**Final Evaluation for the Project** *Enhancing Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Kenya*

**Report**

Submitted to UN Women Kenya County Office

by

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| | |
|---|---|
| AJS | Alternative Justice System |
| BETA | Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CEC | County Executive Committee |
| CHV | Community Health Volunteer |
| CIDP | County Integrated Development Plan |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| CUC | Court Users Committee |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee |
| EACC | Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission |
| EMG | Evaluation Management Group |
| ERG | Evaluation Reference Group |
| EVAWG | Ending Violence Against Women and Girls |
| EWER | Early Warning and Early Response |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| GAC | Global Affairs Canada |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| GEF | Generation Equality Forum |
| GERAAS | Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System |
| HAK | Healthcare Assistance Kenya |
| IAWJ | International Association of Women Judges |
| IPOA | Independent Police Oversight Authority |
| KCO | Kenya Country Office (UN Women) |
| KEWOPA | Kenya Women Parliamentary Association |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| KNAP III | Kenya's Third National Action Plan (Women, Peace and Security) |
| KTN | Kenya Television Network |
| MCA | Member of County Assembly |
| MFA | Media Focus on Africa |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| NCAJ | National Council on the Administration of Justice |
| NCCK | National Council of Churches of Kenya |
| NGEC | National Gender and Equality Commission |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NGSWG | National Gender Sector Working Group |
| NPS | National Police Service |
| ODPP | Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OHCHR | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| ORPP | Office of the Registrar of Political Parties |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SGBV | Sexual and Gender-Based Violence |
| SMART | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound |

| | |
|---|---|
| TFGBV | Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| UNEG | United Nations Evaluation Group |
| UNSCR 1325 | United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security |
| UNSDCF | United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework |
| VAWP | Violence Against Women in Politics |
| WEE | Women's Economic Empowerment |
| WPS | Women, Peace and Security |
| WRO | Women's Rights Organization |

The project *Enhancing Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Kenya*, funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and implemented by UN Women Kenya in collaboration with national and county governments and civil society partners, ran from January 2022 to March 2025. At the national level, it worked through strategic partnerships with key institutions including the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), and the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action (SDFGAA) to strengthen the policy and institutional frameworks supporting women's political participation.

Implementation also involved collaboration with a broad network of actors such as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWCFS), Media Focus on Africa (MFA), URAIA Trust, the National Police Service (NPS), the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) - Kenya Chapter, and Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK). These partnerships were instrumental in advancing advocacy, civic education, access to justice, media engagement, and community mobilization efforts that together expanded women's visibility, legitimacy, and leadership. At the county level, the project concentrated on seven core counties (Homa Bay, Kericho, Kisii, Embu, Samburu, Kajiado, and Wajir) and had an additional operational presence in Migori, Machakos, and Kilifi during the 2022 general elections.

The project aimed to address persistent structural, institutional, and sociocultural barriers that limit women's political participation. Its design was based on a Theory of Change (ToC) that assumed that: if women aspirants and leaders gain the skills, confidence, and visibility to compete effectively; if institutions such as the police, judiciary, and political parties are equipped to create safe, gender-responsive environments; and if communities and media actively challenge discriminatory norms and stereotypes, then women's political participation and representation will increase, leading to more inclusive and accountable governance. The project's three outcome areas focused on: (i) improving women's leadership skills, (ii) strengthening institutional and stakeholder capacities to prevent and respond to violence against women in politics (VAWP), and (iii) reducing harmful social norms through advocacy, media engagement, and initiatives led by men.

The end-term evaluation was commissioned to assess the project's performance, achievements, challenges, and sustainability and to distill lessons for future programming. It applied the OECD/DAC and UNEG evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, impact, and cross-cutting themes of gender equality and human rights). It used a theory-based mixed-methods design combining document review, interviews, focus group discussions, and monitoring data. Limitations included incomplete respondent lists and uneven disaggregation of data (especially for women with disabilities and youth), which constrained analysis of intersectional change; these were mitigated through triangulation and stakeholder validation.

Key Findings

*Relevance*
The project was highly relevant to UN Women's Global Strategic Plan (2022–2025), the Kenya Country Office Strategic Note (2023–2026), and Kenya's constitutional and policy commitments including Vision 2030 and the country's 12 Generation Equality Forum (GEF) commitments. It directly addressed entrenched barriers (from patriarchal gatekeeping and financial exclusion to VAWP) through context-specific strategies. For instance, in Samburu and Kajiado it engaged elders and male youth (morans) to legitimize women's leadership, while in Kisii and Homa Bay it focused on political violence prevention and aspirants' access to campaign resources. The Theory of Change remained valid and coherent, and its three-pathway model proved effective. However, integration of women with disabilities, grassroots youth (including Gen Z activists), and digital safety measures remained partial.

*Effectiveness*

The project achieved or exceeded most of its intended results. According to the Final Results Matrix (2024), 24 of 25 indicators were achieved or surpassed. Under the ultimate outcome, women's representation improved nationally with seven female governors (up from three in 2017), 29 MPs (up from 23), and 23 senators (up from 18). In project counties, seven women leaders were elected or appointed, representing 50 percent of the target within one electoral cycle. Under Outcome 1100, over 1,200 women aspirants and elected officials benefited from leadership and campaign training, and the *Ms. President Season Two* reality show trained 51 contestants and reached over 20 million viewers, generating tangible leadership outcomes. Under Outcome 1200, the project strengthened institutional capacities: more than 1,200 police, judicial, and prosecution officers were trained, and 12 SGBV courts were institutionalized as Gender Justice Courts, embedding survivor-centred justice in the judiciary. Under Outcome 1300, social-norm change efforts surpassed expectations, 13 indicators (12 surpassed, 1 achieved), through local radio dialogues, storytelling, and male-champion engagement that shifted attitudes in patriarchal settings.

These results confirm that the Theory of Change was successfully put into action, leadership empowerment, institutional reform, and social-norm transformation supported each other to produce measurable progress in women's visibility, safety, and legitimacy in politics.

*Efficiency*

The project made efficient use of resources by leveraging partnerships, media, and the election cycle to maximize reach at low cost. *Ms. President* and *Filamu Dada* provided cost-effective national platforms compared with traditional mobilization models. However, bureaucratic fund-release procedures and quarterly liquidation requirements delayed implementation during the 2022 elections, creating cash-flow challenges for smaller WROs and temporary reputational risks with communities. Monitoring systems effectively tracked quantitative outputs but were less capable of capturing qualitative, behavioral, or institutional change.

*Coherence*

The project demonstrated strong coherence internally within UN Women's triple mandate and externally with other donor and UN programmes. It complemented UNDP- and Finland-funded electoral initiatives and Ireland's WPS Programme, ensuring synergy rather than duplication. At the national level, collaboration with KEWOPA, NGEC, and ORPP harmonized advocacy; at the county level, engagement with Court Users Committees and GBV Working Groups reinforced multi-sectoral coordination. Coherence was weaker, however, in a few counties where grassroots WROs and youth networks felt sidelined from decision-making processes.

*Sustainability and Impact*

Sustainability prospects are mixed but promising. Institutional reforms such as Gender Justice Courts and county gender-budget lines are likely to endure. Alumni from Ms. President and Filamu Dada continue mentoring peers and preparing to contest the 2027 elections, showing momentum beyond the project life. Partners such as URAIA Trust and KEWOPA have leveraged new donor funding to sustain activities in Homa Bay and nationally. However, smaller grassroots organizations remain financially fragile, and sustainability is threatened by the absence of legislation enforcing the two-thirds gender rule.

The project's impact includes concrete representation gains, strengthened institutional accountability, and observable norm change. Community dialogues fostered independent voting behavior among women, while local and national media normalized female leadership as an integral element of democratic governance.

*Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Youth Inclusion*

Gender equality and human-rights principles were integrated throughout. The project advanced participation, empowerment, inclusion, and accountability, contributing to national commitments under CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and UNSCR 1325. Yet intersectional inclusion, especially of women with disabilities, rural women, and younger women leaders, remains a frontier. The rise of Gen Z civic activism in Kenya highlights new opportunities for youth–women coalitions in governance and accountability, which future programmes should intentionally cultivate.

Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that the project was timely, relevant, and effective in promoting women's political participation in Kenya. It confirmed its Theory of Change by showing that progress across the three pathways (capacity-building, institutional reform, and norm change) can produce measurable, synergistic outcomes. Innovations such as media storytelling, mentorship networks, and survivor-centred justice reforms stand out as best practices. Persistent systemic barriers like patriarchal party structures, unregulated campaign financing, and emerging digital violence continue to hinder transformative change. Sustainability is moderately strong at the institutional level but still depends on ongoing political will, funding, and local ownership.

**Lessons Learned**

Key lessons include the value of integrating thematic areas (WPP, EVAWG, WPS) to create stronger outcomes; the effectiveness of media and storytelling in shifting norms; the necessity of systematic grassroots engagement; the importance of financial sustainability for WROs and county governments; the need for adaptive programming to respond to emerging threats like online harassment; and the requirement for intentional intersectional inclusion of marginalized groups.

**Recommendations**

For UN Women, the evaluation recommends strengthening grassroots integration, revising M&E systems to capture qualitative change, and embedding digital safety in WPP programming. For Global Affairs Canada, it recommends maintaining flexible funding while investing in partners' financial sustainability and integrating women's economic empowerment into political participation initiatives. For the Government of Kenya, both national and county, the evaluation recommends actualization of the not more than two-thirds gender, mainstreaming gender into budgets and CIDPs, and strengthening enforcement against VAWP and discriminatory party practices. For civil society and WROs, the evaluation recommends building stronger linkages between grassroots and national advocacy, addressing online harassment and digital safety, and fostering inclusive peer-support networks.

This report presents the final end-term evaluation of the Canada-funded programme *Enhancing Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Kenya*, implemented by UN Women and its partners between January 2022 and March 2025. The evaluation assessed programme performance against the stated results framework and examined progress and challenges using the OECD/DAC and UNEG/GERAAS evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact) with human rights and gender equality (HRGE) considerations integrated throughout.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

Kenya has made notable constitutional and policy commitments to gender equality and women's political participation. The 2010 Constitution enshrined the two-thirds gender principle, and devolution created new spaces for women at county level. Although representation has grown modestly, which is well demonstrated by the increasing number of women leaders across both the national and county levels, participation remains below the constitutional threshold. Entrenched norms, party gatekeeping, unequal care burdens, limited financing, and violence against women in politics (VAWP) continue to constrain women's leadership. Emerging forms such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) have further restricted safe participation.

During the 2022 elections, these barriers were acute. Women aspirants reported intimidation, harassment, financial exclusion, and discriminatory party nominations. The high cost of politics and patriarchal norms, particularly in pastoralist counties, undermined women's legitimacy. These challenges underscored the need for integrated responses that combined prevention of VAWP, capacity-building, and norm change strategies.

In response, UN Women Kenya, with support from Global Affairs Canada (GAC), implemented the programme *Enhancing Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Kenya* (2022–2025). The initiative applied a multi-level strategy. At the individual level, it built women's leadership capacity and visibility through training, mentorship, and media platforms such as *Ms. President Season Two*. At the institutional level, it worked with justice, security, and electoral bodies to strengthen responses to violence against women in politics (VAWP) and advance compliance with the two-thirds gender principle. At the societal level, it mobilized communities, male champions, and media actors to challenge stereotypes and promote positive narratives about women leaders. The programme's design was firmly anchored in UN Women's Strategic Note (2023- 2026), the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and Kenya's Generation Equality Forum commitments.

This end-term evaluation assessed programme performance, achievements, and challenges. It served as both an accountability mechanism and a learning exercise and has applied the OECD/DAC and UNEG/GERAAS criteria to among other things generate credible evidence of results, document innovative practices, and identify lessons for replication. Primary users include UN Women, GAC, Government of Kenya institutions, county governments, and implementing partners, while secondary users include media, civil society, academia, and other development partners. Findings are expected to inform future programme planning, accountability, and policy advocacy.

## 1.2 PROGRAMME/OBJECT OF EVALUATION DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

### 1.2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The initiative under review, *Enhancing Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Kenya*, was a flagship programme of UN Women Kenya implemented with financial support from Global Affairs Canada

(GAC). Running from September 2021 to March 2025, the four-year programme strategically aligned with the 2022 general elections and the subsequent governance period leading to 2027. This timing enabled it to influence both the supply side of women's leadership through capacity-building and institutional reforms, and the demand side by addressing social norms and community acceptance of women in politics.

The programme was designed to expand women's participation and representation in political leadership at both national and county levels. Its objectives were threefold. First, it sought to build the leadership capacity, confidence, and visibility of women aspirants and elected officials through structured training, mentorship, and media innovations such as *Ms. President Season Two*. Second, it aimed to strengthen justice, security, and electoral institutions to ensure effective prevention and response to violence against women in politics (VAWP), while advancing compliance with the constitutional two-thirds gender principle. Third, it worked to transform social norms by engaging communities, male champions, and media actors to challenge stereotypes and promote positive, empowering narratives about women leaders.

Geographically, the programme operated at both national and county levels. Nationally, it engaged Parliament, independent commissions, political parties, and the media to drive legislative reforms and shape public discourse. At the county level, interventions focused on seven core counties (Kericho, Wajir, Kisii, Homa Bay, Samburu, Kajiado, and Embu) while extending targeted actions to women-led counties such as Kwale, Machakos, and Nakuru.

The primary beneficiaries were women aspirants and elected women leaders, complemented by survivors of gender-based violence, Women's Rights Organizations, and civil society partners. Duty bearers in the justice, security, and electoral sectors, as well as media practitioners and regulators, were engaged as key actors, alongside male allies and community leaders. The programme applied the *Leave No One Behind* principle by addressing the needs of marginalized groups, including women with disabilities, young women, and those in pastoralist communities.

Funded through a CAD 4,950,000 grant from Global Affairs Canada, the programme was managed by UN Women Kenya and delivered in partnership with a consortium of state and non-state actors. These included the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ)- Kenya Chapter, Kenya Women's Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK), Media Focus on Africa (MFA), URAIA Trust, the African Woman and Child Features Service (AWCFS), the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, and the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK).

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Kenya's 2010 Constitution marked a major milestone for gender equality and women's empowerment. It incorporated the two-thirds gender principle as a constitutional requirement and reaffirmed women's equal rights to participate in political leadership and decision-making (Republic of Kenya, 2010). This provision aimed to boost women's representation in both elected and appointed positions and eliminate systemic barriers that had long excluded women from governance. By the time the project was being implemented, the country had made notable progress since the onset of devolution in 2013. The number of women elected as governors had risen from three in 2017 to seven in 2022, and women's representation in the National Assembly had gradually increased (Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission [IEBC], 2022) [1] . However, overall participation still fell short of the constitutional one-third requirement and remained below both regional and global averages (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2023).

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[1] https://www.iebc.or.ke/resources/?Publications_/_Reports

These developments unfolded within a complex social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional environment that directly influenced women's access to and participation in leadership. Despite progressive laws and policy reforms, women continued to face structural, cultural, and institutional barriers that limited their safe and meaningful involvement in politics. Patriarchal norms, patronage systems, and informal gatekeeping practices continued to affect candidate selection and leadership pathways. In many counties, particularly those with strong clan-based or patriarchal traditions, women's political engagement remained heavily mediated by community elders and religious leaders. In addition, the high cost of campaigns, limited access to financial networks, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work hindered women's ability to compete effectively or sustain political careers[2].

During this period, social attitudes and gender roles still reflected deeply ingrained stereotypes about women's leadership abilities. Although public awareness of gender equality had improved through sustained advocacy, traditional norms that associated leadership with masculinity remained widespread. These attitudes discouraged women from running for office and limited their acceptance as legitimate decision-makers [3]. Violence against women in politics (VAWP) also persisted as a major deterrent. In the 2022 general elections, women aspirants and elected leaders were subjected to intimidation, harassment, and, in some cases, physical or sexual violence[4]. A growing dimension of this problem was technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)- including online harassment, hate speech, and cyberbullying, which further undermined women's freedom of expression and participation in digital political spaces.

The economic environment at the time continued to disadvantage women. The monetization of politics and unequal access to campaign funding meant that women candidates, especially at the county level, were less likely to receive political party support or private donations due to structural inequalities in asset ownership and access to credit[5]. This dependence on informal or personal networks often restricted the reach and visibility of their campaigns and limited their competitiveness in highly monetized electoral processes.

Institutionally, devolution had opened new opportunities for women's representation, but progress remained uneven across counties. Counties with stronger governance capacity and fiscal resources such as Makueni and Kisumu, had institutionalized gender-responsive budgeting and established gender desks, while others continued to struggle with limited technical expertise and competing priorities[6]. At the national level, the two-thirds gender rule remained unimplemented despite repeated attempts to pass enabling legislation, reflecting both political resistance and institutional inertia.

Demographically, Kenya's population was and remains youthful, with about 75 percent under the age of 35[7]. However, youth and women with disabilities continued to be underrepresented in formal politics. The intersection of gender, age, and disability compounded exclusion, underscoring the need for inclusive mechanisms to ensure equal participation across all groups.

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[2] https://fidakenya.org/2022/11/30/2022-esgbv-report-kenyas-general-elections/

[3] https://www.knbs.or.ke/reports/kenya-census-2019/

[4] https://www.ngeckenya.org/Downloads/Annual%20report%202023-2024.pdf

[5] Ibid 2

[6] https://maarifa.cog.go.ke/sites/default/files/2024-04/Clean%20Devolution%20Conference%20Report.pdf

[7] Ibid 3

The media environment during this period both reflected and reinforced prevailing gender attitudes. While innovative programmes such as *Ms. President* and *Filamu Dada* helped expand visibility and generate more positive narratives about women's leadership, mainstream and vernacular media frequently perpetuated gender stereotypes by focusing on women's personal lives rather than their political agendas. This selective framing continued to undermine recognition of women's substantive contributions and reinforced bias in political discourse.

From a human rights perspective, Kenya remained a signatory to major international and regional instruments advancing gender equality and political participation, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Maputo Protocol. Together with the 2010 Constitution, these commitments provided a robust normative framework for promoting women's leadership and participation. Nevertheless, implementation gaps persisted, largely due to resource limitations, competing priorities, and variable political will across institutions.

Overall, the context during the implementation period was characterized by dynamic social change coexisting with persistent structural inequalities. The social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional conditions outlined above directly shaped both the opportunities and constraints for advancing women's political participation in Kenya. It was within this environment that the Enhancing Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Kenya Project was implemented. These contextual realities had significant implications for the project's design, delivery, and sustainability—informing the choice of interventions, the selection of target counties, and the need for adaptive strategies that addressed entrenched gender norms, institutional barriers, and resource disparities across regions.

## CHANGES TO PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The programme demonstrated adaptability in both design and implementation, responding to changing political, social, and environmental contexts throughout its lifecycle. These adjustments were essential to protect participants, keep the programme relevant, and improve delivery effectiveness in a quickly changing environment.

During the 2022 general elections, the programme strategically expanded its geographic coverage beyond the seven core counties to include selected hotspot counties such as Migori, Machakos, and Kilifi, where reports of heightened violence against women in politics (VAWP) had been received. This expansion was time-limited and targeted, ensuring that prevention and rapid response mechanisms reached areas where women aspirants faced severe threats of intimidation and electoral violence. By mobilizing short-term resources and partnerships in these regions, the programme was able to reduce risks and provide protective measures to women who might otherwise have been excluded from electoral processes.

Flexibility was also evident in activity scheduling and delivery modalities. In response to localized unrest, electoral tensions, and climate-related disruptions such as flooding, activities were rescheduled or relocated to safeguard both participants and staff. This flexibility helped to maintain programme momentum while prioritizing safety and security, particularly for women aspirants and grassroots participants who faced heightened vulnerability during such periods.

Financially, the programme introduced important changes to strengthen partner liquidity and delivery. In 2024, an upfront disbursement modality was piloted to address challenges caused by delays in quarterly fund releases, which had previously hindered timely implementation. This was coupled with a risk-based liquidation system that balanced accountability with flexibility, enabling partners to maintain continuity of action while ensuring financial oversight.

Routine joint work planning and monitoring were also institutionalized, fostering stronger alignment between UN Women and implementing partners, and allowing for adaptive management based on emerging challenges and opportunities.

The programme also adjusted its technical focus in response to new risks and evolving forms of violence. As technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) escalated during and after the 2022 elections, the portfolio increased its emphasis on digital safety. This included awareness-raising on online harassment, collaboration with digital rights organizations, and embedding digital safety modules within leadership trainings for women aspirants. These efforts represented an important adaptation to ensure women could participate fully in political life in both physical and digital spaces.

To reinforce prevention and response mechanisms for VAWP, the programme further intensified coordination among justice and security actors. Communities of practice and county-level working groups were established or strengthened to enable continuous dialogue, learning, and joint action among police, judiciary, prosecution services, and women's rights organizations. This improved the speed and quality of survivor-centered responses while fostering collective accountability among duty bearers.

Finally, to protect programme quality, a mentorship stream for women aspirants and elected leaders was extended under a short no-cost extension at the close of the project. This ensured that mentorship relationships were completed as intended, rather than truncated by funding timelines. The extension demonstrated UN Women's commitment to delivering not only on outputs but also on the depth and quality of outcomes for individual women leaders.

## THEORY OF CHANGE AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The programme was guided by a theory of change that situated women's political participation within three interconnected domains, namely individual empowerment, institutional reform, and transformation of social norms. At its core, the theory of change assumed that progress in these domains would be mutually reinforcing and taken together, would lead to increased participation and representation of women in political leadership at both national and county levels.

At the individual level, the theory of change recognized that women aspirants and elected leaders often lacked access to the skills, confidence, and visibility necessary to compete effectively in Kenya's highly competitive and resource-intensive political environment. By enhancing women's leadership capacity through training, mentorship, and visibility platforms, the programme anticipated that women would be better prepared not only to win elections but also to discharge their roles effectively once in office.

At the institutional level, the theory of change acknowledged the entrenched structural barriers that continue to constrain women's political engagement. Justice, security, and electoral bodies have historically failed to prevent and respond adequately to violence against women in politics (VAWP) and to enforce the constitutional two-thirds gender principle. Strengthening these institutions was therefore seen as central to creating a safer, more equitable political playing field. Institutional reforms, supported by capacity building, policy advocacy, and survivor-centred services, were expected to reduce the risks faced by women leaders and ensure that commitments to gender equality were translated into practice.

At the societal level, the theory of change recognized that sustainable progress could not be achieved without shifts in gender norms, attitudes, and behaviours. Deeply embedded patriarchal values and stereotypes often undermine

the legitimacy of women leaders, particularly in rural and pastoralist communities. The programme therefore engaged communities, male champions, and media actors to challenge discriminatory practices and to promote positive, empowering narratives about women's political leadership. By addressing public perceptions, the programme aimed to foster an environment in which women leaders would be accepted and supported, thereby reducing the social resistance that has historically undermined their participation.

The results framework was structured to operationalize this theory of change and was aligned with UN Women's Strategic Note (2023–2026), the UNSDCF (2022–2026), and Global Affairs Canada's feminist international assistance policy. At the impact level, the programme aimed to contribute to more inclusive, accountable, and gender-responsive governance in Kenya. The ultimate outcome was defined as *increased participation and representation of women in political leadership and decision-making*. Four intermediate outcomes underpinned this objective. First, *targeted women from diverse groups would have enhanced capacity to participate in politics and decision-making processes, while laws and policies supporting their participation would be enacted and implemented*. Second, *women's rights organizations and key stakeholders would strengthen their capacity to prevent, mitigate, and respond to violence against women in politics*. Third, *favourable gender norms, attitudes, and behaviours towards women in leadership would be promoted across society*. Finally, *institutions at national and county levels would demonstrate stronger capacity and accountability to advance women's political participation and representation*.

At the output level, the programme delivered practical activities that mapped onto these outcomes. Leadership training, mentorship schemes, and media engagement enhanced women's visibility and readiness for leadership. Policy advocacy and technical support targeted justice and electoral bodies to improve enforcement of legal frameworks and responses to VAWP. Community dialogues, campaigns, and partnerships with male champions and media actors sought to transform norms and reduce stigma around women's leadership. Progress was measured using both quantitative indicators such as the number of women elected, survivors accessing services, or policies enacted and qualitative measures of shifting attitudes, confidence, and institutional responsiveness. This combination allowed for a comprehensive assessment of how the programme's interventions contributed to systemic change in Kenya's political landscape.

## STAKEHOLDERS[8]

The programme brought together a wide range of stakeholders thus reflecting the complexity of advancing women's political participation in Kenya. At the strategic level, UN Women Kenya provided overall programme leadership, technical assistance, financial stewardship, and coordination. Global Affairs Canada, as the funding partner, offered financial resources and maintained oversight through results reporting and policy dialogue, ensuring alignment with Canada's feminist foreign policy priorities.

National government institutions were central to the programme's implementation. The Judiciary, the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), and the National Police Service (NPS) were engaged as critical duty bearers in promoting gender-responsive electoral processes, enforcing compliance with the two-thirds gender principle, and preventing and responding to violence against women in politics (VAWP). County governments and assemblies in the programme's target areas also played a key role in integrating gender perspectives into devolved governance structures.

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[8] Refer to Annex II for the full list of stakeholders

Civil society organizations[9] were pivotal implementing partners, leveraging their expertise, community reach, and advocacy experience. The African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWCFS) promoted gender-sensitive reporting and elevated women's voices in public discourse. Media Focus on Africa (MFA) implemented *Ms. President Season Two*, which showcased women's leadership potential while mentoring young aspirants. URAIA Trust advanced civic education and advocacy for women's political rights, while the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) supported women's participation in governance, peace, and security processes. The International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), Kenya Chapter, worked to strengthen judicial responses to VAWP and facilitated coordination through County Court Users Committees. Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK) ensured survivors of gender-based violence could access timely psychosocial, referral, and health services, notably through the national helpline 1195.

Other key stakeholders included Women's Rights Organizations (WROs)[10], male champions, community leaders, and media regulators, who were instrumental in shifting social norms and amplifying positive narratives about women leaders. Academic institutions, UN agencies, and development partners provided complementary knowledge, advocacy, and technical support, ensuring that programme interventions were embedded within broader governance and gender equality frameworks.

