

IN BRIEF

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION CÔTE D'IVOIRE 2021–2025

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) conducted by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Country Office in Côte d'Ivoire. The evaluation was conducted from November 2024 to December 2025 and covered implementation of the Country Office's Strategic Note 2021–2025.

Purpose, objectives and scope

The purpose of the evaluation is to support learning, strategic decision-making and accountability for results for the UN Women Côte d'Ivoire Country Office and its key stakeholders. Specifically, the evaluation aims to:

- assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and integration of human rights and gender equality principles in the design and implementation of the Country Office's Strategic Note 2021–2025;
- generate actionable lessons and recommendations to inform development of the next Strategic Note (2026–2030); and
- contribute to organizational learning on UN Women's strategic positioning and delivery modalities in a lower-middle-income, politically stable but socially unequal context.

The CPE covered the Strategic Note's four programmatic impact areas: Women's Political Participation (WPP), Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) and Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS/HA), as well as results under the Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework. The CPE examined interventions implemented between 1 January 2021 and 31 August 2025 at national level and in selected regions.

Primary intended users of the evaluation include the UN Women Côte d'Ivoire Country Office, the UN Women Regional Office for West and Central Africa,

headquarters divisions and IES. Secondary intended users include government counterparts, civil society organizations (CSOs), donors and UN system partners.

The evaluation is intended to inform:

- accountability for results and resource use under the current Strategic Note;
- coordination and advocacy within the UN system; and
- resource mobilization and partnership engagement.

The evaluation results will be made publicly accessible through UN Women's Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system.

Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation employed a theory-based, mixed-methods approach aligned with UN Women's evaluation principles, including gender responsiveness, participation and respect for human rights. Contribution analysis was used to assess the plausibility of UN Women's contributions to observed changes. A reconstructed theory of change provided the analytical framework.

Data collection methods included document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and an online survey. Stakeholders consulted included UN Women staff, government partners, CSOs, donors and UN agencies. While efforts were made to ensure inclusive participation, engagement of persons with disabilities and some marginalized groups was limited, constraining the depth of the CPE's leave no one behind analysis.

Context

Côte d'Ivoire has experienced sustained economic growth and relative political stability since 2011, alongside persistent gender inequalities. Women remain under-represented in political decision-making; concentrated in informal and low-productivity economic activities; and disproportionately affected by gender-based violence (GBV). Structural constraints related to social norms, uneven decentralization and limited institutional capacity continue to affect the translation of national commitments into tangible outcomes for women and girls.

The Strategic Note 2021–2025 was aligned with the country's National Development Plan (PND 2021–2025), the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and international normative frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Key findings

RELEVANCE

The Country Office's Strategic Note and project portfolio were well aligned with national priorities, UN system frameworks and international gender equality commitments. UN Women's focus on governance, women's leadership, prevention of GBV and WEE responded to clearly articulated national needs. Relevance was strongest at the institutional and policy levels. However, emerging and persistent issues, including the sustainability of women's livelihoods and uneven access to services for marginalized groups, were not consistently addressed through dedicated indicators or targeted interventions.



Photo: UN Women/Yulia Panevina

COHERENCE

UN Women played a central coordination role on gender equality within the UN system, particularly through leadership of the Gender Thematic Group and engagement under the UNSDCF. Joint programming and inter-agency collaboration were evident, particularly in ERAW and humanitarian contexts. However, portfolio coherence was largely cumulative and adaptive rather than deliberately engineered from the outset. Many connections across thematic areas emerged retrospectively through shared normative frameworks and recurring institutional partnerships, rather than through explicit ex-ante design. Internal portfolio coherence was further constrained by fragmented funding, parallel projects with similar objectives and limited sequencing across impact areas. Links between normative work, capacity development and community-level outcomes were not always explicit.

EFFECTIVENESS

The portfolio delivered most planned outputs and contributed to institutional and normative changes, including support to electoral processes, policy development, coordination mechanisms and GBV response frameworks. Effectiveness was strongest where interventions combined technical assistance, capacity development and sustained engagement with national institutions. However, evidence of outcome-level change for women and girls was often insufficient to determine its extent consistently across interventions. Many interventions relied primarily on output-level indicators, such as numbers trained or reached, with limited verification of behavioural change, income sustainability or shifts in decision-making power.

