



## **Final Evaluation**

**Making Every Woman and Girl Count: Supporting the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs through better production and use of gender statistics (Women Count) Programme**

**FINAL DRAFT REPORT**

**Submitted by:**  
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—John Kimote, Evaluator

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
APRO	Asia-Pacific Regional Office
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics (Nepal)
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEGS	Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics
CGD	Citizen-generated data
CGEP	Country Gender Equality Profile
CO	Country Office
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CPEM	Presidential Council for Women’s Equality (Colombia)
CSO	Civil society organization
DANE	National Administrative Department of Statistics (Colombia)
DEK	Data, evidence and knowledge
DOS	Department of Statistics (Jordan)
ECARO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
EDGE	Evidence and Data for Gender Equality
ESARO	East and Southern Africa Regional Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FPI	Flagship Programme Initiative
GEOSTAT	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GEWE	Gender equality and women’s empowerment
HQ	Headquarters
ICD	Institutional-Capacity Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INEGI	National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico
KDHS	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KII	Key informant interview
KM	Knowledge management
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, inter-sex, queer and other
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (Bangladesh)
MSGIA	Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NSDS	National Strategies for the Development of Statistics
NSO	National Statistical Office

NSS	National statistical system
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PARIS21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
RGA	Rapid gender assessments
RO	Regional Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SP	Strategic Plan
SPC	The Pacific Community
TA	Technical Assistance
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of reference
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UN ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean
UN ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USD	United States dollar
VAW	Violence against women
WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office
WEI	Women's Empowerment Index
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

## 1. Executive summary

### 1.1 Brief context and methodology

“Making Every Woman and Girl Count: Supporting the monitoring and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through better production and use of gender statistics” (Women Count) programme, Phase I, was a multi-stakeholder global strategy implemented from September 2016 to December 2021 through 10 full-fledged country projects, four regional projects (which provided technical and/or financial support to 63 non-pathfinder countries), and one global project. The total cost of the Programme was USD 61 Million, including the Center of Excellence on Gender Statistics (CEGS) and the Joint Programme on VAW Data and contributions received from donors and resources secured from other programmes and pooled funding sources at the end of Phase I of the programme totalled USD 44,357,071 with a funding gap of USD 16,642,929 (27 per cent).<sup>1</sup>

Women Count (Phase I) was a UN Women Flagship Programme Initiative (FPI) designed to respond to three main challenges that impeded the acceleration of SDG achievements: 1) weak policy space and legal and financial environments; 2) technical challenges that limited the effective and efficient production of gender statistics; and 3) lack of access to data and limited capacity of policymakers and other potential users – including government, civil society organizations (CSOs) and academia – to analyse, use and advocate for gender statistics to inform policies.<sup>2</sup> Overall, its objective was to ensure that gender statistics were available, accessible and used to inform policymaking and advocacy, and to ensure accountability for delivering on the SDGs and other gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) commitments.

Programme implementation focused on: country-level partnerships, regional technical support, and global policy support and SDGs monitoring. Additional projects contributing to Women Count included: the Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics (CEGS) in partnership with the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI); the UN-to-UN agreement with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean (UN ECLAC) in Colombia; the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (PARIS21) at the global level; and the global Joint Programme on Strengthening Methodologies and Measurement and Building National Capacities for Violence against Women (VAW) Data, which was implemented by UN Women in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO).

The evaluation employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative data-collection approaches, particularly a desk review of project documents as well as virtual key informant interviews (KIIs) with various stakeholders. In particular, it utilized findings of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of Phase 1 of the Women Count programme to respond to some of the key questions. The evaluation was inclusive and participatory, involving internal and external reference groups, donors, partners, relevant UN Women staff, and other stakeholders at country, subregional, regional and global levels. The end-term evaluation focused on all Women Count programme interventions to assess its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, impact and sustainability.

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<sup>1</sup> Details about funding sources, allocations, expenditures and funding gaps are shown in Tables 1–4.

<sup>2</sup> UN Women. Women Count Project document. November 2017 Revision.

## 1.2 Evaluation findings

**Finding 1:** Women Count’s programme design, theory of change and partnerships were responsive in addressing barriers to the production, analysis, availability and use of gender statistics at the national, regional and global levels.

**Finding 2:** Through the Women Count design, conceptualization and implementation, UN Women exhibited both internal and external coherence with other national, regional and global programmes.

**Finding 3:** By anchoring the programme around responding to national, regional and global priorities, Women Count effectively contributed to the increased and institutionalized production and use of gender data and statistics across different countries and regions. As a result, the Women Count programme achieved more than 90 per cent of its results at outcome and output levels.

**Finding 4:** The Women Count programme amplified UN Women’s role as a leader and “go-to” resource for gender data, evidence and knowledge.

**Finding 5:** Through Women Count, the institutional capacities of data users and producers were strengthened to ensure sustained production and use of gender data to address SDG and other data gaps at the national, regional and global levels.

**Finding 6:** The programme’s flexibility was key to adapting and rapidly responding to emerging contextual changes, such as political changes, changes in National Statistical Office (NSO) leadership and the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Finding 7:** The Women Count programme’s governance structure, management and coordination were consultative/participatory, efficient and provided a timely communication flow to ensure transparency of actions and accountability towards stakeholders, partners and donors.

**Finding 8:** Strong, consistent and diversified financial commitments were key to Women Count’s success. However, funding gaps posed implementation challenges at national, regional and global levels.

**Finding 9:** The Women Count programme contributed to UN Women’s efforts to ensure that relevant gender data and statistics informed policy and advocacy, supporting evidence-based decision-making.

**Finding 10:** The Women Count programme is likely sustainable because NSOs owned its interventions, increasing the likelihood of sustained outcomes and efforts after the Women Count programme.

## 1.3 Recommendations

1. To ensure that the efforts/results of Phase I can be sustained, not only under Phase II but also in response to the UN Women Strategic Plan (2022–2025) Outcome 6 on gender data, UN Women should continue strengthening its gender statistics capacities as well as continue to develop the capacities of National Statistical Systems (NSSs) with a clear exit strategy at the end of the programme. UN Women should allocate more core resources (financial, technical expertise and capacity-

development) to support countries, as well as regional- and global-level efforts to ensure effective and sustainable gender statistics work. **(Findings 5, 8, 10)**

2. The programme should continue promoting strategic partnerships with other gender statistics actors and encouraging countries and regions to strengthen collaboration with external stakeholders (e.g., private sector, academia, policymakers, CSOs, etc.). UN Women should partner and secure more commitments for gender statistics work at the global, regional and national level. **(Findings 1, 2, 7, 9)**
3. The programme should continue reporting on high-quality results that were not only regarded by donors and the FPI evaluation as best practices, but also for the programme team to reflect on how to make the process more efficient in Phase II. To address the perception among some UN Women Country Offices (COs) that the management and monitoring approach was prescriptive, the next phase should be more inclusive and participatory (promote a bottom-up feedback model). This will contribute to shared ownership of monitoring and reporting processes (templates) among all, while also encouraging thoughts and ideas on how to make these processes more efficient. **(Finding 7)**
4. The global project should promote more South-South cooperation/peer-to-peer learning (across UN Women implementing offices) between countries and regions to enable them to share experiences and learn from one another. Although there were bilateral discussions, monthly inter-regional meetings, a Teams site to share information, and webinars to promote internal and external cross-learning, the scope was limited and should thus be upscaled and more formalized. **(Finding 5)**
5. To ensure sustainability, the Women Count programme should do a mapping of key stakeholders, at CO and Regional Office (RO) level, and maintain existing partnerships within NSSs (e.g., NSOs, ministries of women, etc.). Based on the results of the mapping exercise, Women Count should come up with targeted initiatives for closer engagement (e.g., platforms for producers and users) and coordination mechanisms to enable them to continue carrying out gender statistics work, with or without UN Women support. **(Findings 1, 5, 7, 10)**
6. UN Women should improve programme visibility and communication by creating awareness of programme activities/interventions, produced data and how they can be used. Regions and countries that had a communication expert reported great results due to work done by the communication experts (e.g. ESARO). At the global level, UN Women should regularly organize high-level meetings of key stakeholders from different countries and regions (NSO heads, donors, policymakers, CSOs, private sector, etc.). During such meetings, the participants can interact, share information and experiences on gender statistics from their respective countries and regions. **(Findings 4, 6, 7, 9)**
7. UN Women should continue advocating in countries that have yet to integrate gender statistics into their national statistics plans to recognize the importance of mainstreaming gender statistics in their policy development, national strategies and legal frameworks. **(Findings 3, 5, 9)**

## 2. Background and purpose of the evaluation

### 2.1. Programme background and context

#### 2.2.1 Overview of the evaluation subject

“Making Every Woman and Girl Count: Supporting the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs through better production and use of gender statistics” (Women Count) programme (Phase I) was a multi-stakeholder comprehensive global strategy implemented from September 2016 to December 2021



through 10 full-fledged country projects, four regional projects (which provided technical and/or financial support to 63 non-pathfinder countries), and one global project. The total budget of the programme for Phase I was \$61 million, including the VAW Joint Programme and the Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics. Contributions received from donors and resources secured from other programmes and pooled funding sources at the end of Phase I of the programme totalled USD 44,357,071, leaving a funding gap of USD \$16,642,929 (27 per cent). Details about the funding sources, allocations, expenditures and funding gaps are shown in Tables 1 and 2 (Annex IV).

## **2.2.2 Programme background and context**

The SDGs featured core areas of the feminist agenda, including a commitment to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, to eradicate discriminatory laws and constraints on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work and to increase women's participation in decision-making. However, measuring progress on the SDGs from a gender perspective was challenging due a lack of robust monitoring and accountability frameworks. This was evident in the fact that in 2016 only 26 per cent of the SDG gender-related indicators had available data for monitoring and reporting<sup>3</sup>. Additional challenges included:

- Weak policy space and legal and financial environments: Lack of political will to mainstream gender statistics in national plans and limited awareness of the importance of data for gender equality are critical barriers to progress. Out of 126 countries with data, only 15 per cent had specific legislation requiring the NSS to conduct specialized gender-based surveys and only 13 per cent had a regular dedicated budget for gender statistics.
- Technical challenges limit the effective and efficient production of gender statistics: Due to resource and technical constraints in most developing countries, the production of gender statistics is still quite limited and gender data gaps were pervasive.
- Lack of access to data and limited capacity of policymakers and other potential users to analyse, use and advocate for gender data to inform policies: Gaps in gender statistics are compounded by the low dissemination and communication capabilities of many NSSs to make existing data available in user-friendly formats.

These challenges at the national level are often exacerbated by the lack of coordination at regional and global levels, particularly by development partners that provide support for statistical capacity-building. This lack of coordination means that the already meagre technical and financial support for gender statistics being provided to countries is often highly fragmented and, in some cases, duplicative.

The Women Count programme was designed to improve the availability, accessibility and use of quality gender statistics to inform policy, advocacy and accountability for delivering on GEWE commitments in the SDGs, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and other national priorities.

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<sup>3</sup> UN Women Project document (Revision), Women Count Programme, November 2017

The programme hinged on the following Theory of Change (ToC):<sup>4</sup> *If (1) the policy environment is supportive and well-coordinated, it allows for more effective monitoring of SDGs; and If (2) good quality gender statistics are available, comparable, accessible and regularly produced, this bridges national data gaps and meets policy and reporting commitments under the SDGs, CEDAW, the BPfA as well as other national priorities; then (3) users are able to analyse and utilize gender data, and it informs policymaking and advocacy as well as promotes accountability.*

Its overall objective was to ensure that gender statistics were available, accessible and used to inform policymaking, advocacy and accountability to deliver on the SDGs and other GEWE commitments.