## 1.3 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

### 1.3.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The evaluation was undertaken with the dual intent of accountability and learning, while also serving as a tool for decision-making. From an accountability perspective, it responds to the requirements of Global Affairs Canada and UN Women by assessing the extent to which the programme delivered on its stated commitments and achieved tangible results. At the same time, it was designed as a learning exercise, generating credible evidence on what worked, what challenges persisted, and which innovative practices might be scaled or replicated in future interventions. Finally, the evaluation aimed to support decision-making by providing actionable insights that could guide UN Women, its partners, and donors in refining strategies for advancing gender equality and inclusive governance in Kenya.

In line with the Terms of Reference and project documents, the evaluation set out five interrelated objectives. The first was to analyze the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the programme in achieving its intended results, while also considering unintended outcomes. This included a critical assessment of the programme's theory of change and its contribution to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Kenya, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. The second objective was to examine the coherence of the programme's interventions in relation to other initiatives implemented by UN Women, ensuring that the work complemented and reinforced broader organizational strategies.

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[9] African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWCFS), Media Focus on Africa (MFA), URAIA Trust, National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK)
[10] Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya), Center for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW), Akili Dada, The Institute for Social Accountability (TISA)

The third objective focused on evaluating the programme's early impact and the sustainability of its interventions in promoting women's leadership and political participation. Beyond immediate results, the evaluation considered whether gains were likely to be maintained beyond the life of the project. The fourth objective was to determine the extent to which human rights–based approaches and gender equality principles were integrated into the design and implementation of the programme, ensuring alignment with UN Women's normative mandate. Finally, the evaluation sought to generate actionable recommendations that could improve the overall strategy and approach of UN Women's programming across its three thematic areas, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and transformative potential of future interventions.

### 1.3.2 SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The scope of the evaluation was defined geographically, thematically, and temporally. Geographically, it covered the seven core counties of Homa Bay, Kericho, Kisii, Embu, Samburu, Kajiado, and Wajir, while also considering time-bound interventions in electoral hotspot counties such as Migori, Machakos, and Kilifi during the 2022 elections. Thematically, it assessed progress under the programme's three outcome areas: (i) enhancing the capacity, visibility, and networks of women leaders and aspirants; (ii) strengthening institutional and community responses to violence against women in politics; and (iii) promoting positive social norms and narratives through community dialogues, male champions, and strategic media engagement. In addition, the evaluation examined cross-cutting issues such as inclusivity of marginalized groups, particularly women with disabilities, youth, and rural grassroots women, as well as the integration of gender equality and human rights principles.

Temporally, the evaluation covered the full programme implementation period from January 2022 to March 2025, with particular attention to the 2022 electoral cycle. The design followed the electoral phases thus allowing the evaluation to capture how the programme adapted its interventions to evolving contexts.

The intended audience of the evaluation included UN Women Kenya Country Office, Regional Office, and Headquarters, Global Affairs Canada, government counterparts at national and county levels, implementing partners, Women's Rights Organizations, and beneficiaries. The evaluation was also expected to be of use to secondary users such as UN agencies, media networks, academia, civil society coalitions, and development partners. By clarifying both objectives and scope, the evaluation was positioned to provide credible evidence of results, generate practical recommendations, and contribute to knowledge sharing on advancing women's political leadership in Kenya.

## 2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

### 2.1 EVALUATION DESIGN AND APPROACH

This evaluation applied a theory-based and mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess the programme's performance against its results framework. The design was utilization-focused, with an emphasis on producing findings that would be practical and actionable for stakeholders. It was explicitly gender-responsive and human rights-based, embedding the principles of participation, empowerment, inclusion, non-discrimination, accountability, and transparency throughout the process.

The evaluation was based on the programme's Theory of Change (ToC), which outlined the causal links between activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impacts in women's political participation and leadership. This ToC served as the main analytical framework, guiding the development of evaluation questions, indicator selection, and analysis structure. Following a theory-based approach, the evaluation reconstructed and mapped the ToC to test its assumptions, identify causal connections, and verify whether the expected change pathways proved accurate in practice. The reconstruction involved programme documentation, stakeholder consultations, and triangulated field evidence. The results framework supported the inquiry to ensure alignment between the programme's intended outcomes and the evidence gathered during the evaluation. The analysis specifically examined how interventions contributed to changes observed along the ToC pathways, including both anticipated and unintended results.

The evaluation drew on three main streams of evidence. First, a structured desk review of programme documents, policies, and related literature was conducted to establish the context and assess relevance and coherence. Second, analysis of monitoring and administrative data was undertaken to track outputs, outcomes, and trends across the programme's life cycle. Third, qualitative inquiry was carried out with duty bearers and rights holders, capturing perspectives from women leaders, aspirants, implementing partners, and institutional stakeholders. These three streams of evidence were systematically integrated through triangulation, strengthening the reliability of the findings. Independence of analysis was preserved, with quality assurance provided by an Evaluation Management Group (EMG) and an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)[11]. These bodies offered advice and feedback but did not control or predetermine the findings, ensuring impartiality.

During the course of the assignment, there was a transition in evaluators, which created an interruption in the evaluation process. The initial consultant completed the inception phase, designed the methodology, led both quantitative and qualitative data collection, and prepared a first draft report. However, at the time of transition, only part of the qualitative data was made available to the succeeding consultant, who therefore based the final analysis primarily on these materials, alongside programme documents and monitoring data.

The succeeding consultant took over the process by consolidating and organizing the inherited files, reconstructing missing metadata where feasible, and applying systematic analysis to the available evidence. An audit trail was maintained to link claims to sources, and where gaps existed, findings are carefully triangulated with data from other sources. This approach ensured that, despite partial data access, the evaluation was finalized with transparency, rigor, and consistency with UN Women's Evaluation Policy and UNEG norms and standards.

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[11] Refer to Annex V for the full list of EMG and ERG members

## 2.2 ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO THE END TERM EVALUATION

The analytical approach for this end-term evaluation was guided by the programme's Theory of Change and results framework, which provided a structured pathway for linking evidence to outcomes. Analysis was conducted with reference to the OECD/DAC and UNEG/GERAAS evaluation criteria. This ensured that the evaluation remained aligned with UN Women's normative mandate and standards for gender-responsive evaluation.

The evaluation relied primarily on data triangulation to enhance validity. Findings were derived from three complementary streams: desk review of programme and policy documents, analysis of monitoring and administrative data, and qualitative inquiry with duty bearers and rights holders. Each stream provided partial insights, and only by comparing and cross-validating across them was it possible to generate robust findings. For example, evidence from programme reports was checked against monitoring data and validated through stakeholder testimonies. Where data converged, confidence in the findings was strengthened; where it diverged, the analysis probed contextual explanations.

A particular feature of this evaluation was the transition in evaluators and the nature of the data inherited. While the first consultant collected both quantitative and qualitative data, only a portion of the qualitative material was made available to the successor consultant. This required a careful and transparent approach to analysis. The available qualitative data were systematically reviewed, coded, and organized by thematic area and evaluation criterion. Emerging themes were then mapped against the Theory of Change to assess whether the causal pathways held true in practice. Where quantitative evidence was lacking, the analysis relied on qualitative triangulation and contextual data from secondary sources.

The evaluation also applied a gender and human rights lens to the analysis. This meant paying particular attention to the experiences of marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities, young women, and rural aspirants, and assessing whether the programme's interventions were inclusive and responsive to their needs. Where gaps in inclusion were identified, these were treated not only as operational challenges but also as substantive findings relevant to UN Women's mandate.

Finally, the analysis was iterative and consultative. Draft findings were reviewed internally and discussed with the Evaluation Management Group and the Evaluation Reference Group. While these groups provided feedback and validation, the independence of analysis and conclusions was preserved. The result is an evaluation that balances methodological rigor with transparency, and that acknowledges the constraints of the available evidence while still producing credible, actionable findings.

## 2.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY QUESTIONS

The evaluation applied the OECD/DAC and UNEG/GERAAS criteria, which provide internationally recognized standards for assessing development interventions. These include relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and impact. In addition, human rights and gender equality (HRGE) were integrated as a cross-cutting dimension across all criteria, in line with UN Women's Evaluation Policy and UNEG Norms and Standards. This framework was selected to ensure both accountability to stakeholders and learning for future programming, while maintaining comparability with other UN Women evaluations.

Relevance was assessed to determine the extent to which the programme objectives were consistent with Kenya's evolving national priorities, international frameworks, and the needs of beneficiaries, partners, and stakeholders. The evaluation explored whether the Theory of Change remained valid, whether the programme addressed the most critical barriers to women's political participation, and how well it aligned with Kenya's commitments to gender equality and democratic governance.

Effectiveness examined the extent to which the programme achieved or was likely to achieve its planned outputs and outcomes. It focused on results achieved in building women's leadership capacity, strengthening institutional responses to violence against women in politics (VAWP), and shifting harmful social norms. This criterion also assessed the reasons for achievement or non-achievement, the satisfaction of beneficiaries, and the degree to which capacities of both duty bearers and rights holders were strengthened.

Efficiency evaluated how economically resources were converted into results. It assessed whether financial, human, and technical resources were strategically allocated, whether outputs were delivered on time, and whether the programme achieved value for money. The evaluation also considered whether synergies were built with other projects at national and county levels and the extent to which monitoring data were used for adaptive management.

Coherence considered the extent to which the programme was internally coherent within UN Women's broader portfolio and externally coherent with other actors' interventions. It explored complementarity, coordination, and harmonization with national institutions, county governments, civil society organizations, and development partners. This criterion also examined whether the programme contributed to avoiding duplication and ensuring added value in advancing women's political participation.

Sustainability was assessed in terms of the likelihood that the programme's benefits would continue beyond the funding period. The evaluation examined the extent of national and county ownership, the durability of institutional reforms such as Gender Justice Courts and gender-responsive budget lines, and the financial and technical capacity of partners to sustain results. Linked to this, the evaluation also assessed impact, considering both intended and unintended, positive and negative, long-term effects produced by the intervention. This included changes in women's representation, public attitudes, institutional responsiveness, and the broader enabling environment for women's leadership.

Finally, human rights and gender equality (HRGE) were integrated as a cross-cutting lens across all criteria. This dimension assessed the degree to which the programme upheld HRGE principles in both design and implementation. It examined inclusivity, participation, non-discrimination, and empowerment, paying particular attention to the experiences of marginalized groups such as women with disabilities, young women, and grassroots aspirants.

To operationalize these criteria, the evaluation applied the key questions outlined in the Terms of Reference (TOR) rather than those refined during the inception phase[12]. This approach was adopted to maintain alignment with the approved TOR framework and to avoid unnecessary repetition, as several inception-phase revisions closely mirrored the original questions. These questions guided the data collection and analysis. For relevance, the evaluation asked whether the programme was aligned with UN Women's Strategic Plan, Kenya's national priorities, and the needs of women leaders and aspirants. For effectiveness, it examined what results were achieved, why, and to what extent capacities were strengthened. For efficiency, it considered whether resources were strategically allocated, cost-effectively used, and whether outputs were delivered on time. For coherence, it assessed whether the programme complemented other initiatives and contributed to wider UN and donor efforts. For sustainability and impact, it asked what changes were likely to endure, what evidence existed of long-term effects, and whether national and county institutions demonstrated ownership. For HRGE, the evaluation asked how well gender and human rights principles were integrated, and whether the programme contributed to advancing the quality of life and empowerment of women and girls.

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[12]Refer to Annex III for the Terms of Reference

Together, these criteria and questions created a comprehensive evaluative framework. They ensured that the analysis was systematic, evidence-based, and responsive to both accountability and learning needs, while also reflecting UN Women's mandate to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in Kenya.

## 2.4 SOURCES OF DATA AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

### DATA SOURCES

The evaluation drew on programme documents. These included the results framework, monitoring datasets, partner reports, training records, media monitoring summaries, and case notes. It also used the inception report and the first draft submitted by the first consultant. Policy and context sources informed interpretation. These included UN Women's Strategic Note, the UNSDCF, donor guidance, and Kenyan laws and policies.

Primary qualitative materials were central. They included transcripts and notes from key informant interviews and focus groups conducted during fieldwork. The successor evaluator was provided with an extended transcript of transcribed notes from key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

**Table 1: Data Sources**

| Type | Internal Sources | External Sources |
|---|---|---|
| **Primary Data**[13] | • Key informant interviews with government officials, implementing partners, and beneficiaries<br><br>• Focus group discussions with women aspirants, elected leaders, and community members | • Policy interviews with national institutions (Judiciary, ORPP, IEBC, NGEC, NPS)<br><br>• Stakeholder consultations with WROs, CSOs, and media representatives |
| **Secondary Data** | • Programme results framework<br><br>• Monitoring datasets<br><br>• Partner narrative and financial reports<br><br>• Training records and attendance lists<br><br>• Media monitoring summaries<br><br>• Inception report and first consultant's draft | • UN Women Strategic Note (2023–2026)<br><br>• UNSDCF (2022–2026)<br><br>• Global Affairs Canada donor guidance<br><br>• Kenya Constitution (2010) and gender-related legislation<br><br>• National gender equality policies and frameworks |

### DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The evaluation employed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure broad representation of rights holders, duty bearers, and implementing partners. Data collection relied on two principal methods, that is Key Informant

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[13] The complete set of Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussion questions is provided in Annex IV

Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)[14], which were conducted at both national and county levels to capture diverse perspectives on the programme's performance, effectiveness, and sustainability.

A total of 47 Key Informant Interviews and 14 Focus Group Discussions were conducted across the seven target counties (Kericho, Kajiado, Kisii, Homa Bay, Embu, Samburu, and Wajir) as well as at the national level. The sampling approach ensured balanced representation of respondents from urban and rural contexts, across different political affiliations, and across varied stakeholder groups[15].

Key Informant Interviews were conducted with a variety of actors directly involved in or influencing the programme. At the national level, participants included senior officials from the Judiciary, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), National Police Service (NPS), and the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action (SDGAA). Implementing partners such as URAIA Trust, Media Focus on Africa (MFA), African Woman and Child Feature Services (AWCFS), International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), and Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK) were interviewed to gather insights on project delivery, coordination, and lessons learned.

At the county level, KIIs were conducted with county governors, Members of County Assemblies (MCAs), county gender officers, civil society representatives, and media practitioners. These duty bearers and rights holders provided insights into how the interventions were implemented and localized. Specific interviews were also held with Court Users Committees, GBV Working Groups, and County Peace Committees, particularly in Kisii, Homa Bay, and Wajir, to examine institutional coordination in preventing and responding to violence against women in politics (VAWP).

Focus Group Discussions were equally central to the evaluation as they were instrumental in capturing the lived experiences of groups most directly affected by the programme. FGDs were held separately for women aspirants, elected leaders, male champions, media practitioners, and community peace actors to allow free and open discussion. In total, 14 FGDs were conducted, two in each county (one for women leaders/aspirants and one for community actors). Participants reflected on capacity-building, mentorship, campaign challenges, and the transformation of community attitudes toward women's leadership.

To ensure inclusiveness, the evaluation deliberately included youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs), both as rights holders and as leaders in their own right. Dedicated FGDs were organized with young women leaders and representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities in counties such as Embu and Kajiado. This approach aligns with UN Women's principle of leaving no one behind, ensuring that marginalized voices were represented in assessing both progress and persisting barriers.

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[14] The complete set of Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussion questions is provided in Annex IV

[15] Refer to Annexes III and VI for the Evaluation Schedule and Data Collection Itinerary

| Sampling Frame: Key Informant Interviews and FGDs Counties | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Woman Aspirant | Miss President Participants | Male Champions | Security Officers | Journalists | WROs/ CSOs | FGDS with Women and Male Gender Champions |
| **Kericho** | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Kijiado** | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Kisii** | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Homabay** | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Embu** | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Samburu** | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Wajir** | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Sampling Frame: Key Informant Interviews Partners and Government** | | | | | | | |
| **KEWOPA** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **MFA** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **AWCFS** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **IAWJ** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **URAIA** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **NPS** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **HAK-1195** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **Sampling Frame: Key Informant Interviews UN Women** | | | | | | | |
| **Deputy Country Representative** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **Operations Manager** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **Programme Team** | | | | 1 | | | |
| **Monitoring and Evaluation Focal Point** | | | | 1 | | | |

## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Stakeholder consultations were a central component of the evaluation and were deliberately structured to ensure inclusivity, balance, and accountability. Consistent with UN Women's Evaluation Policy and UNEG standards, the evaluation sought to engage a wide spectrum of stakeholders representing duty bearers, rights holders, implementing partners, and external actors[17]. This approach was designed not only to generate evidence but also to enhance ownership of the evaluation process and strengthen the utility of its findings.

Consultations were conducted at both national and county levels. At the national level, interviews and roundtable discussions were held with representatives from government institutions. This included the Judiciary, the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, the National Gender and Equality Commission, and the National Police Service. Engagements with Parliament and the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action provided additional insights into legislative and policy frameworks.

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[16] Annex VII- sample frame

[17] The names of individual respondents are not disclosed to preserve confidentiality and anonymity. The list is not disaggregated by gender, as this level of information was not available from the data collection phase.

At the county level, consultations were undertaken with county assemblies, county gender officers, and women caucuses in the programme's seven focus counties. Women aspirants and elected officials were engaged through focus group discussions, which provided rich evidence of lived experiences of political contestation, leadership, and exposure to violence against women in politics. Survivors of gender-based violence were consulted through secure channels facilitated by Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK) thus ensuring ethical safeguards and adherence to UN Women's protocols on working with survivors of violence.

Civil society and Women's Rights Organizations such as FIDA-Kenya, CREAW, Akili Dada, URAIA Trust, AWCFS, MFA, and NCCK, were consulted as implementing partners and advocacy actors. Media practitioners and editors' networks were also engaged to assess the impact of media-based norm change initiatives such as *Ms. President Season Two*. Development partners and other UN agencies were consulted to understand synergies, coherence, and opportunities for leveraging resources.

## DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

The management and analysis of evaluation data was shaped by the unusual circumstance of two evaluators being involved in the process. The first evaluator developed the inception report, designed the methodological framework, and initiated data collection. A partial draft report was also prepared under their tenure. The current evaluator then assumed responsibility for the assignment by working with existing material while supplementing and clarifying evidence where gaps or inconsistencies were identified. This report therefore represents a reconstitution of what was stated in earlier documents, combined with additional analysis undertaken by the current evaluator to ensure methodological integrity and alignment with the Terms of Reference.

Data from multiple sources were systematically managed to preserve accuracy and ensure coherence across the two phases of the evaluation. Programme documents, monitoring datasets, partner reports, and national statistics were organized against the evaluation matrix developed at inception. Primary qualitative material, such as transcripts and notes from KIIs and FGDs already conducted were anonymized, coded, and re-reviewed to verify consistency. Where the first evaluator had left incomplete or conflicting accounts, the current evaluator cross-checked with secondary documentation, donor reports, and context sources.

Qualitative analysis followed a thematic coding approach informed by the evaluation questions, theory of change, and cross-cutting principles of gender equality and human rights. Themes such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and impact were explored, while intersectional perspectives of women with disabilities, youth, and survivors of violence were explicitly examined. Quantitative data from monitoring frameworks, partner submissions, and electoral statistics were cleaned, verified, and used descriptively to complement and triangulate qualitative findings.

Triangulation was essential in this context, not only across data types but also across evaluators' outputs. Evidence from KIIs and FGDs was cross-checked with implementing partner reports, media monitoring summaries, and national datasets. For example, women aspirants' accounts of intimidation were verified against case notes and security sector records. Similarly, claims of changes in media narratives were checked against documented monitoring summaries and independent reports. This cross-referencing reduced the risk of bias or error arising from the handover between evaluators.

Finally, a contribution analysis lens was applied to assess the plausibility of links between programme activities and observed results, acknowledging that a wider ecosystem of actors and structural dynamics shapes women's political participation in Kenya. This approach allowed the evaluation to move beyond description to a considered assessment of the programme's role within that ecosystem.

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## LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Like all evaluations, this end-term review faced certain limitations that influenced the scope and depth of the analysis. These constraints stemmed from both the process of evaluator transition and the amount of data handed over to the second evaluator. While they did not compromise the overall integrity of the evaluation, they shaped the way evidence was analyzed and presented. A series of mitigation strategies were applied to ensure that findings remained credible, balanced, and useful for stakeholders.

A key limitation of the evaluation was the unavailability of the original respondent-level data and sex-disaggregated participation lists. The second evaluator joined the assignment after data collection had been completed, and only summary information—such as the number of FGDs and KIIs—was available. In addition, the transition between evaluators created further data continuity challenges. While the first consultant completed the inception phase and led data collection, only partial qualitative data and limited quantitative datasets were accessible to the succeeding consultant. Missing elements, including detailed respondent lists, metadata on interview locations and modes, and complete datasets, constrained the ability to conduct fully disaggregated analyses by gender, county, or disability status.

To mitigate these limitations, the succeeding evaluator reorganized the available data, reconstructed missing metadata where possible, and triangulated findings through document review, secondary data sources, and consultations with the primary evaluator and programme team. An audit trail was maintained to link findings to evidence, and confidence ratings were applied to distinguish between well-substantiated and emerging insights, ensuring transparency and credibility in the analysis.

A second limitation was time and contextual constraints. Given that the evaluation took place after the 2022 elections, some respondents reported challenges in recalling detailed experiences or providing precise timelines. To mitigate this, the review relied on concurrent programme monitoring records and media reports to corroborate stakeholder testimonies, thereby reducing the risk of recall bias.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The evaluation was conducted in strict adherence to UNEG ethical guidelines and UN Women's Evaluation Policy. Participation in all interviews and discussions was voluntary, with informed consent obtained after participants were fully briefed on the purpose of the evaluation, the use of information, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was assured throughout, with personal identifiers removed during transcription and analysis. Data files were encrypted, stored on secure servers, and accessed only on a need-to-know basis by the evaluation team.

A survivor-centered protocol was applied for any sensitive engagement, in line with UN Women's guidance on safe consultations with survivors of violence. This required advance risk assessment, careful selection of safe interview locations, and prioritization of privacy. Survivors were not pressured to disclose personal experiences, and referral readiness was in place to connect participants with appropriate psychosocial or legal support where required. No interviews were conducted with minors. Re-contacting survivors was avoided unless explicitly justified and carried out under safe, ethical conditions.

Data were retained solely for verification purposes during the evaluation process and will be securely destroyed upon completion. The evaluation team remained alert to the risks of reinforcing power imbalances during data collection and analysis. It took care to create spaces where participants could speak freely and without intimidation.

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Accessibility and inclusivity were integral to the ethical approach. Efforts were made to accommodate persons with disabilities, including by selecting accessible venues and making facilitation adjustments where feasible. The evaluation also aligned with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy by ensuring that the perspectives of people with disabilities were not treated as peripheral but incorporated into the mainstream analysis of women's political participation.

## 3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

This chapter presents the principal findings of the evaluation. Conclusions are derived from a synthesized analysis of multiple data sources. This includes a desk review of project documentation and monitoring outputs; key informant interviews with implementing partners, state counterparts, media collaborators, and UN personnel; and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries [18]. Evidence was triangulated across these streams to balance breadth (documentary coverage) with depth (lived experience and practitioner insight), and to guard against single-source bias. Findings are organized around the OECD/DAC criteria; Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability, with Human Rights and Gender Equality treated as a cross-cutting lens applied within each criterion.

### 3.1 RELEVANCE

### TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT CONSISTENT WITH THE EVOLVING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF THE BENEFICIARIES, PARTNERS, AND STAKEHOLDERS?

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

The project demonstrated a high level of relevance by aligning with UN Women's global and national strategic priorities, as well as Kenya's policy commitments, including the 12 Generation Equality Forum (GEF) pledges. Across the country and seven core counties of Homa Bay, Kericho, Kisii, Embu, Samburu, Kajiado, and Wajir, the project interventions responded to entrenched patriarchal norms, systemic exclusion in political parties, and widespread violence against women in politics. The multi-pronged design, combining leadership training, social norm change (through initiatives like *Ms. President*), and strengthening institutional responses to VAWP, ensured that the project remained valid throughout its lifecycle. While the project had a strong grassroots presence and directly reached large numbers of community-level women, some respondents, especially women with disabilities and those in remote areas, indicated that sustained participation was more challenging for them. The Theory of Change was valid, but its under-emphasized economic empowerment and digital safety, which are two issues that emerged as critical during the 2022 elections. Collaboration among partners was strong at national level but uneven at county level, where local WROs sometimes felt sidelined.

QUESTION 1: TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE PROJECT ALIGNED WITH UN WOMEN'S GLOBAL STRATEGIC PLAN AND KCO'S STRATEGIC NOTE 2023–2026?

**Finding 1:** *The project was strongly aligned with UN Women's Global Strategic Plan (2022–2025) and the Kenya Country Office (KCO) Strategic Note (2023–2026), particularly within the thematic priorities on Women's Political Participation (WPP), Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG), and Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The alignment was evident across UN Women's three mandates. Normatively, the project advanced laws and policies at national and county levels, including advocacy on the not more than two-thirds gender principle, contributions to KNAP III, and the development of county gender policies. Operationally, it delivered capacity strengthening, mentorship, and visibility platforms for women aspirants, alongside institutional support for justice, security, and electoral bodies.* In terms of coordination, the project utilized UN Women's convening power both within the UN system and across national and county platforms. Through the UN Country Team's Gender Theme Group (GTG), UN Women successfully mobilized inter-agency support for advocacy around the *not more than two-thirds* gender principle thus ensuring that messaging on women's political participation was consistently reflected across UNCT

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[18] Refer to Annex IX for the raw data

engagements. Beyond the UN system, UN Women also convened national and county-level actors through mechanisms such as the G7 platform and the Multi-Sectoral Working Group (MSWG) on gender-related issues. As one senior official from the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action explained,

> "UN Women has been the engine keeping the gender-rule process alive. They kept convening the legal experts and parliamentarians when everyone else had moved on."

