



FINAL REPORT

# COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION UN WOMEN SUDAN (2018–2023)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation team expresses its gratitude to all the individuals, organizations and government institutions in Sudan that shared their insights. The evaluation greatly benefitted from the active involvement of the UN Women Sudan Country Office, under the leadership of the Country Representative, Adjaratou Ndiaye and evaluation focal point Abdelrahman Idriss El Zibag. Particular thanks go to Fatma Mohamed, programme specialist; Mary Mbeo, international consultant; and Awatif Alyadh Ali Yousif, project coordinator, for supporting the organization of interviews in Khartoum, North Darfur and the Red Sea State. All provided substantial contributions to the evaluation and facilitated the engagement of partners and key stakeholders throughout the region.

The evaluation also benefitted from an esteemed external reference group.

We extend our thanks to Inga Sniukaite, Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service; Lisa Sutton, Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services; and our Independent Evaluation Service peer reviewer, Cyuma Mbayiha, Regional Evaluation Specialist, West and Central Africa

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# COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION UN WOMEN SUDAN (2018–2023)



**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS)**

Independent Evaluation Service (IES)

UN WOMEN

*New York, November 2023*

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# ACRONYMS

<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CPE</b>	Country Portfolio Evaluation
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DRF</b>	Development Results Framework
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>IEAS</b>	Independent Evaluation and Audit Service
<b>IES</b>	Independent Evaluation Service
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>MANSAM</b>	Women of Sudanese Civic and Political Groups
<b>OECD/DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PRCSP</b>	Promote Reconciliation and Coexistence for Sustainable Peace in Darfur
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAMID</b>	African Union - United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNITAMS</b>	UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission Sudan
<b>UNSCR 1325</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
<b>UN-SWAP</b>	UN System-wide Action Plan
<b>US\$</b>	United States Dollar
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION UN WOMEN SUDAN (2018–2023)

Photo: UN Photo/Maimana El Hassan

This report presents the main evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) of the UN Women Sudan Country Office conducted between January and June 2023. A CPE is a systematic assessment of the normative, coordination and operational aspects of UN Women's contribution to development results relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level.

## PURPOSE

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) conducted this evaluation to provide an independent and systematic assessment of UN Women's contributions to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in Sudan between 2018 and 2023, which covers the Strategic Note period. The purpose of the evaluation is to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning to inform the next Strategic Note.

## OBJECTIVES

The evaluation objectives were to:

1. Assess the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the country portfolio (planned and implemented), including between the normative, coordination and operational elements of UN Women's triple mandate, and the extent to which human rights and gender equality have been addressed.
2. Identify lessons learned and good practices that can be scaled.
3. Provide actionable recommendations to inform the development of the new Strategic Note.

## INTENDED USERS

The primary intended users of this evaluation are the Country Office which will use the findings to develop, design and implement its new Strategic Note. Secondary users are expected to be the UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office, headquarters colleagues, national partners and others working in Sudan.

## BACKGROUND ON UN WOMEN IN SUDAN

Sudan has undergone significant political changes in recent years: the 2018 revolution led to a transitional government; and, in October 2021, the military took over the transitional government. At the time of data collection for this evaluation, Sudan was ruled by a new Sovereign Council in the absence of a cabinet of Ministers. The military takeover has led to funding partners suspending aid. Plans for a transition from military to civilian rule were put on hold by the fighting that started on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, which has resulted in thousands of injuries and hundreds of deaths and forced thousands to flee their homes. The 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview estimated that approximately 30 per cent of the population needed humanitarian assistance in 2022. The high incidence of conflict has led to a large population of refugees and internally displaced persons. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the ongoing humanitarian crises in Sudan.

The Strategic Note is the main planning tool for the Country Office to articulate how it will implement UN Women's triple mandate across normative, coordination and operational work in Sudan. The Country Office's budget between 2018 and 2022 was S\$ 17.75 million. The Country Office's largest area of work is Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action, accounting for 54 per cent of budget allocation; followed by Women's Political Empowerment (28 per cent) and Women's Economic Empowerment (18 per cent).

## METHOD

This CPE employed a non-experimental, theory-based, gender-responsive approach. In consultation with the Country Office, a reconstructed theory of change was developed and used as the basis for contribution analysis. Evaluation questions were developed using the theory of change and assessed against the criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC), comprising relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, gender equality and human rights, and organizational efficiency. Multiple sources of data were obtained, and 160 stakeholders were consulted through interviews and focus groups (80 per cent women and 20 per cent men). The CPE followed UN Women's procedures to ensure high-quality evaluation processes and products and ethical conduct as outlined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Handbook. All evaluation products were subject to quality review by IES management, a peer reviewer, the Evaluation Reference Group and the Evaluation Management Group.

## KEY FINDINGS

### EFFECTIVENESS:

#### Are interventions contributing to target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note?

The Country Office has made important strides in its support to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Interventions are contributing to target outcomes in the areas of women's political participation, women's economic empowerment, and women, peace and security, through activities such as capacity building and technical support, raising awareness, and facilitating engagement between right holders and duty bearers. The Country Office's contribution to UN system coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment has strengthened during the strategic note cycle, but there is more to be done. Overall, there are some promising signs of sustainability, but also some challenges related to resourcing, project duration and scale, and the political context.

### COHERENCE:

#### Are the Country Office's interventions coherent with the work of the UN Country Team and other key stakeholders?

The Country Office's interventions are generally coherent with the work of the UN Country Team and other key stakeholders. There is also an opportunity for UN Women to support stronger coordination across the UNCT to further improve programme coherence.

### EFFICIENCY:

#### How strategic was the Country Office in its allocation of resources to ensure value for money?

Resources have supported good progress against target outcomes. The CO has been fairly strategic in its resource allocation, and evidence has been used to some extent to guide portfolio development and prioritization.

#### How efficiently has the Country Office managed to pivot in response to the changing context?

The Country Office has effectively responded to changes in the political context and UN Country Team structure and has navigated well the sensitive political context.

#### Do the interventions selected maximize UN Women's comparative advantage?

The Country Office's comparative advantage is 1. Its strong connection with the women's movement and its flexibility to work with smaller organizations; 2. Its gender mandate and expertise; and 3. Its political savviness and willingness to take risks. For the most part, CO's interventions are well aligned with UN Women's comparative advantage.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

#### Are interventions supporting structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment?

Many of the UN Women Sudan interventions supported structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment, though in some cases this was affected by projects' limited budgets and duration.

## CONCLUSIONS

**CONCLUSION 1:** After a difficult start to the Strategic Note period, UN Women has been successful in reinstating itself as a key player within Sudan and has effectively mobilized resources. The Country Office has managed to rebuild donors' trust by demonstrating an ability to deliver and pivot quickly to the changing context. Country Office capacity has also improved with the recruitment of quality personnel seen as key experts in their fields. UN Women is now seen as a critical supporter of the women's movement and an advocate for gender in Sudan, committed to working with grassroots organizations. Other areas of its comparative advantage include its gender expertise and its ability to respond to political changes and willingness to take risks.

**CONCLUSION 2:** The Country Office has effectively delivered against its target outcomes, achieving key results in its three thematic areas. It has supported more women of all ages to fully engage with political and economic institutions; supported women to secure access to productive resources and engage in sustainable resource creation activities; and influenced duty bearers in their delivery of commitments on women, peace and security. The Country Office has also supported the broader enabling environment. In terms of coordination, it has contributed to the UNCT Gender Theme Group and capacity building of UN agencies on gender mainstreaming. UN Women's programming is generally coherent with the work of the UNCT and other key stakeholders and the Country Office has been working to coordinate its partners and the women's network.

**CONCLUSION 3:** The effectiveness of the Country Office's work could be improved by addressing some of UN Women's weaker areas. The Country Office's contribution to UNCT coordination could be strengthened, with promising areas of work including the UNCT Gender Theme Group, the Humanitarian Country Team and increased joint programming with other UN agencies. Links across thematic areas could be strengthened, moving towards larger, holistic programmes that tackle different components of gender equality and women's empowerment. The current political situation means work with the government is not possible, but normative work and activity at the macro level to complement micro-level programming is critical for delivering at scale and supporting sustainable, structural change. Project duration and scope need to be carefully considered to ensure projects are able to support sustainable outcomes, and participants are able to take forward project outputs and outcomes.

**CONCLUSION 4:** The Country Office has effectively managed the difficult context by being flexible and making the most of political and funding opportunities. However, its mandate is broad, and needs within the country are significant, affecting the Country Office's ability to deliver against its priorities.

Furthermore, while Country Office capacity has been significantly strengthened, limitations in the office's current capacity continue to affect all areas of its work, constraining what it is able to do. In the next Strategic note, the Country Office should further prioritize its areas of focus, building on its comparative advantage and its unique position and mandate to support women's empowerment through structural change. It should also seek to reach greater scale with limited resources by tilting more of its efforts towards its normative and coordination mandates, to complement its programmatic work.

**CONCLUSION 5:** The Country Office has effectively supported structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment, successfully addressing cultural norms, power structures and the root causes of gender inequality. However, in some cases, short project duration and budgets limited the ability of the office to address social norms and support structural changes. While projects were generally designed considering the differential needs of different target populations, in some cases accessibility issues affected the target population's ability to participate.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 1.

#### Considering comparative advantage and evidence to guide decision-making

The Country Office to (a) prioritize efforts to focus UN Women's limited resources, building on needs assessments/context analysis that considers other stakeholders' programming and UN Women's particular comparative advantage, alongside the current conflict context, and document this process; and (b) assess the changes required to the strategy developed under the transitional government period; and (c) move towards more prioritized, consolidated, larger, longer-term projects.



### RECOMMENDATION 2.

#### Strengthening office capacity

The Country Office to further strengthen its capacity by clarifying the management structure and considering the split of responsibilities between the Country Representative and other senior staff; filling gaps in finance/operations, monitoring and communications; and reviewing personnel time allocated to the office's humanitarian and coordination mandates.



### RECOMMENDATION 3.

#### Strengthening coordination

The Country Office to invest more in its coordination mandate and ensure this is reflected in corporate and individual workplans.



### RECOMMENDATION 4.

#### Maximizing intervention effectiveness and sustainability

When designing interventions, the Country Office to consider the scope and scale necessary to effect sustainable change and the barriers that may affect uptake of outcomes.



### RECOMMENDATION 5.

#### Increasing accessibility for relevant participants and partners

When designing interventions, the Country Office to further consider potential barriers to accessibility and consider how activities can be best designed to maximize accessibility for all target participants.

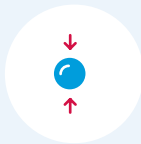






Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND COUNTRY CONTEXT<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Annex 14 sets out further details on the country context, along with information sources.

## Background

Sudan has undergone significant political changes in recent years: the 2018 revolution led to a transitional government; and, in October 2021, the military took over the transitional government. At the time of data collection for this evaluation, Sudan was ruled by a new Sovereign Council in the absence of a cabinet of Ministers. The military takeover has led to funding partners suspending aid.

A peace agreement was signed in Juba in August 2020 between the Transitional Government and Sudan Revolutionary Front, ending decades of violent conflict. Women have succeeded in including strong gender provisions in the peace treaty.

In April 2021, the Council of Ministers gave its approval for Sudan's ratification of the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with some major reservations. Existing national gender policies in Sudan remain outdated. Regional and international bodies have raised concerns about the violation of women's rights in Sudan and the lack of adequate protection against rape and other forms of sexual violence.

The military wing of the current government is more conservative than the civilian wing. In November 2019, the Khartoum Public Order Act (1998) that

controlled how women dressed and behaved was repealed. However, in August 2022, a new Community Police was established, which many fear will facilitate the return of the Public Order Police. Additionally, many inequitable laws affecting women's rights still exist.

Plans for a transition from military to civilian rule were put on hold by the fighting that started on 15 April 2023, between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, which has resulted in thousands of injuries and hundreds of deaths<sup>2</sup> and forced thousands to flee their homes.

## The UN system

The UN Country Team (UNCT) is implementing the Delivering as One Initiative to harness the combined resources, capacity and knowledge of UN agencies in a coherent programme. The UN Gender Theme Group has been mandated to support the mainstreaming of gender as a cross-cutting issue in the UN Development System. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018–21 (extended to 2023) has mainstreamed gender across all its five outcomes.

### SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT:



**Health and education:** Education for girls and maternal health practices have progressed, but these remain inequitable.



**Economic equality:** Women still face major challenges to access markets due to their lack of ownership of assets and limited access to credit. Women are affected by inequitable laws, community social norms and perception towards women's work, particularly in rural areas.



**Gender-based violence:** Social norms, cultural beliefs and practices around child marriage and female genital mutilation are the main contributors to gender-based violence.



**Political participation:** Despite an increase in quotas, women's political participation remains low. Following the military takeover, women have been further side-lined, and there has been a heavy crackdown on advocacy for the protection of women's rights.



**Women, peace and security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction:** The 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview estimated that approximately 30 per cent of the population needed humanitarian assistance in 2022. The high incidence of conflict has led to a large population of refugees and internally displaced persons. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the ongoing humanitarian crises in Sudan.



**Marginalized and vulnerable groups** include those affected by conflict and displacement, those with disabilities, those with HIV, women-headed households, victims of violence, the elderly and orphaned children. There is unequal access to, and quality of basic services between urban and rural areas. Youth and internally displaced people are more vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases. Intersectional factors affecting women also include religion, ethnicity, education and geographical location.

<sup>2</sup> [UN News. Sudan](#). Last updated 28 April 2023.

## 2. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) is to deliver a systematic assessment of UN Women's work in Sudan. The intended uses of the evaluation are:

1. Learning from effective approaches, to support improved decision-making.
2. Accountability for UN Women's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The primary intended users of this evaluation are Country Office personnel who will use the findings to develop, design and implement the new Strategic Note. Secondary users are expected to be the UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office, headquarters colleagues, national partners and others working in Sudan.

The scope of the CPE is the Country Office Strategic Note, including the Development Results Framework (DRF) and the Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework for the period January 2018 to December 2023.<sup>3</sup> All activities included in the Strategic Note were considered, including joint programming.

The specific objectives of the CPE were to:

- Assess the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the country portfolio (planned and implemented), including between the normative, coordination and operational elements of UN Women's triple mandate, and the extent to which human rights and gender equality have been addressed.
- Identify lessons learned and good practices that can be scaled.
- Provide actionable recommendations to inform development of the new Strategic Note.

The terms of reference in Annex 13 sets out additional information.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE CPE



Assess the **effectiveness, efficiency and coherence** of the country portfolio (planned and implemented), including between the normative, coordination and operational elements of UN Women's triple mandate, and the extent to which human rights and gender equality have been addressed.



Identify **lessons learned and good practices** that can be scaled.



Provide **actionable recommendations** to inform development of the new Strategic Note.

<sup>3</sup> As data collection took place in Q1 2023, the activities taking place Q2 to Q4 2023 were not covered. There was also a change in workplans after April 2023. Financial and results data analysis was undertaken in Q3 2022.

# 3. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

## Strategic Note overview

The Country Office's Strategic Note is UN Women's main planning tool to deliver its mandate in Sudan to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The current Strategic Note 2018–23 covers the **thematic areas** of (1) Women's Political Participation; (2) Women's Economic Empowerment; and (3) Women, Peace and Security. At the end of 2022, the actual budget for 2018–22 was US\$ 17.75 million.

The theory of change for this evaluation was developed during the inception workshop and tested by the evaluation using contribution analysis (see Annex 2).

## Results framework

The **Development Results Framework** (DRF) sets out indicators against target outcomes and outputs as set out below.<sup>4</sup>

→ **Result Area 1:** Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems

**Outcomes:** More women of all ages fully engage with political and economic institutions and in leadership.

→ **Result Area 2:** Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy

**Outcomes:** Women secure access to productive resources and engage in sustainable resources creation activities in rural, peri-urban, conflict, post-conflict and humanitarian settings.

→ **Result Area 3:** Women and girls contribute and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and from humanitarian action.

**Outcomes:** Commitments on women, peace and humanitarian action are implemented in coordination between the UN System and national stakeholders, with more women and gender equality advocates influencing the processes.

The **Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework** includes the following goals to support intended development results. The Country Office:

1. Effectively and efficiently delivers processes to advance delivery of its mandate, including coordinating and promoting accountability for the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments across the UN system.

2. Effectively leverages its partnerships and communications capacity to increase support for financing of the gender equality agenda.
3. Manages with accountability its financial and other resources to deliver its target objectives.

## Results data

The **results-based management system** captures quarterly reporting against output indicators, bi-annual reporting against outcome indicators and annual reporting as per the UN Women corporate template. However, data was not systematically reported against all indicators and no mid-term review was undertaken for the 2018–23 Strategic Note. See Annex 3 for a summary of the main results from the Results Management System and Annual Reports. A sample of these results have been validated as part of the evaluation (see methodology section for further information).

## Strategic Note interventions

Annex 5 sets out the full list of programmes undertaken during the Strategic Note period, including national, regional, global and joint programmes, mapped against UN Women's normative, coordination and operational mandates.

## Financial and Human Resources analysis

**The financial and human resources analysis for this evaluation covers January 2018–July 2022.** Annex 6 provides more detail.

**The Country Office has been moderately successful with its resource mobilization.** Its budget increased from US\$ 2.3 million in 2018 to US\$ 6.3 million in 2022. However, its overall budget during 2018–22 of US\$ 17.8 million falls well short of the target US\$ 25 million. The Country Office is reliant on a few key donors – the following top five donors account for 89 per cent of its budget: 1. Swedish International Development Cooperation funding the Strengthening Gender Architecture project; 2. United Nations operations in Darfur funding the State Liaison Function projects; 3. Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs: funding the Enhancement of Women's Entrepreneurship project in the Red Sea State; 4. Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office funding the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund COVID-19 response; and 5. Peacebuilding Fund funding the Supporting Sustainable Peace project in the Blue Nile State.