The programme approach focused on: 1) Building a supportive policy and institutional environment for the localization and effective monitoring of SDGs; 2) Increasing the quality, comparability, and regularity of gender statistics that addressed national data gaps and met reporting commitments under the SDGs; and; 3) Ensuring that gender statistics were accessible to users in governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector, to strengthen adequate demand for the production of gender statistics.

The Women Count programme adopted a three-pronged approach to implementation, through:

- **Country-level partnerships:** Country projects were implemented in 10 pathfinder countries<sup>5</sup> that were selected following an independent country selection exercise in 2017. The selection was done by the programme in partnership with NSOs and in coordination with other actors.
- **Regional technical support:** Four regional projects were implemented in UN Women ROs in Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, East and Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa, to provide policy and programmatic support to pathfinder countries, and on-demand technical and financial support to non-pathfinder countries. The regional projects also provided technical support to regional bodies to dismantle barriers to the regular production of gender statistics and supported national plans to monitor the SDGs.
- **Global policy support and SDGs monitoring:** The global project provided: programmatic and technical advice to national and regional Women Count projects; guidance on the production of gender statistics; monitoring of the SDGs through methodological work, data compilation and dissemination; and improved data on unpaid care and domestic work (among other thematic areas).

The programme was implemented in the following geographical areas:

- (i) East and Southern Africa (ESARO) regional project – with support to Eswatini, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Zimbabwe, as well as to Kenya, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania (hereafter Tanzania) country projects.

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<sup>4</sup> UN Women. 2017. Global Project Document (revised): Making Every Woman and Girl Count: Supporting the Monitoring and Implementation of The SDGs Through Better Production and Use of Gender Statistics.

<sup>5</sup> The initial selection of pathfinder countries included 12 countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Cameroon, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Morocco, Jordan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Albania and Colombia). Albania country project was supported through the regional project for Europe and Central Asia, while Sierra Leone project was dropped as a result of UN Reform.

- (ii) West and Central Africa (WCARO) regional project – with support to Benin, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, as well as to Cameroon and Senegal country projects.
- (iii) Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) regional project – with support to Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Other countries (including Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) were mainly supported on Rapid Gender Assessments (RGAs).
- (iv) Asia and the Pacific (APRO) regional project – with support to Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Niue, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tokelau, Tonga and Viet Nam, as well as to Bangladesh and Nepal country projects.
- (v) Latin America and the Caribbean – Colombia country project
- (vi) Arab States – Morocco and Jordan country projects
- (vii) Global project

Additional subprojects under the Women Count programme included: the CEGS, implemented in partnership with INEGI; the UN-to-UN agreement with UN ECLAC; and PARIS21. The Joint Programme on strengthening methodologies, measurement and building national capacities for VAW Data, implemented by UN Women in partnership with the WHO, directly contributed particularly by supporting VAW data initiatives undertaken through Women Count at global, regional and national levels.

## **2.2 Evaluation’s purpose and objectives**

### **2.2.1 Evaluation’s purpose**

The purpose of this end-term evaluation is to assess the contributions of the Women Count programme to increasing the planning, production, coordination, availability, accessibility and use of gender statistics. The evaluation is both summative (backward-looking) and formative (forward-looking). On the one hand, it assesses results at national, regional and global levels and how the programme has effectively implemented its Mid-Term Review (MTR) management response to address the weaknesses identified (successfully or not) and strengths, including how the programme has remained agile in the wake of COVID-19. On the other hand, building on the MTR, the evaluation provides forward-looking recommendations as to how UN Women can enhance its work on gender statistics. This is especially pertinent considering the inclusion of a new Systemic Outcome on ‘Improving the Production and Use of Gender Statistics and Gender-Disaggregated Data’ in the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and the development of a Data, Evidence, and Knowledge (DEK) strategy to improve the production and use of gender data and evidence as a core component of UN Women’s work. This evaluation has drawn on the MTRs of the Women Count programme, the CEGs, the UN Women-WHO Joint Programme on VAW Data as well as recent evaluations conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service. This evaluations’ recommendations will also inform the Women Count Phase II programme.

### **2.2.2 Evaluation’s objectives**

As outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the broad objectives of this evaluation were:

- 1) To assess UN Women’s contribution to results, including the effectiveness of programming strategies in addressing policy and legal frameworks that govern the production of gender statistics and in increasing the production, availability, accessibility and use of gender statistics, with a special focus on innovative, scalable and replicable interventions at the national, regional and global levels.
- 2) To provide evidence-based analysis on whether and how Women Count has helped strategically position UN Women as a leader in gender data, to add value in the production, analysis and use of gender data and statistics that monitor and report on the SDGs, at country, regional and global levels.
- 3) To assess how UN Women has influenced other partners to integrate gender data into their work through the first phase of the Women Count programme.
- 4) To assess and validate the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme’s approaches and strategies, including its alignment with internal and external global, regional and national frameworks and priorities.
- 5) To assess the value of the programme’s results relative to the resources invested therein.
- 6) To evaluate UN Women’s organizational performance, such as its management systems, design of strategies and programmes, including Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and how effectively they facilitated the implementation of programme objectives; and
- 7) To draw lessons and produce concrete recommendations on what is needed to ensure UN Women is recognized as the ‘go-to’ for thought leadership around gender data and how UN Women can build on this first phase of the programme, including aspects that have worked and should be scaled-up, aspects that require improvements, and aspects of the programme that have not worked and should be changed or abandoned in the second phase.

## **2.3 Evaluation’s scope**

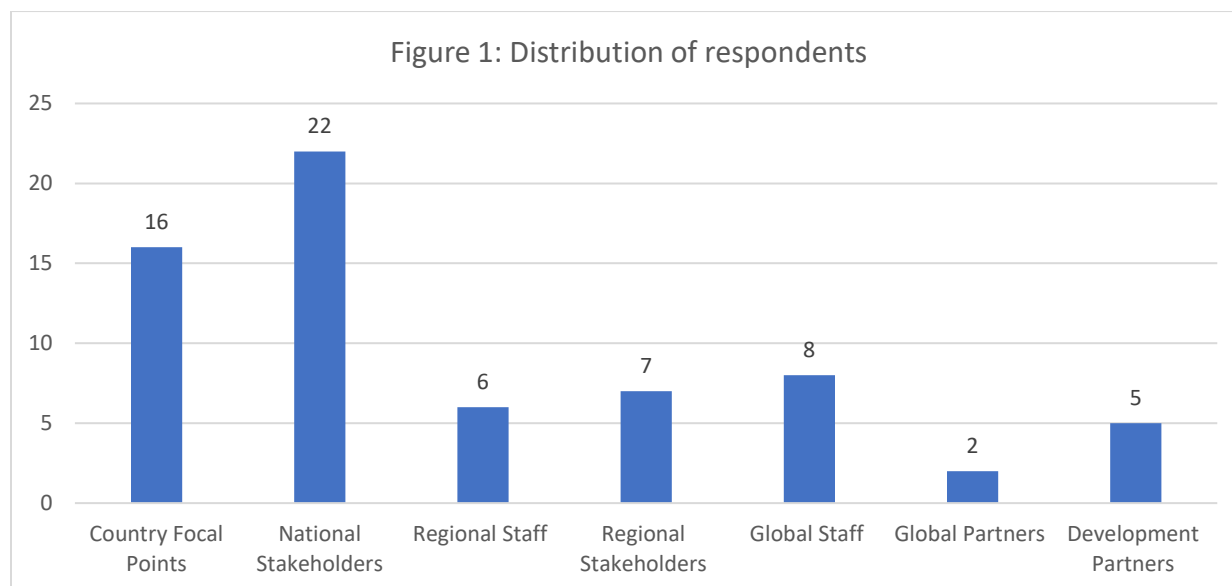
The scope of this evaluation covers the entire implementation period (2016–2021) and all geographical areas where the Women Count programme was implemented (national, regional and global levels). The evaluation assesses the three programme outcomes using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria (namely relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, impact, and sustainability).

## **2.4 Evaluation design and methodology**

### **2.4.1 Evaluation approach**

The evaluation is theory-based and employs a mixed data-collection methodology, particularly a desk review of project documents and key informant interviews (KIIs) engaging various stakeholders. The information collected and findings from the Women Count programme MTR have been utilized to respond to some of the evaluation questions, particularly on programme design, relevance, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness. For triangulation purposes, questions were posed to key stakeholders across all of the pathfinder countries as well as regional and global projects who were selected using purposeful sampling. KIIs were conducted on sampled respondents across all the pathfinder countries and the regional and global offices. The use of mixed methods helped the evaluator gather in-depth and evidence-based information and look deeper than just analysing figures. It created an environment of openness and encouraged key informants to expand on their responses and even open up to note additional related

issues not initially included in the KII questions. The evaluation also sought to establish management, technical and performance challenges, including establishing failure and success factors, challenges, lessons learned and recommendations for improvement. The evaluator conducted a comprehensive document synthesis and analysis of the overall programme ToC and country-specific and/or region-specific project results frameworks as the primary evaluation tools.



A total of 67 key informants were purposefully selected and interviewed from a list of the entire Women Count team, implementing partners and other stakeholders for each project (national, regional and global). In cases where the list included more than one person from the same organization, the evaluation only reached out to the ‘top priority respondents.’ The countries selected for in-depth analysis were exempted from this rule. The evaluation included an in-depth analysis of four projects to develop case studies on project achievements and lessons learned (see Annex V). The three pathfinder countries selected for in-depth study were Cameroon, Georgia and Morocco. In addition, there was an in-depth study of one regional project (APRO). The four projects were selected using criteria agreed upon with the Women Count team. The criteria used included considering a mix of pathfinder countries<sup>6</sup> and non-pathfinder countries,<sup>7</sup> a mix of regional and country projects, and selecting projects with different levels of maturity.

<sup>6</sup> Countries in which UN Women develops and supports the full implementation of the Women Count programme (i.e. technical and financial support). Twelve pathfinder countries were initially selected through an independent process based on various criteria, including: their commitment to women’s and girls’ rights and to high statistical standards; language and regional diversity; country-level demand, including demonstrable need and institutional commitment to improve gender statistics; and motivation to be part of a global and inclusive learning process on gender statistics. However, due to UN Reform, country projects were dropped during Phase I in Cabo Verde and Sierra Leone, leaving 10 implemented pathfinder country projects.

<sup>7</sup> As opposed to pathfinder countries, where full Women Count projects are implemented, support to non-pathfinder countries consists of limited technical and/or financial support, on demand (i.e., support for particular statistical activities, such as surveys).

The evaluation was transparent and participatory, involving internal and external reference groups,<sup>8</sup> donors, relevant UN Women staff and other stakeholders at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. It was carried out in accordance with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and its Ethical Code of Conduct, as well as UN Women policy guidelines. International humanitarian standards consistently guided the data-collection phase. During KIIs, the evaluator obtained fully informed consent and proceeded with the required sensitivity before and during data collection.

#### **2.4.2 Evaluation criteria and guiding questions**

Guided by OECD/DAC criteria, the evaluation sought to answer the following questions focused on the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact, and sustainability, while documenting lessons learned. The evaluation findings are presented under each of these criteria. The list of key questions can be found in Annex I (TOR).

### **2.5 Evaluation limitations**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic and related travel restrictions, it was not possible for the evaluator to travel to the different regions and countries to conduct face-to-face interviews. However, this was sufficiently mitigated by remotely conducting KIIs, case studies and other stakeholder consultations virtually. The tight timelines, especially for data collection, presented a few challenges, especially when potential key informants could not participate in KIIs, with some not showing up or rescheduling their sessions. To address this challenge, the evaluator worked closely with the evaluation manager and Women Count focal points to reach out to external stakeholders and manage the timelines.