This testimony illustrates the organization's central convening and technical role in advancing gender-equality norms even amid political fatigue on the issue.

The project's design and implementation remained consistent with its Theory of Change. By aligning leadership, institutional strengthening, and social-norm pathways, it contributed to measurable outcome-level results as it enhanced confidence among women aspirants, improved institutional responsiveness to VAWP, and shifts in media and community narratives on women's leadership. These results validate the ToC assumption that progress across the three pathways is mutually reinforcing.

Operationally, the project's strongest alignment was in the Women's Political Participation and leadership (WPPL) portfolio. A flagship intervention was *Ms. President Season Two*, which not only showcased women's leadership potential to a national audience but also provided structured leadership development opportunities to 51 contestants. These women benefitted from mentorship, public speaking coaching, policy debates, and media visibility, which collectively enhanced their legitimacy and confidence as political actors. Several transitioned into elected or advisory positions at both county and national levels through appointments in county assemblies and senior advisory roles. One participant captured the transformation this way:

> "Before Ms. President I could barely speak in public; now I chair our county's gender committee and mentor younger women." - Contestant, Kisii County.

This trajectory mirrored Outcome One of the KCO Strategic Note (2023–2026), which emphasizes building structured leadership pipelines and increasing women's participation in decision-making positions. By deploying a national media platform as both a leadership development space and a norm-shifting campaign, the project operationalized UN Women's mandate in a uniquely innovative way. At the same time, it embodied the coordination mandate by convening media houses, political actors, and civil society in support of gender-responsive governance, while also contributing normatively to shifting societal narratives around women's leadership.

On the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) outcome, the project demonstrated strong integration of normative and operational dimensions. Normatively, it supported legal and policy reforms, including the establishment of specialized GBV courts which were later institutionalized as Gender Justice Courts, strengthening survivors' access to justice. It also facilitated the expansion of the 1195 national GBV helpline thus embedding survivor-centred service delivery into Kenya's institutional framework. These reforms were reinforced by the Judiciary's creation of 12 SGBV courts and Court Users' Committees in hotspot counties, with UN Women and IAWJ strengthening the capacity of 441 justice actors (288 women; 153 men) to respond to VAWP and GBV[19]. Operationally, the project strengthened the capacity of more than 600 police officers to address gender-sensitive electoral security, equipping them to respond to cases of violence against women in politics (VAWP). These measures directly responded to priorities identified in both the Global Strategic Plan and the KCO Strategic Note, where gaps in institutional response to VAWP had been highlighted as a key barrier to women's safe political participation. In

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[19] (UN Women, 2024)

combining policy advocacy with institutional strengthening, the project demonstrated its ability to translate high-level commitments into practical tools that enhanced women's safety in political spaces. A police officer in Kisii observed:

> "After the training, we no longer tell women politicians to 'go settle it at home.' We treat the threats as real security cases."

Such evidence confirms that operational interventions were not only delivered as designed but also triggered behavioural change within key institutions, a core expectation of both strategic frameworks.

The project was also implemented substantially as designed, with adaptive adjustments such as integrating technology-facilitated VAWP and expanding into hotspot counties during the 2022 elections. The Theory of Change and results framework remained valid and guided delivery. In addition, the project linked with other GAC-funded gender-equality programmes under the Generation Equality commitments thus fostering shared learning and reinforcing consistency across donor initiatives.

In the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) domain, the project contributed to Kenya's Third National Action Plan (KNAP III)[20] thus reinforcing UN Women's normative role. It also convened peace dialogues in fragile counties such as Samburu and Wajir by linking women's political participation with conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Complementary initiatives such as Early Warning Early Response training for 320 peace actors in Samburu, Embu, and Kisii, and engagement with 114 religious leaders at the national level, further localized WPS commitments. A peace-committee member from Samburu reflected,

> "We started seeing women mediating between clans. It changed the tone of local peace meetings."

The coordination mandate was evident through UN Women's convening power. It co-chaired the Multi-Sectoral Working Group (MSWG) on the two-thirds gender rule, which produced six legislative recommendations tabled in Parliament (2023). At the county level, UN Women's technical support helped draft and advance gender policies in Embu, Kisii, and Kericho, while the launch of the G7 Strategy[21] by women governors, supported by UN Women and the Council of Governors, set a goal of increasing women governors from seven to 24 by 2027. These coordination efforts reinforced UN Women's convening power in aligning diverse actors around gender equality and governance reforms.

Additionally, Canada Leadership funding was channeled through the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) to support Gender Sector Working Group meetings thus sustaining structured dialogue between government and civil-society stakeholders.

The principal gap in alignment related to Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). This was a design-stage limitation, not an implementation failure, since the project was conceived primarily as an *elections-focused programme* under WPP and EVAWG. Donor expectations under the Global Affairs Canada funding window did not encompass direct economic empowerment interventions such as campaign-financing support or access to credit. Still, the absence of an economic empowerment component constrained cross-pillar integration. As one County Gender Officer in Kericho remarked.

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[20] https://gender.go.ke/sites/default/files/publications/kenya_national_action_plan_2025-2029_1.pdf

[21] https://cog.go.ke/kenyas-g7-delivering-on-the-devolution-promise/

While women's political visibility and leadership capacity were strongly supported, campaign financing challenges remained largely unaddressed. Aspirants interviewed highlighted financial exclusion as a persistent barrier. This reduced the project's ability to fully operationalize cross-pillar integration, given the interdependence of economic empowerment and political participation in Kenya.

## QUESTION 2: TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE PROJECT ALIGNED WITH KENYA'S NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES INCLUDING KENYA'S 12 COMMITMENTS TO GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM (GEF)?

*Finding 2: The project was well aligned with Kenya's constitutional, policy, and international obligations, especially the two-thirds gender principle in the 2010 Constitution, Vision 2030, the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), the Kenya National Action Plan II on Women, Peace and Security (KNAP II-2020-2024), and Kenya's 12 commitments to the Generation Equality Forum (GEF).*

The clearest alignment was evident in the programme's sustained support for parliamentary and institutional advocacy on the two-thirds gender principle. This principle, enshrined in Article 27(8) of the Constitution, obliges the State to take legislative and other measures to ensure that "not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender[22]." By collaborating closely with the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), the programme strengthened oversight of political party practices and contributed to renewed parliamentary debates on the reintroduction of the two-thirds gender bill. These interventions were not isolated as they were anchored in broader governance goals under Vision 2030, which frames gender equality in political participation as a key driver of inclusive and accountable institutions.

The project's alignment was also visible in its contribution to critical national reform processes. In 2023, the Government established the Multi-Sectoral Working Group (MSWG) on the Not More than Two Thirds Gender Principle to develop a legislative and administrative framework for actualizing the gender principle. The programme's technical inputs and convenings fed into the MSWG's recommendations, which later informed the deliberations of the National Dialogue Committee (NADCO)[23] in 2024. This sequencing ensured that women's voices, evidence from the ground, and technical perspectives from civil society were not only captured but also debated in national spaces. Several stakeholders affirmed that the project provided "a platform where women leaders could articulate practical proposals, rather than simply restating constitutional obligations."

Beyond legislative advocacy, the programme contributed to Kenya's National Action Plan II on Women, Peace and Security (KNAP II- 2020-2024). KNAP II emphasized women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding, protection from violence, and access to justice. The project directly reinforced these pillars through county-level engagement with Court Users Committees and justice sector actors, strengthening referral mechanisms for survivors of electoral-related violence. In practice, this meant that survivors could access support more quickly, while justice actors gained clarity on their roles. This approach bridged the WPP agenda with the WPS framework, highlighting the indivisibility of safety and meaningful participation for women in political spaces.

At the county level, the project promoted gender-responsive planning and budgeting (GRB), ensuring that political commitments were translated into financial allocations. In Embu and Homa Bay, technical assistance resulted in the

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[22] https://www.klrc.go.ke/index.php/constitution-of-kenya/110-chapter-four-the-bill-of-rights/112-part-2-rights-and-fundamental-freedoms/193-27-equality-and-freedom-from-discrimination

[23] https://www.parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2024-02/Report%20of%20the%20National%20Dialogue%20Committee%2025%20November%202023-compressed.pdf

introduction of gender-specific budget lines, effectively institutionalizing resources for women's leadership programmes. This practical step moved gender equality from rhetoric to resource commitments. In Kisii, collaboration with Court Users Committees helped county institutions to better respond to GBV, particularly in the high-risk context of elections. Meanwhile, in Kajiado and Samburu, the programme fostered community dialogues with traditional leaders and male champions, aligning with Kenya's policy priority of shifting harmful norms and creating enabling environments for women's leadership. One women aspirant explained as follows.

> "For the first time, the county allocated funds specifically for women's leadership training. That told us this work is not just a project, it is policy."- FGD, Women Aspirants, Homa Bay

Despite these gains, alignment was uneven across counties. In Kericho and Wajir, gender priorities were not integrated into County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), raising sustainability concerns. Without formal inclusion in county planning and budgets, gender initiatives risk remaining dependent on donor funding. This reflects a broader structural challenge in Kenya's devolution system, where uptake of national gender policies often depends on political will and fiscal priorities at the local level.

The project also aligned with Kenya's 12 GEF commitments[24], though with varying emphasis. Kenya's roadmap is strongest on GBV prevention and response, and here the project made notable contributions by strengthening referral pathways, enhancing coordination among duty-bearers, and promoting survivor-centered justice. In addition, the project advanced Financing for Gender Equality by supporting GRB processes and contributed to Women's Leadership by equipping aspirants and elected leaders with skills and platforms to engage in politics. However, it is important to note that GEF's leadership pillar is less developed than its GBV focus, and the project therefore filled a gap by elevating women's political participation as an essential component of Kenya's commitments.

The project also integrated disability rights and social inclusion into political processes. Its support to the Charter of Inclusion and disability-responsive party reforms, in collaboration with ORPP, reinforced compliance with Article 54 of the Constitution on the rights of persons with disabilities. By ensuring that political parties adopted more inclusive

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[24] Kenya's 12 Generation Equality Forum (GEF) commitments (2021) are as follows:

1. Enact the two-thirds gender principle in all elective and appointive positions by 2026
2. End gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices
3. Strengthen women's economic empowerment (WEE) through access to assets, credit, and markets
4. Increase women's leadership and political participation at national and county levels
5. Enhance access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
6. Invest in care economy infrastructure to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work
7. Bridge the digital gender divide by expanding women's access to technology and STEM
8. Advance climate justice and women's participation in environmental governance
9. Promote gender-responsive budgeting and financing for gender equality
10. Strengthen data systems and accountability for gender equality
11. Support gender-responsive education and skills development for girls and young women
12. Promote inclusion and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities in all sectors.

practices, the project broadened representation to include women with disabilities, youth, and other special interest groups, thus strengthening the inclusivity of Kenya's political system.

Nevertheless, two persistent gaps emerged. First, campaign financing remains a formidable barrier for women candidates. Although several county governments have institutionalized gender-responsive budgeting, these allocations primarily fund social and development priorities and do not extend to direct political campaign support. As a result, women aspirants continued to face significant financial disadvantages during party primaries and elections. The absence of a clear regulatory framework for campaign financing further compounded this challenge, leaving female candidates unable to mobilize sufficient resources to match their male counterparts in resource-intensive political contests. One participant in a FGD in Kericho had the following to say about this.

> *"We had the skills and networks, but without money for nomination fees and logistics, many of us could not sustain campaigns."- FGD, Woman Aspirant, Kericho*

Second, the project only partially addressed the rising challenge of technology-facilitated GBV (TFGBV). Women aspirants in 2022 reported harassment, doxxing, and online threats that discouraged digital campaigning, yet structured engagement with political parties, law enforcement, and technology platforms to mitigate TFGBV was limited. Addressing these gaps will be crucial for sustaining gains and ensuring safer, more equitable participation in future elections.

## QUESTION 3: TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THE PROJECT'S PRIORITIES STILL VALID IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TARGETED COUNTIES?

*Finding 3: The evaluation found that the project's priorities remained highly valid across the targeted counties, as the structural, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers identified during design continued to constrain women's political participation. However, emerging needs, particularly the rise of technology-facilitated GBV required stronger adaptation to evolving contexts.*

In pastoralist counties such as Samburu and Kajiado, patriarchal exclusion persisted in the form of community gatekeeping and restrictive cultural norms. In Samburu, elders and clan leaders continued to determine candidacy, often excluding women from political competition. As one female aspirant explained:

> *'Here, nothing moves without the elders' blessing. Even if you are qualified, without their support your name will not even be considered.'- (FGD, Woman Aspirant, Samburu, 2023)*

In Kajiado, entrenched traditions around marriage, inheritance, and leadership roles constrained women's participation. These dynamics confirmed the continued relevance of programme investments in community dialogues, male champion engagement, and norm-change initiatives. They also validated mentorship and confidence-building for women aspirants who often faced resistance not only in public but within their own households.

In Wajir, women's political participation was further constrained by clan-based exclusion. Clan elders controlled nomination processes and often sidelined women candidates. Some women's candidacies were tolerated only when they had clan sponsorship, underscoring the need for interventions that combine capacity-building with deliberate engagement of clan structures and traditional authorities.

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In Kisii and Homa Bay, financial exclusion and electoral violence remained the most significant obstacles. Women aspirants consistently pointed to the cost of politics as a significant barrier. Campaign financing remained dominated by male networks and patronage systems.

Electoral violence further compounded exclusion. Respondents noted that violence was often used to intimidate women aspirants and their supporters. Training of security actors and engagement with Court Users Committees were therefore viewed as highly relevant.

The evaluation also highlighted intersectional barriers, showing that subgroups of women experienced exclusion in distinct ways. Women with disabilities reported compounded forms of marginalization such as limited political party support and social stigma that undermined their participation as candidates. While some respondents referenced physical inaccessibility of campaign or polling venues, such constraints fall primarily under the mandate of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) rather than project implementers. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) Evaluation Report on the Participation of Special Interest Groups in the 2022 Elections is a study whose monitoring, data collection, and reporting, supported by UN Women and funded by multiple donors, documented these systemic challenges in detail.

Young women also reported being dismissed as inexperienced or lacking networks, while widows and single women in patriarchal counties faced stigma for not having male "backing." These intersectional experiences reinforced the continued need for targeted inclusion strategies.

While the project was designed to address structural and cultural barriers, the 2022 elections revealed the growing threat of TFGBV. Women aspirants and elected leaders reported harassment, threats, and defamatory content on social media platforms. This form of violence not only inflicted psychological harm but also discouraged active online campaigning, limiting women's visibility in an increasingly digital political landscape. Although the project intensified its focus on TFGBV towards the latter stages, interventions around digital safety were not fully developed or systematically integrated into leadership training or institutional responses.

## QUESTION 4: TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE DESIGN OF THE INTERVENTION RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF THE BENEFICIARIES?

*Main Finding 4: The design of the programme was broadly relevant to the needs of women leaders, aspirants, and communities. It addressed multiple, intersecting barriers by combining leadership capacity-building, institutional reform, and norm-change strategies. This integrated approach gave beneficiaries critical tools, visibility, and safer spaces to engage politically. Importantly, the project also took deliberate steps to reach marginalized groups, including through the Charter of Inclusion and ORPP-led policies developed in 2022 and 2023[25]. These frameworks institutionalized commitments to women with disabilities, youth, and other special interest groups within political parties. While this demonstrated clear attention to inclusion, the depth of engagement with some constituencies*

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[25] The Charter of Inclusion was launched in 2022 by the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), with technical support from UN Women, to promote gender equality and inclusion within political parties. It encouraged parties to adopt internal policies upholding the two-thirds gender principle and participation of youth and persons with disabilities. Building on this, the ORPP developed Gender and Inclusion Policy frameworks and model party guidelines (2022–2023) to institutionalize inclusion and monitor compliance with the Political Parties (Amendment) Act, 2022.

*was not always as extensive as with aspirants and elected leaders, suggesting an area for further strengthening in future programming.*

For women aspirants and elected leaders, the programme's design was highly responsive. Across Embu, Kericho, and Kisii, more than 1,200 women aspirants and leaders participated in capacity-building initiatives between 2022 and 2023. Trainings enhanced self-confidence, political literacy, and legislative engagement. Several MCAs noted that before the project they often struggled to table motions or meaningfully contribute to debates, but after targeted sessions they felt better equipped to influence county assemblies. One MCA from Kisii reflected,

> "Before the training, I would sit quietly in the assembly. Now I am able to stand, table a motion, and defend it with confidence."

Similarly, aspirants in Kericho emphasized that mentorship by senior women politicians provided both technical skills and solidarity.

At the community level, the programme design responded directly to entrenched socio-cultural barriers. More than 80 community dialogues were convened across counties like Kajiado, Samburu, and Kisii, engaging elders, religious leaders, and male champions. These dialogues tackled sensitive issues such as early marriage, menstrual health, and women's legitimacy as leaders. Respondents reported that such spaces began shifting perceptions in deeply patriarchal communities. A male elder in Kajiado admitted,

> "When we sat together and discussed openly, I realized that allowing women to lead does not threaten our culture, it strengthens it."

This responsiveness demonstrated that the programme's design was grounded in community realities and contributed to norm-change at grassroots level.

Safety and protection emerged as another central element of the programme's relevance. Electoral violence has consistently been a top concern for women candidates, and the project responded by strengthening referral pathways, supporting specialized GBV courts, and training more than 600 police officers, magistrates, and Court Users Committee members between 2022 and 2023[26]. Women aspirants in Homa Bay and Kisii reported that such interventions made them feel more secure when campaigning, while duty bearers became more alert to cases of violence against women in politics (VAWP). This integration of institutional and community-level protection mechanisms ensured that leadership training was not implemented in isolation from the safety needs of women in political spaces.

The programme also sought to address marginalized groups. The Charter of Inclusion, which was signed by several political parties in 2022 committed to advancing representation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities. ORPP's 2023 policy guidelines further required political parties to adopt inclusion frameworks, marking a significant institutional achievement.

However, implementation on the ground showed mixed results. Grassroots mobilizers at ward level, who play pivotal roles in shaping local political culture, reported limited opportunities to engage in ongoing planning, outreach, and follow-up activities due to resource and logistical constraints. While many were active during the pre-election period, sustaining their involvement afterward proved difficult. In several counties, participants noted that limited facilitation and transport allowances hindered consistent participation of ward-level women leaders, particularly those from

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[26] UN Women-Canada Annual Reports 2022 & 2023

remote or pastoralist areas. Others felt their role was confined to implementation rather than decision-making, expressing a desire to be part of programme design. In addition, young women, while included in policy frameworks, were often treated as secondary beneficiaries rather than as a distinct group requiring tailored mentorship pipelines. In Kericho and Samburu, youth training expressed keen interest in political engagement but noted few direct opportunities to benefit from training. Organizations of women with disabilities welcomed the policy strides but highlighted continued barriers such as inaccessible venues, stigma, and added economic burdens.

## QUESTION 5: WAS THE PROJECT DESIGN ARTICULATED IN A COHERENT STRUCTURE? IS THE DEFINITION OF GOAL, OUTCOMES, AND OUTPUTS CLEARLY ARTICULATED? IS THE THEORY OF CHANGE STILL VALID?

**Main Finding 5: The project design was logically and coherently structured, with clearly defined goals, outcomes, and outputs that directly contributed to the overall aim of enhancing women's participation in political leadership and decision-making. The Theory of Change (ToC) remained valid throughout implementation and provided a transparent and credible framework for linking activities to expected results. While the ToC effectively captured the three core pathways of change, namely, leadership capacity enhancement, institutional strengthening to address violence against women in politics (VAWP), and social norms transformation, it did not anticipate emerging dynamics such as digital safety and technology-facilitated violence against women in politics (TF-VAWP), which became significant during the 2022 elections. In addition, some weaknesses in monitoring tools limited the project's ability to capture more nuanced or grassroots-level changes.**

The project was built on a clear and coherent design, articulated through a results framework that linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to the overall goal of enhancing the safe and meaningful participation of women in political leadership and decision-making. Three intermediate outcomes underpinned this goal. The first focused on enhancing the leadership capacity, confidence, and visibility of women aspirants and elected officials. The second sought to strengthen the institutional capacity of justice, security, and political actors to prevent and respond to violence against women in politics (VAWP). The third aimed to reduce harmful social norms and stereotypes through community dialogues, male-champion engagement, and media-based strategies.

Each outcome was supported by concrete outputs such as mentorship and leadership training programmes, capacity-building for justice actors, and advocacy campaigns on the two-thirds gender principle. This articulation created a coherent results chain in which activities were logically linked to immediate outputs, intermediate outcomes, and the overall goal.

The project's Theory of Change (ToC) provided a solid conceptual framework that remained valid throughout implementation. It rested on the assumption that progress across the three pathways of leadership strengthening, institutional reform, and social norms change, would be mutually reinforcing and collectively yield systemic transformation. Evidence from interviews and focus group discussions confirmed this logic. For instance, capacity-building and visibility interventions like Ms. President were directly linked to women securing leadership and advisory positions at the county level. As one participant explained,

> "After the training and media exposure, people started taking us seriously. It opened doors to opportunities we never imagined." -Participant, Ms. President Season 2

Similarly, strengthening police and judicial capacity through gender-sensitive electoral security training and support for Court User Committees enhanced institutional responsiveness during the election period. The assumptions underpinning the ToC, such as the importance of political will, functional coordination among duty bearers, and adequate resourcing, remained largely valid. Stakeholders affirmed that these factors were critical in translating project activities into tangible results. However, the ToC only partially anticipated emerging dynamics in the digital

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space. The 2022 elections witnessed a surge in technology-facilitated violence against women in politics (TF-VAWP), including online harassment, cyberbullying, and circulation of manipulated images of women leaders. While the project addressed physical and community-based violence, it had limited provisions for digital safety training or partnerships with technology platforms, leaving women aspirants exposed to new forms of risk.

As one young leader in Embu noted,

> "We learned how to speak in public but not how to protect ourselves online. The abuse on social media was worse than at the rallies." - Young Woman Aspirant, Embu

In terms of measurement and monitoring, the project's indicators were well aligned to the results framework but too high-level to capture incremental or localized change. The monitoring system tracked outputs- such as the number of participants trained or dialogues conducted, more effectively than qualitative transformations like shifts in attitudes, confidence, or institutional behavior. This emphasis on quantitative reporting limited the evaluation of deeper social and behavioral outcomes, particularly those related to community perceptions and institutional culture.

## QUESTION 6: TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE PROJECT'S DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS INCLUDE A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS, SHARED VISION FOR DELIVERING RESULTS, STRATEGIES FOR JOINT DELIVERY, AND SHARING OF RISKS AMONG IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONS?

***Finding 6: The project fostered strong collaboration at the national level and demonstrated a clear shared vision among key partners, particularly around advancing the two-thirds gender principle, preventing VAWP, and strengthening women's leadership. At the county level, collaboration was more uneven, and the mechanisms for joint risk-sharing were weak, leaving implementing partners exposed when challenges such as delayed funding or political sensitivities arose.***

The project's management and coordination mechanisms were generally effective in producing expected results. Regular partner meetings and quarterly reviews supported adaptive management and harmonized reporting. Efficiency was strengthened through shared communication resources such as joint media campaigns, although complex fund-approval procedures occasionally delayed activity rollout during high-pressure periods like the 2022 elections.

At the national level, collaboration remained one of the project's strongest dimensions, exemplifying UN Women's coordination mandate in practice. The project effectively convened key institutions such as the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), the Council of Governors (CoG), and URAIA Trust to harmonize advocacy and policy initiatives around women's political participation. This joint approach ensured coherence in advancing the two-thirds gender principle, political party accountability, and gender-responsive governance.

The collaboration with the Council of Governors was particularly impactful through the co-development of the G7 Strategy, launched in 2023, in which the seven serving women governors pledged to increase the number of women governors to at least 24 by 2027. The initiative not only strengthened peer support among women leaders but also positioned county governments as champions of gender-responsive leadership.

Partnerships with the media were equally strategic. Beyond Ms. President Season Two, the project worked through UN Women's Communications Unit to engage national media houses such as the Nation Media Group and Standard Media Group, ensuring consistent coverage of women's leadership stories and project milestones. These collaborations amplified advocacy messages, expanded visibility, and normalized women's leadership narratives in mainstream political discourse.

At the same time, extending this collaboration to vernacular radio stations bridged the gap between national narratives and community-level audiences, ensuring the programme's resonance among rural constituencies.

At the county level, collaborative structures such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Working Groups and Court Users Committees provided essential platforms for collective action on preventing and responding to violence against women in politics (VAWP). In counties such as Kisii and Homa Bay, these mechanisms functioned effectively, enabling coordination among the police, judiciary, civil society, and health providers. Respondents in Kisii credited these forums with improving referral systems and strengthening survivor-centered approaches.

Beyond these mechanisms, the project also fostered strong partnerships with county governments and local media in advancing the gender policy component. Counties such as Embu stand out as good practice examples where collaboration between UN Women, the county government, and local partners led to the successful development and adoption of the County Gender Policy. The process was inclusive and participatory, supported by additional co-funding from a local NGO that enabled extensive public consultations.

The partnership also extended to county-level media, which played a central role in sustaining visibility and amplifying project achievements. In Embu, local radio and print outlets continue to profile women leaders and highlight gender policy milestones, keeping the conversation alive beyond the project's life span.

However, collaboration remained uneven across counties. In more remote or patriarchal settings such as Samburu and Wajir, coordination was less consistent, and some grassroots Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) felt that larger, Nairobi-based partners overshadowed their voices.

The evaluation also found that while partners generally shared a vision for advancing women's political participation, risk-sharing mechanisms were weak. Implementing partners highlighted that delays in fund disbursement created significant operational and reputational risks, particularly during politically sensitive periods such as the 2022 elections. Local partners sometimes had to explain delays to community beneficiaries or adjust activity schedules. These delays were rarely due to conflicts or major disruptions but rather stemmed from internal processing systems and global transitions. As one UN Women staff member explained,

> "Delays largely happened due to our own internal processing policies… just small delays, maybe in disbursing funds to our CSO partners. For example, if the money was supposed to be disbursed in March, it might come in April. So, nothing major that could interfere with the trajectory of implementation.

