



EVALUATION REPORT

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN ETHIOPIA 2022–2025



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**UN Women Independent Evaluation,
Audit and Investigation Services**

Independent Evaluation Service

Nairobi, February 2026

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EVALUATION TEAM:

Kay Lau, Regional Evaluation Specialist and Team Lead

Maereg Teweldebirhan Alemayehu, Evaluator

Juliet Mwaura, Evaluator

Andrei Iovu, Evaluator (inception and data collection phases)

EVALUATION MANAGEMENT:

UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

Inga Kaplan, Chief, UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

Lisa Sutton, Director, UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

Violeta Leiva, Peer Reviewer, Regional Evaluation Specialist

Copy-editing: **Catherine Simes**

Design and layout: **Yamrote A. Haileselassie**

Cover Photo: UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BoWSA	Bureau of Women and Social Affairs
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EVAW/G	Ending Violence Against Women/Girls
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
IEAIS	Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
IFMIS	Integrated Financial Management Information System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoWSA	Ministry of Women and Social Affairs
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RMS	Results Management System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSDCF	United Nations Strategic Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Programme for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
US\$	United States Dollar
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN ETHIOPIA 2022–2025

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Purpose

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) conducted a Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) of the Ethiopia Country Office 2022–2025 Strategic Note. The evaluation’s purpose is to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning to inform the Country Office’s next Strategic Note.

Objectives

The evaluation objectives were to:

1. Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and gender equality and human rights of the country portfolio.
2. Identify lessons learned and good practices that can be scaled.
3. Provide actionable recommendations to inform development of the Country Office’s new Strategic Note.

Intended users

The primary intended users of this evaluation are the Ethiopia Country Office, which will use the findings to develop and implement its new Strategic Note. Secondary users are expected to be the UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office, headquarters colleagues, national partners and other stakeholders working in the country.

Background on the UN Women Country Office

The Strategic Note is the main planning tool for the Country Office to articulate how it will implement UN Women’s triple mandate across normative, coordination and operational work in Ethiopia. Due to delays during Covid-19, the Strategic Note was only approved in December 2021. Hence, the evaluation focuses on the period between January 2022 until the start of the evaluation data collection. The Country Office’s budget between 2022 and 2025 was US\$ 47.5 million.

Method

The CPE employed a theory-based, gender-responsive approach. Evaluation questions were developed using the theory of change and assessed against the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee criteria. The evaluation team obtained multiple sources of data and consulted 259 stakeholders through interviews (139), focus groups (93) and surveys (27). The CPE was delivered in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Handbook. All evaluation products were subject to quality review by IES management, a peer reviewer, the Evaluation Reference Group and Evaluation Management Group.

Key findings

EFFECTIVENESS, SUSTAINABILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

To what extent has the Country Office contributed to achieving planned outcomes? What is the Country Office's contribution to UN system and broader coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment?

The Country Office contributed to outcomes across all pillars: it institutionalized gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) tools and practices with government counterparts; strengthened survivor-centred gender-based violence (GBV) systems and referral pathways; expanded women's livelihoods and access to decent work/social protection in crisis-affected areas; supported women's leadership and participation in decision-making (including sub-national governance and civic spaces), training women at national, regional and local levels; and advanced gender analysis and coordination in humanitarian and Women, Peace and Security settings to inform response and protection.

The Country Office's leadership of inter-agency platforms (e.g. sector working group on gender, Gender in Humanitarian Action [GiHA] and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse [PSEA]) and support to government-led coordination mechanisms enhanced system-wide accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment, although limited staffing constrained the consistency of engagement.

As of the end of 2025, according to Country Office reporting, 44 per cent of Strategic Note outcome indicator targets were met, 24 per cent showed some progress, 16 per cent showed limited or no progress, and 16 per cent were deemed not applicable.¹

How sustainable were these outcomes?

Normative work (e.g. the Beijing+30 action agenda, the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Women and Social Affairs' adoption of GRB into policy frameworks) showed stronger prospects for sustainability due to integration in national systems. Conversely, short-term programmatic pilots, particularly those without clear transition plans, showed weaker prospects for sustainability.

Are interventions designed to apply gender, human rights and disability inclusion approaches?

The Country Office consistently targeted hard to reach groups, including rural women, women with disabilities, internally displaced persons and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including through dedicated support to women's rights organizations, although scope and depth varied.

COHERENCE AND RELEVANCE

Are the Country Office's interventions coherent with the work of the UN system and other key stakeholders, and strategically relevant in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Ethiopia?

Country Office interventions were aligned to national policy priorities, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework outcomes and UN Women's Strategic Plan, maintaining a clear focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women across normative, coordination and programmatic work.

The Country Office's mandate and gender-specific technical expertise, together with its convening capacity, positioned it as a relevant actor for government, UN agencies and civil society.

The portfolio was thematically broader than the funding available, contributing to small-scale initiatives and diluting focus, limiting the ability to demonstrate depth and scale.

Direct, small-scale delivery mirrored non-governmental organizations' approaches and did not leverage the Country Office's comparative advantage. Systems-oriented work showed stronger coherence with partners' roles and mandates, and provided clearer pathways to institutional uptake.

¹ The relatively high share of "no longer applicable" indicators primarily reflects changes in indicator applicability/definitions and availability of underlying data during the Strategic Note period,

EFFICIENCY

How efficient are the Country Office's organizational structures and management processes?

Corporate platforms supported compliance and preparedness. However, delays with recruitment affected delivery, and the limited coordination across units affected effectiveness. Strategic Note funding enabled flexibility but allocation decisions were not always clear. Numerous short-term, small grants to civil society organizations increased transaction costs and did not fully leverage the flexible Strategic Note funding.

Conclusions

- **CONCLUSION 1:** The Country Office achieved its strongest results where it linked its triple mandate into one pathway, from norms and coordination to operational delivery. However, the depth, scale and sustainability of outcome-level change varied by thematic and geographical area.
- **CONCLUSION 2:** The Country Office systematically applied a leave-no-one-behind lens, but coverage and depth for specific groups were uneven.
- **CONCLUSION 3:** The Country Office portfolio remained aligned to national priorities, UNSDCF outcomes and UN Women's Strategic Plan, strengthening its relevance. However, the portfolio was thematically too broad relative to the funding available, leading to dispersion across areas.
- **CONCLUSION 4:** UN Women's comparative advantage in Ethiopia is its normative leadership and convening power to influence policies, systems and processes. Results were amplified when this was used to shape systems-level change, rather than delivering small-scale initiatives.
- **CONCLUSION 5:** Corporate systems supported delivery and crisis preparedness, but the timelines of some recruitment and procurement exercises and limited cross-thematic coordination and planning constrained efficiency.
- **CONCLUSION 6:** Strategic Note resources were an important enabler, but were not consistently used as a strategic platform to drive predictable partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Sharpen strategic focus and value proposition

Prioritize 1–3 high-impact thematic areas and geographic concentrations where UN Women has clear comparative advantage, such as policy influence, coordination on underfunded issues), and phase out scattered, small-scale service delivery. Focus operational delivery where there is strong national demand, alignment with the UNSDCF, and realistic pathways to systems-level uptake, for example, integration into government plans, budgets and standards.

2 Advance disability inclusion and intersectionality

Strengthen capacity and systems to deliver inclusive, disability-responsive programming. Integrate disability inclusion systematically across the programme cycle, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy commitments, ensuring coordinated action through the UN Country Team.

3 Strengthen coordination, partnerships and joint programming

Formalize coordination roles and deepen strategic partnerships with the UN and CSOs.

4 Improve M&E, learning, reporting and knowledge management systems

Strengthen systems to link project-level results with Strategic Note outcomes, and to support learning and effective programming.

5 Invest in internal systems, personnel and leadership continuity

Strengthen internal systems and leadership continuity to support effective delivery and adaptive management.



Photo: ©UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

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EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) is to deliver a systematic assessment of UN Women's work in Ethiopia.

The intended uses of the evaluation are:

1. Learning on effective approaches to support improved decision-making.
2. Accountability for UN Women's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The primary users of this evaluation are intended to be the UN Women Ethiopia Country Office, which will use the findings to (a) inform the design of the new Strategic Note, implement interventions aimed at addressing gender-related gaps and promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Ethiopia; (b) and for accountability purposes. Primary users also include the UN Country Team (UNCT), to feed into the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and inform the design and implementation of joint programmes. Secondary users are expected to be the UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office and Global Office colleagues, the Government of Ethiopia, national partners and others working in the country to identify what works to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, areas that need additional support and opportunities for strategic partnership.

The scope of the CPE is the Strategic Note, including the Development Results Framework and the Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness framework as the documentation basis for the evaluation. The evaluation covered the period from January 2022 to June 2025. All activities included in the Strategic Note were considered, including joint programming.

The specific objectives of the CPE are to:

1. Assess the relevance of UN Women's contribution to interventions and alignment with international agreements on gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency.
3. Support the Country Office to improve its strategic positioning to better support the gender equality and women's empowerment.
4. Analyze how human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note.
5. Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices and examples of innovation.
6. Provide insights into the extent to which the Country Office realized synergies between its normative, coordination and operational mandates.
7. Provide actionable recommendations to inform development of the next Strategic Note.



Photo: ©UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

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COUNTRY CONTEXT

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa.² Its ranking on the Global Gender Gap has improved from 97th in 2021 to 79th in 2024.³ The national policy environment reflects commitments to gender equality, including Ethiopia's ratification of CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Maputo Protocol, and by enacting national laws and policies promoting women's rights.⁴ The Ten-Year Development Plan (2021–2030) mainstreams gender across sectors, supported by frameworks such as the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Guidelines and GRB, and accountability tools such as the performance levelling tool.⁵ However, implementation capacity remains uneven, especially at regional and woreda (district) levels, due to limited resources, high staff turnover and competing mandates within the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA).⁶

MoWSA leads gender equality efforts, coordinating gender mainstreaming across sectors and overseeing implementation through Gender Directorates in all ministries and decentralized structures at regional and local levels.⁷ Challenges persist, particularly at sub-national levels, including limited capacity, high staff turnover and weak coordination, which hinder effective implementation and long-term planning.⁸

Ethiopia has taken important steps to advance gender equality, including the 2019 CSO Proclamation, which lifted restrictions on foreign-funded organizations, enabling greater advocacy for women's rights. This reform has strengthened civil society's role in promoting gender justice.⁹

Improvements have been made in women's political participation. Women currently hold 41.9 per cent of seats in the lower house of parliament and around 36.4 per cent of ministerial posts. Yet gender parity remains inconsistent.¹⁰

Economic disparities continue to limit women's empowerment. The average wage for women remains 32.8 per cent lower than for men.¹¹ Unpaid care work for women remain disproportionately high, and occupational segregation restricts access to better-paid opportunities.¹²

Ethiopia faces a complex humanitarian context, shaped by conflict, climatic shocks and public health risks. In early 2025, 19 million people were at risk due to drought.¹³ Earthquakes in the Afar region¹⁴ and renewed conflict in Tigray and Amhara compounded these challenges.¹⁵ The suspension of US aid in January 2025 significantly disrupted humanitarian and development assistance.¹⁶

² [Ethiopia Statistical Office. \(2023\). Population of zones and woredas projected as of July 2023](#)

³ [Benchmarking gender gaps, 2024 - Global Gender Gap Report 2024 | World Economic Forum](#)

⁴ [Synthesis Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action | UN Women – Africa](#)

⁵ [Planning and Development Commission. \(2020\). Ethiopia: Ten years development plan 2021–2030. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.](#)

⁶ [UN Women. \(2024\). Ethiopia Country Gender Equality Profile.](#)

⁷ MoWSA. (2023). *Mandate and Organizational Structure*. [MoWSA Website](#)

⁸ OPM. *Building Resilience in Ethiopia – Technical Assistance (BRETA): Final Evaluation and Annexes*. Published June 2024. [UNFPA Ethiopia. \(2024\). Country programme evaluation of UNFPA Ethiopia: 9th country programme 2020–2025 – Evaluation report. United Nations Population Fund.](#)

⁹ Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD). (n.d.). *CSO Proclamation*. Center for the Enforcement of Civil and Economic Rights (CECOE). <https://cecoe.org/document-tag/proclamation/>; The Borgen Project. (2021, October 4). *Women's rights in Ethiopia*. <https://borgenproject.org/womens-rights-in-ethiopia/>

¹⁰ [UN Women. January. Ethiopia Country Gender Equality Profile.](#)

¹¹ [Tesfaw, Z., & Mehare, A. \(2023\). Female labor force participation and wage gap in urban Ethiopia \(Policy Working Paper No. 17/2023\). Ethiopian Economics Association. https://eea-et.org/course/policy-working-paper-17-2023-female-labor-force-participation-and-wage-gap-in-urban-ethiopia-zinabu-tesfaw-and-abule-mehare/](#)

¹² [UN Women. \(2024, January\). Ethiopia Country Gender Equality Profile.](#)

¹³ [Ethiopia Priority Humanitarian Response and Critical Funding Gaps \(February - April 2025\) | OCHA](#)

¹⁴ [ReliefWeb. \(2025, January\). Ethiopia: Earthquakes – Jan 2025.](#)

¹⁵ [OCHA. \(2025, March 27\). Ethiopia: Humanitarian Update, 27 March 2025. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.](#)

¹⁶ [Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance February 10, 2025, office of inspector general, USAID.](#)

Efforts to eliminate harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation have seen gradual improvement, but violence against women remains widespread. Nearly two thirds of women aged 15–49 believe wife-beating is justified under certain circumstances. The government’s 2020–2024 costed strategy to end child marriage and female genital mutilation and growing grassroots feminist movements are critical responses to these challenges.¹⁷

Marginalized groups, including women living with HIV/AIDS, women with disabilities and internally displaced women, face compounded vulnerability and limited legal protection. Socioeconomic inequalities

are particularly acute for rural women and girls, who are more likely to experience early marriage, school dropout and limited access to health and education services.¹⁸

The UNCT in Ethiopia, one of the largest globally, works through the UNSDCF 2020–2025 to support national priorities.¹⁹ The Common Country Analysis (2020) identifies key development gaps, including persistent rural–urban disparities, youth unemployment and climate risks.²⁰ Gender equality and social inclusion are prioritized across UN interventions to support Ethiopia’s path towards inclusive and sustainable development.²¹

Annex 16 provides further detail.

COUNTRY CONTEXT



¹⁷ [Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. \(2019\). National roadmap to end child marriage and FGM 2020–2024. UNICEF Ethiopia.](#)

¹⁸ [UN Women. \(2024, January\). Ethiopia Country Gender Equality Profile.](#)

¹⁹ [United Nations Ethiopia & Government of Ethiopia. \(2020\). United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(UNSDCF\) 2020–2025.](#)

²⁰ [United Nations Ethiopia. \(2020, September\). Common Country Analysis: Ethiopia \(Updated\).](#)

²¹ [United Nations Ethiopia.](#)



Photo: ©UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

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PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

The portfolio analysis summarizes the object of the evaluation, the Ethiopia Country Office Strategic Note.

Strategic Note overview

The Strategic Note covers the period 2022–2025.

As of Q3 2025, the amount mobilized for 2022–2025 was US\$ 47.5 million, compared to a target of US\$ 49.3 million. The Strategic Note targets women, especially the poorest and most excluded, as well as the institutions and communities that can contribute to strengthening women’s empowerment and gender equality. It delivers across the triple mandate of coordination, normative and operational delivery, covering the Strategic Plan thematic areas of 1) Women’s Political Participation and Governance; 2) Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE); 3) Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Humanitarian Action; and 4) Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW).

Theory of change

The Strategic Note included a theory of change, which is set out in Annex 4. The outcomes are taken verbatim from the UNSDCF.

Results framework and results data

The **Development Results Framework** sets out indicators against the target outcomes and outputs set out below. Outputs with normative components are highlighted, and coordination was reviewed as a cross-cutting approach. The full logframe is set out in Annex 4.

OUTCOME 1

All people in Ethiopia enjoy the rights and capabilities to realize their potential in equality and with dignity.

Outputs: Institutions and partners strengthened capacity and commitment to advance gender equality, expand women’s participation and decent work, and prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, through gender-responsive laws, policies and recovery mechanisms that support women’s safety and sustainable livelihoods.



OUTCOME 2

All people in Ethiopia live in a cohesive, just, inclusive and democratic society.

Outputs: Women’s leadership and participation expanded through gender-responsive laws and institutions; stronger justice and peace mechanisms; and enhanced capacity of women’s organizations, movements and media to uphold rights across the humanitarian–development–peace–security nexus.



OUTCOME 3

All people in Ethiopia benefit from an inclusive, resilient and sustainable economy

Outputs: Government and women’s civil society organizations (CSOs) strengthened their capacity and tools for gender-responsive planning and budgeting, while evidence-based approaches with humanitarian actors expanded women’s access to jobs, livelihoods and social protection, especially for young and marginalized women.



OUTCOME 4

All people in Ethiopia live in a society resilient to environmental risks and adapted to climate change.

Outputs: Government and women’s CSOs enhanced gender-responsive climate, disaster and environmental frameworks, promoting equitable benefit sharing and women’s leadership in risk management and governance.



No changes were made to the Strategic Note impact, outcome or output levels. Some changes were made at activity levels, introducing additional activities from new donor-funded programmes. Over the Strategic Note period, the Country Office also strengthened its humanitarian–peace–development nexus programming and opened sub-offices in the Somali, Amhara and Tigray regions.

The **Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework** includes the following goals to support intended development results:

1. Effectively leverage and expand partnerships, communications and advocacy, while securing sustainable resourcing for delivery of the Country Office’s mandate.
2. Maintain a diverse, highly performing cadre of personnel.
3. Efficiently and effectively discharges all business processes.

Results data

The **results-based management system** involves quarterly reporting against activity and output indicators and bi-annual reporting against outcome indicators. A summary of the main outcome results from the Results Management System and Annual Reports is set out in Annex 5. Data from these systems were validated during the evaluation.

Strategic Note interventions

A full list of programmes undertaken during the Strategic Note period, mapped against normative, coordination and operational areas (national, regional and global programmes) is set out in Annex 7.

Financial and Human Resources (HR) analysis

The financial and HR analysis draws from January 2022 to October 2025 (Q3 2025).

The Ethiopia Country Office’s annual budget has decreased from US\$ 14.3 million in 2022 to US\$ 10.7 million as of October 2025, with expenditure of US\$ 36.4 million over the Strategic Note period.²² The top five donors (Government of Netherlands, Swedish

International Development Cooperation Agency, Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office, Government of Denmark and Government of Norway) account for 50 per cent of the Country Office’s non-core budget.

The Country Office had mobilized US\$ 47.5 million²³ by October 2025 against a target of US\$ 49.3 million.²⁴

The timeliness of donor reporting has been strong, with 90.2 per cent of reports submitted on time between January 2022 and October 2025.²⁵

As of October 2025, the Country Office employed 52 people in total, of which 20 were staff, 22 were on Personnel Service Agreements, 7 on consultancy contracts, 1 Intern and 2 Volunteers. 34 were female and 18 were male.²⁶

Stakeholder mapping and analysis

The main stakeholder groups were:

- **Governmental stakeholders:** Primary duty bearers responsible for leading Ethiopia’s development.
- **Civil society organizations (CSOs):** Partners working with the Country Office and partners working on different activities aiming to contribute to the same target outcomes.
- **Research institutions:** Researchers providing insights into what works.
- **Private sector:** Partners on WEE projects and funders.
- **UN agencies:** Partners on joint programmes, and supported through UN gender coordination.
- **Bilateral and foundation donors:** Providing funding for UN Women’s work.
- **Country Office team:** Responsible for implementing the Strategic Note.
- **Other multilaterals/regional bodies:** Key partners contributing to the same target outcomes.
- **Target groups of right holders:** Rights holders that UN Women aims to support.

Annex 3 analyses the institutions included within each stakeholder group, including their roles in and intended contributions to the Strategic Note.

