

Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Partnership Framework 2022-2025 (SPFIII) between the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), and UN-Women

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The consultant would like to thank everyone who participated in this mid-term review (MTR) of Strategic Partnership Framework III between Sweden, Norway and UN Women. The views presented in this report are based on the information and data collected through desk review of documentation as well as on interviews conducted with official representatives of UN Women. The findings below do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of UN Women, Sida or other organisations involved.

¹ Est. \$47,795,436 using UN exchange rate for May 2021 of 8.369

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Acronyms

APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AWLN	African Women Leaders Network
CAR	Central African Republic
CO	Country Office
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian ORganisation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESARO	East and Southern Africa Regional Office
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
HA	Humanitarian Action
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace (nexus)
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAC	Latin America & Carriibbean
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAM	Needs Assessment Missions
NAP	National Action Plan
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PBF	Peace Building Fund
PPID	Policy, Programme & Intergovernmental Division
PSMU	Programme Support Management Unit
RA	Regional Advisor
REC	Regional Economic Community
RO	Regional Office
SADC	Southern African Development Commission
SCR	Security Council Resolution
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
Sida	Swedish International Cooperation Agency
SPF	Strategic Partnership Framework
SP	Strategic Plan
TSM	Temporary Special Measures
UNCT	UN Country Team

UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks
UNSE	UN Special Envoys
VAWP	Violence Against Women in Politics
WACARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WGFO	Women and Girl-Focused Organizations
WiPF	Women in Politics Fund
WPP	Women's Political Participation
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WRO	Women's Rights Organisation

Executive Summary

The Strategic Partnership Framework (SPF) between UN Women, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) is in its third phase of implementation. SPF III supports the implementation of systemic outcomes of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, related to two of UN Women's thematic priorities: Women's Political Participation (WPP) and Women Peace and Security (WPS), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and Humanitarian Action (HA). The **purpose** of the MTR is to inform future orientation and implementation of SPF III and potential successor frameworks. It focuses on criteria that can most usefully inform further refinement of the SPF, namely **coherence (internal and external), sustainability, and impact**. The review is based on an examination of background documents and consultations across UN Women at country, regional and global levels.

Conclusions

SPF III has built on the significant gains across key impact areas for WPP, WPS, HA and DRR under previous SPF phases. Having global policy leads and teams at headquarters linked closely to experts in regional offices and country offices, together with an easily accessible funding pot and a set of clear norms and guidelines has enabled extension of coherent thematic support across country programmes as well as enabling lessons from a range of contexts to influence decisions at global levels. Outside of advisory capacity directly funded by SPF, the **engagement of UN Women leadership with thematic advisors appears to be an important multiplier of effectiveness.** This engagement enables thematic perspectives and analysis to inform wider policy and political engagements at different levels, enhancing the speed of decision making when new opportunities for impact are identified and amplifying key messages internally and externally.

SPF III has enabled continuity and extension of UN Women's significant role promoting integration of GEWE system-wide at international, regional and national levels. Established roles have continued in promoting women's leadership, such as support to the international electoral assistance and within the international peace and security architecture, whilst significant progress has been made in establishing UN Women's roles within key global and regional mechanisms for HA and DRR. SPF III has notably enabled establishment of UN Women's system-wide leadership role on gender in humanitarian action (GiHA) as well as its coordination role in key contexts; as well as setting global norms and standards for GE in crisis contexts through the coordination of the IASC Gender Reference Group and the coordination of GiHA Working Groups in protracted crises and sudden onset emergencies. UN Women is now an established, trusted and recognised partner bringing a GEWE perspective to policy and programming, including through Gender Equality Accelerators under the Strategic Plan that covers different stages of crisis prevention and response.

At country level a wide range of programming is supported by SPF funds and through the leveraging of SPF funds to mobilise large-scale programmes from a range of bilateral and multilateral funds. This programming benefits from consistent defined approaches – such as

GiHA coordination or support to Temporary Special Measures coupled with the flexibility to adapt to local contexts with support of regional and in-country advisory positions. This enhances the relevance and effectiveness of programmes through ensuring that they are rooted in gender analysis and data, draw on best-practices and lessons from other contexts and that they align UN Women's role with key national and international partners, including national governments, civil society and other UN and INGO implementing partners.

SPF has enabled widespread and sustained engagement with WROs and networks to ensure that they receive funding directly and that they are able to be heard in key processes from local to global levels, including humanitarian planning and peace processes as well as DRR national strategies. UN Women has successfully supported the growth, increased capacity, connectedness and recognition of local peacebuilding and humanitarian action by women as well as supporting ongoing work of WRO's in advocating for systemic changes. SPF has enhanced UN Women's ability as a UN entity mandated to support both member states and civil society to support system-wide legal and institutional change and enhance the enabling environment through support to WRO's and political engagement. Presence of SPF-funded experts at country and field level was a key enabler of funding channelled to WROs.

There is significant evidence that the **flexibility in policy and programming engagement built into the SPF, enables UN Women to adapt to a changing global context and to disasters, humanitarian crises and displacement resulting from political crisis, conflicts, disasters, climate change and other factors.** For example, the flexibility of SPF support has been critical in unstable political contexts, where longer-term project funding does not have sufficient flexibility allow significant timely adaptation, whether at the level of short-term additional interventions or more significant reworking of programme strategies.

The wider context of global uncertainty around conflict, increased displacement trends and humanitarian needs combined with increased frequency and intensity of disasters related to climate change presents a worrying backdrop for UN Women's work through the SPF. There is disquiet around the overall context in which UN Women works, with growing opposition globally to GEWE and a very real risk of pushback against women's rights. There is rising concern across the organisation that funds for women's rights are declining overall, and the upcoming period may need even more innovative approaches to programming and changes in how UN Women seeks to deliver its mandate. This context is reflected in the relatively slower progress against indicators relating to overall funding as well as financing through national capacities.

In this uncertain context, having the ability to reflect and leverage new partnerships and sources of funding in a shifting global donor landscape is crucial to maintaining progress. This may include the further articulation of thematic overlaps at field level. For example, it was noted that potential growth of DRR under the umbrella of WPS opens up potential for larger-scale engagement in reconstruction as it relates to Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Wider engagement and advocacy towards donors may be needed to ensure longer term sustainability of both UN Women programmes and the progress made in institutionalising structures and systems to support GEWE within member states and WROs, including in conflicts and humanitarian crises where the WPS and HA agendas intersect. Although UN Women has close relationships with selected donors committed to GEWE, more could be done to collaborate

outside of the funding relationship, for example in aligning learning and influencing policy work and strategic dialogue on key themes, for example on strategies-entry points to advance GE through HDP actor collaboration drawing on recent experiences in Sudan, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon and other crises where HA and WPS agendas intersect also with other issues such as climate crisis/change.

The SPFIII sustainability and exit strategy is framed around leveraging additional funds to multiply UN-Women's capacity, expertise, positioning and substantive engagement its ability to partner with government, UN agencies and CSO partners with a view to positioning gender equality commitments to the centre of relevant policies and strategies in crises and conflict settings. However, **SPF impacts sustainability on GEWE beyond resource mobilisation.**

SPF multi-year non-core flexible funding enhances UN Women's ability to balance its approaches between responsiveness to immediate global trends and emerging crises and long-term strategic programmes, increasing the **ability to sustain long-term engagements and partnerships with other UN agencies and actors, whilst adapting as necessary to continue meeting ever evolving needs.** This includes volatile contexts, pivoting to meet new needs and intervening to maintain women's voice during crises both protracted and sudden onset.

The SPF has immense added value in supporting individual experts with broad, flexible remits and linkages from the local to the global level. These experts have the ability to engage across thematic boundaries, bringing their skills to programmatic technical advice, policy engagement, and political accompaniment. Coupled with access to flexible funding, earmarked against strategic priorities, these individuals have been able to advance normative frameworks at global and regional levels as well as catalysing a broad and effective programming base. Thematic and cross-thematic learning and innovation enabled by SPF contributes to the evolution of broader programmatic approaches within UN Women including in the ways that the agency responds to emerging crises. This fluidity is essential to UN Women's ongoing strategic positioning within an evolving international system and changing context and has enabled it to grow its programming footprint with innovative, responsive and effective approaches.

Recommendations

SPF should continue what it is doing as its combination of technical capacities, institutional connectedness and provision of small-flexible funding appears highly effective in catalysing better, longer term and more relevant programming alongside policy engagement, including the ability to balance short-term responsiveness with longer-term change processes. That said, greater emphasis in several key areas could further enhance UN Women's effectiveness in the short-term as well as positioning UN Women to sustain impacts on GEWE in the longer term as the operating environment looks to become more challenging.

- 1 Extend the impact of knowledge products and learning processes on coherence across UN Women ensuring linkages to policy work in various spaces including the UN Security Council (UNSC) or IASC Principals and Deputies meetings, through: increasing data and evidence generation and updating knowledge products where these remain useful for priority programming approaches; improving accessibility and**

- increasing visibility** of priority knowledge products to give these wider traction and applicability to non-specialist staff across UN Women, as well as positioning UN Women with its partners.
- 2 **Engage UN Women leadership across country, regional and global levels to ensure understanding, buy-in and coordination with the conceptual, strategic and programmatic work enabled by SPF.** This could include briefings to leadership as well as establishing stronger communication and coordination with relevant thematic advisory roles to share learning on specific approaches or opportunities for synergies between advisory and leadership roles, including how advisory capacity can best support political and policy engagement at different levels and how leadership decision can facilitate the responses to opportunities identified by SPF-funded advisors.
 - 3 **Draw on and scale-up corporate coordination and dialogue using existing coordination mechanisms to address complementarity between WPP, WPS-HA and DRR agendas, including building on emerging synergies at field level to inform UN Women’s corporate Strategic Notes and Annual Work Plans.** Depending on the country typology and context, this could include clarifying how different technical approaches can be delivered concurrently or be better aligned and sequenced for countries emerging or at risk of from conflict or crisis. Mechanisms such as the crisis response situation room and task teams have been mobilized to respond to political situation, conflict and humanitarian situations in countries like Haiti, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Bangladesh, looking at the needs and priorities of women and girls affected by crises, including IDPs, refugees and those in host communities. This can address linkages between political work, IASC advocacy, UNSC related discussions, investment in gender analysis and data, funding for local WRO’s and networks, partnerships with national governments and other actors on policy, humanitarian planning and legal processes/aspects, investigations in HR and IHL violations, operational response through the WPHF and UN Women’s country level programming on WPS and HA.
 - 4 **Invest further in long-term programme development processes - drawing on UN Women Gender Equality Accelerators - to ensure that UN Women remains relevant in the changing context, particularly in innovative programming areas that utilise thematic synergies.** This includes the intersection of WPS, HA and DRR (with links between reconstruction and WEE as well as resilience, protection, human rights and local leadership related interventions). This should enable UN Women to be more adaptable in a changing funding landscape.
 - 5 **Develop a coordinated approach to respond to the wider donor landscape and funding trends for GEWE.** Funding constraints are an ongoing concern, despite SPF successes in leveraging funds, both due to systemic weaknesses (such as dwindling funds to support WPP in between election cycles) and due to the current downturn in overall funds for GEWE. UN Women should draw on the SPF funded capacity across the system to identify internal and external actions in response to current and predicted shortfalls, including: external advocacy to enable access to increased, predictable and long term funding including in relation to conflict and crisis contexts; forging of new partnerships; framing how UN Women’s work can be integrated into wider programming; and research into innovative funding mechanisms for the future in countries with declining donor funding.

- 6** **Prioritise the contribution of SPF to sustaining gains for gender equality, women’s leadership and empowerment in the longer term through building local and national capacities within member states and within civil society, including their ability to finance activities outside of UN Women’s financial support.** Prioritize long-term capacity building for national ownership of change processes to support GEWE goals. This should include a strong focus on external engagement across national, regional and global levels to embed gender equality within public financial management capacities as well as increasing direct support for WRO’s.
- 7** **Engage in strategic and coordinated advocacy to address the lack of political will and commitment from some governments and inter-governmental actors to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.** This relates both to engagement around the politicised backlash against women’s rights in key countries and a wider de-prioritisation of GEWE in some key spaces. This process can draw on the advisory capacity and established civil society relationships fostered by SPF to date.
- 8** **Develop collaborative activities between UN Women, Sida and Norad to amplify messages around the successes and lessons from SPF in driving system-wide change and context specific change for women.** To date the relationship between UN Women, Sida and Norad has been highly supportive, with UN Women valuing the depth of the relationship, efforts of Sida and Norad to interrogate how SPF enables change, and constructive feedback gained through regular engagements. There is appetite within UN Women to further this with collaborative activities to maximise the value of the partnership. This could focus on sharing lessons externally and facilitating discussions across the donor community to help shape wider responses to the current challenges to progress on GEWE. Utilising key moments, such as the 1325+25 anniversary, the peacebuilding architecture review, the Global Platform for DRR 2025 and ongoing engagement in IASC could provide initial impetus for this.

Introduction

Programme Context

The Strategic Partnership Framework (SPF) between UN Women, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) is in its third phase². Established in 2012, SPF is a non-core funding modality supporting UN Women to implement successive strategic plans. SPF III started 31st January 2022 and will end 31st December 2025, with committed funding of SEK 434,000,000 (SEK110 million per annum with funding for 2024 and 2025 reduced to SEK107millionper annum).

SPFIII supports the implementation of systemic outcomes of UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2022-2025, related to UN Women’s thematic priorities Women’s Political Participation (WPP)³ and Women Peace and Security and Resilience (WPSR), Humanitarian Action (HA)⁴ work. The SPF III Programme Framework sets out high level theories of change relating to the two impact areas and describes how the flexible funding modality is expected to support UN-Women’s triple mandate normative, coordination and leadership roles (Annex 3). These reflect previous learning and highlight expected causal pathways and assumptions.

SPF III contributes to thematic support through a range of modalities including intergovernmental normative support, research and knowledge generation, integrated policy advice, capacity building and technical assistance, budget support to field programming and driving UN Coordination at global, regional, and country levels⁵. The basic modalities of the programme are deployment of staff, experts and short-term specialists to strengthen capacity at national, regional, and global levels (including secondments to strategic partners) in response to urgent gaps in capacity to support UN Women’s normative and coordination mandate, providing catalytic funding and targeted programming to support national actors, knowledge generation and dissemination.

The SPF is implemented as a global programme managed by the relevant thematic teams in Policy, Programme & Intergovernmental Division (PPID) with a dedicated Programme Management Specialist based in Programme Support Management Unit (PSMU) responsible for the overall programme, and operational and financial management. Interventions at the regional and country level are supported through the network of six regional offices (ROs) and resources within 40 country offices (COs) and a network of deployed experts supporting joint work in countries with no UN Women office.

² Norad has provided funding since 2023.

³ Contributing to UN Women Strategic Plan Impact Area 1 [Governance & Participation in Public Life](#)

⁴ Contributing to Strategic Plan Impact Area 4 Women [Peace, Security, Humanitarian & Disaster Risk Reduction](#)

⁵ SPFI and SPFII supported advisory services and technical support to more than 70 field offices, including seed funding to 22 country offices.

MTR Purpose and Scope

The **purpose** of the MTR is to inform the future orientation and implementation of SPF III and potential successor frameworks. SPFIll maintains the same broad approach from earlier phases and reflects findings from a Final Evaluation of SPF Phase I (2016), Mid-Term Review of SPF Phase II (2019), corporate thematic evaluations and internal reflections on impact at the end of SPF II. These showed that SPF significantly contributed to building organizational capacities and resource mobilization and played a critical role in facilitating implementation of UN Women's Global Strategic Plan (2021-2025), supported by generation of knowledge, timely policy advice and technical assistance to country and regional offices, including deployment of experts and strategic seed funding; UN coordination at global and country levels; and advancing global normative frameworks. However, gaps remain in understanding of how the SPF III is working related to thematic coherence and coordination, sustainability, and its contributions to achieving impact against key UN Women goals. This MTR therefore focuses on criteria that can most usefully inform further refinement of the SPF.

Coherence and compatibility of the SPF-supported work at global, regional, and country level. This will evaluate how the programme fits the broader context within which it is implemented. This includes **internal coherence**, focused on alignment with internal policy frameworks and synergies and interlinkages between SPF-supported interventions and other UN Women's interventions in selected thematic areas as well as **external coherence**, focused on alignment with UN system-wide agenda and policy frameworks and commitments and complementarity and coordination of the SPF-supported interventions with other relevant development, humanitarian and peace actors, including governmental and civil society, such as local women-led organizations and networks; and the extent these interventions add value and contribute to positive impact on the lives of women, girls and others while avoiding duplication. Where possible, the MTR will seek to explore the extent of synergies between the two thematic agendas.

Sustainability and impact of SPF-supported programming interventions. The MTR will identify programming that stemmed out from the SPF support and evaluate how they were sustained and amplified. The review will also include sustainability and transformation that is achieved through opening of new areas of work that were initially conceptualized and piloted with the SPF support and then developed to their full potential through new funding modalities, both internal and external. The MTR will identify, assess, categorize, and document these interventions, their sustainability, impact, and catalytic effect, and recognize underlying internal and external enablers and constraints critical for their success or lack of thereof.

MTR Methodology

The MTR was conducted between May and September 2024, with an inception phase May/June and data collection July/August focussed on selected UN Women Country and Regional Offices supported through the programme, UN Women HQ Staff, Regional Policy Advisers and Specialists, and Sida and Norad counterparts.

An initial document review of key SPF documents (Annex 2) focussed on understanding the key components of SPF, identifying existing evidence and lessons to date, and noting remaining gaps in knowledge or important questions to be addressed by the MTR. This identified key expectations for change associated with SPF, the reporting to date on activities and achievements and key gaps in knowledge around how SPF supports coherence, coordination, sustainability, and impact. This informed development of a review framework (Annex 1) with priority questions around which to frame data collection. It suggested focus areas and an approach to data collection to ensure a feasible review process within the time available.

The consultant undertook qualitative data collection through semi-structured key informant interviews (KII) with UN Women staff (Annex 4) conducted remotely as well as further review of secondary data, guided by the review framework. The MTR takes a qualitative approach to assess progress and change driven by the SPF against the specified criteria, through the use of illustrative cases. It is not intended to measure whether UN Women achieved SPF indicators but rather seeks to describe qualitatively the changes and lessons.

A variety of country, regional and thematic examples are drawn on to illustrate key aspects of how SPF implementation adds value to UN Women's efforts. Due to the number and diversity of interventions and variable thematic emphasis across different countries, there was no simple way to select a representative sample. Consultations during the Inception phase identified potential focus countries and themes which the consultant sought to explore. Criteria for country or intervention cases included: examples of a modality implemented in several places, examples demonstrating synergies between thematic areas; a spread of contexts to include differing states of fragility (including some contexts of protracted conflict), and prioritising cases not previously explored in depth in reviews, or with significant revised information.

With limited time and resources to assess such a broad-reaching programme, the scope is limited to illustrative examples at global or national levels that illustrate how SPF-funding supports UN Women goals. It is not feasible to do a comprehensive assessment.

Findings are presented largely thematically based on specific examples from consultations, drawing aspects of the criteria together. General conclusions are then articulated before setting out priority recommendations for the remainder of the SPF III implementation period.

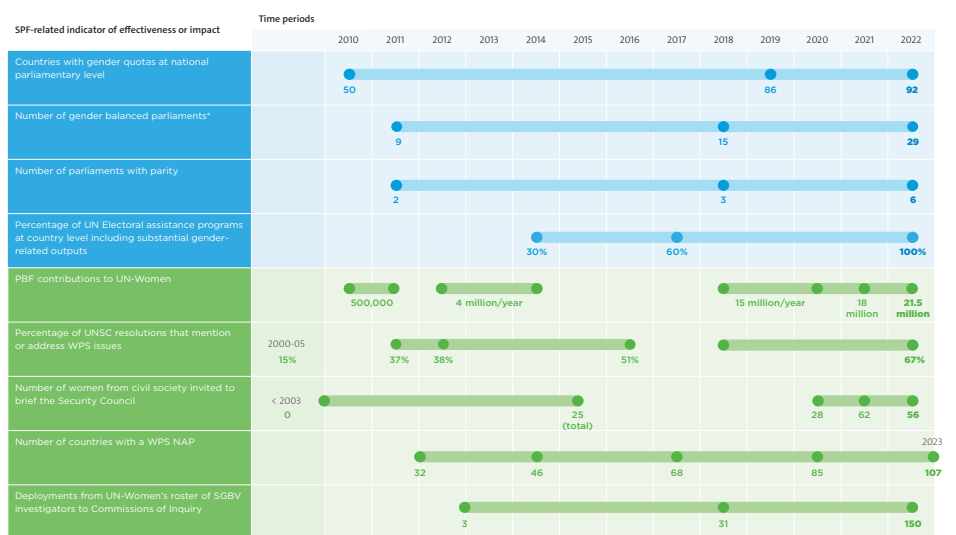
Findings

Overall impact areas

SPF III builds on significant gains across key impact areas for WPP, WPS, HA and DRR under previous SPF phases.

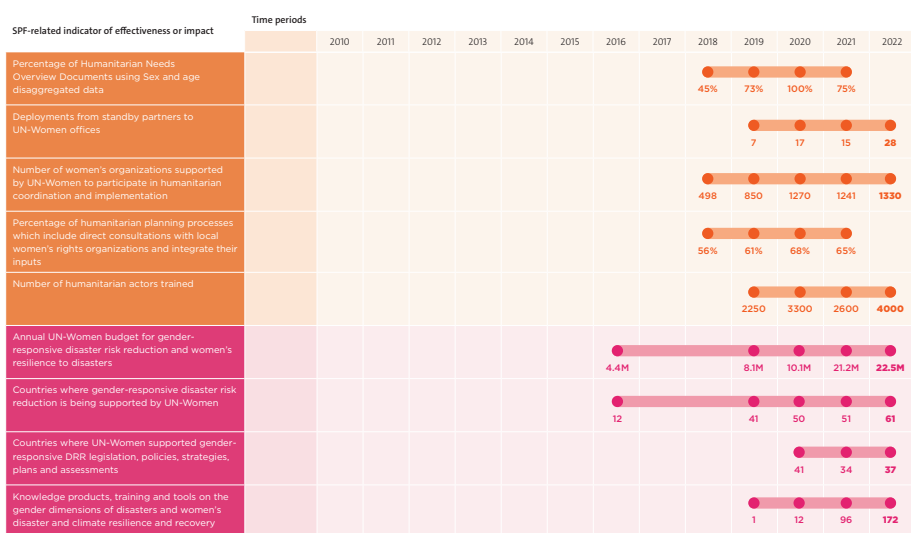
UN Women tracked data to show changes against high-level indicators on WPP, WPS, HA and DRR, to which SPF interventions have contributed since it was introduced in 2012 (Fig. 1). This demonstrates the value of sustained engagement on WPP and WPS and success in introducing new programming for HA and DRR under SPF II.

Figure 1: Then and Now – Differences in UN Women’s programming, partnerships, and reach over the SPF time period



* Gender balanced referring to at least 40 per cent women’s representation.

Today, it is unimaginable that an investigation team would be staffed without a gender expert, or that a report or charging document would not include sexual and gender-based violence or gender analysis.



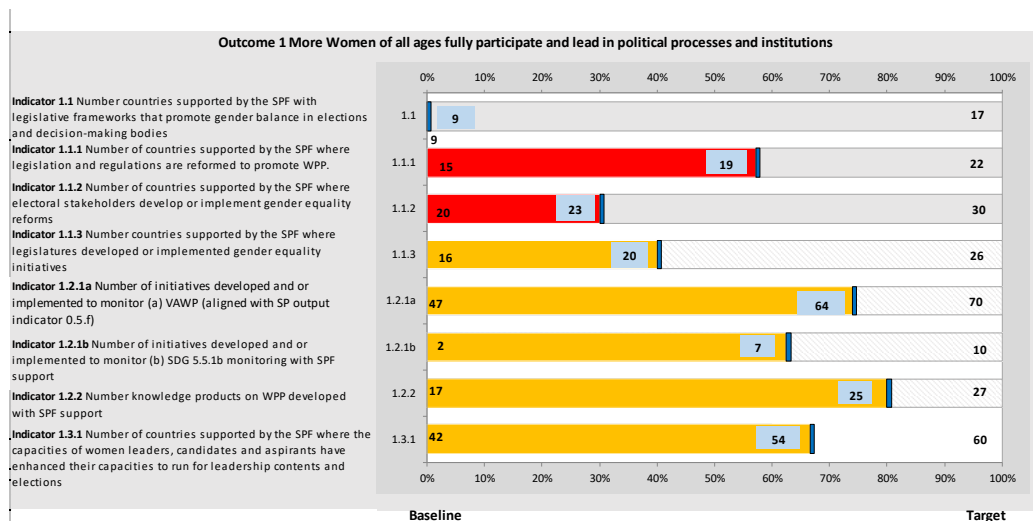
Under SPF III, UN Women has continued to push for progress against these indicators, with the funds enabling ongoing development and roll-out of coherent approaches within each of the themes whilst continuing to adapt to a changing global context and to conflict and crisis situations. It has also enabled increasing synergy between some themes.

Tracking against indicators, highlights steady progress in many areas at the mid-point of SPF III, including efforts to develop and implement coherent thematic approaches around WPP and WPS, and influence on the wider international peace and security landscape. However, a lack of progress against some key indicators signals important concerns around the shifting context for advancing GEWE, with a de-prioritisation or worse roll-back of women’s rights in many contexts where UN Women works globally coupled with a decline in donor funding to support GEWE overall. This includes specific challenges to efforts to increase WPP and WPS as well as efforts to ensure that women’s needs are met and voices heard across peace and security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction processes.

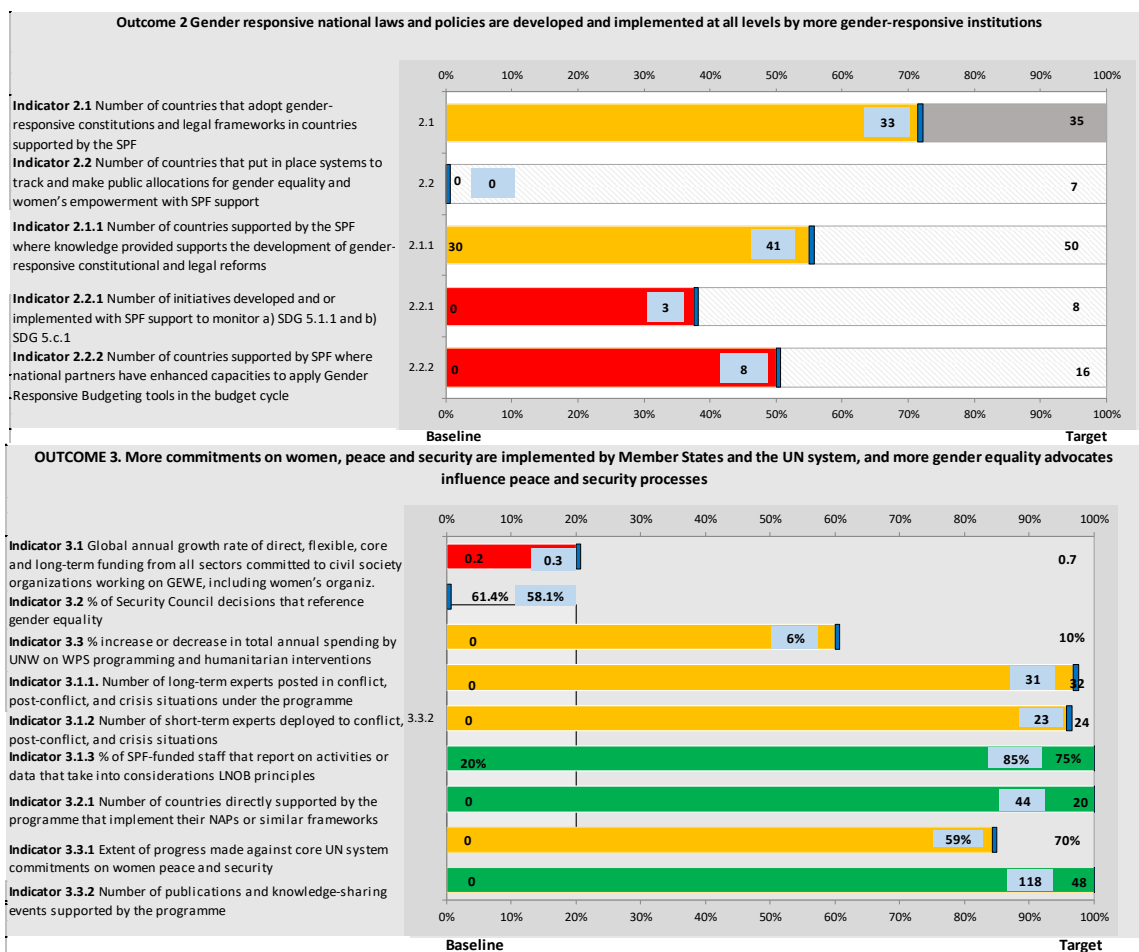
Of particular concern is the slow progress against two key indicators that underpin sustainability. Indicator 3.1 highlights slower than anticipated growth in direct, flexible, core and long-term funding, including for support to civil society. Whilst examples below, highlight many ways in which SPF has underpinned wider resource mobilisation for programming, the wider picture of GEWE funding requires concerted efforts across UN Women and in partnership with its committed donors to build wider support.

At the same time, sustaining gains for women longer term rests on building local and national capacities within member states and within civil society to finance support for GEWE. There has not yet been significant progress in advancing national capacities to support GEWE through public financial management, including gender budgets, as shown against indicator 2.2, as this work was discontinued due to lack of budget allocation from 2024.

