



INSIGHTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY:  
**A META-SYNTHESIS OF UN WOMEN EVALUATIONS**



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Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women (IEAS)

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**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS)**

Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

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# ACRONYMS

<b>AC</b>	Americas and the Caribbean
<b>AS</b>	Arab States
<b>AP</b>	Asia and the Pacific
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>ECA</b>	Europe and Central Asia
<b>ESA</b>	East and Southern Africa
<b>GATE</b>	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
<b>GERAAS</b>	Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System
<b>IES</b>	Independent Evaluation Service
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>LEAP</b>	UN Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access, and Protection in Crisis Response Flagship Program
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OEEF</b>	Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency
<b>RMS</b>	Results Management System
<b>RBM</b>	Results-Based Management
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>WCA</b>	West and Central Africa
<b>WFP</b>	Women, Peace and Security

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

This meta-synthesis brings together evidence on UN Women's organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs. In alignment with UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2022, the synthesis focusses on issues related to UN coordination efforts, strategic partnerships, knowledge management, innovation, results-based management, resource mobilization, streamlining business processes and improvements in the management of financial and human resources. In addition to highlighting progress, the synthesis captures commonly identified drivers of change in the form of good practices, innovations and impediments.

The purpose of this synthesis is to contribute to UN Women's knowledge base and learning on the organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs of the Strategic Plan. The findings are also intended to inform the forthcoming evaluation of Flagship Programme Initiatives and thematic priorities, and other corporate processes.

Given the specialized focus of this synthesis, a wide sample of evaluations was selected to provide sufficient context and capture any changes in approach during the current Strategic Plan period. The scope of this synthesis covers all evaluations conducted by UN Women between 2018 and 2019, as well as corporate evaluations from 2017. Evaluations with a GERAAS rating of fair and above were included, bringing the total sample to 68 reports.

## Approach and methodology

This meta-synthesis is theory-based and used an analytical framework to map the pathways of progress on organizational effectiveness and efficiency. It began by constructing a theory of implementation describing the approach of UN Women using elements from the Strategic Plan and the accompanying Integrated Results and Resources Framework (see annex 2). This was then used to design a coding structure to analyse and map evaluation evidence.

**68**  
evaluations  
2017-2019

### Scope

**53** country-level evaluations

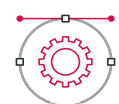
**9** global evaluations

**6** regional evaluations

### Methodology



- Combination of quantitative and qualitative methods
- Coding structure to analyse and map evaluation evidence



- Theory-based analytical framework
- Reconstructed theory of implementation

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to identify emerging trends and highlight good practices and impediments. The quantitative analysis assessed the strength of evidence on emerging insights and lessons by mapping relative frequencies and geographic coverage. The qualitative analysis used a structured synthesis with a view to refining trends, identifying common lessons and highlighting any innovative approaches to achieving the outputs. Given the focus on organizational effectiveness and efficiency, the analysis and findings were organized around the related four outputs of the UN Women Strategic Plan.

## Key Insights

### OUTPUT 1

#### Enhanced coordination, coherence, and accountability of the UN System for commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment

UN Women plays a pivotal role in the United Nations system to enhance coherence on issues related to gender mainstreaming, gender parity and system-wide accountability in these areas. The achievements of UN Women in UN coordination efforts are acknowledged and well documented in most evaluation reports covering this area. Many evaluations also highlighted the established role of UN Women as a technical expert on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Through its convening power, UN Women brings together diverse UN stakeholders. Several evaluations highlighted UN Women's ability to work effectively with partners to deliver stronger and more comprehensive programmes. Effective coordination between UN Women and other UN entities is a key contributor to the delivery of successful programmes, especially for UN joint programming. UN Women has succeeded in strengthening programmes by partnering with other UN agencies to harness relative comparative advantages.

To strengthen accountability, UN Women has worked with partner agencies to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) measurement indicators and monitor progress towards results. Some evaluation reports also highlighted UN Women's technical support through training on gender mainstreaming.

Establishing clarity on roles and governance structure, harnessing implementation synergies and leveraging the comparative advantages of partners are some of the good practices that UN Women employs. These have implications for joint programmes to build on ongoing or complementary initiatives and reduce operational costs while improving implementation efficiency.

When examining factors that negatively affect UN system coordination, the most frequently identified risks related to a lack of streamlining in terms of communication and implementation. Some evaluations also highlighted issues with the management and implementation of joint programmes, resulting from a lack of clarity around responsibilities. Another impediment was the inadequacy of resources (human, financial and technical) allocated to coordination work.

#### GOOD PRACTICES



##### CLEAR GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Establishing clarity on roles and governance structure

#### IMPEDIMENTS



##### LACK OF STREAMLINED COMMUNICATION

Lack of streamlined communication and implementation (e.g. in Country Teams)



##### HARNESSING SYNERGIES

Harnessing implementation synergies and leveraging comparative advantages of partners



##### INADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

Inadequacy of resources (human, financial and technical) allocated to coordination

### OUTPUT 2

#### Increased engagement of partners in support of UN Women's mandate

UN Women has shown its expertise in bringing together diverse stakeholders to comprehensively and efficiently address issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Approximately one third of the evaluations in the sample noted its success in identifying and engaging with a wide range of partners, including national gender machineries, government ministries, the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs). Each of these partners is important for bringing about change, contributing unique strengths and local and international connections to

facilitate successful programme implementation on the ground.

UN Women has played a key role in building synergies amongst gender equality advocates. This is especially true in cases where UN Women’s country and regional strategies align with existing programmes. Alignment encourages high levels of national and local ownership of programmes, which increases the likelihood that they will be sustained beyond UN Women’s established timeframes.

UN Women has demonstrated expertise in engaging and coordinating with relevant government bodies in order to build their capacities and enable them to take ownership of projects. Several evaluations highlighted the support UN Women has provided to CSOs on capacity development, innovative methods of advocacy and networking opportunities. There is strong evidence of UN Women’s commitment to ensuring the participation of CSOs in decision-making processes and ensuring inclusion and participation of marginalized groups of women and gender equality champions at the grassroots level. Strategic partnerships with digital or media based private sector institutions have also proved beneficial in socializing the gender equality and women’s empowerment agenda, and empowering media personnel to recognize and report on gender-related issues.

The identification and selection of strong local partners was found to significantly contribute to the success of gender equality initiatives. Strong partners from the public and private sectors add significant value by contributing their expertise in implementing women’s social, political, and economic empowerment activities. UN Women can support these capacities with its own organizational strengths and utilize their local connections to create spaces for dialogue and improve community-level engagement.

While UN Women’s partnership engagement strategy has been quite successful in achieving the objectives and expected results of interventions, evaluations identified some common risks when engaging with outside actors. Inadequate outreach and weak coordination with partners were reported in several evaluation reports. Weak partner capacity was also identified as impediment, with several evaluations recommending greater support to develop capacities, especially in knowledge management, gender

mainstreaming within organizations, and monitoring and evaluation strategies.



### OUTPUT 3

**High quality of programmes through knowledge management, innovation, results-based management, and evaluation**

Many evaluation reports found that UN Women has been engaged in various efforts to develop internal and external monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity. There is evidence that UN Women has worked to improve M&E of interventions by clarifying definitions of outcomes and outputs, and explicitly defining measurable indicators and targets. The integration of specialized personnel, utilization of in-house experts from regional offices and headquarters, and the hiring of external M&E consultants have also proven to be beneficial in the development of monitoring strategies.

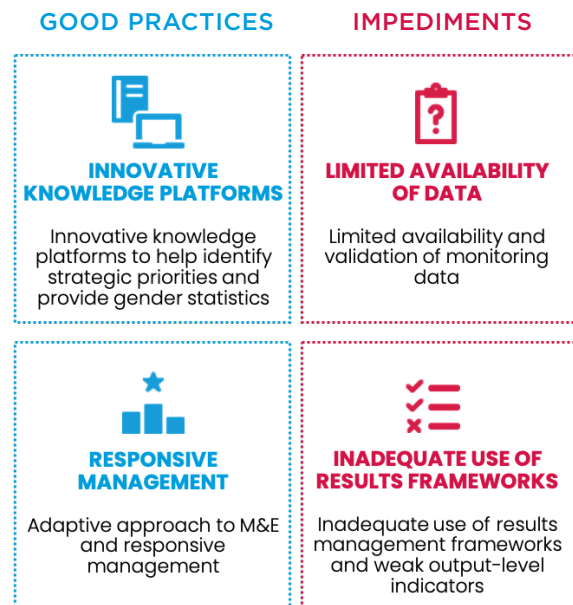
Improving capacities on gender responsive results-based management (RBM) continues to be a priority area for UN Women. While several evaluations indicated a strengthening of UN Women RBM systems over time, there is room for improvement. Implementation of these systems is most successful



when accompanied by a logical framework or theory of change that is closely aligned with the objectives, expected results and outputs. Evaluations highlighted the importance of developing a strong theory of change by engaging multiple stakeholders and using a participatory process. A few evaluation reports indicate that UN Women country offices are committed to utilizing an RBM system in all phases of project implementation and there is a consistent effort to ensure that offices have sufficient RBM capacity and systems. Evaluations also indicate that RBM training provided to partners is seen as valued and useful, but it requires continuous follow-up for partners to fully adopt it.

