



UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation: 2018-2021

Report

Submitted by

Dr. Benjamin Kaneka:	Team Leader
Mr Davie Kalomba:	Consultant
Ms. Villa Ezala:	Consultant
Dr Catherine Mthinda:	Consultant

Submitted to:

UN Women Malawi Country Office
Evelyn Court Compound Area 13/31
P.O. Box 31774
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

November, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....	4
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION.....	11
1.1 Description of the Strategic Note 2018-2021	11
1.2 Theory of Change.....	13
1.3 Malawi Context.....	14
1.3.1 Gender Based Governance	15
1.3.2 Women Economic Empowerment (WEE)	17
1.3.3 Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls.....	17
1.3.4 Humanitarian Response and Human Rights	18
1.4 Implementation Arrangements and Key Stakeholders.....	19
1.5 Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation.....	20
2.0 METHODOLOGY	21
2.1 Evaluation Approaches	21
2.2 Evaluation Framework.....	22
2.3 Data Collection Methods.....	23
2.4 Study participants.....	24
2.5 Response Rate	25
2.6 Data Analysis	25
2.7 Data Triangulation and Validation.....	26
2.8 Ethical Considerations.....	26
2.9 Health and Safety Considerations	26
2.10 Limitations	27
3.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS	28
3.1 Relevance	28
3.2 Effectiveness	39
3.2.1 Gender Based Governance	39
3.2.2 Women Economic Empowerment.....	45
3.2.3 Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls.....	47
3.3 Efficiency	60
3.4 Sustainability.....	66
3.5 Gender Equality and Human Rights	70
3.6 Coherence.....	76

4.0 CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS	79
4.1 Conclusions	79
4.2 Lessons learnt	84
4.3 Recommendations	86
APPENDICES	

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Summary of evaluation participants 25
Table 2: Annual Budget, Expenditure and Delivery Rate from 2018-2021 62

Figure 1: Annual Budget and Expenditure from 2018-2021 (USD millions) 62

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACPC	Area Civil Protection Committee
ADC	Area Development Committee
AfDB	African Development Bank
AICC	African Institute of Corporate Citizenship
ASWAp	Agriculture Sector Wide Approach
ASWAp-SP	Agriculture Sector Wide Approach – Support Project
BDPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CDM	Centre for Multiparty Democracy
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Program
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
CRA	Climate Resilient Agriculture
CRECOM	Creative Centre for Community Mobilization
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
CSAG	Civil Society Action Group
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CVSU	Community Victim Support Unit
DDP	District Development Plan
DHRM	Department of Human Resource Management and Development
DoDMA	Department of Disaster Management Affairs
DPRA	Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act
DRF	Development Results Framework
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
EPA	Extension Planning Area
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group

EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
FGDs	Focus group discussions
FOYODE	Forum for Youth Development
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEER	Gender and Elections Engagement Room
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GoM	Government of Malawi
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
IDI	In-depth Interview
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IP	Implementing Partner
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KOICA	Korea International Corporation Agency
MACOHA	Malawi Council for the Handicapped
MAGGA	Malawi Girl Guides Association
MALGA	Malawi Local Government Association
MaLS	Market Link and Support
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDHS	Malawi Demographic and Health Survey
MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission
MESN	Malawi Electoral Support Network
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MIAA	Malawi Interfaith AIDS Association
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MOAIWD	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development
MOFEPD	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and Development
MOGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare

MOJCA	Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
MOLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MOTT	Ministry of Trade and Industry
NFIS	National Financial Inclusion Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NGOGCN	NGO Gender Coordinating Network
NICE	National Initiative for Civic Education
NLGFC	National Local Government Finance Committee
NSO	National Statistics Office
NSSP	National Statistical Strategic Plan
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee
OEEF	Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Program
RBM	Results Based Management
RNE	Royal Norwegian Embassy
SADC	Southern African Development Cooperation
SADD	Sex and Age Disaggregated Data
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
SN	Strategic Note
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
ToR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Program on HIV and AIDS
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistant Framework

UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNFAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNW	United Nations Women
USD	United States Dollar
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans
WASH	Water, Hygiene and Sanitation
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN Women CO commissioned a Country Program Evaluation (CPE) in order to thoroughly assess performance and contributions made by the CO towards achievement of gender equality results in Malawi, targeting all program and projects implemented during this SN period. This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Program Evaluation for the UN Women Country Office covering the SN period of 2018-2021. The CPE was conducted from July to November 2022. It begins with this summary covering an overview of the CPE, its purpose, objectives and scope. Lastly, it highlights the key conclusions and recommendations.

1) Overview of the Country Portfolio Evaluation

UN Women Country Office (CO) in Malawi was established in October 2012 in order to address key issues of gender inequality and discriminatory practices in collaboration with the Government of Malawi (GoM). The SN under review covered the period 2018-2021. In general, the SN aimed at ensuring that women and girls enjoy their full rights and positively contribute to, and benefit from social, economic, and political developments of the country. It covered four pillars: Gender Based Governance (GBG); ii) Women Economic Empowerment (WEE); and iii) Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAW) and iv) Humanitarian Action.

2) Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The purpose of the CPE was to assess the UN Women Malawi's strategic positioning, and the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the portfolio, with reference to the Strategic Note (SN) cycle of 2018-2021. In addition, the CPE was meant to analyze how human rights and gender equality principles are integrated in implementation. The following were specific objectives of the country portfolio evaluation:

- a) Assess the relevance of UN Women contribution to the intervention at national levels and alignment with international agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment;
- b) Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the SN;
- c) Explore modalities for the UN Women Malawi CO's improved strategic positioning to better support the achievement of sustained gender equality and women's empowerment;
- d) Analyze how human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the SN;
- e) Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices and examples of innovation that supports gender equality and human rights;

- f) Provide insights into the extent to which the UN Women Malawi CO has realized synergies between its three mandates (normative, coordination and operations); and,
- g) Provide actionable recommendations with respect to the development of the next UN Women Malawi CO Strategic Note.

The CPE covered all areas of triple mandate: normative work in Development Results Framework (DRF), coordination work in the Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework (OEEF) and all operational thematic areas, across all thematic areas of the SN.

3) Methodology

The evaluation applied a theory of change approach to planning the CPE and analysis of its results, and a contribution analysis to establish attribution of the program outcomes to the country portfolio. A gender responsive approach was employed regarding what is being evaluated and the criteria thereof, and how the evaluation was conducted. As the CO program involved multi-stakeholders and men and women and youth, participatory approach and mixed methods were applied to allow for inclusiveness and participatory processes that suit the needs of participants. The evaluation applied OECD/DAC evaluation criteria by focusing on relevance, effectiveness (including normative, and coordination mandates of UN Women), efficiency, sustainability and coherence. The CPE also included human rights and gender equality as an additional criterion.

Data collection included 70 key informant interviews, 5 individual in-depth interviews, 20 focus group discussions, and 2 community meetings involving over 250 participants at national, district and communities levels. In addition, over 40 documents were consulted. The data was analysed qualitatively using content analysis.

4) Key Conclusions

a) Relevance (Linked to findings 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 10)

CP remained relevant

The CP was well premised on the relevant guiding frameworks and interventions were grounded on systematic generation and synthesis of contextual evidence, which facilitated better focusing and targeting on the underlying causes of gender inequality. The SN outcome areas were aligned to global, continental, regional and national treaties, conventions and socio-economic development frameworks. Key among them were the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the UN Resolutions: 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security and ending sexual violence in conflict situations; the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on

Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol); and, the 2008 Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development; the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (Section 13a); the Gender Equality Act (2013); Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2006); Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) I-III (2006 to 2022); the Malawi Vision 2063 and its First 10 Year Implementation Plan (MIP 1).

The interventions were informed by a broad base of evidence from specific studies, namely: 'Perception Study on Women's Political and Economic Participation' and 'Perception study on Gender and Social Norms around Violence against Women and Girls in Malawi'; the 2018 Population and Housing Census: Gender Thematic Report; the 2015/16 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS); the 2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey; the 'Gender Impacts of COVID-19' study; the 2018 Comprehensive Baseline Assessment of Disaster Risk Management in Malawi; and, the gender gap agricultural productivity studies, also provided insights and informed the focus and scope of interventions.

The CO played its rightful role by ensuring that the necessary resources and technical assistance were availed to multi-sectoral partners that advance GEWE goals and objectives, throughout the programme design and implementation stages. These strategic choices were very critical in ensuring that the program remained relevant to the context.

b) Effectiveness (Linked to findings 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24, 28, 30)

CP achieved varying degrees of progress towards outcomes

The CP achieved varying degrees of progress across pillars and interventions. Significant progress was made in terms of the following outcomes: Outcome 6.1: Enhanced implementation of national, regional and international normative and policy frameworks; Outcome 1.3: Gender statistics are accessible to all users to inform policy, advocacy and programming; Outcome 2:1 Rural women and youths have increased access to secure and productive resources, practices and technologies to engage in Climate Smart Agriculture; Outcome 2:2 Women's capacities to invest in climate smart and time saving assets, tools and technologies is increased; Outcome 3:1 Social norms, attitudes and practices hindering women and girl's rights are transformed at individual and community levels; and, Outcome 4.1: More women play a greater role in and are better saved by disaster risk reduction and recovery processes. There was some progress on Outcome 1.2: National and local plans and budgets are gender responsive, and unsatisfactory progress on Outcome 1.1: Women participate, lead and engage in decision making processes in political and public institutions.

In general, progress was affected by operational constraints, such as delayed funds disbursement, protracted administrative and political approvals for legal and normative frameworks, as well as disasters and pandemics. The interventions also generated

positive unintended outcomes that directly benefitted individuals, households and communities at large.

Significant effort was directed towards creation of an enabling environment, through reviewing and development of relevant legislative policy and strategic instruments, with some already paying dividends, in terms of legal redress for GBV and improved access to relevant services. The CO supported amendment of the Constitution of Malawi, through Bill No 36, leading to increased age of marriage from 16 to 18 years; ; advocacy and input to the enactment of the Political Parties Act, which advances women representation; alignment of the Chief's Act with international human rights standards and responsiveness to the rights of women and girls; and, review of 5 gender related laws (the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, the Gender Equality Act the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, the Penal Code, the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act) and 2 policies (the Gender Policy, and the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Policy) was under way, through the Spotlight Initiative. Once approved/enacted and operationalized, these will likely enhance realization of GEWE objectives, as well as human rights.

Women empowerment efforts were achieving tangible outcomes in the areas of agricultural productivity and entrepreneurship, thereby raising prospects of food security and economic autonomy of the beneficiaries, including people with disabilities. In the case of leadership positions, the progress was slackening, due to deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and practices. Institutionalization of genders statistics was evident in strategic planning processes, although this was not particularly evident in terms of gender responsive resource planning and allocation processes at both central and local council levels. Capacity challenges still exist at local council and community levels in this regard. The case was also similar to increased awareness levels about harmful socio-cultural norms and practices, as well as promotion of positive masculinity, but the actual transformation could not be ascertained within the scope of the evaluation. There is coordinated and multi-sectoral referral system for victims of GBV related incidences, although the geographic coverage scope still remains limited and needs upscaling. These will require a systematic evaluation to better inform programming. The CO was very central to the registered progress, as it forged strategic partnerships, introduced innovative tools for programming, provided necessary technical support, built capacities, and mobilized and coordinated partners.

c) Efficiency (Linked to findings 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38)

CO's structure and key staff appropriate with significant amounts of resources mobilized but spread thinly

The CO's structural configuration, knowledge and skills levels were appropriate for efficient delivery of interventions. For example, the CO was led by a Country Representative providing leadership and support to four thematic areas and six supporting functions. Each thematic area and support function had a team lead, with

one or two associates. However, the CO implemented 24 interventions/projects, covering 16 out of the 28 districts and partnering with 60 organisations (both government and CSOs), which outstripped the available number of key staff.

The CO was able to mobilize significant amounts of resources from a number of donors to support its SN. The resources were prudently utilized and accounted for. However, the resources were spread thinly across many IPs, resulting into short term projects that were not in tandem with GEWE challenges that require long term solutions. In addition, there were delays in funds disbursements that affected timeliness in delivering its portfolio. The CO provided necessary support in financial management and monitoring to ensure achievement of results. The use of diverse and strategic partnerships proved effective in building capacity of IPs and in the delivery of interventions and achievement of results. The CO also established an RBM system that was operational at the CO as well as in the partners' organizations. Despite the CO investing in capacity building on the same, levels of competence and adherence amongst the organizations was different and this affected the data quality of results at both output and outcome levels.

d) Sustainability (Linked to findings 39, 40, 41, and 42)

Sustainability of interventions is likely but there are challenges to be addressed

In general, the likelihood of sustaining interventions in targeted districts is high as the CO's efforts through implementing partners ensured that most interventions were mainstreamed through existing institutions and structures with core mandates, such as MOGCDSW and other MDA, CSO coordinating networks, TWGs, and local government structures, so as to allow continuation beyond project lifespans. Additionally, to ensure quality in delivery of interventions, the institutions and structures have been strengthened with human capacity (skills and knowledge) and in some cases infrastructure/equipment which will further promote continuation of interventions.

However, there are some hindrances that pose a threat to sustainability such as short duration of projects (a year or less), resource constraints for coordinating institutions, such as MOGCDSW and IPs, allowance syndrome for stakeholders and staff attrition within implementing entities. These hindrances undermine the ability of the existing institutions and structures to establish specific systems for accountability and continuity and maintain the gains from interventions and therefore need to be addressed.

e) Gender Equality and Human Rights (Linked to findings 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 and 50)

Interventions integrated gender and human rights and were inclusive

The SN was designed based on the principle of realization of human rights and use of participatory, gender and culturally sensitive approaches, aimed at building the capacity

of stakeholders to promote gender equality and empowerment of women with a focus on “Leaving No One Behind” principle. During implementation, virtually all interventions integrated gender and human rights and aimed at reaching those left behind. Examples include review of laws and policies that presented barriers to access to leadership positions and use of technology (phones) in humanitarian response and recovery plans aimed at ensuring SGBV services’ continuity for those affected by emergencies. There was a positive, but gradual shift in attitude towards women and leadership positions in society, while innovative approaches were reducing GBV at the household level. Economic empowerment interventions were also opening avenues for leadership roles for women and youth in local structures.

The CP advanced gender equity and human rights, as the interventions did not discriminate against any population groups, and also provided many opportunities and spaces for participation by all, including people with disabilities and marginalized ones. The role of the CO was significant in efforts to create an enabling environment, through provision of technical support, among others. Interventions were participatory and inclusive. Both male and females, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities, participated in community mobilization and advocacy activities for example in vying for leadership positions as well as campaign rallies. People with disabilities also participated as contestants.

f) Coherence (Linked to findings 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58)

Institutional and programmatic linkages and synergies existed but coordination was a challenge

There were both institutional and programmatic linkages and synergies during implementation of the CP, fostered through several coordination platforms and processes. For example, UN Women contributed to the development of UNDAF (2019-2023), coordinated the development of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, chairs the Monitoring, Evaluation and Advisory Group and was the Evaluation Manager for the UNSDCF evaluation. However, the CO implemented numerous short-term projects across the thematic pillars that made internal linkages and synergies difficult. There is also room for improvement at program implementation level through optimal utilization of coordination structures. Strategic partnerships across functional and levels of the GEWE response facilitated a fair balance across UN Women’s core mandates. The consistent reference to guiding frameworks for programming across the cascade also facilitated compatibility of interventions.

5) Recommendations

a) Relevance (Linked to finding 6)

1. Maximize use of existing coordination platforms and scale up alternative avenues

Optimize use of existing coordination platforms and scale up alternative avenues, such as virtual platforms to enhance information sharing and program focus by multi-sectoral partners. The MOGCDSW, CO, local councils and gender coordination networks should review the available coordination platforms, their membership, frequency of meetings, and their suitability for information sharing, and identify measures to strengthen them as key vehicles for sustained cross-learning and program focus.

Ranking: Medium

b) Effectiveness (Linked to findings 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19 and 22)

2. Intensify targeted advocacy and lobbying

The CO, in collaboration with MOGCDSW and NGOGCN should intensify targeted advocacy and lobbying for expedited political and administrative approvals for legal, policy and strategic frameworks. This will entail conducting a rapid stakeholder analysis to determine their influence on the review and approval processes; designing and implementing targeted advocacy and communication actions to facilitate timely approvals and implementation of the frameworks. **Ranking: High**

3 Facilitate technical capacity building of DHRMD in gender transformation resource and mobilization

The CO should facilitate technical capacity building of DHRMD, in gender transformation, and resource mobilization, to implement a sustained program that focuses on women empowerment and development in leadership positions in the context of the dynamic operating environment in the public sector. DHRMD remains a key public sector entry point in this regard and there is need to undertake capacity needs assessment, development of a capacity development roadmap, technical skills development, and development of gender related project proposals, apart from lobbying for earmarked gender budget from government by the DHRMD itself. **Ranking: High**

4. Enforce compliance with guiding frameworks for gender responsive budgeting

The MOFEPD, in collaboration with the MOGCDSW, MOLGRD and NLGFC should enforce compliance with guiding frameworks for gender responsive budgeting. The CO should support the process to popularize and disseminate newly approved guidelines and the yet to be enacted amended Public Finance Management Act at all levels. MOFEPD should enforce appropriate sanctions and incentives on adherence to these frameworks by MDAs and councils. In addition, the CO should continue to facilitate capacity building of Parliament to consistently apply the gender lens to budget review and approval processes. **Ranking: High**

5. Continue partnering with NSO to build capacity of MDAs and councils on data disaggregation

The CO and MOGCDSW should continue partnering with NSO to build capacity of MDAs and councils in generation, dissemination and utilization and of sex and age disaggregated data, through a systematic capacity development plan. NSO and line ministries should utilize the ‘Gender Statistics Assessment Report’ that was undertaken recently and systematically implement and track the recommendations regarding capacity gaps in the areas of national statistical system coordination, human and financial resources, and technical expertise in production and analysis of gender statistics. The MOLG should ensure that all district SEPs and DDP currently under development utilize the defined minimum gender data sets for planning, monitoring and reporting. **Ranking: High**

6. Consolidate and capture positive changes in the agriculture sector wide gender reports

The efforts by the CO and MOAIWD in promoting adoption of CSA and labor-saving technologies, through ASWAp were commendable. As the efforts continue, the CO should jointly with UNFAO and the Agriculture Sector Technical Working Group, ensure that the positive changes being registered in the agriculture sector (by various partners) are consolidated and captured in the agriculture sector wide gender reports, in order to influence planning, decision making and policy. **Ranking: High.**

7. Undertake a comprehensive evaluation of interventions on GEWE related socio-cultural norms and practices

The MOGCDSW, in collaboration with the CO, should undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of interventions focusing on GEWE related socio-cultural norms and practices to assess the extent of transformation, as well as related service coverage, in order to inform program consolidation and scale up plans. The ministry should leverage of available technical assistance from UN Women to develop concise terms of reference for the study, mobilize the expertise and resources to commission the study. Once done, the results should be disseminated at all levels, using most appropriate channels. **Ranking: High**

c) Efficiency (Linked to findings 33, 35, 36 and 37)

8. Review the CO’s staff requirements against its envisaged portfolio and establish a data base of prequalified consultants

The CO should review its staff requirements in the context of the envisaged portfolio, and establish a database of pre-qualified consultants, in order to shorten the recruitment process. **Ranking: High**

9. Develop a resource mobilisation strategy, focusing on both short- and long-term strategies

The CO should develop a resource mobilization strategy, focusing on both short and long-term strategies for addressing GEWE challenges in Malawi. Existing and potential funding streams should be assessed against envisaged programme scope, to establish the resource gap, and engage both existing and potential boundary partners accordingly.

Ranking: High

10. Review implementation arrangement with Government of Malawi

The CO, in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, should review the implementation arrangement of the project in ASWAp, so as to reduce the route through which the funds flow from the MOAIWD to the CO, to avoid delays in funds disbursements. **Ranking: High**

11. Continue to strengthen the RBM system until it is well established

The CO should strengthen the RBM system as a continuous learning opportunity until RBM is well established, as a culture of results. Specific attention is required in the development, systematic numbering, tracking, and consolidation of output and outcome indicator results at project and CO levels, throughout the SN period. **Ranking: High**

d) Sustainability (Linked to findings 39, 40 and 41)

12. Strengthen focus on capacity building in leadership for gender mainstreaming, coordination, implementation and monitoring

The CO needs to maintain and strengthen its focus on capacity building of existing institutions and structures in leadership for gender mainstreaming, coordination, implementation and monitoring, as this has proved to be an effective strategy in fostering sustainability. The prudent choice of partners based on their mandates and core business should be maintained. Priority must also be given to organizations that have footprint in the districts and project jurisdictions. **Ranking: High**

13. Strategize on funding modalities

The CO needs to strategize on funding modalities, so that numerous short-term projects are avoided and ensure that interventions are capable of addressing root causes of gender inequity. This could be achieved by engaging fewer number of implementing partners, with a longer project duration, so that resources are not spread thin and there is room for interventions to yield ultimate results. **Ranking: High**

e) Gender Equality and Human Rights (Linked to findings 46, 47 and 52)

14. Enhance participation of beneficiaries at all stages

There is a need to build in a more robust mechanism for greater participation of beneficiaries in the interventions and local structures (councils and community levels) in the design, implementation and monitoring of interventions so that at every stage, an opportunity is provided for their inputs. **Ranking: High**

15. Document success stories and capture data in agriculture sector wide gender reports

The CO should enhance documentation of success stories arising from innovative approaches to women empowerment interventions. In addition, reflect the gains from such approaches in agriculture sector wide gender reports in order to influence policy direction. **Ranking: Medium**

f) Coherence (Linked to finding 55)

16. Streamline and consolidate projects portfolio

The CO, in collaboration with UNCT partners, should strive to streamline and consolidate the projects portfolio within the scope of the current pillar focus, which remains relevant and comprehensive in addressing GEWE issues. In doing so, emphasis should be on those GBG and EAW outcomes whose progress is very much affected by deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices that necessitate long term strategies. This will require carefully engaging partners that can offer expertise and implement holistic programs, with a wider geographical coverage, as opposed to having a lot of partners implementing similar interventions across the country. In addition, this will require careful solicitation and screening of potential partners, coupled with more thorough due diligence assessments, to ascertain the available technical capacities. The Spotlight Initiative offers a very good learning opportunity for this strategic direction. **Ranking: High**

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

UN Women is a global champion for promoting gender equality and women empowerment. The Country Office in Malawi was established in October 2012 in order to address key issues of gender inequality and discriminatory practices in collaboration with the Government of Malawi (GoM). The CO aims to enhance ongoing efforts by the United Nations system and other stakeholders to ensure that gender equality is achieved, and that women and girls are empowered and are able to live their lives free from violence and discrimination. Its first strategic note (SN) covered the period 2014-2017. The SN under review covered the period 2018 to 2021.

