

UN WOMEN

Country Portfolio Evaluation of Kyrgyzstan Strategic Note (2015-2017)



Part I: Summative Report

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Names of evaluators	Jo-Anne Bishop, Independent Consultant Lilia Ormonbekova, Independent Consultant
Name of Evaluation Manager	Isabel Suarez, Regional Evaluation Specialist, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
Contact Details for this Report	Isabel.Suarez@unwomen.org

List of Acronyms

ARWEE	Acceleration of Rural Women Economic Empowerment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CO	Country Office
CORT	Collaborative Outcomes Reporting Technique
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GE	Gender Equality
GEEW	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GSPS	Gender in Society Perception Study
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning
MP	Member of Parliament
MSC	Most Significant Change
NSC	National Statistical Committee
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RBM	Results-Based Management
RO	Regional Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSI	Semi-Structured Interviews
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UN	United Nations
UN WOMEN	UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women)
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UFE	Utilisation Focused Evaluation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

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COVER PHOTO: Almkan Baimanbetova a beneficiaries of the joint UN Women, FAO, WFP and IFAD programme 'Acceleration of Rural Women Economic Development" proudly shows off her greenhouse she built with support of the programme. As a single-head of household, the greenhouse will generate additional income for her family. Photo: CPE Evaluation Team/Mamajan, Karasui District.

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Jo-Anne Bishop and Lilia Ormonbekova (CPE Independent Evaluators)



Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the UN Women Kyrgyzstan Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE). CPEs are systematic assessments of the contributions made by UN Women to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level.

This CPE focused on the normative, coordination and operational/programmatic work of the UN Women Country Office under its 2015-2017 Strategic Note. The evaluation was summative and formative in nature and assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and human rights/gender responsive of the country portfolio.

The evaluation was premised on a human rights-based and gender responsive approach founded on the principles of inclusion, participation, and fair power relation.

Context

Kyrgyzstan has a population of 6,019,500 persons¹ and is one of the poorest post-Soviet countries. Since its independence, the country progressed in achieving MDGs on reducing severe poverty and hunger, ensuring environmental sustainability, development of global partnerships and reducing child mortality. However, Kyrgyzstan is still lagging behind in terms of reducing maternal mortality, and there are increasing challenges with regard to sustaining gender equality achievements. Despite good legislative and policy frameworks and government's commitment towards gender equality and women's empowerment, large groups of society remain patriarchal, whereas the spread of religious extremism may further hinder achievements in the area.

Strategic Note Portfolio

The Country Office (CO) Strategic Note is the main planning tool for UN Women's support to normative, coordination and operational work in the Kyrgyz Republic. UN Women (previously as UNIFEM) has implemented catalytic initiatives on promoting women's economic, political and social rights in Kyrgyzstan since 2001. A Country Office with delegation of authority has been operational since February 2012².

The Strategic Note is grounded in the standards, principles and obligations of the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Concluding Observations of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Millennium Development Goals, and Committee and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Recommendations (2011), and CEDAW Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic reports.

In line with the UN Women Global Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and Kyrgyzstan's UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2013-2017, the Strategic Note contains a Development Results

¹ National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyzstan, estimation as of January 2016.

² Former UNIFEM started operations in Kyrgyzstan in 2001 under the supervision of its Sub-regional office for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) which covered 12 countries in the region. In February 2012, UN Women established its first Country Office in Central Asia in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, through the reorganization of UN Women's regional architecture.

Framework (DRF) contributing to the impact areas of women's economic empowerment; ending violence against women and girls; peace and security; and governance and national planning.

The Strategic Note was implemented through partnerships with government, civil society, the UN Country Team (UNCT) and development partners. Operational work was conducted within the framework of global, regional and joint UN programmes.

The total planned budget of the Strategic Note for the period of 2015-2017 was 7.6 million USD. As per December 2016, expenditure against this target programmatic budget was 4.7 million USD.

Evaluation Objective

The CPE was commissioned by the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia as a primary formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the Kyrgyzstan Country Office (CO) and national stakeholders' strategic learning and decision-making for the next Strategic Note, due to be developed by the Kyrgyzstan CO in 2017.

The CPE will be used to support: a) learning and improved decision-making (including through identification of lessons learned and good practices) to support the development of the next Strategic Note 2018-2022; b) accountability for the development effectiveness of the CO Strategic Note 2018-2022 in terms of UN Women's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment; and c) capacity development and mobilisation of national stakeholders to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The target audience and intended users of the CPE are: UN Women Staff (including in the Kyrgyzstan CO, Regional ECA Office and headquarters), national and local governments, the UN Country Team and Gender Task Group, civil society representatives, project beneficiaries and development partners.

Methodology

The evaluation team chose approaches and methods for the evaluation that took into account the evaluation context as well as the identified expectations and priorities of end users. The evaluation team also applied design characteristics that supported end users to have ownership of the evaluation findings through the use of highly participatory, collaborative and gender-responsive evaluation approaches.

A theory-based approach was applied in order to test and validate the re-constructed theories of change guiding the CO's work under its Strategic Note. This approach was complemented by a Utilization-Focused Evaluation approach and a Collaborative Outcomes Reporting Technique (CORT) which combined a theory-based and highly participatory approach.

In order to ensure that evaluation findings were balanced and based on multiple levels of evidence, the evaluation team employed mixed-methods approaches based on adequate triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data from a broad range of data sources including a portfolio review of 107 documents, 40 interviews and 14 Focus Group Discussions with 221 stakeholders (137 female and 84 male), site visits to four project sites and administration of an online survey which included 25 respondents (22 female and 3 male). The evaluation applied Contribution Analysis in assessing effectiveness of the CO's portfolio.

MAIN FINDINGS

Relevance

1. The UN Women country portfolio in Kyrgyzstan is well-aligned with national policies, strategies and emergent trends and its design and implementation has directly contributed towards implementation of CEDAW commitments. Ensuring more explicit reference to a broader range of international human rights treaty body recommendations relevant to the next country programme will further reinforce these results.
2. Partnerships have enabled UN Women to achieve greater results through its engagement of local partners and use of joint programming with the UNCT, UNiTE coalition and youth. Investing in a wider range of partnerships is needed to position and align the COs work across a broader range of issues.

Effectiveness

3. Despite limited core funding and human resources, UN Women has achieved considerable results in all impact areas, and especially through its normative mandate, by leveraging its strong ties with civil society.
4. UN Women's programmatic interventions, and its use of an integrated approach, are positioning and equipping duty bearers and rights holders to better understand and address root causes of gender inequality with some community-level programmes yielding transformative changes at the community level. Interventions reflecting UN Women's three-pronged mandate produced the most significant changes.
5. Despite its limited resources (including human and financial), UN Women has achieved important results in its policy work in terms of strengthening laws, policies and implementation of CEDAW Concluding Observations. Establishing greater policy linkages across programmatic areas will further strengthen normative results.
6. UN Women's technical coordination efforts and its intensive work to integrate Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) within the current UNDAF has been an important strategic investment and will support greater prioritization of GEWE by the UNCT; however, this work needs to be further scaled up and taken to a higher level. There is strong demand for greater UN Women leadership on coordination in order to influence UNCT accountability for GEWE.
7. The UN Women Kyrgyzstan CO has introduced a number of innovative approaches, especially among youth and with regard to power distribution within families, which have the potential for impact at multiple levels. Further up-scaling these innovations, and generating increased knowledge and visibility about the approaches used and including them within future projects of UN Women and other partners will contribute to further sustainability of results and increased impact.

Efficiency

8. The UN Women Kyrgyzstan CO adheres to RBM and has an established M&E system; however, deepening its current application of human rights-based approaches in programme design, monitoring and reporting, as well as a strengthened knowledge management system, would support better targeted interventions and learning.
9. The CO's relatively scarce funds were used in a cost-efficient manner as a result of strategic re-positioning and prioritization of issues with a potential for long term impact. HQ-driven funding targets have compelled the Office to spend significant time on resource mobilisation efforts.
10. There is a strong desire by a broad range of partners and stakeholders for greater UN Women leadership, visibility and positioning at a higher strategic level in order to influence and inform development interventions.

11. With a relatively small number of staff, the CO achieves significant results in many areas. However, with few staff members being in high demand for their gender expertise and high expectations among partners for more guidance from UN Women, the Office's human resource capacities are being challenged.

Sustainability

12. Investments to strengthen legislative frameworks, increase national capacity to implement CEDAW commitments and generate strong evidence to inform policy development, have contributed to the sustainability of results. Further efforts to achieve sustainable change will require greater breadth of partnerships and the identification of institutional entry points.
13. UN Women's use of strategies that empower and equip national partners with expertise and tools to advance change, and the cascading effect this is having on transferring skills and knowledge to a wider range of stakeholders and in building gender equality champions, will support increased national ownership of GEWE results. The role of men and boys in these effort is especially critical.

Human Rights and Gender Equality

14. UN Women's policy and programme interventions have effectively responded to the underlying causes of gender inequality and poverty; however the specific needs of marginalized groups were less analysed and prioritized in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note.
15. Whilst there are good examples of efforts by the CO to engage key stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of its programmes; efforts to ensure greater social inclusion and use of human rights-based and gender-responsive approaches can be deepened in a more systematic way.

CONCLUSIONS

Relevance: Limited resources require UN Women to be more strategic in its future work. There is a need to identify and work through strategic entry points and strengthened partnerships in order to focus efforts where there is a potential for maximized results. Coordination work and mechanisms need to be elevated and shifted from a technical to strategic level focus.

Effectiveness: UN Women's implicit theory of change based on tackling deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, stereotypes and harmful practices through a priority focus on evidence generation and community level engagement with women, men, girls and boys, has been appropriate and effective and is positioning the Office to work towards transformative change. Inclusion of a more explicit theory of change is needed to ensure that future programming aligns with and adheres to this approach.

Efficiency: The integrated approach applied in the design and implementation of UN Women's programmes has enabled it to achieve greater results with fewer resources and ensured that interventions address multidimensional aspects of gender equality. Efforts to further reflect this approach in results frameworks, RBM and structures are needed to fully systematize this work and also ensure better linkages across the mandate areas of UN Women's work.

Sustainability: A strong legal and policy environment for GEWE, combined with strategic partnerships that maximized synergies and technical expertise of different partners, were key enabling factors for the sustainability of results. Major hindering factors were the weak institutional status of the gender machinery and turnover within, and the limited timeframe of some programmes and human resource constraints.

Human Rights/Gender Equality: UN Women's interventions have directly supported implementation of international human rights norms and generated important results and evidence for rights holders and duty bearers in addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality. Greater efforts are needed to specifically target the needs and priorities of marginalised groups and to deepen stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of its future work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. UN Women's should use its multidimensional and integrated programming approach and results as an entry point for supporting broader policy efforts, particularly SDG implementation and adjust its results frameworks and organizational approach to fully align with this approach.
2. Continue to prioritise engagement with rural women and work on social norm change as a means to address key barriers to women's economic and political participation and prevent VAWG and conflict. Ensure that this work is directly linked to policy efforts and other initiatives of partners in order to scale up and sustain results.
3. Ensure greater strategic positioning of UN Women and identify increased entry points through elevating the GTG, revitalising the extended GTG, participation in broader development fora, and increased joint programming to deepen coordination and normative work and scale up and sustain operational results.
4. Support duty bearers and rights holders to further advance implementation of national and international GEWE commitments through a targeted focus on gender responsive planning, budgeting and statistics.
5. Create a broader platform, through UN Women's convening role, to bring together civil society for joint advocacy efforts and engage them in informing and advising on the development and implementation of UN Women's next Strategic Note.
6. Strengthen engagement with rights holders from marginalised and vulnerable communities and support their efforts to advance normative, policy and advocacy efforts to advance their rights and priorities.

Introduction

Development Context and Trends

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked and mountainous country in Central Asia, which gained independence in 1991. The country's most recent (2015) Human Development Index (HDI) value is 0.664³, which puts it in the medium human development category and positions it at 120th place out of 188. Kyrgyzstan has a population of 6,019,500 persons⁴, with over half of it under the age of 25⁵. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita growth has been fluctuating throughout the post-Soviet period, with most recent World Bank data showing a decrease from 8.7% in 2013 to 1.4% in 2015,⁶ which is mostly associated with global recession and the country's accession to the Eurasian Customs Union in 2015.⁷ About one third (32%) of Kyrgyzstan's population is below the national poverty line,⁸ with some regions peaking at above 50%.⁹ Poverty, high level of corruption (136th rank out of 176)¹⁰, lack of employment opportunities and many other causes, can be accounted for a high level of external, and particularly – labor migration from Kyrgyzstan: it is estimated that from half a million to one million of the country's citizens are working abroad¹¹, with their remittances amounted to one fourth of the country's GDP in 2015.¹²

While steadily moving towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with positive effects in the areas of reduction of severe poverty and hunger (MDG 1), ensuring environmental sustainability (MDG 7), development of global partnership (MDG 8) and child mortality (MDG 4),¹³ Kyrgyzstan had the highest rate of maternal mortality (76 deaths per 100,000 live births) in 2015 among the countries of Central Asia thus hampering achievement of MDG 5.¹⁴ Building upon this, the country launched National Consultations on Post-2015 Development Agenda and committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), identifying twelve priority themes and specific policy areas, such as economic growth and employment, state administration and governance, education, food security and agriculture, health care and social inclusion, peace and stability, environmental security, etc.¹⁵ Following the establishment of the National SDG Council, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, as the

³ United Nations Development Programme. Human Development for Everyone. Briefing note for countries on the 2016 Human Development Report. Kyrgyzstan, p.5. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/KGZ.pdf

⁴ National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyzstan, estimation as of January 2016.

⁵ National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan, estimation at the end of 2016.

⁶ World Bank Country Data. Kyrgyzstan. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD.ZG?locations=KG>

⁷ Final Evaluation of the UNDAF for the Kyrgyz Republic, July 2016, p.16.

⁸ World Bank Country Data. Kyrgyzstan. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=KG>

⁹ Ibid 4, p.17.

¹⁰ Transparency International. Corruption Perception Index 2016. <https://www.transparency.org/country/KGZ>

¹¹ National Institute for Strategic Studies of the Kyrgyz Republic, International Organization for Migration, Kyrgyzstan: Extended Migration Profile 2016, p.62.

¹² World Bank. Personal Remittances Received (% of GDP), <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=KG>

¹³ UNDP in the Kyrgyz Republic. Third Report on Progress towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Kyrgyzstan. January 2014. <http://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/library/mdg/third-mdg-progress-report-kyrgyzstan.html>

¹⁴ World Health Organization. Maternal Mortality in 1990 – 2015. http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/kgz.pdf

¹⁵ Final Evaluation of the UNDAF for the Kyrgyz Republic, July 2016, p.28.

key focal authority on gender issues, developed a draft¹⁶ pilot gender- and equity-focused SDG M&E Plan for 2016 - 2017, with strong involvement of women's groups, among other.¹⁷

Context for Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Kyrgyzstan

Against this backdrop, the situation in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment in Kyrgyzstan remains of concern, with the country's Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 0.394 (90th place among 159 countries) and Gender Development Index (GDI) of 0.967 placing it in Group 2 countries with medium-high equality in HDI achievements between women and men.¹⁸ Kyrgyzstan ranks 81st (out of 144) in the Global Gender Gap Report, with the score of 0.987 indicating economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment as the areas lagging behind.¹⁹

As noted in the final evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in Kyrgyzstan, "there is indeed a significant discrepancy between the gender equality principles contained in the legal and policy framework and gendered social norms applied to everyday life, both in rural and urban areas, though with differences and nuances based on the social and cultural level of the people."²⁰ For instance, despite a 30% gender quota, women remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making and in government. As of beginning of 2017, 19% of the MPs (23 out of 120) and 3 out of 14 ministers²¹ are women. Only one in ten of local councillors are women.²² Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is widespread and takes many forms, including domestic violence, bride kidnapping, early marriages, polygamy, physical abuse and trafficking.²³ The percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 is 12%.²⁴ According to the most recent Demographic and Health Survey, 23% of all women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence at least once since age 15, and 13% have experienced physical violence within the past 12 months.²⁵ Impunity is widespread and absence of state-funded services for support and redress to VAW survivors, as well as psychological pressure and cultural traditions at community level discourage women further from filing complaints.²⁶

Inadequate childcare facilities and lack of affordable government social provisioning, lack of decent job opportunities, and absence of formal employment opportunities, as well as influence of traditional stereotypes assigning women as primary caregivers are contributing to women's low labor force

¹⁶At the time of writing, the Plan was not yet finalized.

¹⁷ UN in Kyrgyzstan. No one left behind – evaluating the SDGs with an equity-focused and gender equality lens. <http://kg.one.un.org/content/unct/kyrgyzstan/en/home/news/kg-news/2016/no-one-left-behind--evaluating-the-sdgs-with-an-equity-focused-a.html>

¹⁸ UNDP. Human Development for Everyone. Briefing note for countries on the 2016 Human Development Report. Kyrgyzstan, p.5.

http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/KGZ.pdf

¹⁹<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/economies/#economy=KGZ>

²⁰ Final Evaluation of the UNDAF for the Kyrgyz Republic, July 2016, p.18.

²¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union. Women in Politics: 2017. <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnmmap17-en.pdf>

²² UN Women in Kyrgyzstan data.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women, Kyrgyzstan, <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/kyrgyzstan?formofviolence=fac5fe48636e4d3882bbd2ebbf29bd60>

²⁵ Kyrgyzstan Demographic and Health Survey 2012, p.247-249. <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR283/FR283.pdf>

²⁶ Ibid 18.

participation rate (50% in 2016).²⁷ Given this environment, migration has become one of the coping strategies to secure livelihoods. According to some estimates, for instance, in Russia (main migrant destination country), women represent 40% of all Kyrgyzstani labor migrants.²⁸ Given the scale of migration, with more than 26% of all households having at least one migrant worker²⁹, the impact of this trend on families has been significant, especially for women as single heads of households.

Marginalised and Vulnerable Groups

The impact of poverty and conflict on women and girls in Kyrgyzstan has been particularly acute and the CEDAW Concluding Observations on Kyrgyzstan's fourth period report expressed concern about the situation of groups of women who face intersecting forms of discrimination.³⁰ These include groups such as migrant workers; older women; women domestic workers; women belonging to ethnic minorities; women drug users; and lesbian, bisexual, transgender intersex and questioning (LGBTIQ) communities. Whilst data and analysis is available for some groups such as LGBTIQ communities (as a result of shadow CEDAW reports produced), for most of the other groups, there is a significant evidence gap and, as a result, it has been challenging to assess the extent to which programmes and services have been designed and operationalized to meet the needs of these groups.

Adherence to Global Gender Equality Norms

Kyrgyzstan is a signatory to CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, and is committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UN Security Council Resolution (UN SCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, among other. The country periodically reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), with the most recent, Fourth Periodic Report, presented to the Committee in 2015. In its Concluding Observations,³¹ the latter welcomed the adoption in 2012 of the long-term National Strategy for the Achievement of Gender Equality by 2020 and respective National Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, while noting its concern with regard to a number of areas, including inadequate knowledge on women's rights among all branches of the government and among women themselves, in particular, in rural and remote areas; shrinking democratic space for special groups of women, including LGBTIQ; low participation of women in political and public life; weak state institutions working on gender equality issues and absence of gender mainstreaming strategy and gender-based budgeting; absence of implementation strategies on temporary special measures for gender equality in all areas where women are underrepresented; persistence of deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in family and society; and high level of VAWG including domestic violence, bride kidnapping, early marriage and trafficking. As a follow-up to the recommendations, Kyrgyzstan developed respective Country Action Plan on the implementation of CEDAW Concluding Observations, which is aligned with the NAP 2015 – 2017. The Fifth Periodic Report

²⁷The World Bank. Kyrgyzstan: Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate) at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>; as well as in UN Women in Kyrgyzstan Annual Report 2016, Impact 2, paper version p.21.

²⁸ According to figures published by the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation in April 2016, 574 194 Kyrgyz citizens were on the Russian territory, of which 223 073 are women representing nearly 40% of Kyrgyz migrants.

²⁹Information from the State Migration Service under the Government

³⁰Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Kyrgyzstan, 11 March 2015.

³¹ Office of the High Commission for Human Rights. Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Kyrgyzstan. March 2015.

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/4&Lang=En

on CEDAW implementation is scheduled for 2018.

In the aftermath of 2010 inter-ethnic violence in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan, accompanied by numerous cases of sexual violence³², women's groups submitted an appeal to the UN Secretary-General and the UN Security Council calling on the government of Kyrgyzstan to improve implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325. It was as a result of these actions and the strong advocacy efforts by UN Women, in cooperation with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), that Kyrgyzstan became the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to adopt in 2013 its own National Action Plan on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and to pilot the UN's Seven-Point Action Plan on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding. Whilst there had been indications of good implementation results with regard to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325,³³ recent economic downturn left the National Action Plan underfunded, along with a few other sectors.³⁴

In the lead-up to the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2015, Kyrgyzstan undertook a national Beijing +20 review of progress and challenges in implementing these landmark documents. As noted in the review, since the 1990s the country developed essential gender equality legislation, including at different sector levels; implemented temporary special measures to increase women's political participation; adopted laws aimed at elimination of VAW, such as on criminalization of bride kidnapping and marital rape; and developed a long-term gender equality strategy. Among the areas of concern the review stated the following: weak institutional mechanism for gender equality; inadequate financing of the area; and lack of state institutions' accountability on monitoring gender equality results at sector levels.

UN System and its Work on Gender Equality

The UN system in the Kyrgyz Republic began its work in 1993 and currently comprises of 21 agencies, funds, programmes and entities. The UNDAF 2012-2017 includes the following priorities: (a) Peace and Cohesion, Effective Democratic Governance, and Human Rights; (b) Social Inclusion and Equity; (c) Inclusive and Sustainable Job-Rich Growth for Poverty Reduction. Bearing on results of its predecessor, UNIFEM, UN Women in Kyrgyzstan became operational in 2012, as the first full-fledged UN Women office in Central Asia. While gender equality and women's empowerment is grounded in all UN system members' mandates, it is UN Women that plays the coordinating role on these matters within the UN Country Team (UNCT). UN Women also chairs the Gender Theme Group (both UN-only and extended) that aims at participatory and inclusive discussions and joint decision-making in terms of activities related to gender equality.

Anticipating development of the new UNDAF for 2018-2022³⁵, the UNCT launched the final UNDAF evaluation for 2013-2017, which concluded that "overall UNDAF interventions, priority areas and outcomes are fully in line with the national strategic priorities and with the UN mandate; that implementation of UNDAF was successful towards achievement of outcomes; and that the UNDAF introduced and tested new approaches and innovative models during its implementation. Especially

³² UN Women. Post-Conflict Women's Needs Assessment in the Southern Kyrgyzstan. 2010, p.5, <http://gbvaor.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Post-Conflict-Womens-needs-assessment-in-Southern-Kyrgyzstan-2010.pdf>

³³ Final Evaluation of the UNDAF for the Kyrgyz Republic, July 2016, p.30.

³⁴ UN Women in the Kyrgyz Republic. 2016 Annual Report, p.6.

