



COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2018-2021

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



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This evaluation report covers the UN Women Country Office Strategic Note for Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for the period 2018-2021 and is the result of close collaboration between the regional evaluation specialist, regional evaluation analyst and evaluation consultants, under the guidance of UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services.

The evaluation team would like to express its gratitude to the staff of the UN Women Country Office, including Ms Awa Ndiaye Seck, UN Women representative, Ms Catherine Odimba, evaluation focal point, coordinators, and programme officers. Thanks to colleagues from the Audit Services at UN Women headquarters for their decisive contribution to the financial and operational appraisal of this evaluation.

Specifically, the content in the "Efficiency" section owes much to the findings presented in the internal audit report conducted by UN Women DRC.

The team would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the country portfolio's implementing partners, including government partners and state services, local and international non-governmental organisations, technical and financial partners (agencies and cooperation agencies) and colleagues in the United Nations system.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who contributed in any way to the success of this evaluation.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
PSHA	Peace, Security and Humanitarian Actions
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
OEEF	Organisation Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework
DRF	Development Result Framework
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
GTG	Groupe de Thématique Genre
IDG	Indice de Développement du Genre
IP	Implementing partners
LOA	Local Organization Agreement
LPP	Leadership and Political Participation
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
MINPROFF	Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SN	Strategic Note
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
	Enquête par Grappes à Indicateurs Multiples
UNSDCF	United Nations System Development Cooperation Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WCARO	West & Central Africa Regional Office



SUMMARY

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION 2018-2021

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Photo: UN Women/ Mutaka

This summary presents the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the UN Women Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) conducted between August and December 2021.

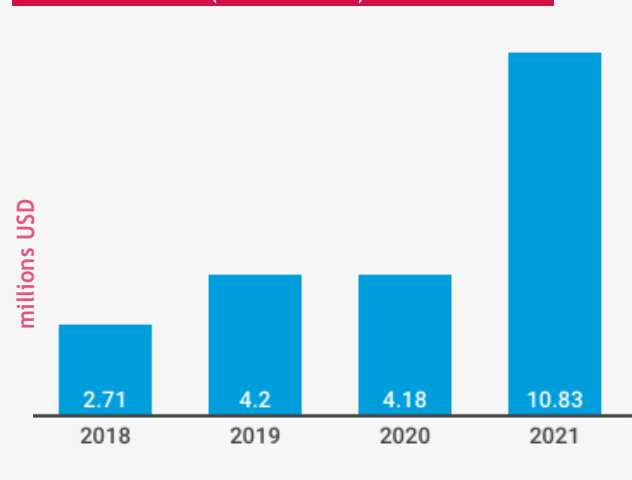
A CPE is a systematic assessment of the normative, operational and coordination aspects of UN Women's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment development results at the country level. Its methodology is essentially qualitative and the data on which its findings and conclusions are derived from documentation, consultation and triangulation of multiple sources encountered in Kinshasa, Goma and Bukavu. As UN Women - DRC had not conducted a project or programme evaluation since 2017, the Independent Evaluation Services (IES) included the evaluation of the UN Women - DRC country portfolio in their action plan for the year 2021. The CPE was conducted jointly with the country office's internal audit.

Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the most populous countries in Central Africa, with an estimated population of 95.2 million in 2022¹, spread over an area of 2,345,409 km². It remains in the category of countries with low human development. DRC's Human Development Index was 0.48 in 2019, ranking 179th out of 189 countries and territories². In terms of gender inequality and development, it was ranked 175th out of 189 countries³ in 2019: the human inequality coefficient was 30.9; the gender development index was 0.844; the gender inequality index was 0.617 and the incidence of poverty was above 60% in 19 out of 26⁴ provinces

In 2019, 2020 and 2021, DRC maintained the 5th position in the "high alert" category of the Fragile States Index. This is a relative improvement since 2018, when the country was ranked first in the "very high alert" category.

UN Women has been present in DRC since 2011. Prior to that, UNIFEM, has been present in the country for fifteen years. Between 2018 and 2021, the Country Office's average annual budget was approximately 5.5 million US\$, most of which came from "non-core" funds, i.e. contributions received directly from different donors for the implementation of specific programmes or projects.

ANNUAL BUDGET (MILLIONS USD) 2018 TO 2021



¹An estimate published by [UNFPA](#) on micro-census work carried out by Kinshasa School of Public Health in March and April 2021 in collaboration with the National Statistics Institute and the Central Census Office.

² Congo Human Development Index calculated in 2019 and published on this UNDP website: <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/COD>

³ UNDP, Human Development Index, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries, 2019>

⁴Common Country Document, CCA, November 2019, p. 59

This institutional representation and programmatic presence provide the CPE with a study objective in terms of internal coherence, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability following the same exercise conducted in 2017. The evaluation applied a qualitative methodology by collection of information through surveys, focus groups and semi-structured

interviews with 120 persons (38 of whom were men) selected from several categories of partners and stakeholders in the Country Office.

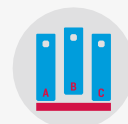
As the DRC Strategy Note for 2018-2019 was extended until November 2021, the lessons learned from this evaluation will be used during the review of the new Strategy Note (2022-2024).

EVALUATION METHOD



SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

120 people, including 38 men, took part in the interviews over a period of 30 days. The selection of respondents was based on an inclusive sampling framework.



DOCUMENT REVIEW

Review of 164 files provided by the Country Office and collected in parts from various UN Women electronic platforms.



DATA TRIANGULATION

Triangulation validated the key findings by cross-checking information obtained from a variety of sources, including UN Women internal audits.



QUALITY ASSURANCE

The evaluation benefited from feedback from members of the Reference Group, and the preliminary results were discussed with the Country Office management team.

Main Findings

The vast territorial size of the country, the post-conflict situation, the prolonged crisis, the re-emergence of armed conflict in certain provinces, and the slow improvement of overall governance conditions are all contextual factors that have constrained the integrated mandate of UN Women in DRC. For a UN entity that has been operating in DRC for twelve years, achieving success in terms of gender equality depends on its capacity to mobilise other UN agencies, as well as the dynamism of civil society engaged in its mandate.

UN Women's Strategic Note is aligned with national priorities, and while the component relating to combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is not reflected in its results framework, this does not necessarily imply an absence of intervention in this domain. The distribution of roles within the UN country team is such that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) assumes the lead and responsibility when it comes to SGBV. UN Women is well regarded among gender equality stakeholders for having exercised its normative and coordinating mandates to contribute to the efforts that led to the reform of the Family Code.

In the programmatic field, UN Women's comparative advantage⁵ is in the domain of political participation and, to some extent, women's economic empowerment. However, due to its operational challenges and limited geographical coverage, UN Women - DRC has not yet proved itself in the field of humanitarian action or response to natural disasters.

The strategy of networking at national level, as demonstrated by the Réseau National des Femmes Rurales (RENAFER) and Dynamique nationale des femmes candidates (DYNAFEC) for economic and political empowerment, respectively, has proven advantageous in overcoming the challenges specific to political and economic domain. In addition, there are formal Gender coordination mechanisms (Gender Thematic Group, One UN Gender Group) and informal high-level consultation frameworks (the "One + One", the "Friends of Gender", etc.) through which UN Women keeps gender issues on the agenda. However, there is no expressed desire to revitalise the Civil Society Consultation Group, whose activities have been dormant for a long time.

⁵The advantage is clear in the sense that, although other agencies (UNDP and UNFPA) are actively involved, the areas of "women's political participation" and "women's economic empowerment" are

the responsibility of UN Women. Although the creation of a network of 5,000 rural women is remarkable, it is still too early to measure the impact of the work begun with them.

The number and instability of human resources pose difficulties in managing the portfolio of operations, which has an impact on all aspects of the organisation's functioning, including project monitoring, reporting and evaluation. This has also resulted in loss of institutional memory, as demonstrated by the loss of documents required for internal audit and the neglect of the recommendations of the 2015 Gender Scorecard. In addition, staff overload has exposed the remaining staff to burnout and this explains the abandonment or suspension of certain consultation mechanisms such as the gender cafés, which although promising, only lasted a year.

Fortunately, the work carried out over more than a decade in the area of legislation led to the reform of the Family Code in 2016. This result must be considered in relation to the precedence normally given to customary law. The status of people with disabilities

and indigenous peoples is also affected by old traditions, which the Strategic Note did not really take into account.

The evaluation also looked at the adaptations made by the country office in its efforts to support the national response to the Covid-19 viral pandemic. This made it possible to understand the relative contribution of UN Women-DRC to the country's efforts, in coordination with the United Nations system, and to determine the extent to which the results originally envisaged in the strategic note had been affected by the pandemic.

The first users targeted by this evaluation are (i) UN Women DRC country office, (ii) UN Women Evaluation and Audit Services, (iii) UN Women Executive Board, (iv) UN Women management team, (v) key national stakeholders in UN System in DRC and (vii) UN Women Regional Office for West and Central Africa.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Strengthen the State as fundamental objective, in conjunction with the other agencies of the United Nations system. Contribute in particular to the consolidation of the capacity of the Ministry of Gender, Women and Children to carry out its functions. The conclusion of formal collaboration agreements with this Ministry, combined with technical support, will enable the Ministry to regain the confidence of citizen organisations; improve their relations with government bodies in the long term; contribute to the application of the government's obligation to make public the amount of resources allocated to gender equality and women's empowerment; update the National Gender Policy; and resume consultation mechanisms such as gender cafés and Gender Thematic Group.

2

Prioritise joint work, particularly in the area of Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action and the fight against SGBV, by integrating the context of fragility and recurring conflicts into programming. The recommendations of the 2015 *Gender Scorecard* should be updated and accompanied by an action plan.

3

Target political parties to initiate and establish an open dialogue with men on parity and encourage them to present lists that include women and people with disabilities.

4

Recruit staffs (and stabilise the contracts) to compensate for the shortage of human resources, set up a monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management unit, and strengthen the operations team, taking into account the aims of the strategic note.

5

In collaboration with the other agencies of the United Nation's system, integrate the principle of "No One Left Behind" in humanitarian and development discourse and interventions.



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1. EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide an independent systematic assessment of UN Women's contributions to national development results related to gender equality at the country level, to support learning through the identification of strategies that have worked and those that have worked less, so as to adjust UN Women's contribution to national efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment. It also aims to identify UN Women's comparative advantage in DRC and support decision-making to inform the implementation of its new strategy.

The evaluation covers the operational, normative and gender coordination aspects of the 2018-2021⁶ Strategic Note.

Considering the Country Office's recent activities in response to crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, or natural disasters, UN Women - DRC has demonstrated its capacity to redeploy its human and financial resources to address context different from that which prevailed when its Strategic Note was initially conceived.

DRC Country Office staff and UN Women Regional Office for West and Central Africa are the primary users targeted by this CPE. Secondary target users are DRC government, development partners such as UN agencies and bilateral/multilateral agencies, and civil society. The UN Resident Coordinator (RC)/Office of the Resident Coordinator (OCR) would also benefit from understanding the added value and contribution of UN Women to the advancement of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2013-2019) and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for (UNSDCF 2020-2024).

The evaluation questions the areas of impact of the Strategic Note according to the criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, gender equality and human rights. The Strategic Note was evaluated according to the criteria⁷ of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and in relation to human rights and gender equality. Following a stakeholder consultation session prior to data collection, the questions proposed in the terms of reference were prioritised around the 5 criteria above and reformulated before the interview guides were drawn up according to the categories of beneficiaries. The evaluation questions are found in Annex III.

EVALUATION CRITERIA



RELEVANCE

Alignment
Positioning
Comparative advantage
Adaptation in crisis



EFFICIENCY

Office management structure
Choice of partners
Geographical coverage
Knowledge management



GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Intersectionality and responding to women's specific situations
Handicap
Indigenous peoples



EFFECTIVENESS

Women's political participation
Women economic empowerment
Sexual and gender-based violence
Women's participation in peace and security
Gender coordination
monitoring and evaluation



SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability of normative mandate results
Sustainability of coordination mandate results
Sustainability of programme results

⁶ The year 2021 was devoted to planning the 2020-2024 Country Office Programme. This strategic note (SN) was not finally approved by the Regional Office until November 2021. As the new United Nations Cooperation Framework has been in force since 2020, and UN Women has formally aligned itself with it, it would be a mistake to consider the SN 2018-2021 as the only

programmatic reference that has guided the Country Office since 2018. We discuss this again in section 2.1 on the Strategic Note 2018-2021 and in section 3.1.1 on the alignment sub-criterion.

⁷ OECD principles and DAC criteria available at <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/2755284.pdf>



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2. CONTEXT OF UN WOMEN'S **WORK IN DRC**

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the most populous countries in Central Africa, with an estimated population of 95.2 million in 2022⁸. Overall, DRC is said to be a country of "mass poverty", with the incidence of poverty exceeding 70% in 22 of its 26⁹ provinces. Poverty is higher among men (75.6%) than among women (71.4%), and is more prevalent in rural areas (70.3%) than in urban areas (56.5%)¹⁰. Extreme poverty is concentrated in the North-West and Kasai regions, and mainly affects women, the unemployed and workers in the informal¹¹ sector.

The World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Report ranks DRC 149th out of 153 countries, with a gender gap index of 0.578, the worst ranking in the Sub-Saharan region. The 2019¹² Common Country Assessment (CCA) report discloses that women constitute almost 51% of the rural population, with 85% of them actively engaged in the agricultural sector, which contributes 40% of GDP. The country's human development indices point to challenges to achieving sustainable development by 2030. Indeed, analysis¹³ of the indices of inequality in development, the gender development index (GDI) and the gender inequality index (GII) disclose huge disparities within Congolese society and specific shortcomings in terms of gender equality. However, in terms of political representation, DRC has made progress¹⁴, the proportion of women in parliament has risen from 9.70% in 2014 to 14.30% in 2019¹⁵.

In Congo, retrograde perceptions of women's role in society persist up to the present day. Several adages perpetuate the intrinsic inferiority of women compared to men. At the legislative level, this is reflected in the January 2015 rejection of the bill reserving a 30% quota in all constituencies.

In 2021¹⁶, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office documented "556 adult victims of sexual violence (548 women and 8 men), of whom 537 (531 women and 6 men), or 96%, were victims of conflict-related sexual violence". In 2021, HIV prevalence was higher among women (0.97%) than among men (0.40%)¹⁷.

Democratic Republic of Congo retain 5th position in the "high alert" category of the "Fragile States Index" for 2019, 2020 and 2021. This is relative improvement in 2018, when the country was ranked first in the "very high alert" category. Armed and inter-communal conflicts have displaced 5.6 million people¹⁸ within national borders, the highest number in Africa. The number of victims of armed conflict increased between 2016 and 2019. It rose from 3 deaths per 100,000 to 4 deaths per 100,000 during this period¹⁹. Congolese society is experiencing forms of marginalisation such as that of the Batwa²⁰ or the exclusion of disabled people.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

95.2
millions

With an estimated population of 95.2 million, DRC is one of the most populated countries in Central Africa.

149th
Out of 153
countries

The World Economic Forum ranks DRC 149th out of 153 countries.

5th
place in the
category
"high alert"

DRC remains in 5th place in the "high alert" category of the Fragile States Index for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

⁸This estimate, released by [UNFPA](#) is based on micro-census carried out by the Kinshasa School of Public Health in March and April 2021 in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics and the Central Census Office. In 2020, the NIS statistical yearbook showed a total population of 98.37 million.

⁹ CCA - RDC, 2022, p. 10 Ibid., p. 48 ODD indicators, cited in DRC CCA, 2020, p.9

¹⁰ Ibid., p.17

¹¹ DRC UNSCDF 2020-2024

¹² Country programme document for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2020-2024). Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services. DP/DCP/COD/3.

¹³ <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/COD.pdf>

¹⁴ As articulated by one of the respondents: "It is difficult to say how representative women are in the National Assembly and

Senate: the 2018 legislative elections do not give a precise indication of the number of women who were actually elected because they were marred by many irregularities, including cheating".

¹⁵ "Report on the voluntary national review of sustainable development objective", Ministry of Planning, 2020, p.33

¹⁶ DRC Common Country Assessment, 2022, p.30

¹⁷ DRC Common Country Assessment, 2022, p.23

¹⁸ CCA – RDC, 2022, p. 10. See Appendix XII on the dynamics of population movements in North Kivu..

¹⁹ "Report on the voluntary national review of sustainable development objective", Ministry of Planning, p. 48

²⁰ [Observations on the State of Indigenous Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

OVERVIEW OF UN WOMEN IN DRC

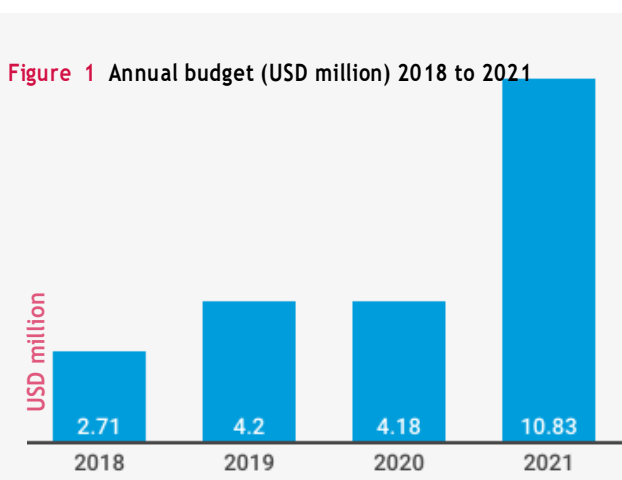
COUNTRY PORTFOLIO

This section of the report, based on document review, provides information data on UN Women's programme in DRC, expenditure, activities, stakeholders and the theory of change.

