



COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2018-2020

CAMEROON

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The evaluation of the UN Women Strategic Note 2018–2020 was conducted by the Regional Evaluation Specialist, the Regional Evaluation Analyst and two Evaluation Consultants, under the leadership of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women.

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ACRONYMS

ADB	African Development Bank
ALVF	Association de Lutte contre les Violences faites aux Femmes-Association, or the Fight Against Violence Against Women
BDEAC	Development Bank of Central African States
BUCREP	Central Bureau of Census and Population Studies
CAMYOSFOP	Cameroon youths and students forum for peace
CAPEC	Cameroon Association for the Protection and Education of the Child
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CSAG	Civil Society Advisory Group
DRF	Development Result Framework
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
FI	Frontier Issues
FPI	Flagship Programme Initiative
FTA	Fixed-Term Appointment
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
ICF	Internal Control Framework
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IT	information technology
LGBTQI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or those questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation), and intersex
LOA	Local Organization Agreement
LUKMEF	Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Foundation
LPP	Leadership and Political Participation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OEEF	Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PDCVA	Agricultural Value Chains Development Project
PSHA	Peace, Security and Humanitarian Actions
RMS	Results Management System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSA	Special Service Agreement
SWAP	System-Wide Action Plan
TOC	Theory of Change
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNSDCF	United Nations System Development Cooperation Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WLPP	Women's Leadership and Political Participation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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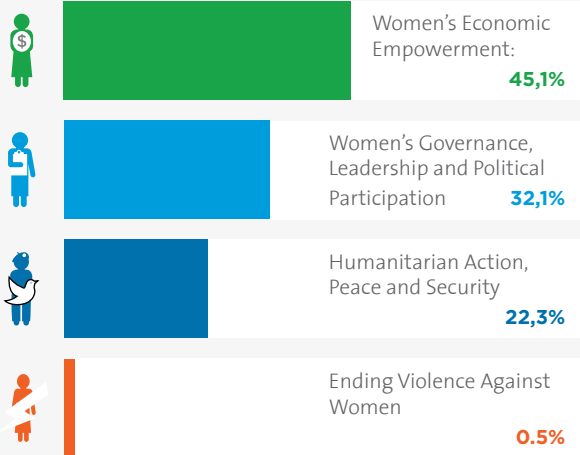
This summary presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation of UN Women Cameroon conducted between July and December 2020. The evaluation is a systematic assessment of the normative, operational and coordination aspects of UN Women’s contribution to gender equality and women’s empowerment results at the country level.

Cameroon has remained a lower middle-income country for the past 30 years, despite its significant resources such as petroleum, agriculture, forestry, mining, tourism and hydropower. Re-election of the country’s President in October 2018 did not take place in a peaceful context. In addition to political tensions, the country has been affected by insecurity in the English-speaking regions of the North-West and South-West, and by religiously inspired terrorism (Boko Haram) in the Far North Region.

According to the 2019 Human Development Report, persistent gender inequalities have led to significant disparities between Cameroonian women and men in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. The number of women without education is more than 1.7 times that of men living in a similar situation. Fifty-two percent of women have experienced domestic violence at least once since the age of 15.

Although UN Women’s presence in Cameroon dates from 2010, it only became official in September 2014, when the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement was signed by the Government. This evaluation of the 2018–2020 Country Programme follows the evaluation that covered the previous period of 2014–2017. The Country Programme required an average of US\$3.2 million annually between 2018 and 2020, divided among four Thematic areas: 45 percent devoted to Women’s Economic Empowerment, 32 to Women’s Governance, Leadership and Political Participation, 22 to Humanitarian Action, Peace and Security and only 0.5 percent to Ending Violence Against Women.

Budget share (%) by impact area (2018–2020)



Population

26M Cameroon had an estimated population of 25.9 million in 2019 and a gender ratio of 98 men to 100 women.

of women live below the poverty line

38% While the average poverty rate is 37.5 percent nationally, 90.4 percent of the poor population are located in rural areas.

Human Development Index

150 / 189 In 2018, the country’s Human Development Index was 0.563 and ranked 150 out of 189 countries.

Following the signing of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement in September 2014, UN Women carried out its development programme as a fully fledged agency. This gives the 2018–2020 Country Portfolio Evaluation, following that of 2014–2017, an object of study in terms of its internal coherence, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The evaluation applied primarily a qualitative methodology with information collected through focus groups, opinion surveys and semi-structured interviews with 53 respondents selected from several categories of stakeholders. As the validity of the 2018–2020 Strategic Note has been extended to December 2021, the lessons learned from this evaluation will be used to inform the development of the new Strategic Note (2022–2024).

KEY FINDINGS

Regarding the relevance of the country programme, both the 2014–2017 Country Portfolio Evaluation and the present one observe the overall alignment of UN Women Cameroon with national and international strategies, policies and legislation. The areas of gender and human rights covered by UN Women Cameroon's Strategic Note are significant but do not reflect some of the concerns previously expressed by review committees of international treaties, including those related to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The Country Office has largely demonstrated its effectiveness. Between 2018 and 2020, there is an upward trend in the results of outcome and output indicators. That said, the modalities of advances to partners, the virtual absence of field missions, and the lack of baseline data surveys hinder the robust monitoring of progress.

UN Women Cameroon's efficiency has been challenged by financial constraints. Funding from one of the main funding partners of the Country Office ceased in 2018. There have also been challenges in disbursements by the Government of Cameroon. As a result, the Country Office has reduced its personnel and vacated its recent premises in the North-West, South-West and Far North regions. These challenges also affected the sustainability of some of UN Women's interventions in the North-West and South-West. That said, two programmes (Second Chance Education and Women Count) have shown tangible signs of sustainability. Finally, regarding the inclusiveness of the Country Programme, the "leave no one behind" principle was upheld, in particular through the targeting of minority groups by UN Women programmes on HIV awareness and COVID-19. However, during the 2018–2020 period, there were no reported actions aimed at promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

Evaluation objectives



Identify lessons drawn from the previous strategic period to inform decision-making

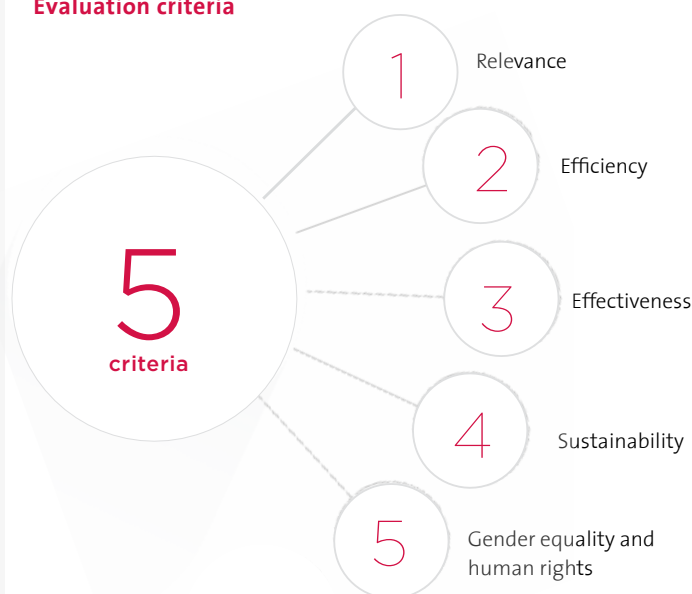


Strengthen the accountability of UN Women about its contribution to gender equality



Analyse how human rights principles and approaches are integrated in the Strategic Note

Evaluation criteria



Evaluation methodology



Gender-responsive evaluation
Used Mixed-methods to triangulate evidence | Desk review and interviews conducted remotely

Interviews and survey



53 Interviews with United Nations colleagues, donors, implementing partners and beneficiaries | Online survey completed by 11 UN Women personnel

Documents reviewed



Annual work plans, evaluations, project documents reports, financial documentation, meeting minutes, key national strategic documents, knowledge products etc.

CONCLUSIONS



CONCLUSION 1

The normative role of UN Women is well established in Cameroon. Its reputation risks being undermined by the perception that the Country Office has distanced itself from small civil society organizations.



CONCLUSION 2

Despite difficulties encountered, it is undeniable that UN Women Cameroon has achieved tangible results in the five impact areas with economic empowerment projects significantly hampered by funding issues.



CONCLUSION 3

Personnel departures without clear handover procedures have resulted in the loss of institutional memory. The Country Office has limited documentation in terms of secure online filing, inventory and storage.



CONCLUSION 4

There is no evidence that the Country Programme contributed to the advancement of people with disabilities and minority groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation recommends that UN Women Cameroon:



Adopt a long-term approach in its relationship with civil society organizations in order to develop new collaborative dynamics to strengthen their capacity for collective action in the area of promoting gender equality. There is a need to go beyond the strictly operational approach of project cooperation agreements, which are likely to restrict partners' roles to the simple status of service providers.



Increase the budget share of impact areas such as leadership and political participation and elimination of sexual and gender-based violence to enhance the relevance of the Country Programme and its ability to respond to key challenges.



Reconfigure the classification of intervention themes across impact areas, so as to clearly separate headings devoted to governance in general and specifically to women's political participation from those devoted to gender statistics, HIV and menstrual hygiene mainstreaming, and gender-responsive planning and budgeting.



Strengthen its monitoring and reporting system by specifying indicator baseline data, by including monitoring missions in programme manager workplans and by channelling collected data through a functional system that complements the Results Management System.



Regarding the disbursements of tranches of funding to partners, rather than entrusting entire project funds to partners, including Government institutions, at once, it is more prudent to put in place a monitoring system with deliverables, whereby disbursements are made against progress observed in the field. Each instalment should be paid only on the basis of an assessment of the state of progress.



Retrieve, organize and preserve its institutional memory by appointing a knowledge management focal point.



Pursue resource mobilization efforts to fill gaps in staffing, avoid the practice of "double-hatting" several functions* into one position and recruit a Chief of Operations and a Country Representative** without delay.



Increase the involvement of women who are also excluded on the basis of ethnicity, disability, income, language, culture and lifestyle in the design, monitoring and implementation of its programmes, and dedicate a portion of the Women Count programme's research to marginalized populations to include their organizations in raising awareness about the use of gender statistics.

* For example, (1) the position of Governance Officer and Women, Peace and Security Officer concentrates the responsibilities related to Leadership and Political Participation of Women; Gender-Responsive Budgeting; Women, Peace and Security as well as the Coordination of the Gender Thematic Group; (2) the Finance Associate assumes the functions of the Operations Manager.

** We will communicate this recommendation directly to the Regional Office.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THIS EVALUATION

1.1. Purpose, objectives and use of the Country Portfolio Evaluation

This Country Portfolio Evaluation takes place within a context where the current strategy for UN Women Cameroon will be replaced by a new Strategic Note (2022–2024). The latter was to be prepared in the last quarter of 2020 and was supposed to be inclusive of the year 2021. However, following the decision of the team of UN Heads of Agency to align the new United Nations System Development Cooperation Framework with the new Cameroon Development Plan, the validity of the 2018–2020 Strategic Note was extended to December 2021. Therefore, this is the right time to inform the strategy of UN Women Cameroon with lessons learned from the Country Programme Evaluation.

The evaluation seeks to:

1. Identify lessons drawn from the previous strategic period to inform decision-making, especially as the new Strategic Note (2022–2024) will be drafted by the Country Office;
2. Strengthen the accountability of UN Women about its contribution to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment;
3. Analyse how human rights principles and approaches are integrated in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note.

In addition, the evaluation enquired about adaptations made by the Country Office in its support to national efforts against COVID-19. This helped to understand UN Women Cameroon's contribution to the country's effort, in coordination with the United Nations system, and determine how results planned in the Strategic Note were affected by the pandemic.

Primary users targeted by this evaluation are (i) the UN Women Cameroon Country Office, (ii) UN Women Evaluation and Audit Services, (iii) key national stakeholders in Cameroon, (iv) the United Nations system in Cameroon and (v) the UN Women Regional Office for West and Central Africa.

1.2. Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation focuses on Country Office interventions in the five impact areas of the Strategic Note 2018–2020 in its operational, normative and coordination dimensions in support of gender equality. Considering recent activities¹ of the Country Office in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation assesses the Country Office's capacity to redeploy its human and financial resources to serve in a changing context.

The evaluation examines the five impact areas² of the Strategic Note according to five criteria³, notably (i) relevance, (ii) efficiency, (iii) effectiveness, (iv) sustainability and (v) gender equality and human rights. These evaluation criteria were elaborated into 20 questions (Annex V).

The analysis of gender coordination focused on the Country Office's efforts to mainstream gender in the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2018–2020, the 2018 and 2019 Humanitarian Response Plans, the Gender Scorecard Action Plan and the coordination of two Gender Theme Groups (the United Nations Gender Theme Group and the Civil Society Organization Task Force on Gender and Public Policies).

1.3. Methods of data collection and analysis

In line with the general concept of Country Portfolio Evaluations, this evaluation was carried out in four stages:

1. A kick-off workshop aimed at confirming the specifications of the evaluation through consultation with the Reference Group and UN Women Cameroon personnel;
2. Semi-structured interviews and discussion groups with all major stakeholder groups;
3. A preliminary findings workshop after data collection;
4. Drafting of the report after triangulation and independent analysis of collected information.

¹ [Cameroon: Distribution of COVID-19 prevention kits to women voters](#)

² Impact areas include Women's Leadership and Political Participation (WLPP); Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE); Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW); Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action (PSHA); and Frontier Issues (FI).

³ Questions related to the coherence criterion, both internal and external, are placed under the relevance and efficiency criteria, respectively.

1.3.1. Semi-structured interviews

At the inception meeting with the Reference Group and UN Women Cameroon personnel, the evaluation questions were prioritized in a participatory manner. Some of the questions were reworded for better understanding and relevance to the context. Meeting participants also agreed on the evaluation timetable and identified the documentation required for the evaluation as well as a list of contacts from various associations and institutions. This initial participation aimed to strengthen ownership of the evaluation in its conceptual phase and also ensure critical adoption of its findings and recommendations.

To guide data collection and analysis, an evaluation matrix was developed (Annex XI). It presents key evaluation questions, judgment criteria, sources of information and methods of data collection for each of the main evaluation criteria. For interviews and semi-structured discussion sessions, data collection tools were adapted to different categories of participants (Annex III).

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cameroon, the evaluation was conducted virtually. The Zoom application was used primarily for group and individual interviews. Alternatively, mobile phones were used to reach stakeholders who did not have access to the Internet.

1.3.2. Sampling strategy

Data collection began with UN Women Country Office personnel to better understand Country Office interventions. This was followed by interviews with United Nations colleagues, donors, implementing partners and beneficiaries. The stakeholder mapping exercise (Annex VIII) helped identify interviewees, using selection criteria such as portfolio coverage, stakeholder diversity, perceived expertise and the nature of their involvement with UN Women interventions. The sample of interview respondents included a good number of participants in professional or leadership positions in ministries and parastatals, non-governmental organizations, embassies and the media.

Participants in focus group discussions were previously involved in a variety of Country Office interventions, including gender mainstreaming in humanitarian interventions, advocacy for peace and security, women's political participation, women's economic empowerment and prevention of violence against women.

The interviews took place over a 25 day period and involved 53 persons (including 31 women) from 34 organizations in the following categories: ministries and parastatals⁴, United Nations agencies⁵, donors⁶, the media⁷ and civil society organizations⁸.

To the extent possible, efforts were made to minimize the use of jargon and to encourage speakers to use the language they are comfortable with. Some spoke in English, others in French. Data collection instruments were revised and tested for different categories of respondents. Group discussions were conducted in a way that limited the possibility of unequal power interaction. At the start of each interview, participants were informed of their rights (including the right to refrain from responding), the purpose of the evaluation and the use of the information entrusted to evaluators.

1.3.3. Personnel survey

An online stakeholder perception survey⁹ was undertaken to collect quantitative data on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Cameroon Country Office Strategic Note 2018–2020. The survey questionnaire targeted 15 UN Women personnel and 6 United Nations personnel. A second survey focused on all non-United Nations stakeholders, comprising 89 people, all grouped under the term “UN Women partners”.

Unfortunately, the response rate from non-United Nations respondents was too low (4 percent) for consolidated results to be representative. Forty-four percent of those contacted did not even open the announcement email, and only 17 percent opened the questionnaire. This is probably due to their limited access to the Internet. The rate of 4 complete responses out of 49 informed people⁹ remains very low.

⁴ The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Employment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Institute of Statistics, the Central Bureau of Census and Population Studies, the Sub-Regional Institute for Statistics and Applied Economics and the General Delegation of National Security.

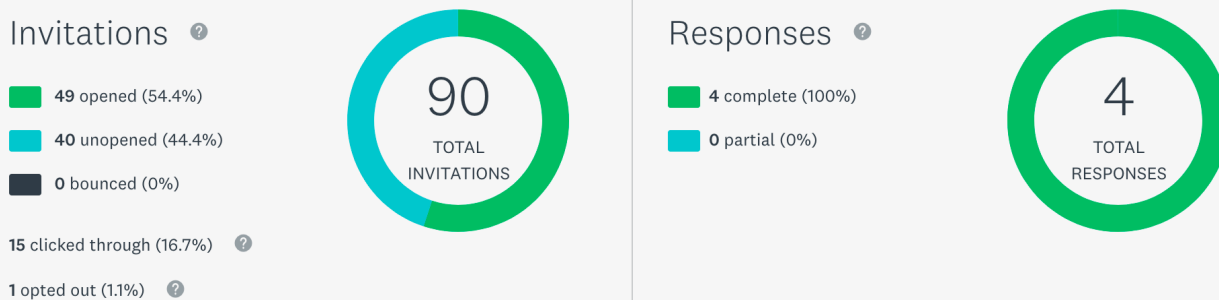
⁵ The UN Resident Coordinator, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

⁶ The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Canadian High Commission, the European External Action Service.

⁷ Cameroon Tribune, CRTV, Le Messenger.

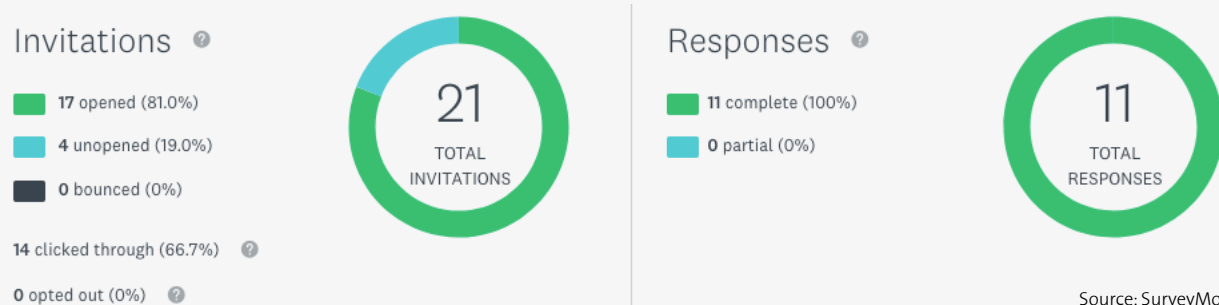
⁸ Association pour la Promotion du Leadership Féminin (APELF), ALVF, Center for Human Rights And Peace Advocacy (CHRAPA), Rassemblement des étudiants de l'Université de Douala à N'gaoundere (RAEDON), Reach Out Cameroon (REO) REO, Light Works, amongst others.