³⁵ The UNDAF was originally designed for the period 2012-2016 and then extended to also cover 2017.

important, UNDAF was highly instrumental in contributing to peace and stability as prerequisites for sustainable development of the Kyrgyz Republic.”³⁶ As for gender equality issues, the report noted that “work to bring transformative changes in the field of gender equality is still at the initial phases³⁷ and would need more joint UN efforts to bring sustainable progress that can enable the full achievement of the SDGs.”

UN Women Strategic Note (2015-2017)

Background

UN Women's mandate (GA resolution 64/289) is to lead, coordinate and promote accountability of the UN system to deliver on gender equality and the empowerment of women with the primary objective of enhancing country-level coherence, ensuring coordinated interventions and securing positive impacts on the lives of women and girls, including those living in rural areas.

The Country Office Strategic Note is the main planning tool for UN Women's support to normative, coordination and operational work in the Kyrgyz Republic. UN Women (previously as UNIFEM) has implemented catalytic initiatives on promoting women's economic, political and social rights in Kyrgyzstan since 2001. A UN Women Country Office with delegation of authority has been operational in Kyrgyzstan since 2012.

The current Strategic Note covers the period 2015-2017. A new Strategic Note for the period 2018-2022 is due to be developed and approved by the end of 2017.

The Strategic Note is grounded in the standards, principles and obligations of CEDAW (including the COBs on the 4th periodic report), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Concluding Observations of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Millennium Development Goals, and Committee and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Recommendations (2011).

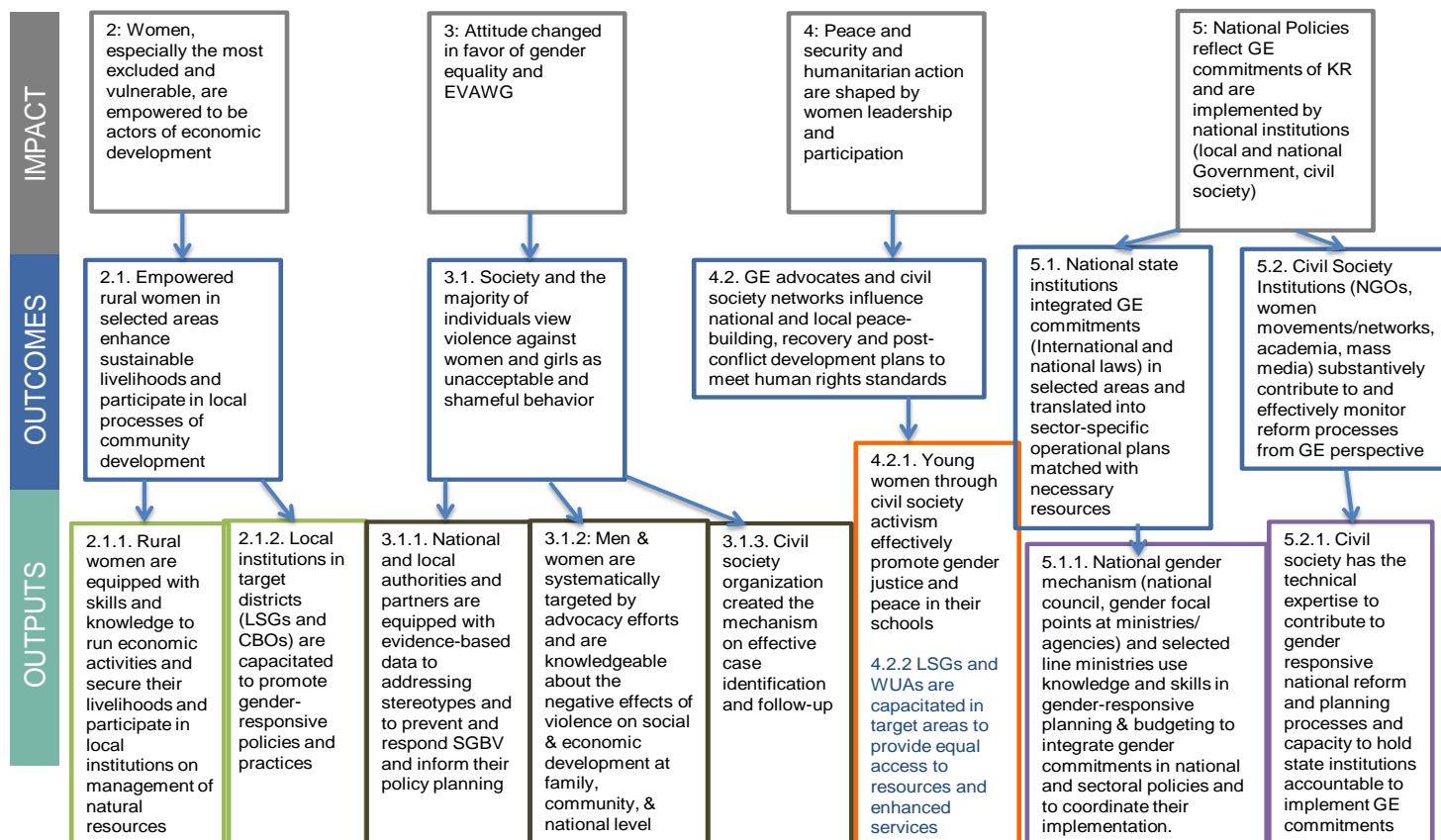
In line with the UN Women Global Strategic Plan (SP) 2014-2017 and Kyrgyzstan's UNDAF for 2013-2017, the Strategic Note contains a Development Results Framework (DRF) contributing to the following UN Women SP 2014-2017 Impact Areas:

- Impact Area 2: Women, especially the most excluded and vulnerable, are empowered to be actors in economic and local development
- Impact Area 3: Women and girls live a life free of violence;
- Impact Area 4: Peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women's leadership and participation
- Impact Area 5: Governance and national planning fully reflect accountability for GE commitments and priorities

³⁶ Ibid 26, p.6.

³⁷ Ibid 26, p.93.

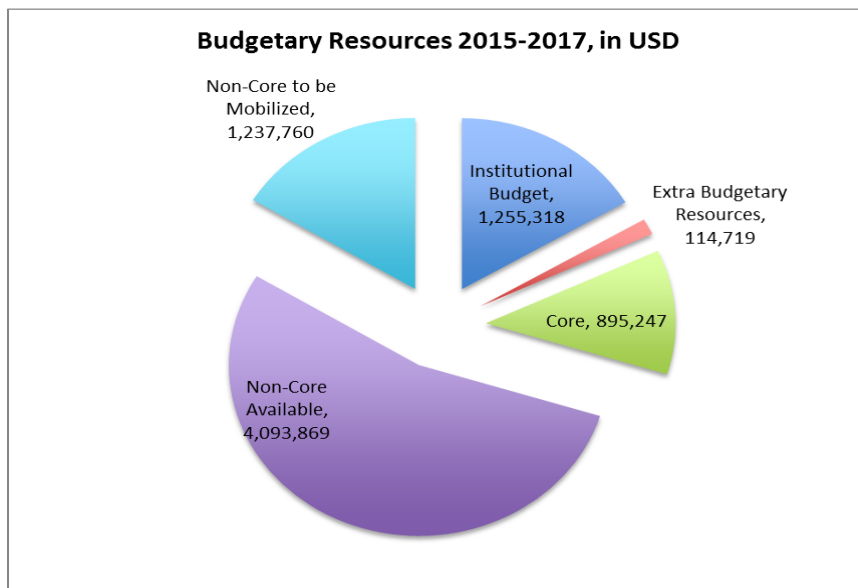
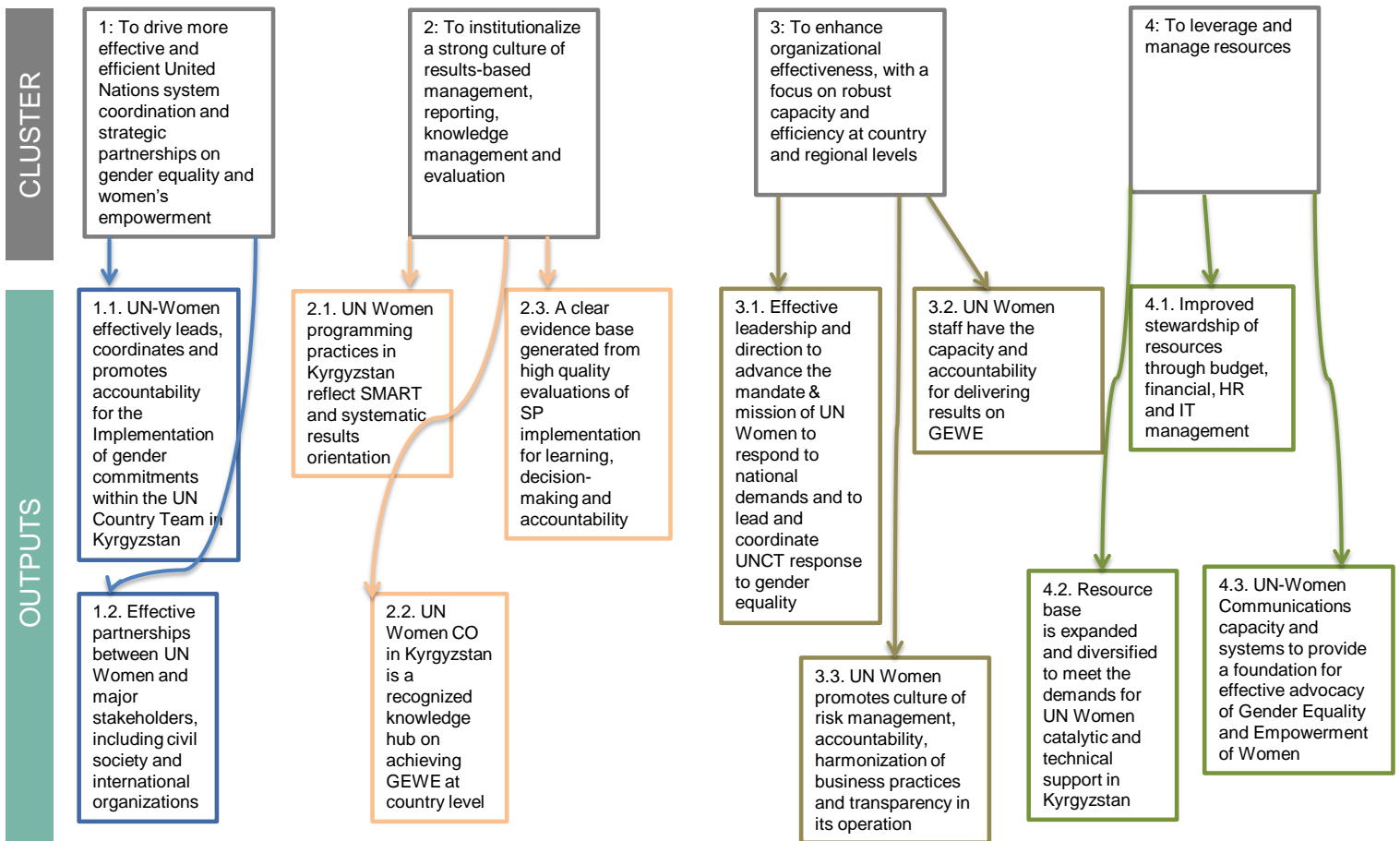
Development Results Framework
Strategic Note 2015 - 2017
UN Women in the Kyrgyz Republic



The SN includes an Organisational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework (OEEF), which focuses on internal operational efficiency, coordination, knowledge management, partnerships, resource mobilization and communications (a logical framework for the OEEF was developed by the evaluation team).

In implementing its DRF and OEEF, the Kyrgyzstan CO has a staff of three funded under the institutional budget provided to the CO to carry out the UN Women mandate. These positions are the Representative, Operations Manager and Programme Finance Associate. Extra-budgetary resources are provided through a 3 percent overhead from cost-sharing, earmarked by the organization to finance additional support personnel. These funds cover the costs of an Administrative Assistant and Handyman. Positions funded from the Core Budget (an allocation on average less than USD 300,000 annually) to support programmatic work include the National Programme Officer, Communications and Advocacy Specialist, and Driver. All additional personnel have been recruited based on funds mobilized under cost-sharing and contributed through projects and are either changed as projects close or retained maybe without having the required technical expertise for the follow-up assignment.

Organisational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework
Strategic Note 2015 - 2017
UN Women in the Kyrgyz Republic



The total planned budget of the Strategic Note for the period of 2015-2017 was 7.6 million USD. As per December 2016, expenditure against this target programmatic budget was 4.7 million USD.

In its Strategic Note, the Kyrgyzstan CO set a target to "at least mobilise double the investment of the core funds over the period of the Strategic Note". The CO exceeded this target by 35 per cent by mobilizing around 2.4 million USD (against 0.89 million of core funds). The Strategic Note also cited the challenge of waning donor interest

in Kyrgyzstan and the need to apply new approaches and to use various opportunities to leverage

resources, through both resource mobilization and effective partnerships and advocacy. The importance of genuinely innovative programmatic approaches was highlighted as a strategy to engage more interest from donors, in particular on longer-term programmes aimed at behaviour change. Another key strategy identified in the CO's 2017 Annual Work Plan has been to increasingly build synergies between the CO's projects and interventions and to replicate best practices with a view to up scaling them. Launched in 2016, the CO's new "Livelihoods through Participation and Equal Access to Water" programme (hereinafter the 'FinWater project') was a deliberate attempt to apply a more integrated and comprehensive approach to its programming.³⁸

Development Results Framework

The work of UN Women is focused on responding to its three-fold mandate.

1. **Normative work:** to support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the General Assembly, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms;
2. **Operational work:** to help Member States to implement international standards and to forge effective partnerships with civil society; and
3. **Coordination work:** entails both work to promote the accountability of the United Nations system on gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW), including regular monitoring of system-wide progress, and more broadly mobilizing and convening key stakeholders to ensure greater coherence and gender mainstreaming across the UN.

In implementing its triple mandate, and in line with recommendations of the Mid-term Review of its Strategic Note, the CO developed a deliberate approach under its 2017 Annual Work Plan to strengthen the bottom-up process of having its policy advisory and normative work informed by its work with stakeholders and the community level, whilst advocating for implementation of progressive laws aimed at protecting women and girls.³⁹

The main interventions undertaken under the Strategic Note are:

Normative	Coordination	National programmes	Global programmes
Support the state substantively and logistically in drafting strategies and national Action Plans to follow-up on recommendations from the Commission on the Status of Women, CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action, UPR, and assist in their	Member of the UNCT Lead of UNCT Gender Theme Group (GTG) Lead of UNiTE movement Member of UNDAF Results Groups, technical and financial support to a gender-responsive CCA Lead of the UNCT OMT	Impact Area 3: Building the evidence base to facilitate responsive gender policy and programs for equality and lasting peace in Kyrgyzstan (GSPS) Impact Area 4: Promoting Gender	Impact Area 2: Acceleration of Rural Women Economic Empowerment (ARWEE) Impact Area 5: Increasing accountability in financing for gender

³⁸UN Women Strategic Note 2015-2017, UN Women Kyrgyzstan Country Office. Strategic Note Report 2017 AWP Cover Note, March 2017.

³⁹UN Women Strategic Note 2015-2017, UN Women Kyrgyzstan Country Office. Strategic Note Report 2017 AWP Cover Note, March 2017.

<p>implementation.</p> <p>Support the state in preparing the GE NAP and the NAP₁₃₂₅</p> <p>Support the state and the national gender mechanism to lead key national level processes with a focus on localization of SDGs</p> <p>Technical and facilitation support to strengthen the national 'gender machinery' to coordinate and monitor implementation of GE commitments</p> <p>Technical support and advocacy to Parliament on improving GE legislation</p> <p>Member of the National Council on GE</p>	<p>in 2016</p> <p>Periodically convene the Extended GTG which includes other development partners</p> <p>Member of the Youth Theme Group, Communications Group, Disaster Risk Coordination and UN SUN group - Scaling Up Nutrition</p>	<p>Justice and Empowerment of Young Women in Kyrgyzstan (EIDHR)</p> <p>Building a Constituency for Peace (BCP)</p> <p>FinWater</p>	<p>equality</p>
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The implementation status of these interventions is the following:

Completed	Completed	Ongoing
Promoting Gender Justice and Empowerment of Young Women in Kyrgyzstan	✓	
Building a Constituency for Peace	✓	
Building the evidence base to facilitate responsive gender policy and programs for equality and lasting peace in Kyrgyzstan	✓	
Increasing accountability in financing for gender equality	✓	
Acceleration of Rural Women Economic Empowerment		✓
'FinWater' project		✓

The Kyrgyzstan CO Strategic Note includes two Joint Programmes which UN Women has been implementing in partnership with other UN agencies. These include the joint programme "Acceleration of Rural Women Economic Empowerment" project implemented by UN Women, FAO, WFP and IFAD. The programme has three goals: 1) increased income opportunity and food security; 2) enhanced leadership and participation; 3) more gender responsive policy and environment.

A country-wide research “Gender in Society Perceptions Study” (GSPS) is being finalised within the framework of the joint programme “Building the evidence base to facilitate responsive gender policy and programmes for equality and lasting peace in Kyrgyzstan” by UN Women, UNFPA and IOM in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and the National Statistical Committee of the KR. The final research report covers the following thematic areas: a) women’s political participation; b) women’s economic empowerment; c) early marriages and kidnapping for marriage; d) women’s involvement in labour migration; and e) women’s religious beliefs and practices.

Underlying Theories of Change

One of the aims of the CPE Inception Phase of the evaluation was to identify, with input of key evaluation stakeholders, and based on all information available, the most appropriate theoretical framework to guide the assessment of the CO’s performance and results. During inception workshops with CO staff and the ERG, it was concluded that the current Theory of Change, which was developed and validated during the 2016 Mid Term Review, does not fully encapsulate the full breadth and depth of the CO’s work and that it needed to be re-constructed and further articulated in order to use it as a guiding conceptual framework for the CPE.⁴⁰

During the workshop with CO staff, initial efforts were made to re-construct the Theory of Change by identifying: a) underlying causes of gender inequality in Kyrgyzstan; b) changes required to address these; c) UN Women CO strategies to contribute to changes; and d) key assumptions. Using this input and the results framework from the Strategic Note and programme documents, the evaluation team has developed a reconstructed version of the Theory of Change (see below). The Theory of Change is summative in nature, as it provides a backward-looking summary of the overarching intervention logic of CO interventions under its Strategic Note and attempts to capture the common logical denominators that have shaped UN Women’s work between 2015 and 2017.

According to the Theory of Change, the central focus of UN Women’s work has been on participation and social norm change. In influencing the development and implementation of laws, policies and budgets, the Country Office directly engaged with duty bearers but also rights holders (including civil society and parliamentarians) to hold governments accountable for GEWE commitments. This involved providing platforms for dialogue between rights holders and duty bearers at the national and local level.

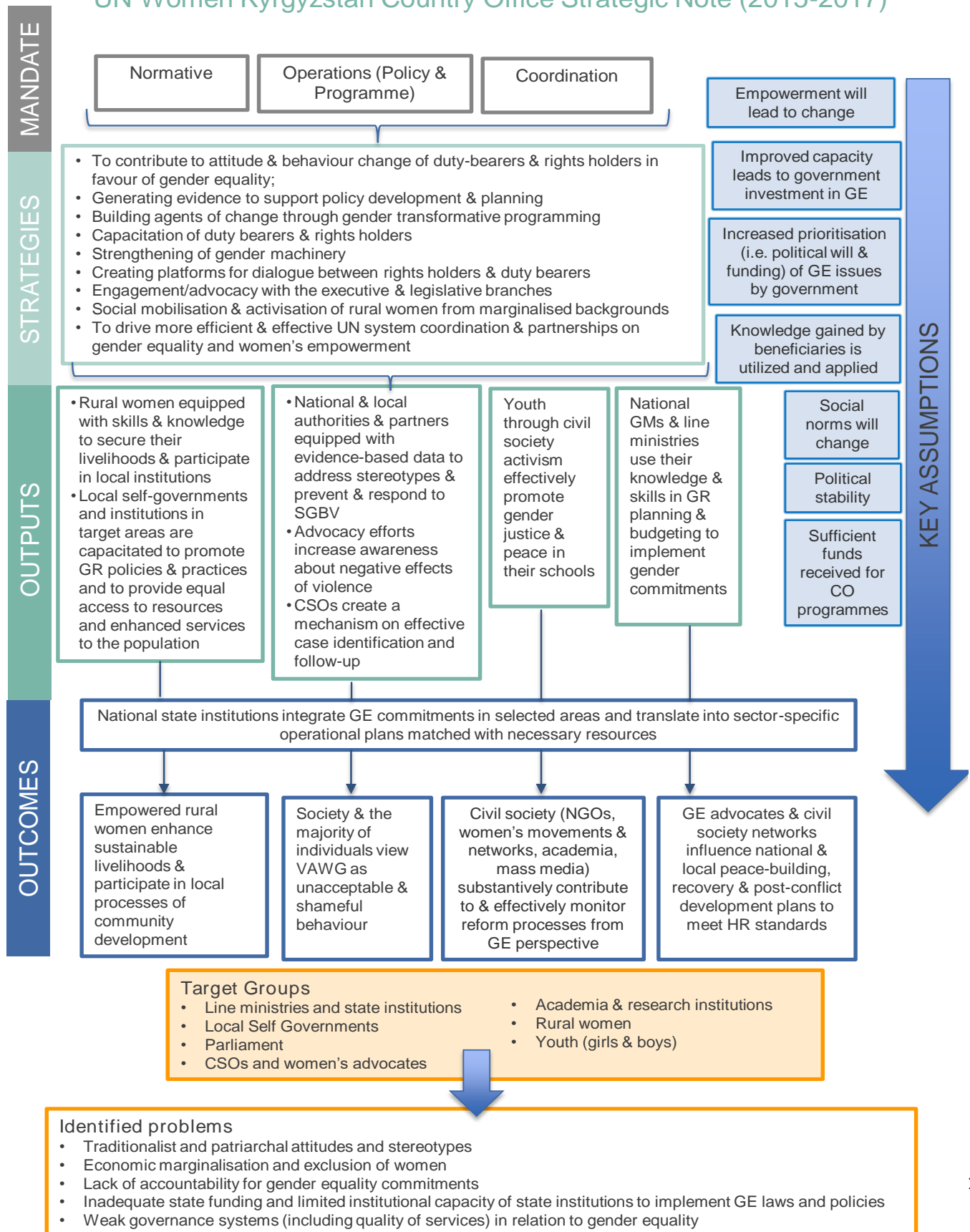
Patriarchal attitudes that are at the source of gender inequalities and harmful practices have are being addressed through UN Women interventions that empower rural women by increasing their social positioning through their direct contributions to improve livelihoods (through income generation work) and access to resources (through their efforts to improve water security and access). The elevated positioning and influence of women is supporting improving governance in terms of ensuring that services address the needs of the most marginalized women and that women actively influence and participate in decision making processes at the community level.

Increasing evidence on the root causes of inequalities and harmful practices has also been a key strategy for tackling social norm change as well a social mobilization approaches and efforts to build agents of change through transformative programming.

⁴⁰ By the time of developing the 2015-2017 Strategic Note, there were requirements in place to develop Theories of Change for Strategic Notes.