1.1 Description of the Strategic Note 2018-2021

The SN is part of CO support to the government and non-government actors to promote gender equality and empowerment of women; and addressing challenges faced by women and girls in the development and humanitarian agenda. The SN outlined the overall strategy and plan of action for the Malawi CO for the years 2018-2021 and has been implemented through rolling annual workplans (AWPs), quarterly monitoring and annual reports. On the overall, the SN aimed at ensuring that women and girls enjoy their full rights and positively contribute to, and benefit from social, economic, and political developments of the country. The SN covered four pillars components: Gender Based Governance; ii) Women Economic Empowerment; iii) Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls; and, iv) Humanitarian Action and are explained below.

Gender Based Governance

Under the GBG pillar, the SN was aimed at enhancing implementation of key legal instrument on gender equality; promotion of women participation in decision making positions and processes; formulation of gender responsive plans and budgets; as well as use of gender statistics to inform policy and decision making. In this respect, the UN Women has been supporting the functional review of the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) in order to identify areas that require support as well as coordinating efforts that enhance dialogue among gender sector stakeholders on implementation of gender equality related national, regional and international normative and policy frameworks. It has also been supporting the engendering of national processes to ensure generation of evidence within those processes. This included supporting sectoral analysis of national budgets and supporting the participation of MoGCDSW in the National Statistical System to ensure that gender responsive planning, budgeting and accountability is institutionalized and promoted at and national and subnational levels. This was in line with UNDAF Pillar 1 and to UN Women Flagship Program initiatives on supporting women to lead in decision making and on ensuring that national and local plans and budgets are gender responsive.

Women Economic Empowerment

Under WEE pillar, the SN was aimed at enhancing the capacity of women to access financing and invest in climate smart agriculture; improve their enterprise development; and increase their access to secure and productive resources, including markets and value-added activities. Specifically, the UN Women has been promoting women's access to and control over productive resources in agriculture that include land, extension services and participation in high value crops, such as legumes and horticultural crops. To this end, women required support in agribusiness entrepreneurship and training to boost their income generating endeavors. Such support included efforts to facilitate access to finance, markets and participation in value addition provided in a gender responsive way targeting different types of women, including those living with disabilities and promotion of human rights.

The efforts have been integrated with climate change management as Malawi's dependency on agriculture is seriously affected by climate change related disasters. As such, the SN has been deliberately focusing on supporting its partners in the promotion of climate-smart agriculture. The driving philosophy has been that impediments to women economic empowerment can be overcome through gender-enabling policies, public investment projects that reduce women's unpaid care burden and improve women's access to income-generating activities on an equitable basis with men. The pillar is aligned with the UN Women Flagship Program 2 on Women's Economic Empowerment.

Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls

Under EVAW the focus was on addressing factors related to social norms, attitudes and behaviors at community and individual levels that precipitate gender-based violence and violence against women and girls. The SN was responding to the root causes of EVAW, while promoting the rights of women and girls. It contains two targets that explicitly focus on eradicating violence: Target 5.2: "Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation"; and Target 5.3: "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation". The general focus of programming under this thematic area was on preventing violence from occurring, through promoting the transformation of social norms, attitudes and practices that hinder women and girl's rights at individual and community levels.

Programming, therefore, involved mobilization of women, men, boys and girls on gender equality, capacity building and behavioral change interventions targeting local actors including chiefs, religious leaders and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to prevent negative social norms and other forms of discrimination. Additionally, programming also aimed at building capacity of local institutions to enable them to gather and utilize evidence that prevent negative social norms, as well as to promote positive social norms, attitudes and behaviors. Thus, they combined issues such as

economic empowerment of women, gender equality training, and engagement of men, as well as targeting gatekeepers of tradition and culture that include traditional and religious leaders.

Humanitarian Action

Malawi is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and related shocks and climate-induced humanitarian crises that have resulted in losses to life, livelihoods and services availability. A 2018 Comprehensive Baseline Assessment of Disaster Risk Management in Malawi, commissioned by the DoDMA, established that storms (74 percent) were the most common cause of humanitarian crises, followed by droughts (68 percent), and thirdly outbreaks of crop pests and diseases at 62 percent. The study established two main factors for vulnerability to disasters: poverty (70 percent) and location in high-risk areas (54 percent). Poverty was identified as a major factor amongst female headed households, ranging from 86 to 93 percent, in six of the thirteen surveyed districts.

Under this pillar, UN women's focus was on strengthening capacities of national, district and community level humanitarian stakeholders on gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action for gender responsive programming in disaster response and recovery with respect to human rights. The emphasis was on effective and quality programming that addresses the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls during crises caused by floods and draughts and later cyclones. In addition, the pillar considered women and girls not solely as a vulnerable group in need of protection but as partners in humanitarian response with a role to play in the process of building resilience to external shocks

1.2 Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) depicts the causal linkages in program interventions, taking into consideration all changes and outcomes throughout the SN period that are expected to contribute to the long-term outcomes. The SN 2018-2021 clearly articulates the ToC developed in 2017 after the mid-term review in 2017. It first describes the global normative frameworks that define the necessary conditions and actions for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, the Beijing Platform for Action and SDG 5 represent the key thematic components of a theory of change for gender equality and women's empowerment. Thus, the SN note was focused on five key outcomes:

- i) A comprehensive and dynamic set of norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is strengthened
- ii) Women are equal leaders with men and have a stronger voice and influence in political, private and public decision-making spheres and processes

- iii) Women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are actively involved in decent work, economic activities and have secure income
- iv) All women and girls live a life that is free of all forms of violence
- v) A peaceful, sustainable and secure environment is supported by a well-coordinated humanitarian response which respects the equal contribution of women, girls, boys and men

Integrated with these were issues of human rights and gender equality principles. Basically, these were the impact areas of the SN under review, from which the CO developed Outputs and Activities. However, during the course of implementation, three additional outcomes were included, in order to effectively respond to the evolving strategic focus for the global, continental and regional normative frameworks; gender dynamics; socio-economic developments, technological advancements; and, emerging issues, such as humanitarian crises. The three additional outcomes were: i) National and local plans and budgets are gender responsive; ii) Gender statistics are accessible to all users to inform policy, advocacy and programming; and, iii) Women's capacities to invest in climate smart and time saving assets, tools and technologies is increased. Additionally, all the original five outcomes were refined, in keeping with the above-described factors.

The reconstructed program ToC is presented in Appendix 1 and could be summarized as follows: If: Government capacity to put up and implement gender responsive policies, and is accountable to its national and international obligations; barriers which hinder women to fully participate in viable economic enterprises and markets are removed; and social cultural norms which perpetuate gender inequalities and inequities are eliminated; then women and girls will enjoy their full rights and positively contribute to, and benefit from, socio-economic and political development in Malawi.

The structure of the CO was also organized based on these impact areas, supported by four enabling functions: management and operations, monitoring, research and evaluation, partnerships and coordination and communication and advocacy. The total budget for the five years more than doubled, amounting to USD22,985,952, compared to the previous SN 2014-2017, which was USD9,834,242, representing substantial growth¹.

1.3 Malawi Context

Malawi is a small landlocked country located in Southern Africa, covering an area of 118,464 square kilometers, a third of which is covered by the waters of Lake Malawi. Administratively, the country is divided into Northern, Central and Southern regions that are also divided into 28 districts.

¹ UN Women Country Office, 2017. Final Report: Country Portfolio Evaluation.

The 2018 population and housing census indicated that the total population of Malawi was 17,563,749. Of this, 51 percent were female and 49 percent were male, while 51 percent were younger than 18 years. Currently, the population is estimated at 19.1 million, with a median age of 17 years. In addition, the country is predominantly rural, with only 16 percent of the total population living in the urban areas (Government of Malawi, 2019).

Malawi's economy is heavily reliant on agriculture and accounts for 90 percent of all export earnings, 45 percent of the GDP and 67.3 percent of the total income of the rural poor. Over 90 percent of the cultivated land is under rain-fed agriculture, though some investments have been made over the years to promote irrigation farming for crops of high value, like sugar cane and rice ((National Planning Commission, 2020; Malawi Government, 2016). Malawi's Human Development index (HDI) value was 0.483 in 2019 and ranked at position 174 out of 189 countries globally, placing the country in the low human development category. Malawi's HDI value was also lower than the 0.513 average HDI for the countries falling under the low human development category (UNDP, 2020). In terms of gender, differences are confirmed in the Gender Inequality Index, where Malawi ranks at position 148 out of 160 countries with a value of 0.62, which reflects the high levels of gender inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity.

Currently, Malawi's development is guided by the Malawi 2063 (MW2063), which is a long-term strategy that outlines the country's development vision and agenda, with the aim to transform Malawi into a wealthy and self-reliant industrialized upper middle income by the year 2063. The Malawi 2063 envisions a 'youth-centric inclusive wealth creating and self-reliant nation by 2063". The MW2063 now has a 10-year Implementation Plan (MIP) that operationalizes the MW2063 from 2021 to 2030. MIP-1 is anchored on the three Pillars of MW2063 namely: Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization; Industrialization; and Urbanization. These Pillars are catalyzed by seven enablers, namely: Mindset Change; Effective Governance Systems and Institutions; Enhanced Public Sector Performance; Private Sector Dynamism; Human Capital Development; Economic Infrastructure; and Environmental Sustainability. The interventions outlined in MIP-1 are primarily guided by the need for the country to create wealth for financing its own development needs. Specifically, it underlines under Enabler 5 on human development the need for gender equality and empowerment of women in all sectors and at all levels (Government of Malawi, 2020).

1.3.1 Gender Based Governance

The Malawi 2022 Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report acknowledges progress made by the country in improving the role of women in decision making positions, albeit modest in some cases. There has been an increase in female representation at senior management level in the public sector, from 24 percent in 2016 to 26 percent in 2022. Similarly, female representation in the National Assembly has increased, from 16.7 percent in the 2014 elections, to 21 percent in the 2019 elections, while at the Local

Assemblies, the number rose from 11% in 2014 to 14% over the same period². Furthermore, while the VNR report does not provide comparable figures from preceding years, it generally acknowledges a rise in the proportion of women at cabinet level, currently at 40 percent, and those in the judiciary and 32 percent and foreign services, at 45 percent, respectively. The 2015 Gender Policy requires the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development to ensure that adequate resources are allocated and disbursed for gender specific programs across all sectors, and that all key macro-economic development frameworks, such as the then Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), sectoral M and E Frameworks and Public Sector Investment Program (PSIP) projects, are gender responsive'.³

To date, “Gender Responsive Budgeting are mostly dealt with as a matter of policy and not law, which hinders enforcement of some of the crucial recommendations or interventions” [Overseas Development Institute (ODI 2021)]. It is however, assuring to note that space was created to provide gender inputs to the Ministry of Finance, to be incorporated into the revised ‘Public Finance Management Act’, this would then make gender-responsive budgeting a legal obligation. In addition, latest set of Gender Responsive Budgeting Guidelines were validated by strategic stakeholders May 2022⁴. It is envisaged that the guidelines will be used as bylaws to enhance implementation of both the Public Finance Management Act and the Gender Act.

The 2021 Malawi National Gender Statistics Assessment, commissioned by UN Women revealed significant gaps in the availability and use of gender statistics. It highlighted the glaring absence of gender specific provisions in both the National Statistics Act (2013) and the National Statistical Strategic Plan (NSSP 2019-2023), despite having ‘gender’ as one of the domains for generation of statistics. Secondly, the assessment noted both human resource and financial capacity gaps at the National Statistics Office (NSO) and other government ministries, departments and agencies. This has affected the availability and quality of gender statistics for accountability, planning and strategic decision-making processes.

For instance, important stand-alone gender surveys, such as comprehensive gender-based violence (GBV) prevalence surveys, time use surveys, and the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) survey have never been conducted in the country. Consequently, by December 2020, Malawi only managed to report on 42% of the 122 gender-responsive indicators, required for monitoring SDGs Agenda 2030, with key gaps on important gender-related indicators (NSO 2021). In addition, the study established that there is lack of clear coordination mechanisms between the MGCDSW, which is the policy holder and primary user of gender statistics, and the NSO that is

² [Malawi election is big win for women, says gender expert | Commonwealth \(thecommonwealth.org\)](https://www.commonwealth.org/news/is-gender-responsive-budgeting-creating-equal-opportunities-in-malawi-103486) and <https://www.devex.com/news/is-gender-responsive-budgeting-creating-equal-opportunities-in-malawi-103486>

³ UNFPA and UNFEM (2006) defines a ‘Gender Responsive Budget’ as one that ensures that the needs and interests of individuals from different social groups (sex, age, race, ethnicity, location) are addressed in expenditure and revenue policies.

⁴ <https://www.nyasatimes.com/stakeholders-aligning-gender-responsive-budget-guidelines-for-local-councils/>

mandated to produce the same. The above notwithstanding, the 2021 End of Program Evaluation of the Women Empowerment Program, established that two national planning documents had fully utilized sex disaggregated data, up from 0 in 2017.

1.3.2 Women Economic Empowerment (WEE)

Women's economic empowerment is strongly related to women's ability to provide for themselves and their families (UNDP, et al. 2021). Indeed, WEE is the most important predictor of women's overall relative economic equality in a wide variety of life options. Economic equality can give women more bargaining power to negotiate for gender role and resource shifts at the level of the household, triggering change in an unequal gender ideology, and associated norms and stereotypes, towards beliefs that are more egalitarian. WEE can also leverage greater gender equality in political institutions that influence women's agency to influence decisions, shape their environment, and affect resource distribution. A central component of women's economic empowerment is the improvement of women's access and control over resources, in the form of paid work, entrepreneurship, ownership of assets, and access to finance. Moreover, WEE contributes to a better-educated, healthier workforce, raising the productivity of today's workforce. And, as a result, women's participation in the paid economy has a positive long-run effect on growth and poverty reduction for future generations.

Impediments to WEE can be overcome through gender-enabling policies at the firm level and through public investment projects that reduce women's unpaid care burden and improve women's access to income-generating activities on an equitable basis with men. To be successful, the women and youth require support in agribusiness entrepreneurship and training to boost their business as this is a new area for most of them. Support should include efforts to facilitate access to finance, markets and participation in value addition. Such policies and support should be gender responsive, targeting different types of women, including those living with disabilities. These strategies were the focus of the UN Women CO SN, which were implemented in selected districts in the country.

1.3.3 Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls

Malawi like the rest of the African countries falls victim of traditional beliefs and practices, gender stereotypes, and attitudes that are supportive of gender-based violence especially spousal or Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) resulting in widespread VAW. Gaps in income as well as on economic opportunities among men and women, promote dependency of women on their male counterparts for income and financial support. This dependency in turn makes women vulnerable and, in most cases, may lead to GBV among families especially farming families in rural settings. Women farmers are therefore likely to have limited access to, and control over, production factors such as

land, agricultural inputs, extension services and technology depending on locality, literacy levels and economic status.

The general pattern is that women have less personal autonomy, fewer resources at their disposal, and limited influence over the decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives. Primary prevention strategies should therefore recognize that it is important not only to influence individuals (women and men experiencing/perpetrating violence), but also the broader community, which is influential in creating a culture of non-tolerance for violence. The prevention of GBV calls for a significant shift in the value system of individuals and communities, focusing on addressing the root causes, underlying causes and predisposing, contributing and exacerbating factors.⁵

1.3.4 Humanitarian Response and Human Rights

Malawi is prone to climate-induced humanitarian crises. A 2018 Comprehensive Baseline Assessment of Disaster Risk Management in Malawi, commissioned by the DoDMA, established that storms (74 percent) were the most common cause of humanitarian crises, followed by droughts (68 percent), and thirdly outbreaks of crop pests and diseases at 62 percent. The study established two main factors for vulnerability to disasters: poverty (70 percent) and location in high-risk areas (54 percent). Poverty was identified as a major factor amongst female headed households, ranging from 86 to 93 percent, in six of the thirteen surveyed districts.

The 2019 World Bank Risk Profile Report for Malawi noted that future changes in the country's economy and population, coupled with climate changes, are likely to aggravate the impacts of floods, droughts and landslides. These fears were confirmed by the experience at the onset of the 2021/2022 rainy season, where a UNICEF published February 2022 Malawi Floods- Humanitarian Situation Report indicated that approximately 225,00 households (more than 1 million people) were affected by floods and storms, close to 200,000 people were displaced, 49 were dead, 18 missing and 206 were injured.

The Disaster Risk Financing Strategy and Implementation Plan (2019-2024) acknowledges the numerous negative socio-economic impacts arising out of such predicaments at household level, which generally affect all household members. Nonetheless, it does highlight the heightened burden shouldered by the female household members, as they struggle with household chores and engage in livelihood related activities, under extremely unbearable conditions. UN Women and UNICEF (2019) established that there were gender differences in disaster and climate change

⁵ Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare. 2014. National Plan of Action to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Malawi. Government of Malawi.

impacts in Malawi. For instance, 56% of those displaced by the 2015 floods and 59% of those displaced by Cyclone Idai in 2019 were women, which also exacerbate vulnerabilities and social inequalities that exist within society. Impacts of the deeply entrenched gender inequalities within Malawian society are also well documented. While they affect many segments of the socio-economic fabric, they significantly contribute to keeping people in extreme poverty and rendering them vulnerable to climate-change related shocks, such as periodic floods and droughts (Molley, 2020).

Different frameworks at the global, continental, regional and national level guide disaster preparedness, management and recovery interventions in Malawi. At the national level, the Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act (DPR) of 1991 has provisions for coordinating and implementing disaster risk management initiatives in the country. The Vision 2063 and MIP 1 include Enabler 7: Environmental Sustainability, which among others, emphasizes on disaster preparedness, mitigation, adaptation and financing of various related interventions. The 2015 National Climate Change Management Policy also highlights the importance of mainstreaming gender and issues affecting the disadvantaged groups into all climate change strategies, plans and programs.

1.4 Implementation Arrangements and Key Stakeholders

The SN was implemented by the UN Women Malawi CO, in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MOGCDSW) as the policy holder and coordinating agency for gender issues, gender related CSOs and communities in Malawi. The SN was implemented at both national and local levels. At national level, major interventions were related to advocacy and capacity building support to relevant government ministries, departments and agencies and CSOs. At district level, the program reached out to 18 of the 28 districts of Malawi. At district level, interventions included awareness raising, advocacy and capacity support to district council and community level structures. The interventions also included economic empowerment activities, targeting vulnerable women and young people, as well as persons with disabilities. Indirectly, interventions targeted men and the community at large.

The CO had a total of 24 interventions/projects with 60 implementing partners that included both government and CSOs. The main funding partner was the Norwegian Embassy that funded all the pillars, through the Women Empowerment Program, from 2017 to 2020. Other sources of funds were from the Government of Malawi through the ASWAp multi-donor trust fund, Korean Government, Standard Bank of South Africa, Government of Iceland, European Union, and DFID. Appendix 2 outlines the key stakeholders and their geographical coverage.

By the end of 2021, the implementation of the SN was as planned in the revised SN document. While there were no significant changes on the overall, interventions slowed down in 2020 and early 2021 due to restrictions that were imposed on the country in response to COVID-19 pandemic. During this time field movements were restricted and activities, meetings and routine office duties were mostly being conducted virtually as the country battled the transmission of COVID-19 in the communities.

1.5 Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The purpose of the CPE was to assess the UN Women Malawi's strategic positioning, and the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coherence of the portfolio, with reference to the Strategic Note (SN) cycle of 2018-2021. It was also meant to analyse how human rights and gender equality principles are integrated in implementation. The results are mainly used for decision-making and learning for improving the Strategic Note design, as well as for accountability for development effectiveness at the country level. The following were the specific objectives of the country portfolio evaluation based on the terms of reference (Appendix 3):

- i) Assess the relevance of UN Women contribution to the intervention at national levels and alignment with international agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment;
- ii) Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the SN;
- iii) Explore modalities for the UN Women Malawi CO's improved strategic positioning to better support the achievement of sustained gender equality and women's empowerment;
- iv) Analyse how human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the SN;
- v) Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices and examples of innovation that supports gender equality and human rights;
- vi) Provide insights into the extent to which the UN Women Malawi CO has realized synergies between its three mandates (normative, coordination and operations); and,
- vii) Provide actionable recommendations with respect to the development of the next UN Women Malawi CO Strategic Note.

The evaluation was conducted from mid-June to mid-November 2022 and covered the SN implementation period, spanning from 2018 to 2021. Geographically, it was undertaken at national, district and community levels. It therefore ensured regional representation of the districts where UN Women programs were implemented. Specific districts covered were Karonga in the North, Dedza, Lilongwe⁶ and Salima in the Center and Machinga and Chikwawa in the Southern Regions, respectively. The last district

⁶ Lilongwe was added to cover the voice of rural women farmers under women economic empowerment pillar.

was specifically included to assess the gender responsive humanitarian action, as it was one of the hardest hit districts by cyclones during the implementation of the SN.

At national level, consultations were held with UN Women Country Office pillar experts, key public sector officials in government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and CSOs operating at national level. Consultations were also held with district councils' officials, non-governmental organizations operating within the districts, and program beneficiary community members themselves.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This section presents the evaluation approaches and framework employed, the data collection methods and analysis methods, and data triangulation and validation. It also includes ethical considerations, health and safety measures, as well as the limitations experienced.