²² UN Women’s corporate database Quantum

²³ UN Women’s corporate database Quantum

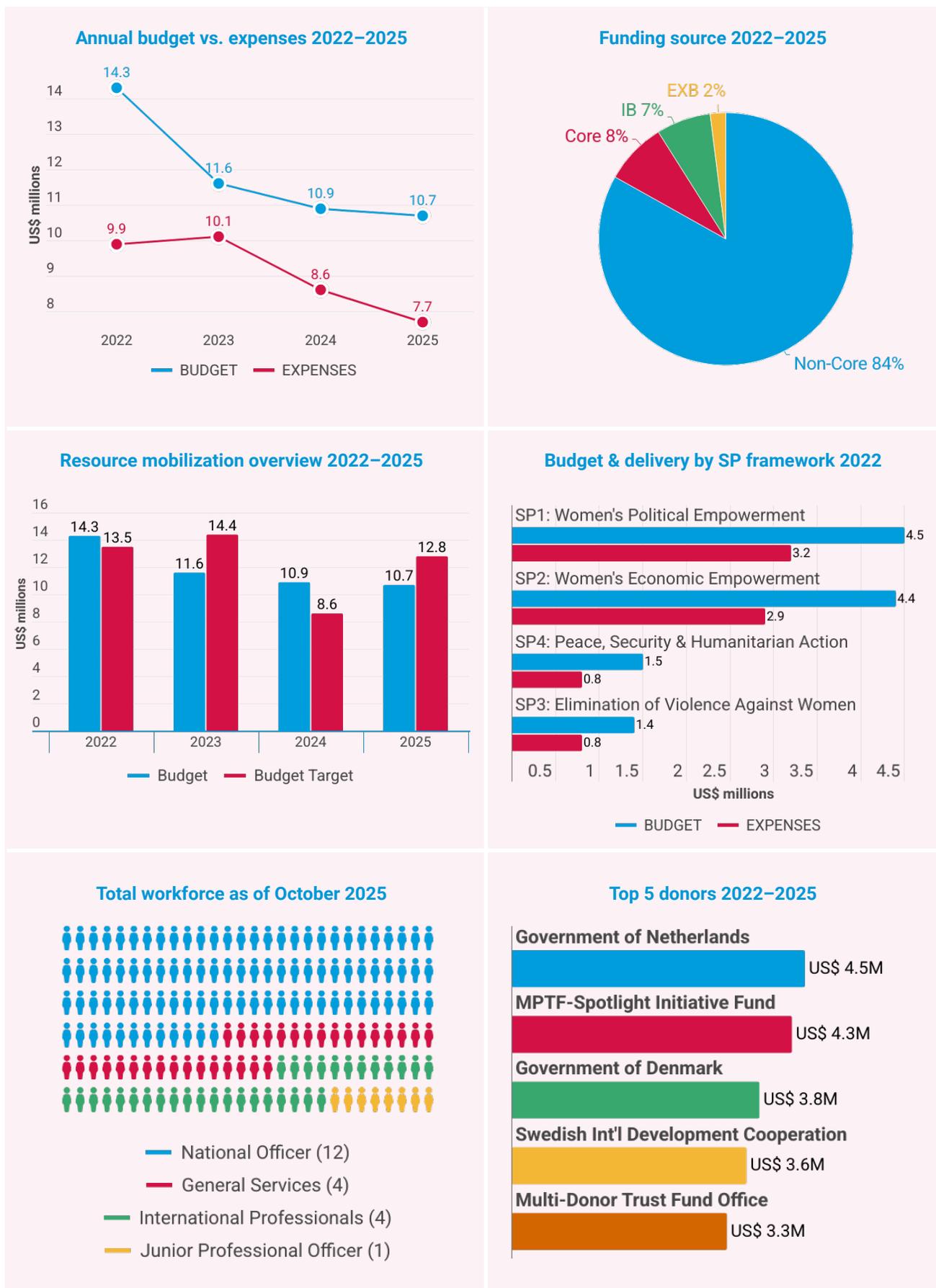
²⁴ UN Women’s corporate database RMS

²⁵ Donor Agreement Management System

²⁶ UN Women’s corporate database Quantum

FIGURE 1

Financial and HR analysis as of October 2025



Source: UN Women's corporate database Quantum and Results management system, October 2025. Prepared by the evaluation team.



Photo: ©UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

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METHODOLOGY

Evaluation approach

The evaluation used a theory-based approach and Contribution Analysis was used to assess UN Women’s contribution to target outcomes as set out in the theory of change (see Annex 4). The evaluation used mixed methods, drawing on both quantitative data (primarily financial and from the evaluation survey) and qualitative data (from document review, interviews and focus group discussions).²⁷

Gender equality and human rights formed a critical component of the evaluation in the following ways:²⁸

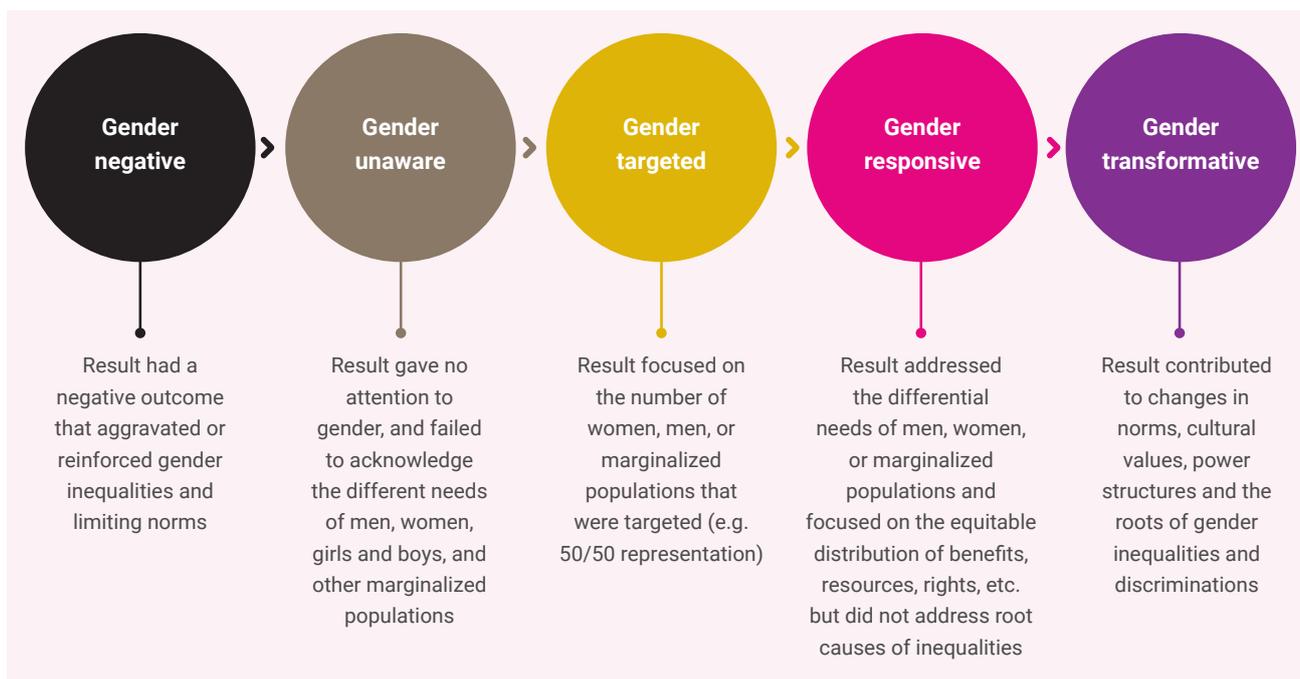
Stakeholder analysis and methodology: Stakeholder analysis was used to select a diverse group of stakeholders to engage in the evaluation, including women

and men, and those most affected by rights violations and who are marginalized and may be difficult to reach. Data was triangulated across different sources and stakeholders.

Evaluation criteria and questions: A specific evaluation criteria on gender equality and human rights was added and associated evaluation questions developed. For sampled interventions, the evaluation team assessed outcomes against [the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale](#)²⁹ developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Human rights and gender equality issues were covered in all sections of the report (findings, lessons learned, recommendations).

FIGURE 2

Gender Results Effectiveness Scale



Source: UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Scale³⁰

²⁷ The inception report sets out the rationale for selecting this design.

²⁸ Building on the *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in 26 Evaluation -- Towards UNEG Guidance*

²⁹ [The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale \(GRES\)](#).

³⁰ [The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale](#).

Evaluation questions

The evaluation sought to answer the following overarching questions.

Effectiveness, Sustainability and Human Rights and effectiveness

→ To what extent has the Country Office contributed to achieving planned outcomes? To what extent are these outcomes sustainable? Have interventions been designed to apply gender, human rights and disability inclusion approaches?

Efficiency

→ How efficient are the Country Office's organizational structures and management processes?

Coherence and Relevance

→ Are the Country Office's interventions coherent with the work of the UN system and other key stakeholders, and strategically relevant in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Ethiopia?

Additional details are set out in the evaluation matrix in Annex 10.

Data collection

The evaluation team reviewed 108 internal and external documents on progress against gender equality and women's empowerment in the country (see Annex 3 for a list of documents reviewed).

The evaluation applied a purposive sampling approach, based on a stakeholder mapping exercise conducted with support from the Country Office (see Annex 8 for further details). A total of 259 stakeholders were reached, exceeding the target sample of 100. Response rate was higher than expected, and during data collection, additional 93 programme participants were reached through focus group discussions as part of the existing schedule, to provide broader coverage across different stakeholder groups and programmes. Additionally, the evaluation team undertook a few 'snowball' interviewees suggested by respondents.

Of the 259 stakeholders reached, 139 individuals participated in interviews and 93 in focus group discussions, and 27 people responded to two surveys. Data collection was undertaken between July and August 2025.

Data collection tools are set out in Annex 11. The tools were piloted with one stakeholder each. Data quality and consistency were managed with a briefing session with the evaluation team on how to use the tools.

The surveys targeted:

- UN Women personnel in the Ethiopia Country Office (39.5 per cent response rate; $N=43$).
- A separate survey for CSOs (33 per cent response rate; $N=30$)³¹.

In light of the limited response rates, the survey results were used to supplement evidence from interviews, focus groups and document review.

In line with the leave no one behind principle, the evaluation consulted 2 CSOs working with youth and people with disabilities and two CSOs working with internally displaced people. Focus group discussions included young people, women with disabilities, internally displaced people and survivors of violence against women and girls (see Annex 3 for additional details).

Data was disaggregated by gender and managed in accordance with the data management plan (see Annex 12).

Analysis

The evaluation matrix formed the framework for analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed in a tabular analysis framework, developed based on the evaluation matrix. Quantitative data were analyzed in Excel.

The evaluation team presented preliminary findings to the Country Office on 8 August 2025 for validation and to identify other perspectives which were incorporated in this report.

Contribution towards each target outcome was analyzed using the format in Table 2 below.

³¹ Against a target of 58% and 67% response rate respectively

TABLE 2.

Contribution Analysis table

TARGET OUTCOME		
Achievement – strength of evidence		
STRONG	MODERATE	WEAK
Corroborated by multiple sources and different types of stakeholders, with detailed examples	Corroborated by more than one source, but limited examples and/or general examples only	Only cited by one source, or by one type of stakeholder. No specific examples provided
UN Women’s contribution – strength of evidence		
STRONG	MODERATE	WEAK
Change explicitly attributed to specific UN Women activity, detailed explanation of how it contributed	General and non-specific link between outcome and specific UN Women activities	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		

Ethics

The evaluation aimed to comply with the relevant United Nations Evaluation Group and UN Women standards on ethics,³² as detailed below:

Integrity

The evaluators ensured compliance with the Code of Conduct: to deliver the evaluation with honesty, professionalism and impartiality. The evaluators are independent from programme delivery. Areas of disagreement between the evaluation team and the Country Office were documented.

Accountability

The evaluation took a transparent sampling and analysis approach, using an analysis framework. Evaluation findings were mapped to the evaluation questions, referencing the underlying evidence.

Beneficence

The evaluation team sought explicit, oral, informed consent, explained the purpose of the evaluation, how the information will be used, and that the consultation could be stopped at any point. The evaluators highlighted potential benefits and harm to participating in the evaluation. All responses were kept confidential, so there is limited expected harm to participants. Where interviews involved discussion of sensitive topics, and with potentially vulnerable individuals, a trauma-informed approach was applied. Interviewers were trained to create a safe environment and monitor participant well-being throughout the engagement.

Respect

The evaluation meaningfully engaged interviewees as evaluation users, not only as subjects of data collection. The evaluation team will share the evaluation brief with all evaluation stakeholders and respondents. To ensure fair representation, the sampling covered different stakeholder categories, including hard-to-reach groups.

³² The evaluation will adhere to United Nations Evaluation Group and UN Women Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct, United Nations Evaluation Group guidance on integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluations with gender-responsive and human rights approaches integrated into the approach.

Limitations and mitigations

Accessibility

Insecurity and the accessibility of certain locations had the potential to hinder field visits. The evaluation team worked closely with the Country Office team to identify realistic locations for field visits. Areas that were not accessible were covered through virtual interviews.

Timing of the evaluation

Data collection took place in July, overlapping with the start of the planning process for the new Strategic Note. There was a risk that the evaluation findings would not be timely to inform this process. To mitigate this, the evaluation team worked closely with the Strategic Note development team to share findings in a real time, ongoing basis.

Uncertainty in funding and effects on the office structure

There is significant uncertainty around future funding and anticipated restructuring within the Country Office. This context may have influenced the willingness of stakeholders to speak candidly. The uncertain context may also impact the feasibility and relevance of certain recommendations.

The evaluation team adopted a sensitive approach to data collection, including offering confidential interviews and ensuring clarity on the independent nature of the evaluation process. Recommendations have been framed with attention to the evolving institutional context, emphasizing practicality, flexibility and alignment with resource realities.

Dissemination and use

The Country Representative will lead follow-up, including preparing a management response within six weeks of report finalization and quarterly tracking of agreed actions. Table 3 sets out the dissemination plan.

Evaluation management and quality assurance

The Director, IEAIS and Chief, IES reviewed and signed off on all evaluation products.³³ Supported by international and national evaluation consultants, the Team Lead was responsible for the CPE, including data collection, analysis and reporting. The evaluation will also be subject to the Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) process, which assesses the quality of the report.

The Evaluation Reference and Management Groups (see Annex 13) were responsible for providing technical review and ensuring a high-quality process.

TABLE 3

Evaluation dissemination plan

DISSEMINATION APPROACH	HOW THIS WILL BE TRACKED
Country Office Evaluation team to share a two-page brief and host a meeting to discuss findings and next steps.	Uptake of findings and extent to which the meeting results in concrete next steps.
Regional Office and headquarters colleagues Evaluation team to share a two-page brief and host a webinar.	Number of stakeholders the brief is shared with. Number of attendees at the webinar.
National partners and others working in the sector Evaluation team to share a two-page external facing brief.	Number of stakeholders the brief is shared with.

³³ UN Women Evaluation Policy, United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation.

FIGURE 3
Summary of methodology

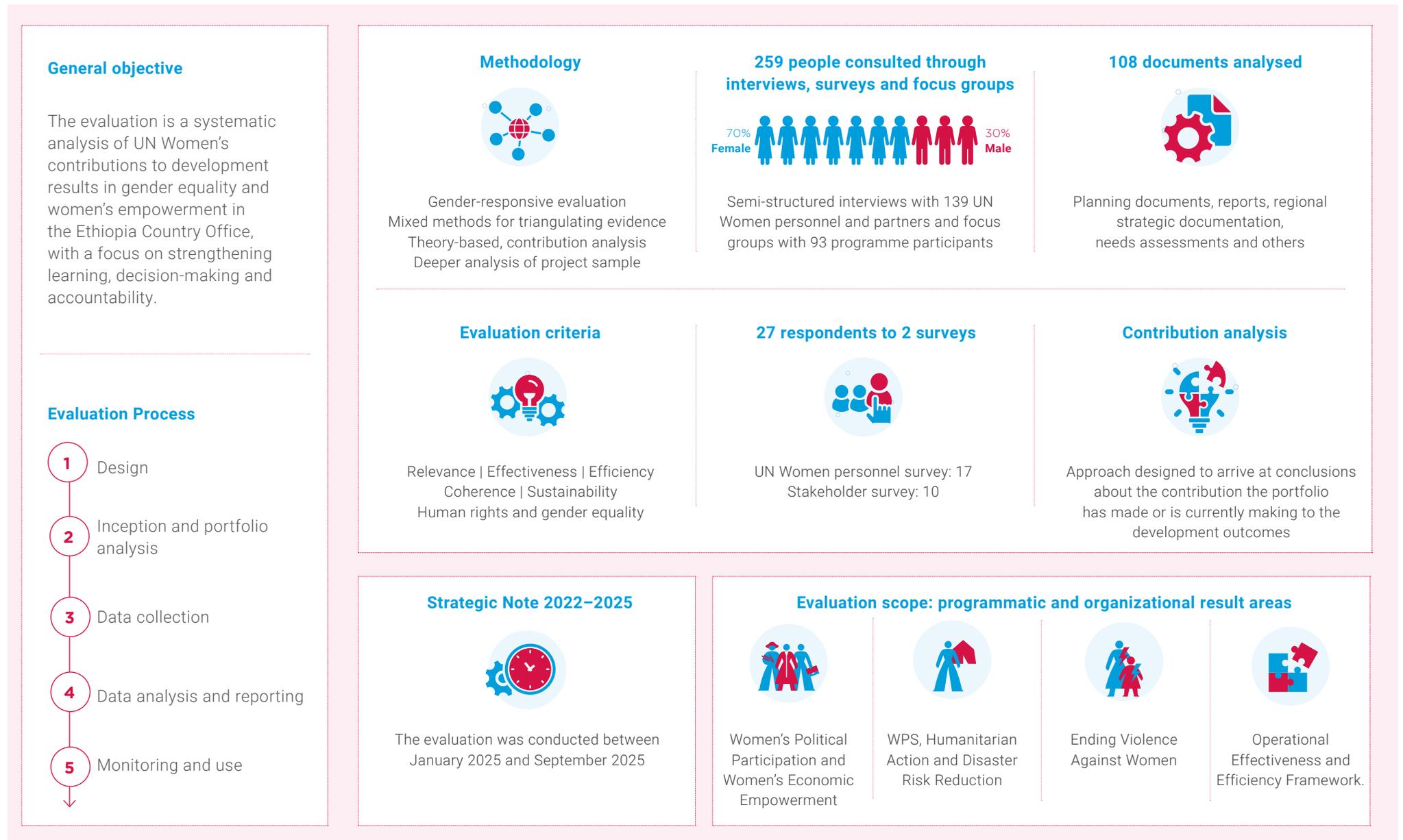




Photo: ©UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

5

FINDINGS

**To what extent has the Country Office contributed to achieving planned outcomes?
What contribution is UN Women making towards target outcomes?
What changes have been observed, and for whom?**

Across Findings 1–4, contribution analysis tables summarize findings and rate the strength of evidence for the achievement of outcomes and the Country Office’s contribution. The effect of other factors, both positive and negative, is discussed in Finding 8. The evaluation matrix originally set out a separate

evaluation question on the Country Office’s contribution to gender equality and women’s empowerment coordination. Given this is included in the Development Results Framework’s target outcomes, findings on coordination have been incorporated into Findings 1–4.



OUTCOME 1: ALL PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA ENJOY THE RIGHTS AND CAPABILITIES TO REALIZE THEIR POTENTIAL IN EQUALITY AND WITH DIGNITY.

FINDING 1

The Country Office made a strong and valued contribution to strengthening coordination on gender equality and women’s empowerment across the UN system, government, civil society and development partners, supporting policy change and bolstering survivor-centred EAW policies and services, with evidence of increased access to multi-sectoral support and emerging shifts in social norms. However, follow-through and institutionalization were mixed: several legal reforms and coordination mechanisms remain pending or under-resourced, and support has not yet consistently translated into sustainable, system-wide implementation and monitoring, particularly at sub-national level.

Against this target outcome, evidence is organized under: (a) Legal, policy and coordination frameworks to deliver survivor-centred services strengthened (Table 4); (b) Women and girls live free from violence, underpinned by progressive social norms and accessible survivor-centred services (Table 5); (c) government institutions and policies are strengthened to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment (Table 6); (d) coordination is strengthened at the UN system level (Table 7), nationally and inclusive of civil society (Table 8) and between development partners (Table 9); (e) humanitarian response increasingly integrates gender equality and translates into improved, sustained access to survivor-centred support (Table 10).

The Country Office contributed to some outcome-level changes against this outcome, particularly where support to legal and policy frameworks, coordination platforms and survivor-centred services was combined. Outcome-level change was most visible in more accessible and multi-sectoral GBV services and emerging shifts in community attitudes and practices (Tables 5 and 10). Other documented results relate to the enabling environment, including strengthened laws and policies, institutional capacities and coordination mechanisms (Tables 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9) and to the design and piloting of tools, protocols and services, for which there is more limited evidence of sustained, system-wide use. This pattern reflects both short project cycles and the design of the results framework and project reporting, which focus primarily on output-level indicators, see findings 7 and 11.