Figure 2 Progress against SPF III Indicators by December 2023⁶



⁶ Reported in the SPF III 2nd Narrative Report for the period January to December 2023



Women's Political Participation

UN Women has supported growth of the WPP programme since 2012, during which time there have been significant advances in normative frameworks as well as progress in women's participation in a wide range of contexts. During this time UN Women's approach to electoral support has evolved. Key policy tools to help shape electoral systems have been developed and are seen as legitimate support to national governments where they may previously have been portrayed as interference, such as Temporary Special Measures (TSM) and in particular legislated gender quotas. UN Women now also plays an established role as gender lead in International Electoral Assistance Missions alongside UNDP and other UN partners.⁷

SPF III sets out the following aims for Women's Political Participation

- **Support Member States to develop and/or reform legal frameworks and arrangements to accelerate women's participation** in public life and decision-making processes, in compliance with Member States' international commitments.
- **Address the underlying root causes of the underrepresentation** on women in public life by: strengthening **normative frameworks**, laws, policies and institutions; promoting positive **social norms** through global advocacy and direct support to country programming; enhancing **diverse women's voice, leadership and agency**; generating practical **knowledge**

⁷ It was noted that only two SDG5 indicators have shown traction, and these can both be linked to SPF investment in catalysing gender quotas, TSM and other electoral assistance support, highlighting the effectiveness of the clear and coherent approach supported by SPF.

and gender statistics and data; and supporting UN system **accountability** and results for gender equality.

It seeks to achieve its WPP aims through:

- **Bolstering UN-Women’s country programming to implement normative frameworks on WPP.**
- Enhancing **institutional capacity** to respond to country-level requests with guidance and support to activities as needed, or where there is no UN-Women presence.
- Providing **high quality technical support** and **global thought leadership** to advance normative and policy agendas with key partners
- **UN coordination to promote WPP and gender responsive legal reforms**
- Supporting **gender mainstreaming into electoral assistance** policies, electoral Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs), and country programmes.
- Coordinating high-level **advocacy within relevant task forces** and leveraging support at the highest political level of the UN through interagency coordination for implementation of SG’s Executive Committee decisions **and** for coordinated advocacy at the country level to prevent and mitigate to VAWP.
- **Advancing the global normative agenda on WPP, prioritising the** new CEDAW General Recommendation (GR 40) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems.
- **Enhancing global knowledge and statistical standards on WPP.** Including: Generating knowledge products and standardized tools; Leading global data collection on preventing VAWP through country-level surveys; Leading data compilation and reporting on SDG indicator 5.5.1b on local government, women in the executive, and women Heads of State; Leveraging UN coordination and other partnerships to lead development of international statistical standards on measuring WPP.
- **External Capacity building on WPP** at regional and country levels on: implementation of training curriculum for women leaders and aspiring candidates, including the companion guide on inclusive campaigns and LNOB; trainings for police/security forces to prevent and mitigate VAWP; technical capacity of parliamentarians and staff to institutionalise gender responsive parliamentary procedures and legislative work (induction curriculum).
- **Internal Capacity building on WPP** through trainings and thematic webinars, peer-to-peer learning, engaging the WPP CoP and exchanging best practices and lessons.
- **Convening partners** including donors, international organizations and civil society groups, to work collaboratively for greater impact and to provide evidence-based tools and expertise to support national partners.
- **Forging new partnerships with other constituencies** such as men and boys, faith-based organizations, traditional and community leaders and security sector actors.

Having a global policy lead (and team) linked closely to experts and programme staff in regional or country offices, together with an easily accessible funding pot and a set of clear norms and guidelines, has enabled extension of coherent WPP support and balancing of long term WPP engagement with responsiveness to emerging needs

SPF III has enabled the WPP Programme to continue developing standardised approaches collaboratively through strong linkages between global, regional and national levels, bolstered by a strong culture of sharing and learning. It was noted that within WPP, the structure of regional policy specialists matrixed to the global advisor in HQ helps to maintain regional-global

coherence in implementing common approaches defined in collaboratively agreed and tested knowledge products, with technical advice supporting adaptation to contextual circumstances.

This is exemplified in the collaborative development and piloting of approaches of the standardized curriculum or standardized survey methodology on violence against women in politics (VAWP), finalised based on feedback from the pilot before roll-out across CO's. Other examples of collaborative knowledge products and tools under SPF III include the campaign and leadership training, and the training programme on legislative induction training for the national and local level which will be piloted in Albania to help to increase the effectiveness of women elected to office. Regional advisors and country programme staff describe the ease of being able to draw on standardised guidance as they have essentially a package of direct service line offerings to the country offices. The SPF has also enabled UN Women to maintain a dedicated statistician, crucial for monitoring and reporting on SDG indicators related to women's political participation. It has also supported the development of databases and online platforms, such as the UN Gender Quota Portal, and the Women in Local Government Website which serve as a valuable resources for information on women's political participation.

Regional WPP advisors balance support to CO's and engagement with key regional institutions on political participation. Within Europe and Central Asia, for example, the ECA Regional Policy Specialist for WPP gives on demand technical assistance and policy advice to CO's, UNCT's and RO's. Through a longstanding memorandum of understanding, they also work closely with the Gender and Democracy programme of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which works in 56 states. For example, UN Women might provide inputs to an OSCE training package or contribute case studies and vice versa. They also acknowledge each other in publications and do joint events or provide expert speakers. There is a high level of organizational knowledge sharing. Having flexible capacity has enabled UN Women to mobilise with this key regional partner to bring thinking from the ECA region to Beijing +30. This is timely because progress is stagnating and, in many countries, going backwards. In early 2024, OSCE hosted training on gender audits within the political sphere earlier and invited UN Women field staff to attend free of charge.

SPF, through the Women in Politics Fund (WiPF), enables additional work arising due to changes in the political context, new trends, and crises, as well as supporting more sustained engagement to support women's leadership.

WiPF flexible funding can support aspects that advance strategic plans but were previously unplanned or unbudgeted, and new activities not included in planned electoral assistance or broader WPP programmes. For example, this can enable key interventions when official electoral assistance budgets fall short or when new needs are identified, contributing to sustained progress in supporting women to engage in political processes. Country Offices, particularly those that have small or no programming in this area, utilise advisory support from Regional Advisors to help access the fund. This is vital in generating analysis, designing the intervention and drafting proposals, advocating to government, and building capacities. If the CO or the regional advisor sees an opportunity to support women's leadership, the WiPF allows them to do small interventions or preparatory work, to complement other donor funds or to forge partnerships with other agencies, whether that be the OSCE, NDI, UNDP or NGO's in the country.

Funding for WPP generally increases in the year before elections but there is often insufficient funding for continuous support to embed WPP. UN Women has used WiPF to support women's leadership in a more sustained way, including through leveraging it to attract larger project funding. SPF seed funding has been used to catalytic effect in Lebanon, Pakistan, Jordan, DRC, Guatemala and Honduras since 2022.

Advancing Women's Participation in Politics in Kenya with WiPF Support

In Kenya, WPP support is focused on helping the government achieving the constitutional provision that parliament consists of no more than two-thirds of either gender. This includes efforts to build capacities of women candidates standing for election and to deter VAWP, as well as support to implement constitutionally mandated temporary special measures (TSM) providing for direct appointment of women MP's if the provision is not met.

In 2022, UN Women in Kenya received a lot of requests for specific support from women candidates and civil society that were not planned for under the multi-year joint electoral assistance programme managed by UNDP. With support from the regional advisor, the CO was able to access the WiPF to meet the funding deficit for these emerging needs. This supported provision of materials from the electoral commission to women candidates and a public campaign promoting violence-free elections which was seen as contributing to a more peaceful electoral process for women. However, at national level women candidates did not see electoral success.

There has been pushback against the two-thirds principle, including protests, judicial attempts to overturn it and a perceived 'silent protest' of underfunding the Department of Gender. Broader protest against ballooning costs of government exacerbates opposition to TSM, which add significantly to parliamentary cost. After the 2022 election, political will at Presidential level was a key factor in seeking a solution to help meet the constitutional provision as the President spoke and wrote publicly in favour of it. This was seen as a culmination of pressure over many years from WROs promulgating the Women's National Charter and advocating to Parliament, the courts and the President for women's political participation, efforts supported by UN Women. With WiPF support during 2023-24, a Multi-Sectoral Working Group was established to propose a formula for achieving the two-thirds gender principle at the next election. This included peace actors alongside government, civil society, academia and faith-based groups, recognising that securing decision-making positions for women can also ensure that women's experiences are considered in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding efforts. The group recently disbanded having met its mandate and submitted a bill to parliament. This is an important milestone in a long process to change the multiple factors that keep women out of decision-making roles. There is currently a critical mass of support as well as multiple mechanisms for holding the government to account, but sustained engagement will be critical. SPF helped meet a very specific need to advance the political process in the post-election period and in preparation for the next election cycle. Close accompaniment of the political process over many years, enabled UN Women to identify and seize this opportunity. In addition to funding for the Multi-Sectoral Working group, consultant capacity to work through legal provisions was recruited to accompany the process and advice was received from the WPP Regional and Global

Specialists who provided comparative examples and drew on UN Women's best-practice guidance on TSM. There is now a need to sustain engagement through advocacy to political leaders on the passage of the bill, supporting public hearings of the bills and parliamentary committees who would be looking at these bills. These inputs together were catalytic and highly strategic in moving forward a political and legal process that might otherwise have stalled at a time of rising opposition. This has provided a basis for more women being elected to parliament at the next election cycle and support to enable them to do their jobs.

SPF has enabled UN Women to leverage large-scale funding to support long-term processes to increase WPP in some contexts, although the availability of large-scale funds for WPP varies across regions. In the Europe and Central Asia region, the SPF-funded regional advisor on political participation and governance supported the development of a four-year, \$4 million program in Georgia, renewable up to 10 years. This leverage is critical in Georgia which has experienced political crisis and the removal of its gender quota in the electoral system. SPF funding was crucial in demonstrating the potential and impact of the program, attracting further investment.

However, overall there is disquiet around declining budgets to support WPP. The Kenya case highlights the need to strategise longer-term around elections so that progress is sustained between electoral cycles. Additionally, the pushback against WPP underscores the need to address deeply rooted social and political barriers that can impede progress towards gender equality and potentially lead to loss of previous gains, whilst also highlighting potential increased difficulty in mobilising resources for WPP in future.

The flexibility of SPF support has been critical in unstable political contexts where timely planning and budgeting for electoral support is challenging

In the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region, some countries saw major polarization and political instability, with parliaments dissolved and snap elections held more frequently in this region. For example, Serbia had four elections in less than four years. This makes planning for engagement on women's political participation hard as it can happen at any point in time.

In Kyrgyzstan in 2021 a series of events politically destabilized the country, resulting in a violent political crisis. The parliament was dissolved, the president was kicked out of office, a new constitution was written, and elections were held all within three months. The structure of the new constitution made it look like fewer women would be elected to the Parliament. However, with support from the WiPF, ECA were able to immediately leverage funding for candidate and leadership training supporting more women to engage in that electoral cycle in what had been a relatively quick and destabilizing event. Slightly more women were subsequently elected and many of those women elected had taken part in UN Women trainings. In Moldova, SPF funding has also supported various WPP initiatives, including campaign and leadership training for women candidates, social norms change programs, and capacity building for civil society organizations. The flexible funding has allowed the Moldova Country Office to respond to the country's politically polarized environment and adapt its programming to the evolving context. Without SPF funds and a set of common approaches, tools and guidelines, UN Women would not be able to respond so flexibly and so quickly to support women's participation in volatile political contexts.

UN Women's unique ability as a UN entity mandated to support both member states and civil society enables it to support system-wide legal and institutional change as well as enhancing the enabling environment, reflecting the views of affected women and building political support for WPP.

UN Women, through its mandate and flexible advisory capacity has been able to build trust and good working relationships with local, national and regional WROs. In combining work at governmental level with direct support and facilitation to WRO's, UN Women enhances its impact on WPP.

Progressing implementation of Zimbabwe's constitutional commitments to WPP in partnership with Women's Rights Organisations

Zimbabwe's constitution is highly supportive of gender equality, but progress has been slow. UN Women has provided long-term support to government in identifying laws needing reform and helped parliament prioritize these changes. Analysis after two electoral cycles highlighted that although the number of women in parliament rose, the majority of these were under affirmative action/TSM and not supported by sufficient capacity building for meaningful influence or sustainable increases in the percentage of women in power. To address this, UN Women provided training for aspiring female political leaders and supported the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to better collaborate with women's rights organizations (WRO's), allowing concerns about female participation to be heard. This also fostered cooperation between women's groups and the media to improve how women are portrayed, leading to more gender-responsive reporting. UN Women also played a coordinating role working through the African Women Leaders Network, a platform to promote WPP and WPS agendas, and established the Gender Observatory where women-led groups could contribute to early warning systems. The Gender Observatory played a crucial role in knowledge development, information sharing, advocacy, and mapping the political environment. It collected evidence on women's participation in elections and gathered information on the responses of observer missions and courts regarding violence against women in elections.

The Zimbabwe Country Office established the Gender Observatory in 2018 and updated it in 2022. UN Women was invited to participate in the needs assessment mission ahead of the 2023 election, supported by SPF-funded technical advisors. This allowed them to influence the recommendations and contribute to the Zimbabwe CO's new programming. The coordination and partnership-building efforts of UN Women in Zimbabwe around WPP have been sustained and the CO holds strategic positions on various platforms. They have also addressed the connection between political participation and peace and security through the Peace Building Fund which they were able to access after preparatory work supported by the SPF.

The Zimbabwe case highlights the importance of partnership building and trust building over a long period to advance WPP, facilitated by SPF technical capacities. It also highlights the potential for peer exchange and learning within and between regions that SPF facilitates. In this case, Zimbabwe shared its experiences in forging collaboration with WRO's to support WPP, and specifically establishing a Gender Observatory, with other countries who want to set up

observatories. This includes exchange with South Sudan, Malawi and Mozambique (facilitated by the regional advisor) as well as exchange with the LAC region (facilitated via Headquarters).

SPF has enabled UN Women to sustain and expand partnerships across the UN System, and with donors, international organizations and civil society groups, to promote women's electoral and political participation and leadership, demonstrating a high level of external coherence.

This includes through UN Coordination to mainstream gender concerns into electoral assistance. This ensures that lessons from WPP implementation on the ground inform UN Women's role in shaping the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance as well as joint programming with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which in turn influences how UN Women carves space within electoral assistance missions to promote women's participation. Key assumptions underpinning this include that the coordination role of UN Women at country level will result in more effective UN joint programming and advocacy to increase women's participation in decision making and gender responsive laws.

Despite funding constraints for WPP, UN Women now needs to build further on established technical approaches and policy tools, such as TSM, to focus more on the enabling environment that addresses the fundamental barriers to participation, including stemming the wave of violent, and threatening activity.

Examples of pushback against women's participation and increased incidence of VAWP are concerning for the sustaining of gains to date on WPP. One of the most significant drivers of contextual change around WPP is technology facilitated GBV which has grown exponentially against women elected officials or women vying for elections global. UN Women's research shows women are deplatforming or leaving politics. There is a high risk of mass reversal of the gains in women's political parity.