<sup>4</sup> Full details of outcomes and outputs can be found in Annex 2.



Between 2018 and 2022, the Country Office's expenses were US\$ 12.2 million. Disbursement rates during 2018–2021 averaged 79 per cent.

The timeliness of donor reporting has been poor, with 58 per cent of reports submitted late during 2018–2022.

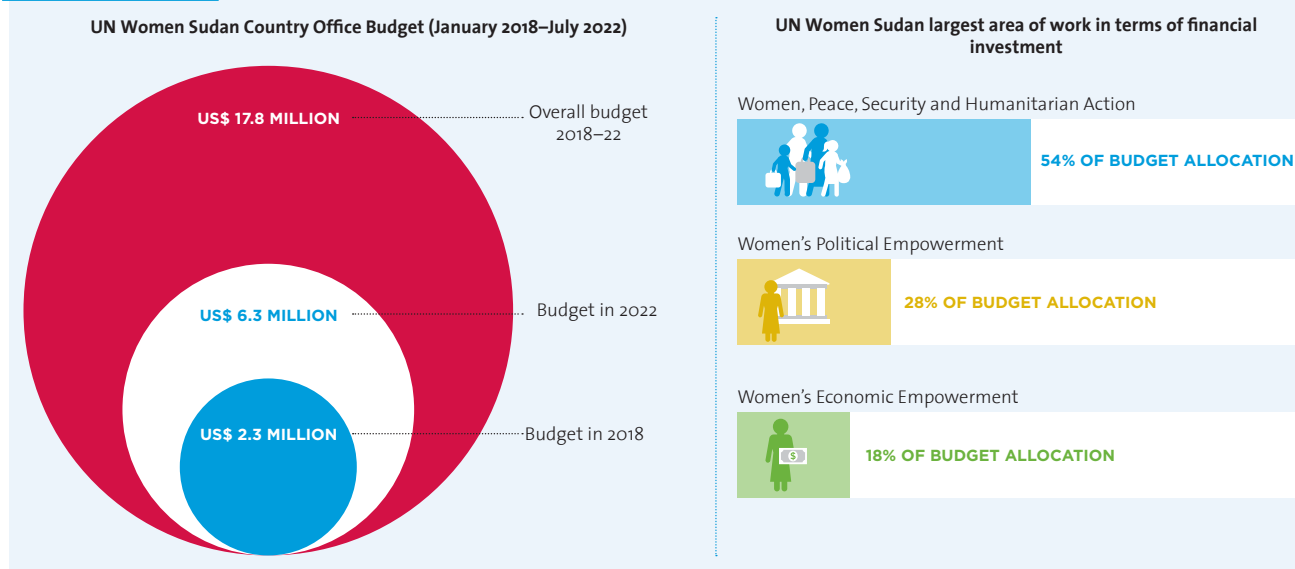
The Country Office's largest area of work in terms of financial investment is Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action, accounting for 54 per cent of budget allocation during 2018–2022; followed by Women's Political Empowerment (28 per cent) and Women's Economic Empowerment (18 per cent).

According to the UN Women Country Office Assessment Tool's programme resource efficiency indicators, the Country Office's non-core to core ratio, management ratio

and operational ratio for 2018–22 were all rated 'green' as per UN Women's benchmarks. Non-core makes up 67 per cent of the Country Office's resources, followed by Institutional Budget at 16 per cent. However, the Country Office's use of 39 per cent core for staffing is rated 'amber'.<sup>5</sup> This figure could be improved by increasing the use of non-core funds for staffing.

As of November 2022, according to the OneApp Enterprise Data management system, the Country Office employed 20 people in total consisting of five personnel in operations/finance; one Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officer; one senior manager; and 13 personnel in programme.

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS



## Stakeholder mapping and analysis

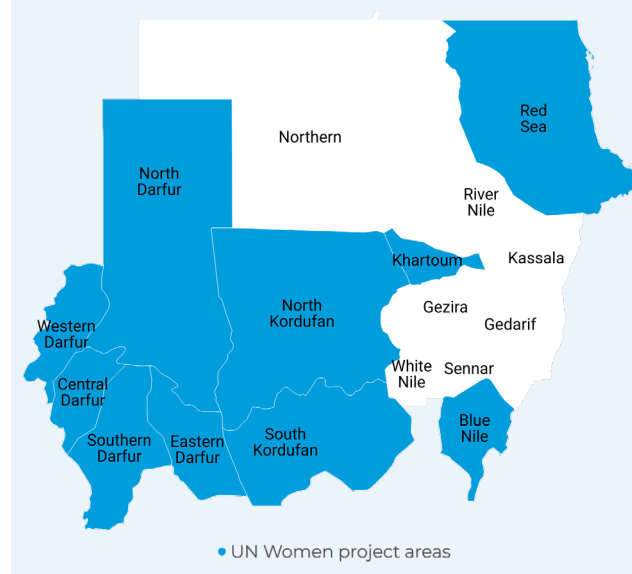
The Country Office's main stakeholders include: governmental stakeholders, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), research and academic institutions, the private sector, UN agencies, bilateral and foundation donors, the UN Women team, other multilaterals/regional bodies and target groups of rights holders.

Annex 7 sets out additional information on the institutions included within each stakeholder group, and their intended contributions to the Country Office's Strategic Note.

## Geographic and programmatic areas

UN Women's main office is in Khartoum, and has project offices in the Red Sea State, Darfur states and the Blue Nile (see Figure 1 for project coverage by state)

**Figure 1: UN Women project territorial coverage**



Source: Evaluation team based on project data

<sup>5</sup> Key indicators across Country Offices are rated Red, Amber and Green. Each colour represents how the calculated corporate indicators fall under the Country Office Assessment Tool dashboard requirements.





Photo: UN Women Sudan CO

## 4. METHODOLOGY

## 4.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation approach was theory based and contribution analysis was used to assess UN Women's contribution to target outcomes as set out in the theory of change (see Annex 2). The evaluation used mixed methods, drawing on both quantitative data (primarily financial and from the survey) and qualitative data (from document review, interviews and focus groups). Further information on the design of the evaluation is set out in the inception report (see Annex 16). The design of the evaluation was guided by the evaluability assessment (see Annex 8).

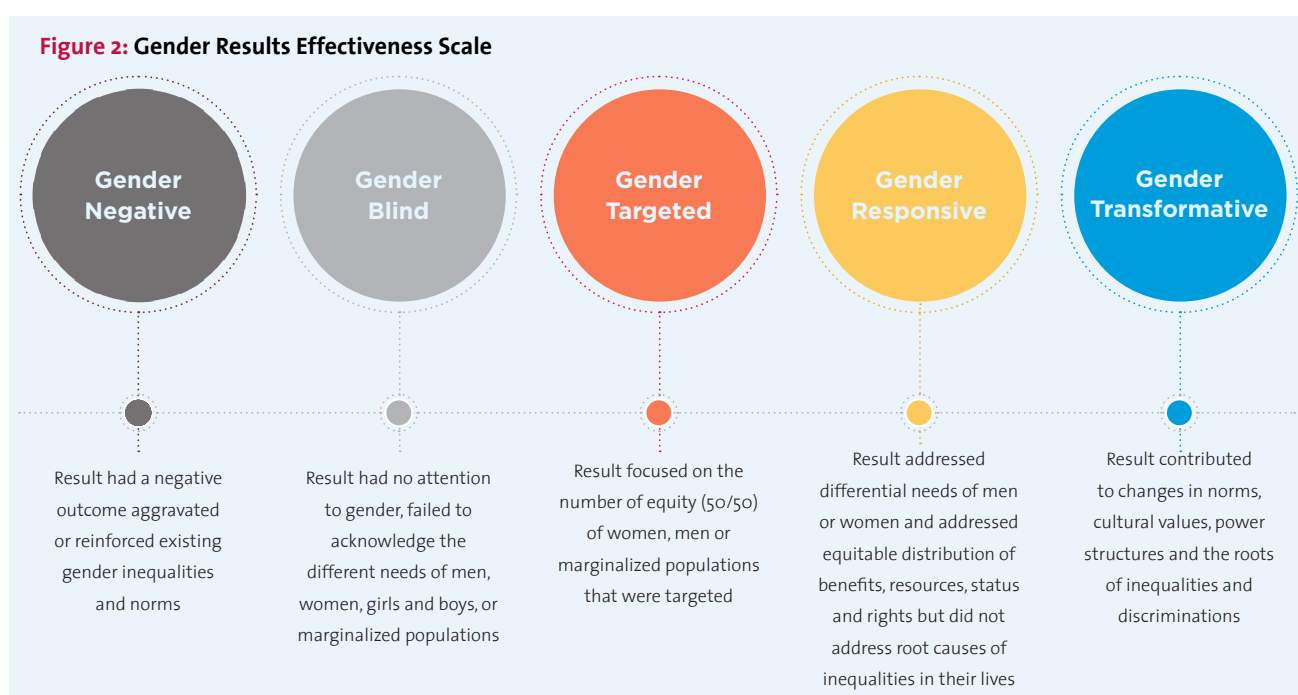
Gender equality and human rights formed a critical component of the evaluation as detailed below:<sup>6</sup>

**Stakeholder analysis and methodology:** Stakeholder analysis was used to select a diverse group of stakeholders to engage in the evaluation, including women and men,

and those who are marginalized and may be difficult to reach. Data was triangulated across different sources and stakeholders.

**Evaluation criteria and questions:** An evaluation criterion on gender equality and human rights was added, and associated evaluation questions developed. For the project review sample, the evaluation team assessed outcomes against the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES)<sup>7</sup> developed by UNDP:

**Reporting:** Human Rights and Gender Equality issues are covered in all sections of the report (findings, lessons learned, recommendations).



Source: The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES)

## 4.2 Evaluation questions

The evaluation sought to answer six overarching questions.

### Effectiveness

Evaluation Question 1: Are interventions contributing to the target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note?

### Efficiency

Evaluation Question 2: How strategic was the Country Office in its allocation of resources to ensure value for money?

Evaluation Question 3: How efficiently has the Country Office managed to pivot in response to the changing context?

### Coherence

Evaluation Question 4: Are UN Women's interventions coherent with the work of the UN Country Team and other key stakeholders?

Evaluation Question 5: Do the interventions selected maximize UN Women's comparative advantage?

### Human Rights and Gender Equality

Evaluation Question 6: Are interventions supporting structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment?

Additional details are set out in the evaluation matrix in Annex 9. Annex 4 sets out the sampling approach used across projects and stakeholders, to address these evaluation questions.

<sup>6</sup> Building on the *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in 26 Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance*  
<sup>7</sup> [The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale \(GRES\)](#)



### 4.3 Data collection

The evaluation team conducted a document review of UN Women and national documents on progress against gender equality and women's empowerment during the inception phase of the evaluation between February and March 2023.

**Interviews** and **focus groups** with key informants were identified through the stakeholder analysis, the majority of which were undertaken in person, during the in-country visit in Khartoum (12–16 March), Port Sudan in the Red Sea State (19–21 March) and El Fasher in Darfur (16–26 March). Some interviews were conducted remotely in April, due to stakeholder availability.

Full details of the data collection tools are set out in Annex 10.

**A survey** of UN Women personnel, UNCT partners and other stakeholders was undertaken in a pilot with one individual from each category. The survey was open from 19 March to 10 April.

In total, the evaluation team targeted a sample of 180 stakeholders. 194 stakeholders were reached.<sup>8</sup> All data was disaggregated by gender where relevant.

A summary and full list of stakeholders consulted is set out in Annex 1.

Beneficiary data was further disaggregated by geographical region, ethnicity, age and socioeconomic background. No specific questions on disability were asked of respondents, so it was not possible to disaggregate data by disability. Data was managed as per the data management plan, set out in Annex 11.

### 4.4 Analysis

The evaluation matrix forms the framework for analysis. Qualitative data was analysed in NVivo, using codes developed based on the evaluation matrix. Quantitative data was analysed in Stata, to identify patterns and trends.

The evaluation team used the debrief meeting with the Country Representative on 16 March and the presentation of preliminary findings to the Country Office on 30 March to validate the findings and identify other perspectives and information to be incorporated in this report.

Contribution towards each target outcome was analysed using the format below.

TARGET OUTCOME		
<b>Evidence for achievement</b>		
Achievement – strength of evidence		
<b>Strong</b> Corroborated by multiple sources and different types of stakeholders, with detailed examples	<b>Moderate</b> Corroborated by more than one source, but limited examples and/or general examples only	<b>Weak</b> Only cited by one source, or by one type of stakeholder. No specific examples provided
<b>Evidence for UN Women contribution</b>		
UN Women contribution – strength of evidence (Strong / Moderate / Weak)		
<b>Strong</b> Change explicitly attributed to specific UN Women activity, detailed explanation of <i>how</i> it contributed	<b>Moderate</b> General and non-specific link between outcome and specific UN Women activities	<b>Weak</b> Link between the outcome and UN women activity unclear, limited explanation of how the activity supported change.
Contribution of other factors; testing of assumptions		

### 4.5 Ethics

The evaluation complied with the relevant United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and UN Women standards on ethics.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Integrity:**

The evaluators complied with the Code of Conduct and delivered the evaluation with honesty, professionalism, and impartiality. The evaluators are independent from the program delivery. Changes to findings made as a result of discussion between the evaluation team and the CO and following additional data collection have been documented.

#### **Accountability:**

The evaluation followed a transparent process through the inception report and sampling approach. Analysis was transparently done in NVivo and Stata. All evaluation findings have been mapped to the evaluation objectives and evaluation questions, with references to the underlying evidence.

#### **Beneficence:**

The evaluation team sought informed, oral consent. The team clearly explained the purpose of the evaluation and how the information will be used. The evaluators highlighted potential benefits and harm to participating, and that participants could stop the interview or focus group discussion at any point. All responses have been anonymized, so there is no expected harm to participants.

<sup>8</sup> Consisting of the individual stakeholders set out in the stakeholder mapping (Annex 6) plus five focus groups with the beneficiaries of the deep dive projects.

<sup>9</sup> The evaluation adhered to UNEG and UN Women Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct, UNEG guidance on integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluations with gender-responsive and human rights approaches integrated into the evaluation.

**Respect:**

The evaluation meaningfully engaged evaluation stakeholders not only as subjects of data collection. The evaluation team will share the evaluation brief with all evaluation stakeholders and respondents. To ensure fair representation of different voices, the sampling approach took into consideration coverage of different categories of stakeholders, including those hard to reach.

**4.6 Limitations and mitigations****Availability of monitoring data against valid indicators:**

Certain indicators and monitoring data were weak and/or missing. Projects do not have individual performance monitoring frameworks separate to the Strategic Note performance monitoring framework; and the Strategic Note performance monitoring framework does not clearly link Country Office level results to that of individual project-level achievements.

The evaluation mitigated this by validating a sample of reported achievements and gathering additional evidence to support achievement against target outcomes as part of the contribution analysis approach.

**Limited number of government stakeholders consulted:**

The political context has resulted in significant turnover within government ministries. Many individuals who worked closely with UN Women have since left their positions. Additionally, given political sensitivities, the Country Office advised the evaluation team not to contact most government partners. The evaluation team sought to mitigate this by triangulating evidence with other sources, such as implementing partners and advisers.

**Limited stakeholders and documents for earlier projects:**

Many of the sampled projects, in particular the UNAMID State Liaison Function and PRCSP project, were completed several years ago. Many staff across these projects have been transferred to other missions and agencies. While the evaluation team were able to speak to implementing partners and beneficiaries for the UNAMID State Liaison Function projects, it was only able to speak to two UNCT stakeholders, and only one person participating in the gender-responsive training. For the PRCSP project, there was very limited documentation, and the evaluation team was unable to speak to any relevant stakeholders.

**Survey response rate:** Despite several follow-ups, there was a low response to the partners and UNCT survey. The UNCT survey only received one response. Therefore, the quantitative responses were analysed alongside the partners survey. The evaluation team supplemented this by extensive interviews with partners and key UNCT partners as identified by the Country Office.

**Changing political context:** The outbreak of fighting in April 2023 will significantly change the political context in the country. Data collection was undertaken in March 2023. At the time of reporting, it was too early to assess how the fighting will affect any political settlement.

As such, the Country Office will have to consider the relevance of the recommendations provided by this evaluation to the changed political context.

**4.7 Dissemination and use**

The table below sets out the dissemination plan for the targeted primary and secondary users of this report.

DISSEMINATION APPROACH	HOW THIS WILL BE TRACKED
<b>Sudan Country Office</b> Evaluation team to share a two-page brief and host a meeting to discuss findings and next steps.	Uptake of findings and extent to which results are met in concrete, actionable next steps.
<b>UN Women Regional Office and headquarters colleagues</b> Evaluation team to share a two-page brief and host a webinar.	Number of stakeholders the brief is shared with. Number of attendees attending the webinar.
<b>National partners and others working in the sector</b> Evaluation team to share a two-page external facing brief.	Number of stakeholders the brief is shared with.

The Country Representative will lead the follow-up process to facilitate use of the evaluation findings and is responsible for issuing a management response within six weeks of finalization of the evaluation report.

**4.8 Evaluation management and quality assurance**

The Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) and Chief, Independent Evaluation Service (IES) reviewed and signed off on all evaluation products, in compliance with relevant guidance.<sup>10</sup> Supported by the international and national evaluation consultants, the Team Lead was responsible overall for the CPE, including data collection, analysis and reporting. The evaluation will also be subject to the Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System process, which assesses the quality of the report, and the level of confidence readers can place on the evaluation.

