

**Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's
Contribution to Women's Political Participation
and Leadership**

SYNTHESIS REPORT

April 2018

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¹ Kristen Sample served as Women's Political Participation Specialist during much of the process, contributing to the design, data collection, analysis and drafting of the evaluation report.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTIL	African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership
AC	Americas and the Caribbean
AP	Asia and the Pacific
AS	Arab States
ATENEA	Joint Regional Project “Mechanism for the Acceleration of the Political Participation of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean” with UNDP and International Ideas
CEB	United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CO	UN Women Country Office
CR/TSM	Constitutional and Legal Reform, including Temporary Special Measures
CSAG	UN Women’s Civil Society Advisory Group
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DPA	United Nations Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EMBs	Electoral Management Bodies
EO	Evaluation Objective
EQ	Evaluation Question
ESA	East and Southern Africa
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
FGE	Fund for Gender Equality
FPI	Flagship Programme Initiatives
WPEL-FPI	Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership Flagship Programme Initiative
GEMs	Gender equality, Environment and Marginalized voices
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GNP	Governance and National Planning
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
HeForShe	HeForShe media campaign of UN Women
HQ	Headquarters / New York City

IANGWE	Inter-agency Network on Women’s Empowerment
IAs	Impact Areas (of the Strategic Plans from 2011-2013 and 2014-2017)
ICMEA	Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance
IES	Independent Evaluation Service (formerly Independence Evaluation Office)
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGOs	International NGOs
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ISE4GEMs	Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices
LG	Local Government
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCO	Multi-Country Office
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
MS	Member States
NAM	Needs Assessment Mission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NPB	National Planning and Budgeting
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
PACEC	Project to Support the Electoral Cycle in Congo
PLWD	People Living with Disabilities
PM&E	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PS	Peace and Security
PSHA	Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action
RBM	Results Based Management
RC System	Resident Coordinator System of the UN at the country level
RMS	Results Management System
RO	UN Women Regional Office
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SG	Secretary-General of the United Nations

SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SP	Strategic Plan (UN Women's Strategic Plan)
TSMs	Temporary Special Measures
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA/GA	United Nations General Assembly

UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAWE	Violence Against Women in Elections
VAWP	Violence Against Women in Politics
WAJ	Women's Access to Justice
WCA	West and Central Africa
WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization
WPP	Women's Political Participation

FOREWORD

Whereas women’s political participation and leadership has increased around the globe, women are still under-represented in political life. Promoting women’s political participation and leadership is vital because it improves outcomes at all societal levels. Research has shown that having women in public decision-making roles and engaging in political life fosters economic growth and results in policies beneficial to women, children, families and their respective communities and countries. Improving women’s political participation and leadership has been recognized by the international community as critical for achieving not only gender equality, but also sustainable development, through the inclusion of a specific target within the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 5.

From its inception in 2011, UN Women has prioritized supporting women’s ability to, “lead and participate in decision-making at all levels”. However, this area of work had not been evaluated globally until now. Undertaken by UN Women’s Independent Evaluation Service, this corporate thematic evaluation assesses the organization’s contribution to this important area of work through a system thinking lens. It captures learning from past practices that can inform and strengthen future work in this area. It also examines UN Women’s position and strategic niche in promoting women’s political participation and leadership in the context of the Secretary-General’s call for UN Development System reform to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The evaluation report presented here makes four reflections, six conclusions and six recommendations to further strengthen UN Women’s contributions in this thematic area. These emphasize finding improved ways of working in partnership with UN agencies, civil society, regional organizations and governments to enhance the level and sustainability of results. The report also highlights the need for prioritizing and increasing efforts to address marginalized communities and social norm change as vital parts of women’s political participation and leadership programming going forward as part of an overall response to strengthening the organization’s capacity to address the structural causes and power imbalances that lead to women’s under-representation in political life.

This report and its recommendations have been shared with UN Women’s management, who are in agreement with the recommendations and have developed a management response and action plan to implement these findings. The aim of these recommendations is to strengthen the role for UN-Women and its partners in promoting women’s political participation and leadership worldwide through the lessons learned and dissemination of good practice identified through this evaluation.

Sincerely,

Verasak Liengsrirawat
a.i. Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) undertakes corporate strategic evaluations of the six impact areas under UN Women's Strategic Plan (SP) (2014-2017). The *Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Women's Political Participation (WPP) and Leadership* is one such corporate evaluation aimed at supporting learning, decision-making and accountability for UN Women and its partners.

Covering the period 2011-2017, the purpose of the evaluation was to assess UN Women's cumulative contribution towards the first of six impact areas – women's ability to "lead and participate in decision-making at all levels" – and to provide evidence from past practice to inform its future strategic planning and implementation in this thematic area. The evaluation assessed UN Women's contribution across its integrated mandate at the global, regional and country level against four key objectives aligned with the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The evaluation objectives were to assess (i) the strategic relevance and positioning of UN Women's work on WPP, given the broader development policy context and its role in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); (ii) the effectiveness of UN Women's work on WPP across its integrated mandate; (iii) the efficiency of UN Women's structures and internal institutional arrangements; and (iv) the extent to which UN Women's position and contribution towards results and momentum on WPP is sustainable for women at individual, collective and system levels, and in relation to the SDGs. In addition, the evaluation examined UN Women's positioning and strategic niche in WPP in relation to the SDGs and the Secretary-General of the United Nations' reform on the Repositioning of the UN Development System.

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation adopted a systemic evaluation approach called the *Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMs)*, which combines innovative systemic evaluation practice with intersectional analysis of three dimensions of gender equality, environments and marginalized voices.

The evaluation was conducted in line with gender equality and human rights principles as defined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy, the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct. The ISE4GEMs approach placed an emphasis on the identification and inclusion of marginalized voices (youth, rural women, indigenous groups, etc.) within the data collection and analysis where feasible and ethical.

To address thematic information needs, the evaluation sampled six cases that served as inputs to the evaluation report: five sub-thematic areas (constitutional and legal reform, including Temporary Special Measures (TSM); inclusive electoral processes; parliamentary support; Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP); and local government) along with one cross-cutting area, leadership.

A mixed-methods approach was applied, involving a blend of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods from different data sources and used different analysis methods to arrive at findings, conclusions and recommendations. Triangulation was applied for consistency, validity and reliability. The evaluation

draws on the totality of evidence collected. This included the overall portfolio analysis and Boundary Story of UN Women's WPP work across a sample of 43 countries (about one-half of the global portfolio). An in-depth analysis across a narrower sample of 24 countries was undertaken that included site visits to six countries – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Egypt, Malawi, Mexico, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. These visits covered five regions – West and Central Africa (WCA), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), Americas and the Caribbean (AC), Arab States (AS) and Asia and the Pacific (AP). The Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region was covered remotely. In total, 397 interviews with a diverse range of internal and external partners were conducted, 575 documents were reviewed and two online surveys were administered to internal and external stakeholders.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The 2030 Agenda and the SDG framework's systemic approach situates UN Women as the key UN actor and thought leader for providing integrated policy advice on WPP.

(Findings 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17 and 19)

Grounding its work in international frameworks and commitments related to WPP, UN Women is seen as an impartial and highly credible actor. For the UN system to be 'fit-for-purpose,' however, there is widespread recognition that the organization must also adopt a more systemic (as opposed to siloed) approach to its work. UN Women's Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) mandate and six thematic areas of work, stemming from Strategic Plan (SP) 2014-2017 (women's voice, leadership and participation; women's economic empowerment; ending violence against women and girls; women's peace and security; governance and national planning; and global and normative framework), situate it to act as the key agency and thought leader within the United Nations Development System (UNDS) to provide integrated policy advice on WPP. A more systemic approach to addressing WPP would include strengthening existing internal and external synergies and forging new ones relevant to the cross-cutting dimensions for sustainable development.

Conclusion 2: In order to be 'fit-for-purpose' to support SDG implementation, UN Women would benefit from adopting a thematic lens for strengthening its internal capacities and resources to match desired impact with delivery capacity on WPP.

(Findings 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19)

Progress on WPP was widely cited as one of the key 'drivers' for enhancing progress across all other UN Women thematic areas, as well as across the SDGs.

While this evaluation demonstrates that UN Women has been able to achieve relevant results on WPP with current capacities, resourcing and organizational structure, it has not yet been able to show that it has reached and sustained the level of results needed to generate the broader impact on WPP as expected, let alone as a driver for broader GEWE influence. This is despite ample evidence that UN Women has successfully leveraged partnerships – which in itself requires a certain level of investment - both within the UNDS and with other global, regional and national partners to enhance its reach.

Despite possessing the building blocks for becoming 'fit-for-purpose' on WPP, persistent staffing gaps and under-resourcing at the global, regional and country levels affect UN Women's ability to meet demand for support. The prioritization of WPP over a broad geographic scope (91 countries in 2016) and the

political complexities this work entails are part of the issue. In addition, current levels of capacity are not adequate to fully implement UN Women's integrated mandate effectively. Most significantly, gaps in terms of thematic policy expertise and variations in the skills of country leadership have meant that UN Women is not always able to meet the demands or expectations of partners. External stakeholders, especially Civil Society Organizations (CSO), are particularly keen to work with UN Women on WPP given its specialized GEWE mandate in relation to other actors. Strong policy expertise at the global level and in the two regions with dedicated Regional Policy Advisors, combined with flexible funding mechanisms, have enabled UN Women to overcome capacity limitations somewhat, but structural human resource constraints remain in the long-term. More investment is needed both externally in terms of funding and support for the coordination mandate on women's political participation, but also internally through investment in knowledge management, training, planning, monitoring and evaluation, partnership management and in terms of decisions around staffing and roles and responsibilities.

Conclusion 3: UN reform efforts provide new opportunities, as well as challenges to implementing its coordination role on WPP, especially at the country level.

(Findings 1, 8 and 11)

UN Women's ability to effectively implement its coordination mandate was hindered by conflicting interpretations among UN actors regarding the mandate and role division, lack of policy framework (aside from electoral assistance) and other agreements about role division and resource imbalances, especially at the country level. Most of these factors are inherent to the UN System and largely outside of UN Women's sphere of influence. Furthermore, resolving divergent interpretations would require joint UN system action. Recent UN reform efforts might provide an opportunity for UN Women to address some of these issues. They could also present challenges for UN Women's positioning, particularly in countries where it has no presence or a significant resource imbalance vis-à-vis the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). For these coherence efforts to be effectively implemented as a means of jointly producing results in the field of WPP, the common chapter of the SP would have to be complemented long term with WPP-specific targets across relevant UN agencies and an inter-agency mechanism at the highest level.

Conclusion 4: Although UN Women has demonstrated effectiveness across its normative and operational work, it could increase the level and sustainability of its results by adopting a more systemic and holistic approach to its programmatic work.

(Findings 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18 and 20)

UN Women has achieved results across its normative and operational mandate. Normative results were particularly prominent in the adoption of inter-governmental norms. Operational results were found across all sub-themes and countries due in large part to UN Women's advocacy capacity, convening credibility and strong partnerships.

UN Women's WPP normative and operation work, however, presents however some challenges. In some countries, linkages between policy and operational work remain weak, and operational results have been uneven across and within sub-themes. This may be caused by the wide range of activities implemented, which make it difficult to develop specific strategies to operationalize normative outcomes, achieve shared institutional learning and create common branding around innovative models. Some sub-thematic

areas would benefit from defining a few key ‘signature’ products around which UN Women could invest in specialized Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), internal learning, knowledge production and branding.

Meanwhile, sustainability of WPP results also presents some challenges due to the WPP specific work environment and corporate limitations. Among these are (i) political volatility; (ii) entrenched nature of social norms; (iii) long-term and regressive nature of the change processes UN Women is working towards; (iv) limitations of M&E systems including nascent risk management system; and (v) short-term approach to the conceptualization and operationalization of results.

While UN Women’s ability to respond to emerging political opportunities is a strength, it is important to balance adaptability with a longer-term systemic and holistic perspective. This includes (i) prioritizing projects based on scale-up and sustainability potential (e.g. electoral context vs. election period; *de jure* vs. *de facto* laws; descriptive as well as substantive representation); (ii) balancing and sequencing efforts across the integrated mandate; and (iii) gauging and mitigating potential negative reactions that may arise in the form of violence, public opinion or public policy backlash.

Conclusion 5: UN Women needs to prioritize and increase its efforts to address marginalization within its WPP work.

(Findings 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18 and 19)

UN Women programming supported the ‘leaving no one behind’ (LNOB) agenda in country offices, but progress was uneven, limited by data and strategy gaps, as well as limited partnerships with groups representing marginalized communities. Internal and external stakeholders want UN Women to provide more support to marginalized groups, likely partially due to the 2030 Agenda. UN Women’s effectiveness in developing and maintaining strong partnerships with civil society groups is key to reinforcing and widening its partnerships with marginalized groups and engaging on WPP. UN Women can use its convening power to ensure inclusion of marginalized groups in national or local dialogues or processes related to WPP. UN Women could strengthen its attention to marginalized groups within sub-thematic areas, including those groups prioritized within the current SP 2018-2021 (young women, indigenous women and women with disabilities).

Conclusion 6: Work on social norm change to support WPP is a promising, yet under-developed area of programming for WPP.

(Findings 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18 and 20)

The political empowerment of women may not be sustained unless there are real shifts in social norms around women entering and staying in politics. Change in social norms remains a relatively under-analysed, under-developed and under-measured area of programming. Energies need to be redirected to develop more concerted and specific programming around social norms change that will complement the women’s political empowerment strategies undertaken. This requires deepening the analysis of and then targeting the context-specific attitudes, stereotypes and perceptions held by men, women, boys and girls of women in politics and women as leaders that prevent women’s political participation and empowerment. The challenge for UN Women will be to find innovative ways to tackle social norms change on WPP ‘upstream’ and link them with new strategies for addressing it ‘downstream.’ Social norms change efforts need to go beyond general or ad hoc awareness-raising activities to develop more long-term and sustained programming that targets not only men and boys, but also women and girls, and produces

specific outcomes, outputs, indicators, baseline and targets. This requires long-term monitoring methods that track change beyond a specific programme and leverage new and innovative monitoring methods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions derived from the evidence analysed for this evaluation and the forward-looking context, the following six recommendations are proposed.

Recommendation 1: In a context of wide-ranging demands and limited resources, UN Women needs to strengthen its prioritization capacity at the country level to contribute strategic and sustainable results on WPP.

UN Women should strengthen evidence-based programming, investment, communication, and fundraising around: (i) the emerging areas of VAWP and local government; (ii) one or two strategic 'signature' programming models within the sub-thematic areas that are innovative, low-cost, and with potential for scale-up and sustainability, considering potential to apply UN Women's universal mandate, e.g. institutional support to caucuses and committees on post-legislative analysis and monitoring; marginalized women ID cards registration and identity management; new technologies for civic education; formal and informal women public decision-making; VAWP protocols; local government advocacy tool and global knowledge product; (iii) partnerships for party system strengthening and institutional capacity building.

Recommendation 2: To strengthen implementation of its coordination mandate, UN Women should establish a clear division of labour with other UN agencies around potentially overlapping mandates. It should also provide thematic operational guidance on planning and implementing its coordination role at the country and regional levels.

UN Women should clarify and formalize its role and coordination function relative to other UN agencies, with regard to the Strategic Plan's joint chapter and UN reform, concerning a joint vision, targets, and implementation framework for WPP. It should establish a division of labour with UN Women as a full partner throughout the project cycle, in resource mobilization efforts and reporting of results. The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) model could inspire ways of working with a similar accountability framework for UN system-wide performance and joint delivery on WPP. UN Women should provide operational guidance on planning and implementing its coordination role at the country and regional level, across sub-thematic areas and with different types of partners. This would clarify for partners how to engage and support UN Women and UNDP in the country context, drawing on each organization's comparative strengths. It would also institutionalize the process instead of relying on the goodwill of individual staff members.

Recommendation 3: UN Women should develop a long-term WPP capacity-strengthening plan to enhance its ability to deliver results and meet stakeholder requests.

UN Women should undertake a WPP capacity strengthening plan of existing resources. This ideally includes the following elements. Conduct an organizational staff mapping and capacity assessment. Clarify roles and responsibilities at Headquarters/New York City (HQ), regional and country-level staff working on WPP. Develop and regularly update policy and programmatic guidance notes that provide a strategic vision for each sub-thematic area with priority activities, role of UN Women *vis-à-vis* other actors, possible risks and potential mitigation strategies drawn from experience and specific indicators and monitoring

tools to support documentation of sustainable results. Complement with online and/or face-to-face trainings for staff. Develop communities of practice or shared staff resources (across countries) on highly specialized subjects and that support cross-country and cross-regional exchange. Strengthen corporate capacities and systems to manage and mitigate risks related to WPP in different political systems and contexts.

Recommendation 4: UN Women should invest in a thematic resource mobilization approach that builds on existing innovative, flexible and longer-term funding mechanisms and that addresses regional priorities.

UN Women should develop a thematic resource mobilization strategy and invest in donor relationship management with the Strategic Partnership Division at the country level with Regional Policy Advisors' support. The strategy should provide a clearer articulation of UN Women's added value to WPP for strategic funding opportunities, illustrate the complementary impact and enabling nature of WPP work, demonstrate human resource capacity and thematic policy expertise at regional and country levels to deliver on the mandate, present a stronger evidence base for strategic funding opportunities and communicate the need for more holistic or full cycle approaches to achieve sustainable results. The development of regional Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership Flagship Programme Initiative (WPEL-FPI) to support resource mobilization at the regional level is also desirable. UN Women should use innovative and flexible funding mechanisms and longer-term national and regional level funding strategies. UN Women should advocate vis-à-vis UNDP for an increased share of external resources leveraged in WPP.

Recommendation 5: UN Women should consistently prioritize Leave No One Behind (LNOB) within its WPP programming at the global, regional and country levels and build an evidence base that can feed into its global normative and advocacy work.

UN Women should (i) strengthen and increase partnerships and networks with marginalized groups at the country level; (ii) develop tailored strategies, seeking to fill basic data gaps on marginalized voices and vulnerable groups at country level; (iii) implement programme models relevant to marginalized groups' needs (e.g. citizenship/voter registration, VAWP protections, dialogue with local governments and constituency engagement); (iv) strengthen knowledge management and results monitoring systems to better plan, document and report on work with marginalized groups, as well as how best to engage and support their political empowerment; and (v) support learning on prioritization through development of strategic pilots, careful testing and scale-up as necessary.

Recommendation 6: UN Women should invest in new programming on social norms change, which complements its WPP work and develop effective methods to monitor and report on progress in the long-term.

UN Women should select specific sub-thematic areas and activities within which to focus social norm change strategies, prioritizing those that allow for leveraging work in other areas for maximum effect. It also would be helpful to build on existing upstream and downstream work to affect social norm change, identifying the appropriate sequencing of activities for mutual reinforcement of symbolic, descriptive and substantive work to achieve greater effectiveness. In addition, UN Women should strengthen and adopt new monitoring methods that provide evidence of the effectiveness of social norm change efforts for WPP over time. This requires training and guidance to staff and could make use of new technologies, such as

big data in partnership with the Innovation Facility, the Strategic Planning, Programme and Effectiveness Unit and the Research and Data Section for potential synergies or links to SDG monitoring efforts.

SUMMARY MATRIX OF EVALUATION RESULTS



FINDINGS



CONCLUSIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

Relevance

1. WPP is a highly relevant area of work and will remain so during the SDG era. →
2. WPP programming is not sufficiently relevant to the needs and interests of marginalized women. →
3. Corporate vision and strategy on WPP is clear, while sub-thematic areas may require further clarity. →
4. UN Women has been responsive to country contexts by successfully adapting to political opportunities and challenges in many countries (with room for risk management strengthening). →
5. UN Women draws its relevance for working on this politically sensitive thematic area from its position as both an impartial actor and the global lead agency on GEWE. →
6. A focus on women's political empowerment is essential and important, but sustaining gains requires addressing and influencing social norms on gender equality. →

Effectiveness

7. UN Women has been very effective in assisting Member States in strengthening inter-governmental norms, policies and standards at the global level. →
8. The challenges UN Women faces at the country level to implement its coordination mandate on WPP are connected to competing interpretations of mandates and roles, as well as priorities and capacities. →
9. UN Women has contributed to strengthening normative frameworks at the country level; further monitoring for signs of regression and implementation extending to the sub-national level would support the sustainability of these gains. →
10. UN Women has contributed to strengthening women's capacity and influence in parliaments; there is scope to work with partners to increase constituency outreach capacity and shift parliamentary procedures and norms. →
11. UN Women has been effective in supporting gender mainstreaming in a number of electoral management bodies, a more consistent application of an electoral cycle process would further strengthen and sustain results to support inclusive electoral processes. →
12. UN Women has contributed to raising awareness on the emerging issue of VAWP at the global level and is well positioned to build on some early operational responses and lessons to accelerate progress. →
13. UN Women has shown leadership in establishing a global methodology for tracking SDG indicator 5.5.1b on women's representation in local governments that can be leveraged to bolster its coordination and operational work at the country-level, and synergies with local governance. →
14. Corporate frameworks to guide UN Women's efforts on transformational leadership would strengthen efforts to develop women's capacity to engage as leaders in political life and facilitate synergies across thematic areas. →

Efficiency

15. Shortage of staffing in terms of overall numbers and varying levels of specialized expertise at the sub-national, country and regional levels affect UN Women's ability to plan for and deliver results. →
16. Despite recent increases in funding and pledges demonstrating potential donors' interest, WPP work is under-resourced and could benefit from a more, comprehensive thematic fundraising strategy that addresses regional differences. →
17. UN Women's external WPP knowledge products are highly valued. At the same time, there is demand for increased cross-country, cross-regional and cross-thematic communication and internal knowledge management on WPP to share experiences, lessons learned and strategies for addressing challenges. →
18. Closing corporate gaps identified in reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems would allow for better assessment of WPP results. →
19. UN Women can build on and improve its strong partnerships on WPP by coordinating at the country level and expanding outreach to organizations of marginalized groups, regional and sub-regional organizations and political parties. →

Sustainability

20. There is no explicit definition of sustainability for WPP, and it is not consistently prioritized or incorporated in planning documents. →

REFLECTIONS

1. UN Women may wish to further explore the connection between WPP and environments to increase relevance to stakeholder demands and interests in implementing the SDGs.
2. UN Women may wish to consider the value of maintaining a strong distinction between local government and local governance work in an era of systemic frameworks that emphasize interconnections and synergies.
3. UN Women could further invest in ways to strengthen and shift monitoring and evaluation systems to capture the sustainability and impact of WPP results.
4. UN Women's WPP work would likely benefit from overall corporate harmonization and strengthening around cross-cutting programmatic issues.

1. The 2030 Agenda and the SDG framework's systemic approach situates UN Women as the key UN actor and thought leader for providing integrated policy advice on WPP. →
 2. In order to be 'fit-for-purpose' to support SDG implementation, UN Women would benefit from adopting a thematic lens for strengthening its internal capacities and resources to match desired impact with delivery capacity on WPP. →
 3. UN reform efforts provide new opportunities, as well as challenges to implementing its coordination role on WPP, especially at the country level. →
 4. Although UN Women has demonstrated effectiveness across its normative and operational work, it could increase the level and sustainability of its results by adopting a more systemic and holistic approach to its programmatic work. →
 5. UN Women needs to prioritize and increase its efforts to address marginalization within its WPP work. →
 6. Work on social norm change to support WPP is a promising yet under-developed area of programming for WPP. →
1. In a context of wide-ranging demands and limited resources, UN Women needs to strengthen its prioritization capacity at the country level to contribute strategic and sustainable results on WPP. →
 2. To strengthen implementation of its coordination mandate, UN Women should establish a clear division of labour with other UN agencies around potentially overlapping mandates. It also should provide thematic operational guidance on planning and implementing its coordination role at the country and regional levels. →
 3. UN Women should develop a long-term WPP capacity strengthening plan to enhance its ability to deliver results and meet stakeholder requests. →
 4. UN Women should invest in a thematic resource mobilization approach that builds on existing, innovative, flexible and longer-term funding mechanisms and that addresses regional priorities. →
 5. UN Women should consistently prioritize Leave No One Behind (LNOB) within its WPP programming at the global, regional and country levels and build an evidence base that can feed into its global normative and advocacy work. →
 6. UN Women should invest in new programming on social norms change, which complements its WPP work and develop effective methods to monitor and report on progress in the long-term. →

A. BACKGROUND

1 WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

From the local to the global level, opportunities for women's participation and leadership in political life are restricted. Women are underrepresented in parliaments, local governments, constitutional drafting bodies, political parties, executive branches and as heads of state and/or government, despite their proven abilities, their positive impact for development² and their right to participate equally in governance and decision-making bodies. Aside from political institutions and processes, there are a number of other public and civic spaces, such as the judiciary, civil society and the media, that influence Women's Political Participation (WPP). Women face multiple obstacles to participating in political life. Cultural norms, structural barriers (such as possession of identity documents required for voter and candidate registration), mobility or security challenges, child care and domestic work, discriminatory laws, disparities in financial resources and networks, and gendered institutions (such as male-dominated political parties) limit women's opportunities to run for and be elected to political office. Gender bias in the media and Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) represent additional impediments to participation.