At the same time, a general downturn in funding for GEWE, and an increasing focus on countries in crisis for many donors, is particularly stark for WPP as there are limited options for funding women's participation, voice and leadership. In this context, the WiPF becomes even more crucial in filling gaps in funding that are essential to both maintain and extend progress. At the same time, national capacity building becomes even more important, with national political will and financial commitment key to sustaining progress in many contexts, as well as advocacy towards potential donors.

WPS, Humanitarian Action, and DRR

Alongside longstanding WPS engagement, UN Women now has established structures for HA and DRR, including work independently of WPS as well as integrated approaches in line with the HDP nexus. Without SPF funds supporting a rich network of capacities from national to global levels, this would not have been possible as high levels of partnership brokering, positioning, political engagement and facilitation have been crucial to progress, including linkages between local, regional and global levels. Progress under SPF III builds on previous successes, noting that strong examples of impact have been previously described in annual donor reports, including Colombia and Lebanon Impact Studies and reflections on the SGBV investigations and Security Council engagement.

SPF III sets out the following aims for WPS, Humanitarian and DRR

- **Learn from and build on the lessons learned in the previous two phases** of the SPF, including the midterm review, annual feedback from the donor, and specific evaluations, such as on UN-Women's humanitarian action work, internal impact assessment of the WPS work of the first two phases of SPF, and the recent corporate evaluation of the work on national action plans (NAPs).
- Strengthen the integration of other pillars of UN Women's work dealing with crisis preparedness and response, such as Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction, within a Women, Peace and Security framework, including by sharpening UN Women's work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
- **Shift towards supporting the implementation, budgeting, and accountability of NAPs on WPS** in countries affected by crisis or fragility, rather than the adoption of new plans.
- **Generate new knowledge, partnerships, or innovative initiatives** that would advance the **Secretary-General's recommendations and goals in 2019 and 2020**, negotiated with the rest of the UN system for the 20th anniversary of 1325.
- **Strengthen capacities of local women led organizations and networks and amplifying women's voices and agency** – including refugees, IDPs and host communities - to influence decision making, funding and prioritization commitments under NAPs, refugee response, solutions to internal displacement humanitarian response plans and other frameworks.
- Continue strengthening **capacities in investigations and documentation of gender-based crimes and atrocities, and multi-stakeholder coordination, both in country and at the global level**, leveraging UN-Women's lead or secretariat role in the main global platforms for coordination on WPS, integrating gender equality and WPS in DRR and HA, as well as policies/frameworks on GE in humanitarian crises, including localized accountability frameworks and gaps in how the humanitarian system responds to the gender impacts of conflicts and humanitarian crises enabling a comprehensive approach across the different stages of crisis, prevention, response, early recovery and linking to the broader goal of sustainable development.

SPF III enables continuity and coherence in UN Women's significant role within the international peace and security architecture

Over the long-term, SPF has enabled UN Women to realise its mandate in peace and security and become a trusted and established institution within peace and security processes from local and national to regional and global levels, working across the triple mandate. The key role of global advisors and other roles at HQ facilitated by SPF is clear in continuing advancement of WPS and GEWE perspectives across intergovernmental and interagency coordination mechanisms⁸, with linkages to local and regional advisors ensuring that these roles bring perspectives from field level. UN Women is now established as a core part of these mechanisms, and staff note that without UN Women's presence on broader peace and security mechanisms many decisions and actions would be gender-blind. UN Women chairs or coordinates all the existing global coordination mechanisms on WPS. This includes the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on WPS, the UN Standing Committee on WPS, the WPS Focal Points Network, the Compact on WPS and Humanitarian Action, and specialized funds like the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the Elsie Initiative Fund.

⁸ UN Women as a whole covers 95 intergovernmental and interagency coordination mechanisms through engagement at UN Headquarters level.

SPF-supported global level capacity ensures that UN Women's role as the Chair of the UN Standing Committee on WPS is informed by experience from different contexts, including UN Women's experience and perspectives from conflict-affected women, ensuring that UN Women shapes both normative frameworks and specific action to address WPS issues. SPF has also facilitated UN Women's engagement in the Security Council, where it plays a crucial role in strengthening the information and analysis on WPS available to Security Council Members and influencing the deliberations and decisions of the Security Council. The funding has enabled UN Women to provide technical expertise and support to women's groups and civil society organizations in informing Security Council debates, for example, the NGO Working Group on WPS (which receives SPF funding) were able to facilitate Sudanese women peace actors to brief Security Council discussions on Sudan, leading to a shift in how gender perspectives were incorporated into decisions.

Maintaining a WPS perspective in international responses to the conflict in Sudan

The case of Sudan highlights how regional advisor support can allow continuity and essential work to promote women's participation in peace processes alongside a pivot to humanitarian response. UN Women Sudan⁹, has largely shifted to humanitarian response with some community level peacebuilding since the escalation of conflict in 2024. The ESARO WPS regional advisor has pivoted to provide additional support to the CO as well as engaging directly with Sudanese women activists across the region, aided by established regional, CO and civil society relationships. She gives support to the Sudan CO on programme development and resource mobilisation.

The WPS advisor, working collaboratively with regional actors such as the AU, IGAD and African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), has facilitated Kampala for women from the region to come together (in person in Kapala and online) to inform the AU peace process. Prior to the meeting she also consulted women still in Sudan. This has amplified Sudanese women's voices, including a powerful call for 50% representation in peace processes. The 'Kampala Feminist Declaration' consolidated the priorities of 49 WROs in the Peace for Sudan Platform and serves as an advocacy tool, towards the AU-IGAD Inter-Sudanese Political Dialogue and US-led peace talks in Geneva. The regional advisor has sought to bring Sudanese women's voices to key strategic advocacy platforms, including AU regional briefings and CSW and the October WPS debate in NYC (with support from the NGO Working Group, one of this programme's key implementing partners). These are entry points to raise women's representation in the AU-supported peace processes and to ensure preparation for future engagement in the peace process and eventual transition period following the current short-term responses of the CO. This supports crisis response planning, facilitates dialogue and partnership with regional and global actors, supports a women's network, helps coalition building, and shares knowledge across the region. It also enhances the sustainability of previous efforts to mobilise a broad base of Sudanese and regional WRO's in support of WPS at a time when most resources are reallocated to HA.

⁹ Based in Port Sudan since the onset of the current conflict with many staff outside of the country.

Sustainability and impact of WPS commitments at country levels rests on innovative approaches to resourcing and accountability for implementation. Presence of national and regional advisors supported by SPF are an important mechanism for building national capacities and sustained momentum to put WPS plans into practice.

As the only UN entity with a mandate to drive WPS results, SPF has enabled advancement of WPS Normative Frameworks and National Action Plans (NAPs) from 19 to 110 over 12 years, including 26% with a budget at adoption and over 81% of NAP's adopted in recent year having measurement and monitoring frameworks. This illustrates the value of longstanding technical and policy engagement, and linkage from national to global levels.

NAP's are largely agreed with significant input and ownership from a range of national and international stakeholders, including WROs. However, momentum and commitment to funding implementation has been lacking for many NAPs once agreed. Given funding constraints globally, the challenge now is to build national capacities and partnerships in-country to support implementation. The role of in-country and regional advisors is crucial in advocating for political support, developing capacity for local financing and developing fundable programmes to realise NAP commitments. Catalytic funding from SPF, together with regional advisor support, has enabled UN Women to support development of a very high number of NAP's each year (both first generation NAP's and second or third iterations). In some cases SPF-supported capacity in-country has been able to support NAP implementation but SPF has not been able to support this consistently. Addressing slow implementation of NAP's remains a priority but requires national capacities.

UN Women has successfully supported the growth, increased capacity, connectedness and recognition of local peacebuilding initiatives by women, an approach which can shift discourse and dynamics around conflict in critical ways to enable peace

UN Women's mandate allowing direct support to WROs has allowed it to give comprehensive support to local women-led peace initiatives in contexts where no other actor could take them to sufficient scale or cultivate the necessary partnership building or political engagement to establish this as a legitimate component of local peacebuilding.

UN Women's engagement with WROs has highlighted the significant momentum of localised approaches to WPS, particularly in highly active women's mediation networks in contexts including Burundi and South Sudan. Women often play very distinct roles as mediators in their communities and, with support, can grow these roles. In a range of countries, SPF has facilitated the capacity building of these structures and highlighted the potential value they have to national actors seeking to shift conflict dynamics as critical timely local mediation can make a difference when localised conflict risks derailing a peace agreement.

This support to localised WPS approaches is made possible through the flexible technical capacity supported by SPF which enables high levels of engagement with local women peacebuilders, exchange of lessons across contexts and financial support to nascent institutional support structures for women at national, regional and global levels.

UN Women's localised approach to WPS has enabled a shift in discourse on conflict in countries not traditionally thought of as conflict-affected, in many cases enabling them to access new funding streams for significant programming.

Scaling up localised WPS approach across the LAC region

In LAC, SPF has funded advisory support since 2017, initially focussed solely on WPS at a time when only Colombia and Haiti worked on WPS in LAC and most LAC member states did not perceive themselves to be in conflict which they defined primarily at state-level. At that time, only Guatemala was ready to receive PBF funding (for transitional justice). The RA initially shared lessons from Colombia and Haiti with UN Women COs across the region. Since 2017, there has been polarisation, unrest and instability across the region and WPS became a useful agenda to connect other strands of work

Under SPF II, the Regional Director allocated money to do gender-sensitive conflict analysis through a tailored framing as '**gender analysis for peace building**' in 2018-2021 in El Salvador, Mexico and Guatemala. This established a methodology that has subsequently been used in Ecuador, Chile and elsewhere under SPF III. Conducting this type of analysis shifts understanding from a pure gender analysis to understanding how gender intersects with conflict and peace, enabling UN Women to identify gendered needs and opportunities from a peace and security lens and thus identify new entry points for change. Critically, it opened space for discussion with national governments as it shifted the discourse around conflict from something at state or inter-state level to localised conflicts, social divides and the underlying drivers and impacts related to gender inequality. This deeper level of analysis was seen to give Resident Coordinator's offices a stronger political platform and to identify alignment of programmatic and political engagements. UN Women leveraged the gender analysis for peace building to leverage PBF support for gender-sensitive or gender-focussed programming addressing peace and security issues, in countries previously considering themselves ineligible. The Regional Advisor worked with several countries not seen as eligible for PBF funding, supporting the Resident Coordinator to establish eligibility for PBF. There are now PBF funded projects in 7 countries in LAC: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras.

Further, in 2019, the LAC Regional Advisor worked with WROs in Mexico on a gender analysis for peacebuilding, noting that Mexico historically did not want to access PBF as acknowledging conflict was seen as politically risky. This analysis was the basis for designing programmes to address violence and 'localised conflict'. Notably, in 2020 the Government of Mexico asked UN Women to help create a network of women who could help deactivate local violence through mediation. With SPF supplementing Mexico's own contribution, the Networks of Women Peace Builders (MUCPAZ) started with 100 women and now operates in 20 states with 20,000 women. This is now seen as a landmark project for conflict prevention which was presented at UNSC when Mexico had a seat. It has subsequently given impetus to networks of women mediators across the LAC region and SPF-funded technical capacities continue to engage under SPF III. This highlights the value of long-term engagement of UN Women's technical experts, building relationships at governmental level and with civil society and accompanying change over a long period.

Regional roles facilitate linkages between national and regional spaces, infusing a WPS lens into the regional peace and security architecture and ensuring that conflict affected women's voices are heard.

Within Africa, the ESARO WPS regional advisor works with the African Union (AU) and IGAD, promoting a regional policy for a gender quota in peace processes at AU level and pushing for AU coordination of a WPS platform for the continent, leveraging engagement with COs, CSOs, IGAD, and the AU. This includes engagement with UN sub-regional political strategies through the UN Special Envoys (UNSE) for the Great Lakes and UNSE for the Horn of Africa to bring a political perspective and linkage to global discourse. When coming into the role she noted that the main relationship for the AU Liaison Office was with the AU Gender Department, not with Peace and Security Department. The advisor has built relationships with the AU Political, Peace and Security Division, bringing UN-AU engagement on the WPS agenda into the core peace and security architecture of the AU where it gets specific focus. The advisor is also supporting IGAD with normative policy on WPS – shifting from a militaristic approach – and supports regional civil society such as Inclusive Peace (platforms for knowledge sharing) and the African Women's Leadership Network (AWLN). Regional advisors combine the ability to view regional conflicts strategically and the need to seize opportunities for influence. In ESARO, for example, the WPS advisor was able to feed into revisions of the regional UN governance, peace and security strategies (approved January 2024) and ensure that a WPS lens was considered in key policies, bringing the WPS agenda into discussions with other UN bodies (UNODC, UNDP, IOM, UNHCR).

The WPSHA advisor in WACARO also engages with ECOWAS, utilising the role of the UN Women representative in Nigeria to engage directly with the ECOWAS Secretariat as well as engaging with gender-focussed staff based in Senegal. This further feeds into engagement with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) overall. They seek to strategically influence the evolution of regional peace and security architecture, noting that the Regional Economic Communities (REC's) such as ECOWAS and SADC will take increasingly significant roles in peace processes and peacekeeping alongside the UN. This has enabled UN Women to better understand the regional context and the institutional and political mechanisms responding to conflict to frame space for WPS and for UN Women. Having these established relationships for UN Women has also enabled it to facilitate regional attention to emergent crises, such as the Sahel, including through giving a platform to affected women. Such coordination and partnership efforts enhance UN Women's ability to leverage collective action around its strategic objectives and to ensure that WPS is represented in key regional action. This approach was strategic due to the changing landscape of peace and security architecture, with a growing reliance on regional solutions.

In the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region, SPF funding has supported the development of a regional roadmap on women, peace, and security, which has helped to strengthen coordination and collaboration between UN Women country offices and other UN agencies in the region. SPF has enabled development of a multi-stakeholder platform on Women, Peace, and Security for Central Asia and South Caucasus, which includes technical people from state agencies responsible for implementing the WPS agenda, showcasing the commitment to fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing on WPS across different levels and stakeholders. SPF has also enabled the organization of closed-door gatherings in Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus, fostering dialogue and collaboration between women activists, government

officials, and other stakeholders on peace and security issues. This work has helped to raise awareness of the importance of women's participation in peace and security processes, and to build the capacity of women's organizations to engage in these processes.

SPF has enabled establishment of UN Women's system-wide leadership role on Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) as well as its coordination role in key contexts.

UN Women provides leadership and capacity to advance gender in humanitarian action and promote the empowerment of crisis affected women and girls. Implementing its Humanitarian Strategy with the two pillars of coordination and programme/service delivery, UN Women advances gender equality in globally in the normative space, and at the regional and country level through coordination support and direct service delivery to crisis affected women and girls.