TABLE 4

Legal, policy and coordination frameworks to deliver survivor-centred services strengthened³⁴

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION
<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, of strengthened policies (gender-based violence prevention/response component in the draft Gender Equality and women's empowerment policy and finalized five-year national strategy preventing and responding to violence), strengthened coordination bodies and processes (SOPs for shelter and criminal record management system).</p>	<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, through convening stakeholders, providing technical support to development of policy standard operating procedures and manuals, and building capacity of government and service providers.</p>

There was strong evidence of policy and legal frameworks being strengthened to deliver survivor-centred services. A GBV prevention and response component was integrated into the national draft gender equality and women's empowerment policy through a consultative, multi-stakeholder process, although this was yet to be adopted. The Country Office also provided technical inputs to the revision of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Code³⁵. However, this is also yet to be approved, meaning the target against this indicator (SP_D_0.1.4) was not met. With Country Office technical, advocacy and convening support, the national five-year strategy on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, accompanied by a comprehensive action plan was passed, meeting the target against this indicator (SP_D_0.3.3).³⁶ The Country Office also supported the government with the pilot of a Criminal Record Management System, which includes a sex-offender registry, expected to strengthen accountability and protection, with planned regional expansion.³⁷

Multisectoral coordination of survivor-centred GBV response was consolidated nationally and extended sub-nationally, translating into three tangible outcomes. Firstly, the Country Office provided convening and technical support to revitalize coordination platforms (National Coordinating Body on prevention and response to Violence against Women and Children; Shelters Coordination through the Ethiopian Network of Women Shelters; inter-ministerial task forces), which enabled the launch of the National Strategy on Prevention and Response to Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) 2023–2028 and related reforms. This was also mirrored by regional working groups, with Oromia formally adopting the National Coordination Body Strategy.³⁸ Secondly, facilitated by these coordination bodies and the Country Office's support to the development and roll-out of standard operating procedures for shelters, referrals and data-sharing regarding services to survivors was standardized, improving service quality and consistency of survivor-centred, trauma-informed care across 21 Ethiopian Network of Women's Shelters.³⁹ Thirdly, the Country Office supported linkages across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. It supported survivors of violence, through convening and advocacy across the Humanitarian Country Team.⁴⁰

³⁴ Relevant indicators: SP_D_0.1.4, SP_D_0.3.3

³⁵ drawing on a Country Office assessment that identified vague provisions that needed to be clarified on gender-specific crimes such as femicide, psychological violence and economic abuse

³⁶ Desk review

³⁷ Government interview

³⁸ Partner reports, CSO and government interviews

³⁹ Interview with a UN agency and focus group discussion with members of the Ethiopian Network of Women's Shelters.

⁴⁰ The Sixth National Report on Progress made in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +30) June 2024, Interviews with UN Women and the government (Ministry of Justice).

Delivery of EAW results were enabled by strong system alignment and partnerships, yet remained vulnerable to conflict, institutional flux and under-funding. Enablers of results included the Country Office’s alignment with government priorities; multisectoral partnerships with ministries, local government, CSOs and faith actors; and community-based referral systems and use of evidence-based approaches (e.g. SASA!, RESPECT⁴¹). Key barriers

were conflict and instability affecting delivery; government restructuring and shifting mandates; variable enforcement of laws; limited public budgets for this area of work; and politicization of conflict-related sexual violence. Implementing partners stressed the need for continuous post-shelter support, socioeconomic reintegration and stronger community-level prevention to sustain gains.⁴²

TABLE 5

Women and girls live free from violence, underpinned by progressive social norms and accessible survivor-centred services⁴³

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	COUNTRY OFFICE’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME
<p>STRONG EVIDENCE of increase in uptake of survivor-centred services, of changes in norms and reductions in rates of violence, based on a national survey undertaken by MoWSA and Oxfam in 2024.</p>	<p>MODERATE EVIDENCE, through funding and coordinating shelters, expanding free legal aid centres and support to one-stop services, building institutional capacities and working with communities to change norms, though recognizing the limited scale of UN Women’s interventions and the many other stakeholders working in this area.</p>

The Country Office has effectively supported women to access survivor-centred services, meeting the target of an increase in the number of women who access services (SP_D_0.4.1). Annual reports noted a total of 5,563 women and girls were reached in 2022; 13,256 in 2023; and 5,488 in 2024.⁴⁴

- Between 2022 and 2024, as part of the Access to Essential Services project, 8,443 survivors were reported to have received comprehensive support including shelter, psychosocial counselling, legal aid and economic empowerment across six regions. Interviewed survivors reported transformative impacts, describing shelters as spaces where they could regain dignity, self-confidence and skills to rebuild their lives.⁴⁵

- In 2023–24, 1,088 women were reported to have accessed free legal aid services through the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association’s legal aid centers, and women’s shelters run by Agar Ethiopia and the Association for Women Sanctuary and Development, supported by the Country Office. Survivors were reached through paralegal committee outreach, composed of police, community leaders and social workers, making significant inroads even in traditionally underserved regions with low literacy.⁴⁶ The Country Office also worked with police officers, who reported shifts from victim-blaming to trauma-informed practices, improving survivors’ experience of justice processes.⁴⁷

⁴¹ SASA! And RESPECT are evidence-based approaches that seek to prevent violence against women and girls. SASA! Is a community mobilization approach that seeks to transform social norms. RESPECT is a violence-prevention framework launched by WHO and UN Women and partners.

⁴² CSO and programme participant interviews, Evaluation of Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls and Delivering Essential Services to Survivors in Ethiopia Final Report 2018-2022.

⁴³ Relevant Indicators: SP_D_0.3.1, SP_D_3.2, SP_D_0.4.1

⁴⁴ While the evaluation could not verify all these numbers, it has validated some specific numbers below.

⁴⁵ Final Evaluation Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022), donor report and interviews with programme participants and civil society.

⁴⁶ Annual report, partner reports, partner interviews

⁴⁷ Final Evaluation Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022), and interviews with programme participants.

- In humanitarian and conflict contexts, the Country Office extended coverage of GBV hotlines; supported temporary shelters in crisis-affected areas; and ensured the integration of sexual health into humanitarian response plans.⁴⁸
- In Kobo, trauma-healing circles supported psychological recovery and were linked to women restarting small businesses.⁴⁹

There was also evidence of changes in social norms, supported by Country Office programming.

The Country Office used social analysis and action approaches to engage community members and religious leaders. For example, it engaged religious leaders to develop GBV guidelines in faith settings; led public campaigns; and mobilized school transport services and community groups to promote accountability and public awareness to strengthen safety. The Country Office also drew on its scoping study as part of the Safe Cities programme to support community actors to better identify and respond to signals of violence.⁵⁰ Exposure to campaigns were reported to have reached 74 per cent of respondents targeted by a programme survey, illustrating widespread community engagement.⁵¹

Monitoring reports identified some tangible changes in attitudes as a result of these programmes. For example, according to a programme rapid assessment conducted by partners, there was a 12 per cent increase in community rejection of violence against women and girls compared with the baseline study conducted in 2018.⁵² In Adama, a rapid assessment conducted by partners reported that knowledge of the link between violence against women and HIV rose from 72.8 per cent in 2018 to 91 per cent in 2024; while

positive attitudes towards prevention increased from 54 per cent to 80 per cent.⁵³ However, The Country Office is unable to report against SP_D_0.3.1 on the extent of bias in gender social norms, due to the delayed 2024 Ethiopia Demographic Health Survey.

There was also evidence of social norms change, and contributing to strengthened prevention and community action.

With Country Office support, religious leaders became critical advocates, integrating anti-violence against women and girls messaging into sermons and faith-based media platforms. In Addis Ababa schools, codes of conduct against GBV were enforced, leading to disciplinary action against violators.⁵⁴ In Hawassa, community members drew on their awareness training to provide information to police regarding traffickers.⁵⁵ Safe Cities programming in Hawassa and Addis Ababa engaged city mayors, sectoral bureaus, universities, CSOs and faith institutions, resulting in tangible improvements such as CCTV installations, expansion of community policing services, improved street lighting, strengthened school protections and safer transport systems.⁵⁶ Partners also reported that ease of referrals and collaboration with essential service providers like police and shelters improved.

Grassroots capacity-building also supported changes in norms. Training under the CSO/women’s rights organization capacity project enabled community women to move from local organizing into national and regional consultations. In Safe Cities sites, these groups successfully advocated for changes in dress-codes for waitresses region-wide in Sidama, reducing exposure to sexual harassment.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ The Sixth National Report on Progress made in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +30) June 2024, interviews with UN Women and the government (Ministry of Justice).

⁴⁹ Partner reports and CSO interviews

⁵⁰ Partner reports (Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls and Delivering Essential Services to Survivors in Ethiopia Final Report 2018-2022; key informant interviews with civil society; and AWSAD Support Phase Rapid Assessment Survey in three kebeles of Adama City Administration, Evaluation of UN Women’s approach to social norms change (2024)

⁵¹ AWSAD Support Phase Rapid Assessment Survey in three kebeles of Adama City Administration, Evaluation of UN Women’s approach to social norms change (2024)

⁵² Partner reports (Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls and Delivering Essential Services to Survivors in Ethiopia Final Report 2018-2022

⁵³ AWSAD Support Phase Rapid Assessment Survey in three kebeles of Adama City Administration, Evaluation of UN Women’s approach to social norms change (2024)

⁵⁴ CSO and programme participant interviews

⁵⁵ CSO interviews

⁵⁶ 2023 Safe Cities First Progress Report and CSO interviews

⁵⁷ Partner reports and CSO interviews

The Country Office’s and partners’ service provision and support to changing norms have played a small part in contributing to Ethiopia’s reduction in the proportion of women and men who experienced violence in the previous 12 months, meeting the target of a reduction over the Strategic Note period (SP_D_3.2). As of 2024, the proportion of women

and men who have experienced physical violence is at 9.3 per cent, sexual violence at 6 per cent, and spousal violence at 19.6 per cent.⁵⁸ Overall, results were enabled by strong community engagement and contextualized approaches, but were constrained by entrenched patriarchal norms and some religious leaders’ resistance to family-law reforms.⁵⁹

TABLE 6

Government institutions and policies are strengthened to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment⁶⁰

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION
<p>MODERATE EVIDENCE, with one policy adopted and advancements in several normative processes.</p>	<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, through convening, technical support and development of institutional tools.</p>

There was moderate evidence that government institutions and policies were strengthened to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. The national Rural Land Administration and Use Proclamation No.1324/2024 was revised to include explicit gender equality and women’s empowerment provisions, and adopted, not meeting the target of three national policies passed (SP_D_0.1.4). This proclamation is expected to strengthen women’s land registration, control and use.⁶¹ The Country Office also supported the revision of a Ministry of Education directive to ensure alignment with gender-responsive standards; technical support to directives guiding regions to update family laws to align with federal standards; draft revisions of the criminal codes on women’s rights; drafts of the national gender equality policy advanced to submission; and a costed gender equality road map⁶².

The Country Office’s support to policies was through convening, technical support, and capacity building, and noted to be invaluable by donors and government interviewees. The Country Office convened stakeholders, including co-chairing the national technical committee for the Gender Policy and Road Map; organized multi-level consultations to inform policy drafts; and supported policy costing and alignment with national plans. It built the capacity of the Ministry of Planning and Development and Ministry of Finance on developing sectoral gender equality strategies. The Country Office also supported sub-national bureaus of women and social affairs to develop gender strategies and coordination frameworks in the Tigray, Amhara and Somali regions.⁶³

⁵⁸ 2024 Annual Report, cited a Network of Ethiopian Women’s Associations, Oxfam and MoWSA-led national survey

⁵⁹ Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls and Delivering Essential Services to Survivors in Ethiopia Final Report 2018-2022, civil society interviews, Evaluation of UN Women’s approach to social norms change (2024)

⁶⁰ Relevant Indicators: SP_D_0.1.4, ETH_D_1.1B

⁶¹ Review of proclamation - Provisions include representation quotas of 30 per cent of positions in agricultural cooperatives and rural institutions to be held by women; target of at least 50 per cent of agricultural extension services to reach women farmers; mandatory issuing of land use certificates for married couples to be in both spouses’ names; reserving a minimum of 20 per cent of newly allocated rural land for women-headed households; and legal protection of women’s land rights in all divorce and inheritance cases, irrespective of customary law

⁶² Interviews with government and CSOs

⁶³ Donor reports, interviews with donors, government and civil society.

Barriers to the strengthening of government institutions and policies include long policy endorsement cycles, government turnover, and fragile resourcing of gender machinery. Government stakeholders noted that the Country Office’s work would be more effective if it provided follow-through to support the institutionalization of pilot tools and the tracking of their effectiveness. There were also questions about the sustainability of the Country Office’s support to the MoWSA through the secondee, while highly valued. To see sustained change, government stakeholders recommended that the Country Office focus on implementation of the gender policy and road map (once passed), including at sub-national levels and through scaling engagement with other ministries.

The Country Office supported international normative commitments in-country and in translating these into national policy dialogue, through policy dialogue, convening and support to data systems.⁶⁴

Data are not yet available against the Strategic Note indicator on the percentage of recommendations of the 8th state report implemented (ETH_D_1.1B) as

the 9th report is not yet available. Nonetheless, the Country Office provided critical technical and financial assistance to the Beijing+30 country reporting and CEDAW processes, including through facilitating CSO inputs (see also table 8).⁶⁵ Concrete results through Country Office Support include stronger gender content in Ethiopia’s 2022 and 2025 Voluntary National Review; CSO recommendations reflected in the 2024 Beijing+30 review; and submission in 2021 of the CEDAW midterm report on priority recommendations (notably violence against women and girls and female genital mutilation).

The Country Office provided key contributions, through technical assistance to the Ministry of Planning and Development and MoWSA to ensure meaningful reporting of gender-related indicators; support to government to convene and resource multi-stakeholder review processes (Beijing+30); and investments in gender-data systems, including strengthening the SDG reporting dashboard and the National Information System, which contributed to the Voluntary National Review.

TABLE 7.

UN system coordination is strengthened on gender⁶⁶

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION
<p>MODERATE EVIDENCE, with the target on UNCT SWAP standards almost met and gender mainstreamed in the 2025–30 UNSDCF, but opportunities to strengthen integration of gender equality across all UN programming, tracking UN-Wide gender results and joint programming and resourcing.</p>	<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, through coordination around key events, evidence generation and technical support, and training.</p>

There was moderate evidence of strengthened UN system coordination on gender. A comprehensive UNCT-SWAP was completed in 2024 following lighter reviews in 2021 and 2022, coordinated by the Country Office with the Resident Coordinator’s Office, with 53.3 per cent against a 60 per cent target of standards met or exceeded (indicator SP_D_0.7.2). In the new UNSDCF 2025–2030, a stand-alone gender equality and women’s empowerment outcome is included and gender is mainstreamed across other outcomes/ outputs, meeting the target of indicator SP_D_0.7.3. UN agencies appreciated Country Office efforts to support coordination through planning processes; for

example, mapping planned activities and budgets to ensure complementarity as part of the UN Violence Against Women and Children coordination platform. Fifty-three per cent of UN Women personnel rated the effectiveness of partnership with the UN system as very or somewhat effective (n=17). Country Office personnel rated the effectiveness of UN coordination highest around advocacy and accountability on gender, but less high in terms of conceptualization and implementation of UN gender interventions.

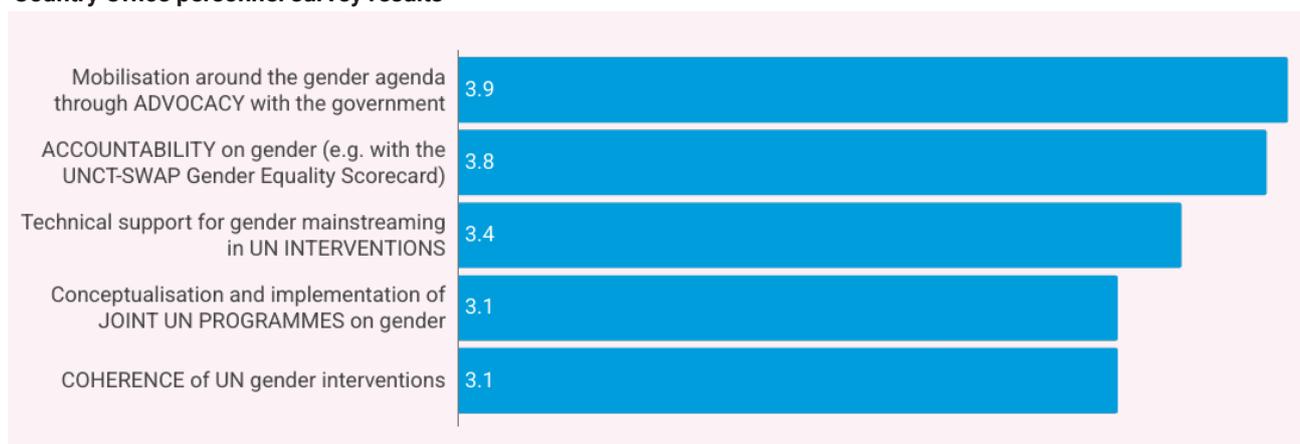
⁶⁴ Government and civil society interviews, survey respondents

⁶⁵ Interviews with donors, government, civil society, Beijing+ report 2024.

⁶⁶ Relevant indicators: SP_D_0.7.2, SP_D_0.7.3

FIGURE 4

Country Office personnel survey results



Source: Evaluation survey

There was strong evidence of the Country Office’s contribution. The Country Office co-chaired the gender result group and contributed to action groups and inter-agency networks such as PSEA), with positive feedback from UN agencies on UN Women’s leadership during the UNSDCF development phase through the result group on the gender-focused outcome. The Country Office’s training, gender analysis and briefs, support to use gender markers, and coordination of the 16-Days campaign was reported by interviewed UN agencies to strengthen overall UN programming and coordination on gender.

However, there are still opportunities to strengthen UN gender coordination. UNFPA and UNDP Country Programme evaluations noted that gender equality integration was inconsistent, and called for better

delineation of responsibilities between UN agencies to support stronger collaboration and joint programming. Interviewed UN agencies felt that the Gender Equality Working Group, co-led by UN Women and the World Food Programme, has not been fully leveraged to track UN-wide gender results, drive joint programming and resourcing, and support better integration of gender equality across programmes.⁶⁷

Some systemic barriers affected this area of work, including the size of UN Women compared to other agencies and capacity constraints; the constrained funding landscape which was perceived to increase competition between agencies; and limited joint programming. The stand-alone UNSDCF gender outcome represents a key opportunity to strengthen coordination.

TABLE 8.

National coordination on gender is strengthened and inclusive of civil society⁶⁸

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION
<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, with CSOs engaged in six national processes, strengthened advocacy of women’s rights organizations, and convening of other platforms such as the national WEE forum.</p>	<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, through convening, technical support to women’s rights organizations on advocacy and institutional areas, and CSO mapping.</p>

⁶⁷ Interviewees expressed that launching a separate Gender Theme Group would be duplicative, especially considering the current performance of the Working Group. Agencies compared the working group’s performance to other more active working groups, such as youth and disability inclusion, which produced outputs more visible to heads of agencies

⁶⁸ Relevant indicator: SP_D_0.5.4

The Country Office played a critical role in strengthening civil society. Civil society informants reported that the Country Office created an alliance of women-led organizations and supported the development of the Consortium of Self-Help Group Promoters. It mapped CSOs to support stronger coordination and convened national coordination forums (for example the National Coordinating Body on Prevention and Response to Violence Against Women and Children and a national WEE forum) to strengthen dialogue on priorities. CSOs reported that these mechanisms improved their understanding of government priorities and facilitated their engagement with MoWSA and local authorities. Partners also noted that the platforms enhanced information-sharing and alignment of messaging, which helped raise issues on the national agenda. For example, community issues raised in these forums were reflected in UN Women's high-level advocacy and public communications.⁶⁹ It also built capacity, through training of 29 women's rights organizations and 30 youth leaders from the National Network of Positive Women and trained organizations in citizen generated data. Unexpectedly, increased visibility for women-led organizations also led to their engagement in humanitarian coordination platforms and receiving of additional funding.⁷⁰ However, members of the UN Women Civil Society Advisory Group reported that the group did not meet regularly and the terms of reference were unclear, affecting its effectiveness.

The Country Office also supported CSO advocacy. It convened four dialogues resulting in policy briefs on national women's movements, gender and climate change, and women's financial inclusion, provided advocacy training and small grants, and supported legal registration of organizations. As a result, several organizations were able to advocate for updating family laws to align with federal standards in the Afar and Somali regions, and broadening the civil space for women's rights organizations to campaign.⁷¹ The Country Office supported civil society to formulate a position paper which they shared with the government

on the draft CSO bill, which may affect the scope of work of CSOs. Advocacy initiatives generated measurable engagement: a campaign under the hashtag #merinesh were reported to have reached over 2,000 viewers and contributed to establishing a network of CSOs to sustain advocacy on women's leadership.⁷² However, civil society noted a missed opportunity for individual campaigns to evolve into a more formal coordination structure. For example, while the 16-day GBV campaign briefly revived collective action, momentum was not sustained.

Strengthened civil society capacity and engagement was evidenced by greater engagement in national dialogues. CSO acknowledged that being invited to formally input into national dialogues marked a shift in how government engaged with CSOs. CSO recommendations were referenced by decision makers and reflected in outcomes. The Country Office advocated for and supported MoWSA to convene formal spaces for CSOs to contribute to the Beijing+ review and CEDAW and SDG reporting. Women-led organizations were also supported by the Country Office and the leadership of MoWSA to participate in development of the National Action Plan and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy which includes comprehensive GBV measures. Ten CSOs and the Women with Disabilities National Association provided inputs to the ongoing revision of Ethiopia's criminal procedure code.⁷³ In total, the Country Office supported CSOs to engage in six national processes, against a target of two (indicator SP_D_0.5.4).

Several enablers and barriers affected this area of work. A key enabler was the changes in legislation concerning CSOs which enabled greater engagement in advocacy and political processes. Challenges included the shrinking civic space and the limited representation of women-led organizations in humanitarian coordination mechanisms. Additionally, while CSO participation increased, it is not yet institutionalized in coordination mechanisms and national policy tracks.