### **2.6 Evaluation management and quality assurance**

#### **2.6.1 Quality assurance and ethical issues**

The evaluator used best evaluation practices that included adhering to UNEG norms and conducting regular consultations with the established Internal and External Evaluation Reference Groups. The ToRs of each reference group were developed and shared with members. The evaluation criteria and the key evaluation questions outlined in the evaluation ToR were further refined by the consultant and organized into an evaluation matrix annexed to this report. The evaluator remained independent throughout the evaluation process and gave clear reasons for evaluative judgements and the acceptance or rejection of comments on deliverables. The evaluator respected the UNEG Ethical Code of Conduct, including evaluator obligations of independence, confidentiality, impartiality, credibility, honesty and integrity, competence, accountability, obligations to participants, avoidance of harm, accuracy, completeness and reliability, as well as regarding omissions and wrongdoing. The evaluator has not disclosed respondents' real names and personal details during or after the interviews. The evaluator was sensitive in identifying

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<sup>8</sup> *External Reference Group* roles included: providing substantive comments to the main deliverables of the evaluation, including the evaluation design, inception report and final report of the evaluation; providing quality assurance throughout the process; and serving as a key informant, as needed. *Internal Reference Group* roles included: providing substantive comments to the main deliverables of the evaluation, including the evaluation design, inception report, drafts and final report of the evaluation; providing quality assurance throughout the process; serving as key informants, as needed; serving as a liaison between the consultant and stakeholders during data-collection, including facilitating the scheduling of KIIs and arranging any other logistics required; and disseminating the evaluation results.

potential ethical issues and approaches that could compromise the evaluation process. Before interviews, the evaluator clearly explained the objective of the evaluation, as well as data-collection methods and requested respondents' informed consent.

To ensure quality, two evaluation reference groups (UN Women's Internal Reference Group and the Donor Reference Group) guided and provided input into the evaluation process. This included reviewing and approving key deliverables (inception report, data collection tools, and final evaluation report) and participating as key informants for the evaluation. An evaluation manager was designated to manage and coordinate the evaluation process.

## 2.7 Intended audience and use

The intended primary users of the evaluation findings are UN Women, its leadership, as well as its staff at headquarters and at regional and country levels working on gender statistics, staff in pathfinder countries, donors, UN agencies, NSOs, government ministries, departments and agencies, academia, research and policy institutions, CSOs and other partners.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Relevance of the programme design and priorities

How did the programme design, approaches and strategies respond to the priorities on gender statistics at national, regional and global levels (including adjusting to changing environments)?

***Finding 1: Women Count's programme design, theory of change and partnerships were responsive in addressing barriers to the production, analysis, availability and use of gender statistics at national, regional and global levels.***

The Women Count programme was responsive and well aligned with national and regional development needs and priorities on gender statistics and the SDGs. Programme interventions in the selected pathfinder countries and regions were informed by findings from their respective gender assessments. A total of 24 such gender assessments were strategically conducted at the beginning of each country and regional project to establish how gender statistics work was coordinated, how data were produced, disseminated and used, as well as to identify gender data gaps and challenges faced in the production, accessibility and use of gender data and statistics.<sup>9</sup> Through inclusive and participatory multi-stakeholder consultations, the assessments served as a basis for developing Women Count action plans and ensuring country and regional ownership. The Women Count programme thus aligned its interventions to address the needs and priorities that emerged from these national and regional gender assessments.

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<sup>9</sup> Armenia, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. And the four regional assessments in ECARO, APRO, ESARO and WCARO

For example, in Bangladesh, a national assessment on gender statistics conducted in 2018 revealed that the availability of gender data and statistics was uneven in several aspects – across sectors and topics, as well as in regularity and timeliness. While there were numerous laws, policies and plans to address gender equality and women’s empowerment, the gender data and statistics needed for monitoring and reporting were not available for many areas, and those statistics that were available were not updated. In addition, surveys and censuses were not conducted regularly. Moreover, the NSS did not have designated statistical capacity – meaning there was no assurance that data collection would be resourced or done on a regular basis. Systems to facilitate efficient access and dissemination were virtually non-existent. Moreover, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the statistical system generally did not have a dissemination policy or advance-release calendar, and access to statistics was complicated for non-government users.<sup>10</sup>

To address the challenges and gaps identified during the gender assessments in Bangladesh, coordination mechanisms were established by the Women Count to strengthen coordination of gender statistics activities in the NSS. Four coordination committees were established to improve decision-making on gender statistics. Coordination was also strengthened to advocate for the inclusion of gender indicators in Bangladesh’s Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEFSDG) for the SDGs. To increase data production, technical capacity of the national statistical system was strengthened to collect data on unpaid care work to improve monitoring of the SDGs. UN Women provided technical support to the General Economics Division (GED), SID and BBS to formulate recommendations and a costed action plan for addressing the gaps in gender-specific indicators in the MEFSDG-Bangladesh and corresponding data requirements based on systematic review and assessment. User-producer dialogues were organized to improve gender statistics analysis and use in planning, budgeting, policy-making and decision-making.

According to regional gender assessments in Africa (WCARO and ESARO), huge gaps existed in the available gender data to track SDG indicators. There was poor coordination and communication, gender statistics work was duplicated, and NSOs still used ineffective methods of disseminating available gender data. The assessment in ECARO found that although many countries effectively produced gender data, the use of existing gender data and statistics was not maximized.

The Women Count programme was built on internationally agreed normative frameworks and GEWE commitments, including essential landmark agreements such as CEDAW and the BPfA, the latter of which includes a strong call for generating and disseminating gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. At the core of the Women Count programme was the explicit call to enhance capacity-development to support national plans to monitor and implement the SDGs. This included accurate, periodic and timely statistics on gender equality. In addition, the programme enabled the testing and adoption of system-wide statistical capacity-development that was anchored in financing, design and implementation of country-level strategies to promote National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs) that were in line with OECD and PARIS21 recommendations.

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<sup>10</sup> UN Women. 2020. Women Count Programme Annual Report 2019.



The Women Count strategy and approach called for the harmonization of statistics globally and across different regions. The programme document included a detailed narrative of its theory of change and a graphic representation of the entire results chain. The logical flow and causal linkages of the results chain and the underlying assumptions were well articulated, and the domains of change from outputs to outcomes and impact were clear. The three programme outcomes appropriately responded to the main gaps and barriers that affect the production, access and use of gender statistics.

The programme design and implementation promoted ownership, inclusivity, mutual accountability and external partnerships. The strategies used contributed to facilitating national ownership and buy-in that prioritized gender data/statistics and contributed to sustaining country/regional gender data infrastructure beyond the life of the project. For example, even after the early conclusion of the Women Count projects in both Bangladesh and Nepal, both countries' NSOs continued to focus on gender data and to request additional (nonfinancial) support from UN Women. Moreover, through a collaborative framework, Women Count provided a road map for all relevant actors (including countries, implementing partners and donors) to unite and work to deliver more coordinated support that addressed challenges in the regular production of gender statistics. This foundation was necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the programme.

The programme intervention logic and components were plausible and realistic. Its results framework, was aligned with Output 6 of UN Women's Strategic Plan (2018–2021) and had clear outcomes and outputs, while allowing the programme some flexibility to adapt to changing contexts and emerging statistical needs. In addition to the elaborate Theory of Change (TOC), the programme architecture used a 'learn-as-you-go' approach that allowed enough flexibility to modify and adjust implementation. While this is commendable, some outcome- and output-level indicators were broad and not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound). For example, the baseline data and end-line targets of most of the outcome-level indicators (e.g., indicator 2.1<sup>11</sup>) were to be decided during implementation, but the timeline for this was not specified.

### 3.1 Programme coherence

To what extent was the programme aligned with UN Women's mandate and Strategic Plan and complementary to other actors' interventions on gender data and statistics?

***Finding 2: Through Women Count's programme design, conceptualization and implementation, UN Women exhibited both internal and external coherence with other programmes at national, regional and global levels.***

In designing Women Count, UN Women leveraged its universal mandate by linking normative frameworks and technical advances in gender statistics at the national, regional and global levels. The initiative was fully in line with UN Women's mandate and objectives of the Strategic Plan (2018–2021), which defines the necessary actions to achieve GEWE. As a good practice, Women Count drew from decades of lessons

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<sup>11</sup> Indicator 2.1- Number of countries that have produced and published at least 50% of national gender-related SDGs indicators in the previous 5 years, respectively

learned through other programmes implemented by UN Women. These included the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project implemented by UN Women in collaboration with the UN Statistics Division (UNSD). The programme also built on several reviews and recommendations, including those prepared in 2011 by the Ghana Statistical Service for the UN Statistical Commission.<sup>12</sup>

There was close coordination and alignment of the Women Count programme with similar interventions by UN Women and other actors to promote cohesion and prevent duplication of gender statistics work. Collaborations were done with other UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), WHO, UNSD, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

The majority of the key informants (95 per cent) agreed that the Women Count programme was well aligned with other interventions and programmes on gender statistics implemented in different countries and regions by other UN entities and actors. To avoid duplication and ensure harmonized support to countries, the Women Count programme also built on existing partnerships with regional commissions, development banks and other relevant agencies, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), the Pacific Community (SPC), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) on gender data and statistics work. These partnerships and collaborations ensured that the Women Count programme was part of broader interventions and programmes dealing with GEWE. These alignments created cohesion, synergy, brought closer working relationships with other actors and UN agencies, and contributed to collaboration on how programmes were implemented within UN Women and the larger UN system. For instance, capacity-development initiatives were implemented in collaboration with other organizations providing similar support. The development of the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa jointly with UNECA and AfDB is just one many examples of cross-organizational work that also helped to strengthen regional normative frameworks. Mechanisms put in place in APRO to work with other UN entities included closer collaboration and joint implementation of activities with UN ESCAP, the SPC, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and many other regional and subregional partners and intergovernmental bodies to support gender data production and use.

As noted, Women Count was aligned with the UN Women Strategic Plan (2018–2021) at the global level, which outlined the organization’s strategic direction, objectives and approaches to support efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. Specifically, the programme contributed to Outcome 2 (Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems) and Output 6 (More and better-quality data and statistics are available to promote and track progress of gender equality and women’s empowerment). The programme also aligned its activities with regional work on transformative financing/gender-responsive budgeting and was closely coordinated and aligned with other interventions implemented by UN Women. For example, the programme was anchored in country-specific strategic notes, and this ensured that gender data and statistics work was not duplicated.

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations. Statistical Commission. 2011. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc11/2011-3-Ghana-GenderStats-E.pdf>

Furthermore, the Women Count team supported the implementation of data-related components by other UN Women projects. This was achieved through the hiring of several statisticians (previously missing at the regional office) to ensure that there were enough experts to support the production of gender statistics for government planning and UN Women programming. Women Count was also closely aligned with other UN-led gender statistics interventions in countries and regions through the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework UNSDCF.

For example, in Kenya the programme collaborated with UN Women’s Ending VAW team to help bridge the existing data gaps in the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2014, which were identified during the reprocessing of the survey to develop the Women’s Empowerment Index (WEI) 2020. As a result, the 2022 KDHS methodology adopted recommendations from the WEI on improving the gender-related questions and technical input on improving the Gender-Based Violence module, the Women’s Economic Empowerment module, and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Module provided by UN Women. In addition, the programme worked closely with the Governance team during its 9<sup>th</sup> periodic report (2021) to the CEDAW Committee and on the national implementation framework for Beijing+25. It also worked closely with the Coordination team by supporting the Kenya CO to ensure that the development of the Common Country Assessment (CCA), the Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) and the UN SWAP Scorecard were evidence-based. This was done by providing all gender data products developed since the programme’s inception and ensuring that they were used in developing the CCA, CGEP and UN SWAP Scorecard. The Women Count team also worked with the Kenya CO team to utilize Kenya’s first SDGs National Gender Factsheet to technically prepare the GEWE interventions for outcome-level results within the UNSDCF with the Government of Kenya (2022–2027).