Partnerships and coordination emerged as an important cross-cutting feature of the portfolio. UN Women engaged extensively in joint programming and inter-agency coordination, while also relying on a wide range of civil society actors for advocacy, capacity-building and implementation. However, the breadth of these arrangements, combined with the investment required to sustain them, points to the need for more deliberate joint planning, clearer partnership frameworks and stronger use of coordination platforms for follow-up and accountability.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability prospects varied across programmatic areas. Institutional anchoring was relatively stronger in governance and WPP, where capacities built within electoral and government bodies are likely to persist. In WEE and EAW, sustainability was weaker due to limited government budget allocations, absence of exit strategies and continued dependence on external funding. Few projects included explicit plans for institutional or financial handover, constraining prospects for scaling or continuation beyond the project cycle.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

The Strategic Note articulated commitments to human rights-based approaches and leave no one behind principles. In practice, implementation focused primarily on women as a homogeneous group. Disability, age, location and other intersecting vulnerabilities were inconsistently reflected in project design, indicators and budgets. Monitoring frameworks rarely captured differential outcomes across groups, limiting accountability for inclusiveness and equity.

EFFICIENCY

The Country Office demonstrated adaptability in managing a complex portfolio of small, donor-earmarked grants. However, this funding structure increased transaction costs and was reportedly labour intensive. Short implementation cycles, together with the repeated need to undertake project start-up (including recruitment, partner selection, work planning and administrative set-up) and staff capacity constraints limited opportunities for economies of scale and structured sequencing. Staffing gaps and turnover affected continuity, institutional memory and monitoring capacity, particularly in results-based management.

Conclusion

The Country Office has made credible contributions to advancing gender equality through policy influence, coordination and institutional capacity development during the 2021–2025 Strategic Note period. The Country Office's role as a trusted technical and convening actor within the UN system and with national counterparts is a clear strength.

At the same time, the portfolio's heavy reliance on small, short-term, donor-earmarked funding constrained coherence, efficiency and sustainability. While outputs were largely delivered, the translation of these outputs into demonstrable, sustained outcomes for women and girls remains limited in several areas.

The Country Office demonstrated proactiveness in advancing priority areas where opportunities arose, but evidence points to a persistent misalignment between strategic ambitions and a fragmented, donor-driven funding structure.

Weaknesses in outcome-level indicators, monitoring systems and leave no one behind targeting limited the Country Office's ability to track results consistently and use evidence for learning, accountability and strategic adaptation.



Photo: UN Women/Yulia Panevina

Recommendations to UN Women Côte d'Ivoire

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Clarify strategic focus and strengthen portfolio management.

The Country Office should clarify its strategic focus and strengthen portfolio management to enhance impact and efficiency.

The Country Office should concentrate resources on a limited number of core interventions that provide a clear organising framework for the portfolio. Annual portfolio reviews should strengthen synergies and sequencing across impact areas. A multi-year resource mobilisation strategy should seek fewer, larger and more flexible grants, including pooled funding opportunities within the UN Country Team.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Link normative work to measurable community-level outcomes.

The Country Office should strengthen programme design by explicitly linking normative work to measurable community-level outcomes.

New interventions should establish explicit theories of change and monitorable pathways between normative work and community-level outcomes. Designs should include realistic sequencing, adequate preparation, costed sustainability assumptions and dedicated monitoring and evaluation resources.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Formalize coordination and partnership structures

The Country Office should build resilience and amplify impact by strengthening the Gender Thematic Group's role in joint analysis and programming and establishing continuity arrangements that reduce dependence on individual personnel. Structured engagement and capacity development for civil society partners should strengthen accountability, participation and broader ownership of results

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Revitalize results-based management to focus on outcomes, learning and adaptive management.

The Country Office should include in its Strategic Note a limited set of outcome-level indicators that capture empowerment, access and inclusion, with feasible disaggregation by location and disability. Semi-annual portfolio reflection exercises should use quantitative and qualitative evidence to support learning and programme adaptation.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Optimize operational processes to prevent inefficiencies and safeguard delivery quality.

The Country Office should address prolonged staffing gaps in operations and finance to ensure adequate oversight, reduce operational risks and protect programme delivery quality.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Develop and execute distinct sustainability and transition strategies for each impact area.

The Country Office should ensure that each impact area is supported by a tailored sustainability and transition plan. These plans should set out formal handover arrangements, domestic financing pathways and concrete measures for integration into government planning and budgeting systems, with continued attention to inclusion and accessibility.

The analysis and recommendations of this evaluation are those of the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women. This is an independent publication by the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS).