

GENERATIA EGALITĂȚII



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COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION **MOLDOVA**

Draft Synthesis Report



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service by an independent evaluation team comprised of Isabel Suarez Garcia, UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialist for Europe and Central Asia and team lead for this evaluation; Aleksandar Zivanovic, International Evaluation Expert; and Eugenia Ganea, National Evaluation Expert.

The evaluation process was conducted between December 2021 and June 2022. The evaluation team is grateful to the over 300 stakeholders who participated in the process through video calls, online sessions and by responding to surveys. These stakeholders include representatives from civil society organizations, government counterparts, development partners, private sector partners, media professionals and UN Women Country and Regional Office personnel. We appreciate their willingness to engage during uncertain times and the rich quality of their contributions.

We are especially indebted to Dominika Stojanoska, UN Women Representative and Lucretia Ciurea, Monitoring and Reporting Analyst, for the time they dedicated to supporting the evaluation and in facilitating the engagement of partners and stakeholders and the entire UN Women Moldova Country Office team for their close engagement during this evaluation process.

We also extend our thanks to Inga Sniukaite, Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service and Lisa Sutton, Director of Independent Evaluation and Audit Services and Shravanti Reedy, Evaluation Specialist of the Independent Evaluation Service for contributing with quality assurance and feedback through the evaluation process.

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ACRONYMS/CHARTS AND TABLES

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
COVID-19	Corona virus disease
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EVAW	Ending Violence against Women
EU	European Union
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
Istanbul Convention	The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MPTF	Multi Partner Trust Fund
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMT	Operations Management Team
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SWAP	UN System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality
UNAIDS	Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPFSD	UN Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the main findings, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation of the UN Women Moldova Country Office Strategic Note 2018–2022, conducted between December 2021 and June 2022. A Country Portfolio Evaluation is a systematic assessment of UN Women’s contribution to development results relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level and aims to contribute to the development of the Country Office’s next Strategic Note and to support decision-making and accountability.

The Republic of Moldova is at the upper end of lower middle-income economies and one of the poorest countries in Europe. It has made significant progress in reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity with average annual growth of 4.5 per cent since 2000.¹ However, the country is largely reliant on remittance-induced consumption and was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and drought in 2020. Women, and already vulnerable population were hardest affected. The country was further affected by the war in Ukraine, in terms of trade and remittances channels, inflation and a humanitarian crisis with more than 470,000 refugees hosted in Moldova as of May 2022 with women comprising 66 per cent of the total.

Although gender disparities are persistent in all areas of life, Moldova is a signatory to international commitments on gender equality, with the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) ratified most recently, in 2021. The country also developed extensive normative frameworks to promote and enforce gender equality. Some progress has been made in implementing the legislative framework, particularly in terms of women’s political participation; capacity development of institutions for gender equality; and protection mechanisms to support victims of gender-based violence.

The UN Women Moldova Strategic Note 2018–2022 was developed in 2017 in a consultative process with the government and civil society. It is aligned with the Republic of Moldova United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018–2022, international standards on gender equality and the national policy and legal framework. The Strategic Note is organized around three impact areas: 1) Women’s Leadership and Political Participation, focusing on promotion and capacity building of women in decision-making, support to the National Strategy for Gender Equality (political participation and gender-responsive budgeting) and support to implementation of National Action Plan 1325; 2) Economic Empowerment of Women, focusing on supporting the development of policies for decent work opportunities and addressing unpaid care work, building capacities of women (including those from marginalized groups) to access

business development opportunities; and 3) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, supporting the development and implementation of policies for the prevention and provision of protection services, capacity development of local institution to provide specialized services to survivors and awareness raising.

Programming was largely concentrated on Women’s Leadership and Political Participation and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

The total budget for the Strategic Note period 2018–2022 was US\$ 18 million.² The office’s annual budget has continuously increased since 2019, as well as the budgets of each of the three portfolios. The majority of funding (over 80 per cent) are non-core funds. Resource mobilization was successful and over time the Country Office diversified sources of funding from two in 2019 to five in 2021. The Strategic Note is largely financed by the (unearmarked) Government of Sweden’s support to Strategic Note implementation (40.73 per cent), European Union (EU) (28.82 per cent) and to a lesser extent by the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (5.34 per cent), the UN Multi Partner Trust Fund (UN MPTF) (2.34 per cent); Government of Japan (1.5 per cent), the Dutch Government (1.2 per cent), and through global UN programmes and country-level initiatives of smaller scale (which altogether represent 2.42 per cent of total available funding). Core and Institutional Budget funds represent 17.76 per cent of the office’s total budget.

Evaluation purpose, objectives and methodology

This Country Portfolio Evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service in close collaboration with the Moldova Country Office as a formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the Country Office and national stakeholders’ strategic learning and decision-making for the next Strategic Note, set to start in January 2023. The evaluation also has a summative (retrospective) perspective to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience.

The evaluation assessed the relevance and coherence of UN Women’s interventions at national level and UN Women’s effectiveness, organizational efficiency and sustainability efforts and analysed how a human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note. The evaluation also identified lessons learned to support the Country Office to improve its strategic positioning to foster greater gender equality and women’s empowerment at the country level and provides actionable recommendations to support development of the next UN Women Moldova Country Office Strategic Note to be implemented during 2023–2027.

¹ World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=MD>

² This includes UN Women UN Women Core, Institutional Budget/Extra Budgetary funds and total final mobilized resources in the period 2018–2022, as of July 2022.

The scope of this Country Portfolio Evaluation includes all activities undertaken by the Country Office under its current Strategic Note, including operational work, support to normative frameworks in the country and United Nations system coordination, from January 2018 to March 2022. UN Women's contribution to the COVID-19 pandemic response in Moldova was also taken into account. The geographical scope of the evaluation spanned all of Moldova, given the Country Office's work at national and local levels across the country. The evaluation could not cover in great detail the consequences of the war in Ukraine on the Republic of Moldova and the Country Office's adjustment and response to the rapidly growing crisis, as the data collection phase of the evaluation was already over. However, some reflections and recommendations are provided based on developments and contacts with the Country Office and the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office during the data analysis stage and development of the evaluation synthesis report.

The evaluation fostered a participatory approach and applied a theory-based, contribution analysis and included outcomes mapping and outcomes harvesting. The evaluation was framed under the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria, including relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. An additional gender equality and human rights criterion was also added. The evaluation was guided by the principles of gender-responsive evaluations and used a “utilization-focused lens” and a mixed-methods approach with both qualitative and quantitative data to triangulate and verify evidence, to ensure the reliability and consistency of findings.

Data collection included a review of more than 90 documents; one all-personnel workshop; online interviews with 81 key informants; eleven focus group discussions with 68 key stakeholders; close review of eight past corporate, regional and country-level evaluations; and four online surveys of Country Office personnel, donor partners, civil society organizations (CSOs) and end beneficiaries of capacity development interventions. Two case studies were developed to provide insight into the Country Offices key approaches to implementation of its Strategic Note: a) the Country Office's support to capacity development of partners; and b) the Country Office's engagement modality with the Government of Sweden (both included as Appendix to the report).

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: *The Country Office demonstrated agility and sustained relevance over the entire period of Strategic Note implementation (2018–2022), operationalizing its theory of change; taking a multistakeholder approach; seizing*

opportunities for action and engaging in continuous assessment of the relevance of its priorities; and adjusting its work as needed, including for its contribution to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the most recent humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. There are opportunities to more strongly integrate the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian agenda based on the most recent lessons from these two crises. (Based on findings 1-3, 7 - 11)

Conclusion 2: *UN Women's broad coordination efforts, combined with strong expertise, were effective in gender mainstreaming UNCT planning, building trust and translating international standards into national legislation with the Government and in reducing tensions and ensuring better operational synergies with CSOs. Further clarification of UN Women's integrated mandate is required, particularly among UN partners and development partners/donors, and prioritization of areas of engagement in different coordination platforms. (Based on findings 3-6)*

Conclusion 3: *UN Women took advantage of the Direct Strategic Note Funding by Sida as an opportunity to transform its way of working, expand partnerships, improve relations with existing partners, and strengthen internal capacities and resource mobilization strategies, which overall positively affected the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of its work. (Based on findings 1-4, 7-13)*

Conclusion 4: *Strategic engagement with Sida and the EU has provided a solid foundation for the internal sustainability of the office; however, the risks of relying on two large development partners need to be considered. Office capacity (both structure and staff) should be taken into account as well as the office's engagement in UNCT Belarus to avoid spreading resources too thinly. (Based on findings 11-15)*

Conclusion 5: *One of the Country Office's key strategies for implementation of its Strategic Note is capacity development. Together with its partners, the office has already gained solid experience in all stages of capacity development management and a variety of capacity development interventions. However, systemic management and quality assurance of capacity development interventions. (Based on findings 7-9)*

Conclusion 6: *Despite its limited capacity, the technical assistance the Country Office has provided to the UNCT in Belarus has been highly effective and appreciated. As expectations of the UNCT Belarus rise and the Country Office capacity is increasingly thinly spread with growing crises in the region, there is a need to review this engagement and look for new solutions. (Based on findings 12, 13)*

Conclusion 7: *UN Women and its partners strongly contributed to an overall solid normative foundation and the establishment of human capacity for gender equality and women's empowerment in the Republic of Moldova.*

Strengthening sustainability strategies in the next Strategic Note, particularly in relation to the Government, including advocating for the establishment and strengthening of national gender institutional mechanisms and networking with champions across different government and civil society sectors, should be prioritized. (Based on findings 14-18)

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Take an integrated planning approach to development of the next Strategic Note and discuss various crisis/development scenarios.

Recommendation 2: Integrate other aspects of Women, Peace and Security in development of the next Strategic Note, beyond women's participation.

Recommendation 3: In the current context of crisis, leverage UN Women's mandate and added value to strengthen coordination in previous and emerging coordination priority areas.

Recommendation 4: Standardize capacity development management processes, particularly needs assessment, quality assurance of design and delivery, and implementing partner reporting; and strengthen overall monitoring and evaluation systems for relevant and tailored follow-up.

Recommendation 5: Further capitalize on the potential of Strategic Note Direct Funding in terms of strengthening the Country Office's holistic programmatic approach and its catalytic effect on resource mobilization.

Recommendation 6: Support further integration of project staff, particularly those engaged during the COVID-19 pandemic and those engaged in EU-funded projects.

Recommendation 7: Ensure that the promotion of transformative approaches and social norms change is continued, that vulnerable groups' needs are covered by the next Strategic Note and that these groups benefit from its implementation.

Recommendation 8: Taking into account the positive impact of UN Women's technical assistance to the UNCT in Belarus, and also the sustainability challenges of the current approach, initiate and contribute to the corporate discussion on UN Women's strategic approach to supporting UN Country Teams without a UN Women presence.



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COUNTRY CONTEXT

1.1. About Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is a landlocked country with Romania to the west and Ukraine to the north, east and south. Moldova is home to 2.6 million people (52.3 per cent women and 47.3 per cent men³). The population is decreasing due to outmigration and natural population decline (a 9.5 per cent decrease since 2014).⁴ The country's Gross National Income per capita was US\$ 4,560 in 2020,⁵ placing the country at the upper end of lower middle-income economies.

In the context of overall growth, Moldova has made significant progress in reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity with average annual growth of 4.5 per cent since 2000.⁶ Although a growth model reliant on remittance-induced consumption has generated high growth and reduced poverty, it had become less sustainable well before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic and a severe drought in 2020 more starkly exposed the vulnerabilities of this growth model to shocks. With a subsequent decline in Gross Domestic Product of 7 per cent in 2020,⁷ Moldova was among the countries in Europe most affected by COVID-19, which significantly impacted households and businesses across the country.

Demographic trends exert additional stress on Moldova's development. Moldova remains among the poorest countries in Europe, while its citizens' aspirations are rising in line with living conditions and income levels of its middle and higher-income European neighbours. Emigration, in particular of young people and people of reproductive age (including qualified professionals) along with low fertility, low life expectancy and population aging are the main factors causing depopulation of more than 1.7 per cent per year.⁸

Emigration of the working-age population and an annual population decline add to the country's economic, fiscal and social fragility.

The national commitment to implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda are reflected in the country's draft 2030 National Development Strategy which outlines ten strategic objectives for sustainable development and draws attention to the situation of particularly vulnerable groups. Intersecting vulnerabilities, including those based on gender and on rural residency, are integrated throughout the strategy.

The Government of Moldova presented the Voluntary National Review on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in July 2020. It captures gender equality achievements, challenges and commitments by the Government to ensure gender-sensitive public policies. The Voluntary National Review notes that the Transnistrian conflict continues to be the main challenge to the country's territorial integrity and a key barrier to uniform implementation of structural reforms throughout the country.⁹

The unfolding war started by Russia in Ukraine is expected to affect Moldova through trade and remittance channels as well as prices and financial uncertainties, combined with humanitarian crises and an influx of refugees from Ukraine, of which the majority are women and children. As of 18 July 2022, 534,613 Ukrainian and third-country national refugees have entered Moldova due to the war.¹⁰ An estimated 90 per cent of all refugees are women and children.¹¹ As of July 2022, approximately 85,300 refugee and 3,986 third-country nationals are temporarily residing in Moldova, of which 60 per cent among the former and 35 per cent among the latter are women.¹² Immediately following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Moldova declared a state of emergency to establish special entry and exit regimes, and additional protections for refugees, the population and Moldova's institutions.¹³ According to World Bank estimates, even under an optimistic scenario, resolution of the conflict in Ukraine and reestablishment of trade routes, subsiding pandemic risks, a continuation of a broad-based government reform programme, and sustained fiscal impulse, growth is expected to substantially decelerate to -0.4 per cent in 2022. An optimistic scenario of de-escalation of the situation in Ukraine, for 2023 growth is expected to rebound to 3.8 per cent and around 4.4 per cent in 2024.¹⁴

The EU¹⁵ is the Republic of Moldova's largest development partner. Since the Moldova–EU Association Agreement¹⁶ was signed in 2014, significant progress has been made in its implementation.

Despite many years of solid economic growth and impressive poverty reduction gains, Moldova remains vulnerable to economic and financial shocks and instability. COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine are having a significant impact in Moldova.

³ National Bureau of Statistics, <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=7319>

⁴ National Bureau of Statistics, <https://statistica.gov.md/category.php?l=ro&idc=103>

⁵ World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?locations=MD>

⁶ World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=MD>

⁷ World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=MD>

⁸ VNR Report page 9; https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26346VNR_2020_Moldova_Report_English.pdf

⁹ Transnistria is a territory in the eastern part of Moldova where armed troops of the Russian Federation are dislocated as a result of the 1992 war. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution on March 15, 2022 designating Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria as a territory occupied by Russia.

¹⁰ UNHCR, Refugee Coordination Forum, Moldova, daily trends,

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrJmZUyYWRhYmMtNGEwOCooNWQxLWUyZjctNjg5YTk2ZGQoZmUzliwidCI6ImU1YzYzOTg5LTY2NjQtNDEzNC04YTBjLTUyNDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOjhg&pageName=ReportSection3a075953f464903fc875>

¹¹ Ibidem and United Nations (24 March 2022). "One month of war leaves more than half of Ukraine's children displaced." Available at: [link](#).

¹² UNHCR, Refugee Coordination Forum, Moldova, daily trends,

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrJmZUyYWRhYmMtNGEwOCooNWQxLWUyZjctNjg5YTk2ZGQoZmUzliwidCI6ImU1YzYzOTg5LTY2NjQtNDEzNC04YTBjLTUyNDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOjhg&pageName=ReportSection3a075953f464903fc875>

¹³ IOM and UN Women, <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/republic-moldova-displacement-surveys-ukrainian-refugees-and-tcns-09-march-22-april-2022>

¹⁴ World Bank Report "Europe and Central Asia Economic Update, Spring 2022 : War in the Region", page 81

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/37268>

¹⁵ The EU adopted the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024, aiming to support alignment of the country's legislation, institutions and practice further in line with European standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, including anti-discrimination and gender equality and child protection standards, the independence and accountability of the judicial system, and electoral legislation and practice.

¹⁶ The Association Agreement is a treaty between the EU, Euratom, their 27 Member States and Moldova that establishes a political and economic association between the two parties.

FIGURE 1. Impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine in Moldova (compiled by the evaluation team)

COVID-19 NEGATIVE IMPACT

- GDP decreased in 2020 compared to 2019 by 7.0 per cent ¹⁷
- 46 per cent of female survey respondents feared domestic violence ¹⁸
- 27 per cent of women worked remotely during the emergency period and kindergartens closed ¹⁹
- 30 per cent of women's income in rural areas consists of remittances ²⁰
- COVID-19 isolation had an adverse impact on family relations

WAR IN UKRAINE

- As of 18 July 2022, 534,613 Ukrainian and third-country national refugees had entered Moldova, due to the war in Ukraine ²¹.
- An estimated 90 per cent of all refugees are women and children ²².
- Approximately 85,300 refugees and 3,986 third-country nationals are temporarily residing in Moldova (July, 2022), 60 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively are women.
- Women are shouldering an immense burden of childcare compounded by stress, fear, psychological distress, limited access to basic services and a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, and human trafficking.

¹⁷ World Bank Group. 2019. Moldova: Rekindling Economic Dynamism. Country Economic Memorandum. World Bank, Washington, DC

¹⁸ UN WOMEN Moldova, Assessment of COVID-19 impact on gender roles Chisinau 2020, Research and data collection by CBS AXA, page 6
<https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/un%20woman%20en%20240820.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 10

²¹ UNHCR, Refugee Coordination Forum, Moldova, daily trends,

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiM2UyYWRhYmMtNGEwOCooNWQxLWEyZjctNjgxYTkyZGQoZmUzliwidCI6ImU1YzYzOTgxLTYyNjQtdEzNC04YTBjLTY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOjhg&pageName=ReportSection3ao75953f464903fc875>

²² Ibidem and United Nations (24 March 2022). "One month of war leaves more than half of Ukraine's children displaced." Available at: [link](#).

MOLDOVA COUNTRY CONTEXT



POPULATION AND POVERTY

2,597 M

Population of 2,597.107 million, continuously decreasing due to continuous outmigration and natural population decline (a 9.5% decrease since 2014). [1]

52.2 %

52.2 per cent of the population are women and 47.8 per cent men. [2]

12.3%

Poverty rate is 12.3% as measured by the US\$5.50 PPP/day poverty line. [3]



KEY DEVELOPMENT RANKINGS

Ranked 90 of 189 countries in the Human Development Index 2021. [4]

Ranked 28 out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2020. [5]



CHALLENGES TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY

Women empowerment in political, economic and social life are still areas in need of focus

Domestic violence and weak stakeholders' capacity to respond, specifically at local level



COUNTRY PROGRESS ON GEWE

40% gender quota approved in public and political decision-making.

14-calendar day paternity leave approved and paid from the social insurance budget to socially insured fathers.

Periodicals and press agencies obliged to use non-sexist language as per changes to the Press Law, the Law on Advertising, the Broadcasting Code.

Normative acts passed on equal pay and childcare services.

Istanbul Convention approved on 2021.

Gender responsive governance



40 women have been elected as MPs (39.6%) after elections of 11 July 2021.



28.7% women were elected as councillor at district/municipal level after local elections in 2019.



21.8% women were elected as mayors and 36.5% of women were elected councillors at local level. [6]

Women's economic empowerment



37.1 per cent of women are employed vs 47.2 per cent of men. [7]



Women run 33.9% of enterprises, i.e. a 6.4 percent point increase over eight years. [8]



More women compared with men own microenterprises (90.3% vs 82.3%).



Fewer women than men own medium or large enterprises (1.3% vs 3.3%).

TRENDS IN SDGS SCORES

Significant progress was registered towards achieving SDGs 1, 8, 13, 17



Significant progress was registered towards achieving SDGs 1, 8, 13, 17



The impact on SDGs 4, 6, 10, 12, 15, 16 is yet to be noticed



VULNERABLE WOMEN

- Women asylum seekers and refugees
- Migrant women
- Rural women
- Women with disabilities
- Elderly women
- Roma women
- Women living with HIV
- Women in detention

Ending violence against women [9]



40% women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a partner or non-partner since the age of 15.



45% women say that their friends would agree that "violence against women is often provoked by the victim" (compared to 15% in the EU)



40% women believe that their friends would agree that "women who say they were abused often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape" (compared to 20% in the EU).



Shame, fear, mistrust of the police and healthcare professionals, lack of long term practical support, such as housing and financial, are barriers that prevent women from accessing services.

