



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN ETHIOPIA 2022–2025

Photo: ©UN Women Ethiopia Country Office

### 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.

The analysis and recommendations of this evaluation are those of the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Service (IEAIS) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women. This is an independent publication by the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Service (IEAIS).

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

#### **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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.