

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Report

Regional thematic evaluation on women's political participation in Latin America and the Caribbean 2011-2014

UN Women
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1. El diseño del proyecto toma en cuenta las características de la comunidad a la que se accede para que las mujeres puedan participar en el proyecto.
2. El proyecto se articula con el contexto para que las mujeres puedan acceder a los componentes del mismo.

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Executive summary

1. Introduction¹

Access

The region has witnessed a significant increase in the number and percentage of women in politics, including the election of five women presidents in the last decade (Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile, Brazil, Trinidad & Tobago), as well as an increase in the number of female ministers from 16% to 23%² and women in parliament (Lower House) from 19.7 to 26.7% since 2005³. Four Latin American countries are among the ten worldwide with the greatest percentage of women parliamentarians. Likewise, there are regional political agreements such as the Quito Consensus, the Brasilia Consensus and the Consensus of Santo Domingo, establishing specific commitments for positive measures and all the necessary mechanisms to guarantee the full participation of women in public and political representation positions, with a view to achieving parity in state institutions and at national and local levels.

The first legislative quota in the world was approved in Latin America, through the historical law enacted in Argentina in 1991. Since then over 17 of the region's countries (60%) have followed suit.

Progress has also been remarkable at country level: at least five countries have adopted parity laws and 17 have quotas⁴. Nonetheless, although progress made in the last few decades is undeniable, quotas alone have proven to be effective but not enough. Reality proves that advancement in terms of women's presence in the different branches of power in Latin America and the Caribbean varies considerably among countries and even within countries, and that the region is still far from achieving parity in all spheres of power and decision-making.

Efficacy

Although the inclusion of women in political representation should be considered a matter of fairness and an end in itself, this does not translate directly into improvements in substantive representation. A way in which women parliamentarians are trying to work more efficiently is by cutting across partisan lines to move forward in having an inter-partisan gender agenda. Coordinating women in politics –from different ideological currents- has allowed foundations to be set for reaching agreements on how to improve women's political representation in power, as regards common positions and strategic issues.

Remaining in office

The capacity of women politicians to remain in office is also an essential aspect that has not been so broadly studied. In Latin American there are very few statistics in this regard. Anyhow, the limited amount of data available seems to show that there is greater and quicker turnover of women in the political system compared to men. In this regard, research in the region highlights the phenomenon of violence and political and moral harassment as one of the potential causes⁵.

¹ This section is an introduction to the evaluation as such. Consistent with the long-term goal of UN Women, it focuses on the current status of women's political participation and leadership. Emphasis is placed particularly on elective posts.

² Hiraga, M & Maeda, H (2014) "Women in Ministerial Positions Worldwide: Looking at the Data Up Close" in World Bank Data Blog http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/over-20-percent-ministers-latin-america-and-sub-saharan-africa-are-women?cid=EXT_TWBN_D_EXT

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments, as at 1 de December 2014 <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world011214.htm>

⁴ Countries with gender parity in registered candidate slates for elections are Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Mexico. Furthermore, Panama has a provision of 50% only for the primaries.

⁵ According to ACOBOL, 40% of women leaving office in 2010 were victims of political violence. The "Law against the Political Harassment of Women is still awaiting regulation". *Noticias sobre Mujeres* (News on Women). 25 November 2012. http://mujeresenelsigloxxi.blogspot.com/2012_11_01_archive.html

2. UN Women Action Framework for political participation

During the period covered by this evaluation, the long-term goal of UN Women at the global and regional levels in the political field has been **“Women’s increased leadership and participation in the decisions that affect their lives”**⁶. The period encompasses two strategic plans at the global level (2011-2013 and 2014-2017) and two Strategic Notes at the regional level (2012-2013 and 2014-2017).

The outcomes for the period up to 2013 are the following:

- Global: Constitutions, legal frameworks, and policies to advance women’s right to participate in decision-making are reformed/adopted and implemented.
- Global: Electoral measures (mechanisms, processes and services) from a gender perspective, promoting leadership and Women’s Political Participation (WPP).
- Global: Common Approach for UN System related to temporary measures to promote women’s leadership and participation in decision-making.
- Regional: Gender equality advocates in governments and civil society influencing democracy and governance policies and strategies to protect and promote WPP and leadership rights in LAC.

At the global level, the 2014-2017 plan also includes the first two outcomes and eliminates the “common approach ... related to temporary measures”, adding a new global outcome which is in essence similar to the outcome for the LAC Region in the previous period “Gender equality advocates influencing constitutions, legal frameworks and policies to increase women’s participation and leadership”.

At the regional level, the 2014-2017 Strategic Note includes a single outcome: “measures with a gender perspective in regional and sub-regional organizations that promote leadership and WPP”.

Likewise, and to supplement framework documents at the regional and global levels, the UN Women’s Office for the Americas and the Caribbean prepared a regional guide called “Political empowerment of women: framework for Strategic Action” for the period 2014-2017 , which includes five objectives⁷

1. Promoting parity democracy: affirmative measures
2. Gender mainstreaming in policies, actions and institutions
3. Strengthening women’s leadership
4. Political parties that promote substantive equality
5. Fighting discrimination, gender stereotypes and violence

The strategic guide defines and develops four intervention strategies: building bridges, coordinating and leading; generating knowledge; providing technical assistance; and developing and strengthening capabilities.

From the organizational standpoint, the role of the Regional Office has focused mainly on strategic guidance, quality control of outputs, supervision and technical support, as well as on more overall programme and operations leadership in places with no country office.

The main counterparts of UN Women at country level during the evaluation period are: governments, parliaments, sub-national governments and national organizations within civil society, and the missing element in all this has been the political parties. Furthermore, UN Women has cooperated with a broad range of regional and sub-regional organizations such as UNDP, UNFPA, CIM/OAS, UNASUR, Parlatino, Parlacen, International IDEA, the Council of

⁶ “Goal” in Annex 1 of the UN Women Strategic Plan, 2011-13; Annex III of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-17; Strategic Note and Annual Work plan 2012-13 for LAC Division and Panama Regional Centre; and Strategic Note Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (2014-17).

⁷ This strategic guide was prepared in 2013 and published in September 2014. It is mentioned herein as a document reflecting the lessons learnt and providing a key indication that UN Women’s plans continue moving forward in this field.

Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMMCA), the Network of Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in the Andean Region (REMMA), the Andean Advisory Council for Senior Authorities on Women and Equal Opportunities (CAAAMI), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE), and the Andean Development Bank (CAF).

3. Objectives, scope and methodology for the evaluation

The main purpose of this regional thematic evaluation is **to help improve the programming approach of UN Women as regards leadership and women’s political participation to achieve the strategic goal of leadership and women’s political participation in Latin America and the Caribbean in the period 2014-2017**. The outcomes of the evaluation will be used to nurture political, strategic and programmatic decisions, organizational learning and accountability, and to identify good practices to advance women’s political participation in decision-making at all levels.

The specific objectives of this evaluation are as follows:

1. Evaluate **the appropriateness** of the approach for the Participation of Women in Politics promoted by UN Women at the regional, national and local levels in the period 2011 – August 2014.
2. Evaluate **effectiveness and efficiency** in moving towards the achievement of outcomes defined in the UN Women’s Strategic Plans 2011-2013 and 2014-2017;
3. **Identify and validate lessons learnt and good practices** allowing UN Women to support the sustainability of the outcomes achieved in the thematic area of Women’s Political Participation;
4. Provide **viable recommendations** with regard to UN Women’s strategies and approaches to promote Women’s Political Participation in the region.

The evaluation was carried out for the period 2011-August 2014 and took place from August to December 2014.

With regard to the information collection techniques, mixed qualitative and quantitative methods were used:

- **Document review:** 187 documents were reviewed and analyzed.
- **Individual interviews:** 150 semi-structured interviews were held with key actors.
- **Group interviews:** 10 group interviews were organized.
- **Case studies:** Four case studies were carried out (English-speaking Caribbean, El Salvador, Colombia, Paraguay), with a view to delving deeper into certain key dimensions, striking a sub-regional balance.
- **Survey among decision-makers:** Opinions and perceptions were collected through 88 replies to a non-probabilistic survey to triangulate all information.

4. Main findings of the evaluation⁸

Appropriateness and relevance

- *Contents of UN Women’s work as regards the participation and empowerment of women in politics is aligned with CEDAW and another 10 international instruments on women’s rights.*
- *The problems faced by women in the region as regards WPP are many and call for sustained efforts in the long term so it would be good for UN Women to continue working in this field.*
- *UN Women has continued to strengthen significant, strategic partnerships with different regional, sub-regional and national actors, particularly with women’s non-governmental organizations, political parties and increasingly with government actors.*
- *Joint actions with UN organizations at the regional, sub-regional and national levels are an appropriate although incipient response to the complexity of the problems to be faced.*

⁸ Only the core findings are included for a summary reading of the evaluation. All 33 findings can be reviewed in the pertinent section of the Final Report.