SOURCES

[1] <https://statistica.gov.md/category.php?no&id=103> [2] *ibid* [3] World Bank Economic Update 2021 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/moldova/brief/moldova-economic-update> [4] Human Development Report 2020 at <https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MDA> [5] Global Gender Gap Report 2020 at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEP_CGGR_2020.pdf [6] Local General Elections 2019, UNDP page 35 [7] Q3 of 2021 <https://statistica.gov.md/category.php?no&id=107> [8] <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?no&id=306&id=6724&parent=0> [9] 2019 OSCE-led survey on violence against women, Moldova https://www.osce.org/files/documents/2/7/424979_0.pdf

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION UN WOMEN MOLDOVA 2018 - 2022



UN WOMEN IN MOLDOVA

KEY BUDGETARY INSIGHTS

US\$ 12,963,406

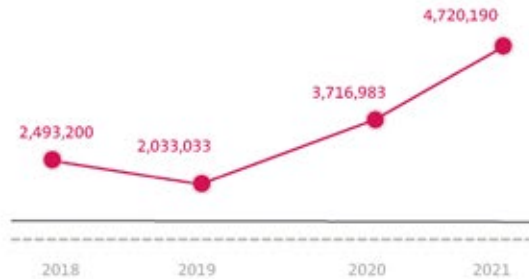
Total budget 2018-2021

TOTAL STAFF: 36

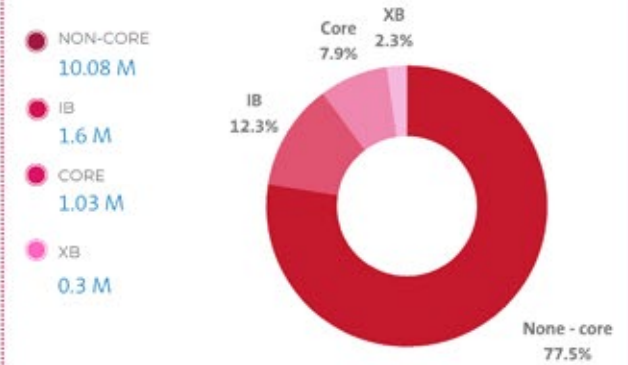
February 2022, COAT dashboard

- 8 Staff
- 24 SC
- 3 Consultants
- 1 UNV 1

CO ANNUAL BUDGETS US\$ (2018-2021)



TYPE OF FUNDING (source COAT dashboard 2018-2021)



THEMATIC AREAS FUNDING

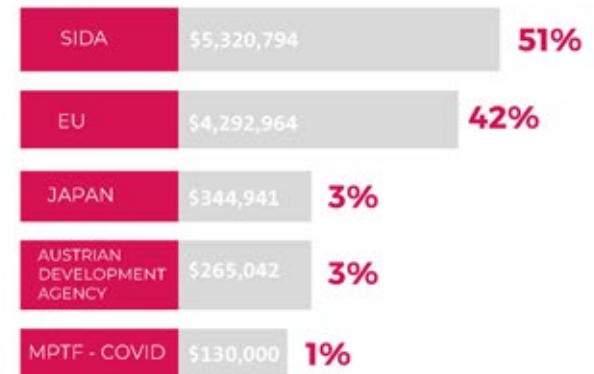


	LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
2018	821,232	499,087	597,862
2019	565,054	360,472	452,969
2020	858,982	498,237	1,640,049
2021	1,438,999	552,338	1,861,957
TOTAL	3,684,267	1,910,134	4,552,837
% OF TOTAL	36.31 %	18.82 %	44.87 %

Thematic areas budget in US\$

TOP DONORS

(Top donors to Moldova CO and US\$ received during 2018-2021)



1.2 Gender equality and the empowerment of women in Moldova

From 1990 to 2019, Moldova's Human Development Index value increased by 8.7 per cent, placing Moldova as a country of generally high human development; however, the value for 2022 decreased to 0.711,²³ from 0.750 in 2019 and 2020.

The Gender Development Index value for Moldova in 2019 was 1.014.²⁴ Of the dimensions that comprise the index, the greatest disparities in Moldova are in the level of access to economic resources, where women face greater barriers, and in average life expectancy, where men are disadvantaged. The 2019 Gender Inequality Index value for Moldova was 0.204, representing a 20 per cent loss in human development due to gender inequality (and corresponding to a rank of 46 of 162 countries).

The legal base for promoting equality and women's rights in Moldova is relatively extensive and is established foremost by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova (1994). Separate legislation reiterates the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination in all areas of public and private life, including Law 5-XVI on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2006, amended in 2016) and Law #121 on Ensuring Equality (2012). These laws define important concepts such as "discrimination" (both direct and indirect forms), "equal opportunities" and special temporary measures or "affirmative action" designed to accelerate progress toward equality and to overcome pre-existing discrimination and disadvantages.

The Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men establishes an institutional framework for monitoring gender equality at national and local levels, and requires the National Bureau of Statistics to produce sex-disaggregated data. In outlining the competencies of key governmental institutions, the law supports gender-mainstreaming processes. The Law on Ensuring Equality prohibits discrimination on the basis of several protected characteristics, including sex, specifying three areas in which discrimination has a particularly negative impact: in employment, education, and access to public services and goods. This law establishes the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, which is part of the national mechanism for gender equality.

The National Strategy for Ensuring Equality between Women and Men for 2017–2021 adopted an integrated approach to the promotion of gender equality and outlines 10 intervention areas, namely: women's participation in decision-making; gender gaps in the labour market and wages; social protection and family policies; health; education; climate change; the institutional mechanism; stereotypes and nonviolent communication; gender equality in the security and defence sector; and gender-responsive budgeting. The first "National Strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2018–2023)" was adopted in 2018. The

Strategy has at its core a survivor-oriented approach and was a result of participatory co-creation by multi-sector stakeholders, including public authorities.

Over the past years, Moldova has made significant progress in promoting gender equality and women's rights by approving a 40 per cent gender quota on election lists for parliamentary and local elections; gender disaggregated data collection in political processes; and the introduction of an obligation for political parties to ensure equal rights and opportunities among their members. A 40 per cent gender quota for the composition of the government cabinet had been established; however, it was removed from the Government Regulation in 2017.

Amendments to the Labour Code, i.e. the 14-calendar day paternity leave paid from the social insurance budget to socially insured fathers, have advanced the gender equality agenda. Amendments to the Press Law, the Law on Advertising and the Broadcasting Code have also been made, obliging periodicals and press agencies to use non-sexist language and show images of women and men through the lens of equal rights in public and private life. For the first time since the country's independence, Law # 289 (2018) addressed the issue of unpaid domestic and care work. Through a new Law # 113, civil legislation regulating domestic violence was further improved and additional amendments were introduced to align national legislation with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.

However, gender equality and women's rights challenges are still persistent in areas related to empowering women in political, economic and social life; work and family-life reconciliation; domestic violence; and the specific situation of certain groups of disadvantaged women (Roma women, women from rural areas, women living with HIV, women in detention, women with disabilities, migrant women, etc.).

Adherence to global gender equality norms

On 14 October 2021, the Moldovan Parliament ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). By ratifying the Convention, the Moldovan authorities duly undertake to prosecute violence against women, allocate resource to ensure the operation of crisis centres, 24/7 hotlines, shelters for victims of violence, provide psychological and legal assistance, and other measures.

Moldova is a signatory to several other international treaties, which guarantee the equality of men and women and prohibit gender-based discrimination. The Republic of Moldova is party to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and has submitted six periodic reports on implementation of the treaty, the most recent was reviewed in 2020, while

²³ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hdi-by-country>

²⁴ Most recent available <https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MDA>

the seventh periodic report is due in February 2024. In its concluding recommendations, the CEDAW Committee expressed concern about women's limited access to justice and the absence of an active gender equality body within the Cabinet, following the suspension of the Government Committee for Equality between Women and Men. The Committee also expressed concern that the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality is not mandated to sanction gender-based discrimination and that a draft law aimed at strengthening the Council was withdrawn from Parliament examination following the adoption of Decision No. 635/2018.

Moldova has undertaken commitments to advance the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action agenda, which includes a number of references in strategic objectives to women, in particular risks relating to poverty and social marginalization. In its concluding recommendations, the CEDAW Committee recommended that Moldova use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and further evaluate the realization of rights enshrined in the Convention in the context of the 25-year review of the implementation of the Declaration and Platform to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

On 21 March 2018, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved the National Programme to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2018–2021 and the National Action Plan to implement the programme. This enabled the increased enrolment and involvement of women in the security and defence sector, and increased the capacity of civil servants and staff from Women, Peace and Security institutions. Two internal regulations that followed aim to prevent and combat sexual harassment, discrimination and gender-based violence in the security and defence sector.

1.3 UN Women in Moldova

Background

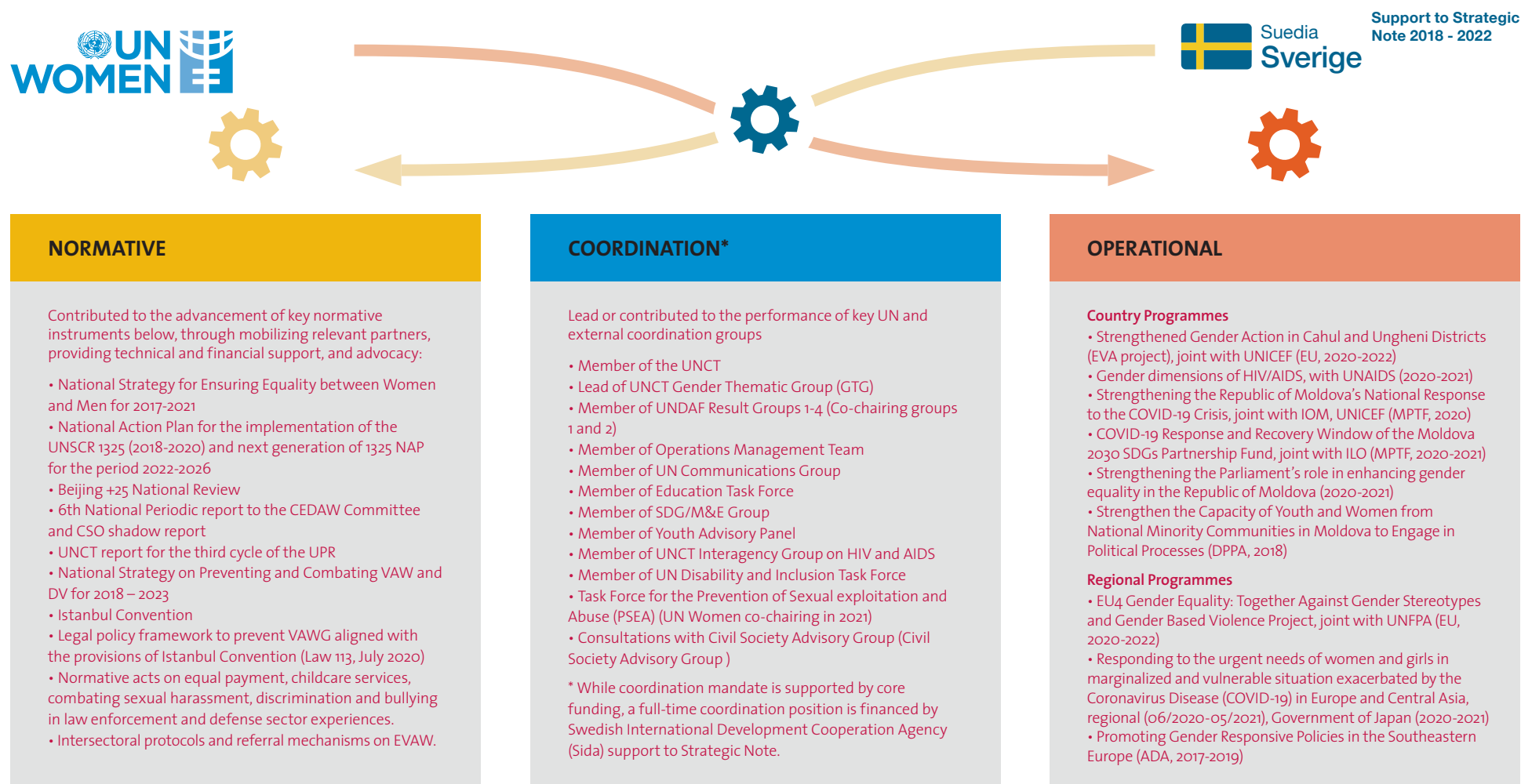
The current UN Women Moldova Strategic Note (2018–2022) was drafted in a consultative process with the government and civil society stakeholders during 2016 and 2017. The proposed programme for 2018–2022 built on the findings, lessons and recommendations drawn from the Country Portfolio Evaluation of the Country Office's previous Strategic Note 2013–2017 and on the results achieved during this period. Consultations were also undertaken with the government at central and local levels, CSOs, Parliament, UN agencies and other international organizations, local communities and women from various groups, including vulnerable and marginalized groups. The UN Women Moldova Strategic Note 2018–2022 is aligned with the Republic of Moldova United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development

2018–2022, the National Strategy for Ensuring Equality between Women and Men for 2017–2021, and National Strategy on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence 2018–2023; and was informed by recommendations from international human rights treaty bodies: CEDAW (2013 Concluding Observations), UPR recommendations (2016), UN Human Rights Committee (under International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (2016 Recommendations) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disability (2017 Concluding Observations).

Leave-no-one-behind principles are mainstreamed into UN Women's Strategic Note, with indicators related to inclusion of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. Together with the UN Country Team (UNCT) Accountability on Scorecard Inclusion, these principles guide the Country Office's work on disability inclusion. The United Nations in the Republic of Moldova applies a Theory of Change on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and disability-inclusive Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all persons with disabilities. The Theory of Change allows the United Nations system in Moldova to prioritize problems, barriers and needs to ensure the full inclusion of persons with disabilities and to identify solutions.

The UN Women Strategic Note 2018–2022 covers three impact areas:

- 1) Women's Leadership and Political Participation:** focusing on promotion and capacity building of women in decision-making, support to the National Strategy for Gender Equality (political participation and gender-responsive budgeting) and support to implementation of National Action Plan 1325.
- 2) Economic Empowerment of Women:** focusing on supporting development of policies for decent work opportunities and addressing unpaid care work, building capacities of women (including those from marginalized groups) to access business development opportunities.
- 3) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls:** supporting development and implementation of policies for the prevention and provision of protection services in line with international standards and commitments, capacity building of local institution to provide specialized services to survivors and awareness raising on gender-based violence and available protection services. Programming was largely concentrated in the areas of Women's Leadership and Political Participation and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

TABLE 1. Overview of the UN Women Moldova Country Office Strategic Note interventions as per areas of its integrated mandate,²⁵ compiled by the evaluation team

²⁵ Normative, coordination and operational work in all three impact areas (Women in Leadership and Governance, Women, Peace and Security, Women's Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women) are supported by the Government of Sweden's which provides unearmarked funding towards the entire UN Women Moldova Country Office Strategic Note 2018-2022. This includes actions in the abovementioned thematic areas, which can be summarized as follows:

- Women in Leadership and Governance (policy advocacy for quota in Electoral Law, changes in the laws on local elected officials, contribution to implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality National Programme on Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2018-2021) and capacity development for gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting in public sector,
- Women's Economic Empowerment (policy advocacy for the laws to address gender wage gap and unpaid domestic work, business skills and development of STEM skills in women, awareness raising on gender equality in the labour market)
- Ending Violence Against Women (advocacy for ratification of Istanbul Convention and harmonization of the laws with international commitments related to gender-based violence, contribution to implementation of the National Strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2018-2023), capacity building of law enforcement and service providers on EVAW).
- COVID-19 response and recovery (rapid assessment of COVID-19 impact)

1.3 UN Women in Moldova

The Strategic Note identifies women who are subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and takes into account intersectionality and particularly addresses the needs of Roma women, women living with HIV, migrant workers and women with disabilities.

The Country Office conducted a mid-term review of its Strategic Note in mid-2020 with the support of an external expert. The review concluded that the Country Office had made significant progress in implementing the expected results; it confirmed that the Theory of Change was still valid and had become even more relevant following the COVID-19 pandemic; and the team had shown a high level of preparedness and flexibility allowing the country programme to quickly respond to emerging issues/crises. In addition, to update the Strategic Note and Development Results Framework with COVID-19 response and recovery-related actions and indicators, the following additional efforts were recommended to enable transformative effects in UN Women's work: (a) continue to support the Government and Parliament in improving legislation and policies from a gender equality perspective, strengthening the gender equality machinery and increasing the demand for gender-responsive budgeting; (b) strengthen partnerships with key institutions and explore opportunities to involve non-traditional partners (CEO managers, private sector, artists, trade unions etc.); and (c) invest in intersectionality and multiple/intersecting forms of discrimination, by empowering the most

marginalized groups of women and enhancing the capacities of grassroots organizations.

Budget and resource mobilization

The total budget for the Strategic Note period 2018–2022 was US\$ 18 million. The annual budget for the Country Office has continuously increased since 2019, followed by an increase in resource mobilization and financial budget delivery (see Table 2). All three portfolios record increasing trends in budget allocation, with the highest increase for Ending Violence Against Women and the lowest for Women's Economic Empowerment. The majority of funding (over 80 per cent) are non-core funds, which represents a good non-core to core ratio (as per the UN Women COAT Dashboard). Resource mobilization has been successful and over time the Country Office has diversified sources of funding from two in 2019 to five in 2021.

The Strategic Note is largely financed by the (unearmarked) Government of Sweden support to Strategic Note implementation (40.73 per cent), EU (28.82 per cent) and to a lesser extent by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (5.34 per cent), UN MPTF (2.34 per cent); Government of Japan (1.5 per cent), the Dutch Government (1.2 per cent), and through global UN programmes and country-level initiatives of smaller scale (which altogether represent 2.42 per cent of total available funding). Core and Institutional Budget funds represent 17.68 per cent of the Country Office's total budget.

TABLE 2. UN Women Moldova Country Office budget 2018–2022

	Planned budget (RMS)	Mobilized (Country Office) ²⁶	UN Women Core and Institutional Budget	Delivered (Country Office)
2018	2,493,200	1,043,085.55	665,323.21	1,929,812.87
2019	2,033,033	1,385,891.91	649,849.09	2,188,228.89
2020	3,716,983	3,938,276.38	662,715.07	3,437,276.01
2021	4,720,190	4,070,761.28	720,159.85	4,563,318.69
2022	7,191,546	4,179,825.21	722,341.19	
Total	20,154,952	14,617,840.33	3,420,388.41	

Source: UN Women Country Office, July 2022

²⁶ Presents the information from UN Women's Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) on the value of signed agreements each year 2018–2022.