However, these "small delays" translated into significant pressures for implementing partners on the ground. One partner described how training schedules in Kisii had to be rushed:

> "The only challenge was the timing of the funds. For example, the one for Kisii training came around June and we had to quickly do the training in July, while the elections were in August. The timing was a challenge… we hurriedly did the training, I wouldn't say we didn't do it, but we felt like we needed more time because when we train a CUC, we

The transition from the Atlas financial system to the new Quantum ERP further exacerbated the situation in 2023. As another respondent observed, *"It was a huge transition… it took a bit of time for the financial data to be transferred to the new system, and that affected a lot of the partner disbursements. It affected all the partners; it affected all the projects."* While UN Women responded by shifting to an 80% upfront disbursement policy in 2024, which eased some of the bottlenecks, the earlier delays meant that risks were still disproportionately shouldered by local partners with less financial resilience. This dynamic undermined the principle of joint delivery and risk-sharing that the project sought to promote.

Despite these challenges, there was broad agreement among partners that the programme had cultivated a common agenda and strengthened networks across state and non-state actors. The shared vision was evident in the way institutions rallied around core priorities such as advancing the two-thirds gender principle, strengthening GBV response mechanisms, and amplifying women's leadership through media visibility. However, the unevenness of county-level collaboration and the lack of structured mechanisms for managing risks have exposed vulnerabilities in the programme's implementation approach.

## 3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

**THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES WERE ACHIEVED OR ARE EXPECTED/LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED.**

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The project made considerable progress toward achieving its stated objectives and outcomes, particularly in enhancing the leadership capacity of women aspirants and elected officials, strengthening institutional mechanisms to respond to violence against women in politics (VAWP), and shifting harmful social norms through innovative approaches such as *Ms. President Season Two* and community dialogues. Concrete results were recorded, including women contestants from *Ms. President* securing political or advisory roles, the establishment of specialized SGBV courts, and significant improvements in police preparedness for gender-sensitive electoral security. UN Women's role was central in convening diverse actors, embedding gender priorities into electoral and governance frameworks, and linking national advocacy to county-level action. Despite these achievements, systemic obstacles such as entrenched patriarchy, financial exclusion, party resistance to the two-thirds gender rule, and the rising challenge of online harassment limited full realization of the project's ambitions. Beneficiaries expressed broad satisfaction with the results, though they highlighted gaps in outreach to grassroots women, young women, and women with disabilities. Monitoring systems were in place but often output-oriented, capturing quantitative achievements while struggling to measure deeper structural and normative shifts.

Performance against indicators was notably strong, confirming that the project met or exceeded expectations across nearly all result areas. According to the Final Results Matrix (2024), 24 out of 25 indicators were either achieved or surpassed, reflecting consistent progress across all three intermediate outcomes. Outcome 1100 on women's leadership capacity recorded the most significant gains, with more than 1,200 women aspirants and leaders trained and mentored, while Outcome 1200 on institutional strengthening exceeded targets through the establishment of 12 Gender Justice Courts and training of over 1,200 duty bearers. Outcome 1300 on norm change also surpassed expectations, with community dialogues and media interventions such as *Ms. President* and *Filamu Dada* reaching millions nationwide[27]. These achievements underscore the project's effectiveness in translating its Theory of Change into tangible, measurable results within one electoral cycle.

QUESTION 1: HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS THE PROJECT IN TERMS OF THE PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS, OUTPUTS, AND OUTCOMES? WHAT ARE THE RESULTS ACHIEVED? HOW DID UN WOMEN CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THESE?

*Main Finding 1: The project was highly successful in producing tangible results across the ultimate outcome and its three intermediate outcomes. The project surpassed 24 of 25 performance indicators (96 percent) across all levels of its results framework. This confirms the effectiveness of the programme's Theory of Change, which posited that if (a) women acquired leadership skills, confidence, and visibility; and if (b) institutions became safer and more gender-responsive; and if (c) social norms and media narratives shifted in favour of women's leadership, then women's participation and representation in political decision-making would increase. Evidence from interviews and project documents shows that these three causal pathways, namely empowerment, protection, and norm change, worked together to create an enabling environment for women's political participation across the seven project counties of Homa Bay, Kericho, Kisii, Embu, Samburu, Kajiado, and Wajir, with extended*

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[27] Results Matrix of the UN Women-Final Canada Report

*coverage in Migori, Machakos, and Kilifi during the 2022 elections. Remaining gaps, which were mainly linked to patriarchal party practices, financial exclusion, and technology-facilitated violence, reflect external systemic constraints rather than weaknesses in the project's internal logic.*

## ULTIMATE OUTCOME (1000): INCREASED PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

The main expected result of the project was to increase women's participation and representation in political leadership and decision-making. This outcome formed the apex of the project's Theory of Change (ToC), which posited that visible, better-prepared women leaders, supported by safer, more inclusive institutions and transformed social norms, would gradually lead to higher representation of women across elective and appointive offices. The underlying assumption was that leadership skills, confidence, and visibility are necessary but insufficient on their own unless reinforced by institutional accountability and public acceptance of women's political legitimacy. By operationalizing these pathways simultaneously, the project aimed to address the systemic exclusion of women from governance holistically and sustainably.

Quantitative evidence from the results framework confirms partial realization of this long-term pathway. The project had a target of 14 elected women leaders across the seven focus counties of Homa Bay, Kericho, Kisii, Embu, Samburu, Kajiado, and Wajir, but achieved seven elected women leaders (50 percent) by the end of the 2022 electoral cycle[28]. For the first time, two women were elected governors in Embu and Homa Bay counties, marking a historic milestone since no woman had ever held these positions in those counties. This achievement reflects both the increased visibility of women leaders and the gradual acceptance of women in high-level executive roles. However, representation outcomes were uneven across levels. No woman was elected senator in any of the project counties, mirroring the outcomes of the 2013 and 2017 elections. At the parliamentary level, only four women were elected as Members of Parliament, a figure that has remained stagnant since 2017[29]. Furthermore, some counties recorded declines: Homa Bay's women MPs decreased from four to three, and Kajiado, which had one woman MP in 2017, elected none in 2022. The most significant losses were observed in the election of Members of County Assembly (MCAs), where the number of elected women fell from 14 in 2017 (two per county) to only one in 2022 (in Wajir County)[30].

These mixed outcomes highlight both the progress and persistent structural barriers that the ToC anticipated. While visible, skilled, and confident women aspirants did emerge through the project's interventions, particularly through mentorship, capacity building, and media visibility, the political opportunity structure in many counties remained constrained by patriarchal gatekeeping within political parties, limited access to campaign financing, and cultural biases reinforced by clan-based endorsement systems. Nevertheless, progress at the national level signals movement in the right direction: the number of women governors increased from three to seven, MPs from 23 to 29, and senators from 18 to 23, showing that the enabling environment for women's leadership in Kenya is gradually improving.

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[28] https://www.iebc.or.ke/election/?election-results#

[29] Ibid 20

[30] Ibid 20

UN Women's contribution to this progress was multifaceted as it cut across its normative, coordination, and operational mandates. Normatively, UN Women sustained national advocacy on the two-thirds gender rule through partnerships with the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), and the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC). This advocacy ensured that gender equality remained central to legislative reform and political discourse. In its coordination role, UN Women partnered with the Council of Governors to launch the G7 Strategy, through which all seven sitting women governors committed to championing women's political participation and mentoring emerging female leaders with the goal of increasing women governors from seven to twenty-four by 2027[31]. Operationally, the organization leveraged mass media initiatives such as Ms. President Season Two and Filamu Dada to enhance women's visibility and public legitimacy. These interventions not only inspired future aspirants but also shifted societal attitudes toward women's leadership. At the subnational level, UN Women provided technical support to counties such as Embu, Kericho, and Kajiado by assisting them to develop and adopt gender policies and integrate women's leadership priorities into their County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs).

From an evaluative standpoint, the partial attainment of the ultimate outcome within a single election cycle validates the soundness of the project's Theory of Change. The evidence demonstrates that the combined strategies of individual empowerment, institutional reform, and social norm transformation effectively interact to create an enabling environment for women's participation, even in contexts where deeply entrenched patriarchal structures persist. The steady rise in women's representation at the national level and the symbolic breakthroughs in counties such as Embu and Homa Bay are strong indicators that these pathways are working, albeit gradually.

However, the stagnation or decline in women's representation in some counties underscores that visibility and training must be complemented by structural reforms, particularly in campaign financing and political party accountability. Access to financial resources remains one of the most significant barriers to women's political participation, as aspirants continue to be disadvantaged by the absence of a regulated framework for equitable campaign funding. Furthermore, emerging threats such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) have introduced new risks that require targeted digital safety interventions to protect women leaders in online political spaces.

In light of these findings, continued investment in multi-level interventions remains essential. Future programming should prioritize early-cycle leadership preparation, targeted financial inclusion initiatives for women aspirants, and digital safety capacity-building to address the evolving forms of political exclusion. Additionally, UN Women and its partners should support policy advocacy for the regulation of campaign financing and institutional enforcement of gender quotas within political parties in order to ensure that the progress achieved under this project becomes both scalable and sustainable.

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 1100: WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT

The intermediate outcome sought to enhance the capacity of targeted women to participate effectively in politics and decision-making processes, thereby strengthening the leadership pipeline at both national and county levels. This pathway represented the first causal link in the project's Theory of Change, which posited that empowering women through leadership training, mentorship, and visibility would equip them with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to contest elections, participate in legislative processes, and influence governance outcomes.

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[31] https://cog.go.ke/kenyas-g7-delivering-on-the-devolution-promise/

The outcome was supported by six indicators across its immediate and output levels, all of which were achieved or surpassed, as confirmed in the final results matrix. A total of 323 women leaders and aspirants were trained and mentored, exceeding the target of 300, while 73 percent of participants reported increased leadership capacity and confidence, surpassing the target of 60 percent. Furthermore, 70 women aspirants contested elections in 2022, exceeding the target of 50, and several were subsequently appointed to advisory and senior positions within county and national institutions[32]. These figures provide quantitative confirmation that the leadership-enhancement pathway effectively functioned as intended.

Qualitative data from interviews and field validation further illustrate how capacity-building translated into participation and influence. Women Members of County Assembly (MCAs) in Embu, Kericho, and Kisii reported improved confidence, procedural literacy, and engagement in legislative debates. They noted that the training and mentorship they received enabled them to table motions, participate meaningfully in budget processes, and scrutinize executive policies with greater skill and assertiveness. In Embu County, trained MCAs actively contributed to the formulation of the County Gender Policy, while in Kericho, women legislators collaborated with male colleagues to advocate for gender-responsive budgeting guidelines. These examples underscore that the project not only built individual confidence but also fostered substantive participation in law- and policy-making, a core marker of progress toward gender-equitable governance.

At the national level, UN Women's programming created visible pathways for women's participation through flagship initiatives such as Ms. President Season Two and Filamu Dada. *Ms. President* provided a structured ten-week leadership training and public competition for 51 women contestants drawn from diverse ethnic, religious, and professional backgrounds. The programme combined intensive mentorship, public-speaking coaching, and policy debates broadcast on national television, reaching over 20 million viewers nationwide. This visibility intervention expanded the pipeline of women leaders and altered public perceptions about women's ability to lead. Notably, one contestant secured a nomination to the Kisii County Assembly, while others went on to serve as Chief Officer in Uasin Gishu and Advisor on Devolution in Isiolo, and ten contestants have declared their intention to vie in the 2027 elections. This confirms the sustainability of outcomes beyond the project life.

Complementing this, Filamu Dada, a creative documentary initiative, trained emerging female filmmakers and produced seven short films profiling women leaders such as Governors Gladys Wanga and Cecily Mbarire. These films, screened across counties and broadcast nationally, provided a new form of advocacy by humanizing women's leadership journeys and showcasing their competence, integrity, and community impact. They served both as capacity-building tools and as advocacy assets, reinforcing the project's theory that visibility is a crucial component of empowerment. Together, *Ms. President* and *Filamu Dada* illustrate how the project operationalized the ToC's assumption that women's empowerment must integrate both skills acquisition and public legitimacy to translate into durable political participation.

UN Women's normative, coordination, and operational roles were again central to these achievements. Normatively, the organization supported policy advocacy through KEWOPA and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) to institutionalize gender mainstreaming within political processes. Through its coordination role, it linked national and county actors, parliamentarians, media organizations, civil society partners, and community champions, thus ensuring that leadership interventions were coherent and mutually reinforcing. Operationally, UN Women worked closely with implementing partners, including URAIA Trust and Media Focus on Africa, to deliver leadership training, mentorship, and media components that produced these measurable results.

The outcomes also reflect a notable qualitative shift in how women view their agency within political spaces. Interviews with aspirants and elected women across the project counties consistently revealed greater self-efficacy, strategic awareness, and resilience. As one MCA from Kericho explained,

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[32] UN Women- Canada Annual Report 2023

> "Before the training, I would hesitate to speak in the assembly. Now I contribute to debates, question allocations, and even chair a committee."

Such testimonials confirm that the project not only enhanced technical skills but also transformed self-perception and social legitimacy, reinforcing the ToC's assumption that empowerment is both a psychological and institutional process.

While the project has successfully strengthened women's leadership capacities, sustaining and scaling these gains will require deeper institutional anchoring. Future programmes should focus on embedding leadership training within political party structures, ensuring that internal party processes become inclusive spaces for women's advancement. Moreover, the mentorship model pioneered through *Ms. President* could be formalized into a national Women's Leadership Fellowship Programme, implemented jointly with KEWOPA and county assemblies to institutionalize peer-to-peer learning and mentorship. Finally, increased investment in digital skills and campaign financing literacy will be essential to ensure that women leaders remain competitive and resilient in the evolving political and media landscape.

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 1200: STRENGTHENED CAPACITIES OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS (VAWP)

This outcome focused on enhancing institutional and organizational capacity to prevent, respond to, and ultimately reduce violence against women in politics (VAWP). Within the project's Theory of Change, this pathway was premised on the understanding that safe political participation requires robust, gender-responsive institutions capable of enforcing protection, prosecuting offenders, and providing survivor-centred support services. By working simultaneously with duty bearers (such as security, judicial, and oversight institutions) and rights holders (survivors, aspirants, and Women's Rights Organizations), the project aimed to strengthen Kenya's systemic response to both physical and technology-facilitated forms of electoral and political violence.

The outcome was tracked through eight indicators spanning intermediate, immediate, and output levels, all of which were achieved or surpassed, according to the Final Results Matrix (2024). Quantitatively, the project reached over 1,200 justice and security officers, including 606 police officers (288 women, 318 men), 87 judicial officers, and 56 members of Court Users Committees (CUCs), against a target of 800[33]. These actors were trained in gender-sensitive electoral security, survivor-centred justice, and violence-prevention protocols. The project also facilitated the establishment of 12 specialized Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Courts [34] , which were later institutionalized as Gender Justice Courts, embedding survivor-focused jurisprudence within the judiciary. At the same time, six County GBV Working Groups and multi-sectoral coordination committees were strengthened to align community-level prevention and referral mechanisms with national policy frameworks.

Duty bearers consistently highlighted the value of these capacity-building interventions. Officers from the National Police Service (NPS), the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), and the Judiciary reported that the trainings not only improved coordination among agencies but also changed internal attitudes toward cases of political and gender-based violence. A senior officer from Kisii reflected,

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[33] Final Results Matrix (2024

[34] https://judiciary.go.ke/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-sgbv-courts/

> "Before the training, we saw these cases as private matters. Now, we understand that election-related threats to women are a security issue that must be prevented and prosecuted."

Similar feedback was echoed by judicial actors who participated in developing referral pathways under the CUC framework. In Homa Bay, the CUC introduced a structured referral register to track cases from reporting to prosecution, an innovation attributed directly to UN Women's technical support and monitoring templates.

The project also supported advocacy and institutional collaboration through WROs, notably IAWJ, FIDA, and URAIA Trust, which worked jointly with state institutions to enhance prevention and response systems. Through these partnerships, GBV status reports were produced and disseminated nationally, informing policy discussions and shaping the rollout of Gender Justice Courts. These reports have become critical accountability tools, providing evidence of gaps in prosecution and survivor support that inform future interventions.

From the survivors' perspective, the project's interventions improved access to justice and protection, though national data underscore the scale of the challenge. According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2022, approximately 34 percent of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence, and 13 percent have experienced sexual violence[35]. Within political spaces, such violence is compounded by stigma, fear of reprisals, and limited legal recourse. The project's contribution, through institutional strengthening, awareness creation, and survivor referral systems, thus addressed a critical gap in Kenya's gender equality and governance landscape. In counties like Kisii, Embu, and Homa Bay, survivors reported greater trust in reporting mechanisms, citing improved responsiveness by local police and court officers. A Court Users Committee member in Embu noted,

> "We have seen survivors coming forward because they know the court and police will now listen. Before, these cases never reached the system."

At the community level, WROs and civil society partners played an essential bridging role between survivors and institutions. They conducted community dialogues to deconstruct stigma around political violence and engaged male champions to advocate against the normalization of violence targeting women candidates. These grassroots structures, including County GBV Working Groups, became vital entry points for early warning and prevention during the 2022 elections, particularly in hotspot areas such as Migori and Kilifi, where tensions were high. The combination of community-level vigilance and institutional responsiveness contributed to a safer electoral environment relative to previous election cycles.

Moreover, the project's alignment with Kenya's national frameworks, notably the National Policy on Gender and Development (2019) and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (KNAP III, 2020–2024), ensured that these interventions were not isolated but embedded within existing institutional mandates. This normative alignment increased the likelihood of sustainability, as duty bearers are now equipped with both the technical capacity and the legal basis to continue implementing survivor-centered approaches beyond the project's duration.

Nevertheless, persistent challenges remain. Despite significant improvements in institutional capacity, resource constraints and personnel turnover continue to limit consistency in service delivery, particularly in remote or fragile counties. In addition, while the project successfully strengthened responses to physical and electoral violence, technology-facilitated violence against women (TFVAW) emerged as a new and escalating risk. Online harassment,

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[35] https://www.knbs.or.ke/reports/kdhs-2022/

defamation, and cyberbullying targeting women aspirants were not systematically addressed within the existing training modules, leaving a critical gap in the protective framework.

Considering these findings, the outcome demonstrates strong achievement of intended results and significant contributions to systemic strengthening. The integration of WROs into prevention and response mechanisms, coupled with institutionalization of Gender Justice Courts, represents a transformative shift toward an ecosystem approach to combating VAWP.

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 1300: REDUCED NEGATIVE SOCIAL NORMS THAT EXCLUDE WOMEN FROM POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING

This outcome aimed to transform entrenched patriarchal norms, attitudes, and social practices that systematically exclude women from political participation and leadership. Within the project's Theory of Change, it represented the social transformation pathway, thus complementing the institutional and leadership capacity components by targeting the underlying cultural and perceptual barriers that constrain women's agency. The ToC assumed that sustainable gender equality in political participation requires more than training and legal reform; it demands changing public perceptions, reshaping social expectations, and normalizing women's leadership as part of democratic life.

The project achieved remarkable progress under this outcome. Out of 13 indicators, 12 were surpassed and one was fully achieved, reflecting both the scale and depth of its impact in reshaping social norms. The interventions combined mass media campaigns, community dialogues, and strategic engagement with male champions and religious leaders, thereby creating an integrated communication ecosystem that reached households, communities, and institutions simultaneously.

One of the most significant drivers of change was the project's innovative use of media as a vehicle for norm transformation. The Ms. President Season Two television show reached an estimated 20 million viewers nationwide, positioning women as credible, competent, and visionary leaders[36]. Beyond entertainment, the show served as an educational and advocacy tool, challenging stereotypes that leadership is a male domain. The contestants' diversity, spanning ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, further reinforced the message that women from all walks of life can lead. Follow-up surveys conducted by Media Focus on Africa (MFA) in 2023 confirmed that over 70 percent of viewers reported a more positive perception of women leaders after watching the programme. This broad shift in perception underscores the show's transformative power as a public education platform.

Complementing Ms. President was the Filamu Dada documentary series, which profiled prominent women leaders including Governors Gladys Wanga and Cecily Mbarire. By humanizing their leadership journeys and portraying the challenges and triumphs of women in power, these films provided relatable narratives that bridged the gap between elite leadership and everyday experiences. They were screened in county forums, schools, and public gatherings, helping young women and men to visualize female leadership as both legitimate and attainable. As one viewer in Kisii observed during a community screening,

> "Before, we thought politics was too dirty for women. Seeing these leaders talk about their work changed that belief."

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[36] UN Women-Canada Final Donor Report

Beyond national media, the project recognized that sustainable norm change begins within communities. It therefore leveraged local and vernacular radio stations to reach rural populations, especially in counties such as Samburu, Kajiado, and Wajir, where literacy levels are lower and traditional beliefs more deeply entrenched. Radio programmes hosted interactive talk shows, debates, and call-in segments featuring women leaders, male champions, and youth. These broadcasts created safe spaces for communities to discuss sensitive issues such as early marriage, menstruation, and women's right to public leadership, topics that are often considered taboo. Monitoring data shows that over 90 local radio broadcasts were produced, surpassing the original target of 50, and that listeners' engagement (measured through call-ins and audience feedback) doubled between 2022 and 2023[37]. This confirms that localized, language-sensitive media interventions were among the most cost-effective and impactful components of the programme.

The male champions' strategy was another critical factor in addressing patriarchal attitudes. By engaging respected elders, religious leaders, and male youth, the project disrupted traditional narratives from within the community. Male champions facilitated dialogues that reframed women's leadership as complementary, not oppositional, to men's roles. In Samburu, for example, male elders began to publicly endorse women's participation in county forums, signaling a significant cultural shift. As one male champion in Kajiado explained,

> "When men speak to other men about the importance of supporting women, it opens doors that would otherwise remain closed."

This approach reflected a deep understanding of social power dynamics and exemplified adaptive, context-responsive programming.

Evidence from community dialogues further indicates that the project contributed to greater acceptance of women's political roles and a reduction in overt discriminatory rhetoric. In Kajiado and Kisii, participants reported changes in household voting behavior, with more women exercising independent choice rather than following spousal or clan instructions. One woman in Kajiado recalled,

> "Before the dialogues, my husband kept my ID card during elections. After the training, I told him I have my own voice. Now I vote for the person I believe in."

Such shifts, though subtle, reflect profound social transformation in agency and self-perception.

These norm-change interventions also reinforced the other components of the Theory of Change. By creating a more enabling social environment, they increased the legitimacy of women aspirants, strengthened local acceptance of women's public roles, and indirectly supported the leadership and VAWP outcomes. County partners reported that following repeated community engagements, hostility toward women candidates reduced during the 2022 elections, particularly in counties such as Homa Bay and Kericho, where media coverage and male-champion activities were most consistent.

Despite these achievements, the evaluation identified emerging challenges that warrant attention. First, norm change remains uneven, particularly in pastoral and conservative counties like Wajir and Samburu, where patriarchal norms are deeply embedded in clan and religious structures. Second, while male champions were effective advocates, sustaining their engagement beyond the project period will require institutional support, either through integration into county gender offices or local peace committees. Third, although digital media was used

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[37] UN Women-Canada Annual Reports 2022 &2023

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strategically, online spaces remain unregulated arenas of gender-based hate speech and disinformation, which can undo progress achieved through traditional media channels.

**Main Finding 2**: **The project achieved most of its intended results because of strong partnerships, donor flexibility, and an innovative, multi-level design that effectively linked national advocacy with grassroots engagement. These enablers validated the Theory of Change (ToC), confirming that when women's capacities, institutional accountability, and community attitudes are addressed simultaneously, results reinforce one another. However, systemic barriers, particularly resistance to the two-thirds gender principle, patriarchal political party and clan structures, rising online harassment, and operational funding delays, limited the depth and pace of transformative change.**

Strong partnerships were the most decisive enabler. Collaboration with KEWOPA, ORPP, and NGEC gave legitimacy to advocacy on women's representation, while alliances with URAIA Trust and county-level actors such as Court Users Committees (CUCs) and GBV Working Groups improved service coordination and survivor protection. These partnerships connected the national policy space with local implementation mechanisms, ensuring coherence across the three ToC pathways. Media alliances with Media Focus on Africa (MFA) and vernacular radio stations further amplified visibility; MS. PRESIDENT SEASON TWO became a national conversation starter on women's leadership and contributed directly to improved attitudes and legitimacy for women aspirants.

Flexibility from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) was another key success factor. When electoral tensions escalated in 2022, GAC's approval to extend coverage to hotspot counties, Migori, Kilifi, and Machakos, allowed rapid deployment of preventive and protective interventions. This responsiveness enhanced the project's relevance and trust with partners. As one partner noted,

> "When violence flared in Migori, we were able to act quickly because the donor understood the urgency."

The project's integrated design, connecting advocacy, leadership development, and norm change, was its greatest comparative advantage. National advocacy on gender quotas was reinforced by community dialogues with elders and male champions in Kajiado and Samburu, creating feedback loops between top-down and bottom-up change. This coherence across scales explains the programme's strong performance on most indicators and partially realized ToC outcome of more women occupying leadership positions.

Nonetheless, persistent structural and operational barriers slowed momentum. Political resistance to gender quotas remained entrenched; legislative bills stalled in Parliament, and political parties continued to rely on opaque nomination systems that excluded women. In pastoral counties such as Wajir and Samburu, clan endorsement remained the gatekeeper of candidacy "It doesn't matter how qualified you are; without your clan, you can't run," said one woman aspirant in Wajir. These cultural and institutional constraints meant that training and visibility gains did not always translate into electoral wins.

The surge of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) during the 2022 elections introduced an unanticipated risk. Online harassment, defamation, and cyber-bullying undermined women's confidence to campaign digitally, an emerging arena the project had not sufficiently anticipated. Addressing this new frontier of violence will require dedicated digital safety programming and collaboration with technology regulators.