- *UN Women’s strategic framework in the field of women’s political participation still shows little ownership by country offices. The evaluation evidenced that strategic notes as well as global work plans with regard to this topic have not been fully understood or implemented by national offices.*

Efficacy

- *Out of the three functions –as a normative, operations and coordination body within the UN System- UN Women’s activities in political participation focus mainly on operations, within which there is a broad range of activities, including institutional strengthening, technical assistance, media campaigns, training, the creation of networks and research.*
- *UN Women activities have been carried out mainly with parliaments, civil society, political parties and sub-national governments. Despite the inter-governmental nature of UN Women, work with national governments –including women’s mechanisms- in WPP has not appeared as a comprehensive part of work in approximately one third of the country offices.*
- *UN Women has developed special expertise in WPP projects to support women of different age groups and cultural origin.*
- *Currently there is no evidence of a clear, systematic and monitored communication and dissemination strategy as regards WPP.*
- *Although there is widespread consensus on the need to work with men, UN Women has not developed any lessons learnt or shared strategies in this regard.*
- *The approach of UN Women is a clear recognition of the need not only to ensure women’s access to elective positions but also to support them once in office, to ensure a greater effectiveness of the gender-based agenda and more substantive representation.*
- *It is not possible to determine whether the different components or strategies led to achieving the committed outputs. However, this evaluation has highlighted some of the specific contributions.*

Efficiency

- *Transition from UNIFEM to UN Women improved the presence, leadership and influence of the Entity at regional and national levels. Nonetheless, start-up of the new Entity was difficult as regards planning and execution at the regional level and in the countries that were implementing specific initiatives.*
- *The limited amount of resources and broad mandate of UN Women underscore the need for a highly political role and profile.*
- *Within the framework of the agency’s regional coordination function, little exchange is observed between the English-speaking Caribbean and the rest of the region.*
- *There are clear limitations for drawing lessons and learning from national programme experiences in WPP, both at the national and regional levels.*
- *Overall, the Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) is a mechanism that has helped to develop important processes in the field of political participation, with a significant amount of financial resources. However, there seems to be no systematic transfer of lessons stemming from the evaluation of programmes/projects financed by FGE in this field.*
- *Although there has been progress in strategic planning, weaknesses are evidenced in applying the results-oriented management approach and in prioritizing outcomes, outputs and strategic activities in the different countries.*
- *Monitoring and reporting are strictly related to specific activities and outputs and only slightly to results, conversely to what is required by a results-oriented management system.*
- *Across the region there is a lack of full-time staff with specific expertise in WPP at country offices. Due to the scarcity of resources, UN Women is forced to resort to specific consulting services which does not favour installed institutional capabilities and knowledge within the organization.*

Sustainability

- *No sustainability strategy has been designed to coordinate supplementary interventions such as institutionalization, partnerships, knowledge and communication management, and capacity building.*
- *Awareness-raising and capacity building of state authorities is a relevant factor for the sustainability of strategies.*

- *Knowledge generation is mainly carried out at the national level. Topics are many and there is no clear prioritization. Although in an isolated manner, significant knowledge has been generated in a topic that is not well known and documented by the countries.*
- *There is no clear evidence of a knowledge management strategy to capitalize the knowledge generated, and guide interventions on women's political participation.*

