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**GENERACIÓN
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POR LOS DERECHOS
DE LAS MUJERES
Y UN FUTURO
IGUALITARIO

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

UN WOMEN REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN STRATEGIC NOTE EVALUATION 2023-2025

 **UN
WOMEN** 

 **FOR ALL
WOMEN
AND GIRLS**

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UN WOMEN REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN STRATEGIC NOTE EVALUATION 2023-2025

**UN Women Independent Evaluation,
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRO	Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office
AECID	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation)
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EVAW/G	Ending Violence Against Women/ and Girls
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
HR	Human Resources
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (Mexico) (Spanish)
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
MESECVI	Mecanismo de Seguimiento de la Convención de Belém do Pará (Spanish)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCT-SWAP	United Nations Country Team System-Wide Action Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSDCF	Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN WOMEN REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN STRATEGIC NOTE EVALUATION 2023-2025

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Purpose

The Strategic Note evaluation for the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean (ACRO) was conducted to assess the office's contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment during 2023–2025. The evaluation's purpose is to support accountability, promote learning and inform decision-making for the upcoming 2026–2029 Regional Strategic Note.

Objectives

The evaluation objectives were to:

1. Assess the coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the ACRO Strategic Note as a tool to guide UN Women's work in the region.
2. Identify good practices and lessons learned to inform future strategic planning processes.
3. Provide realistic and actionable recommendations for the next Strategic Note.

Intended users

The primary users of this evaluation are ACRO, its Country Offices, Non-Physical Presences and UN Women Senior Management, who will use the findings to inform the next Regional Strategic Note. Secondary users include partners such as governments, civil society, UN agencies and donors.

Background on UN Women ACRO

The Strategic Note is the main planning tool for ACRO to articulate its triple mandate across normative, coordination and operational work in the 27 countries it oversees. ACRO's total resource requirements between 2023 and 2025 were estimated at US\$ 45.2 million¹ with an actual budget of US\$ 38.084 million.²

Method

This evaluation employed a non-experimental, theory-based and gender-responsive approach. The evaluation team reconstructed the Strategic Note's theory of change to guide the analysis. The team obtained data from multiple sources, including desk reviews, and consulted over 290 stakeholders through interviews, focus group discussions and surveys.

¹ This represents the sum of the 2023, 2024 and 2025 PPM Award Budgets, as per Quantum information, sourced from the Project Delivery Dashboard.

² This represents the sum of the 2023, 2024 and 2025 PPM Award Budgets, minus the funding gap for the same period, corresponding to Budget (Actual).

KEY FINDINGS

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

Is ACRO contributing to the target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note, and are its structures and systems efficient?

ACRO made progress across the Strategic Note's three impact areas. Impact Area 2³ showed the most consistent progress, consolidating national care systems and advancing gender-responsive financing, with some gains in women's access to decent work. Impact Area 1⁴ also demonstrated effectiveness, contributing to political participation and ending violence against women, primarily through the Atenea and Spotlight programmes. Women, Peace and Security, and humanitarian action had more moderate progress. Finally, Impact Area 3⁵ showed strong advancement in improving UN system and governments' capacity in terms of gender equality and improving gender statistics.

ACRO's capacity to deliver results is constrained by operational challenges. Internal and external stakeholders have highlighted the need to strengthen back-office functions – particularly human resources (HR) and procurement – to address backlogs that disrupt project implementation. Specific issues reported include slow response and approval times within the Quantum platform; complex and lengthy procedures for partner agreement approvals; requirements for monitoring and reporting results; and insufficient operational staffing that requires the use of consultants in roles intended for core personnel. Additionally, corporate communication policies favour outdated platforms and are perceived as limiting digital outreach. Collectively, these constraints undermine timely implementation, overburden staff and impair the organization's responsiveness to external partners.

³ Women in Latin America and the Caribbean have increased their economic autonomy and their access to comprehensive care policies and systems.

⁴ Women in Latin America and the Caribbean live in a more equal, democratic, peaceful and safe society.

⁵ The UN system contributed to transformative changes for gender equality, and governments advanced implementation of international and regional gender equality frameworks.

COHERENCE AND RELEVANCE

How relevant and coherent were ACRO's areas of focus?

Stakeholders regard ACRO as providing highly relevant and coherent technical support, thematic focus and strategic partnerships that align with both the Entity's institutional mandate and the region's priority needs. The Strategic Note (2023–2025) offered a structured and coherent operational framework, ensuring that ACRO's actions remain closely linked to global and regional mandates and responded to current regional challenges – including climate, migration and violence. ACRO's technical assistance was especially valuable to Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences with limited staffing, providing targeted operational, planning and training support. ACRO's leadership and expertise has proven particularly effective in advancing key thematic priorities such as Ending Violence Against Women, Women's Economic Empowerment, and Women, Peace and Security.

Through its coordination mandate, ACRO has positioned UN Women as a relevant leader on gender equality, mainstreaming gender across UN planning processes and actively participating in regional policy-setting forums. Strategic partnerships and knowledge production – including leadership in data, legal frameworks and innovative initiatives in care and climate – further reinforce ACRO's value and influence. Evidence indicates that ACRO's multi-dimensional approach, focused on responsive technical support, cross-cutting themes and capacity-building partnerships, is seen as both relevant and strategically aligned with evolving regional needs.

SUSTAINABILITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

How sustainable and inclusive is ACRO's programming?

The assessment of sustainability highlights a critical tension between ACRO's mandate and the operational limitations imposed by its funding structure. ACRO's project-based funding structure undermines the sustainability of its results by restricting long-term strategic planning, investment in staff and the realization of core principles such as human rights and "Leave No One Behind".

Country Offices are often compelled to prioritize thematic areas based on donor-driven resources, leading to fragmented programming and reduced autonomy. This funding model also results in higher transaction costs, dependence on consultants for essential functions and loss of institutional memory through project-staff turnover.

Additionally, while ACRO is normatively anchored in human rights and intersectionality, implementation gaps persist, particularly for disability inclusion and the systematic application of environmental safeguards. Survey data and stakeholder feedback point to a need for clearer exit strategies, stronger national ownership and standardized approaches to emerging priorities such as climate action and institutional inclusion frameworks.

Ultimately, although ACRO's mandate and technical focus remain highly relevant, the sustainability and effectiveness of its contributions call for more robust resource mobilization strategies to bridge the gap between normative commitments and programmatic delivery.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1:

Strategic relevance and thematic leadership

UN Women's work in Latin America and the Caribbean is widely recognized as strategically relevant and aligned with the rights and priorities of women and girls. ACRO's leadership in key thematic areas such as Ending Violence Against Women, Women's Economic Empowerment and Women, Peace and Security has enhanced its normative influence regionally, supported by strong partnerships, particularly with institutions such as ECLAC. However, humanitarian programming remains relatively limited and less visible, while the need for staff to balance administrative and strategic tasks continues to constrain responsiveness and scalability.

CONCLUSION 2:

Operational systems and processes

Administrative and financial systems continue to ensure compliance but can slow implementation due to complex procedures, limited staffing and the adoption of new corporate systems. Smaller offices and Non-Physical Presences by design rely on ACRO's operational support, which during times of increased demand can cause backlogs and reduce decision-making agility at country level. Progress is evident through improved training and adaptation under new systems yet further streamlining and context-sensitive operational approaches are needed to enhance efficiency and responsiveness across diverse country contexts.

CONCLUSION 3:

Internal cohesion and tailored support

While ACRO has strengthened alignment in several areas, fragmentation between thematic, operational and country-level teams limits coherence and consistency. Variations in support quality and limited mechanisms for knowledge exchange reduce opportunities for synergy. Addressing these gaps and differentiating support structures would enhance equity, coherence and collective impact across the region.

CONCLUSION 4:

Funding model and sustainability

The current project-based funding framework, while supporting innovation and responsiveness, limits institutional stability, strategic planning and staff continuity. Dependence on short-term financing for structural positions constrains flexibility and increases transaction costs. Stakeholders emphasized the need for diversified, multi-year funding and more equitable resource allocation aligned with office typologies. A shift to proactive, coordinated resource mobilization around thematic and multi-country initiatives would strengthen financial sustainability and reduce vulnerability to short-term funding cycles.

CONCLUSION 5:

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Limited investment in monitoring, evaluation and learning functions constrains ACRO's ability to track outcomes, demonstrate results and integrate evidence into strategic decisions. Reporting remains activity-focused, with insufficient analysis of outcome-level performance and limited staff capacity dedicated to these functions. Progress within Communications, Data and Evaluation units has improved technical support, but gaps in coordination and data systems persist. Continued investment in capacities, analytical tools and ethical data management would enhance evidence generation and adaptive management.

CONCLUSION 6:

Strategic partnerships and regional influence

Partnerships remain a central strength and a key driver of ACRO's visibility, influence and results. Collaboration with UN entities, academia, civil society and the private sector has enabled impactful advocacy, joint programming and data-driven policy engagement. Landmark partnerships – such as with ECLAC and in the regional care systems agenda – demonstrate the value of collective action. Strengthening engagement with local organizations, feminist movements and sub-national actors would broaden reach, ensure contextual relevance and reinforce UN Women's legitimacy at the country level.

CONCLUSION 7:

Intersectionality and human rights safeguards

The Strategic Note demonstrates strong grounding in human rights and intersectionality, addressing inclusion across diverse groups through initiatives in care systems, participation and digital engagement. However, integration of cross-cutting themes such as disability inclusion, environmental sustainability and human rights safeguards varies by project. Institutionalizing standardized tools, capacity-building and monitoring mechanisms would strengthen the consistent application of intersectional and socioenvironmental safeguards across the region's programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Develop a regional resource mobilization plan

Draft a comprehensive regional resource mobilization plan, in line with corporate guidance, which promotes coordination, strategic prioritization and sustainability. Pilot the expansion of successful fundraising approaches in key programmatic areas, ensuring closer alignment with donor priorities and greater support for essential operational positions.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Streamline and strengthen back-office functions

Conduct a functional analysis to identify opportunities for increased agility and efficiency in regionally-led operational processes, with particular focus on enhancing HR and procurement support for Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences. Update standard operating procedures; invest in staff capacity and technology adoption; and clarify service standards for support requests.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Align regional planning with local needs and donor priorities

Integrate participatory, bottom-up strategic planning to better tailor regional priorities to country-specific needs and donor expectations. Increase flexibility in annual planning and promote broader consultation with Country Offices and local partners to ensure relevance and impact.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning systems

Enhance accountability and strategic adaptation by investing in improved planning and monitoring functions, shifting towards outcome-level measurement. Establish formal coordination and knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and incorporate AI and digital solutions for systematic data analysis and reporting.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Leverage technology and innovation for adaptation and efficiency

Leverage technology, including emerging AI tools and innovative IT approaches, to improve operational responsiveness, knowledge management and strategic communications. Identify staff as innovation focal points and develop dashboards for real-time data analytics.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Define a regional humanitarian plan

Develop and implement a clear regional humanitarian plan aligned with the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, outlining roles and coordination for timely response. Explore dedicated humanitarian funding and strengthen partnerships for gender-responsive action.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Systematize and scale high-impact normative partnerships

Establish an integrated network approach to systematize and scale high-impact normative partnerships, leveraging successful regional alliances and expanding engagement with UN agencies, development banks and local stakeholders. Foster joint workplans and cross-cutting programming for greater normative and political influence.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Operationalize the Regional Strategy on Gender, Environment and Climate Justice

Implement the Regional Strategy on Gender, Environment and Climate Justice, ensuring the integration of human rights, disability inclusion and environmental safeguards. Prioritize capacity-building and focused engagement with marginalized groups.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow blouse with colorful floral embroidery, is holding a green book. The book cover features the title 'VIOLENCIAS CONTRA MUJERES, JÓVENES Y NIÑAS INDÍGENAS' in white and yellow text. Below the title is a colorful illustration of a village with multi-story buildings and a dark sky with birds. The woman is looking off to the side with a serious expression.

VIOLENCIAS
CONTRA MUJERES,
JÓVENES Y NIÑAS
INDÍGENAS

Photo: ©UN Women ACRO/Gustavo Stephan

1

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 PURPOSE AND USE

The primary purpose of the Strategic Note evaluation for the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean (ACRO) is to assess the office's contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment through implementation of the 2023–2025 Strategic Note.⁶ The evaluation aims to support accountability, promote learning and inform decision-making for the upcoming 2026–2029 Regional Strategic Note.

As with other UN Women evaluations, it serves both learning and accountability functions, providing insights to improve strategy and planning, assess progress towards goals and evaluate use of resources. The evaluation is utilization-focused and participatory, engaging stakeholders from the start of the process through to developing recommendations.

Primary users of the evaluation include:⁷ ACRO, its Country Offices⁸ and Non-Physical Presences,⁹ UN Women senior management and relevant staff at all levels. The evaluation will also benefit partners, including governments, civil society, UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations, donors and the private sector.

The primary intended uses of this evaluation are:

- Supporting strategic decision-making in developing the next Strategic Note.
- Accountability of the existing Strategic Note in terms of UN Women's contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment as well as organizational effectiveness, learning and knowledge management.
- Learning on effective, promising and innovative strategies and practices to support achievement of the new Regional Agenda.
- Capacity development and mobilization of regional stakeholders to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

1.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The evaluation aims to determine how effectively the Strategic Note aligns with UN Women's mandate, the Sustainable Development Goals and regional priorities for women and girls. The evaluation also examines the extent to which planned results have been achieved, the factors influencing progress and the likelihood of attaining intended objectives by the end of the cycle (See Annex 1, Terms of Reference). Furthermore, it reviews the sustainability of results and the practical value of the Strategic Note's frameworks in advancing transformative change at the regional level. Finally, the evaluation aims to generate lessons learned and actionable recommendations to strengthen implementation, management efficiency and the design of the next Strategic Note. A fully developed Evaluation Matrix is available in Annex 2 and a list of the Evaluation Questions is available in Table 1.

The **thematic scope** of the evaluation covered UN Women's work at various levels, including its contributions in the operational, coordination and normative spheres, emphasizing those elements and areas that are most relevant for this evaluation.

The **geographical scope** of the evaluation was regional. While the timing and resourcing of the evaluation did not allow for in-depth national assessments, previous evaluations were used to inform this exercise.¹⁰

The evaluation focused on the current Strategic Note (see **Figure 3**), 2023–2025, mainly 2023–2024, as only partial data on results achieved during 2025 were available at the time of the evaluation. The timing is designed to inform planning of the next Strategic Note, which is scheduled to commence in 2026.

⁶ Available at: https://lac.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/en_sn_acro_19mar24.pdf

⁷ A detailed table outlining the target audiences and intended uses is provided in **Annex 5**.

⁸ Ten Country Offices: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti and Mexico; one Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean; and a programme presence in nine countries: Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Vincent & Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago.

⁹ Eight Non-Physical Presence Offices: Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

¹⁰ A detailed list outlining the documentation consulted is provided in Annex 3.

TABLE 1

Evaluation questions

GENERAL QUESTION AND CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS
<p>To what extent does the ACRO Strategic Note provide a coherent, relevant and effective vision, framework and road map for UN Women’s work in the region?</p>	<p>How do ACRO’s efforts support internal coherence, catalysing efforts at country level and bridging corporate and country-level efforts across UN Women offices in the region to ensure a coherent approach to achieving ACRO’s integrated mandate to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women? [Coherence 1]</p>
	<p>To what extent is UN Women’s regional thematic focus and strategies for influencing normative level efforts relevant and effective for advancing regional/subregional policy frameworks and agreements on gender equality and women’s empowerment? [Relevance 1]</p>
	<p>How effectively is UN Women leveraging its coordination mandate to strategically position itself and contribute to a more coherent and gender-responsive approach by UN partners and other development actors with respect to gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region? [Coherence 2]</p>
<p>To what extent have the ACRO Strategic Note’s intended results been effectively and efficiently achieved to date?</p>	<p>To what extent have the Strategic Note’s intended results been achieved to date, particularly the intended impact? [Effectiveness 1]</p>
	<p>What internal and external factors, barriers or opportunities have influenced progress towards achieving these results? [Effectiveness 2]</p>
	<p>Does ACRO have appropriate organizational structures, systems and capacity in place to ensure efficient use of resources to maximize results? [Efficiency 1]</p>
<p>To what extent has implementation of the ACRO Strategic Note contributed towards greater sustainability of UN Women’s agenda?</p>	<p>To what extent are the core elements and frameworks of the Strategic Note likely to continue, e.g. change strategies, theories of change and the integrated results and resources framework? [Sustainability 1]</p>
	<p>What are the strengths and weaknesses in the design, operationalization and implementation of the Strategic Note which may affect its sustainability? [Sustainability 2]</p>
<p>What are key good practices and lessons learned that should be incorporated in the future?</p>	<p>To what extent are ACRO’s knowledge management, results-based management, capacity development, resource mobilization, partnership development and management, as well as advocacy and communications effectively catalysing and supporting the delivery of UN Women results in the region? [Organizational efficiency 1]</p>
	<p>Has the portfolio been designed and implemented according to human rights and leave no one behind principles, including disability perspectives, social and environmental safeguards and development effectiveness principles (ensuring national ownership)? [Human rights and gender equality 1]</p>

1.3 EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation employed a non-experimental, theory-based approach, incorporating the “Most Significant Change” methodology and contribution analysis, with a strong focus on qualitative data from extended key informant interviews and focus group discussions.¹¹ This approach was guided by a reconstructed Strategic Note Theory of Change (see Figure 4).

This reconstruction was essential to clarify the pathways through which ACRO aimed to contribute to change in the region and to establish a structured framework for assessing evaluability and contribution to the Strategic Note outcomes. The theory of change informed development of preliminary evaluation questions; provided a consistent reference point for analysing results; and provided a framework to assess whether and how ACRO’s interventions contributed to the intended outcomes across the three impact areas (see **Tables 3–5**).

The theory of change also supported triangulation of evidence and helped identify gaps and areas requiring strategic adjustment.

It guided development of the evaluation matrix (Annex 2) and shaped the design of data collection tools (including interview, focus group and survey instruments) which were tailored to explore the assumptions, pathways and expected results embedded in the Strategic Note.

The evaluation was based on gender and human rights principles and adhered to the [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\) Norms and Standards](#) (2016), [UNEG Ethical Guidelines](#) (2020) and [UN Women’s Evaluation Policy](#) and [Handbook](#).

Data collection

Data collection and analysis were based on mixed methods. Emphasis was placed on making use of existing secondary data, such as project documents¹² and monitoring datasets, to limit the need to collect primary data.

The **desk review** included a diverse range of documentation:

- Monitoring data: Tracked progress towards intended results, focusing on indicators related to programmatic and priority areas. Sources included assessments, annual reports and past evaluations.
- Programme data: Provided insights into budget allocations, expenditure, funding sources and resource mobilization efforts.
- Financial Reports (2023 and 2024): Provided information on output and programme results.¹³
- External data sources: Government reports, academic studies and external databases to enrich contextual analysis.

Key informant, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions¹⁴ were conducted, either face-to-face or online with the following groups:

- UN Women staff directly involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Note.
- Donors and representatives from international development organizations that provided funding or supported UN Women’s programmes and initiatives.
- Implementing partners, UN agencies, partner governments and other regional and national organizations.
- Duty bearers and participants in capacity-building initiatives undertaken in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

An **online survey**¹⁵ (via KoBo), complemented qualitative data collection and broadened the evidence base. It targeted:

- Civil society representatives from organizations collaborating with UN Women on programme implementation or advocacy activities.
- Right holders, particularly project participants.
- Government officials involved in Strategic Note design, implementation or relevant policy oversight.

¹¹ A table outlining key informant interviews is provided in Annex 7.

¹² A detailed list of projects and interventions is available in Annex 4.

¹³ The evaluation team did not have access to the 2025 report, as this had not yet been completed.

¹⁴ Fifty people were engaged through key informant interviews and 28 others through four focus group discussions. See Figures 1 and 2.

¹⁵ For more details on sampling targets and achieved results, see Annex 11, and a full list of interviewed people is available in Annex 7.

The online survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions (**72 per cent closed questions** and **28 per cent open-ended**) to capture measurable trends and nuanced perspectives. This segmentation allowed for tailored analysis relevant to each stakeholder group's engagement with the Strategic Note.

The results of this mixed-method analysis are included in Figures 1 and 2.

Data analysis techniques

To ensure the validity of findings, the evaluation applied systematic triangulation. Evidence from various sources and methods was compared to identify areas of convergence, divergence and gaps. For instance, survey responses regarding the effectiveness of regional coordination were validated against interview data and documentary evidence from annual reports. Where inconsistencies were found, they were further explored through follow-up interviews or re-examination of the data.

This iterative process enhanced the reliability of conclusions and enabled a more nuanced understanding of Strategic Note performance. The analysis integrated multiple lines of evidence, including UN Women evaluations¹⁶ and other reports (e.g. annual reports, donor reports, evaluations, audits), as well as data collected through interviews, surveys and **Most Significant Change** stories (see **Annex 8**).¹⁷

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti software. Triangulation was operationalized through analytical coding, categorization and comparison of information across sources. Additional **contribution analysis**¹⁸ was employed to ensure the robustness of findings.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and generative AI tools (including Copilot, Gemini, Perplexity and NotebookLM) were used to support the organization and synthesis of qualitative data. These tools helped identify thematic patterns, summarize large volumes of text and orient the analytical process. However, all interpretation and validation of findings were conducted by the evaluation team and verified by the Regional Evaluation Specialist, ensuring contextual accuracy and methodological rigour.

The **Gender@Work Framework**¹⁹ was also used, particularly in interpreting Most Significant Change stories and outcomes reported through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The results of the analysis are included in **Annex 21** and the summary of changes is also illustrated in **Figure 15**.

The limitations of the evaluation are discussed at the end of this chapter and in **Annex 18**.

The use of four distinct surveys tailored to different stakeholder groups enabled a comprehensive understanding of UN Women's regional work from multiple perspectives.²⁰ Data from project participants, for instance, provided direct insights into the impact and relevance of interventions for rights holders.²¹ External partners contributed perspectives on policy influence and collaborative effectiveness, while UN Women personnel in Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences offered critical views on operational realities and internal coherence.

Contribution towards each Strategic Note outcome was analysed using the format outlined in **Table 2**. The results are reflected in **Tables 6, 7 and 8**.

¹⁶ A detailed list of documents reviewed can be found in Annexes 3 and 10.

¹⁷ Most Significant Change stories are a qualitative monitoring and evaluation technique used to capture the impact of a programme or intervention through personal stories of change. Instead of relying on predefined indicators, Most Significant Change focuses on collecting stories from participants about the most significant changes they experienced as a result of the programme.

¹⁸ Method used to assess the value of different activities or inputs by analysing what was done (content) and how it contributed to the outcomes (contribution).

¹⁹ The Gender@Work Framework highlights the interrelationship between gender equality, organizational change and institutions or "rules of the game" held in place by power dynamics within communities. More information at: <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>

²⁰ A list of data collection tools, protocols and the management plan can be found in Annexes 12, 13 and 14.

²¹ A total of 167 project rights holders participated in the survey (see Figures 1 and 2).