Draft Reconstructed TOC

UN Women Kyrgyzstan Country Office Strategic Note (2015-2017)



Geographic Coverage

All seven provinces and the two largest cities (Bishkek and Osh) are covered by the CO in the Strategic Note 2015-2017.

Specifically, as for the projects completed during the SN period:

- “Promoting Gender Justice and Empowerment of Young Women in Kyrgyzstan” operated in all seven administrative regions, with emphasis on Batken, Chui, Osh, and the capital (Bishkek) and benefitted about 9,000 people;
- “Building a Constituency for Peace” also covered all regions, with focus on 13 districts, supporting about 15,500 people;
- “Building the evidence base to facilitate responsive gender policy and programs for equality and lasting peace in Kyrgyzstan”, as well as “Increasing accountability in financing for gender equality”, were country-wide projects aiming to benefit the whole population.

Currently the CO manages two following projects:

- “Acceleration of Rural Women Economic Empowerment”, which operates in Chui, Naryn, Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken provinces, across approximately 75 villages, and has so far indirectly improved livelihoods of about 8.5 thousand people;
- ‘FinWater’ project working in 5 municipalities in Osh, Batken and Chui regions, having so far benefitted around 2.5 thousand people.

Figure 1: Geographical overview of programming



Country Programme Stakeholders

The preparatory phase of the CPE included an initial mapping of key stakeholders of UN Women interventions under the 2015-2017 Strategic Note. This mapping was further reviewed and elaborated during the inception workshops with CO staff and the ERG.

The stakeholder analysis has been further disaggregated by the specific human rights role (including different categories of duty bearers and rights holders) related to the programme interventions.⁴¹The analysis also includes details about the specific role of stakeholders in the intervention and the relationship to the specific UN Women mandate area (see Table 1).

Table 1: Kyrgyzstan Country Office Strategic Note Stakeholder Analysis

Human Rights Role	Target Group	Role in Interventions	Mandate Area(s)	Thematic Area(s)			
Duty Bearers with the authority to make decisions related to the programme interventions <i>(i.e. government officials, leaders, funding agency)</i>	1. UN Women Kyrgyzstan CO	Programme Management, Funder	Normative Operational Coordination	Cross-cutting			
	2. Ministry for Labour and Social Development	Partner and programme beneficiary	Normative Operational	Cross-cutting			
	3. Gender Policy Department (MLSD)						
	4. Ministry of Agriculture						
	5. Ministry of Economy						
	6. State Agency for Local Self Government and Inter-Ethnic Relations						
	7. Ministry of Foreign Affairs						
Duty Bearers with direct responsibility for the programme interventions <i>(i.e. funding agency, programme managers, partners and staff members)</i>	8. UN Women Kyrgyzstan CO Programme/Project managers	Programme Management	Normative Operational Coordination	Cross-cutting			
	9. Ministry for Labour and Social Development	Partner and programme beneficiary	Normative Operational	Cross-cutting			
	10. Research Centre of State Agency on Support of LSG						
	11. State Commission on Religious Affairs						
	12. Ministry of Education						
	13. National Council on Gender Equality						
	14. Local Self-Governments/District Administrations						
	15. National Statistics Committee						
	16. President's Office						
	17. Gender focal points in line ministries/state agencies						
	18. Parliament/Forum of Women MPs				Partner and programme beneficiary	Normative Operational	Cross-cutting
	19. Ombudsman's Office				Partner	Normative	Cross-cutting

⁴¹The expression "duty bearer" is defined differently in programming and in human rights international law. In accordance with the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, the CPE has adopted a programming definition which includes under the expression "duty bearer" both state and non-state actors, i.e. any actor with either duties or responsibilities for a development intervention.

UN WOMEN KRYGYZSTAN COUNTRY OFFICE COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION

	20. FAO 21. IFAD 22. IOM 23. UNFPA 24. WFP	Joint programming partners	Operational Coordination	Economic Empowerment EVAW
	25. Rural Advisory Services Jalal-Abad (RAS JA) 26. Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI) 27. Community Development Alliance 28. Centre for Gender Studies 29. Alliance for Budget Transparency 30. National M&E Network 31. Social Technologies Agency 32. Innovative Solutions 33. National Federation of Female Communities of Kyrgyzstan (NFFCK) 34. AIDS Foundation East-West in the Kyrgyz Republic 35. Women's Support Centre 36. National Federation of Female Communities of Kyrgyzstan 37. Change Agents PU 38. Sputnik PU 39. Y-Peer PU	Implementing partners	Operational	Cross-cutting
	40. UN Peacebuilding Fund 41. DFID 42. SIDA 43. Norway 44. Finland 45. Switzerland 46. European Union 47. SYKE	Donors and development partners	Operational Normative Coordination	Cross-cutting
Individual Rights Holders (who are the intended and unintended beneficiaries of the intervention)	41. Rural women	Primary beneficiary	Operational	Economic empowerment
	42. Youth/Secondary school students, especially girls	Primary beneficiary	Operational	Peace & Security
	43. Marginalised groups (single women, women living with HIV/AIDS, LGBTIQ, persons with disabilities)	Primary beneficiary	Operational Normative	Cross-cutting
	44. Rural Men and family members	Non-participants of interventions	Operational	Economic empowerment
Collective Rights holders	45. UNiTE Network	Partner	Operational Normative	EVAW
	46. Trust Fund NGOs	Primary beneficiary	Operational Normative	EVAW
	47. National researchers (GSPS UN Women and NSC teams,	Primary beneficiary	Operational	EVAW Peace &

	Professional and Marriage and Choices (Youth) research)			Security
Other interest groups who are not directly participating in the intervention but have strategic technical inputs into the SN	48. UN Resident Coordinator	Partner	Normative Coordination Programme	Cross-cutting
	49. Gender Team Group 50. UNCT	Partner	Normative Coordination Programme	Cross-cutting
	51. Extended Gender Team Group (ADB, OSCE, EU Delegation, World Bank, EBRD, Aga-Khan Foundation, Embassy of Japan, Embassy of Switzerland, Soros Foundation, DFID, USAID, GIZ, FES, U.S. Embassy, NDI	Partner / donor	Normative Coordination Programme	Cross-cutting
	52. Civil Society Advisory Group	Partner	Normative Coordination Programme	Cross-cutting

Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

Purpose of the Evaluation

Evaluation in UN Women is guided by the normative agreements to be gender-responsive and utilizes the entity's strategic plan as a starting point for identifying the expected outcomes and impacts of its work and for measuring progress towards the achievement of results. The UN Women Evaluation Policy and the UN Women Evaluation Strategic Plan 2014-2017 are the main guiding documents that set forth the principles and organizational framework for evaluation planning, conduct and follow-up in UN Women. These principles are aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, Standards for Evaluation in the UN System⁴² and Ethical Guidelines.⁴³ It is a priority for UN Women that the CPE will be gender-responsive, and will actively support the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. The key principles for gender-responsive evaluation at UN Women are: 1) National

This CPE was commissioned by the Regional Office as a primary formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the Kyrgyzstan Country Office and national stakeholders' strategic learning and decision-making for the next Strategic Note, due to be developed in 2017. The evaluation is expected to have a secondary (backwards looking) perspective to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience.

⁴²UNEG, "Norms for evaluation in the UN system", 2005, available online at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/21>, and "Standards for evaluation in the UN system", 2005, available online at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/22>.

⁴³UNEG, "Ethical guidelines", 2008, available online at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>.

ownership and leadership; 2) UN system coordination and coherence with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women; 3) Innovation; 4) Fair power relations and empowerment; 5) Participation and inclusion; 6) Independence and impartiality; 7) Transparency; 8) Quality and credibility; 9) Intentionality and use of evaluation; and 10) Ethics.

CPEs are a systematic assessment of the contributions made by UN Women to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level. The UN Women portfolio responds to three core mandates, which include normative, operational and coordination work. The CPE focuses on their individual and combined success in advancing gender equality in the Kyrgyz Republic. It uses the Strategic Note as the main point of reference.

An additional aim of the evaluation is to assess (within the scope of the CPE) the performance of the Gender in Society Perception Study (GSPS), a joint project with IOM and UNFPA lead by UN Women under the Peacebuilding Fund’s Gender Promotion Initiative, implemented through its 18-month Immediate Reponse Facility. This assessment will support accountability towards the donor, host country authorities and stakeholders, and contribute to organizational learning.

Evaluation Use and Users

In accordance with the TOR, the primary intended uses of this evaluation are:

- ➔ Learning and improved decision-making (including through identification of lessons learned and good practices) to support the development of the next Strategic Note 2018-2022;
- ➔ Accountability for the development effectiveness of the CO Strategic Note 2018-2022 in terms of UN Women’s contribution to gender equality and women’s empowerment;
- ➔ Capacity development and mobilisation of national stakeholders to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Table 2: Primary Intended Evaluation Users

Primary intended user	Primary intended use			
	Learning and generation of knowledge	Strategic decision-making	Accountability	Capacity development and mobilization
UN Women Staff in in the Kyrgyzstan CO	●	●	●	●
Regional ECA Office, UN Women HQ and other regional and country offices outside the ECA region	●			
Target groups, their households and community members, programme/project partners			●	●
National and local governments	●	●	●	●
Civil society representatives	●		●	●
Donor community and other development partners	●	●	●	
UN Country Team and GTG	●		●	

Evaluation Objectives

In accordance with the CPE Terms of Reference, the specific objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

1. Assess the relevance of UN Women contribution to the intervention at national levels and alignment with international agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment;
2. Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the Strategic Note;
3. Support the UN Women CO to improve its strategic positioning to better support the achievement of sustained gender equality and women's empowerment;
4. Analyse how human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note;
5. Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices and examples of innovation that supports gender equality and human rights;
6. Provide insights into the extent to which the UN Women CO has realized synergies between its three mandates (normative, coordination and operations);
7. Assess the extent to which the GSPS project's objectives are consistent with and relevant to the priorities and policies of the donor and relevant to the needs of the target group. Assess effectiveness and efficiency in realizing project objectives;
8. Provide actionable recommendations with respect to the development of the next UN Women CO Strategic Note.

Scope of Evaluation

The period covered by the evaluation is 2015-2016. The evaluation is focused on all activities undertaken by the CO under the Strategic Note, including general support to normative policy and UN coordination. Programme work is considered in relation to the thematic areas established by the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014-2017. In line with the expectations and needs of evaluation stakeholders, the strategically important, multi-stakeholder GSPS programme is prioritized within the evaluation and included as a separate case study (see Annex K in Part II).

All seven provinces and Bishkek and Osh cities covered by the CO in the Strategic Note 2015-2017 are included in the evaluation of normative, coordination and programming work.

Joint programmes and programming were included within the scope of the evaluation. Where joint programmes are included in the analysis, the evaluation considered both the specific contribution of UN Women, and the additional benefits and costs from working through a joint modality.

As per the TOR, **the evaluation does not include a systematic assessment of the long-term impact of the interventions on their beneficiaries as this type of analysis would require resources and methods beyond the design of this evaluation and it is also considered too premature to assess this as few interventions under the Strategic Note that commenced in 2015 could have resulted in impact by mid-2017.** The analysis of outcomes does, where possible, identify potential pathways to impact.

Evaluation Criteria and Priority Questions

Evaluation Criteria

The selection of the evaluation criteria was based on the evaluation Terms of Reference and aligned with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability).

The evaluation uses the following interpretations of the four evaluation criteria in relation to the operational, normative and coordination work of UN Women:

- **Relevance** (including the extent to which the objectives of the development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirements, countries’ needs, global priorities, and partner’s and donor’s policies)
- **Effectiveness** (the extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance);
- **Efficiency** (extent to which the initiative has used the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results)
- **Sustainability** (the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed, the probability of continued long-term benefits and the resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time)

Considering UN Women’s organisational mandate to incorporate human rights and gender equality in all UN work and the UN Women Evaluation Policy, which promotes the integration of women’s rights and gender equality principles, **human rights and gender equality have been considered under each criterion and a specific criterion related to integration of a human rights approach and of gender equality principles** has also been included. Under this criterion, the evaluation has addressed the extent to which the CO’s approaches, interventions and programming are based on international human rights standards (including CEDAW, ICESCR and the economic and social rights enshrined in the UDHR); the extent to which UN Women’s work is operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights, including the degree to which UN Women’s approaches, programme design and implementation seek to analyse inequalities and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.

Evaluation Key Questions

During the preparatory phase of the evaluation, guiding evaluation questions were reviewed and endorsed by the CO. During the inception workshops, the questions were discussed further with CO staff and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG).

Based on feedback received, the evaluation team further revised the questions which are included in Table 3 below as well as in the detailed Evaluation Matrix (see Annex G). The questions are based on the five aforementioned OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and also further clustered by sub-theme areas. **Human Rights and Gender Equality are addressed as a specific criterion and are fully integrated across the other criteria areas.**

Table 3: Evaluation Questions

Key Questions	Sub Criteria	Sub Questions
Key Criterion: Relevance		
Are we doing the right things?	Alignment	To what extent is the portfolio aligned with national policies and international human rights norms?

	Human Rights and Gender Equality	<p>To what extent do interventions contribute to target the underlying causes of gender inequality?</p> <p>Is the choice of partners most relevant to the situation of women and marginalized groups?</p>
Key Criterion: Efficiency		
Are we doing things right?	Organizational Efficiency	<p>To what extent does the management structure support efficiency for implementation?</p> <p>To what degree does the Country Office have access to the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities needed to deliver to portfolio?</p> <p>To what extent was a Results Based Management system established and implemented?</p> <p>What has been the relative investment and funding sources across the different impact areas/mandates?</p>
	Coherence	<p>To what extent are the interventions achieving synergies within the UN Women portfolio and the work of the UN Country Team?</p> <p>Is the balance and coherence between programming- operational, coordination and policy-normative work optimal?</p> <p>What is UN Women’s comparative advantage in this area of work compared with other UN entities and key partners?</p>
	Human Rights and Gender Equality	<p>To what extent did the allocation of resources to targeted groups take into account the need to prioritize those most marginalized?</p> <p>To what degree were adequate resources provided for integrating HR & GE in the interventions?</p>
Key Criterion: Effectiveness		
Are the things we are doing working?	Achievements	<p>To what extent have planned outputs been achieved on time?</p> <p>Are interventions contributing to the expected outcomes? For who?</p> <p>What unexpected outcomes (positive and negative) have been achieved? For who?</p> <p>What has been the contribution of UN Women’s to the progress of the achievement of outcomes?</p> <p>What are the main enabling and hindering factors of observed outcomes?</p> <p>Are there opportunities for up-scaling good practices and innovative approaches?</p>
	Human Rights and Gender Equality	<p>What evidence exists to support claims that the CO’s country portfolio is contributing to gender equality and supporting the advancement of women’s rights?</p> <p>To what extent do interventions contribute to addressing the underlying and root causes of gender inequality?</p>
	UN Coordination	<p>What contribution is UN Women making to UN coordination on GEEW?</p> <p>To what extent has gender equality and women’s empowerment been mainstreamed in UN joint programming such as UNDAF?</p>

	Normative	To what extent have experiences and lessons learned been shared with or informed global normative work and other country offices? What contribution is UN Women making to implementing global norms and standards for gender equality and the empowerment of women?
Key Criterion: Sustainability		
Will the changes last?	Capacity development	To what extent was capacity developed in order to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits? How have interventions supported the capacity development of targeted rights holders (to demand) and duty bearers (to fulfill) rights?
	Ownership	Is there national ownership and are there national champions for different parts of the portfolio? What local accountability and oversight systems have been established?
	Human Rights and Gender Equality	To what extent have interventions helped to develop an enabling environment for real change on Human Rights and Gender Equality?
Key Criterion: Human Rights and Gender Equality		
Are we advancing Human Rights and Gender Equality?	Human Rights and Gender Equality	To what extent did the Theory of Change and results framework of the intervention integrate Human Rights and Gender Equality? To what extent was a human rights based approach and a gender mainstreaming strategy incorporated in the design and implementation of the intervention? To what extent has the portfolio been implemented according to human rights and development effectiveness principles: a) Participation/empowerment; b) Inclusion/non-discrimination; c) National accountability/ transparency Which groups is the portfolio reaching the most, and are any underserved?

Evaluability Assessment of the Country Portfolio

As part of the inception phase of the CPE, the evaluation team conducted an evaluability assessment (the full assessment is included in the evaluation inception report). The assessment built on the rapid assessment conducted by the RES and M&E Officer during the CPE preparatory phase and was further informed by consultations with key stakeholders during the Inception Phase, and by an initial analysis of available data and documents. The evaluability assessment included: 1) an assessment of the quality of performance indicators in the DRF and OEEF, and the accessibility and adequacy of relevant documents and secondary data; 2) an assessment of the availability, validity and quality of project documentation and data; 3) review of the conduciveness of the context for the evaluation; and 4) a comprehensive review of previous evaluations.

Key findings from the evaluability assessment were as follows:

- ➡ While the indicators in DRF and OEEF are SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound), an overwhelming majority of them are numeric and a number of indicators could have been further disaggregated by gender, place of residence (urban/rural), age, etc.

- ➔ There is a good level of accessibility and adequacy of relevant supporting documents and secondary data, although the reporting system would benefit by including space for more detailed information.
- ➔ The CO has a good project documentation culture, with an overwhelming majority of interventions monitored and reported on. Beside progress reports, the office keeps records of communication, visibility and awareness raising materials, and photo stories.
- ➔ The conduct of a number of strategic-level and programme evaluations, in particular the evaluation of the 2013-2017 UNDAF, have resulted in important evidence to inform the CPE. This is coupled with significant interest and willingness of UN Women’s key partners to actively engage in all phases of the evaluation process.
- ➔ There were a number of relevant and recent centralised and de-centralised evaluations undertaken during the Strategic Note period, namely a Mid-term Review of the Strategic Note (2016); Evaluation of UN Women’s contribution to the United Nations system coordination (2016); UN Women’s Contribution to UN Coordination on GEEW in ECA (2016); Evaluation of UN Women’s contribution to GRB initiatives in the ECA Region (2016); Final Evaluation of PBF project “Building a Constituency for Peace” (2016) and Evaluation of the 2013-2017 UNDAF (2016). The evaluation team has drawn heavily upon findings and recommendations from these evaluations, in particular the extent to which they have been applied during the implementation of Strategic Note.

5. Evaluation Methodology



Evaluation Design

Informed by the evaluation TOR and input from the Kyrgyzstan CO and ERG during the inception workshops, the evaluation team chose approaches and methods for the evaluation that took into account the evaluation context as well as the identified expectations and priorities of end users.

The evaluation team also applied design characteristics that supported end users to have ownership of the evaluation process and products through the use of highly participatory, collaborative and gender-responsive evaluation approaches.

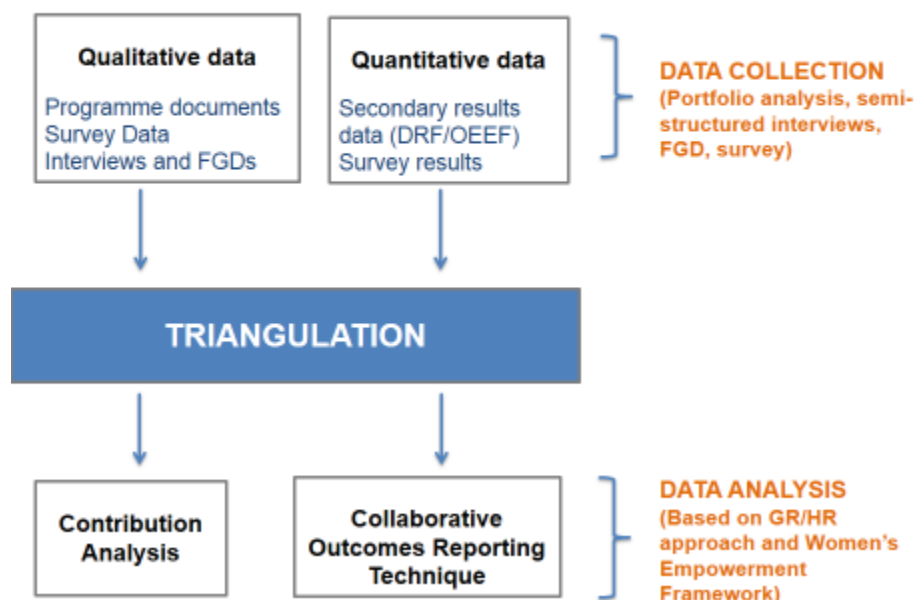
A theory-based approach⁴⁴ was applied in order to test and validate the re-constructed theories of change guiding the CO's work under its Strategic Note. This approach was complemented by a Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach and a Collaborative Outcomes Reporting Technique (CORT) which combined a theory-based and highly participatory approach.

An important aim of the evaluation team is to ensure that Human Rights and Gender Equality principles and approaches guided the evaluation process throughout all of its phases. Special attention was therefore been given to ensure that data collection and analysis methods and tools support this approach. Empowerment approaches were used to engage women and girls as well as men and boys at the community level as data collectors and the Kyrgyzstan CO and ERG as data interpreters (see section on stakeholder participation for more detail).

Sources of Data and Collection Methods

In order to ensure that evaluation findings were balanced and based on multiple levels of evidence, the evaluation team employed mixed-methods approaches based on adequate triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data from a broad range of data sources. This included quantitative monitoring data for the DRF and OEEF, survey data and qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions and interviews with country programme stakeholders. The methods used to conduct qualitative and quantitative data and analysis allowed for comprehensive triangulation (see Figure 2).

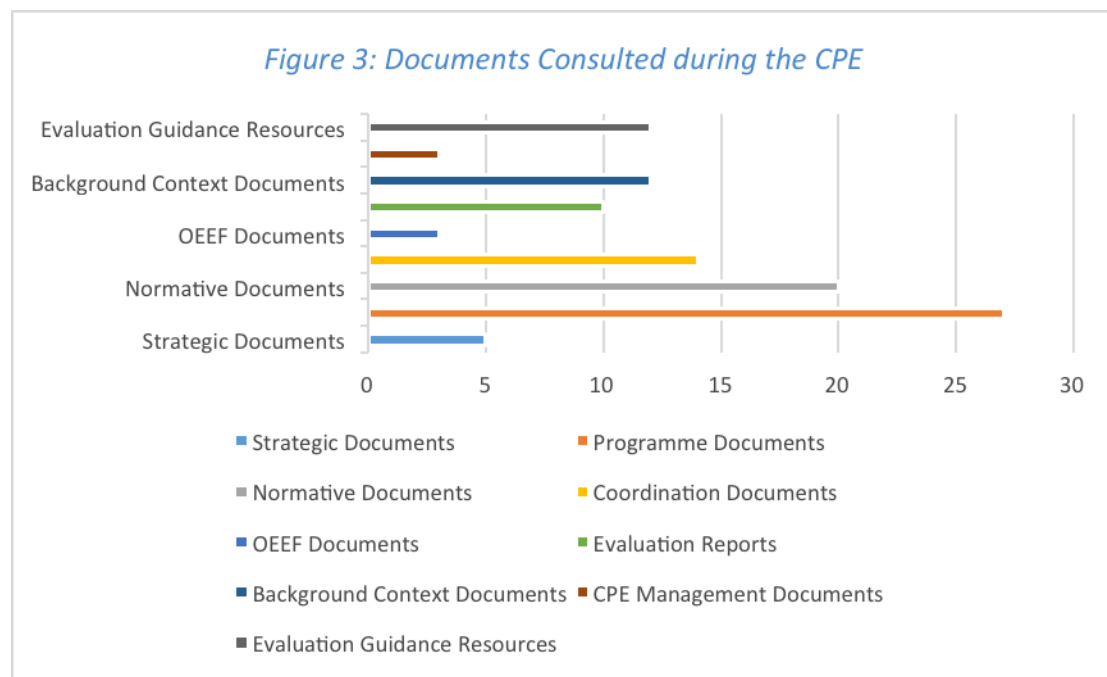
Figure 2: Data Collection/Analysis Methods



⁴⁴A theory based-design assesses the performance of the Strategic Note based upon its stated assumptions about how change happens. These assumptions can be challenged, validated or expanded upon by the evaluation.