Additionally, the current state of democratic governance in the world is a matter of concern, with experts pointing to a period of at least moderate 'democratic decline,' particularly in the areas of freedom of expression and association.³ There is no clear-cut democratic trajectory, and the prospect of violent conflict looms over many transition processes, threatening to derail the development of stable institutions.⁴

Though the relationship between democratic openness⁵ and levels of women's participation is variable, challenges and opportunities for gender equality are shaped in large part by the political context.⁶ While recognizing that the ideal functioning of democracy is unachievable⁷, it is possible to consider a continuum with some countries far closer to achieving full democracy than others. In those contexts where democratic space is restricted, there are limited opportunities for activism that challenge prevailing political, economic and social norms. Under these circumstances, women's groups can be severely constrained. Fragile contexts⁸ are not generally conducive to women's empowerment. One indicator of this is the lack of women political leaders in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Even when women are side-lined from formal processes, however, feminist organizations have often mobilized for gender equality gains during peacebuilding and constitution-building

² For research on the positive impact of women's participation in peacebuilding processes and development outcomes see: "Quantitative Analysis of Women's participation in Peace Processes" In *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes, Annex II*. New York: International Peace Institute and Chattopadhyay, R. and E. Duflo. 2004. "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India" In *Econometrica* 72(5), pp. 1409–1443.

³ Diamond, L. "Democracy in Decline: How Washington Can Reverse the Tide," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2016 Issue. Accessed 30 January 2018.; Freedom House. 2016. "Freedom in the World 2016." Accessed 30 January 2018. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016>; Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index. 2015. "Democracy Index Database." Accessed 30 January 2018. https://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=DemocracyIndex2015.

⁴ Carothers, T. 2002. "The End of the Democratic Transition Paradigm" In *Journal of Democracy* 13(1), pp.5-21.

⁵ It should be noted that the UN concept of democracy is holistic, including "the procedural and the substantive; formal institutions and informal processes; majorities and minorities; men and women; governments and civil society; and the political and the economic at the national and the local levels. UN Secretary-General (UNSG). 2009. "Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Democracy." <http://www.un.org/en/pdfs/FINAL%20Guidance%20Note%20on%20Democracy.pdf>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

⁶ Carothers, T. 2016. *Democracy Support Strategies: Leading with Women's Empowerment*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁷ UN Secretary-General (UNSG). 2009. "Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Democracy." <http://www.un.org/en/pdfs/FINAL%20Guidance%20Note%20on%20Democracy.pdf>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

⁸ Defined as "those countries and territories experiencing armed conflict, emerging from armed conflict or affected by acute political, social, and economic vulnerability and susceptible to chronic forms of organized criminal violence." UNDP. *Governance for Peace: Securing the Social Contract*. 2012.

processes.⁹ While women are usually more negatively affected in countries immersed in conflict, post-conflict constitutional and legislative reform processes have often represented critical opportunities for the advancement of gender equality, women's rights and increases in women's political representation.¹⁰

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women has a universal mandate to lead, promote and coordinate efforts to advance the full realization of women's rights and opportunities. This involves supporting inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms; helping Member States to implement these standards by standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it and to forge effective partnerships with civil society; and leading and coordinating the UN system's work on gender equality, as well as promoting accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

UN Women's response to the under-representation of women in political life is defined in its two successive Strategic Plans (SP) covering the period 2011-2017^{11,12} where it was one of six core impact areas that UN Women aimed to contribute to at the global, regional and national levels. From 2011-2017 (the scope of this evaluation) the level of investment in WPP was estimated at US\$203.5 million¹³ in 100 countries over the entire evaluation period. Despite financing fluctuations¹⁴, UN Women supported WPP programmes in more countries than any other area of work (e.g., 91 out of 93 countries in 2016). In 2015, UN Women developed 12 Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) to deepen the transformative potential of UN Women interventions, including one on WPP – the Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership Flagship Programme Initiative (WPEL-FPI).

The above sets the framework for UN Women's efforts in support of Member States to address structural barriers to women's leadership and political participation by leveraging its integrated mandate:

- Through its **normative support function**, UN Women provides policy support for the advancement of normative frameworks and inter-governmental processes, including implementation of the SDGs with a focus on Target 5.5.
- Through its **operational activities**, UN Women provides demand-driven policy advice, technical assistance and comparative knowledge to UN Women field offices and key national partners like constitutional committees, legislative drafting and electoral management bodies, parliaments, women leaders and political aspirants. This involves partnerships for knowledge products and tools for country implementation. Support also includes, as appropriate, capacity development to translate global norms into national policies, programmes, plans and practices.
- Through its **UN system coordination function**, UN Women provides gender equality expertise through the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance (ICMEA) and substantive contribution to policy papers issued by the UN Focal Point on Electoral Assistance, Department of Political Affairs (DPA). Global advocacy and partnerships are integral aspects of this work, particularly in the areas of VAWP and discriminatory laws.

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs – the Netherlands WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform. 2015. *State of Affairs in Women, Peace and Security*. The Hague, Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law.

¹⁰ Tripp, A. 2015. *Women and Power in Post-Conflict Africa*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ UN Women. 2011. *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Strategic Plan 2011-2013*. UNW/2011/9.

¹² UN Women. 2013. *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2014-2017*. UNW/2013/6.

¹³ In the period between 2011 and 2016, according to the data provided by UN Women Annual Report Data Companion of 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

¹⁴ Its annual budget increased from US\$35 million (2011) to US\$39.4 million (2016), with a decrease in funding between 2014 and 2015. In the period between 2014 to 2016, around 80 per cent of resources was provided through non-core resources. UN Women main donors between 2012 and 2016 were the governments of Spain, Norway and Sweden, with partnerships with UNDP and the MDTF also constituting significant additions to the organization's resources on WPP.

The programmatic work on WPP focuses on five sub-thematic areas: constitutional and legal reform, including Temporary Special Measures (TSM); inclusive electoral processes; parliamentary support; local government; and VAWP, along with one cross-cutting area of leadership in political life.¹⁵ Consistent with UN Women’s integrated mandate, WPP also encompasses coordination within the UN System and global normative support work to intergovernmental bodies.

The policy work in the WPP thematic area is led at the Headquarters (HQ) level by the Women’s Political Participation Unit (HQ WPP Unit) under the Leadership and Governance Section, Policy Division.¹⁶ At the regional level, the thematic area is supported by two dedicated regional policy advisors, covering the Americas and the Caribbean (AC) and Arab States (AS) regions, and reporting to the Programme Division.¹⁷ Varying levels of capacity on WPP exist at the country level, where the majority of activities are implemented.

At the global level, key UN Women partners in this thematic area include United Nations entities (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs as UN Focal Point for Electoral Assistance; and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations’ Department of Field Support (DPKO-DFS). They also include inter-agency coordination mechanisms (e.g., ICMEA), intergovernmental mechanisms (e.g., the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Committee (CEDAW), other special procedures and/or regional HR mechanisms). Among other partners are international organizations (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)); foundations; party international groups¹⁸; Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs); academia; the private sector; and bilateral donors. A joint partnership on WPP includes the *iKNOW Politics* knowledge platform implemented in partnership with IPU, International IDEA and UNDP.

UN Women also engages with regional organizations, including the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States, Parlatino and the Organization of American States (OAS).

¹⁵ Type of actions included for each sub-theme include (i) constitutional and legal reform: support to constitutional reform, changes in legal frameworks and support to implementation and regulation of TSMs, including quotas; (ii) for elections: support gender mainstreaming in EMBs and technical assistance to electoral stakeholders to promote inclusive electoral processes, including through EMB’s sex-disaggregated data collection and gender-responsive electoral arrangements (i.e., voter registration, gender sensitive civic education and voter outreach); (iii) for parliaments: support to Parliamentary Secretaries and Committees, members of parliament, capacity-building, gender awareness training, regional parliamentary bodies; (iv) for local government: monitoring of SDG target indicator 5.5.1b, awareness raising, capacity building and partnerships with local councils, support to community-level/sub-national gender advocates, EMB support towards local level participation; and (v) for VAWP: knowledge generation and development of tools for country implementation, global normative agenda on VAWP, research and building the evidence base at all levels, targeted support programming responses to prevent, monitor and mitigate VAWP throughout the electoral cycle.

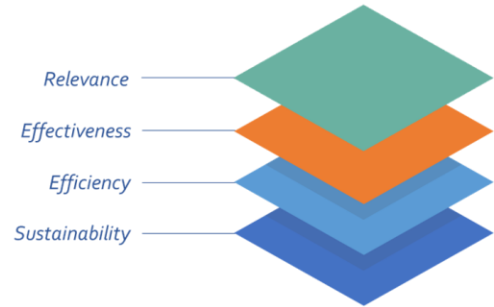
¹⁶ The four other thematic sections under the Leadership and Governance Section are (i) Gender Equality and HIV/AIDS; (ii) Human Rights; (iii) Governance and National Planning; and (iv) Constitutions and Access to Justice.

¹⁷ The other Thematic Section under the Policy Division are: (i) Economic Empowerment; (ii) Ending Violence Against Women; (iii) Peace and Security; (iv) Research and Data; and (v) UN Women Training Center.

¹⁸ Includes the German Stiftung, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute and the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy.

2 EVALUATION BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES



EO1: To assess the strategic relevance and positioning of UN Women’s work on WPP given the broader development policy context and its role in the SDGs.

EO2: To assess the effectiveness of UN Women’s work on WPP across its integrated mandate (and in different geographic and governance contexts) given UN Women’s level of presence and strategy, and across sub-thematic areas.

EO3: To assess the efficiency of UN Women’s structures and internal institutional arrangements, including its knowledge management systems and programmatic coordination to promote WPP.

EO4: To assess the extent to which UN Women’s positioning and contribution towards results and momentum on WPP is sustainable for women at individual, collective and systemic levels and in relation to the SDGs.

Figure 1 - Evaluation Objectives (EO)

normative work to support inter-governmental bodies (such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly); its **operational work** to help Member States implement international standards and to forge effective partnerships with civil society; and its **coordination work** to hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on equality, as well as coordination at the national level, which can include UN system coordination at corporate and field levels and inter-agency mechanisms for thematic areas.²³ It also looks more broadly at UN Women’s positioning and strategic niche in this area, taking into account:

- The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which contain the standalone **“Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”** and mainstreaming of gender equality issues across other goals. SDG Target 5.5²⁴ addressed WPP, with UN Women taking on the role of custodian of the indicator related to local government, among other indicators under Goal 5.²⁵

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) undertakes corporate strategic evaluations of the six impact areas under UN Women’s SP (2014-2017).¹⁹ The *Corporate Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to Women’s Political Participation (WPP) and Leadership* is a significant evaluation aimed at supporting learning, decision-making and accountability for UN Women and its partners.²⁰

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess UN Women’s cumulative contribution towards women’s ability to “lead and participate in decision-making at all levels”²¹ from 2011-2016, and to provide evidence from past practice to inform its future strategic planning and implementation on this thematic area of WPP and leadership under SP (2018-2021). The evaluation had four key objectives aligned with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC)²² evaluation criteria of “relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability” (Figure 1).

The evaluation covers global contributions from 2011-2017 across UN Women’s integrated mandate which include its

¹⁹ UN Women. February 2014. “2014-2017 Independent Evaluation Office Corporate Evaluation Plan.”
²⁰ The other two goal areas (Ending Violence Against Women and Peace & Security) were evaluated under the previous Independent Evaluation Office Corporate Evaluation Plan (2011-2013).
²¹ UN Women. 2013. *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2014-2017*. UNW/2013/6
²² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance. 1991. “DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance.” <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/49756382.pdf>. Accessed 22 May 2018.
²³ UN Women. February 2016. “Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to United Nations System Coordination on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW).”
²⁴ “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, will measure progress by the percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments and at the local level with the indicators 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments; and 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions being particularly pertinent for UN Women’s engagement in monitoring.
²⁵ In addition, the conclusions of the CSW60 (2016) provide a roadmap for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda with strengthening women’s leadership and women’s full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development as one of five areas of action.

- The Secretary-General of the United Nations' call to action²⁶ through the repositioning of the UNDS, with imperatives, such as improving coordination of UN entities, integrating approaches to national capacity-building and strengthening system-wide governance and oversight of the UNDS's support to the 2030 Agenda. For UN Women, this repositioning elevates coordination support to countries for integrated policy advice and greater coherence at all levels through a reinvigorated UN Resident Coordinator system.
- SP (2018-2021) endorsed the co-location of former Impact Area 1 (political participation and leadership) and Impact Area 5 (national planning and budgeting) as standalone outputs under Outcome 2 related to governance systems: 'Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems.'
- The reduction of activities of the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality (FGE), a grant-making modality to civil society organizations (CSO) engaged in political empowerment activities, starting in 2017.

This evaluation adopted a systemic evaluation approach²⁷ called the *Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMs)*. It combines innovative systemic evaluation practice with intersectional analysis²⁸ of three dimensions: Gender equality, Environment and Marginalized voices (GEMs). The use of the approach is a flexible response to the shift in the development and evaluation community to more systemic approaches, including the 2030 Agenda and further builds on the human-rights and gender-responsive evaluation approaches of other evaluations. It also responds to the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination's (CEB) endorsement of applying systems thinking to address challenges. As it did not specifically feature in the SPs, the environment dimension was addressed in a formative manner to support learning and future considerations.

The evaluation was conducted in line with gender equality and human rights principles as defined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy, the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation²⁹ in the UN System and UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct.³⁰ The ISE4GEMs approach emphasized the identification and inclusion of marginalized voices (youth, rural women, indigenous groups, etc.) within the data collection where feasible and ethical. To address thematic information needs, the evaluation sampled six cases that served as inputs to the evaluation report: five sub-thematic areas (constitutional and legal reform, including Temporary Special Measures (TSM); inclusive electoral processes; parliamentary support; Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP); and local government) along with one cross-cutting area, leadership.

A mixed-methods approach was applied, involving a blend of qualitative and quantitative data collection, along with analysis methods of different data sources for consistency, validity and reliability. Flexible and adaptable, the methodology focused on ethical implementation to avoid harm to any participant and paid special attention to those with identified vulnerabilities. Data collection was conducted in cycles. It used alternative methods when those selected became inappropriate or not feasible for gathering the data intended based on specific circumstances. A process of boundary analysis also was conducted at the end of each data collection cycle to determine if the evaluation boundary required expansion (e.g., to include relevant emergent issues) or contraction (e.g., because ethical issues did not allow participation by some stakeholders). A process of systemic triangulations analysis was finally undertaken – allowing for interpretation against multiple perspectives and consistency, validity and reliability – to arrive at key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

²⁶ ECOSOC (United Nations Economic and Social Council). 2017. "Repositioning the UN Development System to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda—Ensuring a Better Future for All. Report of the Secretary-General." Available at: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-on-unds-qcpr-june-2017.pdf>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

²⁷ For more information on the evaluation approach and methodology, please see Annex 6.

²⁸ Intersectionality refers to the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination.

²⁹ UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group). 2016. "Norms and Standards for Evaluation." <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

³⁰ UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group). 2014. "Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance." <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

The evaluation draws on the totality of the evidence collected as part of the evaluation process. This included:

- Portfolio analysis that fed into the boundary story and evaluability assessment (see below). It included a sample of 43 countries (about 50 per cent of the global portfolio) and the following data collection methods:
 - Two online surveys administered to 246 internal respondents, including UN Women staff and consultants (representing a 25 per cent response rate) and 119 external respondents (representing a 26 per cent response rate), including 65 CSO representatives, five donor representatives, 19 government agency representatives, six intergovernmental body representatives, five parliament representatives, 12 UN partners and seven partners from university and research institutions;
 - 37 scoping interviews with 48 individuals (8 male and 40 female); and
 - Approximately 575 documents reviewed.
- Development of a boundary story of UN Women’s Work on WPP, which is a narrative built on a comprehensive portfolio analysis, scoping interviews and an evaluability assessment that sought to provide a holistic picture of UN Women’s past and ongoing work on WPP from the perspective of UN Women staff at all levels. The analysis of the boundary story was used to develop the corresponding evaluation boundary and involved decision-making about what should and was possible to include within this evaluation.
- The evaluability assessment identified the extent to which (i) the object of the evaluation was defined; (ii) progress towards results was measurable; and (iii) data was available. Following the ISE4GEMs approach, the evaluability assessment incorporated elements of gender, environment and marginalized voices.
- The in-depth analysis of a sample of 24 countries (about half of the larger sample) with:
 - 359 interviews;
 - Six in-country field visits (DRC, Egypt, Malawi, Mexico, Pakistan and Zimbabwe) covering five regions (Western and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, AC, Arab States, and Asia and the Pacific); the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region was covered remotely; and
 - Five WPP sub-thematic areas and one cross-cutting theme sampled based on (i) UN Women scope of work to produce meaningful results and (ii) emerging areas of work to draw meaningful lessons for the future.

A number of limitations have been identified for this evaluation process. Mitigation strategies were identified and implemented where possible to address them:

- To overcome the limitation of a lack of conceptual clarity around leadership in both SPs, and because leadership is a cross-cutting issue throughout the organization, the evaluation team used online surveys and interviews to obtain feedback on how the concept of leadership was defined in practice by internal and external stakeholders. As a result, the evaluation focused on leadership in political life and looked at pathways to leadership in terms of active citizenship.
- As the evaluation team found that the operational mandate dominates current M&E reporting systems, it sought to harvest views and results on other aspects of the integrated mandate through interviews and survey questions.
- Corporate limitations and constraints reside in the reporting and financial information. In some cases, the evaluation team relied on reports provided by UN Women teams and was not in a position to verify results or UN Women’s contribution. There also were challenges in obtaining financial information for this evaluation because the Chart of Accounts in ATLAS is limited and did not provide a field for thematic tagging. Going forward, the Results Management System (RMS) and ATLAS linkage will allow for financial reporting for strategic plan outcomes. The evaluation triangulated information, as far as possible,

between evaluative information where present and country offices, headquarters and other stakeholders inside and outside the UN system to contextualize the findings and highlight the implications of these institutional challenges, acknowledging that these challenges do not refer to this area alone.

- To mitigate for in-country evaluation fatigue, the evaluation sought to maximize use of existing evaluation processes. It coordinated with country evaluations taking place at the same time and selected countries that had not been recently evaluated. The evaluation also took advantage of the neighbouring countries of Malawi and Zimbabwe to split a mission into two visits. This allowed for broader regional thematic coverage due to the complementarity of visits' scope and for cost-efficiency. Finally, as the evaluation budget covered five of the six regions, the evaluation undertook in-depth interviews via Skype for the ECA region.
- Despite limited possibility to meet and engage with vulnerable or marginalized groups outside of the country capitals, the evaluation reached out to marginalized groups where feasible (Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zimbabwe) and systematically collected data on marginalization through its methodological approach.
- For communicational purposes, the evaluation changed the acronym from Women's Leadership and Political Participation (WLPP) to WPP and Leadership during the reporting phase. Since survey questions used the original WLPP formulation, the evaluation report contains both acronyms.

B. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The data collected for this evaluation was analysed to develop 20 key findings organized around the evaluation criteria, the integrated mandate areas, the five WPP sub-thematic areas and the one cross-cutting theme selected for this evaluation: (i) constitutional and legal reform, including TSM; (ii) inclusive electoral processes; (iii) parliamentary support; (iv) local government; (v) VAWP; and (iv) leadership.

1 RELEVANCE

Q1: Does the scope and focus of WPP work – overall and per sub-theme – create the best opportunity for UN Women to contribute to change that responds to global, regional and national priorities?

Finding 1: WPP is a highly relevant area of work for UN Women and will remain so during the SDG era.

Internal and external stakeholders were unanimous in highlighting the relevance of UN Women to engage on WPP.³¹ The most commonly cited reasons given to support this included:

- Statistical evidence that shows women lag behind men in terms of representation on every level, including in the parliamentary, local and executive spheres;
- Women's equal representation in political spaces (**descriptive representation**) is a fundamental human right grounded in international law and commitments;³²
- Progress in this area is a critical entry point for achieving GEWE progress in other key thematic areas (**substantive representation**) by helping to ensure that women's interests and perspectives are included in policy debates.

³¹ Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network. 2014. "2014 Assessment: UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women." <http://www.mopanonline.org/Assessments/UNWomen2014/>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

³² This includes CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and Sustainable Development Goal 5.

The work on this thematic area is aligned with the 2030 Agenda and, in fact, contributes to its achievement. The continued relevance for UN Women is supported by stakeholder interviews. It also is supported by a draft internal study commissioned by UN Women in which ‘female leadership in public life’ was identified as the second highest priority area for donors and partners/beneficiaries³³ and external survey results where 75 per cent of respondents perceived UN Women as a credible and leading player in the thematic area. Globally, UN Women’s continuing relevance to engage in this work is also evidenced by partner support and agreement for the organization to take on the role of custodian for indicator SDG 5.5.1b on local government: ‘proportion of seats held by women in local governments’. At the regional and country-level, sustained relevance is supported by the fact that UN Women – which aligns its work at country level with national priorities – reported the inclusion of WPP as a priority in more countries where it works (91 of 93 in 2016) than any other thematic area.³⁴

The evaluation also found that the relevance of UN Women’s mandate was particularly high in terms of coordination work,³⁵ inter-governmental normative activities and the translation of global normative frameworks to the national level through constitutional/legislative reforms. The majority of stakeholders perceived that these areas play to UN Women’s unique mandate and strengths. The relevance of its operational work beyond constitutional and legislative reforms was found to be generally relevant, but more uneven and dependent on other specific country-level internal and external factors. Internally, this included capacity limitations – both human and financial – which affected both delivery and the ability to mobilize resources to support work undertaken on a larger and more sustained scale needed to accelerate progress.³⁶ It was also dependent on UN Women’s comparative advantage in terms of other actors operating on the ground and affected by competing coordination mandates (e.g., around elections).³⁷

The five sub-thematic areas and the one cross-cutting theme assessed as part of this evaluation were found to be relevant, but perceptions of relevance, however, were uneven among sub-themes (and activities within sub-themes) due to variations in country contexts. The variations include national priorities, the actors engaged on each sub-theme, the political context and resultant opportunities and challenges (e.g., election period, decentralization processes in several countries, such as in Pakistan and DRC, and backlash to progress)³⁸ that are not static, but shift over time. Among other contextual shifts that affect relevance are changes in the global context, UN reform efforts and partnerships at the country-level. UN Women’s normative work on local government, for instance, reinforces the relevance of its role to engage on this sub-thematic area at country level.

UN Women’s role in supporting SDG implementation provides opportunities to focus and further strengthen the relevance of UN Women’s work. The organization’s existing human and financial capacity – and its ability to mobilize additional capacity – to expand its work was perceived by internal and external stakeholders as a key factor to consider in taking on additional work. However, there was general support for UN Women to increase its focus or reposition itself within the existing sub-thematic areas in which it currently works and where there are gaps in global leadership. Three considerations are highlighted below:

- The mandate for ‘universality’ implies that sustainable development principles apply to all countries, not only the 93 presence countries where UN Women is now engaged. While not explicitly captured in strategic planning documents and results tracking, UN Women could further leverage its existing inter-governmental normative work for broader global impact and enhanced coordination given that levels of

³³ Boston Consulting Group. August 2017. “Draft Internal Report Business Planning for Strategic Plan Implementation.”

³⁴ UN Women. 2016. *Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the strategic plan, 2014-2017, including the midterm review of the strategic plan*. UNW/DEC/2016/1

³⁵ 80 per cent of external stakeholders surveyed found that on this thematic area within the UN System, UN Women has a clearly defined and highly relevant role.

³⁶ See also: Finding 15.

³⁷ See also: Finding 8.

³⁸ Interviews, survey data and desk review substantiated this finding.

female representation in public life is a global issue that affects Member States, whether they are donor or partner countries. Additionally, some donors interviewed expressed interest in receiving policy advice on how they could enhance the focus and impact of their international cooperation portfolios related to this thematic area.

- Focusing efforts on 'local government' is supported by UN Women's role as custodian of SDG Indicator 5.5.1b, the limited engagement in this sub-thematic area by other UN and non-UN actors, decentralization processes underway in many countries where UN Women works, the lack of information on the extent of inequalities at this level, the opportunity to reach the most marginalized, and synergies with other SDG goals related to inclusive governance (SDG 16) and output areas under the governance outcome of the new SP (2018-2021).
- An emergent reaction (or backlash) of women realizing their right to political participation, the issue of VAWP has been prioritized at the global level and received more attention as a key barrier for advancing in this thematic area.³⁹ VAWP is in need of a global lead to move the issue forward in terms of convening international actors, improving data collection related to incidence of VAWP and developing effective guidance and programmatic responses. Like local level government, this area also enables synergies with other global targets related to Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) more broadly and with UN Women's thematic areas.

Finding 2: WPP programming is not sufficiently relevant to the needs and interests of marginalized women.

A majority of staff (61 per cent) and partners (71 per cent) surveyed strongly or somewhat agreed that UN Women's WPP work has been inclusive. Though approaches were not consistently applied, site visits and documentation found a number of good practices (e.g., work with Roma women in Moldova, young women in Tanzania and a report on indigenous women in the AC region).

However, there is strong stakeholder demand for greater attention to LNOB, as part of the human rights-based approach to programming and a cross-cutting issue of the SDGs. Survey and interview data found that the stakeholders were in general agreement about the strategies that could be adopted to improve UN Women's focus on marginalized groups. They broadly focused on adapting programmes to better address the needs of marginalized women and building a better evidence base on different sub-groups, given the dearth of critical data, which is an important element for effective work and follow-up with marginalized groups. Disaggregated data on marginalized populations are rarely made available by government agencies and are generally lacking in the agenda of international organizations as well.⁴⁰

While the human rights-based approach is an integral part of all SPs – and there is strong evidence supporting UN Women's engagement with both duty-bearers and rights-holders – the evidence for inclusion of marginalized groups was not as robust. Disaggregation was not consistently required in UN Women's planning or reporting documents on WPP and is not reflected in SP targets, even though the WPEL Flagship Programme Initiative (WPEL-FPI) mentioned developing a 'diverse' cadre of women leaders. Nevertheless, some COs have detailed analyses of the needs of specific marginalized groups and tailored support strategies accordingly. Stakeholders pointed to resources as a barrier to addressing this gap, but some saw potential for collaborative work with partners in relation to SDG 16 to enhance this work. A number of additional entry points were identified where UN Women was considered well positioned to support inclusion across its sub-thematic areas:

³⁹ UN General Assembly. 2013. *Measures taken and progress achieved in the promotion of women and political participation*. A/68/184.

⁴⁰ See study by Llanos and Martinez for detailed review of WPP publications produced in Latin America and data gaps in terms of marginalized communities. Llanos, B and V. Rozas. 2015. "Partidos políticos y paridad: Un desafío de la democracia en América Latina." <https://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/7356/int320.PDF?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. Accessed 17 May 2018

- UN Women’s convening power is seen as critical in elevating marginalized voices and advocating for their place at the table.
- Programming in the area of ‘citizenship’ (supporting personal documentation and voting registration, as in Egypt, DRC, Pakistan and Malawi) is well-suited to support the political participation of marginalized women, as is local government, which is seen as ‘closer’ to the needs and interests of marginalized communities and an important space to engage with youth.
- In the parliamentary space, stakeholders highlighted the importance of the LNOB agenda, given the lack of incentives Members of Parliament (MPs) generally have for representing the needs of constituencies with limited political influence. One positive example was in Cambodia where UN Women facilitated informal dialogue spaces between MPs and youth leaders.
- UN Women could better leverage grant-making modalities for WPP, such as the Fund for Gender Equality that has been shown to have a comparative advantage to reach marginalized groups by supporting downstream work.⁴¹

Finding 3: Corporate vision and strategy on WPP is clear, while sub-thematic areas may require further clarity.

The evidence found that both internal and external stakeholders believe that UN Women’s strategy and vision on WPP is clear.⁴² Internal stakeholders indicated high levels of clarity at the corporate and country levels, but slightly less in relation to the regional level, despite the existence of regional notes, regional strategies and even a regional Theory of Change (ToC).⁴³ The AC region was an exception in that it had the highest level of respondents reporting that the vision and strategy were clear, perhaps a reflection of the fact that AC was one of only two regions with a Regional Policy Advisor and the only region with a fully-developed regional strategy. The also has potential to contribute to clarity of vision and programming coherence, including at the regional level. A majority (69 per cent) of staff surveyed believed that they had enhanced WPP relevance in their region. In at least one case (WCA) the WPEL-FPI has already been used for cross-country planning and could have supported recent resource mobilization.

Survey results revealed a potential disconnect between UN Women’s programming focus ‘upstream’ on policy work with electoral management bodies (EMBs), MPs and elected local officials, versus the perception held by many stakeholders that the scope of WPP should encompass work with community organizations, even at the grassroots level, such as water/school committees.⁴⁴ While this evaluation finds that the WPP focus on policy and institutional work is appropriate and in line with UN Women’s mandate and strengths and current level of resources, it is important to keep in mind that country offices are under constant pressure to widen their scope and that there are additional challenges for engaging ‘downstream’ at the grassroots level.⁴⁵ This gap between the perspective of many stakeholders and the actual focus of work on the ground highlights the need for clear communications (internal and external) on the strategic priorities and the justification behind them.

⁴¹ UN Women. April 2018. “Draft Evaluation of the Fund for Gender Equality.”

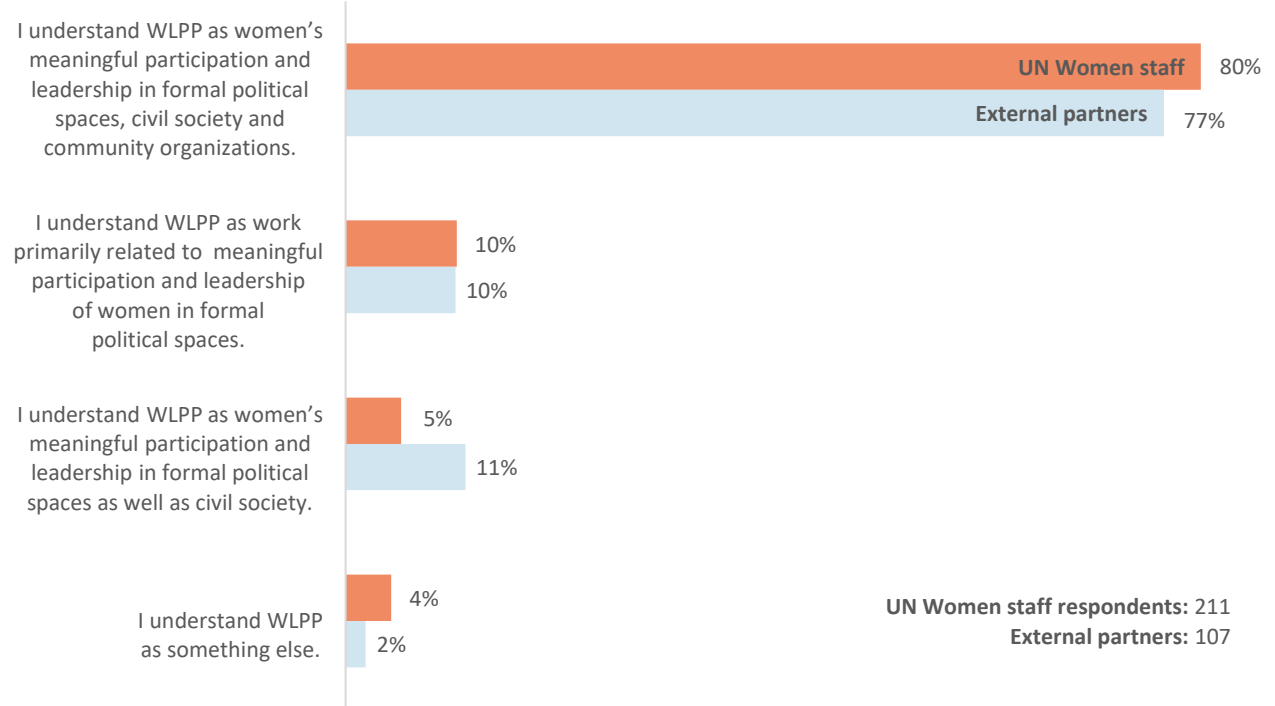
⁴² This is supported both by (i) interview data and (ii) survey results showing agreement by the majority of internal (77 per cent) and external (80 per cent) stakeholders.

⁴³ All regions developed strategic notes, three regions (AC, WCA and AS) developed regional strategies and one region (AS) developed a ToC.

⁴⁴ Both internal (80 per cent) and external (90 per cent) stakeholders surveyed “strongly” or “somewhat agreed” with this scope. This was also supported by the stakeholder interviews conducted.

⁴⁵ For example, civil society groups at the grassroots level might not meet the capacity threshold for corporate procurement processes.

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON THE DEFINITION OF WLPP



Source: Survey to UN Women staff and External partners for the corporate evaluation

Note: For communicational purposes, the evaluation changed the evaluation acronym from 'WLPP' (women's leadership and political participation) to WPP (women's political participation) during the evaluation process. Survey questions used WLPP which was the original formulation and as such the acronym is maintained in the survey graphs.

Figure 2 - Stakeholder Views on the Definition of WLPP

Other issues identified that may benefit from additional institutional clarity or guidance include:

- The concept of 'leadership' is referenced in planning documents and reports, although there is no formal definition of its meaning in terms of UN Women's work. The term 'transformational leadership' was also employed in a number of contexts⁴⁶ but was not well-defined, making it difficult to assess. There was general consensus that leadership work cuts across the work of the entire organization, including WPP where it applies only to political life.
- A framework more explicitly describing the linkages (and lessons learned) among descriptive representation (women elected to office), substantive representation (e.g., on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) policies) and symbolic representation (e.g. influence on social norms). While the WPP work is solidly grounded in human rights conventions, an understanding of the connections could unlock synergies, so that WPP with parliaments and local governments can have greater GEWE policy impact and becomes more sustainable through social norms shifts.
- Integration of the electoral cycle process into strategy and planning documents to support continued engagement. While at the global level, the electoral cycle process has been integrated into knowledge products (e.g. Inclusive Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) and Violence Against Women in Elections

⁴⁶ UN Women. 2016. UN Women Regional Office for Arab States Thematic Evaluation on Women's Political Participation." pp. 20-21.

(VAWE)), the concept could be further reinforced through integration with WPEL-FPI and its theory of change, for instance through linking the WPEL-FPI indicators to each of the phases of the electoral cycle.

- Clarification of the concept of ‘parity democracy.’ Though much of Latin America and some Francophone countries have embraced the concepts of ‘parity’ and/or ‘parity democracy,’ it lies outside the current normative framework (which is guided by the Beijing Platform’s ‘gender balance’ concept). In this context, reflection with interested regions and COs on the varying interpretations of parity and parity democracy, implementation lessons thus far and the relationship to the international normative framework and UN Women’s work in constitutional/legislative reforms could be beneficial.

Finding 4: UN Women has been responsive to country contexts by successfully adapting to political opportunities and challenges in many countries (with room for risk management strengthening).

As outlined in the 2016 Secretary-General Quadrennial Report, “Any problems that may arise cannot be resolved using universal development templates; the system needs to be as context-specific as possible, providing individual diagnoses and solutions. The different capacities and needs of countries require the development system to design individual, tailor-made approaches, reflecting the specific circumstances of every country.”⁴⁷ Evidence indicates that most UN Women programmes are consistent with national priorities and the demands of local stakeholders, but there is less evidence of the consistent use of capacity/needs assessments to inform design. A positive example can be found in South Sudan where UN Women conducted a comprehensive needs assessment as the basis for developing a resource centre for the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus of the National Assembly.

Staff and external stakeholders agree that UN Women is able to adapt to political opportunities. For the most part, UN Women country-level leadership and local staff are seen as ‘politically savvy’ and able to take advantage of political opportunities, although findings were uneven across countries. UN Women’s work was generally consistent with best practices associated with the ‘thinking and working politically’ approach, including “engaging with both the formal political space and the informal institutions, networks and forums of decision-making and negotiation around the rules of the game. Technical support – including in the form of gender or legal expertise – is unlikely to be useful or relevant if it is not aligned with and supportive of locally driven and locally owned change processes.”⁴⁸ Those COs found to be particularly adept at taking advantage of political opportunities tended to share some key traits: (i) flexible funding;⁴⁹ (ii) small-scale programming; and (iii) savvy leadership in terms of keen political analysis and strong political relationships. In these cases, UN Women was able to leverage its credibility and effectively advocate for political change, even in contexts of limited resources.

In contexts of ‘closing democratic space,’ several programs have adapted effectively, for example, by shifting support to the regional level, the subnational level or through links to public administration capacity building. ‘Citizenship’ programmes, in some countries, were testament to UN Women’s ability to respond to national contexts where women’s rights are challenged at the most basic level. These democratic challenges highlight the critical importance of UN Women’s capacity for ‘smart convening’ that includes (delicate) ‘leveraging of the (UN) flag,’ consistent commitment to neutrality principle (see Finding 5 below), use of informal spaces, bridging government and CSOs, linking national groups to international forums and UN/broader diplomatic community coordination.

⁴⁷ UN General Assembly. 2016. *Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system: recommendations, Report of the Secretary-General. A/71/292/Rev.1.*

⁴⁷ Domingo, P., R. Holmes, T. O’Neil, N. Jones, K. Bird, A. Larson, E. Presler-Marshall and C. Valters. 2015. *Women’s Voice and Leadership: Assessing the Evidence.* London: Overseas Development Institute.

⁴⁹ Such as the SIDA SPF-funded Women in Politics Fund.

One area where UN Women’s political adaptation could improve, however, is in the areas of risk identification and contingency planning. Experiences of political transition show both opportunities and risks for GEWE. For instance, studies highlight that, in some countries, women elected via TSMs may face stigma, friction with men in their surroundings, higher workloads and security threats.⁵⁰ However, a review of the risk registers for the evaluation’s 43 sample countries found that only three included mention of risks specific to WPP. The identification and analysis of risks is particularly important in order to anticipate and plan for the types of potential backlash and resistance referenced by numerous stakeholders that is the emergent (and temporary) result of progress.

Finally, while flexibility and adaptation are generally positive traits, it should be noted that this approach can lead to an ad hoc quality that is not without some potential challenges. In particular, to the extent that UN Women country offices are engaged in a wide variety of activities — rather than focusing on a few common programming models — it is more difficult for the agency to develop specific strategies and tools to operationalize outcomes, engage in shared institutional learning and develop common branding. Clear definition of the scope and prioritization of results within each sub-thematic area would support this effort.

Finding 5: UN Women draws its relevance for working on this politically sensitive thematic area from its position as both an impartial actor and the global lead agency on GEWE.

UN Women’s work requires it to be a neutral actor that is non-partisan and rights-based. Almost equally important is the perception by stakeholders of UN Women’s impartiality, which is necessary to generate the trust needed to conduct its operational work. One factor that was cited as providing an effective assurance of UN Women’s impartiality was the strong grounding of its programmatic work in the international normative framework and UN Policy Framework on Electoral Assistance overall. For example, a review of programme documents from the sample countries found that UN Women’s activities at the global, regional and national levels are consistently aligned with international frameworks and commitments. The ToC and results framework developed for the WPEL-FPI was also something that stakeholders found to be relevant to the global, regional and national contexts, supporting the coherence and neutrality of its work in different contexts.

The evaluation found numerous examples of UN Women’s commitment to impartiality, such as demonstrated in work with parliamentarians from parties across the political spectrum. While evidence was clear that UN Women operated as an impartial actor across the board, there were a few examples where the perception of UN Women’s impartiality was raised as an issue and potential reputational risk by a number of stakeholders. In certain contexts, something as seemingly innocuous as holding a training attended disproportionately by participants affiliated with one party or working closely to support a government agency (which invariably is linked to the party in power) may affect stakeholders’ perceptions. Should UN Women choose to work more with political parties, the issue of impartiality will become particularly crucial and may require further reflection and adherence to relevant system-wide policy frameworks.⁵¹ As mentioned in Finding 4, although an enterprise risk management system was recently rolled out across the organization, it has not yet been taken up as a tool to support the identification of such political risks and the mitigating actions that can be taken to guard against it (e.g. more effective communications and review of participant lists for trainings).

Finally, UN Women’s position as the lead agency on GEWE with a broad mandate strengthens its relevance to engage as a key actor in this thematic area. At the global level, the strong technical work of the organization on WPP is respected and demonstrated by the decision for UN Women to act as the custodian for SDG 5.5.1b.

⁵⁰ Eckert, S., K. Jun, S. Lean, N. Gerring, M. Lacouture, J. Liu, and A. Walter. 2017. “Strengthening Women’s Civic and Political Participation: A Synthesis of the Scholarly Literature.” *Research and Innovation Grants Working Papers Series*. Detroit: Wayne State University.

⁵¹ This would include the EAD framework for electoral assistance, staff rules and regulations and human resources code of conduct, and UN oath to preserve impartiality.

However, gaps in resources and staffing at the country level (and some regional offices), discussed in-depth under the efficiency section, can diminish stakeholders' perceptions of UN Women's relevance to engage in operational areas, apart from normative work at the country level.

Finding 6: A focus on women's political empowerment is essential and important, but sustaining gains requires addressing and influencing social norms on gender equality.

Changing social norms through the engagement of men and boys is challenging in general, but the difficulties are perhaps most acute in this thematic area due to zero-sum attitudes that hold that more women in politics means less space for men. In a survey of external stakeholders, lack of commitment from male political and civic leaders was identified as the second most significant challenge to women's political leadership. Despite consensus on the need to engage with men and boys, there is limited understanding of how to design and carry out such programming or advocacy.⁵² There was even less clarity on effective strategies for moving beyond 'engagement' to focus on transforming "the harmful forms of masculinity that are the root cause of gender inequality."⁵³

In comparison with the SPs, the WPEL-FPI puts greater emphasis on the area of social norms. While this inclusion is highly relevant to the current context — as evidenced by signs of 'backlash'— it presents challenges in terms of measurement, financial costs and UN Women's learning. The siloed manner in which UN Women works does not allow for leveraging of social norms change work across all themes and units in a coordinated way. Despite this, UN Women has engaged in several interesting WPP social norms efforts. In some countries, UN Women carried out public awareness campaigns to raise support for women's candidacies (e.g. Albania, Uruguay and Colombia). In Pakistan, a public awareness campaign to encourage registration and voting by women targeted religious and community leaders during voter registration drive efforts. Finally, work related to VAWP has a social norm component at its core. The UN Women-administered grant making modality, FGE, is also assessed to have a comparative advantage in work on social norms change through civil society organizations focused on women's empowerment.

There are a few positive examples specific to male engagement that could provide models for other country offices. The HeForShe campaign is an effort – across regions and thematic areas – aimed at encouraging men and boys to act as agents for change in favour of gender equality. At the global level, UN Women developed a HeForShe kit for parliaments and coordinated a launch of HeForShe at the IPU Global Assembly. In some countries, UN Women carried out events associated with the HeForShe campaign (Uruguay, Sierra Leone and Vietnam). In Ecuador, UN Women supported the Parliamentary Group on Women's Rights, which included ongoing active participation of male MPs. In Sierra Leone, UN Women engaged in outreach to traditional leaders (overwhelmingly male) in order to generate public support for WPP. In DRC, UN Women commissioned a masculinity study and engaged with masculinity clubs.

While the evaluation found cases of social norms engagement, it did not find that UN Women had invested in institutional learning, regarding effective programming models for tracking of results, which is difficult to measure and may require the use of creative tools and technology such as big data and machine learning methods to register shifts in media attitudes or public opinion via sources such as social media.^{54,55} Only about 50 per cent of

⁵² Some studies highlight the need to focus on family and schools as the arena for engagement. See: Miller, C. 2017. "How to Raise a Feminist Son." The New York Times. 05 June. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/02/upshot/how-to-raise-a-feminist-son.html?ref=nyt-es&mcid=nyt-es&subid=article>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

⁵³ MenEngage Alliance. 2017. "Masculinities in the Arab World: Trajectories to Peace and Gender Equality." http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/IMAGES-Discourses-reflections-from-the-conference_Lebanon.pdf. Accessed 17 May 2018.

⁵⁴ For an example of an innovative tool recently developed to track the presence of women in screen appearances, see: Ryzik, M. 2016. "How Long Is an Actress Onscreen? A New Tool Finds the Answer Faster." The New York Times. 14 September. <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/09/15/movies/geena-davis-inclusion-quotient-research.html>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

⁵⁵ Amnesty International. 2018. Toxic Twitter – A Toxic Place for Women. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-1/>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

internal and 53 per cent of external stakeholders surveyed believed (strongly or somewhat) that UN Women has effectively engaged with men and boys in its work on WPP. Two sub-thematic areas were identified where UN Women could play a more strategic role in this area in conjunction with their existing work: changing parliamentary norms and culture (which reflect a male-dominated view) and at the local government level where there are few evidence-based strategies. Finally, some stakeholders also called for programming on social norm change that targeted women and girls to counteract social norms around women acting as leaders or being effective leaders.

2 EFFECTIVENESS

Q2: How effective is UN Women in advancing WPP overall and in relation to sub-thematic components of the WPP agenda in different geographic and governance contexts (local, national, regional, global)?

2.1 GLOBAL NORMATIVE MANDATE

Finding 7: UN Women has been effective in assisting Member States in strengthening inter-governmental norms, policies and standards at the global level.

Inter-governmental normative frameworks provide critical grounding for UN Women’s work, as well as parameters and impetus for the development of laws and policies at the national level. UN Women’s ‘unique mandate’ as the UN agency charged with leading, promoting and coordinating efforts on women’s rights and gender equality leaves it strategically positioned to interface with Member States on inter-governmental norms.⁵⁶

External stakeholders highlighted UN Women’s strong technical reputation in relation to global normative frameworks and contribution of high-quality policy dialogue inputs. Though staffing levels at the global level are limited, UN Women has been able to offer leadership on inter-governmental processes and standards. Some of the key global normative achievements over the evaluation period include:

- On 19 September 2011, further to a General Assembly side event convened by UN Women and partners, top women leaders⁵⁷ signed the Joint Statement on Advancing Women’s Political Participation, which inspired the UN General Assembly Resolution 66/130 on Women and Political Participation in September 2011.
- Building on the recommendations of the 2013 Secretary-General Report on WPP, UN Women has acted as the custodian for SDG indicator 5.5.1b “proportion of seats held by women in local governments,” leading the development of the methodology for its measurement. One major achievement as part of this multiyear process was the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) re-classifying the indicator 5.5.1b (as well as 5.c.1) from Tier 3 (no internationally established methodology yet available) to Tier 2 (international established methodology available).

⁵⁶ Some external stakeholders contrasted the strong strategic advantage for normative work with those ‘downstream’ operational activities, such as capacity building, which are perceived as a more ‘crowded space’ that includes UNDP and numerous other IGOs and INGOs. UN Women’s global inter-governmental normative support on WPP was also perceived by a higher percentage of staff surveyed as “strongly/somewhat effective” (66 per cent) as compared with coordination work (46 per cent) or operational work, which ranged between 42 per cent and 48 per cent, depending on the sub-thematic area.

⁵⁷ Signatories of the joint statement included: H.E. Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil; Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; H.E. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States of America; Rt. Hon. Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission; H.E. Roza Otunbayeva, President of the Kyrgyz Republic; Lilia Labidi, Minister of Women’s Affairs, Republic of Tunisia; Helen Clark, Under-Secretary-General and Administrator, UN Development Programme; and Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

- Each year, UN Women and IPU convened MPs through the Parliamentary Meeting during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for MPs to contribute to the CSW theme and outcome document and ensure agreements reached are debated in parliaments at the national level.
- In partnership with Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Women co-hosted an Expert Group Meeting in 2017 to develop policy inputs on VAWP at the behest of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women for a forthcoming UN General Assembly Report on VAWP. These efforts are aligned with SDG 5 and with SP (2018-2021) Outcomes 2 (women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems) and Outcome 4 (all women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence).
- In coordination with UN Department of Political Affairs, UN Women provided substantive contributions on gender equality and women's political empowerment to the Report of the Secretary-General on Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU in 2016 and 2018 (forthcoming), with special attention to the issue of working with parliaments on VAWP.
- In coordination with the UN Electoral Assistance Division, which led the process, UN Women provided contributions on gender equality and women's political empowerment to the Report of the Secretary-General on *Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections*, as well as the promotion of democratization in 2013, 2015 and 2017.
- In coordination with UN Women Policy Section on Peace and Security, inputs on women and elections have been provided to the Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (2015 and 2016).
- UN Women also supported the organization of the High-Level Meeting of Women Leaders co-hosted by UN Women and the Government of Chile. The outcome document was endorsed and signed by participants in two subsequent High-Level Events in 2015: The Women in Parliaments Summit 2015 co-hosted by the African Union and the IPU Assembly in Hanoi.