3.1 Strategic Note 2018-2021

UN Women-DRC's Strategic Note for 2018-2021 has 11 outcomes divided into four impact areas: women's leadership and participation in political life; women's economic empowerment; humanitarian action; and peace and security. It is part of the process of implementing the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2013-2019. It is aligned with the national gender priorities set out in the national growth and employment document (2010-2020), the national gender policy, national sectoral plans and the country's international commitments. The adjustments made by the Country Office in 2020 to contribute to the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic have not been reflected in the strategic note.

The total budget for the 2018-2021 strategic note was 11.5 million USD, i.e. an average of 2.9 million USD per year. Approximately 36.1% (7.87 million USD) was allocated to the Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework (OEEF) and 63.9% (13.9 million USD) to the Development Results Framework (DRF). This budget does not consider contributions from financial partners in the context of joint United Nations initiatives for which UN Women does not take the lead.



Source : data from the "Project Delivery Dashboard" platform (2018-2021) consulted on 23/09/2021

This budget fluctuates from one year to the next, with an average increase of around 71%. However, the non-core budget²¹ has more than doubled by 2021. In contrast to the non-core budget, the core budget and the institutional budget (IB)²² are more important and stable in 2018 and 2019. A total of nine donors have contributed to the funding of the programme between 2018 and 2021. 34%, 27%, 19% and 11% of the budget came from the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the DRC government, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Swedish government respectively.

As for human resources, in September 2021 UN Women-DRC had a staff of 22, 50% of whom were women: one D post, two P posts, three NOC posts, two G posts, eight SB posts, three UNV posts and three consultants. Only 6 employees were "staff" in the sense that they enjoy the rights and privileges of civil servants in the United Nations system. The country office has deployed 3 staff to Goma but it no longer has a presence in Bukavu. To these should be added the support staff for the new programme to promote women's economic rights: the provincial coordinator in Goma and the provincial coordinators in Lubumbashi and Matadi respectively.

Finally, concerning the drafting of the new strategy note (2022-2024), as the successor to the 2018-2019 strategy note, it took several months for the new strategy document to be approved. The new strategy note was not approved by the regional office until November 2021, and further amendments were added in the first quarter of 2022 following a review by head office. This effectively extends the validity of the 2018-2019 strategy note. However, as indicated above, it would be a mistake to consider the 2018-2021 strategic note as the only programmatic reference that has guided the country office since 2018. The new United Nations cooperation framework has been in force since 2020, and UN Women has formally aligned itself with it.

²¹ The "non-core" budget includes resources used for specific requests for catalytic and technical support.

²² The regular budget includes core and IB resources, considered as untied contributions covering, for example, management costs such as salaries and certain programmes.





Table 1: Results framework (DRF) 2018-2021 - Impacts and outcomes

 IMPACT 1: WOMEN LEAD AND PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING AT ALL LEVELS		
SP Outcome 2: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems		
EFFECTS	1.1	A framework of interest, diverse and competent women political leaders is formed.
	1.2	Women are seen as political leaders who are just as legitimate and effective as men
 IMPACT 2: WOMEN, ESPECIALLY THE POOREST AND MOST EXCLUDED, ARE ECONOMICALLY EMPOWERED AND BENEFIT FROM DEVELOPMENT		
SP Outcome 3 : Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy		
EFFECTS	2.1	Increasing land security and women's productivity for sustainable agriculture in a changing climate
	2.2	Barriers to finance are removed and women's capacity to invest in climate-resilient agriculture, market access and value chains is increased
	2.3	The general business climate for SMEs has improved and is conducive to the economic empowerment of women
 IMPACT 4: PEACE, SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION (SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 16)		
SP Outcome 5 : Women and girls contribute to and have a greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and also benefit from natural disaster and conflict prevention and humanitarian action.		
EFFECTS	4.3	By 2024, the prevalence of violence and armed conflict is reduced and the security of people and property is improved, in particular for vulnerable people, refugees/displaced persons, women and young people (UNSDCF outcome 1.1).
	4.4	By 2024, humanitarian organisations and government structures will provide a coordinated, rapid and effective humanitarian response to people affected by crises in accordance with humanitarian norms and principles, with a view to reducing excess mortality and morbidity among those affected (UNSDCF Outcome 3.2).
	4.5	People, especially the most vulnerable, have equitable, high-quality and sustainable access to basic social services, including HIV/AIDS (Outcome 3.1, UNSDCF).
 IMPACT 6: PEACE, SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION ARE SHAPED BY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION		
SP Outcome 6: A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is strengthened and implemented		
EFFECTS	6.1	Humanitarian response planning, frameworks and programming take gender into account
	6.2	Protection and economic opportunities for women displaced by sudden-onset emergencies (conflict/epidemic/disaster) in temporary shelters and host communities
	6.3	By 2024, people living in DRC, especially the most vulnerable (women, children, refugees and displaced persons), enjoy their human rights, in particular, fair access to justice (including juvenile justice), legal identity and protection, by strengthening the judicial and security systems, civil society organisations' capacity to monitor human rights and institutional accountability (UNSDCF 1.2).

3.2 Stakeholders

Various categories of stakeholders took part in the evaluation interviews: the government, civil society organisations, donors and international organisations operating in DRC, including UN agencies and major development aid agencies that have supported (or not) UN Women's work in DRC.

Table 2. Mapping of stakeholders in the implementation of the Strategic Note 2018-2021.

CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION
 Government	Ministry of Gender, Family and Children; Ministry of Planning; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Social Affairs; Ministry of Gender, Family and Children; Ministry of Planning; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Social Affairs; Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI); National Assembly National Secretary 1325
 United Nations agencies	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); World Health Organization (WHO); United Nations AIDS Programme (UNAIDS); World Food Programme (WFP); United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR); United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO).
 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	Federation of Congo Businesses (FEC CNFE); Congolese Network of Innovation Actors (RCAI), Women's Associations, AFIA MAMA, AWLN Youth Caucus; National Commission of Women Entrepreneurs. Permanent consultation framework for Congolese women (CAFCO), National Network of Rural Women's Associations of DRC (RENAFER), National dynamic for women candidates (DYNAFEC) Media Organisation Local and provincial women's election network
 Financial partners	Governments of Japan, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands and Italy Multi-Donor Trust Fund, Women Peace & Humanitarian Trust Fund, National Committee FEM-US, MPTF-SDG Fund; MPTF-UN COVID-19 Respond Fund Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)

3.3 Theory of Change

If the technical capacities of women leaders are strengthened; if various women's networks are supported; if communities understand women's right to political participation, then a network of women leaders can emerge.

If land ownership, agricultural productivity and access to markets are improved to ensure resilience to climate change; if laws and policies become favorable to women's entrepreneurship and agricultural cooperatives, then women will have greater access to economic opportunities.

If institutions master gender-sensitive humanitarian frameworks; if sources of income are created to support the most vulnerable; if the Secretariat on 1325 adopts a solid accountability framework, then humanitarian and peace action will reflect women's leadership.

The evaluation team consulted staff in a participative way on the theory of change of the strategic note. The diagram below outlines its intervention logic.

Figure 2. Theory of Change from the Strategic Note 2018-2021.

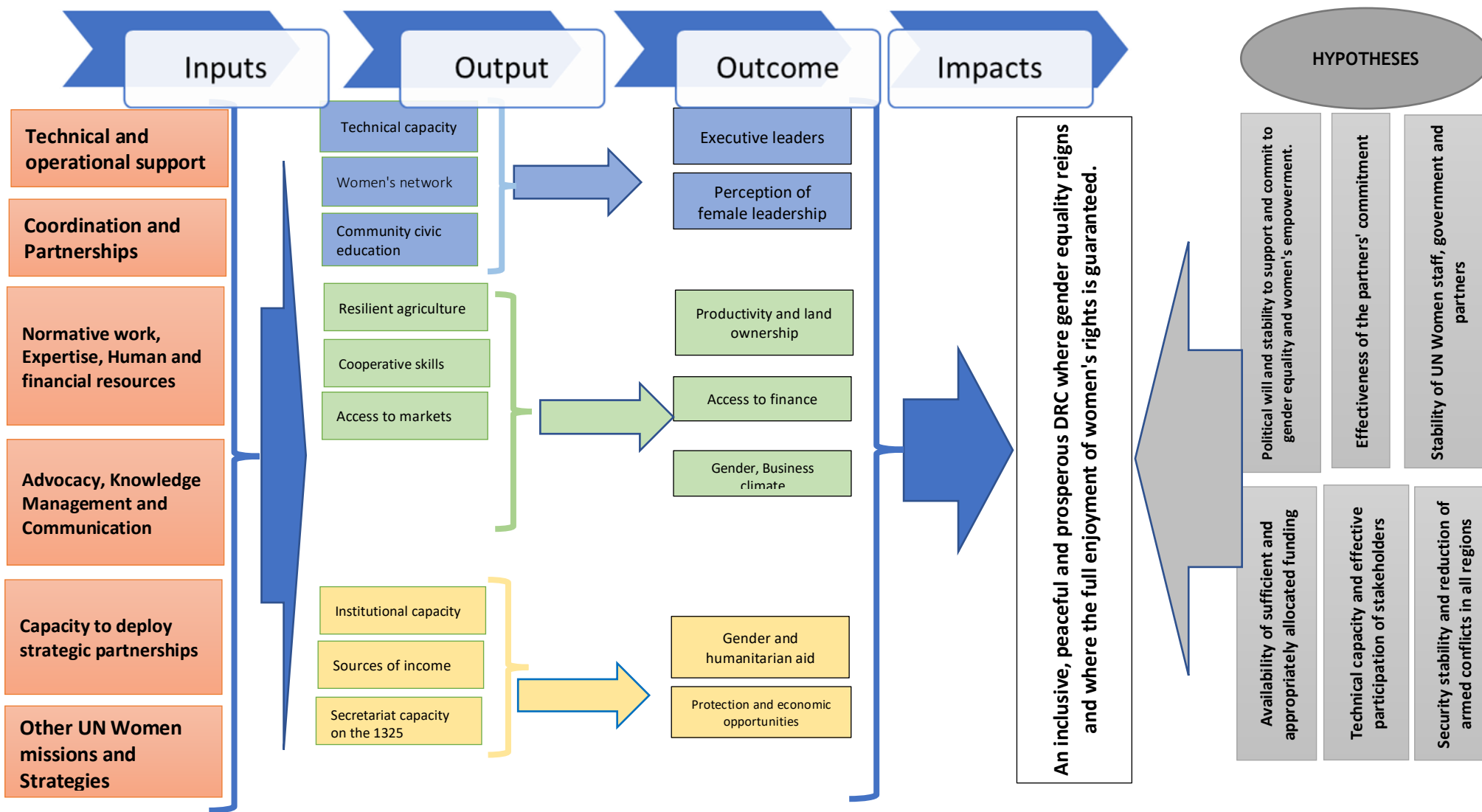




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4. EVALUATION METHOD

4.1 Qualitative Evaluation Approach

The method of this evaluation is essentially qualitative in that it bases its findings more on written data than on numbers, uses open-ended interview questions, incorporates different points of view from multiple sources but on a small population of people, and attaches great importance to context. This non-quantified evidence facilitates nuance in the formative examination of the internal and external determinants of performance, without losing sight of the summative dimension of the evaluation, captured in particular through perceptions of the historical sequence of results and confirmed by field visits or the documentary review. For example, the internal performance factors identified through the comparison of various qualitative sources enable the constraints and advantages of the organisation to be understood. The same qualitative process can be applied to contextual factors to understand the strategic positioning of the organisation being evaluated. The main sources for the evaluation were the documentation made available to the team and the comments collected from respondents selected on the basis of a reasoned choice method.

Document Review

Documentation for this evaluation was provided by the Country Office and collected from various UN Women electronic platforms. The document review was prioritised according to its relevance to the evaluation objectives. It influenced the development of the evaluation tools, guided the analysis and supported the findings. The use of usable secondary data sources helped to reduce redundancy in the collection of primary data.

Survey and interviews

A virtual introductory meeting was scheduled with the programme managers to prepare for the identification of the key stakeholders who would be involved in the data collection process. In the end, 120 people, including 38 men, took part in the interviews over a period of 30 days²³. The selection of respondents was based on an inclusive sampling framework (Annex VIII) according to parameters such as portfolio coverage, stakeholder diversity, knowledge and nature of their involvement in UN Women interventions. Most of the interviews took place in the capital (Kinshasa) during the two-week stay in Goma of two members of the evaluation team. The survey addressed to the 22 staff members included questions relating to the evaluation and those relating to the 2021 internal audit.

This made it long (65 questions) and complex to analyse. That said, the survey did confirm some of the information obtained from the interviews. The participants in the group interviews had been involved in various types of interventions: capacity building; gender mainstreaming in UN interventions; political advocacy in favour of peace and security, political participation, women's economic empowerment and the prevention of violence against women.

Designed based on the terms of reference and the evaluation matrix, the interview guides (Appendix III) cover the evaluation themes and questions, while leaving room for other issues relevant to the Country Office programme. Some interviews were conducted online to overcome the obstacles posed by remoteness, insecurity or occupation. Beneficiaries belonging to the target groups in South Kivu were identified from the lists of implementing partners. The duration of each interview ranged from 20 to 50 minutes, depending on the depth and importance of the interview for the evaluation.

Some of the interviews were conducted remotely to compensate for the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, the vastness of the territory and the lack of security in certain regions. Interviews on the social media, WhatsApp were conducted only in audio and sometimes in groups. Telephone calls were used to overcome connectivity problems. When one of the members of the evaluation team was unable to participate online, minutes were uploaded to a common virtual folder.

Quality Assurance

The evaluation benefited from feedback from members of the Reference Group (Annex II) at key points in the evaluation process and preliminary findings were discussed with the Country Office management team. As expected for country portfolio evaluations, Independent Evaluation Services ensured quality control throughout the process: initial design and synthesis reports were reviewed, commented on, revised, edited and approved.

Collaboration between audit and evaluation initially served to minimise the demands made on respondents. The audit and evaluation teams worked together to harmonise the questionnaires, optimise the availability of respondents for virtual interviews and coordinate the collection and filing of documents. It proved beneficial in that it provided an additional link in the data triangulation process.

²³ In addition to the 19 beneficiaries interviewed in South Kivu, the interviewees came from 32 civil society organisations, 8 donors, 7 UN agencies, 4 government institutions and one academic institution.

4.2 Ethics and inclusiveness of evaluation

As far as possible, efforts were made to minimise the use of professional jargon and to encourage stakeholders to use the language that suited them. Given that two members of the evaluation team were fluent in Swahili and Lingala, the risks of cultural misunderstanding were minimised as no language barriers were encountered.

The gender-sensitive nature of this evaluation is not only based on its subject matter. It focused on the gender and human rights dimensions by adopting:

- Qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis, to capture the nuances arising from the plurality of opinions and the diversity of participants;
- sensitivity, during the data collection phase, to the multiple tasks that our respondents have to perform on a daily basis;
- a global approach imbued with an awareness of the structures that contribute to the inequalities experienced by women, men, girls and boys, particularly those who suffer from multi-sectoral forms of social exclusion including linguistic and ethnic background, economic class, disability, etc.

In this respect, the analysis of the formulation of the strategic note and the reconstruction of the theory of change drew on Sara H Longwe's "Women's Empowerment Framework"²⁴ to

observe that, by omitting the elimination of gender-based sexual violence as an outcome area, the Country Office failed to consciously state the steps required to achieve "empowerment".

The evaluation complied with standards to ensure respect for the human dignity of participants, including disabled people. At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed of their rights (including the right to abstain), the purpose of the evaluation and the use of the information entrusted to the evaluators. Sensitive data obtained during the data collection phase was managed confidentially. For example, information collected online is completely anonymous. At the outset of the interview sessions, the independence of the evaluators was clearly explained, and the participants were given an assurance of confidentiality regarding the treatment of their comments once they had agreed to answer the questions. In addition, the presence of an evaluator during the 'women-to-women' group interviews enabled the beneficiaries to discuss changes in the prevalence of gender-based violence in complete confidence.

EVALUATION METHOD



SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

120 people, including 38 men, took part in the interviews over a period of 30 days. The selection of respondents was based on an inclusive sampling framework



DOCUMENT REVIEW

Document review of 164 files provided by the Country Office and collected in part from various UN Women electronic platforms.



DATA TRIANGULATION

Triangulation validated the key findings by cross-checking information obtained from a variety of sources, including UN Women internal audits.