2.1 Evaluation Approaches

A number of evaluation approaches were adopted in this CPE, in order to assess performance of the CO and these included: theory of change, contribution analysis, participatory approaches, gender and human rights, and mixed methods. Each is discussed below.

a) Theory of Change (TOC)

The evaluation team reviewed and reconstructed the TOC to develop the evaluation plan, especially the *evaluation matrix*. Documents used to review the TOC included the SN 2018-2021 and its results framework; UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021; and, the SN work plans and reports. The TOC was tested during the field and data collection phase. This involved data collection on the interventions supported by UN Women and a critical analysis on whether the interventions were appropriate for achieving the planned outputs; analyzing the evidence of utilization of the outputs to contribute to the intended outcomes, as well as examining assumptions, risks and other contextual factors that may have facilitated or hindered the realization of the results logic.

b) Contribution Analysis

In order to establish attribution of the program outcomes to the country portfolio, the team conducted an assessment of effectiveness using, Contribution Analysis (CA). A key question in the assessment of programs and projects is that of attribution: to what extent are observed results due to program activities rather than other factors? The *Contribution Analysis Table*, included in the Tool 2 CPE Model Document and provided in the 2016 CPE UN Women Evaluation Guide, was populated for this purpose and is included as one of the appendices.

c) Participatory Approach

The CPE adopted an inclusive, transparent and participatory approach, involving a wide range of partners and stakeholders at national, district and community levels. The evaluation team, after consulting the Evaluation Management Group (EMG) (*details of the Team and EMG are in Appendix 4*), identified all relevant stakeholders that were involved in the program. These were clustered according to their roles in specific program outcome areas and were eventually selected to participate, based on the significance of their contribution to the program. This comprehensive list is in Appendix 5. In addition, as part of the evaluation process, the UN Women CO established an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), comprising of selected regional and country level stakeholders, to provide input at different phases of the evaluation roadmap.

d) Gender and Human Rights

The evaluation employed a gender responsive approach regarding what is being evaluated and the criteria thereof, and how the evaluation was conducted. Consequently, the evaluation ensured that the design, process and tools used for data collection and analysis were gender and human rights responsive. The team took into consideration gender dynamics, social norms, inequalities and power relations in the context of assessing the CP's contribution to strengthening GEWE in the country. In terms of the process, the selection of evaluation participants at all levels ensured inclusion of diverse views and comprised women and men, girls and boys and people with disabilities.

Efforts were also made to assess the degree to which gender and power relationships that give rise to inequalities, discrimination and unfair power relations have changed, as a result of the interventions implemented. The evaluation process ensured accountability to gender equality and human rights, by collecting information that demonstrated how the CP interventions have had effect on women and men, boys and girls.

e) Mixed Methods

The CPE process relied on multiple methodological approaches, using a concurrent mixed-method evaluation design that integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to theory, data collection, analysis and interpretation. Qualitative and quantitative data was generated from both primary and secondary data sources, using methods that are explained in data collection methods section.

2.2 Evaluation Framework

The evaluation was conducted on the basis of the six criteria, as defined by the TORs, that is; relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability gender equality and human rights and coherence. The evaluation framework was central to all stages of the evaluation; design, data collection, analysis, conclusions and recommendations. It is included in this report as Appendix 6. For each evaluation question, the matrix identified key indicators, sources of information and data collection methods. In

addition, the matrix formed the basis for development of a detailed agenda for data collection, development of data collection tools and structure of interviews. The data collection tools are included as Appendix 7.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods included document review, key informant interviews, individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, which are described below:

a) Documents review

Extensive review of documents formed the basis of the evaluation, informing evaluation design, including the evaluation matrix and data collection tools, and provided very valuable data to triangulate with the primary sources. The UN Women provided the main documents for the evaluation. The list of the documents reviewed was continuously updated from time to time, depending on the emerging need for evidence gathering and corroboration. The key ones included global and regional strategies and frameworks, national policies, plans and strategies, national surveys, UNSDCF, UN Women Strategic Plan, UN Women Country Office SN Narrative Report, annual work plans and progress reports, financial reports, implementing partners' reports and past evaluation reports. The list of documents consulted is in Appendix 8.

b) Key Informant interviews and stakeholder mapping

The evaluation team interviewed stakeholders that were involved at various levels and degree during the SN implementation. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were held with community, district and national stakeholders, using key informant semi-structured interview guides. Interviewees included UN Women CO program and management staff (pillar specialists, management and operations staff), other UN agencies collaborating with UN Women, implementing partners, strategic cooperating partners (donors), district-based government officers and community level organizations and beneficiaries of the interventions.

The stakeholder mapping was used to identify key informants for each pillar. The consultants determined the list of key stakeholders to participate, guided by the list of all stakeholders that was provided by UN Women EMG. The stakeholders were selected by purposefully sampling, primarily depending on the roles they performed in the implementation of the interventions in the four thematic areas of the SN, geographic coverage of their interventions, uniqueness of their interventions and amount of resources invested in the interventions, among other factors (*the details are in appendix 14 Table 1*). These provided most of the information/data required to answer evaluation questions and are outlined as below:

- i) Government officials from line ministries/departments that partnered with UN Women and the MGCDSW in the implementation of the SN activities.

- ii) Selected Development Partners that supported the SN with resources and technical expertise.
- iii) Some representatives of CSOs involved in community interventions of the SN.
- iv) Other UN agencies that collaborated with the UN Women in the implementation of the interventions.
- v) District council officials
- vi) Community structures, such as cooperatives, VDCs, ACPPs, ADCs and ACPCs

c) *Individual In-depth Interviews (Case Studies)*

Case studies were documented in all the thematic areas. The criteria for selecting the case studies included interventions that were advanced enough that results had emerged. Both district and IP case studies were identified based on the following criteria:

- i) SN pillars to ensure all four areas are accounted for in the selection of case studies, prioritizing “flagship” interventions.
- ii) Level of investment: Programs/interventions selected for case studies included those where UN Women had significant investment.
- iii) Consideration of the regional dispersion, to ensure at least a case study is selected from each region

The evaluation team used a combination of both cases provided by pillar experts at UN Women and those uncovered in the course of the evaluation. In this respect, the consultants leveraged the engagement with key stakeholders and beneficiaries during KIIs and FGDs, to identify important life stories that demonstrate successes of the SN interventions on the target beneficiaries. Documented case studies are in the appendices.

d) *Focus Group Discussions*

The consultants conducted 2 to 3 FGDs in every district sampled for the evaluation, on the basis of their innovativeness and vibrancy. Participants to the FGDs were mainly project beneficiaries that included both women and men, girls and boys, as applicable, including people with disabilities. The discussants reflected on issues pertaining to intervention relevance, effectiveness, coherence, sustainability, gender equality and human rights aspects. An *FGD guide*, with open-ended questions was used for this purpose.

2.4 Study participants

The evaluation involved a total of 230 respondents, comprising of 171 (74 percent) females (women and girls) and 59 (26 percent) males (men and boys). The respondents were by default skewed towards females, since most of the primary beneficiaries and

project intervention participants were females. The study participants are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of evaluation participants

Evaluation Participants Category	Sex of Participants			Method
	Male	Female	Total	
UN Women	2	5	7	KII
Other UN Agencies	1	1	2	KII
Donors	2	1	3	KII
Government Implementing Partners	7	7	14	KII
Non-Governmental Implementing Partners	13	6	19	KII
District Officials	14	11	25	KII
Communities	59	171	230	FGD and IDIs

2.5 Response Rate

The evaluation intended to conduct a total of 76 KIIs at national, district and community levels; 19 FGDs and 8 IDIs at community level. In practice, the following were achieved; 70 KIIs; 20 FGDs; and, 5 IDIs. These represent response rates of 92.1 percent, 105 percent and 63 percent by data collection method, respectively. In addition, 2 community meetings, which were originally planned to be FGDs were conducted. This was because the community members turn up was overwhelming, than originally envisaged. The overall response rate was 88.3 percent and this compares well with similar evaluation exercises and reflects that the data collection was robust and the findings and recommendations were of high quality (*Details in Appendix 14 Table 2*)

2.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was reviewed as secondary data from documents outlined earlier. This was analyzed using Microsoft Excel, to quantify the results achieved by the CP SN and presented as tables and graphs, as required. All qualitative data from the KII, FGD and in-depth interviews was captured according to the structure of the tools. Qualitative data was transcribed verbatim and translated into English and arranged into themes, as per the CPE objectives, evaluation criteria and questions. The scripts were typed in Microsoft Word for analysis. A Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) package, Atlas Ti version 8, was used for data entry, coding, annotating and analysis using the content method of analysis.

2.7 Data Triangulation and Validation

The evaluation team validated the data collected by internal team-based revisions and triangulation, based on systematic cross-comparison of findings by data sources and by data collection methods. The team compared findings from different data sources and data collection methods. For instance, data collected from literature review was compared with findings from key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs), with the aim of strengthening data reliability and validity of the findings, as well as recommendations.

Preliminary findings were presented to UN Women and the rest of the ERG for review and feedback, to ensure the evaluation was on track and address any factual inaccuracies in the data. Thereafter, compilation of the evaluation report commenced, with the evaluation matrix as the reference tool for guiding content in various subsections of the report. The triangulated analysis allowed the drawing of conclusions and recommendations from different sources on outcomes, including both planned and unexpected ones.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The consultants ensured that the applicable norms, as stipulated in the 2005 UN Evaluation Group Norms for Evaluation in the UN System⁷, and four principles (integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence) stipulated in the 2020 UN Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation⁸, were upheld. In this respect, the evaluation was guided by ethical and moral principles. The consultants upheld principles of confidentiality, in order to secure trust of the evaluation participants. The team also ensured dignity and respect for all participants to give out their views and opinions freely, without any prejudice and ensured fair representation of divergent groups and their views.

The consultants ensured that informed consent, verbal or written, as appropriate, was sought prior to engaging evaluation participants. Data and information collected from the evaluation was kept and managed under strict confidentiality. In addition, the consultants ensured that participants were briefed on the purpose of the evaluation and how the information would be used. They were also given the choice of preferred space, and where feasible, time for conducting the interviews and discussions.

2.9 Health and Safety Considerations

The consultants observed and implemented all preventive measures against COVID-19, as prescribed by the Government of Malawi. This included consistent and correct use of sanitizers, liquid soap and face masks during travel and physical engagements with stakeholders. Social distance was also observed throughout the process. Where

⁷ [Detail of 2005 Norms for Evaluation in the UN System \(updated 2016 Norms and Standards are available\) \(unevaluation.org\)](http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866)

⁸ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>

necessary, the consultants used alternative online platforms, such as Zoom, Microsoft Team and telephone interviews to collect data and information from key informants.

2.10 Limitations

The following were the key limitations of the study:

- i) It is worth highlighting that the roadmap provided by the Evaluation Management Group (EMG) allocated a maximum of 10 days to each pillar consultant for data collection, using multiple methods and data sources proposed in the inception report. This duration would not allow the evaluation team to visit as many program interventions sites as desired that were spread over several districts across the country. The time limitation and logistical implications were the major factors considered on the intensity and extent of the field work.
- ii) Notwithstanding these limitations, the choice of project sites and stakeholders was informed by the desire to ensure that the process recognized the contributions of key stakeholders, results in a useful evaluation for the stakeholders, engages and develops the capacities of target groups, ensures multi-dimensional accountability, and empowers marginalized groups, as emphasized by the 2016 CPE UN Women Evaluation Guide. The careful selection of the evaluation participants in the sampled districts and use of multiple methods ensured that the data collected was robust enough and in no way did it affect the quality of findings and recommendations.
- iii) The evaluation was undertaken during a period that was characterized by long durations of power outages, with very limited or no alternatives. This impeded on the rate of progress for data transcription, analysis/synthesis and report writing. The evaluation team had to sacrifice extensively long hours to make up for lost work hours due to loss of power and ensured that the quality of the evaluation remained of high quality, within the prescribed timelines.
- iv) Some intended respondents and study participants were non-responsive to requests for interviews. This was also partly attributed to staff turnover within the concerned organizations. However, the non-response rate wasn't significant to affect the results, and any potential data gaps were made up through data triangulation from multiple sources.

3.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance

Alignment of the CP objectives and activities to guiding global, continental, regional and national frameworks

Implementation of the GEWE programme in Malawi is governed by a number of policies, legal and strategic instruments at the global, regional, continental and national levels. Some of the key ones include: the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the UN Resolutions: 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security and ending sexual violence in conflict situations; the 2015 United Nations SDGs; the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol); and, the 2008 Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development.

In terms of legal instruments at the national level, gender equality is included as one of the fundamental principles in the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (Section 13a). The Malawi 2022 Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report highlights the continuous efforts by the country to reform and enact a number of gender-related laws, in order to enhance the empowerment of women, gender equality, and violence prevention, mitigation, and appropriate response. Key among these legal instruments are the Gender Equality Act (2013); Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2006); Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act (2015); Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Act (2011); Trafficking in Persons Act (2015); HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Management) Act (2018); Land Act (2016); and, the Chiefs Act (2007).

The other frameworks include: Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) I-III (2006 to 2022)⁹; National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages (2018–2023); National Action Plan for Women Economic Empowerment (2016–2021); National Plan of Action to Combat Gender- Based Violence in Malawi (2014–2020); National Youth Policy (2013); National Agricultural Policy of 2016; National Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services Strategy (2020); and, Malawi National Social Support Program II (2018-2023).

The sections below illustrate the extent of alignment of the SN with some of the key frameworks outlined above.

Finding 1. During the design and implementation stages, the CP was well aligned to global, continental, regional and overarching national socio-economic development policies and strategies.

⁹ Subsequently replaced by the MIP-1

Programming during the SN duration was aligned to the MGDS III priority areas 7.2 and 7.3, whose goals were: “ *to reduce vulnerability and enhance the resilience of the population to disasters and socio-economic shocks*”; and, “ *to build an equitable society, where opportunity is not defined by sex, age, disability, and other vulnerabilities*”. Outcome areas 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, and 4.1 of the SN were therefore aligned to the outcomes and strategies of these two priority areas, focusing on increased understanding of disaster risks, preparedness, response, management and social support to vulnerable groups such as women and girls; gender mainstreaming in all development frameworks; increased women representation in decision making structures and politics; consistent implementation of gender responsive budgeting across all sectors; development and implementation of gender transformative approaches; increased access to social justice and other welfare services; implementation of enabling and inclusive mechanisms within small and medium enterprises; and, increased youth and women participation in the economy, including development initiatives at all levels.

In the course of implementation, there was a sequel to the MGDS, called the Malawi Vision 2063 and its first 10-year Malawi Implementation Plan (MIP 1), whose enabler number 5: Human Capital Development, promotes gender transformative approaches, in order to reduce gender power imbalance and social exclusion that hinder the socio-economic empowerment of women. Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, and 4.1 of the SN fully support this.

Outcome 1.3 was also strategically aligned to the Malawi 2063 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that aims at fully capacitating institutions mandated to generate and disseminate data, such as NSO, to provide timely and quality data that is spatially, gender and age disaggregated, as a means of enforcing performance standards and accountability for results at national, regional, continental and global levels. Furthermore, interventions under WEE also responded to the Malawi 2063 agenda, by aligning them to Pillar 1: Agricultural productivity and commercialization that will produce and supply raw materials for industrial processing, and healthy and nutritious food.

There are also sectoral and sub-sectoral policies and strategies that the SN interventions responded to Outcome 6.1 of the SN was aligned to policy objective iii): to strengthen gender mainstreaming in all sectors of the economy; Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2 are aligned to policy objective iv): to reduce poverty among women and other vulnerable groups (Orphans, widows, people living with HIV, persons with disabilities, the elderly) through economic empowerment; Outcome 1.1 supported policy objective v): to promote women’s participation in decision making positions in both politics and public life of the National Gender Policy (2015).

Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2 of the SN were aligned to priority area 7: Empowerment of Youth, Women and Vulnerable Groups in Agriculture of the National Agriculture Policy (2016). The two outcomes were also linked to the third strategic objective of the National Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services Strategy (2020), which aims at developing a sustainable mechanism for promoting good agriculture practices to farmers of all gender groups including the youth and other actors along agriculture value chains. In addition, they were also aligned to the first guiding principle of the strategy: holistic approach and inclusiveness, which recognizes the need to integrate issues of gender, people with disabilities, the youth, HIV and AIDS, climate change and nutrition, which have direct impact on provision of agriculture extension and advisory services.

Within the UN, the SN Outcomes 6.1, 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 on Gender Based Governance Pillar were aligned to UNDAF Outcome 2: Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Malawi is enhanced. The WEE Pillar fell under the UNDAF Theme 1: Sustainable and equitable economic and food security, Pillar 1: Peace, Inclusion and Effective Institutions and Outcome 2: By 2023, Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Malawi is enhanced. Outcome 3.1 of the SN for EAW related to UNDAF Theme 4: Governance and Human Rights and Theme 2: Equitable and Quality Basic Social and Protection Services. The SN Outcome 4.1 for Humanitarian Action aligned to UNDAF Theme 1: Sustainable and Equitable Economic Growth and Food Security; and, Outcome 1.3 Resilience.

The CP was also in line with SDGs that include SDG 2 on Zero Hunger and SDG 5 on gender equality, by specifically targeting women and girls, and economically empowering them, among others. It has three targets that relate to gender-based governance: Target 5.1, “End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls”; Target 5.5, “Ensure women’s full participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”; and, Target 5c, “Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

The SDG also has two targets that explicitly focus on eradicating violence: Target 5.2: “Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”; and Target 5.3: “Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation”. Furthermore, it was aligned to SDG 13, on climate action through promotion of Climate Smart Agriculture or Climate Resilient Agriculture (CSA/CSA) to enhance climate resilience and SDG 17 on partnerships, to achieve the goal by embracing strategic partnerships with public and private sectors. It was also in

line with Beijing+20 review and responded to CEDAW by promoting gender equality and women empowerment.

Addressing underlying causes of gender inequality

Finding 2. Outcomes of interventions under the CP addressed the underlying causes of gender inequality and vulnerabilities of women, girls and people with disabilities.

Among others, the SN focused on the following interventions: creating a conducive legal, policy and program environment for realization of gender equality and human rights; empowerment of women for increased participation in political leadership and decision-making positions; capacity building of institutions and individuals for enhanced service quality and equitable access; generation of income through economic productivity; and, protection and participation during humanitarian emergency responses and recovery. Outcomes in some of these interventions directly addressed the underlying causes of gender inequality.

For instance, reduction in the nomination fees for women aspirants, coupled with prevention of violence during general elections, led to increased women participation, as aspirants and candidates; election and re-election of female councillors, as chair and vice chairpersons for the councils manifested positive change of attitude towards women in political spaces; availability of gender statistics facilitated better focus and targeting of interventions towards the needs of women, girls and vulnerable groups during strategic planning (Malawi 2063), budget allocation (2018/19 Financial Year budget session) and humanitarian support actions (during the Cyclone Anna, Idai and COVID-19); increased household income levels, through cooperatives, CSA (ASWAp-SP II), vocational skills (tailoring-MACOHA) and business management skills (MHub), reduced women and girls' vulnerability, as well as gender based violence at household level. Furthermore, programming under ERAW and WEE targeted marginalized populations, such as people with albinism, people living with disabilities and also responded to national emergency issues, in the spirit of 'leaving no-one behind' and protection of human rights.

Finding 3. The CP interventions were consistently informed by evidence, from multiple sources, such as topical research studies, periodic national surveys and specific gender assessments.

For example, specific studies, namely: 'Perception Study on Women's Political and Economic Participation' and 'Perception study on Gender and Social Norms around

Violence against Women and Girls in Malawi’ were carried out. The 2018 Population and Housing Census: Gender Thematic Report; the 2015/16 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS); the 2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey; the ‘Gender Impacts of COVID-19’ study; the 2018 Comprehensive Baseline Assessment of Disaster Risk Management in Malawi; and, the gender gap agricultural productivity studies, also provided insights and informed the focus and scope of interventions.

In addition, agenda setting sessions were conducted, where among others, women were given space to talk among themselves, as well as women talking with men. Furthermore, various UN Women CO and MOGCDSW program reports provided information on key gender equality issues to be addressed. Consultations with stakeholders, using NGOs and CSO networks and council forums also informed the interventions.

In addition to specific assessments and processes to identify underlying causes, the interventions went further to work with change agents, as well as perpetrators of the identified causes. For instance, the electoral support project involved men, as well as political leaders, to address issues of discrimination, exclusion and violence against women contestants. The EVAW interventions targeted both traditional and religious leaders, to create awareness and address harmful socio-cultural norms and practices that perpetrate inequalities. While this effort is commendable, the CO should consider more sustained engagement of such stakeholders throughout project implementation cycles, to enhance ownership and sustainability prospects.

Alignment with the UN Women Global Strategy

Finding 4. All the SN Outcomes were fully aligned to specific UN Women Strategic Plan Outcomes and Global Outputs.

Outcome 6.1 of the SN for GBG was aligned to UN-Women SP Outcome 1: A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is strengthened and implemented. Outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 of the SN related to UN-Women SP Outcome 2: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; SP Global Output 5: National and local plans and budgets are gender responsive; and, SP Global Output 6: Gender statistics are accessible to all users to inform policy, advocacy and programming.

Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2 for WEE was directly aligned to UN Women SP Outcome 3: Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; SP global output 10: Rural women and youths have increased access to secure and productive resources, practices and technologies to engage in Climate Smart Agriculture; and, SP global output 9: Women own, launch and/or better manage small and medium and large enterprises.

Outcome 3:1 of the SN for EVAW related to UN-Women SP Outcome 4: All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; and, SP Global Output 11: Social norms, attitudes and practices hindering women and girl's rights are transformed at individual and community levels. Outcome 4.1 of the SN for Humanitarian Response aligned to SP Global Output 15: More women play a greater role in and are better saved by disaster risk reduction and recovery processes.

Choice of partners regarding situation of women and marginalized groups

Finding 5. The choice of partners was relevant, and embraced the holistic approach of the UN Women Strategy.

Finding 6.

UN Women forged partnerships with agencies within the UN (UNDP, UNFAO, UNFPA, UNICEF), funding partners, (such as Malawi Government, the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE), Irish Embassy, Standard Bank, Governments of Korea, Brazil and South Africa), implementing partners from the public sector, CSOs and the private sector at policy, technical cooperation, funding and program implementation levels, based on their mandates and comparative advantages.