Though stakeholders and survey respondents perceived UN Women's value added in the normative agenda, the current M&E system does not adequately capture or track UN Women's contributions to WPP inter-governmental frameworks. In some countries, stakeholders also noted weak linkages between the operational and normative mandates, in that UN Women COs did not (or could not) take full advantage of global normative commitments for programming at the field level.

2.2 COORDINATION MANDATE

Finding 8: The challenges UN Women faces at the country level to implement its coordination mandate on WPP are connected to competing interpretations of mandates and roles, as well as priorities and capacities.

The evaluation found that UN Women was widely recognized as the only UN agency with a specific mandate to coordinate on GEWE issues, which includes work on WPP.⁵⁸ It engages in inter-agency coordination mechanisms and joint programming initiatives mainly related to inclusive electoral processes, parliamentary support and local government, with some recent work related to VAWP.

Almost 70 per cent of partners surveyed considered UN Women to be a key actor in coordination efforts on WPP at the country-level.⁵⁹ Yet, less than one-half of UN Women staff surveyed felt that the organization's work to lead, coordinate and promote accountability on WPP was effective. Many staff and partners surveyed were also neutral regarding UN Women's effectiveness in this area. This uncertainty underscores the difficulty of

⁵⁸ This was particularly the case among donor agencies who stressed this unique role of UN Women over, for example, UNDP in relation to both coordination and global normative work, as well as the importance to connect this role to operations.

⁵⁹ 70 per cent of partners surveyed also "agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that their organization had been able to achieve greater results by working together with UN Women.

demonstrating coordination results. There is not an easily accessible statistic or data set that aggregates different forms of working with others on the GEWE agenda, let alone for the WPP. Survey results showed, however, that the system-wide coordination mechanisms implemented by the UN System Coordination Division benefit from formal reporting to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or the General Assembly (GA).

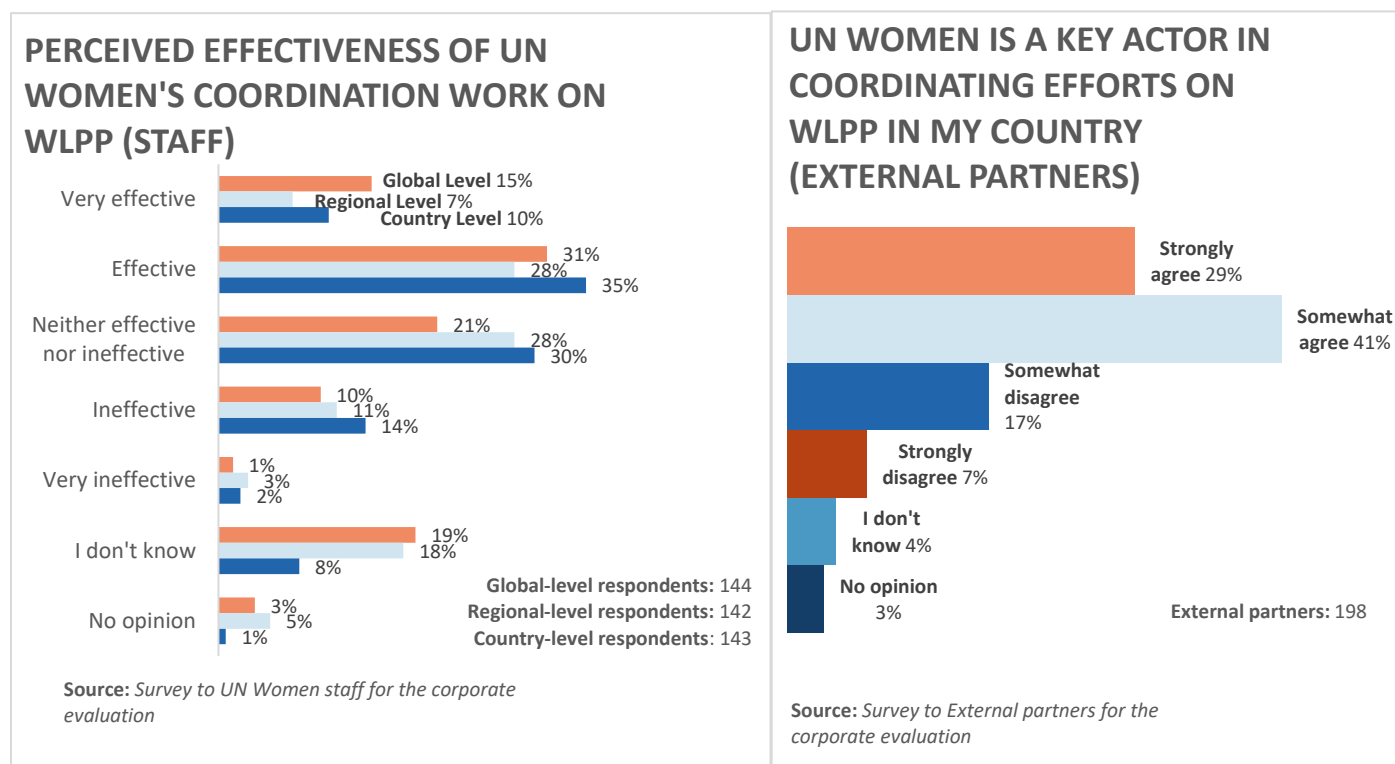


Figure 3 - Perceived Effectiveness of UN Women's Coordination Work on WLPP - According to Staff and External Partners

At the global level, UN Women and UNDP have partnered on signature knowledge products including, *Inclusive Electoral Management Bodies*, *Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections* and *iKNOW Politics*. UN Women engages with inter-agency coordination mechanisms or frameworks that are relevant for its work on WPP. Only support to inclusive electoral processes (which falls within the broader category of UN electoral assistance) is governed by a clearly defined inter-agency UN coordination policy framework, protocols and a mechanism where the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs plays a leadership role in his capacity of UN system-wide Focal Point for electoral assistance. Overall, interviewed donors and UN agency staff had a positive perception of the effectiveness of this coordination mechanism. UN Women was recognized as being an active participant in the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance (ICMEA). Where it had the presence and technical capacity to do so, UN Women contributed substantially to gender analyses and to recommendations included in electoral needs assessment missions and mission reports, particularly providing relevant information through gender checklists. In Pakistan, UN Women's work with civil society at the local level informed and complemented UNDP's candidate capacity-building activities. In Haiti, UN Women was instrumental in raising VAWP awareness and focusing attention on this issue within the UN System, including for the UN Stabilization Mission for Haiti (MINUSTAH).

There have been notable improvements in terms of a common understanding of UN Women's GEWE mandate, especially in terms of electoral assistance. The evaluation of UN Women's contribution to UN system coordination on GEWE noted that UN Women's strategic positioning can be affected when there are other entities with

overlapping mandates for coordination in a thematic area. The mandate of the DPA-EAD on behalf of the Focal Point to determine the scope and priorities of Electoral Assistance at the country level and UNDP's role in coordinating the implementation of electoral assistance work on the ground has intersected with UN Women's mandate to undertake gender-related programming and coordination on WPP. Given the highly structured ways UN entities coordinate, formal structures depend on relationships and adjustments to each entity's methods of working together as parts of a broader UN system supporting a common mission. UN Women's coordination work, often with HQ support, has sometimes focused on finding a 'common narrative' and understanding among the different agencies in the UN system, such as through a gender theme group. UNDP's lead role in implementing (often) multi-million-dollar basket funds for electoral programmes has frequently left UN Women side-lined or with funding only for punctual gender equality and election-related programming.⁶⁰ In cases where UN Women is not explicitly named as an implementing partner in the needs assessment mission report recommendations, UN Women's role in the implementation can sometimes be challenged at the country level.

UN Women recently has taken on a related coordination role at the global level as custodian of SDG Indicator 5.5.1b. This may require new understandings around engagement at the sub-national level, which stakeholders highlighted as an acute need, particularly in large and/or federal systems. UN Women's support in these contexts has been limited, most likely due to issues of capacity and the fact that UN agencies are rarely officially invited to provide support to sub-national election processes. There have been notable improvements in terms of a common understanding of UN Women's GEWE coordination and operational mandate in terms of electoral assistance, yet challenges occasionally still occur with some perceiving this to be duplicative of other UN entities' roles. There are sometimes differences of positions or nuance in understanding by entities on gender-related electoral assistance, such as TSMs. This underscores the need for continued communication and adjustments, as new issues arise, to facilitate smooth collaboration between UN entities. UN Women's coordination work at the country level, often with HQ support, has sometimes focused on finding a 'common narrative' among the different agencies in the UN system, for instance, through a gender theme group.

Although there is no global coordination framework on parliamentary support, in practice UNDP has assumed a coordination role in this area as the UN system lead on 'accountable institutions.' In the absence of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or established division of labor between UNDP and UN Women at the global level, coordination at the country level varies significantly between countries and regions — often based on personal relationships and is often subject to issues of competition for funding and sometimes between agency gender focal points or teams.⁶¹ In some cases, parliamentary support is channeled through a broader UNDP basket fund, but it is unclear to what extent this then feeds into higher levels of agency-wide coordination. At the regional level, UN Women and UNDP have coordinated on the development of parliamentary strategies such as in the AS region, based on the WPEL-FPI ToC and in managing relationships with regional parliamentary bodies (Parlatino for AC). In best case experiences from the country level, such as Algeria, project design leverages the complementary strengths of the UN partners. For instance, UN Women may have more experience in convening dialogues with CSOs, while UNDP might contribute deeper technical knowledge and non-gender specific capacity building of a parliamentary secretariat. UN Women has also raised funds successfully on its own and taken the lead on WPP parliamentary support in some countries (Moldova, Turkey and Tanzania). However, there were also several cases where joint parliamentary programs suffered coordination gaps.

Inter-agency coordination mechanisms for GEWE exist at the global and country level in which UN Women engages, but these mechanisms were rarely leveraged to support its WPP coordination role. At the global level, UN Women acts as the Secretariat for the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), which can establish time-bound task forces to address current or emerging issues that can include WPP. At the country

⁶⁰ This may also be influenced in some cases by donor preferences as a more efficient model for their engagement.

⁶¹ The evaluation of UNDP's contribution to GEWE concluded that as UN Women's footprint has grown there is a need for clarifying partnership arrangements on GEWE work that could be facilitated by the respective HQs.

level, UN Women often chairs or co-chairs gender theme groups where WPP issues can be discussed, but it does not necessarily play a prominent role within country-level coordination mechanisms on governance with a few exceptions, such as DRC and Sierra Leone. This risks side-lining the issue from broader governance reform efforts. UN Women engages in working groups of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (e.g. Programme Working Group) where it might be possible also to pursue coordination around programmatic work.

At the regional level, the lack of regional policy advisors, diversity of political contexts and high level of national sensitivities may make coordination particularly difficult. There was only one example of a joint regional WPP initiative found – the Joint Regional Project Mechanism for the Acceleration of the Political Participation of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, with UNDP and International Ideas (ATENEA) focused on WPP indicator development and tracking in the AC region. At the same time, there were also missed opportunities, such as the development of a research project involving a major publication and nine country case studies on women in parliament that was carried out by UNDP in the AC region without UN Women partnership.

In some contexts, joint programmes across different UN Agencies were said to help establish good relations across agencies, which in turn may help assert UN Women’s role in regard to its coordination mandate. However, joint programming did not ‘automatically’ fill that function and should not be equated with broader UN system coordination efforts. Out of the information available for the 25 countries in the in-depth sample, 64 per cent had a current or past joint programme⁶² or initiative on WPP, with UNDP as the most common partner. The collaboration was most frequently reported as ‘good’ where partners were involved on ‘equal terms’ – either by dividing up the implementation into different components (with each agency leading) and/or where a joint management structure was set up. In several countries, joint programming was perceived by staff to have improved information sharing, personal relationship building and joint experiences that were beneficial to overall UN System coordination. Where UN Women was relegated to acting as an implementing partner, it faced challenges in terms of visibility, access to country-level coordination mechanisms on elections or broader democratic governance. The Delivering as One (DaO) framework seems to have enhanced coordination at the country level in some instances, when agencies align behind joint delivery frameworks with a joint implementation mechanism. In Albania, UN Women played an important role both in coordination and programmatic guidance in a basket-funded gender initiative, yet in at least two of the field visit countries, the lack of clarity and coordination on the WPP agenda was raised as a problem by partners. CSO partners especially expressed their affinity or preference for working with UN Women on WPP issues, but they had to second-guess who among the UN agencies supporting WPP might be the most strategic and reliable partner for leveraging policy influence and longer-term funding arrangements.

Worth mentioning is the significant evidence indicating that UN Women’s staff capacities (numbers and expertise levels) at the country level affected its ability to assert its coordination mandate and advocacy to ensure that relevant WPP issues are on the UN system-wide agenda. Where UN Women’s capacity was higher, its role and leadership were found to be better recognized in joint programmes and within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In addition, the organization was better able to act as the technical lead on gender mainstreaming and WPP policy directives. Where capacity was strained, stakeholders questioned UN Women’s role to coordinate, even if it was the preferred WPP partner. At the global level, inter-agency coordination on WPP could be enhanced through synergies with the UN Women’s Coordination Division, although knowledge exchange and internal coordination among the unit and division are minimal.

⁶² Definition of joint programme: “set of activities contained in a joint work plan and related common budgetary framework, involving two or more UN organizations and (sub-) national governmental partners, intended to achieve results aligned with national priorities as reflected in UNDAF/One Programme or an equivalent programming instrument or development framework,” see: UN Development Group (UNDG). 2014. “Guidance Note on Joint Programmes.” Accessed 17 May 2018. Definition of joint programming: “the collective effort through which UN organizations and national partners work together to prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate the activities aimed at effectively and efficiently achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other international commitments,” see: UN Development Group (UNDG). 2003. “Guidance Note on Joint Programming.” Accessed 17 May 2018.

Overall, UN Women’s ability to fulfil its coordination mandate on WPP is dependent on several variables:

- **History in the country.** In places where UN Women was seen as a ‘newer’ actor, it could sometimes face legitimacy issues among those who had been operating in the local context for a longer time.
- **Operational presence.** In some, but not all sampled countries, having programmes in place on the ground in-country was seen as giving legitimacy to taking on the coordination role in relation to other actors.
- **Leadership.** In countries where UN Women had strong and ‘politically savvy’ leadership, it was easier to take on a coordination role compared to countries in which leadership was perceived to be less savvy in responding to local sensitivities and ongoing political processes.
- **Expertise.** Similarly, having staff with specialized technical expertise and the ability to respond in a timely manner (e.g. providing timely elections support) gave UN Women legitimacy in its coordination efforts with other agencies. Where this ability was missing or housed in other UN agencies, UN Women had more difficulties inserting itself as the mandated coordinator on WPP.
- **Personalized working relations with other UN agencies.** Joint programmes were often associated with positive benefits, such as frequent knowledge-sharing and relationship-building between agencies. These, however, were largely personalized rather than institutionalized and often relied on individual staff members at the program management level as opposed to the leadership level to work well.
- **Competition.** There also was some evidence that coordination efforts led to frustrations when a sense of ‘competition for funding’ between agencies existed and was exacerbated when delivery capacities were uneven.

2.3 OPERATIONAL MANDATE

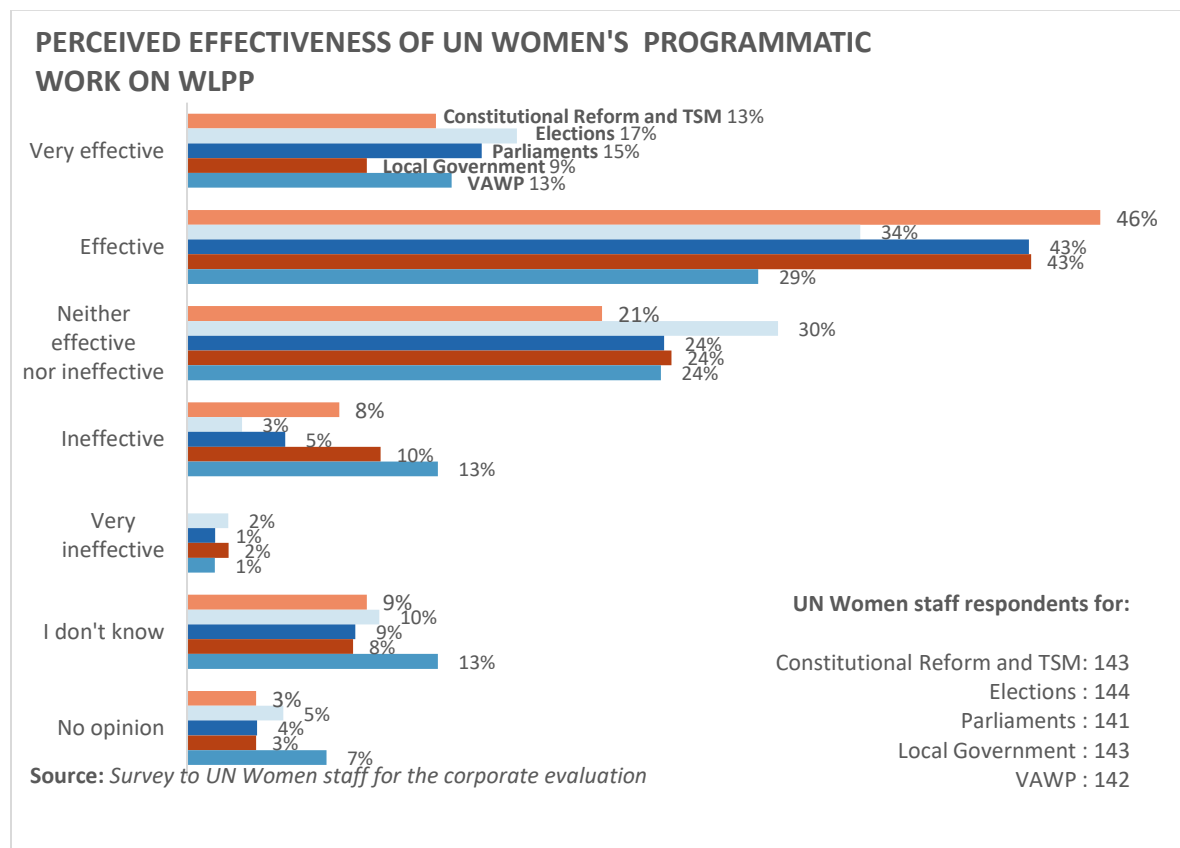


Figure 4 - Perceived Effectiveness of UN Women's Programmatic Work on WLPP

2.3.1 Constitutional and Legislative Reform

Finding 9: UN Women has contributed to strengthening normative frameworks at the country level; further monitoring for signs of regression and extending implementation to the sub-national level, would support the sustainability of these gains.

The evaluation found strong evidence of UN Women’s effectiveness in contributing to normative work at the country level, but fewer results at the regional level. At the regional level, UN Women has made a few notable achievements in terms of WPP inter-governmental normative frameworks, though progress and partnerships with regional organizations was uneven. These include support for the adoption of the ‘democratic parity’ framework commitment of the Parliament for Latin America and the Caribbean (Parlatino)⁶³, facilitating discussions for the adoption of a regional framework for temporary special measures in the AP region and inclusion of a WPP pillar within the Women, Peace and Security Strategy of the League of Arab States (LAS).

At the country level, UN Women has effectively leveraged its convening and advocacy capacity to support constitutional and legal reforms for WPP. This was often done with women MPs, parliamentary women caucuses and national governments, and in conjunction with CSOs, networks of elected women local government officials, local women’s branches of the political parties, and civil society as mobilizers and channels for advocacy.⁶⁴

Coordination with partners was often efficient in advocating for legislative reform. In Morocco, for example, working with the government and parliamentary bodies was complemented by support to an NGO coalition, the Movement for Parity and Democracy, and women’s sections of political parties and unions to specifically address the underrepresentation of women within decision-making bodies at the local level. In Paraguay, closed door sessions on parity democracy with women senators and other stakeholders to build consensus across party lines, a series of public events to raise awareness, and the creation of a Core Group for follow-up on the legislative bill proved efficient. In Moldova, women’s networks carried out advocacy with parties to increase the number of women candidates, and local ‘political clubs’ were created to facilitate dialogue between candidates and parties.

UN Women’s support to constitutional and legal reform on WPP has been focused mainly around:

- **Support to constitution building and reform processes.** In Bolivia, Egypt, Nepal, Mexico, Tanzania, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, UN Women provided technical support and targeted advocacy to national stakeholders, in coordination with UN Partners and CSOs. Support contributed to the inclusion of gender equality provisions in general non-discrimination and specific WPP clauses and in revised constitutions that allowed for additional legislation related to TSMs, including gender quotas (e.g. Nepal and Tunisia) and parity laws (e.g. Bolivia and Mexico). In South Sudan, joint advocacy by UN Women and development partners contributed to the Transitional Constitution, instituting affirmative actions.⁶⁵
- **Work towards the adoption of TSMs has been very visible and respected.** UN Women has advocated and provided technical support to promote the adoption of TSMs, including quotas at national and local levels in a number of countries: e.g. Liberia, Nepal, FYR Macedonia, Mexico, Morocco, Tanzania, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Where TSMs were successful in being adopted, they have paved the way for increasing

⁶³ An important normative achievement has been the new provision of the Parliament for Latin America and the Caribbean (Parlatino) committing to guide its 20 countries and three territories toward parity democracy. This decision will require countries to eliminate gender biases in legislation, close gender gaps in terms of resource allocation and promote equal representation in parliaments, the justice sector and the executive branch.

⁶⁴ This is supported by the UN Women meta-analysis of evaluations in 2016. At the policy level an effective role for UN Women was found to be catalytic programming that promotes the adoption and implementation of normative frameworks through joint work, involving multilateral organizations, civil society actors and country-level donor coordination groups.

⁶⁵ UN Women. July 2016. “UN Women South Sudan Country Office Mid-Term Programme Evaluation.”

WPP, but do not guarantee it underscoring the need for parallel strategies. The evaluation also noted that the role of political parties is particularly important for TSM implementation.

- **Support for adoption of parity laws.** In 2014, UN Women contributed to the approval of legislation, ensuring parity on the composition of electoral lists in Mexico. The constitutional reforms supported by UN Women provided the foundation for these subsequent electoral law reforms. UN Women contributed to a parity law in Senegal in 2014 and supported advocacy in DRC for the adoption of a parity law in 2015, which included equitable representation at the national, provincial and local levels.⁶⁶
- **Support to broader GEWE legislative reforms and policies that create a more enabling environment for WPP.** For example, the revision of the family code and development of the National Gender Strategy and Action Plan in DRC; in Malawi, change in child marriage age through the Marriage and Divorce Act; in South Sudan, development of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325⁶⁷; and development of the Gender Ministry's gender strategy and action plan in DRC.

Stakeholders noted there is often a missing link between the symbolic enactment of policies and laws, and their actual implementation, due to various constraints (e.g. budget for implementation), barriers (e.g. cultural) and sometimes missed opportunities to build on momentum translating into practice. UN Women was sometimes perceived as promoting constitutional and legislative reforms as an end, rather than also as a means to an end. Though there were reported challenges (e.g. in Paraguay and Tunisia) and signs of regression (e.g. in Moldova due to government change and Zimbabwe due to termination of the 'reserved seats' measure), there is not yet systematic monitoring of implementation or clear strategies to address common challenges, such as leveraging parliamentarians' oversight function of public policy (Finding 10), galvanizing civil society to advocate for implementation or campaigns that sustain attention on what the outcome is of the reform.

Development and dissemination of inclusive electoral process models and quota or parity laws to regional and municipal elections was an opportunity highlighted by stakeholders. UN Women supported the dissemination of the quota law for implementation at regional and municipal elections (e.g. Mali). Stakeholders in DRC, Mexico and Pakistan pointed to the provincial level as a possible entry point for progress in implementation, given decentralization processes, devolution of power and enhanced possibilities to support the political representation of marginalized groups.

2.3.2 Parliamentary support

Finding 10: UN Women has contributed to strengthening women's capacity and influence in parliaments; there is scope to work with partners to increase constituency outreach capacity and shift parliamentary procedures and norms.

