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COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION EGYPT

STRATEGIC NOTE 2018 - 2022



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The Independent Evaluation and Audit Services of UN Women (IEAS) led the evaluation under the supervision of Chaitali Chattopadhyay (Regional Evaluation Specialist for the Arab States region). The evaluation team comprised Meredith Brown, International Evaluation Expert; and Awny Amer, National Evaluation Expert.

This evaluation was conducted between December 2021 and September 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation team is grateful to the more than 75 stakeholders including government counterparts, development partners, private sector partners, civil society representatives and to the UN Women Egypt Country Office and Regional Office personnel who participated in the evaluation process over video calls, online sessions and communication exchanges. We appreciate their willingness to engage during uncertain times and the rich quality of their contributions.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
COP	United Nations Climate Change Conference
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EVAW	End Violence Against Women
G&L	Governance and Leadership
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Fund for Children
UNPDF	United Nations Partnership Development Framework
UN SWAP	UN System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality
WEE	Women’s Economic Empowerment

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION EGYPT

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) of the UN Women Egypt Country Office, conducted between December 2021 and September 2022. A CPE is a systematic assessment of the normative, coordination and operational aspects of UN Women's contribution to development results related to gender equality and women's empowerment at the country level.

Background of UN Women in Egypt

UN Women has operated in Egypt since the early 1990s. The Entity transitioned from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to UN Women in 2010. The Strategic Note is the main planning tool for UN Women's work to advance gender equality and women's empowerment through implementation of the Entity's integrated triple mandate of normative, coordination and operational work. The UN Women Egypt Strategic Note covers the period 2018–2022 and is closely aligned to the country's United Nations Partnership Development Framework, which covers the same period, and to the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030.

UN Women Egypt provides integrated policy advice, capacity development and technical assistance, social mobilization and advocacy, and data and knowledge generation, among other functions, to inform policymaking and law-making. UN Women is the only United Nations entity with the exclusive mandate to promote gender equality, including leading and coordinating the accountability of the United Nations system to member organizations' respective gender quality mandates. UN Women also provides intergovernmental normative support at global and national levels, as well as direct support and service delivery.

EGYPT COUNTRY CONTEXT



POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

104 M

Over 104 million, 49.5% women as of December 2021.

43%

Live in urban setting, largest part of the population lives in only 9% of the total land area.



KEY DEVELOPMENT RANKINGS

Ranked 116 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index 2020

Ranked 129 out of 156 in Global Gender Gap Report 2021



KEY NATIONAL COMMITMENTS ON GEWE

20 gender equality provisions in the Constitution and more than 19 laws and amendments strengthening women's rights since 2014

National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 has 34 SDG indicators

National Council for Women and Egypt National Observatory for Women oversee and monitor the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030

Evaluation purpose, objectives and use

The evaluation was conducted primarily as a formative evaluation to support the Country Office and national stakeholders' strategic learning and decision-making for the next Strategic Note (2023–2027). The evaluation also had a summative perspective to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience. Objectives of the evaluation included:

- Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the Strategic Note.
- Support the UN Women Egypt Country Office to improve its strategic positioning to better support the achievement of sustained gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Analyse how a human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note.
- Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices and examples of innovation that support gender equality and human rights.
- Provide insights into the extent to which the UN Women Egypt Country Office has realized synergies between its three mandates (normative, coordination and operations).

Intended users and uses of the evaluation

The primary intended users of this evaluation are UN Women management and Country Office personnel; the UN Women Executive Board, UN Women Regional Arab States Office, UN Women headquarters and other Regional and Country Offices outside the Arab States

region; target groups, their households and community members, programme and project partners; national and local governments in Egypt; civil society representatives; the donor community and other development partners; and the United Nations Egypt Country Team (UNCT). Intended uses include learning and improved decision-making to support development of the next Strategic Note; accountability for the development effectiveness of UN Women's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment; and capacity development and mobilization of national stakeholders to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

UN WOMEN IN EGYPT

US\$ 23,100,368

Total budget 2018-2021

TOTAL STAFF: 44

Source: CO Organigram, January 2022

- 14 Staff
- 28 Service Contractor
- 1 Consultant
- 1 UNV

3 MAIN THEMATIC AREAS



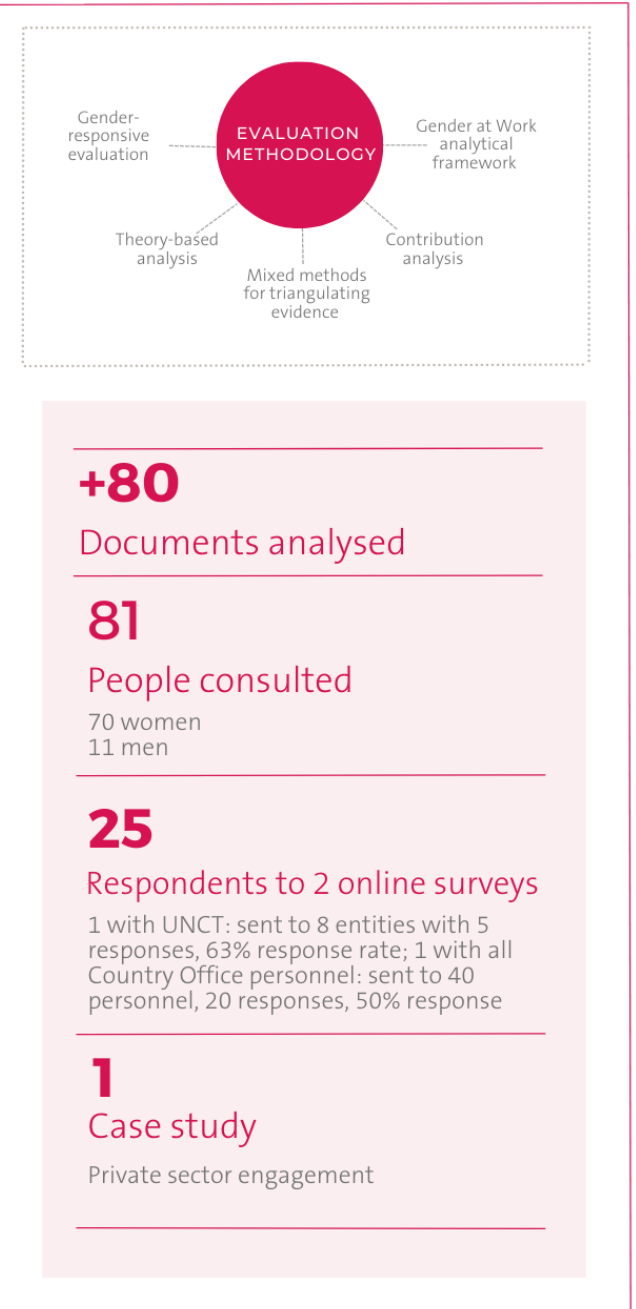
Elimination of
Violence
Against Women



Women
Economic
Empowerment



Peace,
Security, and
Humanitarian
Action



Conclusions and Recommendation

Conclusion 1:

The Country Office sustained its relevance over implementation of the Strategic Note 2018–2022; demonstrated agility by adjusting its programmes to contribute to the response to COVID-19; and continued to deliver results despite frequent leadership changes. There is space to further consolidate its portfolio, avoid mandate overlap in the End Violence Against Women area, secure funding and intentionally aim for innovation.

The Strategic Note, its theory of change and programmatic interventions were designed to directly support the Egyptian government's international commitments and national priorities and contribute to the UN–Government of Egypt's Partnership Development Framework (2018–2022). The Country Office made a strategic decision to consolidate its portfolio under two key pillars of work – Women's Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women – under its current Strategic Note to achieve scale and impact. The Women's Economic Empowerment portfolio needs to be further consolidated to facilitate its transition from multiple projects to a comprehensive programme. Similarly, efforts should continue to avoid a “mandate overlap” with other entities in the Ending Violence Against Women area. The Country Office has supported some creative and novel initiatives, but it could be more intentional and methodical in its approach to innovation. The Country Office had multiple changes in leadership during the Strategic Note period, with stability at the Representative level only occurring during the final two years. Despite this upheaval, personnel remained valued by partners and stakeholders and personnel were reasonably satisfied with their workplace. Non-core funding declined during the period, creating a future challenge for the Country Office.

(Findings 1, 8,9,11-12)

Conclusion 2:

The Country Office has invested in building multi-pronged partnerships to achieve scale and impact. The Country Office is regarded as an expert partner in gender equality and women's empowerment by the government, UN Country Team partners, the private sector and other stakeholders. It has acted as a convenor of government and civil society organizations. The Country Office has laid a foundation during this Strategic Note period for future expansion, scale and impact.

The Country Office has developed multi-pronged strategic partnerships as a key change strategy to “catalyse” large-scale impact and systemic change. It has established itself as a trusted and relevant partner of the government and its objectives and commitments. The Country Office has leveraged its coordination mandate, making use of the UN Country Team gender mechanisms for gender mainstreaming across UN agency programming. Fruitful inter-agency arrangements have arisen through joint programming between UN Women and other UN entities. The Country Office has also developed a more cohesive relationship with private sector companies to address the gendered employment challenges in the country. Despite limitation due to the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) laws during a period of the Strategic Note, the Country Office has acted as an important convenor of government and civil society organisations. Overall, its partnership approach has laid a foundation for future expansion, but the results remain small in scale. These have a potential to reach both a wider geographic audience and/or target a specific demographic group in the next period but more work needs to be done to leverage the private sector partnerships and strengthen the engagement of civil society organizations to develop a greater normative role and capture the impact and lessons of partnerships to ensure they can achieve impact in scale and scope.

(Findings: 2, 4, 6, 10)

Conclusion 3:

The Country Office has contributed to creating knowledge and awareness of gender data and statistics; filled evidence gaps; and supported evidence-based policy and programming decisions. A more systematic approach towards filling gaps in the evidence base and continued engagement with the Egyptian government's statistical agency will yield more tangible results.

The Country Office through its partnership with Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics has played an important role in raising knowledge and awareness about the need for gender data and statistics in Egypt. It is mainly because of UN Women's work that the gender statistics have been integrated in the Egypt's National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). The Country Office has also invested in producing some relevant policy research and knowledge, reported to have been used to set the policy agenda and influence normative changes. In the case of gender statistics, this is a good start, but the momentum needs to be maintained to ensure the strategy is operationalized and the generated data is used to make policy and programming decisions. The Country Office would benefit from taking a more systematic approach to filling gaps in the evidence base to inform decisions about new research topics, and to make the evidence available in an accessible format to decision makers.

(Findings: 3, 5, 8)

Conclusion 4:

The Country Office has demonstrated its commitment to the leave no one behind principle and has adopted a gender transformative approach through its programming. A stronger social relations approach; a systematic approach to identifying and targeting the most vulnerable groups; and a monitoring and feedback system to track the transformative changes would help to strengthen the Country Office's work.

The Country Office's portfolio appears gender transformative, with programming that addresses all aspects of socio-ecological life. The Country Office has made a concerted effort to respond to the needs of some of the most vulnerable women and girls. However, the Country Office and its UN Country Team partners lack a systematic response to the needs of other marginalized groups. There is room for a more systematic approach to operationalize leave no one behind commitments by assessing who is left behind and why; sequencing and prioritizing solutions; tracking and monitoring progress; and ensuring follow-up and review. A stronger social relations approach would be helpful to avoid backlash; identify gender-based violence risks in programming across the portfolio; and create scope for dialogue on some of the harmful impacts of gender norms. Almost all stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation process indicated that attitudes and perceptions about women in Egypt remain one of the most significant challenges to improving gender equality and women's empowerment. Such work requires long-term effort to grow the foundation laid during the Strategic Note period.

(Findings: 7, 13, 14)



Recommendation 1: The Country Office should continue to consolidate the portfolio approach under the Women's Economic Empowerment and End Violence Against Women pillars for the next Strategic Note.



Recommendation 2: The Country Office should facilitate a UN Country Team strategy to engage civil society in normative advocacy.



Recommendation 3: The Country Office should develop a long-term, shared vision for change through its private sector partnership.



Recommendation 4: The Country Office should continue to strengthen the gender perspective in national statistics, production and availability of gender data and evidence and its use by policymakers and planners.



Recommendation 5: The Country Office should augment its social norms change interventions by strengthening its social relations approach involving work with families and communities to achieve and sustain social norms change.



Recommendation 6: The Country Office should embed targeted leave no one behind outcomes in the next Strategic Note.



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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This section provides an overview of the national context, including the challenges experienced by women and girls in Egypt and the national focus on gender equality and women's empowerment. It also provides an introduction to the UN Women Egypt Country Office portfolio.

1.1 Egypt country context

Located at the north-eastern corner of Africa, Egypt has a rich and ancient history. It has the largest, most densely settled population in the Arab region, with a 2021 population of over 104 million, 49.5 per cent of which are female.¹

Most Egyptians live either in the Nile Delta located in the north of the country or in the narrow Nile Valley south of Cairo. Administratively, Egypt is divided into 27 governorates. The four Urban Governorates (Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said and Suez) have limited rural populations. Forty-three per cent of the population of Egypt lives in an urban setting and the largest part of the population lives in only 8 per cent of the total land area, creating specific challenges related to resource distribution.²

In 2019, Egypt increased its Human Development Index to 0.707, maintaining its global rank of 116 of 189 countries.³ The Household Income, Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2019/2020 conducted by Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) showed that the poorest segment of Egyptians have seen the sharpest plunge in expenditure levels and that poverty has increased more in urban governorates (Greater Cairo, Alexandria, Suez and Port Said) than rural. The survey also revealed that one third of the Egyptian population live in poverty and 75 per cent of female-led households receive fixed-rate pensions that result in deteriorating living standards.⁴

As of September 2020, 258,855 refugees and asylum-seekers (52 per cent male and 48 per cent female) are registered with UNHCR Egypt. The majority are from Syria, followed by Sudan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Yemen and Somalia.⁵

Economic reforms in 2016 have supported a positive growth rate, including in 2020 despite the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶

1.2 Gender equality in Egypt

The Egyptian Constitution of 2014 included more than 20 constitutional provisions that guarantee the rights of women in all spheres of life. It was accompanied by the adoption of a series of laws and legislative amendments to strengthen women's legal rights.

In 2017, Egypt launched the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030,⁷ aligned with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The strategy has 34 SDG indicators and is comprised of four main pillars: political empowerment and leadership, economic empowerment, social empowerment, protection with legislation and culture as cross-cutting pillars.

The National Council for Women, the government body responsible for overseeing the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women, established the Egypt National Observatory for Women⁸ to follow up on implementation of the strategy, including the establishment of baselines and follow-up indicators to measure and track progress.

Gender-related indicators have shown some improvement over the past few years. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, Egypt's gender gap is closing, but progress is slow.⁹ The country gained five places in the 2021, ranking 129 of 156, from 2018 when it ranked 135 of 149 countries. However, falling female participation in the economy and an increase in health inequality

¹ World Bank Open Data, Egypt Country Profile, 2021

² *ibid*

³ Human Development Report 2020

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ UNHCR Egypt Fact Sheet - October 2021

⁶ Egypt: Overcoming the COVID Shock and Maintaining Growth, IMF, 2021

⁷ National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030

⁸ Egypt National Observatory for Women

⁹ Global Gender Gap Report 2021

shows there is still much work to be done to close the gender gap (see Figure 1).

