



Evaluation of UN Women Sida Strategic Partnership Framework 2011–2016

Executive Summary

4 October 2016

Evaluation Team

Team Leader: Camillia Fawzi El-Solh

Team Members: Angelica Arbulu, Paul Balogun, Hannes Berts, Katie Skagerlind

Quality Assurance Expert: Alf Persson

National Consultants: Camille Pellerin (Ethiopia), Lamis Nasser (Jordan),

Ca Lian Thang (Myanmar), Allan Quee (Sierra Leone)

SIPU Task Manager: Johanna Lindström

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings and conclusions of the evaluation of the Strategic Partnership Framework (SPF) 2011–16 agreement between the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (UN Women).
2. The agreement outlines Sida's financial and partnership commitments contributing to the implementation of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2011–13. The SPF aimed to support UN Women to implement its 2011–13 Development Results Framework (DRF) in two specific thematic areas: ¹ *Goal 1 Increasing women's leadership and participation* and *Goal 4 Increasing women's leadership in peace, security and humanitarian response*.²

Objectives of the evaluation

3. As per the UN Women Request for Proposal, the scope of evaluating the SPF covers five areas of investigation:
 - a. Assess and validate the achievements of the SPF, identifying the strategic, policy, programme and institutional factors that have led to the realisation of these achievements (or impediment of results).
 - b. Validate the *relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability* of the programme in achieving the development outcomes of the UN Women SPF.
 - c. Provide recommendations for the future of the SPF in relation to its role in supporting UN Women's strategic role and mandate and inform the expansion and extension of the existing and/or development of future agreements of this type with other donors.
 - d. Examine the extent to which funding under the SPF has facilitated establishment of new or stronger partnerships and leveraged greater outcomes that go beyond UN Women's strategic plan and assess the value and relevance of these.
 - e. Assess knowledge generated (including knowledge products), in order to reflect key areas of work from a policy perspective.

Phases of the evaluation

4. The evaluation applied largely qualitative methods and was organised into three distinct phases:
 - a. The *inception phase* included a preliminary desk review, initial interviews with UN Women, and refinement of the evaluation methodology.
 - b. The data collection phase covered an in-depth desk review, further interviews with stakeholders at global and regional levels, field missions in *Ethiopia, Jordan, Myanmar* and *Sierra Leone*, while *Paraguay* and *Somalia* were covered remotely, and an electronic survey targeting key UN Women staff

¹ UN Women 2011b. 'UN Women Strategic Plan 2011-2013: A Vision for Women and Girls. Annex I: Development Results Framework'

² In alignment with the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014–17, these are referred to as *Impact areas 1 and 4*.

- c. The *data analysis and report writing phase*, focused on analysis of data and preparation of the Final SPF Evaluation Report.

Limitations

5. A number of factors limit the evaluation team's ability to fully address the questions formulated in the Request for Proposal.
6. The most significant limitation has been the time constraint—with 10 weeks available for the evaluation from the signing of the contract to delivery of the first draft evaluation report. This limited the Team's ability to:
 - a. Engage fully in a thorough inception process, through which the proposed methodology could be properly tested against preliminary findings and alternative methodologies developed.
 - b. Develop clear criteria for selection of country inclusion, thus ensuring a methodologically sound approach to sampling.

Refining the evaluation framework

7. Based on the identified limitations, the Evaluation Team concluded it would not be able to provide the hard evidence needed to validate the achievements presented in the four SPF Progress Reports; nor to show how the SPF-funded interventions concretely contributed to the overall development outcomes in UN Women's Strategic Plan.
8. In addition, the evaluation questions articulated by UN Women in the Request for Proposal were based on the assumption that the SPF can be investigated as a conventional programme. As the nature of the SPF became clear to the Evaluation Team—that is, as a flexible funding modality contributing to various programme components within Impact areas 1 and 4 of UN Women's Strategic Plan—the overall evaluation approach was broadened from an assessment of the evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability to encompass SPF's contribution to UN Women's institutional development and capacity to promote synergies, add value to the overall efforts of the UN, have a catalytic role as per its triple mandate of normative support, UN coordination, and operational activities and leverage additional resources.
9. Despite challenges and within these limitations, the Evaluation Team has aimed to collect and triangulate as much information as feasible to investigate how and to what extent the SPF funding modality has contributed to achieving expected outcomes in Impact areas 1 and 4 and is confident it has managed to get sufficient and credible information to identify lessons and draw conclusions regarding the specific interventions studied in-country, as well as the overall added value of the SPF as a funding modality.

Evaluation context

10. The initial desk review presented in the SPF Inception Report aimed to contextualise the evaluation by fully understanding the organisational and operational context within which the SPF is implemented, before engaging in field research and in-depth study of documents. Findings from i) the various operational challenges outlined in the annual SPF Progress Reports; and ii) relevant assessments and evaluations—specifically the 2014 Multilateral Organization

Performance Assessment Network; the Development Effectiveness Review of UN Women 2011–14; and the Mid-Term Review of UN Women 2014–17—served as backdrops against which the Evaluation Team has conducted the evaluation.

11. The 2016 Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to UN System Coordination on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) provided further insight into the global, regional and country contexts relevant for evaluating the contribution of the SPF funding modality to implementing the strategic *Impact areas 1 and 4* and for addressing the evaluation criteria.

