



Entité des Nations Unies pour l'égalité des sexes
et l'autonomisation des femmes

**Evaluation of the Contribution of Italian Funded Projects to
Ending Violence against Women and Promoting Gender Equality
in ECOWAS Member States**

**UN Women West Africa Sub-Regional Office (WARO), Dakar, Senegal, with
case studies in Mali and Sierra Leone**

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List of Acronyms

AAA - Accra Agenda for Action
AMNET – Advocacy Movement Network
CB - Capacity Building
CBO – Community-based organization
CD – Capacity Development
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CO – Country Office
CoP – Community of Practice
CPM – Country Programme Manager
CSO - Civil Society Organization
CSW – Commission on the Status of Women
DAW - Division for the Advancement of Women
DHS - Demographic and Health Surveys
DVU – Domestic Violence Unit
ECOWAS - The Economic Community Of West African States
EVAW – Ending Violence Against Women
FGM/C – Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting
FSU – Family Support Unit
GDCe – Gender Development Centre
GELD – Gender Equitable Local Development
GBV – Gender Based Violence
GTT – Gender Thematic Team
HQ – Head quarters
HR – Human Rights
HRBA – Human Rights-Based Approach
ICIEG – Cape Verdean National Gender Institute
IGA(s) – Income Generating Activity
IHRL – International Human Rights Law
INSTRAW - International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
IRC – International Rescue Commission
IT Coop – Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cooperation Department
IWD – International Women’s Day
JV – Joint Vision
K&L – Knowledge and learning
LDC – Least Developed Countries
LL – Lessons Learned
MDG – Millennium Development Goals
MICS Multiple Indicator Clusters Survey
MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
MSWGCA – Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Child Affairs
Nac-GBV – National Committee on Gender Based Violence
NATCOM – National Committee
NeWMAP – Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO – National Programme Officer
NGSP – Sierra Leone National Gender Strategic Plan
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OC – Outcome
 OSAGI - Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
 PAC – Programme Approval Committee
 PB – Peacebuilding (as a UN Led process)
 PBF – Peace building Fund
 PBSO - Peacebuilding Support Office
 PRODOC – Project Document
 PRSP II- Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan
 RO – Regional Office
 SCR - Security Council Resolution
 SGBV – Sexual-Gender Based Violence
 SILNAP – Sierra Leone National Action Plan
 SL – Sierra Leone
 SLFPAC – Sierra Leone Female Parliamentary Caucus
 SLP – Sierra Leone Police
 SLWF – Sierra Leone Women’s Forum
 SRO – Sub-Regional Office (UNW WARO)
 SRSG – Special Representative of the Secretary General
 ToR – Terms of Reference
 TOT – Training of Trainers
 TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission
 UN – United Nations
 UNAMSIL – United Nations Sierra Leone Peacekeeping Force
 UNCT – United Nations Country Team
 UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
 UNICEF- United Nations Children’s Fund
 UNIFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women
 UNJFV – United Nations Joint Vision
 UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
 UNIPSIL - United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
 UNTF – United Nations Trust Fund to end violence against women
 UNW – UN Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
 US HR – US Human Rights Report (annual)
 VAW – Violence against women
 VAWG - Violence against women and girls
 WA – West Africa
 WARO – UNW West Africa sub-Regional Office (Also: SRO)
 WF – Women’s Forum
 WPS – Women Peace and Security

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the independent final evaluation of two programmes funded by the Italian Cooperation (IT Coop) through UN Women (UNW) in West Africa.

The funding was provided to UNIFEM (part of UNW since January 2011) which developed the programme plans and strategies and implemented the programmes in 2009 and 2010. UNW completed implementation in 2011.

The evaluation assesses the success of the programmes and aims to contribute to UNW's efforts to strengthen its evaluation function and share learning with the West Africa Sub Regional Office (WARO) and its partners.

The programmes were:

- 1) At a **national level** in Sierra Leone, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) project focused on implementing TRC recommendations on women and gender equality through strengthening civil society, government, and legal institutions to reduce Violence against women (VAW) and protect the rights of women.
- 2) At **sub-regional level** an *Economic Community of West African States* (ECOWAS) programme to contribute to the creation of an institutional environment within the sub-region free of VAW: the VAW ECOWAS regional programme.

Funding for both programmes was split at approximately \$1 million for the TRC programme in Sierra Leone and \$1.3 million for the ECOWAS EAW programme.

Background, purpose and scope of the evaluation

Ending violence against women (EVAW) is one of UNW's organisational priorities. WARO is committed to supporting catalytic strategies to **eliminate all forms of violence against women** and ensure that **countries respect their international and regional engagements on gender equality**.

The evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the two programmes and to achieve a fair, objective and accurate assessment of their performance.

In 2009 UNW considered undertaking a mid-term evaluation of its VAW ECOWAS programme, as originally planned in the project document, as a multi-donor evaluation, including other potentially interested donors. However, the mid-term evaluation was not conducted because the implementation rates were too low to justify the exercise at that stage.

With this formative evaluation, WARO seeks to contribute to UNW's learning and knowledge on programmes and strategies to end VAW and promote gender equality. It also intends to contribute to drawing lessons to improve UNW's leadership role in promoting gender equality and fight against VAW - through an evaluation conceived in a forward-looking mode.

The scope of the evaluation covers ECOWAS countries, with a focus on programme activities in support of ministries of women's affairs and civil society organizations in

Burkina Faso, Cape Vert, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

The report comprises separate analyses for each of the programmes. Section 4.1 looks closely at the project in Sierra Leone and makes specific recommendations for the Sierra Leone country office. The report then moves on to assess the implementation of the ECOWAS sub-regional programme (section 4.2). The chapters that follow examine two crucial aspects common to the Italian funded programmes: financial management and partnership building. The final sections are devoted to an overall analysis of key findings and challenges for the Italian-funded programme as a whole, followed by recommendations.

Data collection for the evaluation took place during 30 days of field work in three countries selected by UNW: Sierra Leone, Mali and Senegal, during February and March 2012. The evaluation was facilitated by the UNW sub-Regional Office and the COs with the participation of Francis Bogie Boogere, Regional VAW Specialist, ECOWAS programme coordinator and manager of the evaluation.

Silvia De Giuli has conducted the evaluation and is responsible for the analysis of findings, conclusions, and final recommendations. In Sierra Leone, a small team including the programme coordinator and one Sierra Leone Country Office staff was formed for specific field visits. In these instances the report makes reference to the evaluation team.

During 2011 UNW was involved in making the transition from former UNIFEM, OSAGI, DAW and INSTRAW to the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which had been created by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2010.

It is important to underline that the programmes reviewed by this evaluation were mainly implemented by UNIFEM.

Although UNIFEM is one of the four entities that joined to form UNW in 2011, it would be a mistake to equate the new organisation with the old Fund for Women (administered by UNDP), which had a different structure and responsibilities from UNW. There are substantive changes in the mandate and accountabilities.

One of the main issues relates to the fact that, whereas the UNIFEM's mandate was based on catalytic efforts, UNW's mandate has changed to *lead and coordinate*. The new organization's mandate also requires a steady effort to strengthen capacities locally. To mark this difference, the report will refer to UNIFEM, as appropriate, for those actions specifically confined to the period preceding the creation of UNW.

BOX 1

2. METHODOLOGY

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation is based on:

- Documentary evidence (documentation collected by the evaluator, documents and reports provided by SRO and other materials supplied by COs)

- Interviews (in-person, telephone, or written individual interviews, and group interviews) with key informants and beneficiaries
 - Group discussions with partners and beneficiaries including at community level
 - Direct observations of project sites and premises
- Document Review included:
- **Primary documentation**, such as programme and project documents and reports, UNW planning, management and programming documentation, documentary material supported by or generated by the Programme such as ERAW action plans, by-laws, manuals and publications, correspondence, activity reports, financial reports, contractual agreements, minutes of meetings.
 - **Multiple sources of secondary data** (Annex 6). In view of the lack of baselines and programme monitoring data, observational fieldwork and interviewing was supplemented with gathering and analyzing numerous other sources. A literature review ranged from government documents, to publications produced by local and international NGOs, to academic literature, and it also included previous studies and evaluations, governmental and partners' plans, policies and strategies¹. The evaluation also reviewed financial allocations relative to the programme outcomes and general management expenditures.
- Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were used for individual and groups (Annex 8). The key stakeholders consulted in case-study countries were identified in consultation with the UNW country offices, and included key government and civil-society actors and others who were most knowledgeable of the VAW aspects in general and the ECOWAS programme in particular.

17 individual interviews were conducted in SL, 16 in Mali, 4 in Senegal, 7 in sub-regional or global Headquarters, and 10 group interviews, with UNW staff, especially Country Programme Managers (CPMs), and programme officers, implementing partners, government officials, final beneficiaries and other key stakeholders at the community, national and regional levels (NGOs, Donors, UN Agencies).

- Community interviews/meetings: the evaluation visited 2 rural communities in Sierra Leone, and 4 urban communities in Bamako, Mali. Community interviews were used to obtain community-level estimates of beneficiaries satisfaction with the interventions.

Finally, a standardised open-ended written questionnaire was sent to CPMs and programme officers through the UNW SRO for those countries that were not visited by the evaluation². Twelve CPMs and programme officers were contacted but only 2 responses were received.

- First-hand observations of structures and facilities, and to a limited extent, of interaction between service providers and the beneficiaries was also sought during field trips.

To the extent possible, information was verified through triangulation of sources³.

¹ PRSPs; sector reports, gender policies; UNCT planning documents (UNDAF; Joint Vision current documents and their analyses and updates), and other UN documents were used to complement information.

² See Annex 9

³ For example: different interviewees were asked separately about the same activity, knowledge and perception of one topic was gathered from diverse groups and / or various geographic areas and locations, and also checked against available documentation, etc.

This evaluation was guided by the six guiding principles set by the UNW Evaluation Policy including: women's empowerment and gender equality, human rights, people-centred development, UN system coordination on gender equality, national ownership and managing for results on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Framework for the evaluation

The evaluation was guided by UNEG norms and standards and by UNW's principles. It analyses progress towards achieving results from the point of view of the international community agreements and its evolving understanding of good practices. It keeps in mind international commitments, and advances in development cooperation thinking in the past decade: the Paris Principles and the three subsequent summits on aid / development effectiveness⁴, and particularly the two principles of country ownership⁵ and managing for development results, also reflected in UNW's policy.

These principles however must be sharpened through a fragility lens. Several programme countries are affected by fragility or conflict. Guidelines⁶ for actors involved in development co-operation in these countries are relevant to this evaluation, and particularly so with regard to the concepts of ownership (and related issues of state building and legitimacy), prevention and non-discrimination/inclusion, coordination, and capacity development.

To reflect the above principles and concerns, the DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability were considered alongside some useful suggestions and adaptations developed by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance⁷, with regard to the evaluation criteria of appropriateness to local context, coherence, coverage and coordination. In practice, this has meant adding a few additional questions to the ones proposed in the ToR (Annex 7).

The evaluation looks at the two programmes individually and examines analytically progress made towards the stated outcomes and outputs. All the DAC key areas are covered in the conclusions. The report answers, to the extent possible, the following key evaluation questions⁸:

Evaluating relevance/ Appropriateness:

⁴ The **Accra Agenda for Action (AAA)** 2008 called for development effectiveness as the measure of aid effectiveness, with indicators in the areas of international human rights standards, gender equality, decent work and sustainable development. The AAA also considered Gender equality, respect for human rights, and environmental sustainability as cornerstones for achieving enduring impact on the lives and potential of poor women, men and children, and that, all policies should address these issues in a more systematic and coherent way.

⁵ See also *DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* (endorsed in December 2008)

⁶ The Principles for good engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries (OECD 2007) were established because fragile states require different responses than those applied in better performing countries. These states face severe development challenges such as insecurity, weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions, violence or the legacy of civil war.

⁷ see ALNAP 2006, *Evaluating Humanitarian Action*, www.alnap.org

⁸ See Annex 7 for the remaining questions

- Are the projects' objectives addressing identified rights and needs of the target group(s) in national and regional contexts? How much do the projects contribute to shaping women's rights priorities?
- To what extent interventions take local context and culture into account?
- Is the design of the projects articulated in a coherent structure? Is the definition of goal, outcomes and outputs clearly articulated?

Evaluating effectiveness / coordination:

- What was the progress made towards the achievement of the expected outcomes and expected results? What are the results achieved and why?
- In the case of the ECOWAS sub-region project, to what extent has the programme's unique approach of bringing local and national interventions together is being understood and incorporated into the programme plans and how effective is the approach?
- To what extent the programmes have coordinated instruments and strategies such as planning, gathering data, managing information, reaching a functional division of labour, and mobilising resources, with governments and other agencies and their relevant initiatives?
- To what extent have inclusion and coverage of the most disadvantaged women been reached?

Evaluating efficiency:

- Have UN Women's organizational structure, managerial support and coordination mechanisms effectively supported the delivery of the projects?

Evaluating sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of the benefits from the projects being maintained after the projects finish?
- Are the projects supported by national/local institutions? Do these institutions demonstrate leadership commitment and technical capacity to continue the efforts and activities supported by the projects and/or replicate them?
- Are requirements of national ownership satisfied?
- How much do the projects build (as planned) on other initiatives to produce a multiplying effect at local level?

Evaluating impact:

- To what extent can the changes that have occurred as a result of the projects be identified and measured?
- Is there evidence that the projects enabled the rights-holders to claim their rights more successfully and the duty-holders to perform their duties more efficiently?

Constraints and limitations

The condensed time frame for undertaking the evaluation presented challenges given the scope of the two programmes coupled with the geographical spread of the ECOWAS work. Most significantly, the evaluation design could not be finalized before the beginning of data collection, resulting in both methodological and logistic limitations and in missed opportunities, for example

- COs were not always ready to receive the evaluator creating lost time in organising field missions, interviews and gathering the necessary documentation to share with the evaluator;
- It was not possible to organise focus groups
- Minimal time to train and source quality interpreters, which led to limitations in speaking with women from very diverse backgrounds about delicate topics or socially sensitive issues in culturally appropriate ways, as well as interviewing stakeholders in the local language(s).
- The identification of stakeholders to involve in the evaluation could have been more comprehensive, including GELD initiatives in Kenema (Sierra Leone) or in Senegal, and Trust Fund Projects
- Preparation and piloting of tools (interview guide, questionnaires, participatory techniques) were restricted

Research tools were refined on iterative basis through the use of scoping and background interviewing, including qualitative in-person interviewing or semi-structured interviews for implementing partners. Interview questions were adapted to country context/ type of programme or project and partner to the extent possible. For the second field visit, it was easier to refine and adapt some of the tools in advance.

The integration of counterfactuals and comparisons, for example, with other agencies legal aid and VAW projects has not been possible as they would require advanced preparation. Also, the low response from CPMs further limited the information available on non case-study countries, for which the evaluation is essentially based on non-verified activity reports.

Finally, more in-depth qualitative information (biographic data, women's and communities' experience with violence) and case studies would have been appropriate to this evaluation to gauge impact, yet were not feasible due to design and time limitations.

3. REGIONAL CONTEXT AND PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

West Africa (WA) is characterised by severe poverty and fragility⁹, a heritage of conflict, discrimination, political instability and dictatorships. As a sad illustration, the latest coup and ensuing of war/ civil conflict in WA took place in Mali during the time this evaluation was being carried out, with unknown consequences for the achievements made by this programme. Lack of infrastructure, services, and underfunded institutional mechanisms / facilities make tangible progress on EVAW extremely slow and hard to achieve.

West Africa is the lowest performing region in the world on the Human Development Index, with eleven countries out of the region's fifteen listed as Least Developed Countries (LDCs)¹⁰. About 70% of the population across the sub-region is rural and an estimated 70% of the active population, mostly women, is employed in the agricultural

⁹ The UNDP Fragility Users Guide states 'Fragility' is a complex and multifaceted concept. There is not as yet an internationally accepted definition, however, there is some consensus within the policy and donor communities around the OECD definition of fragile states: *States are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations.*

¹⁰ Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo (see *United Nations 2010. The Least Developed Countries Report 2010*).

sector, which however accounts for not more than 30% of GDP¹¹. Moreover, women have limited access to productive assets, capital, and market opportunities.

Women in West Africa experience exclusion, high poverty levels, illiteracy and high maternal mortality. Even though all countries have ratified CEDAW and ten¹² signed the 2003 Maputo additional protocol on women's rights to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, there is little political will to actually prioritise implementation and the religious and cultural context results in a tension between customary law and formal legislation. The failure of Mali to adopt a Family Code even after passage in the National Assembly and its subsequent dilution to meet the demands of the religious leaders is one such example.

VAW in the Region includes early and forced marriages for children and widows, sexual assaults and trafficking, domestic violence including beating and marital rape, FGM/C¹³, illiteracy, discrimination in legal, economic and political realms and wide disempowerment¹⁴. Various studies conducted by UNIFEM and CEDAW Country reports in the 15 countries of West Africa show that deeply entrenched cultural norms and increasing religious conservatism perpetuate violence against women, along with women's fears of speaking out and reporting violence.

According to UNW,¹⁵ there is no single West African country with legislation and practice that provides women effective and adequate redress for violence especially when committed in the context of the family. The criminal justice systems including the police, the prosecution services, and court systems have not responded effectively to complaints of violence against women. The absence of legal structures on VAW in several countries has also rendered redress impossible. More often than not, perpetrators of violence against women have gone unpunished.

UNW WARO Strategic Note 2012-13 states: "culturally defined interpretations of the place of girls and women combined with a consistently poor record of implementation of women's human rights instruments despite signature and ratification constitute a major obstacle to progress"¹⁶.

ECOWAS is a major political actor in sub-regional policy, with defined guidance to member states in nearly all aspects of development. Nevertheless, with reference to regional organizations, the 2008 Project Proposal stated: **women are almost completely excluded, invisible and voiceless in ECOWAS processes.**

Italian Cooperation in WA and the contribution to UNW

Gender has been a priority area of Italian Cooperation (IT Coop) since 2007 and UNIFEM, now UNW, was one of the major recipients of funds and technical support in

¹¹ ECDPM. 2006. *Overview of the regional EPA negotiations: West Africa-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (ECDPM InBrief 14B)*. Maastricht

¹² At July 2010: Benin, Burkina, Cape Vert, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal

¹³ A 2006 study by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, Harvard Law School, Inter-African Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices (IAC), Foundation for Women's Health, Research, and Development (FORWARD), and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (UFID) – provides the rate of prevalence of FGM/C as highest in Guinea with 99% of women undergoing the practice." <http://compassionfirstsierraleone.wordpress.com/2009/07/19/fgm-and-AMNET-kambia/>

¹⁴ UNIFEM 2006; Amnesty International 2005, Population Council 2005, CEDAW country reports, quoted in *ECOWAS Project Document*, pag 6; DHS 2005 Cape Vert

¹⁵ ECOWAS Programme donor report 2010

¹⁶ UNW 2012, internal document

the region¹⁷. The contribution granted by IT Coop was part of a multimillion dollar involvement in support of IT Coop policy on gender equality and women's rights, with a focus on the Women Peace and Security (WPS) post-conflict agenda in Anglophone countries (Liberia and Sierra Leone) and promoting women's agency, empowerment, and EAW in Francophone West Africa. UNW WARO has opted for a specific thematic focus on EAW for the resources received.

Italian funding was also the result of a process that had seen growing mobilisation in the region and increased institutional attention to VAW issues. Two Meetings in particular had prompted the contribution:

- The meeting of the Association of Women Lawyers organised by UNIFEM in partnership with the ECOWAS Centre for Gender and Development in November 2006 on the assessment of the implementation of the Maputo Protocol and its recommendations to ECOWAS member states;
- The October 2008 meeting organized by the Ministry of Social Action and of National Solidarity of Burkina Faso in partnership with UNIFEM. Ministers in charge of excision of Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Togo; official representatives of the First Ladies of Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Mali; and representative of CSOs, adopted the Ouagadougou Plan of Action to fight against FGM and its cross-border dimension.

The contribution was thus particularly intended to strengthen the existing process, also by building on the work in progress and the positive prior experiences in the region, especially: the **Italian Cooperation Program** "*Fight against poverty through women's empowerment*" and **GELD**. Finally, the Italian funded programmes were designed to be a UNW regional strategic response to supporting the goals articulated in the Say No UNITE campaign¹⁸ and complementing implementation by the **UNTF-supported projects**.

The Italian Programme - formulated according to the commitments made by IT Coop at the international conference "Femmes protagonistes" (Bamako, March 2007) was financing projects submitted by women's local associations and institutions of Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in the various sectors identified as project priorities.^{19 20}

GELD

¹⁷ The Italian contribution to UNW arises from an initial engagement / concern with post-conflict recovery in the Mano River area (Liberia and Sierra Leone). Funding was then expanded to cover various forms of VAW in the ECOWAS region, generating / bringing forth three distinct programmes - with a regional programme managed by WARO in Dakar and viewed as supportive to the other two: the TRC project in Sierra Leone and a peacebuilding reconstruction programme in Liberia, which has also been evaluated by UNW, in a separate undertaking (See Evaluation Report, UNW Liberia Country Programme 2011)

¹⁸ **Say NO – UNITE to End Violence against Women:** UNW's Say NO initiative is a global platform for advocacy and action, engaging participants to prevent and address violence against women and girls. It contributes towards the objectives of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's campaign, [UNITE to End Violence against Women](#), through social mobilization.

¹⁹ These priorities were: the defence of human rights, the safeguard of health, the support to small enterprises and to fair trade, and the mainstreaming of gender issues and women's human rights, according with the commitments of the Maputo Protocol. The programme aimed to strengthen civil society organizations and African institutions, their programmes and their shared strategies to promote the empowerment of women. The funding aimed to provide women with greater opportunities to express their points of view, and play an active role in economic empowerment and decision making.

²⁰ In the same four countries, IT Coop also financed "Fond LCD-RPS" to improve the allocation of public investment at a local level through the involvement of civil society and local institutions. The activities focused on investments to improve production capacity, diversifying and increasing the incomes of vulnerable rural families, and in areas of social and high environmental risk.

The Italian contribution was seen as closely complementing the UNW component of “Gender Equitable Local Development” (GELD), which aims to support women’s access to resources and services at the local level through gender-responsive planning, programming and budgeting. GELD, in Mali, Senegal and in Sierra Leone, targets local-level planning and budgeting processes in selected and also includes a policy advocacy and knowledge building component to facilitate the sharing of the experiences in national, regional and international fora²¹.

UN Trust Fund

The UN Trust Fund to end violence against women provides grants to West African countries, organizations and governments to pursue innovative strategies geared towards raising awareness, uphold laws, provide medical assistance, train service providers, and reduce stigma and discriminations related to GBV. Successful approaches developed in the Trust Fund projects were expected to complement the ECOWAS VAW programme.²²

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ITALIAN FUNDED PROGRAMMES

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRC PROJECT IN SIERRA LEONE

Section 4.1 of the report presents a broad assessment of the TRC project in Sierra Leone looking at the following analytical areas: context, design, management, and contribution towards achieving the objectives. Findings take into account both process and results factors.

4.1.1 Overview²³

Italian Cooperation awarded a grant of \$1.037M in 2008 for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission project in Sierra Leone.²⁴

Sierra Leone is a post-conflict constitutional republic with a population of approximately 5.7 million. The devastating 11-year civil conflict was officially ended in 2001, when the government, backed by a United Nations peacekeeping force (UNAMSIL), asserted control over the country.

After the conflict, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established in 1999 provided a framework for analysing the root causes of the conflict and for addressing violence. The TRC developed an entire section of its work on women and issued legally binding specific recommendations that, if implemented, would address inequality and injustice, remove the causes of discrimination, and prevent the emerging of new violence. UNIFEM later supported the Sierra Leone Law Reform Commission on legislative reforms to address VAW in the post-conflict reconstruction process in support of the TRC recommendations. **State law has been substantially changed towards gender equality gains in 2007**, with the approval of gender laws, known as the Gender Acts.

²¹ At a programme review meeting held by UNW with IT Coop in December 2010, the need to pursue stronger linkages with GELD experiences was reaffirmed.

²² UNIFEM internal document, “opportunities” section 2009; PRODOC, pag 14: “Successful approaches developed through TF supported projects will complement this programme”

²³ This section draws upon various sources and mainly: US State Department, Human Rights Report 2011; OHCHR Report 2011; UNICEF 2012; when not otherwise stated

²⁴ UNW Sierra Leone implemented the country component of the ECOWAS VAW programme and a TRC project. Although the two interventions are intrinsically related and closely intertwined, the office was individually recipient of a specific grant for the TRC project, which is examined in this section.

In a drive to advance post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction, **the IT Coop provided the grant aimed at advancing the implementation of: the TRC recommendations on gender equality, of SCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and implementation of the new gender laws.**

The project objectives were:

- To increase the number of peace building and post-conflict reconstruction **strategies that incorporate gender equality** in line with national commitments to women's empowerment and human rights;
- Increase the number of **formal and informal justice systems** to enforce the 3 SL Gender Acts: Domestic Violence Act 2007, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, and the Intestate Succession Act;
- Ensure that women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, young women and other **women's groups have increased resources, capacities and voice** to ensure that their priorities are included in relevant policies, programmes and budgets.
- Increase resources and improve structures to implement laws and policies that promote and protect the human rights of women in line with global, regional and national agreements

4.1.2 Social and Cultural Context

Political and social situation

Sierra Leone is made up by 16 distinct communities (or ethnic / tribal groups) which retain some degree of self-government and a political and judicial role for traditional chiefs (Paramount and local chiefs), including a reserved seats system in parliament.

Ethnic affiliations traditionally have been a strong influence in political party membership for the country's two dominant ethnic groups, Temne in the North and Mende in the South.²⁵ The Temne and Limbas, the third-most populous ethnic group, traditionally supported the ruling party and the Mende the opposition. Krio, who make up 7 percent of the population, have traditionally dominated the civil service and the judiciary.

Key government positions tended to be filled with persons from the North. By 2011, ministers from the North still occupied 62 percent of the cabinet offices, while ministers from the Eastern and Southern provinces had been increased to 30 percent, and 8 percent were held by ministers from the western peninsula.

The proportion of women in parliament has increased in post-war elections and with the introduction of local governance, the percentage of elected female Councillors increased from 11 percent in 2004 to 20 percent in 2008.²⁶ In the senior cadre of the civil service, the representation of women is about 7%. (TRC Project proposal document). In 2009 only 16 elected parliamentarians were women (less than 14 per cent) and at the time of the evaluation only two out of 29 cabinet ministers were women.

²⁵ Respectively 35% and 31% of the population . CIA The World Factbook 2012 data

²⁶ UNCT SL 2011 Joint UN Approach to Peacebuilding and Gender Equality (As at 1 7 March 2011)

Women and girls continue to face serious discrimination in the political, economic, social, cultural, civic and judicial domains. Their rights and position are contingent for the most part on customary law and the ethnic group to which they belong.²⁷

Gender equality and empowerment processes in Sierra Leone thus also imply a multiple ethnic, political, geographical, and cultural and economic dimension.

Women experience some of the worst socio-economic indicators in the world: 857 out of 100,000 women die from causes related to childbirth (DHS 2008), over 66% of women have no-education (DHS 2008), 88% of women aged 15-49 have undergone

Female Genital Cutting (MICS 2010), 23% of women aged 15-19 are in a marriage or in a union (MICS 2010); and 47% of girls reaching 18 have given birth or are pregnant (DHS 2008).²⁸

The gender dimension of rural poverty

A 2004 study reported that women enjoy much greater economic and social independence in Freetown and the major provincial towns in comparison to rural areas.²⁹ Here, women's basic rights are being denied in almost all spheres of life due to traditional, religious and cultural beliefs. In their communities, women are silently suffering various forms of abuse.³⁰ They provide agricultural labour often without any control over the major produce from the family farms. Access to productive resources like land and seeds is a serious challenge for women, and often outright forbidden.

A new class of Paramount Chiefs was granted considerable powers by the colonial authorities. In the early twentieth century, and this office became the focus of intense political competition at the local level³¹. A few women from the Protectorate served and still serve as section and tribal heads and a handful of women exercised political power as Paramount chiefs³². For more than 200 years, the South has had a tradition of female leaders. One interviewee said: *We had most powerful chief ever: a woman for a long time. Indirect rule system gave much prominence to our traditional rule system* (group interview).

In the Mende ethnic group in particular, there were several female leaders. Every local council has at least one female representative and there are today 11 female Chief justice and tribal chiefs, one of which currently holds the position of Chief Social Development Officer in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) and attended the CSW in New York in March 2012. However, most women in the provinces had no access to political participation or influence. In the Temne ethnic

²⁷ OECD Dev.Centre, SIGI 2012, <http://genderindex.org/country/sierra-leone>

²⁸ Transitional Joint Vision 2013-14 (draft 5); UNICEF 2012

²⁹ An Evaluation of Post-War Rape and the Response to Rape in the Provinces of Sierra Leone, Freetown: Campaign for Good Governance, December 2004, cited in Fanthorpe, 2007

³⁰ According to the 2008 DHS, overall, 37% of married women were in polygynous relationships, and the practice is more common in rural than in urban areas. 29.7% of married girls aged 15-19 reported that their husband had more than one wife.

³¹ Dr Richard Fanthorpe, Sierra Leone: The Influence Of The Secret Societies, With Special Reference To Female Genital Mutilation A Writenet Report commissioned by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2007

³² TRC report, A Senior Secondary School Version, TRWG, Sierra Leone, 2005

group women cannot become paramount chiefs, subordinate chiefs, or chiefdom authorities.³³

The reconstruction of the Paramount Chief system after the conflict was questionable/disputed choice with regard to their accountability by democratic standards, particularly to women³⁴.

According to the US HR Report released in 2011, major human rights problems included societal discrimination and violence against women; female genital mutilation (FGM); child abuse; trafficking in persons, including children; and forced and child labour. There were reports that children were forced to work on the street. Many girls, particularly those displaced from their homes and with few resources, resorted to prostitution as a means of support.

Despite this background, social processes continue to unfold, and to bring change. In just five years:

- The literacy rate among women aged 19-24 has increased by 23%
- The number of girls aged 15-19 married before the age of 15 has dropped 7%
- FGC has dropped nationally by 6%³⁵

Sierra Leone is ranked 66 out of 86 in the 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index, while it ranked 100 out of 102 only three years back in the 2009.

Female Genital Mutilation / Cutting (FGM/C)

FGM/C is practiced by all ethno-linguistic groups in Sierra Leone except the Christian Krio population of the Western Area.

While 88% of women aged 15-49 have undergone FGM/C (MICS 2010), the rate is declining for urbanised and educated girls, with the cohort 15-19 and 20-24 standing at 70%. NGOs also reported a decline in the practice of FGM, likely due to increased awareness and interventions. FGM was practiced on girls as young as two years old, and many NGOs reported cases in which toddlers underwent FGM because their very young age made it cheaper for parents.³⁶

Girls' initiation into Secret Societies and rites of passage

FGM is a central element in rites of passage into adulthood controlled by the “secret societies” (cult associations). Secret societies are ancient cultural institutions in the Upper Guinea Coast of West Africa and their primary purpose is to regulate gender identity and social conduct. They are also prominent factors of social cohesion.

The women's society is general to Sierra Leone. There are several leading men's societies. Circumcision/excision are the central element in rites of passage into adulthood for both males and females. The secret societies remain a fundamental, albeit unspoken, factor in political relations between town and countryside in Sierra

³³ In March 2010 the High Court overturned a ban on women becoming a paramount chief in the Kissy Teng chiefdom in Kailahun District. (US HR Report 2011).

³⁴ *As the upholders of tradition and the rule of tribal law, they tend to be the actors of a conservative power that denies equality and the human rights of women* [Christi F. Freeman](http://www.beyondintractability.org/casestudy/freeman-failures) March, 2008: <http://www.beyondintractability.org/casestudy/freeman-failures>

³⁵ UNICEF 2012

³⁶ US HR Report 2011

Leone and a key element of the informal political pacts between politicians and their constituencies.³⁷ FGM/C is practiced by women to girl children during initiation rites performed in secluded areas³⁸. The cultural meaning of FGM/C is thus very complex and deeply rooted, and its social implications highly contested as part of identity politics. One camp in Sierra Leone favours the abandonment.³⁹ The argument is that the Bondo society will be doing itself good in this 21st century **if it gets rid of the harmful aspects of its practice, but retains those that annually bring together young girls for sex education and preparation for womanhood.**⁴⁰

The 2007 Child Rights Act does not explicitly address FGM. Strong opposition to the proposed clause was voiced during Parliamentary hearings and the controversial clause was dropped.⁴¹ However, (according to some reports) the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs interprets de facto FGM within the section of the law that prohibits subjecting anyone under the age of 18 to harmful treatment, including cultural practices injurious to the physical and mental welfare of the child. Although police occasionally detained practitioners on accusations of forced mutilation or manslaughter, human rights workers reported that police remained hesitant to interfere in cultural practices.

At the community level the UN agencies and local NGOs work with traditional leaders and local chiefs on a range of interventions. For example, the Advocacy Women Network, **one of UNW's partners promoted the signing by the traditional leaders in several districts of a memorandum of understanding with "Sowies" (FGM practitioners) to increase the minimum age of initiations the "Sowies" performed to 18 years.**

On the other hand, the 'Bondo Society' and its practice of FGM is often used as a weapon of political campaign. Politicians from all sides win votes from women by

³⁷ Decolonization and the development of modern state politics in Sierra Leone created a new role for the secret societies, albeit one shaped by their earlier history. While the leading parties provided opportunities for educational and professional high achievers, both were essentially coalitions of politicians with strong rural powerbases. Even today, men and women winning seats in Parliament and jobs in government are expected to remain loyal to their home communities and direct state resources towards those communities. Few politicians that were not initiated in the localities they wish to represent can expect to win elections and once in office they are expected to provide job opportunities for fellow initiates ("sons / daughters of the soil"). They are also expected to send their children back to rural areas for initiation and to serve as patrons of these and other local ceremonies in honour of their hereditary culture. (Fanthorpe, 2007)

³⁸ TYPE II FGM (excision of the entire clitoris and all or part of the labia minora) is performed in the context of Sande / Bondo initiation, ibidem, page 17

³⁹ Already in 1987, Olayinka Koso-Thomas has argued that the educational functions of Sande/Bondo were slowly disappearing, and that secluded training once extending over one or two years is now completed in a few weeks.

⁴⁰ Many a Sierra Leonean woman's first knowledge of what sex really is was learnt in the bondo bush. In its strictest form, Bondo calls for all initiates to be virgins – clearly putting a stop to promiscuity before initiation. It is in the bondo bush that girls become women, after being taught how to discard prostitution, how to remain faithful to husbands, how to respect elders, how to manage homes, how to raise children, and how to generally behave in society. (from

http://www.thetorchlight.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2083:the-christiana-bull-case-for-the-bondo-society&catid=36:local-news&Itemid=27

⁴¹ Popular arguments put forward by pro FGM/C-initiation women, can be summarised by the following quotes: "*Female Genital Mutilation is an integral part of our culture. It shouldn't be banned because it helps prepare our young girls for marriage and it curbs promiscuity.* (*Bondo Society' and its ceremonial rites*)*inculcates a sense of belonging in young girls, teaches them to keep secrets and be disciplined "* [24-year-old interviewee]; or '*Bondo Society is what hold us together as a community and keeps our traditional heritage. We cannot sit idly by and allow outsiders to destroy it. We will fight it out,*"[56-year-old initiator in Makeni] (Inter Press Service 2005 interviews, reported online at the page

<http://ipsnews.net/africa/interna.asp?idnews=28359>). The latter statement adds an "identity politics" dimension to the issue, whereas women's rights promoters are equated with "foreign, western influence".

extolling the virtues of the 'Bondo Society'.⁴² First ladies, prominent politicians, and their wives have sponsored, organised and rallied for large initiation ceremonies in their constituencies. Other politicians have organized smaller initiation ceremonies to gain popularity in virtually every district of the country. Also, following the ratification of the revised Child Rights Bill, the Deputy Minister of Gender, Social Welfare and Social Affairs stated that the practice of FGM was part of Sierra Leone's culture and therefore it "could not just be eradicated from the land".⁴³

Many Sierra Leoneans still consider Sande/Bondo initiation as a social and cultural necessity. Girls from all social backgrounds continue to suffer FGM, including the educated elite. For the latter group, initiating daughters may serve as a confirmation of African identity and Sierra Leoneans living abroad still bring their daughters back home to undergo initiation. Furthermore, rural men in particular fear and respect the women's society, especially its putative power to punish them both spiritually and physically if they are perceived as mistreating their wives or otherwise transgress Sande/Bondo medicine laws. The rural poor have a further incentive for maintaining the practice. Customary marriage involves the payment of "bridewealth" to a new wife's family and most poor families consider it imperative to initiate daughters so that they can negotiate successfully for this payment. Furthermore, women's society leaders receive considerable income from initiation fees, which are paid over by the girls' families.^{44,45}

4.1.3 The legal Framework

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission⁴⁶ published its final report in 2004, to help Sierra Leoneans understand the causes and dynamics of the armed conflict. It was keen to stress that many of the problems which gave rise to widespread violence continued to pose serious threats to the country. The report contains hundreds of recommendations which, according to the TRC, would "serve as a roadmap towards the building of a new society". Recommendations were divided into four categories, 'imperative' holding the highest priority.⁴⁷ Women were the subject of seven imperative recommendations.

By 2008, implementation of the recommendations had been highly uneven. The range of laws enacted the previous year to further the realization of women's rights and children's rights (the three Gender Acts and the Child Rights Act) are considered genuine achievements, but serious questions remained regarding the enforcement of these instruments.

⁴² IPS news service, 2005

⁴³ Government Minister Defends FGM Practice, Awareness Times [Freetown], 13 June, 2007, reported in Fanthorpe, 2007

⁴⁴ Ibidem

⁴⁵ Interviews

⁴⁶ The TRC was established with the object of "providing an impartial historical record, preventing the repetition of violations or abuses suffered, addressing impunity, responding to the needs of victims and promoting healing and reconciliation. (http://www.africa-union.org/Official_documents/reports/Recommendations.pdf)

⁴⁷ (*Note *In certain instances, the Commission will state that a recommendation is imperative and ought to be implemented immediately or as soon as possible. In the view of the Commission such recommendations fall strictly within the peremptory obligation as stated in the Act. The Government is required to implement these recommendations "faithfully and timeously". These recommendations tend to be those that establish and uphold rights and values* http://www.africa-union.org/Official_documents/reports/Recommendations.pdf)

This has made the approval of the UNW project highly relevant and timely.

The three 2007 Gender Acts

Sierra Leone is governed by three types of law, all of which impact gender matters: formal, customary and Muslim. **The widespread legal and societal discrimination faced by women was particularly strong in matters of marriage, divorce, property and inheritance** which were guided by customary law in all areas except the capital. A woman is frequently perceived to be the property of her husband, to be inherited on his death with his other property.

The legal framework protecting women now grants women protection under all three sets of laws. These new laws comprise the Domestic Violence Act, the Devolution of Estates Act and the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act.⁴⁸⁴⁹

The Gender Acts⁵⁰ are underpinned by the **Sierra Leone National Gender Strategic Plan** 2010-2013, which was launched in 2010 as the Government's four-year strategic framework drafted in conjunction with UNFPA and UNIFEM. Several "sensitization programs" have been conducted around the country, particularly in the areas of fighting sexual and gender-based violence and teaching rural women about their rights under the new Acts.

Access to Justice / Trial procedures

The law provides for a fair trial; however, in practice, many constraints exist. Structural gaps, and reluctance to pursue justice for women, combined with women's lack of income and economic independence, helped perpetuate violence, underreporting and impunity against women.

Since the establishment of the Family Support Units (FSUs) by the Sierra Leone Police in 2001 and the passage of the Gender Acts in 2007, reports of cases of VAW and rapes, especially involving child victims, steadily increased, at least in urban areas. However, most human rights organizations noted that domestic violence continued to be most prevalent and largely underreported in the northern provinces⁵¹. Reportedly, FSUs use mediation as their primary tool for handling domestic violence, while rape cases frequently are settled privately or do not make it to trial because of inefficiencies and corruption in the judicial system.⁵² Indictments were rare. The FSU does not maintain statistics on domestic violence conviction rates, but NGO reports indicate few perpetrators were convicted due to poorly trained prosecutors and out-of-court settlements.

Traditional justice systems continued to extensively supplement the central government judiciary, especially in rural areas, in cases involving family law,

⁴⁸ UNICEF 2012, p 9

⁴⁹ Together, the three new Acts make extensive headway into domesticating the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW, signed and ratified by the Sierra Leone Government in 1988⁴⁹ and constitute a direct response to the observations to SL report made by the Committee of Experts on CEDAW in May 2007 (See: Gender Acts Roll-out Review Meeting Report, MSWGWA, June 2008, page 2; SL Gender Acts Rollout Plan 2009-2011, supported by UNIFEM)

⁵⁰ For full details and commentary on EVAW, see Annex 3

⁵¹ US State Department Human Rights Report, 2011

⁵² In 2009, only 17 cases out of approximately 4000 filed were successfully prosecuted in court Rainbo Centre Program Update, The International Rescue Committee, January 2010

inheritance mandates, and land tenure. Paramount chiefs sometimes refer cases to the police in order to give arrests for civil complaints the appearance of legitimacy.

The lack of judicial officers and facilities hinder access and often produce long delays. Cases could be adjourned 40 to 60 times. Police officers, many of whom had little or no formal legal training, prosecuted a majority of cases on the magistrate level. Most legal advisors assigned to prosecute rape cases, for example, had only three weeks' training and could not compete against well trained defence lawyers. More significantly, although formal laws apply in customary as well as formal courts, traditional chiefs acting as customary judges had limited or no legal training and often were unaware of, or could choose to ignore formal laws. The lack of convictions resulted in a high degree of impunity for rape and non-rape violence. Most perpetrators were known to their victims and included teachers, family friends, relatives, traditional leaders, and neighbours.

Chiefs sometimes colluded with men to evict women and children forcibly from their homes or to subject them to arbitrary detention. In some cases chiefs imposed arbitrary and exorbitant fines, imprisoned women unlawfully in their homes or "chiefdom jails," and expelled them from the community.⁵³

In 2011 UNIMSIL Human Rights Officers concluded:.... **"Customs and traditions continue to bar full implementation of the laws intended to advance the protection of children and women, and harmful traditional practices, including FGM and gender discrimination, are still widespread.** The low rate of prosecution, out-of-court settlements, and interference by traditional leaders in judicial matters continue to undermine the judicial process, thus creating room for impunity, particularly regarding sexual and gender-based violence. **The three gender acts enacted to address the rights of women, including the Domestic Violence Act, have not been fully implemented.**⁵⁴

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1.4 Project design and development

UNW builds upon UNIFEM's engagement for gender equality in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Since 2004, support for the Women's Law Reform Agenda, and strengthening the capacity of the Law Reform Commission, eventually leading to the adoption of the Gender Acts and other initiatives in response to the TRC imperative recommendations, increased UNIFEM's visibility in Sierra Leone. Through this process a strategic partnership was developed between women's groups, the Law Reform Commission and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender. Related studies and assessments contributed to capacity building to increase women's space and access to resources. In 2008 UNIFEM and UNICEF were tasked with executing an US\$ 800.000 project as part of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) contribution to Sierra Leone in support of gender capacity and the protection of women and children's rights

It was in this context that the Italian Cooperation offered its grant. The TRC project was envisioned to complement these ongoing efforts and undertook a consultative and iterative approach to developing the project design between 2006 and early 2009. Care was also put in gathering additional feed-back from stakeholders, primarily MSWGCA⁵⁵

⁵³ US HR Report 2011

⁵⁴ Report issued by OHCHR 2011

⁵⁵ The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs contains a Gender Department, which is responsible for mainstreaming gender into other line ministries, through a network of gender focal points.

(below also referred to as the Ministry), in order to not duplicate but complement the Peacebuilding project (interview, Programme manager).

During the implementation period, UNIFEM (now UNW) had the leadership of Programme 17 of the UN Joint Vision (UNJV) 2009-2012, jointly implemented by the UN Gender Technical Team, or Gender Theme Group⁵⁶, comprising 6 key programmatic results areas which are closely related to the overall objectives of the TRC Project. The UNJV is aligned to national priorities as expressed by the Sierra Leone' Agenda for Change (PRSP II)⁵⁷.

The Project had been designed as a complex and ambitious undertaking, which envisaged 5 outcomes and 11 outputs. **It put forward a holistic and integrated approach to addressing the legal, political and social aspects of VAW that aimed to strengthen both the duty bearer and the right holders** whilst also reinforcing both responsive and prevention mechanisms for the protection of women. Based on the premise that, in order for the results of the TRC process and the 2007 normative gains to impact women's lives, the Ministry should be empowered to lead and coordinate implementation, it initially envisaged a three-pronged strategy focusing on:

1. enhancing the Ministry's capacity;
2. ensuring community ownership and involvement; and
3. promoting community-based responses to address gender based violence, including FGM.⁵⁸

The initial proposal was subsequently adapted to take into consideration the management and implementation capacity on the ground. The comparative analysis of the new Logframe and the UNW component of the Joint Vision programmes, suggests that, perhaps, UNIFEM wanted to align its project implementation to better fit its contribution to the UNJV, and in particular the results areas of Programme 17, however this was never stated explicitly⁵⁹.

The Project implemented by the SL CO is de facto construed around a four-pronged approach:

- Supporting both high-level as well as upstream, down-stream advocacy and capacity development for relevant institutions and civil society actors – while providing a tightly focused engagement with the Ministry to enhance its capacity for effective coordination and monitoring of policies and strategies towards the promotion and protection of the rights of women in Sierra Leone.
- Ensuring greater responsiveness of the justice and security sector through the strengthening of the legislative and Human Rights monitoring functions
- Equipping women's groups and GBV survivors with increased capacity and resources, with a view to stimulate collective action towards asserting women's rights and addressing VAW, and providing access to economic opportunities

⁵⁶ the UN Gender thematic group comprises gender focal points in representation of all Agencies as an internal mechanisms of the UNCT.

⁵⁷ Detailed Analysis of Programme 17 of the UN Joint Vision and Implementation Framework, UNIFEM, Sept 2010

⁵⁸ UNIFEM Project document, 2008, p 8

⁶¹ UNW contributes to the following: Programme 1, Democratic elections and political dialogue, through capacity strengthening of members of the SLEFPAC and of the Council of Female Councilors; Programme 6, HIV; Programme 15, Support to democratic institutions; and particularly, Programme 17: Gender equality and women's empowerment, led by UNW with the participation of the UN Gender Theme Group and the support of other development partners (see Annex 5 for programme details)

- Enhancing the implementation capacity of institutional mechanisms to enforce and monitor the gender Acts

Thus, new components were added to the initial design: the monitoring role of the Ministry, the Human Rights institutions and Justice ministry, and a focus on economic resources for women. At the same time, some important outputs were discarded.⁶⁰

The new project plan retains its ambition through expanding the scope of its objectives / outcomes, but it jeopardises the chance of achieving them by not supporting them with a coherent chain of well organised outputs, activities and inputs.

The evaluation, analysing the programme logic, has assessed that the discarding of certain outputs that were logically integrated into the initial results chain has weakened the project, undermining its potential for impact. This is particularly true for those outputs and activities in support of the oversight and monitoring role of the central and local State. At the same time relevant outcome or output-level objectives, such as building institutional capacity to track, monitor and evaluate implementation of gender strategies, have been subsumed under an "activity" level, making implementation by the CO very difficult.

The project did not indicate an explicit theory of change and it is difficult to identify a strategy inductively based on the proposed outcomes: the modification of the initial Logframe has diminished its internal coherence and its initial rights-based focus. The way the project is organised looks disjointed and the logic is difficult to grasp. This may have affected the overall effectiveness of implementation as will be illustrated in the analysis of each Outcome.

The project was implemented between June 2009 and June 2011 and **resulted in the following support actions to Sierra Leone beneficiaries:**

- Financial and technical support to the Ministry to produce gender related plans and print pocket-size booklets for distribution; and infrastructure rehabilitation (Outputs: publication of Sierra Leone National Action Plan 1325 (SILNAP) and National Gender Strategic Plan (NGSP), Bo Training Centre rehabilitation)
- Financial and technical support to elected leaders to learn about gender equality experiences in other countries in Africa (Study visits; contributed to promote Caucus NeWMAP and strategy planning)

⁶⁰ most noticeably, the following OP were taken out:

Output 5.2

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, gender equality advocates and their organisations effectively monitor the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 2007, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, and the Intestate Succession Act.

Activity 5.2.1:

Facilitate the establishment of a monitoring framework involving relevant ministries and other government institutions, and women's groups to track progress and report on the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 2007, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2007, the Intestate Succession Act and UN Resolution 1325

Output 5.3

Elected women local councilors have enhanced capacity to exercise transformational leadership in the fight against SGBV, peace building and reconstruction, and women's economic and social empowerment

Activity 5.3.1:

Train local councilors to address women's specific issues such as gender responsive by laws that would address SGBV and UN 1325, women's access to land and other issues that touch on their economic, social and political empowerment

- Financial support to the Sierra Leone Women's Forum (SLWF) to conduct advocacy and training activities towards traditional chiefs and religious leaders to promote gender justice and gender equalities in their communities (awareness-raising workshops)
- Financial support to AMNET 's programme of community dialogue to regulate FGM/C (Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed in various districts and national campaign)
- Financial support to local and international NGOs (COOPI, African Kind Hearts, Action Aid) to promote community- level awareness and empowerment, including through skills training for women and girls.

TRC PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN SIERRA LEONE

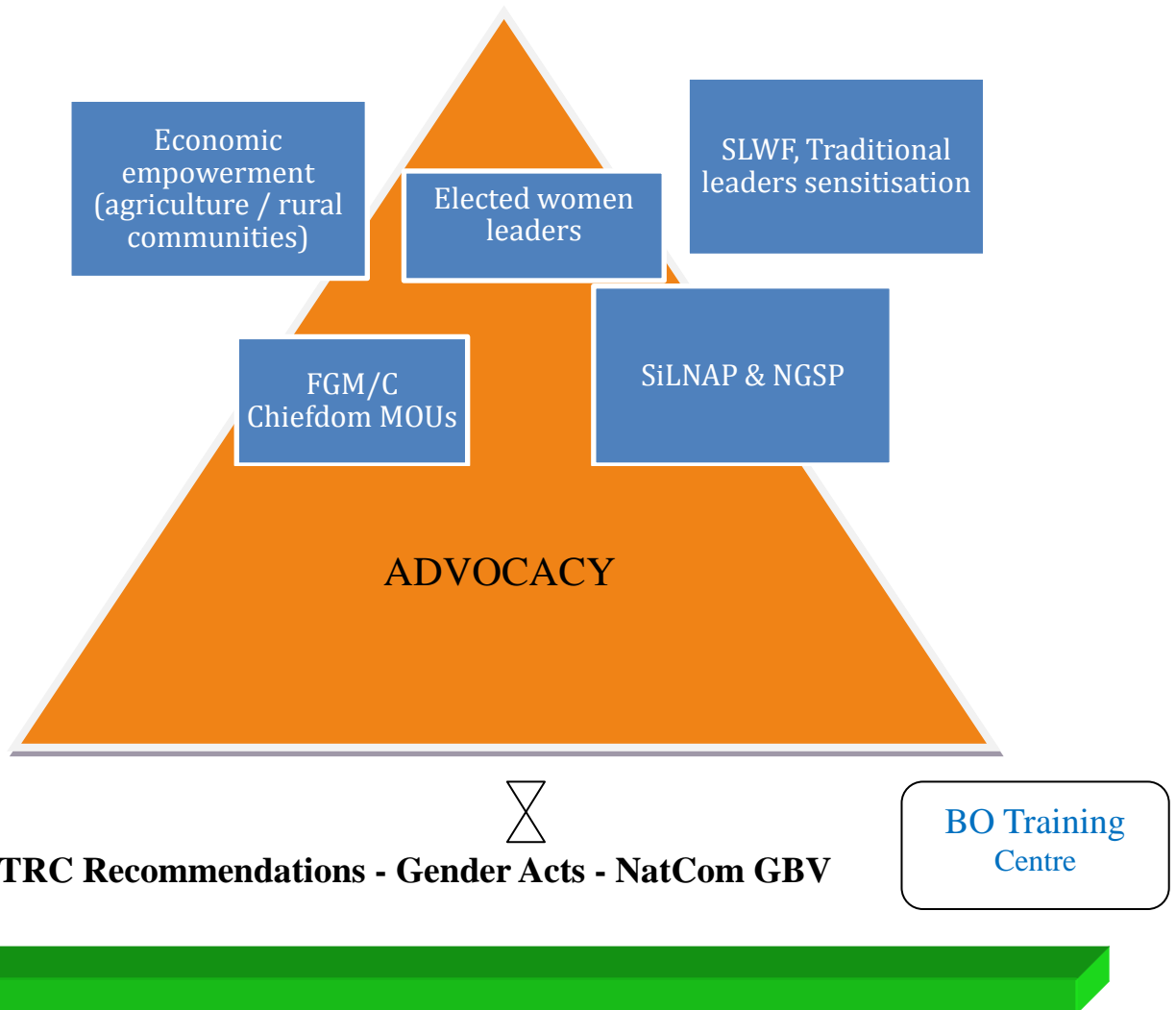


Fig. 1 Visual presentation of TRC project

4.1.5 Project management and technical support provided by UNW

The project was executed by UNIFEM/UNW and implemented by partners, including the Government (MSWGCA) and civil society organisations.

The UNW sub-regional office had overall oversight, financial accountability and management, and reporting responsibility, in consultation with the Africa Section and

thematic advisors at New York headquarters. While the SRO was available for programmatic support, there was no dedicated coordinator or officer who could oversee the project. At the time of reporting, targeted support was given from the regional VAW specialist.

The Country Programme Office in Sierra Leone ensured national ownership of the programme, set targets, managed and monitored overall operations and the day-to-day implementation of project activities. The Office was for a long time staffed by a national programme officer only. The international country programme manager arrived in 2009 and left in mid 2011.

A Steering Committee chaired by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, and involving the various government institutions, UN agencies and civil society organisations was supposed to monitor the implementation of the programme.⁶¹

The planned Steering structure was not put in place and monitoring by the SRO was limited. UNW reported an extremely high turnover in the political and managerial leadership of the Ministry during the implementation period, which affected the chances for efficient and sustained collaboration. The long preparation time and delayed approval and start-up process, described earlier and shown by the lower expenditure rate for the first year of project activities (fig. 2), also contributed to diluting the impact that a quick and well coordinated action was expected to produce.

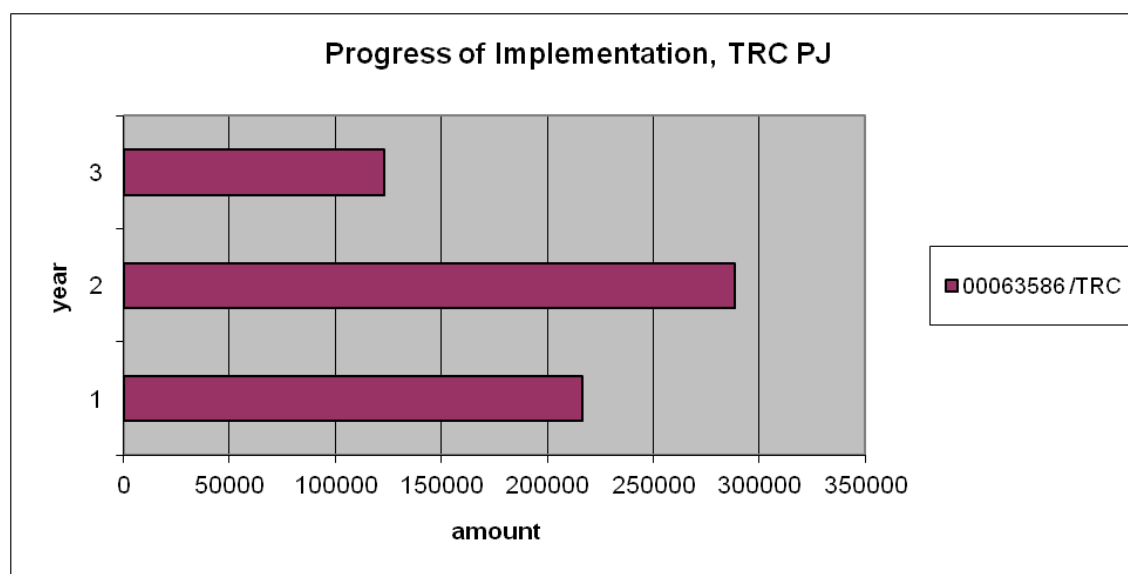


Fig. 2 Pace of implementation during the three years of operations, 2009, 2010, 2011

The UNIFEM Sierra Leone country programme focused on economic empowerment, and political decision making in addition to advocacy work for gender equality. The TRC Project alongside with Peacebuilding and later EAW and Geld constituted the UNIFEM/UNW country portfolio during 2008-2011. A notion of quantitative impact of the project can be provided by comparing the Italian grant with UN office core funding, taking 2011 as a reference.