The Evaluation Reference and Management Groups (see Annex 12 for composition and terms of reference) were responsible for providing technical review and support and ensuring a high-quality, transparent process. The peer reviewer provided another layer of review.

<sup>10</sup> UN Women Evaluation Policy, UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation

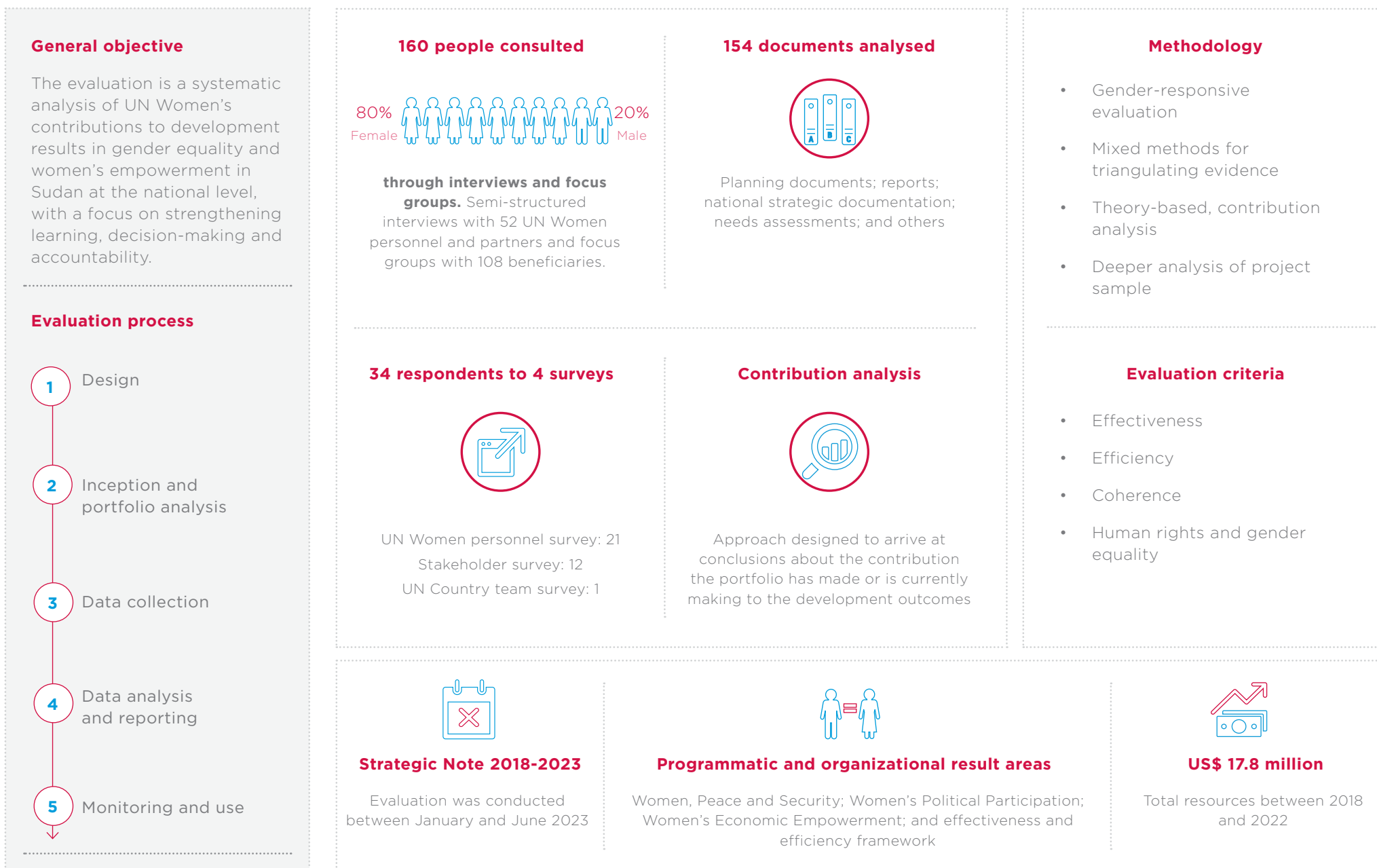
**Figure 3. Summary of evaluation approach and methodology**





Photo: UN Women Sudan CO

## 5. FINDINGS

**EFFECTIVENESS AND COHERENCE**

**Evaluation question 1:** Are interventions contributing to the target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note?

Findings 1, 2, and 3 cover the Country Office's contribution to outcomes in the three thematic areas of: Women's Political Participation; Women's Economic Empowerment; and Women, Peace and Security. The thematic areas and outcomes are cross-cutting; for example, UN Women's contribution to changes in economic policy are set out under the Women's Political Participation section. In each sub-section, a table sets out the contribution analysis and outcome harvesting on key reported outcomes, drawing on the target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note and findings against the sampled interventions. Further detail on the specific evidence gathered is set out in Annex 13.

**WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION****FINDING 1**

**In the area of Women's Political Participation, the Country Office supported women of all ages to fully engage with political and economic institutions and supported the enabling environment to facilitate this. N Women contributed to this by building the capacity of women leaders and government; supporting consultations and workshops to raise awareness of service providers and government stakeholders; bringing together women's organizations; and facilitating opportunities for women to engage with institutions and accountability mechanisms.**

OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
<b>More women of all ages fully engage with political and economic institutions and in leadership</b>		
<b>More women of all ages fully engage with political and economic institutions and in leadership</b>	<p>There is strong evidence reported by UN Women, UN Women partners, donors and women's organizations against this outcome, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased participation of women in political parties</li> <li>Increased political and community engagement of women's organizations</li> <li>Strengthened women's network</li> <li>A common agenda across different groups</li> <li>More diverse women's network</li> </ul>	<p>UN Women, partners, donors and women's organizations attributed the outcomes to UN Women's support in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building the capacity of women leaders, including 43 senior women politicians and 120 women across CSOs</li> <li>Bringing together women's organizations</li> <li>Facilitating opportunities for women to engage with political and economic institutions</li> <li>Providing meeting facilities and financial support</li> </ul>
<b>Other contributory factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social norms and community support</li> <li>Government's political will</li> <li>Political context – the transitional government was an enabler, but the coup has ended UN–government collaboration</li> <li>Commitment and capacity of participants</li> <li>Women's organizations have resources to continue activities</li> <li>Other projects strengthening women's political participation</li> <li>Expertise and existing relationships held by implementing partners</li> </ul>	

Source: prepared by the evaluation team

**Against the target outcome of 'more women of all ages fully engage with political and economic institutions and in leadership', there was strong evidence that the Country Office contributed to:**

- Increased political participation of women in political parties and at the community level:** There was evidence of political parties' increased commitment to women's participation. Project participants reported influencing their political parties to create three gender units, engage more women and youth, and to increase the quota of women in the party. At the community level, women reported using

the knowledge gained from projects by disseminating learning to others and leading advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising sessions. Women also reported taking part in political activities such as voting in local elections; engaging with rights holders to effect change within companies around gender-responsive policies;<sup>11</sup> supporting women's organizations; and being able to better negotiate with their husbands on sending their children to school and allowing their daughters to marry at a later age.

<sup>11</sup> Including paying salaries directly to women rather than their husbands, funding the building of women's centres, kindergartens and land for farming



- **A strengthened women's network:** Participants in UN Women programmes reported that through project support, they were connected with other women's organizations; provided with training on how to manage organizations; and supported to register with the government, leading to more formal inclusion within state level accountability mechanisms.
- **A common agenda across different women's groups and a more inclusive, diverse women's network:** The women's network in Sudan is diverse, with different agendas across geographical locations, between urban and rural women, across the generational divide and between political parties. The Country Office contributed to the development of a common agenda across many groups; the establishment of new groups; and the strengthening of existing groups in many of the 'periphery' areas that were not well supported by others. For example, with UN Women's support, the youth platform set up under the **SIDA Development Studies Research Institute project** that aimed to create a common women's agenda, convinced women leaders to adopt the youth agenda and support them to engage youth in political movements.

**There was strong evidence of UN Women's contribution, through:**

- **Building the capacity of women leaders and organizations:** The Country Office and its partners delivered dozens of workshops on substantive content (human rights, gender issues, democracy, citizenship and political issues); on organizational matters (how to run an organization); and on advocacy and leadership, to support women in producing messaging that they could use to further disseminate to their communities. Several projects also took a participatory and facilitation approach, supporting women's organizations to develop agendas, manifestos and manuals. Partners noted that tailoring to the local context was critical. Some original activities had to be adapted or new activities added, for example the use of cartoons, theatre, hiring of local singers and the use of local language in materials. Donors and partners noted that this was particularly significant as many project areas and target stakeholders were remote and not well reached by partner organizations, e.g. the nomads in Kordofan.
- **Bringing together women's organizations:** The Country Office and its partners facilitated the women's movement by linking up different women's organizations and facilitating dialogue

between different groups. For example, the SIDA Development Studies Research Institute project involved bringing together three separate forums composed of women in political parties, youth and disadvantaged women.

- **Providing facilities for meetings and financial support:** The Country Office played a key role in launching MANSAM (Women of Sudanese Civic and Political Groups), a key political alliance, by providing facilities and financial support, along with capacity building and facilitation support.

**Against the target outcome of 'more women of all ages fully engage with political and economic institutions and in leadership', there was moderate evidence (due to stalling of activities following the military coup) of UN Women's contribution to building an enabling environment in the areas of:**

- **Reform of laws and policies:** Although affected by the coup, some progress has been made: gender-responsive budgeting is now part of the language within government and is included in budget preparation guidance; preparatory work has begun with the Ministry of Justice on a legal review of CEDAW, the labour law and civil service law.
- **Strengthening the gender-responsiveness of institutions:** The bureau of statistics developed a programme to strengthen the gender statistics system; the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission Sudan (UNITAMS) political mission had a strong gender mandate and a gender office directly reporting to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General; and the Ministry of Health strengthened the gender sensitivity of its COVID-19 response, due to UN Women's support.
- **Awareness raised on laws:** including the legal abortion law and Sudan Criminal Law 1991 on rape and sexual harassment.
- **Increased opportunities for women to input into accountability mechanisms:** Women's delegations input into various mechanisms, including the universal review at the human rights council, the family law review, the draft law on violence against women, the National Economic Conference, the design of the Sudan women and equality gender commission, the Juba peace agreement, the peace process in Addis, and bodies including UNITAMS, African Union and the Inter Government Authority for Development.

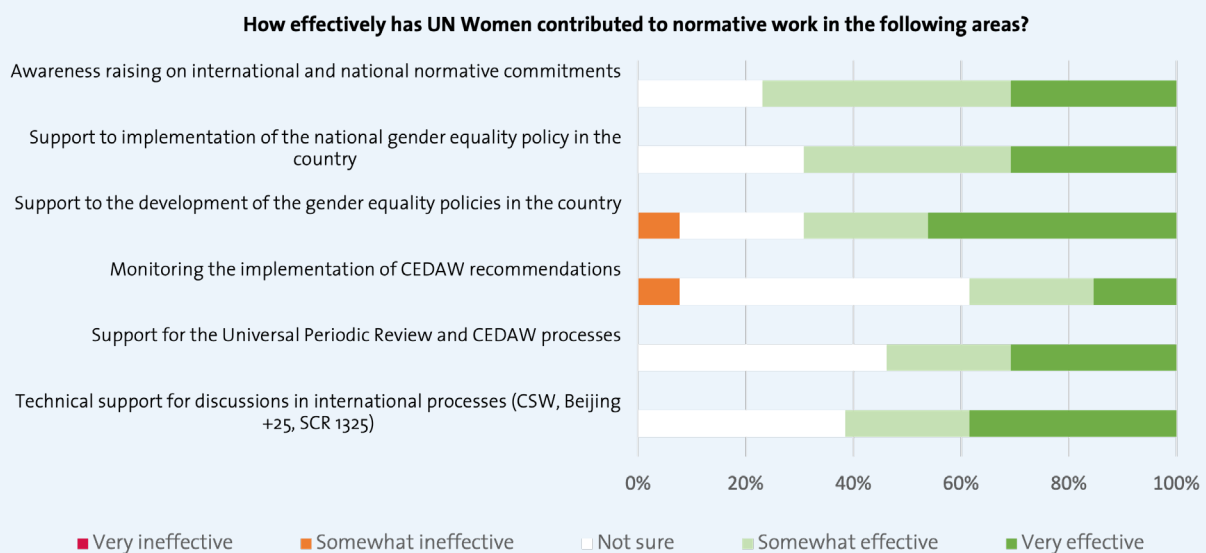
### There was strong evidence of UN Women’s contribution, through:

- **Building the capacity of government** by seconding gender advisers into government ministries and delivering workshops.
- **Supporting consultations and workshops to raise awareness of service providers and government stakeholders on laws relevant for gender equality** by funding and supporting workshops and other dissemination activities.
- **Facilitating opportunities for women to engage with institutions and accountability mechanisms** by strong advocacy, facilitating and providing organization and financial support.
- **In a survey of external stakeholders and UN partners (see Figure 4), stakeholders generally reported that UN Women’s contribution to normative work was effective.** The highest proportion of stakeholders

reported that UN Women was either ‘very effective’ or ‘somewhat effective’ in providing awareness raising on international and national normative commitments (77 per cent). This was followed by support to development and implementation of the national gender equality policy in the country (both 69 per cent); and technical support for discussions in international processes (62 per cent). Work related to CEDAW scored the lowest, with only 54 per cent and 38 per cent reporting respectively that UN Women’s support for CEDAW and monitoring implementation of CEDAW recommendations was very or somewhat effective.

**Annex 17** provides further information on the SIDA gender architecture project and on the Enhancement of Women’s Entrepreneurial Capacity for Effective Engagement in Fisheries and Agribusiness in Red Sea State project

**Figure 4: Survey findings on UN Women’s contribution to normative work**



Source: UN Women external stakeholder and UNCT survey (n=13)

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

## FINDING 2

**In the area of Women's Economic Empowerment, the Country Office supported women to secure access to productive resources to support income generation and engage in sustainable resource creation activities. UN Women also supported the creation of an enabling environment. These outcomes supported improved income security and household well-being and nutritional status for some households. UN Women contributed to these outcomes by funding the construction of productive assets (such as fish drying centres); delivering training and technical support; providing cash transfers during COVID-19; and advocating with financial institutions.**

OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
<b>Women secure access to productive resources and engage in sustainable resource creation.</b>		
<b>Women secure access to productive resources</b>	There was strong evidence against this outcome. Partners, participants and donors reported that UN Women supported the construction of fish labs, which provided a sustainable, productive resource for women.	UN Women funded the rehabilitation and construction of the fish labs.
<b>Women engage in sustainable resource creation activities.</b>	There was strong evidence against this outcome. Partners, participants and donors reported that women were able to use their entrepreneurship and income-generating skills and cash transfers to engage in sustainable resource creation activities, with some evidence of increased income security and household nutritional status.	UN Women provided training and technical support to women's groups in the Red Sea State and provided cash transfers to target groups in Darfur during COVID-19.
<b>Enabling environment created</b>	There was strong evidence against this outcome. Partners reported financial institutions changing their policies and allocations to be more gender-responsive and provided microfinance support to women.	UN Women advocated with financial institutions to change their policies and linked women with micro-financial institutions to support their businesses.
<b>Other contributory factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social norms of women staying in the home affected women's ability to participate.</li> <li>• The commitment and capacity of participants and women's organizations were enablers in some contexts, and lack of commitment and capacity barriers in other contexts.</li> <li>• Contextual factors, i.e. restricted movement due to lockdown and lack of reliable electricity and water supply in Port Sudan town.</li> <li>• Technical and financial support provided to participants by other micro-finance institutions and cooperatives.</li> </ul>	

**Against the target outcome of 'Women secure access to productive resources',** the Country Office supported the construction of women's centres and fish drying labs, which provided a productive resource for women members in agribusiness and the fish value chain. According to the review of Country Office annual reports 2019–2020, the project targeted 10 women's associations/cooperatives in six communities within Port Sudan, Suakin and Gabiet Almaadin. See section below for further details.

**Against the target outcome of 'Women engage in sustainable resource creation activities',** the Country Office contributed to women engaging economically in food production and handicrafts. In some cases, this led to increased income security, nutritional status and household well-being. However, other women reported that they were not able to use the training, as they were unable to raise sufficient capital to run profit-generating businesses. Additionally, businesses were hindered by

high competition in local food markets, and the seasonality of fishing. However, during the off-season, the women in the centers continued with the handicraft activities and selling of dried fish and vegetables. There was strong evidence of UN Women's contribution: partners and participants reported that UN Women's training and technical support was practical and relevant, though ongoing support would have been useful. According to Country Office annual reports 2019–2020, all 60 women trained as part of the project reported improved knowledge and skills that they were using either to establish new businesses or to improve their business management techniques. Based on the knowledge and skills gained from the training, almost 18 women benefitted from the feasibility study and applied it in establishing new small business such as selling ice cream; selling bed sheets for Eid celebrations; 24 (of 60) women were able to manage the flow of their current small business by calculating and differentiating between the capital, loss



and gains, and personal expenses; and the other 18 (of 60) kept records of their business. Moreover, 55 women participants in five focus group discussions in the Red Sea reported that the training from the project left positive impacts on their lives.

**Against the target outcome of ‘An enabling environment is created to support women to engage in sustainable resource creation activities’,** financial institutes changed their policies to better include women. For example, the Central Bank of Sudan launched various initiatives to

promote credit among micro, small and medium enterprises and requires financial institutions to allocate at least 12 per cent of their total loan portfolio to micro-financing activities. The State Ministry of Health and Social Development – Women and Family Directorate and the Red Sea State Microfinance Institution provided microfinance support to some women entrepreneurs from the project. The Country Office contributed to this by advocating with financial institutions.

## WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

### FINDING 3

**In the area of Women, Peace and Security, the Country Office supported women to influence duty bearers in their delivery of commitments on women, peace and security. UN Women also supported duty bearers (the UN System and national stakeholders) to deliver on such commitments through supporting women to participate in native administration councils; supporting the UN system in delivering gender-responsive State Liaison Function programmes; supporting vulnerable communities to build sustainable livelihoods; and building the capacity of stakeholders to improve protection and access to justice for sexual harassment survivors. UN Women contributed to these outcomes by delivering capacity building workshops and providing ongoing support.**

OUTCOME	EVIDENCE OF OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)	UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME (AND STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE)
<b>Commitments on women, peace and humanitarian action are implemented in coordination between the UN system and national stakeholders, with women and gender equality advocates influencing the processes</b>		
<b>More women are influencing the process to deliver on commitments on women, peace and humanitarian action</b>	Partners reported that women participated in the 2020 negotiations with the transitional government and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Front, the development of the Blue Nile State Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 <sup>12</sup> and the peace negotiations.	UN Women provided technical support, capacity building workshops and facilitated the participation of women in peace negotiations.
<b>Commitments on women, peace and humanitarian action are implemented in coordination between the UN system and national stakeholders</b>	<p><b>Effective implementation of rule of law by state institutions</b> – some evidence of women's increased participation in native administration councils across some localities.</p> <p><b>Crisis response programming is gender inclusive and responsive</b> – some evidence of UN Women's coordination and training support increasing the gender responsiveness of overall State Liaison Function programming.</p> <p><b>Vulnerable communities are empowered through sustainable livelihoods</b> – good evidence that the training helped some participants (women, police, ministry of health and rural courts) increase their income, which meant they were more financially independent.</p> <p><b>Improved access to protection and justice for women and girls</b> – some evidence that workshop participants increased their understanding of the laws on rape and sexual harassment and the process that should be undertaken after incidents, which has contributed to increased support for survivors.</p>	UN Women delivered capacity building workshops and ongoing support to organizations and partners. Partners and beneficiaries reported that this support was a key contributor to the reported outcomes.
<b>Other contributory factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The short duration and limited scope of the State Liaison Function projects affected the scale of outcomes.</li> <li>Political sensitivity affected the ability of some women's groups to collaborate.</li> <li>Other projects' delivery capacity training and support to women's organizations contributed to outcomes.</li> <li>Social norms and other systemic barriers limited progress.</li> <li>Accessibility to project activities was a barrier in some cases.</li> </ul>	

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

Against the target outcome of ‘*More women are influencing the process to deliver on commitments on women, peace and humanitarian action*’, the Country Office provided technical support, capacity building workshops and facilitation support, which enabled women from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and geographies (including youth) to participate in the development of the Blue Nile State Action Plan on UNSCR 1325; the 2020 negotiations with the transitional government between the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Front and the transitional government and peace negotiations. This included: support through the Directorate of Women and Family at the Ministry of Social Affairs reaching 182 participants; workshop in East Darfur strengthening the gender machinery on gender-sensitive laws which reached 50 participants; support to 16 CSOs in Darfur; support to 26 women in the Juba peace negotiations; and support in the Blue Nile to 22 institutions and 120 women. This has resulted in stronger accountability mechanisms for the peace negotiations and women’s priorities being better reflected in these negotiations. For example, the Blue Nile State Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 reflected priorities on social and economic rights raised during the consultations.

**Against the target outcome of ‘Commitments on women, peace and humanitarian action are implemented in coordination between the UN System and national stakeholders’**, there was strong evidence reported by partners and beneficiaries of women participants gaining financial independence because of the entrepreneurship capacity building they had received from UN Women. There was moderate evidence of UN Women contributing to the following outcomes:

- **Increased participation of women in native administration councils:** There were a few reported instances of women participating in these councils. However, even in such cases, partners reported that female representatives were not able to participate fully and continued to be marginalized requiring written permission from male guardians to participate. The Country Office delivered capacity building to 55 institutions, reaching 91 female lawyers and members of women’s protection networks, 119 rural court judges and 200 participants from the Sudan Police Forces, judiciary and prosecutors.
- **More gender-responsive UN State Liaison Function programming:** The evaluation team spoke to limited stakeholders for this outcome, which limited the level of triangulated evidence available. One UN partner reported that UN Women’s support to the gender focal point system was critical to gender inclusive and responsive programming. The Country Office reported that its training for 52 UNAMID staff had resulted in more gender data and analysis within State Liaison Function reports.
- **Improved access to protection and justice for survivors of sexual harassment:** Several participants reported that incidents of rape and sexual harassment were decreasing and support for survivors was improving. This was mainly due to changes in the law and increased numbers of female police, but also to increased awareness of the law and process that should be undertaken after incidents, thanks to a number of capacity building workshops, including those delivered by UN Women.

#### FINDING 4

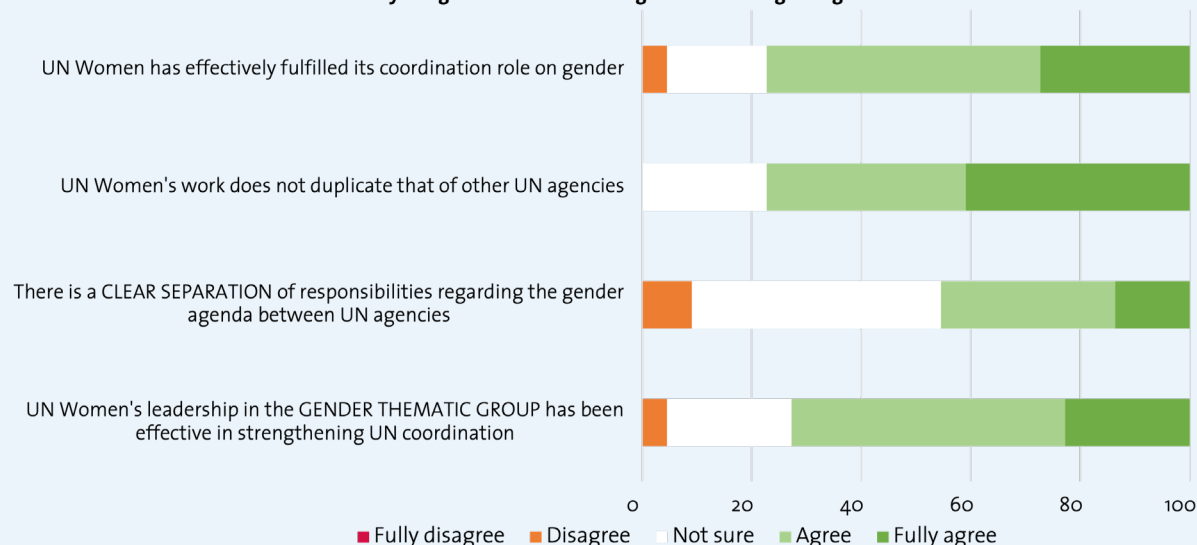
**The Country Office’s contribution to UN system coordination on gender equality and women’s empowerment has been strengthened during this Strategic Note cycle. The Country Office contributes to the UNCT Gender Theme Group and capacity building of the UNCT, UNITAMS and UNAMID and the humanitarian sector. However, overall, UNCT coordination on gender equality remains weak. Barriers include contextual factors (UNCT capacity, political will and the nature of project funding) and some limitations in UN Women’s work. It is important for UN Women to prioritize and strengthen its contribution to UNCT coordination. There are promising areas which could be developed, including work with the UNCT Gender Theme Group, Humanitarian Country Team, and increasing joint programming with other UN agencies.**

**The previous CPE reported that UN Women’s contribution to UN system coordination was weak. The Country Office’s contribution to UN system coordination has grown stronger during this Strategic Note cycle.** Over 70 per cent of respondents to the IES survey of UN Women personnel and the UNCT ‘agreed’ or ‘fully agreed’ with the following statements: UN Women has effectively fulfilled its coordination role on gender; UN Women’s work does not duplicate those of other UN agencies; and UN Women’s leadership in the Gender Theme Group has been effective (see Figure 5).

Around 70 per cent of participants perceived UN Women’s contribution to conceptualization and implementation of joint UN programmes; technical support for gender mainstreaming in UN interventions; and advocacy with the government as ‘very’ or ‘somewhat effective’. Participants perceived UN Women’s contribution to coherence of UN gender interventions and accountability on gender (e.g. with the UNCT SWAP [System-wide Action Plan] gender equality scorecard) as less effective, with 59 per cent and 55 per cent respectively reporting these two areas as ‘very’ or ‘somewhat effective’ (see Figure 6).

**Figure 5: Survey findings on UN Women’s coordination role**

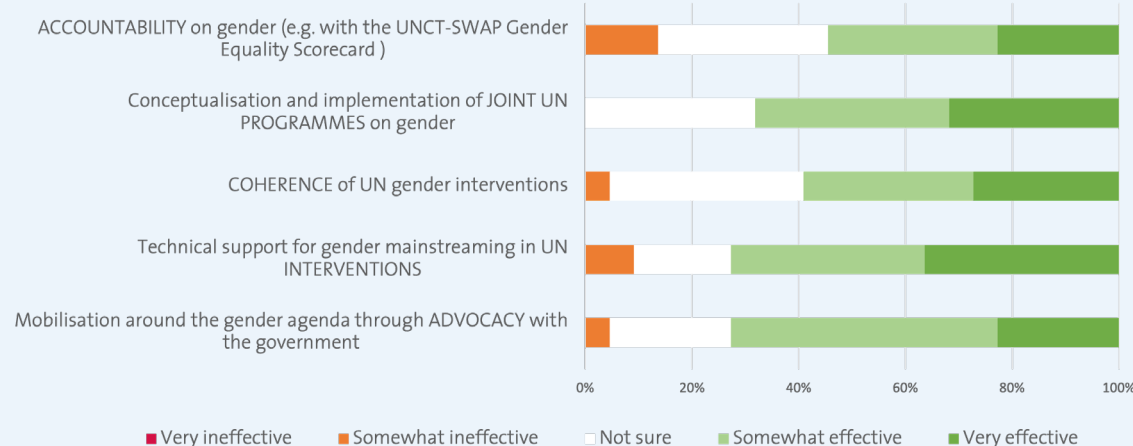
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding UN Women’s coordination role.



Source: UN Women personnel and UNCT survey (n=22)

**Figure 6: Survey findings on the effectiveness of UN Women’s contribution to coordination**

How effectively has UN Women contributed to STRENGTHENING COORDINATION on gender with the UN system in the following areas?



Source: UN Women personnel and UNCT survey (n=22)

The Country Office is contributing to UN system coordination on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the following areas:

AREA	DETAIL
<b>UNCT Gender Theme Group</b>	The integrated gender group has recently re-launched, following several years of hiatus. It is co-chaired by UN Women and UNITAMS. UNCT stakeholders reported that meetings have been well attended, and a strategy was established on how to move forward. Over 70 per cent of survey respondents reported that UN Women’s leadership in the Gender Theme Group has been effective (see Figure 5).
<b>UNCT SWAP scorecard</b>	In 2023, UN Women worked with Gender Theme Group focal points to identify and prioritize actions from the 2022 UNCT SWAP scorecard assessment.
<b>UNCT capacity building</b>	UN Women partnered with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to deliver training on human rights and gender approaches, including on how to integrate gender in programmes.
<b>UNITAMS</b>	UN Women supported the political mission by providing information on political movements and introductions to relevant women’s organizations.
<b>Humanitarian</b>	UN Women is part of the inter-cluster forum on cross-cutting issues and provided inputs to ensure the humanitarian needs overview and the humanitarian response plan (including cluster strategies and project proposals) were gender-sensitive. This involved taking part in workshops, sharing tools and providing feedback on documents. For example, following feedback, the <b>Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster Strategy</b> was strengthened to include a gender target and focus on empowering women and promoting women-friendly livelihood projects.
<b>UNAMID</b>	UN Women supported the UNAMID gender advisory unit and the gender task force. UN Women also supported gender mainstreaming across projects and in reporting, see Finding 3 for additional details.

**The assessment of stakeholders (UN agencies and external stakeholders, including CSOs), is that overall UNCT coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment is not strong. Barriers include UNCT capacity on gender and lack of political will.**

Coordination on State Liaison Function programming was reported by UNCT respondents to be weak.

Development partners reported limited coordination and no coherent strategy from the UNCT on women, peace and security and gender issues. Only 45 per cent of survey respondents agreed that 'there is a clear separation of responsibilities regarding the gender agenda between UN agencies' (see Figure 5). This is also reflected in the Gender Equality Scorecard ratings. Of the 15 UNCT SWAP indicators, in 2021, only three met the minimum requirements, with 5 approaching minimum requirements, and the remaining 7 missing requirements. Only 55 per cent of survey respondents felt UN Women's role in accountability on gender with the UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard was 'somewhat' or 'very effective'.

UNCT stakeholders also reported that agencies did not always prioritize gender, often sending communications personnel or junior staff instead of gender experts to the Gender Theme Group, and that personnel were not always informed about gender issues. In some programme funds, there was also a tension between a focus on selecting partners capable of delivering and spending money quickly, and UN regulations which meant it was not easy to fund small, women's rights organizations.

**Additionally, the UNCT and external stakeholders have pointed to some limitations in the Country Office's contribution to UN system coordination.** UNCT stakeholders noted that the Country Office needed to strengthen coordination and partnership with other agencies. Stakeholders also noted it had been difficult to obtain information on UN Women's work and plans, which is a barrier to coordinating time and engagement with women's groups and making the most of resources. UNCT stakeholders stated they often learned from other partners what the Country Office was working on. Stakeholders in Northern Darfur suggested the Country Office could be more engaged in regular meetings, such as sector committee meetings where emerging issues and coordination matters are discussed, where UNFPA currently represents UN Women. The evaluation team notes that this is because UN Women has only recently established a field presence in Darfur.

Humanitarian stakeholders appreciated the Country Office's attendance in meetings, noting that while previously the Regional Office had provided support, having a physical presence was critical to catalyse positive changes in gender responsiveness in the humanitarian sector.

**Stakeholders highlighted several barriers affecting UN Women's contribution to UN system coordination.** First, some UNCT stakeholders reported that UN Women was seen as an 'outlier' in the UN system, as the Entity was not a consistent participant in many of the inter-agency forums.

Stakeholders also noted that while the Country Office consistently raised issues on women's rights within the UNCT, they felt this was sometimes more critical rather than constructive. This was reported to contribute to a sense of UN Women's alienation. Second, some stakeholders noted that the Country Office took a particular political, ideological stance to distance itself from the political mission,<sup>13</sup> which has hindered UN coordination. Additionally, several stakeholders noted that due to UN Women's relatively small size compared to other UN agencies, UN Women could sometimes be competitive and defensive with other agencies. Both UN Women and other UN agency stakeholders have to manage a high level of competition for limited gender funding. Finally, the Country Office highlighted that the nature of restricted, project funding meant limited resources were available to deliver coordination work. There is opportunity for the Country Office to more clearly define and communicate its specific role in coordination, which is feasible to deliver based on current resources.

**It is important for the Country Office to prioritize and strengthen its contribution to UN system coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment.** The UNCT and other external stakeholders (including academics and CSOs) noted that UN Women was the lead agency on gender, and that a strong component of UN Women's mandate and comparative advantage was to coordinate the UN system on gender equality (see Finding 13). There was a key demand and opportunity for UN Women to support and influence UN agencies' work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

**There are particular opportunities to strengthen UN Women's contribution to UN system coordination, particularly in the UNCT Gender Theme Group, SWAP Scorecard and humanitarian sector.**

<sup>13</sup> Several stakeholders noted that UN Women disengaged itself from the political process to position itself as a key women's rights champion and to build credibility with women's rights group.

**UNCT Gender Theme Group:** UNCT stakeholders agreed the Gender Theme Group was a good platform to strengthen UN coordination. Stakeholders suggested that the Gender Theme Group needs to meet more regularly, and the Country Office could take a more active role in co-chairing the group. There are promising signs of greater UN Women engagement – the Country Office has commissioned a consultant to develop a strategy and is developing a platform to share gender updates with the international and diplomatic community. UNCT stakeholders noted current sharing is ‘ad hoc’ and ‘by chance’, and that UN Women could facilitate more structured and systematic information sharing to support ‘programming coherence’ (See Finding 9 on coherence).

**UNCT - SWAP scorecard:** UNCT stakeholders agreed that the UNCT SWAP Scorecard represents a good opportunity for the Country Office to coordinate the UNCT by identifying key gaps and priorities to strengthen gender responsiveness across the UNCT. At the corporate level, UN Women has launched a set of standards and procedures (jointly developed with UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF), that should be used going forward.

**Humanitarian action:** Humanitarian stakeholders agreed that the Country Office had an important role to play in coordinating and influencing gender work across the humanitarian sector, and the inclusion of UN Women in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee provides this opportunity. The Country Office’s Humanitarian Specialist

has also developed a good foundation for continued work by developing relationships and establishing the case for UN Women’s inputs to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Stakeholders agreed that having a person on the ground is making a difference (previously the Regional Office provided remote support). Initiatives started by UN Women, such as the Gender in Humanitarian Action working group and training curriculum for women leaders to participate in humanitarian assessments should be continued. Additionally, the Humanitarian Country Team stakeholders agreed there was an important opportunity for the Country Office to support gender analysis and develop indicators as part of the humanitarian multi-sector needs assessment. Clusters are specifically requesting this, as there is limited gender analysis to date. One stakeholder noted that the quality of assessments needs to be strengthened, as response modalities are generic and not based on ‘proper gender analysis.’ This gender analysis could also be used to track UN Women’s contribution to increasing gender responsiveness and gender sensitivity in projects.