UN Women Sida Strategic Partnership Framework

SPF funding modality

12. UN Women is highly dependent on voluntary contributions. Since its inception in 2010 the organisation has been operating on a significantly lower budget than the targets set by the Secretary General and the Executive Board. It is noted in the Strategic Plan 2014–17 that ‘UN Women’s mandate, its high dependence on voluntary contributions and the importance of delivering results in its early years, makes it critical that donors prioritize and set a new and higher baseline for resources in keeping with their stated commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment. Without increased contributions, the level of funding provided to UN-Women will not be compatible with carrying out its triple mandate.’³ This has also been noted by the evaluation of UN Women’s coordination role, which tentatively concludes that the organisation may have to reduce the scope of its triple mandate to more efficiently align its work with current resource levels.⁴
13. The SPF is a non-core funding modality through which Sida provides predictable and loosely earmarked funding for UN Women, specifically targeting *Impact areas 1 and 4*. UN Women has repeatedly expressed in the SPF Progress Reports that the SPF modality should serve as a model for other donors to provide flexible non-core funds to support the implementation of its Strategic Plan, through either separate arrangements or pooled funding under a joint SPF.
14. Under the SPF, Sida has contributed a total of SEK210 million over a period of five years—SEK30 million annually between 2011 and 2013 and SEK60 million annually for 2014–15. In order to manage the SPF, UN Women recruited a dedicated programme management specialist. The management structure of the SPF funding modality has developed and changed over the course of the implementation period, which has led to a significant increase in the implementation and resource utilisation levels. It is currently projected that UN Women has committed some 90 per cent of the SPF resources available for 2016 and that it will have reached a 100 per cent utilisation level by the end of the current year (2016).
15. There is no geographic earmarking and, with the exception of the two small funds that have been set up for women’s participation in politics and constitutional reform initiatives, there are no specific mechanisms through which country and regional offices can apply for SPF funding. Allocation decisions for SPF funds are, for the most part, made by UN Women Headquarters as

³ UN Women and EB 2013/b. ‘UN Women Strategic Plan 2014–17’, p.23

⁴ UN Women and IEO 2016. ‘Evaluation of UN Women Contribution to UN System Coordination on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women’. Corporate Evaluation Report by UNIVERSALIA Evaluation Team (draft May)

part of the regular annual budget process. The process of allocating funds varies between the two impact areas.

16. Responses from UN Women staff to the electronic survey to the question on key advantages of the SPF reveal that respondents appreciate numerous aspects of the funding modality. In all categories, except enabling UN Women to pursue new strategic partnerships, positive responses were above 50 per cent. The highest response was for the flexibility in selecting the focus of the SPF activity (81 per cent), followed by enabling UN Women to strengthen advocacy (77 per cent) and enabling UN Women to strengthen existing strategic partnerships (69 per cent). Some 85 per cent said there were no disadvantages to SPF funding. The reasoning for those who found disadvantages included lack of continuity; inadequate funding to implement all the required project interventions; and that funding could only support funding gaps on existing projects. Perceived advantages of SPF un-earmarked funding include: flexibility in selecting the focus of the SPF supported activity; enabling UN Women to strengthen existing and pursue new strategic partnerships, leverage additional funding and invest in capacity building; strengthening advocacy in *Impact areas 1 and 4*; and addressing urgent and time-bound national priorities. Perceived disadvantages include lack of continuity and inadequate funding to implement all the required project interventions.

SPF-funded interventions

17. It has not been possible for the Evaluation Team to fully isolate the contribution of the SPF to the overall progress within *Impact areas 1 and 4*. However, the overall steady progress reported for the impact areas is a positive indication. In 2015, 30 per cent of indicators under *Impact area 1* were reported as achieved, 62 per cent were 'on track' and one indicator (8 per cent) as off track. For *Impact area 4*, 45 per cent of indicators were achieved (in some cases well above the 100 per cent target), 37 per cent were on track and 18 per cent off track.⁵
18. Specifically during the period under review, the SPF funding modality was utilised to strengthen the work of UN Women in the following areas:
 - a. **Capacity and outreach**: The SPF funding modality contributed to strengthening UN Women's capacity to focus on the components of political participation and constitutional reform, which are part of the *Impact area 1* objectives. The SPF has also been utilised to strengthen the humanitarian capacity of UN Women. In October 2012, with support from the SPF funding modality, UN Women established the Gender and Humanitarian Action Unit based in the Programme Division in UN Women Headquarters. The deployment of senior advisers to three regional offices has greatly enhanced the capacity of UN Women to address issues of governance, peace and security across these regions. In some countries and contexts, efforts have been reinforced by the deployment of additional staff to the country office or seconding experts to strategic partner organisations.
 - b. **Deployment of experts**: The SPF Progress Reports provide information on the deployment of staff covering *Impact areas 1 and 4* supported by the SPF funding modality. The total cost of deployment supported by SPF funding in 2013–16 amounts to \$15,454,466. The SPF has

⁵ UN Women 2016f. '2015 Data Companion. Progress Made on the UN Women Strategic Plan 2011–13. Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality'

provided UN Women with the ability to respond quickly by deploying experts on the ground, ensuring quality and comprehensive inclusion of the gender lens.

- c. Knowledge products: UN Women has amassed a considerable amount of knowledge on *Impact areas 1 and 4* since the inception of the SPF. The generation of knowledge includes providing financial and technical support, deployment of gender experts to assist with the production of research studies, reports, investigations, situation analyses, position papers, needs assessments, sex-disaggregated data collection, strategic guidance materials and documentation of women's experiences through testimonials and video interviews.