UN Women was finally admitted as a full Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) member in the end of 2022 . This is a key UN Women modality in fulfilling its humanitarian mandate to coordinate on gender equality and humanitarian action (GiHA) and advance this across the system-wide humanitarian response. Thus, SPF III funds have been timely in enabling the strategic positioning of UN Women in key global, regional and country level processes, including through policy specialist capacity in the Humanitarian Team, advisory capacity in regional offices and dedicated capacities on crisis response and prevention across several offices representing some of the biggest humanitarian crises, including Afghanistan, Sudan, Palestine, Haiti and others. SPF funding supported the establishment of the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Groups at country level, regional and global levels, which has been instrumental in influencing the normative and coordination agenda on gender and humanitarian action.

UN Women plays a critical role in the coordination of UN-led humanitarian and refugee responses, including through providing in-country technical expertise and leadership to the humanitarian system ensuring compliance with policy set standards and roles and responsibilities. UN Women's standardized model on humanitarian coordination is implemented in 27 countries and - entails the following: investment in gender analysis and data to support evidence-based planning; coordination of GiHA Working Groups at country level; capacity building on GiHA and amplifying women's voices and demands in partnership with local women led organizations and networks; and the establishment of localized accountability frameworks to guide action at the level of HC, HCT and the cluster system. In some of the biggest crises such as Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Haiti, CAR, Niger-the contribution from SPFIII has been critical to advancing this commitment and UN Women's positioning in interagency coordination mechanisms under UNCT/HCT including through investment in partnership with LWLOs ensuring complementarity and linkages between the WPS and HA agenda with focus on the protection, promotion of human rights and leadership of conflict affected and displaced women and girls and other population groups. In these contexts, SPF also enabled scaled up partnerships with OCHA, IOM, UNHCR, WFP and other humanitarian agencies.

In Asia-Pacific, the GiHA working group has been active since 2014 under the leadership of OCHA, UN Women and one international NGO. This group engages the regional humanitarian architecture and led to creation of national GiHA groups in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Pacific. The group facilitated the 2024 IASC Gender Policy session, co-hosted by the IASC Gender Reference Group (GRG), bringing together GiHA members

from both country offices and multi-country across Asia and the Pacific. The establishment of the [WE Respond Dashboard](#) by the Regional GiHA Working Group exemplifies the contributions of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Launched on World Humanitarian Day, this dashboard provides an overview of Women and Girl-Focused Organizations (WGFOs), identifies service gaps, and enhances coordination in disaster preparedness and response. UN Women Country Offices made significant contributions to the mapping of these organizations.

At global level, this enabled UN Women to shape and disseminate the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action in early 2024. This sets out the core principles, priority areas and designated roles and responsibilities for the integration of gender into the global humanitarian coordination system. UN Women also developed the IASC Gender Accountability Framework mechanism, placing a focus on localized ownership of the process – including involvement of local women’s organization - to improve buy in and promote ongoing positive adjustments at the national level where persistent gaps and challenges are identified. Development and publication of the 2021 and 2022 Gender Accountability Framework reports track progress in relation to the implementation of international standards to gender equality in humanitarian crises. This leadership role on gender has also helped to develop global partnerships, illustrated by a global MoU between UN Women and IoM signed in October 2024. Internally, the HA team has delivered humanitarian leadership training for UN Women Heads of Offices in crisis contexts to improve predictability and increase the quality of UN Women’s humanitarian work and relevant partnerships.

Investment to articulating a systematic offering for GiHA coordination and integration of GiHA across the cluster system is already showing great returns with HA response plans more likely to include sex and age disaggregated data across the UN system response and to involve WROs in humanitarian decision-making and not just within UN Women. Through IASC at global level and through Humanitarian Country Teams, UN Women has been able to engage in the system-wide response to crisis and implement the HDP approach to embed gender equality. UN Women now participates in the IASC taskforces on the HPD nexus and on climate security.

Flexibility in funding allows UN Women to adapt its interventions to the specific needs of crisis situations, ensuring that its efforts remain relevant and impactful in changing contexts whilst reflecting a coherent approach

The SPF's flexible funding model enables UN Women to allocate resources to emerging crises, as seen in the allocation of funds to the Philippines to support women's groups' engagement in the Emergency Relief Coordinator's flagship initiative on localizing humanitarian action and recently in Gaza to enable response to the sudden onset of conflict.

Enhanced understanding of UN Women’s humanitarian mandate has enabled it to forge roles within coordination structures and system-wide responses in several countries, including IASC priority contexts and some of the biggest humanitarian crises. The clarity now achieved at global level has enabled coherent responses in key contexts requiring rapid pivoting to HA while ensuring synergies and complementarity with the WPS and HA agenda, including coherence with political work, humanitarian access and protection . This enabled swift and clear humanitarian response plans to be developed using SPF funding when crises broke out in Gaza and in Sudan, which both pivoted to scale up humanitarian response following the outbreak of conflict in 2024.

In both cases these integrate WPS alongside HA and they have been mobilised through a combination of coherent global approaches and SPF-funded expertise deployed in-country and from a longstanding Regional WPSHA Advisor.

UN Women is the only UN entity to combine mandates across peace and security, development and humanitarian action through a dedicated lens to gender equality, women's empowerment and rights, placing it uniquely to articulate and demonstrate ways to work effectively across the HPD nexus.

SPF III provides support for Humanitarian Action (HA) and DRR alongside WPS, noting that SPF aims to support the strengthening of the humanitarian – peace – development nexus approach by not only strengthening women, peace and security (WPS) but also mainstreaming gender and WPS into humanitarian response and Disaster Risk Management plans within UN system wide accountability to ensure that prevention, preparedness, reconstruction and recovery integrate gender, women's voices and representation and lead to women and girls having greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience. At global level a lot of work within WPS, HA and DRR takes place separately as UN Women continues to seek conceptual clarity on its distinct approaches and added value within HA and DRR, although the integration between these is addressed within external engagements such as IASC and the Global Compact on WPS and Humanitarian Action and at field level synergies are common.

In some contexts, SPF has enabled the development of integrated or complementary programming, recognizing the interconnectedness of WPS, HA, and DRR . The flexibility of SPF funding has allowed UN Women to respond to emerging needs and design innovative approaches in response to interconnected challenges for women and girls on the ground whilst drawing on globally defined approaches. In the DRC, Chad, Mali and CAR, SPF funding has enabled the deployment of coordination specialists and experts on WPSHA, strengthening UN Women's presence and influence across peace and security and humanitarian efforts. This can include supporting urgent needs in response to crisis. In Ukraine, for example, before the conflict UN Women had a large established country office with a focus on the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and other developmental approaches. SPF support has enabled UN Women to do a full organisational shift in response to the conflict, with a new Strategic Note guiding efforts on WPS, humanitarian response, and gender-responsive reconstruction and recovery.

Catalysing and sustaining a coherent WPSHA programme for CAR

UN Women established a Country Office in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2021 with initial WEE, GBV and humanitarian programmes. Given the context of CAR as post-conflict, the CO started to establish an integrated WPSHA programme to accompany the transition through recovery to development in a context of ongoing protracted humanitarian crisis and cycles of political crisis. Initially through existing CO staff, linkages were made to a range of suitable donors, including PBF, but with no funding yet confirmed the CO drew on short-term SPF support to fund the new Programme Manager position for three months. This sustained the momentum in shaping the new programme and enabled it to confirm its first external donor funded activities, including a WPSHA needs assessment. This additional funded time for programme development enabled outreach to donors, partnership building and a better articulation of the joint WPSHA programme and how it relates to different donors (who use different frameworks and language).

In CAR, having an integrated WPSHA programme enables a more connected response based on more nuanced needs assessment, understanding linkages between conflict responses, post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery, humanitarian response and DRR, with this nexus permeating the CO's humanitarian strategy. This enables UN Women in CAR to access a range of funding for inter-connected work and they finalised funding agreements with a range of donors for the fully non-core resourced programme in 2022. When the temporary WPSHA PM position was due to end in June 2023 and SPF funds were again accessed to sustain the programme, meeting a 25% shortfall in funding for a fixed-term appointment. These short term, timely injections of funds to support staffing during a period of programme development catalysed the programme which now has support from a range of donors, including Japan, the EU and PBF. The extension of the position further enabled engagement with the Resident Coordinator's office and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) in Geneva to update proposals and access WPHF investment in CAR for the first time,

Demonstrating coherence with UN Women's global approach to GiHA coordination, The WPSHA programme in CAR negotiated with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) under OCHA to revive the GiHA Working Group and take the role of Chair. Alongside this central role in bringing a gender perspective to the system-wide humanitarian response, the WPSHA programme supports the Ministry of Gender on their National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security as well as working with the Ministry of Defence on integrating WPS into the armed forces (in partnership with UNITAR and UNCHR). Thus, the CAR country programme both advanced UN Women's coordination role within the humanitarian system and demonstrated practical intersections of WPS and HA.

Integrating WPS, humanitarian action, and disaster risk reduction were noted as ways to create entry points in non-traditional WPS settings, as well as recognising the inherent connection of these approaches for women in conflict contexts.

In LAC, synergies between humanitarian response and WPS approaches emerged from the observation that women working at the forefront of humanitarian response following a wave of storms in the Caribbean, were the same women that address GBV at community levels or work to counter gang violence. These multiple roles presented entry points to develop integrated WPSHA approaches and to introduce the WPS agenda to a region that had previously ignored it, particularly where the admission of conflict could be politicised. Regional Advisors also revealed discrete engagements in contexts where the labels of conflict and peacebuilding remain politically contentious. In these contexts, UN Women may develop a range of other initiatives whilst keeping an active engagement with stakeholders in the region.

In some instances, the SPF has funded initial stages of projects or programs that were later wholly adopted and financed by other development partners or governmental bodies. SPF funding for the GiHA Working Group was crucial in influencing the normative and coordination agenda. The initial SPF support was pivotal in creating a sustainable structure that now functions independently. SPF support for DRR capacity also enabled them to secure funding from ECHO to advance specific outcomes within ASEAN on DRR. This catalytic funding led ASEAN to adopt ambitious targets on protection, gender, and inclusion, which has now become a global best practice. The DRR footprint also helped establish synergies with other programs like Empower, a

joint program between UN Women and UNEP, which has grown into a \$20 million initiative with contributions from multiple donors.

SPF has allowed UN Women to position itself as a core actor on DRR, whilst also exploring synergies with WPS

SPF supports UN Women's role as a key contributor to gender mainstreaming of the UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, with the Gender Action Plan signifying normative progress at global level. In the Asia-Pacific region, SPF has enabled UN Women to position itself as a core actor in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate security through a Regional Advisor on DRR. UN Women's role has been instrumental in development of a Gender Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which sets out plans for mainstreaming gender into disaster risk reduction efforts at the global, regional and national levels. The working group has coordinated the development of guidelines on disability, rolled out the IASC gender policy, and established national working groups in five countries. The SPF also funded the only climate security technical capacity in the region, catalyzing progress in this critical area. The strong Disaster Risk Reduction footprint established through SPF funding enabled UN Women to secure funding from ECHO and contribute to the development of a \$20 million initiative on women for climate-resilient societies.

At the same time, overlaps between DRR and WPS have been explored and there seems to be momentum around defining the role of DRR within a WPS framework. With climate related insecurity rising on the agenda, integrating a gender-responsive DRR lens into WPS presents new opportunities for gender-responsive disaster and climate risk reduction and resilience-building in the face of increasing disaster risks in fragility, conflict and violence-affected settings, as well as new approaches in peacebuilding.

UN Women has successfully leveraged its positioning and partnership for large-scale WPS programmes through the PBF, including channelling funds direct to WRO's

High level results show a significant uplift in UN Women's access to PBF funds during the span of SPF. Most CO staff and regional advisors consulted noted the achievement over time of large-scale funding for WPS via the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), managed by the Peacebuilding Support Office. This is the core mechanism supporting countries transitioning from conflict and has the greatest percentage spend on gender of any multi-donor fund not specifically targeted at GEWE, with 47% now annually earmarked. The presence of UN Women seconded capacity within the PSO over many years has enabled reflection of WPS across the fund and understanding across its staffing of the intersection of gender and peacebuilding, pushing this understanding beyond one of addressing GBV. This has opened the space for UN Women CO's to engage PBF with support of SPF-supported advisors.

Regional advisors have also supported assessment missions and conflict analysis processes, as well as capacity building for gender sensitive conflict analysis, which underpins the development of new and more relevant programming. It was noted that UN Women proposals to PBF and other peace-focused funding historically had weak conflict analysis. However, a marked improvement was noted with project officers now better able to understand gender-responsive conflict analysis as distinct from a broader gender analysis. Within PBF projects, this distinction can also help to influence gender mainstreaming within components led by partners such as UNDP as

joint analysis highlights the integration of gender with broader conflict dynamics rather than seeing it as addressing distinct issues relating to women, which previously led to gender being addressed primarily within UN Women-led project components only.

Informal networking and information sharing, what some informants termed informal diplomacy, is seen as crucial in facilitating new approaches and connecting problems on the ground to solutions and most importantly large-scale, long-term funding. Through SPF supported technical capacity, with flexible roles, multiple UN Women CO's were able to develop WPS programmes, develop partnerships with other UN agencies and liaise with the PBF in order to access funds. In many cases countries now have multiple PBF projects. It was noted that whilst UN Women usually manages the bulk of gender-focussed programming within a PBF project, over time the other agencies (such as UNDP) have also increased their integration of gender across projects as a whole.

The PBF is unique as it allows UN Women to channel some funding to WROs, enabling it to fulfil its mandated engagement with civil society. In cases of extreme conflict, where it is sometimes difficult to work with national authorities, such as Myanmar or Afghanistan, this enables UN Women to continue engagement when other UN agencies are unable to due to a lack of legitimate national partner. This supports sustainability of UN Women engagement across crisis contexts.

The political context and conflict dynamics in different regions significantly impact program sustainability

In conflict-affected contexts like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, programs must navigate complex political landscapes, security challenges, and the evolving needs of women and girls. Adaptability, flexibility, and strong partnerships with local actors are essential for sustaining programs amidst these challenges. Broader geopolitical shifts and global trends, such as the war in Ukraine and the rise of anti-rights movements, can also impact program sustainability. These trends can lead to funding cuts, increased restrictions on civil society, and a backlash against gender equality initiatives, as observed in the ECA region and Kenya as well as Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen. Navigating these challenges requires strategic advocacy, strong partnerships, and a focus on demonstrating the value and impact of UN Women's work.

Conceptual linkages between WPP and WPS are clearly articulated by many CO and regional informants, highlighting an understanding of the complementarity of these approaches in practice.

The lines between WPS and WPP are often blurred, particularly when focusing on WPP in countries with ongoing conflict such as Ukraine and in countries emerging from conflict like South Sudan. Women engaging in politics after a long transition from conflict, rarely make the distinction between WPP, humanitarian action and WPS. In many cases women have initially been first responders or peace activists in their communities or national civil society, have contributed to shape WPS National Action Plans and have evolved over time to seek for formal political roles. As such, when engaging women in focus countries, the distinction between these bodies of work is often obscured. Most informants found it useful to understand this as a continuum in women's participation on decision making processes but cited the largely separate funding sources for WPP and WPS as a factor counting against greater synergy.