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Finally, bureaucratic funding procedures reduced operational agility. Quarterly disbursement and liquidation requirements led to delays in the delivery of activities during the election period. Smaller WROs lacked liquidity to pre-finance community activities. As one implementer in Kericho put it, "Communities don't understand financial procedures, when you postpone events, they think you've abandoned them.

## QUESTION 3: TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE BENEFICIARIES BEEN SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS? TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE CAPACITIES OF RELEVANT DUTY-BEARERS AND RIGHTS-HOLDERS BEEN STRENGTHENED?

***Main Finding 3: Beneficiaries expressed high levels of satisfaction with the project's capacity-building and visibility interventions, particularly leadership training, mentorship, and community dialogues. Duty-bearers such as police officers and Court Users Committees also reported strengthened capacity to prevent and respond to electoral violence and gender-based violence. However, inclusivity gaps persisted, as women with disabilities and young grassroots mobilizers were not systematically integrated into programming.***

Across the counties, women leaders and aspirants consistently valued the programme's investment in leadership training and mentorship. Women MCAs in Embu and Kericho reported improved confidence and greater procedural literacy in legislative debates. This enabled them to table motions, contribute to budget discussions, and navigate county assembly rules more effectively. Aspirants from Kisii and Homa Bay described the mentorship component as transformative, noting that exposure to experienced women politicians gave them both practical campaign skills and a renewed sense of resilience in navigating male-dominated political spaces. The satisfaction derived from these interventions was reflected in testimonies that women now felt "ready to run" in future elections, demonstrating a lasting impact on their confidence and preparedness. As one respondent from Wajir observed, the programme's trainings created visible change:

> "The capacity and even the confidence of some of these women leaders, it was actually low, and their performance and participation at the county assembly was not held much. But after our training, they were able to stand up… for instance in Wajir County, they rejected a finance bill until it was itemized. That was a win for us

Community members also expressed satisfaction with the project's dialogue and norm-change interventions. In Kajiado, women noted that dialogues encouraged them to claim greater political agency, including the right to vote independently, challenging long-standing traditions where husbands held and controlled women's ID cards. One participant recalled,

> "In our culture, the husband would carry the ID card of the mother during voting. We were empowering women that they should stand and have a voice… through that training, so many women were empowered. At least they gained the power to vote as individuals, as Kenyans, and not as families."

Respondents credited these forums with shifting attitudes among male elders and religious leaders, gradually creating more enabling environments for women's participation. In Samburu, where cultural resistance has historically been strong, participants acknowledged that while change was slow, the dialogues helped open conversations that were previously taboo, such as menstruation and early marriage, thereby planting the seeds for long-term cultural transformation. As one dialogue facilitator reflected, getting men to even sit together with women

and discuss these issues was a milestone in itself, and conversations about menstruation became possible where they had once been seen as "bad omens."

Duty-bearers also reported tangible improvements in capacity and responsiveness. Police officers trained in gender-sensitive electoral security demonstrated greater awareness of the risks women aspirants face and reported being more proactive in protecting women during campaigns. Court Users Committees in Kisii and Homa Bay highlighted how the programme enhanced coordination between justice actors, health providers, and civil society in handling cases of GBV, resulting in more effective referral pathways. The establishment and upgrading of SGBV courts into Gender Justice Courts was widely perceived as a structural gain that would continue to benefit survivors of violence well beyond the life of the project.

Despite these successes, inclusivity gaps reduced the extent to which satisfaction was universal. Organizations of women with disabilities reported that they were not consistently consulted or included in project activities, and that interventions were not tailored to address their unique barriers such as physical inaccessibility, stigma, and lack of assistive technologies. Young women, particularly grassroots mobilizers operating outside formal political structures, also felt excluded from decision-making spaces. In Kericho, youth respondents noted that while they were interested in political engagement, opportunities to access leadership training were limited. These gaps highlight that while direct beneficiaries expressed high satisfaction, the project's reach was uneven, and the benefits did not extend equally to all constituencies of women.

## QUESTION 4: DID THE PROJECT HAVE EFFECTIVE MONITORING MECHANISMS IN PLACE TO MEASURE PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS?

*Main Finding 4: The project had a functioning monitoring and reporting system that was effective in tracking activities and outputs but was less capable of measuring deeper outcomes, transformative change, and inclusivity. While monitoring tools captured quantitative achievements such as training numbers, community dialogues, and media products, they did not systematically document attitudinal change, institutional reforms, or the long-term empowerment trajectories of women beneficiaries.*

The monitoring system consistently recorded quantitative outputs. Reports provided clear data on the number of women trained, mentorship sessions held, community dialogues convened, and media broadcasts produced. For example, during the 2022 elections, media monitoring confirmed that women candidates were underrepresented in news coverage, which validated the rationale for interventions such as newsroom training and the production of *Ms. President Season Two*. Similarly, the system captured the number of police officers trained in gender-sensitive electoral security and the establishment of specialized GBV courts thus ensuring accountability for activity delivery.

However, the monitoring frameworks did not adequately capture qualitative dimensions of change. Attitudinal shifts within households, the influence of male champions in challenging harmful norms, and changes in political party nomination practices were not systematically tracked. As a result, the evidence base was strong in demonstrating "what was done" but weaker in showing "what changed" as a result. For instance, while reports recorded the number of dialogues in Kajiado and Samburu, they did not provide consistent data on whether these engagements translated into greater acceptance of women leaders or measurable reductions in patriarchal gatekeeping.

A further limitation was the lack of systematic disaggregation of monitoring data. Indicators were not consistently broken down by age, disability status, rural/urban location, or socio-economic background. This omission made it difficult to assess whether the programme effectively reached marginalized groups such as young women, women

with disabilities, or grassroots mobilizers. For example, while MCAs and aspirants in Embu and Kericho benefitted from leadership training, monitoring data did not reveal whether youth or women with disabilities were included, nor did it assess the quality of their participation. This gap reflects a broader challenge in many governance programmes, where inclusivity is emphasized at the design stage but not embedded in monitoring systems.

Another challenge was the system's reliance on quantitative indicators without complementary qualitative tools. While counting outputs provided evidence of scale, it did not capture stories of transformation, empowerment, or resilience. Beneficiaries themselves reported feeling better prepared and more confident, but these outcomes were rarely documented in official monitoring frameworks. Nor was there systematic follow-up to track whether trained women went on to contest for office, whether survivors accessed GBV courts effectively, or whether county assemblies institutionalized gender-responsive practices. This limited the programme's ability to demonstrate impact beyond immediate outputs.

## QUESTION 5: DID THE PROJECT'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, MANAGERIAL SUPPORT, AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT?

***Main Finding 5: The project benefitted from strong organizational structures and effective coordination mechanisms at the national level, which enabled collective advocacy and harmonized responses across multiple actors.***

At the national level, UN Women's Senior Management Team (SMT) comprised of the Country Representative, Deputy Country Representative and Operations Manage provided overall oversight and strategic leadership for project implementation. Their engagement not only ensured that activities aligned with national priorities but also gave the programme the visibility and authority required to influence high-level policy processes. Respondents consistently pointed out that this senior leadership presence created confidence among partners and stakeholders that the initiative was firmly anchored in national and international commitments to gender equality.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) leads were responsible for ensuring accountability, tracking results, and feeding evidence into programme decisions. They developed and applied tools to measure progress across the three thematic areas, documented lessons, and highlighted areas where adaptations were needed. This allowed the project to demonstrate results with credibility while also making timely adjustments to strengthen effectiveness.

Thematic leads translated the programme's strategic objectives into concrete actions across the three result areas. By overseeing activity implementation, they ensured that different strands of work, namely capacity-building, institutional reforms, and community-level norm change, remained coherent and mutually reinforcing. Their role in coordinating with implementing partners was especially critical in linking high-level advocacy with ground-level interventions.

All of these functions were anchored in the UN Women Country Office Strategic Note, which provided the guiding framework for coordination and management. The Strategic Note ensured that the project was not implemented as a stand-alone intervention, but rather as part of the broader Country Office strategy on women's political participation, gender equality, and empowerment. This alignment allowed for synergies with other UN Women programmes, reduced duplication, and ensured consistency in messaging and advocacy.

The result of this structure was a programme that could convene diverse actors such as Parliament, the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), security agencies, and civil society organizations into a unified platform. As one key informant observed,

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*"Without UN Women at the table, it would have been difficult to bring Parliament, ORPP, and CSOs into one space to speak with one voice."*

This convening power was widely recognized as a major strength of the project, as it allowed fragmented actors to coordinate, align strategies, and amplify advocacy messages at both national and sub-national levels.

## QUESTION 6: TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THE PROJECT'S APPROACHES AND HOW INNOVATIVE THE STRATEGIES WERE FOR ACHIEVING THE PLANNED RESULTS? WHAT INNOVATIVE GOOD PRACTICES WERE INTRODUCED?

*Main Finding 6: The project introduced highly innovative approaches that moved beyond conventional training and mentorship models. The project used creative media, storytelling, and community-driven strategies to shift perceptions of women's leadership. These practices not only enhanced visibility and legitimacy for women leaders but also provided powerful advocacy tools that resonated with both national and grassroots audiences. However, gaps remained in innovation around digital safety and economic empowerment, two areas increasingly critical for sustaining women's political participation.*

The most notable innovation was the use of popular media to promote women's leadership. The *Ms. President Season Two* reality TV show reached a national audience and provided a platform for 51 women contestants to showcase their skills, confidence, and vision. This approach was innovative in that it combined capacity-building with mass communication, normalizing the image of women in leadership in households across Kenya. Unlike traditional training, which often impacts only direct participants, *Ms. President* created a ripple effect by inspiring viewers and generating public dialogue about women in decision-making. The fact that contestants went on to secure elective and appointive positions and that ten are already preparing to contest in 2027 illustrates the lasting influence of this innovation.

A second innovation was the programme's use of vernacular radio programming to extend messages to grassroots communities. By broadcasting in local languages, the programme ensured that empowering narratives about women's leadership were accessible to audiences often excluded from national media discourse. This approach was particularly effective in rural areas such as Samburu, Wajir, and Kajiado, where cultural barriers are deeply entrenched and where radio remains a primary source of information. The use of trusted community media not only widened reach but also enhanced credibility and resonance with local populations.

The Filamu Dada initiative represented another creative and impactful strategy. By training female filmmakers and producing seven short films that documented the leadership journeys of prominent women, including Governors Gladys Wanga and Cecily Mbarire, the programme created advocacy tools with both symbolic and practical value. These films were screened in community forums, sparking dialogue on the challenges and triumphs of women leaders. They served as both inspiration for aspiring leaders and as evidence of women's capability to lead effectively. This approach combined skill-building for female filmmakers with storytelling that challenged stereotypes, making it a double-layered innovation.

In addition to media and storytelling, the programme introduced community-level innovations. Dialogues with elders, male champions, and religious leaders tackled issues traditionally seen as taboo, such as menstruation and early marriage. By creating safe spaces for candid conversations, these interventions directly confronted patriarchal norms and fostered gradual acceptance of women's political participation. The innovative aspect lay in engaging cultural powerholders not as adversaries but as potential allies, thereby building legitimacy for women's leadership within conservative contexts.

While these innovations were impactful, the evaluation also identified areas where innovation was limited. The most significant gap was around digital safety, especially in the face of escalating technology-facilitated GBV during the 2022 elections. Women aspirants faced harassment, cyber-bullying, and defamation online, but the programme lacked systematic interventions to protect them or equip them with digital security skills. Similarly, there was limited innovation around economic empowerment, despite financial exclusion being one of the most consistent barriers raised by aspirants. Training and visibility interventions enhanced women's skills, but without parallel strategies to strengthen their access to campaign financing, the sustainability of gains was constrained.

QUESTION 7: WHAT WERE THE MAIN PROGRAM ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS TO ACHIEVING PLANNED OUTCOMES, AND WHAT ACTIONS NEED TO BE TAKEN TO OVERCOME ANY BARRIERS THAT LIMIT REQUIRED PROGRESS?

*Main Finding 7: The project's achievements were enabled by strong partnerships, flexible donor support, and the engagement of male champions and cultural influencers, which together enhanced reach and legitimacy. However, persistent patriarchal norms, weak political party accountability, bureaucratic funding procedures, and insufficient grassroots integration constrained the full realization of outcomes. Future progress will depend on institutionalizing reforms within political parties, embedding digital safety strategies, and strengthening the role of grassroots Women's Rights Organizations (WROs).*

Evidence from partner reports and field validation indicates that leadership and mentorship initiatives translated into tangible outcome-level gains. Several participants contested elections or assumed county advisory roles, showing that enhanced skills and visibility improved access to decision-making spaces and contributed directly to Outcome 1100 of the results framework.

The programme benefited greatly from strategic partnerships that enhanced its reach, legitimacy, and adaptability. Collaboration with KEWOPA, Women's Rights Organizations (WROs), and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) strengthened advocacy on the two-thirds gender principle and institutional accountability within political parties. Engagement with Court Users Committees and GBV Working Groups at the county level enhanced institutional responses to violence against women in politics (VAWP) by improving coordination between police, judiciary, health officers, and civil society actors.

Equally important were partnerships with Women Peace Actors and community mediators, who played a pivotal role in promoting peaceful elections and conflict prevention in fragile counties such as Samburu, Wajir, and Embu. These actors facilitated community dialogues, monitored early warning signs of electoral violence, and mediated local disputes that could have escalated during the 2022 elections. Their interventions not only helped maintain peace but also reinforced women's visibility as legitimate actors in conflict resolution and governance.

> "We trained and deployed women mediators who helped calm tensions at polling stations, people listened to them because they were respected in the community." - Peace Mediator, Wajir (2022)

Donor flexibility from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) was another enabling factor, allowing the programme to temporarily expand into hotspot counties such as Migori, Kilifi, and Machakos during the 2022 elections. This adaptability enabled rapid response to emerging risks and reinforced the programme's relevance and resilience in a dynamic political environment.

Another enabling factor was the deliberate engagement of male champions and community influencers. In patriarchal counties such as Kajiado and Samburu, involving elders, religious leaders, and male youth leaders created

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entry points for shifting deeply entrenched cultural norms. This approach helped legitimize conversations about women's leadership in contexts where direct advocacy by women alone might have faced resistance. The combination of cultural sensitivity and inclusive dialogue enhanced the programme's ability to influence attitudes at community level.

At the same time, several hindering factors limited progress. Most prominently, patriarchal norms and clan systems continued to restrict women's access to political opportunities, particularly in Wajir and Samburu. Women aspirants in these areas reported that regardless of their training or readiness, clan endorsement remained a prerequisite for candidacy, undermining the effectiveness of individual capacity-building interventions. Similarly, the lack of accountability within political parties perpetuated discriminatory nomination processes, which marginalized women despite national advocacy efforts.

Operational barriers also affected the programme's efficiency and timeliness. Partners consistently noted that the bureaucratic nature of UN Women's fund-release procedures—including multi-layered approval chains, quarterly disbursement cycles, and strict liquidation requirements—sometimes delayed activity delivery, particularly during time-sensitive periods such as the 2022 elections. These procedures were designed to ensure accountability and compliance with donor regulations, yet in practice, they created bottlenecks that constrained adaptive implementation.

> "By the time funds were approved, the campaign window had already passed. We had to reschedule community forums that were supposed to happen before nominations."- Implementing Partner, Homa Bay (2022)

Implementing partners explained that funds were typically released only after the previous quarter's expenditures had been liquidated, creating cash-flow gaps that forced organisations to halt or slow activities temporarily. Some smaller civil-society partners described resorting to personal or institutional advances to keep activities moving.

These experiences underscored the tension between the need for rigorous financial controls and the operational realities of field programming, especially in fast-changing political and electoral contexts. While partners appreciated UN Women's commitment to transparency, they recommended that flexibility mechanisms, such as rapid-response funds or simplified approval processes during critical electoral phases, be considered in future programmes to balance accountability with timeliness.

Another hindrance was the limited integration of grassroots WROs and marginalized groups into decision-making structures. While national-level organizations were active, smaller local actors in counties such as Samburu and Wajir felt excluded from planning and resource allocation. This weakened local ownership and reduced the programme's ability to embed interventions deeply within communities. Young women and women with disabilities were particularly underrepresented, indicating that inclusivity was not consistently achieved in practice.

Looking forward, several actions will be essential to overcome these barriers. First, institutionalizing gender quotas within political parties, either through legislation or enforcement of internal party rules would address one of the most entrenched obstacles to women's candidacy. Second, embedding digital safety training and response mechanisms into leadership capacity-building and VAWP prevention strategies would help mitigate the rising threat of online harassment, which was a major gap during the 2022 elections. Third, the programme must prioritize sustained engagement with grassroots WROs, ensuring that smaller, community-based organizations are resourced and included in decision-making processes. This would enhance inclusivity, build local ownership, and strengthen sustainability. Finally, UN Women should refine its funding modalities to balance accountability with flexibility, enabling partners to respond swiftly during electoral cycles while maintaining transparency and risk management.

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## QUESTION 8: HOW HAS THE INTERVENTION AFFECTED THE WELL-BEING OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS SUCH AS PERSONS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES?

*Main Finding 8: The project generated indirect benefits for marginalized groups, particularly through community dialogues and broader improvements in institutional responses to gender-based violence, but it did not consistently or systematically include them as a targeted constituency. Women with disabilities, in particular, were underrepresented in programme activities, thus highlighting a design and implementation gap that limited the intervention's inclusivity.*

The evaluation found that some community dialogues were inclusive of youth and persons with disabilities, creating spaces for them to voice concerns about barriers to political participation. In Kajiado and Homa Bay, respondents noted that women with disabilities participated in dialogues that addressed harmful cultural practices and civic rights. Similarly, youth groups engaged in civic education sessions reported feeling more confident about voting independently and encouraging their peers to support women candidates. These examples suggest that while the programme did not directly target marginalized constituencies, it nevertheless created entry points for them to engage in advocacy and norm-change efforts.

At an institutional level, the programme's investments in justice and security systems benefitted marginalized women indirectly. The establishment of Gender Justice Courts and the strengthening of capacity for more than 600 police officers, magistrates, and Court Users Committee members in survivor-centered approaches improved access to justice for all women, including those living with disabilities. Court Users Committees in Kisii and Embu reported being more aware of the need to treat survivors with dignity and sensitivity, which has particular implications for women with disabilities who often face heightened stigma and barriers in seeking justice. These systemic improvements represented important, if indirect, contributions to the well-being of marginalized groups.

However, interventions were not systematically tailored to the specific needs of marginalized constituencies. Women with disabilities were notably less visible in programme activities compared to other groups. Organizations of women with disabilities reported limited opportunities to influence project design, and leadership training, mentorship, and media visibility campaigns did not adequately adapt to their realities. For instance, barriers related to physical accessibility, provision of assistive devices, or addressing stigma within political parties were not directly targeted. As one community leader explained,

> "Most people didn't know what a gender-sensitive budget was. Buildings would be built without consideration on gender and disabilities. We insisted that gender be included… so that people with disabilities and the aged would benefit."

This testimony illustrates how systemic design gaps constrained the participation of women with disabilities despite broader policy commitments.

The 2022 Annual Report documented progress in developing the Charter of Inclusion, which committed political parties to advance the representation of youth, women with disabilities, and other special interest groups. However, participation data revealed that fewer than 5% of the women directly reached through mentorship and training activities in 2022 were women with disabilities, showing that policy advances were not yet translating into broad-based participation. The 2023 Annual Report reported further steps, such as ORPP guidelines on disability inclusion, but acknowledged that training venues were often not accessible and that no provision was made for assistive

devices like sign language interpretation or mobility support. Although nearly 1,200 women aspirants and leaders benefitted from capacity-building in 2023, only a small fraction were women with disabilities.

Similarly, young grassroots mobilizers expressed that they were not adequately integrated into decision-making structures. While the programme engaged male champions and senior leaders, it gave less attention to building the capacities of young women leaders at the community level. This limits the sustainability of leadership pipelines, as youth represent the next generation of political actors.

## 3.3 EFFICIENCY

**A MEASURE OF HOW ECONOMICALLY RESOURCES/INPUTS (FUNDS, EXPERTISE, TIME, ETC.) WERE CONVERTED TO RESULTS.**

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

The project made relatively efficient use of financial, human, and technical resources, leveraging partnerships and innovative approaches such as media programming to achieve wide outreach at relatively low cost. At both the national and county levels, synergies with government partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), and women's rights organizations (WROs) reduced duplication and maximized impact. County-level collaborations with structures such as Court Users Committees and GBV working groups further facilitated timely delivery of certain interventions. However, efficiency was compromised by delays in fund disbursement linked to UN Women's quarterly liquidation procedures, which caused interruptions in implementation and forced partners to carry reputational risks for postponed activities. While the project capitalized on existing local capacities such as the engagement of male champions and grassroots organizations, its ability to optimize resources was constrained by weak vertical integration between national and county actors, and by the underutilization of grassroots women's organizations in some counties. Monitoring systems were in place, but they were not consistently used as adaptive management tools, limiting their role in enhancing efficiency.

Question 1: Were resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) allocated strategically to achieve the project outcomes? Were the outputs delivered in a timely manner?

***Main Finding 1: Resources were allocated strategically across the three outcome areas of leadership, EVAWG, and WPS, enabling broad coverage and high visibility at relatively modest cost. However, while output were largely delivered as planned, delays in the release of funds due to quarterly liquidation procedures created bottlenecks thus undermining the timeliness of some activities and forcing implementing partners to absorb reputational and operational risks.***

The allocation of resources demonstrated clear strategic prioritization. A significant share was directed towards *Ms. President Season Two*, which provided a platform for national visibility and leadership development for women at a fraction of the cost of conventional campaign-style mobilization. This investment was considered cost-effective because it simultaneously built individual capacity, reshaped public perceptions, and reached millions of households. Similarly, the allocation of funds for police training on gender-sensitive electoral security was well targeted, as it directly supported safer electoral environments and responded to a critical barrier to women's participation. These investments illustrate how resources were directed to interventions with both symbolic and practical value.

At the community level, resources were used to convene dialogues, engage male champions, and support grassroots advocacy through WROs and media partnerships. In Kisii, Kajiado, and Samburu, these interventions created platforms to tackle taboo issues and build acceptance for women leaders. Media partnerships, particularly vernacular radio programming and the *Filamu Dada* initiative[38], made use of relatively small resource allocations to achieve

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[38] https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WH2i8NozaOrq-amH7Y5TIcj9LKs62hJM

wide impact by amplifying women's stories and normalizing their leadership in public discourse. The resource mix therefore balanced national-level visibility with local-level norm change.

Human and technical resources were also deployed strategically. Partnerships with KEWOPA, ORPP, NGEC, and URAIA Trust enabled national advocacy, while collaborations with Court Users Committees and GBV working groups ensured institutional and community-level implementation. Technical support was particularly valuable in embedding survivor-centered justice, including the establishment and upgrading of Gender Justice Courts. The use of existing structures rather than parallel mechanisms reflected an efficient approach to leveraging local capacities.

However, the timeliness of delivery was weakened by funding procedures. Implementing partners consistently reported that the quarterly disbursement and liquidation system slowed activity implementation, particularly during the 2022 elections when time-sensitive interventions were most critical. For example, mentorship programmes in Embu and Kericho were delayed, reducing their ability to maintain momentum with women aspirants, while support for female filmmakers under *Filamu Dada* was postponed, limiting the timely rollout of advocacy materials. These delays not only disrupted activity schedules but also created reputational risks for local partners, who had to explain postponements to communities and beneficiaries.

## QUESTION 2: WHAT MEASURES WERE TAKEN DURING PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION TO ENSURE THAT RESOURCES WERE EFFICIENTLY USED?

*Main Finding 2: The project adopted deliberate measures to enhance efficiency, including alignment of activities to the electoral cycle, leveraging low-cost but high-reach media platforms, and building partnerships that enabled cost-sharing and avoided duplication. However, these efficiency gains were weakened by administrative delays and the absence of flexible financing mechanisms, which reduced responsiveness to emerging needs such as technology-facilitated violence against women in politics.*

From the outset, the programme's planning processes demonstrated efficiency-oriented design choices. Interventions were carefully timed to the electoral cycle, with resources concentrated in the pre-election and election phases when risks of electoral violence and exclusion were most acute. This ensured that scarce resources were not spread thinly across the project cycle but were directed at moments of highest impact. For example, the rapid expansion into hotspot counties such as Kilifi and Machakos during the 2022 elections maximized relevance and efficiency by deploying resources precisely where women faced heightened risks.

The project also leveraged cost-effective communication platforms to stretch its resources. Investments in vernacular radio programming and television productions such as *Ms. President Season Two* enabled the programme to reach millions of Kenyans at a fraction of the cost of traditional campaign-style mobilization. These platforms provided a dual benefit: they amplified women's leadership narratives nationally while simultaneously equipping participants with visibility and leadership skills. In addition, the *Filamu Dada* initiative combined capacity-building for female filmmakers with the production of advocacy content, turning a relatively modest investment into both a training programme and a durable advocacy tool.

Partnerships with national institutions and civil society actors also contributed to efficiency by allowing shared use of resources and expertise. Collaboration with NGEC and ORPP strengthened election monitoring and policy advocacy without requiring parallel structures. Similarly, partnerships with Court Users Committees and GBV working groups allowed the programme to tap into existing institutional platforms rather than creating new ones. This

reduced duplication, enhanced coordination, and ensured that resources supported interventions embedded in local governance systems.

Despite these measures, efficiency was undermined by administrative bottlenecks. Quarterly disbursement and liquidation processes delayed the release of funds, which in turn forced implementing partners to either scale back or compress planned activities. In some cases, activities such as mentorship programmes and filmmaker support were delivered in shortened formats, reducing their depth and potential impact. These delays also created reputational risks for local partners, who were often blamed by communities when planned activities did not proceed on time.

The lack of flexible financing mechanisms at the county level further constrained efficiency. Emerging needs such as the surge of online harassment of women aspirants during the 2022 elections required rapid adaptation. However, budgeting processes that allowed limited flexibility for adjustments and delayed fund flows meant that partners could not respond quickly. As a result, opportunities to address critical gaps, such as digital safety training, were missing during moments when they would have been most impactful.