In 1981, Egypt ratified and has since reported five times on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with reservations - citing Sharia - remaining on articles 2 (Duty of States), 16 (marriage and family life) and 29 (administration of CEDAW). Egypt committed to the 1995 Beijing Declaration (the Action Plan of which was reviewed in 2020) and to the 2030 SDGs, including Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, with the aim to leave no woman behind.

Key government initiatives such as the 2019 Haya Karima initiative¹⁰ and the 2021 Egyptian Family Development initiative¹¹ aim to improve the standard of living for rural and urban families, including through the economic empowerment of women and women's increased participation in the labour market.

The partnership between the UN and the Government of Egypt outlined in the country's first UN Partnership Development Framework 2018–2022¹² states that dealing with issues of women's social and economic empowerment must be at the forefront of the UN's support in these arenas.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's health, employment and economic empowerment has been significant:¹³

- Women are front-line health workers – women in Egypt make up 42.4 per cent of doctors and 91.1 per cent of nursing staff.
- The demand on health-care services interrupted access for women to reproductive health-care services, family planning and contraceptives.
- 80 per cent of women do not have health-care insurance.
- Women are four times more likely than men to work in the paid care sector (70 per cent of the paid care sector), an informal and precarious work environment.
- Social norms in Egypt hold women as the main caretakers for the household, shouldering the burden of caring for sick family, increasing their exposure risk and jeopardizing their employment.
- Concerns that family-based violence increased during the pandemic; and school closures had

adverse impacts on girls who were expected to take unpaid care duties and in some cases were forced into early marriage.

The National Council for Women prepared a policy paper on Egypt's rapid response to women's situation during the COVID-19¹⁴ outbreak, which includes an analysis of the status quo and addressed impact on human endowment, women's voice and agency, impact on economic opportunities, and the need to promote data and knowledge. The joint UNDP/UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker¹⁵ shows Egypt with a comparatively high number of COVID-19 response measures (48 – higher than the regional and global average), with 21 of these measures noted as gender sensitive.

1.3 UN Women in Egypt

1.3.1 Background

UN Women has operated in Egypt since the early 1990s. It transitioned from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to UN Women in 2010. The current UN Women Egypt Strategic Note, the subject of this evaluation, covers the period 2018–2022 and is the office's first Strategic Note since it transitioned from a Country Programme to a Country Office in 2016. The Strategic Note is closely aligned to the country's UN Partnership Development Framework, which covers the same period, and to the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030.

The current Strategic Note was developed through a consultative process with a range of national, regional and international stakeholders and partners. It also considered the lessons and recommendations from relevant evaluations and audit¹⁶ and was built on the following principles:

- Transitioning from a programme-focus to more long-term transformative change.
- Achieving greater synergies across the portfolio to ensure interventions are scaled-up to meet the needs of marginalized women.

¹⁰ Haya Karima

¹¹ Egypt's Family Development Plan

¹² UNPDF 2018_2022

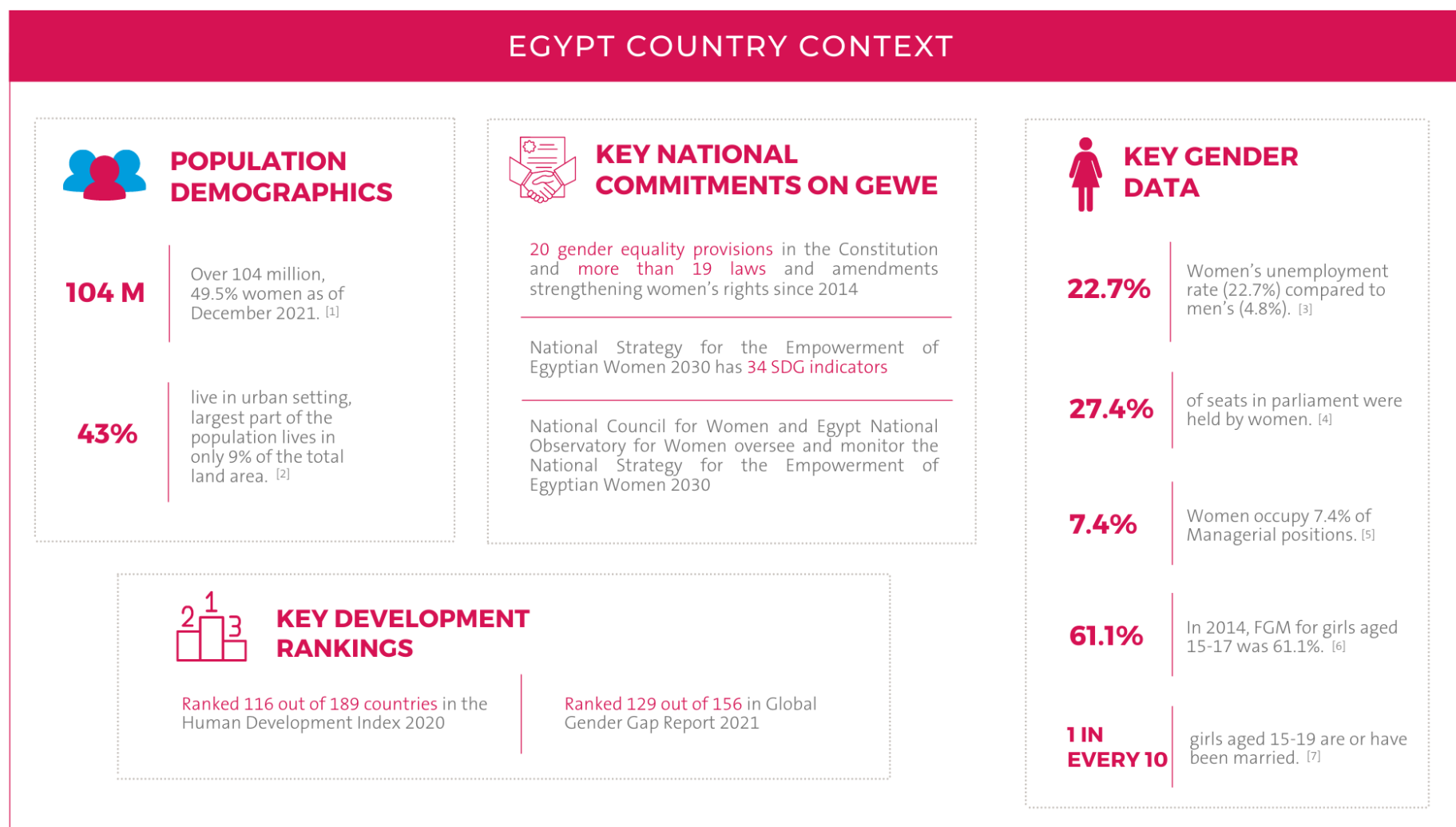
¹³ Egypt's Rapid Response to Women's Situation During Covid-19 Outbreak: Policy Paper

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, UNDP

¹⁶ The Country Office had an audit in 2016 conducted by UNDP, <https://www.un-women.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/UN-Women-audit-report-2016-1609-UNW-Country-Office-in-Egypt-en.pdf>

Figure 1. The Egypt country context (compiled by the evaluation team)



SOURCES

- [1] World Bank Open Data, Egypt Country Profile, 2021
- [2] Ibid
- [3] Egypt Human Development Report, 2021
- [4] Global Gender Gap Report, 2021

- [5] Ibid
- [6] Female genital mutilation in Egypt: UNFPA
- [7] Egypt Census for Population, Housing and Establishment, CAPMAS, 2017

- Communicating UN Women’s value proposition and target supporting the gender-responsive operations of private sector entities.
- A greater influence in policy decisions, particularly in the financial policy sector.
- Scaling up interventions targeting harmful social norms, including greater engagement of men and boys.
- Finding greater synergy and reduced transaction costs through coordination and joint planning.

Under the current Strategic Note, the Country Office consolidated its programmes under two key thematic areas – Women’s Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women. In addition to the two main portfolios, the Country Office has maintained its normative and coordination role. The portfolio is set out in [Figure 2](#).

The Strategic Note identifies the following groups of women as the most marginalized and vulnerable in the Egyptian context.¹⁷ It also recognizes the nuanced forms of vulnerability women face due to various intersectionalities:

- Women living in rural Upper Egypt
- Female heads of households
- Women who live below the poverty line, with disability, without birth certificate or ID card, and formal employment
- Refugee and migrant women

1.3.2 Theory of Change

The Strategic Note contains a Theory of Change, as follows:

If (1) The legislative and institutional environment allows to formulate and implement laws and policies that promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in line with the 2014 Egyptian Constitution and relevant international norms and standards is enhanced;

And if (2) Egyptian women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy;

And if (3) All women and girls in Egypt live a life free from all forms of violence;

Then, women’s political, social and economic rights as set forth in the Constitution are realized and their full potential is harnessed for Egypt’s development and prosperity;

Because Egyptian women will have the requisite skills, resources, support including an enabling environment for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Following the initial scoping interviews with key Country Office personnel and an inception workshop with all Country Office personnel, it was apparent that, while the original Strategic Note Theory of Change is not inaccurate, it is not up to date and does not capture the full performance framework of the Country Office’s approach. Specifically, the original Theory of Change does not directly address:

- the Country Office’s targeted and systemic approach to consolidate its work and allocation of resources under the two key pillars of Women’s Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women;
- interventions related to social norm change; and
- UN system coordination and the Entity’s wider convening function.

As a result of these gaps and the evident evolution in the Country Office’s ‘systemic approach’ adopted during the Strategic Note, the evaluation team concluded that a reconstructed Theory of Change was required ([see Figure 3](#)).

1.3.3 Budget and human resources

The Country Office’s total resources for 2018–2021¹⁸ were US\$ 23,100,368. While core budget has reduced from 2018 to 2020, followed by a stagnant core budget 2020–2021, non-core resources have been on an upward trajectory ([see Figure 4](#)). The average rate of financial implementation over the period concerned was 87.3 per cent.¹⁹

The Country Office grew from 40 personnel (staff and non-staff personnel) in 2018 to 44 in 2022 ([see Annex 1 for the Country Office organization chart](#)). The office’s human resources model was based on a limited number of fixed-terms appointments and a larger number of temporary contracts such as service contracts issued for the duration of a project.²⁰

The period of the Strategic Note was one of leadership turbulence for the Country Office, with two Country Representatives and two acting Country Representatives. Leadership has stabilized over the past two years and was supported since 2019 by a consistent Deputy Country Representative and an Operations Manager.

¹⁷ UN Women Annual Progress Report, 2018

¹⁸ This evaluation is taking place during the last year of Strategic Note implementation; hence the data for 2018–2021 is reflected – full 2022 budget and delivery cannot be taken into consideration. The total budget as on 20 June 2022 covering the entire Strategic Note period 2018–2022 was US\$ 24,597,093.

¹⁹ The average rate for the period of January 2018 to 20 June 2022 is 75 per cent.

²⁰ This is observed globally in UN Women, where decisions on the human resources structure of country offices are taken by the Executive Board, and funding thresholds are de-fined by headquarters.

Figure 2: UN Women Egypt Strategic Note interventions (compiled by the evaluation team with information provided by the Country Office)

Programme/Activity	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Normative					
Women, Peace and Security – National Action Plan 1325 (UK)					
Support to Beijing +20 and +25 national review					
Support to CEDAW national and shadow reports					
Regional and global intergovernmental processes					
Coordination					
Chair, Women’s Results Group UN Partnership Development Framework					
Chair, Gender Theme Group					
Chair, Development Partners sub-group on gender					
Programming					
<u>Country-based Programmes</u>					
WEE – Joint Programme with ILO on Decent Work for Women (Global)					
WEE – Stimulating equal opportunities for women entrepreneurs (P&G)					
WEE – Women’s empowerment for sustainable economic growth (Canada)					
WEE – Women’s Financial and Economic Inclusion in Rural Egypt (Netherlands) + EU					
WEE – Gender Responsive Budgeting Programme, UN SDG Fund					
WEE – Women’s Economic Empowerment (KOICA)					
EVAW – AIShehab (UNTF)					
EVAW – Joint programme on ending violence against women: survivors centred approach programme (USAID/UNFPA JP)					
EVAW – Safe Cities					
G&L – Make Every Woman and Girl Count (Sweden)					
G&L – Strengthening Institutional Capacity (Netherlands)					
<u>Regional Programmes</u>					
WEE – Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women, Joint Programme with ILO					
WEE – Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection in Crisis Response, LEAP (Japan)					
EVAW – Men and Women for Gender Equality (Sweden)					

1.3.4 Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

The Country Office's formal monitoring and reporting process is a combination of UN Women's global corporate reporting commitments against the Strategic Note Development Results Framework and Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework, reporting on UN Partnership Development Framework outcomes and to donors on programme progress. The Country Office set aside 3 per cent of the programmable budget for monitoring and evaluation and has a dedicated position for corporate reporting and monitoring.

An evaluability assessment of the Strategic Note found that most indicators were measurable, specific, clearly related to outcomes and outputs, and were written in singular focused and plain language. There was an adequate focus on forms of outcome-level change (behaviour, institutional performance, beliefs/attitudes). Outputs were within the office deliver capacity and correctly addressed changes in skills, awareness, capacity and institutional arrangements. Taking these factors into consideration, the overall evaluability of the Egypt country portfolio is deemed strong. A summary of the evaluability assessment is provided in [Annex 3](#).

The Country Office did not conduct a mid-term review of the Strategic Note due to leadership transition(s), but it has supplemented its knowledge with independent evaluations. A total of six evaluations were conducted during the Strategic Note period covering various thematic areas.²¹ The Country Office also provided management responses to the evaluations and completed the actions committed to in these responses.

²¹ Final Evaluation of the Securing Rights and Improving Livelihoods of Women (SRILW) project (2018); Final Evaluation of Promoting Women's Employment by Creating Safe and Women-Friendly Workplaces Programme (Women's Employment Promotion Programme - WEPP), 2018; Evaluation of UN Women Economic Opportunities work under LEAP/HA, 2018; UN Women Safe Cities Evaluation 2022; End-term evaluation of men

and women for gender equality regional programme, 2022; Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women, Joint Programme with ILO (ongoing)

Figure 3: Reconstructed Theory of Change (prepared by the evaluation team)

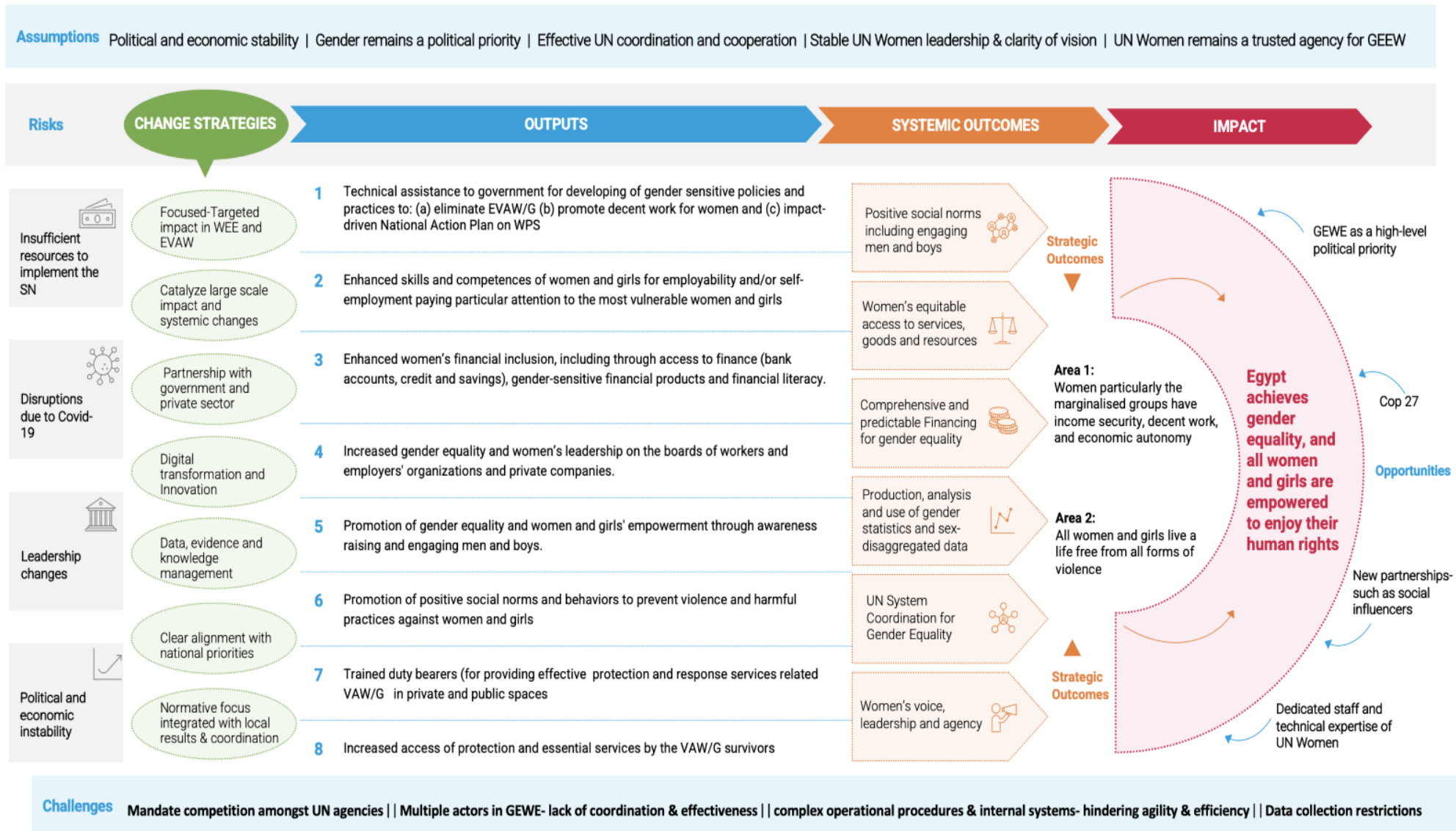


Figure 4: UN Women in Egypt, prepared by the Evaluation Team

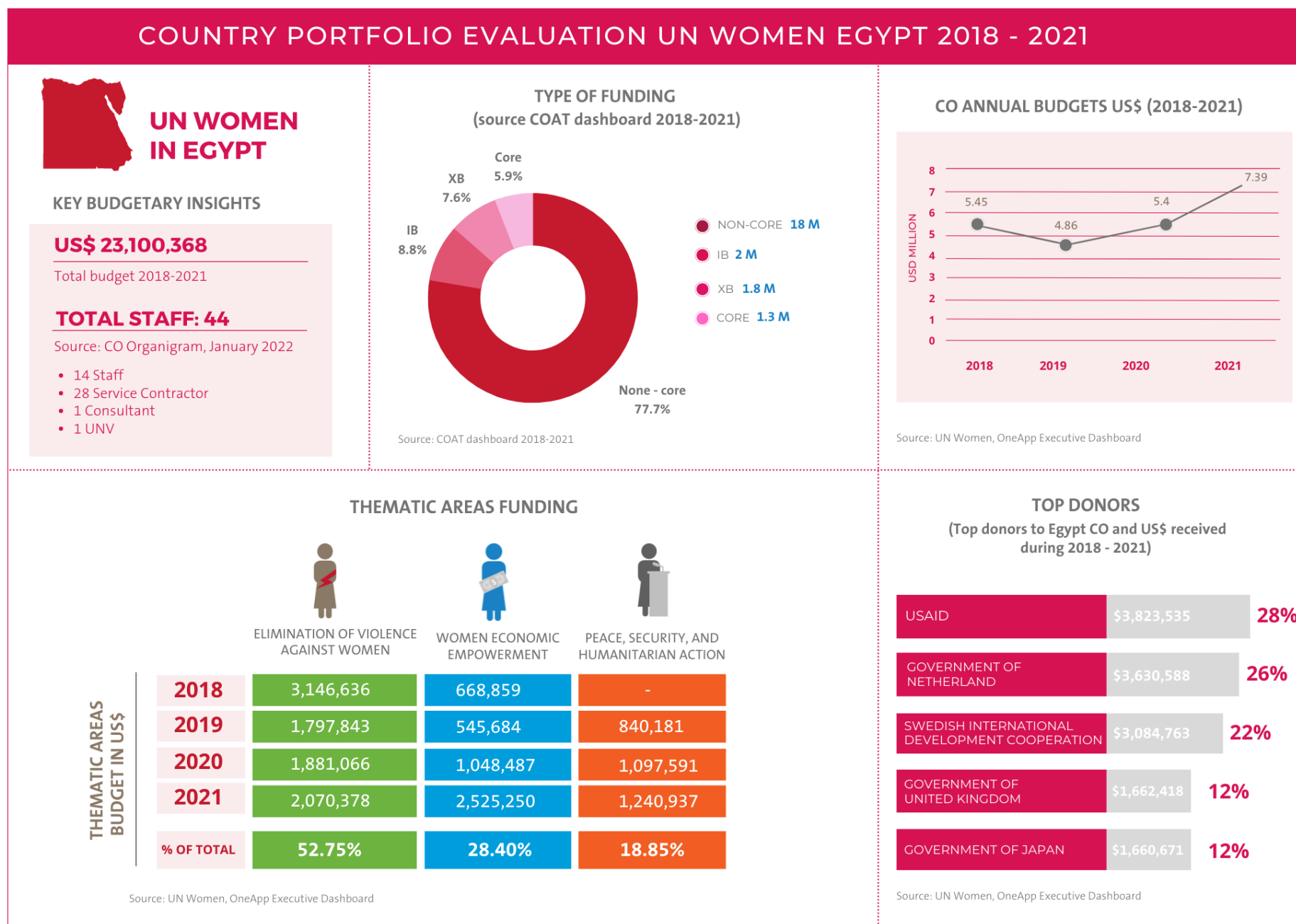




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2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

This section provides an overview of the methodology used by the evaluation team for this Country Portfolio Evaluation, including both the theoretical underpinnings, practical approach and challenges.

2.1 Evaluation purpose

This Country Portfolio Evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) in close collaboration with UN Women Egypt Country Office as a primarily formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the Country Office and national stakeholders' strategic learning and decision-making for the next Strategic Note (2023–2027). The evaluation also has secondary summative (backwards looking) perspective, to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience.

2.2 Evaluation objectives

The following evaluation objectives were developed in consultation with the Country Office at the outset of the evaluation process:

- 1 Assess the relevance of UN Women's contribution to the interventions at national levels and alignment with international agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 2 Assess the effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the Strategic Note.
- 3 Provide insights into the extent to which the UN Women Egypt Country Office has realized synergies between its three mandates (normative, coordination and operations).
- 4 Support the UN Women Egypt Country Office to improve its strategic positioning to better support the achievement of sustained gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 5 Analyse how a human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note.
- 6 Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices and examples of innovation that support gender equality and human rights.

- 7 Provide actionable recommendations to inform development of the next UN Women Egypt Country Office Strategic Note

2.3 Evaluation scope

The scope of this Country Portfolio Evaluation included all activities undertaken by the Country Office under its current Strategic Note 2018–2022, including operational work, support to normative policy and UN system coordination. Programme work was considered in relation to the thematic areas established in the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021.²²

The geographical scope of the evaluation is Egypt. Most of the interviews were conducted virtually with stakeholders based in Cairo, where normative and coordination efforts at the country level are centred and to a large extent programmatic activities are also implemented. Implementing partners and beneficiaries from the Alexandria governorate were also involved through telephonic/virtual key informant interviews. A very small sample of beneficiaries (11) were consulted, particularly to assess UN Women's accountability towards them. However, as per the Terms of Reference, a systematic assessment of the long-term impact of interventions on beneficiaries and their context was not part of the scope of this evaluation as this type of analysis would require resources and methods beyond its design.

2.4 Evaluation design

The evaluation applied a theory-based design to assess the performance of the Strategic Note based on its stated assumptions of how change happens. It used contribution analysis²³ to assess the contribution made towards policy and legislative reforms and the Gender at Work analytical framework²⁴ to assess the Country Office's gender transformative approach.

²² UN Women Strategic Plan_2018-2021

²³ Contribution analysis Methodology for evaluations

²⁴ Gender@work analytical framework

The evaluation methodology applied the OECD-DAC criteria, including relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency as well as the criteria of gender and human rights. The evaluation followed the principles of gender-responsive evaluations, and ‘a utilization focused lens’ to generate forward-looking and actionable recommendations ensuring the information needs of the Country Office and stakeholders are met.

The evaluation followed United National Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guiding Principles, including particular consideration of the following: 1) respect for dignity and diversity; 2) right to self-determination; 3) fair representation; 4) ethical protocols for vulnerable groups; 5) redress; 6) confidentiality; and 7) avoidance of harm. To operationalize these principles and UN Women policies, a Data Management Plan guided the evaluation team on the ethical protocols adopted during data collection and how data was managed and stored.

A mixed-methods approach utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data was used to triangulate and verify data, increasing the internal reliability and consistency of findings. The evaluation used a participatory approach to ensure the perspective and voices of all stakeholders were considered, paying specific attention to the inclusion of women, individuals and groups who are vulnerable and/or discriminated against. This was somewhat limited by the nature of remote data collection.

The inception phase included an evaluability assessment; a participatory workshop with Country Office personnel to discuss elements of the evaluation approach; reconstruction of the Strategic Note Theory of Change; and a stakeholder mapping exercise. The results of these exercises were used to design evaluation questions and support analysis. The evaluation matrix can be found in [Annex 2](#).

2.5 Evaluation limitations and risk-mitigation strategies

During the inception phase of this evaluation, the evaluation team identified the following key limitations:

Time and COVID-19 challenge: The evaluation was constrained due to complications caused by the COVID-19 crisis, making in-person stakeholder engagement challenging. To mitigate this limitation, online options for team discussions were deployed. The evaluation

team worked closely with the Country Office evaluation focal person to organize consultation meetings to ensure the timely completion of the data collection phase.

Potential overlap/duplication of consultation with common stakeholders, such as the UNCT for the new cooperation framework development process: Detailed mapping of stakeholders was shared with Country Office personnel for early identification of any such potential overlaps or duplications. The need to collect independent evaluative evidence from stakeholders for the Country Portfolio Evaluation was also explained.

In consultation with the Country Office, the evaluation team adapted the data collection plan and approach to ensure the evaluation remained comprehensive, gender-sensitive and methodologically rigorous; and was responsive to the changed global realities, including limitations on travel and in-person data collection. The initially identified risk related to the availability of stakeholders due to the pandemic context in Egypt did not ultimately represent a challenge as online interviews and focus group discussions with all relevant stakeholders were undertaken. Similarly, all Country Office personnel were very committed to the evaluation process and provided continuous support.

2.6 Data collection and analysis

Multiple methods of data collection and analysis were carried out using both primary and secondary data to triangulate evidence, including desk review, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and analysing and cross-referencing past evaluations.

Specifically, the evaluation covered the following sample:

- A review of more than 80 documents, including key policy documents, UN Women programme documents and other reports from the UNCT and donors, project progress reports, annual work plans, reports from partners and other documents as listed in [Annex 5](#).
- One all-personnel workshop.
- 65 key informant interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders from government, private sector, development partners, academia, and Civil Society

Organizations (CSOs) (54 women-identified, 11 men-identified) as indicated in the stakeholder list in [Annex 4](#).

- 11 key informant interviews with beneficiaries (all women-identified): 7 from Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection programme and 4 from the Ending Violence Against Women programme.
- One focus group discussion with academic institutions (five participants)
- One online survey with the UNCT: sent to eight entities with five responses (63 per cent response rate), see [Annex 6](#).
- One online survey with UN Women Egypt Country Office personnel: sent to 40 personnel, 20 responses (50 per cent response rate), see [Annex 6](#).
- Review of six past corporate, regional and country-level evaluations.
- One case study on the Country Office’s private sector engagement, see [Annex 8](#).

2.7 Evaluation governance and quality assurance

The evaluation team comprised the Arab States Regional Evaluation Specialist, who is a member of the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) and acted as the team lead for this evaluation process; an International Independent Evaluator and a National Independent Evaluator. The UN Women Egypt Country Office provided administrative, technical and logistic support for this exercise.

An Evaluation Reference Group was established to enhance the participatory approach and national ownership of the process and for validation purposes. It included a representative sample of key stakeholders from the UN Women Egypt Country Office, Arab States Regional Office, government and the UNCT. This evaluation report was validated by the Evaluation Reference Group.

IEAS provided quality assurance support to the process. The IEAS Director and IES Chief provided oversight and methodological guidance, and the UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Evaluation Specialist provided peer support.

Figure 5: Evaluation Data Collection prepared by Evaluation Team

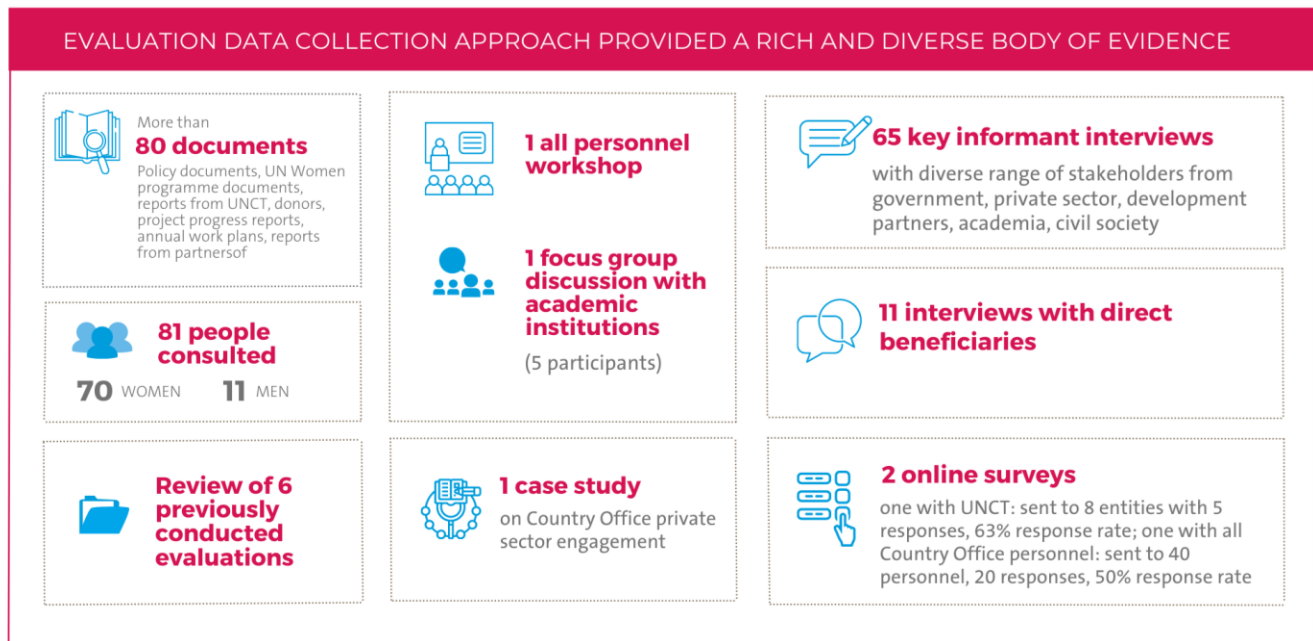




Photo ©UN Women

3 FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance and coherence

Finding 1: The Strategic Note is aligned to national and international priorities and to the identified needs of women and girls in Egypt.

Figure 6: Egypt’s gender equality and the empowerment of women context prepared by the evaluation team



Strategic Note programming is aligned across national, international and UN priorities and responds to the identified needs of women and girls in Egypt. The Country Office and the Egyptian government have in partnership undertaken considerable foundational normative work to integrate international priorities including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, UNSCR 1325, and the SDGs into national priorities. The Strategic Note is relevant to the gender priorities of the Government of Egypt. The President and government have placed high priority on gender equality and women’s empowerment, exemplified in the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030; the Haya Karima initiative aiming to improve standards of living for rural communities including dedicated training and entrepreneurship; the Egyptian Family Development Initiative, targeted at rural and urban women to expand their participation in the labour market; and a number of laws introduced under the Egyptian Constitution. Figure 7 shows the alignment of the Strategic Note with national and international commitments.

Figure 7: Alignment of the Strategic Note to national and international commitments (prepared by the evaluation team)

SN Impact Areas	National Women’s Strategy 2030	UN Partnership Development Framework	SDGs
SN Impact 1: Egyptian women lead, participate in and benefit equally from decision-making systems and processes	Women’s leadership and political participation Women’s social empowerment	Outcome Area 4 Outcome Area 3	4, 5, 10, 11
SN Impact 2: Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy	Women’s economic empowerment Women’s social empowerment	Outcome Area 4 Outcome Area 1	1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11
SN Impact 3: All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence	Protection of women Women’s social empowerment	Outcome Area 4 Outcome Area 2	3, 5, 10
SN Impact 4: Women and girls contribute and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and from humanitarian.	Women’s leadership and political participation Women’s social empowerment Protection of women	Outcome Area 4 Outcome Area 2 Outcome Area 3	1,2, 3, 5, 6, 13, 16

Finding 2: During the Strategic Note period, the Country Office maintained collaborative relationships with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). However, the country context limited the office’s ability to fully engage with the CSOs, including using its convening power for advocacy.

The evolving realities in Egypt with respect to CSOs impacted the ways in which the Country Office engaged with women’s NGOs during the Strategic Note period. National legislation (and pending revisions to legislation) made contracting CSOs complex and included protracted national security clearances for any foreign financing of civil society. Until 2021, when the revised legislation and regulations were adopted, there were limited opportunities for UN Women to convene women’s CSOs for national-level collective advocacy. UN Women’s global initiative Generational Equality Forum²⁵ hosted in partnership with youth and civil society was not supported by the government as these processes rested outside the UN’s official intergovernmental mechanisms.

The Country Office maintained an active collaboration with CSOs as implementing partners, facilitating their participation at the regional level for UN Commission on the Status of Women Sessions, Beijing +25 consultations, as Evaluation Reference Group members in programme evaluations, and through regular one-on-one meetings with CSO representatives on key issues. The Country Office has provided training and capacity building support that strengthened the functioning of CSOs on topics such as communications, results-based management, policy influencing and advocacy.²⁶ According to the UNCT members consulted for this evaluation, UN Women has also been proactive in advocating for a collective stance on the UNCT’s engagement with CSOs.

The national approach to civil society in Egypt is in the midst of positive transformation. With the 2020 adoption of the new CSO Law, organizations now have

greater clarity on the regulatory framework, clearances and procedures involved. In September 2021, the Government of Egypt adopted its first National Human Rights Strategy.²⁷ The President of Egypt declared 2022 the Year of Civil Society. The world’s attention will focus on Egypt when it hosts the UN Climate Change Conference (COP) 27 in November 2022. Through its annual work plan for 2022, the Country Office has committed to supporting the increased engagement of civil society in national dialogues; and, as part of development of its Strategic Note 2023–2027, with the Regional Office it has been exploring best practices in the Arab region for establishing a Civil Society Advisory Group in a manner relevant to the Egyptian context.

The Country Office successfully balanced its relationship with the government with advocacy on behalf of civil society: the evaluative evidence suggests the Country Office has been successful in working jointly with government and civil society in common area. This balancing act will always be subject to potential criticism – by some for being too close to civil society and by others for being too close to the government. It will be important that the Country Office, in concert with UNCT, acts on any changes in the government’s approach towards civil society to increase the voice of CSOs in its advocacy work.

²⁵ Generation Equality Forum, UN Women

²⁶ Men and Women for Gender Equality End-term evaluation, 2022

²⁷ Egypt’s National Human Rights Strategy

Finding 3: The Country Office’s comparative advantage as a trusted, knowledgeable partner in gender equality and women’s empowerment in Egypt is recognized by stakeholders. The office’s work on a gender-responsive COVID-19 response showcased its ability to amplify the needs of women and girls.

In evaluation interviews, stakeholders indicated that UN Women is recognized as the UN’s specialized entity for enhancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of Egypt. Specifically, the national stakeholders consulted noted that UN Women brings the stature of an international organization with a global mandate, regional linkages, expertise and coordination capacity, and a strong technical skill set. They viewed the link that the Country Office provides between government entities and civil society and the production of relevant quality evidence and research as key parts of the Entity’s comparative advantage.

The stakeholders consulted noted that the Country Office played a leadership role in ensuring that the gender impacts of COVID-19 were considered and addressed in national and UNCT policy responses.

In the same vein, interviews and data from the UNCT survey (see Annex 6 for UNCT survey responses) confirmed UN Women’s comparative advantage in gender equality and women’s empowerment in Egypt compared with other UN entities and key stakeholders.

This acknowledgement is a positive foundation as the Country Office begins to assert a greater strategic leadership position with its counterparts. It will be for Country Office leadership and personnel to maximize the positive nature of their reputation, as a means of continuing to build positive change for women and girls in Egypt.

The Country Office’s COVID-19 activities

- UN Women and the National Council for Women commissioned the first Rapid Gender Assessment (telephonic) survey to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. It was the first UN agency to conduct a such a nation-wide telephone survey on the impact of COVID-19 on women.
- The Country Office supported the National Council for Women to issue Egypt’s Rapid Response to Women’s Situation, providing a national road map on a gender-sensitive approach to the pandemic.
- The office mobilized US\$ 8.3 million in support of the COVID-19 response in 2020 (Women’s Financial Inclusion targeting rural women; COVID-19 responsive essential services; greater work on the care economy). This allowed the government and CSOs to continue provision of key services to women during the pandemic, including supporting the immediate adoption of digitized tools and online modalities to ensure continued access to mental health support, and legal aid/advice.
- The Country Office’s position as the lead entity coordinating on gender equality in the UNCT and among development partners allowed it to effectively support the mainstreaming of gender equality priorities into the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP).
- It provided cash assistance to support refugees and host community nationals to cover their basic needs during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS), UN Women developed new protocols to ensure that shelters are supported in the pandemic response, building on its previous efforts to revise shelter bylaws.

(Data source: Evaluation interviews, Annual Progress Report 2018-2021)

Finding 4: The Country Office has advanced UNCT gender priorities through its coordination mandate. However, some areas need strengthening.

Gender equality in Egypt is a UNCT priority. The 2018–2022 UN Partnership Development Framework states “dealing with issues of women’s social and economic empowerment must be at the forefront of the UN’s support in the economic and social arenas”, integrates gender equality across all outcomes, and includes a stand-alone outcome area (#4): “By 2022, women are fully contributing to Egypt’s development and all women and girls” rights set forth in the Constitution, are respected, protected and responded to with no discrimination”.

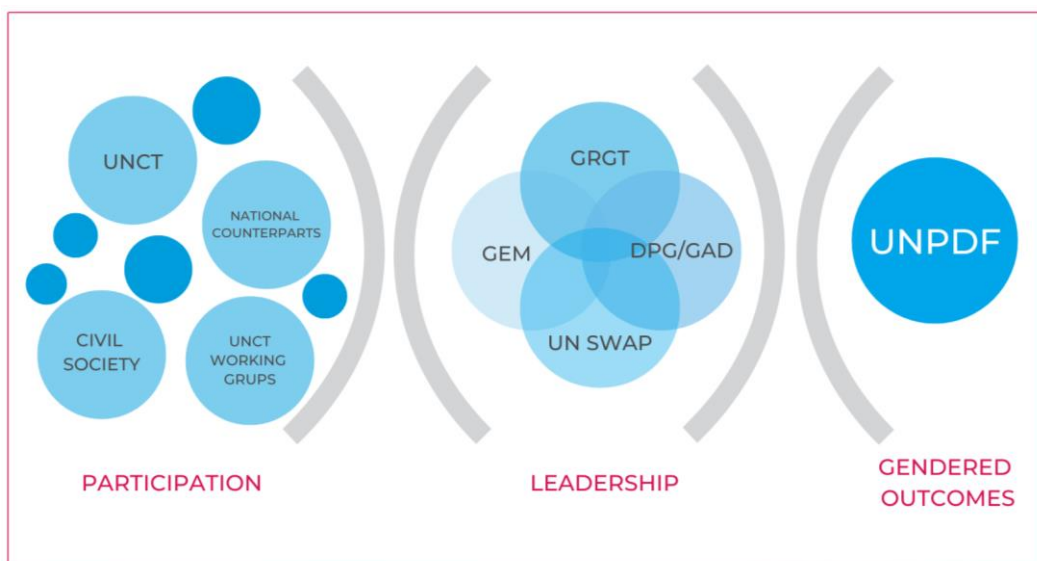
The Country Office’s UNCT coordination work includes:

- UN Partnership Development Framework Women’s Results Group (permanent co-lead with the Government of Egypt)
- UN Gender Theme Group (permanent co-lead)
- Development Partners Group (member) and under this, Gender and Development Group donor sub-group (co-chair)
- Drafting group on gender, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023–27 (co-lead)

Those efforts included leading the adoption and monitoring of the UN Partnership Development Framework annual work plans on Outcome 4; providing technical expertise for gender mainstreaming in the other outcomes including through UNCT System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) Gender Equality Scorecard and Gender Equality Marker analytics; and training for the UN Gender Theme Group. The Country Office’s coordination efforts were also notable as part of the UNCT pandemic response, focusing on mainstreaming gender equality priorities in the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP).

Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator and the Country Office, the UNCT-SWAP Scorecard assessment was completed in December 2019 and an annual follow-up assessment was conducted in 2021. The UNCT-SWAP 2021 reassessment showed that UNCT Egypt ‘met’ or ‘exceeded’ 67 per cent of the performance indicators. Progress had been made in the area of Common Country Analysis, CSO engagement and gender mainstreaming capacity, reflecting the leadership and technical work carried out by UN Women since the 2019 assessment. UNCT Egypt’s experience with the UNCT-SWAP was highlighted as a good practice during the regional UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard training in 2020, attended by more than 190 participants from 11 UNCTs representing 20 UN entities²⁸

Figure 8: Gendered outcomes in the UN Partnership Development Framework (prepared by Evaluation Team)



²⁸ UN Women Annual Progress Report 2020

According to the 2021 UN SWAP assessment, more than 90 per cent of operational joint programmes during the Strategic Note period had visibly mainstreamed gender in line with Scorecard Guidance – including five joint programmes on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Of 12 joint programmes, five were gender-targeted, and of the remaining seven, six had visibly mainstreamed gender with sex-disaggregated, gender-sensitive indicators and data and/or included a gender strategy. The UNCT partners consulted noted the Country Office’s coordination efforts as part of this success.

The Country Office’s coordination efforts are evident in the forthcoming UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023–2027. Within the Common Country Analysis, the Country Office led preparation of the Women’s Empowerment analytic paper and the process of gender mainstreaming throughout the analysis. The Country Office also led two inter-agency capacity development activities in 2021 to strengthen UN’s personnel knowledge of gender mainstreaming tools and key gender and human rights concepts. In the lead-up to Egypt’s presidency of COP 27, in May 2022 the Country Office led awareness raising and the development of advocacy tool for the UN Gender Theme Group on gender equality within climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction. With UN Women leading the drafting of the content, the emerging UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (formal government ratification now pending) contains a dedicated gender outcome and has gender mainstreamed across the other outcomes.

However, some areas need strengthening: the UNCT does not have an internal mechanism in place to ensure the quality of gender mainstreaming across joint programmes and some continue to fall short on visible gender mainstreaming. There is no UNCT Civil Society Advisory Group in Egypt. While the Country Office has been proactive in facilitating dialogue and discussions on the engagement of the UNCT with CSOs, there is not yet a collective UNCT strategy for civil society.

UNCT Survey Results

The evaluation team surveyed five key UNCT partners about the Country Office’s coordination efforts: 4/5 agreed that UN Women had effectively fulfilled its coordination mandate and that UN Women was effective in strengthening coordination in the UNCT system through coherence of UN gender interventions, technical support for gender mainstreaming in UN interventions and accountability on gender.

3.2 Effectiveness

In this section, the Country Office’s results are presented according to their placement within the Theory of Change reconstructed by the evaluation team. The intervention logic of the Strategic Note is tested using the causal chain assumptions made by the Country Office.