QUALITY ASSURANCE

The evaluation benefited from feedback from members of the Reference Group, and the preliminary results were discussed with the Country Office management team.

²⁴ The Women Empowerment Framework is also described in the guide country portfolio evaluations

4.3 Data Analysis

The observations made in this evaluation are based in part on a review of 164 files in 22 folders accessible to each of the consultants on "OneDrive". The data collected from the interviews (individual and group) in the notebooks was transcribed into summary tables with a structure similar to that of the data collection tools. The most significant statements were classified in an Excel file, using filtering and sorting functions to identify matches. The evaluation team used its familiarity with the work of UN Women to assess the credibility of the interpretations put forward during the data analysis phase.

The findings were based on corroboration between the most frequent oral information, the written documentation and, possibly, the online survey. By comparing the different statements, the analysis aimed to identify similarities whose frequency could conclusively suggest concordant programmatic facts. During this phase, the points of view expressed are retained for subsequent confirmation whenever their occurrence is estimated to be significantly frequent. This confirmation process, also known as "triangulation", made it possible to validate the main findings by cross-checking information obtained from various sources, including internal audits of UN Women - DRC (2021) and UNDP-DRC (2018 and 2022). Based on these findings, recommendations were formulated and submitted to the Reference Group for consideration.

4.4 Limitations of the evaluation

The inductive approach that characterises this evaluation does not allow the findings to be generalised to other contexts. Its results apply only to the Country Office within the timeframe of the evaluation. It can sometimes be tainted by prejudice and does not allow us to conclude with any assurance that certain events are linked by causal relationships or simple correlations. In order to limit errors, the evaluation is rigorous in the verifiable documentation of objective facts, and logical argumentation through valid analysis and reasoning.

The other major limitation is particularly noticeable in the "effectiveness" sub-section, where some of the data would normally have been collected on one of the organisational platforms, but the results report in the strategic note were not filled in. The team had to contact several programme managers to ask them to share progress reports on the programmes they coordinated.

The face-to-face interviews were held in urban areas, in Goma and Kinshasa. Projects implemented outside urban areas were not visited, which limited the contribution of observation methods to the body of evidence on which the evaluation findings are based.

The timetable for the evaluation was significantly revised as the process of recruiting consultants took longer than expected. Other difficulties made it necessary to enhance the involvement of the evaluation unit at the UN Women Regional Office, while they still maintain their commitment to peer reviews and other quality assurance measures.

Finally, in terms of efficiency, the absence of comparative data meant that it was not possible to carry out a cost-effectiveness analysis to determine whether, given the budget, the outputs achieved could have been obtained at a lower cost. However, the overarching perspective by the evaluation of the country portfolio did not prevent it from questioning the efficiency of the choices made concerning the involvement of partners, regional coverage or personnel management.



Photo ©UN Womens-Ceko

5. EVALUATION FINDINGS

5.1 RELEVANCE

5.1.1 Alignment

FINDING 1

The alignment of the 2018-2021 strategic note with DRC's gender priorities is established through its convergence with the national gender policy (2009), the international conventions to which DRC adheres, and the United Nations framework plan (2013-2017). However, the results area on the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence is provided for in UN Women's global strategy 2018-2021 but is absent from UN Women's strategic note - DRC 2018-2021

The 2014-2017 strategic note was aligned with the framework plan (2013-2017) of the United Nations System for Development of Congo, which itself referred to DRC's sectoral and national priorities, including the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (GPRSP 2011-2015). Following the presidential and legislative elections in 2018, 2019 was marked by a long period of negotiations between the various parties involved in the race for power. As a result, DRC's five-year development plan²⁵ for 2019-2023 has been postponed by a year. Originally, in 2017, the UN Women-DRC strategy note was planned for the period 2018-2019, so that its duration would coincide with the two-year extension of the 2013-2017 United Nations framework plan. In 2020, the new UN cooperation framework came into force while UN Women-DRC was still drafting its new 2020-2024 strategic note, which was not effectively approved until November 2021²⁶.

Similarly, UN Women has extended its 2018-2019 strategic note by one year. During 2019, UN Women was involved in the drafting process of the UNSDCF. Its strategic note was then aligned with national guidelines based on the 2019-2023 development plan and in accordance with the 2009²⁷ national gender policy.

It must be acknowledged, however, that as the 2018-2021 strategic note omits gender-based violence, its alignment with the National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence (SNVBG) cannot be explicitly established. Even considering that UN Women has carried out many activities relevant to the thematic area of SGBV within the framework of programs dedicated to peace, security and humanitarianism, these activities are not based on a coherently articulated path-results²⁸, so it is not easy to characterise their alignment.

²⁵ Otherwise known as "slippage" in political discourse and the media. This one was preceded by another postponement: the 2013-2017 UNDAF was extended by one year to run until December 2018. In theory, it was to be succeeded by a new UNDAF covering the period 2019-2023. In reality, the UNDAF 2013-2017 lasted until 2019, the year in which UN Women's strategic note was supposed to end. However, this was itself extended by two years for reasons internal to UN Women. During the postponement years of the UNDAF, from 2017 to 2019, the new strategic note was to be aligned with the old

UNDAF. Whereas from 2020 to November 2021, this same strategic note was contemporary with the 2020-2024 cooperation framework. Alignment with the latter framework could only take place for the new 2020-2024 strategic note.

²⁶ This late approval of the 2020-2024 strategic note explains why the evaluation focuses on the "2018-2021 Strategic Note".

²⁷ The update of the gender policy (2009) was originally scheduled for 2014. It has reportedly already been revised since 2018 but has not yet been published for reasons that the evaluation was unable to clarify.

²⁸ Approximate translation of « result pathway ».

5.1.2. Positioning

FINDING 2

Through its normative and coordination mandates, UN Women has helped to position gender in the political, development and humanitarian discourse in DRC. Its undeniable contribution to the reform of the Family Code (2016), the periodic campaigns for the emancipation of women, the gender cafés, and its catalytic role among diplomatic circles and at the highest level of the State are all high points cited to support the general perception of the positioning of UN Women DRC. However, the momentum generated at civil society level may have been affected by the interruption of the gender cafés and GTG meetings, which occurred shortly before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic

UN Women's normative mandate is no longer an abstract phrase since the revised Family Code came into force in 2016. According to gender activists, this historic change is one of the highest achievements of the women's movement in DRC. While UN Women is not the only institution to which this progress should be attributed, it is widely acknowledged to have played a key role alongside the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children²⁹ (MGEF), civil society, UNICEF and UNFPA and, to a lesser extent, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO).

There is no doubt that UN Women continues to assert its leadership during periodic campaigns in honor of gender equality (16 Days of Activism, CSW, International Women's Day, etc.). Also, with the introduction of gender cafés that UN Women combines its standard-setting and coordination mandates to put gender issues to the test of public discussion with an informed audience. This type of meeting provides a forum for exchange on issues related to gender, women and girls.

The presence and visibility of UN Women was asserted through the organization of approximately ten gender cafés held every two to three months³⁰.

Although a lull in momentum³¹ between June 2019 and October 2020, the tenth gender café was held under the auspices of the European Union, focusing on the next strategic gender plan 2021-2025. The social momentum generated by the gender café continued through civil society networks than among influential groups such as "One + One" and the "Groupe Inter-bailleurs", in which UN Women plays a central role³². As one UN Women- DRC manager put it, "the 'gender café' concept has opened the door to embassies for us". The First Lady's participation in activities organised by UN Women- DRC³³ has put gender equality on the agenda at the highest level of government.

What concrete impact have resulted from these intellectual discussions on gender? It is not easy to measure the practical consequences or even to establish a direct link with some of the gender-friendly decisions that followed. One thing is certain: by putting the discussion of women's leadership, their economic empowerment and their voice in the peace negotiations on the public agenda, UN Women has succeeded in putting gender on the agenda in Kinshasa.

²⁹ UN Women's essential role is not without limits. As one interview revealed, "Collaboration between UN-WOMEN and the Ministry of Gender is limited to the cabinet level; however, it remains weak with the administration of this ministry, which is the bedrock of gender".

³⁰ In 2017, a year before the 2018-2021 strategic note, UN Women inaugurated its first gender café moderated by the ambassador of the African Union. A succession of speakers took to the podium to discuss topics such as

"Women's political participation and women's movement in the context of elections and decentralisation in the DRC" [3rd edition of gender café, June 2017].

"For effective participation in building sustainable peace, both at community and national level.". [gender café of 14 Feb 2018]

"Opportunities and challenges for women's entrepreneurship

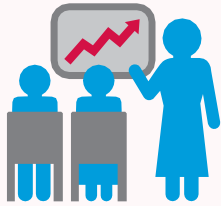
and economic leadership" [7th edition of gender café, 5 Apr 2018].

« A women's leadership journey from Sun City to the present day to capitalise on experience » [8th edition of gender café, 22 June 2018].

³¹ Between June 2018 and October 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic had time to rage in DRC. But not until 24 March 2020, when the Minister of Health declared a state of health emergency. And in the room where the 10th edition of the café-genre is taking place (November 2020), no one is wearing a mask.

³² For more information, see the section on gender coordination.

³³ These include the 16 days of activism in 2020, the presentation of training certificates to the beneficiaries of the Agrifed program in December 2020, its participation in the discussions of the "One + One" think tank co-chaired by the representative of UN Women, etc.

BOX : Gender Café

The first UN Women gender café in Kinshasa was organised in June 2017. But it was the following year that the gender café events were held on a regular basis. The gender café took place mainly in the capital and could bring together between 20 and 80 people around a theme debated by a panel of experts. The audience was made up of gender activists, senior government officials and UN staff. The representative chaired the session, which was facilitated by an ambassador who is a member of the “One + One Gender Group”. The topics covered included women’s political leadership, women’s economic empowerment and women’s contribution to peace negotiations.

There was a total of 8 gender cafés, according to the documentation available. The most intense period of gender café was the first quarter of 2018: from the fourth gender café on the subject of “Dancing for change, singing for peace” on 11 February 2018, to the seventh gender café on 9 April 2018 on “Women’s social and economic empowerment to achieve sustainable and inclusive development in Democratic Republic of Congo”. The eighth gender café took place on 22 June 2018 and focused on “Women’s leadership from Sun City to the present day: capitalising on experience”.

5.1.3 Comparative Advantage**FINDING 3**

Women’s economic empowerment and political leadership and participation are the two areas of impact where UN Women has an undisputed comparative advantage. Although UNFPA has the lead in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence, and other agencies coordinate projects in this area, UN Women contributes through its programmes devoted to peace, security and humanitarian action.

UN Women-DRC plays a leading role in efforts to accelerate women’s participation in political leadership. UN Women owes this reputation more to its convening power rather than its financial resources. For example, UN Women is behind the creation of the women’s organization, DYNAFEC in 2019. Under its impetus, women who lost legislative elections have pooled their individual strengths, regardless of their political orientation. In addition, the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) was launched in DRC under the auspices of UN Women-DRC and the African Union, positioning national efforts at continental³⁴ level. Several African countries followed the DRC’s example, including Cameroon, Sierra Leone and Congo.

UN Women also maintains a relationship of trust with the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). Three years before the 2018 elections, UN Women assigned a programme officer to the CENI to improve the conditions for women’s participation in the elections.

CENI welcomed UN Women’s support at a time when the country had decided to stop accepting electoral assistance from donors.

According to a UN Women staff suggestion thus, “Our comparative advantage lies where we do not tread on the toes of others, in two areas: women’s leadership and political participation on one hand, and women’s economic empowerment on the other”. The support program for women farmers is a promising area in which UN Women is asserting its power to mobilise. The National Network of Rural Women (RENAFER) currently has 5,000 members belonging to more than a hundred organisations in 20 provinces. The involvement of this collective in the implementation of projects does not meet with unanimous³⁵ approval among UN agencies.

However, UN Women - DRC has not consolidated its niche in interventions aimed at helping young girls close the digital gap that separates them from boys³⁶.

³⁴ UN Women’s visibility through the AWLN network was at its highest on 25 November 2021 when President Tshisekedi, then Chairman-in-Office of the AU, was joined by 6 African presidents to inaugurate the 16 days of activism with the Men’s Conference on Positive Masculinity.

³⁵ RENAFER was formed in February 2020, as a result of UN Women - FAO collaboration. The latter did not consider it

necessary to support RENAFER’s involvement in the implementation of projects. In its view, RENAFER, as an umbrella organisation, should confine itself solely to facilitating interaction between member associations.

³⁶ See more details under Efficiency / Economic empowerment and women’s economic empowerment / collaboration with Ingenious City

In terms of online commerce, the opening of a cassava section on the Agromwinda platform has not yet produced conclusive³⁷ results. The virtual shop on the [Agromwinda](#), site was supposed to sell the harvests of the rural women's organisations that make up RENAFAER.

In the other areas of impact, the division of roles between UN agencies is organised in such a way that the gender-based violence (GBV) portfolio falls mainly to UNFPA. UNFPA is responsible for collecting data on GBV, prevention and psychosocial medical response, including in conflict situations. To ensure that the United Nations system is coordinated in the area of GBV, UNFPA has seconded two experts in the field to the Resident Coordinator's office and coordinates the GBV sub-cluster, one of the results of which is the support provided to the Ministry of Gender, Women and Children for the drafting of the national strategy to combat gender-based violence (SGBV). Within the United Nations system, UN Women and UNFPA are not the only agencies working on GBV: UNDP devoted US\$4.9 million between January 2020 and September 2021 to GBV³⁸-related actions. The division of roles between UNFPA and UN Women probably explains the absence of any programming or budgeting by the country office on the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence in the 2018-2019 strategic note.

This programmatic gap on sexual violence is, however, filled at project level: activities dealing with the prevention of gender-based violence are frequently planned as part of projects on the theme of peace, security and humanitarian work.

As for the participation of women in peace and security, UN Women - DRC is counting on joint programming with MONUSCO, alongside OCHA, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, etc., whose collective expertise in the humanitarian field is well established. Should MONUSCO announced departure becomes a reality, it is likely that MONUSCO's "Women, Peace and Security" section will be handed over to the United Nations system, including UN Women. To overcome the void left by MONUSCO, only joint programming will enable UN Women to overcome its limitations in terms of geographical coverage, resources, humanitarian expertise and staff numbers. Furthermore, while UN Women-DRC currently attends meetings of the UN Humanitarian Country Team, it is not certain that this will give it access to a share of the funding mobilised within the exclusive framework of the IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee).

³⁷ For explanations, see the section on economic efficiency/empowerment and women's economic empowerment.

³⁸ Source : Internal audit of UNDP-DRC, March 2022.

5.1.4 Adaptation in the context of crisis

FINDING 4

UN Women was in a favourable position³⁹ for the rapid implementation of emergency measures, particularly those linked to Covid-19 or financed by humanitarian funds specifically earmarked for women. Its contribution in disaster situations, particularly through gender analysis studies, was limited by operational and coordination challenges.

Covid-19 prevention and response projects

The activities undertaken by UN Women - DRC in support of community resilience amid COVID-19 demonstrate its ability to adapt to changing contexts. To this end, it has had to (re)deploy its human resources and make use of existing and potential partnerships with various organisations. The implementation of this special response would not have been possible without the MPTF-WPHF/COVID-19⁴⁰ funds.

When the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, UN Women responded by opening a COVID-19 window in ongoing programs. Virtual consultations are held between UN Women and provincial deputies and mayors to discuss their respective situations and experiences regarding COVID-19. UN Women is also counting on DYNAFEC to raise awareness of the prevention of the pandemic and to distribute resilience kits among women living in disadvantaged areas of Kinshasa, particularly market vendors. RENAHER is responsible for distributing resilience kits⁴¹ to rural women, disseminating prevention messages among the families of its 5,000 members and training several women to produce antiseptics⁴².

In addition, to respond to the pandemic, UN Women is contributing its gender coordination role within the United Nations system as a member of the UN Platform for Response to Covid-19. The amount made available to it to support efforts to prevent and alleviate the effects of Covid-19, as part of the "Concerted action with forcibly displaced women, girls and host communities against consequences of the Covid-19 crisis (DRC)"⁴³ project funded by MPTF, is US\$207,603 in 2020⁴⁴ and US\$295,365 in 2021⁴⁵. A UN Women-DRC project has been set up to contain the resurgence of domestic violence through behavior change communication. It also covers the legal, psychological and medical needs of victims.

Capacity to analyze crisis needs rapidly.

The eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano on 20 May 2021 posed an enormous challenge to UN Women and its ability to adapt. As the evaluation team noted during its mission to Goma, the eruption displaced entire communities, including those who had previously benefited from its projects.

³⁹ For the implementation of WPH or MPT emergency funds, it was sufficient for UN Women - DRC to mobilise 2 or 3 partners already approved (with a known track record on current or recent projects) by the steering committee. On the other hand, a rapid study of the situation of the displaced people of Nyiragongo in the vicinity of the Nyiragongo volcano involved more effort on the part of staff who were already overloaded with work. This explains why UN Women DRC's success in implementing WPH funds through ongoing PCAs does not sufficiently underpin the assertion of its comparative advantage in the delivery of humanitarian kits in disaster or conflict situations or the provision of protection-related services. With better systems, UN Women DRC can certainly position itself in rapid gender analysis and bring its gender expertise to joint humanitarian governance mechanisms.