The results of this accumulation of knowledge have been i) shared with national ministries, civil society, UN regional and country offices and other partners to guide their organisational principles, programming and strategic planning; ii) incorporated into national constitutions, reforms and other legal documents; iii) provided as gender- and evidence-based information to construct knowledge products; iv) utilised as advocacy tools to inform and impact women's participation in elections, humanitarian contexts and peace processes; v) incorporated into trainings and workshops; and vi) utilised to develop and strengthen a coherent and unified gender-based approach within the UN.

- d. Strategic partnerships: UN Women has partnered both with other UN agencies and with national and international partners that have contributed to facilitating production of knowledge products and generation of knowledge. Within the UN, apart from UNDP, these partnerships are with CTITF, UNEAD, UNRCCA, UNSMIL, Kyrgyzstan UNCT, DPKO, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNSDR and DPA. Other partners include local and national governmental bodies, multilateral organisations, civil society and INGOs.

UN Women is believed to have carried out positive work in the area of women's political participation and has the ability to advocate for a gender perspective in the area of women, peace and security (WPS) and humanitarian areas of action; and its gender-relevant expertise is evident at various strategic and normative levels. However, strategic UN partners also have reservations regarding UN Women's attempts to become an operational agency, highlighting that UN Women's rightful role is coordination since it lacks the human resource capacity, field presence, and experience to assume a major operational role.

UN Women and theory of change

19. In 2015, UN Women launched the Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs), which 'are high impact, scalable programmes that will carry the bulk of UN Women's growth', with each FPI including a comprehensive theory of change (TOC).⁶ The previously mentioned evaluation of UN Women's coordination role reveals some limitations in the way the TOC concept has been operationalised—for example pointing out that the TOC has not been translated into guidance to help set priorities and clarify what is expected from UN Women in different thematic and/or geographic contexts, though the FPIs could contribute to this.
20. The apparent lack of clarity is to some extent reflected in the response of UN Women staff to the SPF survey question regarding the usefulness of the FPI TOCs for the respondents' area of

⁶ UN Women 2015d. 'Flagship Programme Initiatives'. Brochure

intervention and operation: 68 percent of respondents found the FPI TOCs very useful and 16 per cent found them somewhat useful or not very useful.

Views of Sida and the Swedish Ministry Foreign Affairs

21. Sweden is traditionally one of the top donors of UN Women (and previously to the United Nations Development Fund for Women) and a strong supporter of the organisation politically. In fact, Sweden was a driving force behind the establishment of UN Women. Whereas the Swedish core contribution to UN Women decreased from some \$19.3 million in 2013 to \$8.3 million in 2015 (Sweden ranking sixth after the UK, Switzerland, Finland, Norway and Denmark), non-core contributions have increased. In 2015, Sweden was by far the largest non-core contributor, with a contribution of some \$25 million. In total, Sweden was also the overall largest donor to core and non-core funding in 2015—with a total contribution of just over \$33 million.⁷
22. UN Women and Sida hold annual review meetings to discuss the SPF Progress Reports, which are captured in Notes for the File (2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016). Overall, the Notes as well as interviews with Sida staff indicate the donor's satisfaction with progress achieved in implementing the objectives of the SPF as laid out in the 2011 Agreement between Sida and UN Women. Sida notes that since 2013 'gender equality and the rights of women and girls received increased attention in inter-governmental processes...] resulting in significant improvements in the normative and global framework'.⁸ The ability of UN Women to 'work across silos and bridge the work on development, peace and security and human rights' is also commended during the annual Sida UN Women meetings to discuss the SPF Progress Reports.
23. The Sweden Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) particularly commends UN Women in terms of its cooperation with Sweden on policy issues, which it expects to further strengthen in the coming years. An example of such cooperation is UN Women organising workshops in Stockholm for Swedish civil servants on gender budgeting and feminist foreign policy in 2015. Sida and the MFA have pledged to work more closely in respect of pooling funds.
24. However, Sida has also raised a number of issues of concern with UN Women during the SPF annual meetings. Such issues have included questions relating to the SPF results framework, baseline data and indicators, risk management plans and partnership selection; requests for updates on the progress in operationalising the regional architecture; queries as to the 'importance of other donors joining the flexible funding framework in order to increase funding'; and concerns over the risk that UN Women might be spreading resources too thin.

Addressing the evaluation criteria

25. In addressing the SPF evaluation criteria—relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability—the Evaluation Team has to the extent possible proceeded to triangulate information elicited from the desk review presented in the SPF Inception Report and other documentation reviewed during the field phase with relevant views of UN Women

⁷ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/donor-countries/top-contributions>

⁸ Sida 2013. 'Portfolio Overview. Sida's support to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) 2013', p.2

stakeholders, strategic partners and national counterparts, as well as information collected on the country examples selected for the SPF evaluation.

Relevance

26. Findings of the desk review presented in the SPF Inception Report as well as from the country examples—*Ethiopia, Jordan, Myanmar, Paraguay, Sierra Leone and Somalia*—indicate that overall the Sida-supported SPF funding modality is relevant in terms of contributing to UN Women achieving its triple mandate as per its 2011–13 and 2014–17 Strategic Plans, specifically through the focus on two impact areas that contributes to the organisation establishing and strengthening its niche with respect to promoting and supporting GEEW.
27. Indeed, while application of the SPF funding modality is earmarked in terms of focusing on the two *Impact areas 1 and 4*, the flexibility regarding how SPF funding is invested within these two impact areas, including the possibility of funding staff positions (normally not funded by other donors) has provided UN Women with strategic opportunities relevant to implementing its Strategic Plan. At Headquarters level, SPF funding supported deployment of one technical expert in *Impact area 1 and further experts in Impact area 4*, as well as the placement of seconded staff. This enabled UN Women to address capacity needs while also ensuring gender is mainstreamed into important global and normative discussions.