⁶¹ From project document PAC 2, 2008 : V1. PROJECT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The SL UNW Office total core budget for 2011 was US\$ 306.000 (for staff, facilities, transport, etc). **The Italian funding at over US\$ 100,000 has been important also quantitatively.**

The project provided significant funding of the operational and administrative support to the CO and particularly to establishing its current strengthened human resource capacity, during the transition from UNIFEM to UNW.

UNW in Sierra Leone is well known country-wide and has consistently been a main player on gender issues and women' empowerment. Also through this project, **UNW has maintained a highly visible profile and has functioned as an important partner to MSWGA, especially as an active member of the critical Government's National Committee on Gender Based Violence (also known as the NatCom GBV)⁶².**

Internal staff turnover and relatively limited capacity of the SRO at the time to provide effective leadership to oversee management and monitor implementation resulted in activities being implemented as a series of loosely related items, without the coordination and vision necessary to frame them as parts of a coherent design. The evaluation could not find evidence of synergies being actively pursued with UNTF projects and GELD programme.

4.1.6 Analysis of progress made towards the intended outcome.

The SL Programme has four agreed objectives, or outcomes.

OUTCOME 1: Increased number of peace building and post-conflict reconstruction strategies that incorporate gender equality in line with national commitments to women's empowerment and human rights in Sierra Leone

- Output 1.1 Relevant training and advocacy materials for the effective implementation of UN 1325, the Domestic Violence Act 2007, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2007, and the Intestate Succession Act are accessible.
- Output 1.2 A systematic collaboration framework involving relevant ministries and institutions and women's groups is established to monitor the implementation of UN 1325, the Domestic Violence Act 2007, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2007, and the Intestate Succession Act.

Finding one (Logic and structure design): linkages between activities, outputs and intended outcome lack full articulation and could be more explicitly expressed.

For example it is not clear how Output 1 (accessible training material) would directly feed into strategies that incorporate gender equality, since it was not linked to an overall training and capacity development plan.

On the other hand, some of the activities are too complex and could constitute an output themselves. For example, Activity 1.2.2 (*Building the capacities of relevant ministries, other government institutions and women's groups to track, monitor and evaluate the TRC implementation, the roll out plan and SILNAP*) would require

⁶² The National Committee on Gender Based Violence (NaC-GBV), [is] the coordinating body for civil society and government communication and cooperation, which is housed in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. It is co-chaired by the Inspector General of the Police.

identification of, and support to, systems, processes and structures that were beyond the scope of this project. Not surprisingly, they were not implemented.

Finding two: The project has directly supported the Ministry on a variety of actions including conducting specific training / indicators development, and producing advocacy materials on UN 1325 (Action Plan).

Advocacy for women's empowerment, and their rights and protection, is strong in Sierra Leone. UNW works very closely with MSWGCA, being one of the main Gender partners, and its support is clearly and fully acknowledged by the Ministry and other gender partners.⁶³ The Ministry sees its own role as coordination and implementation, and partnering with local institutions and organisations on project proposals. The Minister co-chairs the NatCom GBV, a key instrument for gender equality in Sierra Leone and the Gender Director coordinates its monthly meetings.

UNW has consistently promoted the "16 days of activism against violence against women" initiative, as well as IWD celebrations throughout the country. Specific support was provided during the campaign on gender violence Nov-Dec 2009, and campaigns took place around the delivery of Presidential apology⁶⁴, a TRC Imperative Recommendation. A female UNW staff commented: *His open apology to SL women came on IW Day 2010 in Moyamba, and that was a big thing* (interview).

UNW reported that advocacy work was also done in preparation of the presidential policy statement on the 30% quota for women in the next country elections, anticipated in Moyamba and ultimately delivered on IWD 2011. Again, during the same month, in collaboration with the Women's Forum and other partners, radio and media messages were broadcasted and reached every village in the country.

The Minimum 30% quota, imperative recommendation, remains on top of the Ministry's priority, together with repeal of the Section 27, 4 d of the 1991 Constitution, an entrenched clause in the Constitution that prevents full empowerment of women, because it states that nobody can be discriminated on the basis of sex, but women *can be* in the areas of property, marriage, adoption and burial.

⁶³ MOSWGCA partners with many agencies in addition to UNW: UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNIPSIL, Action Aid, IRC, Concern Worldwide, Trocaire, among others, were mentioned in the interview

⁶⁴ H. E. Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, implemented yet another Imperative Recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) by his public apology to women.

The recommendation at paragraph 317 of page 167 of Vol 2 of the TRC Report 2004, requires that 'the President as "the Father of the Nation" and as 'Head of State', should 'acknowledge the harm suffered by women and girls during the conflict in Sierra Leone and offer an unequivocal apology to them on behalf of the government and preceding governments in Sierra Leone'.

"The long awaited public apology, to women, made by President Koroma, on Saturday 27th March 2010 was received with great emotion by the large crowd of women who had gathered in Moyamba, Southern Province from all across the country, for the annual celebration of International Women's Day. ... The President apologised in his capacity as 'Head of State' for violations against women, as 'Commander-In-Chief' of the Armed Forces for all the wrongs done to women by the Army and other warring factions, and lastly as 'Fountain of Honour and Justice' for the injustices suffered by women.

President Koroma gave the women assurances of non repetition of the harms inflicted and of State protection. He further called on his male compatriots – as men, husbands and brothers – to provide security for women at all times. He restated his Government's commitment to implementing the Gender legislation to the letter and also committed to ensuring the 30% quota for women in decision making positions, another imperative TRC recommendation."

Finding three: While specific training materials on the gender legal framework were not created, the production of the four year Gender Strategic Plan 2010-2013 and the printing of SILNAP could be considered a contribution in this direction. In addition, SILNAP was supplemented by a results framework 2010-2014, which was developed through an “indicators workshop” funded by the project in 2010. All these actions are promoted and supported through the collaboration of ministries and women’s groups.

A major output to which UNIFEM has contributed technically and financially was the National Gender Strategic Plan (NGSP).⁶⁵ The process started in 2008, with initial inputs by the Ministry to the UN Gender Theme Group and by UNFPA, and was completed in 2010 with the launch of the NGSP by President of Sierra Leone.

Priority 3 of the Plan (Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights) is premised upon strengthening the NaC-GBV for effective response to gender based violence in Sierra Leone⁶⁶

The sister document SILNAP, the National Action Plan on SCRs 1325 and 1820, was also the result of a joint effort by the government, civil society and UN agencies. UNIFEM’s role in this case was to support an indicator development workshop in Bo, Sierra Leone’s second largest town, which was also attended by the Ministers of Gender and Defence. In preparation of the official launching of SILNAP by President Koroma, UNW also paid the printing of 300 copies in English for regional distribution. Recently the same partnership has advocated for the process of Sexual Offences Bill which has now been approved by Cabinet and is being sent to Parliament.

However, the actual use of such materials is unclear and, while aware of their existence, when asked nobody in the Ministry seemed to remember exactly what the SILNAP Results framework was and how it should be applied.

Finding four: The institutional monitoring framework was not established, leading to a poor information base on implementation performance and needs, which would help decision making to support progress. While Output 1.2 is perfectly in line with the programme’s holistic and integrated approach and with its underlying strategic goal to enhance the Ministry’s capacity for effective leadership⁶⁷, no particular systematic action has been put in place to establish the sought-after **collaboration framework** among state and civil society actors to monitor the gender plans and strategies, beyond periodic meetings.

Such an initiative would require a good degree of organisation and technical skills development; again, structural weaknesses in the Government have not helped prioritise action towards this result. For example, during the evaluation mission, there was little mention of the Gender Acts rollout plan⁶⁸ and UNW-supported activities,

⁶⁵ The Ministry formulated a National Gender Strategic Plan 2010-2013, which outlines the following six priorities:

- Capacity Building, Management and Oversight
- Women’s Participation in Governance
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
- Research, Documentation and Information and Communication Technology
- Women’s Empowerment
- Gender Budgeting and Accountability

⁶⁶ Page 23

⁶⁷ PRODOC 2008

⁶⁸ To ensure the Acts are meaningful for women, men, and families in Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs (‘MSWGCA’) is leading the development of a national roll-out

overall, were not framed in the context of gender acts implementation, by neither Ministry nor UNW staff.

Nevertheless, partners organised a Symposium on Gender Acts dissemination in 2008, the production of the Roll-out Plan 2009-2011, and its 2009 review⁶⁹, to which UNIFEM was part, all of which were possibly an initial move in the direction of stronger coordination, which could be revamped.

One partner commented: *“Roll-out plan of three gender acts is another document out there, but there is also no tracking, no system of monitoring its implementation”*⁷⁰.

It should be noted that development of the roll out plan, and awareness raising on the three gender acts were all actions paid for by the UNTF.

The relation between SILNAP, NGSP and the Gender Acts roll out is unclear: the NGSP first priority area seeks to build MSWGCA’s capacity to strengthen its gender-responsive programming, management and oversight role⁷¹. The NGSP is rather weak and general on VAW, whereas SILNAP is more specific. However they all address women’s rights issues and overlap or complement each other on certain VAW-related provisions.

The harmonisation of these national documents to ensure ease of implementation, was already recorded as a “key national gender priority” by UNIFEM and the GTT in 2010⁷². One of the Partners suggested that a good results structure, showing clear linkages between goals and planned activities, and a time-framed workplan will be needed to help the Ministry fulfil its coordinating role (interview).

A Gender situation analysis published by UNICEF Sierra Leone in 2012 notes, in this respect, that: *Implementation of the plans is thought to be constrained, though no review has yet taken place. However, part of the problem may relate to the lack of clarity in the relationship between the SILNAP and the NGSP, in terms of results and implementation.*

The Review is pending for 2012, as hiring of consultant is under way through a joint committee by UNICEF, UNW and the Ministry.

Furthermore, on the issue of knowledge sharing, coordination and measurement of results, the UNICEF document adds: *“Nac-GBV needs to actively expand its membership to reflect the range of actors and issues that relate to gender equality and women’s empowerment, including local government actors.*

UNW, as the secretariat for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the UN, is also in a strong position to strengthen a community of practice on gender, by convening actors and by supporting MSWGCA to facilitate sustainable platforms for routine information sharing, learning, planning and monitoring.”

To conclude, **the Plans experience shows two things:**

plan for implementation of the Acts, through high level and wider national consultative meetings. (MSWGCA Strategic Rollout Plan for the Gender Acts, 2009)

⁶⁹ MSWGCA-IRC 2009, documentary review

⁷⁰ Interview

⁷¹ Documentary review NGSP 2010

⁷² UNIFEM 2010 pag 11

- Although involved in developing, consulting and initial implementation meetings, the Ministry, UNCT, and other partners still have not coordinated convincingly on their operationalisation and effective implementation.

Unless rapidly addressed, this will result in a missed opportunity. Furthermore, it has allowed other Ministries, which should be primarily involved (Justice, Health, Education, Local Government), to not meet their responsibilities. The MSWGCA did not exert its leadership and implementation role.

- **UNW has a space where it can clearly provide UN system coordination, act as lead driver and lead voice in support to State's priorities and build relevant partnerships for gender equality for women and girls.**

OUTCOME 2: Greater number of formal and informal justice systems promote the implementation of UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820, the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and of the Domestic Violence Act 2007, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, and the Intestate Succession Act

- Output 2.1 Strengthened collaboration between the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Human Rights' Commission, and women's legislative caucuses leading to a more effective complaint mechanism for women's adequate access to the justice system.

This output included support to the capacity development of elected women (nationally and locally) to fulfil their gender-responsive representational roles.

Finding one (Logic and structure design): Outcome design can make it difficult to define objectives or demonstrate results, as political representation and justice objectives appear to be blurred. For example, Activity 2.1.1. - in support of gender responsive female representation - is not logically connected to Justice outputs and outcome and this lack of a clear purpose and articulated steps, reflected negatively in the implementation.

It is to be noted, however, that one of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was that political parties ensure at least 30 % of their candidates for public elections were women. This was also the target for the achievement of the MDG on empowerment of women⁷³. As discussed above, the project has invested on advocacy to achieve the 30 % quota at the next elections⁷⁴.

With regard to women's legislative caucuses, and the content and quality of women's political participation, the project supported a study visit by three members of the Sierra Leone Female Parliamentary Caucus (SLFPAC) who travelled to Rwanda in 2009, while local women councillors participated in a retreat in South Africa, also in 2009.

⁷³ Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone (2010). *Millennium Development Goals Progress Report*. GOSL, Freetown; and , Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2004). *TRC Report: Volume 2*. TRC, Freetown.

⁷⁴ Women face greater barriers entering into political life, including in accessing male dominated political networks and making allies, in financing election campaigns, and in commanding respect. They are more likely to experience gendered forms of political slander, such as having their morals questioned. Women's ability to compete on an equitable basis with men and to effectively represent other women is also affected by their low level of literacy, their comparative lack of understanding of the political processes involved and how to influence them, their knowledge about their rights, and low levels of confidence (UNICEF, 2012).

In spite of attempts made, the evaluation team could not meet any elected representative during the field mission. One of the implementing partners mentioned knowledge of the Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians (NeWMAP), and participation together with the Network in advocacy and coordination activities on the 30% quota, and the gender equality Bill, through NaTCom GBV.

UNW reported that the visits abroad were fruitful and awarded elected and political personnel an opportunity to reflect on their role and strengthen their commitment. For example, *on women's return from Rwanda and South Africa, they asked to have a workshop to have a strategic plan and UNDP facilitated the recruitment of a consultant that helped them develop their strategy plan* (interview). UNW staff also reported that activities were complemented by the participatory planning process leading to the formulation of SILNAP and the Gender Strategic Plan, which both started in 2008.

There was also concomitant training being conducted country-wide for women councillors with the multi-donor trust fund.

The evaluation could not ascertain the contribution of the project to implementing the output. Against this backdrop, the organization in 2009 of international meetings, training and field visits to other countries having experienced successful strategies to promote women's participation in politics (Rwanda) seems relevant, but its outcome and potential impact are not known. Specifically, evidence of progress towards an improved gender justice system through a strengthened political representation was weak.

Finding two: The decision to primarily focus on information dissemination and sensitisation of traditional chiefs in the rural areas, rather than fully engaging the institutional actors on justice reform as per original project plans appears to be relevant.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the Human Rights Commission did not happen as part of the project being evaluated. A programmatic linkage with UNJVP Programme 2 Access to justice and human rights, led by the UNDP, was not made, and it would seem potentially worthwhile (see below).

While not framed directly as a "Justice-related" technical intervention, but rather as general "sensitisation and awareness raising" action - support for this outcome was however started by the SL Women's Forum⁷⁵, an important UNW's partner - as illustrated in the next section (Outcome three).

The outcome objective, an enhanced justice system, has thus been pursued through a different strategy, aimed at sensitising the traditional leaders of Sierra Leone.

Finding three: Sensitisation towards traditional religious leaders appears as a relevant strategy. According to the 2009-2012 Gender Acts Roll-out Plan, the following figures are involved in the informal justice system that revolves around the local Court. While not officially deputed to deal with acts of domestic violence, they are, in practice, the ones dealing with it in the villages due to tradition and structural constraints. The plan envisaged that specific training Sessions need to be held for the following groups:

- MPs

⁷⁵ SLWF as the umbrella organization. Established in 1994, the SLWF has a membership that includes women from all walks of life; professionals, business women, CSO activists, and community women. They are also an historic partner to the Ministry

- Paramount Chiefs
- Chiefdom Speakers, Section Chiefs, Village/ Town Chiefs (Traditional Leaders)
- Quarter Heads, Tribal Heads (Traditional Leaders), Councils of Elders, Mammy Queens, Youth Chairmen
- Religious Leaders
- District and Local Councillors

The relevance of the choice made by the project is reinforced by the analysis included in a recent UN Joint Vision document on gender.⁷⁶ Initiatives like the JV **Improving Access to Justice Project** seek to convey the message that the duty to ensure justice for survivors of sexual violence rests not only with the Police and the Judiciary but also with a range of civil society actors.⁷⁷

According to UN partners, the approach is effective: *As a result of civil society organizations activities on raising awareness and providing victim support services, communities are realizing that sexual GBV should not be tolerated. They are approaching justice institutions to seek redress, even in the face of community persuasion and pressure to do otherwise.*⁷⁸

There seems to be general consensus on this result, based on interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and community meetings, and the programme has contributed in many ways to these changes. Overall EAW campaigns and activities are contributing to shaping a new cultural environment. Attitudes towards violence are evolving for a small but significant portion of the population: 10% among women and girls only. 73% of women aged 15-49⁷⁹ believe that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under some circumstances,⁸⁰ down from 85% in 2005. The current proportion of girls aged 15-19 holding the same view is smaller, but significant, at 63%.

Whereas official figures are not available and statistical data difficult to obtain, there seems to also be a perceived consensus that violence is decreasing (several interviews have confirmed a similar opinion, SLWF, Religious leaders, Lawyers, etc). According to a qualitative field survey conducted last year in two districts not visited by the evaluation team, *“Due to awareness raising and fear of imprisonment, incidents of violence against women are perceived by both women and men to occur with less frequency... Women of all ages in Mannah and Koidu said that violence used to be a greater problem, and that nowadays men have ceased to beat their wives out of fear of going to the police. Young men in junior secondary school in Mannah agree that violence is an unacceptable and punishable response to conflict in a relationship”* (UNICEF2012).

Many interviews and persons met informally by the evaluation team concurred that *“men fear prison now, if they act violently”*.

Finding four: It is very hard to measure, however, whether any significant impact is being derived to women in terms of access to justice, when violence does occur. Activities have been implemented as per the work plan, but there is no evidence of their contribution to progress towards the planned outcome, that is an effective justice system. A direct programmatic linkage with the Access to Justice programme

⁷⁶ UNCT SL Joint Vision towards Gender Equality 2011

⁷⁷ This approach is also part of UNW's Executive Director 16 steps to EAW = Work with front line providers

⁷⁸ UNCT 2011

⁷⁹ UNICEF, Sierra Leone Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey, 2011

⁸⁰ For example, going out without informing the husband, burning food and refusing sex, cited in Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2005

could have benefitted from coordination and synergies, with efficiency and effectiveness gains results.

In conclusion, the civil society / community based approach **was** relevant but was not complemented by systemic action towards reinforcing institutional performance and accountability systems.

Finding five: The project did not clearly set access to justice and complaint mechanism to ERAW within a Rule of Law and law enforcement approach, which would appear a necessary strategy as also provided by SILNAP (objectives 2.1 and 3.1).

While the reference to Ministry of Justice appears relevant, Ministry of Interiors, Local Government and Security Forces should also feature as critical partner for “enforcement”, alongside opinion leaders.

Sierra Leone Police (SLP), for example, is a central actor in any ERAW effort and it has a relevant history and place in SL gender equality / ERAW processes since after the conflict. It co-chairs the NatComGBV, to which UNW is a key member, and their action, is strictly related to the project objectives. In 2000 the SLP established the FSU, originally opened as a Domestic Violence Unit (DVU), at all police stations to deal with women and children and works in partnership with MSWGCA.

The above mentioned 2011 UN joint document goes on to assert that technical and financial support to FSUs has increased confidence in reporting sexual violence cases by victims and the community. While many limitations on FSU effectiveness remain⁸¹, FSU has become a stable player in the country landscape and it is steadily increasing its capacity to fight against VAW.

The Family Support Units: A critical stakeholder

“FSU is strongly supported by authorities in Freetown. It is their baby” Interview, police officer

FSU in Bo has its own separate building with a large reception office, full of people and action at mid morning when the evaluation team arrived .

We met the Inspector (line manager) and the Regional Director. Their role is to investigate cases of domestic violence and GBV (sexual, physical, emotional or harassment) including child cruelty and neglect. The visiting team was informed that FSU has a separate interview room where victims privacy and welfare are protected. After reporting, FSU triage to either Probation office (social worker / gender officer) for protection and mediation matters, or to Justice for criminal proceedings. When a suspect under investigation is arrested he is kept in custody for 72 hours and released if the Court grants bail.

When asked about the Social Worker who is reportedly attached to the FSU, there were some initial doubts on his exact name due to turn over that had taken place recently. Finally, he was not there and impossible to reach that day.

FSU showed the team how recording of claims occurs on a comprehensive form (manual case ledger). Data are then stored in an electronic database. According to data, Physical Assaults are on the increase. In 2011, 780 cases were reported in BO. Abuse of girls as young as eight still occurs.

⁸¹ The UN document notes that the need for payments, including requests for medical certification, continue to limit prosecution rates of sexual abuse cases.

Nowadays, people call police with their cell phones to alert them. In the communities they collaborate with Social development workers, who act as focal points and encourage people to report, where as a few years back there was little reporting and cases were not treated as a criminal sex offence

BOX 2

In order to get a better understanding of the operating context and institutional responsiveness, even though FSU is not a recipient of funds nor direct project support, the team paid a visit to FSU in Bo, and met FSU members in other towns visited by the evaluation as part of the community group interviews. The evaluation team looked at procedures, forms in use, data (number of cases, typology, action taken), training received by staff, and financial issues.

The evaluation team on the ground could not analyse in depth how cases are managed and to what extent suspects are actually indicted, nor could verify to what extent sentences are enforced and how perpetrators are punished.

Undoubtedly, FSUs need strengthening in many ways. Challenges that were mentioned include⁸²:

- officers have few logistic means and large territories to cover,
- their pay is low, which makes them more vulnerable to corruption by male suspects and their families, in spite of the basic legal and procedural training received;
- the working culture and operating environment are still strongly male dominated;
- female officers tend to have lower status and are subject to discretionary powers of their male supervisors and senior colleagues.

Nevertheless, it is clear that FSU is a stable functioning institution playing a fundamental role in the protection and prevention chain. While many gaps in the justice system undoubtedly exist, especially at rural level, their operations are being increasingly strengthened.

Lessons Learned: importance of sustainability and predictability of interventions

Long term planning and incremental support to FSUs was granted both by Authorities' back up and donors' consistent attention. FSU is still chronically underfunded and under resourced. However good management and technical training were indicated by many as key factors that have ensured the progressive building of their institutional capacity.

⁸² Various interviews

A PROFESSIONAL WOMAN'S STORY: The FSU Regional Director in Bo started her career as a general-duty police. She then became Commander in one of the southern districts, and benefited from basic training to operate in refugee camps, where she worked alongside the UN Civil Police, monitoring gender-related cases, before becoming a trainer herself.

When FSU developed from Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) in 2001, 120 SLP officers were selected for further training by Civil Police, among which 30 were finally sent to Freetown for advanced TOT training. She was among them.

Since then, training has been rolled out. The Director referred to her old trainers by name, indicating an attachment and deep involvement in the whole training experience.

When assigned to Bo in 2006, she trained her staff for a month and still keeps reviewing manuals and guidance regularly. There are 4 female police members in the Unit.

BOX 3

The police Director case further indicates how good training must be sustained over time, aim for real change in attitudes and behaviour, and must be accompanied by complementing support measures (BOX 3). This learning could be generalised and applied to the gender agencies that UNW supports.

Finding six. The specific output related to inter-ministerial and inter-institutional collaboration to mainstream EAW and justice mechanisms also remains relevant but did not receive priority attention in implementation.

As noted, the security sector and other key public agencies are necessary players for any concrete advances towards the rule of law and the implementation of gender justice. Their engagement will require a concerted results-oriented effort by UNCT under UNW's leadership, and a strengthened and focused mainstreaming capacity by the Ministry of Gender to steer action towards this goal.

According to one of the main international partners, GBV is not a priority for SL government, and the current lack of political will, if not reversed, will cause marginalisation of MSWGCA and dysfunctional coordination.⁸³ As an illustration, it was reported that in his last public address to the nation given before this evaluation took place, which covered various aspects of the current political agenda, the President did not once mention VAW during the 40 minutes speech.

To conclude, Access to Justice needs a structured approach that brings communities closer to institutions and vice versa: judicial, political, representation and security systems need to take responsibility for law enforcement while communities are also involved in a process of cultural change. In this respect, communities' institutions also include education and health workers, alongside with religious leaders.

Application of this same logic becomes even more critical when dealing with issues of FGM/C, addressed under Outcome 3

OUTCOME 3. Women survivors of SGBV, young women and other women's groups have increased resources, capacities and voice to ensure that their priorities are included in relevant policies, programmes and budgets

⁸³ As a proxy indicator of political will, it could be noted that the Ministry stands at : 0.16% of the national budget allocation for 2012 (UNCT SL, 2010)

- Output 3.1 Women’s groups and civil society organizations are better equipped to effectively advocate for SGBV prevention, protection, treatment, care and support including on the issue of reparations for survivors of conflict-related SGBV
- Output 3.2 Enhanced body of knowledge on the impact of FGM in Sierra Leone and public debate on FGM generated
- Output 3.3 Young women and survivors of GBV access economic and entrepreneurship opportunities

Finding one: VAW prevention and protection were pursued through an effort to promote sensitisation and knowledge of the Gender acts among both communities and key players.

The focus of Outcome three is on “the voice”: enhancing women’s capacities for advocacy, accessing economic opportunities, and making their point of view heard. In the way it has been interpreted by UNW CO and implementing partners, it also relates to Outcome two, accessible justice and better performing redress and accountability systems.

Key partners for Outcome three have been CSOs / NGOs and particularly the Sierra Leone Women’s Forum (SLWF), COOPI, AMNET, and Action Aid.

The SLWF has adopted a strategy of engaging directly the traditional chiefs, tribal and religious leaders. As discussed with reference to the justice system (Outcome two), the Women’s Forum implemented activities towards establishing collaborative links with, and sensitisation of, traditional leaders, the custodians of traditional law.

The Women’s Forum (WF) initially organised a workshop for the Council of Churches of Sierra Leone, attended by each tribal head and their deputy with two female participants from their constituency. They then carried out sensitisation in the four regions.⁸⁴ The President of WF stated: *Our workshop had a very good effect, ideas were integrated in Sermons, were disseminated.*⁸⁵

As a member of the Western Area Interreligious Council, a central institution in Sierra Leone, put it: *The Women’s Forum were the only ones to get to us as mediators and interpreters of the law to the community. Maybe Parliamentarians knew about the new Laws, but 75 /80 of population is illiterate and needs us to tell them. The Project has been our only counter-part on VAW. Another Chief added: “We go back to our community and sensitise them. There is now a reduction in cases reported. Women know that they have got a Law in place to protect them. Every chief was asked to go back and sensitise in their own ethnic language, since the law is written in English, citizens could not know it”.*

The intention of the implementing partner was to train people in rural areas on GBV on the premise that attitude and behaviour change issues are clear, but there is a need to implement many interventions simultaneously, using a **flooding technique**, to change patriarchal society mindset.

⁸⁴ Workshops were organised in Freetown, Makeni, Kenema and Moyamba, b/n October and Dec 2010 for 12 religious leaders and traditional chiefs each, reaching a total 48 participants. In Freetown, all 16 tribal heads were involved

⁸⁵ Group interview

One of the Chiefs stated: *We would like to reach out beyond urban areas. We have 149 chiefdoms, with paramount chiefs, we need to get authorities involved in rural villages. We need to cover all districts and chiefdoms.*

Finding two: The initiative by SLWF is of utmost relevance in light of a recommendation highlighted by of a previous UNW evaluation. In the review of implemented projects to address gender discrimination and VAW by the Peacebuilding Fund, it was found that: *the key challenge identified by the stakeholders was the lack of engagement of chiefs in the initiative. Recommendations by the stakeholders were engagement of chiefs in the training and stakeholder meetings.*

Only first quarter activities of a 12-month proposal submitted to UNW were implemented for this plan. Nevertheless, the SLWF was able to conduct a workshop for law enforcing agents in December 2011.

SLWF is a relevant and prominent national partner that had collaborated in developing the Gender Action Plans as part of the national gender machinery. The partnership with SLWF has extended beyond the TRC project to the ECOWAS VAW regional programme and WF representatives attended one of the planning meetings in Dakar in 2010.

Finding three: Women's organisations and networks' resources and capacities need further sustained strengthening. In spite of multiple occasions of collaboration, the intervention capacity of the SLWF still seems to be ad hoc and limited. It is important to point out that resource constraints facing the SLWF had already been indicated as posing a credibility risk to UNIFEM as the primary partner for gender based programming by a previous evaluation.⁸⁶ This will require careful reflection by UNW on the kind of partnership it wants to build with the SLWF and what mechanisms and steps it wants to put in place to develop it.

Finding four: Advocacy training and economic skills activities may have been useful to participants, empowering them with increased awareness, knowledge and expertise, however there are concerns about sustainability.

Awareness raising

COOPI, an Italian NGO implementing activity 3.1.1. has used a different and complementary strategy to advocacy, with the objective of designing community-based awareness raising campaigns led by women to achieve sensitisation on GBV and dissemination of Gender Acts. While the aim seems highly appropriate, constraints have limited progress towards results: the table in **ANNEX 4** summarises the project implemented in Southern districts⁸⁷.