⁴⁰ The MPTF Project funds have been donated to UN Women, UNFPA and UNHCR.

⁴¹ Under the section devoted to sustainability, the evaluation admits that it was unable to learn from the beneficiaries about the usefulness of the "resilience kits", how long they would last, the possibility of producing them locally rather than importing them in order to increase the number of users, etc...

⁴² In a UN Women report on the results of the 2020 action plan financed by the Swedish embassy, it is stated that "more than 400 women have acquired technical skills in the manufacture of antiseptic soaps and 290 women have been trained in the manufacture of hydroalcoholic gel". The report indicates that 11% of these women have put their knowledge into practice by making antiseptic soap, which they have sold in the market at a profit. If this rate is maintained for a year or two, UN Women will have made a modest contribution to mitigating the economic disruption caused by Covid-19.

⁴³ Amount received on 13 Nov 2020 according to a member of staff.

⁴⁴ In fact \$260,914 according to a UNDP notification (email dated 13 NOV 2020)

⁴⁵ Figures from ATLAS in August 2021

When the volcano erupted, UN Women wanted to carry out a study entitled "Gender Needs Assessment", which would have documented the situation of women, as they represent the majority of those affected. The study would have served as an advocacy tool and would have helped to guide interventions by mapping the vulnerable people affected. For reasons of efficiency, to which we will return later, the study could not be finalised. This confirmed the limitations of UN Women in the humanitarian field: in the interests to expedite the process, UN Women thought it could carry out the study without the involvement of its sister agencies.

Study of the impact of COVID-19

In April 2020, a month after the Ministry of Health officially declared the presence of Covid-19 in DRC, UN Women transferred US\$30,000 to UNDP for the preparation of the "[COVID-19 health and socioeconomic impact study](#)". A month later, the report of the study, co-financed by the AfDB, UNICEF, ILO, UN Women and UNDP, was published.

The report acknowledges that the Covid-19 pandemic "could also lead to a rise in cases of gender-based violence. This violence could also result from the effects of confinement". This quote only conditionally affirms the link between domestic violence and the restrictive measures aimed at containing the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the chapter devoted to the implications of the pandemic for economic and social policies (and the need to revisit the PNSD) does not suggest any particular attention to the plight of women during the pandemic. And when the report acknowledges its own limitations due to the urgency imposed by the crisis, it fails to cite any of the 4 or 5 studies⁴⁶ that would compensate for these shortcomings - on the gender impact of any other health crisis. In addition, out of more than a hundred pages of the "[COVID-19 health and socioeconomic impact study](#)" the specific situation of women is mentioned briefly in three paragraphs⁴⁷, not counting their inclusion in the executive summary.

The omission of gender from the proposals in the study commissioned by the government with the support of the UN system, including UN Women, raises the question of the relevance of this type of collective effort. The question is more relevant given that UNDP had produced a guide⁴⁸ at headquarters level recommending that national and decentralised responses should include the fight against GBV in their formulation and implementation. This is an indication of the limited influence of the One UN Gender Theme Group, as deplored by the 2015⁴⁹ *Gender ScoreCard*. In this respect, the UN system has failed because, through its joint technical support, it has not seized the opportunity to convey its awareness of the direct link between the occurrence of Covid-19 and the increased prevalence of gender-based domestic violence.

Fortunately, this conclusion cannot be generalised because at the same time (May 2020), UN Women Country Office implemented [a project](#) inspired by the 10 pages [guide](#) produced by headquarters, at a lower cost, on instructions and good practice in dealing with incidences of GBV in the context of Covid-19.

Ebola

From the ninth Ebola crisis in May 2018 to its reappearance in 2021⁵⁰, there is no indication that UN Women has been involved in any way. The participants in the interviews agreed on the relevance of conducting studies similar to the one carried out by the *International Rescue Committee*⁵¹ in 2019. A similar study was carried out by UN Women Sierra Leone⁵². UN Women-DRC should have mobilised the resources of the United Nations system, in its gender coordination role, for a similar study. This would be justified given that Ebola has reappeared more than 10 times in DRC, particularly in Equateur province. These studies are effective advocacy tools for mobilising resources to control the resurgence of GBV in the context of an epidemic.

⁴⁶ The proposed studies include (1) "social accounting for 2018 or 2019"; (2) "the effects of Covid-19 on the mining sector (DRC's main growth lever), on the process of transforming economic structures and on food and nutrition situation" (3) "the scientific population and housing census and national land-use planning"; (4) "a programme to diversify the economy and strengthen the competitiveness of the private sector"; (5) "the five-year transport plan for 2020-2024, as the first stage in the implementation of DRC's integrated transport master plan (PDNIT)".
⁴⁷ pages 95, 102 and 103 respectively

⁴⁸ In April 2020, UNDP published an informative book entitled [« Gender-Based Violence and Covid-19 »](#).

⁴⁹ Decision making. The score of 1.5 is far below both the minimum standard and the global average. The score is negatively impacted by the fact that the Coordinator of the

One UN Gender Team is not a part of the UNCT HOA group, and therefore is not best positioned to make the necessary linkages at the highest levels of decision making according to the criteria set forth in the Scorecard based on best international practice. », *Gender Scorecard DRC, 2015*, p. 10.

⁵⁰ The end of this crisis was announced on 16 December 2021, but a [new episode](#) of Ebola, the 14th, broke out in Mbandaka on 23 April 2022.

⁵¹ « [It's all on her shoulders : rapid assessment on gender and violence against women and girls during the Ebola outbreak in Beni, DRC](#) », IRC, March 2019.

⁵² [Report of the multisector impact assessment of gender dimensions of the Ebola virus disease \(EVD\) in Sierra Leone](#).

5.2 EFFECTIVENESS

5.2.1 Women's Political Participation

FINDING 5

The resilience of women toward achieving gender parity, despite the disappointing outcomes of the 2018 elections, can be attributed to the efforts and work of UN Women-DRC carried out by the losers bringing them together within DYNAFEC. Without direct engagement with men within political parties, this advantageous strategy will not be sufficient for UN Women's contribution to a significant improvement in women's political participation in DRC.

At the end of 2018, DRC held several elections by universal suffrage: the election of the President of the Republic, the election of deputies to the National Assembly and the election of deputies to the provincial assemblies. Some feared that the elections would be cancelled, and several observers reported that they went relatively smooth. However, the representation of women was not up to expectations: with only 9.8% of the members of the National Assembly elected in 2018, the rate⁵³ was 4% lower in 2006. This is the most unexpected result of UN Women's efforts to support women's participation in elections.

In view of these disappointing results, the unsuccessful women candidates formed the DYNAFEC association, which opened an office in Kinshasa with the support of UN Women. Subsequently, more substantial support was provided by the international NGO "The Carter Center" as part of the Canadian "Women's Voice and Leadership" programme. The vastness of DRC certainly presents a coordination challenge, but DYNAFEC has responded by creating a WhatsApp group for its geographically dispersed members.

The Swedish Embassy then commissioned a study, through UN Women, to draw lessons from the recent⁵⁴ electoral experience. The resulting roadmap⁵⁵ identified a number of actions, including the following:

1. Adopt binding quotas
2. Encouraging more women to get involved in politics and run for election.
3. To help boost women's self-confidence.
4. Work more with political parties
5. Ensure the engagement of men and boys.

Compared with the strategy note that was drawn up before the 2018 elections, this roadmap represents a significant conceptual advance on the kind of actions required to achieve parity in political leadership. Indeed, of the 5 points in the roadmap, only the second and third benefited from the interventions of the UN Women strategy note. The latter did not directly target men to promote women's political participation. Yet raising men's awareness is the common thread running through the programmatic elements of the roadmap. It is men who are at stake when the roadmap returns to the issue of quotas despite the rejection of 2015 and invites political parties to raise awareness.

None of the 3 outputs of the strategy note relate to lobbying the National Assembly to "block"⁵⁶ Article 13 of the electoral law. The constraint that this would pose is comparable to the actions covered by the first of the five instructions in the roadmap listed above, i.e. "Adopt binding quotas".

Two other programmatic elements of the roadmap that the UN Women strategy note should add to its results framework are:

- Work more with political parties;
- Ensuring the engagement of men and boys.

⁵³ However, it has to be said that only 12% of women (compared with 14% in 2006) were candidates in the legislative elections.

⁵⁴ "Study on the representation and influence of women in politics in DRC", March 2019.

⁵⁵ "The roadmap for women's political participation in DRC",

⁵⁶ Article 13 of the Electoral Law, which is cited as one of the causes of the low rate of women elected, stipulates that each electoral list must take account of parity and disability, but paragraph 3 makes this optional: "failure to achieve parity between men and women during the next elections is not a reason for a list to be inadmissible".

The programmatic advances contained in the roadmap are not reflected in the theory of change for women's political participation proposed by the strategy note. According to the strategy note, the prerequisites for women's autonomy, influence and leadership are as follows:

1. electoral arrangements and frameworks promote gender balance in elections;
2. a critical mass of women leaders is sufficiently prepared and motivated for the electoral race;
3. women are seen as equally legitimate political leaders in society; and
4. women are promoted as leaders in gender-sensitive political institutions.

However, according to the lesson learned from the 2018 elections and based on the experience of 2019 in Nigeria⁵⁷, power dynamics within political parties are the cause of the low representation of women on electoral lists. The strategy note did not foresee an outcome related to the direct engagement of men within political parties to achieve parity.

The challenge in implementing this suggestion in the context of the 2022-2024 strategic note is that several of its results (including the outcomes and outputs of "governance and political participation") are a literal repetition of the wording articulated in the corresponding strategic axis within the UNSDCF. However, this also characterises the indicators, as they are not specific enough to be associated with the mandate of UN Women - DRC:

Table 4 Correspondence between UNSDCF and DRF

UNSDCF OUTPUT	CORRESPONDANCE IN DRF 2020- 2024	OBSERVATION
Output 1.3.1: <i>Citizens, particularly women and young people, have access to information and participate effectively in decision-making bodies and in all sectors of society (political, economic, social and cultural) at national, provincial and local level.</i>	OUTPUT 1.1.1	It is taken literally
Output 1.3.2: <i>Free, transparent and democratic elections are held in accordance with the legislative framework, at all levels and in a secure environment</i>	OUTPUT 1.1.5	It is taken literally
Output 1.3.3: <i>CSOs working in the field of governance have the organisational, technical and institutional capacity to contribute, through citizen participation, to improving the management of public affairs and accountability.</i>	OUTPUT 1.1.3	The UNSDCF output is included in its entirety with the "Women's CSO" specification.

The decision to use the UNSDCF wording does not therefore directly serve the priorities identified in the Roadmap for Women's Political Participation in DRC.

⁵⁷ As UN Women Nigeria has learned, "To be effective and sustainable, UN Women and its partners' efforts must directly target political parties." (5th recommendation of the Country Portfolio Evaluation)

5.2.2. Women Economic Empowerment

FINDING 6

The establishment and empowerment of the national network of rural women (RENAFER) is the greatest achievement of UN Women - DRC in economic impact. The "AGRIFED" flagship program has come up against the commercial restrictions surrounding non-profit organisations and the challenge of implementing online sales.

The strategic note recognizes that 85% of Congolese women are involved in the agricultural sector. It therefore goes without saying that UN Women-DRC has chosen sustainable agriculture as the sector for supporting women's economic empowerment. In reality, given that 69.4% of Congolese women workers live below the poverty line⁵⁸, we should be talking about poverty reduction program.

UN Women's flagship program, "AGRIFED" focuses on climate-resilient agriculture⁵⁹. The first achievement to be credited to UN Women-DRC agricultural program is the establishment of RENAFER in collaboration with FAO in February 2020. Reputed to have more than 2,500 associations spread over 19 provinces, this organisation will make it possible to reach a total of 125,000 rural women and thus overcome the obstacles linked to the vastness of DRC's territory. The initial aim was to estimate the needs⁶⁰ of hundreds of thousands of women by describing their individual profiles. The evaluation team was unable to confirm the completeness of a database that was supposed to list the profile details of each member of the thousands of rural women's associations.

At its conception, this program had 4 components: (1) women's right to land and land security; (2) access to means of production and technologies; (3) access to financial services; and (4) participation in value chains and markets. In practice, only access to technology and participation in value chains have been implemented. During the field mission, we did not hear of any activities aimed at facilitating access to financial services. This is a consequence of the commercial restrictions imposed on non-profit associations.

Furthermore, no progress has yet been made in the area of land ownership, even though the program included lobbying traditional authorities and political administrators in the provinces of Kinshasa (Bateke plateau) and Kwilu (Idiofa, Gungu, Blungu) for sustainable access to land for women.

For the component relating to participation in value chains, UN Women has chosen to focus on cassava⁶¹ production, processing and distribution chain. Consumed by the majority of the population, cassava can be supplemented with vitamins and minerals to meet the country's nutritional needs. The bulk of the activities consisted of training a total of 190 women, as stated by the "Réseau congolais des acteurs-e-s de l'innovation" (Congolese Network of Innovation Players), which is headed by Professor Yandju, an expert in food biotechnology. The courses covered the treatment and processing of cassava (making bread flour, cakes, doughnuts, waffles and spaghetti), nutritional concepts, the rules of hygiene and conservation of the various products, and basic financial knowledge. Similar training has been provided by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). In order to bring together as many people as possible, RENAFER invited women farmers from different parts of the country to take part in these training courses. For example, around a hundred women from 10 different territories met in October 2021 in the village of Mawunzi Mansende (Mbanza-Ngungu, Kongo-Central) for a workshop run by IITA.

It is still too early at this stage to count the number of women who have been able to sell their value-added products following the application of the lessons taught by IITA, RENAFER and other trainers.

⁵⁸ Source: UN Women, Women Count, Country Database, 2021. The same source indicates that 66.4% of working men live below the poverty line.

⁵⁹ For this impact area, the TDC in the 2018-2021 strategy note reads: If (1) women farmers realize rights to land and secure land tenure; if (2) they have equal access to productive resources, services and technologies for sustainable farming; if (3) they attain the financial capacity to invest; and if (4) they participate fully in green value chains and markets; then (5) women farmers are economically empowered and resilient in a changing climate;

because (6) the root causes and drivers of gender gaps in agriculture have been removed.

⁶⁰ In her speech launching the RENAFER network in February 2020, the UN Women representative announced the imminent launch of "an exhaustive database, bringing together all the rural women's organisations in the DRC". This "(...) will provide a more accurate picture of the needs and profiles of rural women in the country".

⁶¹ The project documents mentioned cassava and maize, but the latter crop did not subsequently appear in the reports and discussions.

Assuming that a total of 300 to 600 women were trained by IITA and RENAFER and received starter kits, it is estimated that only about ten of the women⁶² were actually able to put into practice the lessons on producing bread, waffles and other pastries from cassava flour.

These modest results should, in our opinion, bring the cooperative processing/marketing model back into the limelight, so that equipment costs can be covered quickly and risks reduced. But the transition to a new organisational form will not be straightforward because of the commercial restrictions associated with RENAFER's legal status as a not-for-profit association. In the light of discussions with the various parties involved, the focus at this stage is on delivering training courses and less on organisational strategies to enable the associations to make a sustainable profit.

Finally, the technology component of the program is still in its early stages. In June 2021, UN Women established partnership with the organization [Agromwinda](#) to set up its "Buy from Women-DRC" platform. There is no separate "Buy from Women-DRC" website. When you go to the AGROMWINDA website to look for products sold by RENAFER women farmers, you have to browse through the various product sections (computers, wigs, telephones, etc.) before you get to the food products. This is in fact a sub-category under the [tubes](#) department of the various sections of the AGROMWINDA virtual commerce platform. There are no by-products yet, but rather cassava chips for sale under the "Tubers" section, divided according to the locality of production or storage⁶³.

It was not possible for the evaluation to gather information on the volume of cassava sold by RENAFER member associations through the platform. Given the recent nature of the cooperation agreement between UN Women and AGROMWINDA (June 2021), it will first be necessary for rural women and the public to familiarise themselves with the online sales tool.

Secondly, we anticipate logistical difficulties, particularly with regard to river, rail, road and air transport to deliver orders. The Congo, Kasai and Ubangi rivers form a natural transport system that can only be used during the day. Air transport is expensive, and the railways are in need of rehabilitation. Only 10% of the road network is usable, which isolates Kinshasa from most of the provinces.

TUJENGE STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) is the second component of the Buy From Women technology program. Implemented in partnership with IT company [Ingenious City](#)⁶⁴, the program trained nearly 50 young women between April 2020 and March 2021 who wanted to get involved in digital innovation. The aim of the project was to stimulate female entrepreneurship in the field of artificial intelligence. Even though no robotics start-ups resulted from the training provided to the two cohorts of young women, the project was seen as a relevant way of catching up with the digital backwardness of women. For most of our respondents, over and above the practical results of the project, the essential message sent out by UN Women is that the gendered stereotypes associated with technology must be broken.