UN Women engaged government leadership and was able to develop strategic partnerships across sectors to implement interventions. For government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), the key ones were the MOGCDSW, the policy holder and coordinating agency for gender equality and empowerment of women in Malawi; NSO as the government institution responsible for generational, collation, management and dissemination of socio-economic data of interest being sex disaggregated data and gender statistics in their major data sources (Census, MICS). Other MDAs included MOAIWD, MoTI, MOLGRD, MOJCA, DHRMD and DODMA in the Office of the President and Cabinet. The CO also partnered with MALGA (in collaboration with NLGFC) in the production of the GRB guidelines for Councils, MEC, as the public institution charged with management of electoral processes; and, MACOHA– a government agency responsible for facilitating empowerment of persons with disabilities.

Similarly, the CO partnered with CSO networks, such as the NGOGCN that is responsible for coordination of gender focused CSOs; MESN that is responsible for CSOs focusing on electoral processes; and, CDM that works with political parties on governance issues. The choice of partnership with other implementing agencies was also dependent on areas of expertise, experience and comparative advantage. For example, MHub enhancing capacity of women and youth in business management and access to markets; AICC and MaLS addressing women's agricultural productivity gap and linking them to markets; FOYODE for male engagement and promotion of positive masculinity; MAGGA was targeting young girls; and, Female Sex Workers Association worked with exploited girls and young women, tackling sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues.

The choice of partners was strategically relevant from two main perspectives: functional and technical focus. The choice of the right partners across policy, coordination and programme delivery functions ensured natural complementarity to, and advancement of the UN Women's triple core mandates in this regard. The choice of implementing partners whose technical core mandate and expertise were well aligned to the SN pillars ensured comprehensive thematic coverage; leveraging on existing expertise and geographic reach; as well as better programme quality and outcomes. This notwithstanding, priority needs to be placed on IPs that have both technical and administrative capacity to implement programmes to scale, either through existing partnerships with local agencies, their potential to establish effective partnerships at that level, or even extend their district presence.

Functionality of partnerships

Finding 7. There were sufficient platforms to facilitate partnerships and most of them were effective, although some operational challenges and resource constraints affected some of them.

The evaluation established that UN Women Malawi's IPs used established coordination structures at national and council levels (Technical Working Groups, Sector Working Groups), CSO networks and the UN Family Gender and Human Rights TWG, among other platforms for joint planning, accountability and information sharing. Most implementers partnered with the line ministries (MOGCDSW and MOAIWD) at the national level and worked with the agriculture, gender and social officers at the council level. CSO networks implemented programs through affiliates, who have structures at local levels.

Projects also collaborated with local council community structures that included the DEC, ADCs and VDCs. In addition, specific structures such as area civil protection

committees, child protection committees, CVSU, mobile courts, the police VSUs, as well as local groupings, such as chiefs forum and mother groups, were seen to be key partnerships and therefore a relevant choice. Working with existing local structures was also found to be critical and ensured that local issues were included and tackled in a comprehensive and manner.

This notwithstanding, it was found that not all existing partnerships were working well for varying reasons. For instance, lack of continued physical presence by PACENET who partnered with CCJP on an elections project in Dedza, affected the level of collaboration during implementation and project closure. In Karonga, while local structures were capacitated to implement gender responsive budgeting activities, there was lack of appropriate platforms for engagement with local council technical staff during planning and budgeting processes.

Generally, there was lack of continuous engagement between IPs and local council technical staff on project activities, due to many factors, including competing priorities and staff movements by the latter. As such, some key local council officers in Karonga and Dedza for example, did not seem to know gender related projects implemented within their districts, which has an impact on coordination, planning and resource allocation within the public sector. Partnerships were also affected by limited funding to sustain scheduled meetings for coordination forums, such as TWGs.

Relevance of choice of partners to the themes and projects

Finding 8. The choice of partners was relevant to the SN themes and interventions they implemented, guided by their mandates, expertise and experience.

As outlined earlier, the SN had four main themes or pillars of focus: i) Gender Based Governance; ii) Women Economic Empowerment; iii) Ending Violence against Women; and, iv) Humanitarian Action. The MOGCDSW is the overall gender and women empowerment coordinator, by virtue of mandate, as the policy holder. The rest of the MDAs were also engaged based on the alignment of their mandates with the SN pillars. Similarly, the choice of implementing partners from the CSOs was informed by experience and expertise that they possess to implement projects within the respective pillars.

Partnerships within the UN were based on the gender mainstreaming opportunities that their portfolios offer, to advance gender equality goals, as per the respective SN pillars. This was demonstrated under the Spotlight Initiative project, involving UN Women,

UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP. Some of the areas of expertise and mandates of the key IPs that illustrate their relevance to the SN themes are discussed under Finding 5 above.

UN Women's comparative advantage over other UN entities and key partners

Finding 9. UN Women was able to champion a multi-sectoral response to gender equality, through resource mobilization, provision of technical support to multiple implementing partners, as well as fostering systematic accountability for program results.

UN Women has the core mandate over GEWE within the UN family. Its institutional configuration and staff complement is therefore purposely designed to best respond to all pillars of the SN, as guided by the global UN Women Strategy. While the other UN family agencies do have gender experts, they do not have exclusive mandate over all thematic areas and still require technical support from UN Women, especially on joint programmes and accountability.

The UN Women mobilized resources to lead a comprehensive response to gender issues, at a relatively larger scale and geographic coverage, as per SN thematic areas, through programs such as WEP, whilst other agencies' resource mobilization efforts for gender were only confined to specific interventions and relatively small geographic coverage. UN Women mobilized and provided technical support and capacity building to multiple sectors, such as for MOGCDSW, MOAWD, other MDAs, CSO network coordinating agencies (NGOGCN, MESN, CMD) and specific implementing agencies, unlike other agencies whose scope of such support was confined to limited partners. The CO was the only entity that provided requisite technical support and capacity building to MOGCDSW and CSOs (NGOGCN) to enhance accountability and reporting on global, continental and regional commitments.

Unlike some development partners, UN Women demonstrated a great deal of flexibility in its approach to programming. It provided space for partners to design their own projects around the pillars, which they funded. In addition, it was flexible enough to allow changes in approach and choices of enterprises during implementation, whilst maintaining the desired outcomes and goals, as evident at AICC, who added value addition of groundnuts, while MACOHA added assistive devices and other types of IGAs, other than tailoring alone. This level of flexibility is commendable, but also seems to be a result of the extent of consultations at design stage. Comprehensive and thorough consultations, with both technical and beneficiary stakeholders, is critical at that stage and beyond, in order to avoid any potential implementation delays and unforeseen cost implications.

Reflection of the comparative advantage on the choice of interventions

Finding 10. The choice of program themes and interventions was based on the comparative advantage of the UN Women CO.

As discussed above, the evaluation identified UN Women's comparative advantage in the areas of its ability to champion a multi-sectoral response to GEWE; capacity to mobilize resources for a large-scale country programme; provision of technical support to multiple implementing partners; and, flexibility to programme implementation.

The evaluation noted that the CO managed to mobilize multi-sectoral partners to implement all the four pillars of the SN, to comprehensively address prevailing GEWE issues in the country. This was achieved through mobilization of resources from a number of funding sources, as described under finding 5 above, to implement all the interventions, reaching out to 64% (18 of the 28) of the districts across the country, with some interventions implemented at national level and having ultimate national coverage and impact. The ability to mobilize considerable amount of funding (e.g. through the WEP) also enabled the CO to address the humanitarian action theme that emerged during the course of program implementation, reaching out to a total of 16 affected districts across the country.

UN Women's technical expertise was rendered to a total of 24 interventions/projects with 60 implementing partners that included both government and CSOs, at different stages of project implementation. For instance, the CO provided technical support towards specific gender related studies, as well as assessments on humanitarian crises, as described under finding 3 above, which ensured that the choice of themes and interventions was guided by evidence. Specific innovative tools for GEWE to enhance delivery of interventions and programme outcomes were also introduced. For instance, the household approach under WEE and male engagement strategies, through the HeforShe campaign and barbershop toolkit under EVAW, were especially unique and prized.

The flexibility of programme approach by the CO was further evident at MACOHA, where beneficiaries to be assisted were meant to be in cooperatives, but considering the difficulty of forming them amongst primary beneficiaries, UN Women allowed MACOHA to just put them in groups during training and afterwards. Furthermore, although the primary target for UN Women programming is women and girls, the CO advocated for male engagement in some of the gender-based interventions, because of the influential role that men play in the households, as evident in the CSA/CSR and enterprise development projects.

CP responsiveness to changing environment

Finding 11. The CO was very responsive and adaptable to changing operating environments and program demands.

As a responsive organization, UN Women refocused its interventions in reaction to the emergence of COVID-19 and natural disasters (cyclones and flooding). COVID-19 affected activity implementation, where most activities were conducted virtually, to an extent feasible. Online platforms were used, but had limitations in terms of participation by some stakeholders with limited technological capacity and internet connectivity. Some activities involving huge numbers of participants had to be phased and this had implications on the costs, leading to scaling down of scope in some instances, particularly for meetings, training, orientations, among others. Training of Trainers approach was introduced to limit the numbers at each level.

The CO, in liaison with strategic partners, undertook rapid gender assessment at regional and CO levels, developed and supported implementation of interventions that considered the role of women in these contexts, including leadership. The CO secured USD 114,345 (NOK1,100,000) from the WEP program that was used for Gender-Responsive Prevention and Management of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the country. A total of 17 female Parliamentarians under Parliamentary Women's Caucus were supported with personal protective equipment (PPEs) to facilitate improved response to COVID-19 and enhanced visibility for female parliamentarians, as leaders within their constituencies. Through direct participation in various clusters, such as Agriculture, Health, Food Security, Protection, the CO contributed to gender mainstreaming of the National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan that was informed by a study on the “Gendered impacts of COVID-19”.

The CO enforced use of gender responsive standard operating procedures (SOP) in handling returnees amidst COVID-19, leading to development of a separate handling protocol for women and girls. The National Taskforce on COVID-19 now collects and disseminates gender disaggregated data on COVID-19. UN Women also responded to the National COVID-19 Social-economic Recovery Plan, through women economic empowerment interventions.

During such emergencies, power discrepancies are often worsened, vulnerabilities are deepened, and opportunities are missed to support the unique needs of women, girls and people living with disabilities, including their leadership and participation roles. Under this pillar, UN Women's focus was on strengthening capacities of national, district and community level humanitarian stakeholders, on gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action for gender responsive programming in disaster response and recovery. This was meant to engender women to contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit from the prevention

of natural disasters and conflicts, and from humanitarian action. The main focus was on building the capacity of the district clusters in gender mainstreaming and responsiveness with the expectation that such trainings would cascade to area civil protection committees in the communities. Due to resource constraints the pass on of knowledge and skills did not flow to these community structures. The district councils indicated that they would have preferred more financial and technical expertise from UN Women or any other partner to support their efforts to reach out to communities.

3.2 Effectiveness

This section presents progress of the CO towards achieving its planned targets for the SN, pillar by pillar and outcome by outcome. Discussion in this section makes reference to progress on expected results and contribution analysis in appendices 6 and 7 respectively, as well as case studies in Appendices 8 and 9.

Progress towards achievement of planned SN targets

3.2.1 Gender Based Governance

The Gender Based Governance Pillar of the SN had four outcome areas for assessing progress. These were: i) Outcome 6.1: Enhanced implementation of national, regional and international normative and policy frameworks; ii) Outcome 1.1: Women participate, lead and engage in decision making processes in political and public institutions; iii) Outcome 1.2: National and local plans and budgets are gender responsive; and iv) Outcome 1.3: Gender statistics are accessible to all users to inform policy, advocacy and programming. Varying progress was registered towards achievement of these outcome areas, as discussed below.

Implementation of international, regional and national normative and policy frameworks

Finding 12. There was institutionalization of systematic tracking of progress towards achievement of results, in line with normative frameworks, thereby consolidating accountability and call to action by duty bearers.

With technical support and capacity building from the CO, a total of 22 recommendations of the various treaties and commitments (CEDAW, BDPfA, CSW, SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, African Union Agenda 2063 and the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights) were implemented by 2021; up from the baseline value of 6 in 2017, as part of implementation of the normative frameworks (see Appendix 9). These recommendations broadly aimed at eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination (social, economic, political) against women and girls, so that they can fully enjoy all their human rights; facilitate full empowerment of women with equal access and opportunity in all spheres of life; and, attainment of

full gender parity in elected offices, managerial positions in government and private sector in the country.

Finding 13. There was steady, but gradual progress in creating an enabling legal, policy and program environment for advancement of gender equality and women empowerment, largely owing to the inherently cumbersome administrative and political approval processes, especially for legislative instruments.

There was evidence that the CO supported the review and development of a number of relevant legal, policy and strategic instruments, most of which were either initiated or were yet to be approved/enacted for implementation. Realization of the benefits from such processes will remain incremental, as the frameworks have to continuously keep responding to existing gaps, as well as contemporary gender equality issues. However, some have already started bearing fruits. Reporting of cases of GBV, prosecution, conviction and sentencing of perpetrators have significantly improved. Implementation of the post COVID-19 and disaster recovery interventions was under way and women and girls were being appropriately targeted.

The CO supported amendment of the Constitution of Malawi, through Bill No 36, leading to increased age of marriage from 16 to 18 years; advocacy and input to the enactment of the Political Parties Act, which advances women representation; alignment of the Chief's Act with international human rights standards and responsiveness to the rights of women and girls, particularly those facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination (submitted to MOJCA for vetting); development of the Land Bill, which has 10 gender related laws; and, revision of the Local Government Act. In addition, review of 5 gender related laws (the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, the Gender Equality Act the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, the Penal Code, the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act) and 2 policies (the Gender Policy, and the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Policy) was under way, through the Spotlight Initiative.

Furthermore, the CO supported development of a new Strategic Plan for the MOGCDSW and the Male Engagement Strategy, with the latter planned to be launched in 2022; development of the Chiefs Policy; review of the National Action Plan to combat Gender Based Violence; the National Action Plan on Women Economic Empowerment in reducing GBV, which are yet to be adopted; Albinism National Action Plan (2018-2022); the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS, 2020 to 2024); and, the Malawi COVID-19 Social Economic Recovery Plan (2021-2023).

Commendable efforts were directed towards ensuring that legal, policy and strategic frameworks effectively respond to GEWE needs. While this is plausible and should be

encouraged, there is need to ensure that these frameworks are adequately resourced, implemented and tracked. The existence of multiple, but related frameworks also poses a potential coordination challenge. It is therefore imperative that the CO strengthens the gender machinery capacity in this regard, as well as harnessing linkages and synergies towards collective and mutual accountability for results.

Participation in politics and engagement in decision-making positions

Finding 14. There was growing interest and desire amongst women to take up political leadership positions, implying that interventions towards their empowerment in this regard were making a difference, although the success rate in key contested positions remains minimal.

“CCJP engaged community leadership to identify women aspirants for the position of ward councilors and MPs. Their advocacy messages were very convincing and in Songwe ward alone, 8 of us emerged to compete against men.”
Woman aspirant from Karonga.

A typical case was the lobbying and advocacy by the CO’s, with support from other agencies such the MOGCDSW, 50:50 Campaign, NGOGCN, CMD, among others, where MEC reduced nomination fees for female candidates and political parties also followed suit, by reducing nomination fees for women during the primary elections. However, this was not matched by corresponding success rate during the past two parliamentary and local government elections, implying that interventions need to be enhanced.

While the number of women contestants increased by 42 percent (217 to 309) and almost 60 percent (417 to 659) between the 2014 and 2019 elections, for parliamentary and local council elections, the percentage increase in representation (those elected) was only by 3 percent for local council and 6 percentage points for parliament, respectively. Female representation in the National Assembly increased from 16.7 percent in the 2014 elections, to 23 percent in the 2019 elections, while at the Local Council, the number rose from 11 percent in 2014 to 14 percent over the same period (See Appendix 9). In 2021, Cabinet had 44% representation of females, although only 3 were full ministers and the rest were deputies.

Just like was the case with other pillar interventions, this project was informed by evidence from research; ‘Public Perception and Attitudes towards Women Political Participation and Representation in Malawi’, among others. Evidence suggests that gender remains a critical ground for discrimination against women in political participation, including vote choice by community members, owing to multiple factors, key among which are political, economic and socio-cultural ones.

Achieving meaningful change in election outcomes in favour of women, therefore, calls for wholistic approach to interventions and effective linkages across these three

domains. While much of the focus of interventions under the elections support project has been on the political dimension and factors, there is need to leverage on a great deal of support towards the equality of rights between men and women, not only in political spheres, but also other facets of life, such as women economic empowerment and ending violence against women initiatives, which have over time attracted considerable investment by UN Women and other partners. Success in these two areas has a direct bearing on the political one, over the medium to long term horizon.

Finding 15. There were promising prospects regarding women leading in decision making positions in the public sector and political structures, although the rate of achievement remains far below the desired levels, as per the Gender Equality Act.

The number of women leading in decision making positions increased by 20 percentage points, from 6 percent in 2017 to 26 percent in 2020. This implies that government had taken affirmative action to improve the proportion of women in leadership positions. The CO worked with the DHRMD on women empowerment interventions, towards achievement of gender equality at the workplace. This notwithstanding, the proportion was still way below the 40:60, stipulated in the Gender Equality Act.

Elected women councilors were not shying away from competing for council leadership positions in their respective councils. This re-affirms sustained level of empowerment (confidence and ambition) to lead in local council structures, as a result of the program interventions in this regard. About 11 percent (4 out of 35) of the councils, were headed by women, of whom one was a mayor (for Lilongwe) and three were council chairpersons in 2019. This compared favorably to the proportion of women that were elected during the 2019 elections (14%), although in absolute terms, they remain on the lower side. In addition, councils such as M’belwa, Blantyre, Nsanje, Mangochi, Chitipa and Karonga have ever had women councilors as chairpersons, since 2019.

In addition, there was evidence of changing power dynamics among elected representatives within the councils, as some women councilors were getting elected to chair councils, even within some unfavorable socio-cultural settings, as well as in urban and peri-urban councils. Mzimba district is patriarchal, but in 2021/2022, the only two women were elected as chair and vice chair of the council. Women were also elected as vice mayors in the cities of Lilongwe and Zomba and Luchenza municipal council, as an affirmative action in 2021 elections.

“The call for gender equality in political leadership positions in the councils is steadily sinking in. Women councilors are forthcoming and contesting at every opportunity to chair the councils and some are getting elected. In fact Blantyre district council elected two women councilors, as chair and vice chair in 2021 and the vice chair retained her position from the previous term.” Respondent from MALGA.

Gender Responsive Budgeting

Finding 16. There was partial awareness, knowledge and skills about the gender responsive budgeting concept at national and council levels and institutionalization has not been satisfactory, as only a few MDAs and councils adopted and used it for their annual planning and budgeting processes.

This was compromised by the inconsistent capacity building efforts, with some critical officers at the council level (e.g. Karonga and Dedza), indicating lack of knowledge and skills in undertaking it. The case was also not different for community structures (ADCs and VDCs), who complained that the concept was rather complex to comprehend, due to generally low literacy levels, as evident in Karonga District. In addition, they also complained about lack of platforms for engagement with the appointed officials at the councils, during planning and budgeting processes. From a baseline of 2 in 2017, only a total of 10 (5 ministries and 5 councils) had adopted and applied the gender responsive budgeting frameworks (see Appendix 9). This implies that only 21% (5 out of 24) and 15% (5 out of 34) of the ministries and councils, respectively, had adopted and were using the concept. This manifested a lost opportunity to mainstream gender in development planning, service delivery and resource allocation, in order to effectively address the needs of women and girls.

On the other hand, advancement of the GRB concept and process was embraced at Parliament level, where the CO, in collaboration with CSOs and the MOGCDSW, facilitated budget analysis for the 2018/19 Financial Year, by the Parliamentary Women's Caucus. This led to a significant upwards revision of the budgetary allocation to the social sector, including Gender. The allocation to MOGCDSW increased by 117% (MWK18,686,516,472); from MWK15,843,830,143 in 2018/2019 financial year, to MWK34,530,346,615 in the 2019/2020 financial year. This notwithstanding, the process has not been undertaken consistently at this level.

Gender responsive budgeting remains a critical intervention that will ensure that planned socio-economic development interventions address the disproportionate and unique needs of women and girls, compared to men and boys, while at the same time ensuring that resources are equitably allocated, efficiently utilized and mutually accounted for, between the duty bearers and rights holders. Despite appropriate targeting of the relevant stakeholders; appointed public sector officials, elected council members and community structures, irregular and incoherent capacity building and implementation efforts, coupled with lack of proper enforcement and incentive mechanisms, affected both the rolling out and adherence to gender responsive budgeting requirements across all levels.

However, implementation of the revised Financial Management Act and rolling out of the recently approved gender responsive budgeting guidelines for local councils,

provide a great opportunity to institutionalize this concept and enforce adherence at council and MDA levels in the next SN period.

Gender Statistics Generation and Utilization

Finding 17. There is evidence of institutionalization of generation and use of gender statistics, especially at central level. However, this is yet to be rolled out at council and lower levels.

With technical and financial support from the CO, NSO led the way in generating gender statistics, through the 2018 Population and Housing Census, and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Report (2019-2020), both of which had dedicated chapters on gender equality. Development of the MGDS III utilized gender and age disaggregated data. In addition, 4 national planning documents fully utilized sex disaggregated data by 2021, up from 0 in 2017. These were the Malawi Vision 2063, 10 Year Implementation Plan for Vision 2063, the Malawi COVID-19 Social-Economic Recovery Plan Response Plan (2021-2023), and National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325: Women, Peace and Security (2021 – 2025), as seen in appendix 9. Furthermore, with support from the CO, gender sensitive indicators minimum data requirements for the councils were developed and will be used during the next planning cycle for the district socio-economic profiles (SEP) and district development plans (DDPs), whose process had since commenced.