### 3.2 Effectiveness of the programme results

To what extent did the programme achieve progress/results towards the production, analysis, dissemination and use of gender data and statistics along the results chain?

***Finding 3: By anchoring the programme around responding to national, regional and global priorities, Women Count effectively contributed to the increased and institutionalized production and use of gender data and statistics across different countries and regions. As a result, the Women Count programme achieved more than 90 per cent of its results at outcome and output levels.***

The Women Count programme effectively increased and institutionalized the production, analysis, accessibility and use of gender data and statistics across different countries and regions by strengthening the institutional capacities of NSOs, women’s machineries, ministries and non-traditional data producers and users (academia, CSOs, researchers, etc.). Evidence from the desk review and triangulation with data sources show that the programme contributed to increasing available data to monitor gender-specific SDGs from 26 per cent in 2016 to 42 per cent in 2021. Strategic partnerships with national stakeholders and UN agencies accelerated the momentum to generate more gender statistics and fill gender data gaps on key areas, including poverty, the gender and environment nexus, and asset ownership, among others.

Through increased global advocacy on using gender statistics to inform national, regional and global policies and strategies, the programme created awareness among key stakeholders on the importance of gender statistics and their greater use for evidence-based policymaking. As a result, there was increased demand for the production and use of gender data and statistics. To ensure coordination and avoid duplication, the programme advocated for the integration of gender statistics into NSDSs and the establishment of coordination mechanisms to review and govern the production of gender statistics, which resulted in increased data production for national and global consumption. This also strengthened the linkages between project activities and the overall statistical sector and promoted the harmonization of gender-related interventions.

It is noteworthy that at least 18 countries supported by Women Count have included gender data as a strategic priority within their national strategies, plans or legal frameworks.<sup>13</sup> In Tanzania, the programme not only supported the amendment of the country's Statistical Master Plan, but gender mainstreaming in the Zanzibar Strategy for the Development of Statistics increased the availability and use of gender data for SDG monitoring. The programme also helped achieve the inclusion of gender data and statistics in key national government plans, such as the Mainland's third Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP III), Zanzibar's fourth Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty. In addition, Tanzania's National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children mandates relevant ministries, departments and agencies to produce sex-disaggregated data on VAW to support victims. Institutionalizing gender data commitments into such national development plans contributes to building an enabling policy environment for inclusive data-driven decision-making, which has further enabled governments to track progress and assess results.

Integrating gender statistics in NSDSs and establishing coordination mechanisms to review and govern the production of gender statistics has resulted in increased data production at the national, regional and global levels. The programme has also successfully addressed policy and legal frameworks that have accelerated the increased production of gender-related data across the different countries and regions by strengthening the institutional capacities of NSOs (traditional and non-traditional gender data producers) and by bridging capacity gaps across the NSS in many countries. In Colombia, for example, there was increased production of gender-related data as a result of the support provided to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) in partnership with UN ECLAC, including on institutionalizing a gender and intersectional approach in the NSS.

The programme achieved commendable results in Outcome 1 and 2, albeit less so on Outcome 3. This was understandable, considering the intervention logic and theory of change, which required the use of gender data (Outcome 3) to be measured once the policy and legal environment (Outcome 1) and the data production (Outcome 2) were achieved. Nonetheless, the increased use of gender data was reported in many projects in 2020 and 2021 (see Finding 8 for more detail).

The programme accelerated the production of relevant sex-disaggregated data and statistics to respond to the increased need for gender data and SDG monitoring. To do this, the Women Count programme funded several gender-related surveys and censuses (aligned with internationally accepted standards) and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

assessments on mainstreaming gender data found within administrative data to produce appropriately disaggregated statistics. For example, UN Women supported Georgia and Armenia to conduct time-use surveys in 2020–21 and assisted Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to develop policy briefs based on time-use statistics. In Georgia, the 2018 violence against women survey resulted in a new law on sexual harassment. Countries in ECARO were also supported to produce additional disaggregated data based on available data sources. As a result, NSOs from these countries took leadership on developing national priority gender equality indicators to measure countries' progress on gender equality.<sup>14</sup> The National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT) was also supported to conduct a 'data gaps and needs' assessment for monitoring and evaluating GEWE. These initiatives contributed to increasing the production and availability of gender data and statistics. In Kyrgyzstan, a gender assessment of the NSS was used as the basis for the strategic priorities of the next Gender Statistics Strategy and NSDS.

This increased production of gender data contributed to improved global SDG monitoring, inter-agency collaboration and the production of more data to monitor SDG 5 targets and influence national policies, including on hard-to-measure indicators. Specifically, the Women Count programme provided programmatic and technical support to national and regional Women Count projects; developed guidance on the production of more relevant and disaggregated gender statistics; monitored the SDGs through methodological work, data compilation and dissemination; and contributed to improved production of gender data on unpaid care and domestic work to improve SDG monitoring, among other thematic areas.

For example, with UN Women's support, the NSOs of Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan increased the availability of gender-related SDG indicators through the production and reprocessing of available data.<sup>15</sup> Countries in the Asia-Pacific region reprocessed existing data to identify data gaps and improve measurement, yielding diverse gender data for policymaking and SDG monitoring. For example, in Mongolia, 60 statisticians benefited from training on reprocessing data led by the local NSO, which conducted four trainings in four provinces teaching participants to effectively disseminate knowledge about producing multiple disaggregated estimates.<sup>16</sup> As a result, more than five broad indicators<sup>17</sup> were generated to support the country's commitment to improving women's well-being. In Afghanistan, UN Women supported the reprocessing of time-use survey data, which revealed significant gender gaps and capacity-building needs in survey methodologies. In Mongolia, UN Women supported the local NSO to collect data on Women's herders, through the livestock census, and on gender and the environment, through a stand-alone survey using the Model Questionnaire developed by UN Women and partners. In Bangladesh, UN Women also supported the design, training and implementation of the country's first-ever time-use survey, as well as the testing of the Model Questionnaire on gender and the environment in four selected provinces.<sup>18</sup>

***Finding 4: The Women Count programme has amplified UN Women's role as a leader and "go-to" resource for gender data, evidence and knowledge.***

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> UN Women. 2021. Women Count Annual Report 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Access to clean fuels, water, sanitation, child marriage, skilled attendance

<sup>18</sup> UN Women. 2021. Women Count Annual Report 2020.

Most key informants indicated that the Women Count programme amplified UN Women's role as a leader and "go-to" resource for gender data, evidence and knowledge through the production, dissemination and use of gender data and statistics. The Women Count programme influenced and positioned UN Women as an authority in the gender data community. For instance, the UN Women was able to advocate and push for gender data through the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys. Through its advocacy for more and better gender data and for its use to inform policy and advocacy on various fronts, the programme positioned gender data in national, regional and global policy agendas.

The Women Count programme successfully sensitized countries to understand that enabling policy environments were necessary for effective programme implementation. This led to more countries prioritizing gender perspectives in their national strategies and policies, better collaboration, and increased advocacy and ability to influence others on the production and use of gender data. UN Women, through the Women Count programme, took a leading role in supporting NSOs to implement activities towards the production of gender statistics to inform economic empowerment policies. Through collaboration with other UN agencies on SDGs monitoring (e.g., producing spotlight papers), UN Women encouraged them to produce gender data more regularly. They also influenced other actors to prioritize their work on gender data and statistics. In the ECARO, the Women Count programme influenced the compilation of regular (quarterly) reports on gender statistics. The programme also brought together different stakeholders and agencies to create collaborations and synergy. While in Tanzania, guidance and collaborations with NSOs, government ministries, the women's machinery, and other UN agencies helped strengthen the work on gender statistics.

The Women Count programme was instrumental in raising UN Women's profile as a key actor in the area of gender data and statistics. The programme boosted UN Women's visibility, role and contribution to gender data and statistics. Through Women Count, UN Women was able to leverage its universal mandate to link normative and technical advances at the national, regional and global levels. As one of the custodian UN agencies in charge of monitoring the gender-related indicators under SDG 5 and across the SDGs framework, UN Women through Women Count contributed to the increased production and use of gender statistics and provided the data and evidence needed to influence decision-makers and inform policies to deliver on the commitments in the 2030 Agenda to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Women Count has been UN Women's leading gender data and statistics programme since its inception and it has largely informed UN Women's work on gender statistics. Increased production and use of gender statistics for evidence-based advocacy and accountability informed UN Women's accurate targeting of interventions as well as tracking implementation progress. For instance, in Kenya, UN Women in collaboration with the State Department for Gender developed the unpaid care policy based on the evidence generated from the first-ever Time-Use Survey (2021) conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). In the Asia-Pacific region, the Women Count programme contributed to the inclusion of gender data and statistics as a high-level output in UN Women's Strategic Note for 2022–2025. Women Count also helped raise the profile of gender data in APRO more generally, and advocated for its inclusion in national and regional statistical systems. As such, the programme became a "go-to-resource" for gender

statistics, and most countries requested the programme to support them in the generation of better-quality data on gender statistics. The programme therefore helped countries to go beyond the sex-disaggregation and aggregation of data to consider all kinds of gender-related issues. This aggregation at multiple levels applied the principle of “leaving no one behind”, etc.

The COVID-19 crisis led to more requests by governments and other actors for socioeconomic data on how the pandemic was affecting women and girls. There were also increased demands and requests from other UN agencies – such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) – to produce more gender data. In response, Women Count supported the production of gender data and statistics to respond to this increased demand for new gender data to inform policy and evidence-based responses. In doing so, UN Women emerged as a global leader in promoting gender data during the pandemic by supporting the conduct of RGAs in at least 65 countries between March 2020 and March 2021, with notable uses by policymakers across all regions.<sup>19</sup> In addition, a dedicated COVID-19 section on the Women Count Data Hub provided the latest data, technical tools and resources, positioning it as a go-to resource for SDG monitoring and data and analysis on COVID-19.

***Finding 5: Through Women Count, the institutional capacities of data users and producers were strengthened to ensure the sustained production and use of gender data to address SDG and other data gaps at the national, regional and global levels.***

According to more than 90 per cent of the key informants, the Women Count programme produced a significant volume and quality of gender-related data across country, regional and global levels, by strengthening the institutional capacities of non-traditional data producers (academics, CSOs, researchers, etc.) and government ministries. Between 2016 and 2021, more than 7,000 data producers and users were trained on a variety of skills related to gender statistics, resulting in more statisticians being equipped to produce gender data.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, data producers and users were able to collaboratively plan, take ownership and coordinate the production and use of gender statistics. This was done by integrating gender statistics into national statistical processes and areas needed for decision-making – including legislative frameworks and national development strategies. The programme also supported the regular dissemination of produced gender statistics and institutionalized producer-user dialogues to increase accessibility, quality and demand for gender data and statistics. The programme, therefore, successfully increased UN Women’s visibility, role and contribution to gender statistics work.

The Women Count programme established national and regional coordination mechanisms that brought together different gender statistics system actors to form partnerships. This contributed to improved coordination and increased production and use of gender statistics. In fact, at least 22 countries have improved coordination in their NSS by creating institutional mechanisms as a result of the Women Count programme.<sup>21</sup> For example, in Bangladesh, the Women Count programme supported BBS, the Statistics and Information System, and the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (MoWCA) to establish a

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> UN Women. 2022. Final Annual Report: Moving the Needle on Gender Data.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Technical Working Group on Alternative Data to ensure inter-agency coordination for compiling indicators and uploading them to the MoWCA database/Management Information System. In Kenya, an inter-agency gender statistics coordination mechanism that brought together the voices of civil society, the NSO, line ministries, universities, etc., was formed.