⁶⁹ Key informant interviews civil society and the government

⁷⁰ Key informant interviews with civil society

⁷¹ CSO interviews, partner reports

⁷² Civil society resource centre Partners Report, Annual Report and Workplan, and survey.

⁷³ Interviews with civil society and government

Civil society also noted an opportunity for UN Women to support a more cohesive women’s movement, coordinating responses to backlash and shrinking civic space, through monthly check-ins and prioritizing under-resourced and regional women’s networks. The

Ministry of Finance stated it was planning to revive the coalition of organizations working on women and children’s issues⁷⁴, representing a key opportunity to enhance national coordination.⁷⁵

TABLE 9.

National coordination on gender between development partners is strengthened

OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION
National coordination on gender between development partners is strengthened	MODERATE EVIDENCE of coordination helping to mobilize coordinated funding for the gender machinery and strengthened information-sharing.	MODERATE EVIDENCE of the Country Office’s contribution, through facilitating the gender sector working group. Engaged co-chairs also noted as a key contributor.

The Country Office supported development partner coordination through co-leading the gender sector working group. Stakeholders valued this space for technical exchange, bringing together together development partners, UN agencies and MoWSA. Stakeholders cited generally effective convening (e.g. regular meetings, events and visibility such as the 16 Days campaign) and the Country Office’s key role in supporting MoWSA participation up to the State Minister level in the platform and partner dialogue. The platform reportedly catalyzed over EUR 6 million for national and regional gender machineries.⁷⁶

However, donors described the platform as focused on technical information-sharing and underutilized for joint commitments, accountability and financing.

Donors cited weaker performance on (a) mapping government priorities and donor portfolios; (b) identifying geographic/thematic gaps and overlaps; and (c) operationalizing joint action (e.g. coordinated evaluations and implementation support for laws/policies). Several interviewees perceived the secretariat function as overstretched, with inconsistent follow-up on terms of reference/action plans and missed opportunities to report up to the level of Heads of Cooperation / Development Partners Group. They also noted that the group is not recognized as an official Development Partner Group and that MoWSA’s limited role in the wider architecture constrains escalation and resourcing, calling for stronger government-led donor coordination on gender.

Donors highlighted the following opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness of the platform:

- **Strengthen linkages to strategic levels** by introducing periodic briefs/updates to Heads of Cooperation and clarify governance (agreed terms of reference, milestones, shared workplan) to channel selected issues to decision-making levels. Stronger senior-level voice beyond the technical group to engage less-committed donors and economic actors (e.g. the Ministry of Finance, MoF).
- **Support greater coherence** by maintaining a joint landscape mapping (government priorities, donor portfolios, regional coverage) to identify gaps/duplication and support complementary investments, including potential pooled funding models.
- **Support more effective programming and policy dialogue**, not only advocating for more to be done on gender, but on how best to achieve results, drawing on UN Women’s global evidence.
- **Improve tracking of the tangible effects** of where the Country Office has catalyzed funds and influenced allocation or mobilized action, to meet the Strategic Note’s ambition to ‘influence and mobilize action, commitments and resourcing decisions’.

⁷⁴ originally set up with UN Women support

⁷⁵ Civil society and UN agency interviews

⁷⁶ Interviews with donors and UN agencies, Development Partners Group Gender & Inclusion Working Group webpage

TABLE 10

Humanitarian response increasingly integrates gender equality, translated into improved access to survivor-centred support

OUTCOME STATEMENT	EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION
Humanitarian response increasingly integrates gender equality, translated into improved access to survivor-centred support (SP_D_0.4.1; SP_D_0.7.6)	MODERATE EVIDENCE – access to services expanded and referral pathways strengthened, but gender integration in humanitarian response was concentrated in 2024 so institutionalization is still ongoing.	STRONG EVIDENCE – the Country Office's inter-agency leadership (Humanitarian Response Plan gender review; GiHA WGs; PSEA co-chairing) and financing of holistic survivor support.

Access to survivor-centred support increased with Country Office support. According to management, the annual number of women receiving comprehensive services rose from 5,563 (2022) to 13,256 (2023) and 15,038 in 2024, according to annual reports and donor reports, meeting the target of indicator SP_D_0.4.1. In Amhara, management reported that 1,232 GBV survivors accessed services under the Central Emergency Response Fund grant⁷⁷. The Country Office worked through partners to provide comprehensive shelter-based medical and counselling care to 212 survivors and 13 children, that women described as restoring their confidence and dignity⁷⁸. In Tigray, 4,489 ex-combatants and conflict-related sexual violence survivors were reported to have received holistic support including trauma support, business skills and seed capital.⁷⁹ Interviewed programme participants spoke about the relevance of the holistic model in restoring agency and supporting socioeconomic reintegration.

The Country Office contributed by working with primarily women-led civil society partners to deliver integrated packages of survivor-centred support through its partners and by strengthening referral systems. It worked with PSEA coordination platforms to refresh referral standard operating procedures and to strengthen the sequencing of protection, health and livelihoods services. UN and health partners reported

clearer roles and referral steps, with fewer repeated transfers and more timely referrals from first disclosure to care.

The Country Office contributed to strengthening the capacities of service providers. Local and international non-governmental organizations, women-led organizations and government bodies were supported to strengthen the quality and coordination of delivery, to align with global standards, such as the Essential Services Package. According to management, 642 service providers (CSOs and government) adopted survivor-centred protocols. Similarly, management reported that 122 health-extension workers and 398 community volunteers were trained to route cases via the national hotline and 23 women-led and women's rights organizations gained tools to streamline the process between disclosure and support.⁸⁰ Management also indicated that 84 trained organizations in Somali and Tigray reported integrating gender in internal policies and programming after training, and revising internal protocols and standard operating procedures to align with network-wide standards. Many organizations also reported strengthened inter-agency collaboration. Partners and donors noted that health workers and school focal points trained on standard operating procedures reported greater confidence and empathy in handling GBV disclosures. Interviewed programme participants reported seeing a shift, resulting in fewer cases being dismissed and more referrals to other relevant support.

⁷⁷ Donor and partner reports

⁷⁸ Partner report

⁷⁹ Annual report, donor report and partner reports confirmed numbers. The evaluation team interviewed GBV survivors in Amhara, survivors in the supported shelters, and ex-combatants in Tigray.

⁸⁰ Central Emergency Response Fund, donor report; MSI/AWSAD, partner reports

The Country Office also contributed by engaging communities. Management reported that 2,376 community members were sensitized on GBV/PSEA and related rights⁸¹. Organizations reported disseminating GBV awareness messages to 35,000 people through workshops, posters, media campaigns and the radio. Partner reports noted that UN agencies and women rights' organizations reported that awareness initiatives had shifted community attitudes and increased the reporting of GBV risks, although this was not quantified.

Gender integration became more coherent. By 2024, a gender review of the Humanitarian Response Plan, the Humanitarian Country Team gender strategy/road map (2024-2027) and a GiHA "Pathway", finalized with UN Women support, gave clusters a common standard, meeting the target of indicator SP_D_0.7.6. This was operationalized through the national PSEA network, co-chaired by the Country Office until February 2025, and the inter-ministerial GBV task force and regional bureaus of women and social affairs. The Country Office-produced Rapid Gender Analyses and Gender Alerts were used by the Ethiopian Humanitarian Country Team and clusters to adjust sector plans and guidance to make them more gender-responsive.⁸² Multiple interviewed UN and civil society partners reported that this led to clearer roles and faster, more coherent decisions, reduced non-alignment of gender and PSEA templates and guidance, and increased use of sex, age and disability disaggregated data and the IASC Gender with Age Markers in planning.

Coherence also strengthened at the sub-national level. The Country Office supported eight sub-national networks to streamline coordination and referrals from first disclosure through care and follow-up.⁸³ In Tigray, UN Women co-convened the GiHA Technical Working Group and presented the sub-national gender analysis to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group and sectoral clusters, which triggered the formal integration of GiHA into sub-national coordination. In Somali and Amhara, UN Women supported region-owned gender strategies and delivered preparedness training while mentoring regional bureaus to embed gender in cluster plans, strengthening local leadership and follow-through.⁸⁴ In Tigray, improved coordination between BoWSA, humanitarian agencies and CSOs following Country Office led training was cited by interviewed CSOs and UN agencies as evidence of an increasingly functional network structure.

Delivery coverage expanded to priority crisis regions but remained inconsistent. The Country Office had good coverage across areas with the greatest need,⁸⁵ strengthened by opening of field presence in the Somali region and Tigray to close coordination gaps. Interviewed CSOs valued programmes' clear and transparent targeting criteria. The Country Office also provided locally translated materials. However, accessibility was uneven. CSOs reported that movement restrictions and insecurity affected legal follow-up.⁸⁶ Localization was also affected in some woredas where high transaction costs led the Country Office to pivot from directly contracting women-led organizations to other CSOs, diluting intended community-level reach.

⁸¹ Under the Central Emergency Response Fund grant

⁸² Annual reports and donor reports

⁸³ Annual reports and donor reports

⁸⁴ Annual reports and interviews with the Country Office and UN agencies

⁸⁵ including Amhara (North Wello/Woldia/Kobo), Tigray, Somali, Afar, Oromia, Sidama, South West Ethiopia Peoples' Region, and Gambella

⁸⁶ Donor report, partner reports



OUTCOME 2: ALL PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA LIVE IN A COHESIVE, JUST, INCLUSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.

FINDING 2

The Country Office contributed to expanding women’s leadership and participation in governance and peace processes, with strong evidence of increased representation, attitudinal change and CSO engagement, and moderate progress in institutionalizing gender statistics. At the same time, performance was constrained by a narrow and short-term funding base, incomplete data and information systems, and limited follow-through on the use of gender data and temporary special measures, which restricted the scale and durability of results.

Against this target outcome, the Country Office supported: (a) increased women’s representation across government (Table 11); (b) increased acceptance of women’s leadership (Table 12); (c) women’s organizations to gain a voice in national peace processes and the adoption of a WPS National Action Plan (Table 13); and (d) the institutionalization of gender statistics in national planning (Table 14).

Outcome-level changes were most visible in increased women’s representation in elected and appointed positions and indications of more favourable attitudes towards women’s leadership (Tables 11 and 12),

alongside women’s organizations’ participation in national peace and security processes and the development of the WPS National Action Plan (Table 13). Results on gender statistics were concentrated at the level of institutional frameworks, tools and capacities (Table 14), with limited evidence to date of systematic use of gender data to influence policy and budget decisions. Overall, evidence is strongest in terms of institutional and enabling environment change, and more limited in terms of changes in women’s power and influence. This is affected by predominantly short project cycles and fragmented follow-up, see findings 5, 7 and 11.

TABLE 11

Increased women’s representation across government⁸⁷

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	COUNTRY OFFICE’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME
STRONG EVIDENCE , with expanded women’s leadership through training, promotions, rising representation, institutionalized mentorship and strengthened institutions (National Election Board of Ethiopia, MoWSA and parliament).	STRONG EVIDENCE , through government gender audits and action plans; institutionalized leadership programmes; training of newly elected women parliamentarians; development of curricula, studies and advocacy tools shaping gender-responsive policies; and deployment of gender focal points.

⁸⁷ Relevant indicators: SP_D_1.1 UNSDCF 1.2.1, SP_D_0.7.8

There was strong evidence of increased women's representation across government. Annual reports reported that the proportion of women in leadership in the executive branch at federal and target regions increased from 33 per cent in 2022 to 39.3 per cent in 2024, although this was below the target of 50 per cent against indicator UNSDCF 1.2.1.⁸⁸

The Country Office has contributed to this. Since the start of the Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership programme in 2018, the Country Office reported that it has trained more than 5,000 women leaders at federal, regional and local levels, on transformative leadership, gender-responsive governance and mentorship. Interviewed participants described the programme as highly relevant to addressing leadership gaps, and credited it with boosting their confidence and career progression. Documented outcomes provided by management include:

- Following direct advocacy with a ruling party, a list of 94 women was shortlisted for leadership training, resulting in 36 promotions after the programme.
- In Amhara, the regional BoWSA included aspiring women leaders in its training programme, and of the 182 trainees, 69 women were promoted to decision-making roles.⁸⁹

Women have assumed senior positions as Vice Mayors and Directors of Education, Agriculture and Health, challenging stereotypes of women as unfit for governance roles (see table 12). The Country Office contributed by advocating for women's inclusion with regional, local authorities and the ruling party, and making it mandatory that at least one member of Woreda, Zonal and Regional leadership-appointing committees be a woman.⁹⁰

Building on this training, the Transformative Leadership for Gender Equality Training Centre was established at Bahir Dar University, institutionalized through a University Senate approved curriculum, including manuals and mentorship guidebooks.⁹¹ The government has highlighted this centre as a key, national-level achievement, and plans to replicate this.⁹²

Mentorship and leadership training contributed to improvements in women's leadership participation and retention. Trained women reported overcoming fear of public speaking, increased resilience and greater confidence in challenging discriminatory practices; several who had considered resigning remained in post following the support they received. The cascading mentorship model, with regional women leaders mentoring zonal and woreda level women leaders and aspirants, helped build a pipeline of emerging women leaders at all levels.⁹³

The programme supported gender audits across government, which identified and incentivized improved policies and internal accountability mechanisms. For example, as a result of the gender audit, the National Election Board of Ethiopia adopted a gender-responsive training manual and strategy, deployed gender focal persons in its regional offices and reportedly trained over 1,000 electoral stakeholders. The House of People's Representatives' audit generated reform action plans and was reported to have guided the training of 88 newly elected women MPs. The Country Office prepared gender audit frameworks to support consistent future use.

⁸⁸ The Strategic Note target of an increased proportion of seats held by women in national will only be possible to measure against the next election cycle.

⁸⁹ Final Evaluation Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022) and government interviews.

⁹⁰ Interview with programme participants and the government.

⁹¹ Interviews with the government and UN Women.

⁹² Mentioned in the Sixth National Report on Progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +30) June 2024 and Interviews with Government and UN Women.

⁹³ Interviews with programme participants.

The Country Office successfully influenced MoWSA and BoWSA on the importance of women’s leadership, drawing on its studies on women in leadership and affirmative action and Violence against Women in Elections.⁹⁴ These inputs helped persuade institutions of the value of strengthening women leaders, and mobilizing resources for this purpose. For example, the Amhara BoWSA reallocated funds to train women leaders on trauma-informed crisis leadership programmes. Evidence of women being promoted to senior posts and zones reporting up to 35 per cent female representation, convinced officials to sustain investment. During ruling party meetings, the Head of the Amhara BoWSA also insisted on mandatory promotion of qualified women candidates.⁹⁵

There are promising signs of sustained programming in this area. The Country Office is engaging with UNDP to jointly support the 2026 elections, through starting the women’s leadership programmes earlier in the electoral cycle and to support initiatives such as the young women’s leadership academy.⁹⁶ A key enabler has been the strong commitment and partnerships

with MoWSA and BoWSAs, Bahir Dar University, the National Election Board of Ethiopia and the House of People’s Representatives.

Finally, the Country Office did not meet its target of the UNCT implementing temporary special measures in its support to the government (SP_D_0.7.8), although it held discussions with the National Election Board of Ethiopia on voluntary party quotas/incentives.

Programme delivery and uptake were constrained by women leaders’ financial pressures, a narrow funding base and variable monitoring systems. Many women leaders reported that childcare costs and low salaries reduced their capacity to engage effectively in the programme and leadership opportunities, while recognizing programme provisions for childcare.⁹⁷ MoWSA’s leadership programming relies heavily on UN Women as its sole funder, limiting outreach to only four regions and 250 women annually. Routine administrative data on women’s representation are not consistently collected and the partially functional National Gender Information System hampers systematic tracking. CSOs reported that short-term nature of the small-grants funding stream has made it difficult to sustain programming.⁹⁸

TABLE 12
Social norms shift towards acceptance of women in leadership

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	COUNTRY OFFICE’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME
<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, with a significant increase in women’s representation in leadership, institutionalized quotas and widespread community acceptance of women as equally capable leaders.</p>	<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, through institutionalized gender-responsive policies, training and mentoring women leaders, strengthening democratic institutions and fostering community norm shifts via grassroots mobilization and media engagement.</p>

⁹⁴ Annual Reports, donor reports and interviews with UN Women and the government. Final Evaluation Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022) and key informant interviews with CSOs.

⁹⁵ Interviews with the government and UN Women

⁹⁶ Interviews with UN Women and UNDP.

⁹⁷ Government interviews.

⁹⁸ Key informant interviews with the government.

Shifting deep-rooted gender norms is essential for sustainable progress in women’s leadership, and the Country Office has generated strong evidence of change in this area.

In the Amhara region, an endline study conducted by a partner in 2022 showed that 94.5 per cent of more than 4,800 community members agreed that women are equally capable leaders. This change is directly attributable to the programme’s community dialogues⁹⁹, mentorship approaches and leadership programmes, which not only built women’s confidence but also influenced broader societal perceptions.¹⁰⁰

Mentorship changed social norms by pairing practical leadership coaching with visible role models. Participants reported gaining confidence to challenge discriminatory practices. As the cascading model (regional to woreda) spread, more offices and communities saw women chairing meetings, which programme participants described as contributing to attitudinal change towards women’s leadership.¹⁰¹

The media also played a critical role. With the support of the Country Office, 464 media professionals were reported to have been trained on gender-sensitive

reporting and subsequently produced TV and radio programmes, and election-focused campaigns, profiling prominent Ethiopian women leaders as capable decision makers. This outputs helped reshape the portrayal of women leaders in public discourse, by highlighting women’s achievements and capabilities, to normalize women’s leadership and challenge stereotypes.¹⁰²

A key enabler was high-level political champions including the first female President of Ethiopia, who spearheaded the Presidential Leadership Programme for women leaders, which reinforced the legitimacy of women’s leadership.¹⁰³

Despite these successes, challenges remain. Conflict and instability disrupted community dialogues, and deprioritized gender issues. Patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes are deeply embedded, including among women themselves, and can undermine the impact of training and advocacy, highlighting the need to sustain investment in community-level interventions.¹⁰⁴

TABLE 13

Women’s organizations gain voice and leverage in national peace processes and a WPS National Action Plan is adopted¹⁰⁵

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION
MODERATE EVIDENCE – influence of women’s organizations broadened and a complete National Action Plan drafted, but adoption and implementation are still pending	STRONG EVIDENCE – The Country Office’s convening, resourcing and technical support widened CSO access and provided an inclusive approach to developing National Action Plans

⁹⁹ drawing on proven methodologies such as CARE Ethiopia’s Social Analysis and Action framework

¹⁰⁰ Final Evaluation Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022) and key informant interviews with the government.

¹⁰¹ Interviews with programme participants

¹⁰² Final Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022) and Annual Reports.

¹⁰³ Final Evaluation Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022) and key informant interviews with the government.

¹⁰⁴ Key informant interviews with the government and beneficiaries.

¹⁰⁵ Relevant indicators: SP_D_0.5.4; SP_D_0.1.7; UNSDCF 2.3.1

The National Action Plan has been drafted and is currently under ministerial review, not yet meeting the target of adoption (SP_D_0.1.7). However, CSOs have effectively influenced the process. Management reported that consultations engaged more than 600 participants and 90 CSO representatives. Participants with disabilities reported meaningful inclusion, citing adapted venues and agenda time, although some smaller rural women-led organizations flagged travel/security barriers.¹⁰⁶ Women’s organizations reported a shift from tokenistic consultations to inclusion of their proposals, notably on GBV risk mitigation and inclusion measures. However, the CSOs interviewed noted that tighter government oversight of CSOs, from the registration/CSO authority and regional security/administrative offices, required prior approvals, immediate fund reporting and permits for meetings/travel, affecting participation. Smaller women-led organizations, in particular, struggled to attend consultations under these compliance demands (see Finding 1 for broader discussion on indicator SP_D_0.5.4 on the level of influence of CSOs, beyond WPS).

The Country Office played a key role in supporting this process, through convening of stakeholders, training and mentoring of women leaders to engage in national dialogue, transitional justice and

mediation processes, and technical support.¹⁰⁷ For the National Action Plan, the Country Office established the National Technical Committee and strengthened its capacity; provided RBM/GRB/M&E training; and supported drafting, consultations and costing, which was highly valued by government stakeholders and civil society.¹⁰⁸

The Country Office also contributed to strengthening gender and vulnerability responsive national architecture for peace at the federal, regional and subregional levels, meeting the target of indicator UNSDCF2.3.1. The Country Office trained experts from the Ministry of Peace and supported it to develop a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for Peacebuilding in Ethiopia.¹⁰⁹

Other contributory factors included national and continental platforms. The MoWSA-led WPS National Action Plan Technical and Steering Committees provided legitimacy to the process and the platform for convening. The Country Office also supported CSOs to engage in continental platforms¹¹⁰, which enabled knowledge-sharing and network-building and strengthened visibility of the process.¹¹¹ Security challenges affected participation, forcing relocation to of some consultations.