Parliamentary support is the most common type of WPP programming undertaken by UN Women (75/91 countries in 2016). It has prominence in all SPs and the WPEL-FPI. The ability of women MPs to effectively exercise their offices is constrained by the same factors (e.g. cultural and religious norms, childcare responsibilities and male dominated political parties) that affect women's ability to win election. These factors are compounded by the workplace norms of gendered political institutions — often including harassment and bullying — generally dictated by men. Thus, getting women into elected office is one critical step, but it is not enough. Women still need to be able to express their voices and impact legislation and parliamentary business, as well as attain leadership positions within parliaments (Finding 14).

Fifty-seven percent of internal and 46 per cent of external stakeholders surveyed believed that UN Women's parliamentary support work had been very effective or effective. Evidence from interviews and desk reviews also

⁶⁶ UN Women. 2015. "2015 West and Central Africa Annual Report."

indicated that effectiveness was uneven among the different activities undertaken within this sub-theme. The effort to support women's MP networks (parliamentary committees, parliamentary caucuses and regional networks) was a more successful area for UN Women. At the country level, UN Women has provided useful support to the initial establishment of women's parliamentary caucuses. Stakeholders also referred to the high value contributed by UN Women to linking parliamentarians across countries for South-South exchange or in engaging with regional networks (e.g. Parlantino in the AC region, the Arab Women Parliamentarians Network for Equality and AS parliamentary strategy).

Evidence pointed to parliamentary support having been effective in building the capacity and influence of women MPs — particularly when delivered through a collective structure (commonly a women's parliamentary caucus), which reinforces the capacity of individual MPs, while at the same time, providing a 'strength in numbers' influence boost.⁶⁸ Through work with caucuses, UN Women has contributed to the effectiveness of women MPs and the promotion of women's rights, including synergies with other thematic areas such as Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) (e.g. in Malawi, Senegal, Serbia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe). Evidence indicates that capacity development for women MPs often contributes to gender equality legislation (e.g. in Serbia where support was perceived to have contributed to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) (Finding 14).

Strategic partnerships are critical for efforts aimed at bolstering MPs' substantive impact. For example, work with MPs on non-WPP issues is best served through close coordination with partners — either internal (other UN Women teams) or external (other UN agencies or non-UN institutions) — that have specialized policy expertise in these areas. For example, UN Women supported the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (WRCN) in building MPs' capacities in gender budgeting and budget tracking.

There were also some positive examples of facilitating dialogue between women MPs and other actors/constituencies (e.g. Timor Leste, Uruguay and Zimbabwe), but the evidence indicates that UN Women could increase its focus on supporting constituency relations, especially at district level. This could help bridge the gap between women MPs and women activists. It also could improve dialogue with marginalized groups and with media and civil society to support post-legislative scrutiny of gender equality legislation, including those related specifically to WPP.

Although there have been limited cases (e.g. Moldova and Turkey) of UN Women support to gender-sensitive reforms of parliamentary culture/norms, such as through gender audits or reform of procedures/norms, stakeholders highlighted the need for shifting parliamentary norms toward a more positive enabling environment. Gender audits and benchmarking/monitoring for improvement could be a promising area for further investments and for coordination, building upon the work of IPU⁶⁹ and in partnership with UNDP's broader parliamentary strengthening projects. This could include collaboration on awareness of international good practices, as well as work with parliaments on reflection and establishing of targets and monitoring mechanisms.

UN Women also supports debate/analysis of GEWE legislation, such as the South Sudan Women's Parliamentary Caucus that was instrumental to the development of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. While media and civil society can provide useful monitoring of a law's impact, only the parliament has constitutional oversight responsibility for legislation and its implementation. The evaluation did not find any examples of UN Women's support for post-legislative scrutiny of gender equality legislation. This is an area deserving more focus to ensure that laws passed make a difference for constituencies (Finding 9).

⁶⁸ Interview data and desk study.

⁶⁹ Palmeiri, S. 2016. *Evaluating the gender-sensitivity of Parliaments: A self-assessment toolkit.* London: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

There has been limited investment in developing knowledge products related to parliamentary support work, perhaps because this sub-theme is well researched by others. Nevertheless, a key product includes the *Women in Politics Map* produced every two years in partnership with IPU and the *HeForShe Parliamentary Playbook* developed by Women's Political Participation Unit.

Finally, UN Women has also incorporated social norms change in a number of its parliamentary support programmes, though its impact is not systematically tracked (Finding 17). This has consisted of media campaigns to raise awareness about the role and efforts of women MPs and women's parliamentary caucuses and engagement with male parliamentarians and citizens at the global (e.g. HeForShe events and seminars with IPU), regional (with regional parliamentary bodies but limited to the AC – Parlantino and ParlAmericas – and AP) and national levels (e.g. Ecuador, Uruguay and Colombia).

2.3.3 Inclusive Electoral Processes

Finding 11: UN Women has been effective in supporting gender mainstreaming in a number of electoral management bodies, a more consistent application of an electoral cycle process would further strengthen and sustain results to support inclusive electoral processes.

UN Women's support to inclusive electoral processes is guided by the framework developed by the UN Focal Point for Electoral Assistance, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs in DPA (Finding 8).⁷⁰ Provided in 53 of 91 countries with WPP programming in 2016, it is featured as a core element in all three SPs and the WPEL-FPI, but the focus has shifted from voter registration and turnout to supporting the capacity of women candidates over successive plans.

Fifty-one per cent of internal staff and 44 per cent of external partners found UN Women's work on inclusive electoral processes either "very effective" or "effective." The survey results, coupled with stakeholder interviews and document review, reveal that the effectiveness of UN Women's electoral assistance has been uneven, with strengths in the areas of gender mainstreaming with EMBs and voter registration/turnout.

Work with EMB's on gender mainstreaming was a core element of UN Women efforts. Capacity building support included training programmes for gender-sensitive electoral management (e.g. Mexico, Moldova, Uganda and Pakistan). Furthermore, UN Women in coordination with UN partners, mainly UNDP, provided technical support to EMBs (e.g. DRC, Egypt, Moldova, Tanzania, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Cameroon) for identification of gender gaps in laws and policies, development of gender strategies, support to domestic groups undertaking gender-sensitive elections monitoring and so forth. In Cameroon, UN Women supported awareness raising and EMB strengthening for quota enforcement. As a result, of the 250 candidate lists presented by parties in 2013, the EMB rejected 20 for non-compliance with the quota.⁷¹ In the DRC, UN Women has provided technical support and capacity building to the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI)⁷² on gender mainstreaming since 2014, including substantial contributions to the design of the UNDP Project to Support the Electoral Cycle in Congo's (PACEC) programme gender component and implementation of the 30 per cent quota for electoral body staff.

In a number of countries (Egypt, Pakistan and DRC), UN Women's electoral work supported women's voting rights through civil registration (ID cards or voter registration).⁷³ These initiatives were seen as closely linked to SDG 16.9

⁷⁰ UN DPA (United Nations Department of Political Affairs). 2013. *UN support to electoral system design and reform*. FP/02/2013.; UN DPA (United Nations Department of Political Affairs). 2013. *Promoting women's electoral and political participation through UN electoral assistance*. FP/03/2013.; UN DPA (United Nations Department of Political Affairs). 2014. *UN Support to the Design of Reform of Electoral Management Bodies*. FP/01/2014.

⁷¹ UN Women. January 2016. "Évaluation finale de la mise en œuvre du Plan Stratégique 2012-2013 du bureau pays ONU FEMMES Cameroun."

⁷² Independent National Election Commission

⁷³ More information on work with ID cards is included in Finding 13.

on legal identity for all and relevant to UN Women's LNOB mandate. Though attribution is difficult to assess, UN Women's support for voter registration and 'get out the vote' initiatives (DRC, Pakistan, Solomon Islands and Samoa) were perceived by stakeholders to have contributed to women's voter turnout. In Moldova, UN Women contributed to planning and implementation of an innovative and specially targeted 'get out the vote' campaign for Roma women that included printed materials, the organization of public debates, monitoring of electoral platforms, door-to-door activities, mobile voter information campaigns and even a horse-led carriage and an orchestra. UN Women's support was believed to contribute to increased voter turnout in the eight participating villages.⁷⁴ In Chetrosu village, 98 per cent of Roma people cast their vote during the June 2015 local elections, compared to some 35 per cent voter turnout in 2011.⁷⁵ In the DRC, voter registration efforts at the district level led to increases in at least 40 per cent of the female electorate registered in those districts; and in one province data indicated that more women than men were registered to vote. In Pakistan, UN Women supported voter education and registration efforts in five hard-to-reach districts.

Other support to inclusive electoral processes involved capacity building of women aspirants and candidates. Training programmes were seen as effective in some countries (Tanzania, Moldova and in the Pacific region) in terms of building self-confidence, promoting gender equality awareness and providing campaign skills. At the same time, however, stakeholders have raised a number of challenges related to capacity building programmes, including implementation delays (with trainings held too soon before an election or when elections are uncertain); high cost; limited scale; limited impact due to political turnover; and a lack of results tracking and following-up post-training (Finding 14). In Tunisia, UN Women provided training to 25 women candidates from five different political parties on topics including leadership, local governance and gender equality tools and principles.⁷⁶

UN Women also advocated with political parties to adopt or implement special measures to support women's candidacies. In Nepal, the Making Politics Work with Women (MP3W) project supported women to influence political parties through incorporating gender equality principles with political parties, nominating women to different committees within parties and to stand in the elections. The MP3W project was assessed highly in terms of its ability to ensure that political parties are responsive to gender issues and have capacity for gender-sensitive policies, rules and procedures formulation.⁷⁷ There was also some support for changes to enable women to access political financing. In Malawi, UN Women effectively lobbied the MEC to reduce registration fees for women candidates.

UN Women contributed a number of valuable knowledge products that served to identify gender gaps and share lessons learned in the field of electoral assistance. At the global level, UNDP and UN Women have collaborated on *Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation*, which was highlighted by UN Women country staff as a particularly useful resource for gender mainstreaming work with EMBs.^{78,79} Of the 25 countries included in the in-depth sample for this evaluation, one-half had produced at least one campaign or knowledge product related to electoral assistance. In Pakistan, the Solomon Islands and Samoa, radio drama series were developed and broadcasted across rural areas to mobilize women to vote.⁸⁰ Though not consistently used, knowledge products that were innovative, audience-

⁷⁴ UN Women. February 2017. "Final Evaluation for the Women in Politics Programme." p. 30.

⁷⁵ UN Women. February 2017. "Final Evaluation for the Women in Politics Programme." p. 37.

⁷⁶ Participants gave the sessions high marks with 83 per cent judging the trainings as useful, including 71 per cent who declared they had mastered new skills. Also see 'Leadership' finding.

⁷⁷ UN Women. May 2017. "Assessing the Quality of Evaluations Conducted by UN Women in Asia and the Pacific." p. 52.

⁷⁸ In the context of the *Evaluation of UN Women Sida Strategic Partnership Framework 2011–16*, a survey sent to UN Women staff canvassed respondents' familiarity with global and regional UN Women knowledge products supported by the SPF funding modality, *Inclusive Electoral Processes*, which was tied for second at 73 per cent.

⁷⁹ Also see: Finding 14 in regard to the *Guidebook on Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections*.

⁸⁰ Another example reported is from Palestine where UN Women launched a wide spread campaign at the national and subnational levels to encourage women's participation in local elections as candidates and voters that included street shows, radio spots, posters and billboards, and TV messaging, among others.

appropriate or visual—such as infographics or radio and TV spots in local languages—were seen as particularly effective for public-awareness raising around elections. Infographics produced by the Moldovan EMB, for instance, were used extensively and even adapted by EMBs in other countries. There are few examples of regional knowledge production, perhaps due to the limited number of regional policy advisors. The three-country VAWE analysis (India, Nepal and Pakistan) is one case. Another important initiative to note is ATENEA, a system for the collection and analysis of comparative data, implemented across eight countries in AC.

As highlighted in other parts of this evaluation, promotion of social norms change in electoral processes is a promising though still relatively under-analysed area of programming. Though these themes are covered in WPEL-FPI, UN Women has not yet begun to systematically track or promote institutional learning in this area. In addition, work is also needed on engagement of men and boys, particularly of community/traditional leaders, and of EMB authorities at the national and subnational levels to facilitate women’s voter registration. Stakeholders expressed great interest in the area of social norms, highlighting its potential for shifting public opinion, as well as its role in ensuring greater programme effectiveness and sustainability. UN Women’s engagement in elections-related social norm programming is well documented in Tanzania. Sensitization workshops were held with grassroots leaders, CSOs and faith-based and religious leaders that were estimated to reach more than 10,000 community members. At the same time, the project worked with media to increase the coverage of gender and social inclusion issues. An evaluation found that 20 mainstream TV/radio stations and 40 community radio outlets increased coverage on issues that promoted women, youth, persons living with disabilities (PLWD), leadership and participation because of sensitization conducted by UN Women and its partners. A survey also found shifts in public attitudes, with 99 per cent of study respondents saying that they would vote for a qualified female/PLWD candidate and 98 per cent claiming that they would vote for a qualified youth candidate.⁸¹

Finally, support was seen as effective and high-impact in those cases where UN Women deployed significant resources, developed well-integrated programmes and operated according to the electoral cycle process (e.g. Tanzania). In other cases, however, limited financial and human resources meant that UN Women was unable to develop timely and continuous elections-related programming that permitted sufficient advance work with stakeholders, as well as post-election reflection and reform. This appears to be the case, for instance, in West Africa where an evaluation in 2016 found that UN Women lacked a standardized or consolidated approach to its electoral assistance. Only 32.7 per cent of survey respondents answered in the affirmative when asked if UN Women WPP programming supported making elections more inclusive and credible.⁸²

The evaluation also found the following issues as relevant for inclusive electoral processes in need of increased investment:

- Increased learning and programming for citizenship activities with special attention to the role of new technologies for identity management and registration of ID cards for the most marginalized women (in partnership with UNDP) and engagement with the Secretary-General of the United Nations’ Executive Committee on Legal Identity,
- Stakeholders pointed out that local level elections are a feeder, as well as a potential entry point, for women candidates to enter national electoral processes and provide opportunities for promoting and piloting more inclusive electoral processes. However, UN Women’s work on local elections technical assistance has been limited, possibly due to capacity and resource limitations, a focus on national level electoral processes or difficulties related to securing an official invitation.
- Increased engagement with political parties particularly for convening dialogue and reflection on the adoption of internal gender equality benchmarks (as in the case of Colombia), support for women’s candidacies and VAWP prevention and policy-based commitments.

⁸¹ UN Women. May 2017. “Final Project Evaluation: Wanawake-Wanaweza Project on Women Leadership and Political Participation in Tanzania.”

⁸² UN Women. August 2016. “Thematic Evaluation on Women’s Leadership and Political Participation (2011-2015).”

- Strengthening its outreach through more concerted coordination with regional organizations — and other groups engaged in election monitoring — to inform observation methodologies and processes for an improved focus both on gender equality and marginalized groups.⁸³
- Innovative knowledge products at the country and regional levels that are audience appropriate or visual — such as infographics or radio and TV spots in local languages — were seen as particularly effective for public awareness raising around elections. Infographics produced by the Moldovan EMB, for instance, were used extensively and even adapted by EMBs in other countries.

2.3.4 Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP)

Finding 12: UN Women has contributed to raising awareness of the emerging issue of VAWP at the global level and is well positioned to build on some early operational responses and lessons to accelerate progress.

At the global level, UN Women has been at the forefront of raising awareness on VAWP as a human rights violation and barrier to further progress on WPP.⁸⁴ UN Women has contributed to VAWP being raised as an issue through several Secretary-General reports.⁸⁵ With increased awareness, the issue has steadily gained in importance. It was most recently and prominently highlighted in the 2016 Secretary-General Report on VAW, and more partners listed it as a focus area of work than all but one other sub-thematic area.⁸⁶ The increased attention to VAWP is also reflected in the evolution of UN Women’s corporate strategic planning documents, with the issue integrated within the WPEL-FPI in 2015 and subsequently included as an output within the SP (2018-2021). It took a leading role in UN system coordination to advance the normative agenda around this matter, sometimes in collaboration with other UN agencies, such as OHCHR (see UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women’s upcoming *2018 UNGA Report on VAWP*).

The results achieved to date are commensurate with its status as a relatively new programmatic area not only for UN Women, but WPP work in general. Although a few countries reported working on the issue earlier than 2013 (e.g. Paraguay), only 13 countries⁸⁷ carried out VAWP programming during the 2014- 2016 period. As such, it represents an area where UN Women has a high potential to effectively contribute to the achievement of future results. This is especially relevant, given the significant global gaps in addressing VAWP (e.g. data and statistics, legislation, monitoring efforts, mitigation strategies and programmatic guidance), as well as UN Women’s unique ability to leverage synergies within its own policy division for greater integrated policy coherence (e.g. EVAW, Access to Justice, Research and Data). Survey results support the need to invest more in strengthening effectiveness on this issue, with 42 per cent of staff and 48 per cent of external partners finding UN Women’s work on VAWP to be either ‘very effective’ or ‘effective.’

⁸³ Regional organizations’ units dealing with marginalized groups provide another avenue for pursuing coordination such as the the Organization of American States (OAS) unit that deals with access to rights and equity, with a focus on marginalized populations.

⁸⁴ Included within this discussion on VAWP is the category of violence against women in elections (VAWE) which centers on the realization of women’s political rights in an electoral context.

⁸⁵ UN General Assembly. 2017. *Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization*. A/72/260.; UN General Assembly. 2016. *Report of the Secretary-General on Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union*. A/RES/70/298.

⁸⁶ 19 per cent of external partners surveyed indicated that they focused on VAWP issues.

⁸⁷ Bolivia, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, El Salvador, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Box 1 - Women's Situation Room Experience in Africa

Women's Situation Rooms

To ensure peaceful voting and meaningful participation in elections, UN Women provided technical and financial support to civil society organizations in Africa for violence prevention and election-monitoring initiatives known as Women's Situation Rooms (WSR). The WSR is a citizen engagement effort that aims to raise awareness of, and where possible, prevent and respond to election violence through election observation. The initiative was first used during the 2011 elections in Liberia. It was then endorsed as best practice by the 2012 African Union's Gender is My Agenda campaign. Since then, the concept has been replicated in several countries, some with UN Women's support, e.g. Senegal (February 2012), Sierra Leone (November 2012), Kenya (March 2013), Mali (May 2013), Malawi (2014), Guinea Bissau (April-May, 2014) and Nigeria (2014, March-April, 2015).

In **Nigeria**, inclusion of police and Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) desks within the WSR facilitated real-time incident reporting, i.e. complaints received by phone were dispatched to these officials, who contacted their offices in different states to resolve issues and report back to the eminent women. The WSR was available not only on Election Day, but also before, during and after the elections.

In **Kenya**, organizers conceded that there was need for more time to train volunteers, particularly for youth peer-to-peer dialogue against violence. At the same time, the WSR should have been brought in earlier than a month before the elections. The learning on this approach is ongoing, and experiences have been mixed. A 'lessons-learned' conference in 2017 indicated that WSRs might be too narrowly focused and costly compared with other more long-term initiatives UN Women could support. Still, the concept of WSR, along with its various applications across the African continent, would warrant a more thorough evaluation in its own right to develop a coherent approach, facilitate cross-regional exchange and assess the potential for replication based on national contexts and UN Women's support. More recently, the WSR is being discussed in UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance (ICMEA) to develop a common understanding of UN agencies' engagement and language around this area of work.

At the global level, UN Women developed jointly with UNDP a *Programming Guide on Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections* (2017). The guide provides a number of actions points for addressing VAWE. UN Women has begun collaborations with Rutgers University and Uppsala University to conduct research on VAWP. The evaluation did not come across any examples of activities or results at the regional level on this sub-thematic area.

At the country level, results were mainly found in the AC, WCA and ESA regions and concentrated in the following areas:

- **Filling knowledge gaps and strengthening the evidence-base** on the types and levels of VAWP to inform the development of mitigation strategies. Several countries supported the establishment of monitoring mechanisms for VAWP during, before and after the election period (e.g. Tanzania, Egypt and Pakistan), including Women's Situation Rooms (WSRs) (Box 1). In Tanzania, the findings were discussed at a workshop with political parties to identify possible mitigation strategies.
- **Advocating for and contributing to legislative reforms** that would bring to bear electoral and/or penal penalties for VAWP, which has proved challenging and has had limited success. Bolivia passed the world's only national VAWP law, and UN Women is supporting the Electoral Tribunal Observatory to track

compliance with implementation of the law. Mexico introduced VAWP into the Oaxaca state penal code, yet efforts to introduce a VAWP law in Mexico at the national level faced challenges.

- **Developing protocols, codes of conduct and standard operating procedures** for EMBs, political parties and security personnel covering elections. In Mexico in 2017, UN Women developed a local model VAWP protocol for the state of Oaxaca jointly with the Federal Electoral Court (TEPJF) that can be replicated at the local level in all 32 states. In Tanzania, a code of conduct for political parties was introduced that covered harassment, defamatory language and violence. Political party support for VAWP prevention was important.
- **Organizing or convening dialogues** with relevant stakeholders to discuss ways to address VAWP. For example, in Paraguay, women politicians were convened to discuss issues of VAWP and ways to address it. In Tanzania, workshops were organized with political parties around the VAWP monitoring results to discuss possible mitigation strategies.
- **Targeted capacity building initiatives on VAWP**, including workshops for police officers tasked with providing security during elections (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Sierra Leone) and with relevant actors within the judiciary and dispute resolution mechanisms to address VAWP cases (Tanzania). In Nigeria, efforts were made to train women to participate as election observers, which was also considered a possible strategy for mitigating VAWP.
- **Advocacy aimed at raising awareness and changing the social norms that enable VAWP** through campaigns, using TV, radio and posters (Tanzania). Social norms work, with changing attitudes and behaviours at the core, is integral to VAWP. Civic education and social norms work are important to change the enabling environment and the perceptions of women who participate in politics in partnership with CSOs.
- **Judicial support for VAWP cases**, e.g. accompaniment of a case of VAWP through an *amicus curie* in the Chiapas state of Mexico where as a result of UN Women’s involvement, the judicial authorities ruled that this was not an isolated case of violence, but an issue of VAWP.
- There was also some evidence of how VAWP work brought forward specific issues related to women from **marginalized groups** (e.g. indigenous women and transgender individuals) who are often more at risk for violence.

Understanding of VAWP is still nascent and defies easy answers. It is timely for UN Women to define its role in VAWP, as other UN entities are demonstrating interest in this area of work.⁸⁸

UN Women should take advantage of lessons learned across regions and through the efforts of different organizations. This sub-thematic area requires effective knowledge management, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanisms to capture information and build on it to develop effective and targeted programming efforts and understand which strategies should be replicated and scaled up. The evaluation identified possible promising practices that can be considered for future programming:

- **Global leadership to support consensus on definitions and indicators, marshal knowledge and raise awareness.** In recent years, a number of international organizations — NDI, IPU, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and others — have begun to focus on the issue of VAWP. Notwithstanding staff availability limitations, UN Women is well placed to convene and coordinate information-sharing and coordination for awareness campaigns with other UN agencies, as well as with other international organizations. Reflections should also include regional organizations and groups that conduct election observation to ensure their methodologies reflect and monitor instances of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE) or VAWP.

⁸⁸ For example, Women’s Situation Rooms was the focus of discussion at an UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance (ICMEA) meeting in April 2018.

- **Supporting institutional responses at country level.** Given difficulties associated with the passage of legislative solutions to VAWP, UN Women can build on and expand its work on other types of institutional measures, such as EMB protocols (Mexico), codes of conduct among political parties or legislative reforms at the sub-national level. Monitoring efforts on compliance and engagement with rule of law/impunity for VAWP can support effective implementation of successful legislative reforms.
- **Raising awareness at the country level.** Through advocacy campaigns and capacity building efforts, raising awareness can work to change social norms. More can be done by developing new or leveraging existing campaigns that address EAW issues and target men and boys (e.g. #noesdehombres sexual harassment campaign in public transportation stations in Mexico), specifically for VAWP.
- **Country-level research and alert systems.** Country-level research and alert systems can be applied to clearly identify cases and understand potential trigger factors. In partnership with civil society organizations or EMBs, UN Women could support broader violence monitoring platforms and election situation rooms to better understand VAWP trigger factors, including analysis of VAWP occurring online. The need is justified by recent studies that highlight how women in public positions are being increasingly harassed on social media, and evidence demonstrating that women from marginalized groups face higher levels of harassment (e.g. indigenous women and transgender individuals).⁸⁹

2.3.5 Local Government

Finding 13: UN Women has shown leadership in establishing a global methodology for tracking SDG indicator 5.5.1b on women’s representation in local governments that can be leveraged to bolster its coordination and operational work at the country level, and synergies with local governance.