Finding 5: Normative work has been an area of strength for the Country Office through its partnership and coordination with the National Council of Women, making contributions to the gender equality and women’s empowerment policy and legislative framework and its reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

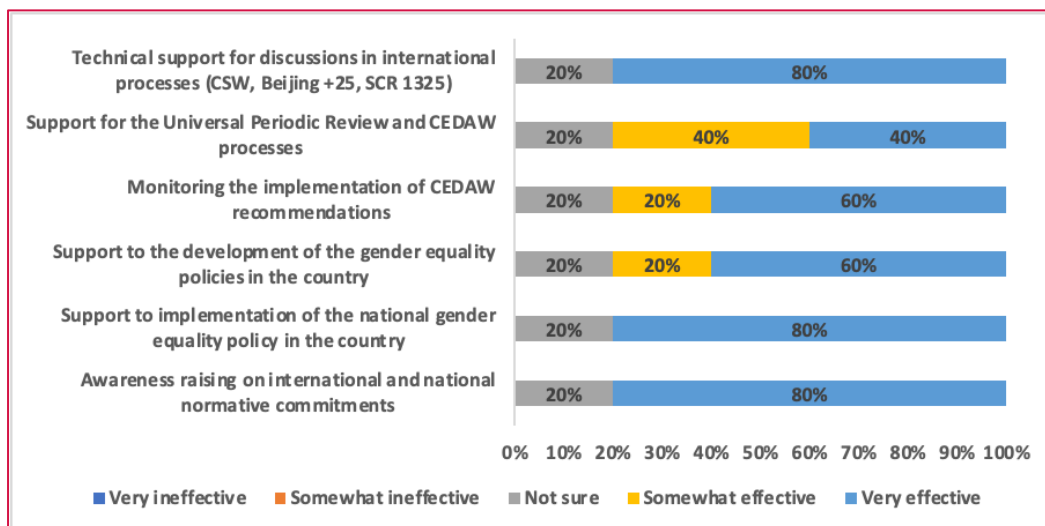
Figure 9: Normative areas of impact (prepared by evaluation team)



The evaluation team used contribution analysis to map the Country Office’s contribution to normative change during the Strategic Note period. Full analysis can be found in [Annex 7](#).

This analysis was supported by stakeholder interviews which indicated that the Country Office has contributed to key policy and legislative changes through its strategic partnership with the government that strengthen gender equality. The UNCT survey also reflected the positive contribution made by the Country Office to normative work (see [Figure 10](#)).

Figure 10: UNCT survey response to Q 13: How effectively has UN Women contributed to normative work in the following areas?



Particular normative changes referenced by stakeholders include the country's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (final draft ready in 2022 and adoption still pending); revised shelter bylaws to eliminate the practice of compulsory family mediation and conciliation (2019); the adoption of standard operating procedures for shelters during the COVID-19 lockdown and outbreak; and the integration of a gender perspective in the annual budget call circular (2021) of the Ministry of Finance. The Country Office's work to support the development of a National Review of Gender Statistics to inform the development of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics of Egypt in partnership with the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) and its contribution to influence policy debate around the care economy to increase public recognition and investments in this area was also well acknowledged.

Three key strategies emerged as the main driving force behind the Country Office's successful normative work: a) its partnership with the government; b) technical advice and support to the government, including national capacity building initiatives to operationalize and monitor policy and legislative changes; and c) UN Women's policy relevant research and evidence.

UN Women supported the development of the Observatory on the Status of Women²⁹ responsible for tracking progress of the National Strategy for women's empowerment in Egypt and indicators of sustainable development for women. The observatory has played a role in informing laws and policies related to gender equality. UN Women has also provided technical advice to and supported nationally driven research of the National Council of Women's Legislative Committee, responsible for submitting proposals for new laws or legal amendments to the National Council of Women for its consideration.

The Country Office has extended support to operationalize policy and legal reforms through capacity building for government officials at the central and local level. It has supported the training of 200 staff at the National Council for Women at central and local levels on various

themes, for instance, as part of the drafting of the soon-to-be-adopted first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 1325 agenda in 2021;³⁰ and to operationalize the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics by strengthening the capacity of the National Statistics Office and staff from 15 line ministries on gender statistics. The stakeholders consulted for the evaluation provided constructive feedback about these sessions.

The Country Office worked with the government and UNCT on normative reporting, including providing technical assistance for CEDAW reporting, the Universal Periodic Review and Beijing +25 reviews. UN Women provided substantive inputs to the 'Joint UNCT Report in the context of Egypt's third Universal Periodic Review Cycle,' in 2019. Under the UN Resident Coordinator's leadership, UN Women also coordinated the drafting of the UNCT's Confidential Report to CEDAW and joined the Resident Coordinator in presenting it to the CEDAW Committee on behalf of the UNCT in October 2021.³¹



TESTING THEORY OF CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS

One of the Country Office's identified change strategies was that the normative focus would be integrated with local results and coordination. The evidence shows that the Country Office's legislative and policy advocacy was complemented by its on-the-ground capacity building for government personnel and its coordination of monitoring and reporting inside government and with the UNCT.

²⁹

<https://en.enow.gov.eg/%D8%B9%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B5%D8%AF>

³⁰ UN Women Annual Progress Report, 2021

³¹ *ibid*

Finding 6: The Country Office has developed a consolidated approach towards its Women’s Economic Empowerment interventions, underpinned by the seven “drivers” of Women’s Economic Empowerment identified by the UN High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment. However, there is room for improvement at an operational level to move from multiple projects to a comprehensive programme to achieve the desired scale and impact.³²

The Women’s Economic Empowerment portfolio has been one of the key pillars of the Country Office’s current Strategic Note, comprising eight programmes with approximately 29 per cent of the total thematic budget allocation for 2018–2021 and 14 personnel working directly within the portfolio as of February 2022.

The Country Office applied a dynamic approach to the Women’s Economic Empowerment portfolio to address the demands and requirement of women from diverse backgrounds. The Country Office’s approach combines both upstream interventions, working at the policy level, and downstream interventions, working with women on the ground. In so doing, the Country Office has partnered with government, the private sector and CSOs. The target group are women who are unemployed and under-employed, women returners, women entrepreneurs, and young women graduates of technical and vocational education with a focus on ‘non-traditional sectors’ to address gender-based occupational segregation in the workplace. The Country Office has stratified its interventions into three broad categories (see Figure 11) to address the needs of the poorest and the most marginalized women in the targeted areas, and to support women who are in the formal job market in the “missing middle” small and medium-sized firms.

The portfolio analysis reflects that these interventions align with the seven “drivers” of Women’s Economic Empowerment identified by the UN High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment (see Figure 12).

While the Women’s Economic Empowerment interventions are apparently designed to collectively contribute to a gender-responsive ecosystem for economic empowerment, the Country Office’s interventions at the operations level are still operating as multiple projects, rather than as a comprehensive programme and the results are yet to reflect large scale-impact.

The stakeholders consulted indicated that UN Women could do more to connect programmes to allow a deeper and longer-term engagement with beneficiaries. For instance, according to stakeholders, beneficiaries who received vocational training from one programme in an intervention area could have access to the loan facilities facilitated by other interventions/programmes to enhance a progressive realization of their economic empowerment. This could include a “geographical targeting” approach for deeper engagement and more tangible results.

³² For Project and Programme difference see- Project-vs-Programme

Figure 11: Country Office approach to the Women’s Economic Empowerment portfolio (prepared by the Country Office)

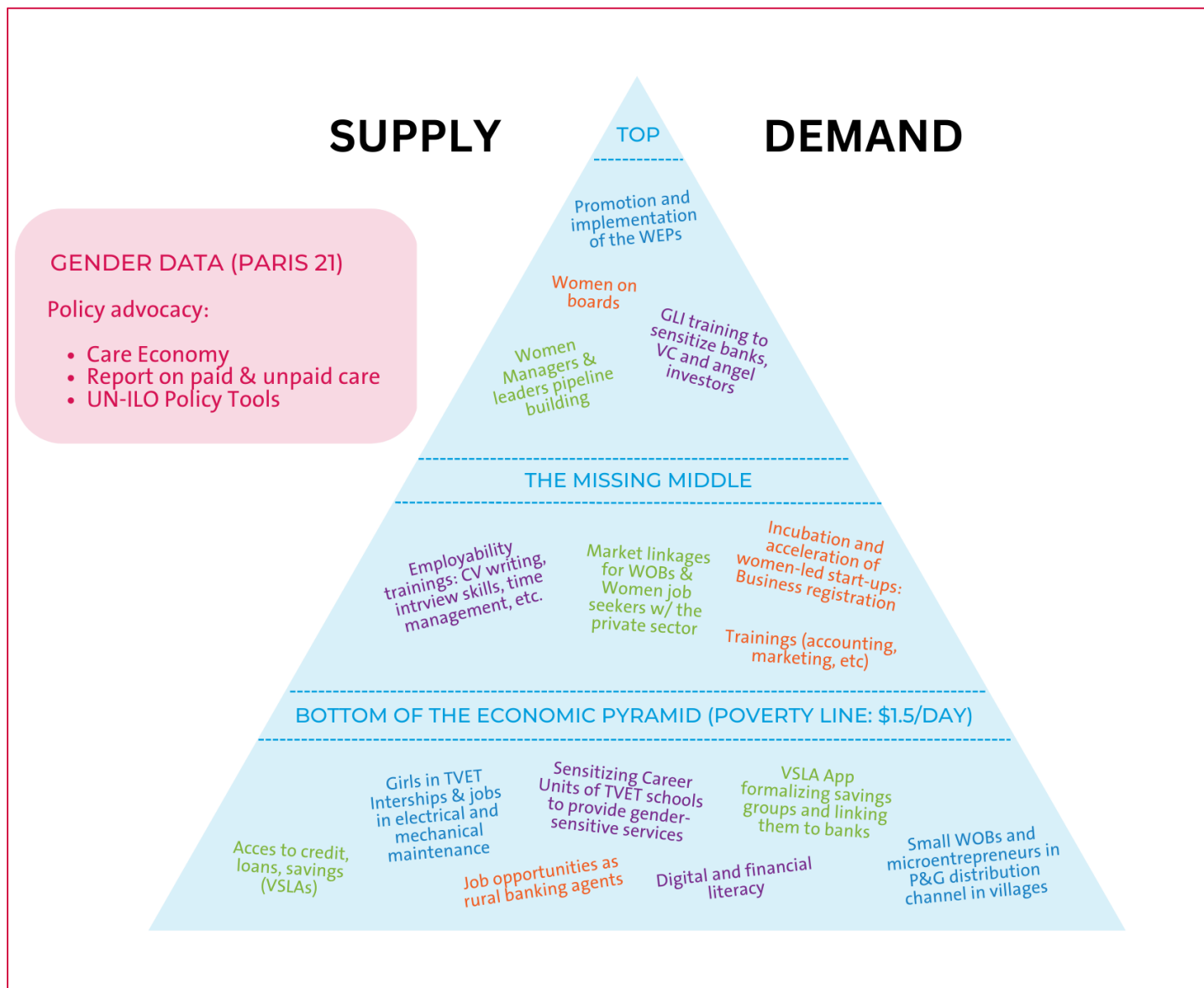
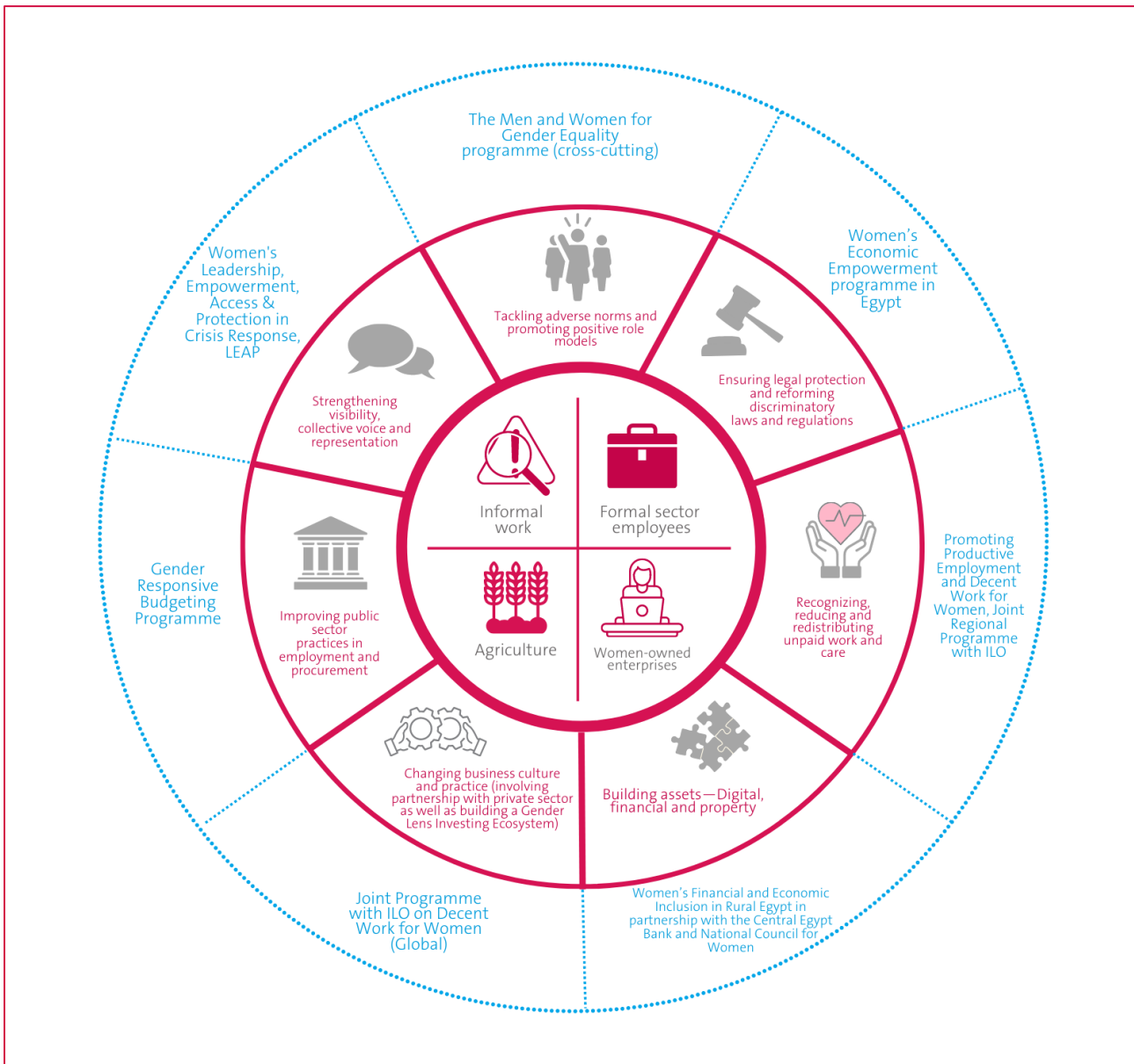


Figure 12: Adaptation of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, first report: A call to action for gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, 2016 with Country Office programmes (prepared by the evaluation team)



Private sector implementing partners shared similar observations, including that private sector partners do not feel as connected to each other as they could be, and that they have very limited involvement beyond their own projects or interventions. These partners expressed a desire to be part of a larger network (see the private sector case study in Annex 8 for more details).