The community-based strategy seems useful and complementary to the sensitisation of local leaders. However, also for Coopi, available information stops at the end of 2010, due to the partner's reporting delays. The evaluation could not ascertain if further activities have been implemented during 2011, which, if not confirmed would result in a missed opportunity for the village women.

Economic empowerment

⁸⁶ UNW SLPBF Evaluation, 2011

⁸⁷ Source: monitoring reports

Indications from a UNW study have suggested women need economic opportunities / skills such as agricultural processing and marketing, and support in accessing land and seeds of economic value (interview). The main intervention for economic empowerment by the TRC project is not targeted to young women or survivors, but to rural village women as farmers and crop producers. UNW supported one component of a larger Action Aid initiative, implemented in three communities of three different districts, for 50 women each (see report for more details)⁸⁸.

Action Aid is based in the operational areas with local field officers who promote a large number of activities: community awareness, advocacy for land, participatory community vulnerability analysis, literacy classes, and training women on rural extension and seed bank management (preservation) by the Ministry of Agriculture and marketing skills. Action Aid representatives stated: *We are bringing in a component of reality in the context of addressing violence. We address basic needs, education, home and health: you can't compartmentalise poverty.*

Many examples were repeatedly recalled during data collection to justify an economic-empowerment approach to gender justice and rights. A partner suggested: *Don't preach about laws and international rights, give them the means to access them or claim them.* This multidimensional approach to empowerment anchored in women's concrete living context seems relevant and effective.

The evaluation visited the project in a village near Makeni, Northern Province, home to the second largest ethnic group, the Temne. Box 4 summarises results observed or reported to the team.

A promising initiative Makomp-Bana Village

Makomp-Bana has 100 families, 50 of them participate in the project.

The objective was to lift women from subsistence agricultural production into farming for business and marketing.

Results included:

- The women advocated to local chief and got a substantial plot of land to farm collectively. Training gave them better knowledge and practices. The Cooperative is now hiring additional labour among villagers.
- The women were aware of ERAW rights. They told us: *"VAW belongs to the past"*. They mentioned governmental sensitisation, town meetings, radio programmes, and confirmed that initiation age is 18.
- However, NGO staff also reported of an upcoming week school closure for initiation ceremonies being organised in a nearby community ...
- Literacy classes had been running and 14 members had attended. Agricultural extension training had been provided and there was a seed bank.

To conclude, although the programme garnered positive results, they were from a low base: it appeared to fulfil more food security objectives than women's economic empowerment.

Completing the initiative through entrepreneurship and skills development will be important to reach the stated objectives.

⁸⁸ Action Aid Sierra Leone, internal report to UNW, June 2011

BOX 4

Finding five: Coordination and synergies with other on-going initiatives such as GELD, UNTF, and UN Joint Vision would have been appropriate.

In this promising action, as in awareness raising, advocacy and other activities covered by the project, there was room for better linkages. Specifically, the inter-linkages and synergies with UNJV Programmes - 4, Agricultural Response, and 14, Rural community empowerment - would have seemed highly appropriate but, to the knowledge of the evaluation, they were not made, which would appear as a missed opportunity.

To conclude, while the individual advocacy training or economic skills activities may have been useful to participants, reportedly empowering them with increased awareness, self-esteem, knowledge and expertise, it is also quite likely that this human capital will soon go lost to them and their communities, if it is not backed up by a stronger women's rights platform and responsive environment. This was an area where the project approach and the need to scale up was particularly evident.

FGM/C: Challenges of implementing women's rights through cultural transformation

A special initiative was directed to curbing FGM/C. In November 2009 UNIFEM undertook a mapping of existing knowledge. An annotated list of key studies from the past five years on FGM/C in Sierra Leone was compiled. At the completion of this desk review it was decided to support action by the Advocacy Movement Network (AMNET).

AMNET addresses harmful traditional practices with a strategy whose principles are close to the ones of the Women's Forum: in order to bypass cultural backlashes and overcome resistance by leading traditional figures, AMNET studied the socio-cultural system and the still prominent role of the paramount chief⁸⁹. Paramount chiefs are almost always men, and their many wives are the ones who head and train the Circumcisers' Society.

The strategy adopted is one of recognition, dialogue with power and authority, at the local level, and adaptation of traditional norms and practices. The aim is to strengthen advocacy towards pushing back the age of circumcision and allowing the girl child to make proper decision, once she reaches the age of 18.

AMNET has developed a **Chieftom Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to ban FGC for children. It has been able to bring the process to 6 districts where MOUs were signed by Tribal Chiefs, Mayors, and Sowie councils agreeing that "No child under age of 18 should be initiated".

MoUs have led to the enacting of bylaws*, and will now be used as Advocacy Tool towards Parliament.⁹⁰

AMNET's multipronged approach was based on a process piloted in the local communities, whereby:

- it carried out dialogues with the soweis themselves, in women-only segregated meetings. It leveraged on Sierra Leone history and real traditional practices.

⁸⁹ As a woman in Sierra Leone said "all subjects are subject to him"

⁹⁰ Municipal by-laws are public regulatory laws which apply in a certain area

- it involved communities into expressing their feelings on FGM/C. The pilot project focussed on intergenerational dialogue, had women come out and say how the circumcision was the worst thing they ever went through in their entire life. They got free from fear and AMNET has videos of how women recount and tell their story: *Never want their child to have it done!*
- It engaged men who also learned what was really going on during circumcision and that it is not true that a woman needs to be circumcised to be sexually satisfied and less demanding
- Finally, AMNET is also sensitising adults and school girls why they should say No to FGC once they turn 18

The TRC project paid for⁹¹:

- The signing of one MoU in Bo district (MOU 2011), now a by-law. Dialogue sessions were conducted in all 16 chiefdoms with 50, 60 participants for each session, involving more than 1000 women in the District. Partners and regional officers who speak the local language assisted. The final signing took 60 head soweis to district capital; AMNET claims that now the law is enforced by chiefs and police, local partners monitor, penalties are set and people are scared to disobey
- Inter-generational dialogue in one district.

. According to the Sowies met by the evaluation team⁹², discussion on a phased approach to abandoning FGM/C had started back in 1993. Sowies favoured 12 as the age limit, but have now accepted the 18 threshold. *Government does not want more violence. We are very law-abiding people....* (Interview)

Comments collected by the evaluation team were similar to the ones expressed by religious leaders and Chiefs: *authorities and circumcisers become cultural interpreters and messengers for other areas of women's empowerment.* They now work with several partners as the Soweis proudly announced: *"We went to Kenema district for another project, went to Bo, Makeni, will go to Potloko. We are also working on elections sensitisation"* (interview).

Finding six: The approach taken vis a vis FGM/C is not validated and it raises some Human Rights Based questions. It presents, simultaneously, opportunities, challenges, and risks.

Clearly, FGC is not or is rarely perceived as a human rights issue, but rather as a cultural practice. Even though the Law prohibits harmful practices (Child Rights act 2007), enforcement does not include FGC.

While Sierra Leone continues to have one of the highest prevalence rates for female genital cutting in West Africa, a considerable drop was registered, from 94% in 2005 to 88% in 2010⁹³ Of the women surveyed by UNICEF (2012), a minority of 22% wish the practice to be discontinued compared to 72% who want it to be continued. Reportedly, education, urbanisation and wealth are correlated with FGC abandonment.⁹⁴ Schooling may also indirectly affect FGC practice as girls, on one hand, will increasingly have less

⁹¹ UNW supported AMNET as part of a much bigger multi-donor initiative, however the funds proved critical for the organisation during 2011 (interview)

⁹² Group interview with 5 representatives from the rural and urban Western Area districts

⁹³ Measured using membership of Secret Societies as a proxy, MICS 2005/2010

⁹⁴ Interview, March 2012. The considerable increase in the literacy rate among women 19-24, from 25% in 2005 to 48% in 2010, reflects the impact of concerted efforts to get the first generation of girls since the conflict to attend school.

time to attend secret societies informal education, while, on the other, acquiring other types of skills will potentially become more relevant than initiation itself.

There is a strong equity hazard in this, as girls from the poorest rural families will remain more vulnerable to being involved in longer Bondo training and free farming for Soweis, and more dependent on the status conferred by society membership.

Monitoring data on the impact on FGM performing by the MoU-signing exercise, and the establishment of Soweis associations are not collected. This would be an urgent task before being able to evaluate whether the approach is working⁹⁵.

The evaluation noted that it was not clear how the MoUs will be sustainable, given that they undercut considerable high income for FGC performers. It seems unlikely that without further support and education, which provide at the same time social and cultural rewards⁹⁶ to attitude change, and community backing to those families and children who refuse FGC, the practice will effectively be abandoned⁹⁷.

An additional risk is that FGM will continue to be practised underground or along borders, even more dangerously and with less protection for the children and girls involved.

The UN has adopted a common stance on FGM/C⁹⁸ based on women's human rights. The AMNET approach supported by UNW respects part of the same philosophy, particularly the focus on sensitization campaigns that include important members of local communities, such as religious leaders or the Soweis themselves; using traditional local media / communication methods⁹⁹; and working with national and local governments. They also avoid perceiving the fight against FGM/C as a broader fight against local culture, and presenting traditional behaviours as negative.

By not fully adhering to a HRBA, however, the "no initiation below 18" strategy incurs two risks:

First, it is based primarily on sensitization, without placing an equivalent emphasis on the responsibilities of the duty bearer, thus leaving the fate of FGM/C dependent on the good will and "civic education" of performers and traditional leaders, but not making them accountable in any way. Gains could easily shift back as political and religious ideologies change.

Secondly, while the approach might produce a positive impact in terms of child protection, it leaves young women without protection and does not enable them to enjoy their rights to physical integrity.

⁹⁵ OHCHR reported : "The national consultative dialogues held by the local authorities with 266 soweis (circumcisers) in November and December 2010 has led to a positive change in the attitudes of the soweis in some districts. In fact, the soweis in one district contacted the human rights actors to ask them to go and certify that all initiates were above 18 years. Nonetheless, the practice continues with widespread and systematic conscription of young girls, and there have been reports of girls being forcefully subjected to FGM, which has had various consequences, including fatalities" OHCHR, 2011

⁹⁶ For rural families it can be display of affluence and power. Family heads save for a whole year proceeds from the farming activities to spend lavishly on 'Bondo' ceremonies.(IPS interview, 2005)

⁹⁷ See on this also a comment by Amnesty Netherlands working on FGM/C in Sierra Leone: "Coalition partners are very much aware of the need for collective abandonment, as communities will undeniably ostracize those who decide to abandon on their own". Working with soweis - Amnesty.nl www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/working_with_soweis.pdf, accessed April 2012

⁹⁸ See, for all, the Interagency Statement on Eliminating female genital mutilation signed by UNIFEM together with other nine United Nations Agencies in 2008

⁹⁹ "even circumcisers came dancing to initiative launch", interview.

UNW's ability to respond to these challenges will depend on its capacity to take an in-depth look at the long term implications of different approaches to FGM/C. There are concerns that the current option does not promote a deeper change in social expectations towards women and girls, based on evolving social norms and alternative mechanisms for community members to signal adherence to shared values, one which ultimately also empowers women to say no to FGM/C. This is very important in assessing the relevance and sustainability of the by-laws approach.

Only a more radical change in power relations, supported by a change in values and beliefs that translates into emancipation of poor women / families, can probably lead to a decrease and final abandonment of the request for FGM/C.

OUTCOME 4 Key policy, service delivery and media institutions have increased resources and improved structures, procedures, incentives and capacities to implement laws and policies that promote and protect the human rights of women in line with global, regional and national agreements

- Output 4.1 Institutional mechanisms have greater data collection and reporting capacity

Activity 4.1.1.Rehabilitation of Social workers training centre.

This objective, a single activity foreseen for Outcome four, was added through a 2008/2009 final project planning review, in response to *a need expressed by the Ministry to produce trained and qualified social workers who could mainstream gender in hospitals and other locations* (interview).

Bo centre is the main social sector educational institution in SL but has not been functioning since the conflict. UNW has provided almost 100,000 US\$ for its refurbishment in 2009-10. The evaluation visited the building and noted that works are basically completed. For lack of follow up and failure by the Ministry to close the procedure, the building has been left empty and unutilized for almost 20 months.¹⁰⁰

Once operational, the centre should provide highly needed refresher courses to the Ministry district-level employees, and train new batches of civil servants. This action also related to the previous UNW Peacebuilding project which had supported capacity for the decentralized units of the Social /gender directorates.

The rehabilitation is potentially catalytic as UNFPA and UNICEF may join in to fund furnishing and curriculum development/revision. This information was not confirmed by partners beyond a vague intent, given that the Ministry has been idle on the matter. However, the future involvement of partners to support the Ministry in ensuring the building will actually be used, will be probably the only way to make a relatively costly investment relevant, effective and sustainable.

No other initiatives took place under this outcome and it is premature given the early implementation to assess its overall relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

4. 1. 7 Conclusions specific to the Sierra Leone TRC Project

¹⁰⁰ The centre could be ready for furnishing and opening with approximately two weeks of work.

Relevance

The programme was relevant in its objectives and in the strategies adopted, to involve chiefs and traditional authorities and work at the community level. It was developed in a consultative way.

The length of the planning and approval process may have had a bearing on the timeliness of response to the TRC recommendations which were framed in the reality and needs of the immediate post-conflict phase.

However the project document underwent several adjustments which kept it “up to date” and able to adapt responsively to the environment which had evolved 8 years after the end of the war. CO and partners had ownership of the proposal by the time implementation started in 2009. Activities and outputs were adapted to needs and the project was managed in a flexible way, incorporating new demands and modulating steps on the basis of studies and incremental results from previous initiatives.

A mix of complementary strategies were used towards community-level awareness raising. Sensitisation towards traditional and religious leaders appears particularly relevant. It not only reflects the broader regional strategy adopted also by the VAW ECOWAS programme to engage authority figures and interpreters of religion, but it is highly appropriate to the local context, where the traditional chiefs in SL play a significant role in the administration of justice.

Changes in the design have undermined the overall programme logic. On the other hand, while the project has actually been able to fund some interesting activities that do respond to women’s priority needs in SL, on the whole it seems to lack coherence and vision. Outcome-level objectives were relevant and appropriate, however the project articulation presented flaws and the structure lacked some critical linkages between implemented actions and overall outcomes, making it difficult to implement as an integrated approach to VAW and gender equality. Single activities needed to be placed within a better articulated chain of results to ensure stronger fulfilment of objectives.

Effectiveness

The project has contributed to raising the issue of gender equality and women’s rights in Sierra Leone. Questions related to the implementation of TRC recommendations on women, but especially the three Gender Acts and other legal and cultural provisions in support of women, figure prominently in public debates, in the media and local discussions.

In particular, it has contributed to shaping an environment more conducive to ending violence against women. There is a general sense that the discourse around women’s status, particularly their basic rights, putting an end to violence, and access to justice, is changing - and this project has directly and indirectly contributed to producing and sustaining the momentum. Advocacy is strong. Overall ERAW campaigns and activities are contributing to shaping a new values and attitudes. Women and communities increasingly realise that VAW should not be tolerated.

Whereas official figures are not available and statistical data difficult to obtain, there seems to be a perceived consensus that violence is decreasing.

The project has been effective in supporting UNW's presence in the country, and allowing the Organisation to continue playing a role within the UNCT, the Gender Theme Group, and as a reliable partner to the Government, particularly the Gender Ministry. This has resulted in UNW leading implementation of Joint Vision Programme 17 and participation in new planning phase 2013 – 2014.

Together with the Peace Building Fund project (2008-9), the two Italian-funded programmes (EVAW and TRC) represent UNIFEM / UNW's main contribution to the UN Joint Vision for SL 2009-12.

UNW's advocacy in favour of the implementation of most of the TRC imperative recommendations on women has been noticeable and the NatCom on GBV continues to be committed to implementing the Gender Acts, among other things. This includes a sustained support to strengthening the role, procedures and capacity of the SL Police FSU. UNW's meaningful participation and dedicated support to the Committee is openly acknowledged by the Government and by UN and civil society partners.

Promotion of more effective justice mechanisms has lacked the necessary involvement of key institutional players. The activities supported under this goal appeared scattered and would benefit from more focused and tightened follow up, monitoring, and upstream work.

The programme has been catalytic in supporting initiatives that attract multiple donors such as the MoU process on FGC and the rehabilitation of the national Social Workers Training Centre whose reopening, when completed, may considerably improve the capacity of the gender Ministry staff to protect women and implement their rights at the local level, particularly in the more remote areas.

A "project" approach ultimately hindered progress and did not provide the necessary follow up and long-term perspective to actions required to sustain multifaceted gender-equality processes. The impression stakeholders convey is that available funds were perceived as a pool of resources made available for women's empowerment, and gender-related activities, through which different interventions could be funded, as needed, rather than viewed as an integrated programme with a clear purpose and a coherent strategy.

UNIFEM seemed to have an operational approach based on single "Activities", whereby a limited number of diverse actions were budgeted and implemented, an approach not always consistent with the overall strategic plan and the programme logic /change theory. Valuable individual actions would have benefited from support from a stronger framework in order to make them more sustainable and yield broader achievements.

Coverage has also necessarily been limited: Breaking up the project in multiple, finite, activities implemented by NGOs has not allowed for leveraging on the decentralised governmental structures horizontally to try and reach women in most of the rural areas.

The choice of partners was accurate and appropriate and the programme has contributed to supporting women's organisations that increase the voice of women and represent their concerns. UNW SL is working with some very relevant CSOs (selected through a long mapping and screening process, as documented in the donor progress report) whose technical capacity is recognised not only by the Ministry but by other international donors. These partners have long been active in the realm of EVAW, through their networks, they rally local traditional authorities and figures whose

legitimacy is highly recognised, and manage to make a dent, achieving meaningful outreach into society down to the grassroots level. Community-level activities have also provided some resources to individual women and communities. These partnerships also offer some room for further improvements that are outlined in the efficiency paragraph and the recommendations to the UNW CO.

More attention should have been placed on inter-institutional coordination as well as with other existing frameworks such as the UN Joint Vision programme and UNW's GELD. Critical linkages with Ministries and government institutions are key to promote effective EAW processes, and the post-conflict governance structures need sustained, coherent and organised support.

More attention should have been placed on institutional capacity issues. The project missed engaging in provision of well-structured support to reinforcing the coordination, oversight and implementing capacity of the Government.

While the challenges posed by weak capacity were correctly envisaged by the project, at the design stage, no operational solution was articulated and not enough effort has been put in finding creative ways of addressing and mitigating those risks.

UNW has now the opportunity to play a much more strategic role than the old UNIFEM did, given the new mandate, stronger office and overall capacity and status of the organisation. Moving from a catalytic to a coordination role, it can ensure the implementation of gender equality and VAW priorities through leading on a consistent and fully mainstreamed process of the UN Joint Vision Programme for the coming years¹⁰¹

Efficiency

The project has faltered due to a long formulation and approval process, PAC timing and approval process in place within UNIFEM has impacted on timeliness which is a critical factor in any post-conflict process. The transition from UNIFEM to UNW has also impacted on efficiency, as it reflected on staff turnover, and changes in the mandate with staff having to adjust and accommodate new demands, beyond project implementation.

Implementation through a small office with high turnover is a challenge. Project management and coordination were left to individual staff members and the project lacked a real programme management structure. The steering committee originally envisaged by the PRODOC did not materialize.

It must be noted that it is very difficult for a small office such as UNIFEM SL CO in 2008-2010, to manage and implement an ambitious and complex project, which spanned over a large and diverse group of partners, with different institutional roles and organizational profiles (from senior Women's Forum volunteer members, to young professional lawyers, to structured INGOs, to key governmental institutions and leaders) and wide range of sectors / areas of implementation.

UNW-CO structure is now being considerably reinforced with recruitment of international staff and additional national professional and support staff to provide enhanced in-country technical support.

¹⁰¹ Interview

Closer on-site monitoring and follow up of implementing partners would have been useful. This was particularly evident with regard to the National Training Centre in Bo, but similar issues appeared in relation to COOPI and SLWF.

The project implementation rate stand at approximately 60 % and UNW is reviewing the financial data provided to the evaluation. However, **the CO was efficient in disbursing the funds at a quick turnaround during the implementation phase**, with a remarkable increase in expenditure rate during 2010 and particularly 2011, and it managed to disburse all the funding allocated to each of the interventions that were in the office provision.

Implementing partners reported that their efficiency has improved through partnerships. All praised UNW responsiveness and quick allocation process, which was considered rather fast compared to other donors. It was also commented that if 90% of contribution is going to implement the project this is efficient, while overhead is very low.

A request for better sharing and coordination has been voiced by some. This offers yet another indication to UNW. Needs put forward refer to:

- i) Knowledge management: information, identification of good practices, reflection on lessons learned;
- ii) Enhanced programming coordination

UNIFEM managerial support and coordination did not always provide an adequate level of backstopping at strategy level.

The Sierra Leone CO, however, did its best to ensure delivery and bring the project to completion. Administrative management was correct and well understood by the office staff. Implementation covered about half of the planned outcomes and outputs. As noted, project funds have now given a significant support to consolidating UNW structure in Sierra Leone.

Sustainability

The project was aligned to national gender priorities and closely linked to the national development planning process. The project is clearly aligned to governmental commitments and the national legal framework. The intense reliance on civil society actors results in a high degree of national ownership. The consistence reference to, and collaboration with, administrative and political institutions and civil servants is a strong indicator of a careful attention to state building. Coordination could be improved and enhanced but it does take place within the framework of existing structures.

Given the role that these principles (alignment, coordination, ownership and state building) play in development effectiveness and good engagement in fragility- and conflict -affected contexts, the project scores high on the main prerequisite for sustainability.

Overall, the direct support provided to national gender planning, programming and implementation processes reinforces the sustainability component of the approach taken by the TRC Project, with the caveats expressed in relation to the effectiveness of national systems in SL

The project is supported by national and local institutions. This is however expressed more as “concurrence and approval” of activities, than an effective degree of participation. These institutions demonstrate low commitment and weak leadership

and technical capacity to continue the efforts and activities supported by the projects and replicate them. A good example is the status of implementation of the gender plans. It should be noted that some capacity development has been supported by the project in the form of international retreats and workshops, study visits and the provision of technical assistance through consultants. An additional effort by UNW will be necessary to supplement the project with sustained and well-planned support to developing the Ministry's mainstreaming capacity.

Coordination of the project with various initiatives aimed at similar thematic goals, was an area deserving attention for increased sustainability. The project did not build sufficiently on those other relevant initiatives to produce a multiplying effect at local level. For example, a clearer linkage in implementation to UNJV Programmes that are thematically or functionally related (such as: 2 - Access to justice and human rights; 12 - Data collection, Assessment and Planning; 4 - Agricultural Response programme; and 14 - Rural community empowerment) would have contributed to enhanced results.

In some instances grassroots and community actors have taken charge of specific aspects of the projects. Some of the stakeholders, for example Local Chiefs in one of the districts, expressed desire to be consulted and participate in project design.

Partners work with local authorities, particularly women councillors, as well as with women parliamentarians and religious leaders, they train local staff in the communities. Overall, the sustainability of advocacy work for gender equality and women's rights is not in question.

Finally, the operational capacity of national partners, also known as capacity resources, such as technology, finance, and staffing, has not been strengthened as this was not a specific output of the project.

Impact

Impact on women's lives cannot meaningfully be determined by an evaluation at this stage as implementation of the TRC project had only just recently been completed or, in some cases, was still ongoing (for example the BO Training centre is not operational, fields of women's the agricultural cooperative were not cropped, etc.).

Deeper changes that have occurred as a result of the projects cannot yet be identified and measured, but perceptual evidence suggests that in some cases the capacity of the rights-holders to claim their rights more successfully, such as women's networks advocates and local women affected by the project, might have been enhanced. The capacity of duty-holders to perform their duties more efficiently is not detectable by this evaluation, if not anecdotally.

It is also impossible to assert to which extent have efforts been successful in stopping harmful practices against women. Nevertheless, there are good indications that discriminatory practices are decreasing and the project has contributed to this. For example, the appointment in the North for the first time of a Court Chairlady is to be considered a breakthrough for the North, even though not at the paramount chief level yet. A leader of the women's network commented: *"The amount of sensitisation on going... Domestic violence does not get away with, even local chiefs are aware now!"*

The most challenging outputs foreseen by the project, such as building platforms amongst various actors, developing operational agendas, and strengthening

institutional coordination and monitoring systems were not implemented. These will demand a higher-level engagement at strategic policy and systemic levels.

In conclusion, the project touched upon many relevant needs and promoted initiatives in a number of areas, spanning a large spectrum of women's equality and empowerment priorities in Sierra Leone. Its objectives are considered relevant by institutional and implementing partners, as well as beneficiaries. In general, the approach was appropriate to the post-conflict conditions of the country and great care was put in adopting inclusive and culturally appropriate strategies. In the case of the overall goal of FGM/C abandonment there is a risk of unintended impact. A somewhat weak design and weak implementing capacity resulted in a lack of coherent, holistic strategy consistent with the full attainment of the objectives and gave way to a set of interventions too fragmented to achieve systemic impact. As stated, however, individual actions, are valuable, individually useful to the direct beneficiaries, and sometime innovative and should be pursued within a better and more integrated framework.

4.1.8 Recommendations for Sierra Leone

- 1. UNW SL CO should move away from a project (and activity-) based approach to scale up, and lead and coordinate on women's empowerment, gender equality and fighting against VAW.** In view of achieving and maximising impact, there is potential for more holistic work. UNW has the opportunity to enhance its leadership and coordination role, aiming to drive the current, promising mosaic of actors and initiatives into an integrated, stronger process. UNW should aim at ensuring that actions are given territorial convergence, continuity (also through security of financing and longer term planning) , and are oriented towards fuller local ownership and sustainability.

It will need to strategise and agree on step by step action with its main partners, especially the UNCT Technical Team and the enlarged Gender Theme Group.

This will also entail complementing the civil society/ community based approach with systemic action towards reinforcing institutional performance and accountability systems. The SL gender plans already outline objectives, actors, and modalities for this to be implemented.

Inter-ministerial and inter-institutional operational dialogue and action to mainstream EAW and justice mechanisms should be addressed as a priority in future UNW EAW programming.

UNW should also insist with Government, that a simple but progressive monitoring component is introduced for at least a few EAW related initiatives.

- 2. Mainstreaming gender equality throughout the UNJV Programme should be pursued as the main avenue to achieving effectiveness and impact, including on VAW.** This includes the present Programme and the planning of the next cycle.

In the view of the evaluation, UNW SL CO could start with a gender analysis of the following current Programmes: 2 - Access to justice and human rights; 12 - Data collection, Assessment and Planning; 4 - Agricultural Response programme; and 14 - Rural community empowerment. UNW SL CO should ensure a much stronger attention to gender equality and women's empowerment is included in these and future programmes outputs, activities,

and indicators, and in the way they will be executed, by the lead and cooperating Agencies and by thematic Clusters.

3. **UNW SL CO should strengthen its Equity approach.** At present, it seems hard to extend results out of capital city and main towns given specific context of backwardness and poverty. There are also niches of urban women who are not reached. There is a need to operationalise a specific focus / approach to provinces, village reality , especially out of main routes and those few districts which seem to be already receiving a lot of attention. UNW should promote a coverage gap analysis with the Ministry and other concerned agencies. It should then share results with women's organizations and partners, in order to jointly develop a practical mechanism that counteracts exclusion
4. **UNW SL CO should pay special attention to partners capacity development.** Structure, procedures, incentives and capabilities could be increased. It will be important to also reflect on specific strengths and weaknesses of main partners, such as the SLWF, and put in place the necessary provisions and steps to help them fulfil their role and deliver more efficiently on their mandate.

Examples of good practice include the setting up of a help-desk, tasked with provision of services for women's organisations and delivery providers and based on capitalising on the already existing strengths and capabilities among local partners; support to local / national networking and strengthening the transparency and effectiveness of organisational and management mechanisms - such as assembly, open internal elections, appointment of boards and coordinators, budget reviews, and development of TORs and clear definitions of roles and mandates.

5. **UNW should undertake more substantive monitoring and follow up of field implementation.** This can be done through a structured approach to regular monitoring agreed upon within the office and shared with the implementing partners.
6. **UNW should write a firm and concerned letter to MSWGCA** asking that immediate action is taken to ensure that the BO National Training Center effectively becomes operational by the next academic year.

4.2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VAW ECOWAS PROGRAMME

4.2.1 Overview and description of the programme

The ECOWAS programme was formulated for a two-year period with the goal of contributing to the creation of an institutional environment within the ECOWAS sub-region free of Violence against Women. It covered 15 countries in the region and it was linked to the Africa UNiTE to end Violence against Women and Girls campaign. It was also developed in response to the recommendations of a 2009 Evaluation that urged UNW to move from short-term strategies to a longer-term approach in managing partnerships with regional organisations.