TABLE 2
Contribution Analysis

TARGET OUTCOME		
EVIDENCE FOR ACHIEVEMENT		
Achievement – strength of evidence		
Strong Corroborated by multiple sources and different types of stakeholders, with detailed examples	Moderate Corroborated by more than one source, but limited examples and/or general examples only	Weak Only cited by one source, or by one type of stakeholder. No specific examples provided
EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION		
UN Women's contribution – strength of evidence		
Strong Change explicitly attributed to a specific UN Women activity, detailed explanation of <i>how</i> it contributed	Moderate General and non-specific link between outcome and specific UN Women activities	Weak Link between the outcome and UN Women activity unclear, limited explanation of how the activity supported change
Contribution of other factors, testing of theory of change assumptions		

The theory of change also enabled the evaluation team to map findings from diverse sources (e.g. monitoring data, stakeholder consultations and Most Significant Change stories) against the intended results and change pathways. This approach supported the contribution analysis, helping to assess how and to what extent UN Women's interventions contributed to observed changes across thematic areas.

Sampling frame

The evaluation **employed a purposive sampling strategy** designed to ensure representativeness across stakeholder types, thematic areas and geographical locations relevant to the Strategic Note. The sampling approach was informed by a stakeholder mapping exercise and regularly updated to address gaps in representation. Detailed information on the sampling targets and results achieved is presented in **Annex 11**.

Thematic diversity was also prioritized, with representation across key areas such as political participation, economic empowerment, care systems, ending violence against women (EVAW), Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and gender statistics.

The evaluation team set initial targets for each stakeholder group, which were largely met or exceeded (See **Annex 11**²²). Minor adjustments were made during implementation to address underrepresentation in specific groups, such as Caribbean stakeholders and people with disabilities, using targeted outreach and cascade sampling techniques²³. **ACRO's main interventions were mapped** into a sample frame for evaluation (**Annex 2**). Selected flagship project evaluations and assessments were incorporated as case studies, using the **Most Significant Change** and **Gender@Work** methodologies (**Annexes 8 and 21**). Selection criteria for these evaluations included:

- thematic relevance
- regional geographical scope
- evaluation scope
- recency of evidence.

²² Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in the design, implementation or oversight of the Strategic Note, and their ability to provide insights into specific thematic or operational areas. The selection process also considered gender, disability status and subregional balance to ensure inclusivity.

²³ By identifying new stakeholders to be consulted through surveys and interviews

Additionally, country-level initiatives supported by regional technical experts were included, especially to address questions of efficiency and effectiveness. A full list of the evaluations and interventions reviewed is available in **Annexes 3 and 4**.

The stories of change were identified during development of the Impact Note Assessment to illustrate UN Women’s contributions to intended impacts and outcomes in the region. Some of these stories, particularly those related to interventions managed by ACRO or those that received specific ACRO support, were selected to illustrate this evaluation analysis.

Project-level reviews gathered feedback on specific interventions from programme managers, partners and government stakeholders. Finally, regional-level consultations with UN Women staff, donors and government partners provided a broader strategic perspective.

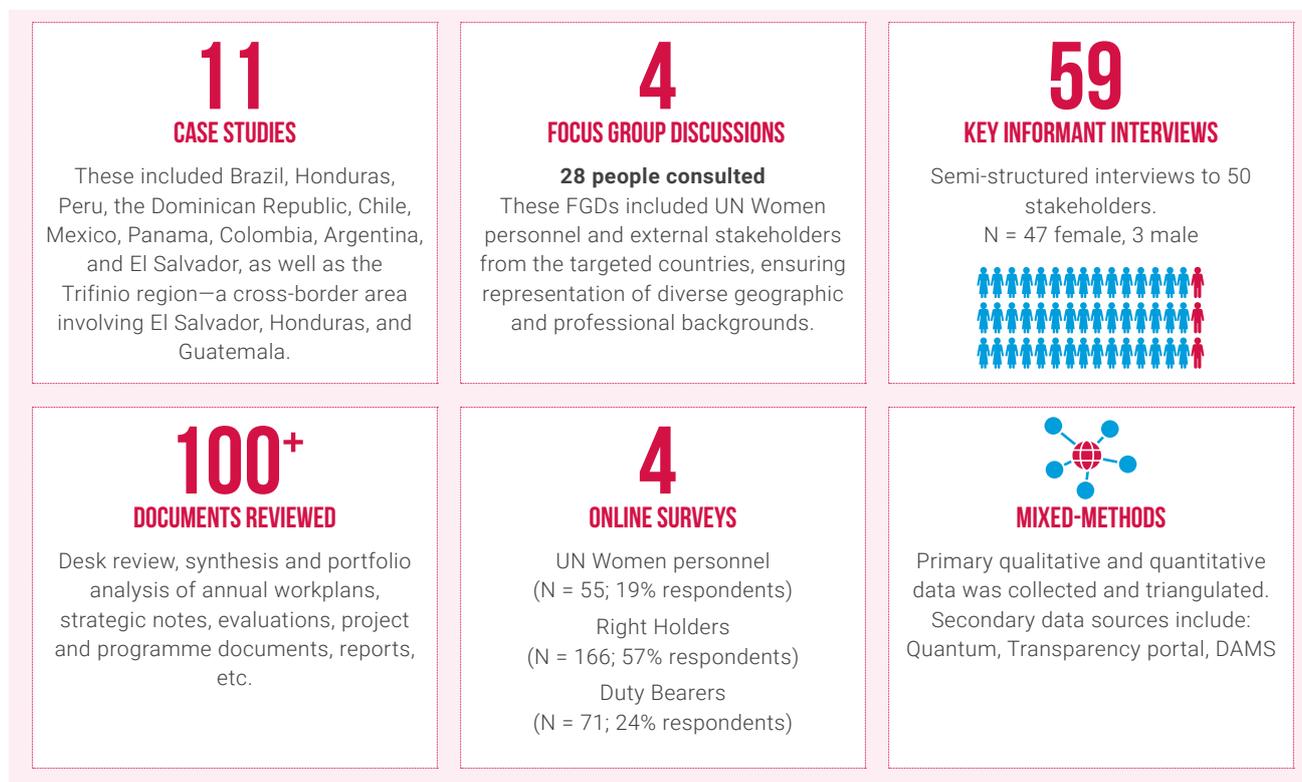
A summary of the data collected across the different data collection methods and sources, and the type of stakeholders consulted, is included in **Figure 2**.

FIGURE 1
Overview of survey participants



Source: Evaluation Team

FIGURE 2
Overview of data collection methodology



Source: Evaluation Team

1.4 ETHICS, GENDER EQUALITY AND LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The evaluation adhered to UNEG Norms and Standards (2016) and UNEG Ethical Guidelines (2020), upholding principles of integrity, accountability and respect. It also applied a gender-responsive and human rights-based lens, incorporating the UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation. This included analysing connections to normative frameworks (e.g. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW], Beijing Platform for Action), examining power dynamics, institutional barriers, participation and voice in the evaluation process.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in key informant interviews, focus group discussions and surveys. Verbal consent was requested at the beginning of each session, with participants informed of the purpose of the evaluation, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time and the measures in place to protect their confidentiality. For online surveys, informed consent was embedded as a mandatory first step in the digital form, outlining the same information in accessible language.

Confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the evaluation. No personal identifiers were recorded or reported, and all data was anonymized during transcription and analysis. Sensitive topics, such as political participation, gender-based violence or organizational performance, were handled with particular care. Interviews were conducted in private settings, and no sessions were video recorded unless explicitly agreed upon. Data was stored in compliance with the UN Women Information Security Policy, and access was restricted to authorized members of the evaluation team.

Instruments were adapted to reflect the linguistic, cultural and political contexts of different stakeholder groups. Surveys and interview guides were translated into Spanish, English, French and Portuguese, and interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the participant. For participants with limited digital access, alternative formats such as phone interviews or chat-based discussions were offered.

To ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities, the evaluation team consulted previous evaluations focused on the insights of disabled persons organizations and applied inclusive practices. In cases where participants required additional support (e.g. language interpretation or assistive technology) accommodations were arranged in advance, although none were used.

An Evaluation Reference Group (see **Annex 15**), composed of representatives from UN Women, government, civil society, donors and UN partners, provided oversight and feedback throughout the process. Additionally, an Evaluation Management Group (see **Annex 16**) reviewed the evaluation design, tools and preliminary findings to ensure ethical and methodological rigour. The Evaluation Reference Group met on 22 May and 26 June 2025.

A Data Management Plan (see **Annex 14**) outlined protocols for data protection, storage and disposal. All ethical safeguards were implemented in accordance with international standards and tailored to the specific needs of the regional context.

1.5 EVALUATION CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

The evaluation team identified and implemented mitigation strategies for several limitations across three main areas as detailed below.

Structural and contextual limitations

- **Funding climate:** Conducted amid financial uncertainty, which affected programme continuity and partner sustainability. To reduce bias, findings were rigorously triangulated.
- **Political sensitivity:** In sensitive contexts, confidentiality was prioritized through unrecorded, private virtual meetings to ensure safety and candid feedback.
- **Timing of the evaluation:** As the Strategic Note was still being implemented, full 2025 data was unavailable. The evaluation focused on interim results and used contribution analysis to assess progress.

Methodological limitations

- **Attribution of results:** Distinguishing ACRO's contributions from those of country presences was challenging. The team addressed this by identifying ACRO's added value through contribution analysis of the planned Strategic Note outcomes.
- **Selection bias and interview fatigue:** Limited time and recent research fatigue constrained stakeholder outreach. Mitigation included prioritizing existing data and purposive sampling, supported by Most Significant Change stories, as well as use of AI to map trends and perceptions of key informant interviews and focus group discussions.
- **Demographic skew:** Respondents were mostly female, reflecting UN Women's staffing. Despite outreach, people with disabilities and those with limited mobility were underrepresented. Insights from recent studies were used to fill gaps.

Operational limitations

- **Stakeholder access and scheduling:** Accessing stakeholders was sometimes difficult due to their competing priorities, and extension of the geographic scope. This required minor timeline adjustments, supported by persistent follow-up to ensure sampling targets were met or exceeded.
- **Data and representation gaps:** Gaps in programme documentation were addressed through direct interviews with project teams. A mid-point review also revealed an under-representation of Caribbean stakeholders, which was promptly corrected through targeted outreach of the Caribbean Multi-Country Office and the use of cascade sampling.

A complete table with limitations and mitigations is included in **Annex 18**.



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2

EVALUATION CONTEXT

2.1. GENDER EQUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The global landscape for gender equality has been shaped by a series of overlapping crises, beginning with the 2020 COVID-19 health emergency and deepened by the war in Ukraine, climate shocks, food insecurity and funding shortfalls. These crises have disproportionately impacted women and girls, particularly in the Global South, where structural inequalities are magnified by limited access to resources, services and decision-making spaces. The Latin America and Caribbean region exemplifies how these global dynamics manifest regionally, revealing both progress and persistent barriers to gender equality.

Over the past few years, Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced significant advances in gender equality, but structural challenges persist that limit the full exercise of women's rights. This analysis is based on key indicators used to examine the current situation in various dimensions such as gender-based violence, political participation, poverty, the labour market, human mobility, climate change and health²⁴.

Gender-based violence remains a structural problem in the region. Between 2020 and 2022, only 37 per cent of women felt safe walking alone, compared to 52 per cent of men. Although the intentional homicide rate for women (3.8 per 100,000 inhabitants) has remained constant, the rate for men has decreased to 35.9. Violence against women and girls is also reflected in child marriage: in 2023, one in five women aged 20–24 was married or in a union before the age of 18. In 2023, at least 3,897 women were victims of femicide in 27 countries in the region, representing 11 gender-based deaths per day. Only 13 per cent of countries have systems for monitoring gender equality.

Women have made progress in **political participation**, but inequalities persist. In 2024, women held 35.8 per cent of seats in national parliaments and 27.2 per cent in local governments. Countries with well-implemented parity measures achieve 45 per cent female representation locally, compared to 32 per cent in those without such measures. In the labour market, 36.3 per cent of managerial positions were held by women in 2023. However, in strategic sectors such as energy generation, women's participation is significantly lower.

The **feminization of poverty** is a persistent reality. In 2023, 3 in 10 women were in poverty, and 1 in 10 in extreme poverty. There are 121 women in poverty for every 100 men. Poverty disproportionately affects Afro-descendant, indigenous and rural women. In 2023, 30.3 per cent of women experienced food insecurity, compared to 25.1 per cent of men. It is projected that by 2050, climate change will push 13 million more women into poverty and 19.8 million into food insecurity.

Women participate less in the labour market (51.6 per cent) than men (76.9 per cent). The burden of care work remains unequal: women spend between 12 per cent and 24.2 per cent of their time on unpaid domestic and care work, while men spend only between 3 per cent and 12.5 per cent. This inequality is also reflected in income: women earn on average between 72.4 per cent and 98.8 per cent of what men earn. Additionally, 50.8 per cent of employed women work in informal conditions.

Women represent 51.3 per cent of international migrants in the Americas and 46 per cent of the forcibly displaced population. In 2023, of the total 520,085 individuals who crossed the Darién jungle, 26 per cent were women and 10 per cent were girls. Although 70.6 per cent of countries in the region apply safe and orderly migration policies, the differentiated impact on women and girls remains a challenge.

Climate change exacerbates gender inequalities. By 2050, its effects could push millions of women into poverty. In the region, only four countries report the proportion of the agricultural population with secure land rights, with a marked gap against women. Only one country (Colombia) has a legal framework that fully guarantees equal land rights.

The fertility rate in Latin America decreased to 1.8 children per woman in 2023, projected to be 1.68 in 2100. However, adolescent fertility remains high (50.6 per 1,000 women aged 15–19). Only 31 per cent of the laws necessary to guarantee access to voluntary termination of pregnancy are in force in the region. Maternal mortality, far from decreasing, increased by 13 percentage points between 2015 and 2020.

²⁴ This information comes from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/UN Women, The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Gender Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean: Gender Indicators for 2024, (LC/TS.2024/19), Santiago, 2025. More details on key gender indicators are available in Annex 19.

Finally, the **lack of disaggregated data** remains a challenge, as greater disaggregation by age, ethnicity and socioeconomic status is required for indicators related to violence, work and poverty. Some key data, such as physical and sexual violence against women and girls, require more frequent collection to strengthen monitoring. Measurement systems on the care economy also need to be strengthened to highlight the care economy's impact on GDP and gender equity, and to encourage budget allocation for care systems and gender equality initiatives.

The key gender equality indicators for the region are presented in Annex 19.

2.2. KEY CONTEXTUAL SHIFTS IDENTIFIED THROUGH DATA ANALYSIS

UN Women is operating in a rapidly evolving and increasingly complex financial and political environment within the region. These changes are reshaping both the external context and prompting internal reflection on structures, operations and strategic direction.

The UN system, including UN Women, **is facing growing financial pressures**, especially after recent cuts in foreign aid for gender equality. Competition among agencies for limited resources is intensifying, especially in middle-income countries where donor interest is waning. ACRO's current short-term funding model limits sustainable planning and puts essential programmes at risk. UN Women offices are increasingly dependent on short-term staffing arrangements and the sustained efforts of overstretched personnel to maintain operational continuity. In some cases, this has led to discussions about closing offices and programmes, which threatens to undermine women and girls' access to essential services, placing them at greater risk of violence, exploitation and harmful coping strategies such as early marriage or transactional sex.

The political landscape has become more volatile, with rising anti-rights movements and resistance to gender equality. This backlash is hindering progress

on key issues such as women's political participation, domestic violence and economic empowerment. Shrinking civic space and political transitions are disrupting advocacy efforts and limiting civil society engagement. These dynamics underscore the need for stronger political analysis and more adaptive strategies.

In smaller offices or Non-Physical Presences, the lack of dedicated operational staff exacerbates efficiency issues. There is no embedded procurement role in Non-Physical Presences, creating structural gaps in decentralized offices. Recent funding shortages have resulted in understaffed offices, with remaining personnel facing a heavier workload, creating an added pressure. UN Women personnel, identified **a key priority to boost operational efficiency** by creating unified (networked) systems, updating software technology and defining clear areas of responsibility. There is a growing demand to streamline processes, clarify roles and promote integrated planning.

Ongoing UN reforms, including "One UN", "UN Women's Pivot to Regions and Countries"²⁵ and "UN 80"²⁶, are redefining UN Women's role, and potentially reshaping its current structure.

UN Women's programming is **expanding to emerging areas** to address new and intersecting challenges. **Climate change, human mobility, digitalization and AI are reshaping the gender equality agenda.** The care economy is also gaining prominence, now viewed as a multidimensional issue linked to climate resilience, peacebuilding and territorial development.

Regional platforms such as the Regional Conference on Women are becoming increasingly important for cross-country dialogue and influence, which could be leveraged to expand ACRO's impact and to foster programmatic growth.

To navigate these challenges, as the lead agency on gender, UN Women must clearly articulate its value, foster inter-agency collaboration and build partnerships with non-traditional actors such as finance ministries, regional banks and the private sector

²⁵ The One UN approach was launched in 2006 to improve the coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of the UN system at the country level. It aims to help the UN deliver more efficiently. Pivot to the Field shifts decision-making and leadership closer to where programmes are implemented. It strengthens the role of field offices and Resident Coordinators, ensuring that local needs and realities guide UN actions.

²⁶ More details at <https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/en>



Photo: ©UN Women Americas and the Caribbean

3

PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

3.1. ACRO STRATEGIC NOTE 2023–2025²⁷

ACRO covers a region that is host to 33 UN Member States, overseeing and supporting 27 countries. This includes 10 Country Offices, 1 Multi-Country Office (with programme presence in nine Caribbean countries) and 8 Non-Physical Presences.

The ACRO Strategic Note (2023–2025) focuses on four UN Women Strategic Plan systemic outcomes to drive results across ACRO’s thematic areas: Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE), WPS, EAW and Governance and Participation in Public Life. At the same time, ACRO has been developing cross-cutting

approaches, such as work on financing for gender equality, climate change, gender-sensitive statistics and data, coordination, and intergovernmental and normative issues. UN Women’s regional strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean for 2023–2025 is structured around one overall vision and two general strategic goals (see **Figure 3**). These are followed by three impact areas, each composed of three outcomes, configuring a nine-outcome results framework. A detailed analysis of the performance of the Strategic Note indicators is available in **Annex 20**.

FIGURE 3
ACRO’s Strategic Note Framework



Source: ACRO’s Strategic Note

²⁷ Ten Country Offices: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti and Mexico. One Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean with programme presence in nine countries: Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Vincent & Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago. Eight Non-Physical Presences: Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela

3.2. THEORY OF CHANGE

ACRO's 2023–2025 Strategic Note does not include a theory of change²⁸; however, the document describes how ACRO's efforts will contribute to desired outcomes and impact, and guides ACRO's work. The Strategic Note defines three overarching impact areas – political participation and governance, economic empowerment and care systems, and institutional transformation for gender equality – supported by a set of thematic priorities and operational strategies.

ACRO also collected a large set of lessons learned based on implementation of previous Strategic Notes.

Based on these points, the evaluation team reconstructed a theory of change (see **Figure 4**) to identify how ACRO adds value and contributes to change in the region and used all nine outcomes to report contribution.

The theory of change was used to (a) inform the evaluability assessment (See **Annex 9**) and preliminary evaluation questions; and (b) develop contribution tables to assess whether ACRO contributed to its three Strategic Note impact areas (see **Tables 3–5**).

3.3. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

Portfolio analysis of the ACRO Strategic Note (see **Figure 5**), illustrates how resources were distributed across ACRO according to the office's Project Delivery and Utilization report. During the Strategic Note period (2023–2025), various regional programmes were/are managed by ACRO. When analysing the data by budget distribution, more than 50 per cent of funds went to regional programmes or multi-country projects: 35 per cent of the funding was concentrated in projects within Central America. Smaller activities were also observed in Venezuela, Peru, Uruguay and Paraguay²⁹.

All Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences consulted recognized that ACRO had provided technical support across normative, data and statistics or programmatic areas, as well as in areas of planning and coordination.

3.4. HUMAN RESOURCES

ACRO is based in Panama City, Panama, with 123 personnel, comprising 24 personnel (Fixed-Term Appointment/Temporary Appointment, 6 Service Contracts, 9 UN Volunteers and 84 consultants³⁰. This distribution highlights a strong reliance on consultancy roles within the workforce, with staff, volunteers and contractors comprising a significantly smaller proportion (See **Figure 5**).

3.5. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The Strategic Note's total resource requirements were US\$ 11.43 million for 2023, US\$ 15.92 million for 2024 and US\$ 17.85 million for 2025. The largest thematic areas of expenditure were Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Access (US\$ 21.29 million), and Women's Economic Empowerment (US\$ 20.80 million) in expenses. Budget expenditure in 2023 was 92.39 per cent and 79.72 per cent in 2024. By the end of September 2025, expenditure was around 63.27 per cent.

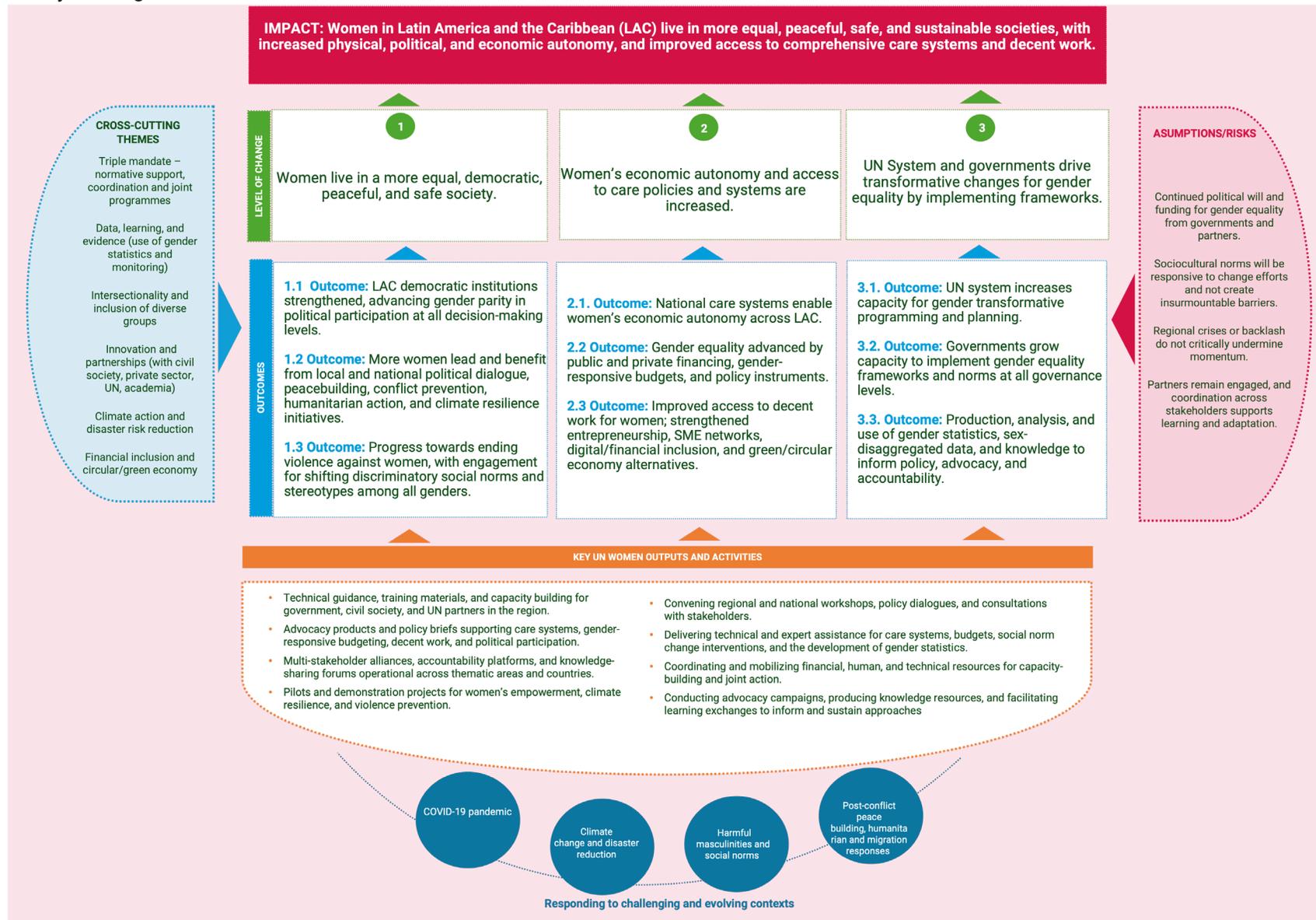
Funding sources have varied slightly over the years, coming largely from core resources (44 per cent) with non-core resources accounting for 36 per cent of overall funds. Top donors included the European Commission (US\$ 2.9 million), the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) (US\$ 2.75 million), the Government of Luxembourg (US\$ 1.67 million) and the Multi-Donor Trust Fund and Japan (each providing US\$ 1.65 and US\$ 1.63 million) (see **Figure 5**). Actual budget reached 80.2 per cent of target budget in 2023, 89.67 per cent in 2024 and had reached 82.13 per cent by September 2025 (see **Figure 5**). While actual mobilization consistently fell short of the set targets, the gap narrowed over the reported period.