UN Women’s knowledge platform and products help to identify strategic priorities and provide updated gender statistics and data. Several evaluations highlighted success in strengthening gender data and disseminating evidence from knowledge products. Once disseminated to stakeholders and decision-making authorities, these products can inform national responses to gender related issues, contribute to increased commitment from partners, and provide a foundation for dialogue on issues affecting women and girls. UN Women has succeeded in providing technical support to partners for the development of digital databases and information management systems, particularly in the areas of violence against women and girls and women’s empowerment.

Limited availability of monitoring data emerged as a recurring issue of concern. Some evaluations cited a lack of partner capacity to establish mechanisms to systematically capture data and a lack of good baseline data. Evaluations also highlighted issues such as an overabundance of indicators leading to technical complications, use of incomplete indicators and a lack of identification of measurable indicators. Weaknesses in the design and utilization of M&E systems can also be attributed to low budget allocations for these activities, which result in inadequate human and financial resources.



**OUTPUT 4**

**Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results**

Many evaluations reported efficiency in the use and management of funds to be satisfactory. UN Women offices were found to allocate resources responsively and efficiently. UN Women improved operational efficiencies by streamlining systems and leveraging the operational capacities of other UN agencies, where possible. In some cases, projects were able to reach more beneficiaries than originally planned. UN Women was also able to co-locate with UN partners in some countries to save on operational costs

In terms of human resources, many evaluations highlighted the value of the experienced and committed personnel of UN Women in managing demanding workloads. Other factors such as the supportive and responsive management of UN Women and efforts to remove operational bottlenecks were also identified as contributing to overall improvements. Key gaps related to this output emerged around fund raising and donor management, with very few evaluations referencing these issues.

One of the good practices identified as contributing to the improved management of human and financial resources was the creation of multi-donor coalitions and pooled funding to support UN Women interventions. The pooled fund allowed for increased collaboration among donors, highlighting UN Women’s effectiveness in securing funds and generating donor support. Pooled funds also allow for the participation non-traditional donors by attracting and accepting smaller contributions that can be combined with a larger pool.

The most commonly highlighted impediment was insufficient financial resources that limit the scope, effectiveness, and impact of UN Women interventions. Other factors negatively affecting efficient management of financial resources included uncoordinated resource mobilization efforts, short funding cycles, delays due to the tranche payment system, and an over-reliance on non-core funding. Risks related to human resources were predominantly linked to inadequate staffing and in-country expertise, and notably high rates of personnel turnover.



## Opportunities and the way forward

### Strengthen organization-wide learning and ensure a broader application of lessons from previous successes with United Nations coordination

The ability of UN Women to coordinate and mainstream gender within the United Nations system is widely acknowledged as one of its key strengths. UN Women has experience successfully collaborating with partner agencies and has helped smooth the implementation of joint programmes (and other collaborative projects) in many countries and contexts. This is a good opportunity for organization-wide learning and a broader application of lessons from previous engagements, including fostering effective and consultative management systems, strengthening effective and participatory stakeholder engagement, leveraging in-country links with partner agencies to garner local support, reducing operational costs through coordination on complementary interventions, ensuring sufficient resources for coordination work and strengthening the culture of collaborative work. UN Women should continue to draw on its key assets for United Nations coordination, including its unique mandate focused on gender equality and women’s empowerment and its access to networks (such as women’s groups and national gender machineries). At the UNCT level, UN Women should continue to strengthen coordination and contribute to the coherence of programmes (particularly joint programming), avoid duplication of efforts by multiple United Nations agencies, improve integration with flagship programme initiatives and the thematic priorities of the strategic plan, and ensure better articulation of the roles and contributions of different gender working groups including the Gender Theme Groups.

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### **Enhance partnership governance and engagement frameworks to foster strong partnerships and build on existing local relationships**

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UN Women aims to foster diverse strategic and catalytic partnerships in support of its mandate. One of the key risks to successful partnerships is a lack of coordination among partners. Partnerships with less engaged actors lead to issues such as overlapping activities, weak accountability and implementation delays that require time and resources from UN Women to resolve. This suggests an opportunity to develop partnership strategies that avoid these pitfalls by explicitly defining roles and responsibilities, using participatory consultative approaches, and aligning with existing programmes where possible. UN Women should continue to use a flexible approach to engagement when working with strong local partners and build on existing relationships.

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### **Further strengthen partner networks and expand outreach to include diverse actors and donors**

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UN Women has shown its expertise in bringing together diverse stakeholders to comprehensively and efficiently address issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The capacity to coordinate between partners such as government ministries, CSOs, and, more recently, the private sector, is widely recognized as one of the key comparative advantages of UN Women. It can build effective alliances that bring stakeholders together and encourage knowledge-sharing, coordination, and cooperation among partners. UN Women has also successfully brought together donors by encouraging pooled or joint funding mechanisms. Pooled funds increase collaboration among donors and allow a wider range of smaller donors to contribute and engage with programming. Pooled funds can also support programmes that are longer, more sustainable, and more flexible, increasing their potential to have transformational effects.

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### **Improve the effectiveness of monitoring systems and strengthen institutional mechanisms for results-based management, learning and planning**

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UN Women should continue to work on enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, and application of its M&E systems. This includes initiatives such as improving the clarity and measurability of project indicators, standardizing indicators and monitoring where possible, ensuring development of clear theories of change, establishing project management principles, embedding risk management, establishing clear guidelines for project closures and incorporating innovative monitoring approaches that are responsive to institutional and political environments. Accountability mechanisms for RBM, including comprehensive project management systems and improved data quality, should be strengthened to encourage regular M&E of project activities. The dedicated personnel of UN Women are recognized as one of its key assets and it should continue to foster internal sharing of knowledge and experiences. There is also an opportunity to adapt reporting systems (including the Results Management System) to improve alignment with outcome and country-level results and enhance learning by fully capturing progress and challenges

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### **Intensify efforts to strengthen gender databases and knowledge platforms**

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The UN Women website is a point of entry for external organizations to gather data and develop awareness-raising materials to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women can augment and leverage the development of digital databases of gender-disaggregated data (including Women Count) at the global and local levels. UN Women should continue to provide technical support to external partners to develop gender-disaggregated databases and encourage gender-disaggregated baseline data collection. The UN Women knowledge management platforms provide a space to share lessons and good practices to advance gender equality and should be strengthened to support knowledge-sharing and evidence-based advocacy on issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Continue to address key constraints on financial and human resources through prioritization, resource mobilization and improved efficacy of business processes**

Lack of funds remains a key challenge for UN Women. The Entity should continue to strategically prioritize and protect key work areas from vulnerabilities caused by reliance on non-core funding, changes in donor priorities and short funding cycles. In terms of resource mobilization, UN Women should build on its efforts to improve coordination and strengthen mechanisms such as pooled funding, multi-year funding, partnerships with the private sector and flagship

programming initiatives. Flagship programming initiatives, which seek funding at a strategic level, have contributed to UN Women unearmarked funds, and should be developed further.

UN Women is currently carrying out a change management process and functional analysis of various offices. Given the varying needs by region and country, the Entity should ensure resourcing is responsive to individual contexts and maintain personnel continuity insofar as possible at the country level. UN Women should also continue to streamline internal business processes and take steps towards addressing commonly identified causes of delays and risks.

**OPPORTUNITIES AND THE WAY FORWARD**



**STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATION-WIDE LEARNING** and a broader application of **lessons** from previous successful engagements on UN Coordination.



**FURTHER STRENGTHEN PARTNER NETWORKS** and expand outreach to include diverse actors and donors.



**ENHANCE PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE** and engagement frameworks to foster strong partnerships and build on existing local relationships.



**IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MONITORING SYSTEMS** and strengthen institutional mechanisms for results-based management, learning and planning.



Intensify efforts towards **STRENGTHENING GENDER DATABASES** and knowledge platforms.



Continue to **ADDRESS KEY CONSTRAINTS IN FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES** through prioritization, resource mobilization and improved efficacy of business processes.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1

### Background

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women) Strategic Plan 2018-2021<sup>1</sup> presents UN Women's strategic direction, objectives, and approaches in working towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The Strategic Plan prioritizes five mutually reinforcing developmental outcomes that are aligned with the organization's triple functions of normative support functions, UN coordination and operational activities.<sup>2</sup>

#### Organizational effectiveness and efficiency

In support of UN Women's overarching mandate, the plan further identifies four outputs capturing organizational effectiveness and efficiency priorities:

- **Output 1:** Enhanced coordination, coherence, and accountability of the UN system commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment
- **Output 2:** Increased engagement of partners in support of UN Women's mandate
- **Output 3:** High quality of programmes through knowledge, innovation, results-based management, and evaluation
- **Output 4:** Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results

This meta-synthesis brings together evidence on UN Women's organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs from evaluations conducted between 2017 and 2019. In alignment with the Strategic Plan, the synthesis focusses on issues related to UN coordination efforts, strategic partnerships, knowledge management, innovation, results-based management, resource mobilization, streamlined business processes and personnel capacity development. In addition to highlighting progress, the synthesis also captures commonly identified drivers of change in the form of good practices, innovations and impediments.