Through the programme, UNW intended to strengthen its support to countries in the ECOWAS region, promoting the concomitant engagement of women's national machineries and women's networks and rural platforms, the association of religious leaders and the associations of women's lawyers at local, national and regional levels. Finally it aimed at supporting women's empowerment at a community level.

Specifically, the programme was designed **to institutionalize the fight against VAW in the mechanisms of sub-regional integration, national policy making and community development** by:

- Positioning the fight against VAW as a priority area in regional integration mechanisms of ECOWAS and within UNCT in ECOWAS countries
- Operationalising an exchange and dialogue framework on innovative approaches in fighting against VAW involving religious and community leaders, associations of female lawyers and rural women's networks;
- Capacity development of ministers and senior staff in charge of gender and women's affairs for their sustained engagement with and influence of other sectoral ministries in the fight against VAW
- Capacity strengthening of the women's movement to support their advocacy on VAW
- Engaging men in the fight against VAW (religious and traditional leaders, young men and the police)

It had three agreed objectives, or outcomes.

Outcome 1 focuses on enhancing the capacity of member states and the institutional legal framework and relates to the elaboration of a regional strategy to fight against VAW, and of **sub-regional and national action plans** to fight VAW based on the 2004 Gender Policy of the ECOWAS Commission, CEDAW and its Additional Protocol, and the Maputo Protocol.

Outcome 2 focuses on the development and adoption of **effective mechanisms** to address VAW by ECOWAS member states.

Outcome 3 deals with the agency of women and men's organizations at grassroots level, with the objective of **empowering** them to influence relevant policies on VAW, through their engagement with decentralized government structures and in decision making processes.

The indicative activities of the programme included:

- the provision of technical assistance to improve harmonization mechanisms between the ECOWAS Commission and member States in their efforts to fight VAW;
- the promotion of a regular forum for dialogue and strategic partnership between the Regional Association of Lawyers, the Regional Association of Religious Leaders, women's regional networks, and other relevant regional and national networks to promote innovative approaches to fight against VAW;
- facilitating access to protection services for survivors of VAW through a green telephone line in some pilot countries, and support to legal and paralegal service-provider groups at the local level;
- training to women survivors of VAW and their organizations and networks in advocacy skills to engage in political dialogue on VAW;
- investigation of incidence levels /prevalence* of various forms of VAW and their social determinants for evidenced-based advocacy to trigger policy response and national resource allocation to fight VAW;
- training of police forces on the implementation of laws on VAW in selected ECOWAS countries; and
- capacity development of the women's movement in the sub-region for their sustained engagement in the fight against VAW.

The contribution, for a total of US\$1.334 million, was awarded in 2008. The ECOWAS programme was implemented between March 2009 and December 2011 in 10 countries: Burkina Faso, Cape Vert, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone. **ANNEX 2** provides further details on planned activities and programme implementation and shows a table with main actions undertaken by the programme in each country.

Programme implemented activities have included:

- A vast mapping of partners working on VAW in the ECOWAS Member States carried out in November 2009 to produce a profiled inventory.
- In December 2009, UNWOMEN organized a Regional programme meeting to determine project priorities and agree on partners that were identified by the mapping exercise.
- The Network of Religious Leaders, the Associations of Women Lawyers, and Rural Women Networks and Associations were selected as the strategic partners for the programme. These organisations were expected to work consultatively and cooperatively in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Republic, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Senegal.

The consultation agreed on a specific role for each of them, and in particular:

- The Associations of Women Lawyers would popularize women's rights and provide legal aid to survivors of VAW.
- Religious Leaders' networks would support women's access to those rights that are laid down by religion and wrongly interpreted by a majority of communities in West Africa.

During 2010 a few UNW country offices were able to follow up on these commitments and further identify / involve additional local partners, with whom they developed an implementation plan and initiated action.

In October 2010 a second large regional planning meeting took place in Dakar which tightened UNW – CSO arrangements and brought about concrete developments, giving way to fuller implementation in 2011.

During 2011, activities included:

- A series of two-day training workshops with legal practitioners, including male judges, women leaders, administrative and political authorities from relevant Ministries held in Burkina Faso, Cape Vert, Guinea, Mali and Senegal;
- Sensitization meetings with police and army officers, religious and traditional leaders;
- Information sessions with representatives of rural women and health workers from the main towns and provinces organized by the programme in Mali, Burkina Faso, Cape Vert, Guinea, Senegal, and Sierra Leone on access to justice, national and international legal frameworks, law enforcement issues and gaps, cultural constraints, and harmful practices that violate women and girls' rights.

The programme focused primarily on building the advocacy capacity of key CSOs that are represented in most countries throughout the sub-region, and on providing - through them - information, sensitisation, and rights awareness to local associations and women's groups and VAW practitioners. The role of religious and traditional leaders and the potential impact of their positive engagement was specially emphasised.

Public initiatives, including statements and speeches by leading figures, information and working sessions on women's rights, trainings, and other activities against VAW were often led within the framework of broader EAW campaigns which included radio and television broadcast, educational messages, women's stories, debates, etc. Particular attention was put in linking ECOWAS VAW programmatic work with the UniTE campaign and other UNW's more traditional initiatives such as the "16 days of activism".

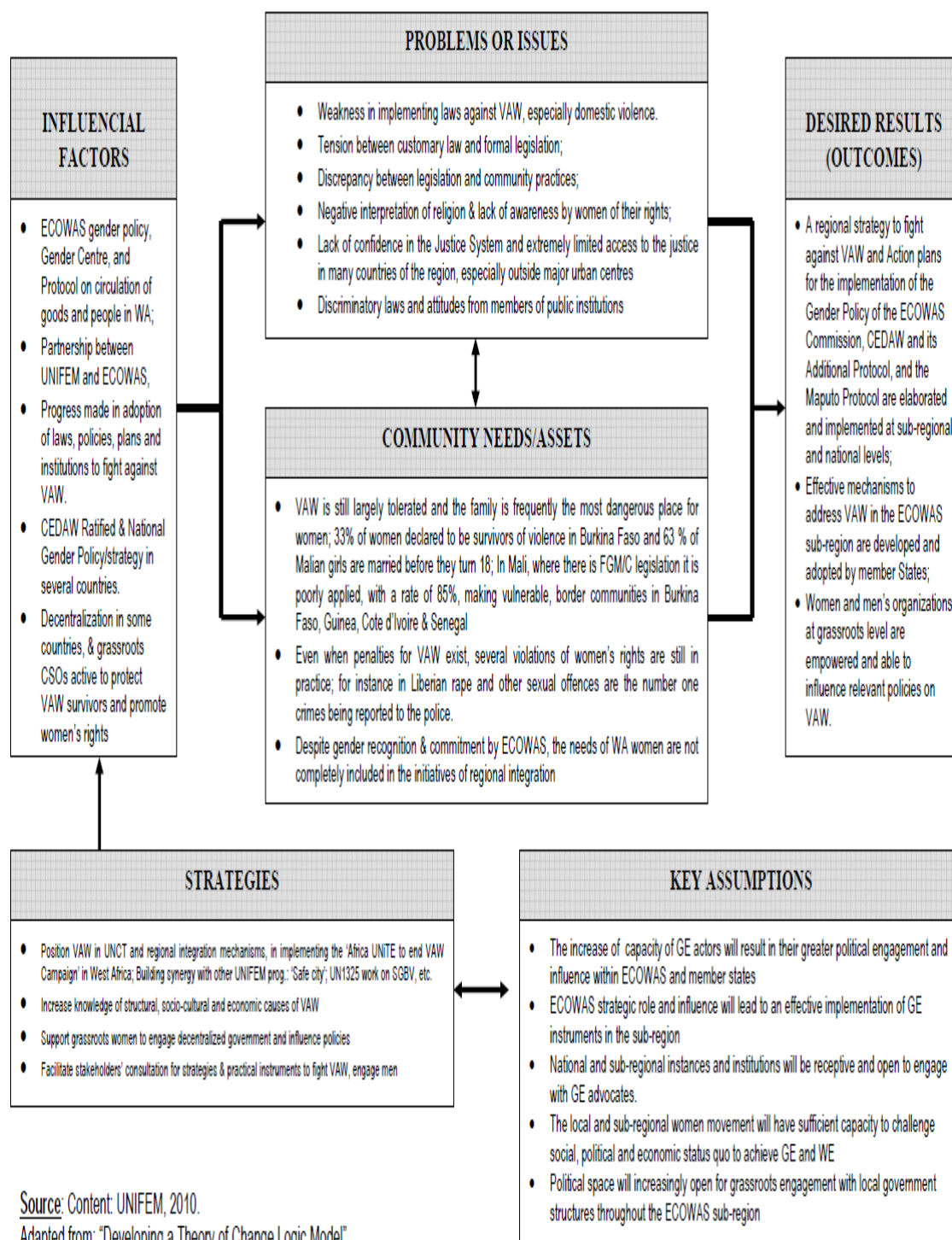
In Burkina Faso, Cape Vert, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone, attention was also brought to the national institutional and legal framework, providing planning support to Ministries of women and gender, and training of civil servants. Cape Vert and Mali, in particular, worked on the development and implementation of VAW /GBV action plans and Mali and Burkina Faso implemented important initiatives with local governments in the provinces.

Relevant protection service provision was extended to a few areas in Mali and Sierra Leone.

The component of Outcome one more properly related to sub-regional integration through a strong engagement of ECOWAS institutions could not be implemented, partly because of the programmatic weakness of their Gender Development Centre in Dakar (GDCe) and a lack of institutional responsiveness by the ECOWAS Gender Commission. The UNW Accra Symposium held at the end of the programme in 2011 brought all major players together and is an important step taken by the SRO in the attempt to build strong inter-institutional and inter-ministerial linkages for the promotion and realisation of gender equality in the region.

Outcome three saw limited implementation in only a few of the countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone - where services and community- level initiatives were brought out to the communities and where local men were at times actively engaged in learning about and defending women's rights.

VAW ECOWAS Programme Theory



Source: Content: UNIFEM, 2010.

Adapted from: "Developing a Theory of Change Logic Model"

The W K Kollogg Foundation

Figure 3 EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.2.2 Design and management

Design

A fundamentally good design was tested by the ambitions of the programme.

The programme's design was **technically good and had a good theory of change** (Figure 3). It led to a comprehensive programme architecture that addressed all complementary levels of intervention.

The overall aim was to create an institutional environment conducive to stopping VAW. Outcomes and outputs would have a symbiotic relationship, creating regional level platforms and dialogue (Outcome 1), aimed at supporting national mechanisms and service provision (Outcome 2) on the ground, which in turn would facilitate women's empowerment and culture change at the grassroots (Outcome 3).

The scope of the programme was ambitious and visionary, capturing strategically the various dimensions of intervention: policy advocacy and institutional strategy development at regional and national levels, service delivery to women and engagement of key players at the grassroots with a focus on decentralised structures of governance.

The design was ambitious, representing WARO's attempt to complement two VAW-related initiatives by the UN Secretary General managed by UNW: the UNITE Campaign and the UNTF. The ECOWAS programme was thus intended to respond to VAW at a more structural level, engaging in a systematic way with governments and civil society, on issues of policy, legal compliance, and accountability, on one side and issues of enforcement and citizenship capacity to demand and contribute to protection, on the other.

The comprehensiveness of the design has been one of the reasons for the good thematic results achieved on the EVAW objectives and also for broader impact on positioning UNW as a lead player for women's rights in the region.

The breadth of vision is summed up by the statement in the programme document¹⁰² which describes: *through a coordinated approach, at the micro, meso and macro levels, the programme will provide a comprehensive and targeted framework for effectively addressing VAW in West Africa. This downstream and upstream approach will lead to increased accountability and leverage collective responsibility of relevant stakeholders at regional, national and grass-root level for ending VAW.*

UNIFEM also wanted to "act as a broker"¹⁰³ for the expression of voices of grassroots organizations to enable them to partner with relevant actors at all levels.

This **ambitious aspiration could not always be backed by concrete and effective programming** to enable the programme to deliver evenly on the expected results. Three factors appear relevant here: capacity, funding, and time horizon.

- UNIFEM capacity was sometimes weak at the country level, which resulted in an overburdened sub-regional office. The existing structure did not allow for implementation effectiveness in the majority of countries.

- It also must be considered that the amount of funding was limited compared to the scope of the programme, suggesting that perhaps a more targeted approach and specific geographic focus would have helped optimise the use of resources.

¹⁰² ProDoc, UNIFEM, 2008 (p 12)

¹⁰³ Ibidem, p 13

- Finally, the implementation period was also extremely short for achieving the broad-based objectives envisaged by the programme. The policy, programmatic, service delivery and social empowerment outcomes expressed, to be reached in a wide and diverse area as the sub-region, need significant preparation and incubation periods before yielding tangible results.

Technical planning was correctly guided by the human rights-based approach (HRBA) endorsed by the UN¹⁰⁴ particularly in its focus on empowering rights holders and targeting the most vulnerable and in the identification of needs and objectives.

Advocacy and capacity strengthening were the main avenues chosen by the project. This approach seems to have been piecemeal.

A limitation in the design lies in its **lack of articulation in the analysis of capacity gaps** of the duty bearers and other key partners, specifically at regional levels. In addition, it underestimated the special support needs implementing partners show in countries affected by fragility¹⁰⁵.

A robust, well-coordinated approach, entailing continuing and sequential interventions is needed to create an impact. Where this was undertaken, as in Mali, the programme was successful.

In most countries (including Sierra Leone, Senegal, Guinea) the Programme focused almost solely on:

- a) training or sensitizing civil society / NGO actors
- b) service provision or (Burkina Faso) on sectoral intervention.

The low performance capacity of the organizations involved limited the effectiveness and prevented the initiatives from achieving impact.

Generally, technical cooperation assistance in fragile states requires stronger scrutiny and leadership to help adjust to the context. **Possibly, more pro-active backstopping would have been needed from WARO and HQ.** For example, more visits carried out by the sub-regional office could have identified problems at an early stage of implementation.

Another finding concerns the choice of indicators.¹⁰⁶ Most indicators in the programme logframes are either process or structural indicators. However, **indicators are poorly developed, with overwhelming emphasis on output-level quantitative indicators such as number of meetings held or number of reports produced.** Possibly, this has not assisted implementation nor guided monitoring in a constructive way.

¹⁰⁴ See The Human Rights Based Approach, Statement of Common Understanding: Developed at the Inter-Agency Workshop on a human rights-based approach in the context of UN reform, 3 to 5 May 2003 and OHCHR, 2006

¹⁰⁵ See DFID Review 2011: UNIFEM had not put in place guidelines or policy frameworks for staff working in fragile states. UNIFEM's track record of working on conflict and peacebuilding was generally positive, but there is no evidence of a robust approach in fragile states more widely.

¹⁰⁶ When developing indicators to monitor the achievements of a human rights-based approach, three clusters could be used: structural, process and outcome indicators. Outcome indicators reflect summary information on the state of realization of a human right.

Process indicators identify information that relates particular policy instruments to "milestone outcomes" that contribute to the protection and progressive realization of human rights. Finally, structural indicators capture information reflecting the legal and institutional framework for the realization of the human right. (HRBA to programming OHCHR,2006)

The programme did not collect VAW-related data to document change and progress in implementation, except for a couple of positive exceptions provided by the Lawyers who keep records of case work. In most implementing countries there is an absence of baselines and monitoring data specific to the programmes and, more in general, little evidence-based information on ERAW processes and progress in the ECOWAS countries.

It is plausible to assume that, had an external review, managed by a small interagency committee, been undertaken in lieu of the cancelled mid-term evaluation, it would have helped identify gaps in the design and emerging issues in implementation, with positive consequences on the possibility of making necessary adjustments early on. However, this should be put in context: it is partly a result of the more general lack of attention to / undervaluing of M&E aspects of programming in the former UNIFEM. This was not peculiar to WARO but reflected a broader institutional weakness in results-based management (RBM) in the organization¹⁰⁷. UNW is actively responding to this challenge by recruiting M&E officers and advisors in many of its main offices.

Moreover, recurring data gaps are highlighted as a fundamental challenge in the Region.¹⁰⁸ The programme has responded to the challenge: Senegal promoted an in-depth study on determinants of VAW in selected regions, and thematic baselines on cross-border FGM/C had provided a strong foundation for sectoral programming in Burkina Faso and Mali.

Planning process

A third limitation lied in the planning process and it affected the substantive activation of relevant partnerships, with negative impacts on achievement of Outcome 1 and on the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of results achieved by Outcome 2.

More inclusive policy dialogue and participatory planning at the outset would have probably enhanced chance of more effective implementation and achievement of sustainable results. Sustainable programmes need institutional support and the participation of central and local governmental structures - as well as institutional, professional, and women's civil society stakeholder involvement from decentralized to super-national (regional) level. These three levels were not reached evenly. A finding reveals that the heavy and complex requirements of partnership development had not been fully forecasted by UNW. Without appropriate involvement of key institutions at planning stage, it proved hard to achieve the necessary partners' commitment.

However, as was just mentioned above, design was based on relevant studies that had given place to consultations to understand determinants of violence and the social mechanisms that sustain it. It was on the basis of this good situational analysis that the programme developed its Theory of Change.

Management

The start up phase was long and actual implementation skewed towards the last year of programme. The evaluation could not ascertain the reasons and causes for the long delay in completing the planning stage of the programme (between 2008, 2009 and early 2010 almost two years were spent in subsequent revisions and fine tuning of

107 UNIFEM struggled to track and report on gender equality results .. [and] demonstrate delivery, partly due to a weak results culture : Multilateral Aid Review: Assessment of UNIFEM/UNW, DFID, 2011

108 Only 2/3 of West African countries for example have sufficient data to be included in the Gender Equality Index of the Human Development Report (UNW, Strategic Note , 2012)

the planning document). Programme staff mentioned bureaucratic procedures and unclear division of labour between WARO and the Programme Approval Committee (PAC) in HQ.

Management arrangements were imprecise and did not facilitate the kind of programme oversight that would have been appropriate to the breadth of vision and aspirations. For example, a group of strategic partners was expected to steer implementation but its composition and procedures were left vague in the programme document¹⁰⁹ and the steering group possibly never established. Overall, the management plan, if possible, should be stronger for a regionally promoted initiative of this size. Staffing at SRO was expected to effectively perform all the ECOWAS programme-related functions: programme oversight and accountability, management, coordination, strategic partnership and M&E, with the only support of one VAW specialist.

Moreover UNIFEM did not have an adequate country and field structure to meet the demands of such an ambitious programme. Some of the countries in the Region did not have a UNIFEM field presence while others only had single NPOs who were also charged with other responsibilities. In many ECOWAS countries where UNIFEM did not have a properly established office, the regional programme was either not implemented or saw only a few limited activities, mainly confined to a few meetings by women's organisations. The evaluation did not find any reports of local activities in Niger and Nigeria. The Cote d'Ivoire programme was suspended due to the armed conflict experienced between the end of 2010 and early 2011.

The significant difference in approach, results and level of intervention of the Mali office / programme have shown that overall office capacity, beyond individual capacity and commitment, is key to sustaining technical and advocacy abilities and support to initiatives.¹¹⁰

Lessons learned on design and management

Initial planning meetings and consultative workshops took place at regional level. Partners were then left to follow up and coordinate with member organizations at country level. A few specific lessons can be learned:

- Consultative planning and inception meetings are critical to partnership building and effective programming. UNW did not fully exploit the opportunities provided by these meetings. Relevant actors were brought together but **one off events are not sufficient**. Even when meetings' outputs went beyond thematic dialogue into action planning as in the Advocacy training workshop held in Dakar 2010, this has in some cases not been sufficient to ensure good follow up by the concerned associations once participants went back to their home base.
- Capacity of the CSO partners to initiate and carry forward action at country level is too low. It requires sustained engagement, with regular monitoring and various forms of support including orientation and motivational support
- It is important that CO / NPO's roles and responsibilities are clearly defined so they can be involved early on and then take forward the work planned at the inception meetings with a lead or facilitation role, as appropriate

¹⁰⁹ PRODOC, page 20

¹¹⁰ Although, as ever, individuals can make a difference: the current programme coordinator managed to navigate within the limitations of UNIFEM field structure, supporting country offices and contributing to initiate a good number of partnerships

- Where UNW offices had the capacity to perform such roles, as in Mali, implementation has been more cohesive and results more evident

4.2.3 Analysis of progress made towards the intended outcomes.

OUTCOME 1: Enhanced capacity of ECOWAS member States to fight against VAW and implement the Gender Policy of the ECOWAS Commission, CEDAW and its Additional Protocol, and the Maputo protocol at sub-regional and national levels:

- Output 1 New partnership between Gender Commission and women's movement is operational in order to elaborate a regional strategy to fight VAW
- Output 2 Dialogue among women's regional networks is institutionalised in a regular forum

The objectives of Outcome 1 seek to achieve a situation in the ECOWAS region where EAW becomes a strong agenda priority, and institutions, ministries and networks region-wide can work more effectively through harmonized mechanisms and improved dialogue. It hinges on member States' capacity and regional dialogue, with a focus on enhanced regional framework to support advances at country level

Finding one: Lines of communication with ECOWAS institutions were kept throughout. Although the partnership was hindered during programme implementation as will be discussed more in depth in Section 4.4, a dialogue continued to be in place, based on a broader collaborative relationship, for example:

- back in 2006 UNIFEM in partnership with the Dakar-based ECOWAS GDCe had organized a meeting of the Associations of Women Lawyers in the region on the implementation of the Maputo protocol¹¹¹
- In 2010, the GDCe Programme Director participated in the ECOWAS VAW programme planning workshop organised by UNW and Trust Africa

UNW has also recognised that the GDCe may need specific capacity development support that has not been possible to provide during programme implementation¹¹². This will probably entail political decisions by ECOWAS as well as targeted alignment between UNW and relevant donors who are actively present in the region.

Finding two: At regional level, the programme established a fruitful partnership with the Trust Africa Foundation, leading to collaboration on two key programme activities: the Dakar workshop and the Accra Symposium.

Trust Africa Regional Training Workshop on Advocacy Oct 2010¹¹³

¹¹¹ UNW, internal document 2009

¹¹² Interviews; Minutes, Programme Review Meeting, UNW and IT Coop 2010

¹¹³ Trust Africa's MDG3 Project, entitled Enhancing Women's Dignity, has two objectives. The first is to reduce violence against women in all its many forms. The project that is implemented in countries that are also covered by the ECOWAS project these include Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Senegal. The MDG 3 project has one of its objectives to strengthen advocacy on issues of violence against women. In building capacity to end violence against women in these countries, the MDG3 project would achieve the following during its pilot phase (2009-2011):

- Compile a database of civil society organizations working to end violence against women in its target countries

The workshop built upon a previous 2009 networks meeting and represented a major effort by the newly appointed programme coordinator to infuse an impulse to implementation. The goal was to gather relevant CSO representatives and inject new strength in these networks by allowing them to jointly develop a shared agenda and planning commitments.

Representatives of Rural women, religious leaders and women lawyers networks from nine countries in the region participated in this advocacy training and planning workshop, which was found excellent by various participants.¹¹⁴

Finding three: Country-based CSOs alliances to jointly implement activities were fostered. While a regular forum to institutionalise dialogue among women's regional networks could not be established, nevertheless agreements were reached with six countries teams who developed detailed national action plans to be implemented together with key VAW stakeholders. Implementation later took place in five countries, given that the programme in Cote d'Ivoire was disrupted by the conflict.¹¹⁵

Finding four: The June 2011 Parity Conference in Senegal is a good example of how Ministries of Gender and Women Affairs in West Africa can be empowered to take action. This International Conference on gender equality, aimed at strengthening of advocacy and synergies among ECOWAS member states and civil society, for equal participation of women in decision making at all levels, brought together over 400 participants from all over the region. It was organized by the Senegalese Ministry of Gender, Culture, and Quality of Life with the support of UNW and the IT Coop.

The model proposed, in line with the approach of the programme, is one of coordination by the Ministers in the region on legal instruments and other tools to support the building of common platforms amongst institutional actors and women's civil society for the identification of operational priorities.¹¹⁶

The Conference adopted a final declaration and plan of action underscoring the centrality of "gender democratic governance" of political and economic processes, which were submitted to the Malabo Africa Union 2011 Summit. The preceding African Women's Pre-Summit Consultation on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union, in turn, urged member States to develop and monitor effective early warning systems and protection mechanisms in consultation with local communities, to mitigate violence against women and girls. It also called on the Gender is My Agenda Campaign Network¹¹⁷, to which the Senegal Ministry of Gender is an observer, to continue to raise awareness on violence against women, and lobby for action to prevent and address the consequences, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations.

-
- Convene training and agenda-setting workshops for civil society organizations
 - Provide grants, seed funding, and technical assistance to organizations working to end VAW
 - Document best practices
 - Document and publish the results achieved during the pilot phase

(From UNW progress report 2010)

¹¹⁴ Reports and interviews. The countries were: Burkina Faso (5 agencies) Cote d'Ivoire (3) Guinea Conakry (3) Liberia (3) Mali (4), Senegal (3), Niger (2), Nigeria (2) Sierra Leone (3)

¹¹⁵ Training report, the Centre for African Family, 2010; UNW donor report 2010

¹¹⁶ Interview, various institutional sites and web news, see for example

www.afriqueavenir.org/2011/06/...textes-de...femmes-dans-la-construction-de-la-sous-region

¹¹⁷ The umbrella of African women's civil society organisations and African women leaders GIMAC, based in Dakar Almadies, is one of UNW's partner

http://www.fasngo.org/assets/files/18%20GIMAC/FINAL_RECOMMENDATIONS_18TH_GIMAC_ENG.pdf

Finding five: The High Level Meeting on Sustaining Responses on Gender Equality in the ECOWAS Region was a major initiative towards UNW capacity reinforcement. It has also opened new opportunities for a renewed engagement on EAW by regional institutions. Whereas Ministries of Gender were supported in their coordinating role, the meeting had the considerable merit that it brought together, in a common space, Ministries of Planning, Local Government and Decentralisation, Finance, and Justice from all countries in the region, in an effort to clearly identify sectoral responsibilities for advancing gender goals in West Africa. The Accra innovative recommendations were subsequently integrated into UNW WARO new Strategy and workplan 2012-2013.

The Symposium has also provided UNW with a new chance for dialogue with ECOWAS, also specifically on VAW. It is hoped that the funding and center stage awarded to the Gender Commission may now open a window for revamping their commitments to women's rights. *Positioning of UNW as institution has importance for fight against violence in general. Rallying people beyond what UNIFEM would do traditionally would strengthen also VAW agenda* (interview).

UNW expects that this renewed engagement and visibility will also help bring VAW issues up to a higher level in the organization, perhaps at the Heads of States level as it had happened in the Great Lakes region.

According to UNW, the regional dimension of the programme and the fact that its history is making roots has played the success factor in prompting ECOWAS to participate effectively in the Symposium.

On a less positive note, the evaluation noted that in her address speech the ECOWAS Gender Commissioner did not mention violence against women, nor women's rights, nor did so the closing remarks by Letty Chiwara, Chief of Africa Division, UNW HQ.¹¹⁸

An explanation for this apparent inconsistency was provided by UNW staff as follows: In 2011, when UNW was created, and the mandate changed, from what UNIFEM's used to be, towards responsibility to oversee all gender equality interventions across the Region. *The development of a Regional Monitoring framework on Gender by all partners in the region was considered a priority over extending support to National EAW Action Plan, so funding went to Accra Symposium.* (interview, UNW officer). In other words, UNW may have wished to look for different strategic entry points to establish itself as a relevant partner on women's empowerment in the region, even though the necessitated transaction cost seems to be the shadowing of EAW as a key objective vis a vis ECOWAS institutions.

UNW has reaffirmed that the regional approach is essential and that "regional" as a label adds value to actions "Moreover the regional dimension is critical to EAW in West Africa because of the homogeneity of issues and the high level of integration and mobility. Without a homogeneous approach to VAW, no country action will really have an impact" (interview, UNW CPM)

Finding six: collaboration between the CSO networks involved in the planning, other partners, and UNW in the field was not sufficiently mobilised to support

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Accra Symposium report 2011

results. In some countries, including Liberia, Niger, Nigeria and Togo, either the absence of UNW field presence, or weak orientation of the CO, may have prevented the integration of the planned civil society-led activities into a broader, structured framework of interventions that can achieve systemic impact¹¹⁹.

It also proved difficult to sustain momentum in Guinea and Burkina Faso, where UNW does not have a national office.

In the Republic of Guinea, Jurists, women's NGOs and Religious leaders cooperated with mutual satisfaction in the realisation of a series of sensitization and training workshops during 2010 - 2012¹²⁰.