TABLE 3. Moldova Strategic Note 2018–2022 funding composition (based on expenditure 2018–2021 and resources available, July 2022)

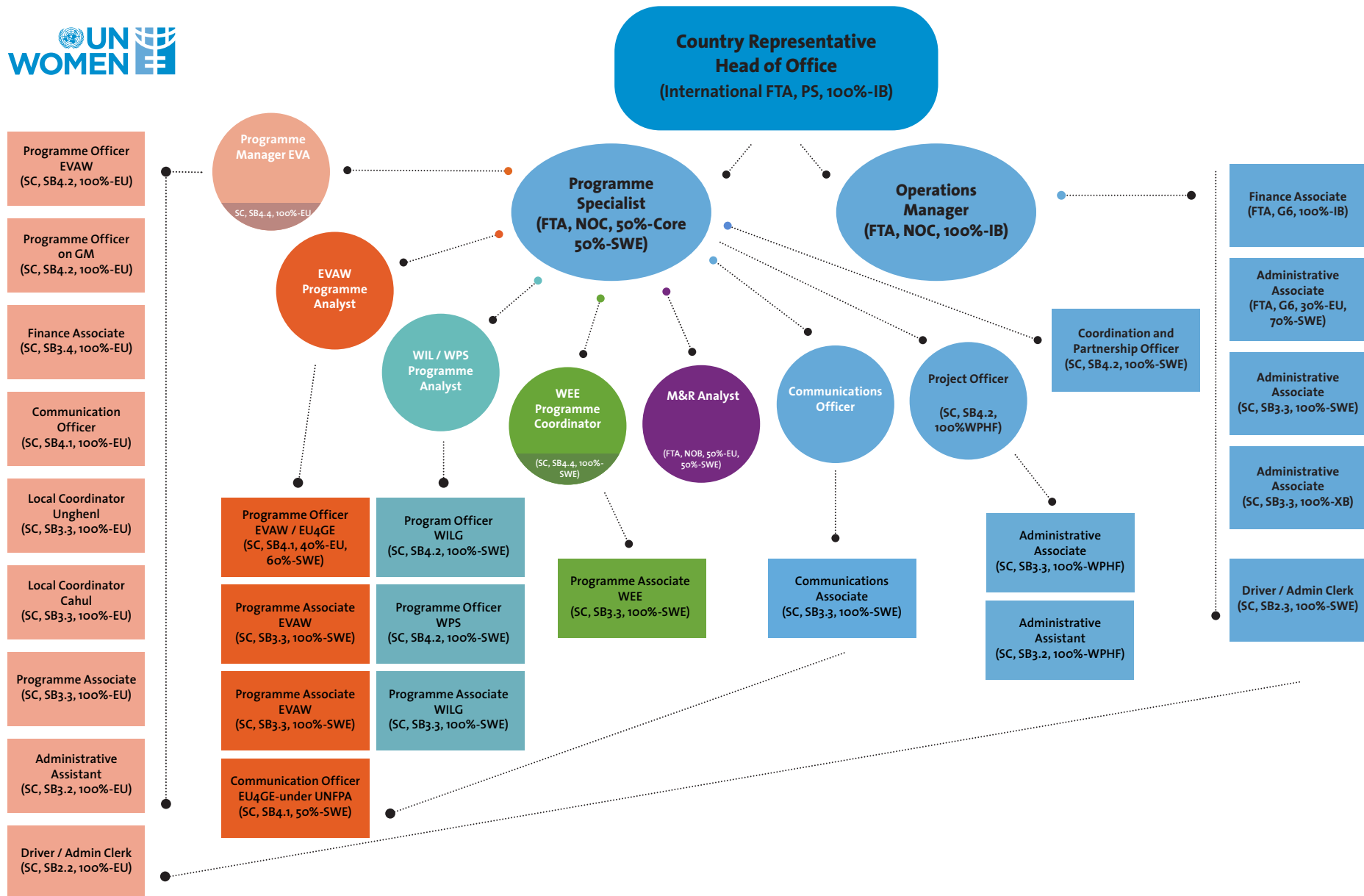
Percentage per donor (2018-2022)	%
UN Women core funds and Institutional Budget	17.68
Sida	40.73
EU	28.80
Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund	5.34
UN Multi Partner Trust Fund (UN MPTF)	2.34
Japan	1.50
Netherlands	1.20
Others (less than 1%, UNAIDS, Finland, ADA, TAR-UNDPA)	2.41
Total	100.00

Source: UN Women Country Office, July 2022

The Country Office's staffing levels have significantly increased since the end of the last Strategic Note. In 2017, 19 personnel were employed at the Country Office (6 fixed-term [2 international and 4 national] and 13 service contract holders); by January 2022, this had increased to 33 personnel (1 international, 7 fixed-term, 25 service contract holders). This increase in human resources followed successful resource mobilization efforts over the strategic period (see Tables 2 and 3). The Country Office managed to negotiate with two donors (Sweden and EU) to use their funding (non-core) to create fixed-term programme

analysts, and monitoring and evaluation national positions (see Figure 1) to provide stability in management functions and address the issue of high turnover of personnel. However, the great majority of personnel remain under service contracts. There was significant turnover in the Country Representative position over the course of the Strategic Note, with four individuals serving in the position in some capacity (either full-time or as a temporary placement). At the time of this evaluation, the current Country Representative had been in position for approximately two years, bringing stability back to the role.

FIGURE 1. Moldova Country Office organization chart (as of April 2022)



Source: UN Women Country Office, July 2022



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EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

2.1 Evaluation purpose and objectives

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

The evaluation took place from September 2021 to May 2022 and assessed the relevance and coherence of UN Women's interventions at the national level; UN Women's effectiveness, organizational efficiency and sustainability efforts; and analysed how a human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note. The evaluation also identified lessons to support the Country Office improve its strategic positioning to foster greater gender equality and women's empowerment at the country level and provided actionable recommendations to support the development of the next Strategic Note to be implemented 2023–2027.

2.2 Evaluation scope

The scope of this Country Portfolio Evaluation includes all activities undertaken by the Country Office under its current Strategic Note 2018–2022, including operational work; support to normative frameworks in the country; and United Nations system coordination from January 2018 to March 2022. UN Women's contribution to the COVID-19 pandemic response in Moldova was also taken into account. Eight country, regional and corporate-level evaluations were reviewed and drawn upon as secondary material.

The geographical scope of the evaluation spanned all of Moldova, given the Country Office's work at national and local levels across the country. The data collection process included focus groups and interviews with beneficiaries and local-level stakeholders from communities in Ungheni, Cahul, Făleşti, Straseni and Drochia districts, Non-Governmental Organizations from the left bank of Nistru and stakeholders representing national CSOs, academia, central-level authorities, donors, the UNCT and personnel from the UN Women Country Office, headquarters and the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. Data collection also included a survey with end beneficiaries.

A systematic assessment of the long-term impact of interventions on beneficiaries and their contexts is not part of the scope of this evaluation, as this type of analysis requires resources and methods beyond the design of the evaluation. The evaluation could not cover the

consequences of the war in Ukraine on the Republic of Moldova and the adjustment and response by the Country Office to this rapidly growing crisis, as the data collection phase of the evaluation was over at the time of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, some reflections and recommendations are provided based on developments and contacts with the Country Office and Europe and Central Asia Regional Office during the data analysis phase and development of the evaluation synthesis report.

FIGURE 2. Geographical coverage of the evaluation



2.3 Evaluation design

The evaluation fostered a participatory approach, applied a theory-based, contribution analysis and included outcomes mapping and outcomes harvesting. The evaluation team used the building blocks methodology developed by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service to reconstruct the Strategic Note's theory of change.²⁷ In taking such an approach, the evaluation aimed to identify opportunities for learning, while ensuring accountability for outcomes and identifying options for future decision-making. The theory-based design assesses the performance of the Strategic Note based upon its stated assumptions about how change happens. These assumptions were challenged, validated or expanded upon by the evaluation.

The evaluation was framed under the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria, including relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. An additional gender equality and human rights criterion was also added. The evaluation was guided by the principles of gender-responsive evaluations, with a “utilization-focused lens” and mixed-methods approach utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data to triangulate and verify evidence to ensure the reliability and consistency of findings. The inception phase included an evaluability assessment analysis and a participatory workshop with Country Office personnel.

²⁷ Evaluating Impact in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, UN Women Working Paper, Independent Evaluation Service, November 2020.

2.4 Strategic Note evaluability, limitations and risk-mitigation strategies

The evaluation team conducted an evaluability assessment to determine the extent to which UN Women's country portfolio in Moldova can be evaluated in a reliable and credible manner. It entailed: a) a review of Development Results Framework and Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework performance indicators according to SMART and results-based management principles; b) a review of the availability and quality of relevant documentation and reporting (including the presence of prior evaluations); and c) an assessment of potential contextual limitations (such as restrictions due to COVID-19, etc.). The assessment was also informed by consultations with key UN Women personnel during the scoping interviews. The full evaluability assessment is attached in Annex 11. Based on the conducted analyses, the overall evaluability of the Moldova country portfolio is assessed as good/adequate.

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

Time and COVID-19 challenges: The evaluation was constrained due to complications caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Data collection was conducted remotely as field missions were not possible. Online collaboration options for the team's work were deployed.

Country Office conflicting priorities: UN Women personnel in Moldova have also had to take on extra responsibilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in neighboring Ukraine and influx of refugees to the country during the final stages of evaluation. This has left the Country Office overstretched and its personnel therefore had less time to engage in the day-to-day tasks associated with evaluation processes.

The evaluation team adapted the data collection plan and approach to ensure that the evaluation remained comprehensive, gender-sensitive and methodologically rigorous. However, the war in Ukraine was not an anticipated risk in the context of UN Women's Strategic Note nor of this evaluation.

2.5 Data collection and analysis

Using a mixed-methods approach, data collection included the following:

- A review of more than 90 documents, including key policy documents, UN Women programme documents and other reports from the UNCT and donors, project progress reports, annual workplans, reports from partners, etc.
- One online all-personnel workshop.
- Online interviews with 81 key informants (68 women and 13 men).
- Eleven online and in-person focus group discussions with 68 participants (53 women and 15 men).

- Close review of eight past corporate, regional and country-level evaluations.
- Four online surveys of Country Office personnel (19 responses; 15 women, 3 men, 1 not declared), donor partners (5 responses; 5 women), CSOs (12 responses; 9 women, 2 men, 1 not declared) and end beneficiaries of capacity development interventions (150 responses / 30 per cent response rate; 135 women, 14 men, 1 not declared).
- Two case studies: a) Review of approach and assessment of the effectiveness of UN Women's Moldova Country Office support to capacity development of partners; and b) assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Country Office's engagement modality with the Government of Sweden (both included as an appendix to the evaluation synthesis report).

Multiple methods of data collection and analysis were carried out using both primary and secondary data to triangulate evidence. The evaluation also used the Gender at Work analytical framework,²⁸ and data collection methods ensured analysis of the Country Office's focus on women from vulnerable groups in Moldova including members of the Roma communities, LGBTIQ communities, women with disabilities, and women in rural and remote communities. The evaluation process' ethical approach is aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group's Ethical Guidance and Code of Conduct for Evaluations in the United Nations System, ensuring the integrity and competence of the evaluation team; accountability and transparency of the evaluation approach and processes to the stakeholders involved; participation of a variety of stakeholders, including end beneficiaries and those most vulnerable; and protecting anonymity and confidentiality along the process.

2.6 Evaluation governance and quality assurance

The evaluation team comprised the Europe and Central Asia Regional Evaluation Specialist, who is a member of UN Women Independent Evaluation Service and acted as the team lead for this evaluation process, an International Independent Evaluator and a National Independent Evaluator.

An Evaluation Reference Group was established that validated the evaluation report and will facilitate use of the evaluation. The group included government partners, civil society representatives, development partners and donors, and members of United Nations sister entities in Moldova. In addition, Country Office personnel and relevant Regional Office personnel acted as the Internal Evaluation Reference Group for this evaluation.

The Director, IEAS and Chief, IES provided management oversight and methodological guidance, and an additional IES evaluation specialist provided peer review support to the process.

²⁸ Gender at Work Framework: <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>.



„PASĂREA LIBERTĂȚII”

Tabloul realizat de peste 20 supraviețuitoare ale violenței în familie în cadrul atelierelor de art-terapie pentru a înțepina și altele femei să rupă cercul vicios al violenței domestice.

Tabloul a fost expus în cadrul Campaniei internaționale „16 zile de activism împotriva violenței în bază de gen”.



Photo©UN Women Moldova

FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance

“ **Finding 1:** In partnership with key national stakeholders, the UN Women Moldova Country Office has demonstrated strong adherence to international normative frameworks (CEDAW, Beijing, UNSCR 1325, SDGs) and proactiveness in advocacy for Istanbul Convention ratification. The Country Office’s Strategic Note is aligned to the UN Women Strategic Plan, national and UNCT priorities and commitments, and the needs of women and girls in Moldova. The Country Office’s adaptability to the COVID-19 context demonstrated the sustained relevance of the Country Office’s actions throughout the entire Strategic Note period. ”

The Country Office’s Strategic Note 2018-2022 had a high level of alignment with international normative frameworks – CEDAW, Beijing Declaration, UNSCR 1325, SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 16 and 17 and the Istanbul Convention. This is supported by continuous analysis of legislation, and monitoring and reporting on the country’s adherence to international commitments as well as through Country Office programming. For example, UN Women supported formal and alternative reporting on CEDAW; assessment and reporting to the Beijing 25+ Platform; development of National Action Plans on implementation of UNSCR 1325 and alignment of the national normative framework with the resolution; and supported analysis of the alignment of the national legal framework with the Istanbul Convention and advocated for its ratification. The relevance of the Strategic Note was validated during the Strategic Note period by annual reviews and consultations with stakeholders and Sida as a strategic development partner, continuous research and a mid-term review process conducted in 2020, which confirmed a high level of alignment with country needs.

The Strategic Note is well aligned to the corporate UN Women Strategic Plan and to the United Nations Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2018–2022 signed by the UN and the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Table 4 presents an overview of linkages between the Country Office’s Strategic Note and international and national normative framework identified by the evaluation team. Strong alignment with country priorities was confirmed by evaluation interviews and surveys, with more than 90 per cent of UN Women and partners surveyed and interviewed agreeing that UN Women and its partners’ work is aligned to the most pressing needs of women and girls in the country; targets the causes of gender inequality; and effectively identifies the most marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Available Strategic Note funding and the flexibility of development partners allowed the Country Office to swiftly respond to the changed context during the COVID-19 pandemic, by conducting a rapid needs assessment and aligning its programmes, strengthening the position of UN Women in the Moldovan context.

TABLE 4. Country Office alignment to national development priorities (information extracted from the Country Office's Strategic Note and UN Partnership Framework with the Republic of Moldova 2018–2022 by the evaluation team)

Strategic Note 2018–2022 Impact Areas	Priorities of the UN Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (UNPFSD) 2018–2022	Priorities of the National Strategy for Ensuring Equality between Women and Men for 2017–2021	Other relevant national policies	SDGs
Women lead and participate in decision-making at all levels	<p>Priority area 1: Governance, human rights and gender equality</p> <p>Outcome 1: The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, demand and benefit from democratic, transparent and accountable governance; gender-sensitive, human rights and evidence-based public policies; equitable services; and efficient, effective and responsive public institutions.</p>	<p>Overall objective 1: Ensure a comprehensive approach to equality between women and men (strengthening institutional, legal mechanisms, regulatory frameworks)</p> <p>Overall objective 2: Strengthen institutional mechanisms for ensuring equality between women and men (human resources, streamlining the the Government's work on gender equality)</p> <p>Overall objective 4: Promoting gender equality in the security and defence sector (access to management and executive positions, gender mainstreaming in policies)</p> <p>Overall objective 5: Integrate gender-sensitive budgeting into the budgeting process (gender mainstreaming in budgeting processes, capacity development for gender-responsive budgeting)</p>	<p>National Programme to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2018–2021, including next generation plan for the period 2022–2026</p> <p>EU Association Agreement signed in June 2014 and in full effect since July 2016</p> <p>Action Plan to Support the Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova for 2016–2020</p> <p>National Strategy on Strengthening the Statistical System in the Republic of Moldova 2016–2020</p>	5, 10, 16, 17
Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy	<p>Priority area 2: Sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth</p> <p>Outcome 2: The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, have access to enhanced livelihood opportunities; and decent work and productive employment, generated by sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth.</p>	<p>Overall objective 1: Ensure a comprehensive approach to equality between women and men (harmonization of national legislation on equal pay with EU standards, gender dimension in career guidance process)</p>	<p>EU Association Agreement signed in June 2014 and in full effect since July 2016</p> <p>Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development for 2012–2020</p> <p>Digital Moldova 2020 Strategy approved under Decision 857 of 31.10.2013</p> <p>National Youth Strategy 2014–2020</p> <p>National Employment Strategy 2017–2021</p> <p>National Strategy on Migration and Asylum 2011–2020</p>	1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 17
Women and girls live a life free of violence	<p>Priority area 4: Inclusive and equitable social development</p> <p>Outcome 4: The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, demand and benefit from gender-sensitive and human rights based, inclusive, effective and equitable quality education, health and social policies and services.</p>	<p>Overall objective 3: Fight stereotypes in society and promote non-violent communication</p> <p>Area of intervention: Stereotypes in society and non-violent communication (countering gender stereotypes and violence)</p>	<p>National Strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence 2018–2023</p> <p>National Programme on HIV/STI Prevention and Control 2016–2020</p> <p>Strategy for the Development of Education 2014–2020 "Education 2020"</p> <p>Strategy for Development of Parenting Skills and Competencies for 2016–2022</p>	3, 4, 5, 10, 16, 17

3.1 Relevance

“ **Finding 2:** The Country Office based implementation of its Strategic Note on a theory of change that identified underlying causes and systemic challenges to address gender inequality, target groups and end beneficiaries including those most vulnerable. However, while graphically presented as one theory of change, it actually reflects three theories developed around the Strategic Note’s three impact areas and does not clearly reflect an integrated approach. ”

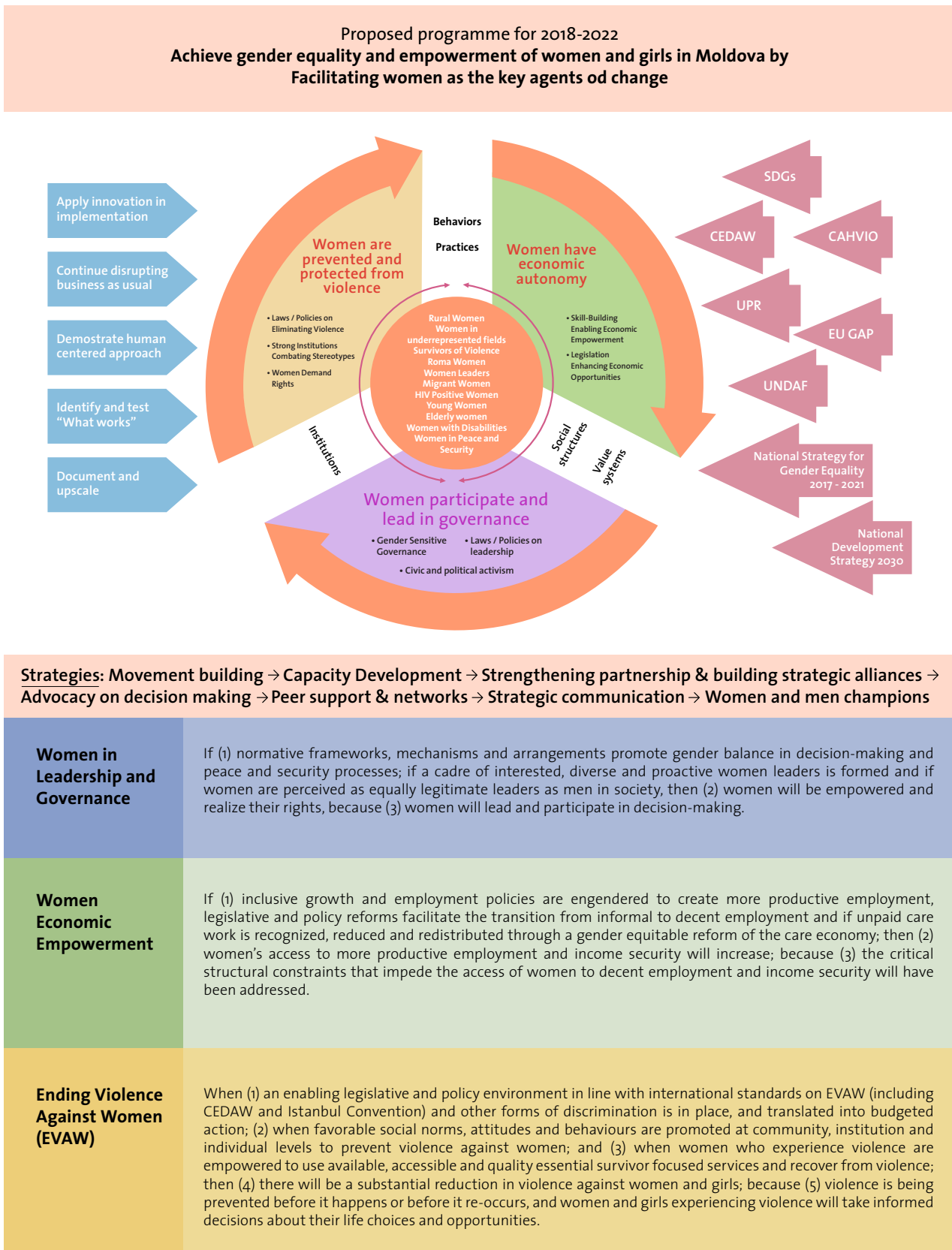
The Country Office based its programming on the theory of change constructed at the time of Strategic Note development, which was slightly revised to include the change of the context due to COVID-19 in 2020. The theory of change has strong emphasis on normative and capacity development aspects. It addresses social norms change around political participation, gender-based violence, unpaid work and feminization of professions, and is comprehensive in the involvement of various segments of society (from the government, civil society and business sectors to the community level in both urban and rural areas, including non-traditional UN Women beneficiaries such as youth and religious leaders). The Women, Peace and Security agenda is addressed to a limited extent within the Leadership and Governance portfolio due to underfunding and limited space for engagement that mostly focused on participation and protection of women in the security and armed forces and the limited space for addressing the confidence building process in Transnistria.

The Strategic Note is inclusive of several vulnerable groups of women, such as Roma women, women with disabilities,

young women, rural women, women with or affected by HIV, survivors of violence and trafficking, women migrants, and women from ethnic and linguistic minorities. Detailed risk and assumption analysis is integrated and followed during implementation of programmes.




The theory of change supported the Country Office in addressing key identified outcomes through its normative and capacity development interventions and community engagement in all the thematic pillars, but synergies among them were not clearly explored. UN Women’s coordination mandate on gender equality and women’s empowerment is insufficiently reflected in the theory of change and only occasionally mentioned and reflected in joint programmes implementation, rather than leadership, coordination and strengthening the accountability of UN system for gender equality. Figure 3 represents the theory of change developed by the Country Office and Figure 4 the theory of change reconstructed by the evaluation team, aligned with the building blocks conceptual framework and the strengthened synergy between impact areas and integrated UN coordination role.

FIGURE 3. Theory of Change developed by UN Women Moldova Country Office



Source: UN Women Moldova Country Office Strategic Note 2018–2022

FIGURE 4. Theory of Change reconstructed by the evaluation team and aligned to building blocks methodology

BUILDING BLOCKS	THEMATIC AREAS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	EVIDENCE OF CHANGE	IMPACTS
 <p>NORMATIVE: Political, legislative, policy, institutional and financial frameworks</p>	<p>Women’s Leadership and Political Participation and Women, Peace and Security, including gender-responsive policies and budgets</p> <p>Women’s Economic Empowerment</p> <p>Elimination of Violence Against Women</p>	<p>Technical assistance to strengthen political, legal/policy, institutional and financial frameworks</p> <p>Capacity development to support and accelerate implementation of the frameworks</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Coordination for synergies within the UN system and with national stakeholders</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Capacity development to empower women and gender advocates to engage in decision-making, use economic opportunities and demand their rights</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Capacity development of central and local institutions to provide specialized services to survivors of violence</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Communication and media engagement to support accountability and raise awareness</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Engagement of men, youth and non-traditional actors</p>	<p>Policies adopted, institutional capacities to implement built, commitments costed and budgeted</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Women’s voice and agency ensured in coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Empowered and committed UN system, development partners and national stakeholders to support gender equality and the empowerment of women</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Women understand their rights, are empowered and engaged in political, economic and human rights agendas</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Data and knowledge on status of women and vulnerable groups generated and accessible</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Gender advocates have resources and capacity for evidence-based advocacy</p>	<p>More women fully participate and lead in gender-responsive governance processes and institutions, including in the security sector</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Increased accountability of UN, development partners and national stakeholders for gender equality and the empowerment of women; women’s voice and agency ensured in coordination.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Women are empowered and their health and security assured and rights protected.</p>	<p>Institutions finance and implement gender-responsive policies that support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s political participation and participation in the security sector; • income security, decent work for women; and • prevention and protection from all forms of violence against women <p>-----</p> <p>Coordinated decision-making; strengthened synergies; reduced overlapping in UN and other stakeholders’ engagement on gender equality and the empowerment of women</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Women can access training, financing and jobs.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Survivors of gender-based violence can access multisectoral responses, awareness increased and tolerance to violence reduced.</p>	<p>Women are equal, empowered to participate, contribute, lead and benefit from development and fully enjoy their rights free from violence</p> <p><i>integrates three thematic impacts below:</i></p> <p><i>Women are regarded as equal, empowered and valued contributors.</i></p> <p>☆☆☆</p> <p><i>Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems.</i></p> <p>☆☆☆</p> <p><i>Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy.</i></p> <p>☆☆☆</p> <p><i>Women and girls live free from violence.</i></p>
 <p>COORDINATION: Leadership, advocacy, partnerships, networks, mobilization and capacity</p>						
 <p>OPERATIONAL: Mobilization, capacity, planning, design, implementation, data, information, monitoring and evaluation</p>						
Assumptions:	Political commitment by partners and key stakeholders, champions existing or grown within stakeholders, readiness to financially support sustainability of the initiatives...					
Risks	Political instability, gender equality not de facto a priority, social norms and deeply rooted stereotypes, laws not being implemented, stereotypes in law enforcement, COVID-19					

3.2 Coherence

“ Finding 3: While the UN Women Moldova Country Office made efforts to adjust its internal structure and programmes for synergetic implementation across impact areas, there is further opportunity to strengthen a common vision about how thematic pillars and different programmes should work together. There is a particular need for stronger integration of Women’s Economic Empowerment and Women, Peace and Security areas into the Country Office’s overall strategy. ”

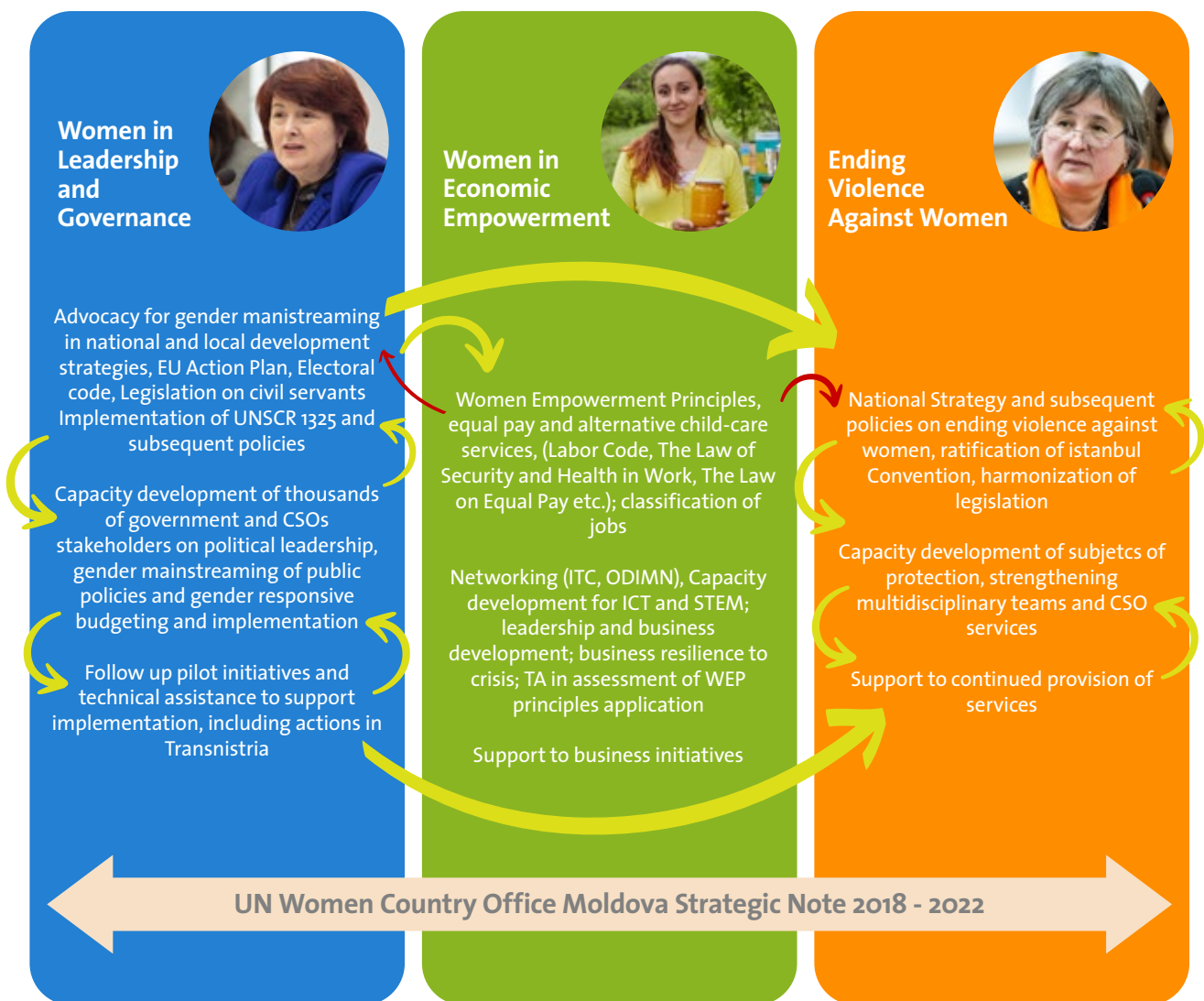
Although the Strategic Note and its theory of change are not explicit on synergies, analysis of Country Office reports and key informant interviews demonstrated the office’s synergetic work within and across impact areas. The usual logic followed within each impact area is policy advocacy followed by capacity development and support to implementation. Stakeholders recognize that general capacity development in gender mainstreaming of public policies and gender-responsive budgeting (components of Women in Leadership and Governance) was beneficial for all impact areas (in development of gender-responsive economic empowerment policies and legislation, and local budgets to support ending violence against women efforts), while some partners see potential benefits in support of new childcare policies and practices to women’s stronger engagement in decision-making.

There opportunities to strengthen contribution of the Women’s Economic Empowerment area to the other two impact areas (for example through businesswomen’s agency in policy advocacy, women in ICT with the capacity to develop digital tools in support of ending violence against women in general or violence against women in politics, or support of female entrepreneurs to exit strategies and employment of survivors of violence etc.). Lessons from COVID-19 and humanitarian crises, such as the regional and global consequences of the war in Ukraine provide space for stronger integration of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the future strategy, particularly in

terms of crisis/humanitarian response, conflict prevention and the humanitarian–development nexus, while also keeping the aspects of participation and protection of women in the security and defence sectors and social cohesion and confidence building in Transnistria.

The Country Office adjusted its internal structure to better support systemic work across impact areas, through engagement of an overall fixed-term Programme Specialist and Monitoring and Reporting Analyst and thematic Programme Analysts for two impact areas (Women in Leadership and Governance and Ending Violence Against Women). While an overall synergetic vision has been adopted by Country Office senior staff, understanding of the Strategic Note approach and synergies need to be further clarified for project personnel and, in particular, among personnel in the Women’s Economic Empowerment impact area, i.e. to enable better understanding of how different impact areas interact; how synergies are achieved within the same impact area; and how local/community actions contribute to overall results. The evaluation noticed that personnel engaged in interventions supported under Sida unearmarked funding were more aware of UN Women’s overall strategy than those engaged in other programmatic interventions. Challenges were partly a result of the more recent start of other projects and that 17 personnel joined the Country Office during the COVID-19 restrictions, when remote working was in place and had little opportunity to integrate.

FIGURE 5. Interaction within and between impact areas



Source: Reconstructed by the evaluation team based on programme reports and key informant interviews

“ **Finding 4:** The Country Office strategically engages in partnerships with national and international stakeholders. Dialogue and transparency in these relationships have been essential to building increased trust and strong collaboration with key stakeholders in supporting the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment. ”

In the absence of a central national institutional gender mechanism, the Country Office strategically engaged with several key line ministries. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Academy for Public Administration and National Bureau of Statistics were engaged across all three impact areas to strengthen normative, gender-responsive budgeting work and interventions in the education sector to support awareness raising, challenging of stereotypes and social norms change. Additionally, the Central Election Commission was engaged on Women in Leadership and Governance; the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence were engaged around the Women, Peace and Security agenda; the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice around Ending Violence Against Women; and the Ministry of the Economy and Organization for Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development around Women's Economic Empowerment.

Interventions extended to the local level through coordination with the Congress of Local Public Administration and local government in more than 20 districts throughout the country.

At the legislative level, there was coordination with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus. Such engagement supported numerous normative reforms; allowed for capacity development of public sector employees as well as end beneficiaries; and supported implementation of developed laws. Strategic engagement and response to the needs of the institutions led to an increased level of trust between the national Government and the Country Office.

In the non-governmental sector, the Country Office engages with networks and platforms that foster a high level of coordination and wide-scale implementation of the actions. Actions with civil society are coordinated through engagement with two major CSO networks: the Gender Equality Platform and Coalition for Life without Violence²⁹

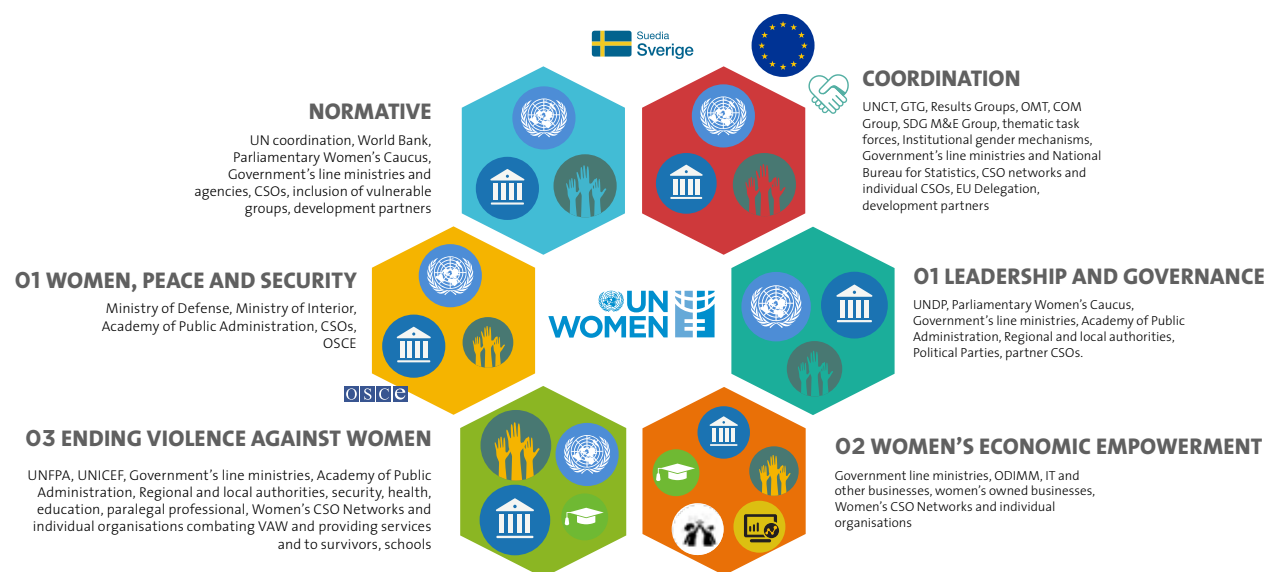
and with individual organizations. According to these CSO platforms, over the Strategic Note period, dialogue with UN Women on strategic issues and the transparency of UN Women's work have been strengthened, which led to increased trust and a reduction in tensions that had previously existed. This allowed for engagement with civil society across all Strategic Note impact areas.

As a UN Women corporate commitment, the Country Office established a Civil Society Advisory Group in 2015 and renewed its membership in 2021. Coordination through the group is considered a less effective mechanism than coordination with nationally developed CSO platforms. Some benefits of an earlier Civil Society Advisory Group mentioned during the evaluation were its engagement in consultations about the Strategic Note 2018–2022 and the involvement of vulnerable group associations in its membership. Both CSOs and UN Women personnel mentioned that cooperation was more intensive with individual organizations than with the group as a whole. New Civil Society Advisory Group members had only met during the focus group discussion organized within the Country Portfolio Evaluation and their formal work had not yet started. Some factors that hinder CSOs' interest in and commitment to the Civil Society Advisory Group are the group's insufficiently clear role in terms of other coordination platforms, and the provision in the group's Terms of Reference that members should be independent and not financially supported by UN Women, which in a context of scarce funding for CSOs discourages their interest in this mechanism.

Similar to CSO coordination, coordination with business sector is organized via key business networks, such as Association of Female Entrepreneurs in Moldova (AFAM), Moldovan Association of ICT Companies (ATIC) and through cooperation with individual companies and business incubators. For more information on strategic partnerships see Figure 6.

²⁹ Gender Equality Platform gathers 44 CSOs and individuals (<https://egalitadedegen.md/en/>) and National Coalition "Life without Violence" has 23 CSO members.

FIGURE 6. UN Women Moldova County Office key strategic partnerships



Source: Developed by the evaluation team

Several joint programmes were implemented with other UN agencies, such as the regional programme “EU4 Gender Equality: Together Against Gender Stereotypes and Gender Based Violence Project”, implemented in partnership with UNFPA (2020–2023), Strengthened Gender Action in Cahul and Ungheni Districts (EVA), joint with UNICEF (both funded by the EU), UNAIDS financial seeds on HIV development policies, Strengthening the Republic of Moldova's National Response to the COVID-19 Crisis (2020) in partnership with IOM and UNICEF and COVID-19 Response and Recovery Window of the Moldova 2030 SDGs

Partnership Fund (2020–2021) in partnership with ILO (both funded by MPTF). The Country Office coordinates with UNDP on women's political participation and with the World Bank on programme budgeting reforms and gender-responsive budgeting on a continuing basis. UN Women also engaged with OSCE in a confidence building process in Transnistria, supporting capacity development and the participation of female negotiators from both the Government of Moldova and de-facto authorities in Transnistria involved in thematic task forces.

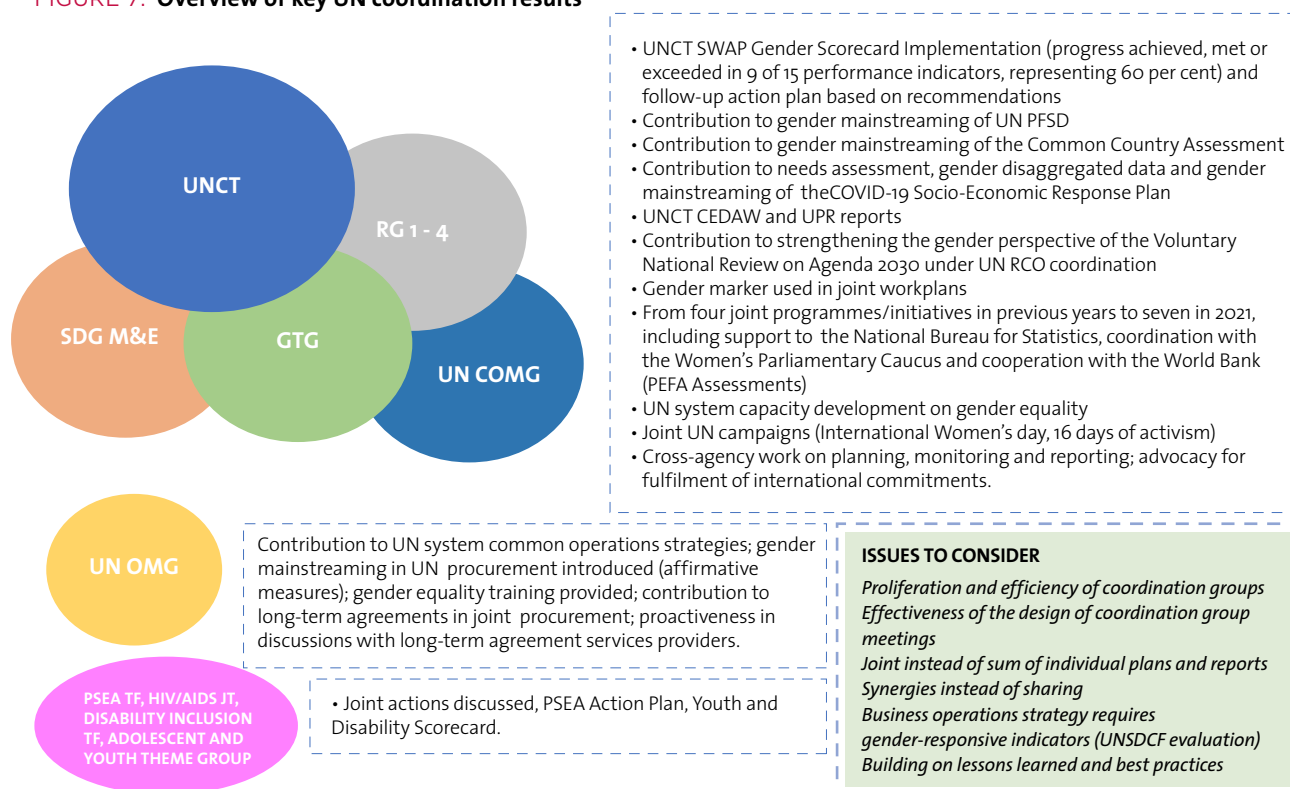
“ **Finding 5:** UN Women is seen as a leader and strong advocate for gender equality in UN coordination efforts and its technical assistance was appreciated across the UN system in Moldova. This led to a number of joint UN results on gender mainstreaming. However, the environment in the country is still challenging with UN agencies having different understandings of UN Women's integrated mandate, competition and siloed implementation of joint programmes. ”

The United Nations in Moldova adopted the ‘Delivering as One’ approach, which mandates joint planning, implementation and reporting. The UN Resident Coordinator’s Office and UN resident agencies generally encourage coordination and are keen on UN Women’s coordination of gender equality.