The programme also built the capacities of data users and producers on more sensitive areas of data collection to fill key data gaps. To this end, several countries in APRO,<sup>22</sup> WCARO<sup>23</sup> and ESARO<sup>24</sup> promoted producer-user dialogues among key stakeholders. In Nepal, UN Women facilitated several user-producer dialogues between the Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal (CBS), CSOs, representatives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, inter-sex, queer (LGBTIQ+) groups and UN agencies to ensure that Nepal's LGBTIQ+ persons would be counted correctly in the 2021 population census. These discussions resulted in an agreed statistical definition of LGBTIQ+ people and improved data-collection methods. CBS completed a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) manual detailing how to collect sensitive GESI data, with this comprehensive definition of LGBTIQ+ groups. This manual and related materials were used to train at least 55,000 people (9,265 supervisors, 43,277 enumerators and 1,957 government staff) on the GESI components of the 2021 Population Census, vastly expanding institutional capacities.<sup>25</sup> The Women Count programme also provided technical and financial assistance to CBS, the National Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens to create a database for storing and sharing core gender-related national and SDG indicators. Women Count also supported the development of a National Gender Profile and other gender statistics reports using the SDGs at the national and subnational levels.

In Uganda, the institutional capacity of the NSS was strengthened through targeted training for data producers and users. As a result, ministries, departments and agencies, as well as high-level governments integrated gender perspectives and updated their data-collection tools, methods and standards, particularly in the justice, law and order sector. This contributed to improved capacity in the compilation and use of quality and timely VAW data for policy, programming and reporting on national and international commitments. Key stakeholders in the NSS now have increased statistical capabilities regarding the production, analysis and use of gender statistics. These enhanced statistical capacities have been used to integrate gender dimensions and variables in the NSDS and surveys at the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), including the Uganda National Household Survey 2016/17, 2020/21, the National Governance, Peace and Security Survey (2017), the Time-Use Survey (2017), the reprocessing and updating of the National Priority Gender Equality Indicators (2019), as well as the National Standard Indicator and SDG Indicator frameworks.

In Morocco, UN Women strengthened the technical capacity of gender statistics producers based on the recommendations of a national study on the data required by national institutions for gender-responsive planning and budgeting. The programme provided technical support to the local NSO to produce gender statistics (including VAW data). It also facilitated training and workshops on the importance of producing

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<sup>22</sup> Nepal, Viet Nam, Mongolia, Maldives, Timor Leste, China, Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Cook Islands, Palau, Nauru, Tonga, etc.

<sup>23</sup> Cameroon and Senegal.

<sup>24</sup> Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*



gender statistics to monitor the SDGs and comply with the Moroccan policy and legal framework, making it mandatory for gender-responsive budgeting and the elimination of gender-based discrimination.

As a follow-up to the Government of Jordan's commitment to improve gender statistics, UN Women supported the Department of Statistics (DOS) to establish an Institutional Capacity-Development (ICD) committee to build capacities for gender mainstreaming, which led to the creation of a national coordination mechanism, a critical institution for gender mainstreaming by DOS. The ICD committee has integrated GEWE tools and approaches in policies and planning across DOS.

The programme worked with regional partners to identify priorities for research and supported a more in-depth analysis of existing data to produce disaggregated gender statistics. The Gender Statistics Training Curriculum developed by UN Women and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific had a module on communicating gender data, which was adapted and replicated across countries within and outside the region. For instance, in Kyrgyzstan, the American University of Central Asia developed a curriculum on communicating gender statistics for university lecturers, which improved the statistical literacy of media students. Content from this module also helped to build the skills and capacity of statisticians in Kyrgyzstan, who benefited from training on presentation, development, structure and message delivery, with practical examples using gender statistics. The APRO also developed infographics and visual materials to disseminate data (focused on SDGs data) and contributed to developing training packages (in collaboration with global FPI staff). These included non-UN actors such as CSOs, parliamentarians, academia, journalists and United Nations Country Teams.

The Women Count programme provided technical and financial assistance to countries to establish parliamentary committees/networks for oversight and policymaking using gender data related to the SDGs. The programme also strengthened the regional community of practice and knowledge base, including through concrete suggestions for gender statistics capacity-development at national and regional levels. Women Count supported the development of gender analysis skills (among government, CSOs and other actors, through training), including by developing an ECARO tailored online course for gender data users (in English and Russian). It also supported the participation of UN Women staff and other actors in the United Nations Staff System College's 'Gender and SDGs' course.

The programme also strengthened the capacities of non-traditional data-collection institutions on gender statistics, such as citizen-generated data (CGD) being developed by Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, data from the private sector, non-official sources and programme data. This enabled countries and regions to assess the availability of data in global SDG databases and identify reasons for gender data gaps. For example, Uganda developed and approved CGD guidelines to support the compilation of data from non-traditional sources, such as CSOs and the private sector, that form part of the NSS. This enabled official data to be complemented by non-traditional sources to address data gaps. This helped dismantle the barriers to the regular production of gender statistics, supported national plans to monitor the SDGs, and promoted South-South cooperation and the sharing of best practices. Through the Women Count programme, there was increased production of CGEPs, indicating the various states of gender equality in different countries as well as data to measure discriminatory social institutions.

***Finding 6: The programme's flexibility was key to adapting and rapidly responding to emerging contextual changes such as political changes, changes in NSO leadership and the COVID-19 pandemic.***

According to 90 per cent of the key informants, the programme was very flexible/adaptive and rapidly responded to emerging contextual changes (e.g., political changes, changes in NSO leadership or the COVID-19 pandemic). This not only involved changing data-collection processes but also encouraging and advocating for countries to utilize gender data and statistics in policy- and decision-making. Moreover, the programme's MTR key findings were continually addressed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.

A key component of the programme was its ability to adapt to changing contexts by identifying data gaps and opportunities. As noted, in response to the increased requests by governments and other actors for socioeconomic data on how the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting women and girls, the programme pivoted to support the production of RGAs in 65 countries to inform policy and evidence-based responses. Their success rested on the programme's flexibility to rapidly deploy data collection. For example, the Asia-Pacific surveys were rolled out in 12 countries few weeks after the pandemic was declared). In addition, the programme ably harnessed the power of emerging data tools in its quick response. For example, in Indonesia, the programme partnered with other organizations (e.g., Gojek) to produce gender data on the impact of the pandemic on small- and medium-sized enterprises using survey and big data. UN Women's experience has shown that using new methodologies to collect data during crises is critical to informing policy responses. RGAs have since been used as effective tools providing timely data to shape gender-responsive humanitarian efforts in post-earthquake Haiti and more recently in war-torn Ukraine.<sup>26</sup>

During the pandemic, Women Count Data Hub also expanded its functionality, with new interactive dashboards visualizing COVID-19 RGAs, VAW and emerging data. News and web stories were produced and posted quickly, to ensure maximum timeliness and relevance. Moreover, working with the WHO, UN Women produced and published comprehensive data on the health impacts of COVID-19, by sex and age.

In terms of country project responses to the pandemic, Cameroon postponed some planned activities such as physical capacity-building workshops and seminars and reallocated funds to conduct studies on the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic effects on women and girls. This informed policy briefs that were issued in the country. In Georgia, the Women Count programme supported the country's NSO to switch to remote data collection using mobile phones (particularly during strict lockdowns when movements were restricted). This contributed to strengthened institutional capacity to collect data remotely. Additionally, there were adjustments to data-collection methodologies, such as increasing response rates and revising sampling strategies. In Jordan, the NSO continued to produce gender data remotely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (including VAW data and its economic effect on women). The programme also influenced the Government of Kenya, UNFPA Kenya, OXFAM Kenya, and CARE Kenya to partner and undertake the COVID-19 RGA using computer-assisted telephone interviews.

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<sup>26</sup> UN Women. 2022. Final Annual Report: Moving the Needle on Gender Data.

Also in Colombia, joint analysis of time-use data increased DANE’s capacities and enabled the early release of partial time-use survey results. UN Women supported DANE in preparing two surveys: the time-use survey and the second Coexistence and Citizen Security Survey. During the analysis, UN Women supported DANE to strengthen staff capacities to integrate a gender perspective in survey design and results analysis to inform future surveys. An analysis of data from the time-use survey (2016/2017) resulted in a special publication in 2020 that was available to inform decision-making. Given the need for information during the most critical months of the COVID-19 pandemic, DANE also developed a preliminary bulletin with partial results revealing that women shouldered more than twice as many hours of unpaid work as men.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout Phase I of Women Count there were also political transitions in most pathfinder countries, although these did not significantly affect programme activities in most countries. However, in a few countries (e.g., Nepal and Bangladesh), political changes did scale down project implementation and consequently affected gender statistics work. For example, in Nepal, difficulties getting a government counterpart to work with (it took almost eight months) caused programme implementation delays. It also caused coordination challenges between the programme and its government counterpart due to the subsequent power shifts, which affected the programme implementation. Political changes in Tanzania and Cameroon caused minimal adverse effects on programme implementation. The programme continued with most planned activities in Colombia, even during political changes. This was made possible mainly due to strong relationships, partnerships and collaborations among national partners (DANE, CPEM, the National Planning Department, and other gender machinery and regional partner such as UN ECLAC). In addition, there were changes in the top leadership of NSOs in a few countries. However, these did not significantly affect programme implementation. For example, in Albania and Uganda, changes in NSO leadership had a minimal adverse effect on the programme activities, although they did affect the timely completion of some of the work.

### 3.3 Efficiency of the programme approach and management

How did the programme set-up, including UN Women’s management systems and human and financial resources, contribute to or hinder the achievement of programme results in the most cost-effective and timely manner?

***Finding 7: Women Count’s programme governance structure, management and coordination were consultative/participatory, efficient and provided timely communication flow to ensure transparency of actions and accountability towards stakeholders, partners and donors.***

Most key informants (85 per cent) indicated that the Women Count programme governance structure provided significant transparency, accountability and oversight. The inclusion of pathfinder countries, donors and implementing partners on the Steering Committee and the dedicated Donor Committee ensured that all key stakeholders with a stake in decision-making were informed of key programme milestones in a timely fashion and provided guidance on monitoring the implementation of activities. The Steering Committee met twice a year, with each meeting presenting an opportunity for the group to:

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

review progress on the implementation of the programme; ensure that the programme was in line with and complementary to other regional and global initiatives on statistics; and discuss opportunities to promote the programme more broadly among non-participating countries.<sup>28</sup>

At the country level, the Women Count programme was managed by a national focal point, in close consultation with regional and global teams, under the supervision of the UN Women Head of Office/Country Representative. UN Women implemented country projects in close collaboration with local NSOs, relevant government ministries, departments, agencies and research institutions. Regional projects were managed by relevant Regional Offices, with overall responsibility resting with the Regional Director. Each regional project was led by a Regional Technical Adviser (regional focal point), who managed the implementation of various Women Count regional interventions and provided support and oversight to pathfinder and non-pathfinder countries in their region. In most cases, Regional Technical Advisers reported directly to their Deputy Regional Director, with a second line of reporting to the Global Programme Manager and Chief Statistician at UN Women HQ. At the global level, the programme was managed by a diverse team of specialists based at UN Women HQ, which served as a link to the work done across the various countries/regions and ensured close coordination and collaboration with key stakeholders, including global partners, UN agencies (e.g., UNICEF, ILO, WHO, etc.) and other actors.

Although most of the KII participants from participating countries and regions (and HQ) indicated that the programme management and implementation structure was consultative/participatory, transparent, accountable and effective, 30 per cent of internal key informants felt that the communication flow was mainly a 'top-down approach'. The programme management team was comprised of highly skilled technical persons (gender statisticians) and management experts who provided robust leadership and ensured teamwork. Several mechanisms were put in place, including the exchange of learning experiences to strengthen coordination and ensure that everyone's voice was taken into consideration. For example, the programme's monthly internal review meetings brought together the HQ team and Regional Advisers. This provided a platform to share and discuss the challenges/bottlenecks and opportunities from the field and get updates on what was happening at HQ and in other regional and country offices.