There is a clear linkage between gender statistics on one end, and gender responsive planning and budgeting on the other, with the former being the basis for the latter. The two interventions must therefore not be implemented and monitored in isolation, but as a continuum and in a comprehensive manner. The tone set at the central level in generating and utilizing gender statistics in national socio-economic development frameworks, as well as emergency response, is highly commendable and needs to be replicated in all sectoral policies and strategies, as a minimum requirement by the central government. The similar direction at the local council level is equally welcome and commendable.

However, these processes are not ends in themselves, but means to an end- improved GEWE, as well as socio-economic welfare of women, girls and other vulnerable groups. These ultimate outcomes can only be ascertained if the existing accountability mechanisms and platforms are regularly capacitated, and consistently enforced at all levels, throughout the planning, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes for interventions that address the needs of women, girls and other vulnerable populations. This will, among others, address the capacity gaps arising from continuous staff movements at institutional level, which characterizes most MDAs and local councils.

3.2.2 Women Economic Empowerment

This pillar had two outcome areas: i) Outcome 2.1: Rural women and youths have increased access to secure and productive resources, practices and technologies to engage in Climate Smart Agriculture; and ii) Outcome 2.2.: Women's capacities to invest in climate smart and time saving assets, tools and technologies is increased. For all outcomes, the CO reached and surpassed the set targets (see appendix 9).

Finding 18. UN Women increased the capacity of rural women smallholder farmers to engage in CSA, thereby improve their incomes and livelihoods. However, this is yet to be consolidated and captured in gender statistics in the agriculture sector wide gender reports.

UN Women increased capacity of women and the youth to access and use vital CSA extension services and information. A total 8,487 women and youth were provided with extension service in CSA, through WEP and three CSA projects, surpassing the targeted of 5,000. For example, through the KOICA funded CSA project, 3,000 women and youth participated in horticulture, using innovative solar powered greenhouse system¹⁰. The technology helped women and youth to increase productivity and quality of produce, with minimum labor demands and it was efficient in use of water. besides using renewable energy. The result was a 40 percent yield increase over the conventional open cultivation and production was throughout the year, giving the women and youth a steady income.

Another 3,000 women and youth engaged in CSA¹¹ through the Standard Bank funded project. The focus in this project was on groundnuts and soya beans value chains, using time and labor-saving technologies, such as double row planting, shellers and processing equipment. As a result, yield increase was reported for both value chains. For example, there was an average of 30 percent increase in groundnuts and a business opportunity in processing groundnuts into flour and peanut butter arose. Under the government funded project in ASWAp, the CO helped over 5,000 women to access and use innovative extension service including CSA. This evidence clearly suggests that UN Women CO facilitated rural women and youths to have increased access to practices and technologies to engage in Climate Smart Agriculture. However, a major concern by key stakeholders in agriculture sector was that the positive efforts registered by different CSOs were not captured in sector wide gender reports, in order to inform planning, decision making and policy. For example, gender statistics reported were only from the MOAIWD, which is an under estimation as this evaluation has shown. The stakeholders therefore suggested that UN Women should champion the consolidation of gender statistics in the agriculture sector.

¹⁰ Empowering Women through Climate Resilient Agriculture: End of Project Report, KOICA funded project.

¹¹ Standard bank and ASWAp-SPII end of project reports, and 2020 -2021 UNW annual reports

Apart from the increased access to extension service, there was no data to suggest that the CO facilitated an increased access to secure and productive resources, such as land and capital. The major reason was that the Government had not yet established the district land registries and governance structures at community level, to support land registration for customary land users. In addition, engagement with financial institutions to facilitate women's access to loans was initiated towards the end of the SN. As such, access to and control over land and other assets remain a challenge to most women.

Finding 19. UN Women increased capacity of women and the youth, including those with disabilities, with entrepreneurship skills, which contributed positively to their livelihoods and economic autonomy.

The CO supported a total of 10,900 rural women and youths to gain access, use and/gain control of productive resources by training them in business management and entrepreneurial skills in partnership with AICC, MACOHA, MaLS and Mhub, through women economic empowerment projects funded by Norwegian Embassy and Standard Bank. Under this outcome, the CO enhanced the capacity of 8,000 women and youth in business management and entrepreneurial skills, and 2,000 of these were linked to reliable and profitable markets through 203 farmers' cooperatives¹², thereby raising their income and moving towards economic autonomy. Furthermore, the CO empowered 249 persons with disabilities, through MACOHA in tailoring and cloth design¹³, which has liberated them from poverty and dependency on handouts, to being self-reliant.

“Before UN Women came in, I had no reliable source of income, I had nothing. But now with this sewing machine, I sell clothes in different community markets. I have bought a plot, some pigs and goats. I have joined a VSL group because of this business. Am now able to look after my family”. An illiterate woman with disability (Appendix 10-Case study).

Economic empowerment for women was also evident through EAW component, where Emmanuel International, a recipient of UN Women funding, provided 3,000 survivors of GBV in Machinga and Dowa districts with business start-up capital, through a revolving fund channeled through *Banki Mkhonde* (Village Savings and Loans Association-VSLA) group. Women of Tayamba VSLA group in Machinga reported growth of their businesses, income and acquisition of economically productive assets at their households. (see Appendix 11, Case Study).

¹² UN Women, 2021. Annual reports.

¹³ MACOHA, 2019. Annual Report: Empowering Women and Youth with Disabilities through Textile and Garment Manufacturing Project.

Notwithstanding the increased capacity built, this evaluation found that the outcome indicators were pitched at output level (capacity building) other than the resultant effect beyond this. There was therefore no data, in terms of the percent women and youth who established businesses or engaged in CSA, as a result of the training, and the benefits thereof. In addition, the youth in Dedza explained that the entrepreneurship training they attended was a one-off activity, with no follow up by Mhub or the CO. As such, their small businesses were not captured anywhere in the project reports.

3.2.3 Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls

The EVAW portfolio had one outcome area: Outcome 3:1 Social norms, attitudes and practices hindering women and girl's rights are transformed at individual and community levels.

Prevention of VAWG through social/cultural norms transformation

Finding 20. There was increased awareness about harmful socio-cultural norms, values and practices that hinder women and girl's rights at individual and community level, although the actual transformation could not be ascertained through this evaluation.

Recognizing that at the root of EVAW are harmful gender stereotypes, norms, attitudes, and behaviours that take time to change, the CO made a significant contribution to the process of shifting negative social norms and cultural practices, through various approaches, including the 'whole-of-society approach'¹⁴ that involved capacity building sessions on gender related laws, GBV and referral support, targeting high level leaders in politics and government; community gate keepers, such as chiefs, religious leaders; Traditional Birth Attendants; women leaders in *Gule wamkulu* (masked dancers for a Chewa Cult), *Alangizi/ anamkungwi* (initiation counsellors for boys and girls), as well as community women leaders, among others.

Under the Spotlight Initiative Project, in 2021 alone, for instance, the project built the capacity of 1,561 chiefs on EVAW, including gender related laws and referral pathways. These champions of change went on to collectively annul 1,222 child marriages (representing 98% of registered child marriages in the 6 project districts), and facilitated the re-enrolment of affected girls in school. In 2021, a total of 195 chiefs, from 85 different communities, were trained to develop bylaws, resulting in the formulation of 7 draft bylaws, which abolish/modify 18 different harmful cultural practices. In connection with the by-laws, the chiefs and community members publicly pledged to end all forms of SGBV, particularly child marriage and harmful cultural practices (e.g. 'fisi' (hyena), 'kutomera' (pre-marriage age proposal), wife inheritance.

¹⁴ An approach that embraces participation of key stakeholders, in a manner that upholds shared ethical norms, principles and values of society.

Using chief's forums, that were created under the Spotlight Initiative, traditional leaders have been using the platform to promote girls' education and also resolved to ban teaching of harmful cultural practices, such as '*kuchotsa fumbi*' (*dust cleansing*)), during initiation ceremonies, as evident in TA Mizinga, in Machinga District. The Spotlight Initiative also supported mobilization of about 1,000 women faith leaders on addressing harmful attitudes in their communities, whose key outcome was their agreement to assist survivors with accessing counselling services, through their religious institution structures.

Through these capacity building initiatives, traditional leaders were able to recognize GBV, understand the issue of rights, establish and enforce community by-laws, conduct awareness campaign on social norms, as well as follow up on early marriage issues and GBV cases.

"Through what we have learnt, our eyes have been opened. We are now able to see violence in situations that we thought were normal in the past. We know that women and children have rights just like men". Member of a chief's forum.

However, the impact of the efforts, retention of skills and knowledge gained, and the resultant transformation in negative social norms at individual and community levels can only be ascertained through a comprehensive comparative study that will measure differences in perception of specific social norms, attitudes and practices, against the results of the baseline study that was conducted in 2018¹⁵. The scope of the CPE did not allow for an in-depth analysis of transformational changes on social norms at individual or community level as per outcome.

Finding 21. Women's movement groups have been effective in identification and reporting of GBV cases.

The CO, through the Spotlight Initiative, spearheaded the women's movement whose members were empowered to identify GBV, report cases and follow up on cases with the police and social welfare office. Formation of Women Movement was still work in progress, but thus far, 6 district-wide movements, with a total coverage of 790 groups against a target of 60 across 38 traditional authorities (TAs) were engaged, oriented and have been conducting campaigns to enhance VAWG prevention, and uptake of services, across 38 TAs, reaching out to 69,155 people (See appendix 9). Empowerment of women and girls to report violence and demand their rights led to an 87 percent increase in GBV case reporting, between 2020 and 2021 alone¹⁶, and this is likely to increase further with the scaling up of this intervention.

¹⁵ Perceptions Study on Social Norms around Violence against Women and Girls, UN Women, 2018.

¹⁶ Spotlight Initiative Bulletin, Volume 3, may 2022

Finding 22. The CO made significant contribution in bridging the gaps within the multi-sectoral referral systems in the target districts, but needs to widen the scope.

Through the CO support, sustainable systems to facilitate service provision for cases of GBV have been put in place and communities continue to utilize them, even in locations where projects phased out. Stakeholder consultations in Karonga and Machinga for example, revealed that traditional leaders were still at the forefront in enforcing by-laws and identifying and following up on GBV cases, including early marriage cases. GVH Malemia, a HeforShe champion in Karonga maintains that efforts on enforcing by-laws and recalling and supporting girls from early marriages were ongoing. Additionally, structures such as CVSUs, police, HSAs and child protection workers continued to work together in response to GBV.

Furthermore, the introduction of mobile courts was a welcome development, which needs to be maintained and widened in scope in the subsequent SN. Under the Spotlight Initiative, a cumulative 193 mobile court sessions were held by the end of 2021, with 149 cases concluded and 461 GBV survivors assisted. Stakeholders therefore highlighted the need to increase the scope of interventions including mobile courts to cover more locations (TAs).

“Mobile courts need to come back. I had never seen anything like it. It’s a good way to teach perpetrators the consequences of their actions”. Respondent in Machinga.

Consultations revealed that mobile courts increased the opportunity for survivors to access justice much quicker and easily, through reduced distance and transport costs, and therefore, need to be re-introduced and widened in terms of scope. This was also well complemented by the distribution of 180 motorbikes and 1,340 bicycles to community-based service providers, which improved access to quality and essential services for survivors of violence living in hard-to-reach areas.

Furthermore, through the Spotlight Initiative, 624 girl survivors of SGBV and child marriage accessed education, through scholarships, as access to education remains pivotal in the fight against violence against women and girls. Apart from creating a platform for better future prospects, the learning institutions empower girls and teach them about their rights and responsibilities.

Finding 23. The CO built capacity amongst male champions who were promotion positive male masculinity, but the efforts need to be scaled up geographically.

Stakeholders consulted commended UN Women for championing the positive male masculinity agenda, through the HeforShe/male champions’ approaches and the barbershop toolkit. Thus far, a total of 6,459 male champions had been identified to scale up promotion of positive masculinities for male engagement on EVAWG and

SRHR, including through implementation of the male engagement operational guide. Youths were also engaged as motivators and change agents, through youth clubs. One such club is Ngokwe Youth Forum in Machinga, which the consultants interacted with. The youths were involved in a number of activities, including conducting community awareness campaigns aimed at socializing their peers on positive male masculinity, equal rights among boys and girls, among others, using the barbershop toolkit.

The CO, through IPs, capacitated these clubs to enhance their understanding on issues of SGBV, human rights, as well as leadership. However, IPs consulted indicated the need to scale up the initiative, through recruiting more men into the program, increasing the scope in terms of geographic coverage, as well as increasing funding under this domain to ensure that more communities benefit from the initiative.

CO's contribution towards achievement of the outcomes

This section makes reference to the contribution analysis table and case studies in describing the CO's efforts towards achievement of the outcomes and outlines some of the key ones.

Finding 24. The CO leveraged on forging strategic partnerships, provision of relevant technical support and financial resources to facilitate achievement of outcomes.

UN Women partnered and supported MDAs and CSOs, through funding and technical expertise, to mainstream gender in key legal and socio-economic planning and development frameworks; program implementation; resource allocation, accountability for results. This was evident through institutionalization of generation and use of sex and age disaggregated data, championed by NSO (See Appendix 12). The CO also enhanced accountability to global norms, standards, commitments and treaties, as well as national socio-economic frameworks, through capacity building and technical support to MOGCDSW, NGOGCN and MOJCA, among others.

The CO facilitated increased capacity of rural women smallholder farmers and youth to engage in CSA, and participate in the economy, as entrepreneurs, by providing technical support and resources to MOAIWD, MOGCDSW and CSOs to invest in business management and entrepreneurial skills. For example, some rural women and youth were given USD2,000 or materials to enable them start businesses or brand and market their products, to reach a wider market (See Appendix 12).

The UN women strengthened capacities of national, district and community level humanitarian stakeholders on gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action for gender responsive programming in disaster response and recovery. At national level, 100% of

clusters (Health, Education, Protection and Social Support, WASH, Coordination, Food Security, Search and Rescue, Transport and Logistics and Shelter and Camp Management) have the capacity to mainstream gender in their operations. At district level, 60% of the disaster-prone districts have the capacity to mainstream gender in humanitarian action.

Unexpected outcomes and their beneficiaries

Finding 25. UN Women introduced gender responsive tools for influencing decision making and resource planning at household level, which have been integrated in the national agricultural extension delivery system.

Under WEE pillar, there was output 2.1.3B Number of households using household approach methodology under Outcome 2.1 on CSA. This output promoted approaches and tools, through which CSA information would be promoted with a gender lens. As a result of this output, UN Women is recognized throughout the MOAIWD for capacitating staff and beneficiaries with gender responsive household approaches that positively influence gender dynamics at household level. The CO trained 245 extension staff to three gender responsive approaches and methodologies that have since been integrated in the extension delivery system: gender household approach, HeforShe initiative and Coop equity¹⁷. The gender household approach was used to encourage households to develop and implement a vision collectively (men, women and youth) so that they can all be empowered. The vision pushes household members to work hard and use their resources appropriately to achieve it (See Appendix 12).

The HeforShe initiative was used to promote male engagement to support gender equality and women empowerment. Coop equity model was used to promote the participation of women in the cooperative governance issues and put more women in leadership positions. Used together, the CO contributed to motivating households to adopt the CSA technologies, build their business management skills, and use the proceeds progressively to achieve their vision, which is unusual in the Malawian culture. The CO helped the communities begin to accept women and youth to participate in governance issues, and work towards ending gender-based violence. Over 10,000 beneficiaries were using the household approaches, through model villages and cooperatives, by end of the SN period. Although this was an output towards increasing access to and use of vital CSA, it became an outcome in its own right, as far as the ministry was concerned. As such, the approaches have since been integrated in the national agricultural extension delivery system, which is a plus.

Finding 26. Although women and youth were the primary target in this SN, the CO engaged men in the households and community at large, as well as caretakers of people with disabilities, realizing that achieving GEWE requires their support.

¹⁷ UN Women annual reports, 2020

Realizing that men were influential in most households, the CO interventions deliberately targeted men in the households, cooperatives and community at large. Thus, male engagement was critical in order for men to understand why it is important to empower women, and this proved effective. For example, communities became aware of gender issues within their settings and resolved to work towards reducing gender-based violence. They also became aware of issues of access to and ownership of land for their own benefit. Similarly, the CO targeted caretakers of persons with disabilities, in cases where their empowerment depended on the caretakers. They received support on behalf of the persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the assistive devices provided to the beneficiaries with disabilities improved their overall capabilities and provided relief to the caretakers, an opportunity which in normal circumstances, the duty bearers fail to provide.

Finding 27. The CP interventions achieved other benefits, beyond what was originally envisaged in the program, in terms of both nature of outcomes and beneficiaries themselves.

Although some interventions focused on women, such as aspirants during elections, the communities at large benefited from the gender equality and women empowerment awareness raised. The promotion of issue-based campaign amongst women aspirants, condemnation and reporting of any form of violence and abuse of women aspirants also benefited male aspirants, as it reduced cases of insults, castigations and physical violence amongst supporters of candidates or parties. In addition, the visibility of the women aspirants during activities of the women empowerment project during elections period raised their profile within society, and prospects of other leadership positions. (See Appendix 13-case study). Women aspirants continued to be recognized as leaders in their communities, as some were still being addressed as ‘shadow councilors’ as exemplified in Songwe Ward in Karonga District.

Enabling and hindering factors for achievement of outcomes

Enabling factors

Finding 28. Partnerships across sectors, engagement of sectoral leadership, use of existing structures and adaptability of the program approaches were the key factors for achievement of outcomes.

Development of strategic partnerships across sectors was one of the critical success factors that led to program ownership and provision of the necessary technical and moral support to facilitate achievement of the desired outcomes. The CO engaged government leadership in all key line ministries, such as MOGCDSW and MOAIWD at all levels, who supported the program at policy and implementation levels. In the case of MOAIWD, there was also good collaboration with all structures down to the community level, involving extension workers. Community ownership was high, as the projects went through existing structures, such as the DEC, ADC and VDC. Such

partnerships also existed with the private sector, who provided technological expertise, such as Bountified International, who fabricated time and labor-saving technologies, according to the women's specific needs.

Apart from the provision of financial and technical services, UN Women supported some of the IPs under WEP with human resources to facilitate monitoring of interventions and prudent management of resources. This facilitated progress towards the outcomes.

Hindering factors

Finding 29. Delayed disbursements, short-term duration of some interventions, design issues, and natural disasters and pandemics hindered achievement of desired program outcomes.

A number of factors hindered progress towards achievement of outcomes. In some projects, there were delays on initial and subsequent fund disbursements from UN Women, which affected inception of project intervention, as well as implementation of activities. This was partly due to varying capacities of implementing agencies, which necessitated thorough due diligence and risk mitigation measures at the onset, as well as acceptability of financial and program progress reports. Partly, this was also due to late processing of funds from the CO and the development partner. For example, the funds from GoM were always late due to the design of the implementation arrangement.

In some instances, such as elections projects, the timing of project activity commencement was late, as incidences of political violence had already occurred in some areas. In addition, some lead implementing partners, such as PACENET in Dedza, lacked presence and footprint in some districts and were operating from long distances. This also affected the level of collaboration with local partners.

The short-term nature of funding for some interventions did not address the deep-rooted socio-cultural factors that affect gender equality and women empowerment e.g. political leadership, just as it negatively affected sustainability of activities and benefits. There was some level of dissatisfaction amongst some women aspirants (e.g. in Dedza) with the nature and extent of support provided by some implementing agencies, and felt it was not good value for money.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and the emergence of cyclones and flooding in the course of implementation also posed serious challenges to program implementation. These significantly slowed down activities and affected the focus on

critical gender sector issues, as attention and resources were switched to dealing with these emergencies.

Contribution of UN Women CO to major policy, institutional, financing, economic and other related developments to enhance gender equality

Finding 30. The country office significantly contributed towards development and review of enabling legal, policy and strategic frameworks; and spearheaded creation of novel national and local leadership accountability structures, as well as a platform for improved resource allocation to the gender sector.

The CO contributed towards the amendment of Sections 22 and 23 of the Constitution of Malawi (Bill No 36), leading to increased age of marriage from 16 to 18 years. UN Women supported alignment and amendment of Chiefs Act, which is now aligned with international human rights standards and responsive to the rights of women and girls, particularly those facing intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination. The CO supported advocacy and contributed to the enactment of the Political Parties Act, which advances women representation, among others; the Land Bill, which has 10 gender related laws. In a bid to reform electoral laws and secure increased participation of women in political life, the CO provided support towards proposed amendments to enable the adoption of a legislative quota had been produced and awaited further deliberation in the coming sittings of Parliament, as part of the Electoral Reforms Bill.

In addition, the CO supported the functional review of the MOGCDSW, leading to development of a new Strategic Plan, supported development of the engendered Chief's Policy, Albinism National Action Plan (2018-2022), National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS, 2020 to 2024), draft Public Sector Sexual Harassment Policy, Action Plan on Resolution UNSCR 1325, and Malawi COVID-19 Social Economic Recovery Plan (2021-2023).

The CO also facilitated formation of a National Chief's Forum, as well as roadmap for establishment of the same at district and community levels, including development of a framework for engagement, which will ensure greater accountability by traditional leaders to their constituents in the promotion of gender equality. The Parliamentary Women's Caucus was capacitated to conduct gender analysis of the 2018/19 budget and used it to lobby for increased resource allocation to the Gender sector, by over a hundred percent.

UN Women Contribution to Coordination on GEWE and it being mainstreamed in UN joint programming, such as UNSDCF

Finding 31. The CO played a pivotal coordination role within the UNCT and among strategic partners in the GEWE architecture in the country, and also facilitated mainstreaming of GEWE in the UN, through provision of necessary technical guidance, participation and mobilizing partners on relevant processes.

The CO ensured that programming of all interventions within the UN agencies and other partners were aligned to relevant global norms and standards for GEWE. Within the UNCT, UN Women contributed significantly to the development and finalization of the new UNDAF (2019-2023), through a gender sensitive root cause analysis. The CO also reviewed indicators, to ensure that they are gender sensitive and assigned gender and human rights markers to all interventions in the UNDAF. UN Women participated meaningfully in the coordination mechanisms of UN, including the coordination structures for UNDAF and UN technical groups in line with its mandate.