Portfolio Analysis

During the portfolio analysis, the evaluation team reviewed more than 100 documents related to each of the mandate areas of the CO; CPE background documents; past evaluations relevant for the evaluation; and annual work plans and reports for the Strategic Notes. See Annex D for a complete list of documents consulted.



The portfolio analysis included a synthesis of secondary results data for the DRF and the OEEF for all activities undertaken by the CO and was triangulated through a mixed method approach.

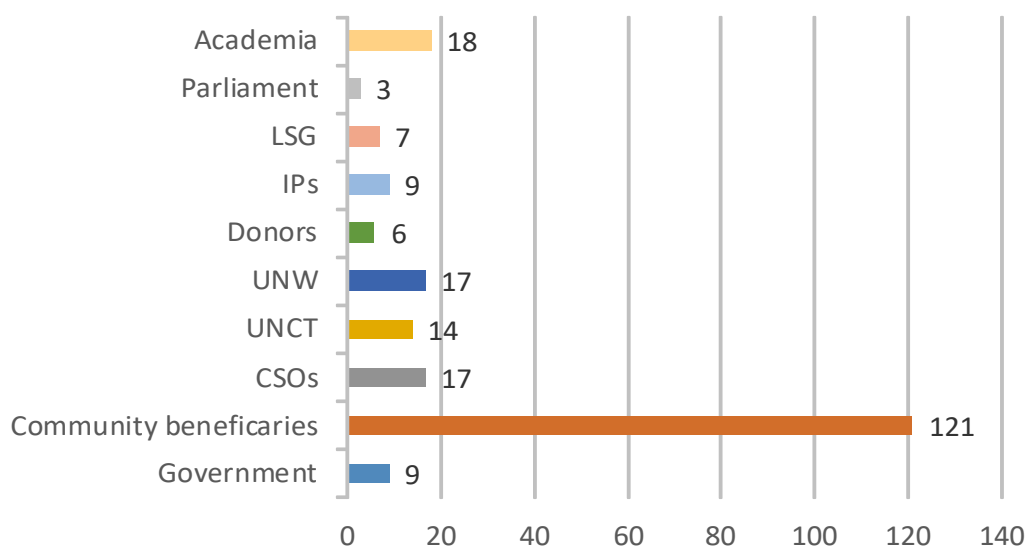
Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured Interviews (SSI) were used to seek qualitative input from a broad range of programme stakeholders and were triangulated with data from the portfolio review and survey in order to support robust analysis and balanced findings. An important aim of the evaluation was to ensure the widest participation of a broad group of stakeholders within the time constraints of the evaluation process. All SIs were conducted using questions designed and customised for each stakeholder group (see Annex J for the interview protocols). Interviews were conducted with a standardised approach for ensuring informed consent and confidentiality (see Ethic section for more detail). All interviews were conducted in the preferred language of interviewees (i.e. English, Russian, Kyrgyz or Uzbek).

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were used to facilitate participatory discussion among a purposively selected group of programme partners and beneficiaries who were involved in similar interventions or through similar functions. FGDs were convened for the following stakeholder groups: 1) CSOs representing marginalised and vulnerable groups; 2) the UN Women, UNFPA/National Statistical Committee (NSC) field researchers involved in the GSPS programme; 3) GTG; and 4) for women and men at the community level (see Annex B for a full breakdown). The FGDs explored a range of pre-determined questions based on the role of the stakeholders involved.

Figure 4: Breakdown of Stakeholders Consulted during the CPE



Direct Observation

The evaluation team conducted visits to a sample of four project sites in order to hear from project beneficiaries, implementing partners and local authorities directly involved in the programme interventions. The evaluation team also meet with community members (in particular men and family members) not involved in the interventions. During discussions with community-level stakeholders, questions were asked about potential changes in their situation and lives as a result of the programme interventions. In harvesting this information, the evaluation team employed a Most Significant Change Technique.

Q-Methodology Survey

A survey aimed at gathering responses on the UN Women's contribution to gender equality in Kyrgyzstan during 2015-2017 provided another opportunity for a wider range of stakeholders, partners and donors to participate in the evaluation process. The survey was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, with multiple choice, scale, open- and close-ended questions, as well as questions with elements of Q-methodology.⁴⁵ The survey also enabled respondents to provide opinions and suggestions on the CO's work, potential areas of improvement and future direction. The survey was completed by 25 stakeholders (22 women and 3 men) and by 10 rights holders and 12 duty bearers.

Data Analysis Methods

The evaluation team applied gender-responsive qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods in order to allow for triangulation. The following methods were used to synthesise and analyse results data and evidence:

⁴⁵Q-methodology investigates different perspectives of participants on an issue by ranking and sorting a series of statements (also known as Q-sort). For more details, please refer to <http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/qmethodology>

1. **Structured Document Analysis:** The evaluation team undertook a systematic mining of existing documents to extract and organize relevant insights. This was conducted prior to the country visit and emerging insights/preliminary findings were summarized in evidence tables which were further populated during the in-country data collection process.
2. **Synthesis and triangulation** of the different streams of evidence was undertaken through a multi-stage process based on **CORT**. Use of a CORT approach to data analysis enabled the evaluation team to apply **participatory analysis** as means to include rights holders as data collectors and interpreters
 - a. The evaluation team analysed and 'packaged' the evidence according to the evaluation framework;
 - b. The revised analysis was presented to the CO as well as the ERG at a summit workshop to establish shared meaning and recommendations;
 - c. The final report will be subject to further comments from the CO and the ERG.
3. The evaluation applied **Contribution Analysis** in assessing effectiveness of the CO's portfolio. This enabled the evaluation team to identify which factors, and which combinations of factors, were most frequently associated with a higher contribution of UN Women towards expected and unexpected outcomes (a summary table of the Contribution Analysis is included in Annex H).

Stakeholder Participation

In order to establish a participatory approach to the CPE early on, the evaluation team travelled to Bishkek for inception workshops in order to engage key evaluation stakeholders and identified users in the design of the evaluation methods and approaches. Prior to this, preparatory discussions were convened by the Kyrgyzstan CO and Regional Evaluation Specialist in order to outline roles and expected contributions of ERG members and to discuss the evaluation timeline and process.

The overall timeframe for the evaluation process was 10 days – longer than the usual one week timeframe allocated for CPE country data collection processes.⁴⁶ Having a longer timeframe enabled the evaluation team to expand the scope of its consultations (particularly at the community level through visits to project sites in the north and south of the country). In order to maximise time and stakeholder participation, the evaluation team also conducted community consultations during the weekend when a higher level of women and men were available.

During the evaluation, key stakeholders were given the opportunity to actively contribute towards the development, review and validation of evaluation findings. Rather than having a passive role in participating in consultations as 'informants' or simply 'validating' findings the evaluation team engaged



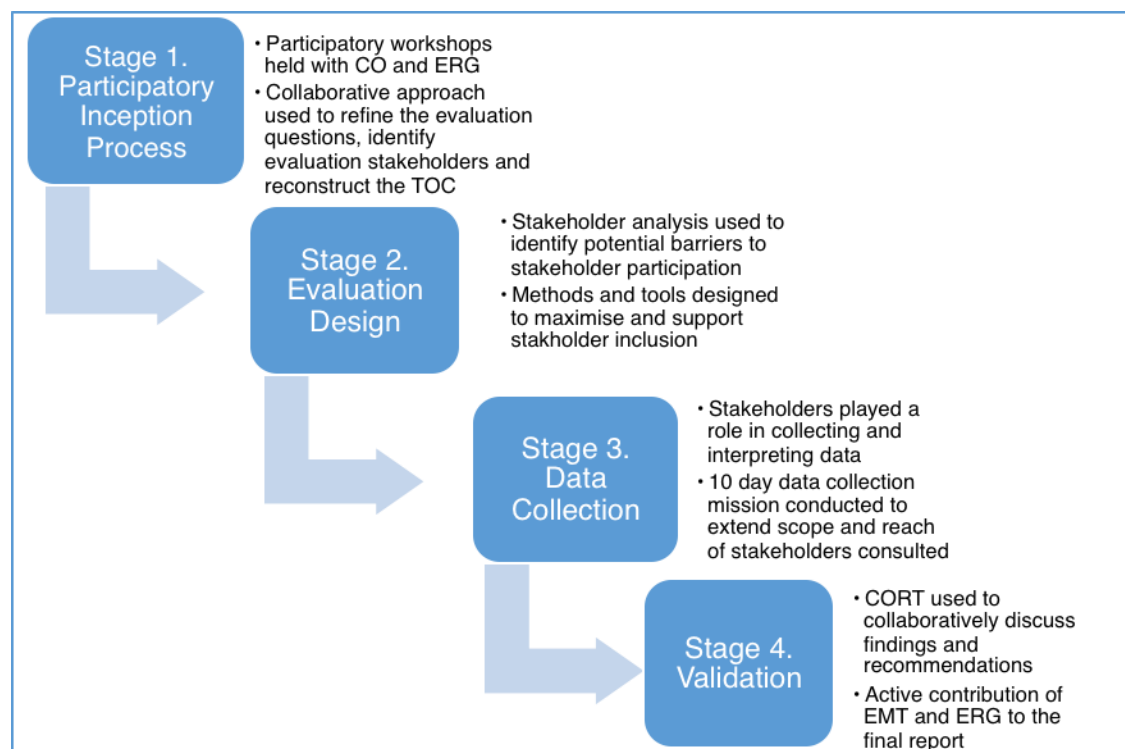
⁴⁶ The Guidance on Country Programme Evaluations in UN Women suggests a six data for in-country data collection (p. 58).

key evaluation stakeholders as partners who actively contributed to findings in order to ensure their ultimate ownership of the final evaluation.

During the data collection phase empowerment approaches were utilised and specific attention was given to maximise the participation of rights holders, not only through consultation with them but by engaging them as data collectors where they were empowered to lead and facilitate discussions with community level beneficiaries. For example, in consultation with relevant programme staff from the CO, community and youth leaders (who were/are beneficiaries of the COs interventions) were able to apply their increased leadership skills through facilitating consultations with community members.

The evaluation team applied CORT techniques to ensure the active participation of key stakeholders in the review of findings and the development of recommendations. This included the organization of a participatory Summit Workshops at the end of the country data collection with the UN Women CO staff and members of the ERG. During the workshop, stakeholders were given an overview of the results framework, evidence and 'emerging' findings. Stakeholders then had the opportunity to contribute further towards the development of shared findings and recommendations.

Figure 5: Evaluation Approaches used to Maximise Stakeholder Engagement



Sampling

Sampling was applied to three aspects of the evaluation: 1) selection of a portfolio sample; 2) selection of stakeholders engaged in the evaluation process; and 3) selection of project sites visited. The overall aim for the sampling was to maximize opportunities for learning, and to be representative of the CO's interventions in order to draw robust conclusions.

Portfolio Sample

The evaluation used a sampling unit based on the Strategic Plan Goals⁴⁷. The main interventions undertaken by the Country Office were mapped into a sample frame for the evaluation including by the geographic area in which they were implemented (see Annex C for the Sample Frame):

In line with the TOR, the portfolio sample for the CPE included:

- ➔ All normative work within the DRF;
- ➔ All coordination work within the OEEF;
- ➔ All thematic areas covered by the Strategic Note;
- ➔ All global and joint programmes;

Given the size of the portfolio, the full range of interventions was included within the sample size. As the “Building a Constituency for Peace” programme has already been the subject of a recent evaluation, the programme was not included in the sample; however, findings from the evaluation were used to inform the wider findings of the CPE.

Stakeholder Sample

Stakeholder sampling ensured a cross-section of stakeholders and beneficiary representatives based on stakeholder type (see Stakeholder Analysis for an overview of programme stakeholders). The list of proposed stakeholders included in the Stakeholder Engagement Matrix (see Annex G) was based on an initial mapping prepared by the Kyrgyzstan CO and further developed during the inception workshop.

Site Visit Sample

Whilst the CO’s Strategic Note was implemented in all seven administrative regions of Kyrgyzstan, the country’s dimensions presented limitation for the evaluation team; therefore, selection of sites visited was based on the following criteria:

- ➔ Locations/provinces/communities representing a range of capacity levels;
- ➔ Locations where implementation of programmes has been completed and is ongoing;
- ➔ Locations representative of a range of portfolio areas, including those aimed at youth and building peace in multi-ethnic communities;
- ➔ Locations with significant financial investment and minor investments;
- ➔ Locations in both predominantly urban and rural settings;
- ➔ Locations that have not received increased donor attention, in order not to overburden the beneficiaries with interviews.

Based on the agreed criteria, the sites of Khalimion, Mamajan, Baizak and Jumgal were chosen.

Gender and Human Rights

A gender-responsive and Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)⁴⁸ was applied throughout all phases of the CPE process and the evaluation adhered wherever possible to UNEG guidance on integrating

⁴⁷It is envisioned that this will include specifically GSPS project

⁴⁸A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities that lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.

Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluations with gender responsive and human rights approaches integrated into the scope and conduct of the evaluation.⁴⁹

The TOR already provided a solid basis for a gender-responsive and HRBA approach in that **gender and human rights were addressed across the criteria and a specific stand-alone criterion on GE/HR was included.**

In mainstreaming Gender Equality (GE) and Human Rights (HR) issues in the **evaluation design and scope**, the evaluation used a systematic approach to examining factors related to gender that assessed and promoted gender equality issues and provided an analysis of the structures of political and social control that create gender equality. Specific areas of analysis included:

- The broader human rights context within the region, and how this has informed the design and implementation of the CO's programming;
- Identification of trends, common responses and differences between groups of stakeholders (disaggregation of data);
- Analysis of the structures that contribute to inequalities experienced by women, men, girls and boys, especially those experiencing multiple forms of exclusion;
- Assessing the extent to which participation and inclusiveness (with respect to rights holders and duty bearers) was maximized in the interventions planning, design, implementation and decision-making processes;
- Assessing the extent to which sustainability was built into the intervention through the empowerment and capacity building of women and groups of rights holders and duty bearers;
- Examining the extent to which a HRBA and GR approach was incorporated into the design, monitoring and reporting of programme interventions, including how recommendations of relevant human rights treaty/intergovernmental bodies (i.e. CEDAW, CSW, UPR, HRC) were incorporated into the design and implementation of the CO's strategic, programmatic and project frameworks;
- Providing evidence of good practice and/or constraints faced by CO staff in applying a GE/HR approach and measures taken to address these.

The following actions were taken to ensure that the **conduct** of the evaluation (including methods and approaches used) was HR/GE responsive:

Design/Inception Phase

- In-country inception workshops with key stakeholders (including CO staff and the ERG) ensured their early and active involvement in contributing to the evaluation design.
 - The process of refining and prioritizing **evaluation criteria and questions** was participatory and included specific consideration of Human Rights and Gender Equality issues
 - Participatory theories of change mapping using a combination of document review, interviews and inception workshop

⁴⁹The evaluation team will be guided by the following documents and guidance: *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in 26 Evaluation -- Towards UNEG Guidance*; *UNEG Handbook for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality Perspectives in Evaluations in the UN System*; UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct

- Stakeholder mapping Human Rights Role Analysis, and power analysis
- ➔ The **Stakeholder Analysis** conducted during the inception phase considered rights holders, duty bearers, power dynamics, and marginalized groups. It also disaggregates target groups of women and men to consider those who are most affected from rights violations or have been excluded from social action;
- ➔ Based on the stakeholder analysis, potential participation barriers were identified and strategies and tools were designed to maximise inclusion (see Annex E);
- ➔ The evaluability assessment specifically examined the extent of data disaggregation in M&E data and collection/reporting tools and systems.

Data Collection Phase

- ➔ The evaluation collected, used and reported disaggregated data wherever possible;
- ➔ Data collection instruments were designed using participatory norms and principles. The surveys were administered in English and Russian and interviews and FGDs outside of Bishkek were conducted in Kyrgyz with the support of an interpreter who was fluent in Kyrgyz and Uzbek (this enabled respondents to participate using their preferred language);
- ➔ Methods and data collection processes were responsive to GE/HR issues and specific measures were taken to mitigate potential barriers and sources of exclusion such as unequal power relations (see Annex E);
- ➔ During the consultation process, management and programme staff were convened separately so that they have an opportunity to share their views individually, thus addressing any potential unequal power relations that may affect their participation;
- ➔ Special facilitation techniques were used to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to actively and equally participate in the Focus Group Discussions and Workshops;
- ➔ Empowerment approaches were applied by engaging community leaders (who were beneficiaries of the COs interventions) as facilitators for consultations with community members;
- ➔ Special attention was given to inclusion of marginalized groups, including holding separate discussions with them (including those the CO has worked with and those it has not).
- ➔ The rights of stakeholders participating in semi-structured interviews and FGDs was ensured through assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. In order to minimise demands on time, the number of questions asked of stakeholders was limited and customised to maximise the efficiency of the process and respect informants time availability

Analysis, Synthesis and Reporting Phase

- ➔ The use of participatory analysis was applied (through the adoption of CORT) in order to include rights holders as data collectors and interpreters. During the CORT final summit, CO staff and key partners and stakeholders had the opportunity to actively contribute to the identification of key findings and recommendations (based on the evidence presented). This ensured a highly participatory approach and ownership for the CPE.
- ➔ Use of mixed methods and triangulation of information to identify similarities and/or discrepancies in data obtained in different ways (i.e., interviews, focus groups, observations, etc.) and from different stakeholders (e.g., duty bearers, rights holders, etc.);

- ➔ All data collected through the review process and included in the final report is sex-disaggregated.
- ➔ Evaluation products have been produced using accessible language (avoiding over-usage of acronyms and explaining evaluation terms in a non-technical manner) in a user-friendly manner in order to also support ease of translation.

Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy⁵⁰, United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System.⁵¹ Both members of the evaluation team signed and submitted an Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form indicating their individual commitment to these standards.

The evaluation has also been based on gender and human rights principles, as defined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy and adhere to the United Nations norms and standards for evaluation in the UN System.⁵²

Other specific commitments included:

1. **Independence and Impartiality.** The evaluation team remained independent from UN Women and the evaluand at all times. Clear reasons for evaluative judgments, and the acceptance or rejection of comments on evaluation products were given. The evaluation report has also made clear that it is the view of the evaluation team, and not necessarily that UN Women – who may articulate its voice through a Management Response. The participation of the Regional Evaluation Specialist as an integral member of the evaluation team and staff member of the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office (as per CPE guidance) was carefully explained to all stakeholders.
2. **Credibility and Accountability.** The evaluation team continuously sought to use best evaluation practices to the best of their abilities at all times. The Team Leader ensured that all deliverables were met in the timeframes specified, or that the Evaluation Manager was advised ahead of time so that mitigating action can be taken.
3. **Rights to self-determination, fair representation, protection and redress.** All data collection included a process of ensuring that all contributors and participants give genuinely free, prior and informed consent. Contributors were given multiple opportunities to refuse, grant or withdraw their consent based upon clear understandings of the persons/institutions involved, the intention of the process, and possible risks or outcomes.
4. **Avoidance of Harm.** The evaluation team worked with UN Women programme staff to identify vulnerable groups prior to workshops, and to ensure that any participatory processes were responsive to their needs. During the inception phase an initial discussion of potential considerations for the stakeholder groups was held where potential barriers and challenges were

⁵⁰ UN Women, *Evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* (UNW/2012/12)

⁵¹ United Nations Evaluation Group, *UNEG Ethical Guidelines*, accessible at: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=102 and *UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system*, accessible at: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=100

⁵² United Nations Evaluation Group, *Norms and Standards for evaluation in the UN System*, accessible at: http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4;Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation - Towards UNEG Guidance, accessible at: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=1401

identified and used to inform the development of data collection tools to support and enable stakeholder participation (see Inception Report for more detail).

5. **Accuracy, completeness and reliability.** During the desk review, data collection and analysis phases, the evaluation team developed tools to ensure that all evidence is tracked from its source to its use and interpretation. The Inception Phase was also used to refine data collection instruments.

Methodological Limitations and Constraints

1. The CORT approach required a high level of engagement by the CO (including the Country Representative, the M&E Officer and programme staff), as well as UN Women's stakeholders. To facilitate this, the evaluation team worked in close cooperation with the CO M&E Officer in order to clearly articulate the value of the workshops to invitees.
2. Government turnover presented a specific challenge for the team, especially when speaking with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development where institutional knowledge of past work was limited by this. In some instances, the evaluation was able to speak with former incumbents which helped to present a fuller picture although gaps remained in this area.
3. The country's geographical dimensions combined with time limitations challenged the goal of the evaluation team to visit as many regions (where UN Women operates) as possible. To mitigate this limitation, the team ensured that sampling (see respective section) was adequate and representative of the CO's diverse portfolios.
4. It was anticipated by the evaluation team that power roles in communities could present some challenges, as gender norms in rural areas often prescribe youth, young married women and women with children not to speak up on various issues. To overcome this, the evaluation team ensured that interviews and FGDs were conducted in a conducive environment (e.g. separate meetings with women, men, girls and boys) in order to mitigate potential participation barriers. Timings of meetings also took into account daily routines in the communities, in order not to prevent respondents from undertaking their chores.
5. It was also expected that the evaluation team composition (all female) could render some, predominantly male, respondents unwilling to share their opinions. To facilitate the contrary, the evaluation team engaged male champions at the community level to lead discussions and interviews. Linguistic limitations (i.e. mainly the fact that the evaluation team members were not fully fluent in Kyrgyz) were also faced but mitigated through the engagement of interpreters wherever Kyrgyz was spoken.
6. Attribution of results of results was a particular the evaluation faced whilst speaking with community stakeholders who were less able to differentiate UN Women's work from other international actors. As a response, the evaluation team cross-checked with UN Women and partners to verify instances where attribution was unclear.
7. Evaluation fatigue was a particular challenge for the evaluation, especially given the significant time that many stakeholders invested to participate in the previous GSPS evaluation. The evaluation team, together with the Programme Manager, ensured that the purpose of the CPE was explained well to stakeholders and that the length of discussions was kept at an acceptable level.

Evaluation Findings

This section provides an overview of the main findings related to the five criteria areas and evaluation questions and indicators. An initial overview of emerging findings was presented and discussed during the CORT workshops with the Evaluation Reference Group and the UN Women Kyrgyzstan Country Office. A further presentation was provided to the CO during their workshop to develop their 2018-2022 Strategic Note. The list of findings below has been further developed and refined to reflect feedback and input provided during these discussions.