⁹ Only 49 people were able (or willing) to read the online survey announcement sent via email.

Figure 1.3.3a. Survey participation rate (not inclusive of UN Women personnel)

Source: Survey Monkey.

Of the 17 UN Women personnel who responded to the survey, only 11 completed it. It is assumed that drivers make up the majority of those (4) who did not even open the questionnaire.

Figure 1.3.3b. Survey participation rate of UN Women personnel

Source: SurveyMonkey.

The difference in the response rates of the two audiences can be attributed to differences in geographic and socio-economic coverage of communication technologies. Stable connectivity is required to navigate from one online survey question to another. UN Women personnel are better placed in this regard than the stakeholder group. This indicates that online surveys are not suitable for collecting data in areas where the level of communication technology penetration is very low.

1.3.4. Ethics and gender responsiveness

The evaluation used a gender-responsive approach to collect testimonies of intended and unintended changes from target groups and trace the mechanisms of change and the likely contributions of UN Women.

The gender and human rights dimensions of this evaluation were made possible through:

- Qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis that allow the evaluation to take into account the diversity of participants and nuances of multiple opinions;
- Sensitivity, during the data collection phase, to the multiple tasks that respondents must perform on a daily basis. For example, for those who work from home, sufficient time between interviews was allowed. This helped to compensate for occasional interruptions by children or other family members.
- Overall, an approach informed by an acute awareness of the structures that contribute to inequalities experienced by women, men, girls and boys, especially those who experience intersectional forms of social exclusion as a result of language and ethnicity, class, disability, etc.

The evaluation complied with standards that ensure respect for participants' dignity. Sensitive data collected for the evaluation was managed with confidentiality. For example, the information collected online is completely anonymous and will be destroyed six months after report publication. At the outset of the interview sessions, the independence of the evaluators was clearly explained, and participants were given assurances of confidentiality.

1.3.5. Data analysis

Data collected in notebooks were transcribed into summary tables that were structured in the same way as the data collection tools. As shown in the table from the content analysis file (Figure 1.3.5), data collected from individual and group interviews were transcribed, and then the most salient statements were classified in an Excel file. The filtering functionality of Excel was used to sort information and identify regularities or themes.

A comparative analysis of various statements sought to point out similarities whose frequency may clearly suggest consistent programme facts. During this phase, the views expressed were retained for later confirmation whenever the frequency of occurrence was considered to be significant. During the data analysis phase, the evaluation team used its familiarity with the work of UN Women to assess the plausibility of interpretations put forward.

Figure 1.3.5. Example of transcripts for content analysis in Excel

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Nom	Org	Role	Question	Donnée									
2	Personne 50	35	Consultant	E22	"Le soutien en									
3	Personne 8	1	Staff	E3	"Formation en									
4	Personne 44	1	Staff	E3	"Renforcement									
5	Personne 1	1	Staff	E3	"Appui à l'auto									
6	Personne 37	25	partenaire	E3	"la quasi-inexis									
7	Personne 50	35	Consultant	E4	"La faible repre									
8	Personne 39	27	partenaire	E4	"Les retards da									
9	Personne 2	1	Staff	E1	"Il est difficile									
10	Personne 30	5	partenaire	E1	"Adoption de									
11	Personne 44	16	partenaire	E1	"Contribution									
12	Personne 6	16	partenaire	E1	« Nos réalisat									
13	Personne 2	25	partenaire	E21	« L'utilité et la									
14	Personne 4	1	Staff	E22	« les activités									
15	Personne 6	35	Consultant	E22	« Le positionn									
16	Personne 44	1	Staff	E3	"L'initiative su									
17	Personne 39	27	partenaire	E3	"Facilitation de									

Source: Evaluation team transcripts

Findings were articulated based on corroborating facts from the most recent oral information, written documentation and the online survey. This confirmation process, otherwise known as “triangulation”, consisted of a cross-comparison of the content obtained from one or another of the methods described above and by cross-checking the information obtained from various sources.

1.3.6. Challenges and limitations of the evaluation

A two-week preparatory mission took place five months prior to the actual evaluation. It allowed the evaluation team to take note of the Country Office and Reference Group expectations (Annex IV) regarding the scope and conduct of the Country Portfolio Evaluation. However, the five months were not sufficiently used by the Country Office to scan and share requested documentation with the evaluation team.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated technical adjustments during the data collection phase. Desk review and interviews were conducted online. As a result, non-digitized documents and people without access to telecommunications remained out of reach.

An inventory of Country Office documents made available online to the evaluation team revealed some information gaps for existing projects. For some projects, documents such as cooperation agreements, known as Project Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) and Local Organization Agreements (LOAs), were missing. Before starting the interviews, the evaluation team devoted three weeks of its time to retrieving them. As a result, the document review phase took much longer than expected.

An important limitation to this evaluation was posed by the insecurity in some regions as well as COVID-19.

The evaluation team consulted with Reference Group members and UN Women personnel about which programme implementation sites to visit outside of the capital. They recommended that the evaluation team visit Maroua, Ntui-Batchenga-Yoko, Bamenda and Buea. In the end, however, it was only possible to visit one of the implementation sites located in Bertoua.¹⁰

Desk review and interviews were conducted remotely, which considerably limited the contribution of observation methods. The evaluation team attempted to partially alleviate this problem by requesting that office space be granted to the National Consultant and Assistant. Workspace was made available to them, along with the necessary work equipment. This allowed them to physically consult several documents and to interact regularly with personnel.

However, online interviews are a poor substitute for traditional face-to-face interview sessions. Poor connectivity precluded the possibility of video conferencing. This deprived the evaluation team of any opportunity to pick up and record non-verbal clues that could have been very useful for interpreting what was said in the interviews.

Even without the pandemic, parts of the anglophone regions would have been inaccessible because some of the territories where UN Women interventions are implemented became highly volatile in terms of security during this evaluation. Overall, these limitations prevented the evaluation from directly observing UN Women’s humanitarian work.

The evaluation team lacked the time to consolidate the various theories of change reconstructed by impact area into a coherent whole. There was no opportunity for a second participatory consultation with UN Women Cameroon personnel and stakeholders to discuss assumptions and anticipated constraints.


¹⁰ Following the possibility of carrying out field missions while respecting barrier measures, a field visit was carried out and limited only to Second Chance Education interventions implemented in Bertoua.


The other important limitation is particularly noticeable in the “effectiveness” section, where some of the data were drawn from the Results Management System (RMS). Result indicator values were not independently reported. Figures (and progress report narratives published in the narrative section of the RMS) were provided by the very personnel involved in programme implementation. This of course does not go without bias on the overall look of performance graphs. Primary sources cited by staff to substantiate reporting can be selected with the same bias and help produce advantageous reports in the RMS. As a result, the overall representation of the Strategic Note performance in the RMS is open to scepticism and questioning.


The evaluation team tried to limit these shortcomings through stakeholder consultation and would have liked to conduct more than the single field visit to Bertoua. This was made impossible by COVID-19.

Lastly, regarding the calculation of budget allocations, the evaluation team is aware of the possibility of double counting for funds with allocations that span multiple budget cycles. This creates uncertainty in the financial estimates. For example, a project with a budget of US\$1 million may have spent US\$200,000 in 2018 and carried over US\$800,000 for 2019. The total allocation of the period 2018–2019 is apparently above US\$1,800,000 if a simple summation of annual budgets is applied.¹¹ Owing to time constraints, it has not been possible to control this risk by identifying budget carry-overs.


Evaluation objectives

-  Identify lessons drawn from the previous strategic period to inform decision-making


-  Strengthen the accountability of UN Women about its contribution to gender equality

-  Analyse how human rights principles and approaches are integrated in the Strategic Note

Evaluation criteria




Evaluation methodology




Gender-responsive evaluation
Used Mixed-methods to triangulate evidence | Desk review and interviews conducted remotely

Interviews and survey



53 Interviews with United Nations colleagues, donors, implementing partners and beneficiaries | Online survey completed by 11 UN Women personnel

Documents reviewed



Annual work plans, evaluations, project documents reports, financial documentation, meeting minutes, key national strategic documents, knowledge products etc.

¹¹ Assuming there is a new allocation of US\$500,000 in 2019. Total allocation is apparently equal to US\$1,800,000 + US\$500,000 for 2018–2019.

2. BACKGROUND OF UN WOMEN'S WORK IN CAMEROON

Cameroon had an estimated population of 25.9 million in 2019¹² and a gender ratio of 98 men to 100 women. Its human development indices¹³ show challenges in achieving sustainable development by 2030. The analysis of development inequality indices, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Inequality Index (GII) reveal huge disparities within Cameroonian society and specific gender equality gaps. In 2018, the country's Human Development Index was 0.563 and ranked 150 out of a total of 189 countries. In the same year, the GDI was 0.869 and ranked 151 out of 166 countries. Its GII at the time was 0.566 and was ranked 140th position out of 162 countries.

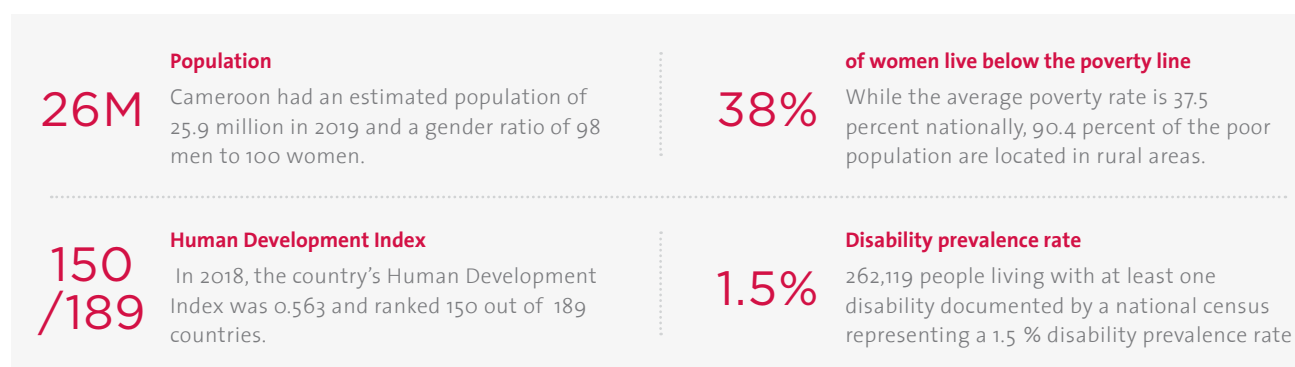
According to the Fourth Cameroon Household Survey (ECAM 4, 2014), 37.7 percent of women live below the poverty line compared to 37.2 percent of men. While the average poverty rate is 37.5 percent nationally, 90.4 percent of the poor population are located in rural areas. In the northern regions, poverty affects 63 percent of women in the Far North, 50 percent of women in Adamawa and 53 percent of women in the North.

The Far North Region has been hit by cross-border incursions by the Boko Haram sect from Borno, Nigeria.

Populations from the Central African Republic arrive massively in the Adamawa and Eastern regions as they flee from religious sects. In addition, the English-speaking regions of Cameroon (North-West and South-West) are going through a sociopolitical crisis. While people are excluded socially and economically on the basis of ethnicity, gender, language and/or religion, other forms of marginalization within the Cameroonian population are based on disability and/or homosexuality.

The Third General Population and Housing Census of 2005¹⁴ documented 262,119 people living with at least one disability,¹⁵ including 127,381 women and 134,738 men, representing an overall 1.5 percent disability prevalence rate¹⁶ (1.5 percent for women and 1.6 percent for men) in the population of Cameroon.

Homosexual acts¹⁷ have been punishable under the law since 1972 in Cameroon. The National Observatory of the Rights of LGBTQI Persons decries increased violations of the rights of defenders of LGBTQI persons¹⁸ in the face of indifference and occasionally, support of the police, administrative and judicial authorities¹⁹.



¹² <https://data.worldbank.org/country/cameroon>.

¹³ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/fr/CMR.pdf.

¹⁴ There is an 18 year gap between the Second and Third General Population Census. If this interval is maintained, we will not have any update before 2023.

¹⁵ For example, hearing, speech, mental or physical impairment, leprosy, albinism.

¹⁶ Rural areas have a higher rate of people living with a disability (1.7 %) than urban areas (1.3 %). By region, Adamawa has the lowest prevalence rate (0.9 %) while the South region has the highest (2.6 %). The disability prevalence in Cameroon's population increases with age, probably as a result of disabling diseases that also increase with age. The population under age 15 has a prevalence rate of 1.0 %, while the rate for those over 60 is 5.7 %.

¹⁷ Article 347-1 of Cameroon's new Penal Code, adopted in July 2016, punishes "sexual relations with a person of the same sex" with a six month to five year prison term and a fine of 20,000 to 200,000 CFA francs (about US\$40 to US\$400). Likewise, Article 347-bis of the same Penal Code provides for a jail term of six months to five years for anyone convicted of "same-sex sexual relations".

¹⁸ The observatory was set up in 2016 at the behest of 20 identity-based associations in Cameroon, including the Cameroon AIDS Foundation (CAMFAIDS).

¹⁹ <https://www.fidh.org/fr/regions/afrique/cameroon/17065-cameroon-les-defenseurs-des-droits-des-personnes-lgbti><https://www.fidh.org/fr/regions/afrique/cameroon/17065-cameroon-les-defenseurs-des-droits-des-personnes-lgbti-confrontes-a-lconfrontes-a-l>.

3. ANALYSIS OF UN WOMEN CAMEROON'S COUNTRY PORTFOLIO

This section of the report presents data on UN Women Cameroon's Programme, expenditures, activities, stakeholders and theories of change, based on literature review.

3.1. Overview of the 2018–2020 Strategic Note

UN Women Cameroon's 2018–2020 Strategic Note has eight outcomes divided into five impact areas: Women's Leadership and Political Participation; Women's Economic Empowerment; Ending Violence Against Women; Humanitarian Action, Peace and Security; and Frontier Issues (Annex VII). The Strategic Note contributes to implementing the country's UNDAF 2018–2020 and is aligned with national gender priorities as outlined in the National Growth and Employment Document (2010–2020), the National Gender Policy, national sectoral plans and the international commitments of Cameroon.

3.2. Review of Strategic Note indicators²⁰

A total of 8 outcomes, 45 outputs and 59 indicators²¹ elaborate on the 5 impact areas of the Strategic Note. There are also 9 outputs from the Strategic Note's Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework (OEEF) that are monitored through 19 indicators.

The evaluation team analysed the quality of the 59 results framework indicators, with particular emphasis on their specificity and measurability given the national context or office constraints. The analysis²² reveals that at least 13 indicators need to be reformulated, including 3 indicators in the area of Women's Leadership and Political Participation, 5 indicators in the area of Women's Economic Empowerment, 2 indicators in the area of Ending Violence Against Women, 1 indicator in the area of Humanitarian Action, Peace and Security, and 2 indicators in the area of Frontier Issues.

In the OEEF, Indicator 3.3B "Status of evaluation management response implementation" should be reformulated as "Percentage of key actions from management response implemented". Similarly, it should be noted that the target for Indicator 3.3A "Number of monitoring reports produced (quarterly reports, donor reports, weekly office meetings)" set at 400 should be reduced to a more achievable number.

3.3. Strategic Note theories of change

The evaluation team reviewed the theory of change designed by the Country Office during its 2017 planning (Annex VIII). The team considered it important to first formulate the theories of change per Thematic area before formulating a theory of change for the entire strategy. It is noted that in the Strategic Note results, both Gender Statistics and Women's Political Participation are placed under Governance and Participation. The heterogeneity of this last Thematic area is further confirmed with the inclusion of an output on HIV-sensitive response. This poses a challenge to sketching causal pathways between results, as part of discussions on the theory of change.

Another point discussed with personnel during the inaugural workshop was the cross-cutting nature of gender statistics. The evaluation team proposed that its outputs be distributed across all impact areas, as it could not be made a Thematic area in its own right.

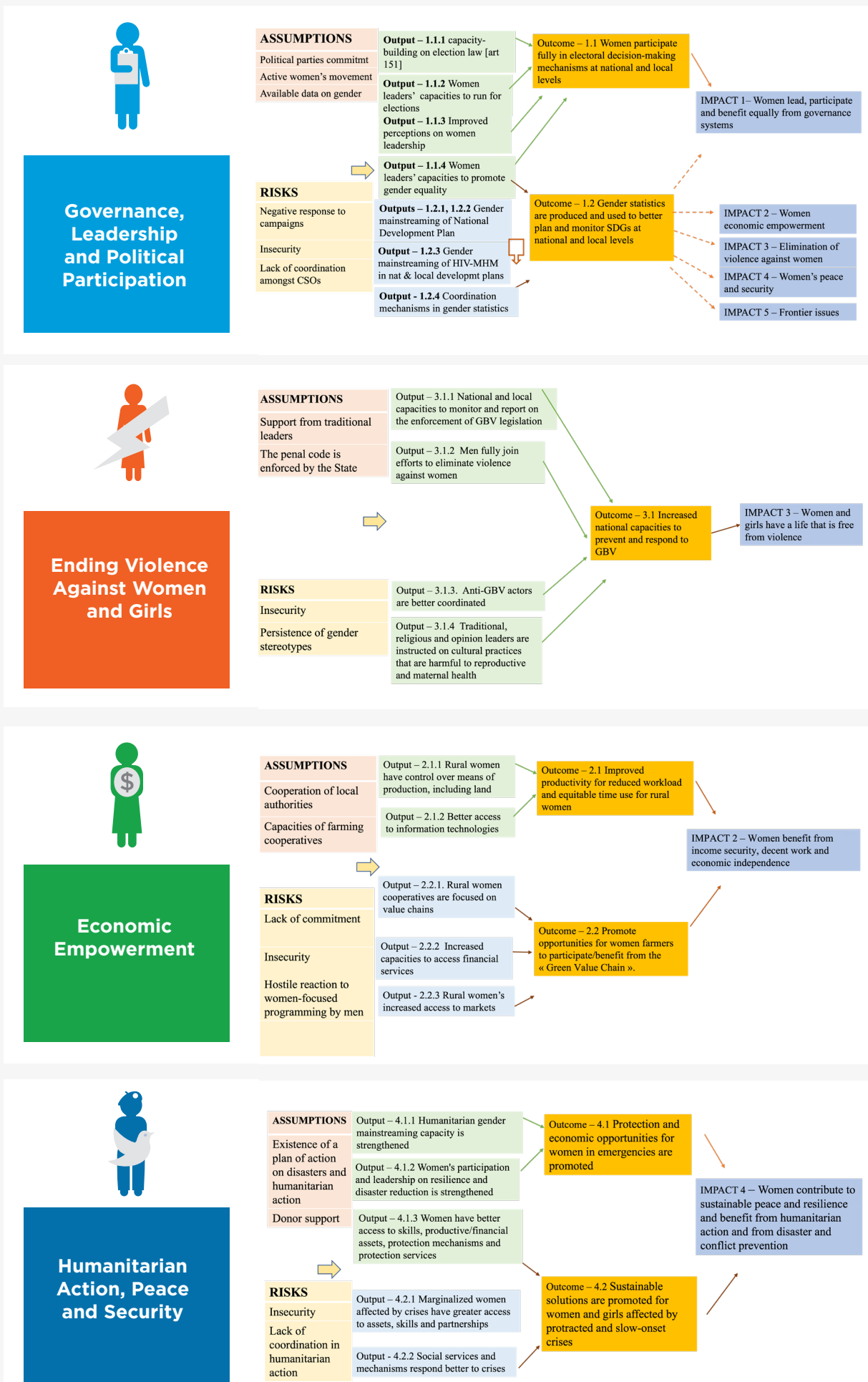
It was also suggested that the *Frontier Issues* impact area, created to accommodate the Second Chance Education programme, should be merged with the *Women's Economic Empowerment* impact area.