TABLE 14

Gender statistics are institutionalized in national planning¹¹²

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION
<p>MODERATE EVIDENCE, availability of data to report against SDG gender indicators at 50 per cent, and no national plan adopted with gender statistics, but foundational systems in place – including draft national strategy, act and guidelines, citizen-generated data platforms introduced, and institutional capacity strengthened.</p>	<p>STRONG EVIDENCE of contribution through technical and financial support to the statistics service, capacity-building, co-convening of working groups.</p>

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with civil society, donor, UN Women, donor report

¹⁰⁷ Government interviews

¹⁰⁸ Interviews and survey

¹⁰⁹ Annual report and government interviews

¹¹⁰ African Union Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, African Women Leaders Network, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre

¹¹¹ Beijing+ report, donor reports and interviews with civil society

¹¹² SP_D_0.6.2, SP_0_6.1

There was moderate evidence of gender statistics being institutionalized.

In terms of national frameworks and standards, while no national plan was formally adopted with gender statistics as an explicit objective by 2024 (against a target of 1 - SP_D_0.6.2), foundational systems were established. The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics III was drafted with strong emphasis on gender statistics. A draft Statistics Act was subsequently introduced, with an emphasis on gender and social inclusion, and Gender Statistics Guidelines. The Country Office provided key technical and financial support to consultations to develop these documents. While finalization of the guidelines is pending, government interviewees noted that the guidelines have been validated internally and some institutions are already referencing it when planning surveys.

In terms of data production and use, the Gender Asset Gap Survey was launched in 2023 with Country Office support. Key findings around laws on property and inheritance rights, joint asset registration and asset ownership indicators were highlighted in the Beijing+ 2024 review.¹¹³ The Citizen-Generated Data user platforms, baseline and action plan were developed with Country Office support. Government interviewees noted they were now incorporating citizen-generated data in official statistics, with UN Women's support. The Making Every Woman and Girl Count programme's midterm evaluation identified evidence of strengthened institutional capacities

(especially within the statistics service) and better integration of gender indicators, through the Country Office's reported support in training 825 producers and users on gender-responsive data and convening user-producer dialogues.¹¹⁴ The availability of data against SDG gender indicators was 50 per cent in the 2022 Voluntary National Review, against a target of 75 per cent (indicator SP_0_6.1).¹¹⁵

In terms of institutional arrangements, the Ethiopian Statistics Service established the Social and Inclusive Statistics department responsible for gender statistics, with technical support from the Country Office. Government interviewees reported a functioning Gender Statistics Technical Working Group, co-chaired by UN Women, and performing key functions such as validating indicators for the national statistical plan.¹¹⁶

However, there has been limited documentation of use of gender data in policy, with opportunity to strengthen monitoring against this target.¹¹⁷

Key contributors to this outcome include the strong leadership of the statistical service and the functioning working group. Challenges include fragmented financing for data systems; uneven sub-national roll-out; limited transition plans, affecting institutions' ability to follow through; and unrealized plans to set up an inter-agency gender statistics coordination mechanism.¹¹⁸ Donors and the government suggested the donor platform could be used to pool technical assistance for implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics III once endorsed.

¹¹³ Gender asset gap study; Beijing+ 2024 review

¹¹⁴ Making Every Woman and Girl Count midterm evaluation, donor report

¹¹⁵ 2022 Voluntary National Review

¹¹⁶ Government interviewees, Beijing+ 2024

¹¹⁷ Making Every Woman and Girl Count midterm evaluation

¹¹⁸ Making Every Woman and Girl Count midterm evaluation, interviews with UN agencies



OUTCOME 3: ALL PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA BENEFIT FROM AN INCLUSIVE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

FINDING 3

The Country Office delivered strong results in expanding women’s access to economic opportunities and services and contributed to important advances in gender-responsive public finance systems and care-responsive measures. Systems change remains partial, however: gaps in time-use and care data, uneven uptake and institutionalization of the Gender Budget Statement toolkit, and gaps in translation of gender-responsive financial commitments into capital flows may limit the depth and potential scalability of women’s economic empowerment gains if not addressed.

Against this target outcome, the Country Office supported (a) women’s access to services, goods and resources strengthened through multisectoral systems and programmes (Table 15); and (b) government systems to allocate, set targets and track gender equality in investment and financing frameworks and instruments (Table 16).

Overall, there was outcome level evidence of systemic change related to gender-responsive budgeting and public finance (Table 16) and some localized outcome level evidence of women’s increased income (Table 15). However, the dispersed, project-based nature of many interventions, and the limited collection of data on longer-term changes in women’s income, economic security or time use limited the evidence for outcome-level gains (see finding 7).

Partners reported that women’s access to services, goods and resources had been strengthened through multisectoral systems, strategies and programmes.¹¹⁹ For example, as part of the Making Migration Safe project, 1,500 women were supported through skills training¹²⁰, resulting in 21 women securing employment and 45 women in self-employment). Thirty-six self-help groups with 260 members were established, providing savings and credit functions. 1,050 migrant women returnees were trained in employability and enterprise skills and 79 provided with start-up grants.¹²¹ 470 women were provided access to a savings and credit cooperative in the Somali region.^{122,123}

TABLE 15

Women’s access to services, goods and resources strengthened through multisectoral systems and programmes¹²⁴

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION
STRONG EVIDENCE of women completing skills training and livelihood initiatives and reporting increased income. Evidence of caregivers supported to enter the workforce through care-enabling arrangements. Childcare standards and tools rolled out in programme areas.	STRONG EVIDENCE , through delivery of programmes with Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions, CSOs and banks to support women to access finance and develop skills. Established and convened the WEE forum and supported system changes around childcare standards.

¹¹⁹ Meeting its target of strategies, programmes and multisectoral systems implemented (SP_D_0.3.2, SP_D_0.3.3, and SP_D_0.4.3)

¹²⁰ 908 completed entrepreneurship training; 592 completed work-readiness training; and 322 commenced technical training,

¹²¹ Partner reports and donor reports

¹²² as part of the Resilience and Institution Support to Empower Women (RISE) project

¹²³ Partner reports and donor reports

¹²⁴ Relevant indicators: UNSDCF 3.2.3, SP_D_0.4.3

Interviewed programme participants valued the highly relevant skills packages, such as support to set up home-based services to enable participants to juggle care responsibilities. They reported increased income, ability to expand businesses, improved psychosocial well-being, reduced stigma and cancellation of re-migration plans due to realistic livelihoods. Interviewed programme participants and banks also highlighted programmes' effectiveness at supporting voluntary savings and loan associations to increase savings and supporting the fast-tracking of participants' applications for loans. Programme participants highlighted challenges around insufficient start-up packages which made it difficult to scale beyond micro-enterprise, highlighting the importance of supporting access to formal finance for working capital, as well as employment pathways.

The Country Office contributed to these outcomes by supporting skills training, psychosocial support and access to finance through partnering with Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions,

CSOs and financial institutions, meeting the target of multisectoral systems, strategies and programmes being implemented to support women's access to services, goods and resources (SP_D_0.4.3).

Support to care-responsive measures also resulted in women's increased participation in waged labour.

The Regional Care Economy Evaluation identified that care-responsive measures have the potential to increase women's labour participation in Ethiopia. With Country Office support, childcare standards were revised, unpaid care work training materials were produced and care economy advocacy guidelines developed. However, Ethiopia has yet to undertake a time use survey, meaning there is no data yet on the proportion of time spent on unpaid care work (UNSDCF 3.2.3). Finally, civil society stakeholders noted that the Country Office's convening of the National WEE Forum helped keep gender issues high on the agenda, including by encouraging sector plans and budgets to reflect women's market-access and care constraints.

TABLE 16

The government has systems to allocate, set targets and track gender equality in investment and financing frameworks and instruments¹²⁵

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	COUNTRY OFFICE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME
<p>STRONG EVIDENCE, with strengthened systems and tools including the National Gender Information System, the Gender Budget Statement toolkit, gender audit manual and the performance levelling tool.</p> <p>Evidence of strengthened government capacity to integrate and report on gender.</p>	<p>STRONG EVIDENCE. The Country Office supported the Ministry of Finance to co-develop the Gender Budget Statement toolkit and embed GRB tagging in the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS), and provided capacity building across government. The Country Office convened the national GRB task force to coordinate roll-out.</p>

¹²⁵ Relevant indicators: SP_D_0.2.1, SP_D_0.2.2, SP_D_0.2.4

There was strong evidence that the government had strengthened systems to set, track and make public allocations to gender equality and women's empowerment, meeting the target of indicator SP_D_0.2.1 and SP_D_0.2.2, through institutionalization of the Gender Budget Statement. The Ministry of Finance, with UN Women's technical support, finalized a Gender Budget Statement toolkit¹²⁶ and piloted it in job creation and agriculture through setting allocations and reporting progress. Currently six institutions use the Gender Budget Statement to report gender allocations.¹²⁷ For example, the Ministry of Agriculture submitted a Gender Budget Statement-aligned request targeting 5.33 million women-headed households. Health entities introduced sex-disaggregated targets in programme plans.¹²⁸

The Country Office contributed to this through capacity-building, technical assistance and ongoing support. It was reported that sixty-six Ministry of Planning and Development staff reported using Country Office training to integrate gender in plans and results frameworks.¹²⁹ A joint 2022 Ministry of Finance, ILO and UN Women fiscal gender assessment informed sector targets. The Country Office supported the integration of GRB tagging in the Integrated Financial Management Information System to improve allocation tracking, and supported development and roll-out¹³⁰ of the National Gender Information System¹³⁰. With Country Office support, MoWSA piloted the tool in Afar, Tigray and Sidama and plans to

scale in 12 regions. To support future prioritization, the Country Office supported a national GRB assessment to identify gaps and solutions across sectors.¹³¹

The Country Office convened the national GRB task force, to support roll-out at the sub-national level.¹³² The Country Office also funded a GRB radio programme which reportedly reached 2 million listeners¹³³ and established woreda-level GRB committees to raise awareness and follow up on agreed gender allocations.¹³⁴

Systems to monitor allocations were also strengthened. The Country Office supported the Auditor General's development of a Gender Audit Manual, reported that it trained 24 auditors, and piloted audits at the Ministries of Health and Agriculture which identified costed gaps¹³⁵ and informed an action plan was developed that focused on closing the gender gaps in the health sector. The Country Office also supported targeted training for parliamentary standing-committee structures,¹³⁶ resulting in interviewed government stakeholders reporting increased parliamentary oversight and questioning on gender issues.¹³⁷ The Country Office also supported the development and roll-out of MoWSA's performance levelling tool, which scores ministries and regions on gender-responsiveness across planning, budgeting, implementation and tracking, used to flag gaps and incentivize ministries and regions to develop action plans.¹³⁸

¹²⁶ Annual reports, UN Women 2025, Assessment of the Gender-Responsive Planning and Gender-Responsive Budgeting Performance of Selected Sectors in Ethiopia and Identifying Gender Priorities at Federal and Regional Level. This involves setting allocations and reporting progress to review sector submissions against the Budget Call Circular

¹²⁷ Annual reports, government interview

¹²⁸ Annual reports, government interview

¹²⁹ Pre and post-training assessments

¹³⁰ This system identified key data required for SDG/CEDAW reporting

¹³¹ Annual reports, government interview

¹³² National Planning Fact Sheet 2025, Voluntary National Review 2025, government interview

¹³³ implemented by the Union of Ethiopian Women and Children Associations, focusing on guiding citizens on when and how to engage in the budget process

¹³⁴ Annual reports, CSO interview, delivered by the Union of Ethiopian Women and Children Associations

¹³⁵ Annual reports, government interview

¹³⁶ Annual reports, government interview

¹³⁷ Annual reports, government interview

¹³⁸ Annual reports, government interview

Country Office efforts on GRB also supported other areas of work, including the Office's advocacy on the national policy on the care economy and sector targets within the Ministry of Agriculture.

However, the Country Office did not meet its target on establishing innovative financing instruments on gender equality (SP_D_0.2.4), although it mapped key actors and started dialogues with partners such as the European Union.

Momentum for GRB has grown with senior leadership, but some barriers to institutionalization remain. Key enablers were government stakeholders' leadership and political ownership, which accelerated uptake;¹³⁹ strong recognition of gender in budget speeches, Public Financial Management guidance and the passage of a 2024 GRB legal mandate.¹⁴⁰

Some challenges remained around uptake.

While the Country Office reported positive feedback, some interviewed stakeholders viewed the GRB toolkit as complex and poorly aligned with the public financial management cycle, limiting usability¹⁴¹; parliamentary training notes also highlighted the need for stronger legal anchoring.¹⁴² Continuity is affected by government reform cycles, workload and staff turnover.¹⁴³ Government stakeholders emphasized the need to scale system-wide support beyond one-off training¹⁴⁴ and institutionalize the Gender Budget Statement and gender audits, and to convert the National Financial Inclusion Strategy-linked women dedicated financing windows into actual capital flows.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Government interviews and the Final Evaluation Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Ethiopia Programme

¹⁴⁰ Annual reports, government interview, with regulations pending

¹⁴¹ the current process meant the gender review happens too late to be able to correct non-gender responsive plans, affecting usability

¹⁴² Government interviews

¹⁴³ [Final Evaluation Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Ethiopia Programme](#)

¹⁴⁴ Government interview

¹⁴⁵ [Final Evaluation Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Ethiopia Programme](#)



OUTCOME 4: ALL PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA LIVE IN A SOCIETY RESILIENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS AND ADAPTED TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

FINDING 4

The Country Office contributed to improving the resilience and recovery of crisis- and climate-affected women through integrated protection–livelihoods support and gender-transformative reforms in agriculture and land policy. Nonetheless, entrenched gender inequalities in land and markets, short funding cycles and limited sub-national implementation of new policies mean that many of these promising gains remain fragile and will require sustained, system-level follow-through to translate into durable resilience outcomes.

Against this target outcome, the Country Office supported (a) integration of responses to link protection, health, justice and livelihoods to produce tangible recovery and economic participation for crisis-affected women (Table 17); and (b) institutionalization of gender-transformative approaches in climate action, agriculture and disaster risk management (Table 18).

Outcome-level evidence was clearest where integrated packages linked protection, health, justice, livelihoods and psychosocial support for crisis-affected women and girls and informed government or UN practice, though scale remained small (Table 17), and where gender-transformative approaches began to be institutionalized in climate, agriculture and disaster risk management policies and programmes (Table 18). At the same time, many contributions remain at the level of pilots, tools, coordination fora and institutional capacities, and the Strategic Note results framework did not systematically capture medium-term changes in resilience or women’s influence over climate and humanitarian decision-making (see finding 11).

The Country Office provided integrated responses to support women to move from crisis to income and stability, achieving the target of implementation of multisectoral systems, strategies and programmes (SP_D_0.4.3). It financed and coordinated a package of case management, mental health and psychosocial support, legal aid and start-up capital via Enat Bank, and issued referral standard operating procedures so that protection, health and livelihoods services worked together. The Country Office also strengthened coordination mechanisms. A draft standard operating procedure for livelihood support to GBV survivors was developed with the GBV Areas of Responsibility under the Tigray GiHA Technical Working Group to formalize referral steps to support economic reintegration. It also produced policy briefs on unpaid care and agriculture and convened the National Women’s Economic Forum to strengthen coordination.¹⁴⁶

TABLE 17

Integrated responses link protection, health, justice and livelihoods to produce tangible recovery and economic participation for crisis-affected women¹⁴⁷

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION
STRONG EVIDENCE , pilots of integrated responses were scaled and evidence of economic participation for crisis-affected women, although scale remains small.	STRONG EVIDENCE , Country Office financing, convening and standard-setting (referral standard operating procedures, knowledge tools) moved efforts from pilots to predictable pathways.

¹⁴⁶ Annual reports, interviews civil society partners

¹⁴⁷ Relevant indicators: SP_D_0.4.3

Strengthened referral systems were reported to have improved case management, increasing referrals between protection services and livelihood support.¹⁴⁸ For example, in Tigray, case managers worked with municipalities to refer ex-combatant/GBV survivors from psychosocial care into business skills coaching and start-up capital.¹⁴⁹

Country Office programming was also reported to have contributed to changing social norms through capacity-building and empowering women leaders.

CSOs noted that male community leaders had initially argued they should decide who receives programme benefits, but women leaders supported by the Country Office successfully advocated for inclusion in village selection sub-committees. Community dialogues seen as an effective mechanism to change perceptions. Interviewed survivors noted that cash and support packages reduced negative coping mechanisms and dependence on perpetrators or clan-based negotiations.

There was evidence of women restarting small businesses and increasing incomes, through Country Office’s integrated support.

- In Tigray, BoWSA-led packages combining trauma support, business planning and start-up capital via Enat Bank reportedly supported 4,489 ex-combatants and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence to restart microenterprises.
- A civil society partner reported that it enabled over 100 survivors in Amhara to become economically independent through entrepreneurship training and assistance.
- CSO partners reported that they had documented 170 women re-establishing income streams through shelter and livelihoods support.

Contextual factors affected women’s ability to benefit from such programming. Inflation and conflicts disrupted programme activities. Gender inequalities, e.g. disparities in women’s land ownership, affected women’s ability to benefit. Civil society partners also noted that stronger bridging between WEE and social protection programming is needed, with other UN agencies.

TABLE 18

Institutionalization of gender-transformative approaches in climate action, agriculture and disaster risk management

TARGET OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	EVIDENCE OF UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION
Gender-transformative approaches institutionalized in climate action, agriculture and disaster risk management (ETH_D_1.4)	STRONG EVIDENCE , with the Ministry of Agriculture adopting policies with strong gender mainstreaming and gender-transformative approaches implemented in agricultural programming.	STRONG EVIDENCE , through a secondee at the Ministry of Agriculture to support policy development and delivery of Climate-Smart Agriculture and Agri-business programme.

¹⁴⁸ Donor report, interviews with civil society

¹⁴⁹ Interviews with programme participants and CSOs

There was strong evidence of gender-transformative approaches institutionalized in agriculture

through the Country Office's support to the Ministry of Agriculture. A secondee provided key inputs to strengthen gender provisions, including GRB capacity-building support,¹⁵⁰ including:

- 2024 Agricultural & Rural Development Policy mandates gender mainstreaming across planning, budgeting and implementation, targeting 5.33 million women-headed households; requiring 30 per cent women in cooperative leadership; and aiming for 50 per cent parity in extension services. In 2024, these sex-disaggregated targets were included for the first time in the Ministry of Agriculture's two-year budget request.
- The 2024 Rural Land Administration Proclamation mandates joint land titling for all married couples and reserves 20 per cent of new rural land for women-headed households, with explicit protections against discrimination.

To roll out these policies, with Country Office support, the Ministry developed a Gender in Agriculture training-of-trainers package, gender advisory groups and a five-year systemic intervention plan for the Women & Social Affairs Directorate, and the **Legal Office now conducts annual reporting of gender-responsive revisions.**¹⁵¹

There was strong evidence of gender-transformative programming through the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Agribusiness programme, meeting

the target of gender-transformative approaches adopted (ETH_D_1.4). Under this programme, management reported that 833 women in 38 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and 1,191 women received support from 33 agribusiness institutions; 524 women accessed Ethiopian Birr 1.75 million in loans; and 264 women received crop insurance.¹⁵² Interviewed programme participants valued VSLAs and Credit Associations for smoothing consumption, and reported diversified incomes, higher savings and improved climate resilience.

There was also some evidence of changes in norms.

Twenty targeted households implemented joint planned farming, budgeting and household tasks, and led community dialogues to share their experience. Interviewees noted that this helped challenge local norms, especially around who controls income, land and agricultural inputs. Unexpectedly, interviewed CSOs noted that experience as part of the programme in leading cooperatives resulted in women progressing into elected roles.

Stakeholders identified both enablers and risks.

The technical calibre of secondees was seen as a key driver of progress, while short funding cycles undermined cooperative sustainability. To ensure commitments translate into real gains for women, CSOs urged the Country Office to support the government in implementing and monitoring the 2024 policy and proclamation, particularly through sub-national extension services.

¹⁵⁰ Interviews with the Ministry of Agriculture, Country Office secondee and programme participants

¹⁵¹ Review of policies and proclamation, interview with the Ministry of Agriculture

¹⁵² Partner and donor reports

FINDING 5

Overall, there was moderate evidence for sustainability. The highest potential for sustainability occurred where results were embedded in government systems and community structures, and defined exit pathways were in place to support local ownership. Conversely, reliance on short-term/projectized funding, episodic capacity support and unclear transition arrangements reduced prospects for continuity and institutional uptake.

Sustainability of results has a mix of promising evidence but also some critical barriers. Respondents to the Country Office and civil society surveys rated the Country Office's support to the sustainability of programme outcomes at 3.5 and 3.9 of 5 respectively (n=17 and 10).

Several interventions have been institutionalized within government systems and community structures. For example, MoWSA has adopted the Presidential Leadership Programme, the Inclusive Leveling Tool and the National Gender Information System as part of its core activities, while the Amhara BoWSA has institutionalized the Women's Leadership Programme. Mechanisms to tag and track gender allocations were integrated into the Public Financial Management Framework and IFMIS, in over 120 federal institutions and supported by legislation, the national budget manual and budget plan documents. EVAWG has been integrated into the curricula of police universities, schools and religious institutions, alongside the development of training manuals and guidelines and adoption of standard operating procedures.