The UN organizations consulted as a part of this Country Portfolio Evaluation confirmed that over the Strategic Note period UN Women had strengthened its role. UN Women is seen as a proactive, leading entity on gender equality and a resource organization providing necessary knowledge and expertise. Thanks to Sida’s funding of the Strategic Note, the Country Office was able to overcome a structural

deficit of funding for the UN Women’s coordination mandate³⁰ and managed to increase its presence and influence by engaging a full-time coordination and partnership officer and contributing additional office personnel across twelve different UN coordination platforms. The results of this engagement are reflected in the engendered UN PFSD 2018–2022, COVID-19 UN Socio-Economic Response Plan, UNCT SWAP Gender Scorecard Implementation, contribution to the UN Common Country Assessment conducted by the World Bank and the increased number of joint programmes and campaigns, and gender mainstreamed procurement procedures etc. (for more results see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. Overview of key UN coordination results



Source: Developed by the evaluation team

While the Resident Coordinator’s Office and representatives of UN agencies are in favour of strengthening UN coordination in general, key Country Portfolio Evaluation informants noted a lack of structure and missed opportunities to use coordination platforms for joint action on gender equality; competition among agencies; and siloed implementation of joint programmes. For example, coordination meetings beyond initial planning were used for information sharing and not structured to strengthen joint work; joint programmes were generally implemented in separate components owned by different agencies with little synergy and awareness of each other’s strategies and results. Many agencies often appointed the same person to participate in several

coordination groups, as a result, motivation was lower and opportunities were missed. It is largely acknowledged by both UN Women and other members of the UNCT, that the proliferation of coordination groups is not proportional to their effectiveness, but no clear solution or alternative has been proposed. Issues pertaining to siloed planning and implementation and the need to ensure commitments on gender equality and gender mainstreaming translate into action in the UNCT were also raised by the Final Evaluation of the UNPFSD 2018–2022. According to the evaluation, additional effort is needed by all UN agencies “to ensure that planning under the UNPFSD is not done as the sum of agency plans, but as a process that consolidates and integrates the efforts of the

³⁰ More than 50 per cent of the total UN Women coordination budget remains at the headquarters level, while Country Offices have minimal core financial resources to implement the Entity’s coordination mandate as reflected in the Meta Analysis of UN Women 2022 Work Plans, Technical Level Presentation, January 2022.

agencies.”³¹ In addition, the evaluation recommended that the UNCT strengthen its capacities to foster gender mainstreaming and establish financial targets for gender equality and the empowerment of women in its programmes.

According to the 2021 UNCT SWAP Scorecard,³² the UNCT in Moldova met or exceeded 60 per cent of its performance indicators. Progress was evident in six indicators in comparison to earlier measurement. The indicator on gender results regressed from “meets minimum requirements” to “approaches minimum requirements.” The Country Office explained that this was because of the increased level of rigour applied to the latest UNCT SWAP report when reporting against this indicator as per corporate guidance. Interestingly, the only indicator that was reported as “missing minimum requirements” was the

Gender Parity indicator. The rationale provided for not meeting this indicator was that the data collected from UNCT members showed an underrepresentation of men across general services and professional categories. Of 130 UN system staff included in the assessment, 78 were women (60 per cent) and 52 (40 per cent) men. There were also greater numbers of women in national officer positions – 39 women (66 per cent) of 59 persons. For P and D-level positions, 8 of 12 employees (67 per cent) were women. These figures have been largely consistent over the past three years. Given the overall underrepresentation of women in the UN system, particularly in leadership positions, such interpretation of an underrepresentation of men could be questioned. Reporting against this particular indicator should be further clarified with UN Women’s Coordination Division in the future.

TABLE 5. Summary of UNCT 2021 UNCT SWAP reporting

Indicator	Missing Minimum Requirements	Approaches Minimum Requirements	Meets Minimum Requirements	Exceeds Minimum Requirements
1 - Planning				
1.1 Common Country Assessment		✓		
1.2 UNDAF Outcomes		✓		
1.3 UNDAF Indicators				→ ✓
2 - Programming and M&E				
2.1 Joint Programs			✓	
2.2 Communication & Advocacy				✓
2.3 UNDAF M&E				→ ✓
3 - Partnerships				
3.1 Engagement Government				✓
3.2 Engagement with GEEW CSO				✓
4 - Leadership & Organizational Culture				
4.1 Leadership				→ ✓
4.2 Organizational Culture				✓
4.3 Gender Parity	✓			
5 - Gender Architecture and Capacities				
5.1 Gender Coordination Mechanism			→ ✓	
5.2 Gender Capacities		→ ✓		
6 - Financial Resources				
6.1 Resources		→ ✓		
7 - Results				
7.1 Gender Results		✓	←	
Total	1	5	2	7

Source: UN Women Moldova Country Office

³¹ UN Moldova, (2021) Final Evaluation of the Republic of Moldova United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018 – 2022, p.90

³² UNCT SWAP is a self-reporting mechanism coordinated by UN Women at the country level.

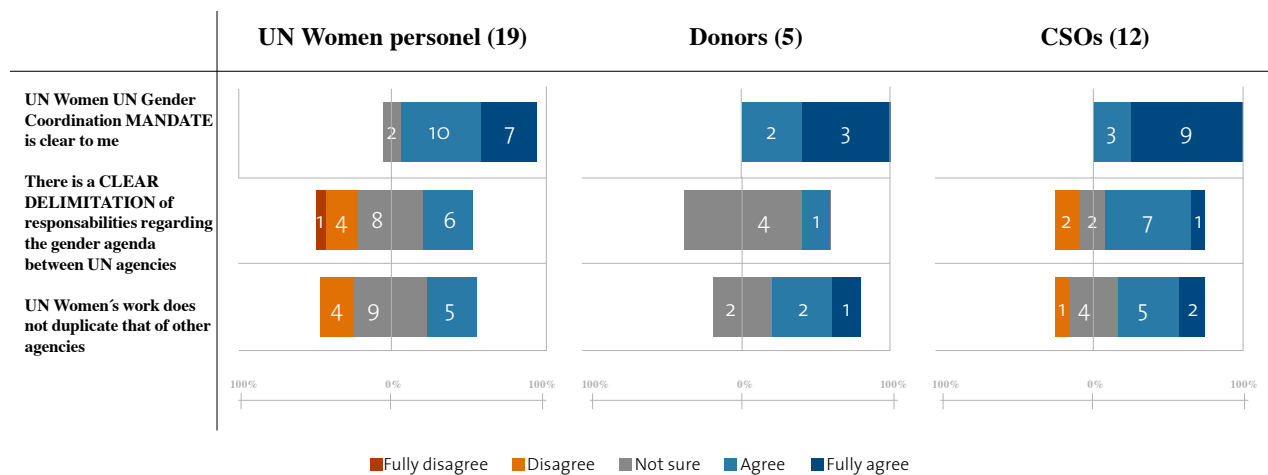
“ Finding 6: The Country Office’s comparative advantages of leadership on gender equality, knowledge and expertise and convening power are well recognized by all partners; however UN agencies have different ideas about how UN Women should exercise its mandate and those advantages in practice. ”

National and international stakeholders see the Country Office’s comparative advantages in being a leading agency on gender equality; having in-house knowledge and expertise or being able to quickly identify and deploy it; having insights in regional and international best practices and lessons learned; and having strong convening and dialogue power. These are seen as valuable assets for strengthening coordination on gender equality in different platforms and in contacts with individual partners. While national counterparts see UN Women’s comparative advantages in all aspects of UN Women’s engagement – programme development, policy support and support to operational implementation (expecting to see pilot initiatives and how gender is mainstreamed in implementation), there are mixed perceptions among UN agencies about how UN Women should use these

comparative advantages. Major UN agencies see the benefits of UN Women’s role in mainstreaming gender into plans and policies, rather than in operational implementation of programmes. This could be one of the reasons that challenges UN Women’s position in coordination as previous evaluations showed the Entity is better positioned in coordination when its UN partners recognize its added value and demand its coordination efforts.³³

Another issue posing a challenge for UN Women to demonstrate its added value is the lack of clarity on UN agencies’ responsibilities for gender agenda and potential duplication and overlapping of UN agencies’ work (this is particularly concerning for development partners/donors).

FIGURE 8. Perceptions on the clarity of UN organizations’ mandates for gender equality



Source: Country Portfolio Evaluation surveys

³³ Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s contribution to UN system coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/5/evaluation-of-un-women-s-contribution-to-un-system-coordination#view>

3.3 Effectiveness

“ **Finding 7:** Evidence of results is strongest in normative and individual capacity development and empowerment across all three impact areas, while the Ending Violence Against Women impact area shows progress beyond that, in systemic changes and influence on institutional practices and social norms. ”

The Country Office takes a holistic approach to its work, successfully combining policy advocacy and normative support with capacity development for the adoption or implementation of policies and empowerment for women’s agency and social norms change. As previously mentioned, the usual intervention logic of the Country Office followed within each impact area is policy advocacy – capacity development – support to implementation. Policy advocacy

involves relationship building, coordination and dialogue with key duty bearers in the Government and CSOs and consultation with rights holders, including vulnerable groups to support revision of existing policies or drafting new policies in line with key international standards. Normative results were achieved in all three impact areas as presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Highlights of the Country Office’s contribution to normative results in the Strategic Note period 2018–2022

Strategic Note Impact area	Results achieved
Women in Leadership and Governance (incl. Women, Peace and Security)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to National Programmes on Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2018-2021 and 2022-2026 and the Action Plans on their implementation (2018 and 2021) • Gender mainstreamed in the National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030” (2019) • Introduction of gender quota in the Electoral Code (2019) • Continued work on gender-responsive budgeting in cooperation with the World Bank and Ministry of Finance for conducting the Assessment of the Public Expenditure an Financial Accountability framework (PEFA) (2020) • Regulations to prevent and combat sexual harassment in security and defence (2020) • New Action Plan for EU accession, combating corruption, and reform of the justice system that includes specific goals for the advancement of gender equality (2020) • Gender mainstreamed in local development strategies and gender-responsive budget allocations in 20 communities (2020) • Contribution to the development of the Voluntary National Review on Agenda 2030 report (under coordination of the UN Regional Coordinator’s Office), by facilitation of the inclusion of women’s CSOs in the working group and advocacy for use of available sex disaggregated data for gender analysis (2021) • Participatory development of the National Programme on Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (2021-2025)
Women’s Economic Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued advocacy for Women Empowerment Principles, particularly equal pay and alternative child-care services (ongoing) • Proposed amendments to the Labour Code, law of security and health in work and law of pay (ongoing) – to reflect realization of the Women’s Empowerment Principles • Classification of occupations in the Republic of Moldova (2021)
Ending Violence Against Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence for 2018-2023, with an Action Plan, based on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention (2018) • The Law to align provisions applicable in civil legislation with the Istanbul Convention (2020) • Ratification of the Istanbul Convention (2021) • Action Plan for Implementation of Istanbul Convention 2021-2022 – included submission of the second draft package of harmonized criminal legislation to Parliament and intersectoral protocol on EVAW (2021) • Regulation for the establishment of the first ever specialized service for victims of sexual violence in the District of Ungheni

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

In alignment with normative engagement, the Country Office engages in capacity development of both government and non-government stakeholders across all three impact areas. This was already envisaged in the design of the Strategic Note 2018–2022 and related Theory of Change where capacity development either precedes policy advocacy to raise awareness and mobilize support, and facilitates or follows adoption of regulations to facilitate their implementation. For example, all 10 outputs in the Strategic Note's Development Results Framework are focused on building the capacities and knowledge of different target groups. Ten of the 21 output indicators clearly refer to the number of different groups with built capacities and knowledge and envisage several thousand beneficiaries will have benefitted over the Strategic Note period. Review of annual budgets showed that in the period

2018–2022, 48 per cent of the total budget or 58 per cent of the Development Results Framework, was planned for capacity development-related activities.³⁴

The Country Office has implemented various capacity development initiatives focused on government officials, parliamentarians and local councillors, female political candidates, media, CSOs and individuals from different vulnerable groups. Capacity development efforts were mostly delivered as training, mentoring and technical assistance but in some cases were supported by the creation of an enabling environment or provision of financial support to apply learned knowledge and skills (for example incentives to start new businesses, financial support to elected female mayors and councillors to implement small community development actions).

TABLE 7. Overview of capacity development interventions by the UN Women Moldova Country Office (2018–2022)³⁵ that supported capacity development of around 4,000 persons per year

Impact area / Topic	Format	Target group
1.1 Women in Leadership and Governance		
Gender mainstreaming in policymaking and budgeting (national and local level)	Training, mentoring, technical assistance, peer support	Public servants from local and central public authorities, mayors, local councillors
Gender-sensitive budget monitoring	Training	CSOs
Political leadership, human rights, gender equality and active engagement in local decision-making	Training, coaching	Women candidates in elections countrywide, women leaders / candidates from Gagauz minority
Leadership and local governance	Training, coaching, financial support to implement actions	Newly elected women mayors and councillors
Gender inclusive electoral process, combating sexism and violence in elections	Training	Members of Central Election Commission and Election Commission of ATU Gagauzia
Advancement of quality of services and policy advocacy for gender equality	Training, technical assistance	CSOs (including Transnistrian region and Gagauzia)
1.2 Women Peace and Security		
Localization of Women, Peace and Security agenda	Training, technical assistance, peer exchange, financial support to implement actions	Ministries, agencies/institutions in security and defence, CSOs
Human Resource Management and National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325	Training and technical assistance	Human Resource representatives at police inspectorates
2. Women's Economic Empowerment		
Business administration and financial education in COVID-19 context	Training, technical assistance, peer exchange, financial support to implement actions	Ministries, agencies/institutions in security and defence, CSOs
Entrepreneurship, business management and application of Women's Economic Empowerment Principles	Training, mentoring, financial assistance	Women entrepreneurs and business owners, including from vulnerable groups ³⁶
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and IT skills	Certified courses, networking with employers	Young women and girls
Economy of care		Government, CSOs, business sector

Source: Country Portfolio Evaluation surveys

³⁴ UN Women's RMS system accessed 26 April 2022.

³⁵ Based on UN Women annual and project reports and evaluation interviews. The evaluation team did not necessarily capture information on all capacity development interventions and all target groups reached.

³⁶ Women from rural areas, women with disabilities, single mothers, women migrants, survivors of violence, minorities.

TABLE 7. Overview of capacity development interventions by the UN Women Moldova Country Office (2018–2022) that supported capacity development of around 4,000 persons per year

Impact area / Topic	Format	Target group
3. Ending Violence Against Women		
Multidisciplinary approach to ending violence against women and best practices in application of the law	Training of trainers, training, mentoring, study visits	Police, service providers from multidisciplinary teams, paralegals, CSOs
Economic empowerment	Advisory support, information on opportunities	Women survivors of violence, service providers, public servants
Gender equality, prevention and combating hate speech and sexism, LGBTQI rights	Training, mentoring, financial support to implement actions	Youth in local communities
Harmonious relations in the family	Adaptation of existing curriculum, training	Teachers, pupils, parents
COVID-19 psycho-social resilience and prevention/protection measures	Training	CSOs
Collecting administrative data on domestic violence	Training	Social Assistance Territorial Units
Gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS and access to services	Training, mentoring	HIV affected population

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team based on Country Office Annual Reports for the period 2018–2021, project documentation and key informant interviews

A supportive legal framework and the increased capacities of national stakeholders have together led to the achievement of significant results across all three impact areas. In Women's Leadership and Governance, UN Women reported a significant share of women trained in leadership skills who decided to run for elections in 2019; and reporting on violence in elections was facilitated and the topic brought into public discourse. Gender-responsive budgeting measures were introduced in local development plans and budgets; while relevant gender disaggregated statistics became available through cooperation with the

National Bureau for Statistics. In the area of Women's Economic Empowerment, new businesses and jobs were created or existing jobs were strengthened, women and girls intensively engaged in STEM and started to generate income; and topics such as unpaid work and the care economy entered political and public discourse. In the area of Ending Violence Against Women, the quality of essential services for women survivors of violence was improved as well as the conduct of justice sector professionals. Table 8 below reflects the key results reported by the Country Office.

TABLE 8. Overview of results reported by UN Women Moldova Country Office in the period 2018-2022³⁷ across all three impact areas

Impact area / Intervention	Result	Effects on vulnerable groups
1.1 Women in Leadership and Governance		
Leadership and campaigning training and empowerment	Of 1,057 women trained, 748 ran for local elections as mayors or local councillors	Of the 38 Roma women trained, 14 ran for elections with 4 being elected. Of 47 trained women with disabilities, 8 women with disabilities ran for local elections of which 6 were elected
27 elected local mayors and councillors developed community-based initiatives	Improvement of local services, cleaner environment; improving accessibility to public buildings; increasing safety in public spaces for women and girls.	Some projects involved improvement of accessibility projects for persons with disabilities
Online platform https://gender.monitor.md/ for reporting gender-based discrimination, violence, sexist speech and violence against women in elections (2020)	144 cases of gender-based discrimination and violence registered, of which 65 related to violence against women and 79 to sexist speech; topics brought to public discourse and policy discussions	
Continued support to interactive e-portal for gender statistics in Moldova – Gender Pulse	Gender-disaggregated data accessible to decision-makers and the public	

³⁷ Based on UN Women annual and project reports and evaluation interviews. The evaluation team did not necessarily capture information on all capacity development interventions and all target groups reached.

TABLE 8. Overview of results reported by UN Women Moldova Country Office in the period 2018-2022 across all three impact areas

Impact area / Intervention	Result	Effects on vulnerable groups
2. Women's Economic Empowerment		
42 investment projects co-financed by UN Women and the Government	80 new jobs created through 40 supported business ideas of young women	70 per cent of projects implemented in rural areas
Business development programme	160 women of 600 enrolled in the business development programme started new business	
31 women-led IT start-ups provided technical and financial assistance (accelerator programme)	15 generated sales within one month of training of approximately EUR 10,500 (US\$ 11,765) 8 reached product state	58 per cent of the founders from vulnerable groups (rural, youth, unemployed, female-headed households, survivors of domestic violence).
Support to digital promotion of businesses	Women from 17 companies digitized their businesses with websites and advertised their products on e-commerce platforms	
IT training	20 women, from 550 who received knowledge and skills, managed to obtain a job in the ICT field or accomplish first successes in launching their own projects ³⁸	
IT bootcamps for youth	160 of 1,143 girls and boys received guidance on their future career choice and essential skills for tech jobs	
Provided tool for private sector to assess their status and progress in application of the Women's Empowerment Principles		
3. Ending Violence Against Women		
Policy and capacity development, financial support to service providing CSOs. Video campaign: 17,000 women reached country wide; media campaign: circa 920,000 of inhabitants were reached; virtual reality tool	Contribution to creation of supportive environment, improvement of quality of services and empowerment of women and girls to report violence. In 2021, the number of protection orders increased by 11.8 per cent in comparison to previous year; reported cases in 2021 increased by 7.22 per cent in comparison to the previous year	Survivors of violence supported, some empowered to provide peer to peer support sessions to other survivors.
Policy support and capacity development at district and local level	Established first specialized service for victims of sexual violence with the support of Ungheni District Council, to be staffed with medical doctors, nurses, and psychologists and provide all the information and services victims may need in one place. Established first specialized service for victims of sexual violence with the support of Ungheni District Council, to be staffed with medical doctors, nurses, and psychologists and provide all the information and services victims may need in one place.	Survivors of sexual violence
Capacity development of circa 250 young people to combat gender stereotypes, old social norms and identification of available services in cases of gender-based violence	12 videos produced and promoted by participants, reflecting how to stop sexual harassment, how to identify the signs of sexual harassment, bullying, gender inequality etc.	Majority of youth involved from rural areas
	Nine community-based initiatives and campaigns implemented on gender equality and anti-discrimination topics	

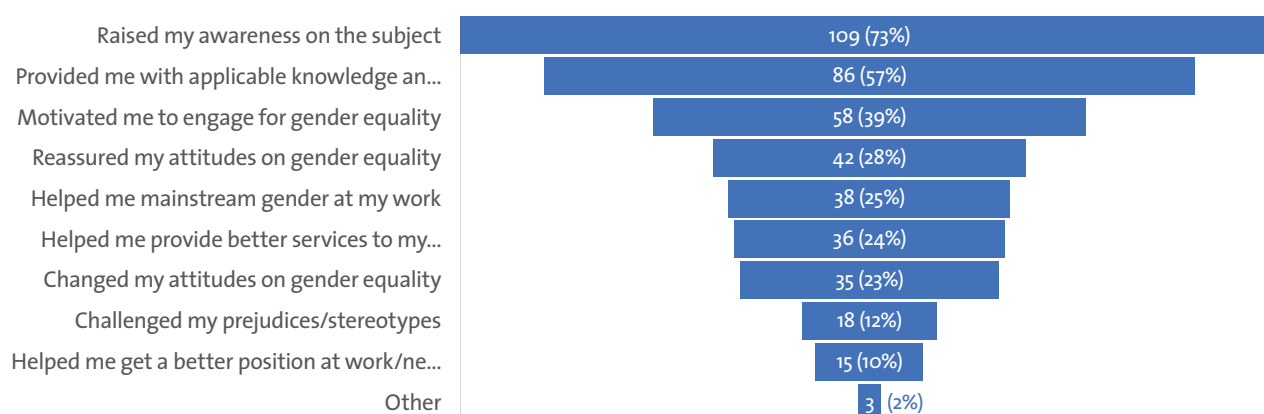
Source: Developed by the evaluation team based on Country Office Annual Reports for the period 2018–2021, project documentation and key informant interviews

³⁸ Implementing partners assessed the results are higher than at the time of the report and that around 20 per cent of the total number of capacity development beneficiaries in some way stayed connected and engaged by the IT industry.