Relevance

Strategic Alignment and Positioning

1

The Country portfolio is well-aligned with national policies, strategies and emergent trends and its design and implementation has directly contributed towards implementation of CEDAW commitments. Ensuring more explicit reference to a broader range of international human rights treaty body recommendations relevant to the next country programme will further reinforce these results.

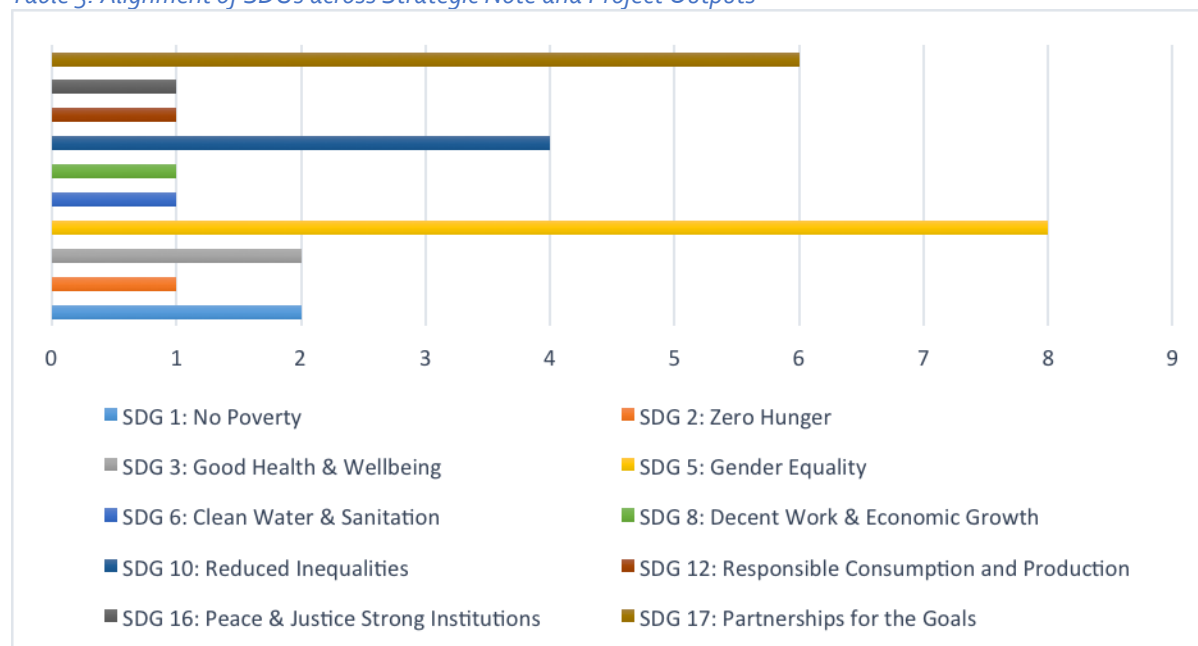
The normative, operational and coordination work of UN Women under its 2015-2017 Strategic Note was designed to align with, and advance, Kyrgyzstan's comprehensive legislative and policy frameworks on GEWE (see Table 4 below). In response to implementation gaps identified through the Beijing +20 national review, and in consecutive MDG and CEDAW reports, support for implementation of national laws and policies was prioritized within UN Women's Strategic Note, particularly support for implementation of the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality (2012-2020) and National Action Plan (2015-2017) which are directly referenced across all UN Women's Development Results Framework areas.

Table 4: National Policies Explicitly Referenced in UN Women's 2015-2017 Strategic Note

Strategies/Policies/Action Plans	Laws
National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality (2012-2020) and National Action Plan (2015-2017)	Gender Equality Law (2003)
National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2013-2014)	Domestic Violence Law (2003)
Sustainable Development Strategy (2013-2017)	Civil, penal and labour codes proclaiming equal rights and land privatisation legislation (2001/2002)
Road Map on Sustainable Development	

UN Women's Strategic Note is also aligned with the national Sustainable Development Strategy (2013-2017) through the 2012-2017 UNDAFs and reflects a commitment to support the Sustainable Development Goals even though Agenda 2030 was adopted after 2015 when the CO's Strategic Note was already developed. A mapping of interventions set out in the SN and project documents shows how UN Women's programming directly supports 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Table 5: Alignment of SDGs across Strategic Note and Project Outputs



The Strategic Note and project documents are informed by and based on a number of key international human rights obligations and standards including CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Commission on the Status of Women.

Although the Strategic Note does not explicitly reference specific treaty body recommendations supported through UN Women’s interventions, a mapping of Concluding Observations (COBs) and CO work provides evidence of strong alignment and areas for intensified engagement (see Table 5 below).

Table 6: Overview of UN Women positioning in support of human rights treaty body COBs/UN Resolutions

Human Rights Treaty Body COBs and UN Resolutions	UN Women positioning
CEDAW COB (2015)	
8(a) Increasing awareness among rural women and girls about their rights & CEDAW	Rural women and girls received training and knowledge about their rights and CEDAW through the following programmes: a) Promoting Gender Justice and Empowerment of Young Women in Kyrgyzstan; b) Building a Constituency for Peace; b) 'FinWater' project; and c) ARWEE programme. The CO is pursuing the possibility to up-scale the course 'My Safe and Peaceful School' as an extracurricular course within the national secondary school curriculum.
10(b) and 21 (c)L– Adopting comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation which prohibits discrimination against women on all grounds	Civil society representatives representing marginalized women expressed a desire for greater advocacy of UN Women in advancing this law and addressing intersecting inequalities
12(a) – Strengthening the mandate, status and financial and human resources of the gender machinery to implement GEWE programmes	UN Women has provided significant technical support to the Department of Gender Policy to enhance its capacity to implement and report on CEDAW; however, there is a need for higher level engagement and advocacy to address the structural and political factors hindering the effectiveness of the Department and the work of the National Council on Gender Development

<p>14(b) Increasing the participation of women who are underrepresented in political and public life, decision making and employment. 24(c) conduct awareness raising activities for politicians, community leaders and journalists on the importance of women's participation.</p>	<p>Through its ARWEE programme, UN Women, has provided leadership support to 93 women (32 of whom are now members of local councils). Several national level public dialogues also took place to lobby for higher representation of women in local councils (First Forum of women members of local councils and National Women's Forum in January and March 2017).</p> <p>There is scope to expand and deepen UN Women's work on political participation (in coordination with UNDP) in order to scale up work with local women and communities and engage with gender champions created through current Strategic Note interventions.</p>
<p>16(b), 20(a), (d), (e) Use public education programmes and conduct research to better understand and address harmful practices; patriarchal attitudes & stereotypes including child marriage and bride kidnapping</p>	<p>The UNiTE campaign has helped to raise awareness about the 2013 amendment of Articles 154 and 155 of the Criminal Code as it relates to bride-kidnapping. Research conducted under the GSPS has generated important information and data about both areas.</p>
<p>18(d) Provide adequate assistance and protection to women who are victims of violence by providing shelter and rehabilitation</p>	<p>UN Women's partners (including UNiTE and UNCT) identified a significant gap in these areas of support and the need for increased resources and government capacity to finance shelters. This has also been indirectly addressed by UN Women through its provision of legal expertise to the Forum of Women MPs to support lobbying efforts in relation to the new DV law, which was adopted.</p>
<p>28(a) Create an enabling environment that enables women to become more independent</p>	<p>Through the ARWEE programme, women were able to increase their household incomes and to develop skill sets to further expand their businesses, thus increasing their independence.</p> <p>MSPS and MPF were found to have induced transformation of power relations in schools, families and communities as the status (power) of students increased.</p>
<p>32(a) Combat poverty among rural women (access to safe drinking water & employment including income generation, formal employment and skills development</p>	<p>UN Women and its joint and implementing partners have adopted multidimensional approaches to poverty reduction through the FinWater and RWEE programmes in these areas. Access to formal employment has not been addressed by UN but there is a gap in this area.</p> <p>The MPF course teaches young girls in rural areas on livelihoods skills, business start-ups which leads to income-generating.</p>
<p>33(a) Ensure access to non-discriminatory services for all women, in particularly those facing intersecting forms of discrimination</p>	<p>Through UN Women's ARWEE programme, rural women and women heads of households are targeted. The FinWater project has as its focus marginalized groups. There are however gaps in the SN and programming interventions on how UN Women identifies and engages with marginalized communities.</p>
<p>Human Rights Committee, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights COB (2014)</p>	
<p>11(c) and (d) Adopt a comprehensive approach to prevent and address all forms of VAW, including bride kidnapping, spousal rape and domestic violence; ensure the availability of a sufficient number of adequately resourced shelters; launch awareness-raising campaigns among men and women on the adverse impact of VAW</p>	<p>The GSPS research provides important evidence and analysis about the root causes of VAW which can support adoption of a comprehensive approach if policy makers are able to use and apply the findings and recommendations. Increased efforts are needed by UN Women to support policy engagement once the research is finalised.</p> <p>Stakeholders identified a gap in terms of resourcing for shelters and have asked for greater engagement of UN Women in advocating for allocation of funds to support this. Awareness raising campaigns have been supported through the UNiTE campaign.</p> <p>The CO provided technical expertise to develop the law on domestic violence as well as coordination support to UNiTE network, which actively lobbied and made the adoption of this and the law on early marriages possible. UNiTE played a key role in monitoring Parliament and worked with</p>

	Parliamentarians to convince them of the need for the law.
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights COB (2015)	
5(b) Adopt the amendment to the law on religious belief and practice ensuring that religious marriages are administered only after the conclusion of a formal marriage	UN Women supported advocacy efforts with parliamentarians and civil society in support of this amendment.
5(d) and 17 Carry out campaigns to eliminate patriarchal attitudes/gender stereotypes	This was carried out through the UNiTE campaign and over 90 advocacy initiatives/actions on bride-kidnapping, VAWG, early marriages, GEWE by youth involved in the MSPS course.
9 Address the root causes of unemployment and adopt targeted measures, including programmes aimed at reducing unemployment among women, young women, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups	The ARWEE programme addressed the root causes of unemployment in its design and implementation although further efforts are needed to address the specific needs of marginalized women
20 Implement a poverty reduction strategy that pays particular attention to disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups and to women	Through its normative work, UN Women is directly supporting implementation of the national Sustainable Development strategy. Many partners recommended that UN Women should strengthen its involvement in addressing the priorities and needs of marginalized women.
21 Address chronic food insecurity and malnutrition and ensure the right to adequate food	Through the ARWEE programme, UN Women, WFP, FAO and IFAD supported interventions to address food insecurity and nutrition. MPF course students gained skills and practice on organic agriculture and processing to improve nutrition at households and school communities.

In addition to the above examples, through the ARWEE and FinWater programmes, the Country Office, also directly supported implementation of the UN General Assembly Resolution 50/165 on Improvement of the Situation of Women in Rural Areas through its efforts to: a) increase the participation of rural women in the decision-making process; b) support measures to give rural women full and equal access to productive resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit/capital, natural resources, appropriate technologies, markets and information; and c) meet their basic requirements in water and sanitation.⁵³

The programmatic priorities set out in UN Women’s Strategic Note also addressed a number of emergent trends identified in its own gender analysis and informed by broader evidence and research. These trends and alignment with UN Women priorities is analysed below in Table 7. During the 2016 Mid-term Review, new trends were identified (such as the rise of violent extremism) and used to inform the Country Office’s work in 2017.

Table 7: UN Women positioning in relation to country-specific context and trends

KEY TREND	OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS FOR GEWE	UN WOMEN POSITIONING
Underrepresentation of women in government and key decision making bodies at all levels. Since	Threats: Lack of society and community support for women’s political participation, lack of financial resources and capacity and non-transparent electoral and decision	At the local level, through the joint ARWEE programme, women’s increased economic participation, combined with leadership training provided by UN

⁵³ UN General Assembly Resolution 50/165 on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, 22 December 1995.

<p>2008, there has been a 10% decrease in women willing to participate in local elections as candidates; as of October 2014, just 20% of MPs are women and only 1 Minister out of 16 is female; 13.6% of local councils are female and only 4% of Heads of local self-governments are female⁵⁴</p>	<p>making processes</p> <p>Opportunities: 2020 parliamentary election; increased evidence on women's political participation as a result of the GSPS research.</p>	<p>Women, has been an enabling factor for some women to participate politically.</p> <p>UN Women is well positioned to support the increased participation of women in decision-making bodies at the local level (for example, women's increased participation in Water User Associations is being supported through the Access to Water programme).</p>
<p>Social norms that undermine GEWE/traditionalist patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes⁵⁵</p>	<p>Threats: Gender norms remain a possible trigger of conflict</p> <p>Opportunities: 2017 PBF call for proposals and evidence from the GSPS; 2017 two calls and one joint UN initiative on PVE in relation to PBF, two calls in relation to EIDHR for proposals and evidence from the GSPS</p>	<p>Under UN Women programmes, engagement with men and boys is directly contributing to changes in attitudes about women's economic and political participation and helping to tackle stereotypes.</p>
<p>Economic activity among women is declining in Kyrgyzstan, dropping from 52.3% in 2010 to 50.4% in 2014. This figure is almost 1.5 times lower than that for men. In rural areas women have de-facto limited access to property, assets and financial services.</p>	<p>Threats: There is a risk of increased feminization of poverty. There is also a tendency for women to be pushed into the informal labour market, and to be forced to migrate in order to find work, exposing them to workplaces with limited legal and social protection</p> <p>Opportunity: Existence of women's cooperatives/associations as a result of the ARWEE programme</p>	<p>The ARWEE programme contributed to the engagement of 1,712 women in productive agriculture and resulted in 805 women running their own small businesses; however, greater efforts are needed to increase women's participation in the formal economy and advocate for greater legal and social protection for women working in the informal economy.</p>
<p>Increasing labour migration</p>	<p>Threat: Women represent 40% of all migrants and they usually engage in low-pay and risky occupations; women are left in a particularly vulnerable position as heads of households and often lack sufficient financial means to support their family.</p> <p>Opportunity: New evidence is available through the GSPS migration pillar report to support greater policy engagement</p>	<p>The ARWEE programme has engaged a large number of female heads of households.</p> <p>The Access to Water project aims to reduce labour migration by creating income-generating opportunities for men and women within their communities</p> <p>As a result of the GSPS programme important evidence exists about gender dimensions of labour migration</p>
<p>Bride kidnapping/early marriage</p>	<p>Opportunity: Amendment of the Law on prohibition of Islamic religious marriage - for those under age 17</p>	<p>UN Women supported amendment of the law and is well positioned to support efforts to socialise the law through the UNiTE campaign and establishment networks of rural women</p>
<p>Violent extremism</p>	<p>Opportunity: The second NAP on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 provides an opportunity to focus on women's</p>	<p>UN Women can use its GSPS research in this area to draw greater attention to the implications of violent extremism on</p>

⁵⁴Source: CEDAW COBS, UNCT CCA, UN Women 2014-2017 Strategic Note

⁵⁵Source: GSPS reports, CEDAW COB, UNCT CCA, UN Women 2014-2017 Strategic Note

	involvement in countering violent extremisms and terrorism. New evidence is available through the GSPS pillar report to support greater policy engagement	women and to support gender-responsive approaches to address this challenge.
About 10-27% of rural areas do not have access to drinking water supply.	<p>Threats: There has not been a specific focus on integrating excluded and vulnerable sectors of the populations in water governance systems</p> <p>Opportunity: Collaboration with the Government of and SKYKE the Finnish Environment Institute through their programming in the water sector in Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p>UN Women's FinWater programme aims to support measures for equitable and efficient use of water within communities and through capacitated local self-governments and Water User Associations</p> <p>The ARWEE programme, through local GRB. promotes addressing drinking water supply needs, and also directly co-funded drinking water supply in one village in Naryn</p>
There is an increasing youth population. As of 2014, over 50 per cent of the population of Kyrgyzstan was under the age of 25.	<p>Threats: youth has to continuously negotiate their life trajectories⁵⁶; there is lack of employment opportunities, high level of migration, domestic violence, bride kidnapping, poor and restrictive access to sexual and reproductive education</p> <p>Opportunities: innovative ways of youth engagement, e.g. through social media and real-time phone-based reporting⁵⁷</p>	UN Women's current programming has a strong focus on youth. Continuing to engage youth as agents of change, especially in influencing social norm change, will remain important.

Strategic Partnerships

2

Partnerships have enabled UN Women to achieve greater results through its engagement of local partners and use of joint programming with the UNCT, UNiTE coalition and youth. Investing in a wider range of partnerships is needed to position and align the COs work across a broader range of issues.

The Country Office nurtured existing partnerships and established new ones throughout 2015-2017. The Office's strong ties within the UNiTE campaign and respective network, allowed for broad and inclusive advocacy efforts, in particular, with regard to the legislative changes on gender issues. The fact that UN Women has access to parliamentarians (through the Parliamentary Forum of Women MPs) and key government stakeholders, including in such areas as agriculture, religious affairs and the statistics office, provided the office with opportunities to support an expanded range of ministries in integrating gender equality into legislation, government strategies, evidence-based policies and budgets.

⁵⁶ Source: Research on Professional and Marriage Choices of Youth in Kyrgyzstan, 2017.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, M-report launched by UNICEF in cooperation with the National Statistics Committee of Kyrgyzstan, www.mnenie.kg

Involvement of implementing partners (e.g. water user associations, rural women’s committees, school principals and local administrators) at the community level proved to be a sustainable and holistic approach. Moreover, the office diversified its partnerships with UN agencies, research networks and development partners; for instance, within programmes aimed at provision of access to water (Government of Finland), on women’s economic empowerment (with WFP, FAO and IFAD) and on gender-sensitive research (IOM, UNFPA and academia).

“UN Women should be working in and across organizations and institutions and facilitating activists and active civil society in reforming social systems and processes to further gender equity.”

Civil Society Partner

Nevertheless, many stakeholders noted that UN Women would benefit from more strategic level engagement at a UNCT level and within development partners’ fora (see Finding 6 for more detail). Other stakeholders identified a need for greater involvement with underserved groups, such as people with persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ communities, sex workers and migrant workers if it diversifies the network of experts being engaged for specific advice.

As for the partnerships with government bodies, UN Women can enhance its outreach if it continues to expand beyond the gender machinery to other ministries and state agencies, in particular, with the aim of working together through whole-of-government approaches to support localization of the SDG. Cooperation with a wider range of parliamentarians, representing both pro-government and opposition would also allow for increased influence on legislative processes. The identification of specific actions to increase private sector engagement through the Country Office’s communications and advocacy strategy could also support new and innovative interventions to advance the Office’s work and further support resource mobilization efforts.

Effectiveness

Overall Progress towards Results

3

Despite limited core funding and human resources, UN Women has achieved considerable results in all impact areas, and especially through its normative mandate, by leveraging its strong ties with civil society.

A comprehensive mapping and analysis of the Strategic Note results indicates that most of UN Women’s DRF (and OEEF) targets are likely to be achieved by the end of Strategic Note period.

Based on the Country Office’s progress reports, the key results in accordance to the Strategic Note Impact Areas, are the following:

In the **normative** area, the Country Office provided expertise and advocated on the amendments to the law on social insurance tariffs supported (through the ARWEE programme), the law on criminalization of religious marriage with minors; the draft law on domestic violence; on strengthening the gender quota in local elections; on hot line services to survivors of family and gender violence; and on increasing

punishment measures for sexual violence against minors. The national gender machinery was supported in the development of the CEDAW Country Action Plan and in gender-responsive nationalization of SDGs and prioritization of SDG 5.

Outputs in the area of **Women's Economic Empowerment** are progressing well, and there is a likelihood that the respective targets will be achieved by the end of the current Strategic Note. In 2015-2017, major WEE interventions focused on provision of skills and knowledge to rural women in selected areas in order to help them increase their income: since 2014 a total of 1,712 women have been mobilized and trained on productive agricultural technologies, nutrition, business, and marketing. Of them, 805 are operating a small business, having increased their income by 29.5% in average. Another area of progress has been the development of gender-sensitive policies and practices at the local level where increased capacity of public officials contributed to gender-responsive municipality development plans and inclusive decision-making and gender-responsive development planning. Some policy advances were also achieved as a result of rural women's advocacy efforts and gender analysis of agricultural strategies was also conducted.

Progress towards achievement of output targets on ending **Violence against Women and Girls** is also on track. National and local authorities were informed about the best international practices to prevent and respond to VAWG through advocacy campaign events; provisions of the draft law on protection and prevention from domestic violence were developed in accordance with international best practices; more than 200 researchers were trained on conducting gender-sensitive research; there were numerous and inclusive campaigns and activities aimed at awareness raising on VAW, especially through the UNiTE network that indirectly targeted 50% of total population, and through thematic programme activities.

The outputs on **Women, Peace and Security** have been mostly achieved. More than 16,000 secondary school aged 14-17 in all seven regions were equipped with knowledge on gender equality, women's rights, conflict resolution, leadership tools and skills for promoting gender justice and safe and peaceful schools, whereas about 90 advocacy campaigns on gender equality were organized in five regions (out of seven). There is also progress towards achieving the target on capacity building of Local Self Governments and Water User Associations (WUAs) in provision of equal access to resources and enhanced services to the population: out of five LSGs and five WUAs targeted, six WUAs were provided with trainings on data and fee collection to effectively manage access to water in marginalized communities.

The outputs under the area of **National Planning and Budgeting** are also on track to be achieved. Gender-responsive budgeting is reflected in the circular issued by the Ministry of Finance, and the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2015-2017 was adopted with a calculated budget for its implementation. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development incorporated national gender equality commitments in its policies, whilst the Ministry of Emergency introduced amendments to its hot line policy to provide services to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development was equipped with technical knowledge to develop the CEDAW Action Plan and with knowledge on SDGs gender agenda. Due to the high rotation in the

Out of 18 targets, 72 per cent have already been met and the CO is on track to achieve most of its remaining outcomes and outputs.

Ministry, the functional analysis of the national gender mechanism was postponed to 2017. Gender advocates at national and local levels are also capacitated to use the Guidelines on Gender Responsive Budgeting to monitor budget allocations and track expenditures; however, it is not systematically done by the government although civil society representatives are being continuously equipped with substantial knowledge, are actively participating in legislative processes and strategic planning, and strongly advocating for increased government commitment and accountability towards GEWE.

The targets as per the **OEEF** framework are progressing well. Whereas the Country Office is on track with regard to expenditure targets, resource mobilization, results-based management and evaluation, risk management, donor reporting and communications; progress on the Office's knowledge management functions, its role at the UNCT level and in leveraging civil society oversight and partnerships with private sector are yet to be demonstrated.

With regard to the first, the delayed revision of the UNCT Gender Mainstreaming Strategy hampers the leadership and **coordination** role of UN Women within the UNCT and efforts to advance and hold UN agencies accountable for agreed GEWE commitments. Delays in performing the Gender Score exercise is limiting analysis on performance indicators on GEWE and the absence of private sector partnerships is also affecting respective output targets.