5. Conclusions

With regard to appropriateness and relevance

- There is consistency with international normative frameworks. Among the topics most addressed by UN Women are, for instance, women accessing elective decision-making positions and public spaces; ensuring participation in electoral processes in equal conditions; enhancing and strengthening the participation of young women, indigenous or afro-descendant women; reinforcing the participation of women in international and regional fora with regard to the agenda of peace, security and development; adopting legislative measures and institutional reforms to favour parity. There are other aspects that have not been so fully addressed such as fostering the participation and leadership in civil society organizations, and political violence, among others.
- If we consider the definition of pillars for developing the strategy as set forth in the regional Strategic Guide on Political Empowerment⁹, more activities are linked to pillar 3 (strengthening women's leadership: caucuses, networks, training) and, secondly, to favouring parity in the normative framework as stated in pillar 1 (promoting parity democracy: parity legislation, affirmative measures, electoral courts, electoral system and funding).
- For both the strategic planning processes developed by the Entity in this period, each country identified its main problems related to this field of work. There is consistency in analyzing and identifying national priorities through their own diagnostic tools (although not all have had the resources to rigorously apply them). There has, however, been no consistent coordination between sub-regions and at the regional level.
- With regard to partnerships: a) with civil society there has been substantive progress in UN Women's rapprochement with new organizations to coordinate actions or carry out joint work; b) progress is noted with regard to the UN System given the existence of joint programmes, coordinated work based on UNDAF and others; c) with the governments a significant coordination effort is observed with legislative and electoral bodies in the countries. As regards political participation, the relationship with political parties and gender equality mechanisms is weaker in the countries and at the regional level.
- According to the evaluation survey, the highlights of UN Women's role and contribution in political participation are strengthening women's leadership; mainstreaming the gender perspective; promoting parity democracy; fighting discrimination, gender stereotypes and violence; and finally, promoting political parties that favour gender equality.
- The country offices, in general, have a broad view of the contents of women's political participation and their programme or operations are not only linked to participation as far as representation is concerned. This appears in a tension in what is deemed to be political participation in countries that do not design or report specific activities in this field but address women's advocacy and leadership.

With regard to efficacy

- In many cases, the reports received from national offices focused on activities and not on outcomes. Reports may indicate whether a workshop was held or not, but do not provide a consistent analysis or evidence of the outcomes, nor do they allow progress to be attributed to UN Women activities and strategies. Likewise, quarterly and annual regional reports analyze the context but lack a systematic consolidation (at regional and country level) of progress made vis-à-vis each indicator. Although it is not possible to measure specific outcomes for the period, interviews, cases studies and a careful examination of progress reports lead to identifying a series of achievements worth highlighting (with regard to the strategic plan indicators) and also to confirming that UN Women's activities have been carried out in agreement with the programming framework.

⁹ The five pillars are: 1. Promoting parity democracy: parity legislation, affirmative actions, electoral courts, electoral systems and funding; 2. Gender mainstreaming in policies, actions and institutions, data, analysis; 3. Strengthening women's leadership: caucuses, networks, training; 4. Political parties that promote substantive equality; 5. Fighting against stereotypes and discrimination in the media and gender violence in politics.

- Acknowledgment of UN Women’s contribution to WPP is mainly in the field of technical assistance to women’s caucuses in critical matters for the country; research, advocacy and follow-up as regards political harassment; favouring dialogue fora and coordination of different actors; generation and dissemination of specialized knowledge; consideration of those niches in which the exclusion of women from decision-making is even worse, such as in the case of indigenous populations; and, with regard to the UN system, inter-agency groups and the follow-up of the gender marker can be highlighted.

With regard to efficiency

- There are very limited resources available for working in this field, and thus the importance of a more political role and of setting strategic priorities. Current resources do not allow fulfillment of the high expectations voiced by UN Women, the governments and civil society. Nonetheless, funds could be more effectively used and optimized. The above is hindered by tension between the agency’s normative and political role and, at the same time, by the need to raise funds.
- It is necessary to consider UN Women’s actions within a context in which other entities also support and implement projects. In this regard –and given the scarcity of resources- partnerships become particularly important as a measure of cost-effectiveness to avoid duplication of activities and ensure a better quality of such activities.
- The installation of a new architecture for UN Women at the regional and national level was very ambitious as regards the planning of results, timeframes, resources and implementation of activities. Currently there is little coordination between the global and regional levels.
- There are highly specialized capabilities in some countries and in others the willingness to move ahead, with professional experts at the national level, who do not work full-time and thus share different commitments with the national office. The teams are fully committed to the Entity’s mandate as regards WPP but overwhelmed by the little time available.
- Due to limitations of staff, particularly those hired in the different offices of the region, it is especially complex to combine implementation and follow-up of national activities and, at the same time, meet the requirements of the regional office. Greater use is being made of special consultants, which does not favour installed capacities and knowledge in the organization and hinders the reinforcement of institutional memory.