²⁰ UN Women personnel devoted two working days, from 31 October to 1 November 2019, to an internal midterm review to thoroughly examine results achieved by reviewing the indicators of the Strategic Note. The review is considered internal because it did not involve any external partners. It nevertheless updated indicators in light of the new context and addressed certain inconsistencies and weaknesses in their formulation.

²¹ UN Women personnel devoted two working days, from 31 October to 1 November 2019, to an internal midterm review to thoroughly examine results achieved by reviewing the indicators of the Strategic Note. The review is considered internal because it did not involve any external partners. It nevertheless updated indicators in light of the new context and addressed certain inconsistencies and weaknesses in their formulation.

²² Summary table (entitled "Indicators by impact area") under Appendix 3.

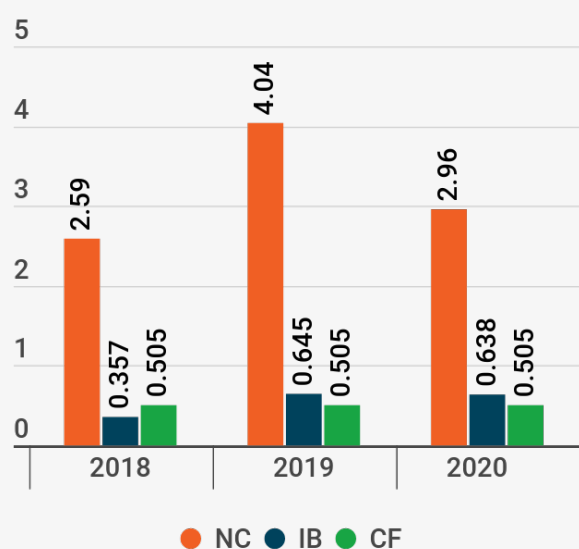
Figure 3.3. - Theories of change by impact area.



3.4. Financial aspects of the Strategic Note 2018–2020

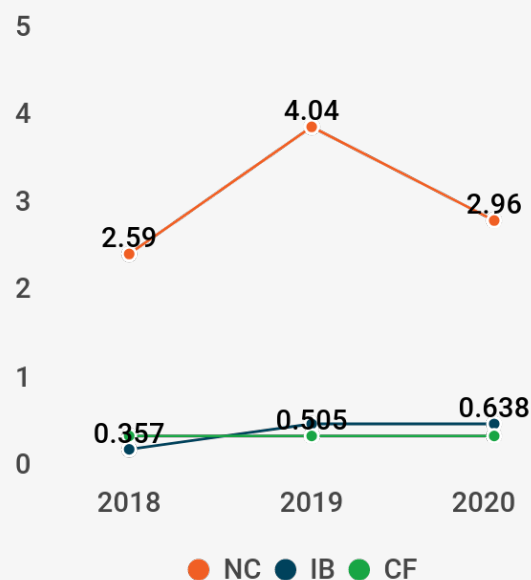
The year 2019 stands out from other years in that the amount of funds mobilized was significantly higher than in previous years, amounting to US\$5,385,664 compared with US\$3,461,508 in 2018 and US\$4,127,281 in 2020. Core funding stagnated at US\$505,575 regardless of the year considered, while extrabudgetary funds have significantly increased year after year.

Figure 3.4a. Mobilization of funds, 2018-2020 (US\$ millions)



NC: NON CORE
IB: INSTITUTIONAL BUDGET
CF: CORE FUNDS

Figure 3.4b. Funds mobilization (evolution) (US\$ millions)



Source : Data from the RMS (2018-2020) as of 10/08/2020 |

3.4.1. Financial mobilization by impact area

The impact area Women's Leadership and Political Participation should have been entitled "Governance" to avoid it being confused with one of its sub-Thematic areas bearing the same name. The term "WLPP" is used in reference to a composite impact area comprising activities pertaining to women's political participation, the fight against HIV/AIDS and gender statistics. Since this terminology is used by the RMS, it has been maintained in the presentation of allocations by result area. To implement the five impact areas, the Country Office mobilized US\$9,563,116 (non-core funds), i.e. nearly 64 percent of the original requirements of the Strategic Note. The breakdown of this total amount is, in decreasing order: US\$3,070,660 (32.1 percent) for Women's Leadership and Political Participation; US\$3,049,501 (31.9 percent) for Women's Economic Empowerment; US\$2,135,472 (22.3 percent) for Humanitarian Action, Peace and Security; US\$1,255,483 (13.1 percent) for Frontier Issues; and US\$52,000 (0.5 percent) for Ending Violence Against Women.

In terms of proportion of funds mobilized relative to the initial budget of the Strategic Note, the Country Office mobilized 90.4 percent for the Women's Economic Empowerment impact area, 74.4 percent for Women's Leadership and Political Participation; 43 percent for Humanitarian Action, Peace and Security and only 5.8 percent for Ending Violence Against Women.

This last percentage reflects clear underfunding for activities related to the elimination of *sexual and* gender-based violence (Appendix-4: Financial Mobilization Table by Impact Area).

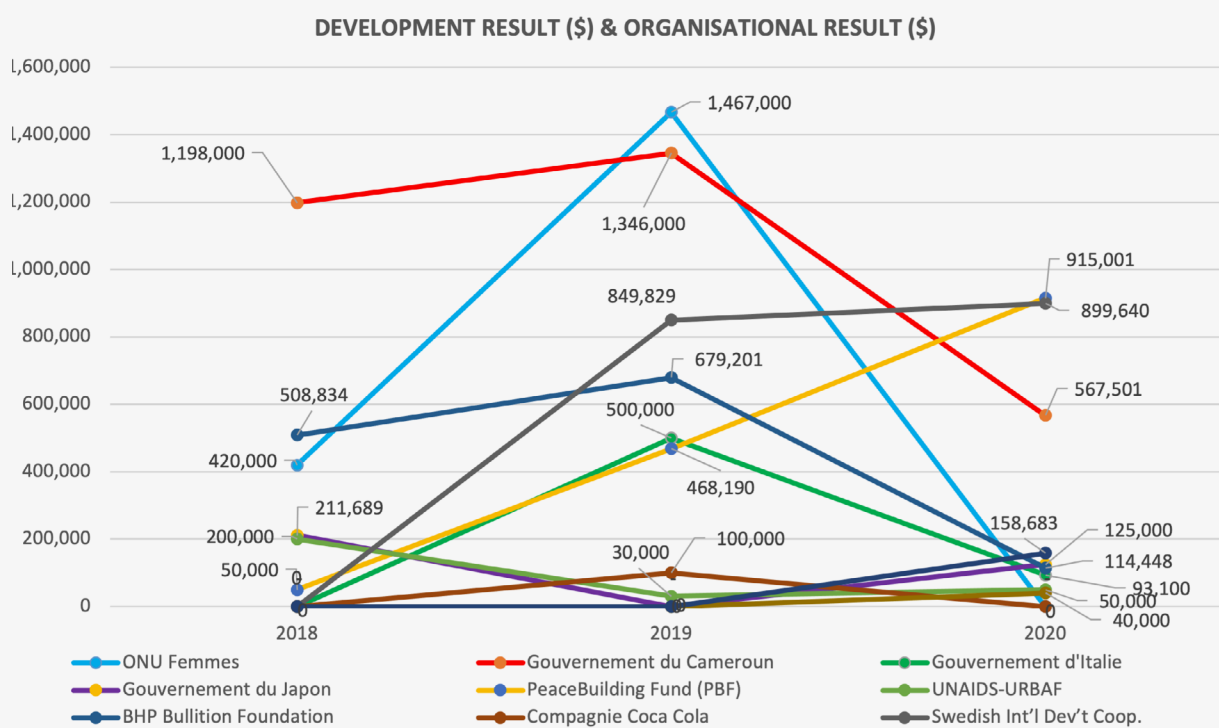
3.4.2. Financial contribution by donor

A total of US\$9,772,116 was made available to the Country Office over the period of 2018–2020. The main contributor of funds was the Government of Cameroon, with US\$3,111,501 (31.8 percent), followed by UN Women's Core funds, Institutional Budget and Extra Budgetary funds (US\$1,887,000, 19.3 percent), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (US\$1,749,469, 17.9 percent), the Peace Building Fund (US\$1,433,191, 14.7 percent) and the BHP Billiton Foundation (US\$1,302,483, 13.3 percent). Funds from the Government of Cameroon were sourced from loans contracted with financial institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) or the Development Bank of Central African States (BDEAC).

Nearly 15.4 percent of funds were provided by a group of six donors: the Government of Italy (6.1 percent), the Government of Japan (3.4 percent), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF) (2.9 percent), the Generalitat of Catalonia (1.6 percent), the Coca-Cola Company (1 percent) and UNAIDS (0.4 percent).

An analysis per fund type [Development Result Framework (DRF) and Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework (OEEF)] highlights that the Government of Cameroon had a higher contribution to OEEF funds (57.9 percent compared with 32.5 percent for DRF). It also shows a sudden decrease in funding from various sources since 2019.

Figure 3.4.2. Financial contributions (2018–2020)



Source : Data from the RMS as of 10 August 2020

3.5. Human resources

The description of UN Women Cameroon personnel further characterizes the profile of the Country Office and helps determine the extent to which the office has the workforce required to achieve its ambitions. In other words, this brief portion of the report can be used to answer the question: does the Country Office have the capacities needed to deliver on portfolio results and position itself to contribute to the coordination of gender among United Nations entities and national partners?

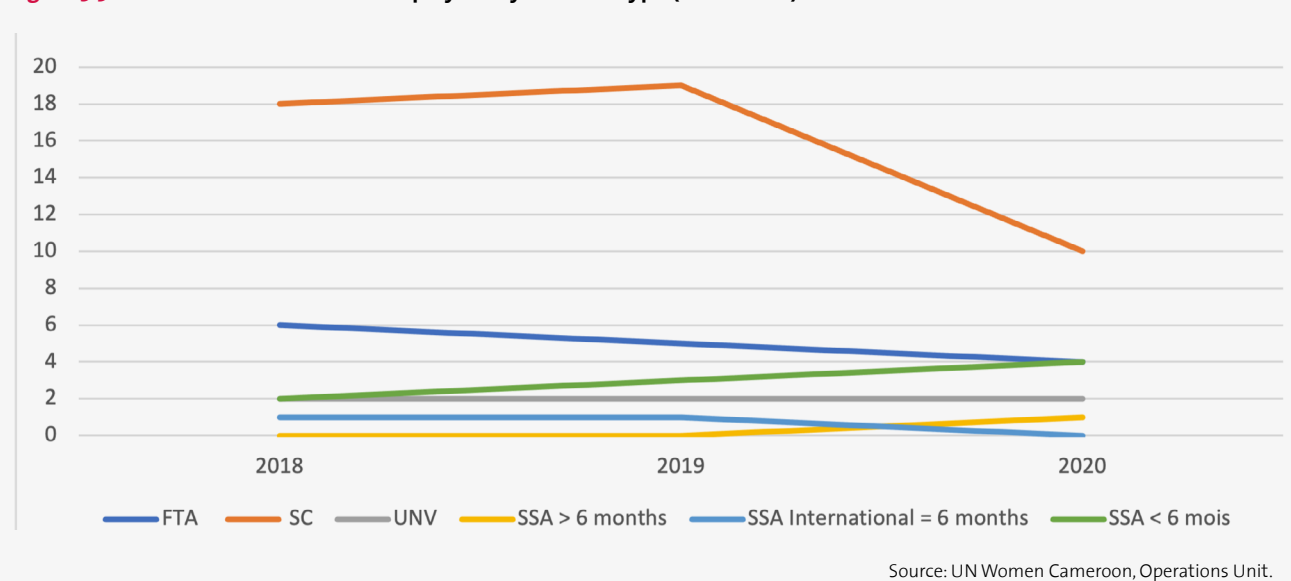
Towards the end of 2019, the number of UN Women personnel dropped by 15 percent from the first quarter, from 30 to 21 employees. This instability is attributed primarily to financial challenges faced by the Country Office in 2019, as suggested by the graph on financial contributions (Figure 3.4.2). The reduced size of the workforce is echoed by the large number of precarious contracts signed by UN Women employees. In 2018, the Country Office had 29 employees, with various contract types: 18 Service Contracts, 6 Fixed-Term Appointments (FTAs), 2 United Nations Volunteers, 2 Special Service Agreements (SSAs) for less than 6 months, and 1 SSA for more than 6 months. In 2019, there were 30 employees: 19 Service Contracts, 5 FTAs, 3 SSAs for less than 6 months, 2 United Nations Volunteers and 1 SSA of more

than 6 months. In 2020, there were 21 employees: 10 Service Contracts, 4 FTAs, 4 SSAs of less than 6 months, 2 United Nations Volunteers and 1 SSA of more than 6 months.

Most of the SSA contracts are precarious. Employees with SSAs are the only personnel with fewer than six months of service (two SSAs in 2018, three SSAs in 2019 and four SSAs in 2020). The evaluation was unable to ascertain whether these SSAs were recruited for core functions or for support services. Regardless of the year considered, the highest proportion of personnel are those with Service Contracts, which deprive them of benefits (pension, annual leave, health insurance, etc.) that are characteristic of positions with stable²³ or FTA contracts. The evaluation team observed that the proportion of SSA contracts has changed from year to year (60 percent in 2018, 59 percent in 2018 and 47 percent in 2018). In light of absolute numbers, this relative drop seems to be a result of the decrease in the total number of personnel rather than a decrease in the number of SSAs or an increase in the number of FTAs.

Furthermore, two recently filled positions (Information Technology Assistant and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer) are of the Service Contract category.

²³ Also known as “actual staff”.

Figure 3.5a. Evolution of number of employees by contract type (2018–2020)**Table 3.5b. Human resources per year (2018–2020)**

	2018	2019	2020
Fixed-term appointment staff	6	5	4
Service contract personnel	18	19	10
United Nations Volunteer	2	2	2
Special Service Agreement personnel (duration greater than 6 months)	-	-	1
International Special Service Agreement (duration of 6 months)	1	1	-
Special Service Agreement (duration less than 6 months)	2	3	4
Total	29	30	21

Source: UN Women Cameroon, Operations Unit.

The closure of UN Women Cameroon premises in Ntui, Maroua and the Far North is not the only factor accounting for the decrease in human resources. The Sub-Offices have ceased to exist since 2019, and the workforce size was 21 in December 2019. Twelve months later, the office was down to 16 personnel, representing a 50 percent drop from the staffing level in the second quarter of 2019.

As a result, only some of the positions in the Country Office's organigram (Annex X) are filled. Others are vacant, either because recruitments have yet to be initiated or because of recent departures of personnel. For example, the Humanitarian Action, Peace and Security impact area was the hardest hit in terms of personnel losses. This was particularly felt in the Far North Region, which lost its Head

of sub-Office. One out of five humanitarian personnel relocated to Yaoundé to work as a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Programme Officer. The position of Programme Manager Leadership and Political Participation was retitled in 2020 as Programme Manager Governance, Women, Peace and Security. This change combined the responsibilities of two major impact areas in the duties of one employee, in addition to the coordination portfolio, which includes managing the United Nations Gender Theme Group. Accumulation of functions is also found at the top-level position: The Country Office Representative of UN Women Cameroon was dispatched to Niger in August 2018, and since then his Deputy has acted since as Representative ad interim.



Photo ©UN Women-CAMEROON

4. FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

At the end of the data collection phase, the evaluation team presented preliminary findings to Country Office personnel and the Reference Group. Preliminary findings were then nuanced and refined to take the form presented below.

4.1. RELEVANCE

4.1.1. Alignment

FINDING 1.

The Strategic Note (2018–2020) covers very significant areas of action in gender and human rights. In terms of relevance, the Strategic Note implementation could better reflect some of the concerns previously raised by international treaty review committees²⁴, including the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

With the exception of a few respondents from the United Nations, the vast majority of interview participants think that UN Women interventions cover the most important areas of gender and human rights. This quasi-unanimous view was corroborated by the online survey.

Nonetheless, reading the Strategic Note with the final conclusions of the 2014 CEDAW report in mind, it is clear that the Strategic Note has not addressed some of the priorities identified in the periodic review of the implementation of international treaties signed by Cameroon.