While it was not possible to confirm the entire scope of the results through other sources consulted, both interviews and surveys confirmed the achievements reported by UN Women. The evaluation team gathered survey responses from 150 beneficiaries of UN Women's capacity development support in all three impact areas.³⁹ The responses showed significant changes achieved at individual level reflected in awareness raising on gender equality (72.6 per cent) and acquiring new applicable knowledge and skills (57.3 per cent); followed by increased motivation to engage for gender equality (38.6 per cent) and reassurance in attitudes on gender equality (28 per cent); ability to mainstream gender at work (25.3 per cent); changed attitudes on gender equality (23

per cent); and the ability to provide better services to clients (24 per cent). Fifteen respondents (10 per cent) confirmed they had obtained a new job or better position thanks to the capacity development support provided by UN Women. Most of the examples mentioned in narrative responses related to building self-esteem to engage in political life in the community; giving public speeches; conducting better research on gender; and using gender data in presentations, analysis of documents and policies from a gender perspective. All of this individual knowledge and skills, if consistently applied, also has the potential to lead to higher-level results at the organizational and systemic level.

FIGURE 9. Key results of UN Women capacity development interventions at individual level reported by end beneficiaries



Source: Country Portfolio Evaluation capacity development survey

Fifty-eight per cent of survey respondents reported having applied learned knowledge and skills often and 8.6 per cent regularly; 18.6 per cent reported applying them rarely; while 15.3 per cent reported having never applied them or were not sure about the frequency of application of knowledge and skills.

In addition to individual level results, UN Women made efforts to initiate changes within institutions and organizations. As reflected in reports, gender-responsive budgeting initiatives were supported by UN Women in 22 localities in the Cahul and Ungheni regions, which allocated 2

per cent of their total budgets in 2022 to implement actions on preventing and combatting violence against women. According to UN Women implementing partners' reports, 42 localities across the country, including four towns (Cahul, Ungheni, Cornesti and Cainari), embedded gender-specific targets and performance indicators in 186 budgetary sub-programmes relevant to advancing gender equality at the local level, such as culture, sports, street lightning, road infrastructure and education. For the first time, these budgetary programmes reflect the different needs

³⁹ In the context of this Country Portfolio Evaluation a survey on the results of capacity development interventions was sent to 500 end beneficiaries with a 30 per cent (150) response rate. Respondents comprised 46 per cent public and elected officials, 15 per cent educational workers, 8 per cent business owners and entrepreneurs, 6 per cent police officers and a smaller number of other professionals.

and priorities voiced by women and men during participatory processes; and incorporate sex disaggregated data and gender indicators to measure progress towards advancing gender equality. With UN Women's technical assistance, the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior introduced policies on prevention and combating sexual harassment; however, their results are still to be assessed. Following UN Women's capacity development, several businesses conduct self-assessment and undertake

measures to improve working conditions for women and exchange good practices.

Surveyed beneficiaries of UN Women's capacity development support reported an improved environment for gender equality in their institutions/organizations; and consolidation of existing business or establishment of a new business.

FIGURE 10. Key results of UN Women's capacity development interventions at organizational level reported by end beneficiaries



Source: Source: Country Portfolio Evaluation capacity development survey

Despite this, evaluation interviews and analysis of the end beneficiary survey showed the environment for strengthening gender equality is still challenging. While 48 per cent of the respondents to the survey did not see any obstacle at their institution or organization to apply learned knowledge and skills on gender equality, 52 per cent faced challenges such as lack of opportunities to apply knowledge and skills (16.6 per cent of respondents); inflexible institutional and organizational routines (13.3 per cent of respondents); other priorities set up by the institution than those that the participants were trained for (12.6 per cent of

respondents); and lack of financial resources for application (12 per cent of respondents). Other, less frequently identified obstacles were insufficient knowledge for independent application; lack of support by supervisors and organizational policies; while some respondents perceived the legal framework was unsupportive. Evaluation interviews with both UN Women and national stakeholders confirmed most of those obstacles, and also a lack of motivation among employees and a high turnover of staff in the institutions.

“ Finding 8: The UN Women Moldova Country Office approach towards capacity development is supported by thorough needs assessment, tailored intervention design and a conscious combination of different types of interventions. However, quality assurance, comprehensive monitoring and reporting, and measuring impact-level change of capacity development interventions could be further strengthened and standardized. ”

In addition to results, under the effectiveness criterion, the evaluation observed how UN Women applies its capacity development strategies. An evaluation framework developed in earlier UN Women evaluations⁴⁰ and frameworks presented in the Corporate Formative Evaluation of UN Women's Support for Capacity Development of Partners to Respond to the Needs of Women and Girls at National Level⁴¹ (all illustrated in Figure 11) were used. Frameworks integrate aspects of capacity development planning, delivery, provision of follow-up and creation of enabling environments for application of knowledge and skills as key preconditions for results at individual, organizational and systemic levels.

The Country Office applied capacity development interventions, conscious of all stages of the capacity development management cycle and with full awareness of the need to apply a combination of strategies and ensure follow-up support to end beneficiaries for best results. The Country Office continues to focus more on the first stages of capacity development interventions with follow up and less on the evaluation of specific initiatives; however, the

office still manages to capture key results and collect human interest stories. An overview of key findings related to capacity development processes is presented below:

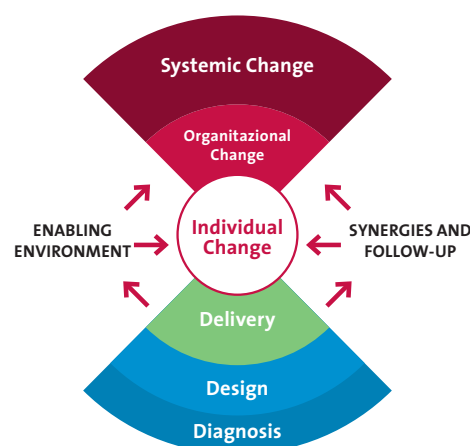


FIGURE 11. Capacity development evaluation framework

Criteria	Key findings
DIAGNOSIS	The Country Office assesses beneficiary group capacity through research, relying on engaged professionals' expertise or on earlier experience in cooperation with the groups. Occasionally, tailored capacity needs assessment were conducted (for example: needs assessment surveys by the Academy of Public Administration, Contact Centre that delivered training and mentoring to local councillors, politicians and women entrepreneurs). In some of the interventions, vulnerable groups' perspectives were well integrated.
DESIGN	The Country Office understands capacity development as a synergetic process of various initiatives. In many cases, in addition to training, the strategy involved mentoring, coaching and technical assistance as a follow-up to facilitate application of learned knowledge and skills, and sustainability of results. Implementing partner reports, end-of-training evaluations and Country Portfolio Evaluations suggest the design of capacity development interventions responded to the identified needs. Survey respondents also recognized capacity development interventions involved UN Women support to application of learned concepts (80 per cent of respondents) and their institution or organization in an creating enabling environment for application (60 per cent of respondents).
DELIVERY	Delivery of capacity development interventions was mostly consistent with their design and responded to the needs of participants. The COVID-19 pandemic affected delivery over the last two years. UN Women, implementing partners and end beneficiaries all reported challenges with online events due to participants' lack of technical capacity in using provided technologies, and in some cases the sessions were not very interactive. However, the overall impression is that the Country Office and its partners provided an adequate learning environment. An area that requires further attention is monitoring the delivery of capacity development as there is no comprehensive database on beneficiaries and implemented interventions.
SYNERGIES AND FOLLOW-UP	The Country Office applies a variety of capacity development strategies in synergy, providing opportunities to apply knowledge and skills and assisting beneficiaries in development of their knowledge and skills through practice. For example: gender-responsive budgeting was followed by technical assistance and monitoring to improve budgets at the central and local government level; IT skills training business development activities were followed by small grants, career orientation sessions or networking with employers to support sustainability; political leadership training for female councillors and mayors was followed up with grants to support small-scale interventions in communities related to improvement of services and infrastructure; training on the application of a legal framework on violence against women was followed by mentorship and support to multidisciplinary teams at the local level, etc. As UN Women has limited resources, it usually engages with national institutions and networks to increase the reach of its interventions and support institutionalization and ownership. Potential synergies with other development partners could be further considered.
ENABLING ENVIRONMENT	The Country Office extensively engages in networking, coordination and normative support to the Government. The Country Office, its implementing partners and beneficiaries consider these efforts key strategies that support an enabling environment for engagement of developed capacities, building of ownership and sustainability of results. While achieved normative results are significant, further technical and financial support to implementation is necessary, as well as building institutional ownership over promoted policies and practices.

⁴⁰ For example [UN Women Pakistan Country Portfolio Evaluation + Audit \(2021\)](#), inspired by 1) UN Women's evaluation framework used for Regional Evaluation on UN Women's Capacity Development Initiatives in East and Southern Africa focusing on criteria of diagnosis of the problem to be addressed with the training, design and delivery of the training intervention and follow-up to support application ; 2) Capacity Development Evaluation Framework of the Food and Agricultural Organization.

⁴¹ Inspired by capacity development frameworks presented in [Capacity development: A report prepared for the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(2016\)](#) for the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

As capacity development is a dominant UN Women strategy in Moldova, closer monitoring and evaluation of results with end beneficiaries requires further attention, i.e. it is still limited to the duration of a programme or there were some examples of captured results up to a maximum

one year upon the programme's completion. Long-term follow-up and impact assessment of selected interventions should be considered, particularly as Sida's Direct Strategic Funding is supportive of the interventions that contribute to strengthening overall management.

“ Finding 8: The UN Women Moldova Country Office approach towards capacity development is supported by thorough needs assessment, tailored intervention design and a conscious combination of different types of interventions. However, quality assurance, comprehensive monitoring and reporting, and measuring impact-level change of capacity development interventions could be further strengthened and standardized. ”

Together with UNDP, the Country Office provides long-term support to the National Bureau for Statistics to produce reliable gender-sensitive statistics to be publicly available for policy development and use by a wide range of non-government and international development stakeholders. The data are publicly presented through a Gender Pulse portal (<https://genderpulse.md/en>), an interactive and user-friendly online tool providing statistical and interpreted visual information of gender-sensitive statistical indicators. The database is linked to the National Bureau of Statistics as the main source and data transfer from the main database is automated.

From technological and utility point of view, Gender Pulse is an application worthy of international-level attention. The portal has been used by the Government and CSOs, and there is a commitment to and interest in its further evolution. However, the National Bureau for Statistics has

limited capacity and it believes it produces more data than is demanded, implying that prioritization and a thematic approach is not consistently considered. Users commented that sometimes the data available on the gender portal are outdated; therefore, the collection and processing of administrative data from public institutions should be strengthened to advance human rights and gender equality.

The Country Office also engages in the production of its own 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; foundation for further research; and reference in capacity development initiatives. Methodological tools, guidelines and research on gender-based violence and gender perspectives on the consequences of COVID-19 were the most referenced by informants.

BOX 1. RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS produced by UN Women during 2018–2022 (compiled by the evaluation team)



[Republic of Moldova Country Gender Equality Briefs](#)

[Assessing the functionality of multidisciplinary teams on cases of domestic violence \(2021\)](#)

[Childcare, Women's employment and the impact of COVID-19: The case of Moldova \(2021\)](#)

[Assessment of COVID-19 impact on gender roles \(2020\)](#)

[Motivations and barriers for girls and women in STEM and ICT domains \(2020\)](#)

[Violence Against Women and Girls Data Collection during COVID-19 \(2020\)](#)

[Equality Means Business – Implementation Guide on Women Empowerment Principles \(2020\)](#)

[Peculiarities of Sexual Violence in the Republic of Moldova \(2019\)](#)

[Review of provisions on incompatibility of offices held by local elected officials from gender equality perspective \(2019\)](#)

[Essential services package for women and girls subject to violence \(2019\)](#)

[Gender sensitive and coordinated service provision in the Republic of Moldova \(2019\)](#)

[Preventing Violence Against Women In Elections \(2018\)](#)

[Gender Barometer: How do Women and Men Participate in Politics and Decision-Making? \(2018\)](#)

[Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development \(2018\)](#)

To communicate its research, data and results, the Country Office has launched campaigns and deployed some innovative approaches to communication, such as virtual reality to combat violence against women, murals and street-art, involvement of influencers, well know figures and engaged in wide outreach to citizens through public events and social networks. The Country Office also maintains and regularly updates its own website: <https://moldova.unwomen.org/en> in English and Romanian.

While campaigns, publications and knowledge products gained the attention of external partners, the website was mentioned by few of them, while social networks usually engage the same active community of followers. With regards to the Country Office's website, human interest/impact stories and campaigns were the most referenced. Some of the evaluation key informants noted a lack of messages sent to men and about men, which could be considered for development in the future.

“ Finding 10: The Country Office's proactive engagement and flexible strategic support from Sida, followed by flexibility of other donors, allowed it to quickly respond to the COVID-19 outbreak through needs assessment, support to gender mainstreaming of the COVID-19 UN Socio-Economic Response Plan, government policies and implementation of programmes benefiting the most vulnerable. ”

The Country Office was rapid in assessing the needs and adjusting its work to the COVID-19 pandemic context. It contributed to analyses of other UN agencies or independently analysed the impact of COVID-19 from a gender equality perspective, for example on women's economic situation; needs of women affected by domestic violence and the system's response; and the situation of Roma women. The Country Office actively supported the UNCT in gender mainstreaming the overall COVID-19 socio-economic response; the Government in development

and implementation of its own response plans; and CSO in maintaining their protection services and with the introduction of online counselling in a situation of increased prevalence of violence and domestic care burden. The Country Office also engaged with female-owned private companies and supported them in reorganization of their businesses towards production of protective items, digitalization of sale and procured goods from female-owned companies in a context of sudden economic deterioration and shortage of protective items.

BOX 2. Highlights from reported activities of UN Women during the COVID-19 pandemic

Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid gender assessment. • Assessment of the needs of women affected by domestic or gender-based violence and systemic response to cases of domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. • Assessment, consultations with the Government and Economic Council, and diverse stakeholders on gender and COVID-19 related measures. • Contribution to the regional study in partnership with UNECE on care services and employment during COVID-19.
Immediate response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of protective equipment, food and hygiene supplies to 18,000 women and men from vulnerable groups, of which a significant part was procured from women-owned / women-employing businesses. • Support to online psychological, social and legal counselling, available 24 hours a day for a four-month period through six specialized CSOs.
Development nexus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender mainstreaming of national COVID-19 socio-economic response policies. • Gender mainstreaming contribution to UN Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. • Economic empowerment supported more than 1,000 women, creating new businesses, strengthening resilience of existing businesses and creating new jobs.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team based on Country Office Annual Reports 2018–2021

Through rapid gender assessments, UN Women identified socially vulnerable groups and allocated savings from Sida strategic funding and project funding, as well as newly mobilized resources to provide protective equipment and information to around 18,000 citizens (including people living in poverty, Roma, people living with disabilities,

female-headed households, elderly women, people living with HIV, rural women, including population in Transnistrian region). Actions were implemented in cooperation with other UN agencies, such as OHCHR, ILO, IOM, UNICEF and UNDP. In addition, during the restrictive lock-down period hundreds of women from these vulnerable groups received psychosocial,

3.4 Efficiency

“ **Finding 11:** The UN Women Moldova Country Office recognized and strategized the opportunities that the direct Strategic Note funding modality provides to support overall efficiency through strengthening its own capacities and in the strategic allocation of resources. Over implementation of the Strategic Note period (2018–2022), mobilized resources and the number of personnel more than doubled. ”

The Country Office has been a recipient of Sida direct Strategic Note funding since 2016, which represented close to 41 per cent of the Country Office’s total budget for 2018–2022 (see Table 9). Sida uses this modality with UN agencies in cases where the priorities of the UN agency largely align with the development priorities of the Government of Sweden. From the beginning of the 2018–2022 Strategic Note cycle in its presentation of the document to Sweden, other donors and national counterparts,⁴² as well as in resource mobilization, the Country Office highlighted the need for agility, disruption

of “business as usual”, and reflection and learning for which the strategic funding from Sida was seen as an opportunity. The Country Office used the funding to strengthen its efficiency and transform internal processes and programming approaches. Over time, when the results of this approach were demonstrated and trust was strengthened between Sida and UN Women, allocation of this type of flexible funding increased (see Figure 12: Theory of Change and for more details see Appendix 1 Case Study: Sida Direct Strategic Note Funding to UN Women Moldova Country Office).

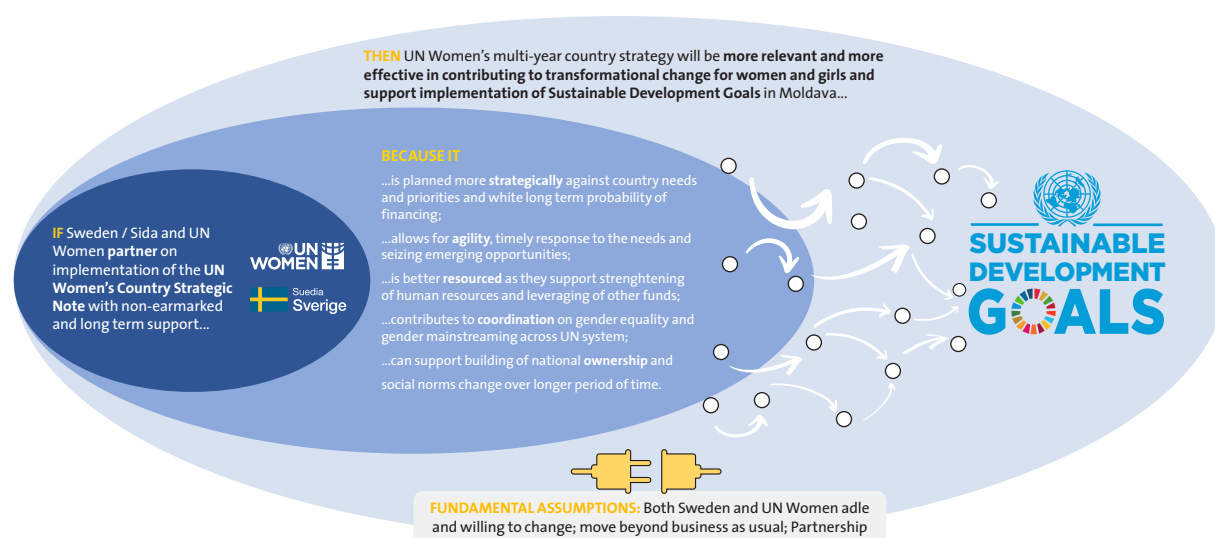
TABLE 9. Sida direct Strategic Note funding as part of the overall UN Women budget 2016-2022

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Core and IB Funds USD	867,701	565,898	665,323	649,849	662,715	720,160	722,341
Other donors USD	1,091,582	664,006	154,310	2,514	976,082	2,326,626	4,549,872
Sida Direct SN USD	71,636	649,488	1,110,179	1,535,866	1,798,478	1,516,533	1,919,334
Total	2,030,919	1,879,392	1,929,812	2,188,229	3,437,276	4,563,319	7,191,547

Source: UN Women Country Office, data provided on 28 April 2022

⁴² Review of presentations of the Strategic Note 2018-2022 to Sida, donors and national counterparts in 2017.

FIGURE 12. Theory of change of Sida Direct Strategic Note Funding



Source: Reconstructed by the Country Portfolio Evaluation team and Niras Sweden team evaluating global Sida's country programme support to UN agencies⁴³

The Country Office's financial reports to Sida show direct Strategic Note funding was invested across all three impact areas; mostly in the normative actions towards the government (which UN Women considered underfunded areas) and to a lesser extent in research and support to other national stakeholders. This allows for continuity of relations with national counterparts and advocacy work over longer periods of time.

Another strategy of the Country Office was to invest Sida funding into horizontal functions programme management and monitoring and reporting, which all contribute to stronger coherence and strengthen synergy within and between impact areas. At this stage, synergies are stronger within and between the Women in Leadership and Governance and Ending Violence Against Women thematic areas, and to some extent in the Women in Leadership and Governance and Women Economic Empowerment thematic areas.

Having solid coverage of key programmatic areas and mid and senior-level management strengthened, the Country Office successfully attracted other major development partners to cover the remaining part of its Strategic Note funding requirements. It managed to obtain EU support for its programmes, which included two projects: Strengthened Gender Action in Cahul and Ungheni Districts – EVA Project (EUR 5.25 million, jointly implemented with UNICEF⁴⁴) and the Regional Programme “EU for Gender Equality: together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence”

covering Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Thanks to strategic dialogue with Sida and the EU, the Country Office managed to extend coverage of horizontal positions to a total of four personnel (including a programme specialist, two programme analysts and a monitoring and reporting analyst). Some of these positions are under fixed-term contracts, which the Country Office expects will reduce staff turnover. Sida funding was also invested to enhance UN and country-level coordination and communications functions, covering two additional officers and related activities.

In total, over the Strategic Note period, thoughtful use of Sida unearmarked funding resulted in mobilized resources and the number of personnel more than doubling as previously indicated (see Figure 1).