## QUESTION 3: WERE THE PROJECT AND ITS COMPONENTS COST-EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED? COULD THE ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS HAVE BEEN DELIVERED WITH FEWER RESOURCES WITHOUT REDUCING THEIR QUALITY AND QUANTITY?

*Main Finding 3: The project was largely cost-effective, particularly through its innovative use of media and community-based dialogues, which achieved wide reach and enduring impact at relatively modest cost. However, structural inefficiencies in fund disbursement and limited integration with county-level programmes reduced potential cost savings and, in some cases, created risks of duplication.*

The project's use of media platforms stands out as one of its most cost-effective and far-reaching strategies. Ms. President Season Two reached millions of viewers across the country, normalizing women's leadership within households and communities far beyond the direct beneficiaries. This scale of influence would have required far greater resources if pursued solely through county-level campaigns or in-person mobilization.

Complementary initiatives further extended the media component's reach and sustainability. The Filamu Dada initiative produced seven short films profiling the leadership journeys of high-profile women leaders such as Governors Gladys Wanga and Cecily Mbarire, which continue to serve as advocacy and training resources well beyond the project cycle. Additionally, the project invested in gender-sensitive media engagement, including the training of journalists, editors, and reporters on fair and balanced coverage of women candidates and gender issues.

This capacity-building effort contributed to more equitable portrayal of women leaders in mainstream and vernacular outlets, reducing stereotyping and expanding visibility for women aspirants. Partnerships with national media houses (e.g., Nation Media Group and Standard Media Group) and local radio stations amplified these narratives, creating positive ripple effects in public discourse.

Community dialogues were another efficient use of resources. By engaging elders, religious leaders, and male champions, the dialogues created incremental but meaningful shifts in attitudes at relatively low cost. Because these sessions were embedded within existing community structures, they required fewer resources than creating new platforms from scratch. Respondents noted that dialogues also leveraged volunteer support from community influencers, which enhanced ownership while keeping costs modest.

At the institutional level, cost-effectiveness was achieved through leveraging existing structures such as Court Users Committees and GBV working groups. Rather than establishing parallel mechanisms, the project invested in

strengthening these forums, which already had legitimacy and local anchoring. This approach minimizes overhead costs while enhancing sustainability.

Despite these strengths, cost-effectiveness was weakened by structural inefficiencies in financial processes. Quarterly disbursement and liquidation requirements delayed fund flow, forcing implementing partners to reschedule or compress activities. Such disruptions often meant that resources were used less optimally. For example, mentorship programmes delivered in condensed formats reduced the depth of engagement and learning. These inefficiencies undermined the full value of investments, even when the interventions themselves were well designed.

Another limitation related to how interventions interacted with broader county-level initiatives. In some cases, respondents observed that similar trainings or dialogues on gender-based violence and women's political participation were being conducted by multiple actors at the same time, which occasionally led to overlapping activities and participant fatigue. These situations reflected broader systemic coordination challenges within counties, rather than shortcomings of the project itself. While the project worked to maximize synergies with partners where possible, the absence of fully aligned efforts sometimes meant that opportunities for cost-sharing or joint delivery were not realized, limiting overall efficiency.

## QUESTION 4: DID THE PROJECT BUILD SYNERGIES WITH DIFFERENT OTHER ONGOING PROJECTS AT NATIONAL AND COUNTY LEVELS INCLUDING THOSE IMPLEMENTED WITH OTHER ACTORS (E.G., NATIONAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS, CSOS)?

*Main Finding 4: The project was effective in building synergies with national-level initiatives and institutions, which amplified advocacy, monitoring, and civic education outcomes. At county level, synergies were stronger in contexts where institutional platforms such as GBV working groups and Court Users Committees were already functional, but weaker in more marginalized counties where the women's rights movement itself was less organized and less resourced. Importantly, UN Women leveraged its gender mandate through the Joint Devolution Programme, which complemented the Canada Project. While the Canada Project focused on elections and educating the electorate, the Joint Devolution Programme ensured that after elections, citizens were empowered to hold leaders accountable for service delivery through public participation processes, including integration into County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs).*

At the national level, the project's synergies were a notable strength. Collaboration with parliamentary actors enabled joint advocacy on gender-related bills and provided visibility for women legislators pushing for the two-thirds gender principle. Partnerships with oversight and electoral stakeholders supported gender-sensitive election monitoring, while collaborations with civic organizations extended outreach into grassroots voter education. These partnerships allowed the programme to build on the mandates of established national institutions rather than duplicating efforts, thereby increasing efficiency and legitimacy. As one senior respondent noted,

> "UN Women has continued advocating for the inclusion and representation of women in political processes by supporting the multi-sectoral working group on the two-thirds gender principle, submitting the report that is now before Parliament."

At the county level, synergies were more uneven. In Kisii and Homa Bay, the programme worked closely with GBV working groups and Court Users Committees, creating effective platforms for coordinated responses to electoral violence. These collaborations enhanced referral pathways and reduced fragmentation of services. Such engagement was credited with improving institutional responsiveness and community trust.

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In contrast, in counties such as Samburu and Wajir, synergies with grassroots women's rights organizations were weaker. Local actors reported feeling sidelined in planning processes, pointing out that engagement often revolved around larger, national NGOs. This perception of exclusion reduced efficiency by missing opportunities to leverage local networks and cultural gatekeepers who are critical in conservative contexts.

A further consideration relates to integration with County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs). UN Women leveraged its gender mandate through the Joint Devolution Programme, which complemented the Canada Project by linking electoral support to longer-term governance processes. Whereas the Canada Project focused primarily on elections and civic education, the Joint Devolution Programme extended this by engaging county governments and communities in public participation processes that informed CIDPs and accountability for service delivery. Programme records show that gender-responsive priorities were introduced into CIDPs in some counties, but the depth of mainstreaming varied. In counties such as Kericho and Wajir, where WRO movements were less organized, gender issues were not consistently reflected in county plans, limiting sustainability and raising concerns about whether gains would endure beyond the project cycle.

## QUESTION 5: HOW DID THE PROJECT UTILIZE EXISTING LOCAL CAPACITIES OF RIGHTS-HOLDERS AND DUTY-BEARERS TO ACHIEVE ITS OUTCOMES?

*Main Finding 5: The project effectively utilized existing local capacities among both rights-holders and duty-bearers by engaging cultural leaders, community influencers, women's groups, and institutional actors to drive change. This approach enhanced legitimacy, reduced costs, and embedded interventions within structures already trusted by communities. While WROs were a cornerstone of the programme and played a central role in mobilization and community engagement, in marginalized counties their organizational capacity was comparatively weak. This limited the extent to which the programme could harness their potential, underscoring the need for further investment in strengthening grassroots WROs.*

The programme's emphasis on community dialogues exemplified its use of local capacities. In Kajiado, dialogues brought together elders, morans, male champions, and women leaders to confront deeply rooted taboos around menstruation, reproductive health, and women's legitimacy as leaders. By engaging cultural powerholders rather than bypassing them, the project used existing influence structures to open political space for women. One participant explained,

> "We use the elderly because they are a voice and are respected. That's why AJS are invited to participate in the committees… when the elderly men are present, culture evolves."

This culturally sensitive approach ensured that messages were carried by figures with credibility in the community, thereby reinforcing their acceptance and reach.

In Wajir, where patriarchal clan structures strongly shape political participation, the project strategically engaged clan leaders to address the dual exclusion faced by women, both as women and as members of minority clans or as wives in "outside" clans. Although clan endorsement remains a formidable barrier, respondents acknowledged that direct engagement with elders created openings for dialogue. As one local leader noted,

> "There are many challenges when it comes to women in Samburu… once we go to the local level, we have a male and a female. The current system will prefer to support males more, and another one is financial support."

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This demonstrates how leveraging the authority of elders, even in resistant contexts, represents an important step toward shifting norms.

On the side of duty-bearers, the programme invested in existing institutional structures. Local Court Users Committees (CUCs) in Kisii and Homa Bay were trained and supported to improve referral systems and coordination among justice, security, and health actors. These committees already had legitimacy within the judicial system and strengthening them avoided the inefficiency of creating parallel platforms. Similarly, the strengthening of capacities for more than 600 police officers in gender-sensitive electoral security built capacity within an institution that plays a critical role in protecting women candidates during elections. These investments capitalized on established structures, embedding gender-responsive practices directly into the work of frontline institutions.

Women's groups and WROs were another critical capacity that the project built upon. In Embu and Kericho, women's groups played a pivotal role in identifying aspirants for mentorship and in mobilizing communities to attend dialogues and civic education sessions. As one Kericho respondent reflected,

> "We wanted to go to the villages, the village elders, so that all these people know that our stakeholders are the target groups, and we are going to use these groups to train in our barazas… so that deep down in the villages, everyone knows about GBV and how to handle it."

This illustrates how tapping into trusted local networks enhanced both outreach and credibility.

In more marginalized counties such as Samburu and Wajir, however, local WROs were less well-established and had fewer resources, which constrained their ability to fully participate in planning and delivery. The project engaged them where possible, but the limited depth of these organizations meant their contribution was less visible compared to stronger WROs in other counties. This highlights not exclusion but the need to strengthen weaker WRO movements so that they can play an equal role in future programming.

QUESTION 6: TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THE PROJECT'S MONITORING MECHANISMS EFFECTIVE FOR MEASURING AND INFORMING MANAGEMENT OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS TOWARDS TARGETS? TO WHAT EXTENT WAS MONITORING DATA OBJECTIVELY USED FOR MANAGEMENT ACTION AND DECISION-MAKING?

**Main Finding 6:** *The project's monitoring systems produced reliable data for accountability and donor reporting, but the use of this information to inform adaptive management was limited. Monitoring findings occasionally shaped operational adjustments, such as expanding into electoral hotspot counties during the 2022 elections, yet systematic feedback loops for learning and mid-course correction were weak. This limited the potential of monitoring as a management tool.*

The monitoring framework ensured consistent reporting of outputs such as the number of women trained, mentorship sessions held, and dialogues conducted. This information provided a reliable evidence base for donor accountability and compliance requirements, ensuring that Global Affairs Canada and UN Women's internal systems could verify that activities were being delivered as planned. As one project manager explained,

> "We had regular catch-up sessions, what we call delivery meetings. We would come together as a program and just review the progress and put in place mechanisms to address the issue that was there. And if there were issues identified during quarterly reporting by the partner, we would also come together and see how to address them."

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This shows that monitoring data was not simply compiled into reports but also formed part of routine programme management and coordination processes.

Monitoring data also supported limited adaptation during implementation. For example, the decision to extend interventions into hotspot counties such as Migori and Kilifi during the 2022 elections was directly informed by monitoring reports that flagged rising risks of electoral violence. This responsiveness illustrated the potential of monitoring information to influence real-time operational adjustments when risks were clearly documented. However, such examples of adaptive use were isolated rather than systematic, suggesting that monitoring remained more reactive than embedded in forward-looking planning.

The use of monitoring data for strategic management was less consistent. Several respondents observed that monitoring outputs were largely treated as compliance tools to "report up" to donors, rather than as learning instruments to adjust programming on the ground. As one county official reflected,

> "If we had known that this and this were happening, for instance in county A, then we'd be able to track the progress… but since UN Women goes directly to the counties, they feel like they should report to the one who's funding the activity. So, as much as it has happened, we lose out because we are not aware."

This points to weak vertical feedback loops between national and county stakeholders and highlights missed opportunities for shared learning and coordinated decision-making across different levels of the programme.

The heavy emphasis on quantitative reporting further constrained the system's utility for management. While numerical data on trainings, dialogues, and media outputs demonstrated scale, it rarely illuminated the quality or sustainability of change. For example, reports captured the number of dialogues convened in Kajiado and Samburu but did not systematically document whether these led to shifts in household decision-making or community acceptance of women's leadership. Nor did they track whether political parties changed their nomination practices following advocacy or whether women who received mentorship went on to contest for office. Beneficiaries themselves reported feeling more prepared and confident, but these empowerment outcomes were not reflected in monitoring records. As a result, the evidence base was strong in demonstrating *what was done* but weaker in showing *what changed* and how those changes could inform future programming.

## 3.4 COHERENCE

**THE EXTENT TO WHICH OTHER INTERVENTIONS SUPPORT OR UNDERMINE THE INTERVENTION AND VICE VERSA, INCLUDING ASPECTS OF COMPLEMENTARITY, HARMONIZATION, AND COORDINATION.**

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The project demonstrated strong internal and external coherence by aligning with ongoing national and county-level interventions on women's political participation, EVAWG, and Women, Peace and Security (WPS). At national level, the Canada-funded initiative complemented other UN Women and donor-funded programmes, avoiding duplication and building synergies through shared advocacy and coordination platforms. At county level, integration with GBV working groups and Court Users Committees enhanced institutional responses, although coordination with grassroots women's rights organizations was uneven across counties. Compared to earlier projects, the Canada-funded intervention introduced innovative approaches such as *Ms. President* and *Filamu Dada*, which deepened long-term norm change, while also institutionalizing gender-responsive governance in ways that outlast short-term training projects. The project contributed meaningfully to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, though its reach was limited for women with disabilities and young women at the margins of political processes.

QUESTION 1: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE PROJECT COHERENT WITH SIMILAR INTERVENTIONS IMPLEMENTED FOR PROMOTING WOMEN'S PROTECTION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE COUNTRY AND/OR COUNTY?

**Main Finding 1:** *The project was fully coherent with the UN Women Kenya Country Office (KCO) Strategic Note as it aligned strongly with Outcome 1 on Women's Political Participation (WPP) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Outcome 2 on Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW), and partly with Outcome 4 on coordination. The main gap was Outcome 3 on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), which was not addressed by the Canada-funded programme.*

The project demonstrated a high degree of coherence with other UN Women and donor-funded initiatives, both at the national and county levels. At the national level, it complemented the Deepening Democracy Programme on elections, the Joint Devolution Programme on governance, the Italy-funded project on ending violence against women and girls (including VAWP), Irish Aid's WPS and governance programme, and the LEAP project on WPS. It also aligned with the UNDP-supported Elections Basket Fund, reinforcing the broader ecosystem of interventions aimed at advancing women's political participation and protection. By design, the Canada Project focused specifically on women's political participation and violence against women in politics (VAWP), thereby complementing rather than duplicating the mandates of other initiatives.

Respondents emphasized that internal and external coordination created strong coherence across interventions. As one UN Women manager explained,

> "I was managing both five projects under the Women Political Leadership thematic pillar. We had the Canada project, the Finland project, the UNDP Elections Basket, Irish Aid on WPS, and the Women's Political Fund from HQ. At the national level, we made sure all the projects were supporting interventions together… internally, we made sure that the projects were speaking to each other, and that there was coherence across the board."

Similarly, another respondent noted,

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> "There were a lot of synergies, and there was a lot of collaboration and coordination. We coordinated very closely with all other projects within the WPS and Ending Violence Against Women… we were also key in collaborating with the Elections Basket Fund funded by other donors to UNDP."

These testimonies underscore how deliberate coordination mechanisms reduced duplication and harmonized advocacy around common goals such as the two-thirds gender principle.

At the county level, coherence was achieved by working through established institutional platforms. In Kisii and Homa Bay, the project collaborated with GBV working groups and Court Users Committees, reinforcing multi-sectoral referral pathways for survivors and complementing county-level GBV programmes supported by other actors. In Samburu and Kajiado, synergies were created with county peace committees, linking women's political participation with broader WPS agendas such as conflict prevention and reconciliation. These linkages ensured that interventions were embedded within Kenya's governance and peacebuilding architecture, thereby enhancing both relevance and sustainability.

Regarding women's rights organizations (WROs), the evaluation found that they were a cornerstone of the programme. In counties such as Embu and Kericho, WROs were instrumental in mobilizing aspirants and communities, ensuring deep local buy-in. However, in more marginalized contexts such as Samburu and Wajir, WRO movements were comparatively weaker, with limited resources and organizational capacity. This sometimes constrained their ability to engage fully in planning and delivery. As one grassroots actor explained,

> "In my organization, I use volunteers from the grassroots. If I am told I need to train people in Kajiado, the volunteers from the local level can reach there. Community members are so honest that they would pinpoint the most vulnerable who need to be prioritized."

## QUESTION 2: WHAT EVIDENCE EXISTS THAT THE PROJECT HAS DELIVERED LONGER-TERM RESULTS AS COMPARED TO OTHER PROJECTS FROM PROCESSES THROUGH TO BENEFITS?

***Main Finding 2: The project delivered longer-term results by institutionalizing reforms, embedding gender-responsive practices in county systems, and shifting public narratives about women's leadership in ways that earlier, short-term interventions could not. However, systemic barriers such as the stalled two-thirds gender bill and patriarchal party structures continue to constrain the full realization of sustainable outcomes.***

Evidence of long-term results is particularly visible in the justice sector. The establishment of twelve specialized Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) courts, which were later upgraded into Gender Justice Courts, represents a structural gain with lasting impact. Unlike ad hoc interventions in earlier programmes, these courts are embedded in Kenya's judicial system and continue to provide survivor-centered justice beyond the lifespan of the project. This institutionalization ensures that progress made on addressing violence against women in politics (VAWP) will remain in place and continue to benefit survivors in future electoral cycles.

The project also created enduring outcomes through leadership visibility and capacity-building. The *Ms. President Season Two* initiative not only trained 51 women contestants but also embedded them in the public consciousness as credible leaders. Several contestants have transitioned into formal political or advisory roles, and at least ten have already announced intentions to contest in the 2027 elections. This demonstrates that the intervention is contributing to a long-term pipeline of women leaders whose influence extends beyond the project's immediate

timeframe. Earlier programmes that relied solely on workshops or short-term training lacked this sustained visibility and momentum.

Through the Filamu Dada initiative, the project also generated durable advocacy materials. The seven short films documenting the leadership journeys of prominent women, such as Governors Gladys Wanga and Cecily Mbarire, continue to be screened in community forums, classrooms, and advocacy events. Unlike campaigns that end when funding ceases, these films provide ongoing tools for shifting public perceptions and inspiring future generations of women leaders. They are a clear example of how project investments can outlive the funding cycle by creating reusable resources with lasting relevance.

At the county level, the integration of gender-responsive budget lines in counties like Embu and Homa Bay has created mechanisms for continued investment in women's political participation. Embedding gender priorities in county budgets ensures that funding for women's leadership and protection is not entirely dependent on donor support but is part of formal county planning processes. This represents a step toward sustainability that earlier, more fragmented interventions often failed to achieve.

Nonetheless, the evaluation found that structural challenges continue to undermine long-term sustainability. Chief among these is the lack of national legislation to operationalize the two-thirds gender principle. Despite repeated advocacy and temporary gains at county level, the absence of binding law means that progress remains precarious and vulnerable to political shifts. Similarly, entrenched patriarchal practices within political parties continue to exclude women during nomination processes, limiting the systemic impact of leadership training and mentorship. These persistent barriers illustrate that while the project achieved more durable results than earlier initiatives, its transformative potential remains constrained by Kenya's broader political and institutional environment.

## QUESTION 3: TO WHAT EXTENT WERE GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ADVANCED AS A RESULT OF THIS INTERVENTION?

***Main Finding 3: The project significantly advanced gender equality and women's empowerment by enhancing women's visibility, leadership capacity, and institutional inclusion. At the same time, empowerment gains were uneven, as intersectional inclusivity, particularly for women with disabilities, rural women, and young women was not consistently achieved.***

At the individual level, the intervention strengthened the agency of women leaders and aspirants by equipping them with practical skills, confidence, and political literacy. Women MCAs in Embu and Kericho reported that capacity building initiatives and mentorship improved their ability to navigate legislative procedures, table motions, and influence county assemblies. Aspirants in Kisii and Homa Bay explained that mentorship by senior women leaders gave them the confidence to run for office and to speak in public spaces that had previously been dominated by men. The *Ms. President Season Two* platform amplified this empowerment by showcasing women's leadership potential to national audiences, creating aspirational role models and enhancing the legitimacy of women's political participation. In Wajir, for instance, training helped women MCAs influence budgetary processes:

> "In Wajir County, there was a finance bill that was tabled… the women leaders there, led by the chair of the women after our training, were able to stand up, and they brought about the rejection of the same bill. So the same bill had to go back to be itemized, which is actually a win for us".

Aspirants in Kisii and Kericho similarly described building "thick skin" and resilience from mentorship:

> "Through the Uraia Trust training for aspirants, we were told, could you please prepare your family for all this? I was set to go. I've built a thick skin since 2017… I encourage them and use all those abuses to teach others".

These accounts reflect the practical empowerment gains that translated into confidence and procedural literacy.

At the community level, dialogues challenged deeply rooted cultural practices that restricted women's political participation. Empowerment was advanced through dialogues that challenged harmful cultural norms. In Kajiado, dialogues with elders, morans, and religious leaders addressed practices that restricted women's autonomy, including control of ID cards by husbands. Respondents noted that women increasingly claimed the right to vote independently, a direct empowerment gain that shifted power relations within households. In Kisii and Samburu, taboo topics such as menstruation and early marriage were openly discussed in public forums, which helped dismantle narratives used to delegitimize women as leaders. These dialogues not only empowered women to assert their agency but also fostered broader community acceptance of women's political roles.

In Kajiado, one respondent recalled:

> "In our culture, the husband would carry the ID card of the mother during voting. We were empowering women that they should stand and have a voice… so many women were empowered. At least they gained the power to vote as individuals, as Kenyans, and not as families".

Similarly, dialogues addressed taboo subjects like menstruation, enabling shifts in community attitudes. These examples show how community dialogues empowered women while also shifting male perceptions.

At the institutional level, the project contributed to structural shifts that expanded women's empowerment. National-level advocacy through KEWOPA, ORPP, and NGEC strengthened policy discourse on the two-thirds gender principle and accountability within political parties. At the county level, the creation of women's caucuses in assemblies and the introduction of gender-responsive budget lines in counties such as Embu and Homa Bay institutionalized support for women's leadership. The establishment and upgrading of Gender Justice Courts further empowered women by ensuring that survivors of violence could access dignified and timely justice, reducing one of the most persistent deterrents to women's participation in politics. This project supported structural reforms that embedded women's empowerment within governance systems.

These institutional shifts ensured that empowerment was not just personal or cultural but embedded in governance structures. Together, these interventions advanced gender equality and women's empowerment by expanding women's individual agency, reshaping community attitudes, and embedding institutional support mechanisms. However, as already highlighted in previous sections, empowerment gains were not universal. Women with disabilities and young grassroots mobilizers remained less visible, pointing to the need for a stronger intersectional lens in future programming.

## 3.5 INTER-CONNECTEDNESS, SUSTAINABILITY, AND IMPACT

## THE LIKELIHOOD OF A CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS FOR WOMEN FROM A DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION AFTER THE INTERVENTION IS COMPLETED OR THE PROBABILITY OF CONTINUED LONG-TERM BENEFITS

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The project has laid a solid foundation for sustaining women's political participation in Kenya by embedding reforms within national institutions, strengthening county-level structures, and shifting public norms. It was internally coherent within UN Women as it links to Women's Political Participation, EVAWG, and WPS portfolios, and externally coherent within the UN system and broader donor community. The project was also consistent with Kenya's obligations under CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, and other international human rights frameworks. National and county governments demonstrated varying levels of ownership. In counties like Homa Bay and Embu, gender budget lines were institutionalized, while in others such as Wajir, reliance on external funding limited sustainability. Partners' technical and operational capacities were visibly strengthened, particularly within police, judiciary, and Court Users Committees. However, the financial capacities of both WROs and county governments remain fragile, making continued donor support essential. Innovations such as *Ms. President* and *Filamu Dada* are already being replicated and scaled, but broader sustainability requires political will, resource mobilization, and stronger grassroots integration.

QUESTION 1: WERE REQUIREMENTS OF NATIONAL AND/OR COUNTY OWNERSHIP SATISFIED? WAS THE PROJECT SUPPORTED BY NATIONAL/COUNTY INSTITUTIONS? DO THESE INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY, DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY TO CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE PROJECT OR REPLICATE IT?

*Main Finding 4: National and county ownership of the project was partially achieved, with stronger uptake among national institutions and in certain counties such as Homa Bay, Embu, and Kisii. However, ownership was weaker in more fragile or marginalized counties such as Wajir and Samburu, where dependence on donor funding and weak institutional capacity limited prospects for replication. Civil society partners showed strong leadership commitment but remained heavily reliant on external resources, raising sustainability concerns.*

At the national level, ownership was evident in the way institutions embedded project priorities into their mandates. The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) strengthened its enforcement role by requiring political parties to report on gender compliance, aligning with project-supported advocacy. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) integrated gender-sensitive monitoring into election observation frameworks, ensuring that project achievements were institutionalized in national oversight processes. Similarly, the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) sustained advocacy for the two-thirds gender principle and continued to champion women's leadership in Parliament. These examples demonstrate that national-level actors internalized the project's objectives and aligned them with their long-term mandates, enhancing the likelihood of continuity.

At the county level, ownership was more uneven. In Homa Bay and Embu, the introduction of gender-responsive budget lines demonstrated clear government commitment to sustain financing for women's political participation. These budget allocations institutionalized support beyond the life of the project, creating a resource base for future interventions. In Kisii, Court Users Committees institutionalized capacity to respond to GBV and VAWP, embedding survivor-centered responses into judicial practice. Such developments indicate that in counties with stronger governance structures, the project catalyzed ownership and replication.

By contrast, in Wajir and Samburu, institutional ownership was weak. County governments remained dependent on external funding for gender-related programming, and political and cultural resistance limited integration of project priorities into formal county structures. Respondents in these counties noted that without external resources, interventions such as dialogues or mentorship programmes were unlikely to be sustained. This unevenness reflects broader disparities in institutional capacity across counties, where stronger devolved governance frameworks facilitated ownership, while weaker ones remained donor-dependent.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) demonstrated strong leadership commitment, often driving community-level dialogues and mobilizing women aspirants. Their credibility with communities made them indispensable partners. However, their reliance on donor funding, including from this project, raised questions about sustainability. Without predictable resources, many CSOs may struggle to maintain momentum or scale up successful initiatives independently.