WPP in local government has been part of UN Women’s strategy since its inception (2011). It recently has gained importance under the SDGs with the need to strengthen the evidence base on this issue globally. Though clearly included as a theme in the current WPEL-FPI, specific reference to sub-national level interventions is not included in the UN Women’s *Integrated Results and Resources Framework (2018-2021)* at outcome or output levels. Moreover, it is unclear at this stage how innovative work at the global normative level, undertaken in relation to SDG methodology elaboration, will be reflected and complemented by operational work.

UN Women’s internal understanding of the framing and scope of the work under this sub-theme tends to differ depending on the level of operation. At the global (policy) level, UN Women works on ‘local government’ (defined as women’s participation as elected or appointed representatives at the executive level), while at the country level, operations often focus more broadly on ‘local governance’ (defined as women’s participation in sub-national public decision-making). In addition, many stakeholders called for more synergistic work between WPP and broader governance work. There is no overall or unified strategy for how work in this area should be conceptualized. As a result, the evaluation looked at both concepts, i.e. ‘local government’ in a summative way to assess WPP work and ‘local governance’ in a formative way to explore future potential investments.

Over the evaluation period, 18 countries⁹⁰ had activities at the sub-national level. Approaches were diverse with some engaged in institutional capacity building at the sub-national levels (e.g. Pakistan), while others focused on training candidates to run for council elections, supporting elected officials (e.g. Palestine and Malawi) or training young women to get involved in politics in post-conflict countries (e.g. Libya), as a strategy to nurture the next generation of women leaders.

⁸⁹ Amnesty International. 2018. Toxic Twitter – A Toxic Place for Women. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-1/>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

⁹⁰ Afghanistan, Albania, Bolivia, Burundi, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guatemala, India, Libya, FYR of Macedonia, Malawi, Moldova, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine and Zimbabwe.

By working on the global methodology for tracking SDG indicator 5.5.1b, UN Women addressed a critical data gap on WPP in local government. This multi-year process involved convening a global-level Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in November 2016 to develop a methodology for tracking SDG Indicator 5.5.1b ('proportion of seats held by women in local governments'), as well as a series of highly technical background papers that have been strategic and well received among stakeholders. As a result of UN Women's efforts, indicator 5.5.1b was reclassified from Tier 3⁹¹ to Tier 2⁹² by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG). Going forward, UN Women plans to support the implementation of the methodology to build the first-ever global measurement on the proportion of women in local government through development of strategic guidance, technical advice and advocacy at all levels. Regional meetings have already been convened in Arab States, Africa, Asia and the Pacific to advance the work and the creation of a technical working group for monitoring the indicator is being discussed.

Strategic partnerships, particularly with UNDP or other UN agencies already implementing programmes at the local level, are key to expanding this theme and could mitigate UN Women's limited capacity at the sub-national level.⁹³ For instance, partnering with UNDP on identity management and registration of identification (ID) cards – which took place in several of the field countries for this evaluation – was perceived to be an area where such a partnership could be fruitful, linking also to SDG 16 on inclusive governance⁹⁴.

Synergies could also be achieved through work with other UN Women thematic areas to maximize reach, with WPP as an 'added on' component to other ongoing activities (e.g. between WPP and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) or Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (PSHA), enhancing women's participation in decision-making, recovery efforts and reconciliation in conflict-affected contexts). In addition, several countries demonstrated interest and willingness to further explore opportunities to link women's participation in local governance and environmental decision-making (e.g. for disaster risk management and climate change legislation or in relation to water and sanitation with women's participation in local water committees). A few concrete examples have materialized already. The AC region, UNDP and UN Women have implemented a joint programme on good governance in the mining sector that has a gender component, ensuring women's involvement in decision-making mechanisms around the extractive industries in mining communities.

Holistic and context-specific approaches that map pathways into local government and local decision-making – from the very first entry-point of getting an ID card, through to being able to vote, civic education, participating in local decision-making and running for office, to holding locally-elected positions, hold the potential for creating more systemic effects than *ad hoc* support to, for example, local candidates. Developing more holistic monitoring and tracking systems using these interlocking pathways that are specific to context could help address entry-point barriers and gather more operational lessons for strategies in different local government contexts.

Sustainability of initiatives often proved to be challenging, especially since few of the trainings of women to run for local office went hand-in-hand with addressing other barriers (lack of education/illiteracy or lack of access to financial resources) or social norms for helping women to access and thrive in local politics. Added to this was the problem of retention. Many women who were trained to run for elected office or in positions as local councillors opted not to run again or were not re-elected (also with links to ingrained social norms). Positive examples included specific targeting of marginalized groups that addressed the cultural context and provided a space for marginalized women to organize. Other positive examples went beyond trainings at the individual level to institutionalizing women's caucuses at the level of provincial governments (e.g. in Pakistan) and municipal

⁹¹ Tier 3: Indicator for which there are no established methodology and standards or methodology/standards are being developed/tested.

⁹² Tier 2: Indicator conceptually clear, established methodology and standards available but data are not regularly produced by countries.

⁹³ In 2018, opportunities for partnerships at the global level on civil registration and legal identity have also emerged with the Executive Office of the SG called for an establishment of an inter-agency taskforce on SDG Target 16.9: "Legal Identity for All to which UN Women was invited to engage."

⁹⁴ SDG 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

women's councils (e.g. in some municipalities in Turkey). Another positive example was the creation of clubs for local women in politics and mentoring schemes (Moldova and Albania).

2.3.6 Leadership

Finding 14: Corporate frameworks to guide UN Women's efforts on transformational leadership would strengthen efforts to develop women's capacity to engage as leaders in political life and facilitate synergies across thematic areas.

Work on leadership under the WPP thematic area is understood to relate to building the political leadership skills of women to engage in political processes, run for and win elections and lead within the legislative or executive bodies in which they serve – increasing their substantive representation.

Yet, there is limited evidence available on how to nurture leadership skills or political apprenticeship, which is part of a wider gap in literature on developing women's individual and collective political engagement skills, including political skills and apprenticeship. Furthermore, compared with much of UN Women's advocacy work, leadership development tends to be cost-intensive. Many of the leadership development interventions to date have been carried out through one-off trainings, with little evidence of replication or sustainability, although a number of good results were found. For example, in Uganda, 700 women were trained of which 70 were reported to have been successfully elected into councils and parliament.

Leadership activities were tracked primarily at an input level (number of training conducted or number of women trained), with little indication of the outcomes or transformative aspects for enhanced leadership in the absence of systemic and periodic post-training assessments or surveys. Still, the evaluation found some examples where capacity building at the institutional level that strengthened political leadership skills facilitated broader legislative change to support GEWE – demonstrating how WPP can support improved governance on GEWE issues. For instance, leadership support to MPs in the Serbian Women's Parliamentary Network had a positive impact on the group's ERAW efforts. There also was evidence from El Salvador of how promoting women's leadership contributed to development of alliances among women holding office at the national and local level to support GEWE. The WPEL-FPI and the new SP provide opportunities to further explore leadership by moving beyond legislative or executive political spaces to target other stakeholder groups, such as electoral management bodies, CSOs, activists or academics. It also incorporates social norms work related to addressing stereotypes of women's leaders, including the engagement of men and boys that was being implemented, but not explicitly recognized in planning documents.

In a context of resource scarcity and competing demands, stakeholders emphasized the importance of strategic approaches, such as working in partnership with other organizations, building on existing programs or materials and focusing on scale and sustainability. For example, the UN Women Training Centre was reported to be developing a course on Leadership for Gender Equality for leaders within government, CSOs and more. This could be further leveraged corporately to harmonize and support leadership development work. While the evaluation found some successful examples of individually-focused trainings (e.g. Uganda) many stakeholders emphasized the importance of focusing leadership efforts on collective structures (e.g. women's parliamentary caucus or CSO platform) to support strengthening at an institutional level, as well as that of the individual members. UN Women supported South-South exchanges through training on women's leadership with civil servants from seven countries in the AS region and the establishment of regional alliances of women parliamentarians, national women's machineries and election-monitoring bodies in the AP region. The evaluation found examples of broader institutionalized training programmes on transformational leadership that also targeted women in politics.

In the three examples listed below, partnerships with local universities and government enhanced the possibility of a sustainable model for future leadership training that will allow more opportunity to capture results over time.

- **In South Sudan.** UN Women provided technical and financial assistance to establish the National Transformational Leadership Institute (NTLI) to build leadership competencies of emerging and existing women in politics, government, civil society and more.
- **In Kenya.** UN Women established the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership (ACTIL) in partnership with Kenyatta University for training, mentoring and coaching to increase leadership competencies of emerging and existing leaders, with a specific module on Women's Political Leadership. Participants in the training included women politicians and senior officials in public service, and there was also an emphasis on targeting youth for training. Despite challenges in follow-up and M&E, the model was recommended in a regional evaluation.⁹⁵
- **In Afghanistan.** A Transformational Leadership Programme was launched in collaboration with the Office of the First Lady to improve the capacity of senior female civil servants to become transformative leaders (e.g. training diplomatic skills, advocacy, negotiation, public speaking, emotional intelligence, mentoring and coaching). Some evidentiary results were visible in increased skills, mentorship and more camaraderie among the women.

There also was evidence of how leadership development efforts increased women's political engagement. In Liberia, a community dialogue process, launched jointly by UN Women and the government, identified 300 women with potential to act as community leaders toward the goal of taking up leadership in different tiers of governance. Over 50 female chiefs and traditional leaders were also empowered in their roles to work with government institutions. In Zimbabwe, it was reported that the number of women in positions of leadership and access to political positions had increased, along with gender-balance improvements in some community structures. (School Development Associations and Water Point Committees). Women leaders also provide symbolic representation by acting as role models who can normalize the idea and practice of women holding power among men and women. There were some examples of activities targeting stereotypes that women might not be effective leaders. For example, in Moldova, a women leaders' e-nomination platform was launched in 2014 that led to the nomination of 76 women leaders by the public aimed at increasing public interest for gender equality in politics. In Zimbabwe, the beliefs among men and women in the capacity of women to lead were reported to have changed. More women were confident, assertive and interested in seeking and holding political leadership positions.

There was also evidence of UN Women making connections in terms of how women gain leadership and decision-making skills from participation in both formal and informal (local) governance spaces. In DRC, UN Women has been compiling a database of existing women leaders who have the potential to become future candidates. Likewise, the approach of training young women at the community level for entering into leadership positions, in new or re-designed institutions, was applied in post-conflict countries in the Arab States. In Egypt, women's groups formed under other thematic areas, such as rural Village Loans and Savings Associations or groups of women farmers involved in agribusiness, served as potential entry points for reaching women for ID registration and civic education.

In terms of targeting marginalized groups, early intervention through support to girls' leadership is essential to foster women leaders. There is evidence of an emerging focus and interest in developing young women's leadership skills (e.g. across the AS region and ACTIL). There also are examples of programmes targeting people living with disabilities (PLWD) or Roma in Moldova, and indigenous groups in the AC region. Finally, women's

⁹⁵ UN Women. July 2017. "Evaluation of UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office Capacity Development Initiatives during Strategic Note period 2014-2017."

political leadership (including those from marginalized groups), in the area of environmental governance and decision-making, is increasing in importance given the need to have women's perspectives and voices heard in these debates given the growing evidence of the disproportionate way in which women are affected by environmental threats.

Although the term 'leadership' is explicitly included in the impact and outcome statements of successive SPs for WPP, in the WPEL-FPI and in other programming documents on WPP, stakeholder interviews revealed that 'leadership' is not seen as only a WPP issue. The term 'leadership' or 'transformational leadership' is included in UN Women planning documents and reports. It is used across impact/outcome areas and is considered an area of common work across UN Women thematic areas. The evaluation found that leadership development was truly a cross-cutting strategy across UN Women, but not governed by corporate concept note, definition, strategy or guidance to support the leadership development work. There is no dedicated staffing for leadership work and no corresponding system for tracking results on leadership development across impact, outcome and output areas of UN Women's strategic plans or its flagship programmes. This makes it difficult for UN Women to improve effectiveness in its leadership programming and may be a missed opportunity to build on synergies and learning across the organization.⁹⁶

3 EFFICIENCY

Q3: To what extent are UN Women's institutional mechanisms and arrangements efficient in advancing knowledge and programmatic coordination to promote WPP?

3.1 INTERNAL ALIGNMENT OF HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Finding 15: Shortage of staffing in terms of overall numbers and varying levels of specialized expertise at the sub-national, country and regional levels affect UN Women's ability to plan for and deliver results.

At the global level, UN Women is widely known and respected for its technical expertise in WPP, but UN Women's experience at the regional and country levels is more uneven with some regional and country offices having no dedicated WPP advisors.

Persistent staffing gaps remain at all levels in terms of dedicated staff for WPP.⁹⁷ At the global level, the structure of the HQ WPP Unit has differed from that of most other thematic policy areas that were each distinct 'sections' serving an SP Impact Area, while the WPP thematic area was a 'unit' grouped together under the Leadership and Governance Section, along with one other SP Impact Area (Governance and National Planning) and three additional related thematic units: (i) Gender Equality and HIV/AIDS; (ii) Human Rights; and (iii) Constitutions and Access to Justice. This variation may have had implications in terms of staffing. The size of the HQ WPP Unit – consisting of three members during the evaluation period – and the existence of only two dedicated Regional Policy Advisor positions (AC and AS regions) out of six regions has not kept pace with the workload.⁹⁸ Human resource levels at the country level are insufficient given the large number of countries that have reported activities in WPP (91 in 2016) – more than any other thematic area and the demand for work at local levels, which may require staff working at the sub-national level. Regional policy advisors were noted to play an important role in terms of adapting work to the regional context, following up on regional normative work and partnerships, and coordinating and exchanging knowledge between COs in the region. Stakeholders reported, however, that

⁹⁶ O. Neil, G. Plank, P. Domingo. 2015. *Support to women and girls' leadership: a rapid review of the evidence*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

⁹⁷ UN Women. September 2016. "Corporate evaluation of the Regional Architecture of UN Women."

⁹⁸ Three regions have Regional Policy Advisors with partial responsibility for WPP (e.g. covering governance, peace and security).

Regional Policy Advisors’ reporting lines to the Programme Division (as opposed to the Policy Division) have created an uneven understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as of the desired level of guidance from and alignment with the Policy Division.⁹⁹ At the time of this evaluation, the two dedicated WPP Regional Policy Advisor positions were in the process of being downgraded from P5 to P4 levels.

Although, existing human resources databases do not track staff capacity to specific thematic areas and do not reveal how many share responsibilities with other thematic areas, the evaluation found that staff shortages were a recurrent theme in nearly all of the countries in the in-depth sample. In addition, out of 236 UN Women staff respondents to the evaluation survey, only 18 responded that they exclusively work on this thematic area, while another 111 respondents share responsibilities with other thematic areas, with the majority estimating that they spent less than 25 per cent of their time dedicated to this area. Many of those who work exclusively on WPP have special service contracts that are short-term in nature.

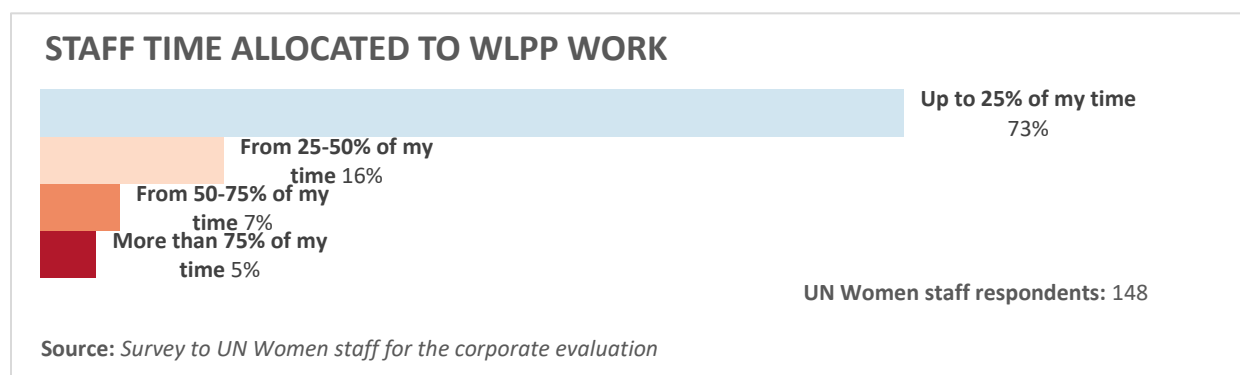


Figure 5 - Staff Time Allocated to WLPP Work

Of those sharing responsibilities with other thematic areas, WPP work was most often combined with Governance and National Planning (GNP), PSHA or EVAW, areas where more synergies could be explored under the SP (2018-2021). While staff who have responsibility for more than one thematic area provide opportunities to institutionalize synergies that have not yet been capitalized on in a systematic manner, but it can also create challenges for staff stretched to cover the demands of more than one thematic area to prioritize one area over another in terms of their time allocation. Evidence suggests that some of the factors that affect prioritization include the thematic area where staff has more specialized expertise, where financial resources are more abundant, where internal communication mechanisms across global, regional and country offices are more institutionalized and regular, and the country context. This being said, VAWP is an area that might require specialized technical expertise at the country level and also an area for training, which could actually be done in partnership with the EVAW Section. In addition, existing internal capacity and leveraging of expertise on WPP could be enhanced through stronger synergies with other units beyond thematic areas, e.g. the Training Centre and the UN System Coordination Division.

Staffing gaps trigger long-term consequences in terms of regional architecture efficiency, partner relations and coordination. As expertise is often missing at the country and regional levels, the HQ WPP Unit receives technical support requests from more than 40 countries annually, which in turn limits the team’s time availability to engage in its primary responsibilities, e.g. global policy development, thematic knowledge management, UN system coordination, strategic partnerships and resource mobilization. This is not consistent with the UN Women regional architecture model, as designed at the creation of UN Women in 2010, was intended to bring capacity closer to the field and reduce transaction costs for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness. In 2017, the corporate evaluation

⁹⁹ UN Women. September 2016. “Corporate evaluation of the Regional Architecture of UN Women.”

of the Regional Architecture noted that HQ's structure had not been adequately adjusted to support the regions and countries, and recommended UN Women should build greater flexibility and optimize its strategic presence and engagements, with more regional policy advisors (and thematic policy advice capacity in the field) and focus also on its normative and coordination roles at regional and national levels in addition to the global level¹⁰⁰. There is evidence that these efficiency challenges hinder delivery capacity and have, in some cases, led donors or partners to select others for collaboration on WPP.

To remedy this issue, short-term consultants or temporary appointments have been widely used, negatively affecting continuity particularly as it relates to longer-term relationship building - this seems a short-term solution to a structural capacity problem. In some cases, COs have found resourceful ways to overcome capacity gaps, e.g. through partnerships with organizations strong on implementation or through improved collaboration with colleagues/partners specialized in the area of communications.

In contexts of staff shortages and limited resources, staff quality and skillsets were particularly critical. In a number of countries, for instance, UN Women was able to exert political influence beyond what would be expected given the team's size and resources. In these cases, CO leadership was politically astute, proactive and well networked such that UN Women was seen as an effective convener for political dialogue, e.g. between government counterparts and civil society, but also within the UN system. While in some countries partners praised the active role of UN Women Country Representatives, lack of responsiveness of some UN Women staff was also identified as a hindrance to effective partnerships.

Finding 16: Despite recent increases in funding and pledges demonstrating potential donors' interest, WPP work is under-resourced and could benefit from a more comprehensive thematic fundraising strategy that addresses regional differences.

An analysis of the information available on WPP investments, showed that funding for this area of work has fluctuated.¹⁰¹ After a decrease in funding between 2011-15 (from \$35 million in 2011 to \$ 28.8 million in 2014 and \$24 million in 2015), there has been a progressive increase in 2016 (\$39.4 million).¹⁰² The Africa regions has consistently received the largest level of investment with some fluctuations across the other regions – the biggest increase was in the AS region.

Funding levels are not necessarily correlated with level of results achieved and there was evidence that some aspects of UN Women's WPP work may be highly effective and less resource intensive than other activities (e.g. normative work at the global level and support to constitutional and legal reform). However, it is difficult to say how much of that is due to the nature of the work or to the highly committed staff, their technical expertise and political capital built through good partnerships and work in countries that might be working to mitigate the funding gaps.¹⁰³ Interviews with stakeholders at the country-level – particularly CSOs – indicated the desire for UN Women to play a bigger role and provide more support to its national partners and frustration that it was not able to mobilize more resources to advance the work.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ UN Women. September 2016. "Corporate evaluation of the Regional Architecture of UN Women."

¹⁰¹ In the period between 2011 and 2016, according to the data provided by UN Women Annual Report Data Companion of 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

¹⁰² UN Women systems may not have been accurately tracking thematic funding, but recent improvements in the RMS and Atlas systems have made future data on thematic investments more credible.

¹⁰³ A cost-efficiency and cost-benefit analysis was not possible due to uncertainty around the financial data. An internal draft assessment report of the Boston Consulting Group also found that this thematic area has a high degree of return on investment with relatively low-cost intensiveness.

¹⁰⁴ The reduction in activities by the Fund for Gender Equality to support women's political empowerment may enhance these sentiments.

At HQ level, the WPEL-FPI was recognized as a helpful tool to move towards a more thematically focused fundraising strategy and for creating stronger partnerships. The potential of FPIs as having a more holistic view on how to mobilize resources alongside other partners was welcomed by both external and internal stakeholders. Regional FPIs were seen as promising for rolling-out to individual Country Offices. At the time of the evaluation, at least two regional FPIs in the thematic area had started or were underway, namely a multi-country regional FPI in West Africa¹⁰⁵ (which successfully raised funds) and a regional FPI for the Arab States.¹⁰⁶ New tools were introduced, such as the Donor Agreement Management System (DAMS) – a leads accounting system for donor pledges - and the Country Office Assessment Tool (COAT), providing an overview of human and financial resources that might support more coordinated and effective resource mobilization efforts.

Some COs expressed concern that the nature of WPP programming — that must necessarily be dynamic, flexible and driven by national stakeholders - does not always lend itself to large-scale programming or restrictive donor requirements. In this context, the Sida Strategic Partnership Framework initiated in 2012 was found to be a highly positive example of strategic and adaptive funding. Sida SPF programme includes a quick intervention funding mechanism – the Women in Politics Fund – that could bolster technical capacity and help meet emerging political opportunities in the short-term. Following internally approved guidelines, COs can receive funding within the course of a week. In Jordan, by the time elections were announced, the regional program ‘Spring Forward’ funds were already committed and not sufficient to intervene. However, funds could be complemented by the flexible ‘Women in Politics’ fund which acted as an internal adaptive response mechanism. A recent evaluation of the funding mechanism also found that the un-earmarked Sida Partnership Framework modality enabled UN Women to act more strategically together with partners, including for leveraging additional funding sources. In addition, there is evidence of the work of FGE projects being leveraged to mobilize resources for UN Women (e.g. the SUMA Initiative: Democracia es Igualdad in Mexico).¹⁰⁴

Interest in this thematic area remains strong among key bilateral donors who see a critical role for UN Women, particularly given its normative and coordination mandates. To secure more funding, donors interviewed at HQ and field levels were overall looking for:

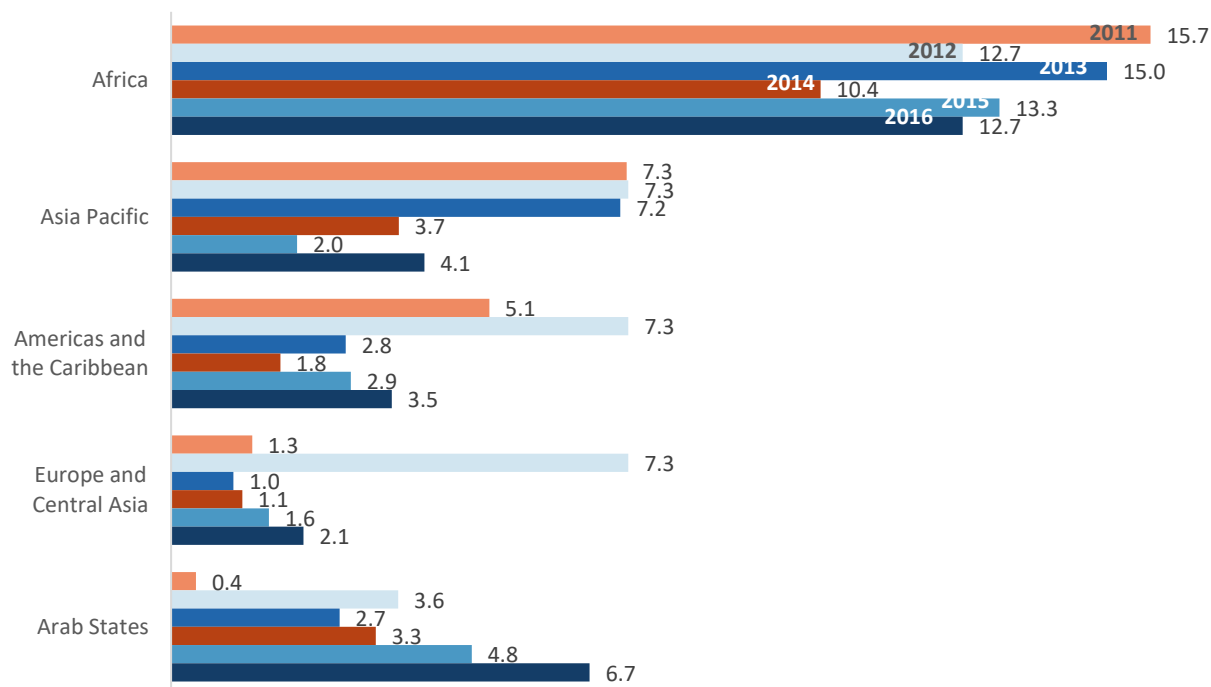
- A clearer articulation of UN Women’s added value to WPP, in terms of how normative and coordination work can support operational activities and prioritization.
- A stronger evidence-base to make the case for strategic funding opportunities.
- Illustration of the complementary impact and enabling nature of WPP work and other thematic areas – in particular in relation to a broader governance agenda.
- Demonstrated human resource capacity to effectively deliver on all aspects of the mandate, including programmatically.