With regard to sustainability

- At the national level, offices identify many risks for outcome sustainability in the field of women’s political participation. The most critical points are the limitation of resources for addressing this topic, the lack of a common understanding –collectively built- on more substantive topics and strategies for the region, too much internal red-tape and the competition for financial resources with other agencies of the UN System.
- There is a high potential because of the positive positioning of the Entity in the region and countries as regards its mandates and the gender equality agenda.
- Evidence shows that strengthening the capacities of national officials and other relevant actors is one of the strategies more frequently implemented by UN Women offices in the region.
- Noteworthy contributions: individual capacity building through mentoring, training and leadership workshops on different topics, with different participants and degrees of intensity, some of which have been organized in cooperation with international organizations and national institutions. Many collective processes have been launched for training women leaders, candidates and politicians with diverse outcomes in each country, in terms of impact on their filling of positions and the sustainability throughout time of their term in office.
- Anyhow, high-level training requires a significant amount of financial resources to support long-term processes. Within a context of reduced budgets, training supported by UN Women turns into specific, brief actions and not so much into strategic actions.
- It is necessary to reinforce the potential of technical assistance to ensure installed capacities at the institutions, and for parliamentary caucuses to innovate and/or take ownership of the gender agenda contents in the country.
- In those countries having greater technical capabilities, the support needed by the counterparts is related to strengthening political fora for coordinating actions with strategic partners (equality mechanisms, civil society organizations, parliamentary caucuses, etc.) so as to define joint agendas and build bridges to connect different country experiences, exchange lessons learnt and set up dialogue fora.

- The weakest areas are those requiring a greater level of institutionalization, for which recurrent elections are a systematic threat leading the critical mass to easily spread out when new administrations take office.
- On the other hand, an important contribution was made to knowledge generation but it has not been significantly harnessed as regards its management, lessons learnt and dissemination.
- The main strengths identified by the evaluation are the positioning of the gender agenda among decision-makers at different institutions; generating specialized knowledge; capacity to establish dialogue among many players; inter-agency leadership in gender topics and also in participation matters; leadership in the work with groups traditionally excluded from politics (indigenous, afro-descendants, the sexually diverse and youths).

6. Main recommendations¹⁰

With regard to the Guide on Women’s Political Empowerment, its strategic framework, design/programming and key notions

- Give rise to a process of collective reflection and analysis allowing UN Women to take ownership of the regional strategy, while better developing and documenting in a clearer fashion the theory of change implicit in the initiatives promoting women’s leadership and participation.
- Vis-à-vis the limitations in financial resources, it is essential for UN Women to address five objectives and decide in each case/country which are the strategic priorities it will focus its work on, in a sustainable manner, so as to make progress in the field of women’s political participation.

With regard to organizational capabilities

- Take measures to guarantee that country offices are rendered the necessary technical support to strategically guide or implement the initiatives promoting women’s leadership and political participation.

With regard to management mechanisms and coordination within UN Women

- Strengthen programming capabilities to apply a comprehensive results-oriented management framework to improve the strategic prioritization of women’s political participation.

With regard to the strategy of partnerships and coordination with key actors

- Develop a strategy for coordinating several players to have –with fewer resources– many voices disseminating strong ideas duly agreed upon by consensus and, at the same time, ensuring success of the initiatives in the field of women’s political participation. The regional Strategic Guide is a way of supporting such partnerships.

With regard to knowledge generation, management and communication

- UN Women should define and implement a communications and advocacy strategy for women’s political participation and parity in the region and in each country.
- UN Women should invest in reinforcing its role in knowledge generation and management in the field of women’s political participation.

7. Good practices

The report highlights 24 good practices of different countries in the following areas, among others:

a) Promoting structural changes

- In Colombia it is worth highlighting the technical contribution and advocacy of UN Women for generating data and breaking down analytical information in the field of elections and, moreover, providing technical support to parliamentarians.

¹⁰ We have only listed the recommendations of high impact for the Entity. The full list of recommendations can be checked out in the pertinent chapter of the Final Report.

- In Paraguay, within the framework of the request for electoral assistance forwarded to the UN Electoral Assistance Division, UN Women -together with other agencies- participated in the diagnosis mission and in the drafting of the report which defined the parameters for UN technical assistance to institutions, with a view to guaranteeing electoral justice in the country.
- In Mexico: in 2012, and after encouraging several actors to partake, the Mexican State was positioned as the eighth country in Latin America to surpass the 30% threshold of women’s representation in the Legislative Branch: 36.8% in the House of Representatives and 33.6% in the Senate. Likewise, the broad advocacy for the Political-Electoral reform enacted in January 2014, took parity of female and male candidates in the Lower House, the Senate and State Parliaments to a constitutional level. This is a key opportunity to achieve parity between men and women in electoral processes as from 2015.

b) *Collective capacity-building*

Work with an inter-partisan forum

- In Bolivia, within the framework of the “Joint Programme Promoting Change in Peace” funded by the MDG Achievement Fund, UN Women worked with the Association of Bolivian Female Town Council Members (ACOBOL) on strategies (particularly a law) to address political violence and harassment against women.
- In Ecuador, the National Assembly is implementing a self-managed course on gender, organized by the Inter-Agency Gender Group under the leadership of UN Women, and within the framework of the Gender Scorecard.