## 1.2

### Purpose and scope

The purpose of this synthesis is to contribute to UN Women's knowledge base and learning on organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs of the Strategic Plan. Using insights from UN Women's corporate and decentralized evaluations, the synthesis highlights evidence-based results and drivers of change. The key objectives are to:

1. Synthesize evidence on progress made towards the achievement of organizational effectiveness and efficiency outputs
2. Identify commonly applied good practices and innovations
3. Analyze impediments and risks as well as successful risk management strategies
4. Highlight overarching, emerging lessons

The primary audience for the synthesis comprises internal UN Women stakeholders, including the Executive Board and UN Women personnel. The findings are also intended to inform the forthcoming Flagship Programme Initiatives and thematic priorities evaluation, and other corporate processes.

Given the specialized focus of this synthesis on organizational effectiveness and efficiency, a wide sample of evaluations was selected to provide sufficient context and capture any changes in approach during the current strategic plan period. The scope of this synthesis

1 UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2022 is available at: <https://undocs.org/en/UNW/2017/6/Rev.1>

2 As stated in the Strategic Plan 2018-2020, the five development outcomes are: 1. A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is strengthened and implemented; 2. Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; 3. Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; 4. All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; 5. Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and from humanitarian action.

covers all evaluations conducted by UN Women between 2018 and 2019, as well as corporate evaluations from 2017. Evaluations with a GERAAS rating of fair and above were included, bringing the total sample to 68 reports of which three evaluations were conducted in 2017, 33 in 2018 and 32 in 2019 (Annex 1)<sup>3,4</sup>.

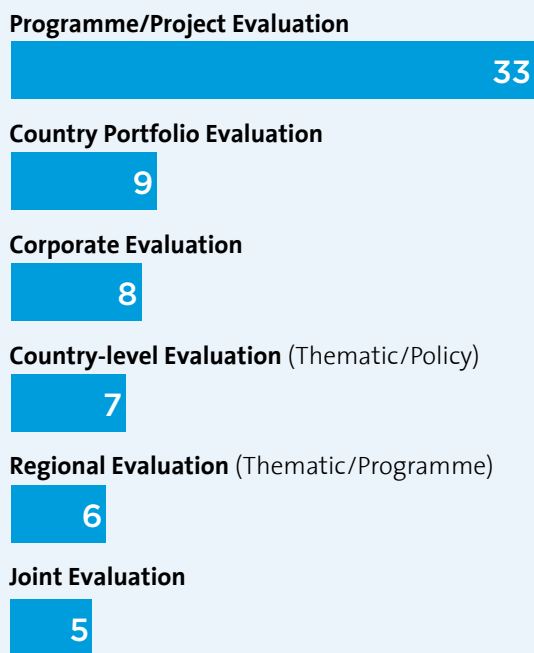
The sample comprises 53 country level evaluations, nine global evaluations and six regional evaluations. This incorporates a wide range of evaluation types, with the majority being programme or project evaluations (33). The sample also includes nine country portfolio evaluations, eight corporate evaluations, seven thematic or policy evaluations at the country level, six regional thematic or programme evaluations and five joint evaluations (Box 1).

In terms of geographic coverage, the evaluation sample is well distributed. The highest number of

each region comprising 19 per cent of the sample. This is followed by evaluations from the Americas and the Caribbean (AC) region (16 per cent), corporate evaluations (15 per cent), and evaluations from the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region (11 per cent). Finally, the Asia and the Pacific (AP), and West and Central Africa (WCA) regions each make up 10 per cent (Box 2).

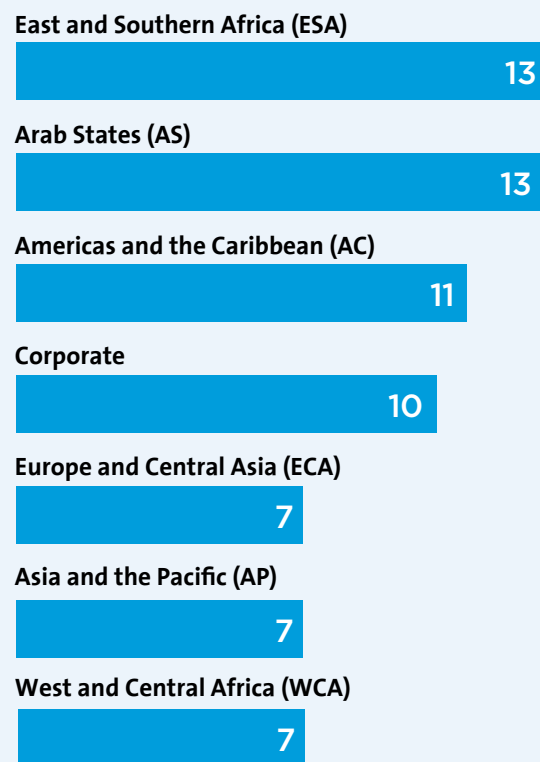
**BOX 1**

**Evaluations by type**



**BOX 2**

**Geographic Coverage of Evaluations**



evaluations cover the East and Southern Africa (ESA) and Arab States (AS) regions, with evaluations from

**1.3 Approach and methodology**

This meta-synthesis is theory-based and used an analytical framework to map the pathways of progress on organizational effectiveness and efficiency. It began by constructing a theory of implementation describing the approach of UN Women using elements from the Strategic Plan and the accompanying Integrated Results and Resources Framework (see annex 2). This

3 The language of most evaluation reports was English (52), followed by Spanish (11) and French (7).  
 4 The Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) is a retrospective external assessment of UN Women evaluation reports.

was then used to design a coding structure to analyse and map evaluation evidence<sup>5</sup>.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to identify emerging trends and highlight good practices and impediments. The quantitative analysis assessed the strength of evidence on emerging insights and lessons by mapping relative frequencies and geographic coverage. The qualitative analysis used a structured synthesis with a view to refining trends, identifying common lessons and highlighting any innovative approaches to achieving the outputs. Given the focus on organizational effectiveness and efficiency, the analysis and findings were organized around the related four outputs of the UN Women Strategic Plan.

## Limitations

The analysis presented in this synthesis is based solely on a desk review of evidence from completed corporate and decentralized evaluations rated as good quality using the UN Women evaluation quality standards. This limitation affects the composition and quality of the sample, although this is the same for previous evaluation syntheses. The broad scope of this exercise and its quality assurance process may mitigate this concern to some extent.

Other limitations stem from subjective judgements involved in qualitative analysis and challenges associated with aggregating results from such a diverse range of evaluations. While these concerns remain valid, the structured manner of the analysis has the benefit of generating a transparent database. This ensures that references are easily available, coding can be cross checked and reviewed, and that the database can be potentially updated in the future and used for further analyses.

The focused nature of this synthesis also creates a risk in terms of the depth (or lack thereof) of evidence in the area of organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Additionally, the four outputs in this area may not be equally or sufficiently referenced in the evaluations, leading to further variations in the body of evidence. In light of this concern, the evaluation was designed to be as broad as possible and the final sample includes

68 evaluations, which are representative of all regions. The synthesis aims to be transparent about the depth of evidence, while also providing illustrative examples.

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<sup>5</sup> The analysis used the NVivo qualitative and mixed methods data analysis software.

## 2. FINDINGS ON ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

This section describes the coverage of issues related to organizational effectiveness and efficiency in the evaluation sample. Evidence related to each of the four outputs is analyzed and the key insights on results, good practices and impediments are discussed.

Coverage of the four outputs varies within the sample of evaluations. As presented in Table 1, output 2, which relates to the increased engagement of partners is the most extensively covered and significant findings related to this area appear in 65 out of 68 evaluations. Output 3 on knowledge, innovation, results-based

management and evaluation and output 4 on financial and human resource management are covered in 64 and 61 evaluations, respectively. Output 1 on enhanced coordination is the least extensively covered, with significant findings related to this area appearing in 43 evaluations.<sup>6</sup>

**TABLE 1**  
**Coverage of organizational and effectiveness outputs**

Output	n*	Frequency (N=68)
1. Enhanced coordination, coherence, and accountability of the UN System for commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment	43	63%
2. Increased engagement of partners in support of UN Women's mandate	65	95%
3. High quality of programmes through knowledge, innovation, results-based management, and evaluation	64	94%
4. Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results	61	92%

\*n = Number of evaluations addressing this output

6 When describing the frequency with which an observation was noted, the synthesis is consistent with previous reports in using the following metric: Most = over 75 per cent of the evaluations contributing to an observation/ finding; Many = between 51 per cent and 75 per cent; Some/Several = between 20 per cent and 50 per cent; Few = less than 20 per cent.



## 2.1

### Output 1

#### Enhanced coordination, coherence, and accountability of the UN System for commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment

Overall coverage of this output was moderate, with 63 per cent of evaluations (43 out of 68) providing insights on results and key factors related to enhanced UN coordination, coherence, and accountability. The geographic coverage of insights was quite evenly distributed, with the highest number of evaluations from the East and Southern Africa region, followed by headquarters-led and corporate evaluations (Box 3).