For example, regarding integration of sexual and gender-based violence provisions into the Cameroonian Criminal Code,²⁵ the 2019 final conclusions of the Committee on Economic and Social Rights (CESR) urged the Government of Cameroon to demonstrate, with supporting evidence, the extent to which the inclusion of sexual and gender-based violence under the penal code allows for the prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of violence against women:

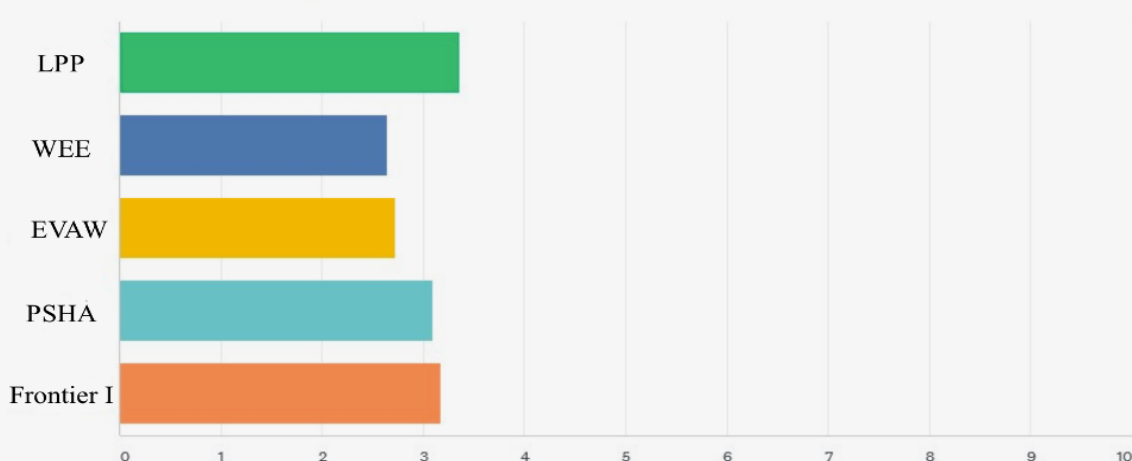
While taking note of the information provided by the State party on the application of the provisions of the Criminal Code to perpetrators of acts of violence against women, the Committee regrets that it has not received statistics on the number of cases in which those provisions have been applied or on the number of offenders who have been put on trial and convicted.²⁶

The Strategic Note includes a gender statistics outcome. Through the Women Count programme, UN Women Cameroon collaborated with the National Institute of Statistics to produce a brochure²⁷ on the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in Cameroon over time. This was appreciated by the general public as its language was easy to understand. However, the Women Count gender statistics programme was not specifically designed to count instances when the criminal code was applied to sexual and gender-based violence, as the CESR had requested in March 2019.

Figure 4.1.1. Importance of UN Women Cameroon intervention areas

In your opinion, what impact areas of UN Women-CMR are valuable?

Received answers: 11; Ignored Questions: 0



SURVEY ABOUT UN WOMEN CAMEROON SN 2018-2020

🔍 (0)

²⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (2014) and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2019).

²⁵ Law No. 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 on the penal code includes specific provisions on sexual harassment, female genital mutilation (article 277) and early marriage (article 120).

²⁶ E/C.12/CMR/CO/4 Para 46 (p.8) – 2019 Conclusions of Economic Committee of Social Rights (ECSR).

²⁷ “Gender and dynamics of some key health indicators in Cameroon”, policy brief of May 2020. Its format and conciseness allow for a fairly wide dissemination to the general public.

Some respondents noted that UN Women Cameroon does not sufficiently target the underlying causes of gender inequality. In their opinion, the entity opted for a consensual strategy to avoid any controversy that might disrupt project implementation. This explains, in their view, why UN Women does not put forward an openly feminist discourse. One participant noted that the term “feminist” is not championed by most gender activists in Cameroon.

The evaluation finds however that the Strategic Note and the National Gender Policy are inspired by a feminist perspective on egalitarianism. Some initiatives of UN Women Cameroon have contributed significantly to reducing inequalities between men and women, including their access to land. For instance, the economic empowerment initiative for rural women in 2018–2019 included a land ownership component in Ntui and surrounding areas.

A question from the terms of reference of this evaluation asks whether the Strategic Note targets the underlying causes of gender inequality. This amounts to asking: “Is UN-Women’s (feminist) work with national gender actors sufficient to reverse unequal relations between women and men in Cameroon?” This can be answered by referring to the actions articulated by CEDAW in 2014. Admittedly, advocacy for the elimination of harmful practices such as child and forced marriages, female genital mutilation, breast ironing, widow stigmatization and widowhood rites are addressed, at least indirectly, by one of the outputs of the Strategic Note²⁸ under the impact area of

Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. However, the said output is formulated in a way that limits its potential for change. In particular,

1. The output of the Strategic Note in question (Output CMR_D-3.1.4) concerns religious/traditional authorities and other opinion leaders. It does not target the judiciary or legislative system.
2. The action consists only of “informing about” harmful practices.

In addition, while the evaluation recognizes the transformative potential of Strategic Note outcomes, it is also clear that the budget allocated to ending sexual and gender-based violence is significantly low (5 percent).

Lastly, a clear gap in the Strategic Note can be observed when the above outputs are compared with recommendations of international treaty review committees,²⁹ including those of CEDAW in 2014. The following elements are either incorporated indirectly or simply absent from the list of Strategic Note results:

- Awareness to “repeal all provisions of the State party’s legislation that discriminate against women, in particular, the provisions of the Civil Code, as well as those related to the prohibition of certain jobs for women”;³⁰
- Advocacy for the effectiveness of Cameroon’s legislation on women’s right to work, the prohibition of discrimination in hiring and the guarantee of decent working conditions.³¹

4.1.2. Choice of partners

FINDING 2.

In keeping with the rationale behind the corporate initiative for flagship programmes, UN Women Cameroon signed partnership agreements with several government institutions and significantly reduced the number of collaborative agreements with civil society organizations. The organization is thus perceived as distant from small civil society organizations. However, the latter are relatively closer to the most marginalized sectors of the population and thus perceived as having a leading role in mobilizing and drawing the attention of local authorities and, indirectly, national leaders.

The work of UN Women is implemented through LOAs and PCAs signed with the Government, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. The entity also works with donors³², sister agencies through the United Nations Country Team and other coordination mechanisms. A mapping of implementing partners and donors can be found in Annex VIII of this report.

Various categories of partners work with UN Women in Cameroon:

- State partners are the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, the Yoko Council, the Ntui Council and the Batchenga Council;

²⁸ Output CMR_D-3.1.4 “Religious, traditional and opinion leaders are provided with relevant information on harmful cultural practices impacting reproductive and maternal health”.

²⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2014) and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2019).

³⁰ This committee urged Cameroon to take this type of measure (“E / C.12 / CMR / CO / 4” pp. 4-6) because it “notes with deep concern that harmful practices against women and girls remain widespread in the State party although they are prohibited by law (art. 10).”

³¹ Ibid. p. 6.

³² In addition, UN Women Cameroon signed funding agreements with the Government of Sweden, the Swedish Development Agency, the Development Bank of Central African States, the African Development Bank, the Government of Japan and the Government of Italy.

- Parastatal partners are the National AIDS Control Committee, the National Communication Council, the National Institute of Statistics, the Central Bureau for Censuses and Population Studies and Elections Cameroon;
- Non-governmental organizations are the Association of the Fight Against Violence Against Women (ALVF), the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Foundation (LUKMEF), the Agricultural Value Chains Development Project

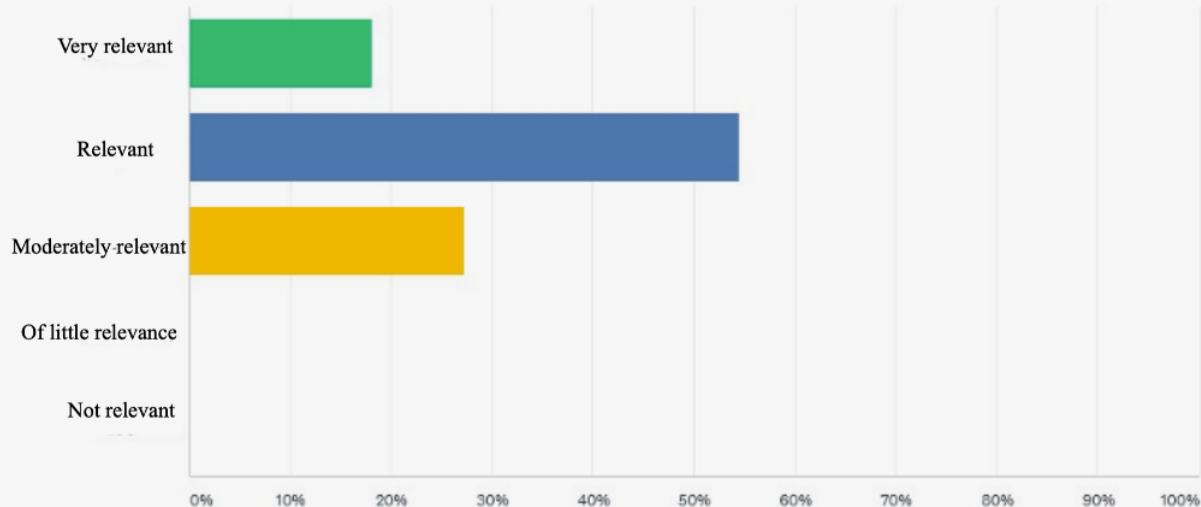
(PDCVA), the Cameroon Association for the Protection and Education of the Child (CAPEC) and the Cameroon Youth and Student Forum for Peace (CAMYOSFOP) United Nations agencies are mainly UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO.

Most respondents to the online survey believe UN Women's choice of partners is "quite relevant".

Figure 4.1.2. Relevance of UN Women choice of partners

Is UN Women - Cameroon's choice of partners relevant for the achievement of its mandate?

Received answers: 11 ; Ignored questions: 0



Source: Survey Monkey

It goes without saying that UN Women³³, as an intergovernmental organization, works with different government ministries, including the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family. This also makes sense in practice: by advocating for State ownership of the gender agenda, UN Women leverages the State's influence or "legitimate authority" (as mentioned during an interview) to bring about long-term normative changes. Working with the Government is therefore a strategic choice. Without a doubt, the establishment of a gender friendly political and legal order is reliant on sovereign State institutions championing this cause.

However, UN Women Cameroon was criticized for turning its back on small civil society organizations, as most of its collaboration agreements are signed with ministries and State institutions. In its Partnership and Resource Mobilization Plan, the Country Office dedicates a section to several ministries, describing the strategic and not necessarily monetary significance they respectively represent

for UN Women. By contrast, only three sentences are dedicated to civil society. Thus, UN Women Cameroon's partnership approach with civil society is unspecific.

Following the Flagship Programme Initiative which was put in place by UN Women headquarters, several Country Offices significantly reduced the number of implementing partners to lower transaction costs. Flagship programmes consist roughly in aggregating a multitude of small projects with the same focus area into a single mega-project. Proponents of the switch to Flagship Programmes had described the former practice as a "confetti-like", or piece-meal, programmatic approach. As a result, the number of partnerships with civil society organizations decreased significantly. Whereas at least 12 non-government organizations³⁴ were implementing projects funded by UN Women in 2016, only half that number is currently in partnership with UN Women.

³³ UN Women in general, not only UN Women Cameroon.

³⁴ MWIP, ALDEPA, ACAFJ, Public Concern, CAMYOSFOP, FEFPLEM, Collectif d'Associations de PVVIH, ASBY, WILFP, ACAFEJ, ALVF, FEFPLEM, ALDEPA

Some respondents did not appreciate this development. They emphasized that the technical competence of selected non-governmental organizations should not entail marginalization of small civil society organizations that work to defend a very noble cause: “Partners chosen by UN Women are relevant, but UN Women’s role is also to build the capacities of small organizations.” UN Women emphasizes on the other hand that civil society organizations are selected on the basis of competency in the impact area, geographical coverage and management skills. For instance, ALVF is specialized in the area of violence against women, both regarding prevention and care for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. To quote an interview with UN Women personnel, “ALVF is a focused partner. Some non-governmental organizations want to do everything, but ALVF is focused on combatting sexual and gender-based violence. Their reporting capacity is quite high.”

UN Women’s preference for partnering with a few technically competent non-governmental organizations is criticized by referring to the very “raison d’être” of UN Women. The United Nations gender entity owes its origins

to advocacy from thousands of small organizations that united to make their voices heard at the United Nations Assembly. Their hopes materialized in 2010 with the creation of UN Women.

Furthermore, there is strategic interest for UN Women to maintain its organic relationship with the women’s movement. For example, in November 2020, civil society weighed in to put pressure on the Government and demand transparency in public finances³⁵. This should have been an opportunity for dissemination of the work plan on gender-responsive budgeting that was commissioned by UN Women. By working more closely with civil society, UN Women would have given a democratic base to its gender-responsive budgeting programme.

Lastly, on partnerships, a UN Women Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) was put in place in Cameroon as a consultative mechanism to facilitate regular dialogue. It is unclear whether the composition of CSAG reflects the diversity of civil society. Additionally, consultations with CSAG are not as frequent as originally intended.

4.1.3. Positioning and comparative advantage

FINDING 3.

UN Women Cameroon’s positioning is most visible in its normative and coordination work and particularly in the area of gender statistics. UN Women inspires more expectations in interventions related to the normative and coordination dimensions of its integrated mandate. This perception, common among gender equality actors, is partly due to its withdrawal from the humanitarian zones of the North-West, South-West and Far North regions.

The normative component of UN Women attracts more expectations among gender stakeholders in Cameroon. They believe that “UN Women is in a better position to campaign or raise public awareness.” This view was partly bolstered by the drawdown of field personnel in Maroua and Bamenda. Many perceive this withdrawal as a setback on the gains recorded prior to the end of Japanese funding, and a reversal as well in terms of positioning in the humanitarian field. Even in Yaoundé, UN Women has not been visible in some of the consultation meetings, due to its limited number of personnel. While interviewed donors emphasized the usefulness of UN Women’s presence, they still noted its absence from key events. “The organization was filling the gender expertise gap in the humanitarian field. Not all United Nations agencies are gender sensitive. The presence of UN Women in the humanitarian field

ensured gender mainstreaming into United Nations interventions. We do not get to see or hear UN Women in the humanitarian meetings any more.”

Interviewees acknowledged that UN Women Cameroon’s limited financial resources prevent it from supporting coordinated protection in conflict situations or ensuring rapid interventions against sexual and gender-based violence.

According to participants from civil society, UN Women is not a typical United Nations agency. It quite naturally champions the aspirations of gender equality activists. The 16 Days of Activism campaigns, the HeforShe Initiative, and accountability to international commitments on women’s rights are all areas where the positioning of UN Women Cameroon is widely recognized.

³⁵ Forum held from 24 to 25 November 2020 by a civil society consortium with government representation (Ministry of Finance). This group of non-governmental organizations called for “the participation of the civil society in the implementation of the public finance reform”, especially “improving the management and transparency of public finances in the context of COVID-19.” This civil society pressure and dialogue group for the transparency of public finances is made up of COSADER; Afroleadership; CRADIF; I-WATCH; PLATEFORME Transparence Budgétaire; RESYPAT; NOLFOWO; Dynamique Citoyenne; CRADEC; PLANOSCAM, SC; les Jeudis de Cotonou; Cabinet MTD; APAC; ROSFIP; ANCFM; UAOD; APESEC; RESIPAT; APINK; RESDECO; CERAGN; AGAD; FCJ; PPTE; SUN; CAPE; SEPDOBAD and CIDE.

The coordination role of UN Women is well recognized by donors. One of them wished UN Women could extend its coordination role to civil society by becoming more involved with the women's movement, not just ministries: "UN Women should enhance its collaboration with civil society organizations." This would certainly establish a channel to communicate the demands of women's organizations to executive circles.

Even with UN Women Cameroon's relatively modest budget, its role cannot be limited to the normative. When asked about this, UN Women personnel said that restricting the entity's work to the normative overlooks its interdependence with other dimensions of its integrated mandate. Focusing solely on organizing campaigns and advocacy on gender norms, laws and policies in Cameroon is not enough for UN Women to fulfil its role. UN Women's added value is recognized across various institutions in Cameroon for implementing joint projects with other United Nations agencies. For instance, UN

Women is valued for its contribution to gender statistics in Cameroon, including its ongoing work on the Gender Demographic Dividend Index of Cameroon.

Most personnel from United Nations agencies did not question the coordinating role of UN Women.³⁶ This is because UN Women Cameroon plays a key role³⁷ within the Gender Theme Group and the United Nations system Programme Management Team (PMT) co-chaired by the Country Office Representative. It is therefore not surprising that gender issues are high on the agenda of the United Nations system in Cameroon. This was clearly said regarding the planning process of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021–2025 as part of alignment efforts to the newly adopted National Development Strategy 2020–2030. However, according to the Cooperation Office of a donor country, the perception of inter-agency competition for funding remains. This could be limited if resource mobilization strategies were jointly organized.

Box 4.1.3 MOST COMMON PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF UN WOMEN IN CAMEROON

UN Women has a clear comparative advantage in the following areas:



Gender advocacy, sensitization and mobilization agency; Gender capacity-building agency



Convener and catalytic intermediary between the women's movement and the Government



Gender expertise hub disseminating knowledge and statistical data on gender



Technical and financial partner of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family

³⁶ In 2016, during the evaluation of the previous Strategic Note, acceptance of UN Women's coordination mandate was less clear. Not all United Nations agencies felt that UN Women should coordinate the United Nations system's contribution to achieving gender equality.

³⁷ The Cameroon Country Office is a member of 22 Thematic bodies or groups and leads two of them; the Programme Management Team and the Gender Theme Group. Table in the Appendix entitled "UN Women Cameroon in Working Groups and Joint Initiatives between 2018 and 2020".

4.1.4. Adaptation to change

FINDING 4.

The flexibility and adaptability³⁸ of the UN Women Cameroon Country Office to changing or unforeseen circumstances was demonstrated by its rapid response to demands following the COVID-19 pandemic.

While maintaining overall implementation of ongoing projects, in particular the *Women Count* and *Second Chance Education* initiatives, UN Women Cameroon responded to urgent needs related to COVID-19 by adjusting its spending plan³⁹ of core funds and by leveraging its gender coordination role in the United Nations system. This was the case for the *Project on Support to Women's Socio-economic Activities around Value Chains Affected by COVID-19* in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.

To curb losses induced by declining demand for clothing items during the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Women supported the rapid conversion of sewing workshops to become 100 percent focused on producing protective masks. This was made possible through a joint project

with UNICEF to support a small women-owned business (20 employees) dedicated to the production of washable masks⁴⁰ in Yaoundé. While this is remarkable at community level, this initiative should be scaled up to cover a significant portion of the population.

By contrast, the training programme on how to produce antiseptic soap and hydroalcoholic gel⁴¹ that was carried out in Bamenda and Buea during the summer of 2020 may have more significant results. The programme is designed for sustainability as it includes a training of trainers component to ensure continuity and dissemination of knowledge. The programme also provides an alternative source of income in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2. EFFECTIVENESS

4.2.1. Overview of performance indicators by impact area

FINDING 5.

UN Women Cameroon has largely demonstrated its capacity to achieve expected results. Between 2018 and 2020, there was an upward trend in the values of outcome and output indicators. According to self-reported data from the RMS, the level of achievement of outcome indicator targets between 2018 and 2019 was approximately 43 percent for outputs and 32 percent for outcomes

As mentioned earlier, the evaluation team did not have the opportunity to verify in the field the validity of the figures. The performance analysis in this report for each of the five impact areas is based on the assumption⁴² that values entered in the RMS by UN Women Cameroon personnel between 2018 and 2019 are accurate.