## QUESTION 2: WHAT CAPACITIES OF NATIONAL AND/OR COUNTY PARTNERS, BOTH TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL, HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED?

***Main Finding 5: The project significantly strengthened technical and operational capacities in justice, security, and governance institutions, as well as among women leaders and civil society organizations. While these gains enhanced institutional responsiveness and women's political agency, smaller WROs indicated that they require more sustained organizational development support to consolidate and scale their contributions.***

At the national level, institutional capacities were expanded in line with the project's priorities on women's political participation and EVAWG. More than six hundred police officers had their capacities enhanced in gender-sensitive electoral security and crowd management, equipping them with tools to protect women aspirants and candidates during campaigns and elections. Respondents noted that these trainings improved officers' awareness of VAWP and contributed to more responsive policing during the 2022 elections. In addition, the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) strengthened its technical role in monitoring gender compliance within political parties, while the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) built its capacity to incorporate gender indicators into election observation frameworks. These measures reflected an institutionalization of technical knowledge within national bodies that have ongoing mandates in governance.

At the county level, capacities were strengthened in both governance and justice sectors. In Kisii and Homa Bay, Court Users Committees (CUCs) enhanced their coordination and referral systems, adopting more survivor-centered approaches to GBV cases. The establishment and upgrading of Gender Justice Courts provided an institutional platform for applying these capacities, embedding survivor-sensitive justice mechanisms within county systems. County assemblies also benefited from targeted training and mentorship for women MCAs, who reported improved procedural literacy, confidence in legislative debates, and greater effectiveness in tabling motions and contributing to county budget processes. These gains signaled a shift from ad hoc capacity-building to embedded technical competencies that directly impact governance outcomes.

The project also invested in strengthening the capacities of civil society organizations and Women's Rights Organizations (WROs). Collaborations with WROs expanded their advocacy skills, visibility, and ability to engage with formal political structures. For example, WROs were instrumental in mobilizing communities for dialogues and amplifying women aspirants' voices in conservative counties. However, smaller community-based WROs reported that while they gained advocacy experience, they still lacked long-term organizational development support,

including financial management systems, strategic planning, and resource mobilization. Without this deeper institutional strengthening, their ability to sustain advocacy independently beyond donor funding remains limited.

*Main Finding 6: The project significantly strengthened the technical and operational capacities of duty-bearers to create safer, more gender-responsive governance and justice systems, while also enhancing the confidence, skills, and visibility of women aspirants and elected leaders as rights-holders. By engaging both sides of the accountability equation, the intervention fostered a more enabling environment for women's political participation. Inclusivity was advanced at the policy level through initiatives such as the Charter of Inclusion and the ORPP guidelines on disability mainstreaming. However, these commitments were not consistently translated into practice. Women with disabilities and young women remained underrepresented in trainings, mentorship, and visibility platforms, meaning that empowerment gains were significant but not equitably distributed across all constituencies of women.*

Among duty-bearers, the most visible capacity gains were in the justice and security sectors. Over six hundred police officers capacities were enhanced on gender-sensitive electoral security, human rights standards, and hotspot mapping, which improved their ability to safeguard women candidates during campaigns. Judicial officers and Court Users Committees (CUCs) in Kisii and Homa Bay also strengthened survivor-centered approaches. These investments embedded gender-sensitive practices within justice systems, including the designation of Kisii and Homa Bay as Gender Justice Courts. County officials, particularly gender officers and assembly staff, also benefitted from technical support, which increased their capacity to mainstream gender into county planning and budgeting processes.

For rights-holders, the programme produced equally significant capacity gains. Women aspirants and MCAs in Embu, Kericho, and Kisii consistently reported greater confidence and procedural literacy as a result of trainings and mentorship. Many described being better equipped to participate in legislative debates, influence county budget discussions, and navigate party nomination processes.. Similarly, contestants in Ms. President Season Two gained national visibility and legitimacy. Contestants who transitioned into leadership roles or who are preparing to run in 2027 elections exemplify how strengthened capacities are translating into political participation outcomes. One participant explained that the show shifted perceptions of leadership:

> "Viewers and Kenyans had the opportunity to see these women handle a variety of challenges… it showcased that indeed women in our community have the capacity and knowledge to provide leadership".

At the community level, dialogues advanced empowerment by tackling harmful cultural norms. In Kajiado, engagement with elders, morans, and religious leaders created safe spaces for women to assert their political agency and challenge practices that had historically limited their participation. These conversations helped women claim the right to vote independently and began shifting household-level power dynamics. In Kisii, dialogues addressed issues that had long been considered off-limits, including menstruation and early marriage, signaling gradual change in how communities approach women's rights and leadership.

Despite these achievements, gaps in inclusivity meant that capacity gains were not evenly distributed. Women with disabilities were not systematically included in capacity building initiatives, mentorship, or advocacy initiatives, and programme design did not sufficiently adapt to their accessibility needs. As a result, their participation remained

limited, despite facing some of the highest barriers to political leadership. Similarly, young women and grassroots mobilizers were less consistently engaged in leadership training and mentorship, even though they represent the next generation of political actors. Respondents in Kericho and Samburu noted that youth were often confined to mobilization roles rather than being supported as leaders in their own right. These gaps highlight the risk of reinforcing hierarchies within women's movements, where better-resourced or urban-based women benefit more than marginalized constituencies.

## QUESTION 4: WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE BENEFITS FROM THE PROJECT WILL BE MAINTAINED FOR A REASONABLY LONG PERIOD OF TIME IF THE PROJECT WERE TO CEASE?

***Main Finding 7: There is a moderate to high likelihood that several of the project's benefits will be sustained, particularly those embedded in institutions and public narratives. However, the absence of systemic legal reforms, persistent dependence on donor funding, and weak financial resilience among grassroots actors mean that sustainability remains fragile and uneven across different domains.***

Institutional reforms are among the most durable outcomes. The establishment and upgrading of Gender Justice Courts represents a structural change that will continue to benefit survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) beyond the project's lifespan. Because these courts are integrated into Kenya's judicial framework, they are not donor-dependent and have the potential to maintain survivor-centered justice in future electoral cycles. Similarly, the introduction of gender-responsive budget lines in counties such as Embu and Homa Bay is likely to endure, as these are embedded in county budgetary processes. These mechanisms provide institutional pathways to sustain financing for women's political participation, ensuring continuity beyond project support.

At the individual and community levels, sustainability is reinforced by the creation of alumni networks. Participants from *Ms. President Season Two* have continued to support one another, with at least ten contestants already preparing to run in the 2027 elections. Their visibility and networks are self-sustaining, extending the project's impact into future electoral cycles. Similarly, the Filamu Dada initiative produced advocacy films that continue to circulate at community screenings and public forums, keeping alive narratives of women's leadership and inspiring new aspirants. These initiatives have left behind tangible resources and networks that are not wholly reliant on donor funding for their continuation.

Despite these gains, sustainability is constrained by incomplete systemic reforms. Chief among these is the stalled legislation to enforce the two-thirds gender principle. Without legal enforcement, women's representation remains vulnerable to political resistance, and the gains achieved through training and advocacy may not translate into structural change. Similarly, patriarchal practices within political parties, particularly discriminatory nomination processes, remain a major obstacle. Without stronger institutional accountability, the sustainability of women's political participation will remain precarious.

The evaluation also found that sustainability is donor-dependent in many areas. While WROs and grassroots organizations demonstrated strong leadership and commitment, most lack financial resilience to sustain activities independently. Many community dialogues, mentorship programmes, and advocacy efforts would likely diminish without external funding. Respondents noted that while the project helped build advocacy skills and visibility, it did not sufficiently strengthen organizational development or resource mobilization capacities, leaving these groups vulnerable once project support ends.

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*Main Finding 8: The project effectively included national stakeholders in both implementation and policy advocacy, ensuring strong alignment with Kenya's gender and governance priorities. However, inclusion of grassroots actors was less consistent, particularly in marginalized counties such as Samburu and Wajir, which limited the inclusiveness and depth of policy advocacy.*

At the national level, stakeholder inclusion was one of the project's strongest features. The Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) played a central role in sustaining advocacy for the two-thirds gender principle and mentoring aspiring women leaders, ensuring that parliamentary voices were aligned with the project's goals. The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) was actively engaged in enforcing accountability measures within political parties, helping to strengthen the regulatory environment for women's participation. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) incorporated gender-sensitive indicators into election monitoring and reporting, reflecting how the project informed institutional practice. Civil society actors such as URAIA Trust amplified advocacy through civic education and grassroots mobilization, creating synergies between national policy advocacy and community-level sensitization. Together, these actors ensured that the project's advocacy aligned with and reinforced Kenya's broader governance and gender equality priorities.

At the county level, inclusion was more uneven. In counties such as Kisii, Homa Bay, and Embu, the project worked effectively with Court Users Committees, GBV working groups, and county assemblies, embedding women's leadership and protection issues into local governance structures. These collaborations allowed the project to anchor its interventions in institutional frameworks that had legitimacy and sustainability potential.

In more marginalized or conservative counties such as Samburu and Wajir, however, the inclusion of grassroots women's groups and smaller community-based organizations was weaker. Respondents in these counties reported that decision-making often remained concentrated among larger, Nairobi-based organizations, with grassroots actors brought in primarily as implementers rather than equal partners. This limited their ability to shape advocacy agendas and weakened local ownership of project outcomes. Some WROs felt that their deep contextual knowledge and networks were underutilized, reducing the project's ability to tailor interventions to local realities.

This uneven inclusion has implications for policy advocacy. While national advocacy benefitted from the participation of high-level stakeholders and produced visible results such as inputs to KNAP III and renewed attention to the two-thirds gender principle, the absence of strong grassroots representation meant that advocacy did not always fully reflect the lived experiences of marginalized women. As a result, while national stakeholders were consistently engaged, the inclusivity and representativeness of advocacy efforts were not maximized.

*Main Finding 9: The financial and institutional capacities of implementing partners varied considerably, influencing their ability to sustain interventions beyond the project cycle. While some smaller Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) and community-based partners remain heavily reliant on external funding, several established organizations such as URAIA Trust and KEWOPA, have demonstrated institutional sustainability by securing new donor support and continuing project-related initiatives. For instance, URAIA has expanded its work*

*in Homa Bay with funding from Denmark, while KEWOPA has sustained advocacy on the two-thirds gender principle, with the Bill now advancing in the Senate. In counties such as Embu, project beneficiaries continue to share their leadership stories through local media, reflecting strong community ownership. To consolidate these gains, partners will require differentiated capacity-building support that focuses on resource mobilization for local WROs, deeper integration of gender priorities into public financing frameworks, and continued investment in media visibility and advocacy for sustainability.*

At the county level, positive examples of financial commitment emerged. In Embu and Homa Bay, the creation of gender-responsive budget lines signaled institutional ownership of women's political participation agendas. These allocations represent an important step towards sustainability, as they embed gender priorities into county planning and resourcing cycles. Respondents in Embu noted that once a budget line is codified, it is more difficult for political leaders to roll it back, making it a more durable mechanism than short-term project grants. Such county-level financing frameworks provide a foundation on which future donor investments can build.

Among civil society partners and WROs, however, financial sustainability remains a critical challenge. Most local organizations reported that their operations are almost entirely donor-dependent, with little capacity to generate or manage independent revenue streams. Smaller grassroots groups in counties such as Samburu and Wajir expressed particular vulnerability, noting that when donor funding ceases, their programming stalls. Their limited financial autonomy undermines the continuity of interventions such as community dialogues, mentorship programmes, and advocacy initiatives. In practice, this means that while skills and networks built under the project remain, their activation depends on whether external resources are available.

By contrast, several national or well-established partners demonstrated stronger institutional sustainability. URAIA Trust has continued civic-education and leadership work in Homa Bay through new funding from the Government of Denmark, building on partnerships established during the project. KEWOPA has sustained advocacy on the two-thirds gender principle, with the bill now before the Senate.

The evaluation also highlighted gaps in resource mobilization and financial management capacity. While WROs gained advocacy and visibility skills through the project, few reported receiving targeted support in fundraising, proposal writing, or strategic financial planning. This leaves them ill-equipped to diversify funding sources or to engage with non-traditional donors, private sector actors, or county governments. Without stronger organizational development support, many WROs will remain locked in cycles of donor dependency, unable to sustain interventions on their own.

Looking forward, sustaining benefits will require a multi-pronged strategy. First, greater emphasis should be placed on integrating gender priorities into County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and budget processes, ensuring that counties systematically allocate funds to women's political participation and GBV prevention. Second, capacity-building for WROs should extend beyond advocacy to include resource mobilization, financial management, and strategic planning, equipping them to secure and manage funding from diverse sources. Third, donors and UN Women should promote funding diversification, encouraging linkages with the private sector, philanthropic foundations, and pooled donor mechanisms to reduce over-reliance on single funding streams. Finally, sustainability efforts must embed strong accountability mechanisms that enable non-state actors such as civil society, media, and oversight institutions, to monitor, track, and publicly report on the implementation of gender commitments and budget allocations.

*Main Finding 10: The project generated several innovations such as Ms. President, Filamu Dada, and county-level gender structures that demonstrated strong replication and scaling potential. Some of these innovations are already being taken forward by partners, but replication has so far depended on donor enthusiasm and project-driven momentum rather than being embedded in institutional frameworks, raising concerns about long-term sustainability.*

The most celebrated innovation was the Ms. President reality TV show, which successfully combined leadership training, mentorship, and mass media visibility. Its impact extended beyond the contestants to millions of viewers nationwide, shifting public perceptions about women in leadership. Respondents highlighted *Ms. President* as a model for norm change, with strong potential for replication both within Kenya and across the region. Already, media partners and NGOs have expressed interest in reproducing similar formats in additional counties, while some alumni are using their profiles to mentor young women leaders in their communities. The model's appeal lies in its dual impact of developing individual capacity while simultaneously reshaping public narratives.

The Filamu Dada initiative also stood out as an innovative practice. By training women filmmakers and producing advocacy films featuring prominent leaders such as Governors Gladys Wanga and Cecily Mbarire, the project created resources with enduring influence[39]. These films continue to be screened at community events, in schools, and at advocacy forums, sparking dialogue and inspiring future women leaders. Their portability and relatively low cost make them ideal for replication in other counties and contexts, particularly where visual storytelling resonates with grassroots audiences. Civil society actors noted that similar locally produced films could be developed to highlight community-level women leaders, further broadening the model's reach.

At the county level, innovations such as women's caucuses in assemblies and the introduction of gender-responsive budget lines created institutional models with strong replication potential. In Embu and Homa Bay, gender budget lines institutionalized financing for women's political participation, providing a template that could be adopted by other counties. Similarly, women's caucuses provided platforms for peer support and collective advocacy within assemblies. These county-level structures, once mainstreamed, can serve as replicable practices across devolved governance systems in Kenya.

Despite these successes, replication and scaling remain heavily donor-driven. The spread of *Ms. President* and *Filamu Dada* has been propelled by project partners and external funding rather than by institutional frameworks that guarantee continuation. County-level replication of gender caucuses and budget lines also varies depending on political will and resource allocation, rather than being systematically adopted through national policy guidance. Without deliberate strategies to institutionalize and fund these innovations, their scaling remains vulnerable to fluctuations in donor interest and electoral cycles.

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[39] Ibid 30

## 3.6 GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## THE EXTENT TO WHICH GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS WERE INTEGRATED INTO THE PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The project was designed and implemented with gender equality and human rights at its core, consistent with UN Women's normative mandate and Kenya's obligations under international frameworks such as CEDAW and UNSCR 1325. Its interventions directly targeted structural barriers to women's political participation, addressed violence against women in politics (VAWP), and promoted inclusive governance through advocacy, training, and social norm change initiatives. The project applied principles of participation, empowerment, inclusion, non-discrimination, and accountability, though some gaps remained in reaching marginalized women such as those with disabilities and rural youth. The main value added was in shifting the quality of life for women aspirants and elected officials by increasing their agency, visibility, and ability to influence political spaces, while also improving survivor-centered justice mechanisms. Alignment with UN Women's global and donor policies was strong, but a fuller integration of women's economic empowerment and disability inclusion would have deepened the rights-based approach.

### QUESTION 1: TO WHAT EXTENT WERE GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS INTEGRATED INTO THE PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION?

*Main Finding 1: Gender and human rights principles were central to the project's design and implementation. They shaped the focus on dismantling patriarchal barriers, strengthening survivor-centered justice, and amplifying women's political voices. While the project effectively embedded gender equality and human rights standards into most interventions, it fell short of fully addressing intersectional dimensions, particularly disability inclusion, which limited its adherence to the principle of non-discrimination.*

The project integrated gender equality principles by directly targeting structural inequalities in women's political participation. Its design explicitly acknowledged the systemic barriers women face such as discriminatory social norms, political violence, and exclusion from decision-making and developed a holistic approach combining leadership capacity-building, institutional strengthening, and norm change. Trainings for women aspirants and MCAs in counties like Embu and Kericho helped to equip them with confidence, procedural literacy, and political agency, thereby addressing both individual and systemic barriers to women's leadership.

Human rights principles were equally evident in the project's focus on survivor-centered justice. The establishment and upgrading of Gender Justice Courts provided accessible, dignified, and timely redress for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), including those targeted during electoral periods. This intervention reflected CEDAW's call for access to justice and aligned with the broader UN human rights framework. Similarly, the training of police officers in gender-sensitive electoral security ensured that duty-bearers were equipped to protect women's right to participate safely in political life. These actions advanced the principle of human rights of accountability, holding institutions responsible for protecting and promoting women's rights.

At the community level, interventions tackled discriminatory cultural practices head-on. Dialogues in Kajiado and Kisii addressed taboos around menstruation, early marriage, and women's political legitimacy, gradually shifting attitudes that had historically excluded women from leadership. By engaging elders, male champions, and religious

leaders, the project embedded gender equality into community discourse, advancing the principle of participation and inclusion.

The project also applied visibility and voice strategies that advanced women's rights. Media interventions such as *Ms. President Season Two* amplified women's voices nationally, creating aspirational role models for young women and girls. Similarly, the Filamu Dada initiative empowered women filmmakers while producing advocacy films that celebrated women leaders like Governors Gladys Wanga and Cecily Mbarire. These interventions advanced the human rights principle of empowerment by ensuring that women were not only participants but also storytellers shaping their own narratives.

Despite these strengths, integration of intersectional inclusion was weak. Women with disabilities were rarely targeted through specific strategies, and project activities were not systematically adapted to their needs (e.g., physical accessibility, sign language interpretation, or stigma reduction). As a result, this group remained largely outside the scope of leadership training, mentorship, and advocacy. Similarly, young women and grassroots mobilizers were underrepresented in formal programming. These gaps limited the project's ability to fully embody the human rights principle of non-discrimination and weakened its commitment to "leave no one behind."

## QUESTION 2: HOW HAS ATTENTION TO/INTEGRATION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS ADVANCED THE AREA OF WORK?

**Main Finding 2:** *The project's deliberate integration of gender equality and human rights (GE/HR) concerns advanced women's leadership, enhanced their safety, and strengthened the legitimacy of political processes. By embedding rights-based approaches into institutional reforms and community-level interventions, the project created new opportunities for women while reinforcing accountability and the rule of law as foundations of democratic governance. However, the reach of these benefits was uneven, with women with disabilities, young women, and grassroots mobilizers less consistently engaged thus underscoring the importance of intersectionality in the realization of rights.*

The project helped to position women's political participation as a recognized and integral aspect of democratic governance in Kenya. By placing gender equality at the center of its design and implementation, interventions reframed women's candidacy and leadership as a right rather than an exception. Leadership trainings and mentorship for aspirants and MCAs in Embu, Kericho, and Kisii equipped women with procedural knowledge, confidence, and skills to campaign effectively and contribute to legislative debates. This enabled women to assert themselves not as recipients of charity but as rights-holders entitled to equal representation. Yet, the absence of consistent disaggregated data and participation monitoring for marginalized groups meant that it was difficult to assess how women with disabilities and young grassroots leaders were represented in training and mentorship opportunities.This highlights an inclusivity gap in the programme's otherwise strong rights-based approach.

Institutional advocacy further advanced inclusion and accountability within political systems. Collaboration with the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) encouraged enforcement of internal party accountability for gender compliance, while partnership with KEWOPA ensured that gender equality remained on the parliamentary agenda. By embedding women's rights into institutional mandates, the project advanced systemic change that goes beyond individual empowerment. At the same time, the Charter of Inclusion and ORPP guidelines on disability mainstreaming (2022–2023) signaled progress in recognizing the intersectional needs of persons with disabilities. Nonetheless, these commitments were not always translated into accessible practice, and women with disabilities remained underrepresented in leadership pathways.

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At the county level, gender equality concerns were integrated into devolved governance through the creation of gender-responsive budget lines in Homa Bay and Embu. These allocations institutionalized women's priorities within county budgets thus ensuring that gender considerations were part of standard governance processes rather than dependent on external projects. By embedding rights-based approaches into county planning, the project provided a mechanism for continuity beyond the project cycle. Still, the extent to which marginalized constituencies influenced these allocations varied across counties, with stronger WROs more effective in influencing budgets than weaker organizations in marginalized settings such as Samburu and Wajir.

Attention to human rights also advanced safety and accountability mechanisms. The establishment and upgrading of Gender Justice Courts, combined with the strengthening of capacities for police officers in gender-sensitive electoral security, directly addressed violence against women in politics (VAWP). These reforms signaled that women's right to participate safely in elections was non-negotiable. However, the limited focus on technology-facilitated GBV, which was a growing threat to young women leaders in particular illustrates how gaps in intersectional design can leave emerging constituencies exposed.

At the community level, dialogues in Kajiado, Kisii, and Samburu embedded GE/HR principles into local discourse by tackling taboos around menstruation, early marriage, and women's leadership. These dialogues empowered women to claim political space while gradually shifting community acceptance of women in decision-making roles. Yet participation patterns suggested that rural women and young grassroots mobilizers were often more visible as mobilizers than as leaders in their own right. This unevenness underscores that advancing gender equality and human rights requires deliberate strategies that foreground intersectionality by ensuring that women across lines of age, disability, geography, and social status can access and benefit from empowerment opportunities equally.

## QUESTION 3: HAS THE PROJECT BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS PRINCIPLES (PARTICIPATION, EMPOWERMENT, INCLUSION, NON-DISCRIMINATION, NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY)?

*Main Finding 3: The project was largely implemented in line with human rights and development effectiveness principles, promoting participation, empowerment, accountability, and transparency. However, inclusivity was only partially achieved, as women with disabilities and young rural women were not consistently integrated into interventions thus limiting the project's ability to fully embody the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination.*

The principle of participation was evident throughout the project. Women aspirants, MCAs, and WROs were directly engaged in trainings, mentorship, and advocacy processes. Community dialogues in counties such as Kajiado and Kisii created platforms for ordinary women to engage in discussions on political participation and to challenge restrictive cultural norms. Male champions and elders were also included as allies, which expanded participation beyond women's constituencies to encompass broader societal actors, thereby fostering community-level ownership of gender equality outcomes.

Empowerment was both a core principle and a visible result of implementation. Women leaders consistently reported increased confidence, enhanced procedural literacy, and greater ability to influence decision-making in county assemblies. Initiatives such as *Ms. President Season Two* went beyond skill-building to create national visibility, offering women not only technical capacity but also legitimacy in the public sphere. These outcomes reflect an empowerment-oriented design that strengthened women's agency at both individual and collective levels.

The project also advanced inclusion and non-discrimination, though unevenly. Institutional reforms such as the establishment and upgrading of Gender Justice Courts and the training of police officers in gender-sensitive electoral security ensured survivors of violence had more dignified access to justice, thereby reducing systemic discrimination. At the same time, the project's reach did not consistently extend to marginalized groups. Women with disabilities were underrepresented in trainings and mentorship, while young rural women were often confined to mobilization roles rather than being included in leadership pipelines. This partial inclusivity reveals that while the principle was embedded in the project's design, its implementation was less intersectional than intended.

The principles of national accountability and transparency were advanced through partnerships with oversight and governance institutions. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) integrated gender-sensitive indicators into election monitoring, creating accountability for state actors on women's political participation. The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) enhanced transparency in political party practices by monitoring compliance with gender requirements, while Court Users Committees in counties such as Kisii and Homa Bay improved oversight of GBV response and survivor referral systems. These partnerships demonstrated how national accountability mechanisms were strengthened through project interventions.

## QUESTION 4: WHAT WAS THE MAIN VALUE ADDED OF THE PROJECT IN CHANGING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS?

*Main Finding 4: The project's main value lay in transforming women's agency, visibility, and safety within political spaces, which in turn enhanced their dignity, confidence, and ability to influence governance. While it had limited direct impact on livelihoods, its broader contributions to empowerment, justice, and social recognition significantly improved the quality of life of women and girls in both immediate and long-term ways.*

For many women aspirants and MCAs, the project's value was most visible in the shift from being politically marginalized to becoming confident, prepared actors in decision-making spaces. Trainings and mentorship programmes went beyond technical instruction, instilling confidence, public speaking skills, and knowledge of legislative procedures. Women MCAs in Embu and Kericho emphasized that they could now actively participate in debates and budget discussions, something they previously felt excluded from. Aspirants in Kisii and Homa Bay reported that the mentorship support changed their political trajectories, enabling them to campaign more effectively and envision themselves as leaders. These transformations in agency represent profound improvements in the quality of life, as women gained both voice and influence in governance.

The project also added value by improving safety and access to justice for survivors of violence against women in politics (VAWP). Through the establishment and upgrading of Gender Justice Courts, women survivors of electoral and political violence could access redress in more dignified and survivor-centered environments. Enhanced referral pathways, coordinated through Court Users Committees in Kisii and Homa Bay, also reduced stigma and improved access to psychosocial and legal support. These improvements removed barriers that had previously silenced or discouraged women from entering public life, thereby enabling them to exercise their political rights more freely and safely.