The management of the direct Strategic Note Funding also allowed UN Women to seize opportunities and react more quickly to country needs expressed by the Government, arising from ongoing reforms or caused by crises.⁴⁵

While overall assessed as positive, the modality also requires continuous strategic thinking and agility from personnel; risk assessment of the management of flexible and unearmarked funding; and dialogue with Sida on development priorities. Further analysis can be found in Appendix 1 Case Study: Sida Direct Strategic Note Funding to UN Women Moldova Country Office.

⁴³ Simultaneous to the UN Women Moldova Country Portfolio Evaluation, Sida commissioned a global evaluation of its strategic funding modality to UN agencies to gather evidence and insights regarding in which contexts and under what circumstances this funding modality is suitable and the preferred modality. It aimed to gain knowledge and further understanding of how strategic support affects the performance of UN organizations receiving this type of contribution. Sida's country programme support to three agencies in six countries was observed: UN Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Liberia, UNICEF in Bolivia and Sudan and UNFPA in Ethiopia and South Sudan.

⁴⁴ With EU contribution of EUR 5.0 million and UN Women contribution EUR 250,000. From this total, UN Women manages EUR 4.25 million and UNICEF EUR 1 million.

⁴⁵ For example, faster immediate support to Government requests, related to: translation of international standards into national legal system; other key legislative reforms, such as electoral reform; continued work on fiscal reforms along with the World Bank; gender-responsive budgeting; capturing opportunities to assist government departments and local governments that were open to apply the model; proactively advocating for labour legislation reform; putting economy of care and domestic unpaid work issues on the public agenda; and engaging with the business sector on application of women's empowerment principles and changes in context, such as COVID-19.

“ Finding 12: While UNCT Belarus reports strong benefits from the Moldova Country Office engagement as a non-resident agency in terms of UN Women’s provision of technical assistance, the Country Office’s senior leadership is stretched and internal coherence and efficiency are at risk. The sustainability of the current arrangement is not only challenging for the Moldova Country Office but also for UNCT Belarus in terms of its own capacity development. ”

Since 2019, based on a corporate-level decision to support the work of the UN in countries where UN Women is a non-resident agency, the Country Office has provided technical assistance for gender equality and the empowerment of women to the UNCT in Belarus. The engagement has been very well received by the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office in Belarus, as it provides support and expertise, which is otherwise limited. The support relies specifically on the involvement of UN Women Moldova Country Representative and senior management. UN Women’s engagement in Belarus strongly contributed to gender mainstreaming of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), shaping the national consultations and providing contribution to development outcomes and contributing to Common Country Assessments and their updates;⁴⁶ the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan; other aspects of UN programming in the country; and also

included the provision of inputs for briefings on the status of human rights in the country in terms of international commitments. Although a non-residential agency, expectations of UN Women’s role are increasing. According to the information reflected in the current Belarus UNSDCF 2022–2026, UN Women’s contribution is envisaged in all five outcomes and fourteen outputs of the UNSDCF. Both the UNCT in Belarus and the UN Women Moldova Country Office confirm expectations from this cooperation agreement are further increasing as new projects are developed and with the launch of a gender-responsive budgeting programme. If these commitments rely on the UN Women Moldova Country Office only, operational challenges might arise, particularly as the UN system in Belarus seems to be investing extra operational efforts and staff capacity in all interventions due to challenges related to limited Government capacity.

“ Finding 13: While the capacities of most Country Office personnel are fully employed, in some cases even stretched, the office manages to perform its functions efficiently. There is however a need to further strengthen the approach to the Women’s Economic Empowerment impact area and consider more strategic use of communication personnel. The bottlenecks and challenges reported usually relate to corporate procedures. ”

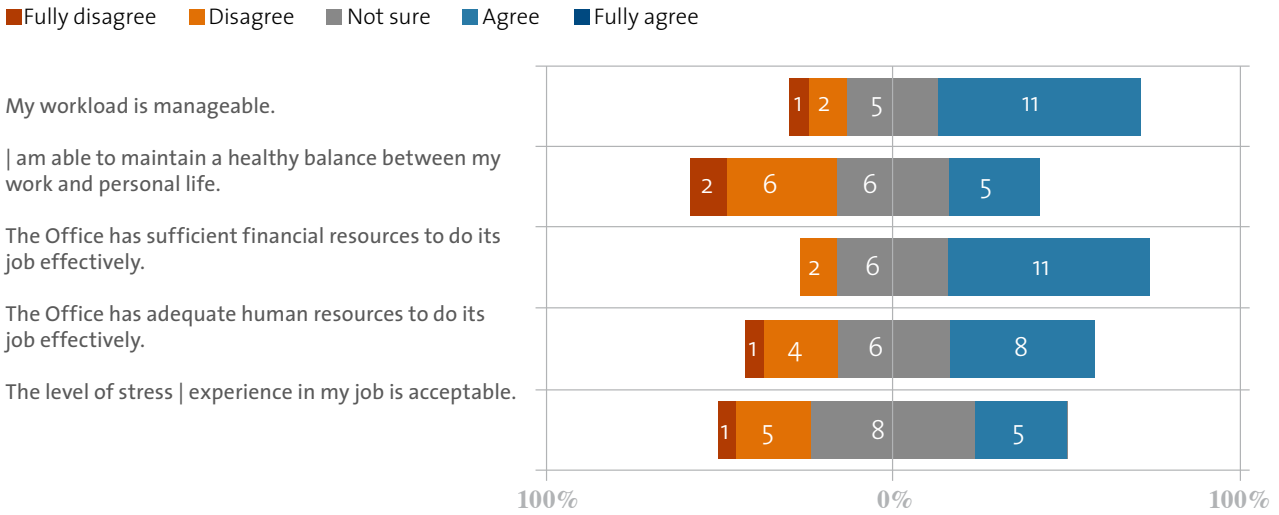
Despite the turnover of personnel and change of the Country Representative position over the course of the Strategic Note, including a gap of several months with five different appointed staff temporarily serving in the position, staff did not believe this was linked to any major bottlenecks in the Country Office’s performance.

UN Women’s partners perceive the Country Office to be very engaged, responsive and present in coordination and dialogue, and field activities. Having horizontal functions covering programme analysts, coordination, monitoring and reporting, and operations largely contributed to this. However, personnel felt stretched and experienced heavy workload, particularly at senior and medium-level

management and in the horizontal functions. This had an impact on work-life balance, while some personnel also reported administrative burdens which sometimes conflicted with the need to be more engaged in programmes. The Women’s Economic Empowerment impact area is understaffed compared to other impact areas. The evaluation identified five persons engaged in communications (of which two full-time personnel were dedicated to Country Office activities, two full-time personnel were committed to projects and there was one part-time consultant). Given some areas are understaffed, the Country Office could consider using these five personnel more strategically.

⁴⁶ Draft United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Republic of Belarus 2021-2025.

FIGURE 13. Responses of UN Women Country Office personnel (19 respondents) to a survey questions on engagement and motivation

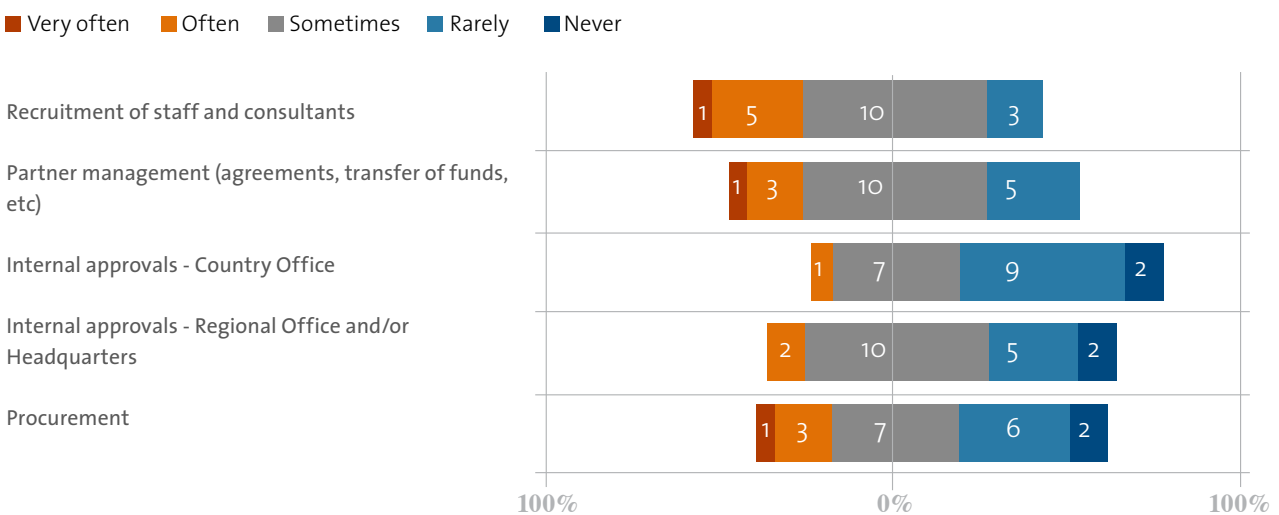


Source: Country Portfolio Evaluation survey of UN Women’s personnel

Some corporate procedures posed challenges for the Country Office, such as regulations related to recruitment of personnel and the selection of implementing partners; delegations of authority for signing UN to UN agreements and approvals (decentralization being higher in other agencies) which delay processes; procurement procedures that are insufficiently adjusted to crisis situations/response, and different interpretations of those procedures; auditing of the same implementing partners multiple times in consecutive years regardless of a positive report in the first

audit; and limited delegation of authority at the country level for internal procedures that often require Regional Office or headquarters approval. The last point has been reported as a particular challenge in implication of joint programmatic interventions as other partner entities have fully decentralized processes at the country level.⁴⁷ The Country Office engages extensively within the office, and with the Regional Office and headquarters to mitigate these challenges but organizational improvements could still be made.

FIGURE 14. Frequency of bottlenecks in daily work as reported by UN Women Country Office personnel (19 respondents)



Source: Country Portfolio Evaluation survey to UN Women’s personnel

⁴⁷ An illustrative example in the context of a UN-to-UN agreement to be signed by UN Women and UNICEF: while the UNICEF Representative was able to sign the contract locally, in the case of UN Women, the contract needed to be signed by headquarters.

3.5 Sustainability

“ Finding 14: While the developed policy framework and institutional mechanisms support sustainability across impact areas, the level of ownership from government institutions is relatively low; depends on individual champions; and is threatened by a high turnover of staff, lack of finances and political changes. ”

UN Women has a strategic approach to strengthening the sustainability of results at country level by supporting the establishment of policy frameworks, fostering capacity development and providing further support in the implementation and creation of supportive environment in institutions and society. The Country Office supported the Government in the development of numerous policies (laws and strategies) as a foundation for the sustainable transformation of practices and the protection of human and women’s rights. This was followed by actions to strengthen capacities of institutions to efficiently implement them, which showed results in individual capacities being strengthened, but ownership building in the majority of key partner national institutions is at the initial stage and only some processes have been internalized (for example gender-sensitive statistics or gender mainstreaming in policies in line ministries such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection or the Ministry of Defence and Interior, or internalized capacity development on gender equality by the Academy for Public Administration and Military Academy).

The overall legal framework for gender-responsive budgeting (a key priority area for UN Women) is still not fully in place, due to slow national fiscal policy reforms and programme budgeting and gender-responsive budgeting

are not fully embedded in laws. The budget planning instruction of the Ministry of Finance includes mandatory gender indicators, while in some local governments UN Women successfully advocated for 2 per cent for gender equality in the budgets, which still needs to be followed up to assess how it translated into implementation and results.

Relevant government-level institutions and partners see UN Women as a catalyst for driving gender equality and the human rights agenda; the office is very often consulted on priorities and implementation processes; and its partners’ services are welcomed to fill the gaps and limitations in capacities of public institutions. Key informants of the evaluation indicated that if the support provided by UN Women and other partners ends, the momentum created would be lost. One of the challenges is that there is no coordination body for gender equality at the central government level, rather the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is responsible for gender equality, which in practice does not allow for strong coordination. This was also one of the remarks made by the CEDAW Committee to the Moldova report. Current ownership in institutions seems to depend on individual champions, which represents a risk also considering the high turnover of staff and political changes.

“ Finding 15: There are some indications of sustainable practices in the Ending Violence Against Women and Women’s Economic Empowerment impact areas, such as capacity development of legal professionals and multidisciplinary teams at the local level, or business education and IT skills provision to women and girls. With additional strengthening and further support these could become replicable models. ”

There are high indications of raised awareness on gender equality and human rights among beneficiaries. A majority reported they frequently apply learned knowledge and skills in their work. Knowledge and skills are mostly applied in replication of training and in some cases in mainstreaming gender when drafting new legal documents and policies. However, 52 per cent of surveyed beneficiaries see obstacles, discouraging them from application of learned knowledge and skills; therefore, further work on changing the environment is necessary.

In the Ending Violence Against Women impact area some progress towards sustainability is seen within justice sector institutions including by increased application of protection measures, while institutions at the district and local level engaged and improved cooperation in multidisciplinary teams. In early 2022, the first specialized service for victims of sexual violence was established with the support of the Ungheni District authorities to provide all the support services and information victims may need in one place. CSOs reported improved quality of services in the Ending Violence Against Women thematic area through projects supported by UN Women, which contributes to their sustainability. However, there is still a heavy dependency on international assistance.

Although the actions were of limited scale or duration, in the Women's Economic Empowerment area, implementing partners or end beneficiaries reported that UN Women

contributed to setting up new or strengthening existing businesses or that its support resulted in the creation of new jobs for beneficiaries. From the 27 end beneficiaries reporting such results in the evaluation survey, 19 mentioned their businesses or new jobs were sustainable, 5 faced some difficulties but had managed to continue working, while 3 had to close their businesses or leave the job. Implementing partners reported that 20 of 550 women and girls provided STEM training did gain employment immediately after the project and, based on later communication, the partners estimate around 100 remained engaged with the IT profession. Enforcement of Women's Empowerment Principles in the private sector including the childcare support to employed and businesswomen was seen by key informants as a successful and replicable practice, which deserved further investment.

Media organizations reported sustainable practices on gender-sensitive reporting in specialized media portals, but still not widely within the mainstream media. The media award for gender-sensitive reporting established with UN Women support has continued; however, it has been difficult to organize every year, as originally planned.

Overall perspectives on sustainability were mixed and dependent on various external factors. Further strengthening of ownership and the creation of enabling environments remain a priority.

“ Finding 16: Although the Country Office has stable and flexible multiyear funding, it relies on two major development partners and has reportedly reached its maximum absorption capacity with the office's current size and internal organization. This may pose a challenge for the long-term development of the office and its programmes. ”

Strategic engagement with Sida and the EU provides a solid foundation for the internal sustainability of the Country Office and continuity of its work. The Sida unearmarked funding modality provides predictability and a long-term commitment. As a consequence, the Country Office's Strategic Notes begin with lower funding gaps. However, the Country Office's two key development partners support around 70 per cent of the UN Women portfolio in Moldova. According to Country Office management, the absorption capacities of the office have reached their limits, considering core staffing and resourcing, and the most convenient approach would therefore be to keep the existing resource structure.

However, the Country Office is fully aware that relying on only two sources of funding bears risks and the strategy of diversification of sources of funding and potentially further growth of the programmatic portfolio and the office will be considered. Donors/development partners were positive

about partnering with UN Women, including those not yet engaged and consulted in the context of this evaluation process. UNCT members are also open to increase the number of joint programmatic initiatives with UN Women, although competition dynamics among agencies and the identification of best implementation modalities to provide sufficient resources to UN Women, need to be taken into account.

The war in Ukraine requires the Country Office's increased attention to respond to shifting needs, demands and priorities from beneficiaries and development partners. Since the start of the war, UN Women in Moldova has worked on the development-peace nexus to enable a gender-responsive approach to the refugee crisis which will need to be strengthened in the context of development and implementation of the next Strategic Note.

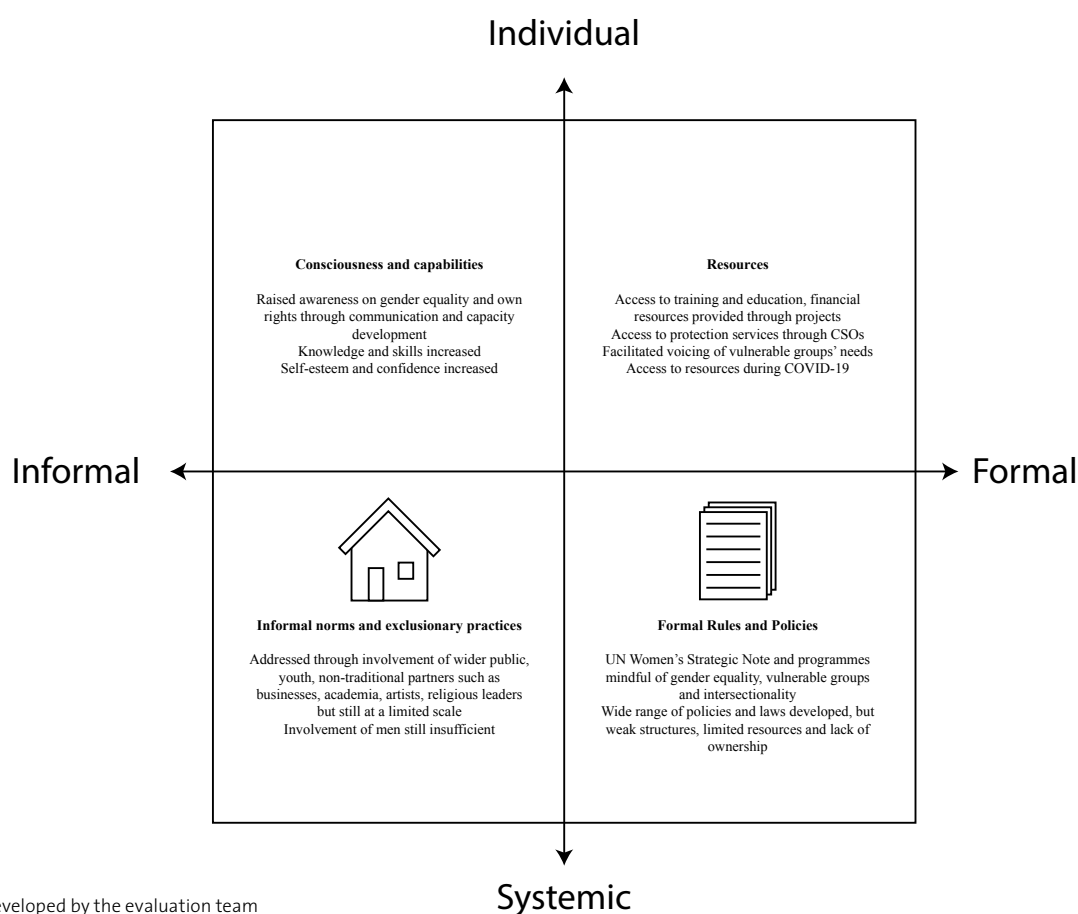
3.6 Gender equality, empowerment of women and human rights

“ **Finding 17:** There are indications of results for different vulnerable groups of women and girls being achieved, thanks to the Country Office incorporating their needs in its Strategic Note 2018–2022 programming and to a large extent in implementation. Assessment of the impact and visibility of those results could be enhanced, particularly for women with disabilities. ”

Mainstreaming of gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights was observed through the lens of the Gender at Work framework,⁴⁸ which highlights the interrelationship between gender equality, organizational change and institutions or the ‘rules of the game’ held in place by power dynamics within communities. UN Women

established a solid starting point as the theory of change integrated transformative logic, and Strategic Note 2018–2022 results and indicators were mindful of gender equality and intersectionality with vulnerabilities, such as disability, ethnicity (Roma and other minorities), rural women, age, power/violence.

FIGURE 15. UN Women Moldova Country Office results through the Gender at Work Framework lens



⁴⁸ Gender at Work Framework: genderatwork.org/analytical-framework

Overall, the analysis shows that the Country Office:

- (a) has provided a significant contribution to the individual informal (through capacity development, empowerment and engagement) and systemic formal quadrants (by policy advocacy and capacity development of duty bearer institutions) but with insufficient sustainability;
- (b) has progressed individual resources by providing access to capacity development, financing and platforms for individuals to voice their needs, but still with limited sustainability; and
- (c) has initiated work in the systemic informal quadrant, but at a limited scale and with limited involvement of men.

As previously mentioned, UN Women's key strategy is policy advocacy and capacity development with significant contribution of both to gender equality, human rights and

position of vulnerable groups. In addition to general gender mainstreaming, the Country Office provided opportunities for vulnerable groups to voice their needs in consultations (for example Roma, HIV/AIDS affected people); mainstreamed their needs in development policies; supported change of the election law with regards to Roma political candidates and double functions; partnered with associations of vulnerable groups; and provided tailored capacity development and supported those who aspired to run for elections. Women and girls from vulnerable groups were involved in business development and STEM skills training. Substantial support was also provided to service delivery and improvement of its quality, particularly in the Ending Violence Against Women impact area and through CSOs and multidisciplinary teams at the local level. Assessment of the impact of these interventions on vulnerable populations could be further enhanced.

