EVALUATION OF REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
CONTRIBUTIONS TO WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

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Introduction and background

UN Women's efforts in women, peace and security are guided by a series of international commitments including United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 and nine supporting resolutions: 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467 and 2493. Other key reference points are the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 5 and 16, further reflects Member States' recognition that the solutions to peace and security and sustainable development are inextricably linked.

KEY FIGURES

42   Approx. **42 projects*** in the Asia and the Pacific region were implemented by 10 UN Women field presences** and the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific between 2017–2020

36M   These projects had a total committed budget of more than **$US36.8 million*** between 2017–2020

57%   Of these, 16 projects, or 38 per cent, were exclusively funded by the Government of Japan. The **16 projects account for 57 per cent of the total women, peace and security budget** in the region between 2017-2020, or more than US$20.8 million.

*We count each project by its unique project ID. For example, the regional project on prevention of violent extremism spans over four years, but each year, its budget, its project ID, its coverage and its interventions are different, and they are counted as different projects.

**The UN Women offices implementing the women, peace and security portfolio include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and Thailand. Some regional activities were also implemented in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam. Pakistan implemented one preventing violent extremism project of approximately US$1 million, but it was subsumed under the women's economic empowerment portfolio, and the Regional Office did not provide a women, peace and security focal point, thus it was not captured during this mapping.

***Source of information is the committed budget specified in the Project Document or Donor Agreement. For projects beginning in 2020 and ended post-2020, its total committed budget for the whole duration is used, not the delivery to date. This is for consistent treatment among projects but also for ease of compilation. Thus, the actual budget/delivery may vary.

The analysis and recommendations of the CPE are those of the Independent Evaluation Service (IEAS) 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).

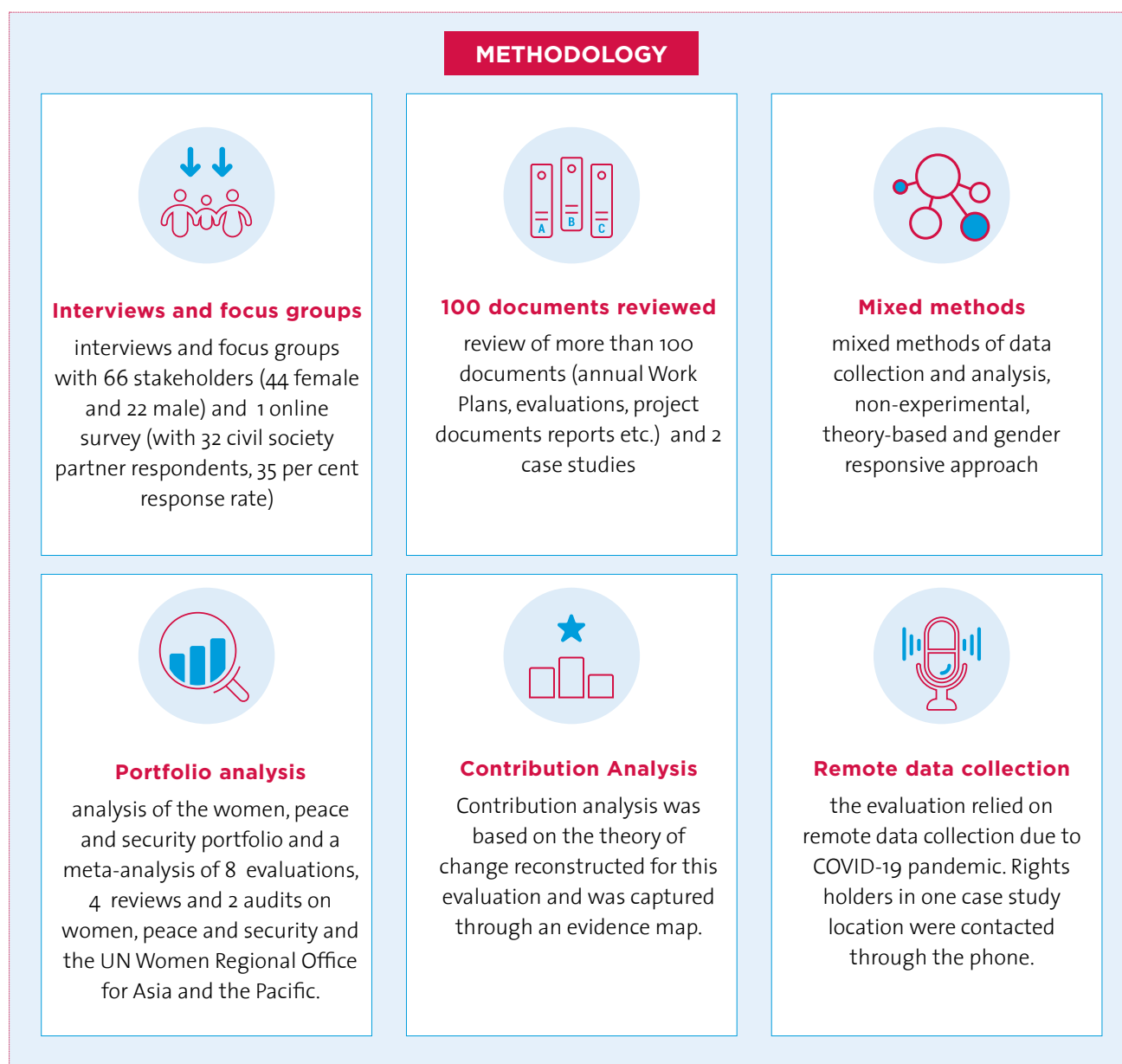## Evaluation purpose and intended audience