UN Women was also involved in joint programming with other UN agencies. The CO led the coordination and development of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. The CO chairs the Monitoring Evaluation and Advisory Group and was nominated to be the Evaluation Manager for the UNSDCF evaluation. UNW is the chair and secretariat of the UN Gender and Human Rights Working Group, in support of ‘One UN’ principle. It is a useful platform for sharing ideas and joint programming for GEWE interventions. Through the leadership and coordination by UN Women, the UN Gender and Human Rights TWG was able to participate in the assessment of Joint Sector Strategic Plan for the Gender, Children, Youth and Sports Sector and the development of a New Joint Sector Strategic Plan.

The CO collaborated with other UN agencies in the implementation of Joint Programs, such as the Promoting girls access to education, through male involvement funded by UNICEF; collaborated with UNFPA and UNDP in a Multi-Donor Trust Fund project aimed at ‘Advancing the Rights of Persons with Disability’; collaborated with UNDP in implementing the Malawi Electoral Cycle Project; and, also collaborated with UNDP in developing and adoption of the Joint Annual Work Plan, signed with the Malawi Parliament. The CO collaborated with the UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA in the development and implementation of the Spotlight Initiative Country Program, for which the CO is the overall technical and specific Pillars lead. UNW also had a common project with UNDP and FAO, called Poverty Environment Initiative, where they jointly developed a Gender in Agriculture Project and shared experiences and achievements regularly.

Contribution towards implementation of global norms and standards

Finding 32. The CO was instrumental in ensuring alignment of the overarching national socio-economic development frameworks to the global norms and standards, supported implementation of appropriate interventions, as well as institutionalization of accountability of results at all levels.

The CO facilitated domestication of global norms and standards, built capacity and provided technical support for accountability. UN Women supported engendering of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III and the successor Malawi Vision 2063. The SN's expected outcomes were well aligned to the global, continental and regional norms and standards. UN Women supported implementation of interventions on gender, empowerment of people with disabilities and good governance, in line with both the MGDS III and the UNDAF.

The MOGCDSW and NGOGCN were supported to produce and submit reports on implementation of GEWE commitments at the global level. UN Women supported reporting processes on global, continental and regional gender equality commitments (CEDAW, BDPfA, CSW), engagement of local women groups representatives in reviewing and assessing implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA). The CO also provided technical advice and was part of the Core Technical Committee for the two reporting cycles of the Voluntary National Review of the SGDs (2020 and due 2022). In addition, the CO supported the institutionalization of collection and use of Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD) at national and district levels, as part of monitoring and reporting on progress on SDG Goal Number 10 on 'reducing inequality within the country and consolidation of disaggregated data collection instruments for humanitarian planning and response'.

Under the Spotlight Initiative, UN Women supported the review of several pieces of legislation, as well as development of new and successor policies and strategies across sectors that advance attainment of GEWE, as outlined under finding 12 above. In addition, the CO facilitated formation of a National Chief's Forum, as well as roadmap for establishment of the same at district and community levels, including development of a framework for engagement, which will ensure greater accountability by traditional leaders to their constituents in the promotion of gender equality.

Theory of Change

Finding 33. Overall, the theory of change supporting the program remained true with regard to development results achievement, but integrating one essential assumption on how to change the national context of Malawi and its traditional beliefs against women, could have been very instrumental.

As per the theory of change, the goal pursued by the portfolio is that “Women and girls enjoy their full rights and positively contribute to, and benefit from, social economic and political development in Malawi by the year 2021. This was to be realized through pursuit of eight (8) outcomes: 1) Outcome 6.1: Enhanced implementation of national, regional and international normative and policy frameworks; 2) Outcome 1.1: Women participate, lead and engage in decision making processes in political and public institutions; 3) Outcome 1.2: National and local plans and budgets are gender responsive; 4) Outcome 1.3: Gender statistics are accessible to all users to inform policy, advocacy and programming; 5) Outcome 2:1 Rural women and youths have increased access to secure and productive resources, practices and technologies to engage in Climate Smart Agriculture; 6) Outcome 2:2 Women’s capacities to invest in climate smart and time saving assets, tools and technologies is increased; 7) Outcome 3:1 Social norms, attitudes and practices hindering women and girl’s rights are transformed at individual and community levels; and, 8) Outcome 4.1: More women play a greater role in and are better saved by disaster risk reduction and recovery processes.

The sub-sections below provide a summary assessment of the extent to which the outcomes were achieved, in the context of the assumptions made then.

Enhanced Implementation of Normative Frameworks

As evidenced by the reported progress under finding 12 above, considerable progress was made towards review, development and engendering of appropriate legal, policy and strategic frameworks in order to advance implementation of relevant normative frameworks at all levels. This was also accompanied by commendable progress towards implementation, tracking and reporting on recommendations from various treaties and concessions at the global, continental and regional levels. Overall, the assumptions held true, as the CO had the requisite capacity to mobilize key partners, and build the necessary skills and technical capacity to advance the provisions of the normative frameworks; government was willing to implement the relevant frameworks and also create space for meaningful engagement with CSOs.

Women participation in leadership and decision-making processes

Whilst there was steady progress towards increased women’s participation in this regard, the reported progress has not been satisfactory. Women still experience huge

challenges to win political leadership positions, due to deep rooted socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices, and limited financial capacity to compete favorably with their male counterparts. The case is no different on the public and corporate sectors, where women empowerment efforts have started to bear fruits, albeit at a slow pace. Whilst some of the assumptions, such as willingness by women to take up leadership positions, willingness by government and partners to monitor and account for actions, creation of peaceful and safe spaces was fairly realistic, and that program interventions also facilitated their materialization, others were overly ambitious.

For instance, intra-party practices are always influenced by a multitude of factors, including potential of the candidates to compete favorably against other party contestants. Therefore, achievement of fairness between women and men is more complex than envisaged. In addition, the political landscape is still characterized by handouts and not necessarily issue-based campaign. The economic status of most women contestants and the above highlighted socio-cultural limitations were therefore critical areas that required exploration of ways of addressing them in a considerable manner.

Gender responsiveness of planning and budgeting frameworks

While the need for gender responsive budgeting is well acknowledged at central level, the concept has been gradually adopted and implementation is yet to be fully embraced across MDAs and local councils. The community level was also hindered by the limited literacy levels to fully grasp the concept and also limited spaces to interface with local council technocrats during planning and budgeting processes. Generally, the assumptions made were not as realistic. The necessary legal reforms, development and adoption of relevant guidelines to enhance gender responsive guidelines took considerably too long. In addition, while the CSO were proactive in empowering the local citizenry in demanding accountability in resource allocation and utilization, as stated above, their literacy levels and limited interface with the councils did not facilitate steady progress.

Generation and use of gender-based statistics

Significant progress was observed towards institutionalization of generation and utilization of gender statistics. This was well championed by NSO, MOFEPD and the National Planning Commission, through engendering of major surveys, socio-economic development frameworks, local council planning tools, as well as disaster management processes. This notwithstanding, this is yet to be fully rolled out across the MDAs and lower levels of the social sectors. The assumptions regarding government's willingness to embrace evidence-based programming and technological receptiveness by partners were realistic. However, other assumptions regarding affordability of appropriate technology, support infrastructure, such as connectivity and power supply, should have been seriously considered.

Women and youths increased access to secure productive resources, practices and technologies to engage in CSA

With regard to this outcome, the CO, in partnership with CSOs, provided capacity building and resources to farmers' organizations to increase capacity of thousands of rural women and youth to engage in CSA, which resulted in increased yields and incomes. This effort was focused on selected high value chains, linked to reliable and profitable markets, promoted along with time and labor-saving technologies and through innovative gender responsive household approaches, which motivated farmers. Furthermore, this was coupled with existing commitment by the line ministry in the promotion of CSA, through ASWAp-II and good environmental conditions during the implementation period. For the CP to achieve substantial gains, what remains is to sustain and escalate the effort, since the projects that facilitated the results were for a short duration and in selected villages, compared to the size of the country.

Women's capacities to invest in climate smart and time saving assets, tools and technologies

The CO, in partnership with appropriate line ministries and CSOs, empowered thousands of women and youth, mainly through their cooperatives in business management and entrepreneurial skills. Most importantly, among the women and youth were persons with disabilities. The strategic partnerships ensured concerted efforts along the value chain, including branding and linkage to reliable and profitable markets to facilitate enterprise development, which motivated the rights holders. Indeed, a business spirit has been developed among the rights holders, which should propel them to move towards economic autonomy. Sustainability of the enterprises is yet to be seen. However, the effort by the CP should be increased. in order to assist many more women and youth to become entrepreneurs.

Transformation of social norms, attitudes and practices

The CO has made considerable progress towards the review/development of legislation, policies and strategies, collaboration between the formal and informal structures, as well as the provision of EVAW services, in order to promote positive social norms, attitudes and behaviors. As discussed above, several pieces of legislation, policies and strategic frameworks were either developed or were under review, in order to create a conducive environment for advancement of, and realization of women and girls' rights, as well as effective delivery of relevant services. This holds true the assumptions on stakeholder commitment and provision of resources, as well as sustained stakeholder collaboration in addressing VAWG.

Additionally, the CO promoted and enhanced collaboration of formal and informal structures, such as the police, the health sector, CVSUs, VDCs and traditional leaders in the promotion of positive social norms and practices. These structures have continued to work collaboratively, even in locations where project activities have ceased. Furthermore, capacity building (as elaborated under sustainability section) targeting community members and community level structures, imparted knowledge and skills

on various subject areas including rights, recognition of negative social norms and practices and promotion of positive masculinity which in turn holds the assumptions true. This is clear evidence that the assumptions on communities valuing EAW services and sustained stakeholder collaboration for addressing VAWG all held true.

Women's increased role in disaster risk reduction and recovery processes

UN Women strengthened capacities of national, district and community level humanitarian stakeholders on gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action for gender responsive programming in disaster response and recovery within the realm of human rights. At national level, 100% of clusters (Health, Education, Protection and Social Support, WASH, Coordination, Food Security, Search and Rescue, Transport and Logistics and Shelter and Camp Management) have the capacity to mainstream gender in their operations. At district level, 60% of the disaster-prone districts have the capacity to mainstream gender in humanitarian action. The emphasis has been on effective and quality programming that addresses the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls during crises caused by floods and draughts and later cyclones. In addition, the pillar considers women and girls not solely as a vulnerable group in need of protection but as partners in humanitarian response with a role to play in the process of building resilience to external shocks

3.3 Efficiency

Capacity of CO to deliver on the portfolio

Finding 34. The CO engaged diligent staff with requisite knowledge and skills to deliver on the portfolio. However, the number was inadequate, considering the scale of the portfolio and number of partners involved.

In general, stakeholders reported that the CO engaged diligent staff with the requisite knowledge and skills to deliver on the portfolio. However, stakeholders indicated that the numbers were inadequate to support the large scale of programming/interventions and high number of implementing partners, which exerted pressure on staff to monitor interventions and manage communication to and from the partners. In addition, some stakeholders expected the CO to provide technical expertise on GEWE, as one of its functions, so that partners would look up to it for technical support. Instead, the CO had minimal staff and relied on short term consultants for technical backstopping, which had a time lag due to the recruitment processes.

Resources permitting, there is need for the CO to increase key program staff commensurate with the portfolio in the next SN and to balance between providing pillar key staff and having readily available pillar experts, as required by the interventions. The CO should consider having a pool of pre-qualified consultants in its data base to shorten the time lag for recruitment process.

UN Women CO management structure supports efficiency in implementation

Finding 35. The CO management structure was efficient for supporting delivery of interventions.

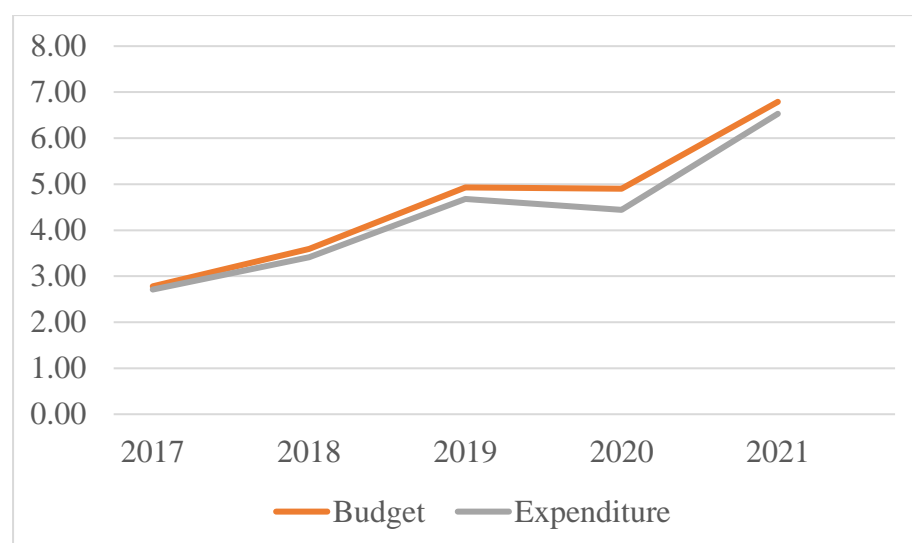
The CO was led by a Country Representative, providing leadership and support to four focus areas: GBG, EVAWG, WEE, and Humanitarian Response. Each thematic area had a Team Lead and an Associate. Supporting functions included monitoring and evaluation, operations, communications and coordination, ICT, human resources and finance. This flat structure with thematic areas and supporting functions was efficient for supporting efficient delivery of interventions. The thematic areas were linked but distinct. The CO's human resources remained stable over the SN period, with an average workforce of 21, and less than 5 percent staff turnover rate for the most part, except in 2018 when 3 out of its 10 program staff moved out, at different times of the year. As noted above, this number of staff was inadequate to support efficient delivery of interventions.

Resource mobilization and utilization

Finding 36. The CO effectively mobilized and utilized resources to deliver its portfolio. However, there were delays in funds disbursements in some instances that affected timeliness in activity implementation.

The CO's primary non-core donor was the Royal Norwegian Embassy, which funded all the four pillars from 2017-2020, with a total of NOK27 million. Other sources of funds were from the Government of Malawi through the ASWAp multi-donor trust fund, Korean Government, Standard Bank of South Africa, Government of Iceland, European Union, and DFID (Appendix 2). The EU The CO's partnership with Standard Bank, a non-traditional donor, was commendable and is encouraged. There was a steady increase in budgeted and utilized resources over the years, from USD 2,782,190 in 2017 to USD 6,788,746 in 2021, while utilization increased from USD 2,708,541 to USD 6,527,289, effectively doubling the CO's resources by end of the SN period, just like did expenditures. Figure 1 below illustrates the growth over the SN period.

Figure 1: Annual Budget and Expenditure from 2018-2021 (USD millions)



The total budget for the five years amounted to USD22,985,952, from all the sources, and total expenditure was USD21,763,868, with an average delivery rate of 92.4 percent. Table 3 below shows the year-on-year budget and expenditure increase and utilization rate¹⁸.

Table 2: Annual Budget, Expenditure and Delivery Rate from 2018-2021

Year	Budget (USD)	Expenditure (USD)	Delivery Rate (%)
2017	2,782,190	2,708,541	95.4
2018	3,591,141	3,407,431	93.5
2019	4,927,145	4,682,049	93.5
2020	4,896,730	4,438,558	88.1
2021	6,788,746	6,527,289	91.4
Total	22,985,952	21,763,868	92.4

The funds were spent according to the needs and priorities set and properly accounted for from both the funding and recipient organizations. However, late disbursements and short project duration were a challenge to delivery on results. Most implementing partners reported frequent late disbursements, which affected staff payments and delivery of seasonal outputs. For example, AICC distributed seeds late that resulted in untimely planting and some farmers completely missing out a season, because they had planted a different crop. Reasons for late disbursements included non-adherence to

¹⁸ The financial data was not disaggregated by source and focus area to enable further analysis.

meeting timelines by implementing partners and in other cases late processing from the CO, which calls for stricter risk mitigation and management measures.

On the other hand, implementation arrangements for the government funds was another cause for concern, which resulted in late disbursements¹⁹. Much as the funds were welcome and continued in an extended phase, government stakeholders suggested the need to reduce the route through which the funds flew- from the MOAIWD to the CO- in order to maximize on the positive gains. Apart from late disbursements, most CSOs had one-year projects, with 6 to 12 months no cost extensions, which was not enough for the CO to promote adoption of CSA technologies, as well as positive social norms, attitudes and behaviors, as is the case with women's participation in elections and gender-based violence. The CO should revisit its resource development plan and diversify its boundary partners in order to build its program and agency capacity with long-term strategies.

Maximization of partnerships to deliver results

Finding 37. To a greater extent, the CO maximized on the use of diverse and strategic partnerships to enhance efficiency in the delivery of interventions and achievement of results.

As noted above, partnerships were diverse and at different levels. With the development partners, the CO managed to mobilize adequate resources to support capacity building and delivery of results according to its SN. The resources targeted outcomes that were aligned to their particular interests as development partners. The partnership with the Standard Bank was particularly interesting, as it broke new ground by targeting microfinance institutions, a grey area in GEWE, as far as Malawi is concerned and yet critical in empowering women and youth.

Strategic partnerships enabled the CO to deliver its outcomes from different perspectives, based on the strengths of each implementing partner. Expertise of implementing partners, as it relates to GEWE, included governance, agricultural productivity, CSA, enterprise development, managing elections, justice, gender statistics, among others. For example, through MACOHA and Mhub, the CO was able to economically empower persons with disabilities and rural women and youth, respectively. With CCJP, the CO managed to empower women aspirants to become candidates during the parliamentary and local council elections.

¹⁹. Government funds moved from the multi-donor trust fund to the MOAIWD, to UN Women HQ as donor, to the CO and then back to MOAIWD again as an IP..

The CO also used existing coordination platforms (TWGs, sector working groups, steering committees, CSAG) to enhance program coordination, information sharing and accountability. In addition, in partnership with government and local council structures, the CO reached out to survivors of gender violence and empowered them to stand on their own. The CO managed to promote GEWE global standards and norms, ensuring that IPs were aware of these and at the same time, enabling the government to deliver on its conventions and treaties. This was achieved through close collaboration with the MOGCDSW, through coordination and strengthening of the gender machinery, for example, by supporting TWGs both at national and within implementation districts. Apart from working closely with the policy holding line ministry (MOGCDSW), it also worked through CSO networks (NGOGCN, MESN) and organizations that have varying reach on the ground.

The CO also partnered with sister UN agencies that included FAO on the CSA projects and UNDP on economic empowerment activities; UNFPA and UNICEF on GBV and rights of women and girls; UNDP on the Elections Cycle Support Project; and, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF on the Spotlight Initiative, to increase synergy and reduce duplication of efforts in the spirit of 'one UN'. A concern was raised that more enhanced joint programming with other UN agencies would help the CO to maximize on its efficiency to deliver its portfolio, taking advantage of the fact that gender is a crosscutting issue and that each agency has a stake with varying degrees of gender interventions in their own agencies.

There was concurrence among all stakeholders interviewed that forging strategic partnership is the best approach for achieving results, not only in the implementation process, but also in capacity building. It was established that the implementation of the SN, through partnerships, was more efficient and more effective in delivering outputs, than a single agency would have done. The CO used and maximized on strategic partnerships across all levels to achieve results. As an organization that largely does not do direct implementation, UN Women was diligent in selecting local partners that fit in well with its strategic objectives and approaches. At the same time, the high number of partners increased the effort of program staff to monitor and supervise the interventions, and to manage communication to ensure efficiency in the delivery of outcome. This made program staff, overstretched and always busy. Other partners raised issues about coordination in planning processes, as CSOs were recruited through a bidding process. Bringing IPs together during the inception phase would strengthen relationships much earlier and enable the CO to maximize on the partnership to deliver its outcomes.

Use of Results Based Management

Finding 38. RBM was at the core of program management and led to capacity strengthening of IPs, but the levels of competences and adherence varied amongst organizations. In addition, there were gaps in data quality of results at both output and outcome levels.

Results Based Management (RBM) formed the basis for engagement and continued partnerships with implementing organizations. The CO built capacity in the IPs at the initial stages, which was reflected in the annual work plans and reports at the CO. Reporting on outcomes was quite detailed, including paying attention to sex disaggregated data and geographical locations on all the impact areas, as well as actions taken at the local and national levels. Nevertheless, levels of competences and adherence varied amongst IPs. In addition, completeness of the reports and consolidation of indicators at outcome level remained a challenge.

In terms of completeness, so much work was evident in the individual end of project reports, but some data was not reflected accordingly or missed completely in the annual reports. All relevant statistics were therefore hard to come by for each outcome. WEE serves as an example for consolidation challenges. It had three CSA related projects contributing to one outcome, which meant that for some indicators, data was supposed to be added up from all three projects and reflected in the annual report, as contributing to that outcome, but this was not the case. The CO should take RBM training as a continuous process for both CO and its implementing partners, until RBM is well established as a culture of results.

Risk mitigation and management measures

Finding 39. The CO provided necessary support in financial management and monitoring to ensure achievement of results

Initial institutional appraisals and due diligence assessments were conducted for each IP, focusing on institutional governance and financial management capacity, to determine the eligibility for funding. The CO provided appropriate training to ensure they were in line with UN Women's standards and procedures. A project coordinator was provided for under WEP, to closely monitor interventions. Submission and approval of programmatic and financial reports of acceptable quality formed the basis for continued funding of IPs. The CO team, therefore, provided necessary support, in financial management and progress monitoring. In the process, proper checks and balances on utilization of resources were maintained. Risks were prudently managed during this SN, with no identified cases of resource mismanagement. The risk mitigation and management measures also helped institutions to grow.

3.4 Sustainability

The evaluation team noted that UN Women invested in sustainability through three key strategies: i) use of existing structures at all levels of implementation; ii) capacity building; and, ii) forging partnerships.

Likelihood that the benefits from the initiative will be maintained

Finding 40. Mainstreaming of interventions, through existing institutions and structures with core mandates facilitated prospects for sustainability.