Many community-level organizations and associations initiated as a result of the Country Office support have continued functioning. At the community level, many community groups, faith-based organizations and women's rights associations, savings groups and advocacy initiatives were reported by partners and programme participants to remain active after project end. Partnerships with ministries, universities and regional academies provide further institutional anchoring.

Some but not all initiatives have clear exit strategies.

For example, some civil society partners noted that while previous interventions were short-term (such as cash transfers), promising change was noted with programmes setting up cooperatives that continue to support income generation after a project ends. However, many initiatives lack clear exit strategies. In the shelter programme, implementing partners emphasized the limited sustained post-shelter support, socioeconomic reintegration and deeper community prevention to reduce recidivism and dependency.

At the same time, several barriers limit sustainability.

Projects remain short-term, affecting institutionalization. Funding is heavily dependent on donors, with limited government budget allocations for gender equality initiatives. Capacity gaps within government partners further constrain sustainability, as some institutions struggle with compliance requirements or lack the resources to manage programmes independently. For example, regional roll-out of tools such as the National Gender Information System has stalled due to staffing and financial constraints. Some interviewed CSOs and secondees have also questioned the effectiveness of the current approach of stand-alone gender training, noting some people have attended 20–30 courses, suggesting that other avenues be explored such as incorporating training into the mandatory civil service curriculum. Political changes also create uncertainty around leadership-focused initiatives, while insecurity, displacement and inflation weaken progress at the local level. Civil society and government highlighted the need to scale engagement with local structures to ensure policies are effectively implemented, that gender is mainstreamed across programmes and that impacts are tracked.

Are interventions designed to apply gender, human rights and disability inclusion approaches?

FINDING 6

Country Office interventions were gender-responsive, incorporating gender and human-rights approaches and pairing survivor-centred services with institutional reforms. Many interventions demonstrated the potential to be gender-transformative. Disability inclusion remained partial, constrained by limited data, budget lines and specific expertise.

The Country Office portfolio applied a human rights-based approach, operationalizing equality/non-discrimination, participation and accountability through linked normative, coordination and service pathways.

Country Office sought to strengthen accountability by supporting duty bearers in parliament, Ministry of Finance, MoWSA, regional bureaus and justice/health actors to meet obligations through gender-responsive laws and strategies, survivor-centred standard operating procedures and standards, parliamentary gender audits, GRB tools and improved gender data.

The portfolio operationalized leave no one behind principles through targeted support to survivors, returnees and trafficked women, addressing the principles of equality, non-discrimination and participation. Country Office and civil society survey respondents rated the Country Office's identification and engagement of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations in line with the principle of leave no one behind at 3.5 and 5 of 5 respectively (n=17 and 10). The Country Office supported women's rights and women-led organizations engagement in national processes¹⁵³, community dialogues and leadership programmes. Accountability and protection were reinforced through survivor-centred case management and referral protocols. At policy level, the Country

Office advocated withdrawal of a Ministry of Education directive that would have expelled adolescent mothers from schools. Humanitarian programming supported gender integration in emergency frameworks and IDP contexts.¹⁵⁴ Programmes were adapted to support reach, e.g. by providing childcare arrangements for trainees during the Presidential Leadership Programme. Nonetheless, gaps persisted: in many cases, sex/age/disability disaggregated data were not available and the lack of specific targets and budgets limited consistent, intentional inclusion.¹⁵⁵

Specifically, disability inclusion was addressed but unevenly implemented. Some shelters reported providing disability-friendly services, including accessible facilities and staff trained in sign language. Country Office supported standard operating procedures emphasizing inclusion of people with disabilities. The Safe City project incorporated a 2 per cent participation target for people with disabilities; and partnerships with deaf associations in Hawassa ensured sign language interpretation. In Addis Ababa, skills and livelihoods interventions introduced adaptations for women with disabilities – such as sign language support, tailored training modules and accessible training sites.¹⁵⁶ Interviewed programme participants with disabilities noted that these adjustments enabled their participation in courses, resulting

¹⁵³ For example, GBV legislation and land-rights dialogues, WPS/National Action Plan work

¹⁵⁴ Final Evaluation Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022), interviews with members of the Ethiopian Network of Women's Shelters and the survey.

¹⁵⁵ Annual reports, and government and CSO interviews, also mirroring gaps identified in the UNFPA Ethiopia country programme evaluation - [UNFPA Ethiopia. \(2024\). Country programme evaluation of UNFPA Ethiopia: 9th country programme 2020–2025 – Evaluation report. United Nations Population Fund.](#)

¹⁵⁶ Final Evaluation Report: Increased participation and effective representation of women in leadership in Ethiopia (2019-2022), and interviews with programme participants

in income-earning activities. The National Action Plans process engaged organizations representing people with disabilities and women with disabilities.¹⁵⁷ Government and civil society interviewees noted disability results were strongest where there were concrete targets, access measures, and strong partner initiative.

Despite these measures, participation of women with disabilities remained limited, with government and CSO interviewees describing inclusion as incidental rather than intentional. Training cohorts occasionally included only one–two women with disabilities. CSOs reported no dedicated programmes or budget lines to address specific needs of women with disabilities. Gaps in disability-disaggregated data and limited integration of conflict sensitivity constrained the engagement of people with disabilities in projects.¹⁵⁸ The lack of disability expertise in the Country Office also affected government partnerships. For example, the Ethiopia Statistics Service requested joint gender and disability guidance on statistics, but UN Women cited limited disability expertise.¹⁵⁹

Based on the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (see figure 2), Country Office interventions range from gender-responsive to the potential to be gender-transformative, see Annex 2. Some initiatives were assessed as having the potential to be gender transformative, going beyond meeting immediate needs to addressing structural barriers. For example:

- the Access to Essential Services project combined support for survivors of violence with legal reforms, institutional strengthening and shifts in social norms;
- programmes on women’s political participation addressed systemic barriers through trauma-informed leadership training and institutionalized leadership pathways;
- the Making Migrants Safe project responded to the needs of women migrants, strengthening systems and addressing perceptions of women’s economic roles; and
- coordination efforts such as the Gender Equality Roadmap Ethiopia sought to strengthen national systems’ accountability on gender.

Other interventions were assessed as gender-responsive, strengthening access and systems without explicitly tackling underlying norms or structural inequalities. The Leadership in GBV project delivered survivor-centred, multisectoral services, supported women-led organizations to engage in sub-national clusters, and sensitized communities. The Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming and PSEA in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle initiative strengthened systems and capacities to improve access to survivor-centred services; however, it did not explicitly address broader power relations or social norms.

¹⁵⁷ Donor interview

¹⁵⁸ Key informant interviews with civil society and beneficiaries.

¹⁵⁹ Government interviews, also the ministry-led inclusive levelling tool included disability-related indicators but lacked disaggregation by disability type.

What were the enablers and barriers to achieving target outcomes?

FINDING 7

Outcomes advanced where trusted partnerships (notably with MoWSA), flexible Strategic Note funding and practical guidance paired with follow-through met committed leadership and capable partners. Progress slowed where short project horizons, uneven partner capacity and monitoring/data gaps limited course correction.

The following internal and external factors affected the achievement of outcomes across all thematic areas. Thematic-specific enablers and barriers are discussed under Findings 1-4. The sufficiency of internal capacity and systems is discussed under Finding 11 (Efficiency).

Internal factors

- **Strategic partnerships with government, donors and civil society:** Donors, government and CSOs highlighted the Country Office's strong relationship with MoWSA as enabling policy influence and coordination. For example, MoWSA was actively engaged in the Gender Working Group, welcoming women's rights organizations into government forums, supporting faster clearance of gender tools and easier reactivation of coordination platforms. Civil society partners valued UN Women's role in targeting grassroots and women-led organizations, providing institutional capacity-building and fostering peer learning through joint training, exchange visits and convenings.
 - **Flexible Strategic Note funding:** Secured funding supported the Country Office to focus on areas traditionally difficult to fundraise for, including coordination, normative work and GRB (see Finding 13).
 - **Turnover in leadership:** Turnover within the country Representative position, and interim postings, affected visibility and the Country Office's ability to strategically engage UN agencies and development partners at a senior level.
 - **Short-term funding:** Partner agreements were largely short-term, affecting the follow-through and institutionalization of outputs (see Finding 5 on sustainability). Civil society organizations noted that longer-term technical and convening support could also effectively build on the momentum from coalitions built around the 16-days campaign against Gender Based Violence and institutionalization the Women's Manifesto.
- **Internal factors – programming approaches**
 - **Guidance and standard operating procedures were most effective when co-designed and paired with follow-through, rather than issued as stand-alone documents:** Partners reported using localized family law materials, humanitarian protection/psychosocial guidance, GBV service-mapping and case-management standard operating procedures where they were linked to training, mentoring and advocacy roll-outs. Government stakeholders pointed out that stand-alone tools such as GRB toolkits and the National Gender Information System faced some challenges with institutionalization. Some tools developed by the Country Office, such as the GRB toolkit, were perceived as complex and not fully aligned with national workflows. A key lesson is the importance of co-design and budgeting for iterative coaching rather than one-off dissemination.
 - **Monitoring and routine data gaps limited course-correction and evidence of intermediate change:** Government partners reported that it was difficult to capture the effectiveness of joint efforts, even when outputs (trainings, tools, meetings) were delivered, given uneven monitoring capacity and gaps in administrative data. They suggested the need to agree intermediate indicators to track progress before scaling interventions, e.g. around

GRB tagging quality; year-on-year change in allocations; and execution rates on gender budgeting across sector ministries.

- **Partner capacity was uneven:** Government and CSO partners highlighted constraints in terms of funding, staffing turnover and capacity gaps, e.g. in financial reporting and monitoring. This was particularly pronounced among small, grass-roots organizations. Government counterparts described wide variation in capacity and resources across bureaus and regions.
- **Political will and senior engagement were decisive for uptake:** Where leaders prioritized the initiative and followed through, results were achieved. For example, with Country Office support, government stakeholders noted that party leadership committed to promoting shortlisted women and 69 of 172 trainees were promoted in 2024. Secondees in entities committed to mainstreaming gender were effective (e.g. the statistical agency); however, where there were vacancies (e.g. the planning commission had a long-vacant Gender Directorate), secondees' influence was more limited.¹⁶⁰
- **Currency devaluation affected purchasing power and alignment between budgets and targets:** While currency devaluation could create a theoretical advantage for US\$-denominated funding, in reality it was offset by rapid inflation, import-linked costs, Ethiopian Birr-denominated

partner budgets and required pay/operational adjustments, affecting planning and purchasing power.

- **Knowledge products supported effectiveness when combined with training or advocacy:** BoWSAs and CSOs reported that localized family law materials improved the quality of their legal literacy and case-handling training. CSOs reported that GBV service/gap mappings undertaken in Amhara and Afar in 2024 enabled them to adjust outreach coverage, more effectively target districts and develop stronger proposals.

External factors

- **Civic space and regulatory constraints affected outcome achievement:** CSO leaders described a tightening operating environment (e.g. draft CSO law restricting election-related work); sensitivities around rights-based advocacy; different levels of openness among local officials; and media misrepresentation of GBV and political participation, highlighting the importance of sustained, strategic advocacy and media investment.

Overall, the theory of change assumptions on internal capacity and systems, partner capacity, economic stability and security held only partially, affecting the delivery of outcomes where these were not fully in place. Additional factors affecting outcomes included the strategic use of knowledge products, political commitment, funding duration and civic space.

¹⁶⁰ MEWGC midterm evaluation

Are the Country Office's interventions coherent with the work of the UN system and other key stakeholders, and strategically relevant in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Ethiopia? How relevant were the Country Office's interventions and efforts to government priorities and national strategies?

FINDING 8

Country Office interventions were well aligned with Ethiopia's gender equality priorities and national frameworks, with government stakeholders noting UN Women's complementary role in turning policy commitments into action through targeted technical support, capacity-building and coordination.

The Country Office's interventions during the Strategic Note period were substantively aligned with Ethiopia's gender equality priorities and national development frameworks, including the Ten-Year Development Plan (2021–2030) particularly under the gender and social inclusion pillar; Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan II (2016–2020); and ongoing justice and legal reform processes. The Country Office also supported revisions of the National Gender Policy. Alignment was evident in supporting Ethiopia to implement obligations under CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol and the SDGs. For example, the Country Office's work on family law reform in the Afar and Somali regions is a direct response to CEDAW's concluding observations urging Ethiopia to harmonize regional laws with federal and international standards. At thematic levels:

- **EVAW:** Country Office efforts directly supported government-led reforms and platforms, such as supporting the Memorandum of Understanding and strategic framework for the National Coordination Body, co-chaired by the Ministry of Justice and MoWSA, working on multisectoral GBV response. The Country Office also supported development of the National five years strategy on Prevention and Response to Violence against Women and Children, and revision of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Code. Government stakeholders noted these were strategic interventions that match current government reform priorities.
- **Women in Leadership and Governance:** support was aligned with the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia's reforms around voter education, inclusion of women and enabling CSO observation

in the last electoral cycle (2020–2021); and with the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP II) – Ministry of Justice-led, Proclamation on Civil Society Organizations and Electoral Law reforms and the national goal of achieving 30–50 per cent women's representation in leadership positions. The Country Office's work also aligned with national efforts to prevent and respond to Violence Against Women in Elections and Politics, a priority identified by the National Election Board of Ethiopia through a national study (2023).

- **Gender-responsive budgeting:** Efforts were aligned to Proclamation No. 970/2016 which mandates gender perspectives into budget preparation.
- **Coordination:** In addition to the national frameworks and international commitments set out above, coordination efforts on data were aligned with national data mandates.
- **WEE:** Interventions with the Ministry of Agriculture embedded gender-responsive tools, data systems and institutional mechanisms, and also supported gender integration in the Gender Equality Strategy in Agriculture and Agriculture and Rural Development Policy, and to meet CAADP Malabo Declaration commitments¹⁶¹. The Country Office also supported gender integration in the forthcoming national WEE strategy.

¹⁶¹ Africa-wide agricultural growth and food security targets

- **WPS and Humanitarian Action:** The Country Office supported development of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, and programming engaged the BoWSA at sub-national level to ensure coherence with government structures.

Survey data showed civil society rated the Country Office’s alignment to government priorities at 4.4/5 (n=10); and Country Office personnel rated alignment at 3.8/5 (n=17). Both rated the Country Office’s focus on the most pressing needs of women and girls in the country at 4.4/5.

Government stakeholders across sectors described UN Women’s role as complementary to national efforts, helping to operationalize policy commitments which ministries lacked the resources, technical capacity or reach to implement. Ministries such as MoWSA, the National Election Board of Ethiopia and the Ministry of Agriculture highlighted critical

contributions, across gender audits, leadership and political participation training, GRB tagging and tracking, and secondments, which strengthened institutional capacity to deliver on national gender equality targets. Support for gender data systems and reporting, such as the National Gender Information System and gender-disaggregated indicators, was credited with enabling Ethiopia to meet obligations under CEDAW, the SDGs and national gender policy monitoring. Regional bureaus in underserved or conflict-affected areas (e.g. Afar, Somali, northern Amhara) noted that UN Women’s engagement was particularly relevant in contexts where few other partners remained, while also emphasizing the need for more systematic and sustained presence at sub-national level.

What synergies are there between UN Women’s portfolio and the work of the UN (UNCT, Humanitarian Country Team), government and civil society?

FINDING 9

The Country Office portfolio showed programming synergies with UN entities, government and civil society, linking shared standards/tools to joint delivery. However, these are not yet implemented at scale, underscoring the case for greater co-design, joint programming and polled resourcing.

Programming synergies with UN entities, government and civil society were evident across all thematic areas. These collaborations linked shared standards/tools (e.g. shelter standard operating procedures, the levelling tool, National Gender Information System, GRB tagging) to operational pathways (cluster plans, service-mapping, PSEA referrals) and to civic/political platforms (the Women’s Manifesto, party engagement), demonstrating clear complementarities.

Synergies with the UN system (UNCT/Humanitarian Country Team)

UN counterparts described practical co-delivery and shared products, some examples include:

- With UNFPA, UN Women co-developed national standard operating procedures for shelters and case-management, facilitating interoperable survivor referral pathways across government and civil society, and integrating legal support under the coordination of regional BoWSAs. UNFPA

and UN Women are jointly delivering a new EU/AECID-funded programme to strengthen gender directorate capacity.

- With UNICEF and the World Health Organization, UN Women co-produced PSEA-GIHA training manuals, joint training and messaging, and coordinated survivor referrals.
- UN Women funded Women in Leadership and Governance support, complementing UNDP’s support to the 6th General Elections.
- With IOM, a joint action plan facilitated collaboration on community engagement with women returnees.

There was also some coordination with other UN agencies supporting the same government institutions. For example, UNICEF mentioned good collaboration around support to MoWSA. However, generally UN agencies noted more needed to be done to ensure efforts are complementary and avoid duplication.

Despite these gains, collaboration remained siloed and small-scale¹⁶². Partners signalled an interest in earlier co-design and pooled resourcing under the new UNSDCF stand-alone gender outcome.¹⁶³ Partner UN agencies noted that beyond technical engagement, strong representative-level engagement is needed to shape joint programmes and agree roles.

Synergies with government

Government counterparts reflected that the Country Office's value add was strongest where its technical products were embedded in government systems, and supported at the federal and sub-national level. Examples include:

- Support to developing GRB tools and curricula, aligned with the Ministry of Finance and MoWSA efforts and IFMIS integration, supporting a coherent GRB approach applied across federal and regional budgeting.
- Support to the development of the levelling tool (alongside UNICEF and CARE) and National Gender Information System, stewarded by MoWSA, providing a shared benchmarking and data system for gender equality.

Synergies with civil society

Civil society partners reported that UN Women's technical inputs, paired with women's rights organizations/CSO reach, co-produced shared platforms and delivery packages. They valued these coalitions but called for pooled/joint programming to move beyond one-off initiatives. Examples include:

- With the Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations, co-delivery of the Women's Manifesto provided a common agenda taken up by parties and candidate platforms, bridging CSO advocacy and formal political processes.
- Under the Safe Cities programme, a city-level Memorandum of Understanding among 18 institutions (city administration and sector offices) engaged school clubs and community police, to influence development of local by-laws to improve safety in public spaces.
- The Country Office supported women's rights organizations platforms to draw on community-level needs to develop community messaging and training.

¹⁶² ≈0.7 per cent joint programming in 2023; none in 2024. Annual reports, drawing on UNCT reporting. Also [United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Ethiopia. \(2024, August\). United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(UNSDCF\) evaluation: Ethiopia – Final evaluation report.](#)

¹⁶³ Recent UNFPA and UNDP country programme evaluations also urge stronger UNCT/HCT collaboration and portfolio-level coordination with other agencies and development partner - [UNFPA Ethiopia. \(2024\). Country programme evaluation of UNFPA Ethiopia: 9th country programme 2020–2025 – Evaluation report. United Nations Population Fund.](#) and [UNDP Independent Evaluation Office. \(2025\). Independent country programme evaluation – Ethiopia \(ICPE/ADR\). United Nations Development Programme.](#)

FINDING 10

The Country Office's comparative advantage is in leveraging its triple mandate to shape policy, coordinate actors and broker gender evidence that links grassroots to national decisions. It was most effective in delivering partnership-led programming to catalyze institutional adoption and scale. Specialist service delivery and fragmented, small-scale projects do not leverage this advantage.

The Country Office's comparative advantage lies in three areas.

First, its triple mandate, positioning and convening power enabled it to effectively track progress against international commitments (CEDAW/Beijing, UNSCRs) and translate this into national policy and practice, such as the draft gender policy and National Action Plans (see Findings 1 and 2). The Country Office's positioning enables it to support coordination between government, UN agencies, development partners and civil society around multisectoral coordination platforms, across development and humanitarian spaces (see Finding 1). UN agencies also referenced UN Women's role in mainstreaming gender in UN and humanitarian coordination systems (such as results groups, GIHA, PSEA, etc.).

Second, the Country Office leveraged its strong relationships with government and civil society to bridge macro and micro processes. As a longstanding partner to MoWSA and regional bureaus, combined with its relationships and support to women's rights organizations, the Country Office is able to bring in grassroots perspectives and evidence to inform national processes and legislation.

Third, the Country Office leveraged its exclusive gender-equality mandate and technical depth to provide evidence, analysis and hands-on support to mainstream gender across organizations and sectors. Government, civil society, donors and UN agencies valued the Country Office's gender analysis and technical expertise, delivered through capacity-building, advice and evidence-sharing to strengthen their own approaches to gender. The Country Office's support to institutional capacity strengthening within MoWSA and BoWSAs and the women's movement

was highly valued by all stakeholders. In addition, Stakeholders highlighted gaps in gender data and valued the Country Office's gender analysis.

The Country Office portfolio was aligned with government priorities (see Finding 8) and judged highly relevant by programme participants (see Findings 1–4), who reported that interventions addressed priority needs. UN Women's broad mandate and cross-sectoral focus on gender represented a key opportunity but also a challenge for prioritization. Needs far exceeded available resources, especially amid unmet resource mobilization targets. The portfolio is spread across multiple themes, geographies and partnerships. Hence, clarifying where the Country Office's comparative advantage is strongest relative to other actors remains essential to guide prioritization and partnership choices.