If the completion rate (CR) is defined as the ratio of the number of targets achieved to the number of targets set, the progress reported as achieved can be calculated as follows:

$$CR = \frac{\text{(Number of targets exceeded or achieved)} \times 100}{\text{Total number of targets}}$$

Given that data available on the RMS covers only two years of implementation out of the three year span of the Strategic Note (2018–2020), performance in 2020 has been estimated on the basis of a two-tier scale, that is “Sufficient” (CR > 67%) and “Insufficient” (CR < 67%), under the assumption of a uniform annual distribution. In addition, it is possible to assess the likelihood of the desired results being achieved in 2020 by calculating the CR gap to 100, i.e. the quantity between the CR and 100.

The overall value of outcome and output indicators for all five impact areas between 2018 and 2019 is 32 percent and 43 percent respectively (Appendix 6 – Summary of indicator values by impact area). This means that the level of effectiveness for each of the indicators was considered as insufficient. The *Women's Economic Empowerment* impact area has the lowest completion rate for outcome and output indicators (0 percent and 13 percent respectively).

³⁸ Or “dynamic relevance”.

³⁹ This adaptation did not necessarily involve reformulating the results of the Strategic Note.

⁴⁰ On 23 July 2020 a ceremony was organized in the conference room of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family to officially donate 30,000 reusable barrier masks. This is the result of a joint UNICEF-UN Women programme to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable women and girls.

⁴¹ At the regional level, as of July 2020, there were 2,137 participants (2,120 women and 17 men) trained in 8 online interactive sessions on the making of antiseptic soap and hydroalcoholic gel. Source: <https://africa.unwomen.org/fr/digital-library/publications/2020/09/riposte-covid-19-au-senegal>.

⁴² section 1.3.6, “Challenges and limitations of this evaluation”, of this report.

Initially, the evaluation team thought outcome indicator values were omitted in this impact area. The team was aware⁴³ that the Country Office achieved tangible results during the period 2018–2020, notably as part of the *Second Chance Education* programme. However, it appeared that the indicators for Second Chance Education are listed separately under the newly-added standalone “Frontier Issues” impact area. As the RMS shows⁴⁴ very little expenditure in 2020 in the area of Women’s Economic Empowerment, it can be inferred that the low level of its output indicators is consistent with the two-year disbursement delay for the Gender Road Project.⁴⁵

Conversely, the area of Women’s Leadership and Political Participation stands out, as it has the highest completion rate across all indicators. Its outcome and output indicators stand at 45 percent and 68 percent respectively. By way of example, a detailed description of indicator value trend in the area of *Women’s Leadership and Political Participation* is provided below.⁴⁶

The two outcome indicators for Women’s Leadership and Political Participation (Figure 4.2.1a) indicate that no change was observed in 2018. In contrast, in 2019, 5 of 9 outcome indicators (56 percent) witnessed significant change, while one outcome indicator (11 percent) witnessed relative progress and 3 outcome indicators (33 percent) showed no change. These figures indicate that between 2018 and 2020, there was a significant change in the number of outcome indicators whose targets were met or exceeded.

With regard to the output indicators for Women’s Leadership and Political Participation, the evaluation team observed once again that the first two years (2018 and 2019) of UN Women operations in Cameroon did not yield immediate results (Figure 4.2.1b). Thus, for the eight output indicators of *Women’s Leadership and Political Participation*

in 2018, no change was observed for one of the indicators (12 percent) and some progress was noted for two indicators (25 percent), while significant progress was noted for five other indicators (63 percent). In 2019, 16 (70 percent) of the output indicators in this area reported significant progress, while some progress was noted for 5 indicators (21 percent), and 2 indicators (9 percent) respectively.

These results reveal that Women’s Leadership and Political Participation is the only impact area for which the online RMS showed the best ratio of “achieved/exceeded” output indicator targets.

The evaluation team initially believed that the lack of change in 2018 despite the volume of investment was the result of social and political resistance to efforts aimed at women’s political participation. However, this assumption did not help explain the contrast with results observed in 2019. If indeed a relatively slow pace of change in women’s political participation is to be expected elsewhere in Cameroon, it would be surprising to see such sudden positive changes in outcomes within one year interval, as suggested in the graph above.

In fact, there is an easier explanation. During the development of the Strategic Note, the heading “Leadership and Political Participation” was used to name an outcome in which only four outputs (out of a total of 13) were related to the leadership of Cameroonian women. Financially, these outputs accounted for a relatively small proportion of the budget (only 8 percent in 2020). The rest of the results under this area were mainly⁴⁷ dedicated to gender mainstreaming of statistics. They covered, to a lesser extent, the “inclusion of HIV and menstrual hygiene in plans, policies and budgets at national and local levels”. As such, the outstanding performance initially associated with political participation is mainly due to⁴⁷ the dynamism of UN Women Cameroon’s gender and statistics programme.

Figure 4.2.1a. Outcome indicators for Women’s Leadership and Political Participation (2018, 2019)

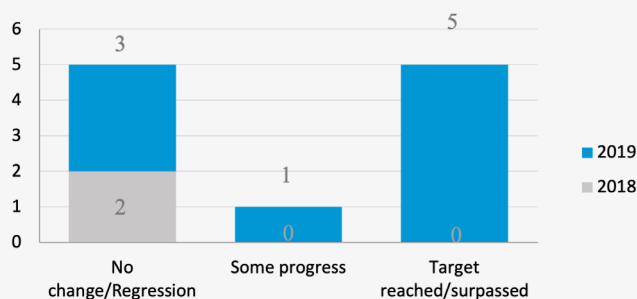
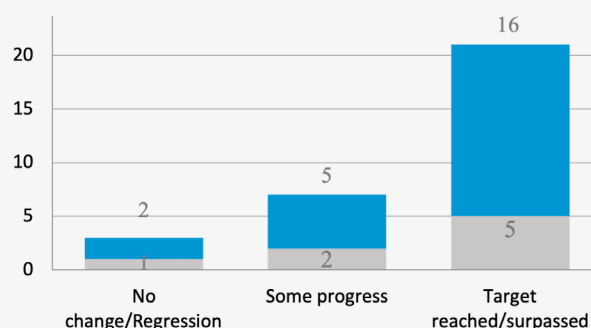


Figure 4.2.1b. Output indicators for Women’s Leadership and Political Participation (2018, 2019)



Source: Data from the RMS.

⁴³ Progress reports of the Second Chance Education programme were confirmed by the external midterm review of the programme: “Midterm Review of the UN Women “Second Chance Education” Programme March–July 2020.

⁴⁴ The RMS also reflects figures from Atlas, the financial database of UN Women.

⁴⁵ Including the Gender Road and Agricultural Value Chains projects funded by banks through the Ministries of Public Works and Agriculture. The last disbursement of funds from the African Development Bank was in December 2016.

⁴⁶ The details of the other result areas have been included in Appendix 1.

⁴⁷ This conclusion is not only grounded on the modest share of Leadership and Political Participation outputs in the total number of outputs of Outcome 1 or its small weight in the budget of this outcome. This is also because, even from an expenditure point of view, one output of Leadership and Political Participation (CMR_D_1.2.3) out of the total four outputs recorded zero expenditure during the entire duration of the Strategic Note, i.e. 2018–2020.

4.2.2. Key results by impact areas

The main achievements⁴⁸ of the UN Women Cameroon Office are described below.

Key results in Governance, including gender statistics

According to many respondents, the current status of women's participation in elections reflects the collaborative work of UN Women and its partners during the 2018 electoral campaigns. At present, 10 percent of mayors are women, 26 percent of senators are women, and 34 percent of the seats in Parliament are held by women. The specific contribution of UN Women to these results is difficult to establish, considering the very low share of funds invested in political participation (4 percent). However, the role of ELECAM, an election management organ, has been mentioned several times during interviews. UN Women advocacy work with ELECAM on women quotas has resulted in increased representation of women in executive and legislative positions. Political parties signed circulars to ensure that women headed political lists during legislative and municipal elections in 2020. In addition to these achievements, 100 women candidates and political party leaders were trained⁴⁹ in electoral law and the importance of women's participation in political decision-making positions and the value of women in political leadership and governance. These measures and activities led to a significant increase in the proportion of women parliamentarians, senators and councillors.

Under the Governance component, a normative framework on gender statistics in Cameroon has been adopted to regularly produce data on a minimum list of gender indicators. UN Women supported, through its *Women Count* programme, trainings on gender statistics attended by a total of 141 actors of the National Statistical System in 2019 and 2020.⁵⁰ The UN Women gender statistics programme is expected to influence the General Population and Housing Census and the General Census of Agriculture and Livestock, two major national statistical operations that are under way.

In addition, a national network of journalists and communicators on gender statistics was put in place. With UN Women's support, the network organized a training⁵¹ on visualization techniques for demographers and statisticians.

Key results in Women's Economic Empowerment

This impact area has a major project entitled "Support to specific and entrepreneurial activities of women: Gender promotion and acceleration of women's economic empowerment along the Batchenga-Ntui-Yoko-Lena road project". The project was greatly affected by funding delays which compromised its execution. For instance, farming activities that were originally scheduled in February 2020, which is the right season for planting some crops, were postponed. Another participant observed during discussion sessions for this evaluation: "Maize cannot be planted in June, so we had to change crops. The funds arrived too late relative to seasons."

Nonetheless, a "Guide to Gender Mainstreaming in Road Projects" was developed and disseminated among road construction stakeholders. In addition, a simplified "Guide to Gender Mainstreaming in Agricultural Cooperatives" in Cameroon was developed in 2019. In 2018, the project reached out to 77 women living along the highway, helping them to obtain land titles (52) and land permits (25) with the aim of increasing women's access to land ownership and securing agricultural production to increase income. While this number is modest, it can provide a solid reference for advocacy with local or national governments and other development stakeholders for large-scale transformative effects.

Key results in Humanitarian Action, Peace and Security

UN Women Cameroon contributed to gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian response of United Nations agencies by developing the Training Manual for Women Mediators for Peace and Social Cohesion, available in French and English. The Country Office carried out training in 2019 for 150 heads of organizations on how to respond to violence, conflict situations, mediation and resolution. In 2018, 43 gender focal points, 102 humanitarian actors and 112 programme officers from United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations attended the same type of training.⁵²

⁴⁸ The results discussed here are taken from the annual reports of UN Women Cameroon.

⁴⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/1716176881954641/posts/2514583882113933/>.

⁵⁰ UN Women Newsletter Q3, July to September 2020.

⁵¹ UN Women Newsletter Q3, July to September 2020

⁵² UN Women Cameroon 2018 Annual Report.

Key results in Ending Violence Against Women

In the impact area of Ending Violence Against Women, UN Women focused its activities on capacity-building in support to public institutions and civil society. In 2019, 30 gender desk officers based in the North-West and South-West regions were trained in the protecting of women against sexual and gender-based violence. During the same year, 57 members of law enforcement forces (gendarmes and police officers), comprising 50 women and 7 men, were trained on humanitarian principles and protection against sexual and gender-based violence in the Far North Region. In the North-West and South-West regions, 500 members of the security forces, comprising 250 police officers and 250 gendarmes, received the same type of capacity-building.

In 2018, 32 instructors from the national gendarmerie and 6 gender desk officers were trained on gender mainstreaming in security issues. Similarly, in the North-West Region, 35 women, 10 men and 5 traditional leaders were trained in carrying out and giving feedback on security audits, combined with risk and vulnerability mapping.

The international outreach of UN Women's work materialized when the coordinator of one of UN Women's partner organizations, Ms. Aissa Doumara Ngatansou (ALVF), was awarded the Simone Veil Prize in the context of combating violence against women.

Key results in Frontier Issues

Through the *Second Chance Education* project, UN Women Cameroon enabled marginalized people to acquire new skills to undertake small-scale economic activities or access professional opportunities. The majority of beneficiaries were living in precarious situations (internally displaced persons, refugees, host populations) and had dropped out of traditional school settings. This intervention was rolled out to 10,348 people (4,000 men and 6,348 women) and comprised distributing start-up kits and providing vocational training (in agriculture, livestock, entrepreneurship and small trade).

4.2.3. Results monitoring and accountability system

FINDING 6.

The online monitoring platform (RMS) of UN Women Cameroon does not provide sufficient information about progress towards results. At times, the RMS can be misleading: Women's Economic Empowerment indicators had an "ON TRACK" orange label in the RMS, but relevant outputs had been stagnant for three years due to funding delays. In addition, cash advances to partners are not always broken down in instalments and conditional upon the validation of reports. This does not help accountability on results or traceability of expenditures.

The absence of field missions does not allow UN Women Cameroon to monitor and report accurately on progress towards results. During 2018-2020, there were no surveys or baseline studies on Strategic Note indicators. This has deprived UN Women of the opportunity to reliably compare baseline data with data about the outcomes of its interventions.

The evaluation team is not aware of any baseline study undertaken by the Country Office on the Strategic Note 2018-2020⁵³. Such a study would have allowed comparisons between newly collected data and baseline data. The internal⁵⁴ midterm review exercise noted how insufficient was data reported on RMS. This was corroborated by interviews, which also confirmed the absence of monitoring missions. During the desk review, the evaluation did not come across any reference to monitoring missions. This is probably due to limited staffing and heavy workloads.

Interviewed stakeholders⁵⁵ observed the weakness in reporting. For example, the report on the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) did not sufficiently highlight results achieved. In addition, the Country Office did not communicate as to why funds that were earmarked for cash-activities⁵⁶ were used for other expenses.

Generally, donors appreciated regular updates from UN Women such as newsletters. However, some donors felt that the reports could provide more information about the country situation through a gender perspective. They also noted that progress reports lack figures on the level of achievement relative to targets, especially on results achieved "after all these training sessions and workshops". This is particularly the case for reports on projects funded by Italy.

⁵³ The team found no trace of any baseline report from the preceding Strategic Note. However, the Country Office had previously planned to "Carry out baseline study and establish a database of gender indicators of the highway and update it annually, produce a gender report on the contribution of the road project in reducing gender inequalities" [Strategic Note (2014-2017), DRF Activity 2.2.3.4]

⁵⁴ The review is said to be "internal" because stakeholders were not present.

⁵⁵ Individual interviews with colleagues in the United Nations system and with several donors.

⁵⁶ This is essentially a cash distribution programme to people in special need.

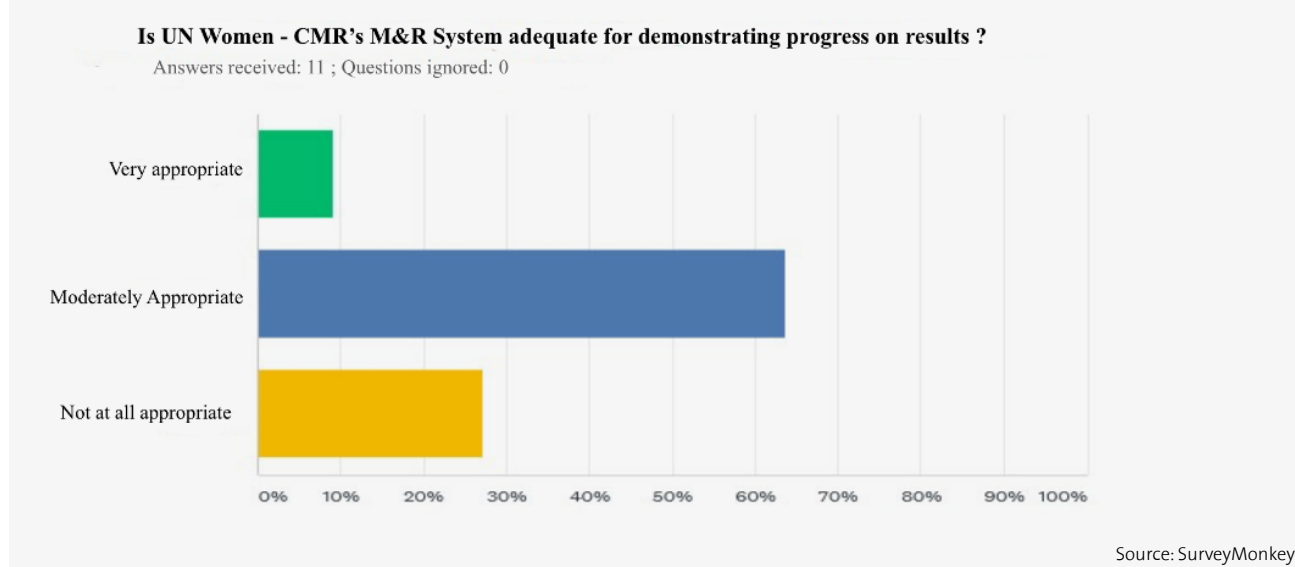
This perception of weak monitoring and reporting was confirmed by a significant proportion (27 percent) of online survey participants. They also observed that the current monitoring system does not show progress made as a result of UN Women interventions. Only 8 percent of UN Women personnel surveyed consider the monitoring system to be “very appropriate”, while 65 percent considered it “somewhat appropriate” (Figure 5.3).

Furthermore, the fact that RMS output indicators on Women’s Economic Empowerment continue to feature an orange “ON TRACK” label, is in contradiction with the

three-year suspension of economic empowerment activities, following the failure of the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Agriculture to disburse expected funds.

Lastly, several survey respondents suggest UN Women could proceed more cautiously with funds advanced to partners. Instead of entrusting the entirety of a project’s funds to a particular ministry, it was suggested to disburse funds in instalments upon the validation of outputs. Participants noted that other United Nations agencies do not make one-off transfers for an entire project but rather disburse funds in instalments after satisfactory completion of deliverables.

Figure 4.2.3. Adequacy of UN Women – Cameroon’s monitoring and reporting system



4.2.4. Factors that influence performance

FINDING 7.

The evaluation identified three unexpected outcomes. These most likely resulted from UN Women Cameroon’s convening power around its unique mandate, as well as fruitful collaboration with the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and the Family and various government bodies. The evaluation also recognizes the flexibility and adaptability of Country Office personnel to changing contexts.

SUPPORTING FACTORS

In terms of achieving planned results, implementing partners and UN Women personnel recognized a number of success factors. These include:

- Flexibility and adaptation to changing contexts, particularly the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic, were made possible by the technical skills of UN Women Cameroon personnel.
- Country Office capacity to bring together and rally diverse actors, as demonstrated by the *Women Count*

programme, has earned UN Women Cameroon its current prominence in gender statistics. UN Women is a key player in the National Statistics System which positions it favourably to monitor Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁵⁷ from a gender perspective.

- There was an enabling environment for collaboration with government authorities. In addition, the Country Office made the right choice of implementing partners, particularly in the North-West and South-West regions.