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide insights for decision-making with respect to the work of the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on women, peace and security over the next Strategic Note period (2022–2026) and to facilitate understanding and learning about UN Women's portfolio in the Asia Pacific region, achievements since 2017, opportunities and challenges, as well as gaps in programming and results.

The primary audience is UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and field presences in the region engaged in women, peace and security. However, the evaluation may be useful for other actors working in women, peace and security, including partner governments, CSOs, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), NGOs and national partners, and donors.

Evaluation objectives

The CPE+A had the following objectives:

- **Assess** the relevance and coherence, effectiveness and organizational efficiency, and the sustainability of the efforts of the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in support of the thematic area of Women, Peace and Security;

- **Analyse** how the human rights approach and gender equality principles, including LGBTIQ and disability inclusion perspectives, are integrated in this work;

- **Identify** a "menu of evidence" of what works and what does not work in terms of UN Women's programmatic support to women, peace and security, with the aim of providing input on the investments of field presences in this area for future work.

- **Identify** lessons learned and provide action-oriented recommendations to inform UN Women's work in this area.

METHODOLOGY

Interviews and focus groups

interviews and focus groups with 66 stakeholders (44 female and 22 male) and 1 online survey (with 32 civil society partner respondents, 35 per cent response rate)

100 documents reviewed

review of more than 100 documents (annual Work Plans, evaluations, project documents reports etc.) and 2 case studies

Mixed methods

mixed methods of data collection and analysis, non-experimental, theory-based and gender responsive approach

Portfolio analysis

analysis of the women, peace and security portfolio and a meta-analysis of 8 evaluations, 4 reviews and 2 audits on women, peace and security and the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

Contribution Analysis

Contribution analysis was based on the theory of change reconstructed for this evaluation and was captured through an evidence map.

Remote data collection

the evaluation relied on remote data collection due to COVID-19 pandemic. Rights holders in one case study location were contacted through the phone.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: **RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE**

CONCLUSION 1

Since 2017, the visibility and credibility of work by the Regional Office on women, peace and security has grown within the region, and the Regional Office is now recognized as providing a unique gender perspective and linkages with civil society to its partners in the peace and security space. While UN Women's added value within the peace and security space is clear, it has not been fully capitalized upon. With a more strategic and longer term vision as the basis for its approach, the Regional Office could clarify its niche at the regional level, ensuring that it leverages not only the global mandate of UN Women in women, peace and security, but also the country-level expertise and varied experience across the region. A clearer vision may help direct work to where it is needed most and help partners understand how they can best leverage UN Women's expertise, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Co-create a vision for women, peace and security in the region with UN Women offices across the region and key peace and security actors from across stakeholder types and identify UN Women's value proposition in the peace and security sector. Prioritize where to focus based on a sound analysis of the current situation, country needs, the overall direction of the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action thematic area and UN Women's capacity to deliver on the ground.

CONCLUSION 2

There is opportunity for the UN system coordination mandate of UN Women to be fully leveraged to the advantage of the Regional Office women, peace and security team. The lack of coordination mechanisms focused on peace and security within the region could be an opportunity for UN Women to demonstrate leadership by stepping up to facilitate exchange and coordination amongst actors in this area. The Regional Office should continue to identify strategic partnerships and engage in a more systematic manner within the peace and security space in a way that can be mutually beneficial and help the Regional Office to bring its efforts to scale and move beyond South-East Asia.

RECOMMENDATION 2

As part of the Regional Office coordination strategy, ensure coordination for the Women, Peace and Security thematic area is clearly outlined, explaining how the Regional Office will engage in coordination with the United Nations system and beyond as well as how these efforts seek to influence partners with established key performance indicators that can meaningfully measure progress.

EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

CONCLUSION 3

UN Women made significant contributions to the establishment of national action plans related to preventing violent extremism and women, peace and security that were inclusive and represented diverse voices. National (and regional) action plans on women, peace and security and the prevention of violent extremism were adopted in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines, and progress was made through ASEAN. UN Women integrated normative and policy expertise, and its reach with civil society to ensure participation in these processes was key to this progress. The adoption of these frameworks demonstrates national ownership of the women, peace and security agenda and provides an important impetus for national-level action. The challenge for the Regional Office will be to identify how to ensure continued support in implementing and localizing the agenda. Important lessons can be learned from across the region, where national action plans on women, peace and security have been implemented and supported by UN Women offices.

CONCLUSION 4

Presented with an opportunity for innovating in the women, peace and security space, the women, peace and security team at the Regional Office in several cases pushed boundaries, leveraged new media and implemented a range of unique initiatives in a space that is not yet fully understood. These initiatives aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge around preventing violent extremism and other women, peace and security issues and facilitating economic empowerment as a deterrent to violent extremism and factor that reduces the risk of trafficking. While these individual efforts may have contributed towards advancing the women, peace and security agenda, without a longer-term vision or framework, outcome-level monitoring and clarity in how the various efforts are connected, UN Women (in the region and globally) cannot fully expect transformative impact or benefit from or exploit their learning.

CONCLUSION 5

Although there was an indication that women have experienced some immediate benefits, including a sense of empowerment within the home and community and increased immediate income, without continuing support these gains are at risk of being lost. Solid baseline information and engagement with the community to determine the best type of support and investment from its perspective is essential. A horizontal approach to looking at how the different initiatives (within the Regional Office and at field presence level) can support each other for greater impact needs to be built in from the start by basing it on the overarching vision. This could also enhance the potential for sustainability by pooling resources so that efforts are not interrupted. Expertise and interlinkages between thematic areas, field presences and teams within UN Women (Regional Office, Country Office, headquarters) were not fully leveraged, which may have reduced the effectiveness of programmatic efforts, particularly the economic empowerment initiatives and publication/communication efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Continue building an evidence base on what works to build social cohesion, reduce marginalization and ensure peaceful societies by establishing a regional programming approach for translating national action plans and other normative-level efforts into action through coordinated efforts. This regional programming approach should be based on the vision and priority areas articulated and apply innovation principles by inviting UN Women Country Offices (in consultation with key stakeholders) to make a pitch for project models to be tested. Through robust indicators and a monitoring and evaluation framework, lessons learned can feed into the scaling up of the most effective approaches across the region.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

CONCLUSION 6

Human rights and gender equality are at the core of the Regional Office's work. The regional women, peace and security team included the targeting of marginalized groups during the design phase and was able to reach marginalized groups. However, the Regional Office must strengthen its efforts and provide support to implementing partners to prioritize and track how the most marginalized groups of the targeted population are engaged and benefit (or not) from programming efforts, not only because of the mandate of the organization, but also because there is evidence that marginalization is a key driver of violent extremism and increases vulnerability to trafficking. The fundamental strategy for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women is changing social norms – driving positive gender norms and ending harmful practices, discrimination and marginalization. Measuring efforts aimed at changing these norms is essential so that UN Women and its partners can understand what works and what does not work in diverse contexts and track change, including steps forwards and steps backwards, over time.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The regional women, peace and security team, in collaboration with the Regional Office focal point for partner agreements, should develop a toolkit for enhancing the capacity of relevant implementing partners on how to identify and engage in defining appropriate programmatic approaches and indicators for measuring progress over the longer term, including social norms change. In addition, it should monitor and report in collaboration with the target population, including the most marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities, women affected by conflict-related sexual violence, women-headed households, ethnic minorities and LGBTIQ persons.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY

CONCLUSION 7

While several good practices were identified, several challenges that were rooted in the women, peace and security regional programme and related project design and implementation limited efficiency. These include: the potential efficiency gains of a regional approach were lost as the result of a siloed approach; defining a risk appetite could help with balancing the need to take risks to allow for innovation, while at the same time ensuring risks are properly managed; diversification of donors and regional-level pooled funding could support enhanced efficiency. Regional Office support to Country Offices beyond the regional programmes could have resulted in efficiency gains and multiplied the impact of UN Women efforts. Enhanced capacities of UN Women and implementing partners on expectations of UN Women monitoring and results-based reporting are also needed to ensure the data required to report at the aggregate level and on a disaggregated level are collected. Pooled funding could be a way to encourage donors to contribute to women, peace and security efforts while allowing the Regional Office the flexibility to place the funding where it is needed most, while ensuring the sustainability of efforts and cross-linkages across Regional Office teams and countries.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Regional Office should clearly articulate and demonstrate how regional programming efforts could enhance efficiencies across countries and take concerted action to enhance the organizational efficiency of women, peace and security efforts through diversification of the donor base and modalities, capacity-building, and dedicating time to assessing the best value for money approach.