TESTING THEORY OF CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS

The Theory of Change envisions large-scale impact and systemic changes, including that women, particularly marginalized groups have income security, decent work and economic autonomy. While considerable work has already taken place to consolidate Women's Economic Empowerment interventions with a holistic approach, there is room for improvement at an operational level to move from multiple projects to a comprehensive programme to achieve the desired scale and impact.

Key Women's Economic Empowerment results during the Strategic Note period (2018–22)

- 20 new companies in different fields signed the Women's Empowerment Principles during the Strategic Note period, making a total of 42 as of December 2021
- 11 women-owned companies established
- 2,711 women supported to strengthen their capacities and skills to participate in the economy, including as entrepreneurs
- 106 women trained and registered for company board placement service
- 10,000 persons reached with messages through one national campaign on shared household responsibilities

Annual Work Plan Reports, 2018-2021

Finding 7: UN Women’s approach of engaging men and boys and promotion of positive social norms change to end violence against women is yielding positive results, but mostly at the individual level. A stronger social relations approach is needed involving work with families and communities to achieve and sustain social norms change. Overall coordination also needs to be improved to avoid an End Violence Against Women mandate overlap between UN entities.

The Country Office’s End Violence Against Women portfolio is the second key pillar of the current Strategic Note, comprising four programmes with approximately 53 per cent of the total thematic budget allocation for the 2018–2021 period and seven personnel working directly on the portfolio as of February 2022.

The portfolio is multi-layered, from individual to system level with actions focusing on safe spaces, safe shelter, legal aid, mental health, policy reform and social norms change.

The stakeholders consulted appreciated the Country Office’s thought leadership and technical support provided to engage men and boys in this challenging area, particularly through the “Because I am a Man (BIAM)”³³ campaign, which provided an entry point to focus on men and boys. The evaluation of Men and Women for Gender Equality Programme³⁴ corroborates these observations that UN Women has contributed to enhanced knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning positive gender social roles at the targeted beneficiary level (both men and women). However, according to that evaluation, the evidence of social norms change in the wider community is limited, implying that more work needs to be done to address harmful gender social norms at the family and community level³⁵ (see Figure 13).

Stakeholders also acknowledged the Country Office’s contribution to addressing issues of violence against women and girls in public spaces through the Safe Cities programme. Egypt’s first gender-responsive urban market, Zenein, and the Cairo Bus Rapid Transit project, shaped by women’s travel patterns and preferences, were referenced as useful models. The evaluation of the Safe Cities programme echoes its relevance and effectiveness.³⁶

The Country Office’s work with essential service providers nationally and locally in supporting a survivor-centred approach for survivors of gender-based violence drew mixed responses from stakeholders. Some appreciated this contribution, highlighting the way the Country Office has worked closely with other UN entities such as UNFPA, UNODC and UNDP to coordinate support for the “One Stop Shop” for the Protection of Women Victims of Violence; others stated they were not sure about UN Women’s value addition in this area of work. According to these stakeholders, “resource competition” among UN entities results in limited learning exchanges on this issue. The evaluation team notes that this is not an issue unique to Egypt as evidenced in the corporate evaluation of UN Women’s UN system coordination and its broader convening role in ending violence against women,³⁷ which noted challenges in developing an effective division of labour, particularly between UN Women and UNFPA. In the case of Egypt, inter-agency arrangements have been established through joint programming between UN Women and other UN entities such as UNFPA and UNICEF; however, overall coordination could be improved to avoid a “mandate overlap”. The evaluation team observed that the Resident Coordinator’s office acknowledged this issue as an area for improvement.

³³ Because I am a man campaign

³⁴ End-term evaluation of Men and Women for Gender Equality Regional Programme, 2022


³⁵ *ibid*

³⁶ End-term evaluation of Safe Cities free of Violence for Women and Girls, 2022

³⁷ Corporate evaluation: UN system coordination and its broader convening role in ending violence against women, 2021

Figure 13: Level of effectiveness of Country Office social norms change interventions using the UNICEF ACT Framework for measuring Social Norms Change ³⁸ and the results from the Men and Women for Gender Equality end-term evaluation (prepared by the evaluation team)

UNICEF ACT Framework	Assessment of the Country Office's social norms change interventions
Knowledge Degree to which beneficiaries have increased their knowledge of gender equality and harmful practices such as gender-based violence	Positive
Attitudes Degree to which beneficiaries have positively shifted their attitudes towards gender equality	Positive
Self-efficacy Degree to which beneficiaries have acquired skills to engage in gender equal behaviours and challenge harmful practices	Positive
Behaviour change Degree to which positive behaviours are practiced by beneficiaries as a result of engagement with the programme	Positive
Social norms Degree to which beliefs about typical and appropriate behaviour in the community have shifted.	Work to be done at the family and community level.



TESTING THEORY OF CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS

A key element of the Theory of Change progression from change strategy to output to outcomes is an increase in positive social norms and provision of essential services to end violence against women. The evidence indicates that to a large extent this holds true – the Country Office's strategy to engage men and boys, discussion around masculinities and positive parenting have supported change in knowledge attitude and behaviour but at a targeted individual level. Assumptions around the provision of essential services are partially true as there are other actors in this field.

³⁸ For further details of this model, see the UNICEF ACT Framework for Measuring Social Norm Change. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/documents/act-framework>

Finding 8: The Country Office has worked strategically to prioritize gender data and evidence for policymaking and for monitoring the progress towards the SDGs and the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women. Further work will be required to raise the profile and use of gender data in decision-making.

In Egypt, generation of quantitative data is always under close national ownership. The availability of gender data and statistics needs considerable attention. As per the UN Women Data Hub, as of December 2020, only 56.6 per cent of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective were available, with gaps in key areas, in particular: key labour market indicators, such as the gender pay gap and women in local government.³⁹ In addition, many areas – such as gender and poverty, women’s access to assets (including land), physical and sexual harassment, and gender and the environment – lack comparable methodologies for regular monitoring.

In this context, stakeholders commended the Country Office’s technical support to Egypt’s Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) to integrate gender statistics in the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and its contribution to build capacity on gender data and statistics.⁴⁰ As a result of this work, the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics will include a stand-alone chapter on gender statistics and gender mainstreaming guidelines in line ministries’ sectoral plans. This is an important step which will need operationalizing to ensure that the data generated is used to make policy and programming decisions.

The Country Office also engages in the production of research and knowledge products, which are used by most of its national and international partners as a reference for policy advocacy, programme planning and project design, and for further research and reference in capacity development initiatives. Publications on the role of the care economy in promoting gender equality, understanding masculinities, and gender perspectives on COVID-19 consequences, and the first national study on the situation of violence against women living with disabilities were the most referenced products by the respondents during consultations. However, there is potential to build a more systematic approach to filling gaps in the evidence base that would link gaps to priority areas of focus.

Key research and knowledge products produced by UN Women in the period 2018–2022 (compiled by the evaluation team)

- Understanding Masculinities: International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) - Egypt - Key Findings, 2018
- Breaking new ground in gender-responsive urban planning: Zenien Market Brief, 2019
- Social Protection Systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, 2019
- Women and COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020
- The Role of the Care Economy in Promoting Gender Equality, 2020
- Toolkit for Youth on Advocating and Achieving Gender Equality by 2030 - Egypt, 2021
- Gender-Transformative Parenting Manual, 2022
- Violence against Women with Disabilities, February 2022



TESTING THEORY OF CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS

The Theory of Change identifies data, evidence and knowledge management as a change strategy leading to a systemic outcome of production, analysis and use of gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data. The Country Office’s active engagement in this area has begun to produce systemic change aligned with the Theory of Change, through the embedding of gendered data collection into national statistics gathering.

³⁹ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/egypt>

⁴⁰ PARIS21 Introduces New Gender Statistics Assessment Framework in Egypt, 2019

Finding 9: The Country Office has had success in introducing novel ideas into programming in Egypt. However, there is room for the office to push the boundaries of innovation further.

Innovation in UN Women’s environment is complex, challenging and hampered by an imperfect corporate approach.⁴¹ In Egypt, the Country Office’s work on innovation is guided by national priorities and by its own successes in conventional programming. This is not to say that the Country Office has not had creative and novel successes. Partners and stakeholders had positive feedback about the Country Office’s communications approach raising awareness about gender sensitive issues and themes. In particular, the feature film “Between Two Seas”, tackling negative stereotypes about women and specifically calling attention to female genital mutilation is a good example of communications innovation – both in its very production and in the approach to garnering attention for the film. To ensure that the message is also shared with the general public, along with the National Council of Women, the Country Office has arranged for ongoing free screenings of the film with discussions in public spaces.

Partners and stakeholders also had positive feedback about the Country Office’s initiative supporting women’s engagement in Information Technology-related businesses and industries to break occupational gender segregation⁴² and improve digital financial inclusion of women entrepreneurs across Egypt.

The Country Office is poised to launch further innovative programming, such as the Sovereign Gender Bond. This programme is truly novel and offers the promise of national scale and significant normative impact. Similarly, there is innovation opportunity in work on gender and climate change. The Country Office has identified this as an area of focus as it prepares for the upcoming COP 27 in November 2022.

There is room for a bolder portfolio in areas where the government is a willing partner. Neither UN Women globally nor the Country Office has a clearly articulated, intentional, strategic approach to innovation that includes engaging partners in the innovation process and building a tolerance for risk and failure. A clear strategy and a methodical approach to incubate innovative ideas and learn from them would support dialogue with partners and donors to introduce even greater creativity into the portfolio.



TESTING THEORY OF CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS

The Theory of Change identifies digital transformation and innovation as a change strategy. While the Country Office has worked to ensure a digital focus is part of its Women’s Economic Empowerment strategy, including through digital financial inclusion and a focus on including women in IT and digital work streams, work is still required to embed innovation sufficiently to meet the assumptions in the Theory of Change.

⁴¹ Corporate Formative Evaluation of UN Women’s approach to Innovation, 2021

⁴² The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme interview respondents

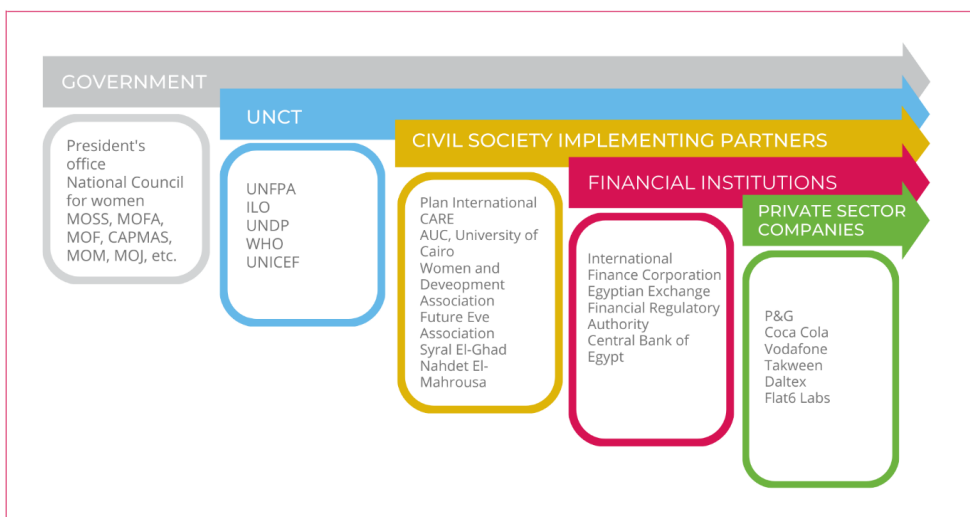
Finding 10: The Country Office’s multi-pronged approach to partnership has laid a foundation for expanding the scale of its reach across Egypt

The Country Office outlines partnership with government and the private sector as a key change strategy to catalyse large-scale impact and systemic change in its Theory of Change. Therefore, its focus has largely been on normative, coordination and “catalytic” operational interventions through a multi-pronged partnership approach.

The National Council for Women has been the key partner for the Country Office, but the office has also worked closely with other ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of International Cooperation, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Financial Regulatory Authority, CAPMAS, local authorities, UNCT partners and CSOs as implementing partners. The Country Office targeted a more cohesive relationship with private sector companies to address the gendered employment challenges in the private sector, including low rates of female employment, pay and leadership gaps - only 18 per cent of the female workforce is employed in the private sector, compared to 36 per cent in government and public sectors combined.⁴³ The Country Office engaged 20 new private sector companies in Women’s Empowerment Principles partnerships during the Strategic Note period to promote gender positive policies and also expanded its work with five private sector companies as implementing partners. Greater consideration of these private sector partnerships can be found in [Annex 8](#).

Most of the stakeholders consulted expressed their support for the Country Office’s partnership approach. They indicated that as an individual entity, UN Women Egypt cannot implement programming at scale across Egypt, nor should it, given the interest and commitment of the government towards gender equality. At the same time, the partners consulted expressed appreciation for the Country Office’s technical experience, its convening power and its contribution to support policy and legislative work; quality research; as well as the programmatic interventions to implement the government’s gender equality and women’s empowerment strategy at scale.

Figure 14: The Country Office’s multi-channel partnership strategy (prepared by the evaluation team)



⁴³ The World Bank’s 2019 Women Economic Empowerment study

While there have indeed been some tangible normative results that have the potential to positively change women's lives at scale (see Annex 7), e.g. momentum in the private sector such as through new companies signing up to the Women's Empowerment Principles during the Strategic Note period and ambitious endeavours such as the financial inclusion and digitalization initiative with the National Council for Women and the Central Bank of Egypt to change the lives of 120,000 women entrepreneurs, the large-scale results of partnerships are yet to be evident.

Each partnership channel with a different sphere of influence has the potential to reach both a wider geographic audience and/or target a specific demographic group. It is incumbent on the Country Office to maintain the engagement of its partners to reach the desired impact and scale during the next Strategic Plan period.



TESTING THEORY OF CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS

The Theory of Change assumption that partnership with government and the private sector will catalyse large-scale impact and systemic change is partially true. While the Country Office's intervention logic is strong, the actual results have not yet been fully realized.

3.3 Efficiency

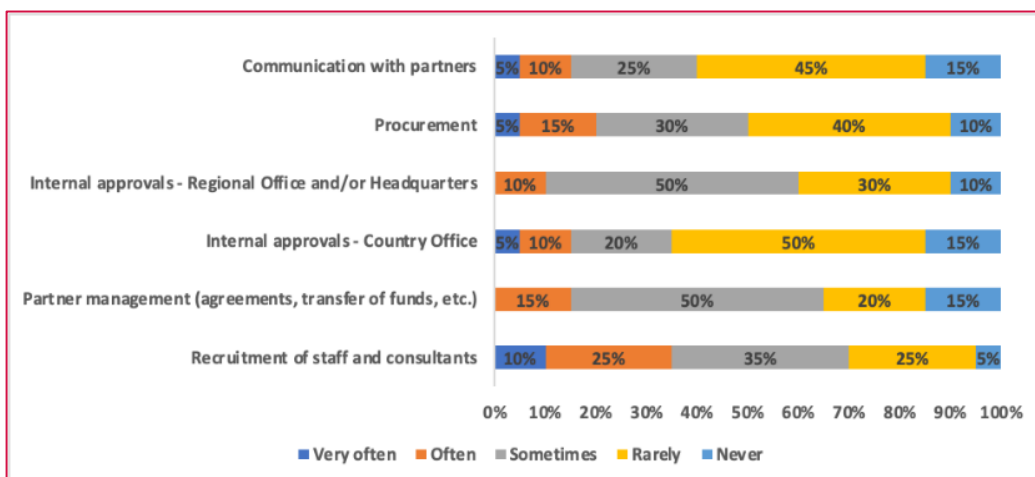
Finding 11: Despite multiple leadership transitions during the Strategic Note period, stakeholders and personnel reported no major challenges with management and operations. However, there is still room for improvement with regard to some corporate procedures, donor reporting, and personnel training and learning opportunities.

Leadership of the office during the Strategic Note period was turbulent, with two Country Representatives and two acting Country Representatives. This has stabilized over the past two years and was supported since 2019 by a consistent Deputy Country Representative and an Operations Manager.

The Strategic Note was implemented within the leadership transition and a pandemic period. Despite these challenges, the evaluation evidence did not reflect any major concern regarding the management and operations of the Country Office. The Country Office personnel survey (50 per cent response rate, 20 responses of 40) showed no significant bottlenecks in management areas, as seen in Figure 15. Consultation with implementing partners, including the government, which is the office’s largest implementing partner, did not reflect any major concern regarding management and operations. The evaluation consultations also indicated that the arrangement of placing UN Women personnel in government ministries to support oversight and financial management functions have apparently been fruitful.⁴⁴

Financial implementation had an average rate of 87.3 per cent over the period 2018–2021.⁴⁵ The financial implementation rate was high in 2018 (88 per cent), but went down in 2019 (85 per cent) and in 2020 (86 per cent) (see Figure 16). The Country Office attributed this mainly to COVID-19 related challenges and amendments brought in 2019 to a 2017 law regulating NGOs.⁴⁶ The new NGO regulations required all national and international NGOs to notify the Ministry of Social Solidarity to operate in Egypt and seek approval for receiving foreign funding. These led to a period of delayed implementation in 2019 and 2020. However, the Country Office managed to improve its financial implementation rate in 2021 (91 per cent).

Figure 15: Egypt Country Office Personnel Survey Response to Q 16: How often do you experience significant bottlenecks in the following management areas, if at all?



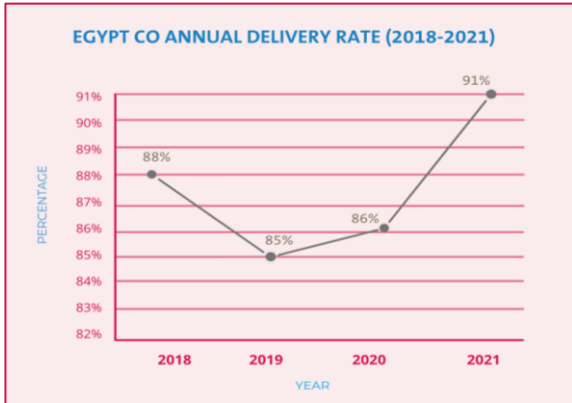
⁴⁴ UN Women personnel on individual consultancy contracts in government ministries to provide technical input, support oversight, financial management and efficiency of functions. Currently two UN Women personnel (on individual consultancy contracts) are placed in the National Council of Women, primarily involved in finance related support. In the past, consultants were placed in the National Council of Women for the national

ID programme as well as in the Ministry of Social Solidarity to provide technical advice and support. There are also plans to place staff in the Ministry of Finance in the future when the Gender Bond takes effect.

⁴⁵ The average rate for the period of January 2018 to 20th June 2022 is 75 per cent.

⁴⁶ Egypt’s government ratifies bylaws of new NGOs law, Year 2019

Figure 16: Egypt Country Office annual financial implementation rate (2018–2021)

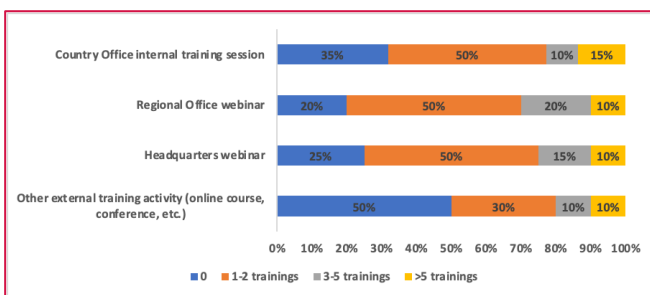


Source: UN Women, OneApp

The Country Office prepared annual risk registers with strategic, contextual, operational, fiduciary and safeguarding risks. These risks covered a broad range of areas⁴⁷ with mitigation measures and clear responsibilities. The Country Office monitors and updates the risk registers annually as part of its annual reviews and work plan development process; however, there is scope to improve risk mitigation and management by monitoring risks on a quarterly basis, as part of quarterly reviews of implementation of project documents and annual work plans.

The last internal audit of the Country Office was carried out in 2016 by the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations.⁴⁸ It was assessed as “partially satisfactory”.⁴⁹ All ten recommendations were accepted. The next internal audit for the Country Office is expected to take place in 2023.

Figure 17: Egypt Country Office personnel survey response to Q 11: Please select the training opportunities you have participated in since 2018 or after you joined the office, while indicating the number of those opportunities.



Source: UN Women personnel survey (n=20)

Some personnel interviews identified some corporate procedures as challenging, including the centralized approval process at the Regional Office and headquarters such as approvals of the General Ledger Journal Entry, vendors and vouchers, delegation of authority thresholds and bugs in the Procurement and Tender system that sometimes hinder the speed of implementation. The Country Office engages internally and with the Regional Office and headquarters to mitigate these challenges but there is room for organizational improvement.

The Country Office generally monitored Strategic Note indicators in a timely manner and donor reporting was also completed on time. However, some donors requested a greater level of ongoing information sharing, rather than an annual report on progress so that they feel more engaged and see the “big picture”.

Interviews revealed that individual staff members and leaders in the organization are valued by partners and stakeholders for their flexibility and professionalism, both as gender experts and in programme management. Internally, there appears to be job satisfaction among personnel.

The Country Office personnel survey results were positive about work–life balance and collaborative ways of functioning – for details, see Annex 7.

An area of note relates to training, staff development and learning opportunities. In answer to the survey question on training opportunities since 2018, most personnel indicated they had either no training or one–two opportunities. Personnel also noted that there had been less knowledge sharing between projects since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the pandemic, this is not surprising but as things move towards a more normal situation, ensuring that personnel are up to date and knowledgeable is critical to the success of the Country Office.

⁴⁷ Including but not limited to: Limited funding, change management, fraud, Third party risks, country risk- political or civil.

⁴⁸ UNDP Audit Report_ UNW Egypt Country Office_2016

⁴⁹ Implying that the internal controls, governance and risk management processes were generally established, and functioning, but needed improvement.

Finding 12: The Country Office is working to leverage national investments, but initiatives are at a nascent stage and declining non-core resources is a key challenge.

The majority of Country Office funding during the Strategic Note period (close to 78 per cent) came from non-core funds. However, the revenue stream analysis of non-core resources (as of May 2022) showed that the “confirmed” non-core funding for the office will come to an end in 2024.⁵⁰ Consultation with the operations team revealed that approximately US\$ 4.7 million is in the hard pipeline through to 2024. This was noted as one of the key concerns by Country Office and Arab States Regional Office management. Most Country Office personnel surveyed (90 per cent, 18 of 20 respondents) also expressed concern about the inadequate financial resources.⁵¹

Review of the resource mobilization plan maintained and updated by the Country Office on a quarterly basis revealed that the office has had limited success since 2021 in securing non-core funding. Consultations revealed that the Country Office targeted two big funding opportunities that did not manifest – USAID Funded Women’s Empowerment Programme in Egypt: Coherent Approach to Empowering Women (US\$ 39 million) and the European Union Spotlight initiative for Egypt (US\$ 6 million).⁵²

With respect to long-term support for women and girls, the Country Office works closely with the government and national institutions to sustain the results of its interventions. Some concerns were raised about the financial sustainability of some UN Women programmes, particularly those that needed high maintenance such as urban upgrading for safe gender

space. The Country Office is working to leverage other forms of financing such as through a Sovereign Gender Bond which could increase national budget allocation for gender equality and thereby allow for cost-sharing between the Country Office and Government of Egypt. However, along with other resource mobilization efforts, this is at a nascent stage and the potential results are still speculative.

Decreasing non-core funding in combination with missed resource mobilization targets is a challenge for the Country Office

⁵⁰ Limited to US\$ 397,000 in 2024 from the Korea International Cooperation Agency, KOICA for the Women’s Economic Empowerment programme.

⁵¹ UN Personnel Survey Question No 7: The Office has sufficient financial resources to do its job effectively.

⁵² Country consultations indicated that the USAID funding went to an American contractor and the EU Spotlight Initiative did not progress as the government had reservations about the programme’s explicit human rights approach.

3.4 Human rights and gender equality

Finding 13: The Country Office’s programming, particularly in the Women’s Economic Empowerment thematic area, has intentionally targeted impoverished women and displaced women. It requires more structured consideration of multiple vulnerabilities, intersecting discrimination and a systematic response to the needs of other marginalized groups who are further left behind.

Leave no one behind is a fundamental principle driving the work of UN agencies and a critical element of achieving the SDGs. The Country Office has identified specific target groups that, in Egypt, have intersections between gender and poverty, life in northern Egypt, being displaced or a refugee, and women with disabilities.

The Country Office placed a high priority on its Women’s Economic Empowerment strategy and included its focus on women in poverty and displaced women within that strategy. This is a successful approach to embedding the needs of marginalized groups directly into a larger programme – an important element in achieving inclusive transformational change.

However, this programming has largely focused on women in certain governorates and communities in Upper Egypt. Stakeholders noted this limitation and the potential to expand the geographic scope and scale of programming to reach more poor and marginalized women in other governorates.

The Country Office has prioritized women with disabilities. In this regard, it supported an important study on Violence Against Women with Disabilities in collaboration with the National Council for Women, Ministry of Social Solidarity, UNDP and UNFPA that focused on the poorest of the poor population of women with disabilities benefitting from social protection programmes. The study revealed that 54 per cent of ever-married women surveyed were subjected to psychological violence, whereas 42 per cent were subjected to physical violence at the hands of their husbands. The evidence generated aims to inform the development of the National Disability Agenda of Egypt through developing policy recommendations to support women with disabilities.

By-the-numbers snapshot of leave no one behind programming (from Annual Work Plan Reports 2020 and 2021)

- A total of 1,035 women had access to employment opportunities through skills development and vocational training
- 250 women received direct cash assistance
- 236 women had cash for work opportunities (through the production of 10,000 face masks and ear savers)
- More than 286 refugees had access to gender-based violence related services, counselling, psychosocial and legal support, and referrals
- 54,600 marginalized and displaced women received ID cards



Violence Against Women with Disabilities Studies

Other programming was conducted with minimum barriers to participation, including ensuring that online programming was available for women who could not leave the house and women with disabilities, and by supporting entrepreneurial ventures by women from all groups, including women with disabilities and displaced women. For instance, under the Men and Women for Gender Equality programme, although not initially planned within the programme, one of the interventions used Braille for people with visual impairment.⁵³ Similarly, the joint programme for the ‘Economic Empowerment of Women for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Egypt’ provided professional training to 1,000 women, of whom 300 live with disabilities, to access the job market.⁵⁴

Not all the Country Office’s programming is fully inclusive. Certain types of programming, such as Women on Boards required UN Women and their partners to engage in recruiting qualified participants. In this programme, women in targeted groups were not actively sought out. While this is understandable, as the pool of qualified candidates is low, the Country Office missed the opportunity to include women in target groups, such as women with disabilities. Similarly, the Gender Transformative Parenting initiative could have included a module on inclusion and Persons with Disabilities⁵⁵ and the Country Office could have systematically addressed the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals such as domestic workers, migrant women, etc.

There is room for more focus on the intersection between economic empowerment interventions and increased risk of gender-based violence. Stakeholders acknowledged that the Country Office’s Women’s Economic Empowerment programmes have been more “reactionary” in responding to gender-based violence issues that emerged as a result of changing traditional gender roles through women’s economic empowerment. There are some good examples such as the Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection in Crisis Response programme⁵⁶ that linked protection from gender-based violence services with economic empowerment initiatives. While these concepts have been instituted in particular interventions, a more consistent consideration of such risk assessments should now be applied to all programming. More systematic engagement of men and boys, families and communities could also be considered to generate “buy-in” and prevent backlash due to changes in traditional gender roles as a result of women’s economic empowerment programmes.⁵⁷

Overall, the Country Office’s holistic approach to leave no one behind has generated results, in particular for women in poverty and displaced women in northern Egypt. It requires a stronger and more structured consideration of multiple vulnerabilities, intersecting discrimination and a systematic response to the needs of other marginalized groups who are further left behind.

Figure 18: Highlights of the Country Office’s leave no one behind programming (prepared by the evaluation team based on programme documents)

Programme	Women in poverty	Displaced/migrant/refugee women	Women with disabilities
Safe Cities	✓	✓	✓
Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection in Crisis Response	✓	✓	
Financial Inclusion (VSLA)	✓	✓	✓
Research Paper on Violence Against Women with Disabilities	✓		✓
Men and Women for Gender Equality Programme			✓
Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme initiatives under various Women’s Economic Empowerment programmes	✓	✓	✓
Egyptian Women’s Empowerment Development of National Action Plan (1325)	✓	✓	✓

⁵³ End-term evaluation of Men and Women for Gender Equality Programme, 2022

⁵⁴ Egypt Country Office Annual Progress Report 2018-2021

⁵⁵ End-term evaluation of Men and Women for Gender Equality Programme, 2022

⁵⁶ Evaluation of UN Women Economic Opportunities work under LEAP/HA, 2018

⁵⁷ See for example the WFP Evaluation guidance, which includes nine evidence pathways to gender transformation including #6: Focus on Social Relations to Avoid Backlash.

Finding 14: The Country Office’s portfolio demonstrates a commitment to transformative change, with programming that addresses multiple socio-ecological structures and challenges. However, the office’s monitoring and learning systems do not adequately capture and track these transformative changes.

The Gender at Work Framework⁵⁸ allows for an evaluation of the holistic nature of a gender equality and women’s empowerment portfolio, assessing impact and the interrelationship between gender equality, organizational change and institutions, and the power dynamics within communities.

When the Country Office’s portfolio is viewed across the four quadrants, a picture of fledgling transformative change emerges. The current Strategic Note called for a shift in programming towards a more strategic and less projectized portfolio, crossing thematic areas and addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment in a more holistic fashion. This shift is under way. The Country Office’s work has targeted each of the four quadrants and many programmes address multiple quadrants, targeting both formal and informal structures through a variety of activities.

With respect to the formal quadrants, it is clear that the normative improvements in legislation, policy and adherence to international conventions have been positively impacted by the Country Office’s work and advocacy. The Country Office has contributed to strengthening empirical evidence – both data and research – including important research on the impact of COVID-19 on women and an assessment of violence against women with disabilities. Ongoing work with the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics to build gender data in Egypt will have long-term, positive impact.

Similarly, UN Women’s work has made gains in the service delivery and resources available to women and girls through gender-responsive budgeting; support for service providers; and work on financial inclusion and entrepreneurship, strengthening individual capacity to act on rights and engage in self-improvement. The Safe Cities initiative in the marketplace in Zenin combined infrastructure designed through consultation with women users with capacity building so that women vendors could make the most of the new safe space.

The Country Office has made efforts to more directly influence the social norms that pervade Egypt’s ongoing gender equality challenges and to more directly empower women to act on their rights. According to the Country

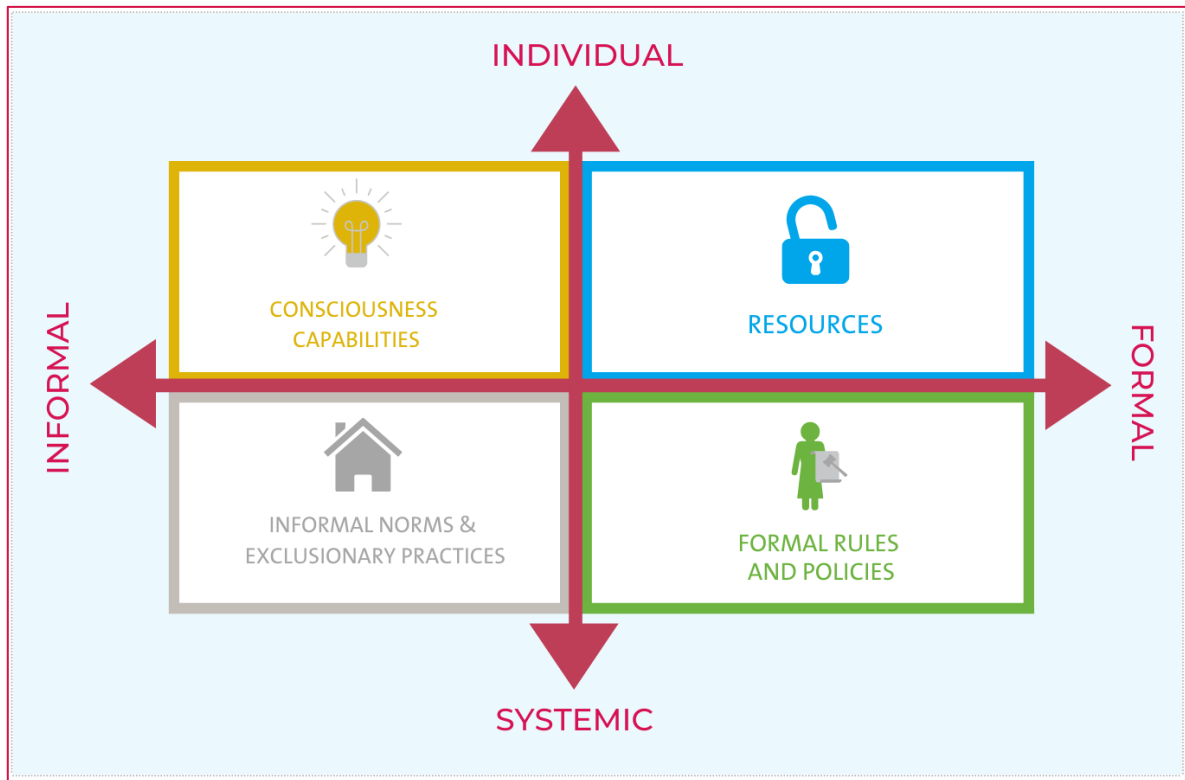
Office’s annual progress reports (2018–2021), over 50 community activities implemented in the Alexandria and Damietta governorates focused on behavioural change and promoting the engagement of men and boys in combatting violence against women and girls. More than 7 million people were reached under the Country Office’s larger advocacy and information campaigns, including “Because I am a man”. The successful film “Between Two Seas” has advanced discussion on harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and other forms of gender-based violence.

However, this work is far from complete. Almost all stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation process indicated that attitudes and perceptions of women in Egypt remain one of the most significant challenges to improving gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Such work requires long-term effort to grow the foundation laid during the current Strategic Note period. The Country Office’s monitoring and learning systems do not adequately capture and track gender transformative changes, such as social norms change by capturing for instance, resistance to change, the existence of sanctions, men’s engagement in household duties or evidence of religious and community leaders speaking out. Establishing a means of capturing and analysing this data will support the Country Office’s transformation efforts.

⁵⁸ Gender at work analytical-framework

Figure 19: Gender at Work Framework



LESSONS LEARNED

This section provides lessons from the experience of the Egypt Country Office that have potential application for other UN offices and programmes.



Maintaining the engagement of private sector corporate partners requires a strategy that allows those partners to see the big picture and plan for their own roles.

Private sector partners value their engagement and partnership with UN Women but the absence of a long-term vision and strategy for their engagement risks discouraging their interest and investment.

A piecemeal approach of small-scale interventions is not conducive to a long-term, fruitful private sector–UN partnership. In order to stay engaged, private sector partners need to see either significant scale or new gains, including engagement of a network of other companies to bolster the investment, increase innovative opportunities and share the investment burden.



Long-term outcomes must be anticipated, such as the transfer of responsibility from implementing partners to the government to ensure the sustainability of the results

A multi-channel partnership strategy that includes a variety of implementing partners, including international agencies and private sector companies is an important strategy for expanding the scope and reach of interventions. However, neither international agencies nor private sector companies have the mandate, capacity or commitment to maintain or sustain the gains made through the programmes. In many instances, the government or a government agency has the mandate for that work. Without long-term planning that includes partnership and commitment by government to increase attention in those areas, the efforts made in the initial intervention could be lost. It is critical to explicitly embed financial sustainability plans from the outset of programmes, and work towards transferring those responsibilities to the government, especially for programming that impacts the most vulnerable target groups.



Maintaining a successful partnership with a strong government partner requires trust, focus and co-creation of programmes.

Understanding the perspective and mandate of government counterparts is critical to sustaining a long-term partnership. Along with building trust and relationships, co-creating programmes with government counterparts helps to build ownership. The Egypt Country Office has built a successful partnership with the government through the National Council for Women, finding its place as an advocate, trusted partner and technical expert. The Country Office makes strategic decisions about which issues it will advance, ensuring that these issues are aligned with the national strategy. From a practical perspective, this includes engaging the National Council for Women in programme development and scope, while facilitating the engagement of diverse perspectives of beneficiaries and civil society through a variety of means.



A corporate strategy and guidelines on innovations would support UN Women Country Offices to develop an enabling environment for its work in innovation.

A standard strategy or framework on innovation would help Country Offices to develop the relevant organizational structures, systems and culture to design, implement and learn from innovative approaches. Such a strategy or framework would help UN Women to be more intentional and methodical in its approach to innovation. Successful innovations have the potential to support gender equality impact at scale.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides overall conclusions and corresponding recommendations. Over the course of the Strategic Note, the UN Women Egypt Country Office introduced a refined strategy to focus resources, time and attention in key areas. This approach seeks to support national priorities and maximize UN Women's role in this large and complex country. It has also laid the ground for the Country Office to potentially achieve impact on a larger scale and scope in the coming years.

The recommendations have been drafted following a consultative approach with the Evaluation Reference Group. Presentation of preliminary findings and the way forward took place in a workshop with Reference Group members to inform the recommendations presented below. Each recommendation is tied to corresponding findings and conclusions and includes actions for consideration by the Country Office. The level of priority and responsibility for actions are indicated with each recommendation.

Conclusion 1

The Country Office sustained its relevance over implementation of the Strategic Note 2018–2022; demonstrated agility by adjusting its programmes to contribute to the response to COVID-19; and continued to deliver results despite frequent leadership changes. There is space to further consolidate its portfolio, avoid mandate overlap in the End Violence Against Women area, secure funding and intentionally aim for innovation.

The Strategic Note, its theory of change and programmatic interventions were designed to directly support the Egyptian government's international commitments and national priorities and contribute to the UN–Government of Egypt's Partnership Development Framework (2018–2022). The Country Office made a strategic decision to consolidate its portfolio under two key pillars of work – Women's Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women – under its current Strategic Note to achieve scale and impact. The Women's Economic Empowerment portfolio needs to be further consolidated to facilitate its transition from multiple projects to a comprehensive programme. Similarly, efforts should continue to avoid a “mandate overlap” with other entities in the Ending Violence Against Women area. The Country Office has supported some creative and novel initiatives, but it could be more intentional and methodical in its approach to innovation. The Country Office had multiple changes in leadership during the Strategic Note period, with stability at the Representative level only occurring during the final two years. Despite this upheaval, personnel remained valued by partners and stakeholders and personnel were reasonably satisfied with their workplace. Non-core funding declined during the period, creating a future challenge for the Country Office.



Based on Findings 1,8,9,11-12

Recommendation 1

The Country Office should continue to consolidate the portfolio approach under the Women's Economic Empowerment and End Violence Against Women pillars for the next Strategic Note.

Responsible Organization:

- Country Office
- Headquarters
- Regional Office

High Priority

Actions:

- Draw on the reconstructed Theory of Change and develop a revised monitoring framework that measures complex, transformative impact and includes independent feedback
- Develop approaches such as geographical targeting to increase the scale and impact of interventions
- Strengthen inter-agency mechanisms for coordinated actions in the thematic area of Ending Violence Against Women
- Analyse risks linked to having reduced core resources and strengthen risk management as well as the sustainability of interventions
- Go beyond formal engagement and reporting to donors

Conclusion 2

The Country Office has invested in building a multi-pronged partnership to achieve scale and impact. The Country Office is regarded as an expert partner in gender equality and women’s empowerment by the government, UN Country Team partners, private sector and other stakeholders. It has acted as a convener of government and civil society organisations. The Country Office has laid a foundation during this Strategic Note period for future expansion, scale and impact.

The Country Office has developed its multipronged strategic partnerships as a key change strategy to “catalyse” large scale impact and systemic change. It has established itself as a trusted and relevant partner of the government and its objectives and commitments. The Country Office has leveraged its coordination mandate, making use of the UN Country Team gender mechanisms for gender mainstreaming across United Nations agency programming. Fruitful inter-agency arrangements have arisen through joint programming between UN Women and other UN entities. The Country Office has also developed a more cohesive relationship with private sector companies to address the gendered employment challenges in the country. Despite limitation due to the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) laws during a period of the Strategic Note, the Country Office has acted as an important convener of government and civil society organisations.

Overall, its partnership approach has laid a foundation for future expansion, but the results remain small in scale. These have a potential to reach both a wider geographic audience and/or target a specific demographic group in the next period but more work needs to be done to leverage the private sector partnerships and strengthen the engagement of civil society organizations to develop a greater normative role and capture the impact and lessons of partnerships to ensure they can achieve impact in scale and scope.

 Based on Findings 2,4,6,10

Recommendation 2

The Country Office should facilitate a UNCT strategy to engage civil society in normative advocacy.

Responsible Organization:

- Country Office
- UNCT

Medium Priority

Actions:

- Work with UNCT partners and the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office to determine a shared course of advocacy and dialogue on the role and place of civil society organizations in Egypt.

Recommendation 3

The Country Office should develop a long-term, shared vision for change through its private sector partnership.

Responsible Organization:

- Country Office

High Priority

Actions:

- Engage with private sector partners to develop a private sector engagement strategy
- Develop a network of private sector companies beyond Women’s Empowerment Principles signatories and facilitate regular dialogue with them.

Conclusion 3

The Country Office has contributed to creating knowledge and awareness of gender data and statistics; filled evidence gaps; and supported evidence-based policy and programming decisions. A more systematic approach towards filling gaps in the evidence base and continued engagement with the Egyptian government's statistical agency will yield more tangible results.

The Country Office through its partnership with Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics has played an important role in raising knowledge and awareness about the need for gender data and statistics in Egypt. It is mainly because of UN Women's work that the gender statistics have been integrated in the Egypt's National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). The Country Office has also invested in producing some relevant policy research and knowledge, reported to have been used to set the policy agenda and influence normative changes. In the case of gender statistics, this is a good start, but the momentum needs to be maintained to ensure the strategy is operationalized and the generated data is used to make policy and programming decisions. The Country Office would benefit from taking a more systematic approach to filling gaps in the evidence base to inform decisions about new research topics, and to make the evidence available in an accessible format to decision makers.



Based on Findings 3,5,8

Recommendation 4

The Country Office should continue to strengthen the gender perspective in national statistics, production and availability of gender data and evidence and its use by policymakers and planners.

Responsible Organization:

- Country Office

Medium Priority

Actions:

- Develop an evidence gap map to identify gaps in the evidence base to inform decisions about new research topics and where UN Women would like to strategically invest its resources
- Continue partnership with CAPMAS to operationalize gender statistics and data commitments
- Consider opportunities to introduce innovative methodologies to respond to gaps.

Conclusion 4


The Country Office has demonstrated its commitment to the leave no one behind principle and has adopted a gender transformative approach through its programming. A stronger social relations approach; a systematic approach to identifying and targeting the most vulnerable groups; and a monitoring and feedback system to track the transformative changes would help to strengthen the Country Office's work.

The Country Office's portfolio appears gender transformative, with programming that addresses all aspects of socio-ecological life. The Country Office has made a concerted effort to respond to the needs of the some of the most vulnerable women and girls. However, the Country Office and its UN Country Team partners lack a systematic response to the needs of other marginalized groups. There is room for a more systematic approach to operationalize leave no one behind commitments by assessing who is left

behind and why; sequencing and prioritizing solutions; tracking and monitoring progress; and ensuring follow-up and review. A stronger social relations approach would be helpful to avoid backlash; identify gender-based violence risks in programming across the portfolio; and create scope for dialogue on some of the harmful impacts of gender norms. Almost all stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation process indicated that attitudes and perceptions about women in Egypt remain one of the most significant

challenges to improving gender equality and women’s empowerment. Such work requires long-term effort to grow the foundation laid during the Strategic Note period.

 Based on Findings 7,13,14

Recommendation 5 

The Country Office should augment its social norms change interventions by strengthening its social relations approach involving work with families and communities to achieve and sustain social norms change.

Responsible Organization:

- Country Office

High Priority

Actions:

- Develop guidelines to ensure robust gender and social relations analysis at the programme design stage paying specific attention to identifying gender-based violence related risks associated when challenging negative gender norms.
- Ensure that gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and management measures are embedded systematically in the design of programmes, implemented and monitored.
- Ensure the strengthening of engagement with national stakeholders and communities to avoid backlash.

Recommendation 6 

The Country Office should embed targeted leave no one behind outcomes in the next Strategic Note.

Responsible Organization:

- Country Office
- UNCT

High Priority

Actions:

- Embed a planned intervention for targeted vulnerable groups in every programme.
- Collect data and evidence to learn about what is working well and what needs to be changed.

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DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY
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UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and



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