#### BOX 3

#### Geographic Coverage of OEEF Output 1

##### East and Southern Africa (ESA)

9

##### Corporate

8

##### Europe and Central Asia (ECA)

7

##### Arab States (AS)

6

##### West and Central Africa (WCA)

5

##### Americas and the Caribbean (AC)

4

##### Asia and the Pacific (AP)

4

#### Key Insights

UN Women plays a pivotal role in the United Nations system to enhance coherence on issues related to gender mainstreaming, gender parity and system-wide accountability in these areas. The achievements of UN Women in UN coordination efforts are acknowledged

and well documented in most evaluation reports covering this area. Many evaluations also highlighted the established role of UN Women as a technical expert on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Progress towards achieving successful coordination within the United Nations system, particularly at the country level and in joint programming, is highlighted in many evaluations. UN Women has also succeeded in strengthening programmes by partnering with other United Nations agencies to harness relative comparative advantages. Examples include leveraging in-country links of partner United Nations agencies, effective United Nations country team (UNCT) coordination and knowledge-sharing. Evidence of the success of UN Women in leading the United Nations Gender Theme Groups is weaker, although evaluations in Liberia and South Sudan have found that UN Women has contributed significantly to the UNCT through these groups. This could be an interesting area for future evaluations as it is one of the key entry points on coordination for UN Women.

To strengthen accountability, UN Women has worked with other agencies and partners to develop measurement indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 5 and monitor progress towards results. Some evaluation reports also highlighted UN Women technical support through training on gender mainstreaming.

#### *Strengthening programmes through partnerships*

Through its convening power, UN Women brings together diverse UN stakeholders. Several evaluations have highlighted its ability to work effectively with partners to deliver stronger and more comprehensive programmes for beneficiaries. Effective coordination between UN Women and other United Nations entities is a key factor in the delivery of successful programmes, especially for United Nations joint programming, and this is also noted in many evaluations. For instance, the evaluation of the joint programme on women's economic empowerment in Kyrgyzstan found that experts from FAO, WFP and IFAD worked together to combine efforts on normative and community work. This facilitated change at multiple levels by improving the social context and the individual capacities of rural women. Evaluations of joint programmes in Georgia and Ethiopia similarly found that strong collaboration between UN Women and other UN agencies was highly instrumental in achieving programme objectives. As part of the joint project on Improving Women's Participation in

Political Processes as Peace Building Ambassadors in Sierra Leone, UNESCO, UNDP, and UN Women successfully harnessed their respective strengths to support the programme. UNESCO brought in cultural strengths, UNDP brought comparative advantage in working with electoral bodies and rule of law and UN- Women brought in the voice of women, civil and voter registration and political processes including women's empowerment.

## Good Practices

Two common good practices emerged as contributing factors to successful coordination. The first is clear roles and governance structures when working across agencies, particularly in the context of joint programmes. Strong programmes had well-functioning management committees and clearly defined responsibilities. Partnerships with established governance frameworks and clearly defined management functions were associated with better results. For instance, the Bangladesh country portfolio evaluation shows that collaboration between ILO, IOM and UN Women helped leverage the specific expertise and mandate of UN Women to promote the recognition of gender issues and responses to them across mandates managed by other UN agencies. The second good practice is harnessing implementation synergies and leveraging the comparative advantages of partners. This allows joint programmes to build on ongoing or complementary initiatives and reduce operational costs while improving implementation efficiency.

## Impediments

The most frequently identified risks to United Nations system coordination relate to a lack of streamlining of communication and implementation. For instance, UNCTs can have multiple channels of communication and relationships with the same agency due to differences in priorities and operations at the country level, causing inefficiency. For joint programmes, implementation delays can be compounded when each United Nations agency involved independently approaches the government for approvals. Some evaluations have also highlighted issues with the management and implementation of joint programmes due to a lack of clearly defined responsibilities. One of the reasons identified is the inadequacy of resources (human, financial and technical) allocated to coordination work.

### HIGHLIGHT

#### BANGLADESH COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

*"Collaboration between ILO and UN Women and IOM is a good example of how UN Women's distinct expertise and mandate can be leveraged to gain traction on recognition of gender issues and responses to these across mandates managed by other UN agencies. It has involved:*

- *Formal collaboration in shared programmes in ways that use the comparative advantage and distinct specializations of involved agencies.*
- *Informal collaboration, including beyond the project framework, sharing technical expertise to fine-tune translation of policy into implementation so that the intent of gender-responsive policy can be fulfilled*
- *Understanding of each other's comparative advantage and a desire to combine analytical weight to optimize mutual objectives. All three agencies have clarity as regards their common goal and are working towards common strategic results and national priorities."*

## 2.2

### Output 2

#### Increased engagement of partners in support of UN Women's mandate

The coverage of issues related to increased engagement of partners was very high, with 95 percent (65 out of 68) of evaluations referencing various aspects related to output. The East and Southern Africa and Arab States regions contributed the highest number of relevant evaluation reports, followed by Americas and the Caribbean (Box 4).

**BOX 4****Geographic Coverage of OEEF Output 2****East and Southern Africa (ESA)****Arab States (AS)****Americas and the Caribbean (AC)****Corporate****Asia and the Pacific (AP)****Europe and Central Asia (ECA)****West and Central Africa (WCA)****Key Insights**

UN Women has shown its expertise in bringing together diverse stakeholders to comprehensively and efficiently address issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Approximately one third of the evaluations in the sample noted its success in identifying and engaging with a wide range of partners, including national gender machineries, government ministries, the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs). Each of these partners is important for bringing about change, contributing unique strengths and local and international connections to facilitate successful programme implementation on the ground.

Several evaluations highlighted the importance of engagement at the community level to support the ownership and sustainability of projects. For instance, in the Arab States region, the evaluation of the Community Based Solutions and National Level Grants for Promoting Gender Equality and Engaging Men and Boys in the Arab States initiative found that the involvement of community leaders and gatekeepers had a critical impact on community-level change. In terms of engaging a diverse range of partners,

evaluations found that UN Women has successfully engaged with faith-based organizations (e.g. in Egypt and Ethiopia), men and boys (e.g. in Morocco and Palestine) and youth (e.g. in Albania, Malawi and Mozambique).

Several evaluations found that UN Women played a key role in building synergies among advocates for gender equality. This was especially true where the UN Women country and regional strategies aligned with existing programmes, allowing it to support and complement the work of government and civil society partners. This strategy encouraged high levels of national and local ownership of programmes, which increases the likelihood that they will be sustained beyond the engagement of UN Women.

**Successful engagement with government**

Strong and inclusive partnerships between UN Women and government institutions at the municipal and national levels are a key success factor in advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. UN Women has shown its expertise in engaging and coordinating with relevant government bodies for capacity-building and enabling them to take ownership of projects. Several evaluations noted the success of UN Women in bringing together different government entities to strengthen project implementation and reduce duplication of efforts. For instance, working closely with the National Council for Women in Egypt, UN Women supported efforts to develop the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women and Girls and protocols to ensure the commitment of the Government of Egypt to "respect women's rights and encourage their effective and active participation in the development of their community." In Kyrgyzstan, UN- Women maintained good communication with government counterparts, resulting in strong relationships with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration, the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Statistics Committee and the State Agency on Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations.

**Engagement with Civil Society Organizations**

A key element facilitating the achievement of expected results of UN Women interventions is the strategic engagement of CSOs. Strong relationships with CSOs are facilitated by the credibility and trust that UN Women has built among these actors based

on its demonstrated expertise in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. Several evaluations highlighted the support UN Women has provided to CSOs on capacity development, innovative methods of advocacy and networking opportunities. Some evaluation reports (e.g.: Albania and Thailand) also provided strong evidence of UN Women's commitment to ensuring the participation of CSOs in decision-making processes, with some evidence of inclusion and participation of marginalized groups of women and gender equality champions at the grass-roots level.

### *Private Sector Engagement*

While not as widely documented as CSO and government engagement, some evaluations found positive impacts from engagement with private sector partners. This was especially true for women's economic empowerment. Coordination with the private sector led to advocacy on women's economic issues, skills training based on private sector demand and improved access to lines of credit for women. For instance, successful engagement with the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry through a United Nations joint programme led to further advocacy for gender equality in lending practices and the implementation of reforms in investment and insurance policies affecting women entrepreneurs. Strategic partnerships with digital or media-based private sector institutions (e.g. in Sierra Leone) have also helped promote the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda, empowering media personnel to recognize and report on gender-related issues.

### **Good practices**

The evaluation reports highlighted several good practices that enhance the recognition of UN Women interventions and amplify impact. The identification and selection of strong local partners was found to make a significant contribution to the success of gender equality initiatives. These partners included economic entities such as cooperatives and community banks, government ministries with high levels of interest and commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, and active CSOs with extensive local connections. Strong partners from the public and private sectors add significant value by

contributing their expertise in implementing women's social, political, and economic empowerment activities. UN Women can support these capacities with its own organizational strengths and use the local connections of partners to create spaces for dialogue and increase community-level engagement.