The Women Count programme collaborated with other actors to leverage partnerships and resources (human and financial) to achieve maximum impact. This was done through partnerships with other UN Women units, inter-agency coordination within the UN system, and collaboration with governments and development partners. In Kenya, the reconstitution and operationalization of the Inter-Agency Gender Statistics Committee increased ownership of the programme interventions. The Committee played a crucial role in ensuring that the programme was consultative, participatory and backed by a robust coordination mechanism, leading to greater buy-in from the various relevant stakeholders and the overall successful implementation of the programme. In Mongolia and the Maldives, where major investments were made, participation included discussions with the Government, NSO, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Women, etc., to identify their needs before collecting the statistics.

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<sup>28</sup> UN Women. 2021. Women Count Programme (Phase 1) MTR Report.

To strengthen accountability, the Women Count programme adopted a monitoring and evaluation system that allowed for timely collection of data and information, thus enabling continuous programme monitoring and reporting. Progress at the national and regional levels was continuously monitored by the respective countries and regional offices (decentralized) in close coordination with the team at HQ. M&E, communications and advocacy plans were prepared to standardize monitoring and reporting across countries and regions and identify key opportunities for gender statistics work. While this was a good practice, most of the focal points at the country level felt that the M&E systems and templates were prescriptive, and their input during their development was limited. Country and regional offices provided quarterly updates on project developments, which was a good practice that allowed both field offices and the HQ team to keep abreast of any positive developments and anticipate delays or risks. Although the programme's decentralization gave countries more control over the programme, which prevented it from being overly prescriptive overall, most countries did not have sufficient human resources (few staff and limited capacities on project management and M&E) to implement the programme effectively and at the same time do monitoring and reporting. For example, some countries and regions had only one focal point person who played multiple roles, including that of programme manager, technical specialist, communications officer, etc. This strained their capacity to carry out M&E, which often caused delays in monitoring the programme.

To ensure effective communication and learning, the programme developed a Knowledge Management Closure Guidance for Phase I with a series of guidelines to support countries to put together their knowledge products and know-how to better store, disseminate and communicate best practices. These practices were adopted as part of the management response to the MTR findings on the need to strengthen knowledge management. The programme created a Microsoft Teams Site to facilitate greater sharing, storing, and exchange of resources across the programme with HQ and Focal Officers / Focal Points. Regular webinars (monthly/bimonthly) on different topics were also regularly organized to facilitate learning exchange among colleagues. For example, ESARO rolled out a Community of Practice on Gender Data to enable knowledge-sharing among different partners beyond Women Count.

***Finding 8: Strong, consistent and diversified financial commitments were key to Women Count's success. However, funding gaps posed implementation challenges at national, regional and global levels***

The Women Count programme had a budget of USD 61 million at inception. This was expected to cover key interventions and activities, including global policy support, programme implementation in pathfinder countries and regional offices, the VAW Joint Programme, and funding for the CEGS. Good resource-mobilization efforts by UN Women yielded approximately 73 per cent of the total budget (received from various donors). This left a funding gap of about 27 per cent of the initial programme budget. Therefore, the programme had to adjust some of the planned activities to match the available resources.

Besides the programme funding gap, which posed a key challenge to effective programme implementation, there were domestic funding challenges, especially at the country level. Participating countries had not dedicated adequate resources to support gender statistics work for various reasons, including the lack of gender-responsive budgeting and an initial lack of awareness among countries on

why regular production and use of gender statistics was important for policy and evidence-based decision-making. By the end of Phase I, the issue of domestic financing for gender statistic work among most countries had not been fully addressed.

Despite the above funding and resource mobilization challenges, UN Women had unprecedented success in mobilizing resources for the programme from public and private donors and partners at the global level. The programme was funded by a diversified pool of donors, which was particularly encouraging in a context where gender statistics were rarely prioritized. However, the resources devoted remained inadequate at the national, regional and global levels. The initial programme budget was USD 61 million but the actual resources mobilised was USD 44,357,071 (funding gap of 27%). Resource mobilization was less successful at the country and regional levels (and relied heavily on efforts deployed by the HQ team). However, there were several examples of how programme activities spurred national investments. In response to the national assessment conducted by UN Women in Sierra Leone, Statistics Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Gender committed USD 3 million to fund a Women Count project starting in 2022; the Government of Bangladesh is investing USD 100,000 of its own funding in an upcoming VAW prevalence survey; the Government of Cameroon allocated USD 728,000 to finance gender statistics activities and reforms; the Government of Colombia is co-investing USD 320,000 in its first VAW survey; and the Government of Kenya contributed USD 150,000 towards training enumerators and data cleaning of the 2021 time-use survey.<sup>29</sup>

There was a criteria for allocating financial resources to the countries and regions implementing the Women Count programme. However, the funds were not utilized by all countries, given that governments were not at the same level of capacity and need – which led the programme to instead adopt a ‘maturity model’ for Phase II. Most national and regional projects used their allocated budgetary resources efficiently, although budgetary adjustments were made in a few countries, particularly those not delivering as expected or facing implementation bottlenecks. This was meant to ensure that resources were strategically allocated to the regions and countries where they would yield the best outcomes for the programme. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, financial reallocations were made because some planned activities could not continue (including in-person seminars, workshops and training).

Annex IV show the total financial contributions received from donors and resources secured from other programmes and pooled funding sources, as well as project allocations, expenditures and funding gaps.

Additionally, most countries and regions faced human resource constraints. There were many requests by countries and regions seeking more technical specialists (gender statisticians) and support staff (communication officers, programme assistants, etc.) to ease programme implementation work. Despite the staffing challenges, the programme was successfully implemented and its objectives were met. Most key informants (85%) indicated that many governments were not necessarily keen to allocate enough domestic budget and incentives for national statistical systems. Similarly, some governments were not providing enough incentives to statisticians through the civil service (e.g., salaries and career paths) to

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<sup>29</sup> UN Women. 2022. Final Annual Report: Moving the Needle on Gender Data.

attract and retain suitable candidates. Consequently, NSOs faced difficulties managing their human resources and sometimes lost qualified technical staff to the private sector, civil society, and international organizations. Some of them maintained their staff through project per diem payments.

### 3.4 Impact of the programme

To what extent has the Women Count generated transformative and significant intended or unintended effects on policy uses of gender statistics (used to inform research, advocacy, policies and programmes)?

***Finding 9: The Women Count programme contributed to UN Women’s efforts to ensure that relevant gender data and statistics informed policy and advocacy, supporting evidence-based decision-making.***

The impact of the programme was visibly felt at two levels: a) increasing data availability on the SDGs, with gender indicators particularly moving from 26 per cent data availability in 2016 to 42 per cent data availability at the end of 2021; and b) influencing policy decisions and resource allocation to address the needs of women and girls. At the global level, gender-related SDG data and metadata were made available to many stakeholders, including policymakers, statisticians, programme officers, civil society and researchers, to promote greater use. As a result, official gender statistics produced at the national level were reported periodically to the international statistical system and were widely disseminated. Data users were also increasingly made aware of available gender statistics to monitor and inform SDG indicator monitoring and implementation.

The collaboration between Women Count and the VAW JP proved successful, particularly at the level of pathfinder countries, which received support in planning and implementation of VAW prevalence surveys, as well as on data use for policy and programming. For example, in Albania, Georgia and Morocco, the VAW prevalence surveys (that had never been conducted before or dated back 10 years) resulted in policy changes (legislation against VAW passed by national parliaments) and were used to boost NGO advocacy efforts.<sup>30</sup> The survey data were also used to monitor progress on SDG 5 and 16 indicators related to VAW.

There are many examples of how COVID-19 RGA findings have influenced government policies, programmes and pandemic responses across all regions, including those already noted in Colombia, as well as in Albania, Chile, Jordan, the Maldives and Senegal.<sup>31</sup> In Indonesia, the results of big data analysis, a survey and qualitative analysis to assess the impact of COVID-19 on micro and small enterprises by UN Women and other partners were used by the Government to promote women’s access to finance and to set up cash-support stimulus packages for small businesses, including for the second phase of the National Economic Recovery Plan.

In many countries, these timely and agile programmatic pivots had concrete impacts on policymaking. In partnership with the Presidential Council for Women’s Equality (CPEM), UN Women Colombia adjusted its project implementation plans in response to the pandemic and conducted an RGA in November 2020.

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<sup>30</sup> UN Women. 2021. Women Count Annual Report 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

It revealed that most Colombians saw decreased income, lost jobs and lost businesses amid the pandemic, with women faring worse than men.<sup>32</sup> The findings helped justify and extend existing social welfare programmes – such as the Formal Employment Support Programme, which offers differential subsidies (50 per cent for women versus 40 per cent for men) and the Public Employment Service, which has placed 300,000 women in formal employment during the pandemic while underlining the need to support women’s entrepreneurship and formalization.<sup>33</sup> The findings also contributed to structuring a pilot project for Women’s Entrepreneurship with prioritized funding from the national tax system for projects that reach rural women.<sup>34</sup>

All key informants mentioned that the Women Count programme influenced and gave visibility to the work on gender data as a strategic priority within UN Women. It also gave significant prominence to gender data as a cross-cutting outcome during the design and implementation of other programmes. The programme significantly impacted how national, regional and global partners and other stakeholders carried out their mandates by providing them with much-needed data for policy- and decision-making. In different countries, regions and globally, there was a greater focus on the production of gender data and statistics, with data producers knowing that gender statistics and other types of data collected were being used to improve people’s lives. The programme provided and received technical support to/from the private sector, academia, CSOs and government entities, indicating that gender statistics work was recognized and appreciated by other stakeholders.

The programme promoted national, regional and global advocacy on access and use of existing gender data based on the needs of data users. Technical support was provided to publicize and disseminate gender statistics. The Women Count programme also effectively demonstrated to key stakeholders the importance of regular production and use of gender data and statistics to inform policy and decision-making. This was done by creating awareness among key stakeholders on the importance of gender statistics to inform evidence-based policymaking and strategies. Advocacy at the global level was done through events organized by UN Women during major gatherings of decision-makers, such as the UN General Assembly, High-Level Political Forums, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the UN Statistical Commission. UN Women used such advocacy initiatives to encourage key implementors (at national, regional and global levels) to formalize agreements on the production and use of gender statistics. In addition, the programme supported global consultations, collaborations and the establishment of surveillance systems, while helping countries develop national communication toolkits, improve administrative registers (on VAW and women’s economic empowerment), and recruit key staff and consultants to support gender statistics work.

In the Asia-Pacific region, 10 ASEAN Member States were supported to reprocess existing data with a gender lens and identify those groups lagging furthest behind for each of the SDGs in the ASEAN *Gender Outlook*. The findings are already being used to shape future regional strategies, such as the ASEAN’s

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<sup>32</sup> UN Women. 2021. Women Count Programme Annual Report 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



Complementarity Initiative and ASEAN Cares and informing the ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Disaster Management 2021–2025.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, Uganda’s 2020 VAW survey findings spurred a call from the Minister of Finance to adopt a national zero-tolerance policy and these data are being used by the Ugandan Women’s Parliamentary Association to push for the adoption of a pending Marriage and Divorce Bill. They have also been used to inform policy recommendations to strengthen data management systems to collect timely and quality disaggregated VAW data, which have been taken up by authorities, even prompting UBOS to commit to conducting a VAW survey every five years.<sup>36</sup> Similarly in Morocco, the country’s first-ever costing of violence against women and girls, based on data from its 2019 VAW survey supported under the programme, was a key precursor to the country’s 2020 National Integrated Plan for Women’s Economic Empowerment identifying VAW as a critical obstacle (objective 3.2) and to the New Development Model launched in 2021, which calls for a zero-tolerance policy.<sup>37</sup>

In Jordan, a national gender mainstreaming policy and a national strategy for women were endorsed with language supporting the institutionalization of sex-disaggregated data collection. The gender mainstreaming policy ensured that all information, whether programmatic or institutional, could be analysed from a gender perspective to inform decision-making, planning, implementation and reporting processes. Moreover, Women Count supported the inclusion of gender statistics and SDG gender-related indicator data collection within the country’s new National Strategy for Women.