These factors contributed to the achievement of three positive unexpected results during the implementation of the Strategic Note. These include:

1. Facilitating the issuance of 308⁵⁸ birth certificates to children who were not officially registered. This action bolstered UN Women's credibility in rural communities.
2. Working with committed traditional and religious leaders. For example, several hectares of land were made available⁵⁹ by a traditional chief to beneficiaries of UN Women's Gender Road project. This action contributed to women's access to land in an environment that was previously unprepared for female land-ownership. Sixty-five women's groups gained access to land through the implementation of the Women's Economic Empowerment programme.
3. Responding quickly to COVID-19⁶⁰ emergencies. UN Women provided the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family with 30,000⁶¹ masks, built the capacity of vulnerable women to produce⁶² and sell masks, and generated knowledge about COVID-19 through support to a national survey by the Central Bureau of Census and Population Studies.⁶³

HINDERING FACTORS

There were several challenges that may have inhibited UN Women's contribution to its Strategic Note objectives. These include:

- The small size of the actual workforce. There are many vacant positions in the Country Office's organizational chart.
- Insufficient allocation of funds for impact areas of Ending Violence Against Women and Women's Political Participation
- The small number of joint projects, particularly in the humanitarian field.
- Insufficient on-site monitoring and support to implementing partners in the field. This has been especially challenging since the return to Yaoundé of personnel who were originally deployed in the North-West, South-West and Far North regions. The Country Office cannot always rely on partners having access to communication technologies.
- The short duration of interventions, which does not allow for tangible results to be achieved.
- Delays in making funds available for implementing

partners. This has been particularly devastating for the Gender Road project (*Women's Economic Empowerment*).

- Absence or weak presence of UN Women in crisis zones. This explains why funds were not received from CERF.
- The profile of the Gender Focal Points, both at the United Nations Gender Theme Group and also within the Humanitarian Task Force is not always in line with the required profile and therefore does not facilitate decision-making or implementation. This is compounded by Focal Point turnover, which affects continuity and implies the need for additional training sessions.

PERCEPTIONS ON FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PERFORMANCE

The graph below summarizes perceptions gathered during the survey. It confirms that the following factors are most conducive to achieving results:

- Government's role in gender equality through the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (91 percent);
- Institutional environment (i.e., the context of laws and policies) related to gender equality and women's empowerment (82 percent);
- United Nations inter-agency collaboration on gender equality under the leadership of UN Women (82 percent).

On the other hand, according to the online survey, UN Women advocacy capacity was the least supportive factor for achieving the outcomes of the 2018–2020 Strategic Note. This is surprising given the views expressed during the interviews, which cited major campaigns such as the 16 Days of Activism, HeForShe, International Women's Day and the successful appeal to sister agencies for joint initiatives targeting women affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as instances of successful advocacy. When asked about their negative perception of advocacy work, personnel noted how difficult it was for UN Women Cameroon to persuade the Government to release funds and resume with the Gender Road project, which had been stalled for three years.

Fifty-five percent of survey respondents criticized the coordination of civil society organizations on gender equality and women's empowerment.

⁵⁸ UN Women Cameroon 2019 Annual Report.

⁵⁹ Individual interview, UN Women personnel.

⁶⁰ UN Women Newsletter Q3, July to September 2020.

⁶¹ Ibid.

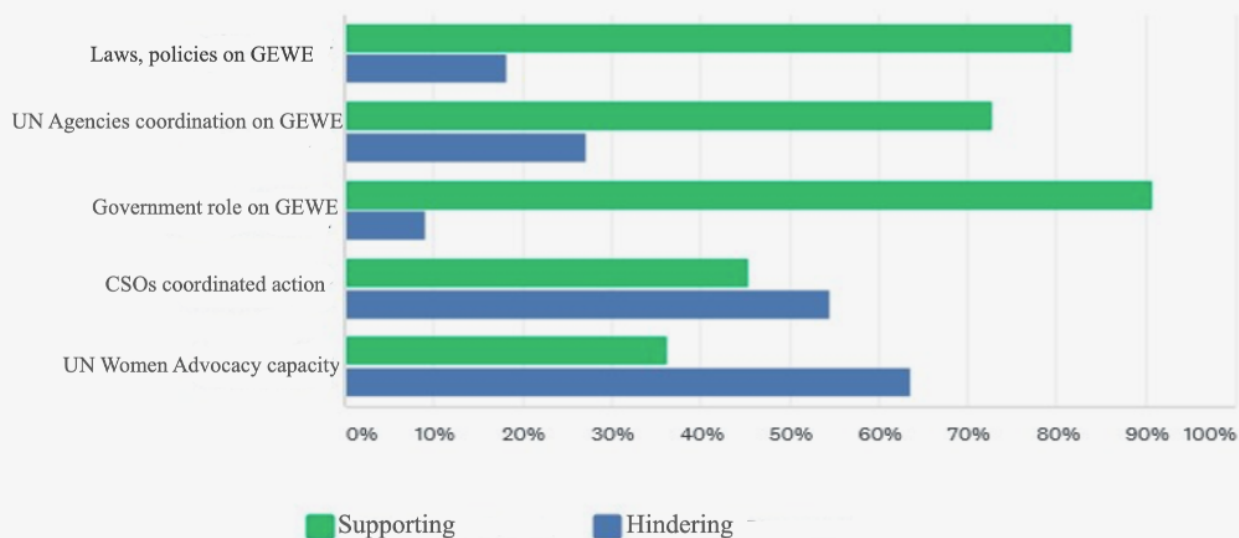
⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Individual interview, UN Women and personnel of the Central Bureau of Census and Population Studies (BUCREP).

Figure 4.2.4. Factors supporting or hindering the achievement of results of the Strategic Note 2018–2020

Looking at the 2018-2020 period, what factors do you consider as supporting or hindering strategic note results?

Answers received: 11 ; Questions ignored: 0



SURVEY ABOUT UN WOMEN CAMEROON SN 2018-2020



4.2.5. Contribution to United Nations coordination on gender

FINDING 8.

The influence of UN Women Cameroon is widely considered catalytic within different coordination sub-groups of the United Nations system, such as the Gender Theme Group. While this presence was felt during preparation of the United Nations System Development Coordination Framework, the reduced size of the Country Office's human resources has affected continuity.

UN Women continues to assert its normative agency in terms of gender coordination within the United Nations system. This representation is widely associated with UN Women's work on gender mainstreaming in the new United Nations System Development Cooperation Framework 2021–2025, and its advocacy for gender-sensitive humanitarian response. The work of the Country Office is also visible in the Gender Theme Group⁶⁴ and the Civil Society Organizations Working Group on Gender and Public Policy in Cameroon, including two networks of sectoral gender focal points in Yaoundé and Maroua.

In addition, since 2018, UN Women has been following up on the implementation of the United Nations Country Team's United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) Gender Equality Scorecard. In this regard, a congratulatory letter⁶⁵ from UN Women's Executive Director was sent in October 2019 to the United Nations Country Team in relation to the achievement of results in several areas, including:

- Mainstreaming gender equality into UNDAF outcomes. One of these outcomes is gender-focused and outlines how gender equality and empowerment will be promoted in line with SDG priorities, including SDG 5;
- 34 percent of UNDAF indicators are explicit about gender equality.

In 2019, UN Women assumed the role of Head of the Programme Management Team within the United Nations coordination mechanism. This offered the opportunity to influence formulation of the United Nations System Development Cooperation Framework 2021–2025, with emphasis on gender equality. High-level advocacy is currently underway⁶⁶ to have more financial resources earmarked for gender activities. This involves convincing United Nations agencies to allocate a percentage of funds (e.g., 15 percent, as is the case for the World Food Programme) to specific gender activities.

⁶⁴ The Gender Theme Group remains the main channel, together with the sister agencies of the United Nations system (UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF), for carrying out the 16 Days of Activism campaigns against sexual and gender-based violence in 2018 and 2019.

⁶⁵ Letter from Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Deputy Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women.

⁶⁶ Personal interview with the Resident Coordinator.

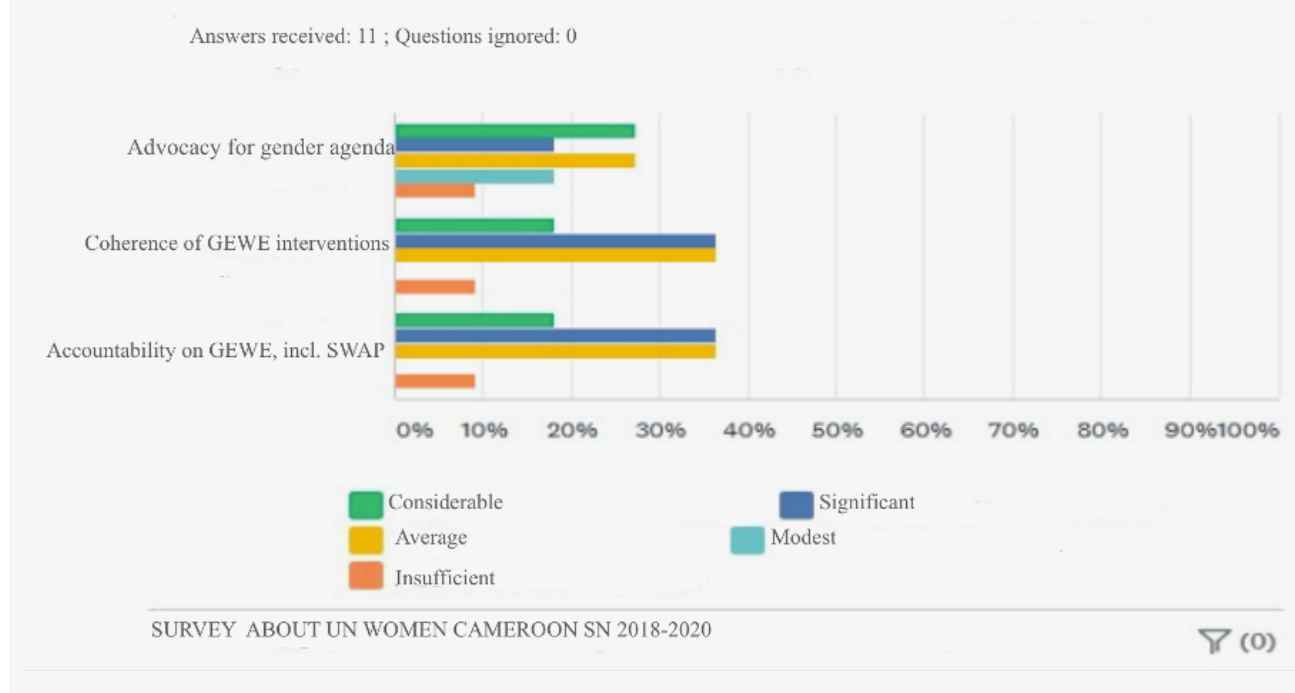
However, only two joint programmes relating to the Peacebuilding Fund (UNESCO/UNDP/UN Women) and one under COVID-19⁶⁷ (UNDP/UN Women) were implemented during the period under evaluation. This is far from the target of 30 percent budget allocation to joint programmes, and no joint programme addresses humanitarian issues.

That said, a remarkable amount of work was invested in raising gender awareness in the sector of humanitarian work. A more fluid coordination of humanitarian actions was made possible by pooling two networks (humanitarian and development) and by the participation of delegates from civil society in the Gender Theme Group. Similarly, gender mainstreaming⁶⁸ into humanitarian action was facilitated by including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Gender with Age Marker in project development.

PERCEPTIONS ON UN WOMEN CONTRIBUTION TO INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION ON GENDER

A quantification of perceptions about the contribution of the UN Women Cameroon Country Office to strengthening inter-agency coordination on gender, both in development and humanitarian work, is consistent with the above analyses (Figure 4.2.5). For example, the “role of UN Women in mobilizing around the gender agenda and in mainstreaming gender in interventions” was mostly seen as having “considerably contributed” (27 percent) to strengthening inter-agency coordination on gender. On the other hand, the performance of the criteria “Coherence of gender equality and women empowerment activities” and “Gender accountability, notably through the SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard” is such that only 18 percent of the respondents said that they had significantly contributed to inter-agency coordination.

Figure 4.2.5. What was UN Women's Contribution to United Nations coordination on gender equality (both development and humanitarian work)?



⁶⁷ UN Women Newsletter Q3, July to September 2020. The results of the implementation of the programme related to COVID-19 entitled “Support to women's socioeconomic activities around COVID-19 induced value chains in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon” are available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6chMFLl8r78&feature=youtu.be> and highlighted in UN Women Newsletter Q3, July to September 2020.

⁶⁸ This was made possible by the training in 2019 of 127 humanitarian and development actors, including 77 women and 50 men, using tools such as CARE's rapid gender analysis, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Gender with Age Marker and the Food and Agriculture Organization's socioeconomic analysis tool (UN Women Newsletter Q3, July to September 2020).

4.3. EFFICIENCY

4.3.1. Allocation of budget and human resources

FINDING 9.

The share of funds allocated for Women’s Economic Empowerment appears disproportionately higher than funds devoted to Elimination of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Women’s Political Participation. This budget allocation by impact area is not optimal for Cameroonian women to become emancipated from discriminatory norms and practices.

It is not easy to grasp budget allocations as featured in Atlas and the RMS. Terminology issues are misleading at times, especially concerning the area dedicated to Women’s Leadership and Political Participation, which is identified as project “SPF2 O1.1 Legislative” in Atlas and as “Women’s Leadership and Political Participation” in the RMS. The problem is that what ought to be separate is brought together in the RMS. Under the heading “Women’s Leadership and Political Participation”, the RMS conflates different allocations usually known to be under Governance in general, namely allocations for (a) Leadership and Political Participation, (b) Norms, (c) Gender and HIV and (d) Women Count. Conversely, the RMS separates what should be brought together. For example, the Second Chance Education budget is recorded separately from Women’s Economic Empowerment even though, 100 percent of this programme’s activities are related to the economic impact area.

For more clarity, the evaluation team made the following adjustments:

- Amounts allocated to Women’s Economic Empowerment were added to those of Second Chance Education and classified under the new expenditure category “WEE-SCE”.
- “SPF2 O1.1 Legislative” funds were subtracted from the Women’s Leadership and Political Participation amounts to obtain the “LPP” (Leadership and Political Participation) and “GOV” (Governance) budget figures. The aggregate of Governance funds as distinct from Women’s Political Participation is hereafter named “GOV”. These funds are dedicated to non-political participation interventions, i.e. Norms, Women Count, and Gender and HIV.

We thus have the following distribution:

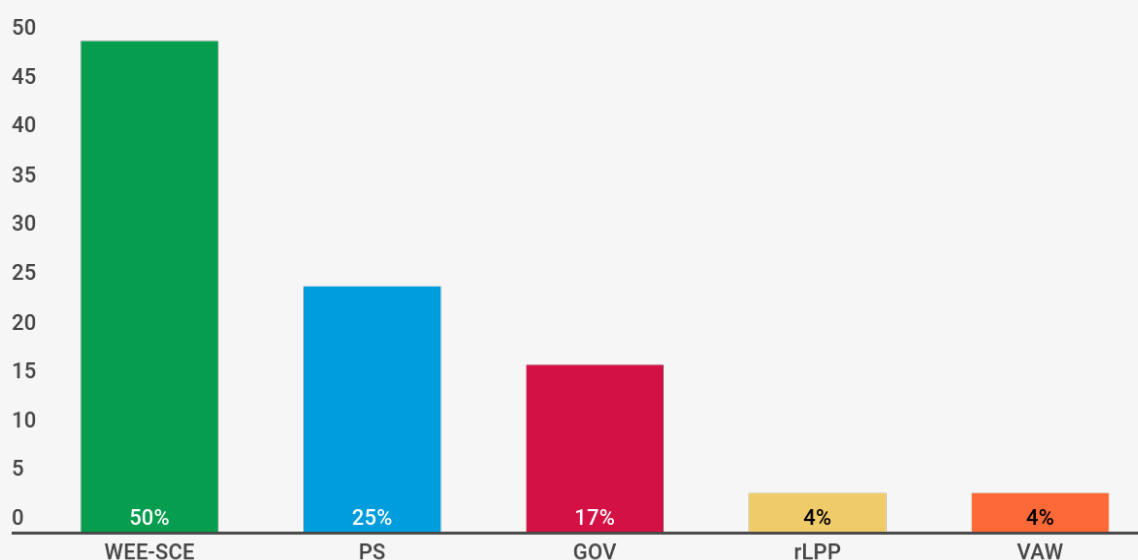
Table 4.3.1. Adjusted distribution (US\$) of the budget by impact area of the Strategic Note 2018–2020

Leadership and Political Participation (rLPP)	Governance (Gov)	Women Economic Empowerment (and Second Chance Education) (WEE-SCE)	Violence Against Women (VAW)	Peace and Security (PS)
US\$ 340 081	US\$ 1 469 361w	US\$ 4 329 783	US\$ 362 594	US\$ 2 135 472

Source: Evaluation team calculations using data drawn from Atlas on 14 December 2020.

A further breakdown of Governance funds would have highlighted the low figures allocated to Norms over the period 2018–2020.

Figure 4.3.1. Adjusted distribution (%) of the budget by impact area of the Strategic Note 2018–2020



Source: Evaluation team calculations using data drawn from Atlas on 14 December 2020.

Calculations⁶⁹ show that the impact areas Elimination of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Women's Leadership and Political Participation each account for 4 percent of the budget of UN Women Cameroon's activities, while half of allocations went to Women's Economic Empowerment.

To be sure, both Elimination of Violence Against Women and Women's Leadership and Political Participation funds amount to at least 4 percent of the budget, respectively. This is because Peace and Security programmes in humanitarian zones include expenses related to elimination of violence against women and participation in peace negotiations. However, the same can be said about economic activities which are often included in humanitarian interventions. Therefore the fact remains that 4 percent allocations remain comparatively low to meet the needs of Cameroonian women in terms of Leadership and Political Participation and Elimination of Violence Against Women, especially those living outside the humanitarian or conflict context.

The 50 percent share dedicated to Women's Economic Empowerment activities clearly creates an imbalance in UN Women's response to gender inequality in Cameroon. Focusing on economic support at the expense of other dimensions can keep women at the lowest stages of Sara H. Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework.⁷⁰ The framework distinguishes five stages on the path to women's emancipation. The Welfare level is the target of economic activities, as they can increase income without questioning the order of unequal relations between women and men. The second level, Access to Resources becomes less acceptable insofar as it tends to disrupt men having the predominant share of wealth. The Awareness level emerges beyond purely economic aspects of programming: at this stage, women recognize the systemic nature of their exclusion and are prepared to commit themselves to accessing the Control level, which is associated with true Empowerment, or the highest level of autonomy that cannot be reduced to the economic dimension alone.

4.3.2. Country Office programme management structure

FINDING 10.

The high number of vacancies hinders the smooth implementation of the Strategic Note. Personnel departures have affected the institutional memory of UN Women Cameroon. The small size of its Operations Unit leads to delays in approving and executing transactions, including those related to procurement, recruitment and advances to partners.