Civil Society

- In Uruguay, and for the last two years, *Cotidiano Mujer*, *CIRE* and *CNS Mujeres*, with the support of the UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality has promoted the campaign “*Mujeres a la Par*” (Equal opportunities for Women) in support of having more women included in candidate lists.
- In Colombia, actors highlight the role of UN Women to favour the relationship with civil society and the State, building bridges and generating dialogue fora, in support of women’s participation and leadership in the peace process. UN Women has supported civil society in the preparation and holding of the Summit on Women and Peace in 2013.
- In Mexico, Paraguay and Bolivia it is important to consider coordination strategies with the movement of indigenous women which has been able to position an actor that was practically excluded from the political arena and, moreover, make visible and reinforce an intersectionality strategy.

Partnerships with men

- In Ecuador, male legislators participate in the Parliamentary Group on Women’s Rights, also in coordination roles.
- In Colombia, within the framework of the Joint Gender Programme financed by the MDG Achievement Fund, an educational communications strategy was implemented with a strong approach on masculinities, reaching out to many sectors of the population, from public officials and civil society organizations to a broader audience, through a mass media campaign.

c) *Individual empowerment*

- Interviewees deemed the “advancing transformational leadership” project funded by UNDEF and implemented in the English-speaking Caribbean to be relevant and efficient in view of its methodology, and suggested its replication in other sub-regional contexts. The mentoring component is a useful empowerment method as part of the training for transformational leadership.

d) *Monitoring and accountability*

- One of the most effective collaborations is the ATENEA tripartite project shared by UN Women, UNDP and International IDEA. ATENEA has promoted a country-based building of strategic partnerships with political, institutional and social actors involved in the field of women’s political participation. The project is currently

being implemented in 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, under the leadership of the Regional Technical Coordination Unit.

- The Regional Office, through the political participation advisor, has set up a regional political participation network made up of representatives, advisors and national officials.
- In 2012, the “Gender Scorecard” was applied in Bolivia as well as in Ecuador (2010 and 2014) and Colombia.

e) *Partnership building and coordination with actors:*

- The interviews have highlighted the role of UN Women in organizing summits and fora, which have allowed a more fluent dialogue between civil society and the State. These activities are cost-efficient.
- In Colombia, the International Cooperation Gender Roundtable and, particularly the Committee for Women’s Inclusion and Political Representation is a good practice at the regional level, representing a strong, strategic partnership of UN Women with bilateral cooperation agencies, the UN System, NGOs and international non-profits working in this field.

8. Lessons learnt

In the quest for parity-based democracy and substantive representation, progress is complex, long-term and non-linear and its success depends on the interaction among the different structural, individual and collective levels which must reinforce one another.

Structural change is useful for standards, processes and institutions to be inclusive, gender-sensitive and represent women. It is necessary to seek capacity building and strengthening at the collective level, through cooperation networks and structures. Partnerships are a vital strategy to ensure advancement of collective agendas. Likewise, support to empowerment processes at the individual level allows women to make their voices heard in public deliberations.

It is essential to prioritize and focus actions to optimize available resources.

The gender-based agenda is too broad and complex at the regional and national levels for UN Women to cover the whole of the agenda efficiently and in an independent and isolated manner. The current broad scope of UN Women’s initiatives suggests the need to focus more on niches and strategic actions.

Fulfillment of the UN Women mandate for reinforcing accountability depends on effective monitoring and follow-up.

The responsibility of working on women and gender equality and being a model to be followed by the rest of the organization should start at top management levels. In the case of joint activities between UN Women and other UN Agencies, the capacity, skills and empowerment of the lead agency should be analyzed from the very beginning; and its roles, competences and responsibilities should be fully understood and accepted by all partners from the word go.

In a context of difficult challenges as regards the timeframe and scarce resources, coordination with other international and regional organizations is essential to avoid duplication of efforts, seek programme synergies and share costs.

The gender-based agenda is too broad and complex at the regional and national levels for UN Women to cover the whole of the agenda efficiently and in an independent and isolated manner. The proposal to join efforts through a big regional partnership around the Strategic Guide should help the process flow. This partnership should allow all to move forward towards a parity democracy while each agent, including UN Women, seeks its own niche, depending on the capacities and needs of each country or context.