UNW reports it initiated contacts with UNDP and other agencies to ensure that support to the planned CSOs work would be aligned to the Joint Programme on VAW that was being developed by the UNCT. It also undertook to support the Ministries of Women Affairs, which were also present at Dakar 2011, and Internal Security to integrate the fight against VAW in the Security Sector reforms; a plan of interventions was presented in December 2010 to the concerned ministries for validation¹²¹. These initiatives were coordinated with the ECOWAS GDCe, PBSO and the Peacebuilding Commission Guinea Configuration¹²². The evaluation found disbursement of funds for the ministry in 2011, but the absence of a field presence by UNW makes it difficult for the organisation to show the positive gains derived by its contribution.

Similarly, activity reports for implementation of joint training seminars by CSOs in Burkina Faso testify of action initiated and supported by the Programme, with the synergistic involvement of the Trust Africa foundation.

Finding seven: In all these instances, a better monitoring and reporting system, that emphasises the collection, analysis, production and sharing of performance and outcome-based information and data would have probably assisted UNW country and sub-regional office in tracking programme implementation and progress, as well as demonstrate results where these may have been achieved

OUTCOME 2: Development and adoption of effective mechanisms to address VAW by ECOWAS member States.¹²³

- Output 2.1 National strategy to fight against VAW is elaborated and in use in all member states of ECOWAS (activities include: technical support to governments to elaborate and implement EVAW strategy, Protection services, hotline, advocacy skills training to women and their networks)
- Output 2.2 financial resources allocated to EVAW through gender responsive budgeting (GRB)

- Output 2.3 Senegal study on incidence of forms of VAW¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ In one of the above mentioned countries, for example, the organisation who had attended the regional planning meeting was different from the implementing partner in the field. Moreover, the CO never managed to meet them during the implementation phase and had no updated information on progress (UNW programme manager, personal communication).

¹²⁰ Activity report, AFJG, 2012

¹²¹ UNW Progress report 2010

¹²² Join Mission Report UNW 2011

¹²³ OC2 Indicators: extent to which cases are better reported to police and mechanisms to fight impunity of perpetrators

- Output 2.4 Local-level implementation of International Laws and adoption of cross border FGM/C law

Finding one: In-country action has been catalytic and participatory in Cape Vert, Mali and Sierra Leone. In Cape Verde UNW operated in the context of the specific GBV law that came into effect in March 2011. An initial demand from women advocates and CSOs, the law proposal was the product of the coordinated work of a wide range of actors: Cape-Verdean Network of Women Parliamentarian, National Gender Institute (ICIEG) and members of the SOL network, primary UNW partners¹²⁵. During the drafting of the proposal, a mapping of the GBV response was conducted in partnership with the national gender machinery and civil society organisations to inform the programme's strategy, with a focus on existing support services to GBV victims and service gaps. Funding made available for the mapping by the ECOWAS programme was complemented by additional funding from the NGOs to also include an analysis of bottlenecks of victim's access to justice, since such information was important to better devise the new provisions of the law.¹²⁶

In other countries also, the Italian funds were pooled in by Governments with other contributions to planning from the UNTF, UNFPA, UNICEF, and other partners and donors.

Support to Security Council Resolution 1325 Action Plan (SILNAP) in Sierra Leone by the TRC project, for example, was a complementary action of the Italian funded programmes. The national gender strategic plan (NGSP) and other existing gender plans in Sierra Leone are currently being reviewed to align their implementation with SILNAP.

Finding two: The programme succeeded in supporting the development of the Mali National VAW Programme 2011-2013. In Mali UNW used the programme to work innovatively with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family to deliver a VAW Action Plan¹²⁷, a fully-costed, results-oriented, 2-year plan which is funded by the government for 40% of its budget.

Finding three: UNW was a decisive partner in the highly participative and iterative, inclusive process in Mali. Simultaneous, country-wide elaboration of the

¹²⁴ The Study was completed in 2012 under the leadership of the Sahara Programme at the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar

¹²⁵ *This law represents an innovation in the Cape-Verdean legal system. Not limited to new repression measures for GBV cases, it provides programmatic solutions aimed at primary prevention, and protection measures. GBV is now considered to be a public crime. The definition of GBV is extensive, covering physical, psychological, sexual, moral and patrimonial violence based on gender inequalities or social constructions of unbalanced power relationships. Criminalization of harassment based on gender, includes attitudes that diminishes self-esteem. GBV cases are considered to be urgent. It also ensures the treatment of the aggressor through the implementation of psychological, psychiatric and educational programs*
ICIEG - Capeverde Institute for Gender Equality and Equity, Concept Note "Community based dissemination of Cape Verde's newly adopted GBV Law" 2011

¹²⁶ Interview

¹²⁷ See: PNLV 2011-2013, Ministry promotion Women Children and Family, Preface "Ce présent Programme National 2011-2013 de lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes et aux filles, aligné sur la PNG-Mali vise la mise en œuvre des dispositions de la PNG relatives aux violences faites aux femmes et aux filles. Je voudrais adresser mes vifs remerciements à ONU FEMMES (appuyé par le Gouvernement d'Italie) et UNFPA pour leur appui technique et financier dans l'élaboration du présent programme. This National programme to fight VAWG 2011-2013 aligned with the Mali National Gender Policy (NGP) concerns the implementation of the NGP provisions on VAWG. I would like to express my sincere thank you to UNW (with the support of the Government of Italy) and UNFPA for their technical and financial support in the development of this programme.

Action Plan started in December 2010 in 8 regions and was concluded with a large validation workshop in Bamako.

The Plan is clearly aligned to international and national treaties and legal instruments, including the 2010 National Gender Policy and it is integrated to the Government's National Programme to fight against FGM/C. It addresses all forms of violence at multiple levels and provides for effective mobilisation of central and local institutions and governmental structures at decentralised level. It provides for complaint mechanisms and referral and redress avenues, for example by informing and instructing education personnel on services available in case of harassment at the workplace.

Finding four: The creative approach adopted for the elaboration and dissemination of the Mali Plan is noteworthy. The process was strongly supported by the Minister for Women, Children and Family and led by high-level governmental figures, with the principal involvement of both the Ministry line structure at regional levels and decentralised local authorities. While regional drafts were being put forward through inclusive discussions, a major media campaign involved local and national radio and TV stations, and Muslim religious leaders, in informing, explaining and promoting EVAW. A widely-attended theatre context accompanied and mirrored the incremental structure of the regional/ national formulation process. UNW estimates that up to 50.000 people have been reached one way or the other through the Action Planning process.

Finding five: The programme has promoted country-based coalition and delivered women's human rights training to State agents in Burkina Faso, Cape Vert, Mali, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.

In 2010, the Association des Femmes Juristes **Burkina Faso** (lawyers) conducted a two day training and agenda setting workshops with legal practitioners, women leaders, administrative and political authorities on VAW international and national legal instruments for male and female judges, Police and Army officers, and religious leaders and established MoUs with Police stations in three regions. Also in 2010, lawyers in **Sierra Leone** collaborated with the Women's Forum traditional leaders, and members of the Inter Religious Council to prepare regional sensitisation meetings¹²⁸.

Similar activities were organised in 2011 for Judicial Police and HR organisations in **Senegal**, where the programme complements a strong VAW hotline initiative funded by IT Coop. Here it has been particularly effective because it linked up training of Judicial and Court personnel with a free legal service provided for women at the clinics. As a result women who need to file a complaint will be addressed to officers who are sensitised and taught how to handle VAW cases¹²⁹.

In **Cape Vert**, UNW has provided support to national partners in the dissemination of the GBV law at local and community level, in the context of the implementation of the National GBV Action Plan (2008-2011) aimed at strengthening the capacity of ICIEG and civil society partners,

This line of action was complementary to other ongoing efforts, which included strengthening the capacity of public sector actors, such as the police and justice officials, to implement the law, especially in terms of timely and sensitive case management; as well as for the establishment of a programme for rehabilitation of men

¹²⁸ Progress report, UNW 2010 and interviews

¹²⁹ (Interview)

offenders; and engaging men and boys in the combat against GBV and the promotion of gender equality¹³⁰.

Conducting the Training of Trainers (TOT in Cape Vert as a joint training of civil society partners and some public sector institutions, including teachers, health and police staff) was found by UNW to be a good option, which fostered a multi-sectoral approach from the outset. The pool of trainers also capitalized on local level actors, which were expected to be an asset in view of a multiplying effect. The methodology of the training was delineated to ensure work on attitudes and the management of participatory sessions¹³¹.

In **Mali**, women's organizations have conducted sensitization sessions for local partners such as women cooperatives members and their local leaders, health workers, and respected religious figures who can publicly advocate for EAW. Information on international and national legal frameworks, and mechanisms for redress were discussed together with the viability of local options and responses. All of the recipients of sensitisation met during the evaluation stated that they were very happy with the information received and that it was the first time that VAW was addressed in such structured way.

Finding six: Sector-specific on-the-job training has added value and impacts on daily practices in the work environment. Particularly interesting is the sector-specific training provided to health workers (head doctors, nurses and obstetric personnel) in hospitals and municipal health Centres in Bamako. These act as referral structures for the lower-tier local clinics and health posts. All attendants met by the evaluation praised the training and requested more of such sessions¹³².

The value-added by sector-specific technical training was, on top of knowledge transfer, that participants could immediately relate what they learned to their professional environment and peers- discuss among colleagues new approaches to delivering concrete responses, and what internal organizational improvements were necessary to operationalise them.

Furthermore, training was related to monitoring issues and information gaps, and a simple ledger was provided to each Centre to comply with ward and municipal-level data collection.

Finding seven: The agency of civil society partners was promoted through the activities of the programme. UNW found that in one of the implementing countries, the Women's Lawyer Association was not well positioned to lead on the implementation of the project, in terms of operational capacity to convene actors, design the intervention, and implement the actions. The TOT and its respective manual proved to be an effective tool to promote their commitment and agency in the context of the national response to GBV¹³³.

Finding eight: The Cape Vert and Mali experiences have adopted a systemic approach and could be considered examples of good practice.

They are comprehensive of multiple elements:

- TOT that takes replication and multiplication into account;

¹³⁰ (Interview)

¹³¹ (interview CPM)

¹³² (individual and group interviews)

¹³³ (interview)

- Decentralized community training of local level stakeholders, including community leaders, CBOs and local actors (health, police, education, officers)
- Development of guidance materials,
- Promotion of action-oriented response, to help participants think of ways to return the lessons learned and knowledge acquired to other community members/peer groups.
- Establishment of multisectoral partnerships for coordinated networking and advocacy¹³⁴
- Complementarity to other ERAW initiatives

A concrete example was effectively illustrated by a UNW manager : "*Later civil society partners participated in a capacity building workshop in Dakar, where country priorities were discussed. Because their participation was framed within the context of an operational partnership, organized around a mapping activity linked to the elaboration of a GBV Law, the Dakar meeting was useful as they could take learning back and feed it into further action planning for the concrete implementation of the law*"¹³⁵.

These actions were also efficient and implemented at low cost (approx. 50.000US\$).

The evaluation also notes that good proposal forms (project fiches) outlined clear and detailed steps and responsibilities of technical and implementing partners, and some UNW COs used well designed project planning tools to facilitate partners' submission.

Lessons learned on effective national mechanisms to address VAW

- The good practices described above underscore the importance of reaching categories of civil servants and local-state professionals, by firmly anchoring community / civil society sensitization and the promotion of their demand capacity into institutional accountability. This approach was found helpful when it was accompanied by a clear delineation of sectoral responsibilities, specific tasks, and concrete, appropriate, and viable response modalities for the concerned public officers.
- UNW country experiences have suggested that GBV is a difficult concept to grasp and requires considerable capacity building, but it also contributes to more transformative effects. The choice of training methodologies is crucial and particularly effective when they allow participants to build individual and collective consciousness on gender power relations¹³⁶.
- **Sensitisation on new norms** should not equate with ineffective (harmful) lecturing of communities and target groups. Participants in Sierra Leone observed that sensitisation teams coming from Freetown are not fully accepted by communities.
- **Beyond sensitisation** These informants pointed to a need to engage at chiefdom (local area) level, through in-depth discussions, face to face interaction

¹³⁴ Cape Vert proposal, ICIEG

¹³⁵ Interview, CPM

¹³⁶(interview

with local officers over VAW / GBV. This would allow ownership over the implications of reformed legal frameworks, for example work out the details of case handling, etc¹³⁷.

- Partners' experience confirms similar findings. UNICEF is concerned about *“Ensuring the training sessions and sensitization processes are as effective as possible, tailoring them to local resources and reality.”* With regard to care service providers, they suggest that there is a need to **differentiate between sensitizing (the entire personnel), training (those who are in contact with the victims or can promote detection) and more specific training** (for those who will provide direct care and attention to detected victims).¹³⁸

OUTCOME 3: Empowerment of women and men organizations at grassroots level through engagement with decentralised government structures and decision making processes

- Output 3.1 develop a strategy to increase influence and leadership role of grassroots women 's organizations locally across the sub-region. (includes Support to legal and paralegal service-provider groups at the local level happened in Mali, Senegal, SL.
- Output 3.2 Decentralized innovative action to involve men and boys (includes Training of police forces on the implementation of laws on VAW in selected ECOWAS countries)

Outcome three focuses on local level implementation, through involving men and boys at community level (including police training).

Community-level engagement by the programme in Mali with decentralised government structures has been discussed in the context of decentralized action planning under Outcome two. Other countries have also conducted some police and judicial training, as already mentioned.

Finding one: Positive linkages with the GELD initiative were developed in Mali, where UNW reports that EAW messages were consistently incorporated in district-level advocacy and planning support to the women mayors in central and Northern provinces. The promotion and exploitation of potential synergies between the two programmes also in other countries would have likely created a multiplier effect and mutually reinforced action, yielding impact for EAW, Gender Equity and Women's empowerment messages.

Finding two: The Italian-funded programmes have contributed to making vital services accessible to women. Support to legal and paralegal service-provider groups at the local level responds to women's priority needs and can be life changing and life saving.

The provision of decentralised legal and paralegal services was supported by the programme only in Mali and Sierra Leone. Walk-in facilities are open to women in urban districts of Bamako and other provincial towns in Mali, and in Freetown and Kenema in Sierra Leone. These offices are supervised by trained lawyers but they are sometime run, at a very low cost, but effectively, by motivated women with relatively little training and education. They provide active listening, counsel, legal advice, essential orientation

¹³⁷ group meeting

¹³⁸ UNICEF Sierra Leone 2012)

and support in court procedures, and active mediation vis-a-vis male perpetrators, their families and employers, and traditional justice and police, as appropriate. **Local stakeholders and beneficiaries were highly positive about this approach**¹³⁹.

Such interventions create positive dynamics and impact on the local cultural and institutional environment, when men at all levels (individual citizens and office holders) are faced with the fact that women are no longer alone and powerless, but can find support in locally accessible professionally-based practice. Individual accounts of how the practice members have helped women in difficult circumstances, ranged from cases of direct physical violence, to abuse, to child neglect, to moral, psychological and social oppression.

The Secretary General Report to CSW 2012 makes various references to the contribution of UNW's Italian funded programmes,¹⁴⁰ in particular to how legal aid was provided to victims of VAW by the National Association of Women Lawyers, in States such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Sierra Leone.

Finding three: The social norm approach is reflected in the pilot PNLE project in Sisako to address female genital mutilation being practised across the border between Mali and Burkina Faso. The SG Report also refers to community-based sensitization, multi-stakeholders interventions and how positive and innovative social norm approach¹⁴¹ is being supported by UN-Women and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme in Burkina Faso and Mali.

Reports by implementing partners and secondary beneficiary information confirmed strong community support for the initiatives being introduced in this Malian Southern district, even though implementation had started toward the end of 2011. For lack of time the evaluation could not visit the Burkina Faso areas, where UNW reports that direct Ministerial support and interventions are being effective¹⁴².

4.3. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT / FIGURES OF THE ITALIAN FUNDED PROGRAMMES

The evaluation conducted a careful and in-depth analysis of expenditure patterns for the programmes. Comprehensive financial data (spreadsheets by year and country) were provided to the consultant after the field phase was completed. Data was disaggregated and re-organised into relevant categories, to show timing of disbursement, area coverage and type of beneficiaries / recipients of funds. A synopsis of the financial figures findings is provided in three tables annexed to the report (ANNEX 1). This section provides a review of the use of funds.

The grants of the Government of Italy amounted to **a total contribution of US\$ 2,372,017**. The funds provided by the Italian Cooperation compare strongly with other programmes to EVAW in West Africa. For example, the UNTF's current investments in West Africa are US\$ 4,306,475¹⁴³.

Programme managers in Mali and Cape Vert reported that UNW VAW actions were entirely supported by the Italian contribution. It is possible to assume that this was true for other countries, with the exception of Liberia and Sierra Leone which were recipient

¹³⁹ personal and group interviews

¹⁴⁰ SGR 2012, paragraphs 18, 35

¹⁴¹ SGR 2012, Paras 29, 45

¹⁴² UNW Donor Report

¹⁴³ Data available on the TF site

of additional peacebuilding funds with a significant EAW component. *We must say that in 2011 funding for VAW in Mali only basically came from ECOWAS VAW Programme ... It was this funding that allowed us to develop the institutional framework and open up partnerships for support service provision with the Women Lawyers and cross border work. It is all based upon the Programme!* (Interview)

The allocation originally earmarked for the TRC Recommendations project in SL stands at 44% of the total contribution, however the actual expenditure reviewed by this evaluation only amounted to 24 % of the funding received, at US\$580,000. Conversely, US\$ 1,468,000 - or 62% - was directed towards regional spending.

The following charts illustrate specific findings related to:

1) Start up and Pace of implementation

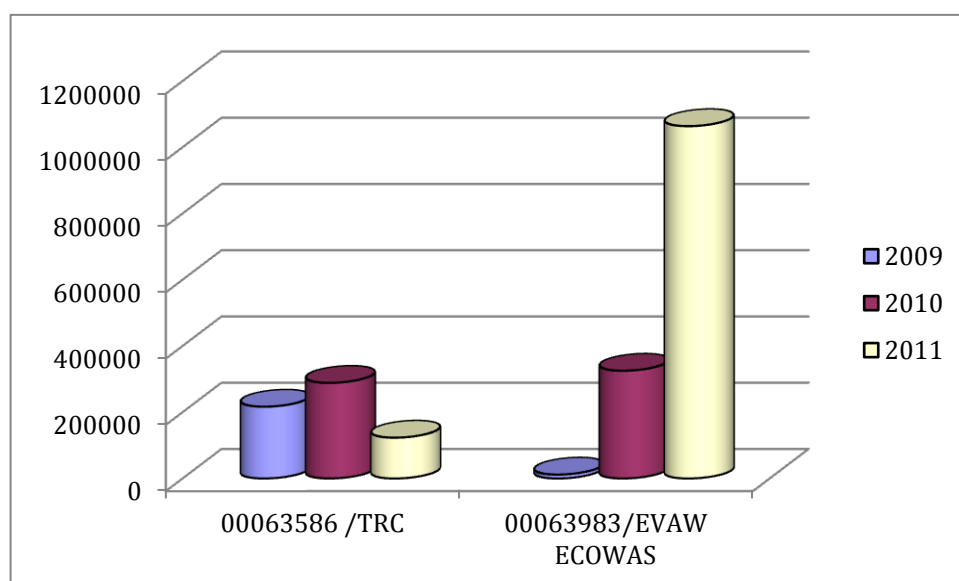


Fig. 4 Start up and Pace of implementation

Fig. 4 shows the pace of expenditure in dollar amounts, by year, for each of the two programmes

Disbursement records show that, while the Sierra Leone project was rather evenly implemented between 2009 and the end of the no-cost extension in mid 2011, **for the ECOWAS programme the bulk of implementation, more than one million dollars, took place in 2011.**

This is a reflection of the difficulties encountered by UNIFEM in programme planning, approval, and preparation. Once activities were identified and partnerships secured, implementation finally took off in the last year of the programme.

2) Allocations by country

Fig. 5 shows the programmes overall geographic coverage and distribution of resources. It should be noted that the Senegal bar includes all SRO-based payments and not only the country-implemented EAW programme (which accounted for approximately 15% of expenditures recorded under “Senegal”). For example, the cost of the 2011 Accra Symposium alone was US\$ 255,000, or 19% of the ECOWAS contribution.

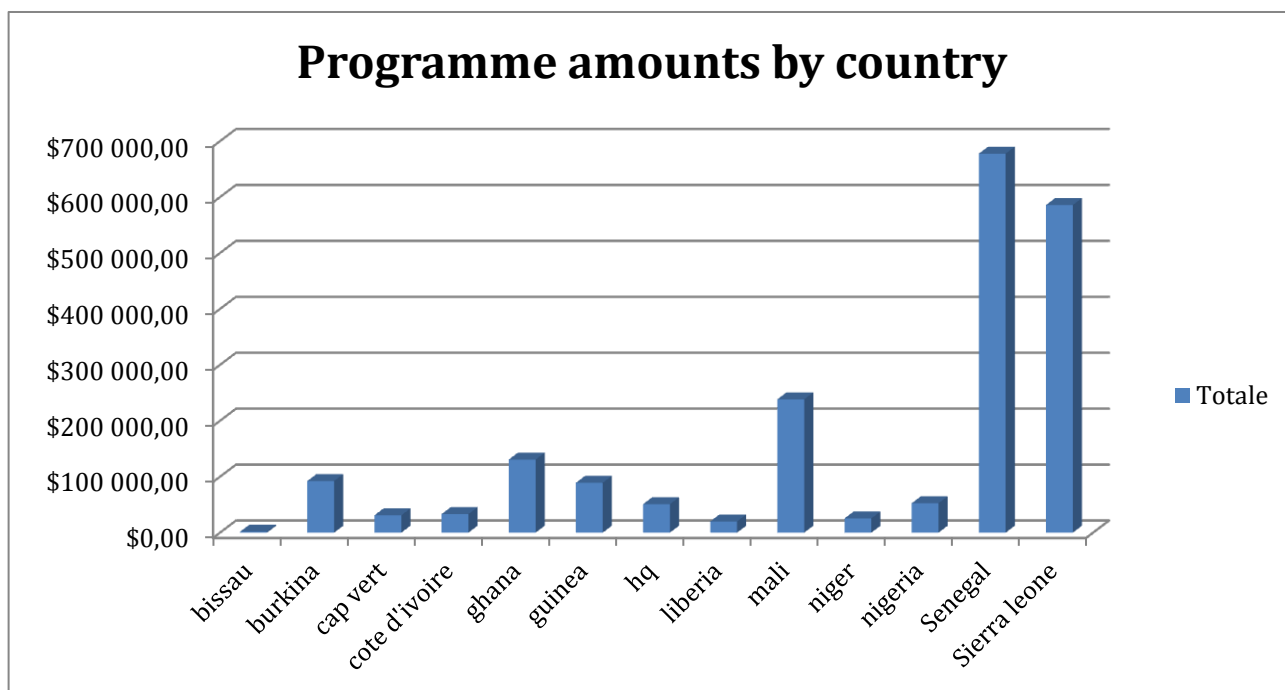


Fig. 5 Allocations by country

3) Allocations by type of expenditure

To get a better sense programme allocations, disbursements were grouped according to main typologies. Administrative and managerial costs, including **Human resources and UNW organisational and operation support, together, accounted for 52% of programme spending**¹⁴⁴, while **Contributions to country actions / agencies** - which groups all in-country payments made to Ministries and other implementing partners accounts for the remaining 48% .

Administration / Human resources, include staff salaries and benefits, consultancy fees, translation and other services, and travel daily allowances; General Management / Operations, include travel fees and hotel costs. UNW WARO has highlighted how some of this expenditure could go to administrative support provided to direct programme activities, like in the organisation of workshops, not as part of UNW general management functions.

¹⁴⁴ This programme moneys was spent on salaries, honoraria, DSA, and travel of consultants, staff, and a few national partners attending international gatherings: for example 50% of Senegal financial report 2010, the whole Liberia disbursement 2011 (US\$20,000: salaries), Niger 2011; Nigeria 2011 (various months, 11 persons salaries US\$50,000) or even Van Breda international insurance for office staff, which means in these cases resource allocation not always focussed on ERAW or was only indirectly related to the programme's objectives

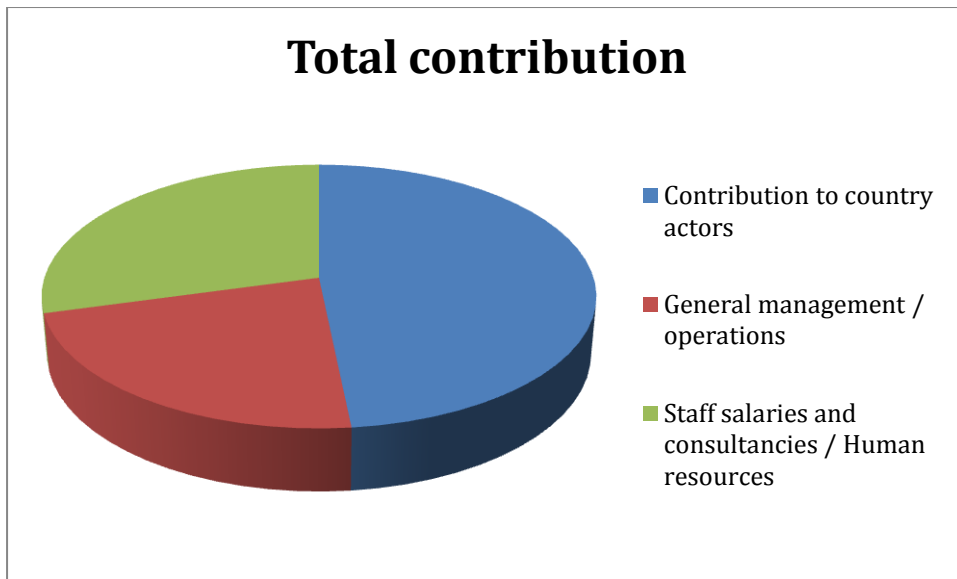


Fig. 6 Breakdown of Operational and Organisational costs

The breakdown shown in the Fig. 6, indicates that staff salaries and consultants fees absorbed 30% of programme funds, at almost US\$ 600,000, and general management 22% at US\$ 454,000.

This support to institutional strengthening has at times been vital for UNW in the region. In Mali, for example, the VAW programme (US \$210.000) represents approximately 30% of the 2011 country portfolio, but as the CPM reported: *"It was thanks to the Italian Cooperation that UNW could be launched in Mali"*.

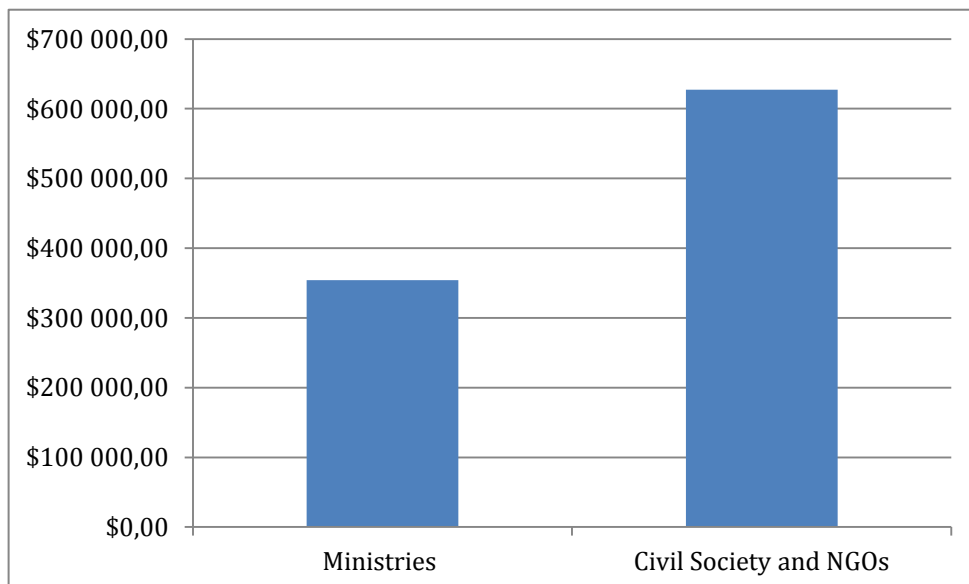


Fig. 7 Institutional and CSO beneficiaries

The analysis of the 48% of programme funds that went to agencies and implementing partners in the various countries revealed that civil society benefitted by almost twofold compared to governmental institutions (Fig.7).