Overall, the Country Office's comparative advantage was not in specialist operational delivery. Donors and UN agencies highlighted the need for clearer division of labour across UN agencies, particularly with UNFPA around GBV shelters/survivor services¹⁶⁴ and with FAO/WFP on sectoral livelihoods/agriculture, and for the Country Office to articulate its value add in these areas and how it ensure integrated, rather than parallel UN programming. Donors questioned UN Women's comparative advantage in small-scale delivery overlapping with civil society, noting that acting mainly as a funding conduit to CSOs without clear added value increased transaction costs and limited visibility and institutional uptake.

The Country Office portfolio has been most effective where interventions had a clear route to institutionalization and where it has worked across its coordination, normative and operational mandate.

¹⁶⁴ This is consistent with the UNFPA Ethiopia country programme evaluation, which also found that, despite good collaboration (for example co-chairing the PSEA network and joint advocacy on harmful practices), roles between UN agencies on GBV services and shelters remain insufficiently delineated and called for clearer joint approaches with government and development partners

Government, civil society and donors emphasized UN Women's comparative advantage lies in policy influence, system coordination and gender evidence/accountability, with implementation most effective where selectively prioritized to reinforce these areas, for example through linkages with government plans/budgets or UN joint results, or where it is piloting approaches and brokering scale with government and UN counterparts.

Policy and coordination were the most valued aspects of UN Women's offer. Stakeholders highlighted that convening stakeholders across different sectors and supporting policy reforms offered the greatest potential for transformative change. The majority of stakeholders interviewed highlighted that UN Women's new Strategic Note needs to emphasize policy work, focusing on a small number of critical issues, and funding CSOs to advocate. Promising areas include the informal sector and minimum wage, land and inheritance, CSO law revision, GBV legislation, family law and the criminal code. There is also scope to better track advocacy outcomes beyond adoption, such as implementation status and budget allocations and enforcement, e.g. on implementation of the women's manifesto. There is also opportunity to strengthen the economic case for gender investment.¹⁶⁵

Operational engagement added value when it leveraged the Country Office's comparative advantage at system level – working with government and UN partners rather than running parallel, gender-only projects.¹⁶⁶ The Country Office has been most effective where there is strong political will, financial commitment and enforcement mechanisms. Effective cases included supporting sub-national implementation of national policies; generating frontline evidence to inform policy and budget decisions; and enabling the participation of women's rights organizations in coordination forums through institutional capacity-strengthening and participation financing.¹⁶⁷ The strongest results came from supporting institutionalization, embedding models in government systems, and supporting adoption at sub-national levels and enforcement, rather than one-off tool development or training only. For example, the Safe Cities model showed a credible route to sustainability via support to the design and implementation of municipal by-laws, protocols and budgeted plans.¹⁶⁸

Stakeholders identified several areas where UN Women could deepen its strategic positioning and partnerships. Key priorities highlighted by civil society, donors, government and UN agencies for the Country Office to address in the new Strategic Note, included integrating WEE across all programming, and addressing conflict-related sexual violence and community-level norms and prevention as the priorities for the Country Office to address. The 2025–2030 UNSDCF presents an opportunity to consolidate UN Women's role within joint programming and results groups, particularly in areas such as peacebuilding, inclusive governance, electoral support, GBV response and harmful norms, where it is a named partner in UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF country programme documents. The Results Groups, especially Outcome 5 focused on gender, offer promising platforms to formalize shared planning, resource mobilization and accountability. There are also opportunities to leverage government partnerships. Donors and UN agencies suggested exploring opportunities to expand existing partnerships with ministries beyond MoWSA, focusing on ministries committed to and with resources to reach women and girls, including the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Finance, which have expressed interest in engaging the UN on GRB and reviving the coalition on women and children's issues. There is also opportunity to further scale engagement with sub-national institutions to support implementation.

The Country Office's structure of six thematic teams and largely siloed ways of working constrained cross-thematic integration, especially critical for WEE and triple-nexus work. The personnel structure needs to be adapted to align with the focus areas of the new Strategic Note. Donors and UN agencies stated they would value additional gender analysis capacity in the team, and indicated a willingness to resource such analysis. Stakeholders viewed sub-national presence as most valuable when coordination focused, targeting areas where the Country Office seeks to address identified gaps in humanitarian coordination/localization and in scaling systems with government/UN partners, rather than in delivering dispersed, small projects.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ For example, calculations of the net costs and returns on different gender investments

¹⁶⁶ Key informant interviews with donors and UN agencies

¹⁶⁷ Annual reports, Key informant interviews with government, civil society and UN agencies, and Country Programme Documents

¹⁶⁸ Programme reports

¹⁶⁹ Key informant interview with UN agencies, civil society and donors.

How efficient are the Country Office's organizational structures and management processes?

To what extent do the Country Office's organizational structures and management processes support the efficient use of resources to achieve results?

FINDING 11

Despite having core corporate systems in place for resource and results management, the Country Office's efficiency has been constrained by prolonged vacancies, protracted procurement processes, underutilization of risk management and scenario planning, limited cross-thematic planning and fragmented partnership and budgeting practices.

Internal systems and personnel management

Corporate systems such as GST, DAMs, PGAMs and Quantum provided¹⁷⁰ a foundation for stronger accountability and tracking of procurement, HR and financial processes. Quantum has facilitated easier tracking of expenditure, although there were some teething issues during its launch. There have been challenges in tracking alignment between planned and actual expenditure and activity, especially for Strategic Note funding leading to some teams overspending on their allocations. However, PRISM, the new planning and results management system, is expected to address these challenges.

In terms of procurement, the Country Office also engaged with UNCT Operations teams and leveraged UN Long-Term Agreements. However, Country Office colleagues cited long timelines procurement as affecting delivery, and highlighted the need for stronger planning and collaboration between Programmatic and Operational teams during planning and programme design, and the need for greater delegation of authority to thematic leads. The Country Office is moving towards more coordinated procurement planning across teams which is expected to introduce efficiencies.

The Country Office adhered to corporate risk management systems, but there is scope to strengthen real time risk management to guide resource allocation and delivery adjustments. Country Office planning was largely based on full funding assumptions, unlike other UN agencies which prepare scenario-based plans ("plan B" and "plan C") to guide prioritization under different resource levels. The Strategic Note's

results framework and workplan did not set to identify and prioritize activities most critical to achieving outcomes. Donors and Country Office colleagues noted that annual donor review meetings and planning cycles did not consistently include structured risk analysis or contingency planning. This limited the Country Office's ability to strategically prioritize when funding fell short, risking reactive decision-making. Donors had concerns about the significant proportion of planned roles vacant, without clear analysis of delivery implications or identification of activities to be scaled back.

At times, challenges around HR planning affected timeliness and personnel capacity. Country Office colleagues reported that gaps in key roles (e.g. representative, monitoring, reporting and evaluation, resource mobilization, donor relations, associates to support with administrative work) were felt acutely, affecting continuity and visibility. Recruitment for critical positions was not prioritized in line with delivery needs; for example, the planning, monitoring, reporting and partner relations specialist role had been vacant since February 2024, due to recruitment delays followed by budget shortfalls. Thematic teams were not aware of the decision to pause the recruitment, highlighting the need for better communication on recruitment plans and timelines.

The approach of using Strategic Note funding for personnel positions also constrained flexibility and strategic alignment with evolving priorities. While conversion of Special Service Agreement contracts to more stable Service Contracts was valued, the decision to use Strategic Note funding for a significant

¹⁷⁰ Corporate systems for managing requests, donors, partners and enterprise resource management

proportion of these positions and to absorb the impact of salary scale revisions, limited the Country Office’s flexibility to adjust the personnel mix in line with evolving priorities and earmarked funding realities. This resulted in growing areas of work, such as Humanitarian Action, facing prolonged capacity gaps. For example, there was an extended vacancy of the Women, Peace and Security & Humanitarian Action specialist. There was also limited flexibility to organize capacity across teams based on need, although some redeployment occurred (e.g. a GRB analyst was assigned to support the Humanitarian team after long-standing requests).

The recently established field offices have supported delivery at the sub-national level and visibility at sub-national coordination platforms. However, the sub-national offices reported that their engagement with the Country Office has been primarily reactive, focused on resolving immediate implementation issues rather than contributing to ongoing programme planning and thematic work.

Professional development opportunities were available, including professional certifications in procurement and project management, but were not yet framed within a clear, office-wide capacity-building

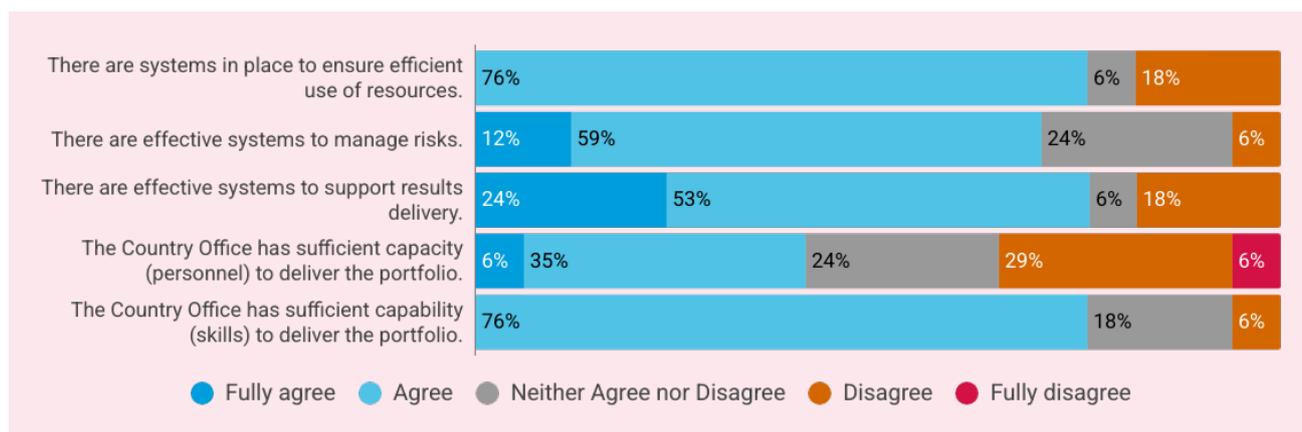
strategy. Some personnel perceived that access to training was ad hoc and not always clearly aligned with roles or longer-term development plans.

Internal budgeting processes did not enable programme teams to influence resource allocation decisions where appropriate. Programme leads reported that they were sometimes informed of significant office-wide overhead commitments after decisions had been taken, with limited opportunity to provide input on delivery implications or to plan for resulting constraints on programme resources. Teams felt that while they were accountable for delivering results, they were constrained in terms of how funds were spent. Programme teams considered that criteria and decision-making processes for allocating Strategic Note funding were insufficiently clear, limiting shared understanding of how priorities were set. They recommended a structured call for thematic proposals linked to Strategic Note outcomes and identified gaps, to support more strategic allocation and improve transparency.

Survey results echo these findings. As set out in Figure 5, while personnel broadly agreed that core systems and skills were in place, views were mixed on the sufficiency of overall capacity and risk management was seen as still maturing.

FIGURE 5

Country Office personnel’s perception of efficiency (n=17)



Source: Evaluation survey

Cross-team coordination

Limited incentives and systems for cross-thematic integration constrained the effectiveness of programming and reduced potential efficiencies from shared partnerships, data and resources.

Planning, budgeting and results tracking were largely siloed, with minimal joint workplans or shared indicators (only 20 per cent were shared across more than one thematic area). Even where multiple teams contributed to the same results, targets and reporting were managed separately, limiting the Country Office's ability to present a consolidated, cumulative picture of change or report high-level results. Different teams managed separate agreements with the same CSO were managed by different teams, increasing transaction costs and reducing opportunities for integrated delivery. Some implementing partners reported that they had to push hard to include small WEE components into other thematic programming to support women's ability to participate, given each team's focus on its own thematic targets. This has constrained cross-thematic programming. Recognizing this gap, the Country Office has introduced measures to strengthen cross-thematic synergies, including a resource mobilization task force with focal points from each programme area; and a role for the coordination team to support management of partners working across thematic areas. Emerging initiatives, such as the Irish Aid Phase IV programme, are expected to foster synergies between WEE, EAW and governance work through shared outcomes and coordinated delivery.

Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting systems met compliance requirements but were not fully optimized for integrated analysis and learning.

The Country Office's monitoring and reporting processes supported timely donor submissions and alignment with corporate priorities, but their design limited utility for internal decision-making. Linking the Strategic Note to both the UNSDCF and UN Women's Strategic Plan strengthened corporate alignment but also introduced some

complexity, requiring teams to set aside frameworks agreed with donors and making it harder to frame the Country Office's work and results. Personnel highlighted the need to develop indicators better aligned to the UNSDCF and Strategic Plan, and noted that many of these challenges are likely to be resolved by the stand-alone gender outcome in the new UNSDCF. Additionally, just over one-third of outcome indicators were yes/no indicators, making it difficult to track progress over time as well as more nuanced performance.¹⁷¹

Limited integration and standardization affected the consistency and quality of monitoring and reporting.

The absence of common tools (e.g. for social norms measurement) and lack of a standard partner performance monitoring approach made it harder to ensure data consistency and avoid double counting. Frameworks were in place to compile reporting across thematic teams, but a more standardized approach using Excel to show how partner-reported totals add up to the figures reported in the Strategic Note would strengthen the audit trail. While there was good use of monitoring to capture case studies, monitoring reports could be improved by using a consistent template. This would help to ensure all reports document agreed actions and owners, lessons learned and planned adjustments to programmes which are tracked, along with more systematic validation of partners' reported outcomes, organized around project-level results frameworks. While outcome harvesting was piloted, its application was not consistent across the Strategic Note period to track transformative change.

Mechanisms for cross-learning and integrated analysis remained underdeveloped.

Adjustments following the midterm review, such as expanded geographic coverage and revised targets, demonstrated responsiveness to performance data. However, structured platforms for sharing lessons learned across thematic teams were limited, even where partner networks overlapped.

¹⁷¹ For example, one binary indicator was: multisectoral systems, strategies or programmes are implemented to advance women's equal access to and use of services, goods and/resources, including social protection

Communications

Communications capacity and integration into programme planning have been uneven, affecting the consistency and reach of advocacy. Partners, including UN agencies, highlighted strong coordination and visibility around flagship initiatives such as the 16 Days campaign. However, the systematic practice of allocating modest communications budgets within programme proposals has lapsed in recent years. As a result, the Communications unit has become heavily reliant on core resources, with most funding absorbed by personnel costs, leaving limited operational budget for activities, media partnerships or equipment upgrades. Civil society interviewees noted communications is especially critical in Ethiopia to support visibility and advocacy, given most mainstream outlets lack the capacity to cover gender issues. While some teams actively engage communications colleagues from the outset of programme design, others involve them only at later stages, limiting opportunities to shape coherent, strategic messaging or link communications products to policy influence and resource mobilization.

Cost-efficiency

Introducing more consistent cost-efficiency monitoring would strengthen the Country Office's ability to demonstrate value for money and address donor concerns. Donors questioned the return on investment of certain modalities, such as short-term, training-heavy interventions and the use of international non-governmental organizations with higher transactional costs. While some initiatives, such as the Women in Leadership and Governance training programme evaluation, have included cost-efficiency assessments, these remain isolated examples. Establishing robust, output indicator-level financial data, including core, non-core and personnel costs, would enable consistent analysis across modalities. Additionally, identifying mechanisms to capture reported catalytic effects of coordination (e.g. mobilizing additional funding, influencing policy) or the

expected efficiencies from Long-Term Agreements and shared UN services would help demonstrate cost-efficiencies.

Partnership systems with government, development partners and civil society were largely efficient, with opportunities to strengthen efficiency through stronger joint planning and co-creation.

Government: At times, alignment with government planning cycles was affected by perceived protracted clearances, 21-day advance travel notice requirements and travel reimbursement timelines. Government stakeholders had some concerns around accountability expectations, citing examples such as demands for receipts before funds were fully utilized at the cooperative level. Preagreed activity calendars, streamlined approvals and predictable disbursement schedules were highlighted as practical solutions. Maintaining highlevel channels (e.g. the Prime Minister/President's Offices) alongside technical engagement was seen as important for supporting policy implementation.

Development partners: Engagement with donors was active and broadly effective: partners valued UN Women's technical depth, convening/brokering role and flexible instruments to enable partnering with grassroots CSOs).

- On **engagement and reporting**, experiences differed by modality. Earmarked funders were largely satisfied with collaboration, while Strategic Note donors were more critical regarding absence of clearly defined focal point; proactiveness of strategic engagement to inform coordination and timeliness of financial reporting. Some earmarked donors noted a lack of clarity in terms of how their programme funding complemented other funding and limited visibility of results directly attributable to their funding, making it hard to support value-for-money assessments (see also Finding 13). There was also some evidence of the Country Office strategically leveraging development partners to achieve results, for example through technical and political support such as co-hosting research dissemination and training events. However, some partners felt the Country

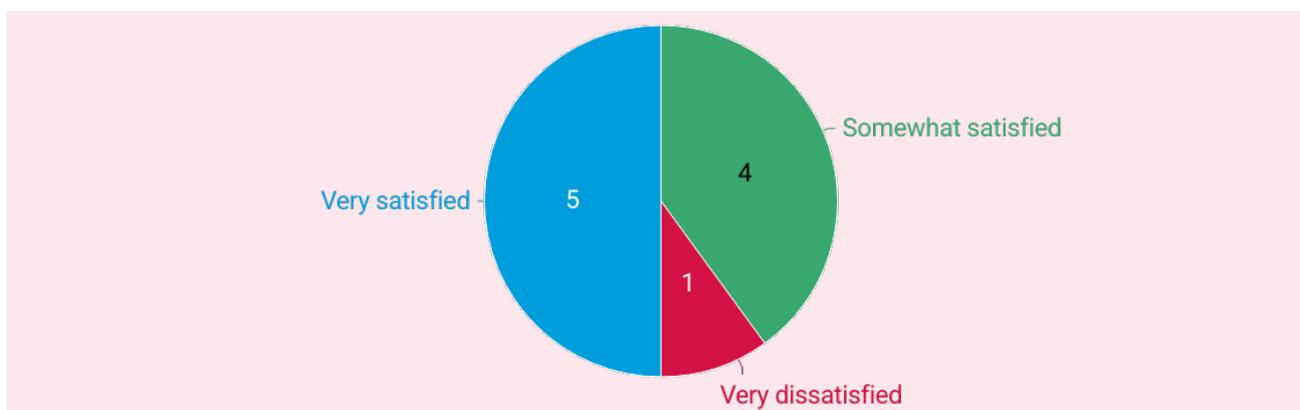
Office could better leverage this with key requests for partners' political support on pushing forward the gender policy and National Action Plans.

- On **programme design and resource mobilization**, partners cited the weakness of a supply-driven, concept-note approach, at times drawing on limited consultation and needs assessments. Donors requested more co-creation of programmes; greater collaboration across thematic areas and with other UN agencies; and segmented offers tailored to donor priorities and perceived value add of UN Women¹⁷². Where co-creation was applied,

this has been effective; for example, the recently launched AECID/EU-supported programme (EUR 5 million) was co-designed across thematic teams and with UNFPA against a shared results framework aligned to AECID priorities and where the Country Office adds the most value. The gender working group was seen as under-used for co-creating programmes and mobilizing resources, e.g. through establishing pooled funding mechanisms. Targeted cultivation of international financial institutions and foundations remains a key opportunity.

FIGURE 7

Satisfaction with partnership (n=10)



Civil society: Partnerships with civil society as implementing partners were generally efficiently managed. UN Women provided institutional capacity support (e.g. on finance/M&E) and facilitated peer learning via mailing lists, training and exchanges. Feedback from the civil society survey was generally positive, with 50 per cent very satisfied and 40 per cent somewhat satisfied; (n=10) with their partnership with UN Women, reflecting positively on the Country Office's communications and collaborative and supportive approach. The Country Office worked with a broad range of women, youth and disability-led organizations, including those working at the grassroots level. The Country Office also sustained these relationships beyond individual projects, which enabled it to tap into partners for rapid situation analysis in crisis contexts, to inform funding allocations and programme design.

Efficiency constraints fell into two areas.

- 1. Funding and time frames:** Flexible, multi-year funding that the Country Office received did not flow down to partners. Short project cycles (many around four months) limited planning, follow-up and consolidation of outputs. In humanitarian settings, budget-reallocation procedures were perceived to be slow. Many CSOs felt partnerships were "prescriptive" with pre-set activities and outputs and called for more co-creation to enhance effectiveness and contextual fit.
- 2. Fragmentation:** Numerous, small partnerships created high transaction costs for the Country Office (also noted in the previous CPE). Several partners received small institutional capacity grants that did not evolve into substantive collaboration. Coordination with other agencies in terms

¹⁷² For example, development partners varied in perspectives about whether the Country Office's value add was in macro/policy reform versus sub-national scaling and working with MoWSA versus other line ministries.

of civil society partnership was uneven. UN counterparts and donors highlighted existing mapping exercises (e.g. GBV mapping with UNFPA) that could be used more deliberately to build joined-up work and synergies.