Apart from the significant educational advantage of breaking down the prevailing perceptions of the respective aptitudes of girls and boys about technology, the link between the computer incubation program and the rest of the Agrifed program is not very clear. Of the 28 project titles explored by the girls, only 6 were indirectly related to agri-food and only 1 of the projects proposed by the participants was directly related to the interests of the Agrifed⁶⁴ women farmers.

These results should inspire caution regarding technology-related initiatives. Reservations were expressed in the overall assessment of UN Women's approach to innovation, in particular the fact that their logistical assumptions (equipment, electricity, connectivity) are not assured, which limits their sustainability and inclusiveness, particularly regarding the most vulnerable⁶⁵ women.

⁶² We were unable to verify this assertion by visiting the production sites.

⁶³ As none of the sub-headings explicitly mentions RENAFER, we can guess that the associations concerned are those whose locality is followed by the reference "Associations des Femmes (...)" which explicitly mention the word "Femmes", i.e.: Bulungu [Kwilu (Association des Femmes Vendeuses de Bulungu)], Kabata [Kwilu (Association des Femmes Productrices de Kabata)], Idiofa [Kwilu (Association des Femmes Vendeuses d'Idiofa)]. The other origins of the cassava sold within the framework of the RENAFER-AGROMWINDA collaboration (with the support of UN Women) are the warehouses of Bokuda (Sud-Ubangi), Yembongo (Kinshasa), Mukoko [Kwilu (Organisation Paysanne des Exploitants forestiers Site Mukoko)], Gungu [Kwilu (Organisation d'intervention Agricole pour le Développement de

Gungu)]. In fact, after checking, only cassava chips from Bulungu and Idiofa are on sale at the Agromwinda site. The project has also been implemented in Gungu territory, but its cassava pods are not on sale at the Agromwinda site. Prices per kilo ranged from 38,000 CDF to 75,000 CDF.

⁶⁴ Only the project entitled « Web and mobile platform allowing farmers to have access to local market information and to better sell their crops to avoid post-harvest losses » has a direct link with the agri-food sector.

⁶⁵ « Buy from Women is a clear example, as it is unlikely that many poor or marginalized women will be able to use the platform because they lack internet connectivity, electricity, literacy and digital literacy. », IEAS, « Corporate formative evaluation of UN Women's approach to innovation », 2021, pp.9, 28.

5.2.3. Sexual and gender-based violence and women's participation in peace and security processes

FINDING 7

Women's participation in peace processes remains very low. Modest progress towards community cohesion following the contribution of humanitarian projects has been undermined by the resumption of conflicts with rebels and neighboring countries.

As we have already seen, the strategic note does not include a result relating to the elimination of sexual violence. However, this theme is reflected in programs aimed at the participation of women in peace and security processes. In this area, UN Women's contribution has been mainly through a collaboration agreement with MONUSCO and the implementation of projects directly targeting vulnerable women, particularly internally displaced persons.

Women's leadership in conflict resolutions

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2556 (18 December 2020) called on the administrative authorities to "ensure the full, effective and genuine participation of women at all stages of this process". The resolution welcomed "the systematic consideration of gender issues". MONUSCO's gender unit was set up precisely to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout the mission's operations. This coincides with UN Women's peace and security objective of involving women in the protection of civilians and in efforts to maintain and promote peace and security.

In concrete terms, this objective should result in:

- representation of women in negotiation, peacekeeping and peace-building processes (involving women civil society leaders and members of organisations in conflict prevention and resolution, public institutions and decision-making);

- the inclusion of women's networks in the deployment of advisors as civilian and military for the protection of women and men;
- the prevention of sexual violence and the rehabilitation of survivors.

In reality, there has been limited progress made on women's leadership in conflict resolution. MONUSCO's gender unit is part of the UN mission's political department. However, this department no longer plays the leading role it did when the mission was called MONUC. In a context where conflicts persist despite several decades of presence by UN forces, MONUSCO sometimes struggles to make its political role understood by the population⁶⁶ as the elections scheduled for the end of 2023 approach. On the other hand, MONUSCO's protection role is sometimes appreciated⁶⁷ and sometimes criticized, as shown by the [hostile demonstrations](#) by the population, who cite its lack of results despite 21 years of presence in the DRC.

As current events confirm, in a state of emergency⁶⁸ where the military and security approach takes precedence, the populations that have not managed to flee the territories occupied by the rebels are forced to support the rebel organisations. Under these conditions, it is out of the question for the subjugated populations to participate in the peace efforts. Secondly, as the rebel movements do not involve women militarily in their actions, women remain marginalised during peace negotiations. There are rarely any women combatants on either the rebel or government side.

⁶⁶ DRC: women demonstrate in Goma to demand the departure of MONUSCO

⁶⁷ "(...) a question asked by a journalist about the alleged ineffectiveness of MONUSCO in the field. "Our colleagues and I often go out into the field. We meet representatives of the population. We often hear more positive things than those who think that MONUSCO has done nothing for security for nearly 20 years (...) But the people say to us: stay and be more present." Comments by the Deputy Secretary General taken from the DRC Prime Minister's Office website

[<https://www.primature.cd/public/2021/10/21/re-trait-progressif-et-echelonne-de-la-monusco> - the-prime-minister-sama-lukonde-met-with-the-deputy-secretary-general-of-lonu-in-charge-of-peace-maintenance-operations/]

⁶⁸ On 6 May 2021, Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi declared a state of emergency in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu. The aim was to restore peace at a time when these provinces were under attack from armed groups. One year on, several MPs continue to point out the lack of preparation that preceded this decision, the absence of military objectives and the absence of a strategic action timetable.

BOX

These views are corroborated by an analysis⁶⁹ published in 2021 by Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security with the support of the Canadian government. The Institute gives a mixed assessment of the successive UN missions MONUC and MONUSCO.

“EFFECTIVENESS - After 20 years in the DRC, MONUSCO’s impact on peace and stability remains contested. A 2019 assessment of the mission’s effectiveness credits MONUSCO and MONUC with a number of positive strategic results, including preventing a recurrence of major violence, creating a permissive environment in which foreign and domestic actors could carry out economic activity, contributing to the functioning and creation of crucial infrastructure such as airports, roads, and telecommunications, and enhancing civic space and civil society. However, MONUSCO’s performance on the protection of civilians is varied, and by some accounts, has diminished the state’s role in preventing violence and protecting civilians. On a more fundamental level, the mission has generally failed to invest in the long-term political change necessary to build and sustain peace in light of its withdrawal.

Consultations with MONUSCO personnel and local actors sought to uncover how stakeholders conceive effectiveness in the DRC context, and whether or not they believe the mission is effective. Interviewees defined effectiveness in the following ways, from most to least common:

- Protection of civilians;
- Consultation with locals;

- Completion of assigned, concrete tasks;
- Creation of visible change on the ground;
- Provision of vocational training and capacity-building for locals. Views on the effectiveness of the mission varied widely.

The following are notable sentiments expressed by stakeholders:

- MONUSCO generally fails to protect civilians and respond quickly to alerts;
- Peacekeepers sexually abuse and/or exploit local women, boys, and girls;
- Peacekeepers are distant from and disrespectful towards local civilians;
- MONUSCO’s quick-impact projects are very beneficial for the local community;
- The FIB is more responsive, less burdened with bureaucracy, and therefore more effective than the rest of MONUSCO;
- The mission’s radio station—Radio Okapi—is very useful at relaying information about attacks;
- MONUSCO mandates do not reflect conditions on the ground.

At national level, voices are being raised to put an end to the war. This is the case of the NGO Rien sans les Femmes (RSLF), whose peace mediator says: “At national level, women and young women are represented at 26.2%⁷⁰, which is a fairly low proportion, even though women are the main actors in peace, because they have the natural ability to act in the peaceful resolution of conflicts. In peace mechanisms and initiatives, 31% of the 11 coordination points targeted by the project are women”⁷¹.

The talks recently held in Nairobi with the mediation of Kenya were not notable for the presence of women at the negotiating table. Only the international framework would lend itself to significant participation by women, by combining the efforts of women’s organisations such as the African Union’s African Women’s Committee for

Peace and Development or the non-governmental organisation “Femmes Africa Solidarité”, with the crucial work of Congolese civil society organisations as umbrella.

Changes brought about by UN Women projects in humanitarian contexts

Through the implementation of various humanitarian projects, some of which have been funded by MONUSCO, UN Women has been able to address different forms of vulnerability resulting from the instability created by the armed conflicts in Kasai, Tanganyika, Ituri, North and South Kivu.

Some observations⁷² were made about the following projects following interviews and field visits organised in Goma (North Kivu). These projects had been selected on the basis of various criteria, including the amount of advances disbursed and accessibility.

⁶⁹ CASE STUDY OF THE United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, May 2021

⁷⁰ The evaluation was unable to consult the study carried out by RSLF to find out how this participation rate was calculated..

⁷¹ Announcement made publicly on 29 April 2022 by Annie Bamba (Rien sans les femmes) on the study on the participation of women and young women in peace mechanisms and initiatives in the 11 RSLF coordination target points.

⁷² See Annexes VIII and IX: information collected in Goma

Table 5 - Samples of selected projects

Ref. ATLAS	INITIATIVE
125817	Action concertée avec les femmes, les filles déplacées et les communautés d'accueil contre les conséquences de la crise de la COVID-19 et les VBG au Nord-Kivu
121761	Lutte pour l'éradication des violences sexuelles et basées sur le genre en ville de Goma et en territoires de Nyiragongo, Masisi, Ruthuru
115109	Appui à la réinsertion des femmes victimes de violences de la part des groupes armés et renforcement de capacité en vue de lutter contre les violences basées sur le genre à Mugunga, Rusayo, Kibumba, Muja
121761	Assistance socioéconomique et juridique au service de la lutte contre les abus sexuels, la défense des droits des veuves et filles démunies aux alentours des carrés miniers en provinces du Nord et du Sud-Kivu/RDC

Based on the presumed link between conflict and poverty, several projects implemented in this unstable region have an income-generation component and raise awareness of women's participation in decision-making. The supposed⁷³ benefit of implementing these modest projects is to facilitate the "humanitarian-development transition" in post-conflict areas. For the purposes of the evaluation, it is more realistic to consider that these projects contribute to greater cohesion at community level. As reported by the members of the evaluation team on their return from their mission to South Kivu:

*"The women who received agricultural training as part of project, 115109 on Economic Empowerment and the Elimination of GBV emphasised in the focus groups that they had increased their capacity for innovative approaches to farming and, consequently, their income. Although they said they were now able to manage their farming activities independently, without the support of the agronomist who accompanied them throughout the project, they mentioned that they would appreciate receiving continuous ad hoc technical support."*⁷⁴

The benefits of these projects sometimes extend beyond the people who receive UN Women's support.

*"Neighbours and family who had not benefited from the project were able to learn farming techniques directly from them, underlining the positive impact of the project on the wider community"*⁷⁵.

The training on human rights also had an impact on the family decisions of those who took part.

*"The focus group with beneficiaries also indicated that changes in behaviour conducive to greater gender equality had taken place in their communities. One participant presented the case of her teenage daughter, who became pregnant after being sexually abused. Contrary to custom, she and her husband facilitated the girl's return to school, a choice she attributed to the greater knowledge of women's rights she had gained by participating in the awareness-raising sessions included in the psychosocial support pillar of the same project. This episode has been characterised as an important step and has triggered discussions in their network about the exclusion that women and girls traditionally suffer as a result of abuse"*⁷⁶.

The implementing partners interviewed also reported changes in behaviour and better protection of women's rights in the target communities. However, it was not possible to assess both the extent of change and the contribution of the project due to the project indicators and monitoring system in place.

*"When asked how these changes are captured, UN Women staff and implementing organisations have indicated that this remains a challenge. The latter only have the individual success stories of beneficiaries as the main method of highlighting the changes that have occurred"*⁷⁷

The few changes mentioned above are constantly being called into question by the resumption of hostilities between the government and the rebels on the one hand, and on the other, tensions with neighbouring countries where [the rebels](#) fleeing from the government army supported by MONUSCO.

⁷³ "Post-conflict areas of the country require greater innovation to respond not only to obvious needs that follow conflict, but also to attend to those needs for decentralization, stability and development. This allows for stabilization and development processes to take place as well as longer term interventions and strengthening of the resilience factor in communities having been assisted with humanitarian aid. This element of transition from humanitarian towards development will be factored into

UN Women's programming particularly in the economic empowerment component. » note stratégique 2018-2019, p.5

⁷⁴ See Annexes VIII and IX: information collected in Goma.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

5.2.4. Gender Coordination

FINDING 8

In a context where the Ministry of Gender does not have the resources required to make its voice heard, several supplementary or complementary gender consultation mechanisms have spontaneously appeared over the last four years. However, their continuity requires regular technical monitoring, which the size of UN Women's staff does not allow.

Interviews held with various stakeholders very often agree on the critical role played by the UN Women representative in ensuring that there is a torch of gender equality carried out by the UN team, the diplomatic circle of "Friends of Gender" and the highest government officials, including the First Lady. This is the case of the "Gender Donor Group", also known as One + One Gender, which brings together the agencies of the United Nations system, the European Union, the IMF and a number of embassies interested in gender issues⁷⁸.

Apart from this common objective, the members of the "One + One Gender" group represent donors in DRC: Spain, Belgium, IMF, Netherlands, Sweden, European Union, etc. Hence its other name, "Coordination inter-bailleurs pour le genre"⁷⁹. Donors such as Japan, China and South Korea are not members, but they tend to confirm the Euro-American character of the "One + One Gender" group. In 2021, this group had four priorities: combating sexual violence, strengthening women's economic power, women's political leadership, and women's participation in peace and security.

Sources agree, however, that the high-level commitments described above do not have a technical⁸⁰ counterpart at Country Office level. When asked about the "One UN Gender Team", several UN staff members indicated that it is most active in preparing major periodic events such as 8th of March, Women's Day

or the 16 Days of Activism, and that it has been consulted on the drafting of strategic documents such as the UNSDCF or the CCA. Apart from the rarity of its meetings, which was noted long before Covid-19, its main challenge is the hierarchical level of agency staff representation, as denounced since the 2015 *Gender Scorecard*. Added to this is the fact that the *One UN Gender Team* does not take part in country team meetings.

The evaluation did not gather sufficient information on the activities of the Gender Thematic Group (GTG) because, according to sources in the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children, it had stopped meeting before the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2010, UN Women and the Ministry of Gender had worked together to define the GTG's mission and objectives, as well as its institutional remit, in a 36-page document. The document identifies various⁸¹ sub-working groups but does not include a sub-working group on women's participation in peace and security processes.

Joint programs, particularly through various inter-agency mechanisms such as the WPHF humanitarian fund, collaboration with MONUSCO and the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic, have created synergies between the work of UN Women and the UN agencies.

⁷⁸The ambassadors take it in turns each year to co-chair the "One+One", which is permanently chaired by the UN Women representative. During the evaluation team's field mission, the "One + One Gender Group" was co-chaired by the UN Women representative and the Swedish ambassador. In an interview with us, he described the "One + One" as "a very informal strategic group whose members are ambassadors and representatives of the United Nations system and the IMF". Its objective is "to advance the gender agenda in DRC".

⁷⁹Not to be confused with the "Feminist friends" or "Feminist Seven" group made up of Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands and European Union.

⁸⁰The technical functions that merit attention are the revitalisation of the One UN Gender Group and the Civil Society Consultation Group, the follow-up to the recommendations of the Gender Scorecard, and the advocacy for the establishment of a peace and security sub-working group within the Gender Thematic Group.

⁸¹These include the Sub-Working Group on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (p.16-20), the Sub-Working Group on Gender Equality and Women's Legal Empowerment (p.21-25), the Sub-Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (p.26-30) and the Sub-Working Group on Women's Political Participation and Leadership (31-35).

Furthermore, It should be noted that the United Nations Cooperation Framework is gender-sensitive, in terms of its contextual analysis, its programmatic principles, the formulation of its results framework and its theory of change. Through joint initiatives, UN Women combines the exercise of its operational and coordination mandates. This is the case with the Country Team's contribution to the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The joint annual organisation of the 16 Days of Activism is an opportunity to combine normative, programmatic and coordination mandates. However, while some acknowledge UN Women's contribution to gender coordination, particularly through the leadership of the Program Management Team, sources in the United Nations system suggest that "the Office should have had more staff than that". UN Women's expertise could have been called upon more regularly during the periodic reviews and reports on the implementation of the cooperation framework (UNSDCF).

In theory, the Civil Society Consultation Group is another structure provided for in the country office's modalities of engagement with civil society. Given the discontinuation of the gender thematic group, this consultation group would have served as an alternative platform for the participatory engagement of civil society organisations. Unfortunately, this consultation group has long since been put on hold. Various interviews, including with the country office representative, have not revealed any desire to revitalise it. However, in a context where gender cafés have not been held since 2019, the dialogue sessions with the Consultation Group are opportunities for UN

Women to play its role as a bridge between stakeholders and thus provide a platform for discussion between the government and feminist organisations. Among the latter, the dialogue would enable better coordination between actors who are aiming for the same objectives. The evaluation found that there was a lack of coordination between DYNAFEC, AWLN-RDC and RSLF, each of which, in its own way, aims to promote women's political participation. The Consultation Group does not only bring together organisations funded by UN Women. For example, RSLF is a direct recipient of funds from the Swedish Embassy, which also provides financial support for each of the outcomes of the UN Women strategic note.

The 2015 Gender Scorecard did not leave much trace in the collective memory of UN Women-DRC and the One UN Gender Theme Group. Even in March 2018, at the end of a "gender accountability framework training" facilitated by UN Women - WCARO in which 36 UN staff members participated, a concern for recollection was expressed. It was then recommended to "share the 2015 Gender Scorecard report: if the report is still relevant (sic), to propose an improvement plan based on the recommendations. Otherwise, launch a new Gender Scorecard⁸²". In November 2021, during the evaluation mission, very few of the UN Women staff interviewed were aware of the 2015 Gender Scorecard.

Yet the 2018 strategic Plan document refers to it as "A Gender Scorecard was also initiated within the UNCT in 2015 to aim (sic!) UN Women to improve gender coordination⁸³".

⁸² Recommendation no. 2 from the summary of the training course held on 4-8 March 2018, Kinshasa.

⁸³ Strategic Note 2018-2019, p.5.

5.2.5. Monitoring and Evaluation

FINDING 9

The strategic note was implemented without a functional monitoring, reporting and evaluation system. The virtual absence of field missions or “spot-checks”, the omission of annual reports on the RMS platform from 2018 to 2021 do not allow UN Women-DRC to monitor and report accurately on progress towards results. There have been no surveys/studies of baseline data for portfolio results indicators, which deprives the Office of visibility on results achieved.

The 2018 strategic note committed to a results-based management⁸⁴ approach to document results through direct monitoring of projects, through field visits. However, as admitted by the program officers and confirmed by the civil society organisations on which UN Women-DRC relies to implement its programs, there have rarely or never been any visits by UN Women-DRC staff. The Covid-19 pandemic further discouraged any willingness to undertake missions in 2020. Online sessions were then organised with partners⁸⁵. Some of the organisations we met in Kinshasa and Goma said they were surprised at the lack of replies to their emails. However, it must be acknowledged that stakeholders' requests can sometimes exceed the country office's staff capacity.

The strategic note 2018-2021 prioritised⁸⁶ the development of a baseline data study. This promise has not been fulfilled, limiting UN Women's ability to measure progress in its results. The [previous](#) country portfolio evaluation commented on this point⁸⁷. Five years on, it has to be said that between January 2018 and October 2022, the Office operated without a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. To compensate for this absence, it is planned that each Program Specialist will be responsible for this function, as Monitoring and Evaluation will be included in their terms of reference: “The country office has integrated monitoring and evaluation and resource mobilization in the terms of reference of each program specialist to ensure that these two thematic areas become fully mainstreamed in the daily activities of each staff⁸⁸”.

But this breakdown of monitoring tasks across different program officers is not working: the UN platform Results Management System (RMS) has not displayed an annual report since the last evaluation of the strategic note in 2014-2017. The years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 have therefore passed without UN-Women DRC's programmatic progress being reflected on RMS. Apart from the annual reports, RMS does not display the quarterly monitoring of indicators for the year 2021. In the event of failure or incapacity, it is in principle the regional office that takes over from the country office. But given that, in the case of DRC, the representative was supervised by the Executive Director, the regional office did not have enough leeway to intervene. This hierarchical situation put UN Women's regional architecture to the test.

Finally, we were able to observe that certain activities planned in the humanitarian field relate to a theme not mentioned in the results framework of the strategic note: the fact that interventions relating to sexual violence are carried out in practice in the field, without being deliberately reflected in the planning documents, limits visibility of the extent to which an entire area of UN Women DRC's work is being carried out.

The lack of visibility is felt more because UN Women - DRC has not conducted an evaluation since 2017. Added to this are losses of institutional memory, described under the “Efficiency” section (Audit Issue 10), which can be detrimental to the exercise of UN Women's mandate. One example is the oversight surrounding the 2015 *Gender Scorecard*.

⁸⁴ « A results-based management approach for monitoring, reviewing, reporting and evaluation to track progress of the programme will continue to be employed in implementing of the present strategic. Direct project-monitoring activities, driven by periodic progress reports and field visits when applicable, will be conducted on an ongoing basis, utilizing the United Nations Coordination Framework monitoring and evaluation framework/systems. UN Women DRC will also develop a Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF) with detailed performance indicators and time monitoring. Annual Work Plans will be reviewed at the beginning of each calendar year to make adjustments as required. » Strategic Note, 2018-19, p.8

⁸⁵ This is in line with the intentions set out in the strategy document: « UN Women DRC Office will conduct capacity building activities for partners in Result Based Programming and Monitoring. » Strategic Note 2018-19, p.9.

⁸⁶ “The first monitoring and evaluation priority will be the establishment of a baseline study and the elaboration of the monitoring and evaluation framework. » Strategic Note 2018-19, p.9

⁸⁷ This relates to Finding No. 12 and Recommendation No. 3 of the 2014-2017 CPE.

5.3 EFFICIENCY

5.3.1. Office management structure

FINDING 10

Staff departures have affected the programmatic and coordination functions of UN Women DRC, and the high number of vacant posts hinders the optimal implementation of the strategic note. The small size of its operations unit leads to delays in the approval and execution of transactions, including those relating to procurement, recruitment and advances to partners.

At the time of the country office visit in October 2021, there were 7 staff members (3 international, 4 local), and 17 non-staff contract holders (8 local Service Contractors (SC), 1 international Service Contractor (SC), 3 local United Nations Volunteers and 5 Special Service Agreements (SSA) consultants). At the time, 58% of the staff were women. A number of posts were vacant due to the large number of staff leaving⁸⁸ and the slow pace of recruitment. Most of the departures of qualified staff were due to the uncompetitive nature of UN Women's contracts. Indeed, the proportion of staff holding Fixed Term Appointments (FTA) contracts is 29%, which is low compared to UNDP staff whose said proportion is 51% in June 2018. The risk posed by job insecurity was recognised in 2017, when the strategic note promised that stabilisation measures would be taken through rewarding⁸⁹ more contracts.

- The departures and insecurity have had several consequences for the running of the office. The first is the tension experienced by staff in optimising the exercise of UN Women's triple mandate. Torn between the respective demands of coordination, normative and operational work, the programmatic component of the staff was forced to prioritise emergencies. As a result, the concern for balance and coherence between the three elements of the mandate became secondary.
- The monitoring of activities related to UN Women's coordination mandate suffered particularly from the departure of staff, whether it was the regular activities of the One UN Gender Theme Group, the gender theme group or the monitoring of gender mainstreaming in studies or policies;

- According to the 2021 audit, documents and accounting records for the digital incubation project were lost when the finance assistant left for another UN agency (Audit Issue Nr. 6). Consequently, at the time of the audit, it was difficult to report on the selection procedure for this partner.

The concerns (or 'issues') identified have in turn had an impact on the effectiveness of UN Women's interventions:

- there were delays in most operational processes, due to a slowdown in approvals :
- after the departure of the Deputy Representative, the only person with approval authority in the Internal Control Framework (ICF) remains the Country Representative, creating bottlenecks (Audit Issue Nr. 11);
- reporting lines within program teams have become increasingly blurred. Most staff now report directly to the country representative (Audit Issue Nr. 7). This, combined with the scarcity of weekly meetings, made it difficult to circulate information. As a result, the pandemic has exacerbated the working tendencies, reduced the pooling of resources and opened the door to overlaps.

⁸⁸ 13 in total, including that of the deputy representative following her resignation.

⁸⁹ «The service contracts will be transformed progressively into FTAs based on mobilized non-core resources. »

5.3.2. Choice of partners

FINDING 11

Almost all the funds advanced by UN Women have been entrusted to civil society organisations, which has marginalised government partners.

When we look at the list of national organisations or institutions that have received funding from UN Women - DRC within the framework of formal partnerships, the vast majority belong to civil society. Partnerships with local women's networks have certainly enabled UN Women's message to reach marginalised communities and groups, contributing to improved attitudes/behaviors towards gender equality and women's rights. But these partnerships with non-governmental organisations should not have meant avoiding the government. In 2020, there was still one provincial ministry among the recipients of UN Women advances. And in 2021, 100% of the advances to partners were granted to non-governmental organisations. As is commonly known, the Ministry of Gender receives a comparatively lower allocation in the country's budget. Its share of government allocations does not exceed 1% of the State budget. Yet this ministry has not received any funds from UN Women-DRC since 2019.

UN Women - DRC's financial commitments have not include the government by the following extracts from the 2018-2019 strategy note: « *The country office will extend and formalize its partnerships with non-traditional Ministries and institutions such as the Ministries of the Interior, Defense, Planning, Economy, Agriculture, Trade, Health, Social Affairs, Infrastructure and Energy, Finance and Budget in line [with] the different thematic areas. Strong partnerships with the National and Provincial Assemblies as well the Senate are foreseen for purposes of advocacy on the adoption of gender sensitive legislation*⁹⁰. »

« *The UN WOMEN advocacy strategy will continue to be based on direct actions towards key institutions of the DRC such as the parliament and the National ministry of Women's affairs in order to accelerate the adoption of a suitable framework for gender equality in the DR of Congo*⁹¹. »

A number of passages in the UNSDCF 2020-2023 strategy document devoted to sustainability show that this preference for partnerships with non-governmental organisations is no accident, but rather part of a deliberate choice referred to in the text as a "circumvention strategy". The document begins by welcoming the fact that the synergy between the country team and MONUSCO has made it possible to strengthen ownership and social cohesion by placing communities at the centre of the stabilisation process. This has resulted in "improved security, access to social services and the development of income-generating activities, while involving provincial and local administrations as part of a steering mechanism supported by the most appropriate institutions"⁹².

However, when the results expected at the end of the processes leading to change were not forthcoming, this was due, the Cooperation Framework suggests, to the "(...) lack of vigilance and strategy to circumvent certain institutions undermined by corruption"⁹³ (...). A more abundant reference to corruption can be found in the Common Country Assessment published a month before the UNSDCF⁹⁴ cooperation strategy. These references to corruption are also corroborated by the humanitarian coordinator's [preface](#) in July 2020, accompanied by an 80-page [report](#)⁹⁵ on irregularities observed in the life cycle of humanitarian projects in DRC.

⁹⁰ Strategic Note 2018-2019, p.9

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.10

⁹² UNSDCF - DRC, Point 3.6 - Sustainability, p.36

⁹³ UNSDCF - DRC, Point 3.7 - Comparative advantage, p.36

⁹⁴ Instances of corruption are frequently mentioned in the common country document. It is at the heart of Chapter II, which explains the "Main development problems and their

causes" (p.14), to which the document returns in paragraph 6.2 "Poor governance, hampered by the slow progress of the rule of law and high levels of corruption" - DRC between growth, crises, conflicts and the quest for effective governance for inclusive and sustainable development, p.62.

⁹⁵ Adam Smith International, « Operational review of exposure to corrupt practices in humanitarian aid implementation mechanisms in the DRC », July 2020

In terms of coherence, it is remarkable that synergies have been established between the economic empowerment programs and those impact areas aimed at combating sexual and gender-based violence on the one hand, and the peace, security and humanitarian work programs on the other. For example, the "Reform and dissemination of texts and laws favourable to women's entrepreneurship" program has a component for the prevention of violence against women, which is being implemented in South Kivu by the Goma-based NGO *Expertise humanitaire et sociale*. Similarly, the MONUSCO-funded program implemented by UN Women in South Kivu is entitled "*Support for the socio-economic reintegration of women victims of violence*". These two cases illustrate UN Women's willingness to break down

the silos between different UN agencies and between distinct thematic areas. This willingness is evident in the formulation of a result in the strategic note⁹⁶.

In addition, the 2021 audit noted that the online directory of partners for ATLAS projects was not exhaustive (Audit Issue Nr. 6), which meant that it was not possible to determine the total volume of funds disbursed to all partners or the total number of partners. Only the WPHF humanitarian fund can be relied upon to provide an accurate assessment of both the completeness of its register of partners and the rigor of its capacity assessments. Furthermore, the choice of Ingenious City⁹⁷ as an implementing partner was not considered to be regular by the 2021 internal audit. For the other implementing partners, the audit indicates that there were shortcomings in the verification of their management capacities.

5.3.3. Geographical coverage

FINDING 12

To compensate for its limitations in the face of the country's vast territory, UN Women relies more on networks of associations and other UN agencies, including MONUSCO, than on its sub-offices in Goma and Bukavu.

As one UN Women partner pointed out, "UN Women's geographical presence in a country like DRC is inadequate, as it is only present in Kinshasa and Goma; a branch should be opened in Lubumbashi, given the problems faced by women and girls on mining sites".

In its strategic note, UN Women states "*UN Women will continue to operate through its offices in Kinshasa and in Goma for the Eastern part*⁹⁸". Bukavu is not mentioned in this quotation, yet UN Women's presence in South Kivu dates back to the UNIFEM era. A P4 staff member was deployed there before 2011, followed in 2017 by a program officer who was transferred to Kinshasa the following year. At the time, UN Women was still able to mention in its strategic note "*The strengthening of the DRC office and program, as well as the re-opening of two sub-offices in Eastern DRC, has opened up an opportunity for UN Women to effectively play its leadership and coordination roles and provide technical support to Gender Equality within the UN system*⁹⁹."

This presence in Bukavu in 2018 is only effective thanks to the office's recourse to a temporary assignment of a UN Women Cameroon staff member ("detail assignment") for a period of 3 months. When he left, only the driver and a communications officer remained. When the latter leaves the organisation in 2019, there will still be a driver, an office and vehicles in Bukavu

UN Women has been present in Goma with a program officer since 2014, joined in 2018 by a UN volunteer to monitor implementing partners. Since 2021, a P3 staff member has been present in Goma, supported by an administrative assistant. In both Bukavu and Goma, UN Women shares office space with UNDP. The evaluation team in Goma found that the sub-office was experiencing logistical problems (Audit Issue 18): no UN Women vehicle was available.

⁹⁶ Outcome 6.2 Protection and economic opportunities for women in temporary shelters & in host communities displaced by sudden onset emergencies

⁹⁷ « For one partner (...), there was no evidence (therefore, no assurance) of a selection process » (Issue 6, IAS audit report on DRC, 2021).

⁹⁸ Ibid. p.8.

⁹⁹ Strategic Note 2018-2019, p.5

All UN agencies face a common challenge due to the extensive dimensions of the DRC. For UN Women, according to data from ATLAS in August 2021, most advances to partners were made around Kinshasa: Gombe, Ngaliema, Ndjili, Lingwala, Mont Amba, etc. (See Annex XIII). This should make monitoring easier. Logistical difficulties may discourage field visits to

places that are difficult to access, such as Inongo (Mai-Ndombe), or where security is not guaranteed, such as Beni and Butembo.

For the rest of the country, UN Women must rely on women's networks and, possibly, other UN agencies, including MONUSCO, which is preparing its gradual departure from the country.

5.3.4. Knowledge management

FINDING 13

The gender cafés of 2019 are a best practice in knowledge dissemination. The fact that their content is no longer accessible today is an indication of the office's knowledge management limitations. Losses of institutional memory have been deplored due to the absence of handover and recovery procedures and, above all, the weakness of documentation in terms of inventory, filing and making files available on a virtual folder accessible to staff.

One positive point in terms of knowledge management is that UN Women-DRC has fulfilled its commitment to intensify conferences on various gender-related topics¹⁰⁰. A series of nine conferences known as "gender cafés" was organised in the city of Kinshasa. But this practice has been discontinued, as the last gender cafés were held at the end of 2019, well before the Covid-19 pandemic. And because the country office's institutional memory management system is weak, it is difficult to retrieve the content of the 2019 gender cafés events.

In addition, the system for collecting, filing and sharing country office data and documents could be improved, as both the audit (Audit Issue 10) and evaluation missions noted. Losses of institutional memory were deplored following the successive departures of 13 members of staff, including 8 who were not consultants. These losses can be explained by the lack of clarity about handover and takeover procedures and the poor centralisation of information. Many documents are stored on staff computers.

The country office requested assistance in 2019 from UN Women - WCARO to review the organisation of its IT infrastructure in order to set up a digital document filing system. The regional office said it was prepared to send its IT specialist to Kinshasa.

But the country office expected UN Women - WCARO to be responsible for the tickets and DSAs. When the issue was raised with the IT unit at headquarters, the message to the country office in January 2020 was that the office's expenditure on IT should be included in the annual UN Women-DRC budget. In June 2020, the regional office enquired about support needs on the same topic, but the issue of mission funding remained unchanged. The country office then replied that it would opt for a local solution in this case. But as the audit shows, the challenge remains (Audit Issue 16).

The quality of IT services at UN Women-DRC is partly a reflection of the quality of corresponding services at UNDP-DRC. In 2018, UNDP's internal audit denounced "the absence of effective ICT governance or a disaster recovery plan" and estimated that internet costs could be reduced¹⁰¹. Information and communication technology (ICT) services are covered by a Service Level Agreement (SLA)¹⁰² between the two agencies signed in 2013. Specifically mentioned are software and hardware maintenance, internet access and related infrastructure, video/audio (tele-)conferencing services, and the maintenance and creation of Atlas external access profiles.