**Monitoring:** Finally, several UNCT and external stakeholders recommended that the Country Office track the results of its contribution to UN coordination, which would also be useful to advocate the value of UN Women’s coordination work. For example, one stakeholder noted that the SWAP scoring could be used to track the effects of UN Women’s coordination work, including gender training to the UNCT.

## FINDING 5

**There were unexpected outcomes in terms of (a) project participants sharing knowledge and information to other participants, thereby increasing the reach of projects; and (b) Women’s Economic Empowerment outcomes leading to changes in the community’s perception of women and their role within the community, especially significant given the restrictive cultural norms in the Red Sea State.**

Participants and partners reported that beneficiaries passed on information from training and workshops to others across a range of projects, including the UNAMID training for UNCT colleagues, the women’s political participation projects and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund COVID-19 project. Women went on to raise awareness of other women, both informally and formally through training and workshops.

There were also unexpected outcomes in terms of women’s increased economic empowerment also changing social norms. For example, women used to receive assistance

through their male family members. Directly targeting women participants supported a sense of ownership. For example, UN Women’s programmes supported women to increase their economic role in the community, and in many cases this also led to changes in the community’s perception of women, contributing to empowering women. Partners, participants and donors noted this was a significant achievement, especially in the areas in which UN Women was working.



## FINDING 6

**The assumptions set out in the evaluation's theory of change remained valid, affecting the delivery of the portfolio where they did not hold. These included: positive social norms supporting gender equality and women's empowerment; gender-responsive national policies and laws and the political will to develop and implement such policies and laws; and strong coordination on peacebuilding and humanitarian processes aligned to global accountability standards. UN Women's portfolio also aimed to support these areas of work in terms of changing social norms; developing and reforming gender-responsive national policies and laws; and contributing to coordination and the mainstreaming of gender into peacebuilding and humanitarian processes (see Findings 1 and 4).**

In addition to these assumptions, other external and internal contributory factors affected the achievement of outcomes (both positively and negatively). External factors included the economic context; commitment and capacity of participants; and the contribution of other projects. Internal factors included the credibility and expertise of UN Women and implement partners; project duration and scale; and the accessibility of project activities. These should be added to future iterations of the theory of change.

### **Assumption 1: Social norms support women and girls' participation in social, economic and political processes; structural and socio-cultural barriers are removed**

Social norms and the support of the broader community (including men) were highlighted as both enablers and barriers to projects. Many projects found it was necessary to first convince community leaders and husbands to permit women to participate.

Across some projects, there were reports that the wider community supported women in political participation. However, in some cases, lack of community support negatively affected the ability of young women to promote gender issues and the youth agenda in their local community. In other cases, it was women themselves who rejected the concept of women empowerment, affecting what projects could achieve. This was especially common among the shepherds and nomadic communities.

Many projects successfully contributed to social norm change (see Finding 16 for a discussion on the extent to which projects were able to effect structural changes).

### **Assumption 2: Gender-responsive national policies and laws exist and are implemented by stakeholders with increased capacity, and there is political will to develop and implement gender-responsive policies and laws**

Several projects sought to support the creation and implementation of gender-responsive policies and laws, and capacity building of government stakeholders (see Finding 1). To support implementation of existing laws, the Country Office sought to increase awareness of government stakeholders and service providers on several

gender-responsive national policies and laws (including the legal abortion act and two articles on rape and sexual harassment). Stakeholders reported that this had a positive effect on implementation of these laws.

Political will was a key factor affecting project effectiveness. There was evidence of political will during the transitional government period. For example, one stakeholder noted that a significant achievement was the Country Office securing government commitment to work with seven gender advisers deployed under the **SIDA gender architecture** project, though one partner noted that inconsistent commitment still affected delivery. However, the positive political environment was hindered by the coup, which affected the progress of many projects. For example, the coup put on hold the government's progress on signing the National Action Plan; the work of the gender advisers seconded to government; and progress on updating laws (including the family law and law on ending violence against women). See Finding 12 on how the Country Office adapted to these contextual changes.

Political sensitivity after the coup also affected the implementation of projects. Selection of participants was politically sensitive. In some cases, certain groups refused to collaborate. There were also challenges in creating a common women's agenda and national women's platform across diverse groups often in conflict, with different agendas. There were sensitivities in launching a call for proposal with civil society when it was no longer working with the government.

### **Assumption 3: Peacebuilding and humanitarian processes are well coordinated between the UN, government and other development partners and align with nationally applicable global accountability standards.**

As discussed in Findings 4 and 9, the level of coordination and coherence across programmes is mixed, and there is a key opportunity for the Country Office to strengthen its contribution to coordination. UN Women is playing a key role in increasing the gender-responsiveness of peacebuilding and humanitarian processes.

### Additional external contributory factors that clarified UN Women's contribution to the achievement of outcomes

- **Stability and conduciveness of the wider context and economy:** The economic situation was a key barrier to the stability and conduciveness of work during the evaluation period. The Strategic Note period was characterized by high inflation, which meant project budgets, cash transfers and grant sizes were quickly devalued. Other factors specific to different projects include: the reliability of electricity and water supply, COVID-19 restrictions, accessibility of banks and cash, security measures affecting women's ability to travel, and challenges with entering Internally Displaced Person camps.
- **Commitment and capacity of participants:** The commitment (or lack thereof) of local stakeholders to participate in projects and continue their political participation and businesses after the end of projects was noted as a key factor across all projects. For example, it was noted that the **no excuse campaign** which aimed to promote women's political participation in the transitional government produced few tangible outcomes because the voluntary but demanding nature of the campaign meant engagement was difficult to sustain. The capacity of women's organizations was also noted as a key challenge across many projects. Stakeholders agreed that many women's organizations were not well structured, had limited resources and were often composed of women with low literacy levels. Partners pointed out that these organizations, especially those at the grassroots level, were often unable to meet selection requirements related to capacity and resources and required significant support.
- **Contribution of other projects:** Across many projects, partners and participants pointed out that other UN projects were also key contributors to the target outcome. For example, in the **fisheries and agriculture** project, women entrepreneurs received support from microfinance institutions and cooperatives and UN Women provided productive inputs (vegetables, fish) as part of the project intervention. UNDP led the project on mediation and justice committees, which contributed to increasing women's access to justice and services in Darfur. Many other organizations also supported women's organizations, their political participation and the wider women's network.

### Additional internal contributory factors identified affected the achievement of outcomes

- **Credibility and expertise of UN Women and implementing partners:** The credibility and expertise of the Country Office and its implementing partners was noted as a key contributor to projects' effectiveness. Partners and participants pointed to the specific thematic expertise of UN Women and its ability to draw in experts when needed; its effective engagement of partners at all project stages, including the design stage; and its ability to effectively work with the women's network. Partners' relationships and expertise were also noted as key. For example, the University of **Khartoum** was able to bring stakeholders together during a politically sensitive time because it was seen as independent and credible. CSOs were able to build on existing relationships with communities to deliver to tight timescales, especially critical in challenging contexts such as remote states and with marginalized populations, such as the nomads.
- **Project duration and scale:** The short time frame for many projects (six months for State Liaison Function projects, and approximately three months for many SIDA gender architecture projects), and associated limited budgets and scope affected the ability of projects to effect sustainable, structural change. Short project durations meant there was sometimes limited time to conduct a full needs assessment. Partners also reported that this affected the value for money of projects. Significant investment was put into setting up projects, building relationships and networks, and developing material, but the duration of projects meant these outputs could not always be capitalized on. Some partners also reported that the short duration of projects meant they could only target participants in cities and not harder to reach groups at the community and village levels. Many partners noted it was important to have longer, larger projects to effect outcomes.
- **Supporting participants to take forward training:** In training projects, partners pointed out that more support would be useful to enable participants to take forward the training. For example, partners reported that the **State Liaison Function livelihoods** project did not support participants to access resources; therefore, many women did not have the funds to apply the skills gained to develop new business. Participants in the **fisheries and agribusiness** project noted ongoing mentorship was needed to support their businesses.

In the **State Liaison Function human rights** project, partners and participants noted that beyond workshops supporting the judiciary system to implement sexual harassment and rape law, more needed to be done to effect change, including strengthening coordination between different actors; providing training to female police officers and lawyers; ongoing support to rural courts; financial support for survivors to access courts; and changing procedures to make it easier for survivors without identification to access services. On the **State Liaison Function rule of law** project that worked with native administrations, partners reported that more needed to be done to support changing social norms around women's participation in politics, which continued to be a barrier and limited the actual, meaningful participation of women in the native administration.

- **Accessibility of project activities:** Partners and participants reported some barriers to attending project activities, especially in the Red Sea State and in Darfur. This included: insufficient participant fees, lack of transportation, timing of activities clashing with other responsibilities and security issues with travelling at night. Finding 16 sets out the links between accessibility and the gender-responsiveness of projects.
- **Relevance of participant selection:** Some partners also reported that the participants selected were not always the most relevant to the project. There were several cases reported by partners of participants not being relevant to the targeted area or subject matter who attended multiple workshops for the participation fee. Partners reported that this was due to downstream partners and community gatekeepers insisting on certain participants attending.

## FINDING 7

**Working across thematic areas is important to support UN Women's target outcomes. There are examples where this has happened and UN Women plans to strengthen this area. Cross-thematic work may be achieved by moving from small projects towards larger, holistic programmes.**

**Working across thematic areas is important to support UN Women's target outcomes.** Many stakeholders noted that UN Women needs to do more on Women's Economic Empowerment across all its interventions. Income generation was highlighted as critical for both Women's Political Participation and Women, Peace and Security interventions as women need resources to be able to engage politically and enhance their roles in supporting peacebuilding. This also helps ensure that the right to engage is not exclusive to the middle classes. The Country Office noted that even in Women's Economic Empowerment projects, empowerment work was critical to support sustainability, so that women can be empowered to claim their rights and support each other through coordination forums.

**There are examples of cross-thematic linkages in the current Strategic Note.** For example, the **fisheries and agribusiness** project not only supported income generation, but also taught participants about their political rights and supported them to access legal support. The **WE-RISE!** project built on the **fisheries and agribusiness** project to include additional components on social inclusion and political rights awareness. In one of the SIDA projects, a livelihoods component was also included.

**UN Women has committed to doing more in this area.** The 2022 planning meeting notes state, 'there was commitment from UN Women staff to focus on integration of programme thematic areas... delivery would be more effective if coordination of different programmatic areas is considered. Interlinkages between the different UN Women portfolios are not functioning to commit to the new guidance from Headquarters (HQ), and we need to design projects that consider the linkages between the 3 areas.'

Several UN Women personnel also noted that while the annual planning retreats were a good start in terms of supporting coordination across thematic areas, more could be done to ensure that the annual workplan is developed together, so that project inputs are planned across team members' workplans. New programmes are designed with stronger linkages between thematic areas. For example, a new Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund programme consists of three pillars, on women's political participation, protection and women's economic empowerment, jointly delivered by UN Women, UNDP and an international non-governmental organization.

**Cross-thematic work may be best achieved by moving towards larger, holistic programmes.** Many partners and participants suggested that the Country Office should implement larger, holistic programmes that include many components, including awareness of gender equality, empowerment, political participation and economic rights, training on small businesses and providing grants for small businesses in order to support structural and sustainable change. One partner reported that it had proposed an economic component as part of a **SIDA gender architecture** project, recognizing that women would struggle to participate politically without some income. However, the Country Office apparently requested that the economic empowerment component be removed, so that the project expenditure would fit within the budget allocated to UN Women. The Country Office designed the **SIDA gender architecture** to fund dozens of projects; it may be beneficial to focus on fewer, more holistic projects, given some of the challenges with delivery highlighted by project partners.

**FINDING 8**

**There are some promising signs of sustainability, including formalized women's networks and organizations; women's organizations receiving support from other partners; the generation of productive resources and profits from women's economic projects reinvested in sustainable initiatives; and the strengthened capacity of women and government stakeholders. However, there are also challenges to sustainability: UN Women is not currently working with the government; limited resources are available to take forward some of the portfolio outputs and outcomes, exacerbated by the short duration and scale of some projects; and the political context.**

**There are some promising signs of sustainability:**

- **Formalized networks and organizations:** Implementing partners reported that many organizations set up under the projects were officially registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs and linked up to state level networks. The Country Office also reported that it tried to support the sustainability of the women's network and projects by linking up partners, e.g. across the SIDA-funded gender architecture project, so that they could better support each other.
- **External support:** Implementing partners reported many examples of women's networks and women's organizations, following UN Women support, receiving support from the government (e.g. funding and land), and from other organizations, including UN agencies such as UNITAMS, UNICEF and UNFPA.
- **Productive resources:** The **fisheries and agribusiness** project financed the construction of fishery centres and the purchase of assets. Country Office personnel reported that participants from the **fisheries and agribusiness** project were reinvesting profits from businesses in sustainability.
- **Increased capacity and awareness:** The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund project trained women on how to secure small amounts of funding. The Country Office is also supporting long-term change by funding the gender institute at the University of Khartoum, with the aim of instilling a commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in future leaders.
- **Structural transformation:** Projects supported changes in social norms which are expected to help sustain outcomes. For example, partners reported that the **fisheries and agribusiness** project empowered women participants to 'trust themselves and start challenging the domination of men.' Partners noted this was important to prevent men from taking over the businesses once the project is over.

**Working with the government is expected to support the sustainability of projects, but this has been affected by the current suspension of all UN-government collaboration.** Country Office personnel noted that, as a result, it became UN Women's responsibility to support sustainability. In terms of the State Liaison Function programmes, UN Women worked at the community level. One staff

member noted that while it achieved a great deal, the results were not sustained when UNAMID left due to security issues.

**Women's organizations and networks reported that it can be a challenge to secure resources to take forward project outputs and outcomes.** UN Women partners reported that limited funding meant they could not always continue to support the women's organizations: one organization reported that the awareness raising and advocacy workshop on the legal abortion law required more resources to follow up and support government and service providers to operationalize the law. Participants of the political participation projects recommended that to support sustainability, the Country Office could deliver training of trainers sessions; provide funds for women's groups to conduct awareness-raising sessions; and create a database for women activists to strengthen women's networks. Participants of the Women's Economic Empowerment projects suggested that provision of small grants or equipment and support with marketing would help them develop their businesses.

**The short duration and scale of projects also affected sustainability,** which was mentioned by all SIDA gender architecture project partners. Additional resources are needed to harness the initial investment into needs analysis and establishing the project and networks. For example, several projects developed political participation manuals based on extensive community consultation, but additional resources are needed to disseminate the manual so it is actually used. Implementing partners reported that the new women's organizations and networks set up under the project require additional training. Participants of the Women's Economic Empowerment project reported that the training sessions were useful but that regular coaching and follow-up were needed to address emerging issues on the food production business for example.

**The political context also affected sustainability.** One partner reported that in the Blue Nile, during the Juba negotiations, 'the women were at the heart of everything, because they were brought in for political gain during the peace negotiations, as the women were signatories.' However, several partners reported that the women's coalitions faced strong opposition from the government, even before the coup.

**Evaluation question 4:** Are UN Women’s interventions coherent with the work of the UN Country Team and other key stakeholders?

## FINDING 9

**UN Women’s interventions are generally coherent with the work of the UNCT and other key stakeholders. The Country Office recognizes the importance of joint programming and has sought to strengthen this area across the Strategic Note period. UN Women has also made a concerted effort to coordinate the women’s network and the work of its partners. However, coordination is generally weak in the country, with potential duplication and overlap of activities. There is an opportunity for UN Women to take a leading role in coordinating work.**

### Country Office interventions are generally coherent with the work of the UNCT and other key stakeholders.

The table below highlights key areas of synergy and joint programming across the Country Office’s normative work and three thematic areas.

**UN Women recognizes the importance of joint programming and has sought to strengthen this area across the Strategic Note period.** The Country Office has invested in

increasing its joint programming. For example, the office recently submitted a proposal to the Peacebuilding Fund entitled GM3 (gender marker 3) in Darfur, partnering with UNDP and Alight, an international non-governmental organization. Other UNCT stakeholders also highlighted the importance of more joint programmes across UN agencies.