Efficiency

28. Documentation available on UN Women’s performance in operationalising its triple mandate concludes that overall the organisation has focused on increasing resources available for programming through, for example, harmonising business practices aiming to increase efficiency and accountability and thereby reducing administrative costs. It has achieved cost-efficiency by leveraging resources, although internal cost controls are deemed to require strengthening. In light of chronic funding shortfalls at the overall level, UN Women appears to have adopted approaches geared towards the strategic and efficient use of limited resources. It has also been noted that the SPF funding modality has had a catalytic impact that has helped leverage other resources and build internal UN Women capacity.
29. In assessing efficiency, the Evaluation Team aimed to investigate first whether resources were used as intended and in a timely manner, and second if funds derived from the SPF have led to leveraging of funds from other sources. The country examples reveal that efficiency is linked to the type of UN Women in-country presence as well as the focus of interventions. Findings in *Jordan, Sierra Leone, Somalia* and—as far as could be ascertained—*Paraguay* indicate that overall SPF funding has been efficiently utilised. The extent to which funding additional to SPF support has been leveraged differs, with Jordan, Sierra Leone and also Somalia relatively more successful.
30. In the case of *Ethiopia*, SPF-funded interventions in terms of seconding staff to the Special Envoy’s Office (SEO) in the African Union Commission (AUC) and to the Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan have been efficiently implemented, but have also resulted in largely bypassing the UN Women country office in Ethiopia. In *Myanmar* efficiency of delivery of UN Women support is perceived by some to be affected by limited available UN Women capacity (deployment of a senior gender adviser (SGA) place in the Resident Coordinator’s (RC) Office,

although it is said UN Women would not have been able to raise further funding if the SPF-funded initiatives had not been used efficiently.

Effectiveness

31. The documentation reviewed by the Evaluation Team indicates that overall UN Women has been effective in reaching the stated corporate objectives. In turn, this is deemed to be linked to the organisation's ability to work with key actors on GEEW issues, as well as to address the cross-cutting themes inherent in its triple mandate. This conclusion is deemed by the Evaluation Team to be largely supported by the four SPF Progress Reports, indicating that programme achievements have been realised through provision of technical support at country level; building strong partnerships at global, regional and country levels; knowledge generation through practical research; and development of tools for country implementation, as well as supporting wide-ranging activities relevant to implementing *Impact areas 1 and 4* supported by the SPF funding modality.
32. The Evaluation Team also notes—and takes into account in addressing effectiveness—that there is differentiation in the way SPF funding has been allocated within *Impact areas 1 and 4*. Though SPF funding for *Impact area 1* has been subject to some revision, allocation appears to be to clearly identified programme areas to be supported through specific SPF funds. By contrast, allocation within *Impact area 4* appears to be largely in response to urgent demands and gap-filling via the strengthening of surge mechanisms and capacity contributing to effectiveness. To this may be added that the focus on programme components in *Impact areas 1 and 4* may differ from one country context to another.
33. Key findings on effectiveness in the country examples supported by the SPF funding modality reveal:
 - ✓ In *Ethiopia*, stakeholders generally describe SPF-funded interventions as effective in terms of contributing to the overall objectives of integrating a gender perspective in the peace and security work of the AUC.
 - ✓ The UN Women *Jordan* country office has been relatively effective in the way it has recognised and pursued strategic priorities, established an acknowledged niche not only in the development but also in the humanitarian arena and endeavoured to link its normative work with concrete action on the ground.
 - ✓ In *Myanmar*—where the SPF does not fund a programme or projects and reporting focuses at activity level—the SGA/country director has produced annual reports that set out results affecting some processes and include a range of support provided directly by the SPF-funded position as well as through use of funds and technical support sourced from elsewhere.
 - ✓ In *Paraguay*, the SPF-funded interventions have been effective with respect to strategic selection of partners, contributing to the evidence-based approach and providing a regional and global perspective through the SPF-funded interventions.
 - ✓ Capitalising on its strengthened strategic position and visibility during and following the Ebola crisis, UN Women *Sierra Leone* has been effective in mobilising support for implementation of planned outcomes and outputs in *Impact area 4*. SPF funding support to *Impact area 1* enabled UN Women Sierra Leone—in partnership with UNDP, which also

provided financial resources—to strategically position itself as a key player in engendering the constitutional reform process. UN Women Sierra Leone has also contributed to strengthening the role of the UN Gender Technical Team (GTT), perceived to be the ‘technical arm’ of the UNCT.

- ✓ In the case of *Somalia*, seconding an SGA to the RC/Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) Office provided a valuable addition to the team and strengthened the capacity of that office to engage in the WPS agenda. Although outside of the formal mandate, the gender adviser also effectively supported the work of UN Women in Somalia. This proved very important for UN Women’s efforts to strengthen its role within the UNCT and build relationships in the country.

Sustainability

34. The Mid-Term Review of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-2017 concludes that UN Women continues to be hampered by resource constraints that prevent sustainability and the scaling-up of successful interventions. Ensuring adequate financing will be critical to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The development of a productive engagement and multi-year partnership frameworks that allow for greater predictability and sustainability of financing will be a priority.⁹
35. Though the SPF progress reports focus mainly on presenting outputs and activities, examples of sustainability identified include funding of technical positions by other stakeholders hitherto covered by SPF funding. UN Women has also leveraged funding from various sources, which may further contribute to the sustainability of SPF supported interventions. In other instances, small funding accompanied by technical support from UN Women Headquarters on *Impact area 1* programming has provided a way for UN Women country offices to position the organisation as a key stakeholder in electoral assistance programming and also to leverage additional resources from Sida and other bilateral donors.
36. Regarding the sustainability of SPF-funded interventions in the country examples covered by the evaluation:
 - ✓ In Ethiopia, the sustainability of UN Women’s support to the SEO will to a large extent be dependent on internal efforts to institutionalise the Special Envoy’s function within the AUC structure. From a sustainability perspective, given the institutional setup of the AUC, it has been noted that it would have been a better move to second experts to one of the institutionalised units.
 - ✓ In the case of Jordan, to date UN Women appears to be relatively successful in leveraging funds for its programme activities, including those managed by the SPF-funded position (recovery specialist). But sustainability of completed project initiatives and ensuring that phasing-out and the exit strategy foster national ownership is one side of the coin, so to speak. The other side of the coin is the particular challenge of institutionalising the SPF funded position, given that donors generally do not fund salaried posts.

⁹ UN Women and EB 2016. ‘Report of the Under-Secretary General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on Progress Made on the Strategic Plan, 2014–17, including the mid-term review of the strategic plan’, May, pp.28, 33

- ✓ In Myanmar, in terms of sustainability of UN Women’s SPF-funded position, it is intended that by 2017 the country director position will be funded from the organisation’s core institutional budget. At this point in time, the position will be as sustainable, or not, as other positions funded through the UN Women core institutional budget.
- ✓ In Paraguay, the creation of the core group for democratic parity, which includes key partners and parliamentarians, is now independent of UN Women and the SPF funds, and will continue to serve as a the basis for promotion and advocacy of the gender parity bill. Given the high level of national ownership, those with own funds—both politicians and organisations—are continuing to advocate and lobby for the bill, making use of the evidence and other resources (guides, communication materials, etc.) developed with SPF funding to advocate for gender parity and educate both government and civil society. Communication campaigns are still on-going and the draft bill developed continues to be the basis for achieving stated goals.
- ✓ In Sierra Leone, while the Ebola crisis is recognised as having enabled UN Women Sierra Leone to strategically position itself as a key stakeholder in promoting and supporting GEEW at the normative, policy and local levels, without a clear organisational, advocacy and resource mobilisation strategy the country office would have been more challenged to establish and strengthen its niche within the UN system in Sierra Leone, as well as among international organisations and key national counterparts. The deployment of a coordination and partnership specialist is strategic in terms of strengthening existing and exploring new partnerships, thereby increasing the potential for leveraging funding sources. The departure of the two SPF-funded international staff has not left a notable human resource gap in the UN Women Sierra Leone country office, since national staff paid from core funding have taken on some of the pertinent responsibilities.
- ✓ In Somalia, the sustainability of the secondment of the SGA to the RC/HC in Somalia has been secured through the merger of the function with the gender adviser position at the Special Representative of the Secretary-General’s Office, and the creation of the Integrated Gender Office at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. The office has a total of six approved positions. There are questions, however, regarding the long-term relationship and the respective roles and responsibilities of UN Women and the SGA of the political UN mission now that UN Women has a stronger presence in Mogadishu.

Contribution of the SPF to UN Women’s Mandate

37. In proceeding to triangulate the findings of the recent evaluation of UN Women’s coordination role with findings of the SPF desk review and views of UN Women and other key stakeholders on the SPF funding modality, the Evaluation Team notes that such triangulation needs to take into account that the conclusions on synergy, value added, catalytic role and leveraging funds are drawing on experiences of a relatively narrow base—that is, six country examples. Account needs also to be taken of the UN Women country presence model in the country examples selected for field missions (or evaluated remotely).

Synergy

38. Findings from country examples covered by the SPF evaluation clearly demonstrate that an efficient UN Women organisational setup is the minimum critical requirement for effectively

promoting and contributing to synergy within the UN system. However, relatively limited human and financial resources in a full-fledged UN Women country office may not necessarily be an insurmountable hindrance if the country representative/senior management i) is proactive in developing a consistent approach to strategically positioning UN Women as the key agency with the required technical gender expertise within the UN system and *vis-à-vis* the wider country-based international community, as well as among national counterparts; ii) pursues joint funding opportunities as a means of maximising pooled resources while at the same time minimising competition in leveraging funding from actual or potential donors; and iii) contributes to promoting the UN goal of Delivering as One, and is supported by a proactive Resident and/or Humanitarian Coordinator.

39. These conditions can be said to be more or less applicable in the examples of *Jordan* and *Sierra Leone*, and—as far as could be ascertained—also in *Paraguay*. On the other hand, where SPF funding has supported the positioning of an SGA as part of piloting UN Women’s coordination role within the UN system—rather than implementing a project *per se*—then synergy between members of the UNCT and the scope for action is dependent on the degree to which the RC is engaged with and supports such a pilot scheme. In the case of *Myanmar*, the pilot largely failed because of a change in priorities of the RC. In the case of *Somalia*, the secondment of an SGA to the RC/HC contributed to the integration of gender issues in this office, and initially also to the coordination and use of synergies across the UNCT. It also significantly supported the development of UN Women’s own capacity and relationships in Somalia.