¹⁰⁰ "In terms of communication, UN WOMEN will intensify the gender thematic conferences in 2018 with students, women's and youth groups, but also state leaders as target » NS-2018-19, p.11

¹⁰¹ "Audit of UNDP CO in the DRC », Report No. 1981, Office of Audit and Investigations, 2018. As the 2021 UNDP-DRC audit was conducted remotely, the report does not cover ICT issues.

¹⁰² "Service Level Agreement between UNDP and UN Women in DRC », Annex-1, Issue 8, p.10

5.4 SUSTAINABILITY

5.4.1. Sustainability of the results of the normative mandate

FINDING 14

The regular contribution of Congolese civil society to the periodic reports relating to international conventions on women's rights is an enduring achievement to which UN Women has contributed.

Consideration must be given to the significance of religion and the impact of cultural customs when assessing the sustainability of the progress supposedly brought about by the reform of the Family Code (2016).

The evaluation collected feedback and opinion of various national actors who had benefited from UN Women's support during activities relating to Resolution 1325, CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol and other international conventions: the know-how accumulated by civil society in preparing parallel reports to the committees monitoring international conventions is a lasting asset.

As mentioned earlier, it takes several years of coordinated effort to bring about changes in laws and policies. It took 13 years to change the Family Code, the equivalent of 4 strategic notes. This achievement is irreversible because, as we were told during a focus group discussion organised as part of this evaluation, it is unlikely that parliamentarians will call this reform into question in the future and return to the status quo ante. It will take several decades for these changes to have a tangible impact on people's behaviour. While changes to legislation are by their very nature slow, the sustainability of the results of hard-fought amendments to laws requires a longer¹⁰³ period of observation.

However, the progress made is indisputable only if we do not ask the question of how it is rooted in popular consciousness and what impact it has on the daily lives of Congolese women. The results of amending laws will not be sustainable unless they are translated, popularised and disseminated among the population.

Firstly, customary law takes precedence over modern law. The cultural practices surrounding marriage, birth and death refer to tradition rather than to modern legal frameworks, especially in rural areas.

Secondly, as stated during the interviews, given that 95.8% of the population of DRC claim to be Christian¹⁰⁴, the egalitarian discourse of UN Women will necessarily come into competition with the calls for the submission of "women" issued relentlessly by Christian churches, the majority of whose members are women. Believers are reminded of the principle of the subordination of women, created to serve as helpers for men¹⁰⁵. Under these conditions, even in urban areas, the theme of submission, particularly preached by revivalist churches, is more likely to reach the masses than the message of feminist empowerment.

¹⁰³The Family Code was reformed in 2016 after a dozen years of struggle. The question of the durability of its influence extends beyond the period of the strategic note that saw it rectified. This justifies the apparently retrospective view that this evaluation takes of an event that predates the

2018-2021 strategic note.

¹⁰⁴Figures taken from the website of the French Christian newspaper "La Croix" entitled : demographic data for DRC (consulted on 21 February 2022).

¹⁰⁵ Ephesians 5:19-33; Genesis

5.4.2. Sustainability of the results of the coordination mandate

FINDING 15

The One + One Gender Group is one of the sustainable consultation mechanisms to which UN Women has contributed. Other mechanisms, such as the Gender Cafés, the Gender Thematic Group, the One UN Gender Team and the Civil Society Consultation Group, have been completely or partially shelved, which has consequences for gender mainstreaming in the formulation of public policies¹⁰⁶.

UN Women's key role in creating frameworks for discussion of gender issues among the diplomatic representations of donor countries was mentioned several times during the interviews. The "One + One Gender Group", the "Inter-Donor Group", etc. are all mechanisms which bear the UN Women stamp but which have acquired an autonomy and dynamic which will ensure their continuity without requiring additional efforts during the next UN Women country portfolio exercise.

Another mechanism that appears to be monitored is the "Gender Parity Compact" initiative. Each year, the Resident Coordinator's office compiles a report on gender parity among UN staff in DRC. This report is reviewed in particular by the UN Women representative in her capacity as a member of the UN country team and chair of the Program Management Team (PMT) since 2019.

Unfortunately, this cannot be said of the institutionalization of the consultation mechanisms initiated by UN Women, such as the gender cafés and the gender thematic group.

1. The regular holding of these consultations faded well before the Covid-19¹⁰⁷ pandemic broke out. Most of the gender cafés were held in 2017 and the first two quarters of 2018. A period of hesitation lasted until November 2020, when the European Union used the format to publicize its global plan for DRC, entitled "Gender Action Plan III" for 2021-2025;
2. For reasons internal to the Ministry of Gender, GTG meetings were interrupted before the Covid-19 pandemic in DRC was officially declared.

This should have drawn UN Women's attention to the need for appropriate institutional or operational support. In this regard, a review of the collaborative agreements or LOAs for the 2018-2021 strategic period does not indicate a formal partnership with a ministry at the national level. It is difficult to envisage the sustainability of efforts in any development sector through collaboration with civil society organisations alone.

3. Only the Secretary General's "Gender Parity Compact" has received the collective attention of the UN system on gender. There has been no follow-up to the "Gender Scorecard" accountability process. Initiated in 2015, this report remained a document that very few UN Women staff remembered in 2018 during a training session on the UN System's¹⁰⁸ gender accountability. In 2021, it is the Secretary-General's "Gender Parity Compact" that first springs to mind when UN Women staff are asked about the "Gender Scorecard" during interviews. Others were unaware that it had taken place, which points to a lack of institutional memory.
4. The Civil Society Consultation Group, a structure provided for in the country office's modalities of engagement with stakeholders, has long been dormant. Yet, as noted earlier (in section 5.2.4), dialogue with the Consultation Group can enable better coordination between different stakeholders and facilitate advocacy with the government.

¹⁰⁶ Because without monitoring, the studies that inform these policies run the risk of being silent on gender, as was noted earlier in relation to the Gender Impact Assessment.

¹⁰⁷ This interruption in activities is explained differently depending on whether one is talking to UN Women staff or to officials from the Ministry of Gender. It is either "since the ministerial reshuffle of April 2021 (that) the WGG has been suspended", or "(it is) due to lack of budgeting that WGG meetings are no longer convened".

¹⁰⁸ A passage in the "Gender Coordination" paragraph is devoted to this oversight in the section of this report dealing with the Efficiency criterion.

5.4.3. Sustainability of results of the program mandate

FINDING 16

UN Women-DRC has contributed to the creation of two networks whose dynamism and autonomy are signs of sustainability. These are RENAfer and DYNAFEC in the economic and political participation fields respectively. The absence of collaboration agreements with the government, the abandonment of work in gender budgeting, the short duration of staff contracts and the lack of project monitoring are all elements that limit sustainability. The greatest challenge to the sustainability of the programs is the context of conflict and the fragility of the state.

Generally speaking, the contribution of UN Women - DRC cannot be understood without reference to the context of conflict and state fragility¹⁰⁹. The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains in 5th place in the "high alert" category of the "Fragile States Index" for 2019, 2020 and 2021. This is a relative improvement because in 2018, the country was ranked first in the "very high alert" category.

In this context, it is important to promote programming that is sensitive to conflict and fragility, as well as to humanitarian and development needs. The visit to Goma and Bukavu showed that this has not always been the case, particularly when it comes to empowering women economically. Following attacks by rebel groups or a geological disaster (as in the case of the Nyiragongo volcano), rural women may, from one day to the next, have to leave the land that they have developed thanks to the funding they have received.

1. Results of economic empowerment programs:

Some initiatives have not produced convincing results, as in the case of the project implemented by "Ingenious City", because no "start-up" has been launched following the digital incubation programs in two successive cohorts. But if we take into account the message sent out by a robotics project aimed solely at young girls, then we can see elements of sustainability in breaking down the stereotypes associating technology with masculinity. With the inclusion of DRC among the priority countries for the 2022-2023 edition of the "African Girls Can Code" program, a follow-up to this type of initiative is possible. However, the new incubation program will need to take on board the lessons learned from the evaluation of [UN Women's approaches to innovation](#).

Conversely, UN Women - DRC was unable to make any progress on the outcome aimed at facilitating rural women's access to land ownership. Access to land is a factor of sustainability and a means of mobilising resources through bank credit¹¹⁰. Unless appropriate attention is paid to this aspect of the Agrifed project, there is a risk that the program will not facilitate women's involvement in the value chain for cassava, the program's chosen product, in a sustainable way.

Similarly, there is no sustainability in programming for gender-responsive planning and budgeting. None of the post 2017 strategy notes have taken this on board. If this evaluation had a less limited geographical scope, the evaluation would have approached initially trained provincial and national public administration officials to find out more about the follow-up to the lessons learned 3 to 5 years earlier during training organised by UN Women. Moreover, the abandonment of gender responsive planning and budgeting programming has deprived UN Women and the gender activist community of a tool to track gender responsive spending in key sectors such as health, education or infrastructure at both national and provincial levels.

However, even if the database of RENAfer's 125,000 members is still under construction, the network of 2,500 rural women's associations is showing signs of sustainability. Its representation in 19 provinces¹¹¹ means that UN Women and other funding partners can cover the vast territory of the country. There are still some well-established rural women's organisations that still do not perceive the necessity to join RENAfer.

¹⁰⁹ The "National Fragility Assessment Report in DRC" (February 2019) (1) summarises the previous exercises of the same type in 2013 and 2016, (2) presents an overview of fragility, particularly in the areas of security, justice and economic foundations and (3) presents the evolution of the "fragility spectrum" from 2013 to 2018.

¹¹⁰ However, as one of our respondents noted, "women entrepreneurs' lack of access to credit is a constraint on women's economic empowerment".

¹¹¹ If its membership is confirmed, it will be counted as the 20th provincial branch.

This is the case of "Dynamique paysanne féminine" and the "Ligue des organisations de femmes paysannes du Congo". But RENAFER is the only umbrella organisation whose memberships cover more than a dozen provinces, which can make it easier to mobilise resources from donors concerned about replicability. For one program officer, "the creation of RENAFER was a stroke of genius. It makes it possible to quickly reach women during Covid-19 awareness-raising activities".

However, as noted above, RENAFER's legal status does not yet allow it to market the products it processes.

2. Results of political participation programs:

Among the new governors elected in 2022 by the provincial assemblies, there are [three women governors](#) out of a total of 24. The electoral process that led to this result is entirely endogenous: it was initiated by CENI without support from international actors, which the evaluation considers to be a sign of sustainability.

The creation of an environment conducive for the gradual emergence of women's leadership is a collective result to which UN Women has contributed in various ways, in particular through the institutional perpetuation of DYNAFEC organisation thanks in particular to the support provided by UN Women, Canadian cooperation and various organisations. Since the disappointing results of the 2018 elections, DYNAFEC has provided a forum for women from several political parties. It enables them, regardless of political orientation, to reflect on the opportunities offered to female leadership within political parties by comparing the strategies for maintaining the male monopoly.

The NGO RSLF is another important actor, but did not receive direct support from UN Women during the period covered by the strategic note¹¹². Its activism is felt beyond Kinshasa in the representation of women in provincial assemblies and ministries. However, the evaluation did not observe any tendency to pool resources or share roles between women's organisations with similar objectives, such as DYNAFEC, AWLN-RDC and RSLF. There is, however one organisation dedicated specifically to creating a framework for consultation on

gender issues within civil society: the non-governmental organisation CAFCO, "Cadre permanent de concertation de la femme congolaise".

3. Results of the « Peace, Security and Humanitarian work» programs:

Apart from war and natural disasters, the programming of the "Peace, Security and Humanitarian Work" component is characterised by two non-sustainability factors cited by our respondents' concerning projects implemented by UN Women: the very short duration of funding and the scarcity of monitoring in the field. The limited duration of projects is part of a programmatic practice that can be likened to scattering the resources made available to partners. It affects the substance of the services provided to beneficiaries.

If added to the non-sustainability factors is the long delays in approving disbursements, then the impacts on the deliverables to the communities. Worse still, there have already been cases where projects have been halted "for lack of money" especially for payments for second instalment. This was the case for the projects implemented by "Réseau congolais des acteurs de l'innovation" and "Jesuit Refugee Services" in 2018¹¹³ and 2020¹¹⁴ respectively.

However, the Common Performance Framework of DRC Humanitarian Fund has defined a critically important indicator: the timely disbursement of funds. This disbursement time must not exceed 10 calendar days.

4. Covid-19: Women soap production

UN Women has received US\$198,000 as part of the "WPHF COVID-19 Emergency Response Window" project. This amount was transferred in November 2020 to organisations such as RENAFER and DYNAFEC to carry out several awareness-raising campaigns on the prevention of COVID-19, distribute "resilience kits" and cash transfer. According to RENAFER officials, 400 women received US\$200 each.

Has there been any lasting impact from these efforts? According to UN Women staff, 550 women have received training in the production of alcoholic gel. RENAFER says that 600 women have been trained.

¹¹² Like UN Women, the NGO receives direct support from the Swedish Embassy.

¹¹³ We were unable to obtain a clear explanation for this interruption.

¹¹⁴ MONUSCO did not wish to pay the second instalment to UN Women without a full financial report.

We have not verified these assertions, nor the one about which 11% of the women trained have gone on to become "sustainable" soap-makers. If they were true, then the continuation of this economic activity beyond the duration of the project would be a sign of sustainability. RENAFER would just have to spread the example among the 19 provinces where it is represented for this saponification know-how to improve the lives of women on a national scale.

With regard to the "resilience kits", the evaluation did not have access to the beneficiaries to find out about their usefulness, their duration of use, the possibility of producing them locally rather than importing them, and so on. UN Women should re-examine the cost-benefit of resilience kits. The fact that they are imported reduces the sustainability of their distribution.

5. Sustainability and partnerships :

The Ministry of Gender had already abandoned the convening of the gender thematic group well before the Covid-19 pandemic, which has paralysed much of the consultation among gender stakeholders to date. There may have been several reasons for this, but the choice¹¹⁵ of avoidance, i.e. not concluding formal agreements with central government in 2020 and 2021, will not help the country to overcome the fragility of its state institutions. To achieve lasting change in relations between women and men in DRC, it is not enough to carry out projects that promote this or that aspect of women's well-being.

As gender inequalities originate and perpetuate in the systems of relations between the different spheres that make up society, the approach must be sufficiently broad to include national institutions. Because only the government has the necessary levers to carry out normative reforms and ensure, in a comprehensive and sustainable way, the continuation and expansion of modest initiatives financed in particular by the United Nations system.

Donors' mistrust of the government dates back 30 years, to the time when the World Bank criticised Mobutu's Zaire for diverting loans for development¹¹⁶ projects to private use. The privatisations and austerity imposed by the structural adjustment programs have further weakened the state, creating real challenges in all sectors. The dynamism of civil society is rooted in the relationship between the government and the international community. Non-governmental organisations then receive international aid directly to fill the gap left by the state in a number of areas, including health and education.

However, there is hope that the trend will be reversed, particularly with the World Bank granting significant loans to the Congolese government, part of which consists of budget support for economic governance reforms: "The Bank's active portfolio for DRC will reach around 7 billion dollars at the end of June 2022"¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁵ See the second point in the Efficiency chapter, entitled "Choosing partners".

¹¹⁶ The World Bank's decision in March 1990 to allocate its funding directly to social sector projects rather than entrusting it to Mobutu's government is

explained in the book « Aid and reform : the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo », 2012 Page 8, Paragraphs 24-26.

¹¹⁷ [World Bank press release, 7 June 2022](#)

5.5 GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS

5.5.1. Intersectionality and response to women's specific situations

FINDING 17

Conceptually, the strategic note targets "women" in general, regardless of other dimensions of their condition (age, region, ethnicity, income, occupation, etc.). In practice, the implementing partners target their beneficiaries according to specific criteria.

One of the causes of gender inequality is the justification of the subordinate role assigned to women by traditional culture and Christian or Muslim religion. The construction of an inequitable conception of female identity has been targeted only indirectly by UN Women programs through various intervention themes, particularly in the context of promoting the emergence of a female political elite. Even in this case, the systematic use of the generic term "women"¹¹⁸ to designate the main target of the interventions in the strategic note assumes that all women are thus covered by this general appellation. However, taking into account the different social categories of Congolese women and girls would provide a less abstract understanding of their condition. The strategy note does not distinguish between women: whether it is a question of political participation or economic empowerment in a post-conflict context or not, the strategy note does not specify the differences in approach chosen depending on whether women in cities or women in the countryside are targeted, women who own businesses or farms or women who work for them, women farmers or women mine workers, Pygmy women or non-Pygmy women, women with diplomas or illiterate women, etc.