### 3.5 Sustainability of the programme

What measures did UN Women take to ensure continuity in the production, analysis, and use of quality gender statistics at national, regional, and global levels?

***Finding 10: The Women Count programme is likely sustainable because NSOs owned the programme interventions, increasing the likelihood of sustained outcomes and efforts after the Women Count programme.***

The results achieved by the Women Count programme are likely to be sustained because it was built as a multi-stakeholder system for gender data and statistics rather than stand-alone projects designed to respond to specific data gaps. The programme strengthened commitment to long-term integration of gender data into NSSs, legal frameworks (e.g., gender equality policies), and national development strategies. Ownership of the programme interventions, particularly by NSOs, contributed to improved production and use of gender statistics, which increases the likelihood of sustaining the programme’s interventions and results over time. Building the institutional capacities of NSOs to produce gender data and statistics ensured that staff were more likely to apply and retain the skills gained to continue producing and using gender data and statistics, an important step towards sustaining the results. The programme involved data users such as policymakers from the beginning and kept them informed on all

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> UN Women. 2022. Final Annual Report: Moving the Needle on Gender Data.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

the stages of gender data production and analysis. This was done to ensure that by the time gender data were made available, they were already aware of them and how they could use these data to inform policy and decision-making.

According to 95 per cent of KII participants, when users are not involved in producing gender data, they are less likely to understand or own the produced findings; however, when key stakeholders (NSOs, governments, etc.) are involved (as they were through the project), they understand it, recognize its importance and embrace regular data production, reflecting greater ownership. When key stakeholders (NSOs, governments, etc.) understand the data produced, they know its importance and thus embrace regular data production, reflecting greater ownership. Recognizing data use gaps made it possible to be more deliberate in asking partners how they used available gender data. The Women Count programme supported awareness-raising initiatives among national stakeholders on the importance of gender statistics. This increased the likelihood that NSOs would conduct surveys and carry out gender data collection on their own. The programme also promoted political will in the selected pathfinder countries by ensuring political backing to support the continued production and use of gender statistics.

Further, to ensure sustainability, the Women Count programme worked on the full spectrum of the data value chain and focused on gender data production, analysis, dissemination and use. The programme developed the capacity of NSOs and line ministries to ensure that gender statistics work was included in formulating major reform processes and creating more partnerships and synergies in producing gender statistics. This included promoting evidence-based policymaking and guiding the whole policy work, policy development strategies and other national strategies to ensure that gender statistics were embedded in legal frameworks and policies, to ensure their continued production and use. Discussions on the various types of data points and how data can impact policy also resulted in increased data use in policymaking.

The evaluation concludes that the national gender assessments created an impetus for countries and regions to continue producing gender data and statistics without support or with limited support from UN Women and other actors. Different countries/regions reported different levels of preparedness to continue the production and use of gender data on their own. Some had robust national statistical frameworks and could thus continue with the statistical work without Women Count support. However, some countries were still in nascent stages and needed continued support to generate gender statistics.

Some potential sustainability challenges the programme experienced included inadequate resources to bridge all the existing data gaps, which were affected by changing priorities. The programme addressed some of these challenges, including financial constraints for government institutions (e.g., NSOs) to collect and use gender statistics, with varying success. For example, Cameroon successfully advocated for government resources to be regularly allocated for the production, analysis and use of gender statistics. Replicating that practice in other countries would be instrumental to sustaining gender statistics work.

The programme also supported the development of methodologies to ensure the continuation of gender statistics work, such as the Training Curriculum on Gender Statistics or specific methods to measure the gender-environment nexus and initiated user-producer mechanisms that advocated and created

awareness of the importance of gender statistics. Nepal integrated gender data and statistics components in its national population and housing census, which contributed to the inclusion of gender indicators in national census and surveys. Such indicators were more likely to be incorporated into national statistics and other surveys, contributing to the sustainability in the production and use of gender data in Nepal. In Albania, there was great partnership and cooperation between the Women Count programme and the national NSO, which generated ownership of the programme. The National Statistics Committee of Kyrgyzstan built a gender-responsive NSS by developing an Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender Data as a national mechanism for coordination, planning and use of gender statistics. This generated ownership of programme activities by other gender statistics actors, including the NSO, CSOs and government ministries. This collaboration contributed to the sustainability of programme interventions and results.

In cooperation with PARIS21, UN Women supported the National Statistics Committee to conduct three national consultations to assess the need for data to inform gender equality policies and programmes and identify the strategic priorities for the gender statistical system for 2021–2024. The collaboration with PARIS21 also resulted in mainstreaming gender into NSDSs, thus ensuring that gender data were produced and used more regularly. These strategies contributed to better coordination and planning of gender statistics work through the development of gender assessment frameworks and the integration of gender perspectives into statistical strategies, thus contributing to more sustainable processes for gender statistics work. For instance, in Egypt, Kyrgyzstan and the Maldives, NSDSs were developed with PARIS21 support. Specifically, in Kyrgyzstan, gender assessments were used to inform strategic priorities for the 2022–2026 NSDS and the development of the country’s first-ever National Gender Statistics Strategy. The local NSO took a leading role in prioritizing gender equality and regularly produced gender data to monitor progress made on gender equality. The country also developed its national gender equality strategy (until 2030) based on gender statistics assessments, entrenching the sustainability of gender statistics work and embedding specific gender data-related activities into the NAPs for 2022–2024.

Most key stakeholders confirmed that no social, economic or environmental risks could significantly jeopardize the sustainability of programme results. However, the lack of (or reduced) investment towards the production, analysis and use of gender data and statistics by national and regional partners could threaten sustainability. In addition, sustainability of the progress made by Women Count would be determined by financial resource availability/mobilization, capacity-development of NSSs, and the formulation of country, regional and global strategic frameworks that compel governments and other stakeholders to make investments in gender data and statistics. Social and cultural barriers (e.g., norms, taboos, etc.) could influence the accuracy, process and quality of gender data collection. Political transitions were also bound to happen, which could bring uncertainty, especially in countries or regions where such changes put the continuation of the production, analysis and use of gender statistics at risk.

An enabling environment for producing and using gender data should be created by working on country systems, including by mapping institutional capacities for gender statistics (such as a maturity model with multiple indicators). Having strategic plans in place in countries that explicitly include gender data and articulate concrete activities in the medium term provides a platform for countries to mobilize resources. Additionally, having a regional road map on gender data (including how to collect and use it) is key, as

evidenced by the successful Pacific Roadmap supported under the programme, which has contributed to at least 11 countries creating enabling environments for improved gender data since its adoption.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, NSOs should work towards developing such road maps. Women Count should strengthen its partnership and engagements with government institutions (NSOs, women's machineries and ministries) and other actors by providing more technical support to ensure the sustainability of interventions. According to 90 per cent of the KII participants, having a strong national gender equality mechanism would influence gender statistics.

The programme should establish more partnerships with various other data producers (e.g., CSOs, private sector, line ministries, etc.) and users to promote ownership and encourage regular production and use of gender data and statistics. The Women Count programme should promote a multi-stakeholder approach of engaging a larger number of partners, which is critical, especially when conditions deteriorate. It is unrealistic to expect NSOs to carry this burden on their own and have sufficient influence and political space to maintain the prioritization of gender statistics. Thus, the role of collaborators and partners in this process is important, particularly to advocate for sustaining the progress of gender data production as a key component of the national statistical system. There should also be more awareness-raising, advocacy and coordination within the larger UN system to encourage countries to start producing gender statistics on their own without the support of the Women Count programme.

## 4 Conclusions

Women Count's programme strategy and approach were based on UN Women's triple mandate, integrating normative support, coordination and programmatic functions. The programme supported the creation of enabling environments, which was necessary for strengthening the timely production, use, as well as management, coordination and development of gender statistics work. The programme also supported the use of gender data for evidence-based decision-making by supporting producer-user dialogues and strengthening existing fora for NSSs to engage with policymakers. Women Count provided a platform for all key actors (including national and regional stakeholders, implementing partners and donors) to come together and work towards providing more coordinated support that addressed challenges in the regular production and use of gender statistics. The programme also effectively responded to the main barriers that affect the production, accessibility and use of gender statistics.

Women Count's programme design and implementation were well aligned with the needs and priorities identified in the national, regional and global gender assessments of NSSs. These NSS assessments led to the strengthening of processes that govern gender statistics work. Women Count interventions were demand-driven, with capacity-development initiatives responding to the needs identified by respective countries and regions through gender assessments that were conducted to examine legal frameworks, policies and practices governing the production, analysis and use of gender statistics.

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<sup>38</sup> UN Women. 2022. Final Annual Report: Moving the Needle on Gender Data.

The programme's implementation strategy was appropriate, as it targeted the entire system and covered the full data cycle and statistical processes while simultaneously addressing existing barriers to the efficient production, dissemination and use of quality gender data and statistics. The collaboration with PARIS21 resulted in mainstreaming gender into NSDS guidelines and in pilot countries, thus ensuring that gender data were produced and used more regularly. These strategies led to better coordination and planning of gender statistics work through the development of gender assessment frameworks and integration of gender perspectives into statistical strategies, thus contributing to more sustainable processes for gender statistics work.

The Women Count programme was built on internationally agreed normative frameworks and commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, including landmark agreements, such as CEDAW and the BPfA, the latter of which includes a strong call for generating and disseminating gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. The Women Count Programme was also well aligned with other global initiatives, agreements and best practices on gender statistics and the SDGs. This alignment ensured that the Women Count programme was part of broader interventions and programmes dealing with GEWE issues.

The Women Count programme influenced and positioned UN Women in the gender data community as an authority on gender data. As a best practice, the programme developed and/or adapted standardized methodologies, technical support tools and guidelines to produce gender data that addressed gender-related Tier I/ II SDGs indicators to respond to national/regional gender data gaps. There was internal coherence with other interventions implemented by UN Women to avoid the duplication of work. Women Count promoted cooperation and partnership with key stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels to avoid external duplication and ensure coherent and consistent support to countries. The programme closely also collaborated with other UN agencies to promote external coherence and synergy. This collaboration strengthened the institutional and technical capacities of NSSs and provided financial support for data collection to monitor the implementation of SDGs and other national and international commitments. The programme also strengthened the capacities of non-traditional gender statistics producers, such as citizen-generated data, data from the private sector and non-official sources.

Women Count's programme management and coordination adopted a 'matrix organizational structure' that allowed a regular flow of information between global, regional and national teams and encouraged close consultation during programme implementation. These management and implementation structures were consultative/participatory, transparent, accountable and effective. Most countries and regions faced human resource constraints at the UN Women level (i.e. project staff). Despite the challenges, Women Count successfully implemented the programme and ensured that its objectives were met. The programme management team comprised highly skilled technical persons (gender statisticians) and management experts who provided robust leadership and ensured teamwork. The Women Count programme collaborated with other actors to leverage partnerships and resources to achieve maximum impact. This was done through partnerships with other UN Women thematic units, inter-agency coordination within the UN system, and collaboration with governments and other development partners.

There was also close collaboration with other national/regional/global stakeholders, including relevant government ministries, CSOs, the private sector, academia, women's machinery, etc.