Most of civil society payments were related to implementation of training and other project activities. Women's Ministries in Mali, Sierra Leone, Burkina, Guinea, Senegal and Ghana received contributions for various actions including decentralised planning

(Mali), constructions (SL) and communications (Ghana). For some other ministerial contributions it was not possible to trace a clear activity line, although the Programme Coordinator confirmed that funds were normally targeted to the development and implementation of national action plans.

Accounting

Accounting for the Italian contribution has been professional and transparent and record keeping is clear and complete. At the micro level, project activities in Cape Vert, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone (when the evaluation could access reports) were well documented and reported to detail. Only in some cases (particularly for 2010 expenditures and for Burkina Faso and Guinea) the evaluation could not access valuable documentation.

4.4. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Leveraging, strengthening and sustaining partnerships was a key strategy for the programme, and was considered an added value by UNW¹⁴⁵. A second strategy involved opening a space for women's dialogue with local and national institutions, within a broader regional integration framework, where the Proposal document clearly identified targets at all levels¹⁴⁶. Programme outcomes included capacity development (CD) of gender ministers and their senior staff, to engage other line ministries in VAW; and strengthening the capacity of women's movements to support their advocacy on VAW nationally and locally. The programme could also count on a Regional UN working group willing to "cluster" around EVAW, to make that a priority within UNCTs.¹⁴⁷

Finally, a UNIFEM evaluation¹⁴⁸ had specifically indicated that establishing a cooperation framework with the sub-regional organisation in WA would be necessary to strengthen their institutional capacity and ensure sustainability of the partnership.

Almost two years (2009 and 2010) were spent by the programme in mapping, selecting, networking and fostering dialogue with the concerned stakeholders.

The programme has successfully reinforced its partnership with gender machineries in a few countries and with cross-regional CSO players such as religious leaders, and the associations of women lawyers. In Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, SL, it has, to different extents, reached out to the rural women and their CBOs. At the regional level, challenges prevented the expected results.

a) Partnerships with CSOs are relevant but CD must be implemented differently. Much effort and work has gone into cooperating with CSOs. Their representatives were brought together in two Dakar meetings, and these groups are now seen by UNW as established and reliable partners. It should be noted, however, that these CSOs are country based and only very loosely connected at regional level.

¹⁴⁵ (from ProDoc Pag 12) The value added of the programme is the strategic partnerships at all levels that will tackle complexity of VAW in multidimensional, multisectoral and multi-level manner realising activities at the regional, national and local levels... to increase the critical mass of gender advocates fighting against VAW.

¹⁴⁶ The programme was primarily targeted to partnership with ECOWAS, Governments, and SCOs, namely the Association of Women Lawyers, Religious Leaders and Rural women networks

¹⁴⁷ ProDoc, UNIFEM 2008

¹⁴⁸ UNIFEM 2009

The UNW methodology did not account for capacity gaps, leaving a loophole between the positive participation of partners in programme meetings and the actual degree and quality of implementation they were later able to carry out. A key dimension is technical and organisational capacity. The country experience has shown that their capacity remains an issue and sustained technical assistance, monitoring and follow up will be needed by UNW to support their ability to engage in effective dialogue with local and national institutions.

b) Overall, the programme has not engaged visibly and consistently in a dialogue with the gender Ministers, and did not pursue a systemic approach to EAW implementation that would concomitantly strengthen the ministries in the WA region. With Ministries and gender machineries there is a more sketchy picture. While alignment and collaboration are always ensured by UNW, the best experiences appear to have taken place in Cape Vert and Mali, with some limited initiatives in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

c) Multi-sector engagement, mainstreaming, and budgeting processes, on the whole, were non enacted – probably due to limitations also on the part of UNW's internal structure. However a good start was made in some countries, for example Mali.

At the Regional Symposium organised in Accra in 2011, UNW has made inter-ministerial dialogue its flagship / brand strategy. The success of the Symposium has opened new avenues that the Organisation now intends to pursue. The useful analysis provided by WARO's 2012-2013 strategy shows at the same time the relevance of some of the key partners identified by the programme, and how much the programme has contributed to shaping and refining WARO's vision on its partnership portfolio¹⁴⁹.

d) Partnership with ECOWAS was, in principle, and still remains potentially highly relevant, on two accounts: the mandate of ECOWAS itself, as it relates to HR obligations towards women of the governments in the region, and the positive role such partnership could play in engaging ECOWAS institutions in spearheading Governments' action to promote and protect women's rights to equality and to a life freed from violence. Strategically located at the core of Outcome one, the initial choice of engaging with the ECOWAS¹⁵⁰ Community was based on the fact that ECOWAS was reported to have over the years built strategic alliances with its development partners including UNIFEM, and the existence of important collaborations, especially with the

¹⁴⁹ WorkPlan_Strategy Note 2012-13, UNW 2012, It identifies five broad categories of actors for Gender Equality (GE) in the region: governments and regional Economic communities; gender advocates and the women's movement; national gender machineries; donors/development partners including the UN; and traditional and faith based communities. The impact on GE of these groups can be assessed through four key factors: political will, level of influence, technical and organisational capacity, financial influence and allocations to GE. Development financing priorities and how these are established and managed internationally and nationally; the will, technical and financial capacity of government and development actors to internalise, mainstream and advance GE; the organisation and ability of citizens (and in particular gender advocates, men and boys, and the women's movement) to demand and achieve their rights are among main impacting factors.

¹⁵⁰ Under the ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993) the Community is committed to the enhancement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of women. Under article 65, member States undertook to formulate, harmonize, coordinate, and establish appropriate policies and mechanisms for the enhancement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of women. Thus, **to accompany member states in the implementation of their gender equality obligations, ECOWAS established an institutional framework composed of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre and a Gender Technical Commission within its Human Development and Gender Commission.**"

Commission for Human Development and Gender, was considered as an opportunity for the programme.¹⁵¹

For example,¹⁵² the Dakar-based Centre au Développement du Genre / Gender Development Centre (GDCe) is involved in a number of regional programmes in Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Senegal.¹⁵³ However, the way this partnership has been envisaged and related actions and objectives were anticipated in the planning document raises questions.

Key concepts in partnership building and multi-stakeholder joint programming on violence against women, include building consensus, initiating complex negotiations to agree on joint programming agenda, and facilitating participation and “buy-in”.¹⁵⁴ It does not appear that sufficiently targeted contacts and consultations with the sub-regional organization were conducted during the formulation and planning of the EAW ECOWAS Programme. Once implementation started, advocacy towards relevant ECOWAS Gender institutions has been neither adequate nor fruitful.

Evidence from this evaluation¹⁵⁵ shows that EAW is not a regional priority for the Commission, which, moreover, had felt excluded from the planning process for the programme. ECOWAS should have been involved in the formulation process from inception, but was approached too late into implementation¹⁵⁶

UNW is now aware of these shortcomings and is exploring new ways, in consultation with its Africa section at HQ and its Nigeria Office, to also engage the Gender Commission on EAW. Leveraging on the above-mentioned UN Regional VAW Cluster could perhaps also provide a useful avenue.

To conclude, Partnerships have been envisaged as a desirable result without sufficient attention to the heavy requirements of partnership development which needs appropriate methodologies and criteria. Civil society was positively engaged by the programme but it will need continuing reinforcement. The creation of cross regional dialogue and regional/national/local platforms able at the same time to promote and respond to the implications of EAW policy implementation will depend on UNW's ability to persevere on the roadmap designed by the regional programme.

UNW has a strong reputation in partnership building and has traditionally used its alliance with GE advocates, grassroots groups and women's networks for advancing the visibility of women's rights and needs¹⁵⁷. The next step is to move national

¹⁵¹ See ProDoc pag 9

¹⁵² UNIFEM-TRUSTAFRICA: Training Workshop on Advocacy for EAW Fundraising 2010, Workshop Report and Participants Handbook, 2010

¹⁵³ Obstetric Fistula Programme, WPS, Support to Association of Women Lawyers

¹⁵⁴ UNFPA 2011

¹⁵⁵ Minutes of meetings, 2010

¹⁵⁶ UNW WARO visited the ECOWAS Gender Commission in Abuja during Aug 2010

¹⁵⁷ See DFID Review 2011 : **Partnership Behaviour**

□ UNIFEM's approach to partnerships was one of its key strengths. It had a good reputation with national women's machineries, gender partners at global and regional level and civil society (including at local level).

machineries from declarations and micro-level implementation to scaling up their operational levels and improving results on the ground.

5. OVERALL FINDINGS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE ITALIAN FUNDED PROGRAMMES

1. The Italian contribution has been substantive and strengthened UNW's presence in West Africa with positive repercussions on both organizational and institutional planes

Interviews and reports suggest that, given the challenge faced by the Organisation of moving from a project approach to leveraging and partnering, and up-scale programming strategies, the Italian contribution appeared to provide the opportunity to lead a large flagship programme on one of the most urgent and pressing priorities for achieving human rights and equality for women and girls in the Region.

2. The programmes have been instrumental in developing a broad and integrated approach to ERAW in WA region. They have enabled the newly created UNW to look at VAW in a wider manner and ensure that one of its organisational priorities is addressed in a range of countries and also prospectively by the ECOWAS sub-Regional organization

In 2011 a tension existed in the transition from a small fund administered through UNDP (based on catalytic strategies and opportunistic approaches with a small country capacity) towards an organisation with a more comprehensive and robust mandate. The programme has both been impacted by, and helped the transition from UNIFEM to UNW, facilitating and allowing it to experiment and shape a more holistic approach. As a senior UNW underscored: *"To me there is another thing that influenced implementation: creation of UNW: because it became clear that we needed to look at a broad area of work ... Go beyond project approach"* (interview).

UNW's policy and programmatic inputs have impacted on both processes and outcomes, mobilising national governments, gender machineries, regional / national organisations and networks, and communities in the prevention of, and fight against, VAW. The programmes were not implemented in isolation but contributed with their specific focus to wider women's equality processes and actions such as those supported by the UNiTE campaign, the UNTF, or GELD. This has strengthened ERAW in countries of the ECOWAS region and the programmes have contributed to this.

3. The programme was effective in enabling UNW to raise the profile and manage VAW as a priority in ECOWAS region, while at the same time positioning itself as a stronger organisation particularly within UNCT.

Several interviews confirmed that the availability of funding and the concrete possibility to make programmatic contributions has strengthened UNW's

□ UNIFEM was particularly adept at capitalising on the links between partnerships at local and national level and using these to inform and enrich its global advocacy work.

position and role, particularly in Mali, Liberia, Senegal,¹⁵⁸ and Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the significant funding made available for organisational support - as clearly shown in the previous section - has on the whole strengthened the organisation's presence and role, regionally and nationally. There was an assumption by UNW management that UNW capacity reinforcement would by extension impact on EAW.

"Positioning of UNW as institution has importance for fight against VAW in general Rallying people beyond what UNIFEM would do traditionally would strengthen also VAW agenda" (interview, UNW Manager).

4. In a few countries, the IT Coop programme as a whole has supported promising practices, a few of which are quite innovative, and deserve being sustained.

- a. The programme has supported civil society, institutions and gender machineries and ministries, to fight VAW in numerous ways. Both programmes build on three important factors that make it particularly appropriate for West African context: i) the need to engage boys and men also through the leadership of traditional male figures, ii) the need to work with culturally suitable media, and iii) recognition of the specific reality of cross border communities.
- b. Elaboration, promotion and implementation of GBV laws and action plans is ongoing in Cape Vert, Mali, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Joint training of front line responders has been undertaken in Burkina Faso, Cape Vert, Guinea and Senegal. Decentralised legal services are being brought closer to women in Mali, Sierra Leone, and Senegal, while health workers are being empowered to monitor and take charge of VAW cases brought to clinics in Mali.
- c. On the more innovative side, protection / prevention of violence is being understood and popularized through traditional means such as theatre in Mali, or user friendly manuals in Cape Vert. Cape Vert will also create rehabilitation centres for men and boys found guilty of VAW. Cross-border mobilization of local governments, communities and NGOs is being tapped upon to fight FGM being performed on small girls and babies in Burkina Faso and Mali.
- d. Though not directly supported by this programme, UNW has validated other VAW community initiatives such as radio listening circles that were implemented through previous funding and could be replicated¹⁵⁹

5. The programmes have been catalytic.

Because UNW chose to use programme funds towards organisational strengthening this has generated spill-over effects with impacts on other areas of work, particularly establishing partnerships, including inter-ministerial dialogue to promote gender budget mainstreaming. This dialogue culminated in the Accra Symposium of September 2011.

¹⁵⁸ For example, UNW's participation in Parity Law process

¹⁵⁹ PBF project Evaluation Report UNW 2011 p 29

As reported by various interviews, the programmes have also attracted interest by other agencies and bilateral donors to support EAW, and UNW is in the process of preparing a second phase of the VAW ECOWAS programme. *Essentially the programme gave us a platform to address other issues and dialogue in other spaces* (Interview, senior manager).

6. The programmes have enabled UNW to rally a diverse platform of actors: sub-regional organisations, national governments and Civil Society.

The programmes have provided a significant opportunity for UNW to engage both at the thematic level and programmatically. Being able to inject funds has awarded UNW a higher status and influence authority. UNW has used its advocacy capacity and good partnership reputation to convene stakeholders from different fields that normally do not work together, and create new links, potentially very relevant. UNW considers the establishment of strong partnerships with regional and national media groups, including capacity building for professional journalists, for improved coverage of GEWE and VAW issues as a new development resulting from the Italian contribution¹⁶⁰.

7. The programmes contributed to implementing the WPS agenda in the region by enhancing the EAW component.

EAW themes were included in the approach of the SRSG for WA¹⁶¹, and integrated in the ECOWAS women mediators training, and post-conflict peacebuilding planning in Guinea (2011 Conakry Mission report)¹⁶², and brought concrete achievements in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

8. Where the ECOWAS programme approach was implemented consistently, it was successful.

The programme is designed to focus simultaneously on the national institutional framework, on support service provision, and promoting culture change through advocacy and leaders sensitisation down to the community level, together with strong networking and civil society capacity development.

Where it was possible to implement all of these levels, as in Mali, it has been successful in bringing about visible changes in governmental action, reaching a very large segment of the population and servicing a relatively good number of beneficiaries.

9. The programme has contributed to making vital services accessible to women.

Support to legal and paralegal service-provider groups at the local level responds to women's priority needs and can be life changing and life saving. The provision of decentralised legal and paralegal services was directly supported by the programme in Mali and Sierra Leone.

Key Challenges:

¹⁶⁰ Interviews, see also Strategy Note, 2012

¹⁶¹ Interview

¹⁶² ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, UNW and UNOWA, developed a regional framework for implementation of SCR 1325. Synergies with VAW especially in Guinea resulted in UNW WARO involvement in the planning process of a joint UNW PBSO e PB commission activity

Addressing systematically the central and local institutional levels to mainstream EAW; implementing system-level mechanisms; working with various members of the communities; and enhancing duty bearers' accountability at all levels remain the challenges to be faced next.

1. The approach in its entirety is potentially quite powerful even though, overall, it could not be implemented consistently at all levels.

The complexity of the issue and low responsiveness by public institutions have limited the coverage of the VAW ECOWAS Programme. UNIFEM/UNW, perhaps limited by organisational capacity, has also taken a narrower vision and approach in implementation than were suggested by the comprehensiveness of the design. In the countries where it was implemented, it tended to privilege collaboration with civil society networks without equally addressing the institutional and the community levels.

2. The programmes initiatives per se are valuable, well justified and target oriented. However, in the want of a clear institutional framework, they can appear as a series of ad hoc and distinct actions at times, leaving an overall picture that is still patched and fragmented.

To be fair, the programmes would more appropriately and effectively be seen as a start up phase of a much longer process of which contours are starting to emerge. There were seed actions that need to be followed up and taken to bear results. For example the Guinea WPS project, or the two action planning workshops in Dakar (2009 and 2010) brought together partners which have not always responded as may have been hoped.

Programme initiatives had stronger potential to achieve impact when they were consistently framed within the multi-level strategy that programme designs had envisaged. An institutional approach towards working with Ministries and state structures to create EAW public – private partnerships and platforms at the local, national and regional levels seems promising, and would require priority focus in future undertakings.

3. The extent to which UNW is developing a reflection on “systems” as opposed to direct or semi-direct support to service delivery through ad hoc activities remains an issue. The project approach is still strong and it can undermine impact and sustainability of the benefits reaching women.

Senior officers mentioned that UNW is developing a more comprehensive draft policy at HQ that looks at both aspects, however this is not yet known / discussed at regional level.

There is a need to scale up in the future and work upstream towards engaging state actors at all levels to reinforce accountability. This was also underscored, for example, by initiatives in Guinea, Mali and Sierra Leone where civil society actors showed a sort of “good will attitude” in their approach to EAW. Reportedly, there is a constant reference to “sensitisation”, to helping women who experience violence through “listening” and mediation, to leaders making personal declarations to champion EAW, and so on, and little emphasis on the technical training and duty performing responsibilities of public servants and state agents.

4. **There appeared to be missed opportunities in empowering women at the grassroots** and linking up more efficiently with other UNW programme areas: particularly gender responsive budgeting (GRB) and economic empowerment.
5. **Accountability of institutions to ERAW, and power of civil society to command/require it, remains a weakness that needs to be accounted for in programming**

In West Africa, relevant social actors at regional and national levels (for example, women's umbrella organizations but also academia, capacity building committees, rural NGOs, or the media) are still not empowered to play a forceful role at a strategic level.

To sum up, the Programmes represent a very good start towards ERAW and advancing gender equality in the West Africa region.

The two years of implementation have been described as “catalytic”, “seed planting”, and have laid foundations for making tangible progress on ERAW.

The ECOWAS Programme was “relevant but very ambitious”¹⁶³, especially considering the **operating context** (weak or young democracies, or conflict/post-conflict countries, poverty, high levels of illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, and unfavourable legal frameworks).

Major goals were addressed at least to an initial extent, and many of the planned activities implemented.

The programmes have:

- Succeeded in putting ERAW firmly on the UNW WARO agenda and contributed to advancements in West African States (Societies and their governments)
- Enhanced knowledge and learning (K&L)
- Initiated dialogue
- Created or strengthened partnerships
- Promoted innovative initiatives

Interviewees generally agree that the programmes have provided a tremendous opportunity for raising the profile of VAW and Gender Justice issues and they have given the newly created UNW (and the Italian Cooperation) legitimacy as credible players in these areas.

The **regional dimension** is **not only relevant, but it adds value**. In fact, the Italian grant and specifically the ERAW Programme has given UNW leveraging power on multiple partners /actors.

It has also enhanced the **visibility** of UNW and Italian Cooperation as active, knowledgeable, consistent drivers. The programmes – just by being there - have helped in a general way to reinforce the status of UNW as an organisation leading on gender equality and women's rights.

Some have suggested that by increasing UNW's **recognition**, programmes have also contributed to making its role in UNCT easier.

¹⁶³ Interviews, various UN / UNW staff

Although two years is a short time, UNIFEM and Italian Coop were active in West Africa on EAW and gender equality many years prior to the programmes and this experience has been brought to bear with positive results along with the impact of other actors who have contributed to process in the region. Planning therefore built on existing experience, expertise, and cooperation. However even stronger attention to linkages, synergies and learning would optimise the impact of results.

There were also planning and management issues that resulted in a very long start-up phase and some discrepancies in the planned outcomes.

By and large, in most countries Outcome two (the state level) was prioritised, with Outcome one (the regional level) starting to receive more attention towards the end of implementation

A senior manager synthesised the ECOWAS experience “*The programme to me had two legs: - First is Civil Society (Associations of Women Lawyers, traditional and religious leaders and Rural Women networks). They had a forum for dialogue and space to express their own voice; - Second is engaging with Governments Ministries of Gender and Justice to deal with certain issues*”.¹⁶⁴

The ECOWAS programme promoted and facilitated the harmonisation, region-wide, of approaches to EAW advocacy and policies. National civil society organizations joined in inception workshops and developed their own objectives and action planning, to be implemented in a selected number of countries where VAW is prominent and women’s civil society can play a role.

The **local-level, multi-sectoral approach appears promising**. There is potential to pursue it in a significant way. UNW can continue investing in these initiatives expanding them in all countries where it operates, with clearer results orientation and stronger focus on the two components:

- Targeting diverse stakeholders for more inclusive engagement (of boys and men, vulnerable women and girls, office holders and service providers, etc).
- Linking up systematically with local governance structures to contribute to broader and more sustainable results.

A few challenges will need to be overcome. Platform building and engagement at governmental levels, and particularly mainstreaming EAW and gender equality beyond national ministers of Gender is a process that has just only began and will require UNW’s enhanced focus and effort.

The third outcome has had little implementation and is contingent on the other two for making a sustainable dent in EAW.

¹⁶⁴ Interview

6. CONCLUSIONS¹⁶⁵

Relevance/Appropriateness

The programmes were relevant and appropriate on many accounts. Their main goal (to contribute to the creation of an environment free of VAW) had featured as the top recommendation made to UNW in a global survey of women's organisations made upon its foundation.¹⁶⁶ In the context of EVAW, the programme followed women-recommended priority approaches such as attention to rural women, collaboration with Civil Society partners, and building partnerships between these and their governments.

Programmes were relevant in their objectives, design and approach, less so in the strategy towards governments and the capacity to be transformative. Focus on building technical capacity, advocacy to effectively prioritise VAW and gender concerns in government spending and implementation (SL) and impacts on enforcement of rights was inconsistent and gave mixed results.

Relevance of objectives for participating countries was demonstrated by the training content and discussions at the October 2010 regional workshop (Senegal) where each country team also developed a Plan of Action.

Design for the ECOWAS programme is technically good and presents a good theory of change. It creates a comprehensive programme architecture that addresses all complementary levels and dimensions of intervention. The Programme logic is based on a multi-sectoral and comprehensive, well integrated approach that includes, among others, policy measures, protection services, education and advocacy. The two programmes, read together, are complementary and address most of VAW / gender equality components endorsed by the UN.¹⁶⁷ UNW staff generally appreciate the four

¹⁶⁵ See TOR in the Annex and evaluation framework in Section 2

166 OXFAM survey on country level recommendations A Blueprint for UNW 2011.
What does civil society at country level expect from the new UN women's agency? (OXFAM 2011)
Based on a survey of civil society, including 100 women's rights and grassroots organizations activists from 75 countries, "A Blueprint for UN Women" outlines key priorities of the new agency and makes proposals on how UN Women should proceed to build up its operations and have impact at country-level.

Key recommendations : In order to be effective at country level, UN Women should build its work around these priorities:

The top priority that UN Women must address is all forms of violence against women. 98% of survey respondents said urgent action is needed on this issue and 72% selected it as the number 1 issue for UN Women to tackle

1. UN Women should focus on the empowerment of rural women as they are less aware of their rights and have fewest resources and access to services
2. UN Women should adopt a different approach to working at country level to that of UN agencies in the past. Its approach should be **transformative**, leading to actual change
3. A central element of UN Women's strategy should be the collaboration and inclusion of civil society organizations (CSOs) as genuine partners at country level. Civil society wants UN Women to support their efforts to empower women, strengthen their rights and ensure they play a role in the development of their countries
4. UN Women needs to examine its relationship with governments at country level and use its access to government to open up spaces for CSOs to participate in the political processes of their countries.

¹⁶⁷ Issue paper for the 57th CSW on EVAWG (2012): *It is now clearly recognized that a systematic, comprehensive, multi-sectoral and sustained approach is necessary to address all forms of violence against women and girls. Such an approach should include legislative and policy measures, protection, services and access to justice for victims, prosecution and punishment of offenders, prevention, educational and awareness-raising measures, training and advocacy, and data collection and research. Much work has been done in these areas. primary prevention, that is preventing violence from occurring in the first place. is an area where much work remains to be done, where there are few and*

dimensions (regional framework, country-level institutional effectiveness, protection and access to services, and community engagement).

Programme formulation, albeit not participatory, was **based on numerous specific studies** (see for example Burkina Faso 2006 and Senegal 2008¹⁶⁸). It identified relevant and still valid issues such as tension between customary law and community practices and formal legislation, or ineffective justice systems, and biased role of religion. Also identified proposals to approach VAW in innovative manners.

Planning was correctly guided by a HRBA, although a few weaknesses were noted:

- It lacked articulation in the analysis of capacity gaps of the duty bearers and other key partners specifically at regional levels. In addition, it underestimated the special support needs that implementing partners show in countries affected by fragility.
- Had programmes involved partners more actively at the design stage, it is possible that capacity gaps and related needs could emerge more clearly. Stakeholder consultation is a good practice in planning and facilitates better identification of activities, outputs, and outcomes. Gaps had been identified amongst “risks” in the programme logframe, but this did not determine an adequate risk mitigation plan and ensuing action.
- Implementation and management arrangements in programme documentation were not well designed, with roles and responsibilities poorly outlined. A proper oversight structure was never actually put in place for the programmes. Attention to performance monitoring and reporting was also weak in the design, and the mid-term evaluation foreseen by the initial budget did not happen.

Certain key elements of the planned approach have suffered in implementation or were not addressed, namely, support to the coordinating role of governments and institutional capacity strengthening, prosecution of offenders, reparations¹⁶⁹, and data collection.

Implementation of access to support services, a specially relevant and successful component of the programme where it was implemented, along with primary prevention, increasingly an area of attention for the United Nations¹⁷⁰, should be strengthened.

limited initiatives and less clarity about good practices. Intergovernmental bodies have recently placed an increasing focus on primary prevention of violence against women. The General Assembly has called States to increase their focus on prevention. (See General Assembly resolution 65/187). The Human Rights Council stressed the significant role of primary prevention (A/HRC/14/12 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: ensuring due diligence in prevention).

168 UNIFEM ProDoc,2008, pages 5, 10

169 Some of the persisting challenges to eliminating violence against women include impunity of perpetrators and barriers to victims/survivors' access to justice and effective reparations. Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, 23 April 2010 (A/HRC/14/22).

170 Issue paper 57th CSW on EVAWG, New York 2012 : In order to prevent violence against women and girls, **political commitment and leadership at all levels are critical** in changing societal attitudes that condone such violence and perpetuate discrimination against women. **The involvement of multiple stakeholders**, including representatives of the media, men and boys, young people, women's groups and civil society organizations, religious and community leaders, and the private sector, needs to **complement** political commitment and leadership.. In order to achieve results, **prevention needs to constitute an integral part of a comprehensive approach in laws, policies, programmes and budgets.**

The relative gaps noted, could be attributed to a weakness in the overall work on the ECOWAS policy environment:

- Region-wide, as a consequence of neglecting focus on “systems”, through pursuing closer collaboration with governments and particularly engaging with the Ministries of Gender and other key ministries.
- Nation-wide, on a timid programmatic approach, whereas a more robust and bolder mainstreaming¹⁷¹ and partnering effort is needed.

In the case of Sierra Leone, for example, the government plan based on PRSP, the Agenda for Change, did not mainstream gender empowerment goals through specific sets of actions and intermediate objectives, and therefore, gender needs were not prioritized nor targeted in funding by donors such as EU. It is plausible that, if Government Ministries (Interior and Loc Gov, Finance, Justice, Health and MoSWGA) are stimulated by the UN Theme Group, under UNW’s leadership and coordination, to include relevant priorities, objectives, and strategies in the next Development Plan, and mainstream gender throughout, opportunities for leveraging more resources will be improved.

Alignment to internal and broader international aid principles and policies is a strong indicator of relevance, and potentially, impact.¹⁷² The programmes were aligned to national gender priorities and closely linked to the national development planning processes

Respondents in the countries surveyed generally agreed that advances towards ending violence have been made, especially in terms of social awareness of issues, rights, and legal provisions, and the programmes have contributed to this changing environment.

Interviews with women and other beneficiaries of training, in particular, showed that programme actions helped them to acquire knowledge of their rights, of the existing laws on violence against women, and of the procedures to follow to seek protection from officials and service providers.

Campaigns, dissemination and sensitisation activities, including training and production of informational materials, have also contributed to shaping women’s rights priorities by raising VAW issues and making them a concern that cannot longer be ignored. This change is reportedly happening at all levels: individual, household, community and societal level.

To this effect, the programme contribution is particularly significant in Mali. The institutional approach and engagement have been critical in this context. A prevalent SC culture of social mobilisation was not pragmatically focused and it tended to neglect the practical protection and care/treatment needs of women, who are for the majority of cases survivors of violence. Now these needs are part of the agenda and response is

¹⁷¹ See for example UNW, Board report 2012 : In 2010, UN-Women contributed to 23 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks exercises, working to ensure stronger mainstreaming and accountability for national priorities related to gender equality. For example, in the United Republic of Tanzania, UN-Women contributed to the United Nations Development Assistance Plan 2011-2015. In the plan, gender equality is not only a cross-cutting issue, it is a programming principle under which every key action and activity the cross-cutting considerations have to be specified and monitored.