²⁸ A theory of change was reconstructed based on the Strategic Note and preliminary desk review (see **Figure 4**).

²⁹ As informed from RMS dashboard in September 2025

³⁰ According to information provided by ACRO HR in September 2025.

FIGURE 4
Theory of change

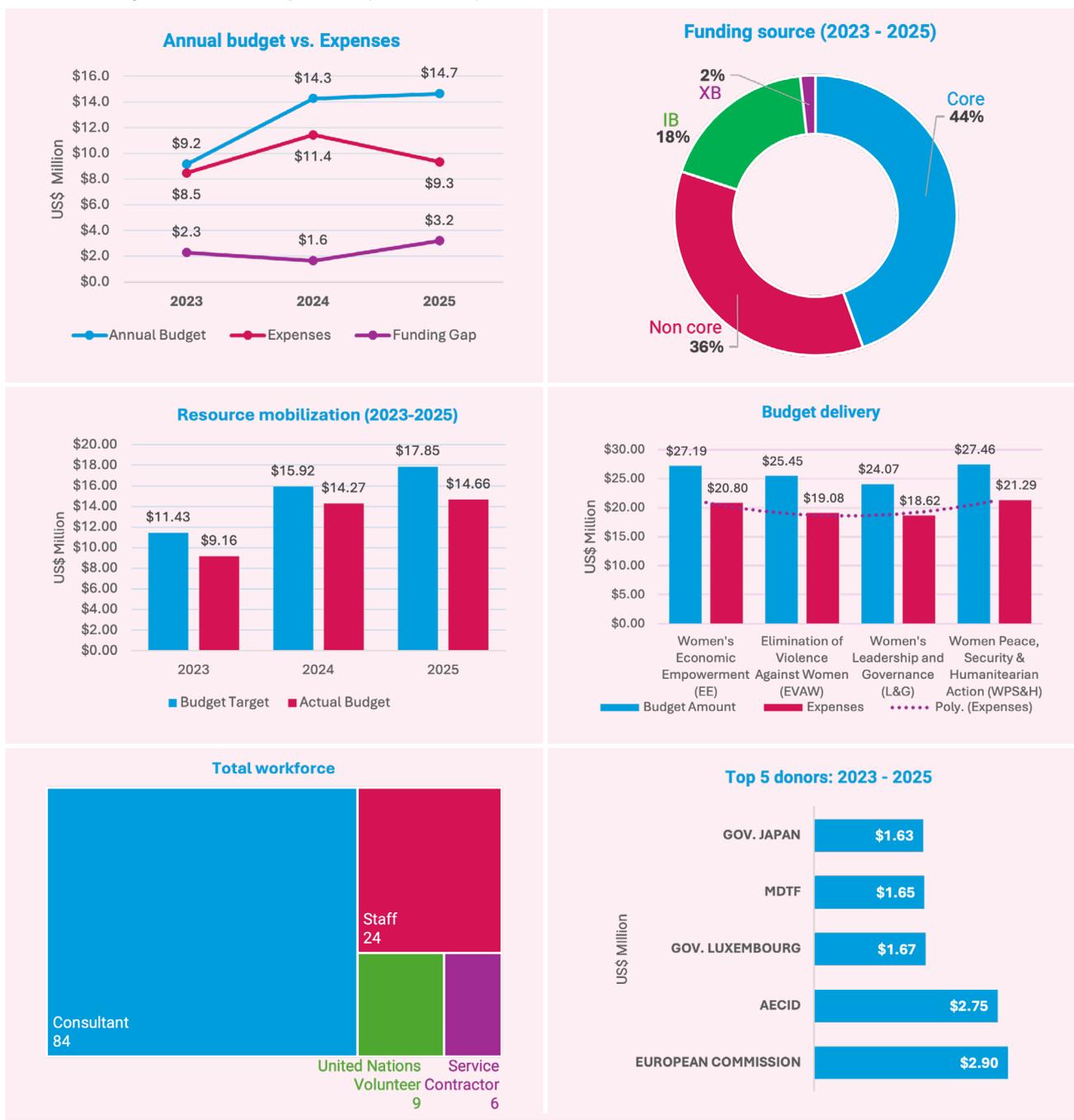


3.6 PARTNERSHIPS LANDSCAPE

A mapping exercise was conducted to identify key partners in the ACRO portfolio, including duty bearers and rights holders (see **Annex 6**). Key stakeholders for each project were identified through a desktop review of the Donor Agreements Management System (DAMS), the Partner Agreement Management System (PGMAS) and other core documents (see **Annex 3**). The resulting list was then validated by project leads and formed the basis for the evaluation's sampling plan (see **Annex 11**).

The final analysis of all documentation (including the Strategic Note, annual reports and prior evaluations) identified 140 external stakeholders. These partners were disaggregated by their role, thematic alignment and stakeholder type (as detailed in **Annex 6**). ACRO is also particularly active through its coordination mandate by supporting 17 inter-agency groups (see detailed list in **Annex 17**).

FIGURE 5
Portfolio analysis ACRO Strategic Note (2023–2025)



Sources: RMS Country Dashboard ACRO, 2023–2025, UN Women's corporate database Quantum, Utilization Report, September 2025



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4

FINDINGS

4.1 COHERENCE AND RELEVANCE

Evaluation question 1. To what extent does the ACRO strategic note provide a relevant and coherent vision, framework and road map for un women's work in the region?

FINDING 1

ACRO's technical support is aligned with its institutional mandate and responds to partners' needs

ACRO has effectively strengthened strategic coherence across the region by providing valued technical guidance and high-level institutional support, which internal and external stakeholders perceive as highly aligned with the rights and needs of women and girls. However, limited impact-level monitoring capacity was observed.

ACRO has contributed to internal coherence across the region, which has supported implementation of the Strategic Note. The ACRO Strategic Note (2023–2025) presents a structured framework built around a vision statement, two overarching goals and three impact areas. These are further broken down into nine outcomes, 30 outputs and four indicators, linked to over 72 projects and 68 activities. The Strategic Note is aligned with both the UN Women Strategic Plan and the region's UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs).

Key informant interviews indicated that the ACRO Strategic Note provided a reference framework for country-level operations. Its relevance is attributed to its alignment with global normative frameworks and regional priorities, including climate shocks, migration and rising violence. The Strategic Note's situation analysis acknowledges the relevance of the nexus between peace, security, humanitarian action and development in the post-pandemic context.

Efforts to promote internal coherence have included strategic and technical support to Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences, particularly during the development of country-level Strategic Notes and UNSDCF. Interviewees noted assistance with reporting, evaluation, thematic resource mobilization (especially in WPS) and strategic planning. Evidence of improved outcomes resulting from ACRO's support is reflected in several areas:

- **Strategic planning and alignment:** ACRO's support has contributed to more coherent and aligned Strategic Notes at the country level. Country Offices reported improvements in the quality of results frameworks and indicators, with the regional strategic planning and monitoring team showing marked improvement in engagement and guidance. This has helped strengthen planning and evaluation capacities across offices.
- **Integration into UNSDCF:** ACRO's support has enabled Country Offices to more effectively contribute to UNSDCF, incorporating gender perspectives and aligning national plans with regional priorities, as well as receiving quality assurance of UNSDCF evaluations. This has enhanced UN Women's positioning within broader UN planning and evaluating processes.
- **Technical guidance:** ACRO has provided targeted support for aligning National Action Plans on WPS with global and regional frameworks. This has helped Country Offices identify strategic entry points for funding opportunities and respond more effectively to national humanitarian priorities.

Resource mobilization and management: While resource mobilization support has been identified as an area for improvement, there are examples of positive outcomes. Multi-country initiatives led by ACRO – such as those funded by the Government of Luxembourg and AECID – have mobilized resources for Country Offices, particularly in middle and high-income countries. Technical assistance in gaining

eligibility for global funds (e.g. Women in Politics Fund, SDG Fund) has helped Country Offices in accessing new resources. ACRO's coordinated support to the development of multi-country proposals was seen **as particularly useful for securing funding for countries with limited local resources and capacity.**

Technical assistance included support to Non-Physical Presences in the formulation of Programme Appraisal Committees, with guidance from Operations and Finance teams. In particular, the "PACK" (Project Appraisal Committee Kit) system was improved, which helped align projects with Strategic Note results through technical recommendations. This systemic improvement directly contributed to better project design.

ACRO also prioritized internal capacity-building for HR and procurement through targeted training, including implementation of the Quantum platform. These efforts involved ad hoc sessions for HR focal points; in-person and virtual training for 139 staff on Quantum Procurement; and webinars covering operational areas such as HR management, policy and project management.

In addition to strategic planning and operations, ACRO offered technical support in areas such as WPS, care systems, data, evaluation and political participation. Overall, the training organized by ACRO was generally viewed as relevant and useful, particularly for smaller offices.

ACRO's technical and advisory support included the dissemination of key tools from headquarters, e.g. the United Nations Country Team System-Wide Action Plan (UNCT-SWAP) Scorecard and Gender Equality Markers, which were translated into Spanish to improve accessibility. These tools, alongside established frameworks such as CEDAW, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Buenos Aires Commitment (see **Box 1**) and the Montevideo Consensus further guided gender mainstreaming efforts³¹. Regional publications, including those developed with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), gender data dashboards and the Gender Data Outlook, aimed to support evidence-based policymaking and contribute to regional gender research. ACRO also participated in shaping the regional gender data agenda through joint outputs such as the regional gender snapshot.

BOX 1

From Commitment to Action: Institutionalizing Gender Equality

The Buenos Aires Commitment (BAC), adopted at the XV Regional Conference on Women in 2022, outlines 74 actions to build a care society; close digital and climate gaps; and finance gender equality through gender-responsive fiscal reform. At the 2023 follow-up meeting, ministers for women's affairs mandated all countries to present costed, interministerial care action plans, anchoring international commitments within national policy cycles.

A regional peer learning platform, co-led by UN Women and ECLAC, was launched to facilitate the exchange of legislative templates and budget tracking tools. The BAC was also explicitly linked to the 2030 Agenda and the Escazú Agreement, ensuring legal and operational coherence across environmental, fiscal and digital governance. This transformation of a political pact into a structured framework for technical cooperation and accountability marks a major step forward in institutionalizing gender equality across the region.

Source: Most Significant Change consolidated by the evaluation team based on the information available for the project.

³¹ This contribution will be expanded in Finding 3

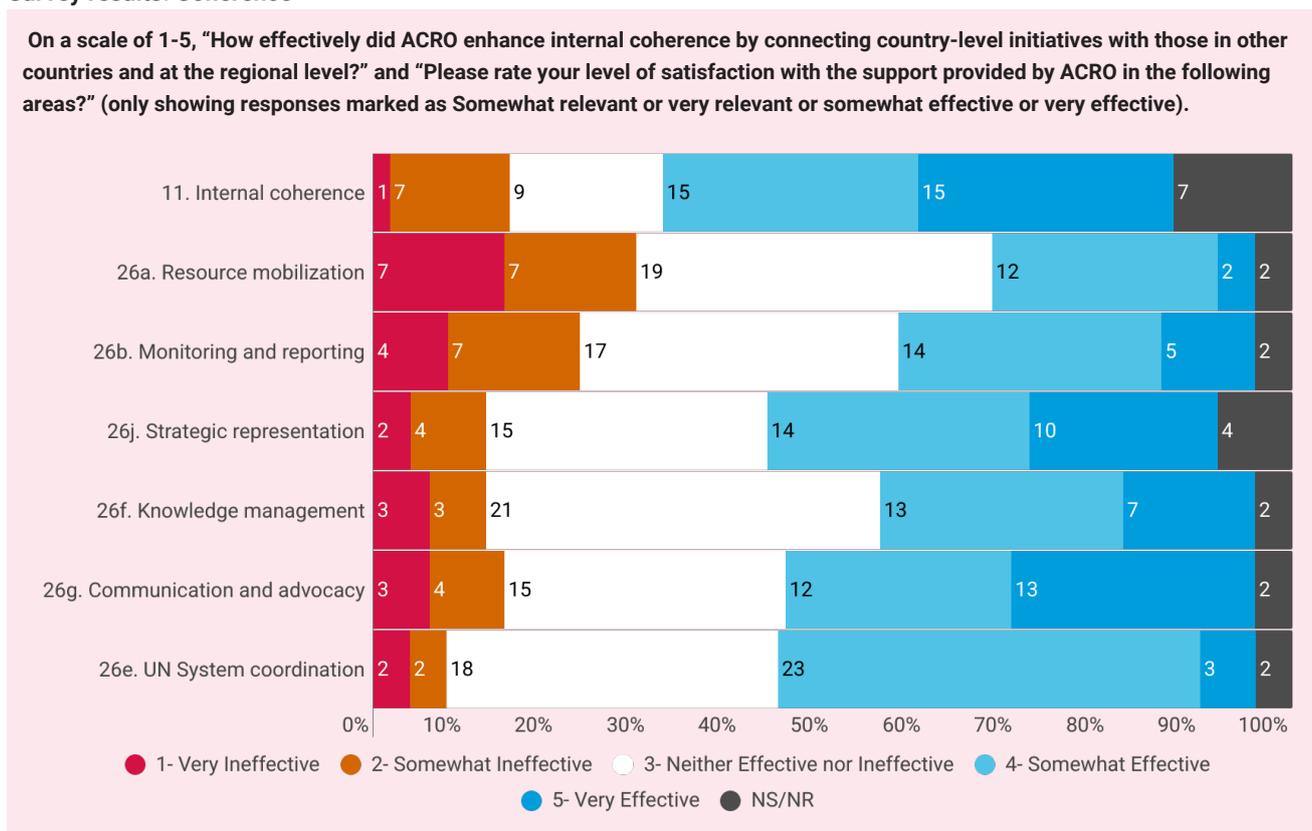
Survey results (see **Figure 6**) show varied perceptions about the relevance and coherence of ACRO’s support. Most Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences (56 per cent) found ACRO somewhat or strongly effective in promoting internal coherence³².

Satisfaction with communication, advocacy and strategic representation exceeded 50 per cent; while knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation support was rated closer to 40 per cent. Resource mobilization support was rated lower, with satisfaction at 28 per cent.

Externally, ACRO has contributed to coherence within the broader UN system. Survey findings (see **Figure 7**) also reflect strong positive perceptions regarding the Strategic Note’s alignment with rights and needs; its targeted approach to addressing gender inequality;

and its identification of marginalized populations. Specifically, 48 per cent of respondents rated the Strategic Note’s alignment with rights and needs as very effective, and 26 per cent as somewhat effective. This view was particularly strong among external partners (81 per cent) and Country Office/ Non-Physical Presence personnel (78 per cent³³). Thirty-eight per cent of respondents rated the targeting of the causes of gender inequality as very effective, and 35 per cent as somewhat effective. Identification of marginalized populations was also rated highly, with 38 per cent considering it very effective and 30 per cent somewhat effective. However, the effectiveness of engagement with marginalized and vulnerable populations was rated lower (see Finding 4).

FIGURE 6
Survey results: Coherence



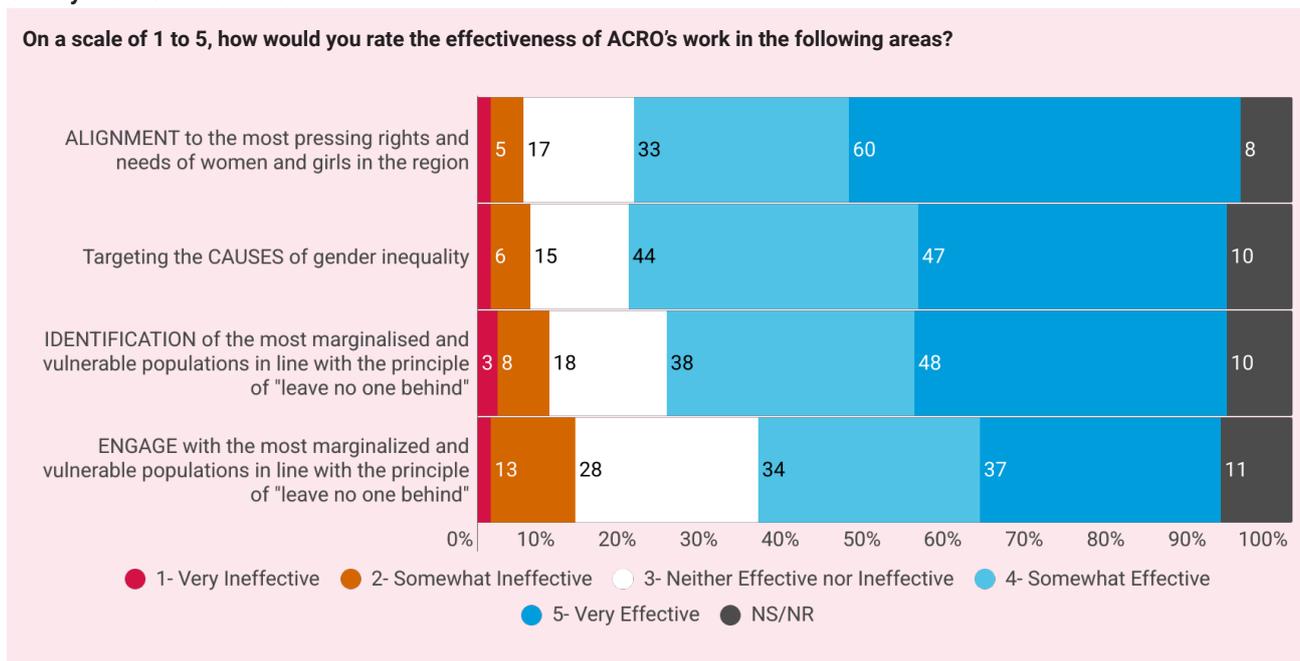
Source: ACRO Strategic Note evaluation survey results, total response for the question: 54 (ACRO and Country Office/Non-Physical Presences personnel only)

³² 64 per cent when not including the NS/NR answers which were very high for this question.

³³ These responses were received from Country Office and Non-Physical Presences. Key informant interviews confirmed a higher level of dependency for smaller offices, as well as a dissatisfaction in terms of the number of regional personnel available to respond or provide support to their queries (see also Finding 4).

FIGURE 7

Survey results: Relevance



Source: ACRO Strategic Note evaluation survey results, total response for the question: 117 (ACRO and Country Office/Non-Physical Presence personnel and external partners).

Concerns were noted regarding inconsistencies between the formulation of Strategic Note goals and the monitoring of impact-level results, which may limit the development of a strong impact narrative. While ACRO has demonstrated effectiveness in designing indicators for UNSDCF, this is less apparent in the reporting of results. Uneven capacity and resources across Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences, combined with staff turnover, further constrain monitoring efforts.

For example, data from the Global Service Tracker show that the percentage of donor reports submitted on time was 95 per cent, this figure drops to 58 per cent when "overdue"³⁴ reports are included³⁵.

There is a recognized need to review and update Strategic Note indicators to better reflect country-level work. The planned separation of Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Coordination functions, as well as the recruitment of a regional monitoring specialist is expected to address some of these issues and improve the tracking of outputs and measurement of outcomes and impacts across the region.

³⁴ "Overdue" refers to donor reports not completed as required under Donor Agreements Management System commitments.

³⁵ Data from Q1 2025

FINDING 2

ACRO's cross-cutting strategy is relevant to advance gender equality frameworks

ACRO has advanced gender equality through a clear thematic focus, strategic partnerships and strong normative leadership. Cross-cutting work on data, care and climate has reinforced regional relevance. However, ACRO's impact in humanitarian settings remains limited, with low visibility and operational challenges.

ACRO's Strategic Note (2023–2025) is structured around four systemic outcomes from the UN Women Strategic Plan: WEE, WPS, EVAWG and Governance and Participation in Public Life. These thematic areas are complemented by cross-cutting approaches, including financing for gender equality, innovative financing, climate change, gender-sensitive statistics and data, and coordination on intergovernmental normative issues. This structure enables ACRO to address a broad range of gender equality challenges relevant to the region.

Findings from the Strategic Note evaluation survey suggest that these priorities are perceived as relevant and aligned with regional needs. All four thematic areas received favourable responses above 70 per cent when marked against very high or high significant perceived contribution. WPS and EVAWG received slightly higher weighted averages, indicating relative stronger perceived value in those areas (see **Figures 8 and 9**).

According to key informant interviews and desk review triangulation, ACRO's multipronged strategy was supported by advocacy efforts, a strengthened communications unit, capacity-building initiatives and the use of its coordination mandate within regional and inter-agency bodies. Interviewees noted that progress under the Strategic Note had been facilitated by strategic partnerships with governments, civil society and intergovernmental bodies.

While normative efforts have yielded some results, there is recognition that closer alignment with national priorities could enhance impact. ACRO's technical and policy leadership is reflected in the strengthening of legal frameworks for political participation and parity (e.g. via the Atenea Initiative), supporting violence prevention legislation and promoting gender-responsive public financing.

ACRO has guided UN planning instruments and facilitated the integration of gender equality into national and regional processes through technical assistance and advocacy. Gender provisions have been integrated into intergovernmental agreements and there are concrete examples of policy influence resulting from ACRO support, such as the advancement of national care policies (e.g. in Brazil); the development and improvement of National Action Plans on WPS; and the introduction of gender budgeting in Chile. These results, along with others related to feminist foreign policy and parity frameworks, such as ACRO's support to the III Ministerial Conference on Feminist Foreign Policies, are discussed in more detail in the following section on effectiveness.

Progress was observed in the **capacity and influence of regional bodies focused on gender equality**. For example, ACRO has provided sustained support to the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), which monitors implementation of the Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women. Beyond monitoring, MESECVI has expanded its role to include the development of regional standards and frameworks, such as its active involvement in drafting the Inter-American Model Law on Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women, an indication of increased normative and operational capacity. The Meeting of Ministries and High Authorities on Women of MERCOSUR has also been strengthened with ACRO's support. This has enhanced its capacity to shape regional standards on EVAWG and to facilitate the exchange of experiences and challenges related to combating violence against women in politics.

ACRO has also supported the Gender Specialized Network of the Iberoamerican Association of Public Ministries, contributing to the advancement of its agenda. In 2023, this support culminated in the approval of the Iberoamerican Protocol to Investigate Sexual Violence, aimed at improving the tools and resources available to justice and police officials. ACRO facilitated the V Plenary Meeting of the Gender Specialized Network, where 16 public prosecutors and one regional expert exchanged practices and evidence to strengthen access to justice and build regional standards. These examples reflect a tangible increase in the technical and normative capacities of regional bodies to address gender-based violence and promote gender equality.

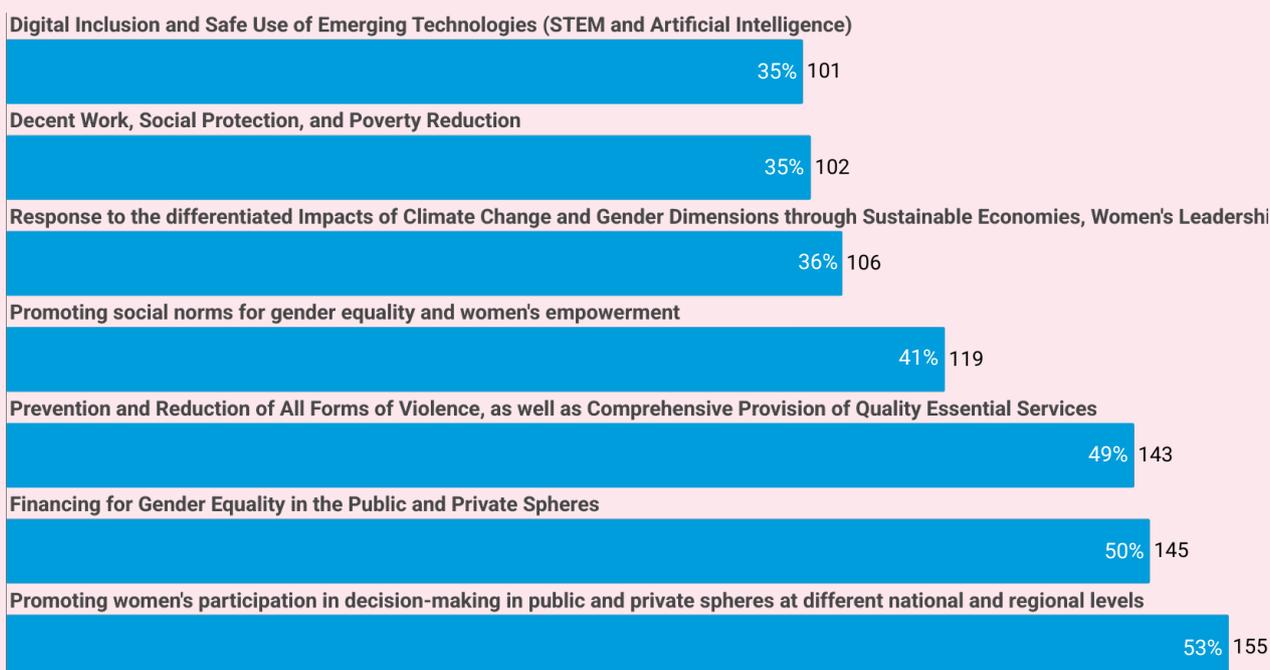
ACRO has also promoted the integration of gender perspectives into national and regional data systems. A key output in this area is the Regional Gender Snapshot, a periodic report that compiles gender equality indicators across Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting both progress and ongoing challenges. This work supports evidence-based

policymaking and contributes to regional knowledge generation.

However, gender integration within humanitarian structures remains an area of concern. Survey and interview data indicate that UN Women’s added value in humanitarian action is not consistently understood or visible to all stakeholders. This area was rated lowest in terms of effectiveness in the Strategic Note evaluation survey (see **Figure 9**), and operational barriers to delivery in crisis contexts were noted. Looking ahead to the 2026–2029 Strategic Note, stakeholder feedback identified several priority areas (see **Figure 8**), including promoting women’s participation in decision-making (53 per cent); financing for gender equality in public and private spheres (50 per cent); prevention and reduction of all forms of violence (49 per cent); promoting social norms for gender equality (41 per cent); responding to the differentiated impacts of climate change (36 per cent); decent work and social protection (35 per cent); and digital inclusion and safe use of emerging technologies.

FIGURE 8
Survey results: Prioritization recommendations

Where should ACRO prioritize its efforts in its upcoming Strategic Note for 2026-2029? Please select up to three focus areas. Seven highest scoring priorities only.



Source: ACRO Strategic Note Evaluation Survey Results, total response for the question: 291 respondents, 873 total valid answers.

FINDING 3

Driving gender equality across the UN system through strategic coordination and leadership

UN Women has strengthened its coordination role among UN partners and development actors, contributing to its positioning as a key actor in advancing gender equality across regional and intergovernmental platforms.

UN Women has reinforced its coordination mandate to promote a more gender-responsive approach across UN agencies. This inter-agency coordination role is recognized as central to its triple mandate – normative, operational and coordination. Key informant interviews with external partners and UN Women staff, along with the desk review, confirm that UN Women has played a key role in mainstreaming gender across platforms and frameworks. Through its leadership and active engagement, ACRO has contributed to embedding gender-sensitive approaches into key frameworks, dialogues and action plans. This includes establishing gender equality as a standing priority on the agendas of country coordination platforms and integrating gender perspectives into broader planning instruments such as Common Country Analyses and UNSDCF (see **Box 2**).

ACRO's coordination efforts have also supported gender mainstreaming within regional structures. For example, collaboration with other UN agencies has contributed to the inclusion of gender equality approaches within humanitarian systems. Participation in regional forums has helped ensure that gender considerations are also reflected in inter-governmental and inter-agency processes.

While smaller Country Offices reported limited capacity to fully deliver on the coordination mandate at the UNCT level, some positive examples, such as in Guatemala and Honduras, highlight how direct support from ACRO has helped Non-Physical Presences and Country Offices strengthen their local influence and engagement.

BOX 2.

Building capacity, bridging mandates: A UN joint plan for gender equality in rural Latin America and the Caribbean

On 6 October 2023, FAO, UN Women and UNFPA signed a two-year joint workplan to accelerate gender equality in rural Latin America and the Caribbean. More than a programme package, the plan is a structured capacity-building tool that transforms how the UN system operates through a gender lens. By aligning mandates across food systems, care economies, and sexual and reproductive health, it sets a new standard for UNSDCFs in at least eight rural-focused countries.

The plan institutionalized a shared results framework with common indicators, joint training for 150 UN staff and co-produced annual data briefs on rural women. These tools enhance coherence, accountability and evidence-based advocacy across agencies. Most importantly, the initiative represents a systemic upgrade in the UN's ability to plan, budget and implement gender-transformative programmes from the outset.

Source: Most Significant Change consolidated by the evaluation team on the basis of the information available for the project.

In terms of intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination, UN Women has supported or co-chaired several key mechanisms in the region, including the Quito Process, Cartagena+40 Process, the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework, the Gender and Evaluation Inter-Agency Coordination Groups and the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants. These leadership roles have enhanced ACRO's visibility and influence in decision-making spaces and contributed to increased access to funding. For example, participation in regional coordination mechanisms facilitated the mobilization of resources through multi-country initiatives, such as those funded by the Government of Luxembourg and AECID, which have directly benefited country-level programming.

Stakeholders noted that focusing on concrete actions within UNSDCF's (driven by knowledge and thematic leadership) had proved effective in terms of strategic positioning beyond inter-agency coordination platforms. In Colombia, for instance, coordination efforts contributed to the advancement of the WPS National Action Plan and adoption of legislation on child marriage. These examples illustrate how coordination can support advocacy and policy shifts.

ACRO's coordination mandate also helped increase visibility for partner organizations and facilitated partners' participation in advocacy spaces, including enabling indigenous women to engage in international forums with the backing of the Regional Director.

The production of gender-disaggregated data and evidence-based policy analysis (often in collaboration with institutions such as ECLAC and INEGI) has further strengthened UN Women's strategic positioning and thematic leadership in the region. A notable advancement is the completion of the Spanish translation of the UNCT Gender Equality Marker Guidance Note. This tool supports Country Offices in tracking, assessing and integrating gender perspectives into planning documents, thereby enhancing UN system-wide capacity

Overall, ACRO's inter-agency work has not only supported gender mainstreaming but also contributed to enhancing UN Women's organizational influence and access to funding, particularly through its leadership in regional mechanisms and its ability to align technical expertise with political engagement.

4.2 EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

Evaluation question 2. To what extent have ACRO strategic note’s intended results been effectively and efficiently achieved to date?

Findings 4–6 include a contribution analysis table, referencing the main outcome-level changes identified. The information presented in the tables is partially sourced from RMS and other management reports and should therefore be considered as management-reported data.

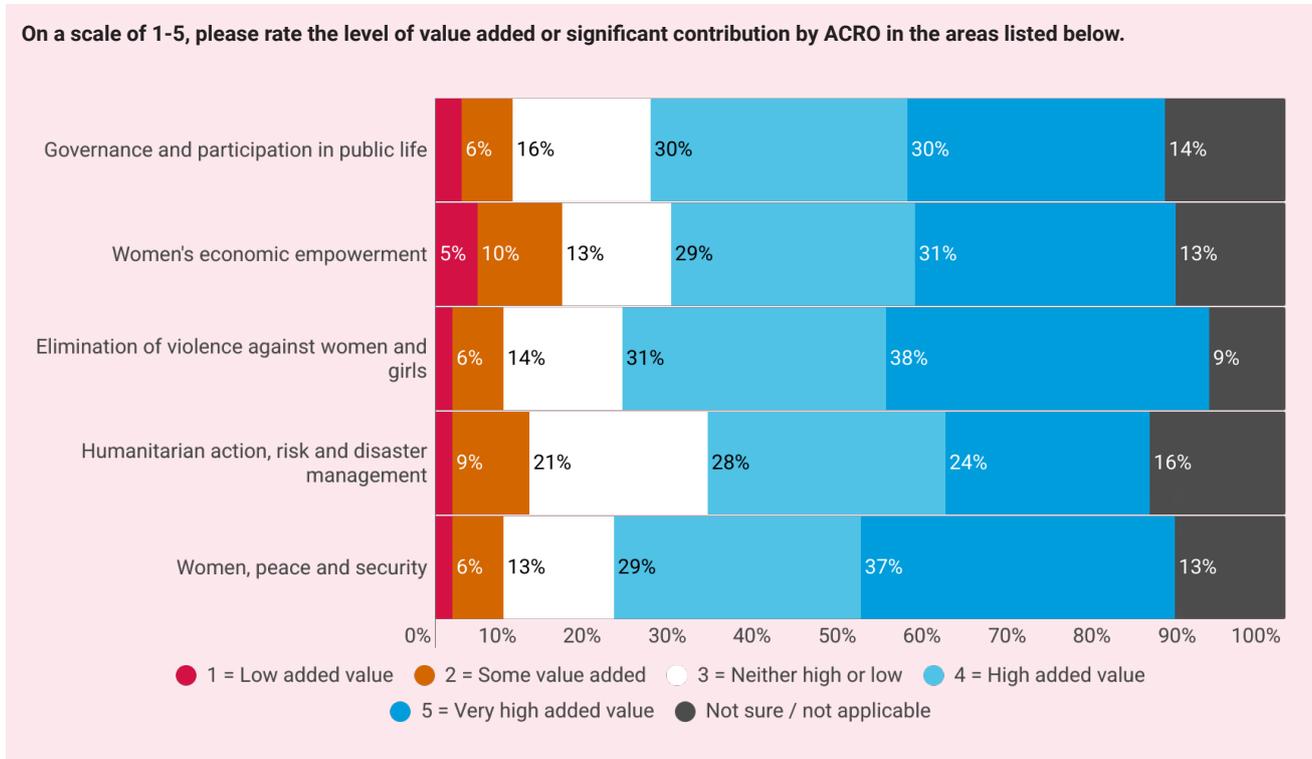
FINDING 4

Impact Area 1 progress in political participation, WPS and EVAW

Impact Area 1 (Women live in more equal and peaceful societies) shows measurable progress in political participation, WPS and EVAW, supported by normative developments, data-informed advocacy and capacity-building efforts. However, progress has been uneven and continues to face constraints related to operational challenges, funding limitations and political resistance in some contexts.

FIGURE 9

Survey results: Added value



Source: ACRO Strategic Note evaluation survey results, total response for the question: 115.

TABLE 3

Strategic Note contribution analysis for Impact Area 1³⁶

STRATEGIC NOTE OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	ACRO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
<p>1.1 Latin American and Caribbean democratic institutions are strengthened, and women increased their participation in all decision-making...</p>	<p>Strong evidence of progress. The regional average for women in national parliaments is 35.7 per cent, which is higher than the global average of 27.3 per cent.³⁷</p>	<p>Strong evidence of ACRO's contribution through its leadership in the Atenea Initiative, which developed the Political Parity Index now used in 15 countries. ACRO's virtual training platform has also trained over 6,799 women for political leadership.³⁸ In 2023, six virtual courses on political participation and gender equality with FLACSO Argentina and the Ibero-American Union of Municipalities reached 973 participants, including 758 women and 546 decision makers. In 2024, virtual courses, a graduate programme and a mentoring programme with FLACSO, UNDP, IDEA, CLADEM, DIAKONIA and Ibero-American Union of Municipalities reached 1,988 people, strengthening local and national bodies.³⁹</p>
<p>1.2 More women lead and benefit from... political dialogue, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, human mobility and humanitarian action.</p>	<p>Moderate evidence of progress, with significant milestones such as Colombia's approval of its first WPS National Action Plan after years of advocacy. In Venezuela, over 200 women were trained in peacebuilding and mediation, and more than 350 grassroots organizations were engaged through the UNIDAS project in Venezuela.⁴⁰</p>	<p>Strong evidence of ACRO's contribution by providing direct support during the formulation of Colombia's National Action Plan. ACRO also supported the UNIDAS project in Venezuela, which established platforms for local resilience and humanitarian response, and helped countries access global funds such as the Peacebuilding Fund.</p>
<p>1.3 Ending Violence Against Women has advanced and a society free of gender stereotypes is promoted</p>	<p>Strong evidence of progress, with 15 countries in the region having legislation that addresses violence against women in politics.⁴¹ At least five countries – Ecuador, Panama, Brazil, Colombia, and Chile – have adopted specific laws or substantial legislative reforms related to gender equality and the empowerment of women/EVAW after 2022.⁴² The main themes were care systems and updating violence frameworks to address digital technologies. Other policy documents, such as Argentina's Decree 89/2023 creating a recovery programme for domestic workers, also demonstrated advances in legal frameworks.</p>	<p>Moderate evidence of ACRO's contribution, particularly through the Spotlight Initiative's grant fund for feminist organizations, which was widely recognized as a key intervention in the area of EVAW. Technical assistance was provided for drafting new or strengthened VAWG legislation. This included support for gender-sensitive legislation, such as Argentina's ratification of the International Labour Organization's Convention C190, concerning violence and harassment in the workplace.</p> <p>ACRO collaborated with key intergovernmental partners, notably MESECVI. This partnership led to support for the drafting process of the Inter-American Model Law on Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women; Development of the Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Violent Deaths of Women for Gender Reasons (Femicide/Feminicide); and development of concrete tools to integrate a strategic vision around femicide reparations, cyber violence and the investigation of sexual violence crimes.</p>

³⁶ The information presented in the table is partially sourced from RMS and other management reports and should therefore be considered as management-reported data.

³⁷ Information sourced from the Inter-Parliamentary Union-UN Women map, which presents global rankings for women in executive and government positions as of October 2025: https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_month=10&date_year=2025

³⁸ Reported by FLACSO through its virtual training platform.

³⁹ As reported by management in 2024 WP Annual Report.

⁴⁰ As reported by the project implementation team.

⁴¹ As reported by GPP team.

⁴² Information sourced from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, at https://oig.cepal.org/en/regulations-list?date_from=2022-01-01&date_to=2025-11-17&type%5B1%5D=1&page=0

STRATEGIC NOTE OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	ACRO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
<p>Contributing factors</p>	<p>Enablers: Strategic partnerships with governments, civil society organizations (CSOs) and regional mechanisms were crucial. The availability and use of data, such as the Political Parity Index, strengthened advocacy efforts.</p>	<p>Barriers: Political resistance and polarization in some countries slowed normative progress. Funding constraints and the conclusion of the Spotlight Initiative created a gap in leadership and coordination for EAW. Operational delays also limited the timely implementation of projects in crisis settings.</p>

Source: Evaluation team

ACRO demonstrated effectiveness in advancing gender equality across the region, particularly in the areas of political participation, WPS and EAW, which correspond to Impact Area 1: Women in Latin America and the Caribbean live in a more equal, peaceful and safe society and its three specific outcomes (see **Table 3**).

According to the analysis of quantitative and qualitative results reported by management against Strategic Note indicators in ONEApp (see **Annexes 9 and 20**), only one indicator under Outcome 1.1, corresponding to gender parity and political participation⁴³, showed consistent progress, as reflected in the 2023 and 2024 Strategic Note narrative reports. In contrast, the related impact indicators⁴⁴ either showed regressions in 2023 or remained unchanged in 2024.

This relative progress is consistent with survey and qualitative findings from the evaluation. For example, according to the evaluation survey, over 35 per cent of respondents rated ACRO's contribution to "Governance and participation in public life" as very high and another 35 per cent as high added value (see **Figure 9**). Notably, external stakeholders and Country Office/Non-Physical Presence personnel generally rated ACRO's contributions more positively than ACRO staff themselves, particularly in areas such as WPS, humanitarian action and EAWG⁴⁵. In qualitative terms, the key informant interviews and

focus group discussions provided examples of significant normative and programmatic contributions.

ACRO demonstrated its strategic ability to convene regional actors around the goal of **parity in democracy** through robust partnerships with civil society, academia and electoral bodies, actively promoting legal measures and institutional changes to ensure women's full political participation. Notable examples are **ACRO's role in contributing to consensus-building in regional parliamentary bodies such as PARLATINO and influencing high-level normative processes such as drafting CEDAW's new General Recommendation No. 40 on Equal and Inclusive Representation in Decision-Making Systems**. ACRO also strengthened institutional capacities by partnering with the Interamerican Institute of Human Rights and its Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (IIDH-CAPEL), successfully implementing specialized virtual courses that was said to have benefitted 88 officers and authorities of Electoral Management Bodies from 15 Latin American and Caribbean countries, specifically bolstering skills to mitigate violence against women in politics and audit political financing with a gender perspective.

In Uruguay, although the Parity Bill was not passed, ACRO's support catalysed national debates and the mobilization of political and civil-society actors. UN Women's research and public opinion data were cited in senate debates, demonstrating the Entity's normative influence⁴⁶.

⁴³ Latin American and Caribbean democratic institutions are strengthened, and states advance towards gender parity in political participation at all decision-making levels.

⁴⁴ Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments; (b) local governments; and (c) executive positions/ministers (cabinets) (desk review).

⁴⁵ Humanitarian action shows the largest gap, with ACRO rating itself significantly lower (average of 3.12) than both external stakeholders (3.87) and Country Offices/Non-Programme Presences (3.83). WPS also shows a substantial gap, with Country Offices/Non-Physical Presences rating ACRO's contribution much higher (4.27) than ACRO itself (3.53). EAWG and governance and participation also show consistent under-estimation by ACRO compared to external stakeholders. Women's economic empowerment is the most aligned area, with relatively small differences across groups.

⁴⁶ Uruguay is a Non-Physical Presence and most of the technical support received for this achievement was provided by ACRO.

Complementing these efforts, sustained alliances with academia, notably **FLACSO Argentina** and the **Ibero-American Union of Municipalities**, was reported to have resulted in extensive capacity development initiatives that significantly increased the knowledge of **1,096 women** in 2024 alone, including leaders from indigenous, Afro-descendant and LGBTIQ+ communities, reinforcing their ability to promote gender equality agendas at national and local levels.

ACRO's leadership in the Atenea Initiative, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International IDEA, has supported the generation of gender parity data and strengthened advocacy capacity. The Political Parity Index developed under this initiative has been implemented in 15 countries and is now used to assess progress and inform policy. Complementing this, the Virtual Political Training Platform hosted by FLACSO Argentina has reportedly trained over 6,799 women, with more than 4,000 receiving certifications. These programmes have expanded access to political spaces and supported capacity-building for women leaders across the region, as reflected in positive feedback from participants in surveys and focus group discussions.

At the national level, **ACRO supported inclusive political processes such as the VI Women, Development and Equality Pact in Panama**, signed by all presidential candidates in 2024 following a participatory process involving 11 workshops with diverse groups, including indigenous women, women with disabilities and public officials. In **Colombia, ACRO contributed to development of the Parity Counter**, a monitoring tool to track political party compliance with parity commitments. These initiatives have contributed to the better measurement of progress in women's political participation.

Regionally, seven countries have achieved or are nearing gender parity in national parliaments, with over 40 per cent of elected positions held by women. While there was no substantial increase in 2024 compared to 2023, the regional average remains at **approximately 35.4 per cent, which is notably higher than the global average of 27.2 per cent.**⁴⁷ **The number of female heads of state or government in the region since 2022 increased to five, following Mexico's election of its first female president.**⁴⁸

In contrast, indicators for Outcomes 1.2⁴⁹ and 1.3⁵⁰ – focused on **WPS and EVAWG – were both reported as having made significant progress.** This is supported by primary data: 37 per cent and 28 per cent of respondents rated ACRO's work in WPS and EVAWG, respectively, as very effective, with an additional 29 per cent and 31 per cent rating it as somewhat effective (see **Figure 9**).

Under the **WPS agenda (Outcome 1.2)**, ACRO has promoted gender-sensitive peacebuilding as a cross-cutting framework, integrating it into humanitarian action, human mobility and disaster response. A key milestone was Colombia's approval of its **first National Action Plan on WPS after 24 years of advocacy**, with ACRO support during its participatory formulation. In Venezuela, the UNIDAS project supported women's leadership in peacebuilding through community round tables in **La Vega** and **23 de Enero**, which now serve as platforms for local resilience and humanitarian response. Over 200 women were reported to have been trained in peacebuilding and conflict mediation, and more than 350 grassroots organizations were mapped and engaged in advocacy and coalition-building in Venezuela. These efforts were supported by partnerships with academic institutions and feminist organizations such as CEMUV and FEMSUR.

⁴⁷ As informed by IPU at the Women in Politics: 2025 press release: <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2025-03/political-leadership-roles-in-2025-men-continue-dominate>

⁴⁸ Since 2022, several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have been led by women. In Peru, Dina Boluarte assumed the presidency in December 2022 following the removal of Pedro Castillo. In Honduras, Xiomara Castro has served as president since January 2022. Mexico elected Claudia Sheinbaum in 2024, with her term commencing in October that year. In Nicaragua, Rosario Murillo has continued to serve as co-president alongside Daniel Ortega, a role she has held since 2017. Meanwhile, in Dominica, Sylvanie Burton became president in 2023, marking another milestone for women's leadership in the region.

⁴⁹ More women lead and benefit from national and local initiatives in political dialogue, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, human mobility, humanitarian action and climate resilience.

⁵⁰ EVAWG has advanced and a society free of gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms is promoted with the engagement of women, girls, LGBTQ+ individuals, men and boys.

UN Women also facilitated the **participation of women, LGBTIQ+ individuals and youth in national dialogues and consultations, contributing to more inclusive peace processes.** These approaches have helped ensure that peacebuilding efforts reflect the diverse realities of affected communities.

In **humanitarian action and disaster risk management, ACRO supported the launch of the first regional humanitarian response project for mobile populations,** with a focus on social cohesion and the prevention of xenophobia (see **Box 3**). In Panama, UN Women engaged in the **Human Mobility Group** under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator's Office, addressing the humanitarian emergency in Darién and Chiriquí provinces. These efforts prioritized the protection and empowerment of migrant women and girls, particularly from indigenous and rural communities. ACRO also supported countries such as Haiti and Honduras in accessing global funds, including the **Peacebuilding Fund and the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund.**

In politically sensitive contexts, references to WPS and humanitarian action were removed from strategic documents due to government resistance. The absence of a centralized gender coordination mechanism in humanitarian response was also noted as a barrier to coherence and visibility at the national level. Despite the existence of a designated “fast-track” system for humanitarian responses, staff reported that achieving approvals, particularly in staff recruiting and procurement, involved lengthy processes that contributed to project start delays.⁵¹ The structure of funding, primarily reliant on non-core, short-term grants, imposes rigidities that prevent agile response and weaken long-term capacity in crisis contexts.

Under the **EVAW agenda (Outcome 1.3),** ACRO contributed to normative and programmatic efforts to address violence against women and girls. The Spotlight Initiative played a central role in strengthening institutional capacity to respond to femicide and domestic violence, with its grant fund for feminist organizations widely recognized as a key contribution. UN Women also supported legal reforms, with **five** Latin American and Caribbean countries showing direct legislative advancements after 2022.⁵²

BOX 3

LEAP-Trayectos: Building inclusive protection in human mobility crises

The LEAP-Trayectos project, led by UN Women with support from Japan, addressed gender-based vulnerabilities in human mobility crises across Central America and the Caribbean. It provided direct services; strengthened institutional capacities; and promoted social cohesion, particularly in border areas such as Darién and Los Chiles. The project empowered women and LGBTIQ+ individuals through culturally relevant protection tools and inclusive humanitarian practices, e.g. integrating disability criteria in shelters and involving migrant women in decision-making spaces.

The initiative also influenced national policies, training over 1,100 humanitarian actors and supporting gender-sensitive legal reforms, e.g. Honduras' Law for Women in Emergencies.

Despite challenges in terms of sustainability and limited LGBTIQ+ inclusion, the project's participatory, adaptable approach left a lasting impact. It fostered leadership, challenged social norms and expanded access to protection services for over 30,000 women – offering a replicable model for gender-responsive humanitarian action.

Source: Most Significant Change consolidated by the evaluation team on the basis of the management information available for the project.

⁵¹ An example of implementation constraints involves a 12-month humanitarian project where essential equipment arrived only two months before the project ended.

⁵² Available data at <https://www.ipu.org/>

PANAMA - 2024

Approved Law 1038 in March 2024 for the creation of the National Care System (another source cites Law 431 of 2024 establishing the Comprehensive Care System).
Achieved significant progress in the enactment of laws and reforms protecting women from technology-facilitated violence

COLOMBIA - 2023 & 2024

Passed Law 2281 (4 January 2023), which created the Ministry of Equality and Equity and established the creation of the National Care System (Art 6). Additionally, significant progress was achieved in enacting laws and reforms aimed at protecting women from technology-facilitated violence (cyberstalking, non-consensual dissemination of intimate content).

ECUADOR - 2023

Approved specific legislation to implement a comprehensive set of care policies, becoming the fourth country in the region with such a specific law approved

CHILE - 2022

Passed Law 21515 (28 December 2022) modifying legal requirements to establish the age of majority as an essential requisite for marriage. In 2023, Chile adopted a national protocol to investigate and respond to femicide/feminicide, and made progress in the adoption of a "Comprehensive Law to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Gender-Based Violence Against Women

BRAZIL - 2024

Enacted Law 15,069 in December 2024, which established the National Care Policy.



● Care Systems & EVAW ● Care Systems ● EVAW

Efforts to shift social norms were supported through inclusive campaigns and educational tools, such as the **“4 Steps to Prevent Gender-Based Violence”** toolkit, which was piloted in four countries and integrated into school curricula. Partnerships with regional bodies, including MESECVI, contributed to the development of model laws and protocols, such as **the Ibero-American Protocol to Investigate Sexual Violence**. Qualitative feedback from external stakeholders highlighted perceived positive changes at the community level, including the formation of women’s committees and shifts in harmful gender norms. However, concerns were raised about the sustainability of these gains following the conclusion of the Spotlight Initiative.

Progress across Impact Area 1 has been supported by several **enabling factors**. Strategic partnerships with government institutions, CSOs and regional mechanisms have helped build momentum for reform (See **Table 3**). ACRO has also leveraged regional platforms, such as the Regional Conference on Women, to promote shared agendas and influence national policy discussions.

ACRO reinforced its engagement with regional and subregional parliamentarians from three Parlantino commissions, which participated in dialogues focused on challenges to **parity democracies** (including violence against women in politics and political financing) and the establishment of **comprehensive care systems**. UN Women also supported the Gender Equality, Childhood and Youth commission, presenting a proposal for a declaration aimed at advancing gender-sensitive legislative agendas at the PARLATINO Annual General Assembly.

The availability of data and evidence, particularly through tools such as the Political Parity Index and public opinion surveys, has strengthened advocacy and informed policy dialogue. Additionally, the expansion of digital training infrastructure (see **Box 5**) has enabled broader and more cost-effective capacity-building, particularly in the context of post-pandemic recovery.⁵³

In the area of WPS, **progress has been supported by the use of peace and security as an entry point; implementation of multi-country initiatives; and more proactive donor engagement**. Regional platforms have also been used to amplify advocacy and visibility.

Despite these advances, several challenges remain. Political resistance and polarization in some countries have limited the adoption of parity legislation and slowed normative progress. In many contexts, women’s political participation remains largely symbolic, with limited influence over decision-making and continued assignment to roles that reinforce traditional gender norms. The absence of a dedicated high-level specialist on political participation has been identified as a gap, and smaller offices – particularly Non-Physical Presences – often rely heavily on ACRO for technical and operational support.

In the ERAW area, **prevention efforts remain fragmented and there is a need for more holistic, community-based strategies**. Funding constraints persist, particularly in high-need countries, and the conclusion of the Spotlight Initiative has created a gap in leadership and coordination. Stronger engagement with LGBTIQ+ movements is also needed to address rising anti-rights backlash and ensure inclusive approaches to violence prevention.

⁵³ Women in Latin America and the Caribbean have increased their economic autonomy and their access to comprehensive care policies and systems.

FINDING 5:

Impact Area 2 shows strong progress, particularly in national care systems

Impact Area 2 (Economic Autonomy) shows the strongest and most consistent progress, particularly in consolidating national care systems, with complementary but more variable gains in gender-responsive financing and access to decent work.

TABLE 4.

Strategic Note contribution analysis for Impact Area 2⁵⁴

STRATEGIC NOTE OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	ACRO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
2.1 National care systems enable women's economic autonomy in Latin America and the Caribbean.	Strong evidence of progress. Ecuador approved specific legislation to implement a comprehensive set of care policies, making it the fourth country in the region —alongside Uruguay, Costa Rica and Venezuela—to have an approved specific law. By the end of 2024, Panama (Law 1038/2024, approved in March 2024) and Brazil (Law 15,069/2024, approved in December 2024) had also approved national care system legislation, bringing the total number of countries with specific approved laws to six. Colombia's Law 2281 of January 2023 established the Ministry of Equality and Equity and the creation of the national care system A landmark achievement was the Inter-American Court of Human Rights' Advisory Opinion 31, which recognized care as a human right.	Strong evidence of ACRO's contribution by playing a role in positioning care as a policy cornerstone through partnerships with ECLAC and AECID. ACRO contributed both written and oral arguments to the Inter-American Court's historic decision and developed a replicable "Model of territorial care management". ACRO provided direct support to 14 countries in 2023 and continuing assistance to 11 countries in 2024. ACRO supported calculation of the cost and returns of investment in care in 13 municipalities of Neuquén, Argentina, Panama, Chile, El Salvador and Belém do Pará in Brazil. ACRO continued to support the Global Alliance for Care , which reached 168 members (including governments, CSOs and the private sector).
2.2 Public and private financing advance gender equality through gender-responsive budgeting, policies, strategies and instruments.	Strong evidence of progress , with 12 countries implementing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). The launch of the digital platform presupuestoygenero.net created a regional hub for GRB knowledge, attracting over 20,000 visits by the end of 2023.	Strong evidence of ACRO's contribution through direct technical assistance to ministries of finance on GRB; development of the digital platform; and the training of over 300 women leaders in GRB through a partnership with FLACSO Argentina. Using GRB tools, ACRO identified that, from 2019 to 2021, governments in the region allocated USD 4.17 billion in their national budgets towards care programmes and policies, establishing a crucial baseline for monitoring care allocation.
2.3 More women have access to decent work and entrepreneurship, SMEs, networks and cooperatives are strengthened.	Moderate evidence of progress. Initiatives have expanded women's access to digital tools, including e-commerce platforms and AI-based financial education. Women-led networks and cooperatives, including those focused on green and circular economies, were also created and strengthened.	Moderate evidence of ACRO's contribution by leading initiatives promoting financial and digital inclusion. This included supporting a guarantee fund and training programmes for women entrepreneurs in Costa Rica and supporting the creation of women-led networks in green economies.

⁵⁴ The information presented in the table is partially sourced from RMS and other management reports and should therefore be considered as management-reported data.

STRATEGIC NOTE OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	ACRO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
Contributing factors	Enablers: Sustained partnerships with key institutions such as ECLAC and AECID were instrumental in advancing the care agenda. The growing political momentum for care as a human right created a favourable environment for policy change.	Barriers: Political instability has disrupted the continuity of care policy implementation in countries such as Peru and the Dominican Republic. The project-based funding model remains vulnerable to political and economic fluctuations.

Source: Evaluation team

According to the 2023 and 2024 Strategic Note narrative reports, progress has been observed across economic autonomy (Impact 2), mainly due to efforts to create national care systems (outcome 2.1). This is also consistent with key informant interviews, which reported notable progress in the development of national care systems; the promotion of gender-responsive financing; and the expansion of women's access to decent work and entrepreneurship, all interconnected areas.

According to key informant interviews with external partners and members of Country Offices/Non-Physical Presences, **UN Women has played a catalytic role in positioning care as a cornerstone of economic and social policy (see Box 4)**. Through sustained partnerships with ECLAC, AECID and feminist movements, ACRO has supported 11 countries⁵⁵ in designing and implementing national care systems, and 13 countries in advancing or approving care-related legislation within the ACRO Strategic Note implementation period so far (2023–June 2025).

These efforts have been bolstered by technical assistance in 13 municipalities⁵⁶ where UN Women facilitated the costing of care investments, with projections indicating that 24.8 million individuals could benefit from these services by 2030. A major innovation has been the development of a “model of territorial care management,” which synthesizes local experiences from Colombia, Uruguay and the Dominican Republic into a scalable framework for local-level implementation.

This model has been widely disseminated and validated through regional exchanges and expert consultations. UN Women's leadership in this area has also been recognized through **the establishment of a “Day for the Right to Care” and the elevation of care issues in intergovernmental forums.**

A major milestone was reached in August 2025, when the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued its Advisory Opinion 31, recognizing care as an autonomous and universal human right. This landmark decision followed a two-year consultation process initiated by Argentina in 2023 and included 129 written observations – the second most participatory process in the Court's history. UN Women contributed both written and oral arguments, with strong support from Country Offices and regional leadership. The Court's opinion explicitly acknowledges the gendered dimensions of care; the economic value of unpaid care work; and the need for states to adopt legal, policy and service frameworks that guarantee the right to care, to be cared for and to self-care. It also calls for equal labour rights for paid care workers and progressive social protection for unpaid caregivers. This pronouncement is seen as a paradigm shift, reinforcing the relevance and impact of UN Women's work in the region.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Peru. ACRO Strategic Note Annual Report 2024.

⁵⁶ Brazil: Belém do Pará; Colombia: Bogotá, Villavicencio, Cumbal, Antioquia, Medellín; Ecuador: Quito; Honduras: Trifinio region; Mexico: Monterrey; Panama: Juan Díaz; Peru: Villa El Salvador, Comas, Tambopata; Dominican Republic: Azua, Santo Domingo Este. ACRO Strategic Note Annual Report 2024.

⁵⁷ Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Advisory Opinion OC-31/24. ‘The content and scope of the right to care and its interrelation with other rights.’ Resolution of September 2, 2024. Available at: https://jurisprudencia.corteidh.or.cr/vid/1054949353/download/MZ8XymbImnJdZApIUUBzAlmI01bS_dY+oKwSpBPmLhhQ=

BOX 4

Caring for equality: Regional and local pathways to transform care systems

UN Women has played a catalytic role in transforming care systems across Latin America and the Caribbean to advance women's economic autonomy. Through regional programmes such as Transformando las Economías and Comunidades de Cuidado, and the municipal-level Ver-o-Cuidado project in Belém, Brazil, ACRO has driven policy innovation, service delivery and cultural change. In Peru and the Dominican Republic, initiatives led to the creation of local care plans, intersectoral governance structures and professional training for care workers, embedding care into national development agendas.

In Belém, the Ver-o-Cuidado project piloted a participatory, gender-responsive care system that influenced Brazil's first National Care Policy. It strengthened municipal institutions, engaged over 30 CSOs and reached marginalized groups including Afro-Brazilian and indigenous women. Across all initiatives, care was reframed as a public good, supported by public campaigns and community dialogues. These efforts institutionalized care governance; expanded women's access to services and decent work; and demonstrated how local innovation can shape national policy, reinforcing UN Women's leadership in care policy transformation.

Source: Most Significant Change consolidated by the evaluation team based on the information available for the project.

However, challenges remain in measuring the full impact of these initiatives, particularly in terms of reductions in unpaid care work and improvements in women's overall well-being. Political instability and institutional turnover in countries such as Peru and the Dominican Republic have disrupted continuity in care policy implementation, while measurement frameworks continue to focus narrowly on economic indicators, often overlooking broader dimensions of well-being.

In terms of **gender-responsive financing and financial inclusion**, UN Women has made significant progress in **strengthening the enabling environment for women's economic empowerment**. ACRO has supported 12 countries in implementing GRB,⁵⁸ including direct technical assistance to ministries of finance. A flagship achievement was the launch of the digital platform **presupuestoygenero.net**, which by the end of 2023 had amassed 296 documents and 162 tools, and attracted over 20,000 visits.⁵⁹ This platform has become a regional hub for GRB knowledge and practice, supported by a targeted visibility strategy that significantly expanded its reach and engagement.

Additionally, over **300 women leaders were trained in GRB through a virtual course** developed with FLACSO Argentina,⁶⁰ with high satisfaction and learning outcomes reported. These efforts have contributed to a growing regional ecosystem of gender-responsive public finance. However, systemic constraints continue to affect implementation and sustainability. Core funding remains stagnant, and project-based financing is vulnerable to political and economic fluctuations. Financial procedures and donor requirements have delayed disbursements and limited flexibility in partnering with civil society.

While national frameworks exist, translating them into local-level services has proven difficult due to limited capacity and insufficient mechanisms for territorial adaptation. This has affected the reach and responsiveness of care systems. The absence of systematic documentation of local initiatives has also constrained replication and scaling, slowing broader implementation. Although legal and policy frameworks have been adopted in several countries, there remains uncertainty about their tangible impact on women's lives, highlighting a gap between policy formulation and service delivery.

⁵⁸ Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Argentina (via FLACSO partnership), Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Costa Rica. UN Women (2024). Feminist Foreign Policy: Solutions for a Better Tomorrow. Working Paper of the III Ministerial Conference on Foreign Policies.

⁵⁹ ACRO Strategic Note Annual Report 2023.

⁶⁰ UN Women (2024). "Rapid assessment of online capacity development in Latin America and the Caribbean".

In terms of decent work and entrepreneurship, UN Women made **advances in promoting financial and digital inclusion**. ACRO led initiatives to expand women's access to digital tools, including e-commerce platforms and AI-based financial education, which demonstrated its usefulness and applicability during the COVID-19 pandemic and continued after it. In Costa Rica, a guarantee fund and training programmes supported women entrepreneurs, while regional projects have promoted gender bonds and inclusive financial ecosystems.

UN Women also supported the creation and strengthening of women-led networks and cooperatives, including those focused on green and circular economies. These initiatives have helped women transition

into more sustainable and dignified forms of work. Duty bearers consulted in the surveys mentioned that UN Women's interventions in the region provided economic benefits, enabling women to establish businesses and become community leaders, highlighting the importance of combining economic actions with psychosocial and legal support.

However, persistent barriers such as informal work, limited access to credit and socio-cultural norms continue to restrict women's economic opportunities. There is also a need to enhance the visibility of UN Women's work at the local level, and to develop more flexible financing mechanisms for grassroots women's organizations.

FINDING 6:

Impact Area 3 Gender equality gains are uneven across Latin America and the Caribbean, shaped by complex national contexts

Impact Area 3 (strengthening UN system and governments) has contributed to the integration of gender-transformative perspectives and the consolidation of gender equality frameworks. However, progress has been uneven across countries and remains influenced by varying political dynamics, institutional capacity and financial constraints.

TABLE 5.

Strategic Note contribution analysis for Impact Area 3⁶¹

STRATEGIC NOTE OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	ACRO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
<p>3.1 The UN system in Latin America and the Caribbean increased its capacity to advance gender transformative perspectives and include gender equality and the empowerment of women in its planning.</p>	<p>Strong evidence of progress. Gender equality has been integrated into key UN planning primarily through enhanced accountability mechanisms, strategic coordination roles and extensive training initiatives.</p>	<p>Strong evidence of ACRO's contribution. UN Women ACRO co-chaired three major Regional Collaboration Platform mechanisms: the Gender Issue-Based Coalition, the Populations Left Behind Thematic Group and the Evaluation Working Group, positioning gender equality and women's empowerment across diverse regional agendas. By providing technical expertise and guidance, UN Women facilitated the submission of six UNCT-SWAP reports in Non-Physical Presences and nine UNCT-SWAP annual reports from Country Offices. It completed the Spanish translation of the UNCT Gender Equality Marker Guidance Note and trained 314 UN personnel in gender marker application. ACRO strengthened the capacity of 54 UN personnel to implement the UNCT-SWAP framework and equipped 161 UN personnel to effectively utilize the UNCT-SWAP reporting tool. Finally, UN Women co-produced the first Regional Gender Equality Profile with 15 UN agencies.</p>

⁶¹ The information presented in the table is partially sourced from RMS and other management reports and should therefore be considered as management-reported data.

STRATEGIC NOTE OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	ACRO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
<p>3.2 Latin America and Caribbean governments increased their capacity to advance a gender transformative perspective and implement gender equality norms and frameworks.</p>	<p>Strong evidence of progress. According to the World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Gender Gap Report, Latin America and the Caribbean reached 74.3 per cent gender parity, making it the third highest globally and showing a 23.4 percentage point increase in political empowerment since 2006, with 16 of 18 countries improving their parity scores. Nearly all countries in the region adopted legal frameworks and constitutional reforms upholding gender equity, combating violence and eliminating discrimination, establishing specialized high-level government gender institutions to implement these policies. The Tlatelolco Commitment (2024) launched a Decade of Action for substantive gender equality, prioritizing structural measures such as care work valuation and strengthened gender statistics.</p>	<p>Moderate evidence of ACRO's contribution Specifically, ACRO provided technical assistance to 14 countries in 2023, and continued supporting 11 countries in 2024, to advance policy and normative frameworks for integrated care systems. Since 2022, at least three countries with UN Women presence – Ecuador (2023), Panama (2024) and Brazil (2024) – have approved specific national care system legislation. These join earlier adopters, bringing the total number of countries with such laws to six: Uruguay, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama and Brazil.</p>
<p>3.3 Gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data and knowledge are produced... and used to inform countries' policies.</p>	<p>Strong evidence of progress in improving data systems. The World Bank Gender Data Portal lists nearly all Latin American and Caribbean countries as having dedicated gender statistics websites, providing sex-disaggregated datasets on labour, education, health and violence. This is marked by the development of regional gender dashboards and snapshots, and tools for tracking Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators with a gender lens, which have improved data accessibility and use.⁶²</p>	<p>Strong evidence of ACRO's contribution. UN Women played a key role in supporting countries' adoption and implementation of the Tlatelolco Commitment (2025), which established a Decade of Action (2025–2035) to accelerate gender equality and care society initiatives throughout the region.</p> <p>ACRO has provided technical support and advocacy resulting in the approval of landmark care system legislation in Brazil, Panama and Ecuador since 2022, influencing the regional shift towards a rights-based approach to care policies.</p> <p>ACRO assists countries in the collection, analysis and use of gender statistics – helping update and maintain gender observatories, launch new SDG-aligned data repositories and publish critical knowledge resources for policymaking. Collaborations have been undertaken with ECLAC, INEGI and national statistical offices. Initiatives such as Women Count, the Gender Data Outlook and Power BI dashboards have helped institutionalize gender data in national planning.</p>
<p>Contributing factors</p>	<p>Enablers: Strategic partnerships and engagement with government and civil-society actors have been crucial for advancing reforms.</p>	<p>Barriers: Political backlash against gender rights and shrinking civic space pose risks to sustainability. Persistent data gaps for marginalized groups limit the scope of evidence-based policymaking. A complex financial context with shrinking aid funding also affects programming.</p>

Source: Evaluation team

⁶² More information at <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean>

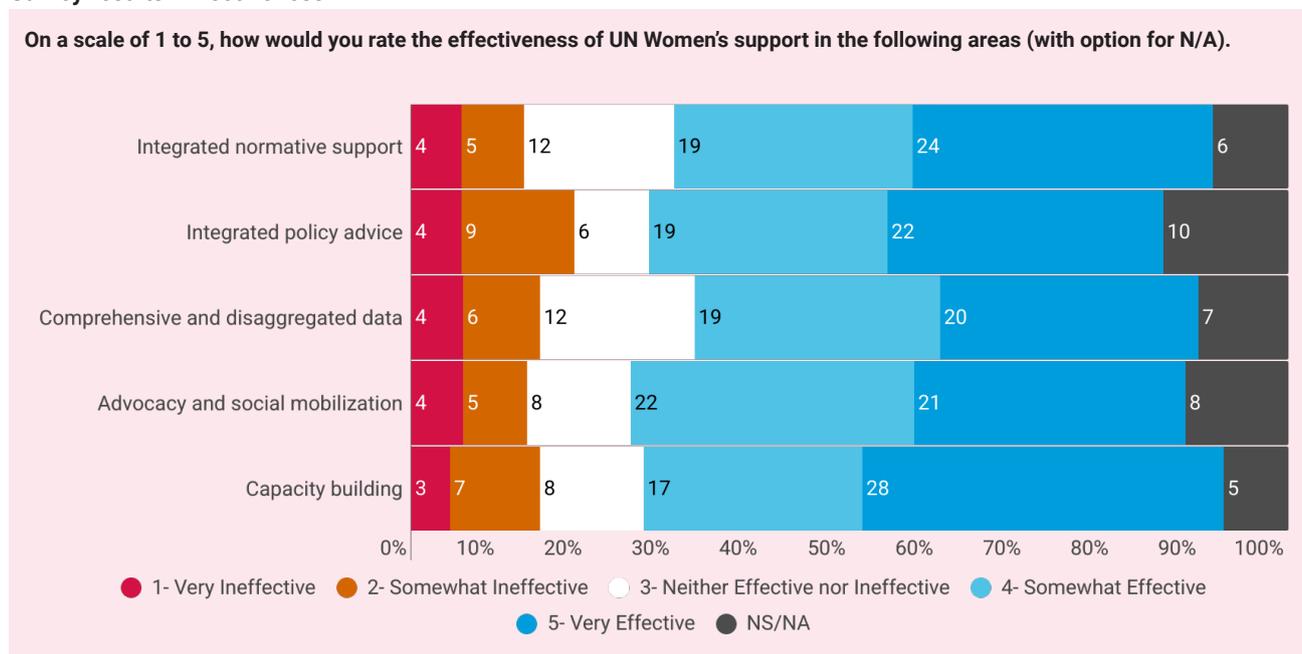
Some or significant progress was reported in both 2023 and 2024 for governments advancing implementation of international and regional gender equality frameworks (Impact Area 3).⁶³ This is consistent with findings from the desk review and primary data collection. According to the evaluation survey, 61 per cent of external respondents – including UN agencies, government and civil society partners – rated UN Women’s support in areas such as normative guidance, policy advice, disaggregated data provision and capacity-building as either somewhat (28 per cent) or very effective (33 per cent) (see **Figure 10**). **These achievements were supported by ACRO’s regional perspective, technical expertise and facilitation of cross-country collaboration.** However, progress varied across contexts and has been shaped by both enabling and constraining factors.

ACRO has contributed to strengthening the UN system’s capacity to **integrate a gender-transformative perspective**, particularly through support to Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences in embedding gender equality and women’s empowerment

perspectives into UNSDCF. Interviews with partners in Peru, Colombia and Paraguay highlighted the relevance of the technical advice provided during UNSDCF planning. ACRO offered tools such as gender markers and analysis frameworks, and convened regional workshops to support alignment with gender equality and women’s empowerment priorities. Chile’s inclusion of gender as a core pillar in its UNSDCF illustrates this influence. Implementation of the UN System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, which sets a target of 15 per cent of expenditure for gender equality by 2026, further formalized these commitments.

Despite these efforts, several challenges were identified. **Fragmentation between ACRO and Country Offices; underutilization of coordination platforms such as the Gender Inter-Agency Group; and limited uptake of global tools such as the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan have hindered progress.** Gaps in the implementation and monitoring of gender indicators within UNSDCF were also noted, with delays and inconsistent reporting from UN Women offices.

FIGURE 10.
Survey results: Effectiveness



Source: ACRO Strategic Note Evaluation survey results, total response for the question: 72 (only external stakeholders)

⁶³ The UN system has contributed to transformative changes for gender equality and governments advanced implementation of international and regional gender equality frameworks.

Governments in the region have taken steps to advance gender equality frameworks. Specifically, ACRO provided technical assistance to 14 countries in 2023, and continued supporting 11 countries in 2024, to advance policy and normative frameworks for integrated care systems. ACRO also strengthened GRB capacity, notably by partnering with the International Monetary Fund to implement the second edition of a GRB workshop which **trained 124 finance officials from Latin America and Caribbean ministries**, aiming to integrate gender equality into fiscal policies.

ACRO enhanced institutional capacity within the justice and public safety sectors, supporting the Gender Specialized Network of the Iberoamerican Association of Public Ministries in **developing and adopting a regional protocol to combat sexual violence against women**. UN Women also contributed to legal reforms, such as the early marriage law in Peru⁶⁴ and supported the establishment of a national care system in Panama,⁶⁵ which is estimated to benefit over one million women. Technical assistance in GRB, results-based management and programme evaluations helped institutionalize gender equality in public administration.

ACRO played a role in facilitating progress in politically sensitive contexts and in supporting regional advocacy and communication campaigns. **These efforts have been enabled by strategic partnerships and engagement with government and civil-society actors**. However, political instability, backlash against gender rights and limited institutional capacity continue to pose risks to sustainability. In some cases, Strategic Notes were adapted to avoid sensitive topics, such as WPS, to ensure government buy-in. Expanding engagement beyond gender ministries to include finance ministries and legislators remains an area for further development.

ACRO has **supported improvements in data systems and evidence-based policymaking**. Collaborations with ECLAC, INEGI and national statistical offices have led to the development of regional dashboards, gender snapshots and training programmes. Tools for tracking SDG indicators with a gender lens have improved data accessibility and use. Resources such as the Regional Gender Profile and Beijing+30 data have informed policy and programming, while Colombia's leadership in DESA statistics reflects the impact of UN Women's support in data collection and identification of gaps.

Initiatives such as Women Count, the Gender Data Outlook and Power BI dashboards with intersectional data have contributed to institutionalizing gender equality in planning and budgeting. However, challenges remain in measuring qualitative impacts; ensuring the use of knowledge products; and addressing persistent data gaps, particularly for marginalized groups. The desk review and key informant interviews highlighted limited disaggregation by variables such as ethnicity, disability and location (rural/urban), and noted that gender units in national statistical systems are not yet fully institutionalized.

Emerging challenges – including political volatility, constrained aid funding and the rise of coalitions resistant to gender equality – continue to affect the pace and depth of change. While some countries have demonstrated political will and public support for normative reforms, others face polarization and shrinking civic space, which have limited the scope of engagement. In certain cases, strategic documents were adjusted to avoid sensitive topics, reflecting the need to navigate complex political environments.

Finally, we have also started to observe the consequences of a complex financial context, with shrinking aid funding due to political shifts in major donor countries, which will directly impact programme delivery.

⁶⁴ Key informant interviews, UNCT Peru.

⁶⁵ UN Women (2023). Third Report Coordination Framework with the Government of Panama.

FINDING 7:

Operational challenges and HR constraints affect efficiency and effectiveness

ACRO’s ability to ensure operational effectiveness is affected by consistency of funds, reduced staffing and the adoption of new systems.

This section examines the operational challenges that are reported to affect the quality and consistency of programme delivery across the region. While these operational challenges occasionally result in delayed implementation and increased demands on staff capacity, their underlying causes are frequently complex and systemic in nature.⁶⁶

A recurring theme emerging from interviews with ACRO and Country Office or Non-Physical Presence staff is the perception that ACRO’s operational processes are overly centralized and bureaucratic. This perception is linked to extensive regional oversight of

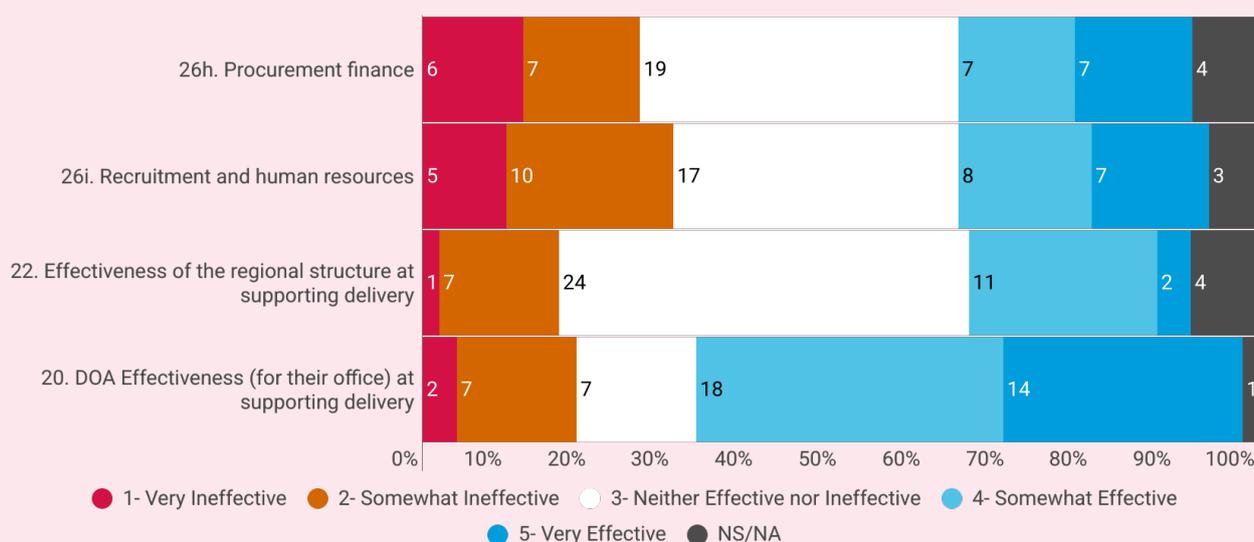
operational functions and to resource and capacity gaps at the country level that require frequent regional intervention.

The introduction of the Quantum Enterprise Resource Planning system further strained operations. The transition from Atlas to Quantum caused disruptions in financial management and reporting, data inconsistencies and payroll errors. In some cases, these disruptions contributed to delays in contracting key personnel, including administrative assistants and project coordinators, which in turn affected the initiation and coordination of local activities.

FIGURE 11.

Survey results: Operational effectiveness

Level of effectiveness across the operational support areas provided by ACRO according to three questions: (22) From a scale of 1-5, how effective and coherent is the regional structure (across Non-Resident Agencies, Programme Presences, Country Offices and Multi-Country Offices) at supporting delivery?; (20) From a scale of 1-5, how effectively does the current delegation of authority to your office support effective delivery?; (26) Please rate your level of satisfaction with the support provided by ACRO in the following areas? (also option for N/A).



Source: ACRO Strategic Note evaluation survey results, total response for the question: 49 to 50

⁶⁶ These observations are drawn from stakeholder perceptions in 2025, and do not fully align with the 2023 IAS audit report, which rated regional operations as Satisfactory (the highest rating) indicating that, despite reported challenges, operational systems overall met established standards and requirements. The global transition and roll-out of the Enterprise Resource Planning system, Quantum, occurred primarily at the beginning of the audit period.

Although ACRO implemented training to facilitate the transition, staff across offices reported ongoing challenges in adapting to the new system. Many indicated that payroll inaccuracies and data discrepancies persisted, suggesting that the global roll-out did not fully account for local operational contexts or varying capacities. Country Offices also cited current inconsistencies across Quantum reports, resulting in uncertainty and continued dependence on ACRO for troubleshooting and data validation.

Despite ACRO's continuous investment in training for Quantum users, several stakeholders noted that the current system contributes to delays in recruitment and procurement, which in turn affects the timely start-up of projects.

Although adequate procurement delegations of authority are in place, the procurement and HR cycles for ACRO and Non-Physical Presences remain concentrated among a small number of finance and HR personnel, creating potential delays during staff absences. The situation was compounded by limited staffing within ACRO's operational units.

In **2024**, the average recruitment process time was reported as **18 weeks**, indicating a decrease from the 2023 peak, although **it remains above the initial target of 14 weeks (confirming reported HR and procurement delays)**.⁶⁷

ACRO Request System⁶⁸ performance also offers some insights (See **Table 6**). Overall system throughput was high, with 95 per cent (2,974 of 3,138) of total requests completed between 2023 and 2025,⁶⁹ **suggesting a strong capacity to process demands**. However, efficiency (as measured by average response times) fluctuated. In 2023, ACRO maintained a moderate average response time of 24.04 days. While the number of requests declined in 2024 and 2025, the average response time first increased to

27.24 days in 2024 before improving to 20.95 days in 2025 (see **Table 6**). **This decline in efficiency, despite fewer requests, may indicate constraints related to staffing, process backlog or adoption challenges that temporarily limited the office capacity to respond**. Moreover, the absolute number of pending requests, despite the system's increased speed, reflects either a growing backlog for more complex requests or a tendency in closing cases late in the period.⁷⁰

Overall, ACRO's Request System effectively managed most incoming requests and demonstrated adaptability in response times. However, the temporary decline in efficiency and the persistence of pending cases point to opportunities for streamlining processes, addressing resource gaps and further optimizing request management.

ACRO's involvement in quality assurance introduced additional layers of review; for instance, **the average time for the Regional Procurement Review Committee quality assurance process rose from 12.5 days in 2023 to 21.6 days in 2024**, suggesting that central review mechanisms may contribute to slowed implementation. The consequences were perceived by staff as operational shortcomings that reportedly constrained programme implementation.

Operational delays are particularly significant during project initiation; for example, one major project required a full year to receive funding, while another faced a nine-month delay before the procurement of essential items could begin, limiting its ability to deliver planned results. The evaluators noted that several project start-up delays originated not within the formal operations unit, but at the project management level. Nevertheless, their consequences were perceived by staff as operational shortcomings that constrained programme starts.

TABLE 6.
Key insights from ACRO's Request System, 2023–2025

YEAR	COMPLETED	PENDING	AV. RESPONSE (DAYS)	TOTAL REQUESTS
2023	1607	78	24.04	1685
2024	883	30	27.24	913
2025	484	56	20.95	540
Grand Total	2974	164	24.49	3138

⁶⁷ Information sourced directly from key performance indicators reported in the 2023 and 2024 ACRO WP Annual Reports.

⁶⁸ The ACRO Request System is an internal administrative tool to log, track and manage requests related to operations such as contracting, procurement, finance and HR approvals. It is designed to streamline the submission and processing of various operational requests, monitor workloads, track completion rates and measure response times.

⁶⁹ As of September 2025, analysis reflects all requests processed up to this date; final figures for completed tasks may vary by year-end.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Conversely, **improvements were observed in project reporting timeliness**, suggesting progress with programmatic implementation. **The proportion of donor reports submitted on time increased from 76 per cent in 2023 (below the 80 per cent baseline target) to approximately 84 per cent in 2024, approaching the 2025 target of 85 per cent**⁷¹. This mixed perception is reflected in the evaluation survey results summarized in **Figure 11**. Across procurement, finance, recruitment and general delivery, support provided by ACRO received mixed ratings from respondents. On average, **28 per cent considered the support effective or very effective**, while **40 per cent rated it as neither effective nor ineffective**. Meanwhile, **32 per cent found the support to be somewhat or very ineffective**. These results suggest opportunities for improving operational support.

In resource mobilization, a key lesson identified was the need to strengthen internal communication flows. ACRO could improve by anticipating and sharing funding opportunities with country and subregional offices earlier, allowing sufficient time for proposal development, review and submission. This suggests that processes within the Resource Mobilization Unit have at times been misaligned with field-level operational timelines.

The Delegation of Authority Framework was also frequently mentioned in interviews, particularly by staff in Non-Physical Presences and smaller Country Offices, who viewed it as restrictive due to the requirement for ACRO approval across most transactions. **This has led to requests for increased delegation, especially for lower-value financial transactions, to enhance responsiveness at the field level**. However, survey data presents a more mixed view: 66 per cent of respondents rated the delegation of authority level as effective (37 per cent) or very effective (29 per cent), which may also respond to the lower response rate from smaller offices/Non-Physical Presences⁷².

The **introduction of new corporate platforms was identified as adding complexity to operational workflows**. While these platforms may offer long-term benefits, their adoption and roll-out has caused short-term disruptions. Respondents noted that corporate tools and policies (such as those related to partnerships and grant disbursements) are not

consistently tailored to regional needs, especially for smaller offices. This perceived lack of flexibility, in their view, can delay implementation and affect collaboration, with some external stakeholders indicating a preference for working with agencies perceived as more agile.

HR management was identified as a significant constraint. Many offices lack dedicated HR personnel, resulting in thematic staff assuming HR responsibilities outside their core expertise. This can affect both programme delivery and operations, and increases reliance on the Regional HR Unit, which itself has a reduced number of staff. **The dependence on temporary, project-based staff for essential operational roles also raises concerns about the sustainability of certain functions**. These challenges point to the need for a more comprehensive regional strategy for recruitment, professional development and staff retention.

The Non-Physical Presence model requires that regional support replaces local roles; therefore, dedicated in-country operational capacities are not anticipated or resourced. With eight Non-Physical Presences lacking dedicated roles for key functions such as HR, procurement and communications, ACRO needs to fulfill both technical and administrative support for these offices, which places additional pressure on regional human resources. Ambiguity around the scope of support for different office typologies has created disparities in resource distribution across the region.

In conclusion, **the operational environment is strained by a convergence of factors:**

- Delegating complex HR and procurement tasks to non-specialized programmatic staff creates inefficiencies at the point of initiation.
- The limited number of HR and Finance staff, combined with a relative higher number of Non-Physical Presences, has contributed to operational backlogs and delays. The current staffing structure places a high volume of transactions and administrative tasks on a small number of regional personnel.

⁷¹ Information sourced directly from key performance indicators reported in the 2023 and 2024 ACRO WP Annual Reports.

⁷² Not all survey participants identified the country in which they work, making it difficult to reference them as either from a Non-Physical Presence or Country Office. This was done to maintain anonymity.

4.3 SUSTAINABILITY

Evaluation question 3. To what extent has implementation of the strategic note contributed to greater sustainability of UN Women's agenda?

FINDING 8:

Leadership knowledge production is a key strength, yet challenges remain in fostering a learning culture

In producing high-quality data and knowledge products, ACRO's leadership, through its team of specialists, is a key institutional strength that enhances thematic added value and programmatic credibility. However, challenges remain in consistent systematization of these assets and in fostering a cohesive, region-wide learning culture.

ACRO's role in knowledge production continues to be a key contributor to advancing gender equality efforts in the region. This work is supported by strategic partnerships that enhance both the credibility and reach of its outputs. Collaborations with regional institutions such as ECLAC and various national statistical offices⁷³ have enhanced the credibility, technical quality and reach of gender data and analysis across Latin America and the Caribbean.

These partnerships have led to the development of several technical and policy-relevant knowledge products. For example, in 2023, UN Women co-led the development of the *Guide for Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective in Statistical Production*, endorsed by the Statistical Conference of the Americas. Coordinated by INEGI, ECLAC's Gender Affairs Division and UN Women. This guide provides a regional standard for integrating gender into statistical systems and is available in both short and extended formats. It was developed in close collaboration with national statistical offices and is intended to support countries in addressing gender data gaps and embedding gender perspectives in national data systems.

In 2023 and 2024, ACRO also co-produced regional reports such as **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Gender Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean: Gender Indicators up to 2023**, which informed regional consultations ahead of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. In Mexico, the preliminary

report **La Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible: indicadores de género de México a 2024** supported the formulation of the Common Country Analysis and the upcoming 2025–2030 UNSDCF.

Additional efforts include the Gender Data Outlook, which involved 11 national statistical offices across the region and aimed to assess gender data capacities and identify areas for improvement. ACRO also contributed to studies on the quality of femicide data and produced infographics such as *Measuring Femicide: Challenges and Efforts to Bolster the Process in Latin America and the Caribbean*, which helped visualize gaps and efforts in gender-based violence data.

UN Women co-organized a series of high-level international meetings and conferences in 2023 and 2024 to strengthen regional dialogue and technical exchange. These included:

- The International Meeting on Gender Statistics (XXV edition), held in Aguascalientes, Mexico, with nearly 900 participants from 30 countries, covering topics such as care economy measurement, unpaid work and big data applications.
- The International Expert Meeting on Gender-Based Violence Statistics, which led to the creation of a regional community of practice on gender-based violence data.
- The Technical Exchange Group on Gender-Based-Violence Statistics, which proposed the establishment of a dedicated working group under the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

⁷³ Including Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Colombia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Ecuador, Mexico, Argentina, Suriname and Jamaica, with particular participation from INEGI in Mexico and DANE in Colombia

- The International Experts Meeting on Time Use and Unpaid Work, held in Santiago, Chile, with 70 participants, focused on improving time-use surveys and integrating findings into care-related policy design.
- Participation in the Festival de Datos in Uruguay and the UN World Data Forum, where UN Women showcased tools and training on gender statistics.

Capacity-building efforts have also expanded. In 2023 and 2024, a total of 1,514 data producers and users were trained in gender statistics through initiatives led by UN Women, ECLAC, INEGI and INMUJERES. Notable examples reported by management include:

- The Higher Diploma in Measurement of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, which trained 121 professionals from 20 countries.
- Workshops on forecasting methodologies (67 participants), climate and environmental statistics (260 participants across two sessions) and the

School of Demographic Analysis on Care (30 participants).

- A Training for Trainers course on the Care Map of Mexico, which trained over 20 CSOs in using geospatial data for advocacy.
- The fourth and fifth editions of the Virtual Course on Integrated Care Systems, co-facilitated with UNDP, the International Labour Organization and ECLAC.

Country Offices reported that these regional studies and tools are useful for informing national-level analyses, including Common Country Analyses and gender scorecards. Key publications such as Gender-Responsive Budgeting: A Roadmap for Its Implementation and outputs from the Women Count initiative – such as the establishment of a gender data centre in Mexico, and targeted research in Argentina (see Box 5) and Uruguay – have supported the institutionalization of gender equality in planning and budgeting processes.

BOX 5.

Open data, safer systems: Advancing gender equality through evidence in Argentina

In 2023, Argentina became a regional pioneer in using open, gender-responsive data to transform justice and digital safety systems. With support from UN Women, two groundbreaking initiatives advanced Outcome 3.3 by closing evidence gaps and translating data into policy change. The Buenos Aires-based court began publishing anonymized, machine-readable rulings on gender-based violence, creating the country's first open judicial dataset on gender-based violence. This enabled researchers to analyse sentencing patterns and fed directly into the city's 2024 Justice Modernization Plan, while also informing Spotlight Initiative policy briefs calling for specialized judicial training.

Simultaneously, digital rights advocates, supported by UN Women, pushed for open data standards to monitor online gender-based violence.

Their inputs helped shape Argentina's National Observatory on Online Violence and a pilot dashboard tracking misogynistic hashtags across social media. These tools are now cited in legislative proposals on digital violence. Together, these initiatives exemplify the full "produce-analyse-use" cycle of Outcome 3.3 – generating disaggregated data, translating it into actionable insights and applying it to shape justice reform and digital safety policies. By embedding transparency and accountability into both offline and online violence responses, Argentina is setting a precedent for data-driven gender equality governance in the region.

Source: Most Significant Change consolidated by the evaluation team on the basis of the information available for the project.

Despite excellence in producing individual knowledge products, ACRO faces a challenge in standardizing its approach to knowledge management;⁷⁴ for example, central, systematic process for consolidating, sharing and leveraging the rich data and analytical insights generated across the region was lacking. **Knowledge is often shared on an ad hoc basis through specific reports, retreats or direct support rather than being institutionalized in a way that promotes consistent, region-wide learning. However, some good practices and results are reported (see Table 7).**

While ACRO actively works to build technical capacity for staff and partners in areas such as project management and evaluation, these efforts could be integrated into a more comprehensive **knowledge management plan**. Such a plan would ensure that best practices and lessons learned from one context are systematically captured and made accessible to inform planning and implementation in others, moving from effective knowledge production to sustained institutional learning.