#### **HIGHLIGHT**

#### **EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP, EMPOWERMENT, ACCESS, AND PROTECTION IN CRISIS RESPONSE (LEAP) PROGRAMMING IN THE ARAB STATES REGION**

UN Women partnered with SAFADI in Lebanon in order to facilitate the dual approach of providing training and job placements. *“SAFADI's experience and understanding of the market is that there is a strong need for women's capacity development when starting up their own businesses and managing small sub-grants.*

*These innovative experiences can be the foundation for lobbying the private sector for its commitment to provide employment to women post-training, with internships or job placements provided by the private sector and facilitated by UN Women as direct support to the private sector. The experience gained in engaging with the private sector in Jordan and Lebanon might be of benefit to the work being undertaken in Egypt and Iraq where private sector engagement is currently being established. Because of the context and the legal restrictions on hiring refugees by the private sector, UN Women has an advocacy role in demonstrating how hiring women (both local women and refugee women) would benefit industry.”*

Several evaluations also noted the importance of efforts by UN Women at capacity-building for partners. Examples included strengthening financial

management of CSOs, training partners on monitoring and report writing, training government officials on mainstreaming gender-responsive planning and budgeting, training on issues and standards for protection from gender-based violence and domestic abuse, and training women politicians to develop leadership and networking skills. Capacity-building by UN Women fosters ownership and sustainability of project activities and increases the influence and credibility of implementing partners.

#### HIGHLIGHT

#### SOUTH SUDAN COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2018

*“The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW), the Women Parliamentarians’ Caucus (the WPC) and implementing partners working on gender equality and women’s empowerment have received considerable support from UN Women in terms of normative focus. With UN Women’s support, key GEWE stakeholders’ capacities have been strengthened: the MGCSW, WPC and Implementing Partners’ knowledge of gender mainstreaming and its benefits, the MGCSW co-ordination and oversight capacities; WPC capacity to advocate for gender mainstreaming being integral to national laws, plans and policies and to work towards operationalization of all such instruments at national and lower levels once they have been passed into law.”*

Another factor identified across the evaluation sample was strengthening multi-stakeholder networks of gender equality advocates. These networks, which encompass gender equality actors from government, civil society and, more recently, the private sector, expand the perspective and possible scope of actions for programmes. Alliances built through UN Women encourage knowledge-sharing, programme coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders.

## Impediments

While UN Women partnership engagement has been relatively successful in achieving the objectives and expected results of interventions, many evaluations identified common risks to successful engagement with outside actors.

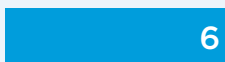
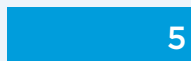
Inadequate outreach and weak coordination with partners were reported in several evaluation reports. Reasons for this included a lack of understanding among partners of overall programmatic strategies, limited participatory planning due to short time frames, lack of regular exchange of information and an absence of clarity in partners’ roles and responsibilities.

Weak partner capacity was also identified as an impediment, with several evaluations recommending more support to build capacity, especially in knowledge management (disaggregation of data and timely and quality reporting), gender mainstreaming within organizations and monitoring and evaluation strategies. The staff turnover of partners at both the federal and regional levels was also reported as a limitation in some evaluations. CSOs remain vulnerable to knowledge gaps due to the loss of key staff and leaders, while staff turnover after changes of government and the lack of multi-year funding mechanisms can pose serious risks to programme sustainability.

### 2.3 Output 3

#### High quality of programmes through knowledge management, innovation, results-based management, and evaluation

Overall coverage for this output was high, with 94 percent (64 out of 68) of sampled evaluations referencing results related to monitoring and evaluation, results-based management, innovation and responsive programme design. The East and Southern Africa, Arab states and Americas and the Caribbean regions contributed the most evaluation findings for this output (Box 5).

**BOX 5****Geographic Coverage of OEEF Output 3****East and Southern Africa (ESA)****Arab States (AS)****Americas and the Caribbean (AC)****Corporate****Asia and the Pacific (AP)****Europe and Central Asia (ECA)****West and Central Africa (WCA)****Key Insights**

Identifying key solutions that benefit women and girls requires developing and disseminating knowledge products, generating accurate gender-disaggregated data, using RBM and committing to the use of evaluation and other assessment findings. Several evaluation reports found evidence of well-designed, responsive programmes that supported adaptation and learning. To create programmes relevant to the needs of beneficiaries, UN Women relies on situational analyses and field research conducted prior to programme implementation, as well as the incorporation of lessons learned from past evaluations and other assessments to improve performance. The Entity would benefit from requiring these success factors to be considered for all programmes and projects in its revised project cycle framework. This would make UN Women better able to identify data-related challenges in various contexts to guide planning, capacity-building and monitoring activities.

**Generation and use of knowledge products**

The UN Women knowledge platform and products help to identify strategic priorities and provide updated gender statistics and data. Several evaluations highlighted success in strengthening gender data and disseminating evidence from knowledge products. Once made available to stakeholders and decision-making authorities, these products can inform national responses to gender-related issues, contribute to increased commitment from partners and provide a foundation for dialogue on issues affecting women and girls. For instance, knowledge products were developed and used from the initial phase for the Safe Cities programme in Ecuador. This facilitated co-learning through exchanges of experience between participating cities. An excellent example of co-learning was the establishment of the baseline survey and creation of the Index of Sexual Violence in Public Spaces, which provided important georeferenced data.

UN Women has successfully provided technical support to partners for the development of digital databases and information management systems, particularly for violence against women and girls and women's empowerment (e.g. in Colombia, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Serbia). Prioritizing and scaling up this practice presents an opportunity to address existing knowledge gaps related to gender-disaggregated data.

**Results-Based Management**

Improving capacities on gender responsive RBM continues to be a priority area for UN Women. While several evaluations indicated a strengthening of UN Women RBM systems over time, there is room for improvement. Implementation of these systems is most successful when accompanied by a logical framework or theory of change that is closely aligned with the objectives, expected results and outputs. Evaluations highlighted the importance of developing a strong theory of change by engaging multiple stakeholders and using a participatory process (e.g. in Liberia, South Sudan, and Syria).

A few evaluation reports highlighted that UN Women country offices are committed to applying RBM systems at an early stage of project development and in all phases of project implementation. There is consistent effort to ensure offices have sufficient RBM capacity and systems. However, capacities are stretched and not all personnel use or interpret RBM correctly. Evaluations also indicate that while the RBM training provided to partners is seen as valuable and useful, it requires continuous follow-up for partners to fully adopt RBM systems and approaches. Partners

were found to take greater ownership of the RBM approach when it was applied in an adaptive manner, allowing them to make adjustments in response to challenges and new priorities. However, as part of effective risk management, these adjustments should be agreed between all stakeholders to ensure interventions remain accountable and cost-effective.

Regarding the UN Women Results Management System, some evaluations highlighted challenges in using the system to retrieve and report accurate information on expenditure and outcome-level results. For instance, the Corporate Evaluation of Humanitarian Action found the system was unable to fully capture the overall contribution of UN Women in this area due to a misalignment of reporting categories. Similarly, the Asia Pacific Programme Presence Portfolio Evaluation found the system was not effectively capturing the results achieved by programme presence offices.

### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

Many evaluation reports found that UN Women has been engaged in efforts to build internal and external monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity. There is evidence that UN Women has worked to improve M&E by clarifying definitions of outcomes and outputs, and explicitly defining measurable indicators and targets. As highlighted in the evaluation of the joint programme on women's economic empowerment in Ethiopia, clear and understandable indicators and targets facilitate effective M&E by stakeholders and encourage compliance with reporting standards. The integration of specialized personnel, the use of in-house experts from regional offices and headquarters and the hiring of external M&E consultants have also proven beneficial in developing monitoring strategies.

Another successful strategy used by UN Women is the establishment of accountability mechanisms and the strengthening of project oversight bodies. Project oversight bodies with representatives from different groups of stakeholders support monitoring by meeting regularly to discuss strategic partnerships for improving efficiency. Stakeholders also share information on gender data, plan activities such as field missions and disseminate reports and knowledge products. For instance, evaluations in El Salvador (the UN Women Ciudad Mujer project) and Kyrgyzstan (the Livelihoods project) highlighted the critical importance of regular technical committee and council meetings to discuss progress and activities.

### *Strategic planning and prioritization*

Many programme and project evaluations mentioned alignment with UN Women's Strategic Plan by establishing linkages with strategic priority areas (e.g. Empower Women project, Fund for Gender Equality, Securing Rights and Improving the Livelihoods of Women in Egypt). Most country portfolio evaluation also highlighted the alignment of country-level strategic notes with UN Women's Strategic Plan (e.g. Asia Pacific programme presence, Guatemala, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, South Sudan). The evaluations, however, were less clear about the role played by the Strategic Plan in helping country teams to select key areas of focus and to prioritize between programmes within a thematic area.

### **Good practices**

Several evaluations highlighted good practices for monitoring and knowledge management. The first is the contribution of UN Women to the development of innovative knowledge platforms which, for example, have facilitated South–South exchange and dialogue between CSOs and government. UN Women knowledge management platforms provide a safe space to exchange lessons learned and good practices for advancing gender equality. The evaluation of the Inclusive Security project in Liberia found that UN Women facilitated South–South exchange with a delegation from Mali, which was reported as being useful and having an impact on women operating in the security and justice sectors in Liberia.

Another good practice that emerged is the innovative approaches to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of monitoring mechanisms. These included the implementation of an adaptive approach to M&E. This allows responsive management, which helps to address the challenges of operating in complex institutional and political environments. These adaptations included online/real-time monitoring mechanisms (e.g. peace support operations in Kenya), gender-specific early warning and elections monitoring tools (e.g. in Sierra Leone), learning-oriented M&E (e.g. the Safe Cities programme in Papua New Guinea) and the use of the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system as a knowledge management platform to facilitate the use of evaluation findings.