As for **knowledge management**, there has been a regression in terms of the Country Office's contribution to global platforms due to the delayed hiring of a Communications and Advocacy Specialist, a decrease in the number of knowledge products developed annually, and the absence of knowledge exchanges.

The table below demonstrates percentages of target achievements per outputs, with average percentages calculated (outcomes' ones only show the number of progressing or fulfilled targets). Red boxes indicate areas for significant improvement, while yellow one calls for attention. All data is taken from the CO's annual reports.

Table 8: Percentage of Target Achievements per Outputs

Result	Number of Indicators	Number of progressing targets	Percent of progressing targets
Impact Area 2 (WEE)			
<i>Outcome 2.1</i>	3	3	
Output 2.1.1 (Number of rural women)	2	2	100
Output 2.1.2 (Local governance and WEE)	3	3	100
Average			100
Impact Area 3 (VAW)			
<i>Outcome 3.1</i>	4	2	
Output 3.1.1 (Research capacities)	2	2	100
Output 3.1.2 (Public awareness)	4	3	75
Average			87.5
Impact Area 4 (WPS)			
<i>Outcome 4.1</i>	2	1	
Output 4.1.1 (Youth and peaceful schools)	2	2	100

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Output 4.1.2 (LSGs and WUAs)	1	1	100
Average			100
Impact Area 5 (NPB)			
<i>Outcome 5.1</i>	4	4	
Output 5.1.1 (Government's gender skills)	5	4	80
<i>Outcome 5.2</i>	3	2	
Output 5.2.1 (CSO oversight)	5	5	100
Average			90
OEEF Cluster 1 (UNCT level)			
Output 1.1 (UNCT Gender Mainstreaming Strategy)	1	0	0
Output 1.2 (Partnerships)	5	3	60
Average			30
OEEF Cluster 2			
Output 2.1 (RBM)	4	4	100
Output 2.2 (Knowledge Management)	4	1	25
Output 2.3 (Evaluation)	2	2	100
Average			75
Cluster 3			
Output 3.1 (Country Programme progress)	2	2	100
Output 3.2 (Delivery)	1	1	100
Output 3.3 (Risk Management)	1	1	100
Average			100
Cluster 4			
Output 4.1 (Donor reports, Human Resources)	5	5	100
Output 4.2 (Resource Mobilization)	1	1	100
Output 4.3 (Communication)	2	2	100
Average			100

DRF Outcomes (Operational/Programmatic Results)

4

UN Women's programmatic interventions, and its use of an integrated approach, are positioning and equipping duty bearers and rights holders to better understand and address root causes of gender inequality with some community-level programmes yielding transformative changes at the community level. Interventions reflecting UN Women's three-pronged mandate produced the most significant changes.

A Contribution Analysis was undertaken to assess the likely performance story of UN Women in terms of contributing to observable changes in the outcomes from the Strategic Note Development Results Framework. A number of plausible contributions of UN Women were noted and in most instances, these were high (see the Contribution Analysis Table in Annex H for more detail). One particular limitation was the formulation of some of the Strategic Note outcomes which were overly ambitious in their aim and therefore difficult to account for. One example was the outcome formulation for Impact Area 3 that *society and the majority of individuals view VAWG as unacceptable and shameful behaviour*. Within the limited three-year period of the Strategic Note, it is difficult to change attitudes for a majority of people as social norm change takes time and require a longer-term investment to see such transformative results.

Impact Area 2 (Women's Economic Empowerment)

Under DRF 2, there is ample evidence demonstrating the programme's impact across all three mandate areas. Through the ARWEE joint programme, one of the most significant results has been the strong integration of gender across the work of four UN agencies. Interviews with the implementing UN agencies and partners confirmed the important role that UN Women had in technically supporting greater GEWE accountability and results among its partner agencies. The programme also achieved important normative results; more broadly in supporting the implementation of a number of human rights treaty body recommendations (see Finding 1) but also in achieving community-driven policy change. An example of this was changes made to the law on social tariffs as a result of rural women's lobbying efforts which were facilitated through the established Self-Help Groups.

Operational results under the programme also exceeded the expected results and there were clear examples of transformation and impact already evident in a timeframe of less than three years.⁵⁸ One of the key reasons for this was the integrated and comprehensive approaches employed under the programme. In its design and implementation, the programme has been effectively applying a multidimensional approach to poverty reduction through its broad focus on food security, women's livelihoods and economic participation. In each community, and with the same group

"The GALS training helped us to achieve more equality in our family. Before, my husband was the only decision maker. After the GALS training, I started participating in family decisions and purchasing decisions – now we always make decisions together."

ARWEE Joint Programme Beneficiary

⁵⁸ The ARWEE Joint Programme was launched in 2012 but activities at field level commenced only in 2014 when resources allocated to the programme were received.

of beneficiaries, all agencies carefully coordinated and focused their work to apply this integrated approach.

Transformative results were most evident in how the programme was able to address structural barriers to women's economic participation and empowerment through changed power relations in families as a result of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology designed and led by IFAD but piloted and further refined and documented by the national UN Women ARWEE Programme Manager and implemented through the Community Development Alliance. In each community the evaluation team visited, it heard transformative stories from beneficiaries, as well as community members not directly involved in the programme, about how the programme changed social norms and enabled women to participate equally in decision-making at the household level which in a number of instances also transcended to increased participation in community-level decision making bodies. The evaluation team also heard testimonies from stakeholders about how division of care work changed within the household, which created an enabling environment for women's increased economic and political participation.

An important contributing factor to the effectiveness of interventions was the Country Office's decade of experience working on economic empowerment initiatives in Kyrgyzstan which has equipped it with knowledge about what works best to advance the priorities and needs of rural women.

"I am happy that my wife is part of the project because now our children get enough fresh and free vegetables and we can sell extra to our neighbours. I like that my wife is an active member of the community now and shows interest in irrigation issues, election matters and drinking water issues and pasture management. She also speak at different gatherings and community meetings so I like this transformation. Our family budget is also winning from this change."

Spouse of beneficiary

Impact Area 3 (Ending VAWG)

UN Women's results in this area have also cut across its tripartite mandate through its effective normative engagement in relation to the revised Law on Protection and Prevention from Domestic Violence (see previous section) and its work to advance social norm change through its operational and coordination mandates.

UN Women's work in this area is contributing to increased public awareness about EAWG through an increased number of campaigns and event. A particular success has been the mobilized action and community-driven awareness efforts of the UNiTE movement in relation to bride kidnapping and early marriage. As a result of the GSPS programme, there is also increased evidence about the perceptions and threats to gender equality and an increased cadre of researchers within the National Statistical Committee (NSC) and academia with increased capacity to conduct gender-sensitive research. But deeper social norm change will take time and sustained investment to achieve. Discussions with CO staff, key partners and feedback from the survey reveal a number of enabling and hindering factors that have affected (both positively and negatively) the achievement of results in this area.

A main enabling factor has been the use of partnerships and coordination to advance work on EAWG. For example, amendments to the Law on Protection and Prevention from Domestic Violence were a result of joint advocacy efforts by UNCT members, parliamentarians and civil society led by the UNiTE network. Having common platforms and positions to advance the law, which were facilitated through

UN Women's convening role, were seen as highly effective. Under the GSPS programme, the decision to have the National Statistical Committee, as an implementing partner, lead and drive the quantitative research contributed to the quality and ownership of the final product.

The most significant hindering factor was the limited timeframe for the GSPS joint programme, especially in light of the modalities chosen by UN Women to implement the programme which included direct coordination and oversight of more than 30 independent researchers which placed significant administrative demands on staff in managing their related contracts and drew attention and focus away from the overall coordination of the programme. As a result, integration and inter-linkages across the project components were reduced and opportunities for joint analysis of qualitative and quantitative data were missing which will require additional efforts to bring together the final research in a way that maximised the value and use of evidence within each component. The limited 18 month timeframe of the programme also meant there was limited time and opportunities to engage more directly with policy makers and to socialize the emerging findings more widely with government, the UNCT, parliamentarians, civil society and development partners in order to influence and inform the development of policies and priorities.

A final challenge of the GSPS programme was its positioning. Although the programme was included under the EVAWG pillar, it was designed and funded as a Peacebuilding Fund programme and whilst the programme outcomes aimed at advancing peacebuilding efforts, during its implementation, opportunities for strengthening this linkage were missed. For example, use of the qualitative and quantitative findings to influence and inform the development of the second National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was limited.

Overall, stakeholders consulted throughout the evaluation process widely agreed that sustained work by UN Women on affecting attitudinal and behavioural change is highly relevant and necessary in addressing one of the main bottlenecks to achieving GEWE. Work in this area also reinforces recommendations of human rights treaty bodies about the need to address and further understand patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes as root causes of VAWG. Whilst there has been a strong focus on prevention efforts, which has complemented the work of other partners (in particular UNFPA and UNDP), many stakeholders pointed to remaining gaps in supporting an effective response to VAWG. The main gap noted was inadequate mechanisms for the protection of survivors (in particular the limited number of shelters) which can contribute to underreporting of domestic violence cases. The need for stronger linkages between prevention and response efforts, for example through extending work on social norm change to front-line responders, was also highlighted.

Impact Area 4 (Women, Peace and Security)

UN Women's results achieved under this area have contributed to positioning women and youth (including more than 16,000 secondary school students aged 14-17 in all seven regions.) with knowledge and skills to advance conflict resolution at the community level. Whilst there is clear evidence (both in terms of project documentation and testimonies from the peer educators) that they are now serving as gender champions in their schools and communities, there is an opportunity to deepen and sustain their engagement and to link it with other advocacy and campaign efforts supported by UN Women.

The “My Safe and Peaceful School” manual was originally developed and piloted during the EIDHR project Promoting Gender Justice and Empowerment of Young Women in Kyrgyzstan and under the BCP project a conscious effort was made, through the implementation of the MSPS curriculum and engagement with boys, to address power relations etc. Under the FinWater project, the focus was expanded to equal access to natural resources.

A finding of the final evaluation of the BCP programme in 2016 was that that project was most effective when the MSPS and MPF components were run in parallel. This finding was confirmed during the current evaluation through beneficiary input which showed differences under the ‘FinWater’ programme in gender awareness between students who only completed the MPF component compared to other students involved in both. Another BCP final evaluation finding was that the MSPS course was found to be the most effective peace-building tool, in addition to combining both courses. The evaluation team also noted that in instances where male students received agribusiness development but did not participate in the MSPS course, the potential for transformative results in terms of social norm change are more limited.

“Gender equality is possible in a society that is generally gender-sensitive. Traditionally, mother-in-laws exert significant influence on families and children as well as a psychological impact which can exacerbate gender inequality. We need to work with people of all ages and require specific approaches to people of different generations.”

Implementing Partner

Although the ‘FinWater’ programme, is still at an early stage, during the evaluation team’s visit to project sites, there was clear evidence of girls influencing social norms within their families. The main factor contributing to this was the programme strategy to engage more broadly with communities through its work with men and boys and Water User Associations, which were often comprised by family members of the girls enrolled in the MPF and MSPS courses. Another key enabling factor was the effect of economically empowering girls in order to challenge social norms and support their increased participation and mobility within their community. For example, when family members saw the potential value of their daughter’s agricultural knowledge and the monetary results of her enterprise, they were more likely to support her participation in further training activities and, in some instances, this opened up doors to girls’ pursuit of higher education.

“When I grow up and get married I will treat my wife with respect. There will be gender equality in my family, for sure.”

Young Participant of MSPS and MPF courses

The ‘FinWater’ programme is also showing important results in influencing social norm change through women’s participation in decision-making bodies in seven LSGs and six Water Users Associations, which were trained on data and fee collection, Integrated Water Resources Approaches, gender equality and women empowerment, to effectively manage access to water in marginalized communities. The programme is supporting increased participation of women in Water User Associations and testimonies from both women themselves as well as male members of the Associations and broader community members showed that women are yielding increased influence within these bodies and also having an important conflict prevention role between members and in communities.

Impact Area 5 (National Planning and Budgeting)

Advancing the integration of GRB into the full budget cycle (including gender analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of expenditure) has been hampered by a number of structural constraints. The lack of public administrative reforms to support a programme-based budgeting approach (an important pre-condition for gender responsive budgeting) has been one such challenge combined with the short timeframe of the GRB programme. The need for long term GRB approaches was recommended in the 2016 evaluation of UN Women's contribution to GRB initiatives in the Europe and Central Asia region.

Another challenge has been the limited influence and positioning of the Gender Machinery to push for gender-responsive planning and budgeting across line ministries. Whilst a budget circular for gender-responsive budgeting was developed, to-date, implementation (particularly in terms of gender-responsive budget allocations) has been limited.

Despite these hindering factors, UN Women has been able to use the knowledge and tools it developed through the Global Programme in its interventions to advance GRB through other channels. For example, costing exercises of National Action Plans were introduced into the national planning processes and have since become a systematic and regular practice in drafting and approving all major national and sectoral development programmes. GRB trainings were also rolled out during the ARWEE programme in order to increase the capacity of rural women to influence and inform local planning and budgeting processes.

Advancing work on GRB in the absence of a clear institutional framework and commitment at the national level has been a strategic and efficient approach by the Country Office in order not to lose investments of the global programme and to deepen results under the ARWEE programme. It is important that efforts to advocate for GRB implementation at the national level, including through line ministries, continues in parallel. Sustained support and training for parliamentarians and civil society to act as GRB budget watchdogs and monitors is equally important as there is a strong appetite among both groups to more actively advocate for increased government commitment and accountability towards GEWE.

Normative Results

5

Despite its limited resources (including human and financial), UN Women has achieved important results in its policy work in terms of strengthening laws, policies and implementation of CEDAW Concluding Observations. Establishing greater policy linkages across programmatic areas will further strengthen normative results.

Despite its limited human and financial resources for normative work, the Country Office has been very effective in providing technical expertise and supporting advocacy work in relation to the amendments of a number of policies and laws (see Finding 4). UN Women has also played an integral role in advancing the implementation of international human rights commitments and Concluding Observations by supporting the national gender machinery in developing a CEDAW Country Action Plan. UN Women has also provided significant substantial support for gender-responsive

nationalization of SDGs and prioritization of SDG 5, a role which is widely recognized and appreciated by the government and UNCT partners.

The most significant challenge for UN Women's policy work has been the status and influence of the national mechanism on gender machinery (which includes the National Council on Gender Development headed by the Prime Minister on Social Affairs and its working body, the Gender Policy Department of the Ministry of Social Development). In its 2015 Concluding Observations, the CEDAW Committee stated that the gender machinery "lacks necessary authority and capacity, including adequate human and financial resources and capacity to ensure that gender equality policies are properly developed and fully implemented".⁵⁹

During implementation of the SN, such challenges remained, particularly capacity gaps which were exacerbated by high staff turnover and a resulting lack of institutional memory. The status and positioning of the Gender Policy Department, combined with its lack of financial resources have further limited its influence and clout and hindered its ability to advance the integration of GEWE in policies, programmes and budgets across the government. The lack of project management staff and structures within MLSD to manage project funds has also affected the Ministry's ability to effectively manage funds from international partners including Kyrgyzstan's first grant from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

A hindering factor for the Country Office's normative work has been policy gaps across programmatic areas. For example, under the GSPS programme, there were limited linkages with work on the National Action Plan on UN Security Council 1325. Investment in efforts to use the GSPS qualitative and quantitative research to inform and advance policy have also been limited under the programme due to the short timeframe for delivery as well as delayed deliverables (see the GSPS Case Study in Part II, Annex K). Whilst the ARWEE joint programme managed to achieve important policy results, some UN agency partners felt that policy results were limited by the even split of resources across the programme and that, in hindsight, greater funds for policy work should have been allocated.

Overall, UN Women's normative work was supported through the strong gender expertise of staff involved in this area as well as the Office's ability to procure high quality technical expertise, especially in relation to gender analysis of legislation.

Coordination Results



UN Women's technical coordination efforts and its intensive work to integrate GEWE within the current UNDAF has been an important strategic investment and will support greater prioritization of GEWE by the UNCT; however this work needs to be further scaled up and taken to a higher level. There is strong demand for greater UN women leadership on coordination in order to influence UNCT accountability for GEWE.

⁵⁹ CEDAW Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Kyrgyzstan, March 2015.

UN Women has been an active member of the UN Country Team and has effectively contributed to influencing and informing GEWE priorities through its analyses and programmatic partnerships. The Country Office played a key role in integrating gender analysis into the UNCT Common Country Assessment (CCA) which enabled country partners to identify key challenges related to GEWE and to identify priority actions needed to address these challenges within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

Whilst there is a strong recognition of UN Women's important contribution towards integrating gender into the UNDAF, there is also strong demand by a significant number of partners for the Country Office to strengthen its leadership and influence across the UNCT, particularly at a higher strategic level in order to ensure greater positioning of gender issues by an increased number of UN agencies. This was also echoed in the evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to UN System Coordination on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Europe and Central Asia.⁶⁰

The 2016 Common Country Assessment found that at the policy level there is a lack of awareness on the importance that the UN places on GEWE in all areas of its work. The Assessment concluded that stronger linkages between the UN mandate as a whole and GEWE priorities of the Gender Task Group (GTG) and the agenda of the UNCT must be established and maintained.

Interviews with UNCT partners identified a series of factors that hinder current coordination efforts such as the overall limited participation of UN agencies at the GTG which often only includes those agencies already active on GEWE and not those who need to increase the gender responsiveness of their programming. Varied level of knowledge and capacity of GTG members (with some members being gender specialists and other simply attending the represent their agency) has the potential to limit their influence within their respective agencies.

“UN agencies are not living up to their own shared accountability for GEEW commitments, which is demonstrated in the low capacity, seniority or expertise of many Gender Focal Points in GTGs.”

Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to UN Coordination on GEEW in ECA (2016)

There was strong consensus among GTG and other UNCT partners that the GTG has operated primarily as an information-sharing platform on GEWE issues and that real coordination among members seems to be lacking with a few working in close cooperation on specific issues, events and projects. Several stakeholders expressed the view that the GTG should be elevated to a higher level in order to lead and drive UNCT work on GEWE, especially in light of the priority that it will need to be given and a stand-alone and cross-cutting goal under the SDGs.

The need for greater complementarity between agencies – especially in the context of waning donor resources – was raised by a large number of partners. The report of the joint of the 2016 joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP to Kyrgyzstan noted challenges that all agencies are facing as they rely heavily on earmark funds. With only 10 percent of agency budgets coming from headquarters, most remaining funds are mobilized within the country

⁶⁰ *Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to UN Coordination on GEEW in Europe and Central Asia, August 2016.*

from bilateral donors or global funds which has created significant competition among UN agencies for funds and fundraising.

A number of stakeholders, both during interviews and in their survey responses, identified the need to use the GTG to map out work in areas where there are either overlapping mandates between multiple agencies (i.e. UN Women, UNICEF and UNFPA's work on early marriage and UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women's work on EVAWG) or potential gaps in addressing GEWE priorities. For example, members of the UNiTE network expressed concern about gaps in the protection of VAWG survivors, especially in terms of financing for shelters.

“Joint programming with UN Women provides an opportunity to increase and raise our gender capacity. If we find a good niche, we become stronger.”

UNCT Partner

Whilst the GTG developed a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy to guide and inform its work, the final strategy (which was developed through a highly participatory approach) was not widely shared and is not being used as a vehicle to support greater cohesion and complementarity in advancing common UNCT priorities. With the Strategic Plan period coming to an end shortly, many GTG members felt that this was a lost opportunity and that in the future, common priorities and results agreed upon in the Strategic Plan should be implemented through joint programming and advocacy. This approach was also recommended in the UNDAF Final Evaluation (2016) which concluded that efforts “to bring transformative changes in the field of gender equality are still at an initial phase and need more joint UN efforts to bring sustainable progress that can enable the full achievement of the SDGs”.

With the current challenges of the GTG in mind, many consulted GTG members and other UNCT stakeholders stated that the GTG should be reinforced to have increased influence and leverage on the work of the UNCT and with national partners. This was also a finding of the Mid-term Review of UN Women's Strategic Note. Many stakeholders pointed out that the coordination mandate, if sufficiently resourced, supported and enforced by the Resident Coordinator's Office has the highest potential to influence UN systems at scale. It is for this reason that UN Women should shift its engagement within the UNCT from a technical level to a higher strategic level. In doing so, the Country Representative should chair and lead the GTG in order to elevate its important and attract more senior staff with decision-making authority within their respective agencies.

Another strong recommendation by a significant number of stakeholders was for UN to play a convening role not only among the UNCT but more widely with development and civil society partners. In response, a significant number of stakeholders underlined the need to revitalize the extended GTG and to use this mechanism to facilitate strategic discussions about results and lessons learned from past work (for example work on peacebuilding) and to set common priorities among the UNCT to scale up past work (such as the multidimensional poverty reduction results achieved through the ARWEE joint programme) and address emergent issues. As noted by the evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to UN Coordination on GEEW in ECA (2016), extended GTGs also offer the possibility for regular multi-stakeholder dialogue and the inclusion of civil society perspectives which could shift the power dynamics within and outside the UN system towards addressing more systemic barriers to GEEW and hold different actors accountable to their GEEW commitments.

Innovation and Up scaling

7

The CO has introduced a number of innovative approaches, especially among youth and with regard to power distribution within families, which have the potential for impact at multiple levels. Further up-scaling these innovations, and generating increased knowledge and visibility about the approaches used and including them within future projects of UN Women and other partners will contribute to further sustainability of results and increased impact.

UN Women in Kyrgyzstan has introduced a number of innovative approaches throughout 2015-2017. Involvement of youth into advocacy activities proved to be both sustainable and unique: young people actively support women's networks, civil society, NGOs and MPs in advocating for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls throughout the country. They are also involved in advocacy initiatives, such as UNiTE movement, International Women's Day, and International Day of the Girl at local and national levels, and suggest new forms of events that attract population and other youth, in particular, through marches, mock theaters, flash mobs, social media, and other innovative initiatives.

The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology developed by IFAD and adopted to Kyrgyzstan's context to support transformative changes at the household level within ARWEE joint programme has built on the economic agency of rural women and helped them start re-negotiating power relations within the household with an ultimate aim of women's increased participation in decision-making, redistribution of reproductive duties, better recognition and appreciation of women's contribution to family's well-being. There is evidence that the methodology has not only been innovative and entertaining for beneficiaries, - it is being up-scaled by the latter through knowledge sharing (there are cases when a beneficiary trained all her neighbours and relatives, and where husbands became GALS champions).

Under the ARWEE joint programme, there has been a multiplying and cascading effect where the 1,712 rural women systematically translated their knowledge to other women. During the site visits, the evaluation team inquired about the approximate number of women each community trained (in terms of sharing knowledge from the leadership training and related to their acquired agricultural skills) and most beneficiaries responded that they had shared their knowledge with at least five women on average. Through the transfer, the reach and the scale of the programmed was increased to at least 8,560.

Approaches and tools, such as allocation of good quality seeds and capacity building in gardening, especially among young women, offered to school students through My Prosperous Farm and My Safe and Peaceful School projects, brought about some interesting results and kept beneficiaries involved in the projects. The innovative approach of peer support and learning exchange among different generations in many cases brought communities together and there are indications of changing attitudes with regard to gender equality. Some evidence showed that girls were able to influence their parents' attitudes on early marriage and continue education; young people feel empowered to demand accountability from local authorities and suggest solutions to development issues.