TABLE 7.
Key results from regional knowledge products in ACRO, 2023–2024

THEMATIC AREA	NAME / PRODUCT	DESCRIPTION	REPORTED RESULTS / REACH	PARTNERS / SOURCES
Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)	Road Map for Implementation (LatAm experiences)	Co-produced with ECLAC, linked to the 2030 Agenda; vital regional GRB resource	1,085 downloads by Dec 2023	ECLAC, UN Women
Gender equality profiles	Regional Profile of Gender Equality in LAC	Major reference; widely accessed knowledge product	5,414 visits	UN Women
Gender statistics / Women Count Initiative	Knowledge products (2024–Aug 2025, 12 items)	Themes: WEE, VAW, gender and environment, mainstreaming; multi-stakeholder collaboration	Varied by product	ECLAC, UNSD, UNFPA, National Offices, Gender Mechanisms
SDG & Gender Agenda	Flagship Series: Regional/Country reports	Two regional (2025) and two country (Mexico/DR 2024–25) reports; four others in progress (Colombia, Chile, Mexico 2025, Uruguay); presented in high-level briefings and conferences	Four published; ongoing series	UN Women, ECLAC
Digital Care Economy	Web section: Care (UN Women LAC)	Platform with 40+ publications, massive downloads; key product: “Care and public policy”	29,059 downloads (platform), 1,885 (key product visits)	UN Women
Digital knowledge platforms	Digital Knowledge Platform (presu- puestoygenero.net)	GRB knowledge hub launched in 2023; 296 documents, 162 tools; categorized and containing up-to-date gender budget data on 12 countries	Library statistics; regularly updated	UN Women
Partnerships & resource mobilization	Knowledge products for partnerships and resource mobilization (2023-2024)	19 products in 2023 (proposal packages, notes, mappings, learning cafes), 20 in 2024 (knowledge/comms products for negotiations with donors)	Total: 39 products (2023–24)	UN Women, partners

⁷⁴ A comprehensive list of ACRO knowledge management products is provided in Annex 22. Although no formal mechanism is currently in place to assess the quality or utilization of these products, each undergoes a structured review process. This includes peer review with input from other programmatic areas, content review by the knowledge management focal point and editorial revision. Final approval is granted by the Head of Office. Regarding the measurement of use and effectiveness, while the number of visualizations is tracked, cross-referencing and citation of knowledge management products in external publications are not systematically monitored. Despite this, consistent efforts have been made to strengthen cross-referencing within regional publications.

THEMATIC AREA	NAME / PRODUCT	DESCRIPTION	REPORTED RESULTS / REACH	PARTNERS / SOURCES
Violence against women in politics	Normative Overview (2024–25)	Presented at RMAAM/MERCOSUR (Dec 2024), launched via UN Women–FLACSO Argentina course, shared widely with parliamentarians	Dissemination in high-level dialogues	FLACSO Argentina, UN Women
Human rights standards in political participation	Standards Guide (2020, updated 2022)	Printed/distributed via Mexican Court’s joint agreement (Dec 2022); regional reference	Printed distribution, digital access	Mexican Court, UN Women
Feminist Foreign Policy	Feminist Foreign Policy Knowledge Product (2024)	Developed for Mexico’s international conference on Feminist Foreign Policy, 2024	Shared at regional/international events	UN Women, Mexican Foreign Ministry
Gender and political finance	Financing of Political Parties and Campaigns (2024)	Developed with testimonials, expert input and electoral institutions; used in workshops	Support for evidence-based exchange and advocacy	UN Women, electoral institutions

Source: Evaluation team

FINDING 9:

Long-term sustainability is constrained by a short-term, project-based funding model

The Strategic Note has supported regional planning and alignment, but its long-term sustainability is reduced by a short-term funding horizon.

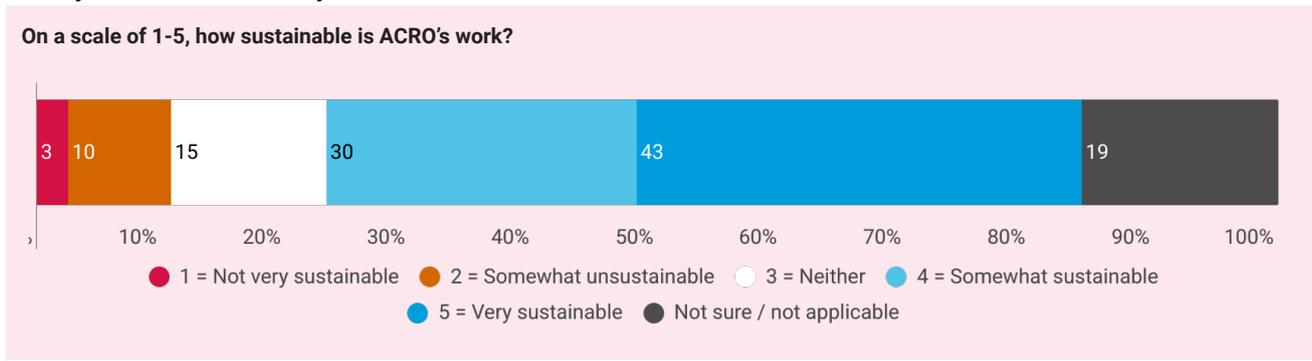
The Strategic Note has served as a useful tool for planning and alignment across the region. However, its long-term sustainability is challenged by limitations in its funding model and operational approach, which are not consistently adapted to the diverse political and institutional contexts of Latin America and the Caribbean. While many external partners view UN Women’s work positively, survey results show mixed perceptions regarding its sustainability. Among external respondents, 40 per cent rated UN Women’s work as “very sustainable” and 31.4 per cent as “somewhat sustainable,” suggesting a generally favourable view. However, 11.4 per cent considered it “somewhat unsustainable,” with smaller percentages rating it even lower, indicating concerns about sustainability among key stakeholders (see **Figure 12**).

A central challenge is the continued reliance on short-term, project-based funding. This model contributes to high transaction costs, reactive planning and limited capacity for long-term investment in staffing and programming. Financial instability has disrupted staffing continuity and affected the retention of technical expertise.

The Strategic Note’s design as a resource mobilization tool has also presented limitations. **Stakeholders noted that the current results framework is broad and lacks clear prioritization, making it difficult to present a cohesive and compelling offer to donors.** As a result, funding remains fragmented and project-driven, rather than strategic and multi-year. Without a more focused regional strategy, ACRO faces constraints in securing stable, long-term resources to sustain its work.

FIGURE 12.

Survey results: Sustainability



Source: ACRO Strategic Note evaluation survey results, total response for the question: 120 (internal and external stakeholders)

The evaluation found that certain **operational practices have not been consistently adapted to the region's diverse country contexts**. This includes a lack of differentiated support strategies for offices with varying capacities, operating in different political environments. Some of the key factors weakening sustainability at the implementation level included:

- Smaller offices often face challenges in monitoring interventions and demonstrating impact due in part to limited resources for monitoring and evaluation and the lack of standardized tools. Rights holders noted that project outcomes – both positive and negative – are not consistently tracked after project completion, which limits accountability and the ability to prove contribution to long-term impact to donors.
- Stakeholders expressed concern that initiatives often lack clear, viable exit strategies, casting doubt on the long-term ownership and continuation of results after UN Women's direct involvement ends. Work on disability rights in Panama (see Box 6), while transformative, highlights that even successful programmes face sustainability challenges that require systemic solutions.

There is a tendency towards shorter project time frames. According to portfolio analysis, the average duration of ACRO projects is 2 years and 2 months.

Projects initiated before 2023 averaged 3.1 years, while those starting after 2023 averaged 2.4 years. This trend contrasts with the expressed needs of Country Offices/Non-Physical Presences and external partners for longer-term programming.

- Political uncertainty, coupled with reduced funding from key strategic partners and the unpredictability of future contributions, has created a constrained financial environment. Core resources are estimated to decline by 15–20 per cent.
- Engagement with CSOs, which is critical for grassroots sustainability, faces some barriers. CSOs reported that unpredictable funding, complex administrative requirements and payment delays discourage collaboration.

Overall, the Strategic Note has been perceived as broad and lacking certain prioritization, complicating strategic focus and resource mobilization at national level. This has limited the Strategic Note's effectiveness as a guiding tool for sustainable programming and long-term investment decisions.

Despite growing interest in Strategic Note-level funding, the prevailing funding model remains project-based and fragmented. Recent financial pressures, including a 15 per cent reduction in planned core expenditure for 2025, have further disrupted staffing continuity and constrained the ability to scale or sustain initiatives.

BOX 6.

Advancing disability rights in Panama through inclusive systems transformation

The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Global Disability Fund) Joint Programme in Panama marked a shift from a medical-welfare model to a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion. Led by UN Women, WHO/PAHO, UNESCO and national partners such as SENADIS, the programme improved disability certification, decentralized services and introduced disaggregated data tools to enhance access to social protection. Over 370 stakeholders were trained, and inclusive planning tools were co-developed with organizations of persons with disabilities, especially women, indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders.

Beyond technical gains, the programme sparked a cultural shift in public policy; strengthened leadership in organizations of persons with disabilities; and linked certification to employment. While sustainability challenges remain, the programme laid the groundwork for systemic change by embedding inclusion in national planning and empowering persons with disabilities as rights holders, offering a replicable model for implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the region.

Source: Most Significant Change consolidated by the evaluation team based on the information available for the project.

FINDING 10

Gaps in the implementation of disability inclusion and environmental safeguards within the Strategic Note

ACRO's Strategic Note includes a strong commitment to human rights and intersectionality but faces challenges in comprehensive implementation of disability inclusion and integration of environmental safeguards.

ACRO's Strategic Note is firmly grounded in a robust human rights framework, aligning with key international and regional normative standards. ACRO provides substantive technical support to implement instruments such as the Belem do Para Convention and CEDAW and has leveraged its mandate to help Member States uphold global norms. This is demonstrated through concrete actions, such as collaboration with regional parliaments to strengthen gender-sensitive legislation and work with MESECVI to support the regional framework on violence against women and girls.

Despite this strong foundation, the evaluation found a gap between high-level commitments and their systematic application on the ground, particularly in the cross-cutting areas of disability inclusion and environmental safeguards (See **Box 6**).

The principle of leave no one behind and an intersectional approach are explicitly embedded

in the Strategic Note. It correctly prioritizes populations facing heightened vulnerability and discrimination, including indigenous and rural women, Afro-descendant women, older and younger women, women with disabilities, migrant and refugee women, and LGBTIQ+ individuals. However, the evaluation identified a discrepancy between this analytical focus and practical implementation.

Survey data reveals that stakeholders rated ACRO's effectiveness in "identifying marginalized populations" relatively highly (38 per cent somewhat effective, and 30 per cent very effective), but its effectiveness in "engaging with marginalized populations" scored notably lower (30 per cent somewhat effective, and 27 per cent very effective) (see **Figure 13**). This suggests a persistent gap between analytical frameworks and participatory programming, which was especially pronounced for indigenous women, Afro-descendant communities and people with disabilities.

Within the leave no one behind framework, people with disabilities are recognized as a priority group, and the evaluation noted numerous positive, targeted initiatives across the region. These efforts include:

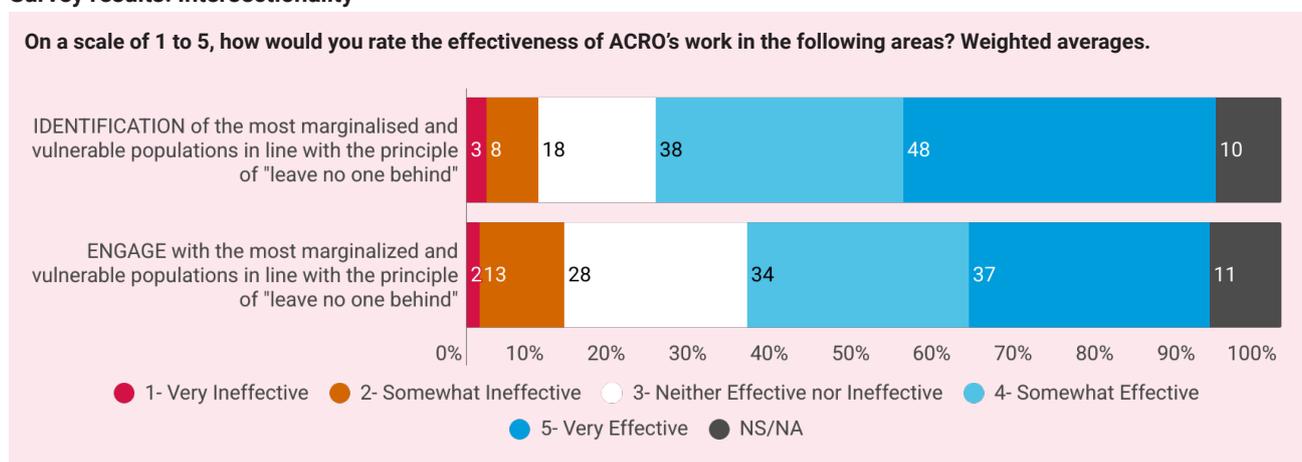
- **The use of disaggregated indicators and data collection to understand and address the realities of marginalized groups.** ACRO applies an intersectional approach aligned with leave no one behind principles, using disaggregated data across initiatives such as political participation programmes; gender data dashboards in Power BI for regional comparisons; and human mobility reports that include sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive information. For instance, ACRO supports the piloting of statistical frameworks on femicide/feminicide and works to strengthen gender statistics capacities in government and civil society.
- **Capacity-building initiatives monitor and promote the participation of marginalized populations by tracking their representation in virtual courses and leadership programmes.** For example, in 2023 and 2024, participation data was explicitly disaggregated by groups including Indigenous, Afro-descendant, LGBTIQ+ and women with disabilities, showing intentional efforts to allocate opportunities and ensure greater access to political influence for underrepresented communities.
- **Partnerships with CSOs and networks representing women with disabilities** to address broader barriers in economic participation, education, poverty and access to justice.

- The update and use of the **Gender-Age Marker tool in humanitarian frameworks** to include disability-specific indicators, and coordination with national disability secretariats and disabled persons organizations, as exemplified in Panama. This ensured inclusive participation beyond urban centres.
- Creation and renewal of advisory groups and humanitarian action programmes, such as LEAP Journeys, which design culturally relevant interventions and protection kits with the input of marginalized communities, including LGBTIQ+ individuals and Indigenous women.

Despite this progress, the evaluation notes that a comprehensive, cross-cutting disability strategy integrated throughout the entire Strategic Note cycle was not clearly articulated. However, the advances in disaggregated data practices, targeted participation mechanisms and the adaptation of engagement platforms collectively reflect a strong organizational commitment to making leave no one behind operational in practice and promoting the full participation of historically excluded groups.

The disability approach presents as a collection of separate initiatives rather than a fully institutionalized and systemic strategy. This is also reflected in stakeholder perceptions, where a plurality of respondents (33 per cent) rated ACRO's work as "somewhat effective" or "very effective" in reaching people with disabilities (see **Figure 14**), suggesting that while individual efforts are recognized, overall impact is perceived as limited by the lack of a cohesive, overarching approach.

FIGURE 13.
Survey results: Intersectionality



Source: ACRO Strategic Note evaluation survey results, total response for the question: 115 (ACRO and Country Office/Non-Physical Presence personnel and external partners).

The Strategic Note demonstrates growing attention to social and environmental safeguards, although application remains inconsistent.

- **Social safeguards:** ACRO has integrated social safeguards, particularly in humanitarian and peacebuilding contexts. **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** was a key focus, with training provided to a range of actors. Efforts to transform harmful social norms, promote positive masculinities and foster social cohesion were also recognized as essential for sustainable change.
- **Environmental considerations and safeguards:** Environmental considerations are an emerging strategic priority. UN Women has commitments to core performance standards related to environmental and cultural protection. However, achieving climate neutrality and environmental sustainability requires improvements to policies and procedures to enhance environmental sustainability and reduce the Entity’s carbon footprint

The intersection of gender and climate action is gaining visibility. Key engagements include:

- The integration of gender into disaster risk management is part of UN Women’s established work on the climate change nexus. The organization has actively supported normative processes related to Disaster Risk Reduction, including

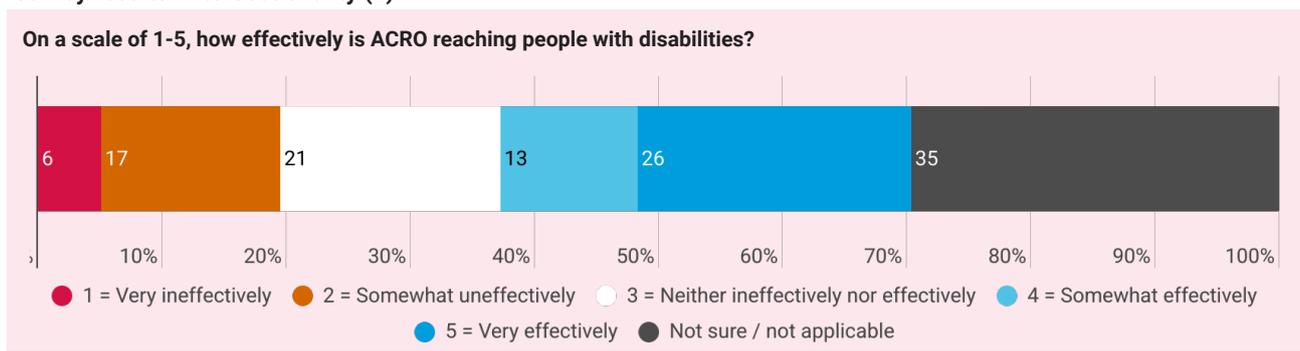
gender-responsive implementation of the Sendai Framework.

- UN Women has participated in the Escazú Regional Agreement forums, solidifying the commitment to gender equality within this regional framework.
- Visibility of rights holders through organizing and participating in forums, such as the Latin America and Caribbean Environmental Defenders Forum and the Strategic Meeting with Human Rights Defenders on Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The deepening of gender and climate work is strongly supported by the regional initiative formally titled “Scaling up Climate Change and Environmental Policies and Programmes and their Effectiveness by Integrating Gender Perspectives”. This regional programme (currently under evaluation) represents an opportunity to further implementation of the regional gender and climate strategy, with an intersectional lens.

While individual projects may incorporate environmental considerations, a standardized approach to risk assessment and mitigation linked to overall Strategic Note implementation was not clearly outlined. This remains a significant gap in ensuring that all programming consistently adheres to and promotes these safeguards.

FIGURE 14.
Survey results: Intersectionality (2)



Source: ACRO Strategic Note evaluation survey results, total response for the question: 83 (internal and external stakeholders)



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**LESSONS
LEARNED**

This section outlines the key lessons learned from implementation of the ACRO Strategic Note (2023–2025). These lessons are derived from the evaluation’s findings and are intended to inform future strategic planning within ACRO and across UN Women.

Evaluation question 4. What are key good practices and lessons learned that should be incorporated in the future?

1. Strategic clarity and realistic prioritization

The experience of implementing a broad Strategic Note with an overloaded results matrix demonstrates that **clear prioritization and manageable objectives are critical for achieving measurable impact, especially in a resource-constrained environment.** When workplans attempt to cover too many outputs without sufficient resources, it leads to a dispersion of effort, implementation delays and difficulty in demonstrating tangible results, which undermines the ability to strengthen evidence and tell a compelling story of impact.

Findings 6, 7 and 9 underscore that overloaded results matrices can undermine measurable impact, as seen in operational challenges and uneven gender equality gains across national contexts. Implementation delays and dispersed efforts were attributable to attempting to cover too many outputs without adequate resources, affirming the necessity of focused, realistic objectives to strengthen evidence and storytelling.

This lesson, applicable to any strategic planning process within UN Women, emphasizes that focused, evidence-based strategies built on concrete country-level analysis are more effective and sustainable when they can be measured.

KEY TAKEAWAYS INCLUDE:

- Future Strategic Notes must be built upon concrete strategies derived from direct implementation experience and comprehensive country-level analysis, ensuring regional plans are thoroughly informed by the realities of Country Office experience.
- Strategic documents must contain clear, specific and manageable outputs. The practice of combining multiple distinct areas into a single output reduces focus and hinders effective reporting.
- Embedding substantial components, such as the care economy, within broader frameworks of WEE or EVAW, provides a strong foundation for integrated work, helping to break down programmatic silos and foster cross-cutting results.

Thoughtful project design that includes a dedicated inception phase is crucial for detailed planning and team recruitment.

2. Proactive and coordinated resource mobilization

The contrast between successful funding of thematic priorities (e.g. care systems) and the systemic challenges of a reactive, project-based funding model suggests that **proactive and coordinated resource mobilization, grounded in thematic expertise and integrated multi-country proposals, is essential for financial sustainability** (Findings 5, 9). While UN Women has consolidated its leadership in several strategic areas, a predominantly reactive fundraising approach and instances of internal competition for donor resources have been perceived as limiting the effectiveness of resource mobilization efforts. In some cases, Country Offices engaged in parallel negotiations with donors, which may affect external perceptions of coordination and coherence within the organization.

The findings also highlight strategic coordination as essential for both fundraising and advancing gender equality across the UN system (Finding 3), demonstrating that proactive, unified narratives strengthen long-term viability and reduce dependence on volatile, short-term funding cycles, favouring financial stability.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES IDENTIFIED INCLUDE:

- Allocating a dedicated budget for coordination within multi-country projects, as seen in the AECID initiative, ensures broader regional impact.
- Initiating smaller projects in countries with a limited presence has proven effective for establishing focal points and mobilizing further resources, as in the case of climate change in Chile and care in Peru.

3. Agile and tailored operational systems

Operational challenges in HR and procurement highlight the need for more agile, streamlined and context-sensitive support systems to enable effective programme delivery. As reflected in the findings (Finding 7), these issues, combined with uneven performance across country contexts (Finding 6), underscore the importance of revising operational processes that can facilitate timely and efficient implementation of strategic priorities. This lesson is critical for a multi-level organization. It shows that centralized expertise must be balanced with decentralized flexibility and that investing in efficient back-office functions directly enables programmatic impact.

SUCCESSFUL AND PROMISING PRACTICES INCLUDE:

- Piloting pooled operational functions (e.g. an HR back office or procurement hub) is a promising solution to address capacity gaps and standardize processes, particularly for smaller offices.
- Using retainers for technical experts (e.g. the team that supported care interventions in Brazil and evaluations in Brazil, Colombia and Panama) is an efficient mechanism for disseminating knowledge and providing targeted support.
- For smaller offices, promoting joint initiatives can lead to more strategic management and greater operational efficiency.
- Establishing candidate rosters and closely monitoring recruitment timelines are proven methods for improving HR efficiency.

4. Digital innovation and AI for capacity and knowledge sharing

The expansion of digital learning and knowledge production allowed for thousands of participants to be reached, and strengthened UN Women's visibility (Finding 8). This validates the lesson that digital innovation and AI are powerful enablers for capacity development and operational efficiency. Progress in political participation, WPS and ERAW programmes (Finding 4) further demonstrates the value of shifting to a digital learning ecosystem to enhance outreach and learning.