### **Impediments**

## HIGHLIGHT

### REGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT EVALUATION

The Gender Café initiated and used by UNW Cameroon and Liberia country offices “*was said to be one of the most effective tools for knowledge sharing and utilization. Created in March 2014, and held each month, the Gender Café brings together high-level officials, practitioners, the Civil Society Organizations and traditional leaders to exchange dialogue and exchange ideas on specific gender issues...Each Gender Café focuses on one of the UN Women Pillars (such as Women’s Political Participation. It delivers outputs responding to the most challenging aspects of the pillar in question.*”

*“Peace Huts were also identified as being an effective knowledge sharing and transfer mechanism at the very grassroots level, where most gender issues are observed. UNW Liberia and Mali COs identified peace huts as highly effective forums where information and knowledge on GE/HR issues was effectively passed on to community members, especially women in rural areas.”*

## HIGHLIGHT

### EVALUATION ON IMPROVING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AS PEACE BUILDING AMBASSADORS IN SIERRA LEONE

*“One unique approach the Project supported was the development of early warning and elections monitoring tool that was gender specific. For example, 150 community-based monitors from across 6 districts were capacitated and reported in real time, early warning reports on incidences of violence during elections using tool were developed. Data generated from the use of these tools was used to highlight incidents of violence to key government institutions, engage security system, notify electoral management bodies (EMBs), the international community and civil society leaders and advocate for action (preventative and mediation measures) to mitigate the violence.”*

Many evaluations highlighted risks and impediments related to knowledge management and RBM. These fell into three main categories: inadequate M&E, limited availability and validation of monitoring data, and inadequate use of results management frameworks.

Inadequate M&E is often a result of weak output-level indicators. Some evaluations (e.g. in Colombia, Ecuador, and Serbia) highlighted issues such as too many indicators leading to technical complications, the use of incomplete indicators and a lack of identification of measurable indicators. Weaknesses in the design and use of M&E systems can also be attributed to low budget allocations for these activities and inadequate human and financial resources. Offices may not always have designated M&E personnel or effective monitoring frameworks to ensure that progress on indicators is captured, validated, and reported in a timely way.

Limited availability and validation of monitoring data also emerged as a recurring issue. Some evaluations cited a lack of capacity among partners to establish mechanisms to systematically capture and validate data. A lack of good baseline data was also reported in some evaluations. In some cases, implementation delays also contributed to the limited availability of monitoring data and gender-disaggregated data was underused.

Inadequate use of monitoring frameworks was cited in several evaluation reports. This could stem from a lack of clear roles and accountability for data collection and validation. Moreover, monitoring frameworks are not always detailed enough to integrate and coordinate stakeholders’ monitoring efforts. For instance, the evaluation of the Preventing Violence against Women and Girls initiative in Ethiopia found that, despite the inclusion of a results framework in the programme document, this was not used to guide monitoring and evaluation. Many of the accompanying indicators were not measured due to a lack of data. The evaluation of the #NoEsDeHombres campaign against sexual harassment in Mexico noted that the programme would have benefited from a results framework with quantitative and qualitative indicators tailored to the different implementation methods and phases of the programme.

## 2.4 Output 4



## Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results

Overall, this output was covered by most of the evaluation sample. Issues related to improved management of resources were referenced in 92 per cent of evaluations (61 out of 68), though the depth of analysis was somewhat varied. In terms of regional distribution, most evaluations contributing results and lessons for this output came from East and Southern Africa, Arab states, Americas and the Caribbean, and HQ/corporate evaluations (Box 6).

### Key Insights

#### BOX 6

#### Geographic Coverage of OEEF Output 4

##### East and Southern Africa (ESA)

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##### Arab States (AS)

11

##### Americas and the Caribbean (AC)

11

##### Corporate

10

##### Asia and the Pacific (AP)

6

##### Europe and Central Asia (ECA)

5

##### West and Central Africa (WCA)

5

Many evaluations reported efficiency in the use and management of funds to be satisfactory. UN Women offices were found to **allocate resources responsively and efficiently**. In some cases, projects were able to reach more beneficiaries than originally planned. For instance, the Livelihoods through Participation and Equal Access to Water programme in Kyrgyzstan was able to learn from other successful models in the

country and strategically allocate resources to exceed targets.

In terms of human resources, many evaluations highlighted the value of the experienced and committed personnel of UN Women in managing demanding workloads. Other factors such as the supportive and responsive management of UN Women and efforts to remove operational bottlenecks were also identified as contributing to overall improvements. For instance, the Preventing and Responding to Violence against Women and Girls programme in Ethiopia achieved its outputs as a result of a well-managed implementation. This is especially significant because the targets were ambitious relative to the available funding and staffing. Key evidence gaps for this output emerged around fundraising and donor management, with very few evaluations referencing these issues.

#### *Efficient use and management of funds*

Several evaluations highlighted the efficient use of limited funds to achieve intended outcomes. UN Women improved operational efficiency by streamlining systems and leveraging the operational capacities of other United Nations agencies, where possible. For instance, the reporting model of the Fund for Gender Equality lowered reporting costs by coordinating annual reports for multiple donors. This method could be used more widely to efficiently channel multiple, smaller contributions. UN Women was also able to co-locate with UN partners in some countries (e.g. in Bhutan, Burundi, and Maldives) to save on operational costs.

#### **Good practices**

Two good practices emerged as commonly contributing to the improved management of human and financial resources. The first is the creation of multi-donor coalitions and pooled funding to support UN Women interventions. For instance, UN Women was able to establish a multi-donor pooled fund to support the development and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security programme in the Arab States through advocacy and engagement with a diverse group of donors. The pooled fund allowed for increased collaboration among donors, highlighting the effectiveness of UN Women in securing funds and generating donor support. Pooled funds also allow for the participation of non-traditional donors by

attracting and accepting smaller contributions that can be combined with a larger pool.

Providing financial training to implementing partners was highlighted as another good practice in several evaluations. Training helps ensure the efficient management of resources through the entire life cycle of interventions. Manuals were also developed to help partners understand UN Women policies, procedures, and guidelines. In addition to training, providing continuous oversight and support to partners in financial management strengthens partner relationships and facilitates open and frequent communication. It also serves as an accountability mechanism to ensure financial resources are used efficiently. This capacity strengthening could be conducted either online or via in-person training (where appropriate given current conditions) for partner staff.

## Impediments

The most commonly highlighted risk was insufficient

by partners to mobilize resources. Some evaluations raised concerns about sustainability due to short funding cycles (e.g. the peacebuilding fund in Papua New Guinea and the Hemayati programme in Jordan). Evaluations also highlighted delays from tranche payments and internal processes (e.g. in Bangladesh, Iraq, and Mozambique).

Risks related to human resources were predominantly linked to **inadequate** staffing and in-country expertise. Evaluations highlighted high turnover rates for technical personnel, the lack of continuity in management, delays in recruitment and vacancies in key positions, all leading to staff overload. Some evaluations also noted that programmes lacked any form of cost–benefit or cost-efficiency analysis, either due to data constraints or insufficient resources.

### HIGHLIGHT

#### PROJECT EVALUATION FOR EID BI EID IN JORDAN

*“The pool funding mechanism instituted by UN Women to raise donor funds for the Eid bi Eid allowed the programme to bridge the time gap while waiting for MOPIC approval of new funding streams. Thus, the programme was able to maintain the management and operations of the four Oases (Za’atari and Azraq camps) during the time gap period and afforded a relative continuity in the programme services to the camp population. This continuity was essential in maintaining trust of the women engaged in the programme and retaining UN Women position among the donor community engaged with Syrian refugees in camps.”*

financial resources, limiting the scope, effectiveness, and impact of UN Women interventions. Another factor that impedes the efficient management of financial resources was uncoordinated resource mobilization efforts. For instance, a few evaluations highlighted inconsistency in the mechanisms used

# 3. OPPORTUNITIES AND THE WAY FORWARD

This meta-synthesis summarizes evidence on issues related to organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Future assessments by the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service, including the forthcoming evaluation of flagship programme initiatives, country portfolio evaluations and internal audits will continue to analyse these aspects in more detail. The following opportunities related to organizational effectiveness and efficiency have been identified based on current evidence from the analysis of evaluation reports.

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## **Strengthen organization-wide learning and ensure a broader application of lessons from previous successes with United Nations coordination**

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The ability of UN Women to coordinate and mainstream gender within the United Nations system is widely acknowledged as one of its key strengths. UN Women has experience successfully collaborating with partner agencies and has helped smooth the implementation of joint programmes (and other collaborative projects) in many countries and contexts. This is a good opportunity for organization-wide learning and a broader application of lessons from previous engagements, including fostering effective and consultative management systems, strengthening effective and participatory stakeholder engagement, leveraging in-country links with partner agencies to garner local support, reducing operational costs through coordination on complementary interventions, ensuring sufficient resources for coordination work and strengthening the culture of collaborative work. UN Women should continue to draw on its key assets for United Nations coordination, including its unique mandate focused on gender equality and women's empowerment and its access to networks (such as women's groups and national gender machineries). At the UNCT level, UN Women should continue to strengthen coordination and contribute to the coherence of programmes (particularly joint programming), avoid duplication of efforts by multiple United Nations agencies, improve integration

with flagship programme initiatives and the thematic priorities of the strategic plan, and ensure better articulation of the roles and contributions of different gender working groups including the Gender Theme Groups.