This highlights the importance of engagement between WPS and WPP portfolios, particularly where there is a continuum of support over a long period of transition from conflict or crisis. It also highlights the importance of long-term funding for WROs who undertake multiple roles and provide a basis for engagement across the nexus. Supporting WRO's to access funding from the WPHF can enable them to plan longer term and evolve their roles.

South Sudan: Accompanying transition from conflict through WPP and WPS

South Sudan is recovering from conflict, creating a new constitution, and preparing for elections at the same time. UN Women and UNDP are working together to provide strategic advice and raise awareness about how citizens can participate in these processes. Critically, UN Women has facilitated and launched the South Sudan Women's Charter, which outlines women's desires for the constitution, based on a two-year consultation process across the country. This could not have happened on such a scale or with such legitimacy through any other organisation, including traction at the highest levels of government and support from regional civil society and regional organisations.

South Sudan's transition is guided by the revitalised peace agreement. A lack of certainty around the feasibility of elections, and several postponements, presents challenges for accompanying the process whilst deterring donors from committing funds. The country lacks typical infrastructure for elections and has weak civil society, making support crucial. This is critical time for the SPF intervention to accompany the process. UN needs assessments in 2020 and 2024 underpin UN entities' focus on creating an enabling environment including capacity building, laws and policies and constitution making. South Sudan has had an SPF supported consultant since 2023, focussed on governance and women's leadership, combining programme management with resource mobilization, knowledge management and TA on WPP design and delivery. Advocacy bilaterally and with the Government of South Sudan focussed on including the TSM of minimum 35% affirmative action for women into electoral laws. Drawing on normative work to secure space for women and responsiveness to women's challenges, the CO has trained civil society and facilitated establishment of a Gender Observatory - a multi-stakeholder platform to prevent election-related GBV comprising 14 South Sudanese organisations from government to non-state actors.

The CO benefited from peer-to-peer exchange with a range of other UN Women offices. The ESARO RA facilitated meetings with staff from Burundi, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Senegal and others to share experience developing similar mechanisms, and mobilised a south-south exchange between South Sudan and Liberia to learn what roles women played when Liberia made the transition from war to peace and elections. Given the clear intersection of WPP and WPS due to the intersection of post-conflict recovery and electoral process, regional advisors for WPP and WPS have both engaged with the CO and liaised closely with each other. The CO has also been guided by material provided by the RA and HQ on temporary special measures, guidance from global lessons on gender observatories, and a global module on preventing VAWP. They in turn, have fed back lessons on this to the WPP global team.

In South Sudan, WPS, humanitarian response and WPP are closely connected. UN Women have been able to work with different women's groups who are not just interested in political

leadership, but in participation in broader recovery, trauma, safety and women's inclusion in security sector reform. They have used PBF funding to catalyse those discussions. UN Women also leads a WPS working group in South Sudan engaging at national and donor level looking at gendered aspects of the peace agreement, and they promote UN coordination to enhance accountability and results for gender equality, working particularly with UNDP and UNESCO under the International Elections Assistance programme. The consultant advisor and RA, as well as a UNV working on WPS, have coordinated and have been able to feed lessons from South Sudan into regional and global discourse on the conflict.

Enablers and Constraints

Internal Coherence

Internal coherence is strong within and between the thematic focus areas, aided by common technical approaches that can be tailored to context.

SPF has enabled UN Women to build institutional capacities across different levels, allowing global policies to be shaped by experiences and analysis from the country and regional levels and for global policy and programming guidance to be disseminated and applied. For example, SPF supported the Humanitarian Section to develop the Internal Guidance Notes on Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) coordination, programming, and partnering with WROs to strengthen and streamline UN Women's humanitarian coordination and operation work with the HDP nexus approach. Furthermore, it enabled the roll-out of UN Women's humanitarian "core commitments" which sets out its minimum offer for its delivery in humanitarian settings and guides the implementation of the Humanitarian Strategy in a consistent manner across regions and countries. SPF drives coherence through flexibility of funding to support advisory posts, learning and exchange, bridge funding to enable programme development and piloting, and in-depth capacity building, accompaniment and direct technical inputs to help apply defined approaches to CO contexts. This enables deeper analysis, preparation and design of programmes and space to develop thematic synergies. Knowledge products, evidence, gender analysis and data, trainings and communities of practice and a culture of peer learning facilitated by regional and global advisors help to disseminate and further develop knowledge. Strong thematic leadership and substantive coordination across relevant sections can foster a shared vision and facilitate effective coordination across different thematic areas and levels. Long-term engagement allows for sustained efforts to build relationships, strengthen capacities, and address deeply rooted challenges. Institutional structures can also encourage exchange, learning and flexibility to engage and respond to capacity needs and opportunities for influence, together with access to flexible funding.

There remains scope to increase and improve knowledge production, updating and dissemination to respond coherently to changing contexts, particularly in the current climate for GEWE, and engage UN Women leadership to further embed a common approach across the organisation.

Some informants felt that time available for internal coordination could be greater and there is potential to upscale knowledge production with guidelines of emerging priorities and approaches as well as updating existing guidelines for the changing geo-political and institutional context.

There is a need to keep guidance up-to-date and improve dissemination and accessibility as utilisation of this guidance seems to rest heavily on the role of specialist staff. Some informants also noted that high staff turnover at the country level, poses challenges. Funding constraints and contractual modalities deter stability in CO staffing. Longevity in advisory positions, can help mitigate this loss of institutional capacity and memory between projects and with new staff coming in.

Levels of communication and coordination between HQ and regional levels vary across team and with length of tenure in roles. Longstanding regional advisors have well-developed working relationships with relevant global policy specialists and across thematic teams, regional leadership, and in some cases with UN Women senior global leadership – noting that support from senior leadership is critical for impact. There is scope to increase thematic engagement with senior management to further increase the coherence and reach of approaches across UN Women, including briefing for Country Representatives, Regional Directors and other senior leaders also to inform their engagement and policy work and coordinate the messages (ensure coherence) in relation to UN Women’s global positioning in Security Council, IASC processes/discussions, follow up on Global Refugee Forum as well as solutions to Internal displacement – emerging from SG’s Action Plan on Solutions to internal displacement-all of which bring a strong focus on the need for closer humanitarian-development-peace actors.

External Coherence

The global advisory capacity supported by SPF is a key enabler of UN Women’s influence in global and regional mechanisms as well as in driving collaborative practice at country and regional levels across the UN system, bilateral donors, national governments and regional bodies.

This flexible capacity has allowed UN Women to establish roles within a vast range of intergovernmental and inter-agency mechanisms at global level as well as increasingly at regional and country levels. The impact of advisory positions is rich and varied at all levels, working through formal and informal mechanisms. The value of informal diplomacy with external actors through advisors appears to be highly valued in facilitating change.

At country level, UN Women works under the leadership of Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RCs) to support Member States, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs), HNOs/HRPs, Country Refugee Response Plans and national development plans, working alongside other UN entities in country. SPF III supports this promotion of coordinated approaches at country levels through provision of expertise, advisory and technical support and funding and this drives greater operational coherence and complementarity externally.

Across countries consulted, there were multiple examples of UN Women working jointly with other UN entities, national governments and civil society. This allows UN Women to leverage the expertise and resources of other agencies, leading to more holistic and effective interventions with greater relevance to the differentiated needs of women, girls, men and boys including those affected by conflicts and crises. The funding has also supported the development of partnerships with civil society organizations, local women led, women’s rights organizations and

groups, and other stakeholders, facilitating their participation in critical processes and amplifying their voices at regional and global levels. The main constraint on action to advance UN Women's agenda at a system-wide level is the sheer volume of potential avenues for engagement and limited time and resourcing. Wider participation across relevant sections could enhance coherence.

Although UN Women has close relationship with selected donors committed to GEWE, more could be done to collaborate outside of the funding relationship, for example in aligning learning and influencing activities on key themes and exploring complementary political engagement.

UN Women and key donors supporting GEWE are facing the same shifting challenges in the global context for women's rights. UN Women highly values the trusting and interactive relationship it has with longstanding donor partners at both headquarters and field levels, including donor roles in providing suggestions and feedback. Several informants noted that more could be done to reflect on the common challenges for addressing GEWE and jointly facilitate wider engagement across the donor landscape on these issues. The anniversary of UNSCR1325 and ongoing IASC engagement/policy work linked to escalation of conflicts and crises in several regions/countries was noted as one upcoming moment around which UN Women, Sida and Norad could potentially collaborate to raise greater awareness and commitment to addressing the current challenges to sustaining progress on GEWE.

Sustainability

The SPF III sustainability and exit strategy is framed around leveraging additional funds to multiply UN-Women's capacity and presence overall and its ability to support government and CSO partners. However, SPF also has potential to increase sustainability of GEWE outcomes beyond securing resource mobilisation for UN Women to implement programmes, particularly in terms of building partner's own sustainability and influencing the wider donor landscape.

SPF has had a catalytic effect for new initiatives. The SPF's flexible funding modality has been crucial in enabling UN Women to initiate and pilot innovative programs and approaches that have subsequently attracted funding from other donors and partners.

SPF funding has often acted as seed funding, enabling a period of programme development or even piloting which leverages additional resources from other donors and partners in the longer term. SPF has frequently been leveraged to obtain large-scale programme funding from UN funding mechanisms and other donors, including through allowing a thorough project preparation process and investments in evidence and gender data (analysis, partnership building and collaborative project design). This is particularly crucial in enabling innovation in address complex needs and ensuring that programmes are rooted in analysis and trusted partnerships. Short term support in programme development phases can catalyse new bodies of work, particularly as UN Women establishes presence or Country Offices in new locations and seeks to grow its programming base in new thematic areas. RAs also build the capacity of country offices, enabling them to take ownership of programs and operate more effectively and sustainably. This has, at times, enabled continuity between programming phases and sustained momentum in programme growth. SPF's flexible funding has been instrumental in enabling UN

Women to respond to emerging needs and opportunities that may not have been initially foreseen within other projects or programs and when other funding sources are not available, making gains in WPP and WPS and HA less likely to be lost and maintaining momentum including through the implementation of Gender Equality Accelerators (LEAP, WRD, WPS).

The current context of a global backlash against women's rights together with a decline in funding for GEWE presents a real concern that gains for women to date will be lost. This may place additional demands on SPF funding, both as a crucial fund to meet deficits where essential activity is needed and as a fund to support UN Women in realising longer term strategies for sustainability of work to further GEWE.

UN Women has the advantage of strong relationships with decision makers and influential actors (including donors) at global levels as well as strong partnerships both with national governments and with women's rights organisations. Advocacy to shape the levels and types of support available for GEWE across the donor landscape is crucial. Further, a strategic approach is needed to prioritise and potentially adapt programming models allow ongoing progress despite both short term and forecast longer-term funding constraints; including outlining complementary elements for a comprehensive programmatic approach to address discriminatory practices/factors and risks to women's protection, access to services and decision-making roles including in crisis contexts.

Ensuring that national partners have the skills, knowledge, and resources to continue implementing programs after initial SPF support is crucial for their sustainability, requiring national capacities and funding, including gender budgets. Lack of political will, as evidenced by the underfunding of gender departments and pushback against women's rights, can significantly hinder the sustainability of interventions. Better political analysis and a more formalized approach to supporting national capacities may be necessary to ensure longer term sustainable gains. Many advisors also undertake political and policy engagements and/or work closely with country and regional directors to support their efforts.

Advisors hold broad responsibilities requiring action on multiple issues, across multiple levels and functions. This heavy mandate requires advisors to prioritise and presents some limitations on levels of engagement and communication between headquarters and regional or country offices, and on ability to engage in long-term strategic initiatives.

Impact

SPF multi-year non-core flexible funding enhances UN Women's ability to balance between responsiveness to immediate global trends, volatile contexts and emerging crises and long-term strategic programmes, increasing the ability to sustain long-term engagements whilst adapting as necessary to continue meeting needs under changed circumstances.

The multi-faceted roles of advisors are key to driving impact, bringing together technical and policy or political engagement with fluid remits. The network of advisors is key to embedding GEWE in normative frameworks and developing common approaches as well as providing a

facilitation role that enhances quality and resourcing of country programmes. Some RAs are also instrumental in strengthening the organization's political influence. They actively engage in political processes and diplomatic efforts, advocating for the organization's goals and amplifying its impact¹⁰. Some also act as facilitators and mediators of women's engagement in political processes, including bringing together groups from different sides of conflict. Examples were given in LAC and ECA of regional advisors engaging directly in diplomacy or mediation activities.

Under SPF III, the WPP and WPS, HA, DRR teams have built strong and sound theories of change and theories of action. Impact is driven by this strong collective understanding of how change happens, noting UN Women's comparative advantages and unique positioning. Under SPF III there is a much clearer articulation of expected change processes and early indications that SPF support is further driving internal coherence, external coherence, sustainability and thereby demonstrating impact through tangible gains across a range of contexts.

¹⁰ It was noted that the job grading of a Regional Advisor was significant in being able to adopt a political or representational role, with P5 status signifying the power to act at this level, although the aptitude and previous experience of individuals also determines how RA roles evolve. Some RA's have previous legal, political or diplomatic experience which shapes their approaches.

Conclusions

SPF III has built on the significant gains achieved across key impact areas for WPP, WPS, HA and DRR established under previous SPF phases. Having global policy leads and teams at headquarters linked closely to experts in regional offices and country offices, together with an easily accessible funding pot and a set of clear norms and guidelines has enabled extension of coherent thematic support across country programmes as well as enabling lessons from a range of contexts to influence decisions at global levels. Outside of advisory capacity directly funded by SPF, the **engagement of UN Women leadership with thematic advisors appears to be an important multiplier of effectiveness**, enabling thematic perspectives and analysis to inform wider policy and political engagements at different levels, enhancing the speed of decision making when new opportunities for impact are identified and amplifying key messages internally and externally.

SPF III has enabled UN Women to continue to expand its significant role in promoting integration of GEWE system-wide at international, regional and national levels. Established roles have continued in promoting women's leadership, such as support to the international electoral assistance and within the international peace and security architecture, whilst significant progress has been made in establishing UN Women's roles within key global and regional mechanisms for HA and DRR. SPF III has notably enabled establishment of UN Women's system-wide leadership role on gender in humanitarian action (GiHA) as well as its coordination role in key contexts; as well as setting global norms and standards for GE in crisis contexts through the coordination of the IASC Gender Reference Group and the coordination of GiHA Working Groups in protracted crises and sudden onset emergencies. UN Women is now an established, trusted and recognised partner bringing a GEWE perspective to policy and programming, including through Gender Equality Accelerators under the Strategic Plan that covers different stages of crisis prevention and response.