¹⁷² Logframe closely conformed to the UNIFEM Strategic Plans outcomes (UNIFEM SP 2008-13 e WARO SP 2008-10): Outcome 1 (legal frameworks) and OC 5 (gender networks effectively demand) , 6 (discriminated women advocate their priorities in budgets, processes, and policies), 7 (institutional environment) and 8 (community –level models)

starting to happen. Through networking of awareness, psychosocial, mediation, and health and legal services, a referral system has been put in place.¹⁷³

The evaluation has also found that choice and formulation of messages, target groups, and media through which EAW advocacy was conveyed was culturally appropriate.

Finally, the selection of implementing partners was relevant both to the objectives to be achieved and specific activities to be implemented. Partners were either identified through mapping exercises, based on their previous, long-term engagement with women's rights promotion, or on their credibility and authority which could effectively be leveraged to help stop VAW (interviews, Country managers). One interviewee stated: *the lead partner for the implementation of the ECOWAS project in my country was selected based on prior experience of GBV programming and coordination, which contributed to effectiveness and efficiency in implementation.*

FGM/C

With regard to intervention to eliminate harmful practices and FGM/C a regional dimension is of special relevance¹⁷⁴.

Partners have reported inconsistencies¹⁷⁵ and the evaluator has observed instances of discussion among UNW staff where the approach did not seem to be thoroughly guided or aligned with HR stipulations and the UN common positions vis-a-vis FGM/C.¹⁷⁶ In certain countries, a lack of clarity and consistency among the UN agencies on fundamental women's rights issues and goals can result in weakened strategies and less effective programmatic approaches.

Effectiveness and Coordination¹⁷⁷

The programmes were effective in enabling UNW to raise the profile of VAW and manage it as a priority in its work in the ECOWAS region, while at the same time positioning itself as a stronger organisation. The programmes also contributed to implementing the WPS agenda in selected countries by enhancing an EAW component and were quite effective in raising the visibility, importance and consensus around EAW in Sierra Leone.

Implemented communication activities were particularly noticeable as they reinforced action where UNW is already strong: **overall, EAW campaigns and activities are contributing to a changing cultural environment.**

Programmes have contributed to formulating (Mali), changing (Cape Vert, Senegal), or implementing (Cape Vert, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Sierra Leone) legal or policy frameworks at the country and local levels, which are considered structural indicators of change towards EAW and reaching gender equality.

¹⁷³As a senior officer commented: "*Today a woman who turns to the DRPF (Regional Office for Women's Protection) finds a response, the programme has set concrete bases*" (interview)

¹⁷⁴ See for example a recent decision by the Assembly of the African Union (Assembly/AU/Dec.383XVII) In that decision, the Assembly of the African Union called upon the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution at its sixty-sixth session to ban female genital mutilation worldwide, by harmonizing the actions of its Member States and by providing recommendations and guidelines for the development and strengthening of regional and international legal instruments and national legislations

¹⁷⁵ Interviews

¹⁷⁶ United Nations bodies continued to address female genital mutilation as a *human rights violation with detrimental effects on the health of women and girls*. SGR to CSW, 2012

¹⁷⁷ (ALNAP) coordination is seen as part of effectiveness: it focuses more on the practical effects of actions of governments and agencies and reflects also the corresponding DAC principle for good engagement

The **programme approach was effective where it was implemented consistently**. Since it provides for integrated strategies that focus simultaneously on various levels, where it was possible to implement them, successful results could be achieved. For example the programme's unique approach has been very well understood in Mali, which has a fully set up UNW office. The programme brought about visible changes, contributing to new policy frameworks and planning approaches by government institutions, while at the same time reaching important segments of the population, and also managing to provide protection services to women in the communities.

This potentially powerful approach however, was **not implemented consistently** across the region, which has hindered overall effectiveness of results. The approach seems to have been piecemeal. A robust, well-coordinated action, entailing continuing and sequential interventions would be needed to create an impact. Actions seem fragmented although valuable when taken individually. The resources provided and their concentration in a two-year time-span potentially allowed for a better strategy implementation, but opportunities were tight. While the thinking behind the strategy seems convincing, it proved unrealistic under the concrete circumstances and the fragility, sometimes conflict-affected context in which UNIFEM then, and UN Women now, operates.

The programmes did not reach a sufficient level of engagement with governmental institutions in most countries, which are fundamental to sustaining achievements, and this was a key factor in limiting effectiveness. One explanation for this could be found in the weakness of UNW decentralised field structure in the sub-region, and priority decisions made at WARO level.

When action planning and capacity development was integrated into ongoing local dynamics, as in Cape Vert or Mali, and to a lesser extent in Sierra Leone, it clearly contributed to more effective results. For example in Cape Vert a comprehensive approach has included: training of trainers, leading to decentralized training of community-level stakeholders; peer to peer education; development of guidance materials; and establishment of multi-sectoral partnerships to ERAW.

The programmes were effective in the identification of key implementing and advocacy partners. Initiatives were taken towards empowering them to become strategic ERAW actors in their countries, and they have begun to work in appropriate ways to translate ERAW messages into culturally viable and acceptable local solutions. The programmes have promoted or contributed to good practices in advocacy, awareness raising, training and dissemination.

The agency of civil society partners, was promoted through the activities of the programme in Cape Vert, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone, and, to a lesser extent, in Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire. In terms of knowledge acquisition all reports as well as beneficiaries interviewed state they have greatly improved their understanding, including legal terms and other dimensions, of VAW. What seems missing is a clear avenue to facilitate an application of this knowledge by beneficiaries organisations, that impacts women's realities.

UNW's funding and support resulted in a few women's human rights and professional organisations across the region working together to devise local action plans, provide information and support services, deliver technical training, and advocate for gender equality and ERAW at the rural community level. In three countries (SL, Mali, Cape Vert) CSOs also worked in coordination with the gender machineries.

UNW provided technical and advocacy support, responsive sponsorship, and monitoring of implementing partners in selected countries, but overall, programme implementation did not focus on their capacity development, beyond initial planning and networking activities, which may have been a second factor in limiting effectiveness.

An additional limitation could be attributed to the fact that the programmes did not coordinate enough with the UNTF facility, nor it did cross-sectorally (within UNW 's own programming portfolio) to enhance synergies between GELD, economic empowerment, and gender responsive budgeting programmes. The ECOWAS programme could have found in the GELD actions a powerful vehicle for transmitting its message and reaching in a systematic way both rural women and decentralised institutions at the same time.

A good synergy with other UN agencies was found to be effective in some countries, but coordination and mainstreaming within UNCTs could have been stronger to ensure higher results.

The regional dimension advocated by the programme approach did not spur any evident result, although towards the end of the programme more effective steps were taken which, if well orchestrated, could lead to a more active promotion and establishment of regional platforms.

The provision of care and protection services are among the benefits that directly and more evidently meet the needs of disadvantaged women, and progress towards outcome results has been made in Mali, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, with process results being achieved in Cape Vert and other countries, thanks to the contribution of the programmes to adoption of Laws, production of guidance materials, and training of civil servants.

Finally, another strong process result achieved by the Italian contribution is the strengthening of UNW's presence in West Africa both organizationally and institutionally.

An Effectiveness Challenge

There is an equity dimension to effectiveness that can be expressed in terms of coverage:

Equity concerns are not restricted to gender but have implications on socio- economic disparities, urban-rural disparities, and educational disparities among women themselves.¹⁷⁸

Issues of how interventions were distributed geographically, how more remote areas were monitored, identification and selection criteria for beneficiaries remained a challenge¹⁷⁹ especially in light of the fact that interventions in fragility-affected countries need to be conflict-sensitive.

¹⁷⁸ Certain groups of women and girls, which are exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, face even greater risks of violence. Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, 2 May 2011, (A/HRC/17/26).

"...Despite intensified efforts, support services are of limited scope, coverage and quality in many countries around the world. Access to such services can be especially problematic for women in rural and remote areas, or women belonging to excluded groups or ethnic minorities, indigenous and migrant women, adolescent girls, and those with disabilities or living with HIV/AIDS, among others". Issues paper - Priority Theme Panel Discussion Preparation 57th CSW on EVAWG

¹⁷⁹ See for example similar note in the Mali PNAVAW, 2011, pag 13

Efficiency

The long delay in completing the planning stage of the ECOWAS VAW programme, and also partly the SL TRC project, was a hindrance to efficiency as contacts, resources and positive dynamics stemmed from previous interventions risked losing momentum.

At the time of implementation, the programmes had many objectives and areas of intervention, which put a high demand on a lean UNW structure. Given the acknowledged challenges in technical and logistic capacity of the implementing partners, concentration on a fewer activities and outputs may have provided for better results

It should be noted that the size of the regional grant, similar to the one given to Sierra Leone, was not a limitation in itself to the regional programme's contribution to EVAW. Rather, other factors, such as enabling context and strategic approach seemed more influential in achieving a good result, as Cape Vert or AMNET and SLWF demonstrated.

The analysis of financial allocations by the programmes established that UNW provided significant amounts, approximately one third of contributions, to beneficiaries for direct activity support, while less was devolved for capacity building or strengthening of partnerships. Perhaps UNW should explore ways of combining target-oriented action with development of the capacity of its partners, particularly the national and regional networks, to maximise outputs against invested input.

Programme coordination by the SRO in Dakar was appreciated by UNW CO staff. Overall, programme managers interviewed felt that the regional programme received accurate supervision and technical backstopping. Functions mentioned as being ensured by WARO included:

- Financial assistance and management
- General coordination and supervision
- Field visits and internal assessments and reviews,
- Partners and project proposals evaluation

Given the magnitude of issues and needs, the ability of the programme coordinator to maintain a focus on the specific objectives of the programme has been particularly appreciated.

Internal documents and partners report reviewed by the evaluation indicate that in all countries, administrative management and financial accounting were meticulous and followed national and UN rules quite strictly.

Sustainability

Stakeholders reported that EVAW has a stronger status in countries of the ECOWAS region than it had four years ago and UNW's programmes have contributed to both processes and outcomes. UNW intends to carry on EVAW initiatives and is looking to consolidation.

Engagement with civil society in general and women's organisations in particular, NGOs, other CSOs and the private sector, particularly the media, to ensure that women's voices are heard in the fight to EVAW, has been a strength of the programmes and will definitely contribute to underpinning ownership and sustainability.

The strategic engagement of religious leaders is expected to bear tangible results. Imams particularly are considered key allies: their calls against domestic violence and early marriages are being heard in the majority of families. Rural radios have introduced EAW broadcasting as part of their regular programming. Successful media campaigns have attracted many partners who are willing to take on EAW actions with good prospects for sustainability.

The extent to which UNW is developing a reflection on “systems” as opposed to direct or semi-direct support to service delivery remains an issue. The project approach is still strong and it can undermine impact and sustainability of the benefits reaching women. Requirements of broad based national ownership of the programme also include assisting government efforts on their EAW and gender equality commitments by supporting efforts to translate these into budget-linked, prioritised, results-oriented operational programmes. As noted, programmes were strictly aligned with governmental commitments, but requirements for GRB and results-based management were seldom satisfied. This was a result of a limited focus by UNW on working with, ministries (including planning, finance and women’s ministries), parliaments, and local governments.

In some cases the approach has been more sustainable with positive collateral benefits. The programme in Mali, for example, had a multiplying effect with considerable contributions granted by new donors to implement the VAW Plan of Action, which will expand legal training for rural women and provision of legal counselling and protection services.

A gap in sustainability concerns the poor M&E culture of the programmes. Supporting national statistical institutions to collect, produce and analyse data will be a critical area for UNW’s continuing engagement in EAW.

A good example that includes the main components of sustainability and ownership is provided by Cape Vert, where the NPGBV was being evaluated in 2011, in view of the formulation of a new GBV plan 2012-2015. The EAW dissemination project was developed in synergy with other lines of action for the implementation of the GBV Law and complementarities include a wider capacity development effort including specialized training for the National Police, legal and medical officers; the regulation of the GBV law and establishment of costed scenarios for the implementation of the support services determined by the law; and development of a prevention strategy.

Finally, as noted, programmes did not build on other initiatives as much as would be desirable to maximise convergence, coordination and synergies.

Impact

Measures of impact consider the long-term effects of the actions implemented and the changes promoted by the programme.

Most indicators in the programme logframes were either process or structural indicators, capturing changes in institutional and legal frameworks and adoption of policies and mechanisms that will lead to EAW. There was no provision in the design for actual collection of information on outcome-level results. The programmes did not collect VAW-related data that could be used to fairly assess impact.

However, the contribution to policies, strategic frameworks and laws in Cape Vert, Mali, Sierra Leone and Senegal, the links developed with decentralised structures in Mali and Burkina Faso, and the positive contributions to strengthening the advocacy environment

in Cape Vert, Mali, SL and partly Senegal, point to the establishment of building blocks towards achieving impact.

A negative indicator concerns the risk threat or limitations presented by controversial approaches to eliminating FGM/C in SL or Mali where resistance to adopting a law is very high. Data on harmful practices such as early marriages and pregnancy are collected by country-wide surveys usually every 5 and 10 years and it would be interesting for UNW to measure the contribution to impact of its own programmes by setting up local monitoring of changes over time in selected communities. For example, a few communities in Mali and FGM performers in SL are declaring that they have stopped child circumcision.

Other measurable changes that contribute to impact include:

- Cross sectoral budgeting in Mali VAW NPA
- Changes in availability of service, for example the number of women receiving legal advice which is comparatively small but growing in Mali, SL, Senegal
- Changes in public information and awareness creation initiatives
- Increased training for women organisations and public officers, VAW service providers
- Increased media attention

Similarly there is **no hard evidence that programmes have contributed to enabling rights holders to effectively claim their rights**, beyond the advocacy, information and sensitisation work promoted by the programmes.

The evaluation has insisted on a dichotomy between Project approach versus systems to ensure sustainable impact. **There is a need to scale up in the future** and work upstream towards engaging state actors at all levels to reinforce accountability.

This was also underscored, for example, by initiatives in Guinea, Mali and Sierra Leone where little emphasis was put on the duty performing responsibilities of public servants and state agents. Conversely in other instances UNW declared that the *impact on women's rights at local level will depend on the implementation of the 2nd phase and the multiplication of training provision, which will promote the rights of women to an environment free of violence at local and community level where GBV cases have access to justice and support services.*

To conclude: the VAW ECOWAS contribution aimed at promoting synergetic catalytic interventions to raise the issue of EAW policies in the region and provide the foundations to an effective, sustainable approach. The programme has succeeded in defining some promising practices and strategies and has identified critical stakeholders and partners.

While, with a few exceptions, the single country initiatives were only mainly planned and brought to a very initial stage of implementation, nonetheless the programme has contributed to achieving progress in two main areas: it has strengthened UNW's presence and visibility in the region, and it has laid the foundations for more robust and coordinated interventions at local, national and regional levels.

The programmes have been catalytic in bringing governments and concerned ministries together in recognising the need for an integrated approach to VAW. It has attracted the

support of new donors who have already signed contribution agreements (Mali) or expressed an interest in doing so in a few countries.

The programme has experimented various approaches, and UNW is learning from diverse country experiences that can be seen as pilots. It has established cooperative partnership models with civil society actors, relevant cultural figures, and women's organisations.

Albeit not fully exploited to date, and often still at an initial or limited stage of implementation, also due to capacity and structural constraints, these models provide a clear framework for future UNW and partner agencies' interventions.

More specifically the Italian-funded programmes have also provided the basis and the conditions, in terms of organisational structure, testing of programmatic approaches, and development of analysis and theory of change, for the formulation of the new UNW WARO strategic planning 2012-2013.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents recommendations stemmed from the findings and conclusions of the evaluation. They are meant to assist UNW in effectively implementing its EAW strategic programming priorities, positioning itself to act within a clear leadership role in the ECOWAS region.

1. **The overarching recommendation is that UNW should pursue the VAW programme, and continue prioritising the regional approach, building upon the thematic lead role that the Italian contribution have helped achieve.**

Design of a second phase should rely and expand on the good practices in place: integrated -multi level interventions that simultaneously tackle the regional, national and local levels; support to direct provision of protection services; institutional engagement; sustaining CSO networks; participation in inter-agency joint programmes, and focus on community level action.

It should also address gaps and weaknesses, reinforcing efforts towards: operationalisation of inter-ministerial dialogue, coordination with other programmes, also through maximising synergies with UNW's internal programmatic areas; stronger leveraging of donors and UNCTs; focus on partners' action-oriented capacity development; strengthening of internal programming standards.

2. **UNW, IT Coop and other donors committed to EAW should cooperate to the strengthening and expanding of regional multi-donors platforms with prioritised objectives.**

Commonly agreed formalised platforms can strengthen the process: UNW should promote more direct engagement of its donors and establish a regional, results-oriented thematic platform to support its EAW initiatives.

In spite of current economic difficulties, donors can sustain results and momentum gained by the Programmes and support their continuation in various ways. IT Coop should not cease its support and should take forward its active collaboration with UNW, for example, by convening other stakeholders, facilitating participation, and help raise technical and financial resources from elsewhere.

Donors could also provide technical assistance through coordination with and learning from their own projects or by supporting a monitoring and advisory role

3. **UNW HQ and SRO should coordinate to provide high-level leveraging towards policy and programmatic partnership building with sub-regional institutions.**

This could be achieved through the enactment of an “encircling strategy” involving mobilisation of a mix of actors for multiple advocacy entry points: the ECOWAS Gender Commission and department, the Dakar GDCe, national Governments and Ministries of gender, a multi-donor platform, UN Regional Directors in West Africa, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Union. Leveraging on each stakeholder's human rights and gender equality mandates and policies could facilitate the identification of a set of common objectives to be jointly agreed.

The setting up a regional Round Table or Permanent / Regular Conferences on VAW to manage high-level interactions, complex negotiations and consensus-building could be one of the avenues to be considered. Such instrument should be strategically linked to the identification and promotion of a regional, time-bound set of standards to be achieved, and to the show-casing, analysis and mutual learning around key national events marking progress on EVAW

4. **UNW's partnerships with regional CSOs should focus on increasing their networking capacity**

Strong, independent and well-resourced CSOs, particularly women's organisations, are essential for mutual accountability in regional and country-led EVAW and gender equality processes. In ECOWAS, relevant social actors at regional and national levels (for example, women's umbrella organizations but also academia, CBOS, rural NGOs, or the media) are still not empowered to play a forceful role at a strategic level.

UNW should further promote linkages, platforms, capacity, knowledge, and networking with a view to strengthening their voice and building up a credible advocacy compact. Such a process should be conceived as a multi-actors incremental and developmental programme that starts at, and feeds back into, the country level and supports, also financially, knowledge sharing and goal setting. While such process will be promoted and coordinated at regional level, UNW COs should be empowered to play the role of informed, facilitating agents.

5. **UNW' programming should focus on supporting contexts.**

EVAW and gender equality interventions should be carefully targeted to infusing resources in those contexts where they can more effectively contribute to change, i.e. where critical complementing factors are in place that will provide the essential components to yielding sought-after catalytic processes.

It may be more productive for UNW to focus on fewer areas of intervention and tighten synergies to avoid risk of project fragmentation and maximize impact. In doing so, it should prioritise situations in those countries with already existing laws or gender / VAW plans, or where political will and demand are strong, and target investment for the next two-to-four years to systematically support implementation.

This would mitigate the risk of spreading oneself thin over many objectives. It would also contribute to building a body of experience on visible advances in realization of women's rights based on knowledge, operational approaches, and organizational practices which can show results and point to models to be later extended and adapted to countries that are structurally weaker on Gender equality.

Where the positive situation of the member State does not tally with UNW current circumstances in the country, UNW should tap on the regional resources and partnerships to identify a viable actor to operate as on-site focal point.

6. The institutional approach should be advanced more aggressively.

UNW needs to be engaging ministries and creating EAW public – private partnerships at the local, national and regional levels. UNW has gained the experience to encourage its COs to move from a focus on awareness and sensitisation to a material culture change that is underpinned by structural changes, driven by clarity of rules, and that demands accountability on one side, and empowerment on the other.

EAW should aim to be continued in an integrated, actively managed process led by the member States at central and local levels, backed up with appropriate technical support from UNW, UNCTs or elsewhere, as appropriate to each country situation.

7. At national level COs should implement a systemic approach to VAW and gender equality

In future UNW will need to complement more consistently the civil society- and community-based approach with systemic action towards reinforcing institutional performance and accountability systems.

Such an approach needs first of all to be embedded into a consistent mainstreaming action also towards other UN Agencies, to help establishing EAW and gender equality policies as true cross-cutting issues within UNCT support to government's planning and budgeting.

Specifically on preventing and sanctioning VAW, cultural / sensitisation campaigns need to be complemented with support to the Rule of Law. This includes promoting policies and strategies that target relevant institutions, including the security sector, front responders, and the civil service at large. UNW COs could consider a variety of strategies in support of administration's policy decisions to enhance law enforcement, such as:

a) public sector regulations and standards: sectoral Standard Operating Procedures development and their application for Chief Police, Mayors, Headmasters, Hospital Directors, Magistrates, etc.

b) on-the-job and in-service training: guidance development and dissemination; official endorsement, dissemination, and enforcement of codes of conduct for teachers, healthcare providers, police, the judiciary, and prison personnel.

b) education sector and vocational, professional training: development and inclusion of EAW messages and provisions in curricula, at all levels

The implementation of these strategies can be facilitated and accelerated through targeted cooperation with rights-based agencies that have closely overlapping objectives (such as child protection, human rights, empowering the most vulnerable, maternal health etc). Immediate partners are UNICEF, UNFPA but also ILO, FAO, UNDP, the EU and other international agencies, donors and NGOs.

8. UNW should strategise internally on ways of coordinating more strongly within its own programme areas, and taking further advantage of partners' concomitant knowledge and action work on VAW

In order to be empowering women at the grassroots and mobilise communities' primary prevention role, including girls, men and boys' gender education to combat VAW, COs will need to link up efficiently with UNW's other programme areas: gender responsive budgeting, participation in decentralized decision making structures, and economic empowerment.

9. Capacity development by UNW COs should become a focus area of the programme

To increase efficiency, relevance, utility and effectiveness, in future, UNW should integrate a strong external capacity development component to its VAW programmes, building on its current capacity development framework to guide its work in supporting national partners.

The role of COs should be redefined so that they can simultaneously:

- Focus on the main technical and organizational weaknesses, and capacity strengthening needs of implementing partners';
- Accompany and nurture them. For example they could consider conducting participatory analysis or self reflection among partners using self-generated lessons learned from monitoring, implementation reports, and evaluations. Knowledge sharing and promotion of good practices from within or outside the programme, where they have proved successful locally
- Provide guidance and actively support implementation by following up on activities and coordination to consistently remind of overall EAW goals and indicate linkages between specific action and broader strategies.

COs should consider employing the collaboration of better equipped partners to provide assistance to others, for example by setting up a sort of service centre / help desk for women's organization calling very pragmatically on partners' diverse strengths, such as educationalists, trainers, lawyers and think creatively on the use of respective field offices for cross fertilization / cross sectoral cooperation and interventions.

The function of Service centres for women's organisations could be specially meaningful to also help women's organisations to effectively engage in local processes for which they need to know the process and forms for participation and decision-making. Support should be provided to central and local governments, civil society and rural women to make policies, procedures and budgets transparent and responsive to EAW objectives.

An additional effort by UNW will be necessary to supplement programming with sustained support to developing Women's Ministries' s mainstreaming capacity and power.

COs will need to formulate and implement their own workplans to show how they intend to promote the capacity of ministries and partners, striking the appropriate balance between governmental and civil society support in the framework of a broad and transformative understanding of the concept of national ownership of gender equality goals.

10. HRBA should remain the underlying principle at all times.

UNW should review its stance on FGM/C in light of UN commonly agreed-upon definitions, to ensure it unambiguously adopts a HRBA that promotes a deeper change in social expectations towards women and girls, based on evolving social norms and alternative mechanisms for community members to signal adherence to shared values, and ultimately also empowers women to say no to FGM/C.

In programming terms, WARO and COs should review their current assistance against UN official positions to ensure it is firmly grounded in the IHRL and define their operational approach to stopping FGM/C accordingly. This will be especially important in assessing the relevance and sustainability of the by-laws approach in Sierra Leone.

11. RBM needs to be strengthened by UNW

In terms of own programming, UNW needs to strengthen RBM approaches, also by ensuring that each partnership or implementation arrangement with national/local actors includes a commonly agreed results framework, where outcome-level objectives are jointly identified, steps are clear to all stakeholders and indicators are viable.

12. Developing the monitoring function on VAW will be key to achieving and sustaining progress.

Data collection has not been sufficiently prioritised in UNW's programming approach. There is a need to improve internal capacity on monitoring, including the development of a monitoring system to track VAW results and changes relating to policy frameworks, implementation capacity, rule of law, access to services and community primary prevention.

Few programme initiatives reviewed by the evaluation included situational assessments, baselines, or outcome-related monitoring. The capacity to reliably monitor programme progress may also be reinforced. UNW should ensure closer linkages between RBM and M&E. Arrangements could be provided for "light" but rigorous review of future programme proposals to ensure that basic requirements for monitoring are in place. It will be important to consistently align country and sub-regional staff in a peer-review process before funding is committed. For example, country staff should ensure key programming standards have been met and regional staff, in turn, should review these requirements and oversee compliance with the process.

Good programming practice also include shared, realistic and detailed planning and implementation of agreed actions by national women's associations and SCOs. This should translate into written letters of agreement or MoUs signed by UNW with the relevant entity. COs should monitor performance and progress towards results also through regular monitoring field visits to implementing partners

With a view to underpinning a successful regional approach, local and country actors must be much more engaged in collective identification of, and agreement on, indicators that are sensitive to field realities while also responding to the need to compile results regionally to track and demonstrate progress.

Experience shows that M&E serves its intended purpose best when it is used as a learning intervention as opposed to a compliance intervention. Self-assessments and participatory monitoring, as community based-monitoring, generate useful insights and identify entry points that can be leveraged for significant impact

In order to enhance partners M&E capacities and ensure proper documentation of results UNW could develop simple monitoring cover forms / activity facts sheets, where all essential data are recorded (Date, place, modality of action, number and profile of staff involved, participants, results, etc).

To better promote results-based and human rights- based reporting and help partners focus on the ultimate goals of the programmes, pre-formatted Project reporting forms should facilitate reflection on logic of expected results, role of partners and participants, long term objectives and impact of activities / projects in other words they should be action-oriented and point not only to immediate results but also on related outcomes, sustainability, and impact.

13. Internal capacity development is necessary to position UNW as the lead agency on gender

Establishing the profile and role of the new entity to play a stronger coordination function and ensure policy coherence on gender equality will entail for UNW to harmonise, level field, and consolidate its mainstreaming approach globally and regionally.

In the short term, the professional background of staff being recruited and definition of assignments of senior management will be critical. UNW will need to ensure it maintains a true international profile across its sub-regional structures and a true "staff mix".

Supporting the achievement of these objective requires promoting a substantive and well- designed internal capacity development initiative. In order to effectively overcome a project - based modality, managers will need to share a common understanding of the specific ways in which mainstream and up-stream work operates, to ensure coherence of approach.

In the next 3 to 5 years it may prove effective to also invest heavily on staff technical training, particularly gender planning and project planning. To strengthen technical capacity at office level UNW should tap on the valuable resources it has in house, and expand current knowledge sharing practices. UNW could use internal resources (such as former INSTRAW resources, or senior staff such as former gender planning professors and leaders). It could consider sending staff to summer or intensive short courses abroad and in the region, as well as enrolling staff in distance education and training courses.

Finally it could consider using specific knowledge management tools and knowledge transfer options based on internal sharing and learning, such as conducting more in - house training, common reflection on practices, after-action reviews, South-South cooperation and exchanges, establishing a COP on VAW, sharing protocols, activity reports, etc.

14. WARO staff should be enabled to focus more effectively on their technical role

SRO staff have been required to perform management functions. To optimise roles and resources, SRO tasks should be to back up COs with an enhanced support system (including regular visits, monitoring tools, technical backstopping and follow up) and provide advisory technical assistance to COs for gender planning and budgeting mainstreaming, leveraging, and resource mobilization.

15. Equity concerns in UNW's programming should be strengthened.

UNW should include disparity and coverage analysis in its capacity development work, and ensure that relevant SMART indicators are always included in ERAW programme logframes.

16. UNW WARO should undertake a good practice study to contribute to the upcoming 57th CSW on ERAW/Girls to be held in 2013

RAW programmes can generate a useful contribution to the Conference based on promising initiatives and lessons learned across the ECOWAS region.

17. Thematic funding on RAW and gender equality should be promoted amongst donors as an available option by UNW

UNW could encourage Donors to explore thematic funding modality for focused earmarking of resources and closer targeting of objectives and reporting accountabilities.