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## **Enhance partnership governance and engagement frameworks to foster strong partnerships and build on existing local relationships**

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UN Women aims to foster diverse strategic and catalytic partnerships in support of its mandate. One of the key risks to successful partnerships is a lack of coordination among partners. Partnerships with less engaged actors lead to issues such as overlapping activities, weak accountability and implementation delays that require time and resources from UN Women to resolve. This suggests an opportunity to develop partnership strategies that avoid these pitfalls by explicitly defining roles and responsibilities, using participatory consultative approaches, and aligning with existing programmes where possible. UN Women should continue to use a flexible approach to engagement when working with strong local partners and build on existing relationships.

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## **Further strengthen partner networks and expand outreach to include diverse actors and donors**

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UN Women has shown its expertise in bringing together diverse stakeholders to comprehensively and efficiently address issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The capacity to coordinate between partners such as government ministries, CSOs, and, more recently, the private sector, is widely recognized as one of the key comparative advantages of UN Women. It can build effective alliances that bring stakeholders together and encourage knowledge-sharing, coordination, and cooperation among partners. UN Women has also successfully brought together donors by encouraging pooled or joint funding mechanisms. Pooled funds increase collaboration among donors and allow a wider range of smaller donors to contribute and engage with programming. Pooled funds can also support programmes that are longer, more sustainable, and more flexible, increasing their potential to have transformational effects.

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### **Improve the effectiveness of monitoring systems and strengthen institutional mechanisms for results-based management, learning and planning**

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UN Women should continue to work on enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, and application of its M&E systems. This includes initiatives such as improving the clarity and measurability of project indicators, standardizing indicators and monitoring where possible, ensuring development of clear theories of change, establishing project management principles, embedding risk management, establishing clear guidelines for project closures and incorporating innovative monitoring approaches that are responsive to institutional and political environments. Accountability mechanisms for RBM, including comprehensive project management systems and improved data quality, should be strengthened to encourage regular M&E of project activities. The dedicated personnel of UN Women are recognized as one of its key assets and it should continue to foster internal sharing of knowledge and experiences. There is also an opportunity to adapt reporting systems (including the Results Management System) to improve alignment with outcome and country-level results and enhance learning by fully capturing progress and challenges

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### **Intensify efforts to strengthen gender databases and knowledge platforms**

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The UN Women website is a point of entry for external organizations to gather data and develop awareness-raising materials to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women can augment and leverage the development of digital databases of gender-disaggregated data (including Women Count) at the global and local levels. UN Women should continue to provide technical support to external partners to develop gender-disaggregated databases and encourage gender-disaggregated baseline data collection. The UN Women knowledge management platforms provide a space to share lessons and good practices to advance gender equality and should be strengthened to support knowledge-sharing and evidence-based advocacy on issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

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### **Continue to address key constraints on financial and human resources through prioritization, resource mobilization and improved efficacy of business processes**

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Lack of funds remains a key challenge for UN Women. The Entity should continue to strategically prioritize and protect key work areas from vulnerabilities caused by reliance on non-core funding, changes in donor priorities and short funding cycles. In terms of resource mobilization, UN Women should build on its efforts to improve coordination and strengthen mechanisms such as pooled funding, multi-year funding, partnerships with the private sector and flagship programming initiatives. Flagship programming initiatives, which seek funding at a strategic level, have contributed to UN Women unearmarked funds, and should be developed further.

UN Women is currently carrying out a change management process and functional analysis of various offices. Given the varying needs by region and country, the Entity should ensure resourcing is responsive to individual contexts and maintain personnel continuity insofar as possible at the country level. UN Women should also continue to streamline internal business processes and take steps towards addressing commonly identified causes of delays and risks.

# ANNEXES

**Annex 1: List of evaluations included in the meta-synthesis**

**Annex 2: Theory of Implementation**

## ANNEX 1

### List of evaluations included in the meta-synthesis

Region	Office/ Division	Title of Evaluation	Year of Publication	Report Quality Rating
Americas and the Caribbean (AC)	Colombia	<a href="#">Mid Term Evaluation of the Programme: Overcoming Gender-Based Violence to Ensure Women’s Full Enjoyment of Rights</a>	2018	Very good
	Colombia	<a href="#">Final Evaluation Sweden Project: Women’s Citizenship for Peace, Justice and Development</a>	2018	Good
	Ecuador	<a href="#">Evaluación de proceso del proyecto “Fortalecimiento de la capacidad de resiliencia en paramo y el mejoramiento de la posición y condición de las mujeres”</a>	2018	Fair
	Ecuador	<a href="#">Evaluación del proyecto “Mujeres liderando el desarrollo inclusivo sostenible de la provincia de Loja”</a>	2018	Good
	El Salvador	<a href="#">Evaluación final del proyecto: “Ciudad Mujer/ONU Mujeres”</a>	2018	Good
	Mexico	<a href="#">Evaluation of the Safe Cities Campaign #noesdehombres</a>	2018	Very good
	Panama	<a href="#">Regional evaluation on norms and standards for gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE)</a>	2018	Very good
	Bolivia	<a href="#">Alianzas estratégicas para la igualdad de género y el empoderamiento de las mujeres en Bolivia 2014–2017</a>	2019	Good

	Ecuador	<a href="#">Evaluación de impacto del programa: “Quito ciudad segura para las mujeres y las niñas”</a>	2019	Fair
	Guatemala	<a href="#">Country Portfolio Evaluation</a>	2019	Very good
	Mexico	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of the Mexico Strategic Note 2014–2019</a>	2019	Good
Arab States (AS)	Egypt	<a href="#">Evaluation of UN-Women Economic Opportunities Work under LEAP/HA</a>	2018	Good
	Egypt	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of the Securing Rights and Improving Livelihoods of Women Project</a>	2018	Good
	Egypt	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of Promoting Women’s Employment by Creating Safe and Women-Friendly Workplaces Programme (Women’s Employment Promotion Programme – WEPP)</a>	2018	Good
	Jordan	<a href="#">Women, Peace and Security in the Arab States – Final Independent Evaluation</a>	2018	Good
	Morocco	<a href="#">Evaluation of the Partnership between Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Local Governments and UN-Women</a>	2018	Very good
	Egypt	<a href="#">Formative Evaluation of Community and National Level Actions for Promoting Gender Equality and Engaging Men and Boys</a>	2019	Very good
	Jordan	<a href="#">Final Project Evaluation for Eid bi Eid Project Phase I and II</a>	2019	Good
	Jordan	<a href="#">Hemayati: promoting women and girls' health and well-being</a>	2019	Very good
	Jordan	<a href="#">Evaluation of the National Strategy for Women and a Situational Analysis of Women’s Rights and Gender Equality in Jordan (2013–2017)</a>	2019	Fair

	Morocco	<a href="#">Appui à l'autonomisation économique des femmes à travers la promotion de la chaîne de valeur agro écologique pour une meilleure résilience au changement climatique</a>	2019	Good
	Multi-Country Office for the Maghreb (Morocco)	<a href="#">Accès aux services judiciaires pour des femmes et des enfants victimes de la traite des êtres humains au Maroc II</a>	2019	Fair
	Palestine	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of the “Advancing the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the oPt”</a>	2019	Good
	Regional Office for the Arab States (Egypt)	<a href="#">Supporting Syrian Women’s Engagement in the Syrian Political Process – Building a Homegrown Constituency for Peace Programme</a>	2019	Good
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	Bangladesh	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of the Project Titled “Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women”</a>	2018	Good
	Thailand	<a href="#">Final Evaluation – Regional Project “Preventing Exploitation of Women Migrant Workers”</a>	2018	Good
	Bangladesh	<a href="#">Country Portfolio Evaluation</a>	2019	Very good
	Nepal	<a href="#">Thematic Evaluation of Women’s Economic Empowerment (AWEE and FWW) Programme</a>	2019	Very good
	Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">Impact Evaluation of the Safe Cities and Safe Public Transport Programme</a>	2019	Very good
	Papua New Guinea	<a href="#">PNG Country Portfolio Evaluation</a>	2019	Good
	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Thailand)	<a href="#">Regional Office Programme Presence Portfolio Evaluation</a>	2019	Very good
	Burundi	<a href="#">Burundi Country Portfolio Evaluation</a>	2018	Very good



East and Southern Africa (ESA)	Ethiopia	<a href="#">End Evaluation of “Preventing and Responding to Violence against Women and Girls in Ethiopia” Programme</a>	2018	Good
	Kenya	<a href="#">Final Project Evaluation – Engaging Women in Preventing and Countering Extremist Violence in Kenya</a>	2018	Good
	Kenya	<a href="#">Kenya Country Strategy Final Evaluation</a>	2018	Good
	Mozambique	<a href="#">Mid Term Evaluation of the WEE BE Funded Project in Gaza Province</a>	2018	Good
	Rwanda	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of the Joint Programme “Advancing and Sustaining Gender Equality Gains in Rwanda”</a>	2018	Very good
	Rwanda	<a href="#">UN-Women Rwanda Country Portfolio Evaluation 2014–2018</a>	2018	Good
	South Sudan	<a href="#">Country Portfolio Evaluation</a>	2018	Very good
	Ethiopia	<a href="#">Evaluation of Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE)</a>	2019	Very good
	Kenya	<a href="#">Project Evaluation – Integrating Gender in Peace Support Operations</a>	2019	Fair
	Malawi	<a href="#">Mid Term Evaluation for the Women Empowerment Programme</a>	2019	Good
	Mozambique	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of the WEE Gaza Project</a>	2019	Fair
	Zimbabwe	<a href="#">Final Evaluation Zimbabwe Gender Peace and Security Programme</a>	2019	Fair
Europe and Central Asia (ECA)	Albania	<a href="#">Thematic Evaluation of Women’s Political Empowerment (SN Outcome 1)</a>	2018	Good
	Kyrgyzstan	<a href="#">Joint Programme on: Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP-RWEE)</a>	2018	Very good

	Kyrgyzstan	<a href="#">Livelihoods through Participation and Equal Access to Water</a>	2018	Good
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of the Project “Standards and Engagement for Ending Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2016–2019)”</a>	2019	Fair
	Georgia	<a href="#">Mid-Term Evaluation of UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality</a>	2019	Very good
	Serbia	<a href="#">Evaluation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016–2018</a>	2019	Good
	Ukraine	<a href="#">Mid-Term Evaluation of the Project “Gender Equality at the Centre of Reforms, Peace and Security”, Funded by the Government of Sweden</a>	2019	Good
Headquarters	Fund for Gender Equality	<a href="#">Independent evaluation of UN-Women’s Fund for Gender Equality (2009–2017)</a>	2018	Very good
	Policy Division	<a href="#">Final Evaluation of the Knowledge Gateway on Women’s Economic Empowerment Project (Empower Women)</a>	2018	Very good
Independent Evaluation Service (IES)	IES	<a href="#">What Can We Learn from UN-Women Evaluations? A Meta-Analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN-Women in 2016</a>	2017	Not rated
	IES	<a href="#">Evaluation of UN-Women Regional Architecture</a>	2017	Very good
	IES	<a href="#">Evaluation of UN-women Strategic Partnerships on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment</a>	2017	Very good
	IES	<a href="#">UN-Women’s Contribution to Women’s Political Participation and Leadership</a>	2018	Very good
	IES	<a href="#">Reflections on Change. Meta-Analysis: Findings and Lessons from Evaluations Managed by UN-Women in 2017</a>	2018	Not rated

	IES	<a href="#">Meta-Synthesis of UN-Women Evaluations 2017/2018</a>	2019	Not rated
	IES	<a href="#">Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning</a>	2019	Very good
	IES	<a href="#">Corporate Thematic Evaluation: UN-Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action</a>	2019	Very good
<b>West and Central Africa (WCA)</b>	Cameroon	<a href="#">Prise en charge adéquate des femmes victimes de violences dans la région de l'extrême nord</a>	2018	Good
	Liberia	<a href="#">Country Portfolio Evaluation</a>	2018	Very good
	Mali	<a href="#">L'évaluation finale du projet « projet d'amélioration de l'accès des femmes victimes de violences sexuelles et basées à la justice et à la sécurité dans le processus de consolidation de la paix au Mali »</a>	2018	Fair
	Liberia	<a href="#">Evaluation Inclusive Security Project</a>	2019	Good
	Mali	<a href="#">Evaluation de la note stratégique d'ONU Femmes Mali 2014–2019</a>	2019	Good
	Regional Office for West and Central Africa (Senegal)	<a href="#">Knowledge Management Evaluation</a>	2019	Fair
	Sierra Leone	<a href="#">Improving Women Participation as Peacebuilding Ambassadors</a>	2019	Good

## ANNEX 2

### Theory of Implementation

As identified in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, the UN Women key development outcomes are aligned with the Entity’s three functions (normative support functions, United Nations coordination and operational activities). The five development outcomes are:

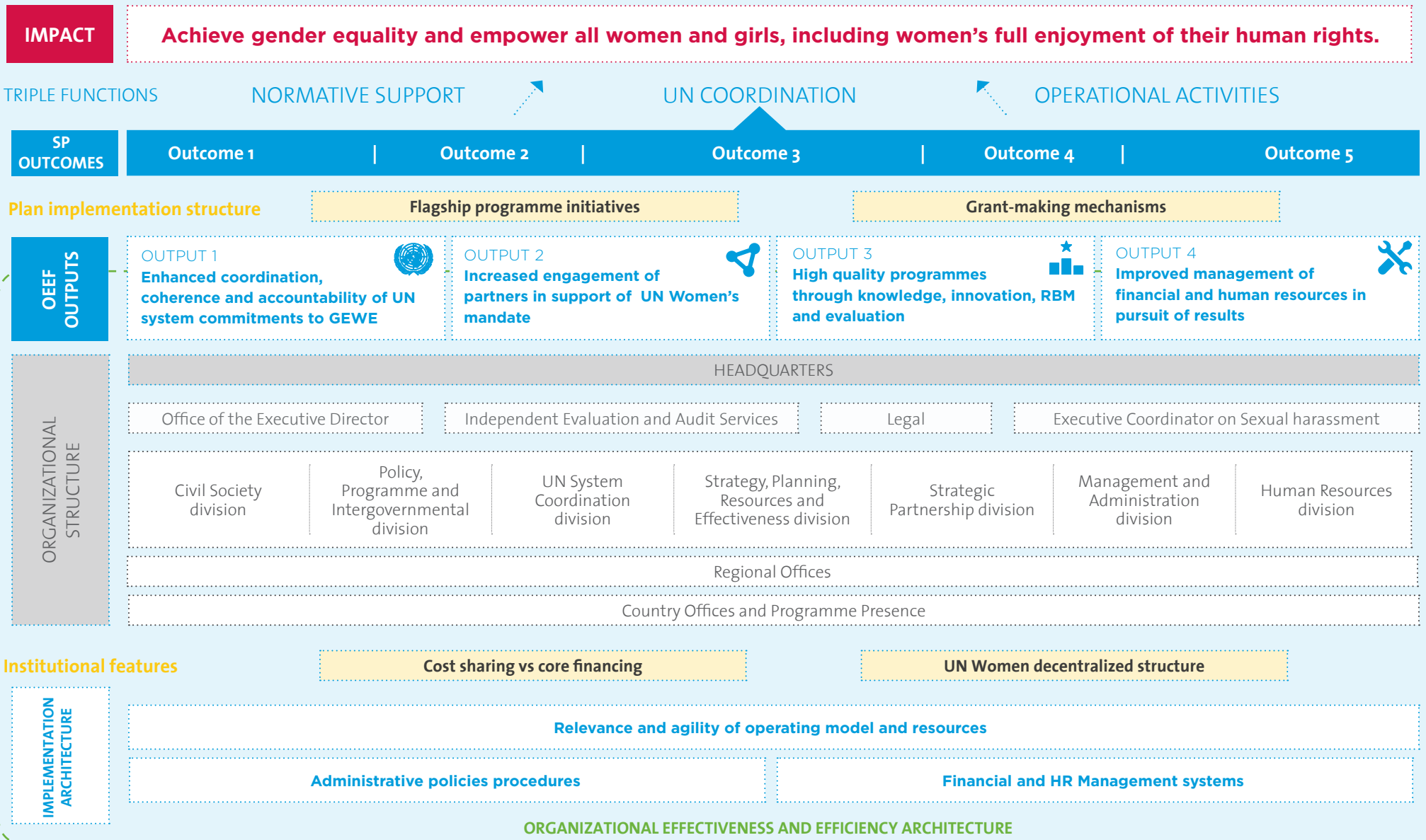
- i.** A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is strengthened and implemented.
- ii.** Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems.
- iii.** Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy.
- iv.** All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence.
- v.** Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and from humanitarian action.

The Integrated Results and Resources Framework sets out the results and metrics for measuring progress made by UN Women towards development outcomes and ultimately impact. The supportive organizational outputs are:

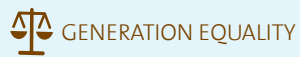
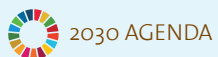
- Enhanced coordination, coherence and accountability of the United Nations system commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Increased engagement of partners in support of UN Women’s mandate.
- The high quality of programmes through knowledge management, innovation, RBM and evaluation.
- Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results.

UN Women ensures implementation is faithful to these outputs by monitoring inputs that reinforce each other. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the implementation architecture and broader environment in which UN Women operates.

Figure 1: Theory of Implementation for UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 Integrated Results and Resources Framework



EXTERNAL FACTORS



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**Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service of UN Women (IEAS)**

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit Service under the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service. The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service's main purpose is to enhance accountability, inform decision-making, and contribute to learning about the best ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the organization's mandate, including its normative, operational, and coordination work. The Independent Evaluation Service also works to strengthen capacities for gender-responsive evaluation within UN entities, governments, and civil society organizations.

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*Disclaimer: The analysis and recommendations of the meta-synthesis are those of the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN WOMEN. This is an independent publication by the UN WOMEN Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS).*

**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION  
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY  
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A  
GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND  
GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED  
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON  
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



**Planet 50-50 by 2030  
Step It Up for Gender Equality**

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