“ Finding 18: The Country Office integrates gender transformative approaches into its strategies, in particular empowering women and targeting wider public and specific groups for social norms change (schools, youth, parents, businesses, religious communities) which resulted in some changes at the individual level. Further attention is needed to measure and capture the effects of these actions for learning purposes. ”

The Country Office made substantial efforts to address informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices by fostering engagement and the agency of women in all sectors to act on their rights individually and through their positions in the system. Results from capacity development initiatives on self-confidence, self-esteem, initiation of actions in communities or in the workplace are evidence that the strategies work. An additional strategy was engagement with non-traditional partners or in non-traditional areas, such as:

- Educational sector – educational professionals, youth and parents through capacity development, awareness raising and creative workshops to initiate local campaigns.
- Businesses – to change business as usual and introduce Women's Empowerment Principles and encourage self-assessment and improvement.
- ICT companies – to provide capacity development in professions in deficit and professions that traditionally do not engage women.
- Religious communities – to open discussion on violence against women among religious leaders and their communities.
- Working with academia, innovators and artists in innovative public campaigns.

These efforts started to send important messages on the necessity of cultural norms change, that were recognized by UN Women partners, although the evaluation was not able to conclude to what extent they would be sustainable without the continuous presence of UN Women and its partners.

There is still limited engagement with men and limited tailored initiatives targeting them. Some initial examples were engagement of young men and boys in schools in workshops and campaigns against stereotypes and fathers' clubs discussing masculinity. These could be further expanded in future to feed more information about this target group into future programming. Additional remarks were provided by the evaluation's key informants with regards to tailoring programmes to Roma and women with disabilities, i.e. that there was some dropout registered for multiple external reasons and that expanding engagement with their associations could be an option for better understanding of their needs and any barriers they might face.



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LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: Integrated programming increased the overall effectiveness of the Strategic Note and each of its components, taking into account the assets developed in each impact area and engaging them cross-thematically. Gender sensitized politicians and skilled public officials can support normative progress and improvement of public services across thematic areas; educational reform can support social norms change on gender equality and violence, and strengthen leadership and entrepreneurial skills in women and girls; and businesses can benefit from gender-responsive development policies; as well as provide support for exit strategies for women survivors of violence etc.

Lesson 2: Direct Strategic Note Funding by Sida provides many opportunities and potential benefits for the Country Office, but it does not mean it is an easy mechanism to manage. There are many benefits from the direct Strategic Note funding by Sida, as it is long-term, flexible, unearmarked and predictable/committed funding. If managed properly, it is supportive of a holistic approach to programming and in strengthening synergies between impact areas, strengthening resource mobilization and management, development of internal capacities and financing of underfunded horizontal positions and support UN coordination on gender equality, as well as for financing underfunded areas and seizing emerging opportunities. However, to achieve this, strategic thinking, clear vision, proactiveness and agility is required, which the Country Office demonstrated to a large extent.

Lesson 3: Multi-stakeholder dialogue and structured dialogue with each sector reduces misunderstandings and increases trust, leading to more effective collaboration. Dialogue with Sida and the EU led to increased agility in the Country Office and strengthening of strategic partnerships and more sustainable financing. Dialogue with CSOs led to increased trust and reduced tensions which had been persistent for years. Dialogue with the Government enabled timely response to its needs and openness to new reform issues. Dialogue with UN partners, although requiring further structuring, opened new areas of collaboration and strengthened UN Women's influence.

Dialogue with OSCE and stakeholders in Transnistria placed the engagement of women in the confidence building process on the agenda.

Lesson 4: One-off capacity development interventions are not sufficient to produce results, rather a synergy of capacity development approaches is required such as training, coaching/mentoring, technical assistance, financial incentives and continuous follow-up. This should be supported by additional policy advocacy and interaction with the management of institutions and organizations supported to promote an enabling environment. Further identification of synergies with other UN and development partners and possibilities for scaling-up and replication can lead to transformational change.

Lesson 5: Grasping all opportunities to engage with stakeholders on gender equality (variety of UN coordination platforms, multiple small-scale initiatives, responsiveness to continuous Government demands) may be a good tactic to identify which of those are of interest to UN Women (where it can provide the strongest contribution and added value). However, if this exploratory phase lasts too long, it spreads organizational capacities too thinly and requires a move to the next development phase – prioritization and more strategic, result-oriented design and structuring of those engagements.

Lesson 6: Engagement with national CSOs platforms, in addition to the Civil Society Advisory Group, facilitates implementation at various levels. It strengthened dialogue with nationally grown and owned coordination mechanisms; increased the effectiveness of dialogue and transparency; and led to mutual trust building. Additionally, coordination with the national CSO platform needs to ensure that connection with CSOs in the field and grassroots organizations is established as these can be the most effective channel to reach communities and the most vulnerable groups of women and girls. In addition to think tanks and human rights defenders, the Civil Society Advisory Group could also be a good opportunity to involve associations of vulnerable groups, whose needs are not necessarily clearly voiced in CSO discourse.



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CONCLUSIONS

During implementation of its current Strategic Note, and since the Country Representative position was filled and the Country Office was restructured and strengthened with key horizontal functions, improvements in implementation of UN Women's threefold mandate has been demonstrated, with significant advancements in policy advocacy across all three thematic areas; growth of key national stakeholder capacity; and a strengthened position at the UN coordination table.

Deteriorating conflict dynamics in Ukraine, casualties and the rapidly changing humanitarian context in the region represent a new priority for the UN Women Moldova Country Office. Along with engagement in immediate needs assessment and response, peacebuilding and conflict prevention need to be strengthened; humanitarian and humanitarian–development nexus needs to be included in the next Strategic Note; and the integration of a currently absent crisis and humanitarian response needs to be fostered in the Women, Peace and Security / National Action Plan 1325 agenda in the country.

Conclusion 1: The Country Office demonstrated agility and sustained relevance over the entire period of Strategic Note implementation (2018–2022), operationalizing its theory of change; taking a multistakeholder approach; seizing opportunities for action and engaging in continuous assessment of the relevance of its priorities; and adjusting its work as needed, including for its contribution to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the most recent humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. There are opportunities to more strongly integrate the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian agenda based on the most recent lessons from these two crises. (Based on findings 1-3, 7 - 11)

The Strategic Note, its theory of change and programmatic interventions were designed to directly support the Republic of Moldova's international commitments and national priorities and contribute to the UN–Government of Moldova Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2018–2022 outcomes. This was ensured through close follow-up on national reforms; continuous wide consultations with national and international stakeholders in Moldova; follow-up on findings and recommendations of the previous Country Portfolio Evaluation 2014–2017 and Mid-Term Review in 2021; and proactive research and consultation on emerging crises and needs. While priority needs were addressed in all three impact areas, the Women, Peace and Security area was underfunded and consequently narrowly focused on participation, and to some extent protection of women in law enforcement and the armed forces. Additionally, as UN Women grows the Women's Economic Empowerment impact area, around unpaid work, the care economy and supporting employability and employment opportunities for women, requires stronger integration and linkages with other more developed parts of UN Women's portfolio.

Conclusion 2: UN Women's broad coordination efforts, combined with strong expertise, were effective in gender mainstreaming UNCT planning, building trust and

translating international standards into national legislation with the Government and in reducing tensions and ensuring better operational synergies with CSOs. Further clarification of UN Women's integrated mandate is required, particularly among UN partners and development partners/donors, and prioritization of areas of engagement in different coordination platforms. (Based on findings 3-6)

The Country Office extensively used opportunities to engage in UNCT coordination across multiple coordination platforms and to identify potential synergies with other members of the UN family and start joint programmes. In the absence of an effective central institutional gender mechanism, UN Women coordinates with multiple line ministries, while coordination with civil society and businesses is mostly implemented through national civil society and business networks, which proved to be an effective coordination mechanism which built trust. There is a continued need for engagement with CSOs representing vulnerable groups and an opportunity to involve them in coordination mechanisms such as the Civil Society Advisory Group and engage with businesses for advocacy on Women's Empowerment Principles. Taking into account the numerous coordination platforms UN Women engaged with, prioritization and a coordination strategy is required with stronger and results-based coordination meeting design.

Conclusion 3: UN Women took advantage of the Direct Strategic Note Funding by Sida as an opportunity to transform its way of working, expand partnerships, improve relations with existing partners, and strengthen internal capacities and resource mobilization strategies, which overall positively impacted the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of its work. (Based on findings 1-4, 7-13)

Thanks to the flexible and long-term nature of the Direct Strategic Note Funding modality, the Country Office was able to strategically plan and allocate Sida resources across the three impact areas; ensure continuity of the programmes running; finance underfunded areas; and promptly respond to country needs and priorities. While the coordination mandate is supported by core-funding, funding of staff to cover the Entity's UN coordination mandate at the country level represents a global structural challenge. Sida funding also provided a full-time coordination specialist position and engagement of multiple personnel in a variety of UN coordination groups, thanks to which UN Women's presence and effectiveness in coordination platforms was strengthened. This funding proved helpful in the crisis context caused by COVID-19 as the Country Office was able to support swift interventions, although other donors also increased their flexibility during the period.

Conclusion 4: Strategic engagement with Sida and the EU has provided a solid foundation for the internal sustainability of the office; however, the risks of relying on two large development partners need to be considered. Office capacity (both structure and staff) should be taken into account as well as the office's engagement in UNCT Belarus to avoid spreading resources too thinly. (Based on findings 11-15)

The Direct Strategic Note Funding modality enabled the Country Office to invest time in strategic resource mobilization and helped in bringing the EU as the second major development partner to the country portfolio. UN Women has also made progress in optimizing the office team to foster the sustainability of key horizontal functions and overall management in the office. However, at the end of the 2018–2022 strategic period, the office's two development partners cover close to 75 per cent of the entire Country Office budget and 90 per cent of its development results framework. This represents a risk to the stability of the programme should either donor significantly reduce or completely close funding. According to Country Office management, the amount of funding is optimal for the current size of the office and the absorption capacity of the office has reached its limit, which shows the future Strategic Note should take into account diversification of funding sources and assess the need for office growth as well as more efficient use of some already available staff (for example, the high number of communication officers). Additionally, due to COVID-19 and remote work, a large number of personnel have not yet been fully integrated into the office and are unaware of the office's overarching theory of change and approach. With the stabilization of COVID-19 situation and return to the office, there is an opportunity to strengthen team cohesion and increase synergetic work and efficient use of existing staff.

Conclusion 5: One of the Country Office's key strategies for implementation of its Strategic Note is capacity development. Together with its partners, the office has already gained solid experience in all stages of capacity development management and a variety of capacity development interventions. However, systemic consolidation of the capacity development function in the Country Office is needed to ensure comprehensive management and quality assurance of capacity development interventions. (Based on findings 7-9)

The Country Office follows all stages of the capacity development management cycle, from needs assessment to design, delivery, implementation and evaluation, with stronger focus on the initial stages. Capacity development as delivered by UN Women and its implementing partners provides most results at the individual level of beneficiaries, which is reflected in advanced knowledge and skills, self-esteem and confidence, awareness raising, application of small-scale initiatives or improvement of beneficiaries' position in their communities, in some cases new or better jobs and income generation. Results in institutional/organizational and systemic change are predominantly happening in the normative area of UN Women's work with some examples of emerging systemic practices or practices implemented by enthusiastic and committed champions in institutions and organizations. As capacity development represents the key part of the Strategic Note, quality assurance mechanisms, standardization of monitoring, progress measurement and

reporting tools and templates should be introduced across UN Women and its implementing partners to better tailor follow-up support and better understand the changes that are happening, and the enablers and barriers that affect the beneficiaries of capacity development when they try to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Conclusion 6: Despite its limited capacity, the technical assistance the Country Office has provided to the UNCT in Belarus has been highly effective and appreciated. As expectations of the UNCT Belarus rise and the Country Office capacity is increasingly thinly spread with growing crises in the region, there is a need to review this engagement and look for new solutions. (Based on findings 12, 13)

The quality of support provided and initial results achieved increased the expectations of the UN Regional Coordinator's Office in Belarus and the UNCT. UN Women's engagement is also likely to grow based on UN Women's commitments in the UNSDCF, where its contribution is envisaged in all five outcomes and fourteen outputs. Given that the Country Office staff are already stretched in Moldova, and that the office faces growing humanitarian and conflict crises in which UN Women is expected to play a gender mainstreaming role, there is a need to reconsider relying on the UN Women Country Office Moldova to respond to all the commitments made in the Belarus UNSDCF.

Conclusion 7: UN Women and its partners strongly contributed to an overall solid normative foundation and the establishment of human capacity for gender equality and women's empowerment in the Republic of Moldova. Strengthening sustainability strategies in the next Strategic Note, particularly in relation to the Government, including advocating for the establishment and strengthening of national gender institutional mechanisms and networking with champions across different government and civil society sectors, should be prioritized. (Based on findings 14-18)

The Country Office's work has advanced the normative framework for gender equality contributing to the adoption or improvement of more than 20 policies and laws, and has strengthened capacity for gender equality in public institutions involving thousands of public officials in capacity development programmes and reaching the wider general public with social norms transformation messages. In addition to the awareness raised in beneficiary institutions and organizations and women's increased self-esteem and agency, some of these actions have already shown higher level results in the increased number of elected women, better protection for women survivors of violence, and employment and income generation for vulnerable women. However, these results are unlikely to be sustained, unless there is strong national ownership and building of stronger national gender machinery, which requires further attention.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations included in this section are based on the findings, lessons learned and conclusions presented. All were discussed with the UN Women Moldova Country Office in March and April 2022 prior to the development of its next Strategic Note that will cover the period 2023–2027. The recommendations are to be addressed by the UN Women Moldova Country Office in partnership and consultation with relevant partners in Moldova, including national stakeholders, UN entities and other development partners and donors. The Recommendations section is organized in a way to present overall recommendations and a set of proposed actions. The level of assessed impact, priority, difficulty and suggested time frame are indicated

below each specific recommendation.

Although the data collection phase of the Country Portfolio Evaluation was already completed and not able to cover the consequences of the war in Ukraine on the Republic of Moldova and generate evidence-based findings, conclusions and lessons related to the crisis, at the corporate level UN Women and the Country Office have generated quite extensive knowledge from the COVID-19 humanitarian context on how to immediately engage gender mainstreaming in the UN and national Government's response. Therefore, some recommendations are still provided in this area of UN Women's involvement.

Recommendation 1: Take an integrated planning approach to development of the next Strategic Note and discuss various crisis/development scenarios.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Actions for consideration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop one overarching theory of change integrating all of the Country Office's impact areas. • Integrate scenario development exercises into planning (peace and humanitarian/ humanitarian–development nexus, development). • Integrate further prioritization into planning. • Maintain a participatory approach and the participation of a variety of stakeholders, including vulnerable populations, across impact areas. • Use built national capacities across all three impact areas in an integrated way. • Take into account the benefits of Sida Direct Strategic Note Funding and discuss risks. |
|---------------------------|--|

Impact & Priority
High

Time frame
Immediate

Difficulty
Medium

Recommendation 2: Strengthen other aspects of Women, Peace and Security in development of the next Strategic Note, beyond women's participation.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Actions for consideration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster stronger inclusion of protection, peacebuilding (in country – Transnistria) and humanitarian relief components (now lacking in the current National Action Plan 1325) • Promote integration of gender mainstreaming in the Government and United Nations' response plans, humanitarian projects of different agencies and joint programmes. • Consider feasible levels of involvement in operational humanitarian assistance and discuss modalities for monitoring the implementation of the UN and other humanitarian stakeholders' efforts from a gender perspective. • Strengthen Country Office and Regional Office coordination and exchange with other UN Women offices. |
|---------------------------|--|

Impact & Priority
High

Time frame
Immediate

Difficulty
Medium

Recommendation 3: In the current context of crisis, leverage UN Women's mandate and added value, strengthening coordination in previous and emerging coordination priority areas.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Actions for consideration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue engaging in needs assessment; gender mainstreaming of plans and policies; gender mainstreaming of operational work (which can be a weak link in humanitarian/crisis contexts); and explore possibilities for monitoring and evaluation of crisis response work from a gender perspective. • Review existing engagement of UN Women in UN coordination platforms; rethink the processes and structures of the meetings; and redesign meetings so that they are more engaging and action-oriented discussions. • Discuss CSO coordination through nationally grown platforms with the Regional Office and headquarters, i.e. whether there is a need for additional coordination through a Civil Society Advisory Group, and ensure that in any solution vulnerable groups associations are involved. • Discuss the possibility of scaling-up and replication of UN Women's successful practices and models by other UN agencies and development partners, where UN Women does not have the capacity to lead. |
|---------------------------|---|

Impact & Priority
High

Time frame
Immediate – medium-term

Difficulty
Medium

Recommendation 4: Standardize capacity development management processes, particularly needs assessment, quality assurance of design and delivery, and implementing partners reporting; and strengthen overall monitoring and evaluation systems for relevant and tailored follow-up.

Actions for consideration

- Discuss with the Regional Office and headquarters the need to prepare a guide outlining key methodologies and tools used for capacity development, taking into account those already developed by national partners.
- Include cross-sectoral perspectives into capacity needs assessments.
- Strengthen work on learning objectives and application of appropriate methodologies to address them in design and identify opportunities for follow up and synergies with other programmes at the design stage.
- Establish an overall database with key information on all capacity development interventions and disaggregated data on beneficiaries within the Country Office portfolio.
- Develop and implement a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan for capacity development at the Country Office level, focused on measuring change produced through implemented activities and projects and creating internal incentives for learning during the course of implementation.

Impact & Priority
High

Time frame
Medium-term

Difficulty
Medium

Recommendation 5: Further capitalize on the potential of Strategic Note Direct Funding in terms of strengthening the Country Office's holistic programmatic approach and its catalytic effect on resource mobilization.

Actions for consideration

- Continuous internal transformation (contracting modalities, cross-thematic and synergetic improvement of horizontal processes, monitoring, reporting, communications, and optimization of programmes and processes raising issues of internal corporate bottlenecks within UN Women).
- Analyse risks linked to having unearmarked funding available in terms of Country Office development and growth, resource diversification and mobilization, increasing partner expectations and prioritization, results and impact capturing/evaluation.
- Discuss flexibility with Sida in terms of peacebuilding and humanitarian crisis work.
- Organize strategic evaluations across the portfolio and follow up on lessons learned and recommendations.
- Together with Sida, promote the modality to other development partners and engage in diversification of sources of funding.

Impact & Priority
High

Time frame
Medium-term

Difficulty
Medium

Recommendation 6: Support further integration of project staff, particularly those engaged during the COVID-19 pandemic and those engaged in EU funded projects.

Actions for consideration

- Ensure participation of all staff in the next Strategic Note planning process and development of the theory of change.
- Clearly present the overarching logic of the theory of change and how each project fits and contributes to the bigger picture (outcomes of the Strategic Note).
- Provide periodic follow-up with employees.
- Further analyse internal organization and how capacities can be reorganized to reduce staff workload, including how communication capacity (large number and knowledge of staff) can provide a greater contribution to overall Strategic Note implementation.

Impact & Priority
High

Time frame
Immediate – Mid-term

Difficulty
Low

Recommendation 7: Ensure that the promotion of transformative approaches and social norms change is continued, vulnerable groups' needs are covered by the next Strategic Note and that they benefit from its implementation.

Actions for consideration

- Continue fostering engagement with non-traditional partners to influence social and cultural norms.
- Develop more strategies and tailored messages to involve men.
- Review the vulnerable groups involved and consider integrating people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities in programmes.
- Further integrate the cross-thematic approach to vulnerable groups' rights.
- Encourage vulnerable groups' perspectives to be integrated in calls for proposals and implementing partner selection.
- Strengthen monitoring and reporting on vulnerable groups by implementing partners.

Impact & Priority
High

Time frame
Immediate – Long-term

Difficulty
Medium

Recommendation 8: Taking into account the positive effects of UN Women’s technical assistance to Belarus, but also sustainability challenges of the current approach, initiate and contribute to the corporate discussion on UN Women’s strategic approach to supporting UN Country Teams without a UN Women presence in the country.

Actions for consideration

- In light of the Country Office’s increased engagement in response to the consequences of conflict and scaling-up of existing areas of work, initiate discussion with the Regional Office and headquarters on alternative possible arrangements for covering commitments to the UNCT in Belarus.
- Initiate corporate assessment and exchange on similar technical assistance programmes in other regions.
- Contribute to the corporate discussion, if opened, on development of a strategic approach to provision of technical assistance in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in countries which lack UN expertise on gender and UN Women’s presence.

Impact & Priority
High

Time frame
Medium-term

Difficulty
Medium