Some MDAs were very strategic in efforts to sustain interventions. For instance, DHRMD conducts annual gender audits, NSO is mandated to implement periodic surveys, Ministry of Finance, through NLGFC, coordinates budget development for councils annually. Some program components, such as GRB and gender statistics, were therefore likely to be sustained, because of the knowledge and skills that were imparted on individuals and the institutions themselves. This was also the case for those interventions where volunteers were used, such as through NICE. The CO office provided technical guidance in the implementation of the surveys highlighted under section 3.2 above, through NSO, and development of the GRB guidelines through NLGFC. These partnership arrangements facilitated sustainability of the activities, as they were mainstreamed into the existing functions, systems and processes.

Additionally, the CO, under all the portfolios, proactively engaged existing government structures at district and community levels, that is through ministries of gender, trade, and agriculture, with the assumption that these would continue with the programme, since they are going concerns. As such, the CO worked very closely with local councils, CSOs, coordination networks, and TWGs. The aim was to enhance thought leadership. This engagement, coupled with the knowledge and skills that have been developed for individuals and institutions, created a strong relationship that facilitated uptake of interventions by community level structures, such as ADCs, VDCs, traditional and religious leaders that are likely to be sustained.

Furthermore, in the case of WEE beneficiaries, private sector companies (inputs suppliers and produce buyers) that were linked to the beneficiaries and their followers continued to work with them, as business partners. However, limited resources prevented implementation of multi-year projects that could meaningfully impact on deep rooted socio-cultural factors that impede gender equality and women empowerment, as well as changing legal frameworks to comprehensively address these factors. This was particularly evident in GBG and EAW pillar interventions, and to a lesser extent under WEE, as discussed under section 3.2 above. Sustainability of program outcomes for projects that have had a long lifespan was therefore very likely to last a long time, in comparison to those that have had a short lifespan.

Capacity Building of Partners

Finding 41. UN Women strengthened institutions with human capacity (skills and knowledge) for those involved in the implementation of interventions at different levels, and also provided necessary infrastructure/equipment to ensure that benefits of interventions are sustained beyond the SN implementation period.

Capacity across all the portfolios was built mainly through existing government institutions (targeting MOGCDSW coordinating staff, staff from other MDAs), CSOs, implementing partners, district and community level structures as well project beneficiaries/stakeholders. Capacity development was achieved through training and orientation sessions, partner review meetings and spot checks.

Capacity development varied from project to project, with those targeting existing formal structures both at district and community level bearing notable results. However, the case was different for those that did not rely on existing structures and had a short implementation period.

Under the WEE Portfolio, the CO used the ToT approach to build capacity and impart skills in CSA/CRA, business management and entrepreneurship skills as well as on gender responsive household approaches for partners and project beneficiaries. The gender responsive methodologies and tools have since been integrated into the agricultural extension delivery system; that is beyond the selected project sites, which is a plus. As such, ASWAp SPII has embraced these effective tools in its additional financing being implemented in Dedza District, which implies continuation of these initiatives beyond physical or financial presence of UN Women. The tools proved effective in motivating households to use CSA/CRA information and conduct their businesses to achieve their vision, while reducing gender violence.

Through various programs and projects implemented within the period under the EVAW portfolio including under the WEP and spotlight Initiative, capacity development targeted local structures, such as at district levels: TWGs, the gender office, the community development office, the police, health service providers; and at community level: ADCs, VDCs, CVSUs, ACPCs, chiefs, religious leaders, mother groups, community-based facilitators, VSLA, and change agents. These existing structures have been oriented on various approaches aimed at fighting the root causes of violence against women and girls including social norms change and positive masculinity. Interactions with project beneficiaries in Machinga, Karonga and Dedza indicated that capacity building initiatives were effective in most cases, as these structures are to a large extent continuing with project activities, even in cases where projects phased out.

In Karonga for example, the Karonga Debate Club, a former partner under WEP that implemented an SRHR related project, reported that informal by-laws that were developed to respond to issues of sexual and reproductive rights are still being used by traditional leadership in the area and also that youth clubs and CBOs strengthened during the project are still up and running and continue to bring reports of activities and awareness campaigns conducted.

Furthermore, in Machinga the consultants interacted with a chief's forum responsible for responding to GBV cases, early marriages, as well as conducting awareness campaigns and acting as a referral point for cases of GBV in Ngokwe village. Members of the forum maintained that project activities are on-going, despite the fact that the implementing partner, Forum for Youth Development (FOYODE), is no longer in the area. In the same light, the Chitundu Youth Club that focuses on the promotion of positive masculinity among the youths in Ngokwe Village, Machinga, also continued its activities, using the barbershop toolkit as their main guide.

“We were taught and are now continuing our work. After all, we are fixing our own community. We want our women and children to be safe from violence.” Member of the Chief's Forum.

To some extent, infrastructural capacity building was also achieved for some IPs, through supply of equipment, such as computers for gender data storage and analysis, as well as tablets for data collection and reporting. The CO has to a great extent managed to strengthen capacity of local institutions and the likelihood of sustained efforts is high.

Major capacity gaps that would make sustainability a challenge

Finding 42. Lack of local structures and the short-term nature of some interventions did not facilitate sustainability of interventions beyond project life span.

It was established that capacity development varied from project to project. Those targeting existing formal and grassroots structures that included volunteers and local governance structures, such as council cluster committees, ADCs and VDCs, and issue specific committees, such as civil protection committees, were bearing notable results. The case was different for those that did not rely on existing structures and had a short implementation period.

In addition, the short duration for interventions that aimed at transformation of societal norms and practices, did not facilitate achievement of intended results, let alone sustainability. Some interventions, mostly those related to elections had a very short life span and could not meaningfully address the underlying socio-cultural factors of gender inequality, such as masculinity. These short-term interventions did not establish any specific systems for accountability and continuity, beyond the project period. The

issue of short duration of projects (less than a year or two), coupled with high turnover of trained staff, in both government and other agencies, undermine sustainability of the gains of the interventions and may have limited impact on the beneficiaries.

Finding 43. Resource constraints had multiple negative effects on program sustainability.

Finding 44.

This prevented implementation of multi-year projects related to female participation in leadership positions that could meaningfully impact on deep rooted socio-cultural factors that impede gender equality and women empowerment, as well as review/development and enactment of all relevant legal frameworks that could comprehensively address these factors. Even government ownership, through the coordinating MOGCDSW, was found to be inadequate due to limited human and financial resources, as a result of relatively low budgetary allocations to the ministry. Consequently, some core activities relied on financial and technical support from cooperating partners (donors) and in the process, weakening the prospects of sustaining the gains beyond the duration of the project funding cycle. In addition, there were calls for allowances from partners that are available for continuity, including government staff and in some cases community volunteers that was inimical to sustainability, as it resulted into demotivation when there were no organizations to provide allowances and refreshments at the expiry of the project duration.

Ownership of the program

Finding 45. Ownership of interventions was achieved through engagement of government leadership, gender sector networks, community leaders and policy level advocacy, but it seemed to be less pronounced at council level and communities for some Pillars (e.g. GBG), since some key sectors do not yet have Gender Officers and the Gender office does not have extension workers.

UN Women used existing structures at all levels and leveraged on institutional mandates and comparative advantage of its IPs. These included working closely with the coordinating MOGCDSW, CSO's coordination networks, national and district level TWGs, and local community structures (ADCs, VDCs, CVSUs, CCPCs), thereby instilling ownership of processes and accountability to commitments. Involvement of rural beneficiaries alone, without presence of extension workers and structures was not sufficient to propagate sustainability.

Ownership was also demonstrated at policy and lower levels, depending on level of engagement and involvement. The coordinating ministry (MOGCDSW) has been

taking the lead in many activities, such as during review and development of policy, legal and strategic frameworks, and reporting on treaties and conventions. Members of Parliament and Councillors showed ownership of the interventions within their jurisdictions. For instance, during COVID-19 pandemic, the CO supported women MPs to lead the response, through provision of personal protective equipment and supplies that were used during awareness and sensitization sessions, and distribution. However, limited funding affected continuity.

At community level, some traditional leaders have demonstrated ownership of interventions by taking leading roles in the prevention of violence, community mobilization, enforcing by-laws on issues such as early marriages, as well as acting as a referral point for GBV cases. Under the GBG portfolio, traditional leaders also played a big role in the identification of and advocating for women aspirants during elections. Sensitization strategies during the election period at community level helped to develop attitudes respectful to women and girls' rights. This approach prepared communities to own and hold on to the GEWE gains from the program.

Ownership was also evident in districts where the Spotlight Initiative is being implemented. The presence of Spotlight Initiative District Coordinators within the districts has enhanced collaboration with government departments, and therefore, further encouraged ownership of program interventions. However, while the District Coordinators have performed a key coordination role, some quarters (line ministry and councils) considered a gradual shift towards integration of this role into existing functions and positions, as a catalyst for increased programme ownership.

3.5 Gender Equality and Human Rights

UN Women CO contribution towards implementation of global norms and standards for GEWE

Finding 46. Systematic analysis of gender equality gaps led to necessary reviews and development of relevant legislative instruments and strategic frameworks that advance effective implementation of global norms and standards

At the design stage, the situational analysis that informed the design of the SN included a comprehensive analysis of key gender specific indicators, including women participation in leadership, gender-based violence and other harmful gender norms and practices, and women economic situation. Data was also disaggregated by age and sex to identify the challenges facing girls and women specifically.

Through its technical and financial support, the UN Women facilitated the development and review of various national gender related laws and frameworks that respond to current and emerging gender equality issues. These include the review of five gender

related laws (the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act; the Gender Equality Act; the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act; the Penal Code; the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act). These have provided a requisite legal framework aimed at ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women. Two examples attest to this. The enactment of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act has ensured that perpetrators of gender-based violence and violence against women have their sentences, enhanced to a minimum of 14 years, once convicted, to deter would be offenders. The Gender Equality law now compels the public services to move towards a forty to sixty percentage share of leadership positions for either sex, hence ensuring that more women are getting into leadership positions at all levels of public service, as already highlighted under ‘effectiveness’ section.

In addition, the SN supported the review of two Policies (the Gender Policy, and the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Policy) through the Spotlight Initiative that have liberalized access to, and use of sexual and reproductive health services for all women, regardless of age, marital status, level of education or level of income. Under the same program, UN Women led the review of the National Action Plan to combat Gender Based Violence and the review of National Action Plan on Women Economic Empowerment, which once adopted will reduce cases of GBV and enhance economic independence of women, especially the vulnerable rural based ones while contributing to reduction in GBV.

The CO supported engendering of the national budget frameworks that include Gender Responsive Budgeting Guidelines- adopted in 2022 and the Public Finance Management Act, and a bill in this regard was drafted. The MOGCDSW was also supported to develop a new Strategic Plan and the Male Engagement Strategy, that was planned to be launched in 2022. All the UN Women supported efforts will holistically contribute to the enhanced GEWE in Malawi.

Finding 47. UN Women contributed towards the country’s engendering of key national socio-economic development frameworks and accountability to global, continental, regional and national frameworks.

Through technical and financial support to stakeholders, the UN Women CO supported the engendering of the MGDS III and its successor Malawi Vision 2063. Currently, these frameworks have clear gender indicators and targets that all sectors look up to and the country has institutionalized periodic review mechanisms to check on the progress of these indicators and targets. The program also supported accountability for results of these at different levels. In addition, the UN Women supported the country in the domestication of global gender norms and standards and the undertaking of periodic reporting processes of global, continental and regional gender equality commitments. These include CEDAW, BDPfA, CSW, AU Human and Peoples Rights and the Maputo

Protocol. It has been working with various institutions within the civil society, government, and other UN agencies supporting such institutions, to understand these global norms and standards and checking compliance with the required standards and guidelines. Further, the UN Women supported increased awareness of existence of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and its roles in promoting GEWE. This was a substantial contribution as the UN Women is the only partner championing and supporting the government of Malawi in these aspects.

Effect of the program in changing the dynamics of power in relationships between different groups

Finding 48. There are shifts in perception and attitude towards women and their position in society among men in particular and society as a whole, although resistance persists in some contexts.

Most of the interventions in the UN Women SN were specifically meant to address the underlying causes of discrimination against women and girls, as well as other vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities. The results show that there is progress towards changing power dynamics and power relations, but resistance persists. During the implementation period, for example, there has been evidence of more women taking up leadership positions in the public sector (in line with the dictates of the Gender Equality Act) and also more women aspiring for and getting elected into political leadership positions. There are also changing attitudes towards the role of women on local council structures, as some were able to be elected as chairpersons and vice chairpersons, and even mayors.

Similarly, women and youth were being elected as members or leaders of governance structures in farmers' organizations. For example, there is a women led Mphinga Rice Cooperative in Karonga District.

“During United Democratic Party (UDF) primary elections at Kambewe Primary School, voters were denied access into the classroom where elections were being conducted, simply because the woman contestant was leading. The elections were suspended right away, because her supporters protested.” Male monitor working for MESN.

However, the changes brought about by UN Women contribution need to be sustained, as there are still gaps and challenges to gender equality and change in power dynamics, especially within political institutions and some societies with strong patrilineal norms, values and practices. For example, in the case of women aspirants for political offices, there were instances when women were deliberately sabotaged during party primary elections. An incident occurred in Nsanama Ward in Machinga District, where primary elections were deliberately disrupted, when the woman was leading and rigging allegations were falsely peddled against her. Some voters were barred from entering the voting room, after the woman aspirant showed an early lead.

While progress at both national and local levels was recorded, due to the support provided by UN Women in this regard, the interventions' effectiveness was thwarted by short duration of the support (mainly through six months to one-year projects attached to elections), in the midst of complex and unbalanced power dynamics. Substantial transformation could not be realized from the short-term nature of some of the interventions, necessitating the fostering of long-term strategies for changes to be substantially noticeable in traditional social roles and norms and in the lives of the most vulnerable groups.

Finding 49. UN Women's support to stakeholders engendered innovative approaches that promoted shared vision and responsibility and reduced gender-based violence at the household level.

Through technical and financial support to various organizations, the UN Women introduced and promoted the gender household approach and HeforShe campaigns that have been encouraging families and households to draw and follow common household vision. Both men and women in Kamphata and Mazinga model villages in Lilongwe rural testified about progress being made

"There is change in terms of mindset. We see a situation where in the family, a father, mother and the children are able to sit down and discuss the development agenda, they have a vision within their house, and they put it somewhere there – this is where we want to be after some time." An agricultural extension officer.

towards achieving their households' vision as women and children become the center of all decisions made in the household. In addition, they indicated that the presence of male engagement champions is contributed to reduced cases of GBV in their villages. However, changing power dynamics is long-term, as it involves changing people's attitudes and behavior, hence the need to sustain and escalate these interventions. Stakeholders observed that it is important to document such changes qualitatively as well as quantitatively and be reflected in gender statistics in the agriculture sector.

Addressing Underlying Gender Equality Needs

Finding 50. Interventions in the program were well informed by systematic synthesis of evidence from multiple sources and therefore focused on addressing the root causes of gender inequality

A 'Perception Study on Women's Political and Economic Participation' was carried out. Enhanced gender statistical analysis across sectors, such as the gender thematic report of the 2018 'Population and Housing Census' also informed the program and the 2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey also provided insights. In addition, the 'Gender Impacts of COVID-19' study also informed the response during the peak of the pandemic. IPs also based their proposals on their regular interactions with the communities they serve. Women were able to express themselves during group

meetings and defend their rights to access and ownership of land, as well as on GBV related issues. Agenda setting sessions were conducted, where women were given space to talk among themselves, as well as women talking with men.

Some of the interventions supported by the CO were aimed at addressing the gender gap in agricultural productivity, limited access to and control over resources, the time and labor demanding roles of rural women and limited participation in decisions relating to farm produce marketing and income utilization. The contextual situation of the rural women in Malawi was grounded on relevant studies on poverty and gender gap in agricultural productivity, local experience of IPs, UN Women's regional and global experience, and baseline studies.

Finding 51. The interventions were amenable to 'adaptable learning approaches'²⁰ in order to best respond to the needs of the targeted beneficiaries.

During implementation, the CO was flexible enough to respond to the needs of rural women. Some adjustments were made at inception phase, based on feedback from the CO. For example, for two of the projects (WEP and Standard Bank one), adjustments were made after beneficiaries demanded changes in terms of diversifying the types of businesses to include non-agricultural ones, in areas along the lake, and processing and value addition technologies in ground nuts to fetch better prices.

Relevance of Choice of Partnerships to Situations of the Vulnerable Groups

Finding 52. The nature and scope of partnerships was in tandem with the needs of the targeted vulnerable beneficiary groups, guided by the core mandates and comparative advantages of the partner agencies.

UN Women forged partnerships with agencies within the UN, donors, public sector, CSO and private sector at policy, technical cooperation, funding and program implementation levels, based on their mandates and comparative advantage. For instance, the MOGCDSW is the policy holder for gender equality and empowerment of women; NSO is the government institution responsible for generational and management of socio-economic data; MEC is the public institution charged with management of electoral processes; NGOGCN is the CSO responsible for coordination of the gender agenda amongst CSOs, MESN is the CSO responsible for coordination of electoral interventions amongst CSOs; CDM works with political parties on governance and democracy issues. All these partners focus on issues that are at the core of women, girls and other vulnerable groups' gender inequality.

²⁰ The project was flexible enough to the contextual realities. It defied the 'one size fits all' approach and responded to the actual needs of the beneficiaries to maximize their benefits

Embracing human rights and development effectiveness principles: Participation/empowerment; inclusion/non-discrimination; national accountability/transparency

Finding 53. The program was participatory, inclusive and transparent as interventions did not discriminate against any population groups, and also provided many opportunities and spaces for participation

The SN implementation was participatory and aimed at empowering rural women. Enterprise development projects targeted rural women, with a focus on agribusiness. Eventually, adjustments were made to include non-agricultural businesses for the women with disabilities and women in the lakeshore areas, where farming is not the major activity. The three CSA projects also targeted female smallholder farmers. However, women only cooperatives were hardly there and as such, the CO worked with cooperatives where women were in majority. Similarly, for persons with disabilities, able bodied caretakers were also found to be critical and were included. In general, men were targeted in all WEE interventions as indirect beneficiaries to gain their support for women economic empowerment.

Interventions targeting women empowerment towards leadership positions in the electoral processes were also participatory and inclusive. Both male and females, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities, participated in community mobilization and advocacy activities, as well as campaign rallies. People with disabilities also participated as contestants.

“The elections related interventions were non-discriminatory. People with disabilities participated freely. A woman candidate won the 2019 elections as a ward councilor for Chilangoma Ward. She went on to be elected chairperson in 2021 for Blantyre district council.” Respondent from MALGA

Contribution of interventions towards targeting of the underlying causes of gender inequality

Finding 54. Interventions directly contributed towards addressing underlying causes of gender inequality

As comprehensively discussed under findings 2 and 3 above, there were a number of studies and assessments that informed the focus and scope of the interventions, in order to ensure effective targeting and that they address the underlying causes of gender inequality.

Relevance of partners to the situation of women and marginalized groups, including women with disabilities

Finding 55. The CO chose partners that were relevant to situations of women, marginalized groups and women with disabilities

As elaborated under finding 5 above, the CO's choice of partners was well informed by mandates and expertise of the IPs, such that those with a particular niche in addressing specific vulnerabilities were engaged for program implementation. A typical example was the partnership with MACOHA, a government agency that is mandated to advance the interests and address the needs of people with disabilities. The project involved training of identifies beneficiaries in garments production and business management skills, in order to improve their income levels. In addition to this core intervention, they were also provided with assistive devices to alleviate their physical constraints.

On the overall, as can be deduced from the foregoing, the SN had a combination of both strategic and countrywide approaches to generate broad results that would impact on most marginalized women and girls, and project-based approaches to serve particular marginalized women, yielding localized impacts. The SN was designed based on the principle of realization of human rights and use of participatory, gender and culturally sensitive approaches, aimed at building the capacity of stakeholders to promote gender equality and empowerment of women with a focus on "Leaving No One Behind" principle. During implementation, virtually all interventions integrated gender and human rights and aimed at reaching those left behind. Examples include review of laws and policies that presented barriers to access to leadership positions and use of technology (phones) in humanitarian response and recovery plans aimed at ensuring SGBV services' continuity for those affected by emergencies. UN Women CO also has a specialist dedicated to humanitarian preparedness and response who entrenched gender and human rights perspectives in the program

3.6 Coherence

Synergies within the UNCT and their work

Finding 56. There were clear synergies within the CO and with other UN country teams, facilitated by a number of platforms and processes.

The UN Women program was in tandem with other agencies interventions. For example, the UN Women contributed to the development and finalization of the new UNDAF (2019-2023) by providing its expertise in gender sensitive root cause analysis. It also reviewed indicators, to ensure that they are gender sensitive, and assigned gender and human rights markers to all interventions in the UNDAF. It also coordinated the development of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. In addition, UN Women

chairs the Monitoring, Evaluation and Advisory Group and has been nominated to be the Evaluation Manager for the UNSDCF evaluation.

Through the leadership and coordination of UN Women, the UN Gender and Human Rights TWG was able to participate in the assessment of Joint Sector Strategic Plan for the Gender, Children, Youth and Sports Sector and the development of a New Joint Sector Strategic Plan. The UN Gender and Human Rights working group was a platform for sharing ideas and joint programming on GEWE. The Recipient UN Organizations also held Pillar meetings, to ensure coordinated planning, joint implementation and delivery.

Finding 57. Linkages and synergies at program implementation level exist, but are not yet maximized due to existence of several GEWE project across the UNCT portfolios

There were some implementing partners, such as MACOHA, implementing components of either GBG and EAW or WEE and EAW, thus some synergies were achieved there. At UNCT level, a notable element of synergy was with the UBRAF project, where the donor was UNAIDS and the project tackled issues of HIV in relation to gender and gender-based violence. Additionally, there were synergies under the Spotlight Initiative, where four UN agencies (UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP) have been working together.

During this SN, the CO secured program and projects that created so much operational work. Considering the size of the CO, and the fact that other UN agencies have bits of GEWE interventions, more work should focus on joint programming and coordination to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of its work. That is, the CO should capitalize on the coordination platforms already established within the UN system and strengthen joint programming with the related UN agencies.