¹⁰⁵ Around 10 million Canadian \$ funding.

¹⁰⁶ This may also be an area for inter-thematic learning on mobilizing multi-country programmes and promoting innovation for FPI implementation, including resource mobilization.

¹⁰⁴ SUMA Initiative: Democracy is Equality in Mexico.

REGIONAL THEMATIC DISTRIBUTION OF WLPP PROGRAMME EXPENSES (US\$ MILLION)



Source: Data Companion 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Note: Data Companions from 2013 and 2014 reported a total of US\$ 38m spent in Impact Area 1, but the disaggregated data showed a total of US\$ 28.7m and 20.1m, respectively.

Figure 6 - Regional Thematic Distribution of WLPP Programme Expenses

3.2 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Finding 17: UN Women’s external WPP knowledge products are highly valued. At the same time, there is demand for increased cross-country, cross-regional and cross-thematic communication and internal knowledge management on WPP to share experiences, lessons learned and strategies for addressing challenges.

Many UN Women WPP knowledge products developed for external use that include publications, policy briefs and studies have had successful uptake internally as well. Asked what type of knowledge products were more frequently used by internal staff and external partners, global publications and CO materials were most frequently cited, along with evaluation reports. In addition, the *Women in Politics Map*¹⁰⁷, produced every two years in partnership with IPU, has been cited as a highly relevant knowledge product. The 2015 publication on *Inclusive Electoral Processes* was also highlighted as a significant contribution to work with and by EMBs.

Other knowledge initiatives were recognized as valuable. Examples include research on the effects of political finance on WPP; increased access to knowledge on WPP through *iKNOW Politics*; continuing advocacy on implementation of the *UN General Assembly Resolution (66/130) on Women’s Political Participation*; and

¹⁰⁷ UN Women. 2017. “Women in Politics Map, 2017.” <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/4/women-in-politics-2017-map>. Accessed 17 May 2018.

elaboration of the first *Secretary-General's Report on the implementation of the GA Resolution 66/130 on Women and Political Participation* for the 68th session of the GA.

While these knowledge products enhanced UN Women COs and national partners' ability to formulate and implement constitutions, legal frameworks and policies that promote WPP, they required broader dissemination to enhance their use.¹⁰⁸ Stakeholders also expressed the need for materials that were innovative, audience appropriate or visual—such as factsheets, infographics or radio and TV spots in local languages—for greater effectiveness in raising public awareness.

Internal communication and knowledge management have been an institution-wide challenge and also for WPP specifically, which does not have a dedicated knowledge management specialist as is the case for some other thematic sections. The 2017 corporate evaluation of the Regional Architecture noted that the prescribed knowledge management and internal communication functions have not been adequately developed – linking policy and normative work to operations and how that works in the current regional architecture.¹⁰⁹ Overall, internal communication and knowledge sharing have been more personal than institutional, rather centralized and relying heavily on the HQ WPP Unit, with (i) limited opportunities for experience sharing between regions – as there were no systemic efforts in place to connect different Regional Policy Advisors with each other or to link up people from across different regions who face similar issues or challenges, and (ii) uneven knowledge sharing within regions dependent on the presence of a Regional Policy Advisor (only the AC and AS regions, respectively, have created a formal knowledge exchange mechanism and an *ad hoc* network of political participation focal points). An organizational culture of information exchange – which will be needed for a community of practice to emerge – was also noted to be institutionally underdeveloped.

Interviewed staff often pointed to the need to engage more on practical problem solving geared towards improving overall delivery performance. Staff interviews articulated a demand for more standardized, timely and easily accessible internal guidance on WPP programming. For instance, a frequently raised issue at country level was how to optimize the sequencing of strategic interventions in this thematic area to benefit from the complementarity between normative, coordination and programming work. Other areas of need were how to work with marginalized groups and engagement with men/boys. Moreover, missed opportunities for *iKNOW Politics'* use in informing UN Women programming and as a platform to feature UN Women's work were identified – despite it being seen as the foremost international knowledge hub for WPP.

Capacity, competing priorities, limited training and corporate mechanisms might be needed to improve internal communication and knowledge management. Though staff working in this thematic area receive an initial on-boarding – similar to that of other thematic areas – they expressed the concern that the briefing was insufficient for an understanding of roles, responsibilities, expectations and corporate policies on this area of work. As no evidence of any other corporate level training for staff on WPP was found, COs have sometimes developed separate training resources, adding to the risk of fragmented understanding and disconnect between field and HQ. The UN Women Training Centre has developed high quality courses on relevant themes, however, their use is often geared towards external audiences, leaving an untapped opportunity for corporate training on WPP. This evaluation also notes the plan to develop a corporate knowledge management strategy, which would be a welcome first step.

3.3 MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

¹⁰⁸ UN Women. October 2016. "Evaluation of UN Women Sida Strategic Partnership Framework 2011–16."

¹⁰⁹ UN Women. September 2016. "Corporate evaluation of the Regional Architecture of UN Women."

Finding 18: Closing corporate gaps identified in reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems would allow for better assessment of WPP results.

UN Women has made considerable investments in its monitoring and reporting systems¹¹⁰, including the Results Management System (RMS), the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) system, the Donor Agreement Management System (DAMS), the Leads system accounting for donor pledges and the Country Office Assessment Tool (COAT).

While these are commendable achievements, the evaluation noted the need for continued improvements in the future to fill the corporate gaps identified below affecting the organization's ability to make claims about results, including impact.

- A more **systemic approach to monitoring and reporting systems** is needed to identify the cumulative or transformative effect of UN Women's integrated mandate and the extent to which results are affected by and strategies are in place to respond to national contexts. Internal monitoring and global reporting do not systematically track the **combined effect of UN Women's integrated mandate** to achieve results at all levels, including those achieved **alongside other partners**, with the exception of electoral assistance results. This makes it difficult to understand the extent to which reported results benefitted from the complementarity between normative, coordination and operational work.
- There is no measure or internal assessment of how UN Women contributes to or fulfils its **universal mandate**, distinguishing between countries where UN Women has presence and where it only has a liaison office or no presence at all. Particularly, it is difficult to assess how UN Women fulfils its universal mandate in countries that are donor countries rather than ODA-recipient countries (or where there is no UN Women programming). The UN Women Global Compact seeks to do a universal 'stock taking' at an aggregate level, but does not identify UN Women's contribution in relation to progress or efforts to prevent backlash in certain contexts. Some donor countries expressed, via this evaluation, that UN Women could play a bigger role in advising them on how they could better incorporate gender priorities into their SDG support in bilateral aid and even in their domestic policies, including on WPP.
- In areas where UN agencies' role division is unclear and contested, **joint delivery and/or contribution to advancing WPP is not universally assessed**, nor are there agreed global targets for WPP across UN agencies. This might pose challenges for differentiating contribution to results between UN partner agencies and creates the risk of double reporting. When results are achieved through partnerships, systems for better tracking the specific contributions of UN Women to results needs to be put in place and these contributions made more visible, while protocols for avoiding double reporting should be defined as well.
- The **timeframe for Results Based Management (RBM) systems**, ending at the closure of a project/programme, means that any evidence of long-term or sustainable results go undocumented. Yet, this is key information for better understanding overall effectiveness and sustainability in this area of work. By visiting Pakistan years after the project was terminated, the evaluation was able to capture sustainable results that no RBM system would have been able to capture (Finding 20). The need to modify the timeframe of RBM systems is particularly relevant in the sub-thematic area of constitutional and legal reform, to enable capturing results of advocacy work and beyond changes related to descriptive representation legislation, e.g. monitoring of women influencing policies and exercising substantive representation and monitoring of WPP backlashes.
- **Communication and advocacy** is another corporate area in need of RBM strengthening, not only to enable measurement of results, but also to allow for enhanced synergies with programmatic work. Even when rolled out in the national context, global advocacy campaigns tend to be disconnected from Strategic Note's substantive result objectives (e.g. further to an awareness raising campaign to male politicians the

¹¹⁰ UN Women. September 2017. "What can we learn from UN Women evaluations? A meta-analysis of UN women evaluations in 2016."

evaluation did not find evidence of tracking commitments made by these male politicians). For example, the DRC has made initial investments in ‘programmatically communication and advocacy’ using the multiplier effect of communication and advocacy for increased operational results – measurement of results is yet to be seen though. In Mexico, the evaluation identified a good practice for impact results measurement of a social media campaign on EAW – this could be used as an inspiring example to build on for other Impact Areas.

- **Leadership and social norms change** are also areas where measurement of results has been challenging. Further thinking on how to capture and learn from results need to take place as there seems to be no internal guidance on how to assess efforts in these areas.
- Specifically for WPP, the evaluation identified the **following indicator gaps**: (i) shifts in the structures, procedures and norms internal to parliaments, along the lines of the FPI output ‘institutions are receptive to women leaders’; (ii) improved ‘capacity’ of women elected officials and candidates; (iii) changes in attitude or behaviour shifts of men/boys; and (iv) disaggregation to level of marginalized groups.

Finally, the quality and completeness of the self-reported data is varied. This prevents comparability across countries/regions/years, as well as overall analysis of attribution versus contribution to some results. For example, the RMS indicators do not always allow for qualitative data reporting to identify UN Women’s role in the passing of national laws in favour of WPP. This affects UN Women’s ability to measure contribution and could be addressed with training and quality checks. While the RMS is organized thematically along the SP, the other systems are organized geographically (e.g. ERM and COAT), making it difficult to extract information thematically.

3.4 PARTNERSHIPS

Finding 19: UN Women can build on and improve its strong partnerships on WPP by coordinating at the country level and expanding outreach to organizations of marginalized groups, regional and sub-regional organizations and political parties.

At the global level, UN Women has conducted joint activities with partners, such as the IPU, International IDEA, the Commonwealth, Commonwealth of Local Government Forum (CLGF) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). UN Women has capitalized on its mandate and well-established partnerships with international organizations for its work as custodian of indicator SDG 5.5.1b on local government (Finding 14). UN Women could potentially lead similar dialogue and learning processes on other emerging issues such as VAWP (Finding 13). The ten-year *iKNOW Politics* partnership also illustrates the benefits of inter-institutional collaboration and joint financing.

At the country level, the efficiency of partnerships has often been dependent on the national context and the ability to navigate political relationships. In countries where strong actors were already present, UN Women has been expected to demonstrate its added value to gain a credible seat at the table and establish its niche complementary to other partners and in line with its own capacity. A flexible and adaptive approach that is closely tailored to the national context, including one of trust building between different stakeholders, has been important for UN Women to maintain impartiality, manage reputational risks and safe-guard civic space and national dialogue.

Stakeholders would like to see UN Women take on a strategic and more visible coordination role with international organizations, regional and national partners. For instance, at the country level, UN Women has strong potential to convene and facilitate coordination among international organizations engaged in the thematic area. UN Women has played this role in Colombia as a founder, active participant and, at times, coordinator of the International Cooperation Roundtable on Women’s Participation and Coordination. In DRC, UN Women co-leads the Gender Ministry’s sub-working group on WPP that includes government, CSOs, UN agencies, donors and

international organizations. Almost all stakeholders interviewed viewed UN Women as the key agency for coordinating WPP with recent strengthened capacity of the CO seeming to provide impetus for taking on this role, whereas in other countries UN Women’s engagement in similar groups is more limited given competition from other actors.

In general, UN Women has a broad network of CSO partners and has appropriately balanced partnerships between CSOs and State actors in playing a convening role in policy dialogue. In contexts of shrinking civic space, UN Women has sometimes been perceived as unwilling to speak up for embattled CSOs and being too close to government. In some other cases, UN Women was perceived as overly dependent on a single government counterpart, thereby putting UN Women at political risk (e.g. following a change of government or in case of tensions between the government Gender Machinery and civil society activists). UN Women’s Civil Society Advisory Groups (CSAG) has played an important role in advocating for the normative agenda at the global level, while country-level CSAGs have not consistently been leveraged for WPP work. Although the modality of implementation when partnering with CSOs depends on the type of intervention and capacity levels, UN Women has at times assumed an implementation role where it could have worked through partnerships with CSOs (e.g. Zimbabwe and Malawi) or concentrated funding to stronger/fewer CSO counterparts. This has brought trade-offs for UN Women’s history of working closer with women’s movements and smaller CSOs.

In some instances, UN Women’s partnerships’ efficiency has been hindered by its own planning and implementation delays and level of responsiveness or communication with partners. This has led some donors and partners to select others for collaboration. Opportunities for strengthened partnerships include:

- In line with the 2030 Agenda and the commitment to LNOB, the evaluation assessed the need to develop partnerships with organizations representing **marginalized groups**.
- **Regional and sub-regional organizations** have also had an important strategic normative role to play in building consensus around political participation principles and targets. UN Women has had positive experiences with Parlatino and, more recently, the AU. Further leveraging these partnerships, including for reflection on gender-sensitive election monitoring and reporting, could yield enhanced results.
- UN Women’s work with **political parties** included dialogue on TSM application, candidate recruitment, sustainable candidate training processes, access to campaign resources and measures to prevent VAWP. Women engagement can be coordinated through and supported by other UN agencies working on this issue such as UNDP.

4 SUSTAINABILITY

Q4: Has UN Women contributed to sustainable results in WPP?

Finding 20: There is no explicit definition of sustainability for WPP, and it is not consistently prioritized or incorporated in planning documents.

UN Women defines sustainability as “the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed.”¹¹¹ While it strives to achieve sustainable results, defining and tracking sustainability has been a corporate challenge.¹¹² Given that UN Women began operations in 2011, it is generally too early to assess sustainability as many of the long-term changes sought might not take hold for a

¹¹¹ UN Women. “UN Women Programme and Operations Manual.”

¹¹² UN Women. September 2017. “What can we learn from UN Women evaluations? A meta-analysis of UN women evaluations in 2016.”; UN Women. June 2016. “What can we learn from UN Women evaluations? A meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN Women in 2014 and 2015.”

number of years after programmes close. Survey results showed an overall positive perception among stakeholders: 62 per cent of internal stakeholders strongly or somewhat agreeing that results have been sustained or taken up by national, regional or international counterparts and 70 per cent of external stakeholders agreeing that UN Women has contributed to the achievement of long-term sustainable results.

The evaluation found numerous cases of some sustainable progress in the sub-thematic area of constitutional/legislative reforms, as evidenced by reforms that contributed to an increase in the overall number elected women. However, there were also instances of regression and backlash and more systematic long-term tracking of results would allow for more robust analysis. Sustainability is inherently more difficult to gauge in other types of WPP activities. For instance, while UN Women has made important investments in social norms promotion and capacity building for elected women and candidates, M&E systems have not been designed to assess the results of this work, particularly in the long-term.¹¹³ Related to this, UN Women's risk identification and mitigation system does not currently capture risks related to backlash against WPP progress, nor contribute to sharing of lessons learned and good practices in terms of adaptation to political challenges. Initiatives such as the ATENEA monitoring system established in the AC region could potentially be used to enhance risk resiliency and sustainability through close monitoring of WPP progress and setbacks.

Within RBM processes, short project timeframes (sometimes two years) and overly ambitious goals also limited incorporation of sustainability targets and absence of ex-post reviews hinders learning on sustainable outcomes. Within the sub-thematic area of inclusive electoral processes, stakeholders emphasized the importance of working continuously throughout the electoral cycle and ideally working through at least one additional cycle to maintain momentum and consolidate and sustain progress.

Though prioritization was highlighted by internal stakeholders as a critical need given the context of limited resources, there was limited evidence of sustainability or scale-up potential used as criteria for selecting new projects. One positive example is the Caribbean Multi-Country Office (MCO), which in its Strategic Note (2014 - 2017) prioritized working in countries that committed to provide in-kind contributions (technical, human and financial resources) and the political will to enable implementation.

UN Women's strength in building effective partnerships (with CSOs, national governments and UN Agencies) and developing projects responsive to stakeholder interests (e.g. the gender mainstreaming course tailored for municipalities in the AC region that became a self-sustained service) are both key ingredients for sustainability. In fact, external survey respondents highlighted effective partnerships (with CSOs, national governments and UN agencies) as the primary driver of sustainable results. In Pakistan, a CSO partner engaged in a voter turnout project that successfully incorporated this area of work in their organization. The CSO further built on this success by (i) liaising directly with donors; (ii) working directly with the EMB; and (iii) joining the district voter education committee. UN Women's capacity to build broad consensus between partners — including civil society and across political parties — can also help to ensure that support for reforms and policies lasts beyond a change in government.

Despite some positive examples, the sustainability of results for constitutional/legal reforms is often stymied due to limited accountability for actual implementation. In some contexts, UN Women has enhanced sustainability through support for EMB enforcement of constitutional/legislative reforms (e.g. work with sub-national EMBs in Mexico focused on enforcement of constitutional reform for parity). In Moldova, sustainability was achieved through strengthening capacities of EMB to conduct gender analyses, gender statistics and research to identify challenges associated with bringing more women into politics, as well as institutionalization of disaggregating data. National stakeholders were called on to lead processes, not just engage in them. However, it does not appear

¹¹³ See also: Finding 6 and 18.

that UN Women has worked with parliaments to support exercise of their constitutional oversight responsibility, for instance, through post-legislative scrutiny processes that assesses to what extent a WPP law has been implemented.

Consistent with the 2030 Agenda commitment on the ‘three dimensions of sustainability’,¹¹⁴ stakeholders also highlighted the importance of integrated programming that could include, for instance, MP capacity strengthening linked to substantive representation work in areas such as economic empowerment or environmental policy.

Finally, capacity building experiences that are collective and institutional rather than individually-based and ad hoc are also more likely to generate sustainable improvements. This lesson was highlighted by UN Women’s work with the Women’s Parliamentary Group in El Salvador, where support was perceived to have contributed to sustainable increases in capacity and influence (Finding 14). It should be noted, however, that the sustainability of capacity building results might also be limited by political turnover and environment. Though cross-country data is sparse, research from some countries indicates that women are less likely to win re-election and have shorter political careers than their male counterparts, underscoring the need for better understanding of factors that can help women build successful political careers in the long-term. More long-term assessment of the results of such capacity-building efforts within different country contexts and the effects of such training outside of political life and over time is needed.

Some other examples of sustainability include:

- In India, a strategy of working with women-only assemblies (Panjayats) as a precursor to the village assemblies, was recognized by the government as valuable and incorporated at state level.
- In Cambodia, the Young Women’s Leadership Network was supported by UN Women, but then consolidated and raised donor funding on their own.

5 PROMISING PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation findings provided a number of promising practices presented here for consideration in future WPP work. For the purpose of this evaluation, a promising practice is defined as one that meets at least two of the following criteria: leads to an actual change, has an impact on the policy environment, demonstrates an innovative or replicable approach, or demonstrates sustainability.¹¹⁵

Relevance

- Promotion of **cross-country networking for knowledge exchange and mutual support**, particularly in contexts of closed political systems or gender backlash.
- **Application of a comprehensive needs assessment as the basis for developing support when existing country/gender diagnostics are insufficient**, as in the case of South Sudan’s resource centre for the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus of the National Assembly.
- **Facilitating dialogue between MP’s and marginalized groups**, such as work in Cambodia with youth groups.
- **‘Citizenship’ programs** such as in Egypt, DRC, Pakistan and Malawi as a means of supporting the political participation of marginalized women.
- **Outreach to traditional leaders** as a means of engaging men/boys and influencing social norms.
- **Creation of ‘core support’ or ‘advisory groups’** charged with project design and accompaniment, such as in Paraguay and Moldova.

¹¹⁴ The three dimensions are: social, economic and environmental.

¹¹⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality. 2013. “Mainstreaming gender into the policies and the programmes of the institutions of the European Union and EU Member States.” <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Good-Practices-in-Gender-Mainstreaming.pdf>. Accessed 18 May 2018.

Effectiveness

- **Linking capacity building efforts to other thematic areas**, such as in Serbia where support to the women's parliamentary caucus contributed to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- **Support for subnational implementation of constitutional reforms at all levels** e.g. through judicial challenges on non-compliance that resulted in legal rulings in support of parity in Mexico. The experience was relevant to the local context and demonstrates the importance of the subnational level, where WPP barriers may be greater.
- **Design of locally appropriate protocols, codes of conduct, awareness campaigns and monitoring mechanisms to address VAWP** was seen as particularly important given the difficulties associated with securing VAWP legislation.
- **Engagement with political parties** through raising awareness, sharing of good practices and facilitating consensus on WPP benchmarks, as in Colombia.
- **Support for strategies to address context-specific barriers to voter turnout by women**, such as the idea of voter thresholds in Pakistan.
- **Social norms programming through media campaigns** that include careful tracking of shifts in media coverage and public opinion as in Tanzania.
- **Support for regional dialogues in partnership with regional bodies** that reinforce a common language and shared commitments, such as the Parlatino Parity Democracy Framework in Latin America.

Efficiency

- The use of the Sida-supported Women in Politics Fund as a **tool for implementing a timely initial response to emerging political opportunities**.
- **The development of a multi-country FPI** to promote greater programming coherence and more effective fundraising, as was used in West Africa.
- **Coordination with UNDP at the global level on signature knowledge products** aimed at influencing policy debates and programming.
- The **use of specialised knowledge products**—such as creative infographics or radio/TV in local languages—were seen as appropriately tailored to and effective with target audiences.
- Leadership in convening and coordinating, including for joint programming among international organizations engaged in WPP, as in UN Women's role in Colombia as a founder and active participant and sometimes leader of the International Cooperation Roundtable on Women's Participation and Coordination.

Sustainability

- **Support for gender sensitization at an institutional level** that influences policies and the overall (parliamentary or EMB) structure. For instance, work in Moldova, included a special session on gender equality in the induction training of all newly elected MPs, use of sex-disaggregated data, awareness raising for marginalized groups and awareness raising with staff and strengthening of constituency offices.
- **Capacity building programs that enhance the ability of partners to consolidate and fundraise independently**, as seen in Cambodia with the Young Women's Leadership Network.

For the purpose of this evaluation, a lesson learned is defined as a generalization based on evaluation experiences with projects, programs or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design and implementation that affect performance, outcome and impact.