At country level, a wide range of programming is supported by SPF funds and through the leveraging of SPF funds to mobilise large-scale programmes from a range of bilateral and multilateral funds. This programming benefits from consistent defined approaches – such as GiHA coordination or support to Temporary Special Measures coupled with the flexibility to adapt to local contexts with support of regional and in-country advisory positions. This enhances the relevance and effectiveness of programmes through ensuring that they are rooted in gender analysis and data, draw on best-practices and lessons from other contexts and that they align UN Women's role with key national and international partners, including national governments, civil society and other UN and INGO implementing partners.

SPF has enabled widespread and sustained engagement with WROs and networks to ensure that they receive funding directly and that they are able to be heard in key processes from local to global levels, including humanitarian planning and peace processes as well as DRR national strategies. UN Women has successfully supported the growth, increased capacity, connectedness and recognition of local peacebuilding and humanitarian action by women as well as supporting ongoing work of WRO's in advocating for systemic changes. SPF has enhanced UN Women's ability as a UN entity mandated to support both member states and civil society to support system-wide legal and institutional change and enhance the enabling

environment through support to WRO's and political engagement. Presence of SPF-funded experts at country and field level was a key enabler of funding channelled to WROs.

There is significant evidence that the **flexibility built into the SPF, in terms of both policy and programming engagement, allows UN Women to adapt to a changing global context. This includes responding effectively to disasters, humanitarian crises, and displacement resulting from political crises, conflicts, climate change, and other factors.** For example, the flexibility of SPF support has been critical in unstable political contexts, where longer-term project funding does not have sufficient flexibility allow significant timely adaptation, whether at the level of short-term additional interventions or more significant reworking of programme strategies.

The wider context of global uncertainty around conflict, increased displacement trends and humanitarian needs combined with increased frequency and intensity of disasters related to climate change presents a worrying backdrop for UN Women's work through the SPF. There is disquiet around the overall context in which UN Women works, with growing opposition globally to GEWE and a very real risk of pushback against women's rights. There is rising concern across the organisation that funds for women's rights are declining overall, and the upcoming period may need even more innovative approaches to programming and changes in how UN Women seeks to deliver its mandate. This context is reflected in the relatively slower progress against indicators relating to overall funding as well as financing through national capacities.

In this uncertain context, having the ability to reflect and leverage new partnerships and sources of funding in a shifting global donor landscape is crucial to maintaining progress. This may include the further articulation of thematic overlaps at field level. For example, it was noted that potential growth of DRR under the umbrella of WPS opens up potential for larger-scale engagement in reconstruction as it relates to Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Wider engagement and advocacy towards donors may be needed to ensure longer term sustainability of both UN Women programmes and the progress made in institutionalising structures and systems to support GEWE within member states and WROs, including in conflicts and humanitarian crises where the WPS and HA agendas intersect. Although UN Women has close relationships with selected donors committed to GEWE, more could be done to collaborate outside of the funding relationship, for example in aligning learning and influencing policy work and strategic dialogue on key themes, for example on strategies-entry points to advance GE through HDP actor collaboration drawing on recent experiences in Sudan, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon and other crises where HA and WPS agendas intersect also with other issues such as climate crisis/change.

The SPFIII sustainability and exit strategy is framed around leveraging additional funds to multiply UN-Women's capacity, expertise, positioning and substantive engagement its ability to partner with government, UN agencies and CSO partners with a view to positioning gender equality commitments to the centre of relevant policies and strategies in crises and conflict settings. However, **SPF impacts sustainability on GEWE beyond resource mobilisation.**

SPF multi-year non-core flexible funding enhances UN Women's ability to balance its approaches between responsiveness to immediate global trends and emerging crises and long-term strategic

programmes, increasing the **ability to sustain long-term engagements and partnerships with other UN agencies and actors, whilst adapting as necessary to continue meeting ever evolving needs.** This includes volatile contexts, pivoting to meet new needs and intervening to maintain women's voice during crises both protracted and sudden onset.

The SPF has immense added value in supporting individual experts with broad, flexible remits and linkages from the local to the global level. These experts have the ability to engage across thematic boundaries, bringing their skills to programmatic technical advice, policy engagement, and political accompaniment. Coupled with access to flexible funding, earmarked against strategic priorities, these individuals have been able to advance normative frameworks at global and regional levels as well as catalysing a broad and effective programming base. Thematic and cross-thematic learning and innovation enabled by SPF contributes to the evolution of broader programmatic approaches within UN Women including in the ways that the agency responds to emerging crises. This fluidity is essential to UN Women's ongoing strategic positioning within an evolving international system and changing context and has enabled it to grow its programming footprint with innovative, responsive and effective approaches.

Recommendations

SPF should continue what it is doing as its combination of **technical capacities, institutional connectedness and provision of small-flexible funding** appears highly effective in catalysing better, longer term and more relevant programming alongside policy engagement, including the ability to balance short-term responsiveness with longer-term change processes. That said, greater emphasis in several key areas could further enhance UN Women's effectiveness in the short-term as well as positioning UN Women to sustain impacts on GEWE in the longer term as the operating environment looks to become more challenging.

Coherence

- 1. Extend the impact of knowledge products and learning processes on coherence across UN Women ensuring linkages to policy work in various spaces including the UN Security Council or IASC Principals and Deputies meetings, through: increasing data and evidence generation and updating** knowledge products where these remain useful for priority programming approaches; **improving accessibility and increasing visibility** of priority knowledge products to give these wider traction and applicability to non-specialist staff across UN Women, as well as positioning UN Women with its partners.
- 2. Engage UN Women leadership across country, regional and global levels to ensure understanding, buy-in and coordination with the conceptual, strategic and programmatic work enabled by SPF.** This could include briefings to leadership as well as establishing stronger communication and coordination with relevant thematic advisory roles to share learning on specific approaches or opportunities for synergies between advisory and leadership roles, including how advisory capacity can best support political and policy engagement at different levels and how leadership decision can facilitate the responses to opportunities identified by SPF-funded advisors.

- 3. Draw on and scale-up corporate coordination and dialogue using existing coordination mechanisms to address complementarity between WPP, WPS-HA and DRR agendas, including building on emerging synergies at field level to inform UN Women's corporate Strategic Notes and Annual Work Plans.** Depending on the country typology and context, this could include clarifying how different technical approaches can be delivered concurrently or be better aligned and sequenced for countries emerging or at risk of from conflict or crisis. Mechanisms such as the crisis response situation room and task teams have been mobilized to respond to political situation, conflict and humanitarian situations in countries like Haiti, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Bangladesh, looking at the needs and priorities of women and girls affected by crises, including IDPs, refugees and those in host communities. This can address linkages between political work, IASC advocacy, SC related discussions, investment in gender analysis and data, funding for local WRO's and networks, partnerships with national governments and other actors on policy, humanitarian planning and legal processes/aspects, investigations in HR and IHL violations, operational response through the WPHF and UN Women's country level programming on WPS and HA.

Sustainability

- 4. Invest further in long-term programme development processes - drawing on UN Women Gender Equality Accelerators - to ensure that UN Women remains relevant in the changing context, particularly in innovative programming areas that utilise thematic synergies.** This includes the intersection of WPS, HA and DRR (with links between reconstruction and WEE as well as resilience, protection, human rights and local leadership related interventions). This should enable UN Women to be more adaptable in a changing funding landscape.
- 5. Develop a coordinated approach to respond to the wider donor landscape and funding trends for GEWE.** Funding constraints are an ongoing concern, despite SPF successes in leveraging funds, both due to systemic weaknesses (such as dwindling funds to support WPP in between election cycles) and due to the current downturn in overall funds for GEWE. UN Women should draw on the SPF funded capacity across the system to identify internal and external actions in response to current and predicted shortfalls, including: external advocacy to enable access to increased, predictable and long term funding including in relation to conflict and crisis contexts; forging of new partnerships; framing how UN Women's work can be integrated into wider programming; and research into innovative funding mechanisms for the future in countries with declining donor funding.
- 6. Prioritise the contribution of SPF to sustaining gains for gender equality, women's leadership and empowerment in the longer term through building local and national capacities within member states and within civil society, including their ability to finance activities outside of UN Women's financial support.** Prioritize long-term capacity building for national ownership of change processes to support GEWE goals. This should include a strong focus on external engagement across national, regional and global levels to embed gender equality within public financial management capacities as well as increasing direct support for WRO's.

Impact

- 7. Engage in strategic and coordinated advocacy to address the lack of political will and commitment from some governments and inter-governmental actors to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.** This relates both to engagement around the politicised backlash against women's rights in key countries and a wider de-prioritisation of GEWE in some key spaces. This process can draw on the advisory capacity and established civil society relationships fostered by SPF to date.
- 8. Develop collaborative activities between UN Women, Sida and Norad to amplify messages around the successes and lessons from SPF in driving system-wide change and context specific change for women.** To date the relationship between UN Women, Sida and Norad has been highly supportive, with UN Women valuing the depth of the relationship, efforts of Sida and Norad to interrogate how SPF enables change, and constructive feedback gained through regular engagements. There is appetite within UN Women to further this with collaborative activities to maximise the value of the partnership. This could focus on sharing lessons externally and facilitating discussions across the donor community to help shape wider responses to the current challenges to progress on GEWE. Utilising key moments, such as the 1325+25 anniversary, the peacebuilding architecture review, the Global Platform for DRR 2025 and ongoing engagement in IASC could provide initial impetus for this.

Annexes

Annex I: MTR Framework for Enquiry

Area of enquiry	Sample questions
Coherence and Compatibility	
Internal coherence and compatibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has SPF advanced coherent approaches to WPP, WPS, HA and DRR at different levels across UN Women, including synergies between these approaches and with other UN Women themes? What enables or constrains this? • What value has there been in linking global policy work with regional and country-based initiatives and how has SPF supported this? What has enabled or constrained this? • How has SPF engaged with and supported <i>synergies and interlinkages</i> between SPF-supported interventions and other UN Women interventions? What does this mean for UN Women’s goals? • How do SPF-supported activities contribute alongside other resources? What lessons are there for maximizing the catalytic effect of SPF III? • How have different functions supported by SPF - including advisory roles, knowledge products, training, tools/approaches, coordination and partnership - supported UN Women’s influence across WPP, WPS, HA and DRR? • What enables and constrains thematic coherence and complementarity whether cross thematic, between different institutional functions across the triple mandate or between activities at different levels from national to global, including between WPP and WPS, HA and Resilience. 	
External coherence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has SPF III supported the advancement of UN system-wide coherence around gender equality through promotion of coordinated approaches and action system-wide and at different levels from national to global? • In what ways has SPF enhanced integration of GEWE across UN system-wide agendas, policy frameworks and commitments? To what extent does SPF-supported work reflect UN system policy commitments and priorities? To what extent does SPF support ongoing development of the UN system agenda? • What examples are there of complementarity and coordination of the SPF-supported interventions with other relevant development, humanitarian and peace actors, including governmental and civil society, such as local women-led organizations and networks? What enables this and how does it contribute to UN Women’s objectives? • What indications are there that SPF has enabled UN Women to add value to wider efforts to improve the lives of women and girls while avoiding duplication of efforts. • To what extent do SPF supported interventions complement the efforts of other relevant actors, particularly across the UN system? How do SPF-supported interventions add value to UN system-wide approaches? What enables or constrains this? Are there issues around overlapping or duplicated efforts between different actors? • Does SPF enhance coherence between development actors? Are there ways to increase this? How does increased coherence support development goals? • How have partnership approaches at different levels supported coherence and complementarity? To what extent has coherence enabled or facilitated partnership and joint programming, and conversely how has partnership helped coherence to evolve, will be explored. 	

- How has SPF enabled UN Women to continue and expand partnerships across the UN System, and with donors, international organizations and civil society groups, to promote women's electoral and political participation and leadership? How have partnerships strengthened, WPP, WPS, HA and DRR, as well as the humanitarian – peace – development nexus?
- How has SPF supported thinking the strengthening of the humanitarian – peace – development nexus approach, including the complementarity and integration between WPS, HA and DRR in specific country contexts and in global spaces where HA-WPS come together such as the IASC, Security Council or Global Compact on WPS and HA?
- How have advisory roles worked to influence programming and policy across UN Women and to forge a wider role for UN Women in relation to the wider UN system?

Sustainability and Impact

- How has SPF-supported work contributed to impact in the core thematic areas?
- How has SPF supported piloting and scaling up? What programming interventions stemmed from the SPF support? How have these been sustained and amplified, for example, by being taken over by other development or governmental partners, and/or by being replicated by them within their own programming frameworks?
- What supports or constrains sustainability of programming approaches? What lessons are there from SPF-supported interventions ending due to lack of uptake?
- What enables catalytic effect and what internal and external enablers and constraints are critical for their success and sustainability (or lack thereof)?
- How has SPF enabled UN Women to fundraise from other donors and thus multiply UN-Women's capacity and presence overall and its ability to extend support? How has this enhanced programming approaches for both sustainability and increased impact?
- How do individual changes cumulatively or collectively lead to longer term impact and sustainability?
- How do strands of work enabled by SPF complement each other and/or magnify impacts specifically due to the funding modality?
- What lessons can be shared to improve impact and sustainability and to strengthen the flexible funding approach for UN Women overall?
- How can the SPF be built on? How can a non-core funding modality best support impact in future?
- How does evidence of impacts reflect on the defined SPF theory of change? Does it suggest the need to add/remove/amend elements of the ToC?
- What indications are there of wider or unintended impact?
- How have different functions (coordination, knowledge management, advisory services etc) supported the scale-up or embedding of SPF approaches?
- What internal and external factors have determined levels of sustainability? What could support further continuation, scale-up or replication?
- To what extent has SPF helped sustain interventions/approaches despite changing contexts?
- Did SPF-supported work build in appropriate sustainability strategies or exit strategies? How could these be enhanced further?
- Does SPF help UN Women respond to shifting contextual challenges (from sub-national to global and changes across the UN system)?
- How does UN Women utilize SPF funding to respond to urgent crises and what does this mean for sustainability and impact?
- How does fluidity in SPF support, responsiveness to global trends and rapid scale-up when needed balance with the longer-term capacity building and cumulative impacts of longer-term UN Women programmes? What lessons are there for how SPF can support balancing stable programming and growth as well as responsiveness?
- How has SPF been utilised to understand and respond to global trends in women's rights, and specifically the current backlash against women's rights at different levels, thus enabling ongoing impact in a changing context?
- How does country, regional and global advisory capacity balance the multiple demands on them and the variety of potential areas of work? What enhances the strategic and catalytic nature of these roles and what limits it? How do advisory roles function at different levels to enhance coherence, sustainability and impact? What lessons can be drawn from successes and challenges?
- How have advisors leveraged additional funding? Has it supported strategic goals (global or country level)? Is this an enabler of overall UN Women impact or does it detract from strategic goals? What supports effective resource mobilisation?