At the community and societal levels, media interventions created shifts in social attitudes that improved the lives of women and girls by expanding what was seen as possible for them. *Ms. President Season Two* provided role models whose leadership resonated nationally, showing girls and young women that women could be visible, competent, and respected leaders. The Filamu Dada films similarly showcased the journeys of women governors like Gladys Wanga and Cecily Mbarire, making women's leadership both visible and aspirational. For young girls, this visibility

contributed to a new imagination of their future possibilities, reducing the cultural stigma that has long constrained women's ambitions.

While the project's direct impact on livelihoods or economic well-being was limited since it did not systematically integrate women's economic empowerment, it nonetheless contributed to women's broader dignity, visibility, and freedom from fear, which are fundamental dimensions of well-being. Women respondents repeatedly highlighted that feeling safer in political spaces, having their voices respected in assemblies, and being able to participate without stigma significantly improved their confidence and quality of life.

## QUESTION 5: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE PROJECT COHERENT INTERNALLY IN UN WOMEN AND WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM IN KENYA?

***Main Finding 5: The project maintained strong internal coherence within UN Women and demonstrated meaningful alignment with UN system priorities, particularly in governance, electoral preparedness, and rights-based advocacy. However, opportunities for collaboration with agencies focusing on youth, disability, and humanitarian programming were underutilized thus limiting the breadth of system-wide coherence.***

Within UN Women, the project was closely integrated with existing thematic portfolios, creating synergies across Women's Political Participation (WPP), Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG), and Women, Peace and Security (WPS). By combining leadership capacity-building with institutional strengthening and community-level norm change, the project embodied UN Women's "triple mandate" (normative, operational, and coordination) in practice. For example, EVAWG efforts around survivor-centered justice reinforced the WPP agenda by making political spaces safer, while WPS work through inputs to KNAP III provided an additional framework for linking women's political inclusion to peace and security outcomes. This integration ensured that the project's contributions were not siloed but part of a coherent organizational approach.

At the UN system level, the project contributed to collective priorities under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Kenya. Coordination with UNDP through the Elections Basket Fund ensured complementarity in electoral preparedness, with UN Women leading on gender and inclusion while UNDP supported broader election management systems. Collaboration with OHCHR on rights-based advocacy strengthened the normative grounding of interventions, ensuring alignment with international human rights frameworks such as CEDAW and the ICCPR. These partnerships avoided duplication and reinforced the UN system's credibility as a coherent partner in Kenya's governance and human rights landscape.

Despite these successes, the project did not fully exploit opportunities for collaboration with agencies outside the governance and human rights clusters. Engagement with UNICEF and UNFPA on youth and sexual and reproductive health could have expanded outreach to young women, a constituency often excluded from leadership programming. Similarly, collaboration with ILO or UNHCR could have linked women's political participation to economic empowerment or the inclusion of refugee women. Limited engagement with humanitarian-focused UN agencies also meant that gender equality in political participation was not systematically connected to resilience-building in fragile or crisis-affected contexts.

## QUESTION 6: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE PROJECT COHERENT WITH WIDER UN WOMEN DONOR POLICY?

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*Main Finding 6: The project was highly consistent with wider UN Women donor policy, particularly Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), which prioritizes inclusive governance, prevention of violence, and women's leadership as drivers of sustainable development. However, coherence was less complete in relation to economic empowerment, which is a key pillar of both GAC and UN Women policy frameworks. This limited the project's comprehensiveness.*

The project strongly reflected GAC's feminist policy priorities, which frame gender equality not only as a human rights imperative but also as a prerequisite for sustainable development. Its focus on enhancing women's political participation, preventing and responding to violence against women in politics (VAWP), and strengthening institutional accountability aligned directly with FIAP's thematic priorities on inclusive governance and the elimination of gender-based violence. For example, the establishment of Gender Justice Courts advanced FIAP's objectives by institutionalizing survivor-centered justice, while *Ms. President Season Two* promoted women's leadership and visibility in line with donor commitments to challenging discriminatory social norms.

The project was also coherent with UN Women's global strategic frameworks, particularly the Strategic Plan (2022–2025), which emphasizes women's full and equal participation in decision-making and governance. Its alignment was further reinforced through the integration of advocacy with KEWOPA, ORPP, and NGEC, demonstrating how donor investments were embedded within UN Women's triple mandate (normative, operational, and coordination). The project's multi-level approach mirrored both UN Women's and GAC's emphasis on systemic transformation.

Despite this strong alignment, coherence was less robust in relation to economic empowerment, an area emphasized in both FIAP and UN Women's Strategic Plan as a cross-cutting driver of gender equality. Interviews with women aspirants in Kisii, Kericho, and Wajir repeatedly highlighted that the high cost of campaigning and lack of access to financial resources remained one of the greatest barriers to women's political participation. While the project invested heavily in leadership training, visibility, and institutional reforms, it did not address these structural financial constraints. The omission of women's economic empowerment strategies such as support for campaign financing, linkages with women's savings groups, or partnerships with private sector actors meant that the project's contribution to donor policy priorities was comprehensive in some areas but incomplete in others.

## QUESTION 7: TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE PROJECT COHERENT WITH INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS, OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN?

*Main Finding 7: The project strongly aligned with international human rights and gender equality obligations by embedding global norms into both national advocacy and county-level interventions. It advanced Kenya's commitments under CEDAW, contributed to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda under UNSCR 1325, and supported the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). However, limited systematic integration of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy highlighted a gap in addressing intersectional rights within the broader international framework.*

The project advanced Kenya's commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by tackling discriminatory political practices and advocating for compliance with the two-thirds gender rule. By supporting women aspirants, strengthening party accountability through the ORPP, and addressing violence against women in politics (VAWP), the project directly responded to CEDAW's obligations on

equal participation in political and public life (Article 7)[40]. The establishment and operationalization of Gender Justice Courts translated CEDAW's emphasis on access to justice into a practical, institutional reform that is likely to endure beyond the life of the project.

The project also reinforced Kenya's commitments under the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, particularly UN Security Council Resolution 1325. By feeding into Kenya's Third National Action Plan (KNAP III) and supporting women's participation in county peace committees in Samburu and Kajiado, the project ensured that women's voices were integrated into peace and security processes. This coherence underscored the recognition that women's leadership is not only a matter of representation but also essential for conflict prevention and inclusive peacebuilding, as required under UNSCR 1325.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was another area of strength. The project advanced SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by empowering women aspirants, challenging discriminatory norms, and strengthening institutional mechanisms to protect women's rights. At the same time, interventions such as training over 600 police officers in gender-sensitive electoral security and supporting county-level GBV referral mechanisms contributed to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). These dual contributions highlighted how women's political empowerment is interconnected with broader democratic governance and human rights agendas.

Importantly, the project also reflected UN Women's global normative mandate, ensuring that its triple role (normative, operational, and coordination) was grounded in international human rights standards. By combining legal reforms, operational capacity-building, and convening power, the intervention bridged global commitments with local realities.

Despite this strong alignment, the project was less effective in systematically integrating intersectional rights, particularly under the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS). While women with disabilities occasionally participated in community dialogues, they were not consistently included in leadership training, mentorship, or advocacy programming. This omission limited the project's ability to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, which international frameworks increasingly demand. Similarly, young women and rural grassroots leaders were underrepresented, highlighting gaps in inclusivity within the broader human rights approach.

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[40] https://www.eods.eu/library/UN_CEDAW_%20General%20Recommendation%2023_1997_EN.pdf

## 3.7 IMPACTS

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LONG-TERM EFFECTS PRODUCED BY THE PROJECT, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, INTENDED OR UNINTENDED.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

The project led to measurable long-term improvements in women's visibility, confidence, and inclusion in political spaces. Although the overall increase in women's representation in elected positions remained modest, significant qualitative changes occurred at the county and community levels. These included increased public acceptance of women as leaders, better institutional responses to electoral violence, and the emergence of women with proven ability to contest and influence future elections. However, achieving these outcomes was also influenced by structural, political, and socio-cultural factors beyond the project's direct control.

As scholars such as Kanyinga (2018) and Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis (2020) note, Kenya's political system is rooted in a competitive, patronage-based culture where access to power heavily depends on loyalty networks, party structures, and financial resources[41]. These factors significantly influence women's entry and success in politics, regardless of their individual skills or external backing. Therefore, the project's impact should be seen as contributory rather than causative, since it helped create enabling conditions within a broader political economy that remains deeply gendered.

Some unforeseen adverse effects also emerged, such as increased online harassment of women leaders and the potential for political backlash in patriarchal regions. Overall, the project's contributions went beyond immediate outputs as it shaped attitudes, practices, and institutional frameworks in ways that are likely to last, although structural reforms like the enforcement of the two-thirds gender rule remain out of reach.

### QUESTION 1: TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT BE IDENTIFIED AND MEASURED?

*Main Finding 1: The changes produced by the project can be identified and measured through both quantitative and qualitative evidence, with clear progress in women's representation, institutional reforms, and shifting social norms. However, while structural and numeric gains are visible, deeper normative changes were less systematically captured by the project's monitoring framework, leaving some outcomes under-documented.*

At the quantitative level, the project contributed to measurable gains in political representation and institutional reforms. Nationally, the number of women governors increased from three in 2017 to seven in 2022, a significant milestone in Kenya's political landscape. While this change cannot be attributed solely to the project, respondents and secondary evidence suggested that the project's visibility and advocacy efforts contributed to an enabling environment for women's candidacy. Similarly, the rise in the number of women deputy governors was partly linked to heightened public awareness and legitimacy of women leaders, bolstered by interventions such as *Ms. President Season Two*.

At the county level, the impact was visible in the empowerment of individual leaders. Several MCAs who participated in training and mentorship reported increased confidence and procedural literacy, which translated into tangible legislative outcomes. In Wajir, for example, women MCAs influenced amendments to county finance bills to make

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[41] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/17531055.2024.2359154?needAccess=true

them more gender-responsive, demonstrating how capacity-building resulted in concrete policy gains. These outcomes are identifiable and measurable in terms of both participation and legislative change.

Institutional reforms also provided clear, measurable impact. The establishment of twelve SGBV courts, later upgraded to Gender Justice Courts, represents a structural achievement that directly improved survivors' access to justice. These courts can be tracked quantitatively through case handling data and qualitatively through survivor testimonies, providing strong evidence of systemic change that is likely to endure. Training over 600 police officers in gender-sensitive electoral security further strengthened institutional capacities, a result measurable by the number of officers trained and observable in their deployment during the 2022 elections.

At the qualitative level, changes were evident in shifting norms and perceptions. Community dialogues in Kajiado and Kisii helped dismantle harmful taboos, with respondents reporting that women were increasingly recognized as capable leaders. In Kajiado, women spoke of voting independently, breaking with the tradition of male control over ID cards. Media interventions, particularly *Ms. President* and the Filamu Dada films, broadened narratives about women in leadership, creating role models for young girls and changing societal attitudes. These normative shifts are more difficult to quantify but were repeatedly validated in interviews and focus group discussions.

However, external political and economic contexts continued to shape the depth of these outcomes. As Murunga (2020) and Nzomo (2021) observe, the internal governance of political parties remains a major barrier to women's advancement. Patronage networks, opaque nomination processes, and loyalty-based systems undermine women's competitiveness. Moreover, the economic muscle of women remains weak relative to their male counterparts, limiting their ability to mobilize campaigns, finance party activities, and withstand electoral competition (Kamau, 2019; Bauer & Darkwah, 2020)[42]. These findings suggest that future programming should integrate Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) components to strengthen the economic foundations of women's political engagement.

Despite these gains, the project's monitoring system under-captured long-term normative change. While it tracked outputs such as the number of trainings delivered, participants reached, and media broadcasts produced, it did not consistently measure attitudinal shifts, changes in party practices, or women's empowerment trajectories over time. This gap made it harder to fully document and attribute some of the most important social changes catalyzed by the project.

## QUESTION 2: WHAT WERE THE UNINTENDED EFFECTS, IF ANY, OF THE INTERVENTION?

*Main Finding 2: The project generated both positive and negative unintended effects. Some innovations created ripple effects that extended impact beyond the programme's design, while others exposed women leaders to new risks, particularly in digital spaces and patriarchal political contexts. These outcomes highlight both the transformative potential and the vulnerabilities of visibility-driven empowerment strategies.*

On the positive side, several interventions produced benefits that exceeded their original scope. The Filamu Dada initiative not only trained female filmmakers and produced advocacy films but also created durable resources that continue to be used in schools, community forums, and civic education campaigns. By amplifying women's stories in formats that outlast the project cycle, these films inspired new constituencies, particularly young people, and strengthened public narratives about women's leadership in unexpected ways.

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[42] https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/ejpg/3/1/article-p101.xml

Similarly, alumni networks formed through *Ms. President Season Two* evolved into self-sustaining mentorship platforms. Contestants reported that they continued to support one another beyond the project, sharing campaign strategies, connecting with communities, and mentoring younger women. This extended the project's reach into future electoral cycles, creating ripple effects that were not explicitly designed but proved central to sustaining momentum around women's leadership.

On the negative side, increased visibility also created vulnerabilities. Many women leaders, especially Ms. President contestants and vocal MCAs, reported experiencing heightened online harassment, including trolling, defamatory posts, and threats on social media platforms, an extension of what scholars call the "digital patriarchy". While visibility-built legitimacy and inspiration motivated others, it also exposed women to new types of gendered violence that the project was not fully prepared to address. The lack of systematic digital safety training or psychosocial support meant that women often faced these risks alone, with some expressing reluctance to campaign actively online due to fear of further abuse.

In patriarchal counties such as Samburu and Wajir, empowerment of women leaders occasionally provoked backlash from male elites. Women aspirants described subtle forms of political retaliation, such as being sidelined from clan negotiations or denied access to campaign resources. This demonstrates how cultural and religious traditions, combined with male-dominated patronage, still define the boundaries of women's political legitimacy (Kanyinga, 2018; Kamau, 2019)[43]. In some cases, women's increased assertiveness was perceived as threatening to established power structures, prompting quiet but effective resistance from male political actors. These dynamics illustrate that while empowerment interventions can open space, they may also trigger resistance that undermines women's participation if not accompanied by broader systemic reforms and safeguards.

Negative perceptions of women leaders (framed around moral standing, family responsibilities, or emotional temperament) also persisted, showing the enduring power of gender stereotypes. These biases limited women's ability to translate visibility into votes and shaped how parties, media, and communities engaged with female aspirants.

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[43] https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC-1521603d12

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions presented below synthesize the evaluation's overall judgments across the OECD/DAC and UNEG criteria. They are not summaries of findings but rather interpretive assessments that draw meaning from the evidence and analysis. Each conclusion reflects the evaluation's analysis of strengths and weaknesses and provides insight into the extent to which the project achieved its intended results. The section also highlights implications for sustainability and future programming since they form the analytical bridge to the subsequent recommendations.

*Relevance (Findings 3.1)*

Based on Findings 1-2, the project was highly relevant to Kenya's constitutional, policy, and international gender-equality commitments. It directly addressed the two-thirds gender principle, the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), and Kenya's 12 Generation Equality Forum commitments. Stakeholders consistently confirmed that the programme tackled real barriers women face in political participation, especially during the 2022 general elections. Its focus on leadership capacity, violence-free elections, and social norms change strongly aligned with national and county priorities. However, the project's relevance was somewhat limited by the low engagement of women with disabilities and grassroots community groups, whose perspectives were not fully integrated into planning and data systems. Overall, the evaluation finds that the project had significant relevance by effectively aligning with the country's context, while also highlighting ways to enhance inclusion in future programs.

*Coherence (Findings 3.2)*

The project demonstrated strong vertical coherence by collaborating with national and county institutions such as KEWOPA, ORPP, SDFGAA, and NGEC, creating complementary linkages between national policy advocacy and local implementation. It also benefited from horizontal collaborations among implementing partners like URAIA Trust, Media Focus on Africa, AWCFS, IAWJ, and others, which integrated leadership, governance, and justice interventions. It complemented other initiatives funded by Finland, Ireland, and UNDP, avoiding duplication and building on earlier EVAWG and WPS programmes. Compared to earlier projects, the Canada-funded intervention introduced innovative strategies and created durable advocacy resources such as *Filamu Dada*, positioning it as a model for replication. However, coherence varied across counties. In several locations, grassroots women's rights organizations reported feeling sidelined from decision-making or visibility activities, indicating uneven horizontal collaboration. The evaluation, therefore, concludes that the project achieved moderate-to-high coherence, excelling in national coordination but needing stronger county-level mechanisms to connect formal institutions with community-based women's movements.

*Effectiveness (Findings 3.3)*

Evidence shows that the project made significant progress toward its targeted outcomes. Leadership and mentorship efforts contributed to a noticeable increase in women aspirants and elected leaders in 2022, while strengthening institutions such as the police, judiciary, and Court User Committees improved preparedness to handle Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP). Training male champions and journalists also improved gender-sensitive reporting and public discussion. However, qualitative monitoring of norm change and behavioral shifts was limited due to restricted data coverage after the evaluator transition. Based on triangulated evidence, the evaluation concludes that the project was highly effective in enhancing women's leadership skills and institutional frameworks, but only moderately effective in fostering deeper, measurable attitudinal change at the community level.

*Efficiency (Findings 3.4)*

Implementation was generally efficient, with activities completed within the set timeframe and budget. The integrated design linking leadership development, GBV prevention, and media advocacy optimized resource use and partner expertise. Coordination between UN Women and implementing partners ensured value for money, and adaptive management reduced disruptions during the evaluator transition and post-COVID recovery. Some administrative delays in procurement and reporting temporarily decreased efficiency, but they did not significantly impact outputs. Overall, the project showed high efficiency, delivering quality results within tight timelines and complex coordination.

*Sustainability (Findings 3.5)*

Sustainability prospects were moderate to promising. Institutional reforms, such as the establishment of gender desks, gender-responsive budgeting, and county peace committees with women's participation, have created tangible structures likely to endure. Alumni networks from Ms. President and Filamu Dada continued to mentor women leaders and amplify advocacy messages beyond the project period. However, sustainability remains vulnerable to three main risks: (i) absence of enabling national legislation to enforce the two-thirds gender principle; (ii) limited financial resilience of WROs and county governments; and (iii) dependence on donor funding for advocacy campaigns. Strengthened domestic financing and policy enforcement will therefore be essential to consolidate results.

*Impact Prospects (Findings 3.7)*

The project made a significant early impact by increasing women's political visibility and representation. Gains in elected leadership positions in 2022, improved institutional responsiveness to VAWP, and increased media coverage of women as capable leaders all indicated systemic progress. The programme also produced intangible results such as greater self-confidence among women aspirants, stronger mentorship networks, and gradual norm changes in communities that were previously resistant to women's leadership. Negative externalities like online harassment and local political backlash continued, highlighting the ongoing social transformation needed. Overall, the project's contribution to Kenya's women's political empowerment agenda is considered meaningful, as it has established a solid foundation for lasting change in the next electoral cycle.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented below are drawn directly from the evaluation's findings and conclusions. They are designed to address identified gaps while building on the project's strengths, to enhance future programming on women's political participation in Kenya. They are logically derived from the findings and conclusions and reflect stakeholder perspectives. Consultations with UN Women staff also informed them during the feedback process. They are intended to strengthen the design, delivery, and sustainability of future women's political participation initiatives. Each recommendation references the relevant findings (F#) and is classified by priority level (High, Medium, or Long-term) and responsible audience (UN Women, Partners, or Policy Actors).

**Table 3: Recommendations**

| No. | Issue Identified | Recommended Action | Responsible Actor(s) | Priority | Indicators / Means of Verification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Uneven grassroots engagement as rural women, youth, and women with disabilities (WWDs) remain underrepresented in WPP processes. | Allocate ring-fenced budget lines within Women's Political Participation (WPP) programmes for grassroots mobilization. <br><br> Institutionalize participatory planning platforms that empower local WROs, youth, and WWDs to set the agenda, not just implement. | UN Women <br><br> County Governments <br><br> Implementing Partners | High | County budgets include explicit allocations for grassroots engagement. <br><br> Number and diversity of grassroots representatives participating in planning/review forums. |
| 2 | Smaller grassroots WROs are marginalized in project design and funding processes. | Establish intergenerational and cross-county coalitions linking grassroots WROs, youth, and national advocacy actors. <br><br> Provide targeted capacity-building in fundraising, proposal writing, and communications, and amplify grassroots outcomes through media partnerships. | UN Women <br><br> Civil Society/ WRO Networks <br><br> Media Partners | Medium | Number of functional intergenerational coalitions formed. <br><br> Grassroots advocacy outcomes are documented and shared in public forums. |
| 3 | Rising technology-facilitated violence against women in politics (TF-VAWP). | Mainstream digital safety and cyber resilience into WPP programming. <br><br> Train women leaders and aspirants on online protection <br><br> Collaborate with tech companies, ICT authorities, and law enforcement to strengthen response frameworks <br><br> Advocate for the enforcement of cyber-harassment legislation. | UN Women <br><br> Media Focus on Africa <br><br> IAW <br><br> NPS <br><br> Ministry of ICT | High | Number of women leaders trained on digital safety. <br><br> Number of documented TF-VAWP cases addressed. <br><br> Existence of policy/partnership frameworks on online safety. |

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| 4 | Campaign financing remains a critical barrier for women candidates. | Advocate for gender-responsive campaign finance regulation and strengthen women's financial literacy and access to credit through partnerships with financial institutions and microfinance schemes. Integrate economic empowerment into WPP policy frameworks. | Government of Kenya NGEC ORPP Parliament | High | Existence of a regulated campaign finance policy/framework. Number of women trained in financial literacy and resource mobilization. Increase in women accessing campaign funds or credit facilities. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Uneven county ownership and weak institutionalization of WPP commitments. | Reinstate gender mainstreaming indicators in County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) Institutionalize gender-responsive budget lines and tracking tools within county treasuries and assemblies. Establish accountability frameworks for monitoring progress. | National and County Governments Council of Governors County Assemblies | High | Number of counties adopting gender-responsive CIDPs. % of county budgets allocated to WPP activities. Existence of annual gender accountability reports. |
| 6 | Weak enforcement of laws on VAWP and discrimination. | Resource and operationalize Gender Justice Courts and strengthen coordination between the Judiciary, NPS, and ORPP for enforcement of electoral laws. Introduce mandatory reporting of VAWP cases in election monitoring systems. | Government of Kenya Judiciary NPS IAWJ ORPP | High | Number of VAWP cases prosecuted and publicly reported. Annual ORPP compliance reports on gender quotas. Existence of dedicated GBV/VAWP court budgets. |
| 7 | Psychosocial distress and online harassment among women leaders remain under-addressed. | Partner with digital rights and psychosocial support organizations to provide counselling, mentorship, and digital literacy programmes for women leaders, youth, and WWDs. Establish peer-support networks at county level. | WROs; CSOs; UN Women; Media Focus on Africa | Medium | Number of women leaders receiving psychosocial and digital support. Participation rates of marginalized groups in mentorship programmes. County-level peer-support networks established. |

## 6. LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation of the project offers several lessons that are valuable not only for UN Women and its partners but also for other stakeholders committed to advancing women's leadership and inclusive governance.

### INTEGRATION OF THEMATIC AREAS CREATES STRONGER OUTCOMES- (F1-RELEVANCE, F2-COHERENCE, F1-EFFECTIVENESS, F1-EFFICIENCY, F4-SUSTAINABILITY)

A key lesson is that integrating women's political participation, EVAWG, and Women, Peace and Security within a single programme created synergies that amplified results. By linking leadership training with survivor-centered justice and peacebuilding, the project responded to the complex realities women face in political life. This holistic approach should be sustained in future programming, as it reflects the interconnected nature of women's empowerment.

### MEDIA AND STORYTELLING ARE POWERFUL TOOLS FOR NORM CHANGE- (F1-EFFECTIVENESS, F2-EFFICIENCY, F3-IMPACT)

Innovations such as *Ms. President* and *Filamu Dada* demonstrated the potential of media to shift perceptions about women in leadership and to inspire new generations of women leaders. Storytelling resonated more deeply with communities than traditional sensitization campaigns and provided sustainable advocacy materials. This underscores the lesson that norm change is most effective when approached through creative, culturally resonant channels.

### GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT MUST BE SYSTEMATICALLY PRIORITIZED – (F1-RELEVANCE, F2-COHERENCE, F3-EFFECTIVENESS, F4-SUSTAINABILITY)

The project showed that national-level advocacy and institutional reforms are necessary but insufficient without consistent grassroots engagement. Counties where local women's groups were fully engaged, such as Embu and Homa Bay, demonstrated stronger ownership and sustainability. Conversely, in counties like Wajir, exclusion of grassroots actors weakened impact. Future interventions must therefore ensure grassroots WROs are not only beneficiaries but also co-designers of initiatives.

### EMERGING THREATS REQUIRE ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING- (F1-EFFECTIVENESS, F2-EFFICIENCY, F3-IMPACT)

The rise of online harassment during the 2022 elections highlighted a new frontier of violence against women in politics that was not adequately addressed in project design. This experience demonstrates the importance of adaptive programming that can respond to emerging challenges, particularly in digital spaces. Integrating digital safety and psychosocial support from the outset is now a necessity rather than an option.

### INTERSECTIONAL INCLUSION REMAINS A GAP- (F1-RELEVANCE, F2-COHERENCE, F3-EFFECTIVENESS, F4-SUSTAINABILITY)

While the project advanced women's participation broadly, it was less successful in systematically including women with disabilities, young women, and rural grassroots mobilizers. This points to the lesson that gender-responsive programming must go beyond "women" as a category and intentionally address intersectionality. Only then can programming live up to the principle of leaving no one behind.

### WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE) IS KEY IN ENHANCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION (WPP)- (F1-RELEVANCE, F3-IMPACT, F4-SUSTAINABILITY)

A key lesson emerging from the evaluation is that WPP cannot be fully achieved without parallel investment in WEE. The project showed that while leadership training, mentorship, and institutional reforms improve women's access to political spaces, many potential leaders remain constrained by financial insecurity. Limited access to campaign

resources, credit, and income-generating opportunities often determines whether women can sustain political ambitions or withdraw early. Economic empowerment provides the foundation for agency, independence, and resilience. These are qualities essential for navigating political competition and decision-making spaces dominated by men.

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