Digitalization, for example, has been essential to expanding access to training for marginalized groups and building a "networked approach" to learning, while reducing access costs. Therefore, leveraging digital innovation and AI tools is a cost-effective and powerful enabler of capacity development, enhanced operational efficiency and knowledge dissemination.

5. Integrating cross-cutting safeguards and leveraging the Regional Strategy on Gender, Environment and Climate Justice

Findings from this evaluation indicate that gaps remain in disability inclusion and the integration of environmental safeguards within the Strategic Note (Finding 10). This underscores the need to systematically embed emerging priorities to sustain the relevance and rights-based nature of programming. ACRO's cross-cutting strategy and its alignment with institutional mandates (Findings 1 and 2) highlight the importance of leveraging regional strategies to advance integrated approaches to environmental and climate justice.

Experience gained through engagement with the Escazú Agreement and support to environmental human rights defenders demonstrates that incorporating emerging priorities – such as climate resilience and environmental safeguards – enhances both the relevance and rights-based foundation of gender equality programming.

The Scale Up Programme and its Regional Climate Hub provide practical examples of effective gender–environment integration. The programme's emphasis on co-financing and collaboration offers a replicable model through regional and country-level hubs linked to the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.

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6

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter offers an integrated analysis of the evidence, distilling the most critical, cross-cutting issues that define ACRO's performance. These conclusions form the basis of the recommendations that follow.

FIGURE 15
Gender@Work results



Gender@Work Analysis Quadrant – full analysis available in Annex 21

CONCLUSION 1

Strategic relevance and thematic leadership

UN Women is recognized for its strategic relevance and thematic leadership, which provides a powerful foundation to amplify ACRO's impact by strengthening the office's underlying organizational architecture. Stakeholders regarded UN Women's mandate and interventions as highly relevant to the rights and needs of women and girls in the region. A majority of direct project participants rated the interventions as practical and applicable to their needs. This perception is affirmed by the strong positive ratings on alignment from both external partners and UN Women's own field personnel.

Relevance is demonstrated through UN Women's recognized leadership and value added in core thematic areas, particularly EAW, WEE and WPS. ACRO effectively translates its technical expertise into normative influence, successfully advancing regional policy agendas on complex issues such as comprehensive care systems, women's political participation and the WPS agenda. This is often achieved through high-impact partnerships with key institutions, including ECLAC, which has elevated UN Women's visibility and influence in regional forums.

However, humanitarian programming has had more limited impact. While ACRO supported the launch of a regional humanitarian response project and participated in coordination mechanisms, survey data and qualitative feedback indicate that humanitarian action is perceived as ACRO's least effective area of work. The evidence supporting this low perceived effectiveness stems from the limited visibility of ACRO's humanitarian work and lack of a clear articulation structure in crisis contexts. For example, an inter-agency memorandum of understanding aimed to cover a humanitarian joint operation, but it did not translate into tangible actions at the project level, leading to duplicated efforts and poor local acceptance.

The reduction and sunset of certain humanitarian functions under UN80 reforms creates an opportunity for UN Women to offer a specific package of services tailored to emergency situations (e.g. rapid gender analysis).

More broadly, the evaluation team observed that programmatic and leadership staff are frequently required to focus on administrative tasks, which detracts from their capacity to engage strategically. As a result, while ACRO's strategic positioning remains strong, its operational architecture limits its responsiveness and ability to scale interventions in line with emerging regional needs.⁷⁵

Related to Findings 1, 2, 3 and 8

CONCLUSION 2:

Operational systems and processes.

Operational systems and processes present opportunities for enhanced efficiency and responsiveness, as they continue to shape the pace and consistency of programme delivery across the region. While administrative and financial processes play a central role in ensuring accountability and compliance, their current configuration can sometimes backlog implementation or create additional demands on staff time. These challenges are influenced by a combination of factors – such as limited staffing, complex approval processes and new corporate systems.

Processes linked to platforms such as Quantum and ACRO's Global Service Tracker, together with frequent policy updates, have occasionally introduced additional layers of review and adjustment that required additional staff time to ensure the adoption of new systems. Administrative steps involving ACRO – such as Terms of Reference validation, contract amendments or supplier management – can require several levels of clearance, extending turnaround times. Although "fast-track" mechanisms have improved predictability, staff note that these remain relatively resource intensive.

Feedback from ACRO and country-based personnel indicates the importance of achieving a better balance between centralized oversight and operational flexibility. By design, smaller offices and Non-Physical Presences rely on ACRO for administrative and operational support; however, the volume of requests can result in backlogs and affect the timeliness of localized decision-making.

⁷⁵ A summary of the changes found using the Gender@Work Framework is summarized in Figure 15.

Limited operational staffing within ACRO, uneven communication and roll-out of policy updates, and the transition between corporate systems – including the migration from Atlas to Quantum and the forthcoming shift to Prism – also influence the efficiency of task management across different institutional levels, depending on staff familiarity with these changes.

Programme teams frequently absorb administrative responsibilities to maintain continuity, which can gradually shift attention from delivery and stakeholder engagement. As a result, revisiting opportunities for streamlining back-office functions emerges as an important area for strengthening programmatic agility. ACRO has shown adaptability – training initiatives accompanying the Quantum roll-out, for instance, have contributed to progressively shorter response times in ACRO’s Request System, and improvements have been noted in project reporting timelines. Strengthening training for new operational systems would reduce technology adoption costs; foster timely implementation; and ultimately enhance ACRO’s ability to deliver on its strategic commitments across diverse country contexts.

[Related to Findings 4 and 7](#)

CONCLUSION 3:

Internal cohesion and tailored support

Strengthening internal cohesion and tailoring support models could significantly enhance collective impact across the region. While progress has been made in fostering alignment, challenges remain related to integrated planning and improved coordination across thematic and operational areas within ACRO, as well as between ACRO and Country Offices. This fragmentation sometimes leads to missed synergies, potential duplication of efforts and inconsistent support, posing challenges to achieving a “One UN Women” approach. While some teams demonstrate strong coordination, the approach is not institutionalized across the board. The absence of consistent, formal forums for knowledge exchange and joint planning means the organization is not fully leveraging its wealth of experience and expertise.

Country Office/Non-Physical Presence personnel provided varied feedback on ACRO’s effectiveness in advancing internal coherence, with a clear demand for more systematic sharing of materials, best practices and better-aligned regional processes. This internal fragmentation is perceived to be directly linked to the disconnected support provided to Country Offices. Satisfaction with ACRO support functions varied widely, with areas such as resource mobilization, monitoring and HR receiving lower satisfaction ratings.

While some areas have benefitted from structured planning and quarterly tracking of results, these practices are not yet institutionalized across all thematic areas. The lack of dedicated monitoring and evaluation staff, coupled with limited investment in data systems, has hindered ACRO’s ability to systematically assess performance and inform strategic decision-making. This is particularly critical as the organization moves towards more integrated and results-based programming.

The evidence also highlights the unique challenges faced by Non-Physical Presences, which represent a significant portion of the region’s footprint. These offices often rely heavily on ACRO for both technical and operational support yet lack a dedicated governance structure or tailored support model. Addressing this imbalance through differentiated support strategies and clearer accountability mechanisms is essential for equitable and effective regional delivery.

[Related to Findings 7, 9 and 10](#)

CONCLUSION 4:

Funding model and sustainability

The current funding model presents challenges for sustainability and staff continuity. The reliance on non-flexible, project-based funding affects ACRO's capacity to adapt and maintain institutional knowledge. ACRO's funding structure relies on project-based financing, which presents potential challenges for institutional stability. While this model has facilitated responsiveness and innovation, its volatility can limit long-term planning, continuity of staffing and ACRO's ability to maintain institutional knowledge.

Operating under resource constraints, ACRO and Country Offices face high workloads that can affect the consistency and reach of programmatic delivery. A recurrent theme arising from key informant interviews is the reliance on project funds to finance essential operational and structural positions, creating dependence on time-bound resources and increasing transaction costs. These dynamics may reduce flexibility for strategic investment or sustained engagement at country level.

As indicated by survey and interviews, the current resource allocation framework does not always provide sufficient flexibility to meet the diverse needs of different office typologies. Smaller offices face heavier operational and fundraising demands due to their limited local infrastructure, relying more on regional support to fulfill their mandates. Stakeholders highlighted the need for more predictable and equitable funding arrangements that can strengthen institutional stability and long-term impact.

Findings point to the importance of shifting from a primarily reactive, project-driven approach towards a more proactive and coordinated resource mobilization model. Integrating fundraising efforts around thematic priorities and multi-country initiatives – such as care systems and women's political participation – has shown strong potential for attracting sustainable investment. Evidence from initiatives such as the AECID regional programme also demonstrates that allocating dedicated coordination resources within multi-country frameworks enhances coherence and reach.

Stakeholders across groups emphasized that fostering financial sustainability requires diversification of funding sources, greater local ownership and clear exit or transition strategies to consolidate results. Revising the current resource mobilization plan to combine regional focus with country-level implementation would enable more strategic engagement with partners and help reduce dependence on short-term, project-based funding cycles.

[Related to Findings 7 and 9](#)

CONCLUSION 5:

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Limited investment in monitoring and evaluation constrains ACRO's ability to systematically demonstrate outcomes and adapt strategies based on evidence. While ACRO has shown strength in producing knowledge products and analytical reports, funding of monitoring and evaluation roles at country level is inconsistent, with designated staff covering other roles and not fully dedicated to capture outcome-level results or support continuous organizational learning.

This trend is reflected in reporting results, which often emphasize activity tracking rather than measurement of impact, limiting the articulation of strategic impact. The absence of systematic data analysis at Country Office level, and the need to respond to donor-driven reporting requirements, further reduce opportunities for strategic evidence-generation. Staff across Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences highlighted the need for more practical and responsive support from ACRO in strengthening their monitoring systems beyond a project-based reporting logic.

At the regional level, the evaluation role is covered by a dedicated staff member; however, monitoring processes are still embedded within the planning and coordination position. Despite a dedicated monitoring and reporting specialist being created, the position is still vacant. To date, some internal planning and reporting approaches remain fragmented, with limited cross-unit collaboration, which can affect coherence across functions, including financial and budget planning.

At the same time, progress has been made at the regional level in the Communications, Data and Evaluation units, contributing to stronger technical support and an emerging foundation for more robust evidence-based reporting practices. Stakeholders consistently underscored the importance of enhancing organizational learning systems to better capture and communicate transformative results.

Looking forward, there is scope to explore innovative approaches and digital AI solutions to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning functions. This would require targeted investment in staff capacities, data systems and revision of internal ethical data protection and privacy safeguards which could enhance ACRO's ability to generate timely evidence and demonstrate impact more effectively.

[Related to Findings 1, 8 and 9](#)

CONCLUSION 6

Strategic partnerships and regional influence

Strategic partnerships are the primary vehicle for influence, success and amplifying regional impact. A standout strength of ACRO's success has been its ability to cultivate and leverage regional strategic alliances. The evaluation confirms that collaboration with a diverse range of partners (including other UN agencies, academic institutions, CSOs and private-sector actors) is essential to the delivery of ACRO's mandate. These partnerships are instrumental in generating data, coordinating advocacy, shaping policy dialogues and implementing programmes.

Jointly developed knowledge products and leadership in inter-agency forums are consistently highlighted as good practices (e.g. Evaluation and Gender Inter-Agency groups). These collaborations are UN Women's primary mechanism for amplifying its influence and achieving results that would not be feasible to implement alone.

The evaluation confirms the importance of sustaining and scaling regional partnerships, such as the alliance with ECLAC, which has significantly elevated UN Women's normative influence in the region. Similarly, the care system agenda has emerged as a flagship area of work that could serve as a model for future investment and replication.

However, feedback also indicates that partnerships could be deployed more strategically. Stakeholders suggest a need to deepen engagement with grassroots and territorially focused organizations to enhance downstream outreach and ensure that Country Offices are consulted more systematically before regional alliances are established in their national contexts. Expanding collaboration with local governments and feminist movements is also recommended to strengthen UN Women's legitimacy and responsiveness.

[Related to Findings 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7](#)

CONCLUSION 7

Intersectionality and human rights safeguards

The Strategic Note should integrate cross-cutting themes, e.g. the environment, disability inclusion and human rights. The Strategic Note is grounded in international human rights frameworks and demonstrates a strong commitment to gender equality, intersectionality and the principle of leave no one behind. This has enabled ACRO to design inclusive programming that addresses the needs of marginalized populations, including indigenous women, Afro-descendant communities and LGBTIQ+ individuals. Initiatives related to inclusive care systems, participatory planning and digital learning platforms reflect this commitment.

However, the integration of intersectional safeguards, particularly around disability inclusion and environmental sustainability, remains uneven and often project specific. While promising practices exist at headquarters and regional levels, ACRO could strengthen the operationalization of intersectionality and human rights across all stages of its programming. This includes developing standardized safeguard tools, enhancing staff capacity on socio-environmental measures and ensuring that inclusive safeguards – such as those promoted through the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan – are consistently applied, monitored and scaled.

[Related to Findings 2 and 10](#)



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RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations were formulated through a consultative process, with feedback integrated from validation workshops held on 22 May and 26 June 2025. In September 2025, the recommendations were shared with ACRO senior management and all thematic leads for additional refinement. Each recommendation is explicitly linked to key conclusions and is accompanied by a designated priority level and an implementation timeline.

RECOMMENDATION 1: REGIONAL RESOURCE MOBILIZATION PLAN

Develop a regional resource mobilization plan, in accordance with corporate guidance, that promotes regional coordination and supports the matching of funding needs to donor priorities at national level.

Based on Conclusions 4 and 6

Priority:HIGH

Timeline:SHORT-TERM

Suggested steps:

- Draft a regional resource mobilization plan, in liaison with SPD, focusing on leveraging actions already in place, such as mapping the donor landscape; identifying multi-country opportunities; and providing regular updates to Country Offices and Non-Physical Presences.
- Review current obstacles to receiving funding from private sector and non-traditional donors, including by continuing to work closely with the private sector team in headquarters, establishing clear policy frameworks for these collaborations.
- Continue to advocate for funding mechanisms that ensure greater sustainability for essential operational and structural positions, mapping those currently dependent on short-term project funds.
- Continue to pilot the scale up of strategies implemented within the care economy and WPS to other underfunded thematic areas.

To be led by: ACRO Director, Regional Partnerships & Resource Mobilization Team in liaison with SPD.

Rationale and impact:

Fragmented, project-driven funding models limit long-term sustainability. Therefore, developing a clear and articulated regional plan serves to promote coordination, ensure prioritization strategies and secure multi-year funding. It would also strengthen UN Women's ability to retain talent, scale successful models and respond flexibly to emerging priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: STREAMLINE AND STRENGTHEN BACK-OFFICE FUNCTIONS

Conduct a functional analysis to streamline back-office processes for improved agility and efficiency gains across operational functions.

Based on Conclusions 2, 3 and 4

Priority:HIGH

Timeline:SHORT-TERM

Suggested steps:

- Conduct a review of back-office processes (HR, Procurement, Finance) to map workflows, identify specific challenges and produce an action plan to streamline operations.
- Revise functions to build sustainable capacity and realize efficiencies where practical. Review alternative models, such as pooled services and staff, focusing on enhancing shared capacities across multiple countries, when feasible.
- Revise current regional standard operating procedures for greater office agility. Invest in staff training and modern technology, including AI.
- Disseminate clear guidelines for all key operational processes, establishing service standards and expected response times for support requests from field offices.

To be led by: ACRO Senior Management and Operations Team, in close coordination with relevant headquarters units and Country Office/Non-Physical Presence focal points.

Rationale and impact:

Improved operational efficiency would enhance office responsiveness and increase ACRO's delivery across the region.

RECOMMENDATION 3: ALIGN REGIONAL PLANNING WITH LOCAL NEEDS AND DONOR PRIORITIES

Align regional planning and prioritization with country-specific needs and donor priorities through participatory, bottom-up strategic planning.

Based on Conclusions 1, 3 and 4

Priority:HIGH

Timeline:MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps:

- Foster prioritization based on commonalities across countries to streamline efforts and allocate expert, administrative and financial resources more effectively.
- Incorporate more flexibility in the annual planning process through an agile approach to adapt to volatile national environments. This includes updating situational analyses more frequently than the full Strategic Note cycle.
- Strengthen strategic prioritization to focus resources on areas where UN Women has a clear comparative advantage, while strategically integrating new emerging issues (e.g. climate justice, digital inclusion) as cross-cutting themes.
- Ensure the new Strategic Note development process is participatory and bottom-up, beginning with extensive consultations with Country Offices and local partners.

To be led by: ACRO Regional Director and Deputy Regional Director, in coordination with Programme Planning, Monitoring and Operations.

Rationale and impact:

A more strategic planning process, led by ACRO, is needed to focus resources on areas and countries of highest potential impact. Aligning ACRO's planning with international cooperation frameworks and donor priorities is crucial for maximizing effectiveness and relevance. Focused and participatory planning would improve the relevance, coherence and impact of programming.

RECOMMENDATION 4: STRENGTHEN MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING SYSTEMS

Enhance accountability and demonstrate impact through improved planning and monitoring and evaluation functions, leveraging data-driven knowledge production and thematic expertise.

Based on Conclusions 3, 5 and 6

Priority:MEDIUM

Timeline:MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps:

- Invest in and strengthen regional planning and monitoring capacity, shifting the focus from activity-based tracking to measuring outcome-level results.
- Establish and facilitate formal mechanisms for internal coordination and knowledge sharing, such as thematic communities of practice, to break down silos.
- Develop and implement a clear, differentiated service model for supporting monitoring and evaluation in Country Offices/Non-Physical Presences.
- Incorporate AI and invest in more systematic monitoring and evaluation systems to measure long-term results and contributions to change.
- Support Country Offices/Non-Physical Presences in building more robust monitoring and evaluation systems, and increasing internal capacity to enable proactive tracking, aggregation and reporting of results.
- Integrate elements of risk management oversight into structured planning and monitoring cycles.
- Develop a unified knowledge management and learning plan to ensure knowledge management outputs inform learning, adaptation and evidence-based decision-making.

To be led by: ACRO Management, Planning/Monitoring Team, Evaluation and Knowledge Management Units.

Rationale and impact:

Underdeveloped planning and monitoring functions are key weaknesses that prevent ACRO from enhancing accountability and demonstrating impact. Enhanced monitoring, evaluation and learning systems would enable evidence-based decision-making, improve accountability and support adaptive management, strengthening UN Women's ability to demonstrate results and attract funding.

RECOMMENDATION 5: LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Leverage technology and innovation, incorporating emerging AI tools, supported by innovative IT and communications approaches to increase strategic adaptation and efficiency.

Based on Conclusions 2, 3 and 5

Priority:HIGH

Timeline:SHORT-TERM

Suggested steps:

- Prioritize the systematic use of data, statistics and empirical evidence in communications content and overall operations. Explore the incorporation of innovative tools such as Big Data and Citizen Data to stay relevant and address emerging data needs.
- Identify capable staff as AI focal points and invest in virtual programmes that can strengthen AI/innovation capabilities within the office.
- Create dashboards that can provide real-time information and analysis on regional data trends.

To be led by: ACRO IT and Communications Team, in close coordination with Senior Management.

Rationale and impact:

There is a need for more agile tools, supported by an innovative IT and communications approach, and a robust knowledge management system. Incorporating AI tools within ACRO units could expedite response times and increase efficiency, improving service delivery and strategic communications.

RECOMMENDATION 6: DEFINE A REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN PLAN

Define a regional humanitarian plan aligned with the humanitarian–development–peace nexus corporate direction.

Based on Conclusions 1 and 7

Priority:MEDIUM

Timeline:MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps:

- Define a humanitarian plan that including roles, responsibilities and coordination mechanisms for timely humanitarian response, aligned with the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. Consider alternative solutions such as HR humanitarian rosters, simplified operating procedures and alternative service partners.
- Explore mobilization of funds for dedicated humanitarian programmes in alignment with the regional resource mobilization plan.
- Encourage flexible operational modalities and fast-track procurement mechanisms to enable timely response in humanitarian crisis.
- Strengthen partnerships with grassroots organizations and ensure gender-responsive approaches in humanitarian planning and implementation.

To be led by:ACRO Senior Management and Operations Team, in close coordination with Humanitarian ACRO/Country Office/Non-Physical Presence focal points.

Rationale and impact:

A more defined approach to humanitarian action facilitates integration of development and peace efforts. This can improve visibility and effectiveness in humanitarian settings, strengthening the integration of gender in crisis response and enhancing credibility in inter-agency humanitarian coordination.

RECOMMENDATION 7: SYSTEMATIZE AND SCALE HIGH-IMPACT NORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Develop an integrated approach to systematize and scale normative and political influence through enhanced cross-cutting programming, leveraging established multi-stakeholder partnerships and forums.

Based on Conclusions 1 and 6

Priority:HIGH

Timeline:MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps:

- Identify and prioritize relevant gender equality and empowerment of women thematic intersections among current legislation reforms (e.g. care and climate, digital inclusion and political participation).
- Develop joint workplans and shared indicators across thematic teams to foster collaboration and reduce silos, strengthening cross-cutting programming.
- Promote initiatives with normative/legislative impact, and document lessons learned for potential replication or scale-up.
- Provide training and incentives for staff to design and implement cross-cutting interventions.

To be led by: ACRO Programme Strategy Management Unit, Thematic Leads, and Planning/Monitoring and Evaluation Team.

Rationale and impact:

More integrated programming addresses the interconnected nature of gender equality challenges and leverages synergies across thematic areas advancing sustainable normative change.

RECOMMENDATION 8: INTEGRATE DISABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

Operationalize the Regional Strategy on Gender, Environment and Climate Justice, incorporating human rights considerations, with a focus on disability inclusion and environmental safeguards.

Based on Conclusion 7

Priority: MEDIUM

Timeline: MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps:

- Ground all climate action in international human rights frameworks, particularly the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Actively seek out and prioritize the needs and voices of the most marginalized, including women and girls with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ persons.
- Launch a capacity-building programme for regional and country-level staff on the nexus of climate change, disability, gender and human rights.

To be led by: ACRO Senior Management, Climate Change Regional Hub Manager.

Rationale and impact:

There is a gap in implementing the Regional Strategy on Gender, Environment and Climate Justice and applying the leave no one behind principle.

ANNEXES

Annexes are available in Volume II of the report

- Terms of Reference
- Evaluation Matrix
- Consulted documents list
- Projects and interventions overview
- Target audiences and intended uses
- Stakeholder analysis
- Stakeholder interview list
- Collection of most significant change stories
- Evaluability Assessment Report
- Quality and availability of UN Women evaluations and reports
- Sampling: Targets and results achieved
- Data collection protocols: Interviews, focus group discussions and survey
- Data collection protocol: Violence against women
- Data Management Plan
- Evaluation Reference Group Terms of Reference
- Evaluation Management Group Structure and Terms of Reference
- UN Women coordination groups participation
- Key evaluation limitations
- Gender indicators in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Results monitoring by Strategic Note indicators
- Gender@Work Analysis Findings
- ACRO knowledge management products 2023–2025

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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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