An M&E plan sought to standardize monitoring and reporting across countries and regions. Despite staff constraints, progress at national and regional levels was continuously monitored by the respective countries and regional offices (decentralized) in close coordination with the team at HQ (the global project also reported progress on a quarterly basis). However, this decentralized M&E system had its strengths and challenges. Though decentralization gave countries more control over the programme and avoided being overly prescriptive, there were regular consultations with the global team (e.g., monthly inter-regional meetings) and standardization of implementation approaches and M&E systems. COs and ROs carried out both programme implementation as well as M&E, though most of them faced difficulties because of limited human resources. Most of the regional and national projects used allocated budgetary resources efficiently. However, budgetary adjustments and cuts were made in a few countries, particularly those not delivering as expected or facing implementation bottlenecks, and as a result of UN reforms.

To ensure that the produced data and products would be accessible beyond the lifespan of the project, the programme developed a Knowledge Management Closure Guidance for Phase I, with a series of guidelines to support countries to put together their knowledge products and know-how to better store, disseminate and communicate them. These practices were adopted as part of management response to the MTR findings on the need to strengthen knowledge management. The programme created a Microsoft Teams Site to facilitate greater sharing, storing and exchange of resources across the programme with HQ and FOs. Regular webinars (monthly/bimonthly) on different topics to facilitate learning exchange among colleagues were regularly organized. ESARO created a Community of Practice on Gender Data to facilitate knowledge-sharing among different partners beyond Women Count. A Data and Knowledge Management Plan will also be developed for Phase II to align with UN Women's next corporate Data, Evidence and Knowledge (DEK) Strategy.

The Women Count programme worked on the full spectrum of the data value chain and focused on gender data production, analysis, dissemination and use. In doing so, it demonstrated to key stakeholders the importance of regularly producing gender data/statistics that could be used to inform policy- and decision-making. This creates an impetus for them to demand its regular production, which promotes ownership and the sustainability of gender data and statistics work. As demand for gender data has increased, data producers have increased its production. This was also a critical component of generating ownership, developing the capacities of relevant NSO staff to produce better-quality information and ensuring the sustainability of programme interventions and results.

Part of the sustainability challenges the programme experienced included inadequate resources to bridge all the existing data gaps, which were affected by changing priorities. To ensure sustainability, the Women Count programme supported activities jointly implemented by various key stakeholders, including training and seminars on gender statistics work. Different countries/regions reported different levels of preparedness to continue the production and use of gender data on their own. Some countries had robust national statistical frameworks and could thus continue with the statistical work without Women Count

support. There were no social, economic, environmental or political risks that may significantly jeopardize the sustainability of programme results. However, the lack of regular investment from national and regional partners towards the production, analysis and use of gender data and statistics could potentially threaten the sustainability of programme results.

The evaluation findings show tremendous progress in advancing the work on gender data and statistics at the national, regional, and global levels. The gap in gender statistics that previously existed among most countries and regions was significantly reduced. The creation of enabling environments for gender statistics work contributed to increased production, analysis, accessibility, and utilization of gender data and statistics. Most countries made significant progress towards institutionalization and integration of gender data and statistics into their NSDSs, including GRB. Considering that most countries and regions had been sensitized and understood the important role gender statistics plays in informing policy and evidence-based decision-making, there was a likelihood that most of them would continue with regular production and use of gender statistics. The regular production of quality gender data and statistics significantly contributed to the continuous monitoring of gender-related SDG indicators. Though significant progress was made, some gaps and work still needed to be done. For example, most countries and regions were expected to upscale gender data and statistics work and ensure the sustainability of progress and results achieved in Phase I.

Most actors identified UN Women as a “go-to-resource” for gender statistics. Therefore, increased demand for gender data and statistics (such as those witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic) called upon countries and regions to continue playing an active role by identifying gender data and statistics needs and providing the required data as and when needed. Finally, gender data and statistics is a key resource for countries and regions to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. It is, therefore, important to ensure the results realized so far are well galvanized in Phase II and beyond. Based on the ten evaluation findings, the following recommendations are proposed.

## 5 Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATION 1: Capacity-development

<b>Recommendation deals with:</b>	Institutional capacity of UN Women and NSSs
<b>Recommendation is directed at:</b>	Donors, UN Women

*Based on Findings 5, 6, 8 and 10*

***Overall recommendation:*** *To ensure that the efforts/results of Phase I are sustained, not only under Phase II but also in response to the UN Women Strategic Plan (2022–2025) Outcome 6 on gender data, UN Women should strengthen its gender statistics capacities as well as continue to develop the capacities of NSSs. UN Women should allocate more core resources (financial, technical expertise and*

*capacity-development) and support countries, as well as regional- and global-level efforts to ensure effective and sustainable gender statistics work.*

**Actions to be taken:**

- Continue investing in capacity-building on data collection (including the collection of case studies), data reprocessing, data dissemination and visibility, as well as knowledge management.
- Increase the number of Women Count programme staff and have specific staff dedicated to handling the programme’s technical aspects, programme management, M&E and reporting, communication, etc. Besides key technical experts and managers, the programme should hire more support staff (programme assistants) to ease the workload of programme implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Strategic partnerships and collaborations**

<b>Recommendation deals with:</b>	Collaboration and partnership with external stakeholders
<b>Recommendation is directed at:</b>	UN Women

*Based on Findings 1, 2, 7, 9*

**Overall recommendation:** *The programme should continue promoting strategic partnerships with other gender statistics actors and encouraging countries and regions to strengthen collaboration with external stakeholders (e.g., the private sector, academia, policymakers, CSOs, etc.). UN Women should expand partnerships and secure more commitments for gender statistics work at the global, regional and national level.*

**Actions to be taken:**

- Foster more and stronger partnerships between key stakeholders. This will create more ownership and encourage the regular production of gender data. This will also promote the sustainability of gender data production as a key component of national statistical systems.
- Expand coordination within the UN system in the production and use of gender statistics.
- Work closely with policymakers to ensure that gender statistics are produced regularly and to ensure that gender statistics are embedded in legal frameworks and policies, so that gender statistics will be continuously produced.
- Encourage and support the formation of coordination mechanisms such as inter-agency working groups on gender statistics that should deal with the coordination of gender statistics and bring together data users, policymakers and statisticians.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Programme management and monitoring mechanisms**

<b>Recommendation deals with:</b>	Inclusive and participatory management and results monitoring
<b>Recommendation is directed at:</b>	UN Women

*Based on Finding 7*

**Overall recommendation:** *The programme should continue reporting on high-quality results that were not only regarded by donors and the FPI evaluation as a best practice, but also for the programme team to reflect on how to make the process more efficient in Phase II. To address the perception among some*



***UN Women Country Offices that the management and monitoring approach was prescriptive, the next phase should be more inclusive and participatory (promote a bottom-up feedback model). This will contribute to shared ownership of monitoring and reporting processes (templates) among all, while also encouraging thoughts and ideas on how to make these processes more efficient.***

**Actions to be taken:**

- The Women Count HQ team should continue working closely with programme teams at regional and country level when writing reports and creating knowledge products to ensure the process is participatory and there is more feedback from field colleagues/focal points.
- M&E should be more results-based and should not be viewed as an activity but rather a continuous process of measuring results attributable to the programme (separately or jointly).
- The HQ team should clearly explain the need for uniformity in reporting to programme teams at regional and country level. As part of the wider Women Count programme, they cannot be reporting differently.
- Women Count should have dedicated gender focal points embedded in NSOs to offer technical support and report on implementation, progress and results.
- The capacities of country and regional projects should be developed to continuously collect and report on programme results (quantifiable and non-quantifiable data).

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Promoting South-South cooperation**

<b>Recommendation deals with:</b>	Sharing information and lessons learned from countries and regions
<b>Recommendation is directed at:</b>	UN Women, NSOs

*Based on Finding 5*

***Overall recommendation: The global project should encourage and promote scope of South-South cooperation/peer-to-peer learning (across UN Women implementing offices) between countries and regions to enable them to share experiences and learn from one another. Although there were bilateral discussions, monthly inter-regional meetings, a Teams site to share information, and webinars to promote internal and external cross-learning, the scope was limited and should thus be upscaled and more formalized.***

**Actions to be taken:**

- Facilitate additional exchange fora between regions and countries to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned on gender statistics work.
- Support South-South cooperation and learning among different NSOs and other key stakeholders.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Sustainability of interventions**

<b>Recommendation deals with:</b>	Sustainability mechanisms
<b>Recommendation is directed at:</b>	UN Women, NSOs

*Based on Findings 1, 5, 7, 10*

**Overall recommendation:** *To ensure sustainability, the Women Count programme should do a mapping of key stakeholders (at CO and RO levels) and maintain existing partnerships within NSSs (e.g., NSOs, ministries of women, etc.). Based on the results of the mapping exercise, Women Count should come up with targeted initiatives for closer engagement (e.g., platforms for producers and users) and coordination mechanisms to enable them to continue carrying out gender statistics work, with or without UN Women support.*

**Actions to be taken:**

- Increase UN Women’s allocation of core resources to support gender statistics.
- Intensify advocacy for governments to allocate public resources for gender statistics and seek funding from other sources to sustain gender statistics work.
- Increase institutional and technical capacity-development of key stakeholders, particularly gender data collection and use.
- Technical support to NSOs should not just focus on deploying national consultants but rather on international consultants, mentorships and coaching sessions.

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Advocacy, programme visibility and communication**

<b>Recommendation deals with:</b>	Creating awareness of programme activities/ interventions
<b>Recommendation is directed at:</b>	UN Women

*Based on Findings 4, 7, 9*

**Overall recommendation:** *UN Women should improve programme visibility and communication by creating awareness of programme activities/interventions, the produced data and how they can be used. Regions and countries that had a communication expert reported great results due to work done by the communication experts (e.g. ESARO). At the global level, UN Women should regularly organize high-level meetings of key stakeholders from different countries and regions (NSO heads, donors, policymakers, CSOs, private sector, etc.). During such meetings, the participants can interact, share information and experiences on gender statistics from their respective countries and regions.*

**Actions to be taken:**

- Facilitate stakeholder fora to discuss and share information on the progress made in gender statistics work and ensure NSOs participate in key discussions and decisions on gender statistics, e.g., by inviting NSO directors to participate in annual statistics meetings to share information. Such fora could be platforms for bringing donors and other stakeholders together to interact and share information on progress made in their countries in terms of gender statistics and to secure their commitments on the same.
- Hire dedicated communications staff in various regions and countries to handle branding, liaison, consultations and general programme communication issues.
- Further encourage producer-user dialogues.
- Effectively roll out the programme Knowledge Management Strategy and increase the use of information stored in Teams.

- Improve the collection of information/data in Phase II to provide more information on how it is used.
- Continue providing guidance on SDG indicators and developing methodologies to guide countries on how they should produce gender data.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: Engendering NSDSs**

<b>Recommendation deals with:</b>	Gender mainstreaming in NSDSs and development strategies
<b>Recommendation is directed at:</b>	UN Women, NSO, relevant government ministries

*Based on Findings 3, 5, 9*

**Overall recommendation:** *UN Women should continue advocating in countries that have yet to integrate gender statistics into their national statistics plans to recognize the importance of mainstreaming gender statistics in their policy development, national strategies and legal frameworks.*

**Actions to be taken:**

- Relevant government ministries and NSOs should pursue strategies that promote the production and use of gender statistics.
- Advocate for more investments and allocation of public resources for gender statistics work.
- Strengthen the enabling environment (policies/legal frameworks and political will) to integrate gender in national planning and budgeting.
- Offer continuous capacity-building on gender data collection and use in participating countries.

**Annexes (see attached)**

**Annex I: Terms of Reference**

**Annex II: List of documents consulted**

**Annex III: List of Key Informant Interviews**

**Annex IV: Resource mobilization and allocation table**

**Annex V: In-depth studies**