Balance and coherence between operational, coordination and normative roles

Finding 58. Strategic partnerships across functional areas and operational levels of the gender equality cascade facilitated achievement of a fair balance between the CO's core mandates.

The CO partnered with stakeholders at various levels, based on their mandates and comparative advantage. The operations mandate was advanced through program implementing agencies across all sectors. The coordination mandate was achieved through partnering with coordinating agencies (line ministry and CSO networks) and leading the gender agenda within UN agencies, as well as use of relevant coordination platforms (TWGs, steering committees, working groups). The normative role was advanced through support towards review and development of legal, policy and strategic instruments, as well as accountability processes.

UN Women provided holistic support that targeted different levels; policy and legal frameworks, coordination and program delivery. It was able to coordinate and implement programs, with funding from different sources, through engagement of multiple partners. The UN Women connected people and institutions to good practices and experiences. It easily linked up with strategic partners, easily mobilized technical support at national, regional and global levels, and had good accountability mechanisms.

Compatibility with other interventions in the country

Finding 59. The program interventions were very compatible with other interventions, drawing from guiding strategic frameworks and detailed stakeholder mapping.

The SN interventions were aligned to the national socio-economic development frameworks (MGDSD III, Vision 2063), as well as sector specific policies and strategies (e.g. Gender Policy). These frameworks guided program design and implementation in the gender sector, across the country. This was evident in the manner partners (MDAs, CSOs) were easily identified at national and local levels (district and community) to implement programs in the SN, as they were already engaged in similar interventions. This demonstrated compatibility and complementarity with other interventions implemented in the country, which was ensured from program design, throughout the course of implementation and results accountability.

Harmonization and streamlining of interventions

Finding 60. Use of coordination structures and local council officials facilitated harmonization and avoidance of potential duplication of efforts.

Joint planning and implementation arrangements helped to streamline activities and achieve necessary linkages and synergies. These also facilitated sharing of resources (expertise, finances, and materials). Use of coordination structures at national and council levels (TWGs) helped to share information and achieve linkages and synergies. There were also inter-institutional collaboration arrangements that facilitated this. Consequently, there was no obvious duplication of effort, as implementing agencies maximized synergies and linkages in their implementation approaches. The use of network affiliates and coordination structures also helped to minimize this potential issue. Partners were engaged based on their core mandates and comparative advantages.

Potential duplication was also minimized by the active participation of district stakeholders who provided guidance in targeting specific locations and beneficiaries, depending on the interventions. In addition, IPs were chosen based on specialized areas of focus and where more than one IP was present in a district, they were operating in

different locations and implementing different, but complementing interventions. Consequently, there were no overlaps.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the overall conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations/suggested areas of improvement for future implementation of the CP. The conclusions and recommendations are presented based on the six evaluation criteria.

4.1 Conclusions

The section below presents the conclusions from the evaluation. This follows a synthesis of the evaluation findings and the program context, from which they were drawn, to give meaning to them.

i) Relevance (Linked to findings 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 10)

The CP was well premised on the relevant guiding frameworks and interventions were grounded on systematic generation and synthesis of contextual evidence, which facilitated better focusing and targeting on the underlying causes of gender inequality. The SN outcome areas were aligned to global, continental, regional and national treaties, conventions and socio-economic development frameworks. Key among them were the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the UN Resolutions: 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security and ending sexual violence in conflict situations; the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol); and, the 2008 Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development; the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (Section 13a); the Gender Equality Act (2013); Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2006); Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) I-III (2006 to 2022); the Malawi Vision 2063 and its First 10 Year Implementation Plan (MIP 1).

The interventions were informed by a broad base of evidence from specific studies, namely: ‘Perception Study on Women’s Political and Economic Participation’ and ‘Perception study on Gender and Social Norms around Violence against Women and Girls in Malawi’; the 2018 Population and Housing Census: Gender Thematic Report; the 2015/16 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS); the 2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey; the ‘Gender Impacts of COVID-19’ study; the 2018

Comprehensive Baseline Assessment of Disaster Risk Management in Malawi; and, the gender gap agricultural productivity studies, also provided insights and informed the focus and scope of interventions.

The CO played its rightful role by ensuring that the necessary resources and technical assistance were availed to multi-sectoral partners that advance GEWE goals and objectives, throughout the programme design and implementation stages. These strategic choices were very critical in ensuring that the program remained relevant to the context.

ii) Effectiveness (Linked to findings 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24, 2 and 30)

The CP achieved varying degrees of progress across pillars and interventions. Significant progress was made in terms of the following outcomes: Outcome 6.1: Enhanced implementation of national, regional and international normative and policy frameworks; Outcome 1.3: Gender statistics are accessible to all users to inform policy, advocacy and programming; Outcome 2:1 Rural women and youths have increased access to secure and productive resources, practices and technologies to engage in Climate Smart Agriculture; Outcome 2:2 Women's capacities to invest in climate smart and time saving assets, tools and technologies is increased; Outcome 3:1 Social norms, attitudes and practices hindering women and girl's rights are transformed at individual and community levels; and, Outcome 4.1: More women play a greater role in and are better saved by disaster risk reduction and recovery processes. There was some progress on Outcome 1.2: National and local plans and budgets are gender responsive, and unsatisfactory progress on Outcome 1.1: Women participate, lead and engage in decision making processes in political and public institutions.

In general, progress was affected by operational constraints, such as delayed funds disbursement, protracted administrative and political approvals for legal and normative frameworks, as well as disasters and pandemics. The interventions also generated positive unintended outcomes that directly benefitted individuals, households and communities at large.

Significant effort was directed towards creation of an enabling environment, through reviewing and development of relevant legislative policy and strategic instruments, with some already paying dividends, in terms of legal redress for GBV and improved access to relevant services. The CO supported amendment of the Constitution of Malawi, through Bill No 36, leading to increased age of marriage from 16 to 18 years; ; advocacy and input to the enactment of the Political Parties Act, which advances women representation; alignment of the Chief's Act with international human rights

standards and responsiveness to the rights of women and girls; and, review of 5 gender related laws (the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, the Gender Equality Act the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, the Penal Code, the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act) and 2 policies (the Gender Policy, and the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Policy) was under way, through the Spotlight Initiative. Once approved/enacted and operationalized, these will likely enhance realization of GEWE objectives, as well as human rights.

Women empowerment efforts were achieving tangible outcomes in the areas of agricultural and economic productivity, as well as entrepreneurship, thereby raising prospects of food security and economic autonomy of the beneficiaries, including people with disabilities. In the case of leadership positions, the progress was slackening, due to deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and practices. Institutionalization of genders statistics was evident in strategic planning processes, although this was not particularly evident in terms of gender responsive resource planning and allocation processes at both central and local council levels. Capacity challenges still exist at local council and community levels in this regard. The case was also similar to increased awareness levels about harmful socio-cultural norms and practices, as well as promotion of positive masculinity, but the actual transformation could not be ascertained within the scope of the evaluation.

There is coordinated and multi-sectoral referral system for victims of GBV related incidences, although the geographic coverage scope still remains limited and needs upscaling. These will require a systematic evaluation to better inform programming. The CO was very central to the registered progress, as it forged strategic partnerships, introduced innovative tools for programming, provided necessary technical support, built capacities, mobilized and coordinated partners.

iii) Efficiency (Linked to findings 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38)

The CO's structural configuration, knowledge and skills levels were appropriate for efficient delivery of interventions. For example, the CO was led by a Country Representative providing leadership and support to four thematic areas and six supporting functions. Each thematic area and support function had a team lead, with one or two associates. However, the CO implemented 24 interventions/projects, covering 16 out of the 28 districts and partnering with 60 organisations (both government and CSOs), which outstripped the available number of key staff.

The CO was able to mobilize significant amounts of resources from a number of donors to support its SN. The resources were prudently utilized and accounted for. However,

the resources were spread thinly across many IPs, resulting into short term projects that were not in tandem with GEWE challenges that require long term solutions. In addition, there were delays in funds disbursements that affected timeliness in delivering its portfolio. The CO provided necessary support in financial management and monitoring to ensure achievement of results. The use of diverse and strategic partnerships proved effective in building capacity of IPs and in the delivery of interventions and achievement of results. The CO also established an RBM system that was operational at the CO as well as in the partners' organizations. Despite the CO investing in capacity building on the same, levels of competence and adherence amongst the organizations was different and this affected the data quality of results at both output and outcome levels.

iv) *Sustainability (Linked to findings 39, 40, 41 and 42)*

In general, the likelihood of sustaining interventions in targeted districts is high as the CO's efforts through implementing partners ensured that most interventions were mainstreamed through existing institutions and structures with core mandates, such as MOGCDSW and other MDA, CSO coordinating networks, TWGs, and local government structures, so as to allow continuation beyond project lifespans. Additionally, to ensure quality in delivery of interventions, the institutions and structures have been strengthened with human capacity (skills and knowledge) and in some cases infrastructure/equipment which will further promote continuation of interventions.

However, there are some hindrances that pose a threat to sustainability such as short duration of projects i.e. a year or less, resource constraints for coordinating institutions such as MOGCDSW and IPs, allowance syndrome for stakeholders and staff attrition within implementing entities. These hindrances undermine the ability of the existing institutions and structures to establish specific systems for accountability and continuity and maintain the gains from interventions and therefore need to be addressed.

v) *Gender Equality and Human Rights (Linked to findings 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 and 50)*

The SN was designed based on the principle of realization of human rights, through utilization of participatory, non-discriminatory and transparent approaches, aimed at building the capacity of stakeholders to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. This focused the principle of "Leaving No One Behind". During implementation, virtually all interventions integrated gender and human rights and aimed at reaching those left behind; for instance, through review/development relevant laws and policies that address barriers to access to leadership positions, essential SGBV

services, SRHR services, social protection and recovery support for those affected by emergencies. The choice of partners and thematic focus was also in tandem with advancement of, and realization of the gender equality and human rights principles, through engagement of partners with a track record and reputation of implementation of successful programs in this regard.

There was a positive, but gradual shift in attitude towards women and leadership positions in society, while innovative approaches were reducing GBV at the household level. Economic empowerment interventions were also opening up avenues for leadership roles for women and youth in local structures, such as cooperatives, therefore enhancing equity between men and women, as well as the youth. Gender equity and human rights were also advanced, as the interventions were participatory, non-discriminatory against any population groups, and also provided many platforms and spaces for participation by all, including people with disabilities and marginalized ones.

Both male and females, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities, participated in community mobilization and advocacy activities, for example in vying for leadership positions, as well as campaign rallies; CSA; and, entrepreneurship ventures, thereby ensuring that the benefits of the interventions accrue to all of them. The role of the CO was very visible in all efforts towards creation of an enabling environment, through provision of resources, technical support, among others, for all the above-described interventions.

vi) *Coherence (Linked to findings 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58)*

There were both institutional and programmatic linkages and synergies during implementation of the CP, fostered through several coordination platforms and processes. For example, UN Women contributed to the development of UNDAF (2019-2023), coordinated the development of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, chairs the Monitoring, Evaluation and Advisory Group and was the Evaluation Manager for the UNSDCF evaluation. However, the CO implemented numerous short-term projects across the thematic pillars that made internal linkages and synergies difficult. There is also room for improvement at program implementation level through optimal utilization of coordination structures. Strategic partnerships across functional and levels of the GEWE response facilitated a fair balance across UN Women's core mandates. The consistent reference to guiding frameworks for programming across the cascade also facilitated compatibility of interventions.

4.2 Lessons learnt

The lessons learnt have been isolated from the evaluation, emanating from discussions with key informants, at both national and district levels, as well as discussants at community level. Others were deduced from the broader picture of the findings of the evaluation and are expected to inform the UN Women and other stakeholder in the designing and implementation of similar interventions in future. These are outlined below:

- i) *Collaboration with multiple partners, within the UN system, government, CSOs and other stakeholders, based on their core mandates and comparative advantages, facilitates efficiency, linkages and synergies, in pursuit of the desired objectives.* Such institutions possess the requisite organizational structures, minimum staff complements, basic knowledge and skills of existing program to mainstream gender interventions within their core business, as well as wider geographic influence. This is also a premise for ownership and sustainability of interventions, beyond project time horizon. This was particularly evident on projects where the CO partnered with line ministries and departments, gender and elections coordinating networks, such as MOGCDSW, MOAIWD, NGOGCN, MESN and CMD. Future projects supported by the CO should maximize on this partnership arrangement for program successes.
- ii) *Engagement of IPs that have footprints in the districts is very crucial for program sustainability. Projects that were implemented by local CSOs had better physical presence and reach to beneficiaries, leveraged on existing rapport for networking and also had established structures at the grassroots level that facilitated activity implementation.* Such arrangements were notable in Karonga (CCJP) and Machinga (NANES), unlike in Dedza, where the lead implementing partner was located hundreds of miles away and the counterpart local partner did not seem to own the interventions.
- iii) *Emerging changes in the global economic and policy landscape, coupled with unforeseen natural disasters and disease outbreaks provide an opportunity for innovation and new ways of doing business and ought to be seized.* While such circumstances create despair and panic, they have provided quick entry points with interventions that were otherwise not accessible to majority of women and vulnerable populations. For instance, partners were able to mobilize physical and financial resources, to improve access to social protection, sexual and reproductive services, as well as economic productive assets during emergency

and pandemic situations, using more efficient technology (virtual and mobile phone technologies) and targeting mechanisms.

- iv) *Responsiveness to contextual issues, adaptability of project approaches facilitates achievement of desired objectives. Socio-economic contexts vary across the country and one approach may not always be suitable to all settings.* The agri-business project supported by the CO was flexible enough to allow beneficiaries to choose the most suitable enterprises to be engaged in, commensurate with the available local and other potential markets to which they were linked. This facilitated flourishing of business ventures, leading to improved incomes and also availability of commonly sought-after merchandise by the local communities.

- v) *Holistic engagement of household members in economic empowerment interventions not only achieves improved economic welfare, but also addresses some underlying causes of GBV in the households.* This approach directly impacted on household masculinity issues, as the male spouses and children were involved in a shared family vision, leading to shared responsibility towards improved household income and general welfare, which is both a cause and consequence of GBV, if not addressed. Government has already adopted this approach in its extension work and ought to be scaled up.

- vi) *Although GEWE interventions are largely meant to target women and other specific marginalized population groups (people with disabilities and albinism), gender inequality and human rights issues cannot be decisively addressed without full involvement of the perpetrators of gender inequality (men, traditional and political leaders).* Involvement of men and boys, and traditional leaders as champions in projects, such as HeforShe, proved effective in raising awareness and ownership of interventions. Similarly, involvement of political leadership led to policy shift, through reduction of nomination fees within parties, thereby creating a favorable space for women's participation.

- vii) *The intermittent and short-term nature of some interventions undermine the momentum and benefits that are generated from implementation of project activities.* Some of such interventions (such as elections support and elimination of GBV) targeted attitude and behavioral change, within deep-rooted socio-cultural norms, values and practices contexts. The duration of such projects was too short to sufficiently address these underlying factors, such that in the case

of elections, the success rate of female aspirants and candidates was very low, compared to their male counterparts. This calls for sustained effort to make meaningful impact.

4.3 Recommendations

The recommendations were drawn from the conclusions, which are themselves a product of the findings from extensive literature review; stakeholder consultations; and, ERG results validation. All data collection tools were deliberately designed in a manner that offered the evaluation participants at national, district and community levels, an opportunity to offer possible solutions to the challenges and issues experienced in the course of program implementation. Following field data collection and preliminary analysis, a validation meeting was held with the ERG, to reflect on the findings. As well as preliminary recommendations by the evaluation team. Input from all these processes, coupled with a systematic triangulation and synthesis of the evidence, the evaluation team makes the following recommendations, which are also ranked in terms of priority (low, medium and high), depending on the direct impact they have on achievement of results:

a) Relevance (Linked to finding 6)

1. Optimize use of existing coordination platforms and scale up alternative avenues, such as virtual platforms to enhance information sharing and program focus by multi-sectoral partners. The MOGCDSW, CO, local councils and gender coordination networks should review the available coordination platforms, their membership, frequency of meetings, their suitability for information sharing and identify measures to strengthen them as key vehicles for sustained cross-learning and program focus. **Ranking: Medium**

b) Effectiveness (Linked to findings 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22)

2. The CO, in collaboration with MOGCDSW and NGOGCN should intensify targeted advocacy and lobbying for expedited political and administrative approvals for legal, policy and strategic frameworks. This will entail conducting a rapid stakeholder analysis to determine their influence on the review and approval processes; designing and implementing targeted advocacy and communication actions to facilitate timely approvals and implementation of the frameworks. **Ranking: High**
3. The CO should facilitate technical capacity building of DHRMD, in gender transformation, and resource mobilization, to implement a sustained program that focuses on women empowerment and development in leadership positions in the context of the dynamic operating environment in the public sector.

DHRMD remains a key public sector entry point in this regard and there is need to undertake capacity needs assessment, development of a capacity development roadmap, technical skills development, and development of gender related project proposals, apart from lobbying for earmarked gender budget from government by the DHRMD itself. **Ranking: High**

4. The MOFEPD, in collaboration with the MOGCDSW, MOLGRD and NLGFC should enforce compliance with guiding frameworks for gender responsive budgeting. The CO should support the process to popularize and disseminate newly approved guidelines and the yet to be enacted amended Public Finance Management Act at all levels. MOFEPD should enforce appropriate sanctions and incentives on adherence to these frameworks by MDAs and councils. In addition, the CO should continue to facilitate capacity building of Parliament to consistently apply the gender lens to budget review and approval processes. **Ranking: High**

5. The CO and MOGCDSW should continue partnering with NSO to build capacity of MDAs and councils in generation, dissemination and utilization and of sex and age disaggregated data, through a systematic capacity development plan. NSO and line ministries should utilize the ‘Gender Statistics Assessment Report’ that was undertaken recently and systematically implement and track the recommendations regarding capacity gaps in the areas of national statistical system coordination, human and financial resources, and technical expertise in production and analysis of gender statistics. The MOLG should ensure that all district SEPs and DDP currently under development utilize the defined minimum gender data sets for planning, monitoring and reporting. **Ranking: High**

6. The efforts by the CO and MOAIWD in promoting adoption of CSA and labor-saving technologies, through ASWAp were commendable. As the efforts continue, the CO should jointly with UNFAO and the Agriculture Sector Technical Working Group, ensure that the positive changes being registered in the agriculture sector (by various partners) are consolidated and captured in the agriculture sector wide gender reports, in order to influence planning, decision making and policy. **Ranking: High**

7. The MOGCDSW, in collaboration with the CO, should undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of interventions focusing on GEWE related socio-cultural norms and practices to assess the extent of transformation,

as well as related service coverage, in order to inform program consolidation and scale up plans. The ministry should leverage of available technical assistance from UN Women to develop concise terms of reference for the study, mobilize the expertise and resources to commission the study. Once done, the results should be disseminated at all levels, using most appropriate channels.

Ranking: High

c) Efficiency (Linked to finding 33, 35, 36, 37)

8. The CO should review its staff requirements in the context of the envisaged portfolio, and establish a database of pre-qualified consultants, in order to shorten the recruitment process. **Ranking: High**

9. The CO should develop a resource mobilization strategy, focusing on both short and long-term strategies for addressing GEWE challenges in Malawi. Existing and potential funding streams should be assessed against envisaged programme scope, to establish the resource gap, and engage both existing and potential boundary partners accordingly. **Ranking: High**

10. The CO, in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, should review the implementation arrangement of the project in ASWAp, so as to reduce the route through which the funds flow from the MOAIWD to the CO, to avoid delays in funds disbursements. **Ranking: High**

11. The CO should strengthen the RBM system as a continuous learning opportunity until RBM is well established, as a culture of results. Specific attention is required in the development, systematic numbering, tracking, and consolidation of output and outcome indicator results at project and CO levels, throughout the SN period. **Ranking: High**

d) Sustainability (Linked to finding 39, 40, 41)

12. The CO needs to maintain and strengthen its focus on capacity building of existing institutions and structures in leadership for gender mainstreaming, coordination, implementation and monitoring, as this has proved to be an effective strategy in fostering sustainability. The prudent choice of partners based on their mandates and core business should be maintained. Priority must also be given to organizations that have footprint in the districts and project jurisdictions. **Ranking: High**

13. The CO needs to strategize on funding modalities, so that numerous short-term projects are avoided and ensure that interventions are capable of addressing root causes of gender inequity. This could be achieved by engaging fewer number of implementing partners, with a longer project duration, so that resources are not spread thin and there is room for interventions to yield ultimate results.
Ranking: High

e) Gender Equality and Human Rights (Linked to finding 46, 47 and 52)

14. There is a need to develop and implement a more robust strategy to disseminate and popularize legal and policy instruments that directly promote gender equality and human rights, in order to address resistance from some quarters of society, particularly males and traditional leadership. This will require a thorough analysis of different roles of members of the society in influencing attitudes and practices that have a bearing on GEWE; structured, customized and targeted engagement of key stakeholders; maximizing available and other novel platforms for engagement; monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the related interventions. **Ranking: High**

15. The CO should enhance documentation of success stories that are impacting on gender and social dynamics, arising from innovative approaches to women empowerment interventions. In addition, it should reflect the gains from such approaches in agriculture sector wide gender reports, in order to influence policy direction. **Ranking: Medium**

f) Coherence (Linked to finding 55)

16. The CO, in collaboration with UNCT partners, should strive to streamline and consolidate the projects portfolio within the scope of the current pillar focus, which remains relevant and comprehensive in addressing GEWE issues. In doing so, emphasis should be on those GBG and EAW outcomes whose progress is very much affected by deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices that necessitate long term strategies. This will require carefully engaging partners that can offer expertise and implement holistic programs, with a wider geographical coverage, as opposed to having a lot of partners implementing similar interventions across the country. In addition, this will require careful solicitation and screening of potential partners, coupled with more thorough due diligence assessments, to ascertain the available technical capacities. The Spotlight Initiative offers a very good learning opportunity for this strategic direction. **Ranking: High**