AREA OF WORK	EXAMPLES OF SYNERGIES AND JOINT PROGRAMMING WITH OTHER UN AGENCIES AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS
<b>Normative work</b>	<p>Joint programming with the following partners</p> <p>OHCHR: review of transitional justice and law, and training on human rights-based approach to statistics for government.</p> <p>UNDP: no excuse campaign to promote women’s political participation in the transitional government. Mapping for women’s nominations to government.</p> <p>UNITAMS: Supporting women’s rights agenda during the transitional government and support to a broad-based coalition on the peace talks with the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Front North in 2021. Following the coup, bringing together different women’s groups on the constitutional gender agenda. In 2023, capacity building with women’s groups on security building reform.</p>
<b>Women’s Economic Empowerment</b>	<p>UN Women projects in the Red Sea State (fisheries and agribusiness and WE-RISE! Projects) were well aligned to the UN strategy on food security and nutrition. UN Women and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation are the main stakeholders working on women’s economic empowerment in the Red Sea State. The COVID-19 project was complementary to the non-governmental organization’s other projects on income generation and the World Food Programme’s (WFP) nutrition and personal protective equipment projects (the selection criteria used and hence beneficiaries were largely the same).</p>
<b>Women’s Political Participation</b>	<p>The SIDA gender architecture projects were delivered by partners, many of whom established links between their other projects and the UN Women funded project. There were also links between the Development Studies and Research Institute’s work on supporting women’s political participation under this project, and its other work supporting the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Development on advancing women’s participation and reviewing the gender machinery.</p> <p>UN women partnered with UNDP on:</p> <p>Advocacy for political participation in the peace process</p> <p>Collaboration with CSOs</p> <p>Consultations on UNSCR 1325, Darfur peace dialogue and the Juba peace agreement</p> <p>The Establishment of Commissions (elections, constitution building, and reconciliation)</p>
<b>Women, Peace and Security</b>	<p>UN Women is delivering a joint project with UNEP and UNDP, entitled Supporting Sustainable Peace in the Blue Nile. UN Women is focusing on strengthening the women’s movement and protection, coordinating with the other areas of livelihoods and natural resource management.</p> <p>In Darfur, for the State Liaison Function projects, UN Women participated in quarterly coordination mechanisms with other UN agencies, the government and community leaders to validate the impacts achieved and to plan for the upcoming quarter and future projects.</p>



**UN Women has made a concerted effort to coordinate the women's network**, which has been recognized as a key strength by all partners (see Finding 13 on UN Women's comparative advantage). The Country Office supported **MANSAM**, an alliance of political women's groups, CSOs and youth groups, which played a key role during the transitional government. Across the **SIDA gender architecture projects**, the Country Office funded projects creating common agendas and bringing women's groups, CSOs and political parties together, particularly those outside Khartoum and the hard to reach, including youth. The Country Office has also sought to coordinate its partners across the **SIDA gender architecture projects**, through coordination meetings to identify synergies. Partners highlighted this as a key strength of the project and reported that these meetings helped launch further partnerships between implementing partners. Partners suggested it would be useful if UN Women had a stronger vision of how the platform could be sustained after the end of projects. Other partners also noted that previously established civil society platforms and other initiatives led by UN Women had not been maintained, such as the gender-based violence platform, due to the shift towards the political lens.

**However, coordination is generally weak in the country, with potential for duplication and overlap of activities.**

Donors, women's organizations and other UN agencies all highlighted the potential for overlap. Women's political participation partners reported that their participants were often engaged in several political participation projects. This has been exacerbated by the quickly changing context, for example where many stakeholders moved to supporting women's political participation following the opportunity that the transitional government provided.

**There is an opportunity for UN Women to strengthen coordination in the country by taking a leading role in coordinating work through the UNCT.** The Country Office is making a concerted effort to coordinate across its project partners. However, given UN Women's mandate, there is also an opportunity to coordinate the wider sector, including donors and partners, beyond the Country Office's implementing partners, which would help support greater progress towards gender equality. Practically, this could include:

- **Coordination with donors:** Donors stated they would like to be engaged during Country Office planning discussions, so that they can also coordinate among themselves to better support UN Women. One donor suggested UN Women could do more to foster trust and collaboration.
- **Sector mapping:** Partners suggested UN Women could usefully map key stakeholders and activities across the sector to identify opportunities for collaboration and to reduce overlap.
- **More proactive sharing of analysis and information:** Donors and UN partners noted they would like UN Women to share its analysis and information more proactively, including using existing mechanisms such as the Gender Theme Group. This could include sharing reports and invitations to workshops, which would support greater coherence across UN agencies and donors.

**EFFICIENCY**

**Evaluation question. 2:** How strategic was the Country Office in its allocation of resources to ensure value for money?

**FINDING 10**

**The Country Office was in a difficult financial position at the start of the Strategic Note period and has managed to mobilize resources by making the most of opportunities. Resources have supported good progress against target outcomes. However, capacity constraints mean areas for improvement include: budget management, M&E, communications and operations. While Country Office capacity has improved since the start of the Strategic Note, further strengthening of capacity is required.**

**The Country Office was in a difficult financial position at the start of the Strategic Note period but managed to effectively mobilize resources by making the most of opportunities.** The difficult financial position at the start of the Strategic Note period was due to many donors stopping funding to UN Women Sudan, due to delivery and performance issues. The Country Office has subsequently managed to significantly increase its resources, from US\$ 2.3 million in 2018 to US\$ 6.3 million in 2022, through rebuilding relationships for example with SIDA, and making the most of opportunities such as delivering State Liaison Function projects with UNAMID. The Country Office noted it had no formal resource mobilization plan, in part due to limited personnel capacity, but stated the increase in resources was a result of the visibility of its work and by capitalizing on the opportunities that had arisen. For example, donors came to the Country Office asking if it could support certain areas of their work. The nature of funding also affected what the Country Office has been able to do. Core funding provides UN Women Country Offices with flexibility, in comparison to non-core funding which is earmarked for certain activities. The core to non-core ratio in the Country Office is comparable to countries across the region.<sup>14</sup> However, there have been challenges with the short duration of donor agreements and the project nature of funding. For example, funding from the Peacebuilding Fund capped staffing and operational costs at 15 per cent and could only be used for national staff. The large proportion of project funding meant resources for coordination and normative work were limited. As the Country Office is now in a more stable position, it should move to a more formal resource mobilization strategy to ensure fundraising is strategically focused on the Strategic Note and target objectives.

**Resources have supported good progress against the target outcomes set out in the Strategic Note, (see Findings 1, 2 and 3 on effectiveness).** Other resources have increased over the past five years, funding more strategic and programmatic personnel. At the start of the Strategic Note, the Country Office employed mainly operational personnel. Since then, the office has recruited additional strategic and programmatic personnel, an operations manager and additional monitoring personnel, which has contributed to the office's increased effectiveness.

The Country Office also opened sub-offices in the Blue Nile and Darfur, which has supported project delivery in these states.

**Capacity issues linked to the quickly growing office have led to challenges in the areas of budget management, M&E, communications and operations.**

**Project budget management:** The country context has been characterized by an unstable economy, high inflation and currency fluctuation. The Country Office could strengthen its budget management as demonstrated by the following example. While the Country Office returned unspent budget for the **fisheries and agribusiness** project and **UNSCR 1325** project (this was noted to be due to currency fluctuation as the value of the Sudanese pound fell significantly), partners reported that inflation and the timing of transfers significantly affected their budgets. Although project agreements were most often in US\$, UN Women's agreements and transfers to partners were in Sudanese pounds. Due to rapid inflation, the falling value of the Sudanese pound and timing issues with transfers, partners were required to compensate by scaling back project activities, reducing cash transfer values and, in other cases, spending out of pocket. UN Women could better plan to minimize project underspend while enabling partners to deliver activities as originally planned during this volatile economic context.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** The Country Office noted that due to limited capacity and corporate reporting requirements, to date, M&E has mainly focused on corporate and donor reporting requirements. The Country Office produced limited monitoring data or reports related to implementation of interventions. Responsibility for M&E is not mainstreamed across project teams. There have been no evaluations since the previous Country Portfolio Evaluation. Reports from programme partners do not appear to be well filed and it is unclear how they are used. Six monitoring missions have taken place over the Strategic Note period, with one focused on partner capacity strengthening. While there are several templates, including indicator and activity tracking tools, no examples of these being used in practice were shared with the evaluation team.

<sup>14</sup> For 2018-22, the core to non-core ratio of the Sudan Country Office was 13–72 per cent. On average across the region, it was 8–78 per cent.

A performance monitoring framework only exists at the Strategic Note level, and not at the project level, which makes it difficult to track the evidence base for performance against indicators.

The system could be strengthened to better capture the outcomes achieved. The annual and donor reports reviewed report against quantitative targets but do not fully capture the range and richness of outcomes achieved. Several donors noted they were not fully clear on the outcomes achieved by projects.

The system could be strengthened to ensure lessons learned feed into project design. Currently, monitoring data does not present a clear picture of which projects have been effective, areas for improvement and which provide value for money to inform the design of new projects and the overall portfolio. Project design documents reviewed by the evaluation team do not draw on lessons learned from previous monitoring, and it is unclear how partner reports and monitoring mission findings are used to improve programming. The monitoring team is not currently involved in project design, but this is changing for new proposals.

At the Strategic Note level, target setting needs to be more realistic, and benchmarks set for achieving/not met. For example, significant achievement was reported against outcomes where only 10 per cent of the target value was achieved.

The Country Office is aware of monitoring issues and has committed to strengthening M&E. Additional personnel have been recruited and notes from the most annual retreat expressed a commitment to: (a) improve documentation, e.g. field visit reports, success stories and lessons learned; (b) increase monitoring visits to implementing partners and strengthen coordination with programme, operations and communications; and (c) use a delivery plan with activity, targets and budget to support monitoring. UN Women personnel noted there is a planned M&E retreat to address weaknesses.

**Communications:** Donors, civil society partners and other UN agencies agreed that UN Women had made significant contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment in Sudan, but that the visibility of this work was weak. Stakeholders commented that weak communications meant many organizations did not know who UN Women was. Partners also commented that UN Women's absence at key events affected local perception. Many stakeholders highlighted that this is a limiting factor for UN Women, in terms of attracting potential donors, helping to change social norms and supporting its normative work. Of the 13 external stakeholder survey respondents, 8 had not

used any of the Country Office's knowledge products. Stakeholders also pointed out that stronger M&E would support the identification of key results. However, there are indications that the situation is improving and the Country Office is recruiting for a communications officer and allocating budget for communications work.

**Financial and logical processes:** Civil society and UN partners reported challenges in working with UN Women's financial and logistical processes. Civil society partners highlighted that these processes and requirements were not clearly presented to new partners, which made processing payments difficult and resulted in either delays to project activities and/or partners having to use their own funds. Other partners highlighted mistakes made in terms of workshop participants being invited and then disinvited, and delays with responses to urgent emails.

**The quickly increasing scale of operations and gaps in capacity were the main contributors to challenges in M&E, communications and operations.** While UN Women has significantly grown its capacity over the Strategic Note cycle, gaps remain. Key external partners (donors, UN partners) and UN Women personnel agree that the office is overstretched, which is affecting UN Women's ability to deliver. Another partner noted that capacity issues affected its partnership with UN Women, commenting that the Country Office brought important, value-adding perspectives to strategic discussions, but engagement was inconsistent. Capacity gaps have been exacerbated by vacancies which meant staff members have had to take on additional responsibilities. Key opportunities for improvement include:

- **Clearer management structure:** Both UN Women personnel and external stakeholders noted that given the lack of Deputy Representative position, the Country Representative is taking on many of the responsibilities that a Deputy Representative would undertake. In some countries, the head of programmes/programme specialist also takes on the Deputy Representative role. The split of responsibilities between the Country Representative and other management staff should be clarified. Greater delegation of responsibility to others within the team would also support the sustainability of the Country Office when the Country Representative is rotated to another office.
- **Capacity to strengthen gaps:** Recruitments had already taken place and are under way for additional Finance, Monitoring and Communications personnel which should address some of the challenge highlighted. These recruitments should be undertaken alongside the strengthening of systems.

- **Humanitarian:** UN partners and international non-governmental organization stakeholders noted that the inclusion of UN Women in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee represents a major opportunity to influence the gender responsiveness of the humanitarian system and also to access humanitarian funding. The Country Office noted that as the role of UN Women is still being defined as the newest member, establishing a clear role within the Humanitarian Country Team and consistently attending meetings to identify opportunities is key. Additional personnel will be needed to make the most of this opportunity.
- **Coordination:** UN Women personnel and UNCT partners reflected that finding the time to take on the Country Office's coordination mandate is difficult when staff are busy meeting project implementation and reporting deadlines. Allocating staff with specific responsibilities and deliverables on coordination would help.

**The Regional Office has played a key role in supporting the Country Office during the early stages of the Strategic Note, when funding was a challenge.** Core resources allocated from the Regional Office remains consistent with other offices in the region. The Country Office reported good support from the Regional Office in many areas, including the humanitarian area and M&E, and noted there is opportunity for more engagement in the areas of Women, Peace And Security and Women's Political Participation.

## FINDING 11

**Evidence, such as needs assessments and context analysis, has been used to some extent to guide the prioritization and development of the portfolio, thematic programmes and projects. The Country Office could strengthen its use of needs assessments and studies by tracking how those already commissioned have been used, and by considering if the office can draw on existing studies. The Country Office could also better document why certain approaches have been selected, drawing on evidence for the likelihood of achieving results and value for money. Following the needs identification and target outcome stage, this process could be used to appraise different approaches and select the specific approach. Design documents at the country portfolio level could better make the case for intervening to justify priority areas that UN Women is focusing on, drawing on country needs, comparative advantage, mapping of other stakeholders and considering synergies across themes. Finally, a stronger focus should be given to using evidence and results to guide decision-making during projects (course-correction) and in the design of new projects.**

### BOX 1.

#### Sudan Country Office Planning Process – key components

Key components of the Country Office's planning process include:

- **Strategic Note:** The current Strategic Note was launched in 2018. There have been significant changes in the country context and Country Office since then, which has required adaptation in the Annual Work Plan.
- **Annual Work Plan:** Annual planning retreats to inform the work plan form a key part of the planning process. The agenda involves a road map of the Annual Work Plan; discussion of the office's priorities and proposed areas of intervention; and interlinkages across thematic areas. Relevant partners from government and civil society are engaged. Personnel reported that the Annual Work Plan previously relied on older documents and small consultations, but recent retreats have drawn on timely evidence and more extensive consultation.
- **Project development:** Individual projects are developed, which fit within the overall remit of the Strategic Note and Annual Work Plan. This can also drive adaptations to the outputs and activities in the Annual Work Plan.

**Evidence, such as needs assessments and context analysis, has generally been used well to guide prioritization and development of the portfolio, thematic programmes and projects.** The 2019 Annual Work Plan sets out the ambition that 'studies, assessments and research will be conducted to identify gender issues, analyze women's movement, and prioritize women's investment.'

1. **Development of the portfolio: The development of the portfolio and prioritization across thematic areas was guided by Country Office capacity and the changing country context.** At the start of the Strategic Note period, the Country Office determined that it was too ambitious for the office's capacity and funding and reduced the number of thematic areas from four to two, removing Women's Political Participation and Ending Violence Against Women. Women's Political Participation returned as a thematic area in 2020 to take advantage of the conducive political context.

**2. Development of thematic programmes: The development of the Women’s Political Participation project document drew on a formal needs assessment, while the Women’s Economic Empowerment and Women, Peace and Security portfolio are planning to make use of needs assessments to inform new programmes.**

The Women’s Political Participation project document clearly explains why the areas selected have been prioritized, but this is less clear in the Strategic Note and Annual Work Plan sections of Women’s Economic Empowerment and Women, Peace and Security.

- **Women’s Political Participation:** A project document was developed in 2021 for this new area of work, drawing on a needs assessment and programme design mission. The document identified that UN Women had a comparative advantage in convening civil society groups, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized. As such, it committed to supporting gender-responsive constitution making and legal reforms and promoting an environment conducive to women’s participation. This has been used to guide the **SIDA gender architecture** project, focusing on building an inclusive movement in certain themes and across different states as set out in the call for proposals.
- **Women’s Economic Empowerment:** The Strategic Note sets out the ambition to support women’s participation in climate-resilient agriculture, which is being delivered through the **fisheries and agribusiness** and

WE-RISE! Projects. Country Office personnel noted that there is no particular Country Office strategy on Women’s Economic Empowerment that could be used to track progress, and there is a need to draw on more up to date studies, as the data and studies referenced are old. UN Women has also identified that to reach scale and align with its comparative advantage, there is need to move to working at the macro, normative level. A report completed in 2022 on the road map for gender mainstreaming in macroeconomics is expected to be used to guide this work.

- **Women, Peace and Security:** The Strategic Note sets out the ambition to support women’s effective participation in Peace, Security and Humanitarian processes. A significant component of this work took place in Darfur, through the State Liaison Function projects. UN Women personnel reported that a gap assessment was used to inform programme design, though this was not shared with the evaluation team. UNAMID designed the project based on agreed activities and discussion with UN Women. For the upcoming Blue Nile projects, UN Women undertook a joint assessment with UNEP and UNDP, involving a civil society mapping exercise and assessment of gender-based violence.

**3. Development of projects:** Most project proposals drew on recently completed needs assessments and context analysis to guide the focus of the project in terms of target population and target outcomes.

PROJECT	USE OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT/CONTEXT ANALYSIS
<b>Fisheries and agribusiness</b>	Evidence used to guide the design of the project was not shared with the evaluation team.
<b>WE-RISE!</b>	Three studies were conducted at the start of the project covering the impact of social norms on women’s economic empowerment, gender and conflict, and gender profiles for each state. The studies are informing the project’s capacity building and advocacy work.
<b>SIDA Gender Architecture project</b>	The project draws on the needs assessment undertaken for the overall UN Women Political Participation project document.
<b>State Liaison Function projects</b>	UN Women have reported that a needs assessment was undertaken in the development of the projects, but this has not been shared with the evaluation team.
<b>PRCSP</b>	The project document cites studies and monitoring reports.
<b>COVID-19</b>	The proposal cites recent needs assessment surveys.
<b>UNSCR 1325</b>	The proposal draws on analysis of UNSCR 1325 and Peace Agreement 2020.



**The Country Office could strengthen its use of needs assessments and studies by tracking how those it has already commissioned have been used, and by considering if the office can draw on existing studies.** The Country Office has commissioned many studies, including the Road Map for Gender Mainstreaming in Macroeconomics, social norms study, disability inclusion study and plans to commission a study on private sector opportunities in Eastern Sudan. The previous CPE noted that a strong mapping of CSOs was carried out but never used. UN Women could track how its investment in studies has paid off by capturing their use in the design of the portfolio and projects. Other stakeholders, including donors and CSOs, noted that there are many studies in Sudan, and UN Women could make better use of these studies rather than defaulting to commissioning new studies.

**The Country Office could also better document why certain approaches have been selected to meet target outcomes, drawing on evidence for the likelihood of achieving results and value for money, compared across different approaches.** In planning documents, while there is good justification of the need for intervention, there is generally less documentation of evidence for why the specific approach was selected. Different approaches could be compared with respect to the strength of evidence for the effectiveness of the approach (either external evidence or monitoring data), the key assumptions and likely barriers, and the expected cost-effectiveness and value for money of the approach.