Involving NGOs as project implementing partners, which has been applied within the Strategic Note implementation period, has proved to be conducive for results achievement, as local NGOs are closer to population on the ground, and contributed to sustainability, as they accumulated catalytic knowledge for civil society empowerment.

Efficiency

Culture of Results and Results-based Management



The UN Women Kyrgyzstan CO adheres to RBM and has an established M&E system; however, deepening its current application of human rights-based approaches in programme design, monitoring and reporting, as well as a strengthened knowledge management system, would support better targeted interventions and learning.

CO's results culture is embedded in staff's responsibilities and involves compliance with UN Women's global standards. The office's planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes are based on prescribed guidelines, which is most evident through individual project progress reports and annual CO reports. For instance, while there is no yet data on the rating of 2016 CO annual report, 2015 report scored 30 out of 42 (71%), which is considered as "good". In detail, the report was given 7 out of 9 points on results focus, same point on clarity of the office's contribution to results, 4 out of 6 on use of data and evidence, 6 out of 9 on use of lessons and evaluations, and 3 out of 6 on overall clarity.

While the annual reporting is based on the Strategic Note indicators (with additional global ones) and the latter are SMART⁶¹, an overwhelming majority of them are numeric. There is the use of the human rights approach and gender responsiveness with regard to some indicators, however, there are a number of indicators that could have been disaggregated by gender, place of residence (urban/rural), age, etc. Out of seven indicators with baseline "to be determined in 2015", three did not have baseline in 2016. Unit of measurement in indicators and targets differed in some cases. Overall, the office could have benefitted from introducing changes to DRF and OEEF to make its annual progress analysis more qualitative and up-to-date. This, however, may have not been possible due to global Strategic Note guidelines that do not allow for easy change of Strategic Note results frameworks. In addition, individual projects' design and reporting would greatly benefit from disaggregated indicators, not only in terms of gender, but also showing rural/urban-, social status-, and other disparities. This would make the office compliant with "leaving no one behind" approach and allow for intersectionality analysis.

The CO conducted two evaluations throughout the Strategic Note duration and participated in a number of global, regional and UN evaluations⁶². There is strong evidence that the office has been regularly applying evaluation recommendations and taking lessons learnt into account. It should be noted, however, that the CO would have benefitted from increased knowledge exchange at regional and global platforms, which is evident from respective underperforming targets in annual report.

As for the staff capacity, the office benefitted from RBM learning and refresher opportunities through

⁶¹ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound

⁶² UN Women's Contribution to UN Coordination on GEEW in ECA (2016), UN Women contribution to GRB initiatives in the ECA Region (2016), Final Evaluation of PBF project "Building a Constituency for Peace" (2016), Final Evaluation of GSPS (2016), Final Evaluation, UNDAF Kyrgyzstan (2016)

participation in learning events (2 staff members took part in UNITAR course) and with support by the Regional Office in May 2016. Another largely inclusive learning opportunity occurred through the CO’s Mid-term Review in November 2016, where all staff was able to participate at the assessment of the office’s performance from 2015 to the end of 2016, validation of the Strategic Note and suggested areas for prioritization. There is an indication that the office’s M&E area progressed due to hire of a dedicated staff member specifically working on RBM. This positive trend should be taken as a momentum for the office’s RBM culture, especially given the fact that many partners expressed their wish in UN Women’s specific expertise in gender-specific RBM (e.g. gender and climate change, gender and disaster-risk management, gender and prevention of violent extremism).

Strategic investment and leveraging/management of resources

9

CO’s relatively scarce funds were used in a cost-efficient manner as a result of strategic re-positioning and prioritization of issues with a potential for long term. HQ-driven funding targets have compelled the Office to spend significant time on resource mobilisation efforts.

With the overall budget of 7.6 million USD planned for the 3 years of SN implementation and 2.3 million USD per year on average, the CO work, especially in the normative area, and its advocacy through civil society networks, are considered to be of strategic importance to the country.

Annual delivery rate throughout 2015-2016 was high (96% on average). As it can be seen from the figure below, the most resource rich area have been Women, Peace and Security, followed by OEEF, Women’s Economic Empowerment, VAWG and National Planning and Budgeting.

The office’s resource gap analysis (shown below) states that in 2016 the most under resourced area was National Planning and Budgeting, whereas in 2017 resources are required mostly for Women’s Economic Empowerment. There was no shortage of resources in 2015.

Figure 6: Budget expenditure across the Strategic Note 2015-2017, by Impact Area

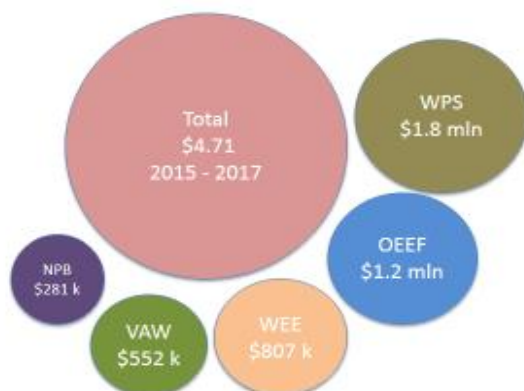


Figure 7: Allocation of budget to impact areas over time, in \$*

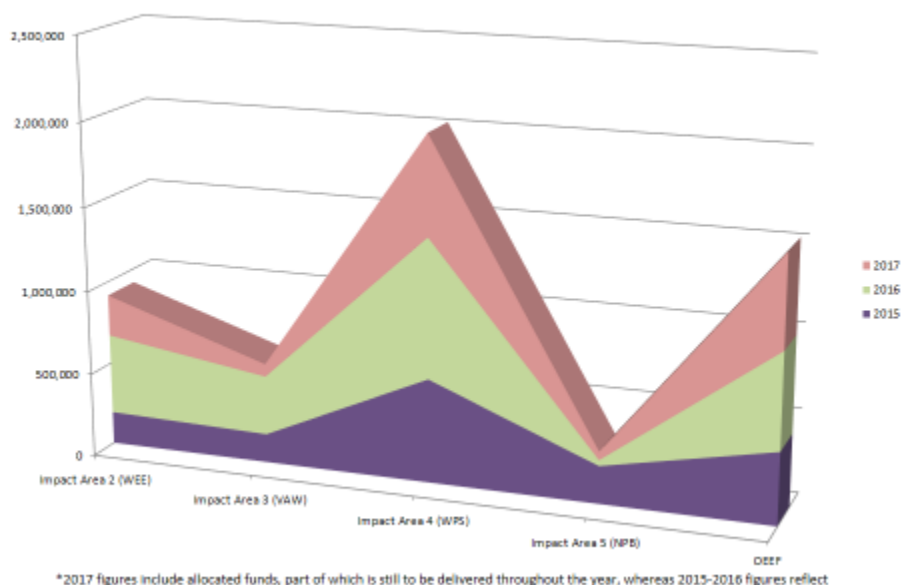
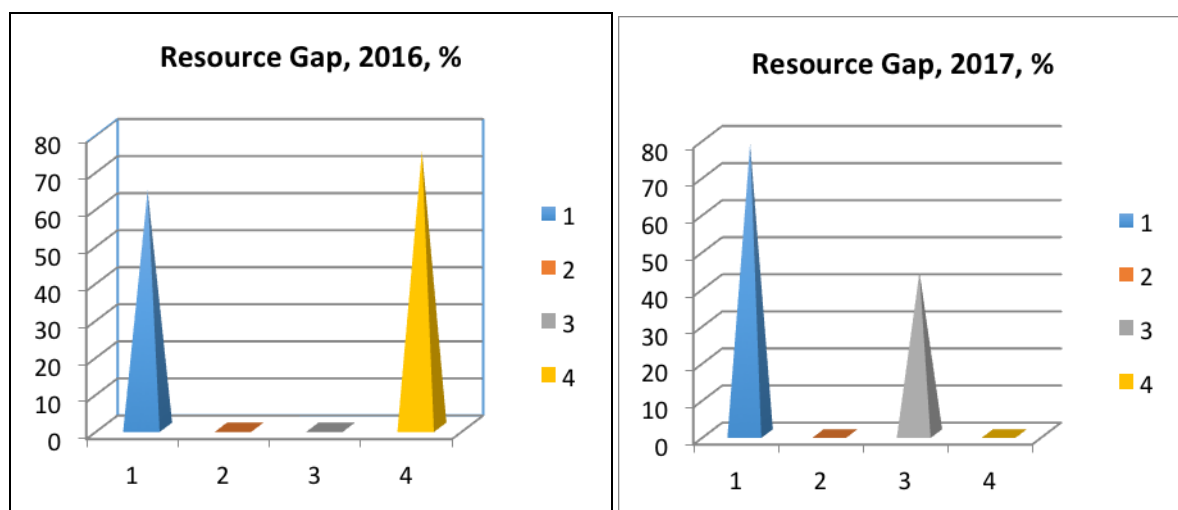


Figure 8: 2016/2017 Resource Gaps, in %



It can also be noted from the figure below that while the core funds remained almost the same throughout 2015-2017, the amount of non-core resources decreased threefold.

Table 9: Country Programme Budgetary Resources vs. Requirements

BUDGETARY RESOURCES VS. REQUIREMENTS						
	Institutional Budget	Extra Budgetary Resources	Core	Non-Core Available	Non-Core to be Mobilized	Total Resource Requirements
2015						
Total DRF	0	0	208,000	1,965,520	0	2,173,520

Total OEEF	410,881	60,947	137,747	10,000	0	208,694
Total	410,881	60,947	345,747	1,975,520	0	2,382,214
2016	Institutional Budget	Extra Budgetary Resources	Core	Non-Core Available	Non-Core to be Mobilized	Total Resource Requirements
Total DRF	0	0	139,000	1,462,279	500,000	2,101,279
Total OEEF	432,604	23,347	155,500	8,000	0	669,983
Total	432,604	23,347	294,500	1,470,279	500,000	2,771,262
2017	Institutional Budget	Extra Budgetary Resources	Core	Non-Core Available	Non-Core to be Mobilized	Total Resource Requirements
Total DRF	0	0	121,597	642,070	737,760	1,501,427
Total OEEF	411,833	30,425	133,403	6,000	0	603,330
Total	411,833	30,425	255,000	648,070	737,760	2,104,757
TOTAL						7,258,233

It is evident from that the office was able to achieve tangible results with small investments. In particular, cost-efficiency of interventions on WEE through ARWEE programme was high: as a joint programme and with an investment of approximately 690 USD per beneficiary, it generated income of 500-600 USD annually per person, with estimated 190 USD for an indirect beneficiary; and resulted in significant scale-up due to knowledge transfer from direct beneficiaries to their neighbours and relatives. Responding to urgent needs and spending small funds on expert fees, the office influenced important changes into gender-related legislation that would benefit a significant part of Kyrgyzstan's population in the long run. Through strong ties with the UNiTE campaign and civil society networks, and spending, for instance, as little as 500 USD on an event cost, the CO was able to indirectly reach up to a half of the country's population with messages on ending VAWG. It has also been noted on multiple occasions that using a local NGO as implementing partner not only provided for cost-efficiency, but also led to sustainability of local development agents and strong presence in the field. Moreover, in some thematic areas the CO has been building upon previous tools and products (e.g. manuals for students participating in My Prosperous School and My Safe and Peaceful School projects).

Whereas the office had also experienced delays in funds transfer and losses due to currency exchanges (e.g. with regard to Finnish resources), it is evident that it could strategize the projects' interventions and reposition itself by focusing on priority outputs. While a number of stakeholders argued that the CO should focus less on individual projects and allocate more time to strategic and higher-level interventions without direct link to a project, it is clear that the office's viability depends on external resources allocated by donors which in an overwhelming majority of cases regard UN Women as a project implementing entity.

10

There is a strong desire by a broad range of partners and stakeholders for greater UN Women leadership, visibility and positioning at a higher strategic level in order to influence and inform development interventions.

Whereas UN Women is widely appreciated for its unique three-pronged mandate, there is an evident demand for the office's leadership and coordination role on gender equality issues among diverse groups of stakeholders and partners. In particular, development partners expect UN Women to play an active role in supporting efforts to streamline gender into thematic areas and to regularly share information about the office's strategies and work; whereas UN partners expressed their desire for the office's management's more vocal and visible presence at UN Country Team and UN Women's leadership in promoting accountability for GEWE commitments. The fact that the extended Gender Team Group chaired by UN Women had not been convened for quite a long time, made it challenging for civil society partners to share knowledge, plan joint activities with development agents and come with one strong voice with regard to important advocacy events.

It appears that the abovementioned challenges mostly stem from the Office's human capacity issues, and especially, from the fact that only two staff are representing the office at strategic level and fora, while also working at individual project level. This namely hampered the roll out of UNCT Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and conduct of Gender Score exercise.

UN Women's increased presence and positioning at all levels of development cooperation, be it with civil society, in UNCT and within the extended GTG, would allow for non-duplication of efforts and would further maximize impact of gender-focused interventions.

11

With a relatively small number of staff, the office achieves significant results in many areas. However, with few staff members being in high demand for their gender expertise and high expectations among partners for more guidance from UN Women, the Office's human capacities are being challenged.

In terms of staff capacity, the CO has grown significantly since 2015. It currently consists of a representative, one national programme officer, an operations manager, an international programme specialist, M&E officer, partnership and coordination officer (currently vacant), communication and advocacy specialist, two project coordinators, community development specialist, project manager, project specialist (currently vacant), field specialist, programme finance associate, administrative assistant, administrative finance assistant, 3 drivers and a handyman. Based on staffing levels, 33% are regular staff, 5% is UNV-funded, whereas 62% are on service contracts, which shows that majority of staff is donor-funded.

With regular staff constituting a small number (7 out of 21), there is acknowledgement both among the staff and stakeholders that the office's work at the strategic programming level remains underserved. Juxtaposing the staff's time staff to SN impact areas, for instance, one may clearly note that the Impact Area on NPB is mostly a responsibility of just one national programme officer (NOC level) who also coordinates many tasks at the office level and allocates significant amount of time to interventions not bringing immediate results, but leading to long-term changes (e.g. improvement of legislation).

The CO's expertise in gender mainstreaming and programming is highly valued by partners and civil society, however, evidence shows that out of 11 programme staff only a few are considered gender experts. Therefore, the office would benefit from further investments to deepen and broaden its gender capacity, first of all, of its core, but also non-core staff in order to serve as a knowledge hub for all actors working on gender issues.

Overall, taking into account delivery rates and stakeholder feedback, the office is efficient and responsive to demands, and there has been good communication with implementing partners. Nevertheless, to make the office more sustainable with regard to staff skills and knowledge, the management structure would benefit from increased holistic approach to programming vs. silo projects, which would also bring more complex interventions in the field.

Sustainability

12

Investments to strengthen legislative frameworks, increase national capacity to implement CEDAW commitments and generate strong evidence to inform policy development, have contributed to the sustainability of results. Further efforts to achieve sustainable change will require greater breadth of partnerships and the identification of institutional entry points.

Investments of UN Women and its UNCT and CSO partners to strengthen the legislative and policy basis for advancing GEWE provide an important institutional foundation for future work. The CO's support to the gender machinery to implement its CEDAW commitments have also created an important enabling environment along with the generation of wide-ranging evidence to support and inform the implementation and development of further GEWE policies.

Sustainability and ownership of these results are however significantly hindered by a number of factors included the weak institutional status and position of the national mechanism on gender quality and its limited influence across the government in driving implementation of GEWE policies and commitments. Whilst continued investment with the mechanism is needed, it is also important for UN Women to target additional entry points for advancing policy implementation such as the National Council on Gender Development and the Council on Inter-Ministerial SDG Coordination. Working with UNCT partners to influence integration of gender into line ministries that they support and engage with is another important entry point to pursue.

Addressing these challenges requires a broader institutional approach to build greater whole-of-government support for the integration of GEWE in policies and budgets. There is a need for greater investment of efforts at a higher strategic level to strengthen the institutional status and position of the gender machinery (in line with CEDAW COBs). Increased engagement with the Prime Minister's Office is also needed in order to reinvigorate and reprioritise the position and work of National Council on Gender Development and to strengthen the capacity of this body. Implementation of SDG 5 could provide important impetus for these efforts.

Collaborating with UN and other partners who are engaged in supporting other line ministries, such as FAO with the Ministry of Agriculture and the World Bank's support for public administrative reform efforts

are also important entry points for building and sustaining greater GEWE capacity and commitment across the government. Such engagement is also needed to build greater government ownership for UN Women's programme results. For example, given the important effect that the MSPS and MSPF is having on changing social norms about gender among youth, most stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in the CO's 'FinWater' project highlighted the need to institutionalize this course within schools. UN Women has already initiated discussions with the Ministry of Education to integrate these as compulsory courses within the national secondary school curriculum.

Results from the ARWEE programme can also be further deepened and sustained through greater policy engagement at the macro- and meso- level⁶³. This aligns with one of the key findings from the corporate evaluation of UN Women's work on WEE (2015) which identified the need to shift away from micro projects that provide loans and grants to women towards supporting women at a collective level in identifying and addressing bottlenecks at the macro-level (through national and international policies, finance, institutions and legislation) that deny women (and poor men) economic opportunities, such as lack of access to finance, credit and markets.⁶⁴ For example, as noted in the 2017 CO Annual Work Plan, this could involve collaboration with other partners to look at the effects of Kyrgyzstan's entrance into the Eurasian Custom Union, in particular on sectors with the largest number of employed women (i.e. agriculture, milk and the sewing industry). Another area is to sustain the entrepreneurial success of self-help groups through policy support from the government and financial assistance from organized financial institutions.

“When we empower women we also need to change men’s minds to support women as joint decision makers. We conduct lots of trainings to empower women - we change their minds but when they come home, it is a different story. We need to attract men and to take a more holistic approach.”

UN Women Implementing Partner

13

UN Women's use of strategies that empower and equip national partners with expertise and tools to advance change, and the cascading effect this is having on transferring skills and knowledge to a wider range of stakeholders and in building gender equality champions, will support increased national ownership of GEWE results. The role of men and boys in these effort is especially critical.

Empowerment has been a consistent aim throughout the design and implementation of UN Women's programmes. Development partners and implementing partners consistently praised UN Women for its ability to put national partners at the forefront of projects. Examples of this have been the ARWEE and 'FinWater' programmes whereby strong locally-based implementing partners (CDA and RAS) were

⁶³ *Macro-level policies* refers to policies that have economy-wide effects, along with implications for employment, income, economic security, and overall well-being. *Meso-level policies* are those that affect change at the institutional level (such as laws on land title, rules on bank lending that ensure equitable access to credit, and policies and regulations to support GRB and engendering of national plans and strategies). Source: UN Women Independent Evaluation Office, *An Empowered Future: Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Women's Economic Empowerment*, 2015.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

chosen and empowered to be responsible for achieving project outputs. Whilst UN Women provided important quality assurance and overall oversight of programme implementation, it did this by ensuring that partners were equipped with tools and knowledge to support their work, rather than by remote co-management.

Under the ARWEE programme, the combined use of strategies to provide leadership and technical training for agricultural actives positioned beneficiaries as leaders in their communities and through their acquired knowledge and confidence, they were able to actively engage with other women and to transfer their knowledge. As mentioned previously, this had a significant cascading effect which magnified the number of programme beneficiaries (with the initial number of women beneficiaries increasing from 1,712 to over 8,000).

The emergence of a critical mass of GEWE champions (including a large number of boys) is also an important result that will contribute to further sustainability and effectiveness of results. The critical need to prepare a new generation of gender activists has also driven and informed the CO's long-withstanding engagement with youth. It will be important therefore for the CO to continue to provide opportunities to support the sustained activism of these champions and to link them with ongoing campaigns and advocacy efforts and to arm them with user-friendly evidence to further understand and address the root causes of gender inequality. Related to this is the CO's engagement with the capacitated national GSPS researchers and continuing to inform and engage them in efforts to build greater evidence for advancing GEWE in Kyrgyzstan.

Civil society partners also raised sustainability concerns related the ageing women's movement and the need to continue to engage and capacitate a new generation of gender equality activists to contribute towards the policy making and implementation. The importance of UN Women's Gender Schools in providing this training was highlighted by a number of stakeholders.

“Today, Kyrgyzstan faces new challenges with older women’s rights advocates supporting women’s advancement and gender equality and progressive younger women somewhat disconnected from the women’s rights agenda. A new generation of gender activists needs to be groomed.”

UNCT Common Country Assessment (2016)

The focus of UN Women's programmes on engaging broader members of communities (including husbands, brothers, teachers and local authorities) has created an important enabling environment for greater participation of women and girls within their families, schools and communities. Through a number of transformative social norm changes, sustainability of women's and girl's economic participation in certain contexts is likely to be sustained but will require increased investment to widen the enabling environment for other women and girls. This will require increased investment in behavioural change campaigns and scaling-up of results achieved through the ARWEE programme and youth projects.

Human Rights and Gender Equality

14

UN Women's policy and programme interventions have effectively responded to the underlying causes of gender inequality and poverty; however the specific needs of marginalized groups were less analysed and prioritized in the design and implementation of the Strategic Note.

UN Women's Strategic Note and the design of its programmes strategies and interventions were consistently informed by comprehensive gender analyses. The Country Office played an integral role in generating new evidence and gender analyses to inform its own ongoing work and that of other development and UNCT partners. In 2016, UN Women directly supported and contributed towards the Common Country Assessment (CCA) which analysed the underlying causes of gender inequality and identified gaps in implementation of international and national policies laws and commitments.

Through its "Gender in Society Perception Study" (GSPS), UN Women and the joint programme partners, produced important quantitative and qualitative data and analysis. Both the CCA and GSPS research findings (where available⁶⁵) were used during the 2016 Mid-term Review of UN Women's Strategic Note and during the development of the new UNDAF for 2018-2022.

Through use of this analysis, UN Women has been able to ensure that its interventions address the root causes of gender inequality and poverty. Examples of this are the Acceleration of Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (ARWEE) programme which addresses multidimensional aspects of poverty and aims to prevent feminization of poverty through increasing rural women's income opportunities and food security, enhancing their participation in local decision-making process at the local level and also within the family. As patriarchal traditions and attitudes have a major impact on women's participation and empowerment, and often taken precedence over legal frameworks in local communities, UN Women has also prioritized work on social norm change at the national and community level, including with men and boys aimed at advancing a positive model of masculinity, non-violence, equality and respect.

In the CO's Strategic Note, migrant and LGBTIQ persons are mentioned in relation to challenges they face in accessing justice and accessing support from civil society and the general public due to stigma and deep stereotypes. Priority is also given to rural women with limited economic activities and survivors of violence; however, there is limited analysis about the specific needs of marginalised women and the effect of intersecting forms of discrimination.

"UN Women should support the most vulnerable groups of women, with intersecting forms of discrimination such as female drug users, sex workers and LGBTIQ people."

Survey Respondent

⁶⁵At the time of this report, a revised version of the migration pillar report had just been completed and finalization of the pillar report on religion was still pending.