In 2019, a number of positions were discontinued or converted following the Country Office closure of sub-offices in humanitarian areas:

- The position of Field Activities Coordinator – Women's Economic Empowerment was renamed Programme Manager Women's Economic Empowerment/Second Chance Education;
- The position of Women Peace and Security Specialist was merged with Governance ;
- The Community Mobilization Officer position was discontinued;
- The position of Administrative and Finance Assistant – Women's Economic Empowerment was converted to Operations Assistant under Women's Economic Empowerment/Second Chance Education;
- The HIV/Gender and Menstrual Hygiene Officer position was discontinued;
- The Gender and Humanitarian Expert position was also discontinued;
- The Operations Assistant was move from Operations to serve under Women's Economic Empowerment/Second Chance Education.

The posts listed below were vacant in 2020 but previously occupied, with the exception of two positions in the area of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:

- Livelihood Expert – Ending Violence Against Women (originally entitled Women's Economic Empowerment and Social Cohesion – Humanitarian Expert);
- Programme Manager – Ending Violence Against Women.

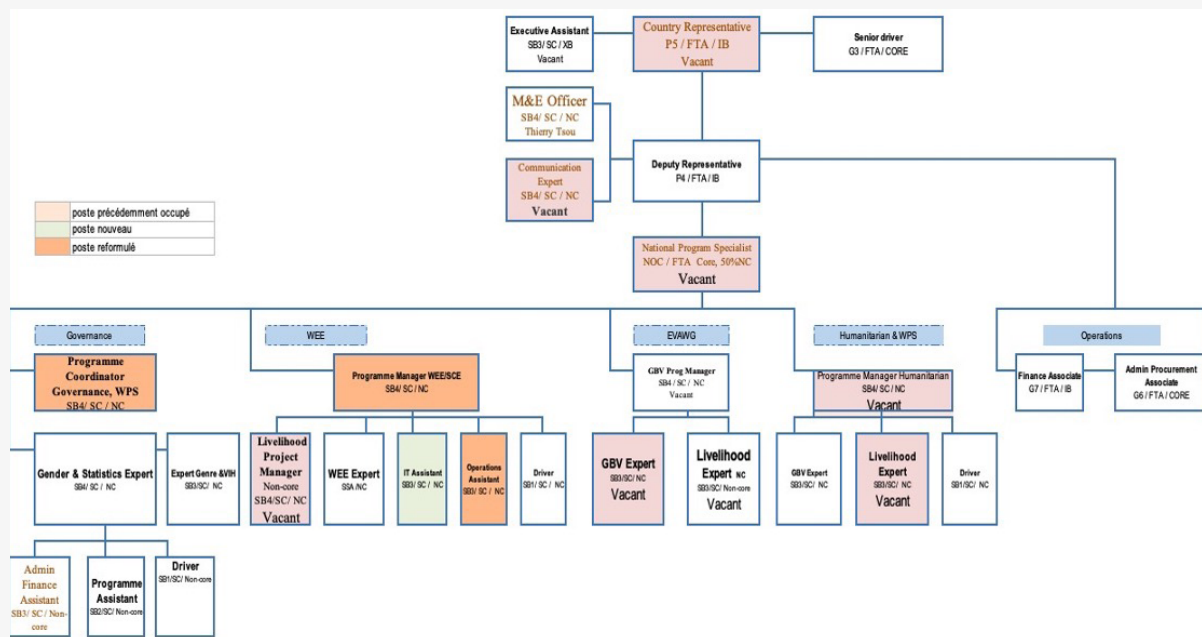
The following positions were vacant at the time of the evaluation:

- Country Representative;
- National Programme Specialist;
- Communication Expert;
- Programme Manager Humanitarian;
- Programme Manager Economic Empowerment;
- Programme Manager Ending Violence Against Women;
- Programme Expert Ending Violence Against Women;
- Livelihood Expert Ending Violence Against Women;
- Livelihood Expert Humanitarian;
- Humanitarian Expert Ending Violence Against Women;
- Executive Assistant.

⁶⁹ For detailed calculations, Appendix 5.

⁷⁰ Women's Empowerment Framework.

Figure 4.3.2a. Organigram (Source: UN Women Cameroon, December 2020)



Duties associated with vacant posts are often performed by remaining personnel. The “Peace, Security and Humanitarian” position was discontinued but duties associated with this post were transferred to the post originally dedicated to Gender Governance and Women’s Political Participation, thus making it a “double-hatted” position. In fact, the position is “triple-hatted” since it is actually entitled Programme Coordinator, Governance Women, Peace and Security (Programme Coordinator in short). This post has the longest list of responsibilities: the Programme Coordinator concomitantly manages interventions related to Women’s Leadership and Political Participation; Norms; Coordination; and Women, Peace and Security. But HIV and Gender Statistics are managed by an expert, respectively.

The post of *Operations Manager* is not even mentioned as vacant in the organigram. The function of Operations Manager has been assumed by the Finance Associate. Its omission from the organigram means the Country Office is comfortable with this arrangement. There are only two posts in the Operations Unit, which is not enough to cover Country Office operations requirements. This explains project disbursement delays, as regretted by some of the partners consulted.

Since 2019, the Deputy Representative has been combining her own responsibilities with those of the Country Representative.

It makes sense that activities related to Women’s Economic Empowerment are managed in conjunction with those of the Second Chance Education programme, with the assistance of an expert in women’s economic empowerment. Human resources and procurement issues are handled by the Procurement Officer.

The overall design of the Internal Control Framework (ICF) is fully in line with the policy of separation of duties (Figure 4.3.2a). The current size of the workforce is such that the Country Office has to rely on support from the Regional Office to serve as the “alternate” Verifying Officer and Senior Manager to ensure compliance with control procedures that regulate decisions in the areas of finance, procurement and human resources. In the event of prolonged absence of personnel, delays can be expected regarding partner advances, payment of fees, supplies and services, etc. For instance, the “Buyer” duties of the Administration Associate are performed by one individual, in addition to other duties in the areas of human resources and procurement. It could happen that the employee is absent from the office for varying periods of time due to illness or for a more happy reason, such as maternity leave. The ICF does not provide for alternate personnel to perform these duties.

Retrieving project documents was the most difficult part of the evaluation. Of the 33 Atlas projects, 22 projects had documentation of varying size (from 2 to 71 documents) relating to activity reports, mission reports, collaboration agreements, etc. However, 11 office projects listed in Atlas had no documentation.⁷¹ The evaluation team was informed that these losses of institutional memory were concomitant with the departure of personnel. Many of the documents sought during the initial design phase of this evaluation were stored on staff computers. The transfer of knowledge to new members of personnel is not guaranteed when procedures for handing over and retrieving documents are not very clear.

Field visits are the first to be scrapped when programme personnel are faced with heavy workloads. This affects the quality of reports because of gaps in result monitoring. It also implies that some of the objectives set out in the Strategic Note will not be achieved, and that other objectives will only be achieved with heavy costs in terms of work-life balance due to the accumulation of responsibilities.

Nevertheless, some are optimistic about available human resources, based on expected funds from donors in 2021. A transfer of US\$700,000 is expected from the Japanese Government in late 2021. In addition, a US\$ 1.3 million agreement earmarked for peace and security activities in the Far North Region has been signed with Japan. This is likely to boost programming during the 2021–2022 financial year. These US\$ 2 million dollars combined with US\$ 900,000 from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund are expected to help meet staffing needs and re-establish the presence of UN Women Cameroon in humanitarian areas.

⁷¹ Atlas projects 113416, 112785, 115891, 98311, 98308, 104952a, 104952b, 104948, 113646, 113645, 80785.

4.3.3 Security of data and equipment

FINDING 11.

There is a risk in terms of digital security and the reliability of information technology (IT) equipment. The recent recruitment of an Information Technology Assistant is a positive step but does not in itself guarantee improvement of the unsatisfactory score attributed to UN Women Cameroon. Placing the Information Technology Assistant under a programmatic unit, rather than Operations, limits the scope of the position's added value. In addition, the Country Office does not have enough radio equipment to deal with crisis situations.

The post of Information Technology Assistant was created in 2020. This should improve the concerning trend of information security indicators. Compliance with security standards is one of the lowest in the organization. The participation rate of UN Women Cameroon in IT security awareness training was only 65 percent in 2020, which is 15 percent below the minimum requirement. The security of its electronic devices is rather low (3 percent to 7 percent), according to the UN Women Information Technology

Services report. Some personnel deplored the absence and/or obsolescence of radio communication equipment required in conflict situations.

The Information Technology Assistant is placed under the Women's Economic Empowerment impact area according to the Country Office's organigram. In this impact area, as previously mentioned, three projects⁷² experienced disbursement challenges. This, in addition to the Service Contract nature of the post, is not sustainable for a function that is so critical to Country Office data security.

Figure 4.3.3. IT compliance and reliability scores.

Office	Overall
Cameroon	✘
Central Africa Republic-CAR	✘
Congo DRC	✘
Cote D'Ivoire	✔
Liberia	✔
Mali	⚠
Niger	✘
Nigeria	✔
Senegal	✔
Sierra Leone	✘

Office	Managed	Protected
Cameroon	3%	7%
Central Africa Republic-CAR	0%	0%
Congo DRC	0%	0%
Cote D'Ivoire	100%	96%
Liberia	100%	100%
Mali	36%	42%
Niger	0%	0%
Nigeria	97%	100%
Senegal	95%	98%
Sierra Leone	0%	3%

[Source: Global Information Security and Compliance Report – December 2020]

⁷² The impact area of Women's Economic Empowerment has three projects funded directly by the Government of Cameroon, all of which have witnessed suspension of disbursements for several months. The projects include the NTUI-BAMENDA Gender Road Project, which was financed by the BDEAC through the Ministry of Public Works; the Gender Road (as part of the Ring Road) project, which was funded by the African Development Bank through the Ministry of Public Works; and the Agricultural Value Chains project, which was funded by the African Development Bank through the Ministry of Agriculture. Disbursements for the first two projects were suspended for three years.

4.4 SUSTAINABILITY

FINDING 12.

In general, while the learning gained by gender actors through capacity-building programmes is often sustained over time, this is not the case with UN Women activities in the North-West and South-West regions. The short duration and interruption of these projects compromises efforts to build national ownership.. Furthermore, the sustainability of UN Women support to the national action plan on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security was compromised by the lack of Government commitment to follow up on the coordination of its implementation. However, the Second Chance Education and Women Count programmes have shown tangible signs of sustainability.

4.4.1 Sustainability of activities that target civil society

The short duration of projects implemented by UN Women Cameroon did not always lead to tangible results. This was the case with the project Improving the Protection of Women and Girls Affected by the Conflict in the South West and North-West Regions of Cameroon, which was implemented by the Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy. The project⁷³ lasted only three months (August–December 2019). The implementing partner acknowledged that this particularly compromised the planned support to survivors of violence (Output 3). Project beneficiaries were concerned that their small-business activities would collapse after such a short period of exposure to training activities. Although 75 percent⁷⁴ of the women supported by the programme gave positive testimonies as to the performance of their businesses and their ability to break even, they were unsure about the sustainability of results. UN Women's limited presence (or even absence) in the field and the modest operational capacities of implementing partners implied insufficient monitoring and follow-up. This had an impact on the conduct of activities and the sustainability of any results.

In contexts with internally displaced persons and refugees, humanitarian aid and sustainability are generally difficult to combine due to the nature of the crises. However, these are not mutually exclusive: transferring the project Cohesion Spaces for Women and Girls to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family has ensured sustainability. Several sources indicated that there was sufficient ownership of the infrastructure by beneficiary communities in the East and Far North regions.

In refugee camps, UN Women involved traditional and religious chiefs/leaders, local elites and beneficiary groups to facilitate the implementation of its activities. Nevertheless, the gap left by the withdrawal of the organization from the Far North Region and the South-West regions was not filled by civil society or the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family. However, UNFPA quickly took over after UN Women's withdrawal and coordinated United Nations programming on ending violence against women.

4.4.2 Sustainability of activities that target the Government

HeforShe and Women Count were some of the interventions that attracted commitment by the Government of Cameroon. This materialized through the official launch of the HeforShe campaign by Prime Minister Philemon Yang and through the championing activities of Professor Jean Emmanuel Pondi's (former Secretary General of the University of Yaoundé).

The Government of Cameroon institutionalized gender inclusion in the statistics coordination mechanism. The Interministerial Committee on Gender Statistics in Cameroon is co-chaired by the Director General of the National Institute of Statistics and the Secretary General of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family. A steering committee⁷⁵ involving senior government officials

was set up in July 2020. In addition, the Government has allocated about US\$360,685 for the continuity of the gender statistics programme in 2021 beyond UN Women's support.

National gender expertise has been strengthened through the capacity-building efforts of UN Women Cameroon. Officials from central and decentralized services of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Defence and civil society (including academics, journalists and students) have benefited from trainings organized by the Country Office.⁷⁶

⁷³ Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy.

⁷⁴ UN Women, 2019, Final Activity Report on Improving the Protection of Women and Girls Affected by the Conflict in the South-West and North-West regions of Cameroon.

⁷⁵ UN Women Newsletter Q3, July to September 2020.

⁷⁶ Individual interviews with Gender Theme Group and United Nations system agencies.

However, stakeholders regretted not being invited to the midterm review sessions of the Strategic Note. Their participation would have enforced ownership of proceedings from the discussions about what elements of UN Women's work need to be celebrated or improved.

Sustainability of results often goes beyond the confines of UN Women responsibility. This is probably the case with activities in gender-responsive budgeting, which were not pursued in 2020.⁷⁷ Two years earlier, UN Women Cameroon had hired a consultant to develop a strategic plan for gender-responsive budgeting. Although the proposed plan was yet to be validated, a seminar on this issue took place in March 2019 and was attended by officials from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family. In addition, UN Women has contributed in various ways to the objectives of resolution 1325 in Cameroon:

- The deployment of two female consultants to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family and

provision of equipment for the establishment of the 1325 Secretariat;

- Financial and technical support to activities of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family.

These efforts will not be sustainable as long as there is no follow-up to the National Action Plan for Resolution 1325 (2018–2020). For example, the Steering and Orientation Committee as well as the regional, divisional and district cells are yet to be put in place. Furthermore, technical coordination by resolution 1325 focal points from different administrative units did not materialize. Apart from UN Women contributions to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, no funding has been received from the Government of Cameroon for the implementation of the national action plan. These gaps, delays and shortcomings affect national adoption of UN Women's efforts to implement Cameroon's commitment to United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

4.5. HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

FINDING 13.

The wording of the Strategic Note takes into account human rights and gender equality and targets refugees, victims of sexual violence, internally displaced persons and communities hosting refugees and displaced persons. However, rural women survivors of violence remain left out of services and facilities to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. While minority groups have been targeted by HIV or COVID-19 awareness programmes, there are no reports of UN Women actions that promote the welfare or empowerment of people living with disabilities.

The focus of UN Women Cameroon on human rights and gender equality norms and standards is reflected in the portfolio design, where the principles of participation/empowerment, inclusion/non-discrimination and national responsibility/transparency figure prominently. The evaluation noted that the Country Office contributed to the promotion of human rights, gender equality and equity for marginalized groups in its interventions. Despite UN Women's very low budget allocation for political participation (4 percent)⁷⁸, there has been an increase in the number of women, including indigenous and disabled women, in municipal councils and the National Assembly.

However, there was no reference in the Country Office implementation reports to any contribution to promoting the rights of people living with disabilities and minority groups over the period under evaluation. For example, support for people with disabilities is not visible in the area of Women's Leadership and Political Participation. Similarly, the evaluation is not aware of any cases of integration of marginalized groups in Women's Economic Empowerment programmes.

The Second Chance Education programme does not indicate any breakdown by ethnic group per se, such as figures for Mbororos or refugees. However, through its

collaboration with CAMYOSFOP, UN Women conducted several awareness-raising workshops on HIV in 2019 and on COVID-19 in 2020 in the East, Littoral and West regions of Cameroon. These were attended by community leaders from the Mbororo and Pygmy ethnic groups.

Women's economic empowerment activities have been small in scale. This will not change the power dynamics between different groups within the communities. In terms of sexual and gender-based violence, most structures are not very accessible to women living in rural areas. One has to walk long distances to find police stations, many of which may not have a gender desk. Telecommunication networks are scarce in rural areas. To find shelters for women in distress or women's empowerment and family centres, one needs to be in an urban municipality or in a refugee camp. Women living in camps are less isolated than women in rural areas, as they have access to facilities and services offered by cohesion spaces.

Lastly, while the work carried out by the Women Count programme was generally commended, it was also criticized for "not inquiring on the situation of marginalized populations".

⁷⁷ The minimal investment of 2020 Country Office resources in gender-responsive budgeting correlates with the limited progress since 2017 in building relationships with the Ministry of Finance. See discussion in point (2) under Lessons Learned.

⁷⁸ Figure 5.11.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON 1

Both the 2017 Country Portfolio Evaluation and this one observe that UN Women Cameroon is aligned with national and international strategies, policies and legislation. According to a government official, the influence of UN Women in Cameroon is such that “the National Gender Policy bears the marks of UN Women’s influence in Cameroon.” Both evaluations, however, deplore the weak engagement⁷⁹ of successive Strategic Notes in the area of women’s political leadership and addressing practices that are harmful to women’s physical and mental integrity, such as genital mutilation.

The evaluation of the previous Strategic Note noted that UN Women Cameroon’s interest in women’s political leadership has waned since 2016, when the Country Office shifted its support⁸⁰ to women’s political participation in the humanitarian context. Since its withdrawal from crisis zones, UN Women Cameroon’s support to women’s participation in conflict and humanitarian settings was discontinued.

In 2020, however, the Country Office worked with ELECAM to advocate for quotas in elections, thus leading to a significant increase in women’s representation in Cameroon’s Parliament, Senate and Councils. These results would have been greater if budgetary allocations for political participation had not been so low.⁸¹

Small allocations to Ending Violence Against Women and Women’s Leadership and Political Participation, as observed between 2018 and 2020, are consistent with what the Country Portfolio Evaluation deplored in 2017: the low appetite for these impact areas. Changing perceptions about the relative importance of these thematic areas will require deliberate efforts to reverse a trend that has already become entrenched over two Strategic Note cycles.

LESSON 2

A central theme of this evaluation is that UN Women Cameroon’s mandate cannot advance significantly without collaboration with civil society organizations. A review of the two consecutive Strategic Notes, from 2014 to 2020, shows that UN Women Cameroon has restricted its interaction with civil society organizations to project implementation dimension only. The previous evaluation, however, had recommended⁸² that more strategic links be forged with women’s networks and civil society organizations involved in gender issues in order to establish synergies.

For example, in gender budgeting, the value of relationships with civil society is clear. It is recalled⁸³ that in November 2020, a group of non-governmental organizations coalesced to demand from the Ministry of Finance that “civil society participates in the implementation of public finance reform.” These organizations could have been interested in collaborating with UN Women, particularly through the validation of the Strategic Plan on Gender-Responsive Budgeting commissioned by UN Women Cameroon in 2018. Given that the group of civil society organizations is in touch with the Ministry of Finance, UN Women could have seized this opportunity to resume dialogue with the Ministry of Finance. The previous Country Portfolio Evaluation in 2017 noted, “With the Ministry of Finance, although there was promising engagement at the beginning of the period of evaluation, there is little progress currently.”⁸⁴

⁷⁹ In 2017, the Country Portfolio Evaluation concluded: “UN Women’s involvement in general was relevant to international and national strategies, policies and legislations as well as to the needs of women. Involvement in violence against women could have been stronger regarding female genital mutilation and early marriage and leadership of women in politics lacks continuous support.” [Country Portfolio Evaluation (2014–2016), p. 48.]