To consolidate and move to more strategic and predictable partnerships, stakeholders suggested approaches used by other agencies, including: framework Memorandums of Understanding aligned to the

Strategic Note period with no funding attached with core partners that span all thematic areas, rather than separate unit agreements; followed by annual workplans and funding agreements grounded in joint planning and performance reviews.

How well did the Country Office manage to respond to emerging humanitarian crises to support gender-responsive humanitarian action?

FINDING 12

The Country Office demonstrated responsiveness by providing strategic inputs to support the gender responsiveness of the inter-agency response, and adapted its programming to provide timely assistance. There were some challenges with access, process and budget constraints which affected delivery and coverage.

The Country Office’s responded to emerging humanitarian crises by providing strategic inputs to support the overall response. In 2023–2024, the Country Office produced a rapid gender analysis for the Humanitarian Coordination Team and the Humanitarian Response Plan gender review. As part of the GIHA Technical Working Group in 2024, the Country Office supported development of a structured framework to integrate gender across the humanitarian response, including a road map, practical tools and checklists. The Country Office responded to the crisis context by expanding its presence in sub-national coordination mechanisms through establishing additional field offices. Survey responses demonstrate strong external confidence in the Country Office’s adaptation to the evolving context (4.5/5, n=10) against a more moderate internal rating (3.4/5, n=17).

The Country Office’s responsiveness enabled it to provide timely assistance. The Country Office adopted adaptive management during crises, such as COVID-19 and in conflict settings. It supported the rapid reinstatement of survivor hotlines to maintain access; provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) to safeguard frontline responders; and use of remote coordination mechanisms to sustain service delivery. The Country Office’s responsiveness enabled partners to launch and sustain online dialogues; pivot quickly to deliver advocacy during high-profile GBV cases; and mobilize emergency assistance such as blanket and safe-house relocations for conflict-affected women.¹⁷³ These adaptations are evidenced in Findings 1 and 4 of this report.

FIGURE 8:
Level of adaptation



Source: Evaluation survey of UN Women personnel (n=12) and external stakeholders (n= 21)

¹⁷³ The Sixth National Report on Progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +30) June 2024, Interviews with partners.

Access risks and process and budget constraints posed some limitations to delivery and coverage.

Security risks in conflict-affected areas hindered the Country Office's ability to deliver in some cases, delaying activities; requiring adaptations to activities and changes to geographic reach; and increasing costs. For example, access risks affected the Country Office's ability to convene stakeholders for National Action Plan consultations. The Country Office mitigated this by clustering activities in safer hubs using flexible funds, field office support and pre-vetted

venues. Donors and partners were broadly satisfied with how the Country Office managed these risks. Nonetheless, responsiveness was sometimes affected by limited contingency lines in budgets for implementing partners; unclear trigger points for switching modalities; and donor amendment requirements. High transaction costs in working with women's rights organizations also led the Country Office to pivot to partner with other CSOs, diluting intended localization in some woredas.¹⁷⁴

How do different funding modalities compare in terms of their efficiency?

FINDING 13

Flexible Strategic Note funding enhanced the Country Office's agility and ability to sustain core functions compared to most earmarked modalities. However, its efficiency was constrained by limited thematic integration, clarity in resource allocation and under-use as a strategic donor platform.

Compared to earmarked funds, flexible resources supported both agility and sustained engagement.

Country Office personnel noted that Strategic Note funding from the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden enabled rapid reprogramming in response to the northern conflict, COVID-19 and the needs of internally displaced persons in the Somali region, bridging delayed or short-term project funding and sustaining staffing during mandatory salary scale adjustments. The modality also supported work that was harder to resource through earmarked funds, such as GRB, normative engagement and coordination functions, and reduced transaction costs through consolidated donor reporting. By contrast, earmarked funds remained bound to predefined outputs and carried higher administrative demands, though Country Office personnel also emphasized that there was flexibility especially in multi-year funding.

There were efficiency challenges in four areas:

- 1. Clarity of resource allocation:** Donors highlighted insufficient clarity on how Strategic Note resources were applied vis-à-vis earmarked programme funds, and apportioned between personnel and programme delivery. Just under 50 per cent of Strategic Note funding was used for personnel and running costs, fuelling perceptions that contributions were disproportionately covering running costs, subsidizing earmarked programmes. Donors noted this made it difficult for the Country Office to demonstrate additionality; for example, showing that core posts funded by the modality delivered outcomes beyond those already financed through earmarked projects. Strategic Note donors expressed interest in reviewing workplans to provide detailed input into workplans and resource allocation decisions that could help identify efficiencies.

¹⁷⁴ Partner interviews and donor report

- 2. Limited integration of programming:** Strategic Note resources were allocated to thematic teams independently, without a structured joint planning process to support cross-thematic integration, which was an anticipated benefit of Strategic Note funding. Flexibility was also rarely passed downstream to implementing partners: most grants remained short-term and project-specific, limiting partners' ability to plan holistically, adapt to emerging needs and sustain results across sectors.
- 3. Under-use of the modality as a strategic donor platform:** Donors felt Strategic Note review meetings functioned more as accountability exercises that focused on presentation of results rather than forward-looking dialogue, joint risk management or resource mobilization. This fell short of the intention of strategic engagement and trust-based collaboration.
- 4. Gaps in financial and results reporting:** Donors noted that while results reporting had improved, there was still room to strengthen results-focus and track progress across the Strategic Note period instead of only on an annual basis. While certified annual reports met requirements, donors reported challenges with the annual financial statements and explanatory notes in providing a clear overview of total country portfolio expenditure, affecting donors' ability to assess the direct value of and return on their investment. Monitoring the value of flexible funding and lessons learned would strengthen annual reports. These issues were not unique to Ethiopia, and also identified in the global evaluation of SIDA's country funding,¹⁷⁵ underscoring the need for additional corporate support on the use of this funding modality.

¹⁷⁵ SIDA: Evaluation of Country Programme Support to UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women (2022)



Photo: ©UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

6

LESSONS LEARNED

This section provides general lessons learned across the operational, coordination and normative areas of UN Women’s mandate for potential application to other contexts.

Strategic use of Strategic Note funding requires strong management and planning

Linked to Findings 10, 11 and 13

Strategic Note funding was often used as a flexible fallback rather than a strategic resource, with unclear distinctions between funding streams and insufficient documentation of its value-add. Donors and personnel highlighted the absence of clear thresholds for using Strategic Note funding for personnel; limited planning for cross-thematic synergies; and the absence of contingency planning when Strategic Note funding targets were not met. Without deliberate planning, the potential of Strategic Note funding to support cross-thematic synergies and predictable financing for implementing partners was not fully realized.

This experience highlights the importance of clear allocation logic, transparent trade-offs and contingency planning to enable the flexible funding modality to function as a coordination and strategic tool to support delivery of strategic ambitions and to leverage other donors, rather than acting as a funding buffer.

Leadership stability is critical for sustained, strategic engagement and visibility

Linked to Findings 10 and 11

Frequent senior management turnover disrupted UN Women’s ability to engage in sustained, high-level dialogue with donors; weakened its presence in UN coordination forums; and reduced its influence within the Development Partners Group, affecting its positioning. Interim arrangements were perceived as less effective in driving external engagement and advocacy, affecting visibility and resource mobilization efforts.

This highlights the importance of prioritization robust succession planning to ensure leadership continuity, and that leadership profiles are well-suited to the external demands of a given context, particularly where strategic visibility, donor relations and high-level coordination are critical to positioning and resource mobilization.

Navigating alignment to different frameworks requires deliberate efforts

Linked to Finding 11

The Ethiopia Country Office’s experience highlights the ongoing challenge of aligning target outcomes, outputs and indicators across the Strategic Note, UNSDCF and UN Women’s Strategic Plan, especially given the move to using UNSDCF outcomes verbatim in the Strategic Note. While the Strategic Note was initially structured around strong thematic pillars, reporting was framed under UNSDCF outcomes and Strategic Plan indicators, which did not always align neatly with internal programmatic logic. This tension complicated efforts to aggregate results meaningfully and demonstrate contribution across reporting frameworks, with donors reporting they found it difficult to understand target results.

The experience underscores the importance of strong collaboration between planning, monitoring and thematic teams to ensure strong planning for results monitoring, to facilitate reporting across different frameworks and ensure accountability to rights holders and partners.

Government ownership and focused engagement are prerequisites for sustainability

Linked to Findings 5, 7 and 11

Interventions were more likely to gain traction where they were prioritized by government stakeholders, with stronger ownership from the outset. Secondments raised questions about sustainability when used to fill gaps rather than build institutional capacity. Government counterparts also noted that continued accompaniment was needed to ensure uptake of new tools, beyond one-off training events, especially critical given capacity constraints within MoWSA.

This highlighted the importance of focusing efforts on fewer, high-potential partnerships with ministries or local governments – especially where interest, commitment and resources already exist, to support more sustainable results. Collaboration with other UN agencies and participation in pooled funding mechanisms can facilitate larger, longer-duration initiatives, which are better positioned to support institutionalization within government systems.



Photo: ©UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

7

CONCLUSIONS

This section provides the CPE's overall conclusions. Conclusions synthesize evidence across the portfolio and are framed against the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee criteria. Each conclusion indicates these criteria and the findings it draws upon.

CONCLUSION 1:

The Country Office achieved its strongest results where it linked delivery across the triple mandate, from norms and coordination to operational delivery.

By combining technical support on national frameworks and policies with leadership of coordinated platforms and targeted operational programming, the Country Office supported translation of national commitments into implementation. This integrated approach underpinned progress across the thematic areas of ending violence against women and girls, women's economic empowerment, humanitarian action and women, peace and security, women's economic empowerment and gender responsive budgeting. For example, the Country Office delivered survivor-centred services, while also supporting the development of policies and implementation of standard operating procedures to improve quality, through its convening roles and civil-society partnerships.

However, the depth, scale and sustainability of outcome-level change varied by thematic and geographical area, affected by operational disruptions linked to conflict and access constraints; the small scale and duration of some initiatives; uneven institutional anchoring and local ownership; mixed opportunities to scale given limited transition plans and resources.

Effectiveness and Sustainability. [Linked to Findings 1–7](#)

CONCLUSION 2:

The Country Office systematically applied a leave-no-one-behind lens, but coverage and depth for specific groups were uneven.

Targeting of rural women, women with disabilities, internally displaced persons and survivors of conflict-related violence was evident across interventions. A more intentional and resourced approach is needed to embed the inclusion of people with disabilities and to track participation and outcomes for marginalized groups across the portfolio.

Gender Equality and Human Rights. [Linked to Findings 1–7](#)

CONCLUSION 3:

The Country Office portfolio was highly relevant, aligned to national priorities, UNSDCF outcomes and UN Women's Strategic Plan.

The Country Office's interventions reflected Ethiopia's policy priorities and were anchored in government systems and standards. Stakeholders valued UN Women's role in advancing government-led reforms and in supporting data and accountability mechanisms.

However, the portfolio was thematically too broad relative to the funding available, constraining depth and results, leading to fragmentation and smaller-scale initiatives that diluted focus and reduced opportunities to achieve coherence, depth, scale and clear pathways from pilots to institutional uptake.

Relevance and Coherence: [Linked to Findings 8–10](#)

CONCLUSION 4:

UN Women's comparative advantage in Ethiopia is its normative leadership and convening power. Results were amplified when this was used to shape systems-level change, rather than delivering small-scale initiatives.

Results were most visible where the Country Office prioritized co-design with government, joint tools and shared delivery platforms with the UN and civil society, to inform policy and institutional reforms. Conversely, small, stand-alone delivery initiatives resembled civil society modalities and yielded limited visibility or scale. Repositioning towards larger, integrated and systems-oriented programmes would enhance coherence and better align to the UN Women's comparative advantage.

Relevance and Coherence: [Linked to Findings 9–10](#)

CONCLUSION 5:

Corporate systems supported delivery, but the timelines of some recruitment and procurement exercises, limited cross-thematic coordination and planning and use of contingency planning constrained efficiency.

Corporate platforms were effectively used to support efficient delivery and meet compliance requirements. However, some key gaps in personnel affected delivery. Coordination across units was not systematic, which affected programme integration. Risk management was applied but the use of contingency planning was limited, affecting delivery when resource mobilization targets were not met.

Efficiency. [Linked to Findings 11–12](#)

CONCLUSION 6:

Strategic Note resources were an important enabler, but were not consistently used as a strategic platform to drive predictable partnerships.

While Strategic Note funding allowed the Country Office to respond flexibly to emerging needs, its flexibility was not fully leveraged to support more predictable, longer-term partnerships with civil society. Rationale for allocations across thematic areas and between personnel and delivery costs were not clearly documented. More deliberate planning of Strategic Note allocations, considering different funding scenarios and how it is to supplement earmarked funding, is needed to enhance its effectiveness and support clear articulation of the outcomes attributable to Strategic Note resources.

Efficiency. [Linked to Finding 13](#)



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8

RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion on the evaluation preliminary findings on 8 August 2025 with the Country Office informed the recommendations below, which are linked to corresponding findings and focus on feasible, realistic actions. Each includes a suggested timeline and level of priority.

RECOMMENDATION 1: SHARPEN STRATEGIC FOCUS AND VALUE PROPOSITION

Prioritize high-impact areas where UN Women has added value and in comparison to other UN agencies and civil society. Focus on operational delivery selectively where there are good linkages with normative and coordination work and where there are expected pathways to institutional uptake and scale.

Based on Findings 7, 10 and 13

Priority: HIGH

Timeline: MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Prioritize 1–3 high-impact topics and geographic areas where UN Women offers clear added value (e.g. policy influence, coordination, underfunded issues) compared to other agencies (see Annex 1 for an analysis).
- Avoid small-scale service delivery and scattered, small-scale projects. Prioritize a small set of focus areas where there is strong demand, link to the UNSDCF, opportunity for multi-stakeholder approaches, and pathways to scale and institutionalize, moving beyond one-off training and policy development to consider how it can be linked to systems, budgets and strategies.
- Review the balance of engagement across the government, including opportunities to scale up engagement with other relevant ministries and to work with BoWSAs as conveners for sub-national adoption (by-laws, protocols, budgeted plans).
- In crises, prioritize GiHA leadership, rapid gender analysis with OCHA/clusters, and women-led/women's rights organizations' access to funding mechanisms and localization.

To be led by: Country Representative, with the support of the Deputy Representative and team.

Rationale and impact: A clearer strategic focus aligned with the Country Office's comparative advantage would strengthen its efficiency, visibility, coherence and sustainability. Concentrating on a small number of high-impact, scalable areas will enable deeper partnerships and more efficient use of resources. This would, in turn, position the Country Office to influence targeted system-level reforms and uptake of its pilots. By linking operational delivery to normative and coordination functions, UN Women can demonstrate clearer added value and achieve more sustainable, transformative change.

RECOMMENDATION 2: ADVANCE DISABILITY INCLUSION AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Strengthen capacity and systems to deliver inclusive, disability-responsive programming. Integrate disability inclusion systematically across the programme cycle, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy commitments, ensuring coordinated action through the UNCT.

Based on Finding 6

Priority: MEDIUM

Timeline: LONG-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Introduce disability-disaggregated indicators and targets, and specify types of disability in monitoring frameworks, tagging disability-inclusive results in results monitoring, aligned with Strategic Note commitments on intersectionality and evidence-based programming.
- Strengthen partnerships with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities for meaningful consultation and co-creation of interventions.
- Leverage UNCT structures and inter-agency mechanisms to align with national disability strategies, pool expertise and coordinate advocacy and joint programming.
- Apply UN accessibility standards to facilities, communications and events, and ensure reasonable accommodation measures are budgeted for and implemented, across all programmes.

To be led by: Deputy Representative, with the support of thematic leads.

Rationale and impact: Targeted action on disability and intersectionality would close persistent gaps in inclusion, support accountability to leave no one behind principles and strengthen the reach and equity of gender equality and the empowerment of women results. This would enhance programme relevance and accountability; promote the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities; and ensure that Ethiopia's country programme contributes to implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and national disability inclusion priorities, while benefitting from coordinated UN system action.

RECOMMENDATION 3: STRENGTHEN COORDINATION, PARTNERSHIPS AND JOINT PROGRAMMING

Formalize coordination roles and deepen strategic partnerships with the UN and CSOs.

Based on Findings 1, 2 and 10

Priority: MEDIUM

Timeline: MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- **UN system.** Clarify division of labour under the new UNSDCF, building on the co-leadership referenced in country programme documents and discussed in result groups. Sharpen the focus of the gender working group towards tracking UN-wide gender results and catalysing joint programming and resource mobilization.
- **Government.** Support the institutionalization of existing tools (gender policy once finalized, performance levelling tool, gender budget statements) in priority ministries and selected regions, partnering with key stakeholders such as MoWSA/Ministry of Planning and Development/Ministry of Finance and BoWSAs to support sub-national uptake.
- **Civil society.** Work with MoWSA to identify how CSO participation in national processes can be further institutionalized, with predictable engagement points and feedback loops; use the Civil Society Advisory Group strategically; and shift to longer-term partnership frameworks.
- **Development partners.** Reposition the gender sector working group to cover both technical and strategic decisions, through review of terms of reference and governance. Consider incorporating strategic agenda points for escalation to Heads of Cooperation incorporated. Prioritize co-creation over one-off concept notes. Track where coordination influences funding and joint action.
- **Resourcing the function.** Given coordination is a cross-cutting approach, consider the resourcing and division of coordination responsibilities across the Country Office to ensure consistent follow-up on agreed actions and visibility of results.

To be led by: Country Office Representative (development of the new Strategic Note); Deputy Representative and Programme Managers (development of new initiatives); Coordination Specialist and Programme Managers (coordination and normative work).

Rationale and impact: Stronger coordination and joint programming would enhance efficiency, reduce duplication and increase the impact of gender equality and the empowerment of women interventions. It would also formalize UN Women's leadership and strengthen shared accountability across the UN system and civil society. Improved visibility and donor engagement would unlock new financing, enhance credibility and position UN Women as an indispensable actor in Ethiopia's gender equality and the empowerment of women landscape.

RECOMMENDATION 4: IMPROVE NJM&E, LEARNING, REPORTING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Strengthen systems to link project-level results with Strategic Note outcomes.

Based on Finding 11

Priority: MEDIUM

Timeline: MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Strengthen the use of cross-thematic indicators and standard tools aligned with the UN Women Strategic Plan and Corporate Framework.
- Institutionalize reflection and learning mechanisms post-midterm review, including cross-learning platforms and better documentation of systemic results.
- Apply outcome harvesting periodically to capture systemic/transformational change; and store short evidence briefs in a shared repository tagged to Strategic Note outcomes. Consider how to better track coordination outcomes.
- Standardize partner performance monitoring to validate partners' reported outcomes, documenting lessons learned and planned adjustments, and strengthening the audit trail between partners' reported outcomes and Strategic Note reporting; for example, through a logframe that maps project indicators to Strategic Note outcomes
- Position the Country Office more explicitly as a gender knowledge broker, by developing a knowledge and analysis agenda for the new strategic note to address key knowledge gaps, and disseminating these systematically through existing coordination platforms.

To be led by: Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Analyst, with the support of the Deputy Representative.

Rationale and impact: Monitoring and reporting have significantly improved, particularly in terms of the quality and timeliness of donor reporting and the consolidation and refinement of indicators to reflect the work undertaken by the Country Office. Better M&E systems would enable results-based management, support learning and enhance the ability to demonstrate strategic impact across the portfolio. Stakeholders requested the Country Office increase its gender analysis and dissemination, to support greater use in programming and policy dialogue.

RECOMMENDATION 5: INVEST IN INTERNAL SYSTEMS, PERSONNEL AND LEADERSHIP CONTINUITY

Strengthen internal systems and leadership continuity to support effective delivery and adaptive management.

Based on Findings 1, 10 and 11

Priority: HIGH

Timeline: MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Clarify roles and strengthen coordination across thematic and operational teams through integrated planning and collaboration incentives. Consider how to break silos by creating teams that can work across thematic areas. Ensure the personnel structure matches the priority areas included in the new Strategic Note, including consider capacity to undertake gender analysis in-house, given UN agency and donor demand.
- Clarify focal point for Strategic Note donor liaison.
- Review bottlenecks to recruitment and responsive HR planning.
- Improve financial planning and management of Strategic Note funding, including clearer ceilings, structures and alignment with earmarked funding.
- Advocate with the Regional Office for continuity in strategic leadership and sustain engagement in high-level joint programming and policy advocacy.
- Systematically build in communications and M&E expenditure lines in programme proposal budgets.

To be led by: Deputy Country Office Representative, with the support of the Operations Manager and the entire office.

Rationale and impact: Clearer structures, improved planning and stable leadership would enable more coherent programming, reduce inefficiencies and support timely delivery. Dedicated resourcing for key functions such as M&E and resource mobilization would also strengthen accountability and sustainability.

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

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

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.



220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA
Tel: 212-906-6400
Fax: 212-906-6705

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