Under optimal circumstances, the note becomes more specific in referring to the occupation of women micro-entrepreneurs operating in the informal¹¹⁹ economy, particularly those involved in cross-border trade, but there is still uncertainty about the social characteristics of the different categories of women. There was some improvement in the new strategy note 2020-24, which assure that economic empowerment programs will make a meaningful contribution: « to the economic empowerment of women living in rural and peri-urban settings in situations of vulnerability and multiple

discrimination, especially women living with disabilities, female household leaders and women survivors of SGBV¹²¹. » But it does not specify the approach it will use to tailor interventions to these targets. The strategy note uses the expressions "women entrepreneurs" and "women farmers and producers" (sic)¹²⁰ interchangeably without specifying their specific characteristics.

Understanding these differences and taking them into account as social realities, it is crucial in all areas of UN Women's strategic impact. By failing to highlight the diversity that characterises the women it targets, the strategy note runs the risk of being programmatically inadequate. Furthermore, its generalising abstraction on "women" renders ineffective the principle of "no one left behind" which is at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In practice, however, the projects visited in North Kivu have proved to be more successful. UN Women - DRC leaves the choice of beneficiaries¹²¹ to the NGOs.

" This strategy proved effective in targeting the most vulnerable people in the communities, because the choice was made through the participation of a wide range of community structures and bodies. During the interviews, the stakeholders presented the various criteria used to select the beneficiaries and showed the data collectors the distribution of the targeted individuals according to their membership of particularly vulnerable groups in society (...) in particular women victims of GBV, orphans, disabled women and widows."

¹¹⁸ The only exception to the abstraction of the term "women" is when the strategy note talks about age. But this is because it refers to early marriage. « Early marriage is common in all provinces and since 2007 approximately 39% of women between the ages of 20 to 24 are in a marriage or a union before the age of 18. » [SN 2018-19, p.3] There is also the distinction "women and girls", but each of these words is devoid of social content.

¹¹⁹ Although women form the majority of those who work in the informal sector where no social protection system exists, they make up just 2.8% of wage earners compared to 12% for men. Up to 65% of women involved in

micro-businesses are engaged in the agricultural sector and remain the economic pillars of their households through informal trade. » NS 2018-19, p.4

¹²⁰ The distinction between "women entrepreneurs" and "women farmers" is not indisputable

¹²¹ The audit acknowledged that « Projects had adequate strategies for targeting or selection of beneficiaries. » Audit DRC 2021, IAS, p.19

However, in a completely different area, in the opinion of a gender observer, the strategy used by UN-WOMEN of organising gender cafés only in the commune of Gombe excluded most women. They could have benefited from gender cafés closer to the population in communes other than Kinshasa city centre, as well as in provincial towns.

The relative flexibility of UN Women (compared to other UN agencies) in the choice of partners was appreciated in the field:

"Most beneficiaries also indicated (...) that with other partners, the choice of beneficiaries is much more limited in terms of membership of social groups or age, which, in their view, limits the possibility of targeting those most in need. In only one case (project 115109 focusing on EVAW and WEE) had UN Women's funding agreements imposed limitations: it was not allowed to target men and boys as part of its gender equality interventions, which apparently had a negative impact on project outcomes. In all other cases, engaging a small percentage of men and boys was an effective strategy for ensuring community ownership of the project¹²²."

5.5.2. Disability

CONSTAT 18

While the 2018-2019 strategic note is silent on disability, the new strategic note provides for a product explicitly targeting people living with a disability.

The 2018-2019 strategy note (effective until November 2021) does not contain a single reference to disability. It is true that none of the outputs of the new strategic note make any reference to disability. Furthermore, the Goma sub-office does not provide physical access for people living with disabilities (Audit Issue 19).

In this respect, UN Women-DRC does not draw on the progress already made by the government through its legal and institutional provisions. The country has a ministry dedicated to the rights of more than 10 million¹²³ people with disabilities in DRC, headed by the Minister Delegate for People Living with Disabilities (PLWD) and Other Vulnerable Persons (OVP). DRC's action plan on Resolution 1325 takes into account the security needs of women living with disabilities in accordance with Resolution 2277 on the protection of persons with disabilities in countries affected by conflict. The proposed law on the protection and promotion of people with disabilities in Parliament was declared admissible by the Constitutional Court in April 2022.

All of which testifies to the national will to integrate disability into the country's development efforts.

However, one of the activities planned in the strategic note of 2020-2024, under Output 2.2.2 explicitly targets people living with a disability, as well as other vulnerable people:

« UN Women will support cooperatives led by vulnerable women to ensure equitable access to post-crisis economic recovery opportunities with regards to COVID-19 and contribute to the transition from emergence to development with a view to consolidating social cohesion. The intervention will contribute to the economic empowerment of women living in rural and peri-urban settings in situations of vulnerability and multiple discrimination, especially women living with disabilities, female household leaders and women survivors of SGBV. » (SN 2020-24, p.19)

¹²² Extract from Annex VIII entitled « A short report from Goma »

¹²³ « African Disability Rights Yearbook 2013 » estimated this number at 10.5 million. (p.291, 1.3) but later, in his " Data collection report on disabled people in the DRC " (2016),

Professor Félicité Langwana counts "more or less 13 million disabled people" (p.5).

5.5.3. Indigenous peoples

CONSTAT 19

With the exception of one humanitarian project, the strategic note did not target DRC's indigenous peoples.

DRC is estimated to have around 650,000 people¹²⁴ belonging to indigenous ethnic groups known as "Batwa" or "pygmies". In July 2013, by its observations on a periodic report by DRC, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that the Congolese State *"ensure that pygmy women have access, without discrimination, to basic services, particularly in the areas of health, education, land, and ensure that they have means of subsistence in the forest enabling them to be self-sufficient and offer them compensation when they have been forced to leave the forest"*.

Nine years later, the National Assembly voted by a majority in favour of a bill to protect and promote the rights of the indigenous Pygmy peoples of DRC. It provides free access to education, healthcare and representation before the courts. To be promulgated by the Head of State, the bill will have to undergo a second reading in the Senate.

The fact that none of the previous and current strategy notes directly addressed the issue of the marginality of indigenous peoples, it has not prevented it from being addressed in the projects implemented by UN Women-DRC. In 2019, a US\$200,000 WPHF/FFPH project was funded by UN Women to "support the commitment of indigenous women to peace-building" and "promote/protect the rights of Pygmy women and girls". Another peace-building project has "300 women beneficiaries, including 150 indigenous women"¹²⁵.

There is still a programmatic gap in the area of impact relating to women's political participation. As reported in an interview in 2017¹²⁶, the pygmies complain that there is an explicit desire to keep them excluded, particularly because they denounce the dispossession of hundreds of thousands of hectares of their ancestral land. As some of them live in the forests, neither pygmy men nor women can obtain a voter's card, which deprives them of effective access to the right to vote.

¹²⁴ "Dynamics of Indigenous Peoples' Groups", 2019, p.5

¹²⁵ Project submitted to FFPH in October 2019: "Support for the empowerment, protection of rights and strengthening of the

social security of rural women in the Walungu and Kalehe territories in South Kivu".

¹²⁶ See Annex VIII.



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6. CONCLUSIONS

1.

The country's vast territory, the fragility of the State, the post-conflict situation, the prolonged crisis or the resurgence of armed conflict in certain provinces, and the slow improvement in the general conditions of governance are all contextual factors that have exerted constraints on the exercise of UN Women's integrated three-dimensional mandate in DRC.

For a UN entity that has been established in DRC for twelve years and relies on UNDP to carry out most of its operations under the 2013 SLA Agreement, sustainable success in the area of gender equality will depend on its ability to bring together around its mandate the capacities of other UN system agencies, as well as the dynamism of civil society. By doing so, UN Women will not only be able to compensate for its own limitations in terms of human resources, logistical means and funding, but above all will be able to contribute to the collective effort of the United Nations system to fill the void left by the gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO¹²⁷.

2

UN Women is well regarded among those involved in the fight for gender equality because they give it credit for having exercised its normative and coordinating mandates to contribute to collective efforts to reform the Family Code.

UN Women's advantage is unquestionable in the areas of political¹²⁹ participation and, to some extent, the reduction of women's poverty, at least in terms of mobilising rural women and organising them into a national network. In the field of humanitarian action or emergency response to natural disasters, UN Women-DRC is finding it difficult to prove itself, given its internal operational¹³⁰ difficulties and the vastness of its territory.

3.

UN Women's strategic note is aligned with national priorities, and if the component on combating sexual and gender-based violence is not reflected in its results framework, it does not necessarily mean that there are no interventions in this area.

The current division of roles within the UN country team is organised in such a way that UNFPA assumes the lead role for sexual and gender-based violence. This division of labour does not justify the explicit failure to mention the programmatic result relating to the reduction of sexual violence. This silence is likely to hinder the development of a conscious path towards autonomy in the sense of Sara Hlupekile Longwe's "empowerment¹²⁸". According to Longwe, empowerment can only begin to be envisaged when well-being is achieved through the satisfaction of primary needs such as health care, nutrition, a basic income and, one might add, security, physical integrity and mental equilibrium.

4.

The strategy of networking at national level, as demonstrated by RENAFER and DYNAFEC (for economic and political empowerment, respectively), has proved advantageous in overcoming the challenges specific to the political and economic spheres.

In addition, formal gender coordination mechanisms (the gender theme group, the One UN Gender Group) or informal high-level consultation frameworks (the "One + One", the "Friends of Gender", etc.) have enabled UN Women to keep gender issues on the agenda. However, the gender cafés no longer take place and there is no expressed desire to revitalise the Consultation Group, whose activities have been put on hold.

¹²⁷ For example, the withdrawal of MONUSCO will take effect on [30 june 2022](#) in the province of Tanganyika.

¹²⁸ « Women Empowerment Framework »

¹²⁹ The fact that the electoral law, despite its many revisions, does not include parity among the grounds for inadmissibility of candidate lists, represents a persistent challenge. Furthermore, we must not lose sight of the fact that the proportion of women

in management positions fell from 30% to 11.90% between 2014 and 2019. ["Report on the voluntary national review of the sustainable development goals" Ministry of Planning, 2020, p.33].

¹³⁰ These include the size of its human resources and its failure to respect the maximum time limit (10 days) set for disbursements, according to a key indicator in the Common Performance Framework of DRC Humanitarian Fund.

6

The size and instability of the country office's human resources posed real difficulties in managing the operations portfolio, which had an impact on all aspects of the organisation's functioning, including project monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

This has resulted in a loss of institutional memory, as demonstrated by the inaccessibility of certain documents required by the internal audit and the neglect of the recommendations of the 2015 Gender Scorecard. In addition, the excessive workload of staff makes them burnout and explains the loss of momentum, abandonment or suspension of certain consultation mechanisms such as the gender cafés. Although promising, these only lasted a year.

Fortunately, the work carried out over more than a decade in the domain of legislation led to the reform of the Family Code in 2017. If this result is to have a lasting impact, the new strategic note must relate it to the precedence normally given to customary law. The influence of tradition remains significant in the status of disabled people and indigenous communities, categories that the previous strategic note did not adequately consider.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations, in their initial form, have been enriched by the insights provided by the members of the reference group. They should not be considered in isolation from the recommendations of the internal audit of UN Women - DRC (2021). The country office's governance, risk management and risk control are the foundation on which the effectiveness of its action rests.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Emergency



Complexity



Aligned with findings

11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

Adressed to

Country Office
Management Team

To make state-building a fundamental objective, in conjunction with the other agencies of the United Nation's system. To contribute, in particular, to consolidating the capacity of the Ministry of Gender, Women and Children to carry out its functions. To ensure that the capacities of the Ministry's staff and the gender units of the sectoral ministries are strengthened. The conclusion of formal collaboration agreements with this ministry, combined with technical support, will enable the ministry to regain the trust of citizen organisations and improve their relations with government bodies in the long term, to contribute to the application of the government's obligation to make public the amount of resources allocated to gender equality and women's empowerment, to update the national gender policy and the resumption of consultation mechanisms such as gender cafés, the gender thematic group and the civil society consultation group.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Emergency



Complexity



Aligned with findings

3, 4, 6, 12, 15

Adressed to

Country Office
Management Team

As reflected in its new 2020-2024 results framework, UN Women should prioritise joint work in all its areas of impact, particularly in the fight against SGBV and in peace, security and humanitarian action, by integrating into its programming, consideration of the context of fragility and recurring conflicts. The recommendations of the 2015 *Gender Scorecard* should be updated and accompanied by an action plan, which should be monitored by the One UN Gender Group, with the possibility of keeping the UN System Program Management Team (PMT) regularly informed.

The country office should consider revitalising the Civil Society Consultation Group so that it can play its role as a bridge between stakeholders, minimise overlap between actors working towards the same goals and provide a platform for discussion between the government and women's organisations.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Emergency



Complexity



Aligned with findings

3, 4, 6, 12, 15

Adressed to

Country Office Management Team

1. Support efforts to make the application of Article 13 of the Electoral Law, which stipulates that each electoral list must take account of parity and disability, less optional. Target political parties to establish concrete dialogue with men on parity and encourage them to present inclusive lists of women and people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Emergency



Complexity



Realistically review the digital ambitions of the rural agriculture program and consider the possibility of collaborating on this aspect with an agency whose comparative advantage in information technology is better established.

Aligned to finding
6

Adressed to
Country Office Management Team

RECOMMENDATION 5

Emergency



Complexity



Recruit staff (and stabilise their contracts) to compensate for the shortage in human resources, to set up a monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management unit, and to strengthen the operations team, in line with the ambitions set out in the strategic note. A Joint Program-Operations Committee could be set up to carry out monthly reviews and mitigate the risks incurred.

Aligned to findings
2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15

Adressed to
Country Office Management Team

RECOMMENDATION 6

Emergency



Complexity



Revise the formulation of the outcomes and outputs of the results framework (2020-2024) to
(1) express the specificity of the results targeted by UN Women; and
(2) clarify the targeting of people living with disabilities, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups.

Aligned to findings
17, 18, 19

Adressed to
Country Office Management Office

RECOMMENDATION 7

Emergency



Complexity



Working with other UN agencies to integrate the principle of "no one left behind" into humanitarian and development discourse and action, so as not to exclude the disabled, the Batwa, albinos and other stigmatised people.

Aligned to findings
17, 18, 19

Adressed to
Country Office Management Office

8. LESSONS LEARNED



Programs intended to be implemented throughout the country must take account of the specific contexts of each province or territory, as approaches differ according to whether the context presents:

- post-conflict or political transition situations with signs of a gradual return to confidence in the State and restoration of State authority;
- situations where governance conditions are improving or deteriorating;
- situations of prolonged crisis or stalemate.



The gender expertise of UN Women-DRC is better promoted when it is part of a framework of inter-agency collaboration. This enables UN Women to contribute to reducing the fragmentation of UN interventions in the face of the challenges of territorial immensity and state fragility.



In emergency caused by armed conflict and natural disasters, UN Women's technical assistance is enhanced when it informs crisis response coordination mechanisms. The production of gender analyses can then benefit from the logistics and collective know-how of the agencies concerned.



It is not enough for the country office to be headed by a representative whose diplomatic performance has contributed to the dynamism of the various gender consultation mechanisms, both within the United Nations system and among national and diplomatic authorities. The fact that the gender café initiatives have run out of steam and that there has been no follow-up to the recommendations of the Gender Scorecard, are further proof of the crucial importance of a technical team whose capacity and governance are equal to the imperative posed by the coordination processes initiated upstream.



The direct supervisory line established between the Country Representative and the Executive Director is divergent from UN Women's regional architecture. While this institutional arrangement has facilitated the unique role played by the Country Representative in the establishment of AWLN country chapters, it has challenged the exercise of quality assurance normally undertaken by the Regional Office, the Program Division and other headquarters departments. As a result, the country office's compliance with organisational standards has faced challenges in diverse areas like planning, monitoring and reporting, IT security etc

End note

* Extract from the report on the evaluation visit to Goma (p.4):

Several monitoring and reporting limitations affect UN Women's overall RBM approach, which has been acknowledged by both UN Women and partners. Project monitoring systems overall appear unable to fully capture changes that may arise from project implementation. As highlighted in the section on effectiveness, all partners interviewed and focus group participants confirmed that some degree of change has occurred in the lives and conditions of beneficiaries. However, it remains very difficult to measure both the quantity and quality of the changes that have occurred, due to both the choice of project indicators and the data collection methods used to populate them. When asked how these changes are systematically captured, both partners and UN Women indicated that this remains a challenge, and the former cited the individual success stories of beneficiaries as the main method of highlighting the changes that have occurred.

Another major issue that emerged from the consultations was the low frequency or total absence of visits by UN Women to the field. UN Women staff acknowledged that this could pose great risks in terms of ensuring that project activities are actually taking place as planned and reported, as the organisation has no way of verifying this on the ground. Partners have also expressed concern that they would like to work more closely together in order to benefit from UN Women's advice in implementing projects. In addition, they feel that this prevents UN Women from really understanding the realities on the ground, including potential challenges to achieving planned results.

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The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit Service under the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service. The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service's main purpose is to enhance accountability, inform decision-making, and contribute to learning about the best ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the organization's mandate, including its normative, operational, and coordination work. The Independent Evaluation Service also works to strengthen capacities for gender-responsive evaluation within UN entities, governments, and civil society organizations.

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