⁸⁰ The previous Country Portfolio Evaluation concluded: “UN Women addressed the vulnerability of women in their lack of political leadership in 2014 and 2015, but in 2016 the focus shifted to supporting women’s leadership in the humanitarian context. This is unfortunate, since the gaps in political leadership continue to exist.” [Country Portfolio Evaluation (2014–2016), p. 44.]

⁸¹ Figure 4.3.1.

⁸² “In view of the partnership with non-governmental organizations, this mainly focused on implementing partners. Establishing more strategic linkages with women networks and CSOs working on gender equality and women’s empowerment could have been beneficial for UN Women as well as for the CSOs.” [Country Portfolio Evaluation (2014–2016,) p. 44.]

⁸³ section 4.3.1 above, Choice of Partners.

⁸⁴ [Country Portfolio Evaluation (2014–2016,) p. 44.]

LESSON 3

The success of the Gender Statistics programme is not a miracle. It is part of a continuum of consultations between UN Women and the National Institute of Statistics dating back to 2013, when there was fruitful collaboration on the Fourth Survey on Living Conditions of Households and on the time use module.

The success also stems from regular dialogue with a broad spectrum of civil society organizations, government institutions and media professionals in the field of gender statistics: there is a National Statistics Council, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Production of Gender Statistics and a Technical Secretariat within the Government.

The timing is right, as Cameroon is in the process of designing its National Strategy for Statistical Development 2020–2029. Statistics authorities noted⁸⁵ the absence of gender mainstreaming in a similar document covering the period 2015–2019.

LESSON 4

The construction of the Batchenga-Lena Road (via Ntui-Yoko) raised a lot of hopes. The road project features in Atlas as “98305-CMR-Women smallholders”, “98307-CMR-Opportunities for women”. Its benefits for the families of women living along the road were described in a promising UN Women article: [“The Journey Along the Gender Road in Cameroon”](#).

The general concept of this infrastructure project was to provide accompanying measures on cross-cutting issues such as gender and the environment during the construction of roads. Part of the work was devoted to raising awareness on HIV/AIDS among the local population and improving their living conditions, with a focus on gender through income-generating activities for rural women and facilitating their access to markets and services available in major centres.

An agreement with donors was reached in 2016 to create a so-called “soft” component that would be implemented in parallel with the so-called “hard” infrastructure component. The “soft”, or gender, dimension of the major road project would be financed by the AfDB and BDEAC, through the Ministry of Public Works. A first transfer of funds took place in 2016 for the Atlas projects mentioned above, which allowed UN Women activities to start. However, the complexity of the financial set-up is such that no other disbursement has been made since then. According to evaluation respondents, *“The road project abandoned us.”*

The hard component of the project proceeded according to plan: the 200 km of asphalt were built with financing by AFDB and BDEAC as well as the French Development Agency and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

It should be noted that the gender component was part of a set of “parallel activities” of the project that were conceptually linked to the road construction phase, as measures to mitigate environmental impact and reduce potential harm caused to neighbouring communities by road construction crews and truck drivers, including adverse effects on gender relations (prostitution, HIV, human trafficking, etc.). It is therefore difficult to envisage the continuation of projects “98305-CMR-Women smallholders” and “98307-CMR-Opportunities for women” because the road construction has been completed.

This experience casts doubts on grants accorded to UN Women through a loan to the Government. The success of a similar project in 2009, on the Garoua-Boulai-Nandeki stretch of road, was associated with the simplicity of its financing modality. At the time, the project had benefitted from direct support from the European Union in partnership with the UNDP.

This lesson should inspire caution in approaching future funding of the three projects expected to be funded by the Ministry of Agriculture from a loan signed with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

1.

85 The National Institute of Statistics has conducted a gender evaluation of the statistics development strategy.



Photo ©UN Women-CAMEROON

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation has enabled the evaluation team to describe achievements made as part of the Strategic Note 2018–2020, especially under the chapter dedicated to effectiveness. The Country Office’s work, alongside the Government of Cameroon, for human rights and gender-responsive development is recognized by all categories of respondents. However, as mentioned in this report, some problems arose during the Strategic Note period.

At the end of 2017, as UN Women Cameroon was designing its next Strategic Note, the Country Office had just submitted a US\$ 1 million proposal to the Government of Japan on women living in crisis-affected regions. The project was conceptually compelling, mainly because it was modelled on the same logic as the 2012 Peace and Security project which was successful in the Arab States Region. Through this project, UN Women had contributed to bringing lasting relief to Syrian women refugees in Jordan. Unfortunately, in 2018, UN Women Cameroon did not receive the long-awaited funds. The Country Office suffered a further setback during the same year as funds disbursement issues⁸⁶ for the Gender Road project persisted since 2016. The funding was part of a multi-donor package that included the AfDB.

These funding problems are at the root of constraints observed throughout the evaluation report. They have predictably affected the size and composition of the office workforce. Funding also influences the Country Office’s decisions about engaging in new areas of work that are consistent with Cameroon’s international commitments. Similarly, field missions and baseline studies are seen as costly and postponed or cancelled, which ends up affecting

the quality of annual reports. As donors are partly reliant on results-based success stories, the uncertainty of donor decisions leads to an unfortunate vicious circle.

Funding shortfalls forced the Country Office to withdraw its personnel from crisis zones (Far North, North-West, South-West regions) in 2019. Conversely, in 2020, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) did not allocate funds that were otherwise annually transferred to UN Women. This is because UN Women had discontinued its presence in the crisis zones. The Country Office’s withdrawal to the capital city implied the sudden closure of unfinished projects. This was the case in areas where UN Women’s presence could not be replaced by another United Nations agency, as UNFPA did in Maroua for projects related to violence against women.

A multimillion dollar agreement is currently being formalized with the Government of Japan to fund a proposed Leadership, Empowerment and Access to Protection programme in the Far North. This will be further enhanced by the release of US\$ 1.5 million from the Government of Cameroon to fund economic empowerment projects, mainly in rural areas. It is hoped that this will trigger a virtuous cycle next year.

However, the normative role of UN Women Cameroon is hampered by its perceived distancing from the small civil society organizations that are actively involved in the women’s movement and by the relative predominance of economic initiatives in its programming. Its apparent preference for Women’s Economic Empowerment initiatives may be at the expense of other important areas of work such as Ending Violence Against Women and *Women’s Political Participation*.



CONCLUSION 1

The normative role of UN Women is well established in Cameroon. Its reputation risks being undermined by the perception that the Country Office has distanced itself from small civil society organizations.



CONCLUSION 2

Despite difficulties encountered, it is undeniable that UN Women Cameroon has achieved tangible results in the five impact areas with economic empowerment projects significantly hampered by funding issues.



CONCLUSION 3

Personnel departures without clear handover procedures have resulted in the loss of institutional memory. The Country Office has limited documentation in terms of secure online filing, inventory and storage.



CONCLUSION 4

There is no evidence that the Country Programme contributed to the advancement of people with disabilities and minority groups.

⁸⁶ The previous evaluation of the Cameroon Strategic Note had recommended that UN Women Cameroon “ensures close follow-up with the Government to unlock the second instalment of the Gender-Road and Ring-Road projects.”

CONCLUSION 1

The normative role of UN Women is well established in Cameroon. Its reputation risks being undermined by the perception that the Country Office has distanced itself from small civil society organizations. Concerns that were previously expressed by the Review Committees⁸⁷ of international treaties, including CEDAW, could have been better represented in the Strategic Note, had the Country Office maintained a vibrant relationship with civil society.

UN Women Cameroon's proximity with civil society organizations existed before, at a time when the number of PCAs with non-State organizations was relatively high. Renewed collaboration with civil society will not necessarily guarantee the end of budgetary imbalances between impact areas. The budgetary dominance of Women's Economic Empowerment may not change suddenly. However, with more interactions between UN Women and many smaller organizations,⁸⁸ relevant decisions could have been taken to draw funding from a "privileged" impact area and cater for the needs of sub-funded areas, such as Ending Violence Against Women. This would have led to greater integration, within the Women's Economic Empowerment impact area, of programmes aimed at eradicating female genital mutilation and sexual and gender-based violence. Arguably, there also would have been greater inclusion of marginalized and/or disabled people in political participation and economic empowerment programmes.

CONCLUSION 2

Despite difficulties encountered, it is undeniable that UN Women Cameroon has achieved tangible results in the five impact areas.

The performance of economic empowerment projects was significantly hampered, however, by funding disbursement issues. Corresponding output indicators did not reflect the prolonged interruption of activities in this area, which has affected the credibility of self-reported information displayed in the RMS. Conversely, the higher completion rates observed in the impact area of Leadership and Political Participation are rather attributable to their being subsumed under a package called "Governance", alongside (i) gender statistics, (ii) gender budgeting and (iii) advocacy for mainstreaming HIV and menstrual hygiene in plans, policies and budgets at local and national levels.

CONCLUSION 3

Personnel departures without clear handover procedures have resulted in the loss of institutional memory. The Country Office has limited documentation in terms of secure online filing, inventory and storage.

The financial hardship experienced by UN Women Cameroon following the loss of Japanese funds and disbursement shortfalls has led to hard decisions regarding the number of its personnel and its geographical presence outside Yaoundé. Personnel departures without clear handover procedures have resulted in the loss of institutional memory. The Country Office has limited documentation in terms of secure online filing, inventory and storage.

The lack of expected funds has prolonged the staffing deficit in the Operations Unit. This continues to put the Country Office management structure at risk and affects its organizational efficiency. The small size of human resources leads to delays in approving and executing transactions related to procurement, recruitment and advances to partners. The practice of paying "all the money at once" to partners becomes preferable in this context, as it minimizes the number of transactions. However, this practice of one-time transactions is objectionable, as it exposes the organization to risk, as noted above.

CONCLUSION 4

There is no evidence that the Country Programme contributed to the advancement of people with disabilities and minority groups.

Regarding the implementation of the "leave no one behind" principle, UN Women conducted several awareness-raising workshops on HIV in 2019 and on COVID-19 in 2020 in the East, the Littoral, and West regions of Cameroon targeting community leaders from Mbororo and Pygmy ethnic groups. However, there is no evidence that the Country Programme contributed to the advancement of people with disabilities and minority groups. Similarly, the evaluation is not aware of any cases of integration of marginalized groups, specifically in the area of Women's Economic Empowerment. The Second Chance Education programme does not report disaggregation by ethnic group to show, for example, figures for Mbororo or refugees. Regarding sexual and gender-based violence, women's shelters and support centres are not easily accessible to rural women.

⁸⁷ Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (2014) and Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2019).

⁸⁸ A gender expert stated that to date "there is no mapping, not even an approximate mapping, of civil society organizations working on gender issues."

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In a workshop with UN Women personnel and members of the Reference Group, the evaluation team discussed the proposed recommendations and agreed to rephrase some of those that may be misunderstood.

RELEVANCE:

The evaluation recommends that UN Women Cameroon:

Priority



Impact



Complexity



1

Reconsider its partnership approach in order to develop new collaborative dynamics with civil society to strengthen their capacities for collective action promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. A first step would be to (a) develop a mapping, even if approximate, of civil society organizations that are actively involved in the women's movement without omitting organizations for disabled people and youth, to ensure intergenerational continuity; (b) establish relationships with partner non-governmental organizations beyond the confines of project implementation agreements; (c) deliberately include strategic alliances with feminist and diverse civil society organizations in its partnership plan; and (d) revitalize the CSAG by increasing the frequency of its meetings to three or four times a year and expanding it to include smaller organizations.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



2

Reinforce the normative dimension of its action by:

- a. Seizing opportunities offered by the development of a new National Action Plan on Resolution 1325 (2021–2025) and the review of the National Gender Policy (2011–2020) to reflect concerns previously expressed by the review committees of international treaties, including CEDAW. It is important to involve civil society organizations in this policy update by putting these concerns on the agenda of the Civil Society Organizations Gender Working Group and emphasizing consultation with marginalized social groups and people with disabilities.
- b. Reviewing Output CMR_D-3.1.4⁸⁹ or formulating a new output that encourages judicial and legislative bodies to take action to rapidly reduce early marriage, genital mutilation and other practices that are harmful to women's physical and mental integrity.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



3

Increasing the budgetary share of impact areas related to Women's Leadership and Political Participation and Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



4

Supporting the participation of women's organizations in the Consortium of Civil Society Organizations⁹⁰ to advance dialogue with the Ministry of Finance on gender-responsive budgeting.

⁸⁹ Output CMR_D-3.1.4 "Religious, traditional and opinion leaders are provided with relevant information on harmful cultural practices impacting reproductive and maternal health".

⁹⁰ A collective of civil society organizations with government representation (Ministry of Finance) for public finance transparency made up of COSADER, Afroleadership, CRADIF, I-WATCH, Budget Transparency PLATFORM, RESYPAT, NOLFOWO, Dynamique Citoyenne, CRADEC, PLANOSCAM, SC ; les Juéuds de Cotonou, Cabinet MTD, APAC, ROSFIP, ANCFM, UAOD, APESEC, RESIPAT, APINK, RESDECO, CERAGN, AGAD, FCJ, PPTE, SUN, CAPE, SEPDOBAD and CIDE.

EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation recommends that UN Women Cameroon:

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 5** Integrate into the new Strategic Note measures necessary to scale up economic empowerment initiatives that have demonstrated potential. By targeting institutional levels (where policies, laws and strategies are developed) to deploy its economic support, UN Women Cameroon can reach more women than through isolated economic initiatives

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 6** Reconfigure the classification of intervention themes across impact areas, so as to clearly separate headings devoted to governance in general and specifically to women's political participation from those devoted to gender statistics, HIV and menstrual hygiene mainstreaming, and gender-responsive planning and budgeting. The latter should be given its rightful place in the next strategic planning. In addition, the Second Chance Education programme should be moved from the category of Frontline Issues to the area of Women's Economic Empowerment.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 7** Strengthen its monitoring and reporting system by specifying indicator baselines, including monitoring missions in the workplans of each programme manager, and uploading reported data in a functional and local system complementary to the RMS. Many respondents, including those from sister agencies, would like to see UN Women exercise more caution regarding the volume of instalments advanced to partners. Instead of entrusting all project funds to a partner, even a government partner, why not make disbursements by deliverables systematically conditional on progress on the outputs achieved? Subsequent instalments would only be paid upon assessment of progress.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 8** Recover, organize and preserve its institutional memory by appointing a focal point responsible for rigorous knowledge management. This focal point would coordinate procedures of inventorying, filing and making all non-confidential documents available on a OneDrive folder. The Human Resources Officer should ensure that handover and retrieval procedures are clearly articulated, understood by personnel and put into practice without delay.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 9** Develop a strategy to contribute to gender coordination at the United Nations system level.
- a.** The coordination role of UN Women could be strengthened, as suggested by a donor country Cooperation Officer, by pursuing joint resource-mobilization strategies to limit the perception of inter-agency competition, particularly in the area of Ending Violence Against Women, where UNFPA also operates. UN Women's comparative advantage in this area can be reaffirmed in the field of psychosocial assistance in humanitarian contexts, the drafting of guides and policy papers, and the production of statistical data on the prevalence of early marriage, genital mutilation and violence against women.
 - b.** UN Women should extend this coordinating role to civil society by becoming more involved with the women's movement, not just ministries. As noted by one of UN Women Cameroon's partners: "UN Women needs to adequately follow up its collaboration with civil society organizations." The revitalization of Gender Cafés would establish a channel of communication between the Government and organized women's groups.

EFFICIENCY

The evaluation recommends that UN Women Cameroon:

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 10 Continue resource-mobilization efforts to fill staffing gaps, avoid the practice of “double-hatting” several functions⁹¹ in one post and recruit an Operations Manager and a Country Representative without delay⁹². The context is favourable for mobilizing resources from the European Union, whose programme cycle starts in 2021.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 11 Approach its workplan in a realistic manner by ceasing to rely on expected instalments from donors that have defaulted disbursements for several years and whose last payment dates as far back as 2016. From its resource-mobilization plan, the Country Office intends to redouble its efforts to closely monitor the release of the second instalment for the Gender-Road and Ring-Road projects.⁹³ The evaluation suggests that, after several years of waiting, the organization should be more circumspect about the availability of these funds.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 12 Cautiously take into account future funding from IFAD, whose disbursements will be entrusted to the Ministry of Agriculture, while anticipating similar difficulties as those encountered with the Agricultural Value Chains, Ntui-Bamenda Gender Road and Ring Road projects.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 13 Organize a function analysis exercise to determine the optimal size of the Country Office and revise the organigram to place the new post of Information Technology Assistant under the Operations Unit.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 14 Renew radio communication equipment to cope with crisis situations and adopt adequate measures to improve the office’s low score on digital security, the reliability of IT equipment and participation in cybersecurity-awareness sessions.

DURABILITÉ

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 15 The evaluation recommends that UN Women Cameroon adopt a long-term approach in its relationship with civil society organizations. This means going beyond the strictly operational limits of Collaboration Agreements, as partners are valued and considered to represent more than service providers. There needs to be a consistent commitment in order to facilitate the transfer of skills and extend the reach of UN Women. In areas far from the capital, sustainability can be further assured by investing efforts in community mechanisms, e.g. mayors, village chiefs, social grass-roots organizations, market management committees.

⁹¹ For example, (i) the position of Governance Officer and Women, Peace and Security Officer concentrates on responsibilities for Women’s Leadership and Political Participation; Gender-Responsive Budgeting; Women, Peace and Security; as well as coordination of the Gender Thematic Group; (ii) the Finance Associate assumes the functions of the Operations Officer.

⁹² The evaluation team will communicate this recommendation directly to the Regional Office.

⁹³ To quote a recommendation from the 2017 CPE report “UN Women Cameroon should ensure close follow-up with the Government to unlock the second instalment of the Gender-Road and Ring-Road projects.”

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

The evaluation recommends that UN Women Cameroon:

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 16** Involve women doubly affected by gender exclusion and discrimination based on ethnicity, disability, income, language, culture and lifestyle in the design, monitoring and implementation of its programmes. It is important that the next midterm review take place in the presence of stakeholders, including members of small civil society organizations that are not represented by the current members of the CSAG or the large non-governmental organizations that have signed implementation contracts with the Country Office.

Priority



Impact



Complexity



- 17** Ensure that the Women Count programme dedicates part of its research to marginalized populations by involving their organizations in raising awareness on the use of gender statistics.



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