**Design documents at the country portfolio level could better make the case for intervening to justify priority areas that UN Women is focusing on, and areas that it will not be focusing on, drawing on country needs, comparative advantage, mapping of other stakeholders and considering synergies across themes.** While the Women's Political Participation project document justifies the selection of focus areas, this could be improved in the Strategic Note, Annual Work Plans and thematic project documents/strategies. Systematic analysis of existing initiatives would help with prioritization, avoid duplication and ensure coherence. This could then be used to consider where UN Women should focus to maximize its comparative advantage (see Finding 14) and how best to ensure synergies across its thematic work and triple mandate (see Findings 7 and 15). This analysis would also help UN Women prioritize and justify why it is not working in certain areas. External stakeholders all pointed to other sectors and geographies that UN Women should be working in.

**Finally, there is opportunity for the Country Office to support a stronger focus on using evidence and results to guide decision-making during projects (course-correction) and in the design of new projects.** The Strategic Note, Annual Work Plan and project documents state that project design has drawn on evidence and learning from previous projects, although this is not always elaborated on. The current focus of M&E is primarily on accountability (to corporate systems, donors and from partners), and could be strengthened to gather evidence about whether expected results have been achieved and capture concrete lessons learned to inform course correction and the design of future projects.

**Evaluation question 3:** How efficiently has the Country Office managed to pivot in response to the changing context?

## FINDING 12

**The Country Office has effectively responded to changes in the political context and UNCT structure, and has navigated the sensitive political context well. Further adaptation is required to stay relevant in the current political context.**

The current Strategic Note period has seen significant changes in the political context and also within the UNCT. Box 2 below summarizes the key developments.

**The Country Office has effectively responded to changes in the political context.** The Country Office previously focused on two outcome areas (Women's Economic Empowerment and Women, Peace and Security), but expanded this to include Women's Political Participation following the transitional government, as it represented an opportunity to support women's political movements. The Country Office recruited a Women's Political Participation specialist to support this work. During the transitional government period, UN Women established

partnerships with government, including seconding gender advisers to government ministries. UN Women also played a critical role in supporting women's representation in the UNSCR 1325 peace agreement, especially in the Blue Nile. After the UN decision to stop working with the government after the coup, the Country Office quickly shifted to increasing its work with the women's network and grassroots CSOs. Stakeholders (donors, civil society, partners and other UN agencies) agreed that a strength of UN Women was its ability to respond to context changes and its willingness to take risks as demonstrated through its early support of the women's movement (see Figure 7)

## BOX 2:

## Timeline of key political events and UNCT developments

- 1 **April 2019:**  
President Omar al-Bashir deposed
- 2 **August 2019:**  
Political Agreement and draft constitutional declaration signed, signifying the beginning of the 39-month transitional government
- 3 **June 2020:**  
United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) established
- 4 **August 2020:**  
Transitional government signs the Juba peace agreement with five rebel groups
- 5 **June 2021:**  
Full withdrawal of African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) completed.
- 6 **October 2021:**  
Military coup and civilian government dissolved

**Figure 7: Internal and external stakeholders found a high level of adaptation to the evolving programmatic context**



The political context is extremely sensitive in Sudan, and the Country Office has navigated this carefully, despite the difficult balance between partnering with both government and the women's network. There was often tension when working with both government and civil society, especially following the coup, given that most groups in the UN movement are not supportive of the provisional political settlement. The Country Office and its partners commented that it is important for UN Women to develop a strategy for re-engaging with government to ensure the office sustains its position as a key supporter of Sudanese women while also abiding by the UN common approach to engaging with the political settlement.

The Country Office has effectively responded to changes in the UNCT structure. UN Women took on a number of Darfur State Liaison Function projects following the phased withdrawal of UNAMID. A challenge was that many of these projects were pre-developed, which limited the scope of the Country Office to make changes to the design. Following the establishment of UNITAMS, the Country Office supported the mission with connections to the women's network.

Further adaptation is required given the current political context. Donors and partners pointed out that projects still referred to the 'transitional period', even though the context had shifted after the military coup, and that the Country Office needed to continue to adapt its programming to ensure its relevance to the current context. Government stakeholders suggested that UN Women should keep informed and maintain relationships with the government administration, to prepare for engagement following a return to civil government.

**Evaluation question 5: Do the interventions selected maximize UN Women's comparative advantage?**

**FINDING 13**

**The Country Office's comparative advantage is: (a) its strong connection with the women's movement and its flexibility to work with smaller organizations; (b) its gender mandate and expertise; and (c) its political savviness and willingness to take risks.**

**Comparative Advantage 1: Mandate to focus on gender and technical expertise to mainstream gender**

A comparative advantage for UN Women is that the Entity has a mandate to focus specifically on gender issues, which gives it a wide spectrum of areas to work on, in contrast to other UNCT partners who are working across competing priorities. Civil society, donors and UN partners commented that UN Women had strong expertise across its personnel. Partners agreed that the Country Office was more gender focused than other UN agencies and was seen as the go to within the UN system on gender matters. One donor noted that once the Country Office had sufficient capacity, the donor transferred its funding from the gender adviser within the UN Resident Coordinator's Office to UN Women given it was more effective and cost-efficient.

**Comparative Advantage 2: Support to and connections with the women's movement and willingness and flexibility to work with smaller organizations**

A second comparative advantage mentioned by most stakeholders was the Country Office's connections to the women's movement, which positioned UN Women well and provided significant opportunities. UN agencies and donors reported that UN Women was the go-to agency in terms of identifying relevant women's organizations.

All stakeholders agreed that the Country Office had played a leading, critical role in supporting the women's movement during the revolution. UN Women was seen as the 'home' of the women's movement, and personnel were well respected. The Country Office reported that women's groups would come to UN Women and ask for support with mediation.

UN Women was reported to be unique among UN agencies in its willingness to work with small, grassroots organizations, despite some of the challenges with complex UN procedures. Partners reported that UN Women was unique in providing a higher level of flexibility than other UN agencies and taking a partnership approach.

The Country Office also made a concerted effort to work with women across its Women's Economic Empowerment and Women's Political Participation projects in different states (rather than just in Khartoum) and from different socioeconomic backgrounds, including marginalized groups.

### **Comparative Advantage 3: Political savviness, willingness to take risks and innovation**

The third comparative advantage relates particularly to how the Country Office responded to the volatile political context.

**Political savviness:** Donors and partners noted that the Country Office had political savviness which meant it could see the direction of travel.

**Willingness to take risks:** Stakeholders also reported that UN Women was willing to take risks. For example, the Country Office supported the women's movement when it was born on WhatsApp, at the very start of the revolution. During this politically sensitive time, there was a risk that the Country Representative could have been declared persona non grata. UN Women has been one of the few agencies since the start of the regime to directly inject budget to government, as part of the **SIDA gender architecture** project. UN Women was also the first organization to support the newly established gender institute. Partners noted it is not easy as a new institute to secure funding, given the risk that it does not launch.

**Innovation:** UN Women and an external adviser also pointed to UN Women's unique conceptualization and focus on pillars for democracy. The Country Office's support to the peacebuilding process was framed in broader state building and accountability terms, with the aim of setting a precedent for how gender plans could be developed in a democratic way, using Women, Peace and Security as an entry point to set a democratic tradition.

## **FINDING 14**

**For the most part, Country Office interventions are well aligned with UN Women's comparative advantage. However, there is an opportunity to consider how to focus UN Women's limited resources and capacity more strategically by focusing on interventions best aligned to UN Women's comparative advantage and unique value proposition.**

**For the most part, the Country Office's interventions were well aligned with UN Women's comparative advantage,** and make the most of UN Women's gender expertise, connections to the women's network and willingness to take risks. The Country Office is able to apply its gender expertise across its programmes, in its normative and coordination work, and in supporting the UNCT to strengthen its gender approach. It has worked across the women's network, including with groups that few others work with, to develop a common women's agenda. However, in shorter projects and the State Liaison Function projects (which were already developed before UN Women took them on), there were challenges in fully applying UN Women's gender expertise and lens (see Finding 16 on gender equality and human rights). In other projects, UN Women's comparative advantage was less clear. For example, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund COVID-19 project was closely linked to a WFP project,

involving cash distribution to beneficiaries also receiving food and nutrition support from WFP. In this case, UN Women's added value was less clear.

**Given UN Women's limited resources and capacity, there is an opportunity to prioritize interventions more strategically to maximize UN Women's comparative advantage and unique value proposition.** Several UNCT partners suggested this should be based on context and needs analysis, which considers where other stakeholders are working and how UN Women can best add value. The Country Office had commissioned a mapping exercise to collect data about women's organizations across the country to help it decide how to support women's groups, but the evaluation team understands this has not been used. Given it takes time to support women's empowerment and the social norms that enable women to claim their rights, UN Women should try to move towards more consolidated, larger, longer-term projects to facilitate this change.

**FINDING 15**

**Given the nature of funding, the Country Office's balance of work has tilted towards the operational. In terms of UN Women's comparative advantage, the office's coordination and normative work could be better prioritized to influence the work of the wider UNCT and Humanitarian Country Team and to deliver impact at scale. There have been good links across normative, operational and coordination work.**

**Given the nature of funding, the balance of work in the Country Office has tilted towards the operational.** Before the coup, there was also growing work in support of the normative mandate. Coordination work is still limited but growing, especially in the humanitarian sector and the Gender Thematic Group (see Finding 4).

**In terms of UN Women's comparative advantage, the Country Office's coordination and normative work could be better prioritized to influence the work of the wider UNCT and Humanitarian Country Team and deliver impact at scale.** The 2022 Annual Work Plan acknowledged the need for UN Women to better coordinate stakeholders around normative gender issues. Country Office personnel reflected that without increased normative work, the office will continue to work at the micro level, where the effectiveness of its interventions is not so visible. As the only agency dedicated to gender issues, UN Women is also uniquely placed to support the UNCT and Humanitarian Country Team to mainstream gender across programmes. Stakeholders pointed out that UN Women is uniquely positioned to take a holistic, multifaceted approach across its triple mandate, which includes capacity building, evidence-based advocacy, knowledge building and sharing linked to implementation of programmes for women on the ground. **It is worth noting that the current conflict context is less optimal for UN Women's normative mandate. UN Women will have to closely monitor the political situation and any emerging opportunities.**

**There have been good links across normative, operational and coordination work.** Across all projects, the Country Office seeks to work with both government and civil society to support normative change as well as programme delivery (although this has been hindered by the coup). In the area of **Women, Peace and Security**, UN Women delivered 30+ State Liaison Function projects, while also supporting UNCT partners to ensure their State Liaison Function projects were gender responsive. **Women's Political Participation** involved normative strands (supporting government gender advisers and review of key laws) and operational strands (supporting civil society and political parties to engage women). Some partners suggested the Country Office could do more to link its normative and operational work, to ensure its advocacy is grounded in the real needs of women, and to ensure advocacy work translates to real change. For example, the Country Office supported one workshop to sensitize government and service providers on the law on legal abortion. However, UN Women does not work in this area programmatically, and as there were no resources to follow up on the workshop, stakeholders reported that the workshop had limited effect. The **Women's Economic Empowerment** portfolio involved normative work at the National Economic Conference. The **fisheries and agribusiness** project also involved advocacy with financial institutions for greater inclusion and supported participants to register with the government. Partners noted the need to do more at the policy level to include measurable gender-sensitive indicators into government frameworks.



## HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

**Evaluation question 6:** Are interventions supporting structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment?

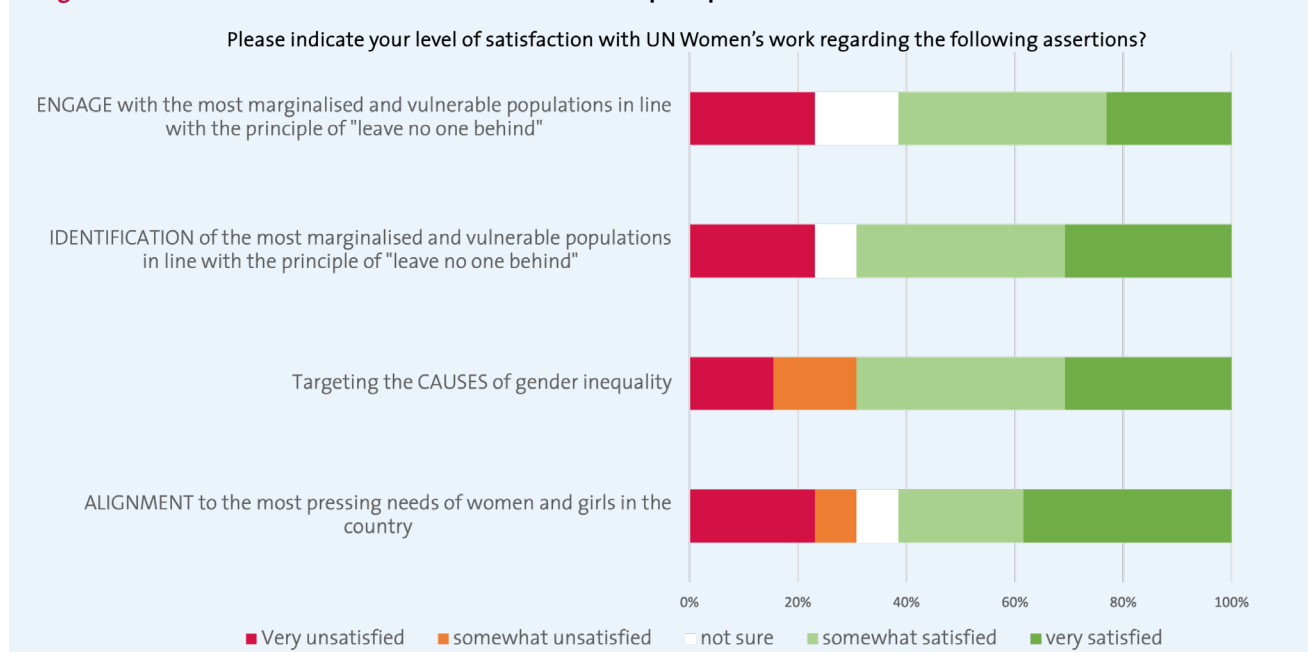
### FINDING 16

**Many Country Office interventions supported structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment, addressing cultural norms, power structures and root causes of gender inequality. All interventions were designed considering the differential needs of men, women, girls and boys and other marginalized populations. However, the short duration and budgets of some projects led to negative outcomes that reinforced gender inequalities and limiting norms.**

Overall, between 60–70 per cent of external stakeholders were very or somewhat satisfied with UN Women's work in identifying and engaging with the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, targeting the causes of gender inequality and working on the most pressing needs of women and girls in the country (see Figure 8).

In assessing whether interventions were supporting structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment, the evaluation team considered both the project design and emerging results against the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale developed by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (see Figure 2 above).

**Figure 8: UN Women's work on the "leave no one behind" principle**



Source: UN Women external stakeholder and UNCT survey (n=13)

**Many Country Office interventions were *gender transformative*, supporting structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment, including changing norms, cultural values, power structures and root causes of gender inequality.** Effecting structural changes takes time, but many promising results were reported, including:

- Fisheries and agribusiness project:** Implementing partners and beneficiaries reported that the project contributed to changing community perceptions of the economic role of women, a key achievement in the conservative Red Sea State. For example, in some communities, women were able to sell in markets for the first time. Women participating in the project successfully lobbied local authorities for land for a women's market near the Suakin main market. Many rural women participating in the project also reported they were able to keep their IDs for the first time to access the project, as previously they were kept with the clan head.
- WE-RISE:** UN Women launched gender studies and gender profiles to support advocacy work relating to changing gender equality social norms.
- SIDA gender architecture:** The different projects contributed to some promising results indicating changes in structures and social norms:
- Within political parties:** Several women participants reported being able to influence male decision makers in their parties. Partners reported that this resulted in outcomes such as the women quota in the political party increasing to 40 per cent and the establishment of a gender unit. Women also benefited from promotions within the party.

- **Within companies:** As a result of awareness-raising sessions, women workers organized a strike against the company, resulting in the company changing its policy so that women workers were able to receive their salaries, rather than through their husbands.
- **Violence against women and child marriage:** In South Kordofan, as a result of the project, women responded to an incidence of domestic violence by advocating with the governor and launching a campaign on security issues. In West Kordofan, awareness raising contributed to women refusing to let their daughters be married before turning 18.
- **State Liaison Function projects:** Project partners and beneficiaries in the **State Liaison Function human rights** project reported it had supported women's greater political participation, which in turn contributed to changing the structural norms around the involvement of women in public life. UN partners and internally displaced beneficiaries reported that the Country Office's work in raising issues around ending violence against women contributed to some positive changes in cultural values around female genital mutilation and domestic violence.
- **UNSCR 1325:** UN Women reported that the project supported women's associations to advocate with government institutions for their rights as part of the peace process, which is leading to changing norms on women's political engagement.

**Project partners (CSOs) reported that they were able to successfully effect structural change by adapting activities to suit local contexts.** Examples included engaging male gatekeepers by explaining the positives of women participating in the projects. However, barriers also included women themselves, i.e. rejecting the concept of women's empowerment (particularly female shepherds).

**Additionally, normative work with OHCHR on human rights is expected to lead to structural changes in time.** Activities included supporting civil society members on the family law review; support to law authorities on the accession to CEDAW; and statistics training on human rights-based approaches for government ministries (see Finding 1 on normative work).

**Some of the other sampled interventions were not gender transformative, but rather gender responsive, i.e. they addressed differential needs and focused on equitable distribution, without addressing root causes** due to challenging contexts and the short duration and small scale of projects.

**Challenging contexts (e.g. in Darfur) meant it was difficult for State Liaison Function projects to address the root causes of violence against women and gender inequality.** Project partners and beneficiaries reported

that the conflict context was characterized by a lack of law enforcement and regular violence against women, often instigated by militia police and soldiers. Judicial and police institutions were reluctant to prosecute in such cases. The native administration<sup>15</sup> was also affected by power dynamics, regularly taking the side of those able to pay them.

Women were able to participate in projects in some instances, but only with the permission of male guardians. Project partners and beneficiaries reported that these contextual barriers meant the short-term projects were unable to support structural changes, such as changes in social norms and reform of relevant institutions.

Gender expertise was available to design the State Liaison Function projects, but more could have been done to go beyond normative expressions and theoretical considerations; consider the socio-cultural context; understand the depth of root causes; and ground the project in the local situation. The needs assessment used to inform the training for the native administration was well written but did not address the root causes of gender equality which limited women's active participation. The Country Office noted it had to take over these projects quickly, which limited its ability to undertake gender assessments and ensure projects were gender transformative.

**The duration and scale of projects also presented challenges for projects to fully address root causes of gender inequality in a sensitive manner.** For example, some SIDA project partners noted that the short duration of the project meant there was insufficient time to conduct a needs assessment at the beginning of the project. A SIDA project partner highlighted the delays it faced in launching the media platform and having to deliver additional self-funded activities to ensure the platform was used to avoid exacerbating conflicts in project locations. Partners reported that longer-term projects were needed to really effect social norm change in sensitive situations, pointing to the challenges for men to accept women as financially independent decision makers. For the State Liaison Function projects, Country Office personnel reflected that limited funding affected the number of beneficiaries that could be reached, and the ability of interventions to target structural causes.

**In some cases, the above led to negative outcomes that reinforced gender inequalities and limiting norms (gender negative). In one SIDA gender architecture project, the implementing partner reported that the project had successfully introduced new ideas about women's rights to women participants. However, the partner noted that the short duration of the project meant it was unable to support women to claim their rights, and to handle any protection issues that arose.**

<sup>15</sup> The British colonial authorities instituted the native administration system, building on existing systems of customary governance. While many of its roles are now performed by the state, the native administration continues to have a role as interlocutor between the local community and external actors (including government and development partners).

One particular instance was relayed to the evaluation team of violence incited against a woman who refused to let her three daughters marry before turning 18. In another *SIDA gender architecture project*, the implementing partner noted it had managed to engage men to permit women to join only by promising a follow-up economic empowerment programme that would focus on the men. This also raises ethical issues by potentially setting misleading expectations if they cannot be fulfilled.

**All interventions were designed considering the differential needs of men, women, girls and boys and other marginalized populations – none of the projects was gender blind.**

**Gender assessment:** Analysis of gender issues informed the design of many projects. For example, during the inception phase, the WE-RISE project launched a gender assessment to understand the impact of social norms and gender stereotypes on women's economic empowerment; a study about gender and conflict; and state-level gender profiles. These studies are informing the design of the project and an advocacy campaign to support structural changes.

**Selection process:** Stakeholders agreed that a particular strength of UN Women in Sudan was its focus on disadvantaged and marginalized women. Across political participation projects, there was an emphasis on targeting women not only in Khartoum, which was typically done by other organizations, but also in remote states (including South and West Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Nile) and working with hard-to-reach communities such as the nomadic community. UN Women effectively partnered with small CSOs with extensive experience working with these communities. This is important to ensure the right to political participation is not exclusive to the middle classes. As one CSO noted, women from other states perceive Khartoum women as different, and engaging women from different states was important to avoid the impression that Khartoum women were imposing their agenda on others.

Projects incorporated thoughtful selection processes, especially during the political upheaval, involving community champions. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund COVID-19 project used selection criteria that was complementary to WFP's nutrition centres, and selected women to receive cash transfers based on criteria including: women headed households; poverty and vulnerability factors; lactating women and those with children suffering from malnutrition; and women with disabilities. The **Development Studies and Research Institute**-led project worked with women in political parties, disadvantaged women and youth, and sought to link up these groups to overcome barriers and mistrust between groups. The State Liaison Function projects also engaged with women from different backgrounds. The **fisheries and agribusiness** project targeted youth, older women, women living in rural areas and urban slums, women with disabilities, internally displaced persons and refugees, and women belonging to different ethnic groups.

Some good efforts were made to target both men and women in all training in some projects (e.g. the **SIDA gender architecture** project delivered by the Sudanese Organization for Research and Development engaged both men and women).

However, for other projects, project partners noted that with additional budget, they would have liked to also target men, given their need for civic education, and in this way to better address social norms. For example, in some communities, men believe sickle cell is transmitted by women, and they stigmatize women bearing children with sickle cell anemia.

**Accessibility:** Implementing partners and beneficiaries noted good practices in terms of projects adapting to the local context, e.g. by using cartoons and theatre in the local language to raise awareness and convincing local singers to sing about positive instead of negative values relating to women.

**However, a common finding reported by implementing partners and beneficiaries across most projects was that timing, payment and transport considerations are critical to participation.** For example, one CSO reported that it was unable to conduct awareness-raising sessions for women workers, as they were unable to leave their daily work and give up their daily wage to attend. Other CSOs noted they had to coordinate the timing to organize activities with the targeted group at an appropriate time, as it is difficult for women to leave their homes and children. State Liaison Function partners also reported that flooding in the autumn presented a barrier for attendance. In particular, these partners highlighted the need for the Country Office to consider the socioeconomic situation of women in conflict and poverty zones, in terms of providing transportation and fees to participants. Partners delivering Women, Peace and Security and Women's Political Participation projects all noted the importance of incorporating Women's Economic Empowerment initiatives, given women's economic empowerment is a necessary first step to enable women to participate politically and to sustain the women's networks created under projects.

**Additionally, across a few projects, implementing partners highlighted that unclear beneficiary selection criteria affected accessibility.**

**The Country Office has committed to mainstreaming disability, but more needs to be done.** Several projects included women with disability as a particular selection criterion (for example, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund COVID-19 project and State Liaison Fund livelihoods project). However, despite commitments in the Annual Work Plan for a target of 10 per cent of beneficiaries to be those with disabilities, this work is still ongoing. UN Women and OHCHR have jointly carried out a legal study on the rights of women with disabilities, involving mapping laws and policies. The intention is to incorporate the study's findings into a specific programme and also to mainstream the findings across all programmes.

## 6. LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation has brought the following key lessons into focus:

Linked to  
finding 6



**Interventions should be designed considering what changes, if any, are required in terms of capacity, motivation and opportunity to effect behavioural change, and by ensuring that the project seeks to support these changes. Otherwise, any capacity building support will not result in sustainable behavioural change.**

The evaluation found that a common enabler across interventions was stakeholder commitment, for example, participant commitment to applying the skills learned from the training and community commitment to supporting participants. Conversely, a common barrier was a lack of opportunity to effect change (for example, lack of funds to apply skills training). To effect behavioural change, target groups must have the capacity, motivation and opportunity to make the changes required.

Linked to  
findings 6.8 & 10



**Interventions seeking to change social norms should carefully consider the context and scale of work required to effect change. Interventions should be designed to be of a sufficient scale and duration and to ensure ethical risks are managed.**

The evaluation found that it was challenging for short, small projects to change social norms, as social norms change takes time. There were also potential negative outcomes and ethical risks with short projects trying to effect social changes.

Linked to  
finding 9



**Especially in contexts where organizational priorities are likely to change fairly quickly, coordination platforms should be set up by carefully considering ownership and sustainability issues. An exit plan should be developed to ensure that platforms can be self-sustaining as soon as possible, to make the most of the resource investment.**

The evaluation found that previous civil society platforms and other initiatives led by UN Women had not been maintained, e.g. the gender-based violence platform, due to the Country Office's shift towards the political lens. Partners highlighted the need to consider sustainability issues when supporting coordination networks.

Linked to  
findings 1 & 13



**A particular value add for UN Women is its partnership approach to civil society. Especially in contexts where women's movements can play a key role in supporting women's empowerment and political participation, this is a good area for UN Women to define its niche in the country.**

The evaluation found that UN Women was particularly known and valued for its role in supporting the women's network and being a champion of civil society, particularly its focus on disadvantaged and marginalized women, including those outside Khartoum. This allowed UN Women to effectively play a critical role in supporting the women's movement and the broader democratic transition.

Linked to  
finding 10



**Offices in challenging contexts could consider some of the approaches that the UN Women Sudan Country Office successfully adopted to rebuild its office, in terms of building relationships and trust with donors and capitalizing on emerging opportunities.**

At the start of the Strategic Note period, the Sudan Country Office was considering closing down, given that many donors had withdrawn funding. The Country Office managed to rebuild its office and reputation in the country by rebuilding relationships with donors, building trust by first working on smaller projects, and capitalizing on opportunities arising from the changing political context (e.g. supporting the women's movement and delivering on projects in support of the UNAMID transition).





Photo: UN Women Sudan CO

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

In its implementation of the Strategic Note, the Country Office has made important strides in its support to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. During the period at issue in this report, the country and Country Office have also undergone changes. The size of the country, scope of such challenges and positioning of UN Women in Sudan provides ample opportunity for the Country Office's growth to achieve greater impact at scale.

**CONCLUSION 1.**

After a difficult start to the Strategic Note period, UN Women has been successful in reinstating itself as a key player within Sudan and has effectively mobilized resources. The Country Office has managed to rebuild donors' trust by demonstrating an ability to deliver and pivot quickly to the changing context. Country Office capacity has also improved with the recruitment of quality personnel seen as key experts in their fields.

UN Women is now seen as a critical supporter of the women's movement and an advocate for gender in Sudan, committed to working with grassroots organizations. Other areas of its comparative advantage include its gender expertise and its ability to respond to political changes and willingness to take risks.

*Efficiency. Linked to Findings 10-13*

**CONCLUSION 2.**

The Country Office has effectively delivered against its target outcomes, achieving key results in its three thematic areas. It has supported more women of all ages to fully engage with political and economic institutions; supported women to secure access to productive resources and engage in sustainable resource creation activities; and influenced duty bearers in their delivery of commitments on women, peace and security. The Country Office has also supported the broader enabling environment. In terms of coordination, it has contributed to the UNCT Gender Theme Group and capacity building of UN agencies on gender mainstreaming. UN Women's programming is generally coherent with the work of the UNCT and other key stakeholders and the Country Office has been working to coordinate its partners and the women's network.

*Effectiveness. Linked to Findings 1-5, 8, 9.*

**CONCLUSION 3.**

The effectiveness of the Country Office's work could be improved by addressing some of UN Women's weaker areas. The Country Office's contribution to UNCT coordination could be strengthened, with promising areas of work including the UNCT Gender Theme Group, the Humanitarian Country Team and increased joint programming with other UN agencies. Links across thematic areas could be strengthened, moving towards larger, holistic programmes that tackle different components of gender equality and women's empowerment. The current political situation means work with the government is not possible, but normative work and activity at the macro level to complement micro-level programming is critical for delivering at scale and supporting sustainable, structural change. Project duration and scope need to be carefully considered to ensure projects are able to support sustainable outcomes, and participants are able to take forward project outputs and outcomes.

*Effectiveness. Linked to Findings 4, 6-7, 9, 11*

**CONCLUSION 4.**

The Country Office has effectively managed the difficult context by being flexible and making the most of political and funding opportunities. However, its mandate is broad, and needs within the country are significant, affecting the Country Office's ability to deliver against its priorities. Furthermore, while Country Office capacity has been significantly strengthened, limitations in the office's current capacity continue to affect all areas of its work, constraining what it is able to do. In the next Strategic note, the Country Office should further prioritize its areas of focus, building on its comparative advantage and its unique position and mandate to support women's empowerment through structural change. It should also seek to reach greater scale with limited resources by tilting more of its efforts towards its normative and coordination mandates, to complement its programmatic work.

*Efficiency. Linked to Findings 10-11, 14-15*

**CONCLUSION 5.**

The Country Office has effectively supported structural changes in gender equality and women's empowerment, successfully addressing cultural norms, power structures and the root causes of gender inequality. However, in some cases, short project duration and budgets limited the ability of the office to address social norms and support structural changes. While projects were generally designed considering the differential needs of different target populations, in some cases accessibility issues affected the target population's ability to participate.

*Gender and human rights. Linked to Findings 6 and 1*

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Presentation of preliminary findings and discussion on the way forward took place with the UN Women Sudan Country Office to inform the recommendations presented below and discuss feasible actions. The level of priority and timeline for implementation are indicated below each recommendation.

Data collection and analysis for the evaluation were conducted in April 2023, before the recent conflict in Sudan. Hence, the relevance of the recommendations will need to be considered in light of the recent conflict in Sudan (April 2023) and quickly changing context.

### RECOMMENDATION 1: Considering comparative advantage and evidence to guide decision-making

Based on findings

7, 8, 14 and 15

Priority

HIGH

Timeline

MEDIUM

**The Country Office to (a) prioritize efforts to focus UN Women’s limited resources, building on needs assessments/context analysis that considers other stakeholders’ programming and UN Women’s particular comparative advantage, alongside the current conflict context, and document this process; and (b) assess the changes required to the strategy developed under the transitional government period; and (c) move towards more prioritized, consolidated, larger, longer-term projects.**

Stakeholders commented that the Country Office was overstretched which affected its ability to deliver. However, most stakeholders also identified other areas where they felt UN Women should be working. This suggests the Country Office needs to better identify and articulate its priority areas, which should be linked to its comparative advantage, needs assessment and mapping of other stakeholder activity.

Given its comparative advantage, there are particular opportunities to focus on:

- Strengthen coordination and normative work to fulfil the Country Office’s triple mandate and ensure it can achieve outcomes at scale.
- Consider implementing larger, holistic programmes that cut across thematic areas to support structural and sustainable change.
- Increase work on social norms and with men.

### RECOMMENDATION 2: Strengthening office capacity

Based on finding

10

Priority

HIGH

Timeline

MEDIUM

**The Country Office to further strengthen its capacity by clarifying the management structure and considering the split of responsibilities between the Country Representative and other senior staff; filling gaps in finance/operations, monitoring and communications; and reviewing personnel time allocated to the office’s humanitarian and coordination mandates.**

- **Clarifying the management structure:** The lack of a Deputy Representative means the Country Representative is overburdened and constricted in what she is able to do. Greater delegation is needed to support sustainability when the Country Representative is rotated to another office.
- **Filling gaps:** Recruitments have recently taken place and are ongoing in the areas of Finance/Operations, Monitoring and Communications. Alongside work

to strengthen existing systems, the Country Office should carefully review whether these recruitments are sufficient.

- **Strengthen Humanitarian and Coordination mandates:** important opportunities were noted across these mandates. It is difficult to take on these mandates when responsibilities are spread across personnel, on top of project and reporting responsibilities.



### RECOMMENDATION 3: Strengthening coordination

Based on finding

4

Priority

HIGH

Timeline

MEDIUM

**The Country Office to invest more in its coordination mandate and ensure this is reflected in corporate and individual workplans.**

#### Opportunities include:

- convening more frequent Gender Theme Group meetings and applying the recently launched set of standards and procedures;
- supporting information sharing and coordination across the UN on gender programming;
- supporting the use of recommendations emerging from the SWAP scorecard and supporting a review of the gender scorecard;
- further developing the Country Office's humanitarian coordination work, around the Gender in Humanitarian Action working group and training curriculum development, and supporting gender analysis as part of the multi-stakeholders needs assessment; and
- tracking the value of its coordination work.

This should be done in partnership with the UNCT and political mission.

The evaluation identified that there was a key demand and opportunity for UN Women to support and influence UN agencies' work on gender equality and women's empowerment, and that coordination overall in Sudan remains weak. Several initiatives led by UN Women are under way.

### RECOMMENDATION 4: Maximizing intervention effectiveness and sustainability

Based on findings

6, 8 and 16

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeline

MEDIUM

**When designing interventions, the Country Office to consider the scope and scale necessary to effect sustainable change and the barriers that may affect uptake of outcomes. Key barriers identified by the evaluation were the ability to take forward skills training, e.g. funds to set up new businesses; and social norms, e.g. support of men to ensure that they did not take over businesses and activities after the end of the intervention. This would maximize the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions and, in doing so, deliver greater value for money for the upfront time and resource investment.**

The evaluation identified that the duration and scale of an intervention is key to ensure it has sufficient time for a needs assessment to be undertaken, to reach target

groups and to support participants in taking forward project outputs and outcomes, thereby supporting sustainability.

### RECOMMENDATION 5: Increasing accessibility for relevant participants and partners

Based on findings

16 and 10

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeline

MEDIUM

**When designing interventions, the Country Office to further consider potential barriers to accessibility and consider how activities can be best designed to maximize accessibility for all target participants. This will also help support leave no one behind objectives, to ensure the intervention is accessible to all.**

UN Women could also consider how it can support smaller civil society organization partners, by building the capacity of organizations around UN Women processes. To ensure projects target and reach the most relevant stakeholders, the Country Office should carefully select and work with partners to develop clear selection criteria for selecting participants. Internal controls should be in place to ensure that multiple stakeholders are involved in the selection process to validate the appropriateness of the selection process; and independent beneficiary

complaints mechanisms should be established (directed to someone independent of project implementation, e.g. to the Representative directly) to increase accountability towards affected populations.

Finding 16 identifies that timing, payment, transportation and selection process issues affected participation. Finding 10 identifies that first-time partners highlighted logistical and financial issues that made it difficult for smaller organizations to partner with UN Women.



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**UN WOMEN IS THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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