Annex II Documents Reviewed

- SPFIII Programme Framework, UN Women, 2022
- UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025
- An Internal Assessment of the Impact of the Strategic Partnership Framework on UN Women's Work on Women, Peace and Security, June 2021
- An Internal Review of the Impact of the Strategic Partnership Framework on the UN Women's Work on Women's Political Participation 2012 – 2021, June 2021
- SPF 10 Year Review of WPP
- Then and Now Infographic
- Agenda and Minutes of Annual Meetings 2022, 2023
- Annual Work Plan 2023 / 2024
- Corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action
- UNW Humanitarian Brief
- Impact Story – Lebanon 2022
- Impact Story – WPS 2012-2020
- Progress Reports
- Stable Funding in an Unstable World: Highlights of the UN Women Strategic Partnership Framework 2012-2021
- Amplifying Women's Voice and Influence in Politics and Crises: Highlights of the Sweden-UN Women Strategic Partnership Framework, 2022
- SPF II Mid-Term Review
- Strategic Note Direct Funding Guidance
- Annual progress report 2022
- Final Report for phase II (2021)
- SPFI&II brochure – Stable funding in an unstable world
- SPFIII 2022 annual brochure - Amplifying women's voice and influence in politics and crises
- Final Evaluation of the SPFI
- UN Women corporate evaluations
- Flagship Programmes (thematic Corporate Theory of Change under SP 2018-2021)

Annex III: SPF Theory of Change

Strategic Partnership Framework between UN-Women and Sida 2022-2025, global programme	
High level ToC (aligned with the SP Thematic ToC for Governance and Participation)	<p>If legislative frameworks and arrangements promote gender balance in public life, And if discriminatory laws are removed and public policies are implemented, financed and accountable to women, And if women are perceived as equally legitimate political actors and lead in gender sensitive institutions, Then diverse women of all ages will participate equally in political processes and decision-making bodies and benefit from gender responsive governance. Because the combined effect of legal, policy, institutional, and structural discrimination that underpin the significant under-representation of women in all aspects of public life and decision making will be remedied.</p>
	<p>Key assumptions: <i>internal factors:</i> UN-Women’s technical leadership, advocacy, knowledge and policy guidance, and coordination at the country level will result in increased participation of women in decision making and gender-responsive laws and policies. <i>External factors:</i> i) Legislatures are functional and regularly pass legislation; ii) there is political will required to move forward gender responsive legislation and policy reforms; iii) raising awareness about gender discrimination will lead to transformation in attitudes; iv) national stakeholders and donors willing to support women’s networks and gender equality advocates.</p>
	<p>Key risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality is not considered a priority in legislative reforms and budgets enacted by legislatures. • Gender equality is not considered a priority in the development of policies and budgets by legislatures and governments. • Combating discriminatory attitudes is insufficient without additional structural changes.
Outcome 1 More Women of all ages fully participate and lead in political processes and institutions.	<div style="display: flex;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>Change: If national partners are provided with technical assistance to adopt and implement legal and policy frameworks that promote women’s political participation, And if national partners are provided with knowledge, tools and data to generate policy and advocate for women’s increased participation in decision making processes, And if capacities of women at all levels to participate in political processes and lead in institutions are strengthened, Then more women of all ages in countries supported by the SPF will be able to participate and lead in political processes and institutions, Because today, the combined effect of legal, institutional, and structural barriers underpins the significant under-representation of women in all aspects of public life and decision making.</p> </div> <div style="flex: 1; padding-left: 10px;"> <p>Summary of key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical and financial support provided to Regional and Country Offices through quick intervention funding to: develop and implement WPP programming (including mechanisms to address and monitor VAWP) and mainstream gender concerns into electoral assistance programmes. • Provide policy guidance on women’s political participation, ensuring global coherence; capturing of lessons learned; knowledge generation; and global advocacy initiatives and global campaigns. • Technical support and awareness raising targeting elected officials (at national and local levels) and parliamentary, bodies to institutionalise Gender-Sensitive procedures and practices (i.e., family-friendly institutional arrangements, or codes of conduct); and support advocacy campaigns on gender equality and discriminatory legislation targeting male political leaders (e.g., through media, CSW, IPU Assemblies, UCLG). • UN-Women Country Offices and national partners are provided with technical assistance, knowledge, and tools to generate gender data and statistics on WPP (including SDG monitoring and measurement of VAWP). • Support the creation of a cadre of capable aspiring women leaders and candidates through the development of training tools targeting women leaders, aspiring candidates, and elected women at all levels. • Continue and expand partnerships across the UN System, and with donors, international organizations and civil society groups, to promote women’s electoral and political participation and leadership, including through: UN Coordination to mainstream gender concerns into electoral assistance; Joint efforts at global level with key partners like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to support parliaments to repeal of existing discriminatory legislation • Undertake high level advocacy initiatives to implement relevant Human Rights and gender equality frameworks </div> </div>

	<p>Key assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some knowledge exists among key national stakeholders, making it possible for the provision of knowledge and options to result in tangible and sustainable results. A select group of women are willing to enter politics and lead. Newly elected leaders acquire skills to enhance an enabling environment for WPP. <p>Key risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of will of electoral stakeholders to support women's political participation. National partners, including parliaments, local governments and EMBs have limited capacities to apply knowledge and are slow to reform given long history of gender discriminatory practices. Lack of understanding of gender equality leads to discriminatory behaviour. Parties may nominate women, but voters do not elect them. 	<p>Key partners:</p> <p>UN agencies, UN country teams and partners at the national level (incl. legislatures, Electoral Management Bodies, ministries, security sector, Civil Society Organisations, observatories).</p> <p>Within the UN system: UNDP, DPPA, UN DESA, UN Regional Commissions, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, and relevant task forces including the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights.¹¹</p> <p>Intergovernmental organisations (incl. Inter Parliamentary Union, International IDEA, United Cities and Local Governments).</p> <p>Regional Intergovernmental (incl. African Union, East and Southern Africa Regional Economic Communities, The Inter-American Commission of Women).</p>	<p>Modalities:</p> <p>Intergovernmental normative support</p> <p>Research and knowledge generation</p> <p>Integrated Policy Advice</p> <p>Capacity building and technical assistance</p> <p>Budget support to programming in the field</p> <p>UN Coordination at global, regional and country levels</p> <p>Advocacy and social mobilization</p>
<p>Outcome 2 Gender responsive national laws and policies are developed and implemented at all levels by gender-responsive institutions</p>	<p>Change:</p> <p><i>If</i> national partners are provided with technical assistance to design and enact laws and policies that promote gender equality, <i>And if</i> national partners are provided with evidence-based tools for advocacy <i>And if</i> capacities of women to participate in law and policy reform are strengthened, <i>Then</i> more countries supported by the SPF will have gender responsive legal and policy frameworks <i>Because</i> the absence of gender sensitive law-making and institutional bias perpetuates gender discrimination in law and policies</p> <p>Key assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and regional stakeholders are willing to demand and act on information on the scale and impact of discriminatory laws and policies. 	<p>Summary of key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide targeted policy guidance and technical support to Regional and Country Offices on gender responsive constitutional and law reform and gender responsive budgeting and policy making Research, data compilation and analysis on gender equality and legal reform through developing, maintaining and disseminating tools and knowledge products Support practical research on SDG monitoring (including legal frameworks on non-discrimination on the basis of sex and systems to track and make public allocations to gender equality) 	
		<p>Key partners:</p> <p>UN agencies (especially UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP and UNODC), UN country teams and partners at the national level (incl. legislatures, ministries, judges, law reform commission, national and local CSOs).</p>	<p>Modalities:</p> <p>Technical support to country regional and national stakeholders</p>

¹¹ <https://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/index.shtml#:~:text=The%20Call%20to%20Action%20is,%2C%20safe%2C%20and%20peaceful%20societies.>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political will exists to enact gender sensitive laws and policies making governance less inclusive and gender responsive <p>Key risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll back/push back on gender equality laws Shrinking civic and democratic spaces Lack of political will of legislators and government decision makers to support gender responsive legislature reform National partners have limited knowledge, data and capacities to develop and implement gender responsive policies and budgets 	<p>Partners implementing the Multi-stakeholder Strategy on Equality in Law for Women and Girls by 2030 including: The Inter-Parliamentary Union, the African Union, the Commonwealth, Internationale de la Francophonie, the Secretaria General Ibero-Americana, the International Development Law Organization.</p> <p>Civil Society Organizations: Equality Now, Coalition on Equality in Family Law, Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, Girls not Brides, International Bar Association.</p>	<p>Alliances with non-traditional partners</p> <p>Intergovernmental normative support</p> <p>Research and knowledge generation</p> <p>Integrated Policy Advice</p> <p>Capacity building and technical assistance</p> <p>Budget support to programming in the field</p> <p>UN Coordination at global, regional and country levels</p> <p>Advocacy and social mobilization</p>
<p>High level ToC (aligned with the SP Thematic ToC for Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction)</p>	<p><i>If</i> more commitments on women, peace and security are implemented by Member States and the UN system, <i>And if</i> more gender equality advocates influence peace and security processes, <i>Then</i> women and girls will be able to contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from conflict and disaster prevention and from humanitarian action, <i>Because</i> with adequate political and financial support, including from international organizations, gender equality advocates and women’s organizations can overcome gender bias and discriminatory attitudes, elite-led, exclusionary and patriarchal decision-making processes, limited access to information, resources, and opportunities, threats to their leadership for speaking up, and general under-representation in women, peace and security, crisis response and recovery, and disaster prevention and preparedness.</p> <p>Key Assumptions: Progress on this outcome will depend on sustained and flexible financing, political support and international pressure by gender champions, adequate visibility and access to resources by women’s movements and organizations, and supportive leadership by the UN Secretary-General.</p> <p>Key Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued polarization in the Security Council. Backlash and reprisals against women activists when exercising leadership and speaking up for their communities. Drastic cuts in financing due to the global economic crisis and the pandemic. Rising militarization, violent extremism, hate speech, and misogyny. Confluence of multiple crises driven by the pandemic, climate change, disasters, mass displacement and migration, and conflict proliferation. 		
<p>Outcome 3 More commitments on women, peace and security are</p>	<p>Change: <i>If</i> UN-Women catalyzes the UN system to meet WPS commitments in countries supported by the programme, including through strengthening its own capacity in crisis-affected countries,</p>	<p>Summary of key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of long-term advisory and technical support, including through Gender Advisors to Missions, Special Envoys, UNCTs, Regional Organizations and WPS advisors to UN-Women regional and country offices in conflict and fragile settings. 	

<p>implemented by Member States and the UN system, and more gender equality advocates influence peace and security processes</p>	<p>and if UN-Women supports Member States and national partners in adopting and implementing commitments to women, peace and security and gender equality in crisis settings, and if UN-Women advances implementation of the goals and commitments of the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325 and related frameworks to protect and empower women and girls in crisis settings, including through the dissemination of new knowledge, then more commitments on women, peace and security are implemented by Member States and the UN system, and more gender equality advocates influence peace and security processes, because the previous decade already led to an impressive list of commitments by Member States and the UN system but an underwhelming record of implementation, and this implementation gap is one of the central challenges to improving the lives of women and girls in crisis countries, and because of the growing evidence that women’s leadership and participation improves the effectiveness of peace negotiations, peacekeeping operations, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of surge technical capacity to accountable actors on WPS commitments and gender-sensitive crisis response. • Global technical capacity to ensure strong engagement with the Security Council and capacity to plan for and implement effective crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery that integrates gender equality and women’s empowerment. • UN-Women supports the implementation, costing, localization, or evaluation of national action plans on women, peace and security or other relevant national frameworks. • UN-Women supports the capacity of national gender authorities, women’s civil society organizations and other relevant local stakeholders to engage with, and contribute to prevention, preparedness and recovery from conflicts and disasters, and provides crisis-affected and at-risk women with protection and empowerment through programmatic support. • Contribute to the implementation of the goals and recommendations of the Secretary-General, as laid out in the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325. • Maintain a community of practice and contribute to the dissemination of cutting-edge knowledge on women, peace and security and gender equality in crisis settings. 	
	<p>Key assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued supportive leadership of the UN Secretary-General and the capacity of UN-Women country offices to respond effectively in the face of armed conflict, high-risk settings and complex emergencies. • National action plans and other frameworks will be extensively consulted with women’s organizations, reflect their priorities, and include a robust budget and a monitoring and evaluation plan. • Continued momentum in the international community in support of this normative agenda, following from the trend of the last decade, and that the proliferation of knowledge will help consolidate. 	<p>Key partners: DPPA, PBSO, DPO, OHCHR, UNDP, OCHA, UNFPA, UNDRR, UNODA, CTED, UNOCT, UNHCR, OSRSG-SVC, the International Criminal Court, regional organizations (AU, EU, OSCE, LAS, ASEAN), research institutions and think tanks (FBA, PRIO, SIPRI, Georgetown University, Columbia University, Open Society Foundations, LSE), civil society (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, national women and youth-led organizations).</p>	<p>Modalities: Technical support Catalytic funding Targeted programming Surge capacity Capacity building Coordination Knowledge generation and dissemination, including through gender and conflict analyses and gender-focused and intersectional assessments in disaster and crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, and investigations and documentation of gender-based crimes and atrocities.</p>
	<p>Key risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower prioritization by other UN agencies and crisis response actors and limited ability by UN-Women country offices to react quickly and recruit surge capacity. • Conflicts and disasters often exacerbate gender inequality and violence against women, holding back progress for women and girls and hindering their contributions to sustainable peace and crisis resilience. • Partnering with governments in conflict-affected countries or in fragile settings to develop or implement new policy frameworks on gender equality can be risky, especially if women’s advocates doubt the sincerity of the government’s intentions. • Growth in knowledge about women, peace and security and gender equality in crisis and high-risk settings will not transcend the communities of practitioners, academics, and policymakers that are directly involved in this agenda, thereby muting its impact. 		

Annex IV: Individuals Consulted

Pablo Castillo	Policy Specialist (WPS)	Global
Zeljka Strahinjic	SPF Programme Manager	Global
Marta Val	Programme Specialist (WPP)	Global
Rachel Weston	Regional Advisor(WPP)	Europe and Central Asia
Maureen Shonge	Regional Policy Specialist (WPP)	East and Southern Africa
Alma Perez	Regional Advisor (WPSHA)	LAM
Marie-Josée Kandanga	Regional Advisor (WPSHA)	West and Central Africa
Nargis Azizova	Regional Advisor (WPSHA)	Europe and Central Asia
Maria Holtsberg	Regional Specialist (Humanitarian& DRR)	Asia Pacific
Edil Absiye	Regional Specialist (WPS)	ESA
Maria Campanuzano Perez	Programme Consultant (DRR)	Global
Kaori Suzuki	Programme Analyst, Humanitarian Action	Global
Maria Karadenizli	Acting Deputy Chief, Humanitarian Section	Global
Korto Williams	Advisor (WPP)	South Sudan
Fadzai Traquino	Advisor (WPP)	Zimbabwe
Angela Muthoni Wambugo	Advisor (WPP)	Kenya
Novella Nikwigize	Programme Manager, WPSHA	CAR
Kari Marie Traedal Thorsen	NORAD	Global
Annette Widholm Bolme	SIDA	Global
Paivi Kannisto	Chief, Peace and Security	Global
Sarah Hendricks	Director, Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division	Global