination, political will and harmonized monitoring systems and resources.

### Rationale

While localization of WPS plans increases ownership, the proliferation of sectoral or departmental plans risks diluting coordination and shifting attention from actual delivery.

### Actions to consider

- **Provide ASEAN-endorsed guidance** on how localized or departmental action plans should align with national and regional frameworks.
- **Streamline reporting mechanisms** and encourage governments to integrate reporting from localized plans into national WPS frameworks rather than creating new parallel systems.
- **Prioritize implementation reviews** and ensure localization efforts are accompanied by measurable implementation milestones and outcome tracking.
- **Continue promoting whole-of-government coordination** and support interministerial platforms to oversee WPS localization and avoid fragmentation.



# 9

## **PROPOSED DISSEMINATION STRATEGY**

The purpose of this section is to ensure that the findings and lessons from the evaluation of the WPS ASEAN project are shared effectively with all stakeholders to promote learning, inform future programming and support an evidence-based management response and future decision-making.

## 1. PRIMARY DISSEMINATION CHANNELS

Presentation of key findings and recommendations in a joint, and then separate, dedicated regional learning session; joint development of the management response allocating responsibilities between ROAP, the ASEAN Liaison Office and ASEAN and other stakeholders; posting the final report and the management response on UN Women's [Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use \(GATE\) site](#) and the ROAP site; and posting the evaluation report on the WPS Knowledge Hub. Evaluation findings and recommendations should be disseminated to the ASEAN WPS Advisory Group, ACW focal points and ACWC representatives as the ASEAN owners of the RPA WPS and the main owner of the project results. ASEAN, its Member States and mechanisms, should be aware of the necessary recommendations ahead of second phase of the project to consolidate the grounds for implementation.

Identify focal points within each stakeholder organization to monitor implementation of the management response.

**Proposed time frame:** Within three months of report approval

## 2. COUNTRY OFFICES

Country-level learning workshops or reflection meetings to take place with government counterparts, ASEAN liaison bodies, and civil society partners. Each CO to prepare a short country brief summarizing findings relevant to their national WPS context and indicating how they will respond and integrate the findings into wider country programming.

**Proposed time frame:** Within six months of report approval

## 3. DONORS

Communicate the full report to donors supporting the WPS project to ensure transparency and accountability to funding partners. Engage with other donors through tailored briefs.

Invite key donors to present their management response.

Strengthen evidence-based dialogue for future programming and resource mobilization.

## 4. OTHER ACTIONS:

Key recommendations should be integrated into the design of the next ASEAN-UN Women WPS phase or related country projects.

The final report and executive summary will be publicly available on the web platforms of UN Women and ASEAN.

Lessons learned and recommendations should be discussed by ROAP, Liaison Office and Country Offices on the respective UN coordination platforms.

UN Women (either ROAP or the Liaison Office) and the ASEAN Secretariat could co-host an event that brings together governments, CSOs and partners to discuss evaluation findings and identify follow-up opportunities.

# UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead UN entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviours and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations translate progress into lasting changes. We make strides forward for women and girls in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

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