Value added

40. Overall, the evaluation of UN Women’s coordination role concludes that the organisation has added value to the normative sphere, for example on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and key human rights resolutions and instruments. UN Women has also added value with respect to providing gender-specific technical support to the UN system and national counterparts (governments and civil society), and mobilising networks of duty-bearers and rights-holders in support of empowerment of women and girls. However, the evaluation also points out that such value added may differ from one impact area to the other, either where UN Women may be perceived not to have the operational capacity (notably in respect of *Impact area 4*/humanitarian sphere) or where some UN agencies may perceive UN Women as encroaching on their own mandate even though it is the designated custodian of UN-SWAP.
41. The findings of the SPF evaluation can be said to add another dimension to addressing value added. Indeed, the SPF’s significance and added value go beyond the results achieved through flexibly funded interventions. What sets the SPF apart from other non-core funding is that resources are earmarked to results at a strategic level also rather than just at activities at programme level. In its second SPF Progress Report (June 2013–May 2014), UN Women noted the SPF had provided ‘concrete resources to allow for integrated and cross-institution programming as well as the flexibility required in particular for UN Women’s work in the area of peace and security and humanitarian response’. Overall, UN Women stakeholders at global, regional and country levels interviewed for the SPF evaluation perceive the contribution of the SPF funding modality to value added in terms of organisational development and capacity-building.

Catalytic role

42. The evaluation of UN Women's coordination role concluded that the organisation had been a driving force in revitalising and strengthening key gender-relevant mechanisms, such as the UN-SWAP and the regional and country level Gender Task Groups. This includes UN Women's leadership in implementing the Beijing+20 process and advocating on key international human rights instruments supporting GEEW, as well as the organisation's contribution to mainstreaming gender in the SDGs: UN Women was instrumental in pushing for a stand-alone SDG on GEEW while ensuring gender concerns were mainstreamed in all the other SFG targets. However, the evaluation also points out that UN Women being enabled to leverage and strengthen its catalytic role generally tends to be impeded by the vertical structure of the UN system, with implications for Delivering as One.
43. The findings of the SPF evaluation can be said to add another dimension to the discussion of UN Women's catalytic role. To begin with, the flexible SPF funding modality has enabled UN Women to expand and address further dimensions of its mandate. SPF funds have enabled UN Women to respond to urgent unforeseen demands in the area of political participation and justice while raising funds from other donors. UN Women has also been able to move the counter-terrorism agenda forward: SPF funding contributed to its strategic response to UNSCR 2242, which gives UN Women a new mandate in this area. SPF funding has also contributed to enabling UN Women to strategically position itself in the preparations for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), as well as to actively contribute to the formulation of WHS gender-sensitive core commitments. Similarly, UN Women was able to contribute to the outcomes of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) and the Sendai Framework Agreement.
44. Without SPF funding, UN Women would not be able to invest in state-of-the-art knowledge products that are time-consuming to produce and require investment for research and production, particularly in the case of policy-oriented research. SPF funding has enabled UN women to strengthen its efforts in generating knowledge, identifying cutting-edge knowledge (i.e. International IDEA funding of political parties and election campaigns) and lag knowledge gaps in new areas to help UN Women country offices implement their Strategic Note. UN Women is perceived to have the capacity to be a knowledge leader on gender, focusing on aggregating lessons learnt and producing guides for best practice. Capacity-building tools have been developed and UN Women is able to compile relevant information on how many countries have trained women through SPF funding.

Leveraging funding

45. Tracking funding allocations in support of GEEW is not facilitated by the reality that UNDAF portfolios rarely include the required budgetary framework. The evaluation of UN Women's coordination role recognised the complexity of constraints affecting the organisation's ability to leverage funding sources in a global climate where competition over accessing such sources, including pooled funds, is among the key factors inhibiting the UN system's progress towards Delivering as One.
46. While the flexible SPF funding modality may not have solved UN Women's challenge of realigning existing core and non-core funding to take account of current resource levels and

requirements, it has more or less enabled UN Women to fast track more initiatives than would generally be the case in respect of earmarked funds.

Pathways to change

47. The diagram presented in the final SPF evaluation report presents the Team’s conclusions on the contribution of the SPF funding modality to articulating the pathways to change in terms of:
- a. Identifying the normative—coordination—operational inputs;
 - b. Cultural, attitudinal and structural barriers that need to be taken into account when addressing the pathways to change;
 - c. Expected long-term impact of the SPF. Information on outcome results has not been addressed in a systematic manner through the SPF Progress Reports.

Conclusions and lessons learnt

48. The Evaluation Team concludes that the SPF funding modality has functioned as the flexible funding source it was intended to be as per the Sida–UN Women agreement. Triangulating available information provides some insight into the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the SPF, as well as its contribution to synergy, value added, strengthening UN Women’s catalytic role and leveraging funding from additional sources. Though the SPF evaluation focused on a limited number of country examples—in part selected by UN Women Headquarters—extrapolation from the key evaluation findings is deemed to provide lessons learnt relevant to strengthening the implementation process of SPF Phase II.

UN Women’s triple mandate

49. The SPF has enabled UN Women to contribute to synergy, value added and strengthening of its catalytic role, as well as leveraging other funding sources. It also enabled UN Women to take advantage of opportunities to participate in normative discussions on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, such as the recent WHS and conferences and fora relevant to *Impact areas 1 and 4* supported by the SPF.

SPF funding modality mechanism

50. Not surprisingly—given the uniqueness of the SPF funding modality and the fact that neither Sida nor UN Women has previous experience of this type of funding modality, which earmarks support to *Impact areas 1 and 4* but otherwise leaves it to the discretion of UN Women which programme components are to be accorded priority—the first years of the Sida/UN Women SPF appears to have been more or less a period of ‘trial and error’.

Allocation of SPF funds

51. The UN Women Strategic Plans 2012–13 and 2014–17 do not explicitly provide guidance regarding which programme components in *Impact areas 1 and 4* to prioritise and where. As such, allocating SPF funding has essentially been a matter of balancing needs—as perceived from the vantage point of UN Women Headquarters, which moreover has the challenge of deciding which of the under-funded areas to allocate SPF funding to and which supported intervention is more likely to be sustainable and/or contribute to systemic change, as well as hopefully serving to leverage additional funding.

Leveraging additional funding source

52. The ability of the UN Women country office to leverage funding in addition to SPF funds is influenced by a number of factors: if/to what extent the country representative and senior management is proactive in following up on funding opportunities; submitting evidence-based funding applications that clearly flag not only UN Women's comparative advantage to deliver on GEEW but also national needs and priorities; and pursuing joint programme/project activities with UN and other strategic partners. Having the SPF funds to begin and prove the validity of a proposal has been a key factor to leveraging funds

UN Women country presence 'model'

53. The expectation that the support of the SPF funding modality will contribute to strengthening synergy, value added, UN Women's catalytic role and leveraging of additional funding sources hinges on the type of country presence 'model' in place—that is, a full-fledged country programme office or limited country presence/pilot initiative—and the extent to which the regional office is involved in country-level activities.

UNCT and resident coordinator

54. Enhancing UN Women's catalytic role and enabling it to effectively address components of its triple mandate is more likely to be achievable in contexts where the RC believes in supporting the goal of Delivering as One and uses his/her authority to ensure the UNCT accords UN Women recognition as the entity providing technical expertise and support on GEEW.

Strategic partnerships and alliances

55. Strategic partners interviewed by the Evaluation Team perceived UN Women's strengths as being the best-positioned UN agency to coordinate on gender issues and lead gender theme groups. However, identifying entry points for the strategic positioning of UN Women within the national context needs to be coupled with a holistic approach to advocating on and supporting the gender equality agenda, and mobilising government and civil society stakeholders.
56. Identifying strategic UN partners for joint activities requires a clear vision on the part of the UN Women country office leadership and senior management, and a strong belief in the importance of Delivering as One. It also requires effectively identifying strategic entry points that acknowledge each partner's mandate and comparative advantage but also stress the advantage of pooling capacity and financial resources, as well as clarity on shared responsibility and working arrangements.

Knowledge products and generating knowledge

57. The SPF funding modality has been instrumental in enabling UN Women to function as a knowledge-broker through investing in a wide range of knowledge products. The choice of knowledge products appears to be a balance between, on the one hand, filling identified knowledge gaps and, on the other hand, responding to arising opportunities to strengthen UN Women's strategic positioning through contributing to the evidence base. This in turn supports UN Women in developing an evidence-based communication and advocacy strategy that may be contextualised to take account of region and country specificities.

Sex-disaggregated data and evidence base

58. As presented in the Data Companions relative to outputs supported by UN Women with respect to capacity development, advocacy, knowledge and promoting dialogue, contribution to data and statistics in 2014 and 2015 was relatively the lowest, and has actually declined.¹⁰ A proactive country representative and senior management in the UN Women country office with a clear vision of multiplier effects and the required strategic approach to effectively linking impact areas in the Country Strategy Note is likely to also explore channels for mobilising efforts to develop sex-disaggregated data, crucial to developing evidence-based advocacy and promoting dialogue among national, international and UN stakeholders. This may in turn contribute to further strengthening UN Women's role in ensuring mainstreaming gender in the SDGs is reflected in regional and country programming of the UN system.

Monitoring progress and reporting results

59. The SPF Progress Reports provide wide-ranging information on programme components and project activities supported by the SPF funding modality and indeed reflect the flexibility of the latter in enabling UN Women to identify which interventions require support in which region and country. However, such information focuses on presenting a vast amount of information at the output level but stops short of information required for measuring outcome results in *Impact areas 1 and 4*. The Data Companions covering 2013, 2014 and 2015 provide aggregate rather than regional and country-specific information in respect of flagging the progress achieved on each indicator, and whether implementation is on track or otherwise.

60. The structure of the fourth SPF Progress Report is more reader-friendly and provides a more structured overview of challenges, lessons learnt and next steps. The Table developed by UN Women along the lines of the Data Companion (see Annex 12) and focusing on the SPF funded impact areas presenting progress – or otherwise – is an important step forward for systematically presenting challenges and constraints as they may arise, enabling more clarity on monitoring and measuring progress on outcomes and outputs of SPF-funded components.

UN Women and Theory of Change

61. The country examples covered by the SPF evaluation reveal that adapting the FPI TOC to the regional and country context requires clear guidelines on how to achieve this. Clarity on adaptation of the TOC to the context would arguably strengthen the quality of applications for donor funding, as well as joint programming endeavours with strategic partners.

Recommendations addressed to UN Women

62. Provide **clarity to UN Women staff on the role and function of the SPF** as a flexible funding modality that supports UN Women in implementing programme components in the designated impact areas as per the Strategic Plan 2014-2017. Designating the SPF as a 'programme' using indicators from the DRF is correct but the aggregate level reporting of the latter is not useful for identifying contribution of the SPF funding modality to outcomes and outputs, and how SPF resources have been allocated within the wider Portfolio of UN Women.

¹⁰ UN Women Data Companion 2014: contribution of UN Women at output level to data and statistics 8% percent, covering 51 countries; 2015: 3.9 per cent covering 38 countries.

63. **Institutionalise the mechanism for allocating SPF funding** to foster clarity, accountability and transparency at regional and country levels, while at the same time ensuring the flexibility of this funding modality is maintained. Link this to compiling a **Strategic Briefing Note on Good Practice Examples** where UN Women has leveraged its strategic positioning supported by effective use of SPF funding. This could arguably function as an effective advocacy tool for strengthening applications for donor funding.
64. Where SPF surge support is activated in response to a humanitarian need and crisis, **consider focusing on programme components where UN Women has established a recognised strategic position** and can further consolidate its comparative advantage, and where technical experience can be transferred to other countries in crisis.
65. Taking the balance between prioritising needs and responding to demand into account, consider **allocating SPF funding to country programme or project offices rather than a country presence with limited capacity**. This would contribute to achieving synergy and value added, and strengthen UN Women's catalytic role.
66. Given the **importance of sex-disaggregated data** for evidence-based advocacy and promoting dialogue, UN Women needs to increase human resource capacity and financial investment in this area, which in turn can be expected to strengthen efficiency and effectiveness of SPF-funded initiatives as well as have implications for implementing the SDGs.
67. Ensure the **phasing-out process and exit strategy** included in SPF funded projects entail explicit and practical steps for post-project sustainability.
68. Note that SPF-funded positions and long-term deployments require **timely follow-up on alternative funding sources**. The experience of the flexible SPF funding support could be used as a model for encouraging other donors to invest in human resource capacity and the country level. Advocacy on this needs to showcase successful experiences where the SPF-funded position has had positive multiplier effects. Investment needs to be long enough to guarantee results before focus shifts to securing further resources.
69. **Capitalise on UN Women's strategic positioning** during the process of developing the SDGs and effectively contributing to the mainstreaming of gender in targets and indicators by providing guidelines for UN Women staff to link the SDGs with SPF-funded programme interventions in *Impact areas 1 and 4*.

Recommendations addressed to Sida

70. Given the continuing constraints to institutionalising the UN goal of Delivering as One—with all too often adverse implications for UN Women to contribute to synergy, achieve value added, and strengthen its catalytic role, not to mention avoiding duplication of efforts, which remains a reality because of the vertically structured UN system—Sida may **consider linking its funding of other UN agencies with evidence that it supports UN Women's role** as knowledge-broker, technical expert and coordinator on GEEW.
71. This also applies to **UN Women's formal membership in the IASC**, which to date is obstructed by IASC full members.
72. **Sida's support to implementing the UN goal of Delivering as One** may be strategically leveraged as follows:

- a. While implementing programme components in *Impact area 1* is supported by specific funds, Sida could, for example, further support UN Women to strengthen its strategic positioning in respect of the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/66/130).
 - b. UN Women has effectively contributed to mainstreaming gender in the SDGs. Sida may contribute to UN Women strengthening its strategic positioning in SDG fora and sectoral networks as part of supporting Delivering as One.
 - c. In respect of *Impact area 4*, UN Women has—with support from the SPF funding modality—strengthened its technical credentials at global level, for example its contribution to integrating gender into the core commitments issued by the WHS.
 - d. Advocating for and actively supporting UN Women's strategic positioning in similar fora would pay dividends in respect of Sida's investment in the UN Women Humanitarian Unit, and programme components funded by SPF Phase I in *Impact area 4*.
73. UN Women's comparative advantage regarding its work on **tracking financial expenditure**—integral to its Strategic Plan Priority on 'Strengthening the responsiveness of plans and budgets to gender equality at all levels'—would arguably contribute to efficient and effective implementing of *Impact area 1 and 4* programme components. Sida may consider allocating SPF funds to strengthen UN Women's capacity to deliver on this strategic priority and linking it with efforts to mobilise the UNCT to actively engage in costing implications of neglecting gender-relevant aspects in the UNDAF and other joint activities.
 74. The strategic approach in the UN Women country office to link programme components in the SPF-funded area with impact areas not funded by the SPF—in particular *Impact area 2* on women's economic empowerment—has contributed to **synergy and value added in terms of strengthening inter-linkages between impact areas in the UN Women Strategic Plan**. Sida may support this further through allocating seed money for institutionalising such inter-linkages in the Country Strategy Note and annual work plans.
 75. Given that Sweden is the main funder of UN Women (when core and non-core funding are combined), Sida may strengthen its support to UN Women in terms of its **strategic positioning in international fora** (e.g. ECHO, ECOSOC, UNEAD, WCDRR, SDG) with arguably positive implications for raising the benchmark on Delivering as One.
 76. Requesting a structured **management response to issues raised by Sida** during the annual meetings on progress of the SPF would contribute to more systematic follow-up of the implementation process. The Table developed by UN Women along the lines of the Data Companion and focusing on the SPF funded impact areas presenting progress – or otherwise – is an important step forward for systematically presenting challenges and constraints as they may arise. Moreover allocating funding for a mid-term review of SPF Phase II would have positive implications for identified adjustment requirements to the implementation process and contribute further to accountability and transparency.