The CEDAW Concluding Observations on Kyrgyzstan's fourth period report refer to migrant workers, older women, women domestic workers, women belonging to ethnic minorities, women drug users and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women who face intersecting forms of discrimination. They also identify the need for increased measures, such as strengthened anti-discrimination legislation, to address the needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups. The CCA also highlighted the fact that some vulnerable categories are even more deprived such as rural women, people with disabilities and children and youth, refugees and stateless persons, and persons of ethnic minority background. During discussions with civil society, there was a strong call for UN Women to more actively increase its engagement with marginalised groups through its programmatic and normative work. The need for UN Women to support platforms representing these groups (such as the Coalition for Equality) and to ensure greater inclusion in advocacy efforts and campaigns was specifically recommended.

Although the ARWEE programme does include female heads of households, the need to ensure that programme strategies are designed to maximise inclusion was raised by beneficiaries. For example, under most of the agricultural work, women with disabilities are excluded, so finding interventions that can engage a broader group of marginalised women is needed in future programming in order to ensure that no one is left behind. Another challenge is that data is not systematically collected in order to track and measure how programme interventions are addressing and reaching marginalised women although under the joint ARWEE programme, the World Food Programme has developed criteria and conditions for beneficiary targeting including marginalised groups. The Access to Water programme was designed with a strong focus on marginalised communities, but it is still early to see what impact it is having on marginalised women.

15

Whilst there are good examples of efforts by the CO to engage key stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of its programmes; efforts to ensure greater social inclusion and use of human rights-based and gender-responsive approaches can be deepened in a more systematic way.

During the Strategic Note period, UN Women's engagement with key stakeholders in the design and implementation of its Strategic Note has progressively increased.

The development of the first Strategic Note was informed by limited participation of government, women's groups and civil society. Whilst some CSO partners were invited to UN Women's Strategic Planning retreat, there were no specific consultations formally organized with government, broader civil society groups (including the CO's Civil Society Advisory Group) and UNCT partners to enable them to directly influence and inform UN Women's priorities. During the 2016 Mid-term Review, a highly participatory process was used to actively involve key partners in reviewing and refining the COs strategic priority areas. Important efforts were also made to ensure inclusion of programme stakeholders through joint site monitoring visits under the ARWEE programme whereby government partners actively joined and participated in assessing the projects progress and results. The value of being involved in these visits was confirmed by a number of stakeholders.

These efforts show an important progression in terms of the CO's efforts to ensure more participatory programme design processes; however, consultations with civil society revealed a desired for increased engagement in contributing to UN Women's planning and review processes.

Other areas where UN Women could more systematically apply a human rights-based approach include the disaggregation of monitoring data to capture information about the extent to which programme interventions are reaching marginalised groups and whether any are underserved. As mentioned previously, increased efforts are also needed to ensure that the CO's operational work continues to be designed to support implementation of normative commitments and recommendations emanating from a broader range of human rights treaty bodies beyond CEDAW. This means more explicitly linking planned interventions to specific treaty body recommendations in the Strategic Note in line with the approach set out in Table 6 under Finding 1.

Conclusions

The conclusions were developed by the evaluation team based on the analysis of findings. This analysis was structured according to the evaluation framework and questions using a mixed methods and gender-responsive/human rights based approach. The conclusions are subject to final validation by the UN Women Country Office, Evaluation Reference Group and the Regional Evaluation Specialist.

Relevance

1

Limited resources require UN Women to be more strategic in its future work. There is a need to identify and work through strategic entry points and strengthened partnerships in order to focus efforts where there is a potential for maximized results. Coordination work and mechanisms needs to be elevated and to shift from a technical to strategic level focus.

**Based on Findings 2, 3, 4 & 5*

Taking into account resource mobilization pressures, throughout 2015-2017 UN Women in Kyrgyzstan significantly focused on projects in new areas (i.e. water management, management of large-sale research project), which has required new sets of skills and project management knowledge. It appears that it has also affected the office's work at higher, strategic levels, and presented difficulties in terms of linking the new projects with UN Women's global impact areas.

The Country Office has established good relations with a range of partners; however, these have been mainly focused at the technical level (i.e. UN GTG – technical focus points; ministry staff at technical working level). Many partners expressed the need for UN Women's increased strategic positioning at the Development Partners Coordination Council (DPCC) and its sub-groups (i.e. continuing to address issues of WEE and GRB through the Working Group on Democratic Governance). The CO could also increase its role as a GEWE knowledge management hub, namely by sharing its experience from operational work to position itself among partners, influence the latter's development interventions and scale-up joint efforts.

UN Women has been an active member of the UN Country Team and has effectively contributed to influencing and informing GEWE priorities through its analyses and programmatic partnerships. Whilst there is a strong recognition of UN Women's important contribution towards integrating gender into the UNDAF, there is strong desire by a broad range of partners and stakeholders for greater UN Women leadership, visibility and positioning at a higher strategic level in order to influence and inform the work of the UNCT and broader development interventions. Moreover, UN Women could achieve more coordination results if it acts in collaboration with the Resident Coordinator to mandate greater gender integration across the UNCT. Greater investment in the Extended GTG is required in order to increase the impact of advocacy work. Whereas there is good visibility at an individual projects-level and on UNiTE, greater efforts are required in strategic-level communication as UN Women is regarded as the best-placed UN entity to speak out on gender issues and to mobilise others to act and engage.

The abovementioned increasing demand to mobilise resources, combined with waning donor interest and resources, and inter-agency competition over increasingly limited funds, calls for identification of new approaches to strategically leverage resources through the office's partnerships and mandate. Such an approach could include participating in joint programmes (in order to bring strong integration of GEWE, particularly in relation to SDG implementation and localisation), but not necessarily leading them, which can present a significant burden on the COs limited resources. For instance, where new programmes are developed, UN Women could advise on specific components to bolster normative and effective coordination of joint programmes. The CO is already aligning with such an approach through its development of proposals for four joint programmes and one with civil society with UN Women positioned to act as both as the leading and participating agency

To mitigate risks related to high turnover within partners' internal structures (e.g. MLSP), the office needs to identify other strategic entry points that can have the greatest impact such as the National Council on Gender Development; to leverage on its available expertise on SDGs, UN Women needs to establish itself further at the inter-ministerial SDG coordination groups.

UN Women made a strategic decision not to address political participation and response aspects of VAWG given the role and involvement of UNDP and UNFPA in these areas. It is therefore important that the Country Office's work on prevention of VAWG through social norm change and on local participation of rural women in politics and decision-making bodies is used to inform and influence programming of other key UN and development partners.

Effectiveness

2

UN Women's implicit theory of change based on tackling deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, stereotypes and harmful practices through a priority focus on the generation of evidence and community level engagement with women, men, girls and boys, has been appropriate and effective and is positioning the Office to work towards transformative change. Inclusion of a more explicit theory of change is needed to ensure that future programming aligns with and adheres to this approach.

**Based on Findings 1, 4, 7 & 14*

The theory of change pursued by UN Women is based on sound evidence about the root causes and drivers of inequality. The decision of the Country Office to centre its programmatic work on tackling deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, stereotypes and harmful practices has been a conscious and strategic decision which, over the longer term, has the potential to have a deep and lasting impact on advancing GEWE.

UN Women's two-tiered approach to addressing social norm change - through generation of evidence and tackling behaviour change at the community level - has supported important results at different levels and among duty bearers and rights holders. Its focus on generating increased evidence about gender perceptions in society (GSPS) has enabled researchers to apply a gender lens to data collection and analysis, and there are indications that many of the researchers are likely to continue applying this knowledge in the research they are conducting outside of the programme. UN Women has also made a significant investment to affect attitudinal and behavioural change at the community level through its engagement with youth, rural women, LSGs and men and boys – the office has to make sure these changes are scaled-up through the next Strategic Note.

Social norm change is complex and requires significant investment over a sustained period of time. During the Strategic Note period, UN Women has achieved transformative results through its work with rural women and broader communities. This is due largely to UN Women's accumulated expertise in this area, but more significantly its empowerment-driven approaches and its engagement with not only women but also men and youth and decision makers at the local level. UN Women's work has shown that addressing social norm change as the main barrier to women's participation and empowerment, is a critical entry point for work to address broader social change such as inclusive development and good governance. It is therefore important that UN Women's work in this area is linked to broader policy initiatives at the macro and micro level.

Evidence from past evaluations and discussions with beneficiaries shows that when women and girls gain greater knowledge about their rights and are equipped with tools and knowledge to make a valuable contribution to the health and welfare of their families and communities, an enabling environment is created for their economic, social and political participation.

UN Women's work has shown that social norm change can drive greater economic and political participation of women, but also that women's increased economic contribution within their families and their role in local decision-making bodies can also drive social norm change. It is therefore important that a two-pronged approach is taken and that UN Women's work on social norm change is strongly rooted in its programming on women's economic empowerment and women's political participation.

The CO's focus on attitudes and social norms has been important: it is aligned with CEDAW COBs and will help to identify and address key barriers to women's economic and political participation, drivers of rights violations (i.e. bride kidnapping, underage marriage, domestic violence) and conflicts.

There is a need to build further on programme results (e.g. ensure that the GSPS research products are used to influence and inform policy-based advocacy; that there is a greater investment in communications products and processes; and that broader and more inclusive platforms exist to convene actors and use them as agents of change (including peer educators and youth).

As for VAWG, the Office should continue its prevention focus through addressing social norm change and maintaining its community-based efforts, such as on WEE programming (through joint efforts with others), to influence and change attitudes and behaviors that are at the root of VAWG. At the same time, there is a need to ensure that there is sufficient national capacity and resources to support and provide essential services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

UN Women has found a clear niche and made a conscious effort to avoid duplication and minimize overlap (i.e. political participation) in many areas. Scope was found to extend work on ERAW and potentially on women's political participation (through new gap analysis and mapping needed under next SN). Some areas where there is potential duplication (i.e. child marriage with UNICEF) need to be further discussed with UNCT partners.

Efficiency

3

The integrated approach applied in the design and implementation of UN Women's programmes has enabled it to achieve greater results with fewer resources and ensured that interventions address multidimensional aspects of gender equality. Efforts to further reflect this approach in results frameworks, RBM and structures are needed to fully systematize this work and also ensure better linkages across the mandate areas of UN Women's work.

**Based on Findings 3, 4, 5, 8, 11 & 14*

Integrated programming requires a collaborative approach across the work and structures of the Country Office. Given the complexity of comprehensive programming, it is important to continue working to identify areas where knowledge and capacity gaps exist early on and to bring in the requisite expertise and knowledge. For example, given the focus of the GSPS in contributing to effective responses to peacebuilding and also the focus of the 'FinWater' project in supporting conflict resolution at the local level, both projects could have benefitted from the early involvement of the Peace and Security Advisor from the Regional Office in order to develop clear theories of change to guide and inform this work and better link it to normative frameworks such as UN Security Council 1325.

The Office's interventions could be up-scaled by supporting effective representation: research shows that just because women leaders are elected, it does not mean that they will necessarily advance a gender-responsive agenda. Therefore, UN Women can play an important role in continuing to provide platforms that link rural women (that benefitted from the Country Office's empowerment activities) with decision makers (i.e. parliamentarians and local authorities).

Another challenge lies with the integration of UN Women's system-wide coordination mandate across its country programming and reporting on/measuring the effects of coordination. There is limited reference to UN system coordination results in its Strategic Notes and DRFs, which limits the explicit link between UN coordination and substantive results on GEWE.

UN Women communicates well through the UNiTE campaign and respective network; however, being vocal at strategic levels, such as UNCT and within development fora, would greatly enhance the Office's visibility. Whereas the knowledge management strategy is being finalized, UN Women have

not continuously shared information accumulated through research and have not been present to a full extent at regional and global women's knowledge exchange platforms.

Due to its cooperation with UN agencies on UNDAF development, and with the National Statistics Committee – on SDGs nationalization, there is a momentum for the Office to serve as knowledge hub and support implementation of post-2015 agenda.

UN Women maintains good projects M&E systems but the Office is often challenged with linking different components of a project to broader and overarching objectives. For instance, with regard to cutting across UN Women's tripartite mandate, women's economic empowerment activities progressed well. However, as for the GSPS and 'FinWater' programmes, a greater link with normative work could have strengthened the overall projects results (see GSPS Case Study Report in Annex K for more detail).

Sustainability

4

A strong legal and policy environment for GEWE, combined with strategic partnerships that maximized synergies and technical expertise of different partners, were key enabling factors for the sustainability of results. Major hindering factors were the weak institutional status of the gender machinery and turnover within, and the limited timeframe of some programmes and human resource constraints.

**Based on Findings 12, 13 & 4*

Many stakeholders assessed UN Women's work as bringing sustainability in a number of areas, and particularly at the national level; however, significant challenges remain in securing high-level status for the national women's machinery (which is placed below ministerial level and has limited cross-government leverage) and state budget commitments to support policy implementation.

Moreover, whilst UN Women has been continuously working with the gender machinery, taking into account high turnover among civil servants, there is a need to expand cooperation beyond usual stakeholders and include others, to advance this work, and to build a new generation of gender equality champions, including men and other "non-traditional" gender advocates. For instance, UN Women can work with the parliament's staff, given frequent changes among MPs; and encourage its partners to have more technical-level staff participate at UN Women's activities.

As for the operational area, the office needs to continue linking policy with practical programmes, which would scale-up good practices at the national level. Including more of local actors at community level would sustain results of interventions and provide for an easy outreach to population. Finally, deeper engagement of programme beneficiaries and partners in design and implementation of programmes could increase ownership and sustainability.

Human Rights and Gender Equality

5

UN Women's interventions have directly supported implementation of international human rights norms and generated important results and evidence for rights holders and duty bearers in addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality. Greater efforts are needed to specifically target the needs and priorities of marginalised groups and to deepen stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of its future work.

Overall, UN Women's work has integrated the human rights principles of inclusion, participation and fair power relations. UN Women's Strategic Note and the design of its programmes strategies and interventions have consistently been informed by comprehensive gender analyses and the Country Office played an integral role in generating new evidence and gender analyses to inform its own ongoing work and that of other development and UNCT partners. Through use of this analysis, UN Women has been able to ensure that its interventions address the root causes of gender inequality and poverty and through its programming, it has already shown progress in contributing towards changing power relations at a household and community level.

In order to maximise participation of its partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries, in its future programming, it will be important for the CO to conduct deeper gender analysis specific to marginalised communities and further targeting of interventions and disaggregation of programme monitoring data in order to address intersectionality issues. There are also strong calls for UN Women to actively increase its engagement with marginalised groups through its programmatic and normative work and support platforms representing these groups.

Linking the Strategic Note interventions with a broader range of international human rights norms, and ensuring that programmes systematically align with normative priorities, will also further reinforce these efforts.

Lessons Learned

This section provides a number of generalized lessons learned derived from the implementation of the CPE which can be used by the Kyrgyzstan CO and other UN Women offices to inform future planning and programming.

1. **The centrality of GEWE within the Sustainability Development Goals provides an important opportunity for UN Women to influence and inform national development priorities; however doing so requires strategic investment of CO time, expertise and resources.** The CPE underscored the strong desire by a broad range of key partners and stakeholders for greater UN Women leadership, visibility and positioning at a higher strategic level in order to influence and inform development interventions. Achieving such influence means prioritising investment of staff time in these processes and using coordination fora with development actors to share UN Women's programmatic results, country-level expertise and know-how into the national development agenda. Greater investment in shifting the focus of the GTG from

technical coordination towards joint programming and advocacy can also play a key role in maximising the impact of gender-focused interventions.

2. **An integrated approach to country programming that recognized the interconnectedness and multidimensionality of GEWE enabled the CO to address and achieve results in other areas not explicitly included as strategic priority areas.** Such an approach also enabled the CO to achieve greater results with fewer resources. For example, under the ARWEE programme, work to support women's economic empowerment also yielded positive results in terms of women's increased political participation, even though political participation was not a specific priority area under the Strategic Note. This also applied to results on gender-based budget where tools previously developed were used under WEE programming and contributed to important results despite having GRB as a specific priority area under the Strategic Note.
3. **Interventions that are rooted in the three-pronged mandate of UN Women tend to be more effective and sustainable.** For instance, under the ARWEE programme, where transformative results have already been achieved, there was ample evidence demonstrating the programme's impact across all three mandate areas whilst under the GSPS programme, coordination results and normative linkages to peacebuilding and conflict prevention were more limited and the programmes results regarded as less sustainable.
4. **Despite an increasing need for resources, it is important for COs to realistically assess their capacity to implement projects implying new themes and areas.** In anticipation of resource mobilisation pressures, CO staff should have greater exposure to new areas, and knowledge sharing, including with other key stakeholders, so that there is at least a minimum capacity in the office, should it receive funding for an innovative project. In instances where COs are involved in implementing complex and multi-faceted programmes in thematic areas, where in-house knowledge is limited (either by time or by capacity), engagement of the Regional Office thematic advisors during the initial design and implementation can play an important role in helping to establish effective strategies and approaches for programming.
5. **Social norm change takes time and requires a longer term investment to see transformative results.** It was as a result of the CO's decade of experience working on economic empowerment initiatives with rural women in Kyrgyzstan that UN Women was able to achieve transformative results under the ARWEE programme and to successfully address structural barriers to women's economic participation and empowerment through changed power relations in families. It is therefore necessary to sustain efforts and work on social norm change through prioritisation in successive strategic notes and ongoing programmatic activities conducted in partnership with key national partners.

Recommendations

The evaluation makes six strategic recommendations to the UN Women Country Office in Kyrgyzstan aimed at strengthening its work under its 2018-2021 Strategic Note. Whilst the recommendations target the Country Office, they will require close collaboration with other key partners. The recommendations are directly informed by the findings and were developed collaboratively with Country Office and ERG stakeholders during the CORT Summit Workshops in order to ensure ownership. A further opportunity to refine these recommendations will be provided during the final review of this report by the Country Office and ERG.

- 1** UN Women's should use its multidimensional and integrated programming approach and results as an entry point for supporting broader policy efforts, particularly SDG implementation and adjust its results frameworks and organizational approach to fully align with this approach.
- Urgency: High
Impact: High
Difficulty: High

Achieve this by:

- ➔ Articulating linkages between thematic areas at the design stage (including programme theories of change that reflect broader holistic change) and during monitoring and reporting on results in order to ensure that all partners and stakeholders understand and are positioned to support integrated programme strategies and approaches;
- ➔ Continuing to shift away from projectized approach towards a more integrated programming: this approach needs to be further deepened especially in terms of ensuring that project work is fully aligned with and integrated across the DRF framework;
- ➔ Designing all future programmes to have targeted interventions to address all three UN Women mandate areas by ensuring that project budget allocation and timeframes allow for intended policy results and through increased use of joint programming in order to integrate coordination into operational work.
- ➔ Continue providing significant substantial support for gender-responsive localization and implementation of the SDGs and prioritization of SDG 5, a role which is widely recognized and appreciated by the government and UNCT partners.

- 2** Continue to prioritise engagement with rural women and work on social norm change as a means to address key barriers to women's economic and political participation and prevent VAWG and conflict. Ensure that this work is linked to policy efforts and other initiatives of partners in order to scale up and sustain results.
- Urgency: Medium
Impact: High
Difficulty: Medium

Achieve this by:

- ➔ Broadly sharing the successes and lessons learned on UN Women’s work on women’s economic empowerment, and GALS methodology in order to contribute towards country, regional and global knowledge about what has worked to advance women’s empowerment and social norm change through the ARWEE programme and to maximize learning from the transformative results achieved;
- ➔ Continuing to prioritise interventions focused on social norm change through an integrated programmatic approach;
- ➔ Leveraging the various UN Agencies around their respective mandate in WEE (for example, engaging with ILO in relation to Decent Work);
- ➔ Supporting women at a collective level in identifying and addressing bottlenecks at the macro- and meso- level that deny women economic opportunities, such as lack of access to finance, agricultural credit, infrastructure investment and markets and the burden of unpaid care work;
- ➔ Identifying strategies for increased engagement through joint partnerships, in particular with UNDP, to support efforts to strengthen women’s political participation in light of the regression in this area and in the context of the 2020 parliamentary elections.

3

Ensure greater strategic positioning of UN Women and identify increased entry points through elevating the GTG, revitalising the extended GTG, participation in broader development fora, and increased joint programming to deepen coordination and normative work and scale up and sustain operational results.

Urgency: High

Impact: High

Difficulty: Medium

Achieve this by:

- ➔ Designating the UN Women Country Representative chair of the GTG and extended GTG in order to attract higher level participation and shift the focus from a technical to a more strategic level;
- ➔ Working with GTG members to develop multidimensional joint programmes to support implementation of key priority areas under the GTG strategy;
- ➔ Positioning UN Women to continue influencing the broader development agenda using a two track approach by elevating the GEWE-focused coordination fora (both GTG and extended GTG) whilst investing in strategic platforms and fora such as the Development Partners Coordination Council and its relevant working groups;
- ➔ Following a two-pronged approach to advocate for institutional strengthening of the Gender Machinery (in line with CEDAW COBs) whilst working with other partners to advance GEWE implementation across a broader range of government actors using SDG implementation fora and platforms as a key entry point.

4

Support duty bearers and rights holders to further advance implementation of national and international GEWE commitments through a targeted focus on gender responsive planning, budgeting and statistics.

Urgency: High

Impact: High

Difficult: High

Achieve this by:

- ➔ Supporting efforts to advance implementation of GEWE commitments through a greater focus on accountability mechanisms and actors by providing budget watchdogs, including parliamentarians, civil society and local women networks and leaders with knowledge and tools to advocate for gender-responsive priorities and budgets.
- ➔ Mobilising key national actors, UNCT partners and civil society around the development of a flagship programme on gender-related data and statistics to support achievement and reporting on SDGs;
- ➔ Using tools and knowledge developed (such as the GRB tools and GSPS) to support greater evidence-based policy advocacy and provide increased platforms and opportunities to engage emerging gender equality champions (including the youth activists and men and boys) in these efforts

5

Create a broader platform, through UN Women's convening role, to bring together civil society for joint advocacy efforts and engage them in informing and advising on the development and implementation of UN Women's next Strategic Note.

Urgency: High

Impact: High

Difficult:

Achieve this by:

- ➔ Increasing the involvement of the Civil Society Advisory Group in advising UN Women on the design and implementation of its Strategic Note and engage a broader group of duty bearers and rights holders (including at the community level) in processes to set priorities and monitor progress;
- ➔ Sharing programming knowledge with civil society in order to highlight lessons learned and good practices to be further scaled up; continue to partner with local organisations in order to build capacity, ownership and ensure sustainability;
- ➔ Sustaining engagement with youth activist and champions and developing communication tools and strategies focused on greater use of social media to support advocacy efforts.

6

Strengthen engagement with rights holders from marginalised and vulnerable communities and support their efforts to advance normative, policy and advocacy efforts to advance their rights and priorities.

Urgency: High

Impact: High

Difficulty: Low

Achieve this by:

- ➔ Increasing UN Women's engagement with marginalised groups through its programmatic and normative work and support platforms representing these groups;
- ➔ Increasing efforts to further target and engage marginalised and vulnerable communities in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes;
- ➔ Conducting joint advocacy campaigns with women from different communities (sex workers, lesbians, bisexual women, transgender women, women who use drugs, women living with HIV, women with disabilities);
- ➔ Providing monitoring data on intersecting forms of discrimination.