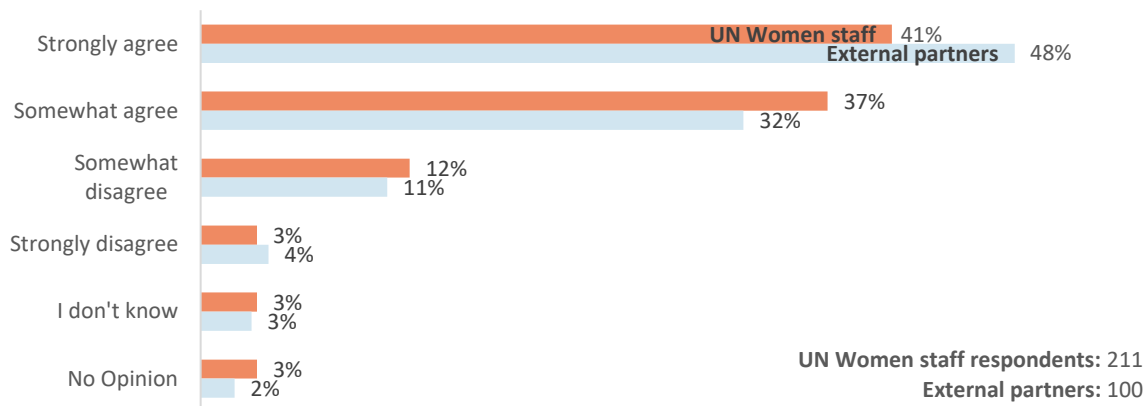
- **Long-term strategic vision is often required for influencing WPP normative work at the global level.** UN Women’s ability to influence the inclusion of an SDG indicator for women’s representation in local government and to lead the development of a methodology for monitoring it (SDG indicator 5.5.1b) was pre-dated by several years of lobbying, building of an evidence-base and convening. In return, it has now put UN Women in a good position to further developing its work on gender-inclusive governance. Working in synergy with other output areas under the SP to combine WPP with transformative leadership training has the potential to operationalize further this long-term vision.
- **Training local institutions so that knowledge is institutionalized and can be replicated with regular intervals shows promise for sustainability.** Regularly offered courses by the Training Centre to municipalities in the AC region has helped foster an institutional culture where gender training is expected and routinely offered to newly elected officials. Transformational Leadership training in partnership with national or regional institutions was another example of how leveraging existing institutions to provide training supports sustainability.

C. REFLECTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The evaluation identified four issues that were relevant to raise for corporate reflection based on the evidence collected and analysis conducted. These are forward-looking considerations for WPP engagement and/or issues that have corporate significance for organizational strengthening.

1. **UN Women may wish to further explore the connection between WPP and environments to increase relevance to stakeholder demands and interests in implementing the SDGs.** The evaluation approach included a consideration of the intersections between the cross-cutting dimensions of the 2030 Agenda: gender equality, environments and marginalized voices. While the two dimensions of gender equality and marginalized voices were highly relevant and well incorporated within the scope of this evaluation, the **connection between WPP and environmental sustainability** was taken as an area for exploration and learning. The evaluation found that both internal (78 per cent) and external (80 per cent) stakeholders “strongly” or “somewhat agreed” that UN Women should identify and respond to any connections between WPP work and environmental sustainability. This was supported by stakeholder interviews, which indicated that this was an area of interest given that the intersection between gender equality and climate change is an increasing priority and relevant area of work in many sectors. While the nexus between environmental sustainability and WPP is still nascent, it is an area for UN Women to support learning given that environmental policy and decision-making is also a rising political priority. Several countries demonstrated the interest and willingness to further explore opportunities to link women’s participation in **local government/governance and environmental decision-making** (e.g. for disaster risk management and climate change legislation or in relation to water and sanitation with women’s participation in local water committees).

STAKEHOLDERS' VIEWS ON WHETHER UN WOMEN SHOULD PURSUE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WLPP AND ENVIRONMENT



Source: Survey to UN Women staff and External partners for the corporate evaluation

Figure 7 - Stakeholders' Views on Whether UN Women Should Pursue Connections between WLPP and Environment

- 2. UN Women might wish to consider whether there is value in maintaining a strong distinction between local government and local governance work in an era of systemic frameworks that emphasize interconnections and synergies.** The SDGs have ushered in an era of systemic thinking that places an emphasis on understanding and addressing the complexities around achieving sustainable development and better understanding of the inter-relationships and inter-connections of the work done in different sectors or thematic areas. This evaluation found evidence of strategic opportunities for UN Women to engage and take leadership in local government (e.g. role in SDGs indicator 5.5.1b) and in broader local governance efforts. Given indications that the inter-relationships between government/governance may be stronger at this level and with stakeholder interest, the strengthening of this synergy has many potential benefits as a signature area of work for UN Women.
- 3. UN Women could further invest in ways to strengthen and shift monitoring and evaluation systems to capture the sustainability and impact of WPP results.** This evaluation found evidence of the need to strengthen some specific issues related to the M&E of WPP work that are highlighted in the findings. While M&E strengthening is something that UN Women has invested in and is continuously working to improve, a broader reflection on how to capture the sustainability and impact of WPP results would be a useful focus. The introduction of systematic post-training assessments and surveys, periodic country surveys, ex-post evaluations, big data methods and partnerships with research institutes are some potential ways to improve monitoring and evaluative information on WPP change processes across the normative and operational work. This would benefit planning processes and better enable UN Women to demonstrate long-term results, as opposed to a focus on short-term output results that have immediate expediency for reporting, but may not best serve the achievement of the organization's overall mandate.
- 4. UN Women's WPP work would likely benefit from overall corporate harmonization and strengthening around cross-cutting programmatic issues.** The evaluation identified a number of areas where WPP work may benefit from more overall corporate harmonization and strengthening around a number of cross-cutting issues to guide and support this work and the work in other thematic areas. Specific areas the evaluation

identified include transformational leadership, capacity development, advocacy and communications for programmatic implementation and knowledge management.¹¹⁶ These areas would benefit from the development of corporate strategies, definitions, indicators and tools. This could support harmonization and leveraging of work across the organization to strengthen development results and efficiencies.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The 20 evaluation findings presented in Section B covered a number of key issues related to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UN Women's work. These six priority conclusions focus on key issues for UN Women to consider in the context of implementing its SP (2018-2021) and the 2030 Agenda within the framework of UN reform efforts.

Conclusion 1: The 2030 Agenda and the SDG framework's systemic approach situates UN Women as the key UN actor and thought leader for providing integrated policy advice on WPP.

(Finding 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17 and 19)

The 2030 Agenda and the SDG framework are systemic in nature and highlight the inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of the 17 goals, with GEWE as a cross-cutting issue throughout. For the UN system to be 'fit-for-purpose,' to support implementation of the SDGs, however, there is widespread recognition that the organization must also adopt a more systemic (as opposed to a siloed) approach to its work.¹¹⁷ One of the core functions identified for UN Development System support to the 2030 Agenda is to provide Member States with "integrated policy advice, including 'thought leadership' and analysis on critical policy issues, working across governments and societies to address and respond to cross-cutting challenges."¹¹⁸

Grounding its work in international frameworks and commitments related to WPP, UN Women is seen as an impartial and highly credible actor. It has been able to position itself and contribute results to WPP during the evaluation period by leveraging its integrated mandate on GEWE to make progress on normative, coordination and operational results and demonstrated potential to adapt to emerging political opportunities. UN Women's GEWE mandate and six thematic areas of work (women's voice, leadership and participation; women's economic empowerment; ending violence against women and girls; women's peace and security; governance and national planning; and global and normative framework) situate it to act as the key agency and thought leader within the United Nations Development System (UNDS) to provide integrated policy advice on WPP

A more systemic approach to addressing WPP would include strengthening existing internal and external synergies and forging new ones relevant to the cross-cutting dimensions for sustainable development. It has the potential to draw on internal synergies within and across three main areas: (i) it's SP's outcome areas; (ii) cross-cutting areas for GEWE (e.g. social norms, transformative leadership and marginalization); and (iii) it's integrated and universal mandate to coordinate work on GEWE, as well as undertake normative and operational work.

¹¹⁶ Social norms, HRBA and engagement with marginalized groups, M&E systems and resource mobilization would also be included in this list, but are addressed within conclusions, recommendations and other reflection areas.

¹¹⁷ CEB report, UN Reform, SDGs and Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).

¹¹⁸ Integrated policy advice, including providing 'thought leadership' and analysis on critical policy issues, working across governments and societies to address and respond to cross-cutting challenges and providing support to generating data and evidence required to better support policy making, implementation and monitoring of national development priorities and the SDGs. Such policy advice will draw on the diversity and expertise available across the UN system and the tools and analysis utilized by the different pillars of the UN human rights, humanitarian action, peace and security, political economy and climate change. See <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/2018-sg-report-adv.pdf>

UN Women has made progress in this direction in some sub-thematic areas (e.g. local government and VAWP) and with new internal and external frameworks supportive of strengthening synergies (e.g. the SP 2018-2021), the Flagship Programmes and the UN reform process). However, it has not yet optimized its potential to do so. A more systemic approach to addressing WPP would include strengthening existing internal and external synergies and forging new ones relevant to the cross-cutting dimensions for sustainable development.¹¹⁹ It would also include communicating its work on WPP as part of a broader policy framework for GEWE and highlighting the key connections that can be leveraged not only internally, but also leading the way for partners to better understand, think and act systemically in their own WPP efforts.

Conclusion 2: In order to be ‘fit-for-purpose’ to support SDG implementation, UN Women would benefit from adopting a thematic lens for strengthening its internal capacities and resources to match desired impact with delivery capacity on WPP.

(Findings 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19)

Progress on WPP was widely cited as one of the key ‘drivers’ for enhancing progress across all other UN Women thematic areas, as well as across the SDGs.

While this evaluation demonstrates that UN Women has been able to achieve relevant results on WPP with current capacities, resourcing and organizational structure, it has not yet been able to demonstrate that it has achieved and sustained the level of results needed to generate broader impact on WPP as expected, let alone how these results can act as a driver for broader GEWE impacts. This is despite ample evidence of how UN Women has successfully leveraged partnerships – which in itself requires a certain level of investment – both within the UNDS and with other global, regional and national partners to enhance its reach. External stakeholders, especially CSOs, are particularly keen to work with UN Women given its specialized GEWE mandate.

Despite possessing the building blocks for becoming ‘fit-for-purpose’ on WPP, persistent staffing gaps and under-resourcing at the global, regional and country levels affect UN Women’s ability to meet demand for support. The prioritization of WPP over a broad geographic scope (91 countries in 2016) and the political complexities this work entails are part of the issue. However, current levels of capacity are not adequate to implement UN Women’s integrated mandate effectively. The decision to place WPP at the output level (unlike EAW, WEE and PSHA that remain at the outcome level) may further exacerbate resource shortages.

Most significantly, gaps in terms of thematic policy expertise and variations in the skills of country leadership have meant that UN Women is not always able to meet the demands or expectations of partners. External stakeholders, especially CSOs, are particularly keen to work with UN Women on WPP given its specialized GEWE mandate in relation to other actors. Strong policy expertise at the global level and in the two regions with dedicated Regional Policy Advisors combined with flexible funding mechanisms have somewhat enabled UN Women to adapt to overcome capacity constraints but the structural human resource constraints remain in the long-term. More investment is needed both externally in terms of funding and support for the coordination mandate on WPP, but also internally in terms of knowledge management; training; planning, monitoring and evaluation; partnership management; prioritizing staffing with policy expertise; and their roles and responsibilities.

Conclusion 3: UN reform efforts provide new opportunities, as well as challenges to implementing its coordination role on WPP, especially at the country level.

(Findings 1, 8 and 11)

¹¹⁹ Social, economic and environmental.

Though there are some examples of successful joint programming, UN Women's ability to effectively implement its coordination mandate was hindered by differing interpretations among UN actors, regarding mandates and role division, lack of policy frameworks (aside from electoral assistance) or other agreements regarding role division and resource imbalances, especially at the country level. Most of these factors are inherent to the UN System and largely outside of UN Women's sphere of influence. Addressing these factors requires joint UN system dialogue and action to resolve differing interpretations.

The UN reform efforts to reposition the system elevates focus on coordinated support to countries and opportunities to further contribute to system-wide accountability on gender equality. Though efficiency may result as UN entities' coordination improves, there is also the danger that 'one voice' might stifle creativity, enforce conservative policies and prevent visibility and resources for UN Women. Recent UN reform efforts could provide an opportunity for UN Women to address some of these challenges or it could also present challenges for UN Women's positioning particularly in countries where it has no presence or a significant resource imbalance *vis-à-vis* UNDP. Issues of visibility can arise with co-location. On the other hand, relations might improve with UNDP in some countries to allow for joint programmes and basket-funds on elections through pooled funding mechanisms. A strengthened Resident Coordinators' system and UNDAF process could prevent the current dispersed approach experienced at the country-level. Also, the current SP 2018-2021, which now includes both a joint chapter and an outcome on strengthened UN system coordination, commits agencies, such as UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women, to work together on issues of marginalization and GEWE.¹²⁰ For these coherence efforts to be effectively implemented as a means of jointly producing results in the field of WPP, the joint chapter of the SP 2018-2021 would have to be complemented in the long-term with WPP specific targets across the relevant UN agencies and an inter-agency mechanism at the highest level to monitor implementation and joint reporting, as well as to make decisions on corporate MoUs on WPP to be implemented at the country-level.

Conclusion 4: Although UN Women has demonstrated effectiveness across its normative and operational work, it could increase the level and sustainability of its results by adopting a more systemic and holistic approach to its programmatic work.

(Findings 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18 and 20)

UN Women has achieved results across its normative and operational mandate. Normative results were particularly prominent, regarding the adoption of inter-governmental norms, while operational results were found across all sub-themes and countries due in large part to UN Women's advocacy capacity, convening credibility and strong partnerships. These results were not uniform, however, across sub-themes or within activities within sub-themes.

UN Women's WPP normative and operational work present some challenges. In some countries, linkages between policy and operational work remain weak; and operational results have been uneven across and within sub-themes. This might be due to the wide range of activities implemented that makes difficult (i) the development of specific strategies to operationalize the normative gains; (ii) the achievement of shared institutional learning; and (iii) the development of common branding around innovative models. Some sub-thematic areas would benefit from the definition of a few key 'signature' products around which UN Women could invest in specialized M&E, internal learning, knowledge production and branding.

¹²⁰Common Chapter to the strategic plans of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women supports Leaving No One Behind and Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, and commits the agencies to work together, plan together and implement programmes together, as well as enhance efficiencies.

Meanwhile, sustainability of WPP results also presents some challenges due to the WPP specific work environment and corporate limitations. Specifically (i) political volatility; (ii) the entrenched nature of social norms; (iii) the long-term and regressive nature of the change processes that UN Women is working towards; (iv) the limitations of M&E systems, including the nascent risk management system; and (v) a short-term approach to the conceptualization and operationalization of results.

While UN Women's ability to respond to emerging political opportunities is a strength, it is important to balance adaptability with a longer-term systemic and holistic perspective. This includes (i) prioritizing projects based on scale-up and sustainability potential (e.g. electoral cycle process vs. election period; *de jure* vs. *de facto* laws; and descriptive as well as substantive representation); (ii) balancing and sequencing efforts across the integrated mandate; and (iii) gauging and mitigating potential negative reactions that might arise in the form of violence, public opinion or public policy backlash.

Conclusion 5: UN Women needs to prioritize and increase its efforts to address marginalization within its WPP work.

(Findings 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18 and 19)

The evaluation found that UN Women programming has supported the LNOB agenda in a number of COs, but that progress is uneven and limited by data and strategy gaps, as well as by limited partnerships with groups representing marginalized communities. There was strong demand by both internal and external stakeholders for UN Women to strengthen further its support to marginalized groups, likely given the additional impetus provided by the 2030 Agenda. However, there was also widespread understanding of the real difficulties and complexities of doing so in a meaningful way given the level of capacity and resources available for WPP work and the existing gaps.

On the positive side, the evidence shows that UN Women has a number of strengths on which it can draw to improve outreach to marginalized groups. Its proven strength in developing and maintaining strong partnerships with civil society groups as part of its overall implementation of a human rights-based approach is key also to strengthening and widening its partnerships with marginalized groups with which it engages on WPP. UN Women may be able to draw on existing partnerships developed for other thematic areas and further expand and sustain these over the long-term to support a process of more systematic inclusion across its work areas. UN Women can also use its convening power to ensure inclusion of marginalized groups in national or local dialogues or processes related to WPP.

This evaluation has also identified several areas where UN Women could strengthen its attention to marginalized groups, including within specific sub-thematic areas, including those groups prioritized within the current SP 2018-2021, i.e., young women, indigenous women and women with disabilities. For example, citizenship programming; local government; VAWP; development and dissemination of inclusive electoral processes and quota/parity laws to local levels; constituency engagement with parliamentarians; civil society grant modalities; and research were all found to provide opportunities for closer engagement with marginalized groups and support their inclusion. Capacity building efforts, especially related to developing young women's leadership skills, and advocacy efforts with EMBs and regional and sub-regional organizations engaged in elections monitoring were other identified opportunities to strengthen inclusion of marginalized groups in WPP work. Developing stronger synergies with SDG 16 on broader inclusive governance processes is also connected to and would be supportive of this work. Finally, UN Women's knowledge management and M&E systems need to be strengthened to support learning on how best to identify and engage marginalized groups and accurately capture and record results.

Conclusion 6: Work on social norm change to support WPP is a promising yet under-developed area of programming for WPP.

(Findings 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18 and 20)

Social norms work underscores all WPP sub-thematic areas, is included in the WPEL-FPI and is considered an essential aspect of UN Women's work overall. As the evaluation findings have noted, the political empowerment of women might not be sustained unless there are real shifts in social norms around women entering and staying in politics. Yet, the evaluation found that social norms change remains a relatively under-analysed, under-developed and under-measured area of programming. Given the scale of the challenges for supporting women's political empowerment alone and UN Women's resource levels and accountability to demonstrate results, this is not surprising. However, the evaluation findings also point to the need to redirect energies to develop more concerted and specific programming around social norms change that will complement the women's political empowerment strategies undertaken. This requires deepening the analysis of and then targeting the context-specific attitudes, stereotypes and perceptions held by men, women, boys and girls of women in politics and women as leaders that work to prevent women's political participation and empowerment.

The evaluation noted the largely 'upstream' nature of the work by UN Women, which aligns with its mandate and capacity levels. Yet, social norm change, like work with marginalized groups, is mainly 'downstream' work that involves engaging at the local or grassroots level. The challenge for UN Women will be to find innovative ways to tackle social norm change on WPP 'upstream' and link this with new strategies for addressing social norms change 'downstream'. For the former, it may be possible to better leverage the symbolic representation of women leaders for social norm change. Advocacy and communications work on WPP – and more broadly across thematic areas by UN Women – could be better leveraged for social norm change impact. The evaluation found that several good examples already exist, which can be better leveraged for WPP work. For the latter, the FGE grant-making modality to civil society groups was effective in addressing social norm change and provided useful learning. New partnerships may need to be explored and may be possible if UN Women strengthens its work on WPP at the local level going forward.

Overall, social norms change efforts need to go beyond general or ad hoc awareness-raising activities to develop more long-term and sustained programming that targets not only men and boys, but also women and girls, with specific outcomes, outputs, indicators, baselines and targets. This will require putting in place long-term monitoring methods that track change beyond a specific programme lifespan and leveraging new and innovative monitoring methods (e.g. big data) that can expand possibilities for monitoring and assessing results. This would help UN Women to better understand and leverage its social norm change work on WPP and increase the possibilities for reporting on sustainable change and impact on WPP over the long-term. Given evidence that similar challenges with social norms change are experienced across UN Women's areas of work, corporate frameworks or guidance may support and enable leveraging of work across all thematic areas for broader impact.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions derived from the evidence analysed for this evaluation and the forward-looking context, the following six recommendations are proposed:

Recommendation 1: In a context of wide-ranging demands and limited resources, UN Women needs to strengthen its prioritization capacity at the country level to contribute strategic and sustainable results on WPP.

Such capacity can be strengthened through the use of evidence-based programming, investment, communication and fundraising around the following:

- Learning and advocacy in the emerging areas of VAWP and Local Government to provide integrated policy advice to Member States and to enhance further UN Women’s strategic niche and added value.
- Selecting one or two strategic ‘signature’ programming models within the sub-thematic areas that are innovative, low-cost and with potential for scale-up, sustainability and potential to apply UN Women’s universal mandate. Examples to explore include:
 - Institutional support to caucuses and committees to engage on post-legislative analysis and monitoring, including through outreach and constituency engagement for women MPs and local government officials;
 - New approaches for registration of ID cards for the most marginalized women and identity management (in partnership with UNDP);
 - Exploring the use of new technologies for civic education;
 - Linking women to different forms of public decision-making (in both formal and informal settings);
 - VAWP protocols developed with EMBs and other; and
 - As an advocacy tool and global knowledge product, a replication of the *Women in Politics Global Map* for local government, in partnership with the relevant organizations.
- Strengthening partnerships with organizations involved in party system strengthening and institutional capacity building. This could include inter-governmental institutions like International IDEA, regional organizations and associations of mayors or local government officials, as well as a strengthened partnership with IPU to engender parliament procedures.

Recommendation 2: To strengthen implementation of its coordination mandate, UN Women should establish a clear division of labour with other UN agencies around potentially overlapping mandates. It also should provide thematic operational guidance on planning and implementing its coordination role at the country and regional levels.

UN Women should clarify and formalize its role and coordination function relative to other UN agencies, with regard to the SP’s joint chapter and UN reform, concerning a joint vision, targets and implementation framework for WPP. It should establish a division of labour with UN Women as a full partner throughout the project cycle, in resource mobilization efforts and reporting of results. The UN-SWAP model could inspire ways of working with a similar accountability framework for UN system-wide performance and joint delivery on WPP.

UN Women should provide operational guidance on planning and implementing its coordination role at the country and regional level, across sub-thematic areas and across different types of partners. This would clarify for partners how to engage and support UN Women and UNDP in the country context, drawing on each organization’s comparative strengths. It would also institutionalize the process instead of relying on the goodwill of individual staff members.

Recommendation 3: UN Women should develop a long-term WPP capacity-strengthening plan to enhance its ability to deliver results and meet stakeholder requests.

In light of the limited WPP human resources, UN Women should undertake a WPP capacity -strengthening plan of existing resources. This would ideally include the below elements:

- Conduct an organizational staff mapping and capacity assessment to provide accurate data on the number and level of staff working fully or partially on WPP, their technical capacity strengths and weaknesses to identifying hubs of expertise that can be leveraged and areas for targeted training or specialized recruitment (e.g. knowledge management).
- Clarify roles and responsibilities at HQ, regional and country-level staff working on WPP and prioritize capacity strengthening at the regional and country level with a multi-year recruitment plan for progressive strengthening in terms of numbers and seniority.
- Develop and regularly update policy and programmatic guidance notes that provide a strategic vision for each sub-thematic area with priority activities, role of UN Women *vis-à-vis* other actors, possible risks and potential mitigation strategies drawn from experience and specific indicators and monitoring tools to support documentation of sustainable results, including post-training assessments and surveys. The programmatic guidance should include strategies for sequencing normative, operational and coordination work; targeting marginalized groups; work with political parties; engaging men and boys as part of broader social norms work; and maintaining impartiality and avoiding reputational risks both within and outside the UN; and in adopting a more systemic approach by way of mapping synergies with other thematic areas.
- Complement with online and/or face-to-face technical trainings for staff responsible for undertaking this work, leveraging the Training Centre's and *iKNOW Politics'* capacities and resources.
- Develop communities of practice or shared staff resources (across countries) on highly specialized subjects that support cross-country and cross-regional exchange and establish periodic teleconferences for information exchange and policy discussion between HQ and field level advisors.

Strengthen corporate capacities and systems to manage and mitigate risks related to WPP in different political system and contexts, including how to identify and deal with potential backlashes to engendering political participation.

Recommendation 4: UN Women should invest in a thematic resource mobilization approach that builds on existing, innovative, flexible and longer-term funding mechanisms and that addresses regional priorities.

To this end, UN Women can pursue the following:

- Develop a thematic resource mobilization strategy and invest in donor relationship management in conjunction and with the support of the Strategic Partnership Division, that should be rolled out at the country level with Regional Policy Advisors' support. This strategy should:
 - Provide a clearer articulation of UN Women's added value to WPP for strategic funding opportunities in terms of how its normative and coordination work can support operational activities and prioritization, as well as how its work across descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation initiatives can act as a driver for progress on GEWE;
 - Illustrate the complementary impact and enabling nature of WPP work with other thematic areas – in particular in relation to a broader governance agenda;
 - Demonstrate human resource capacity and thematic policy expertise at regional and country levels to effectively deliver on all aspects of the mandate, including programmatically;
 - Demonstrate a stronger evidence-base to make the case for strategic funding opportunities, including thematic human resources and financial data to make the case for the level of resources and staff capacity requested; and
 - Communicate the need for more holistic or full cycle approaches to achieve sustainable results (moving away from *ad hoc*, seasonal and sporadic funding support), as well as the steps being taken

to improve UN Women’s administrative track record in terms of responsiveness and timeliness to help attract more funding.

- Develop regional WPEL-FPI to support targeted and tailored resource mobilization at the regional level, building on the recent success in the UN Women West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) and align with the thematic resource mobilization strategy.
- Use both innovative and flexible funding mechanisms administered at corporate level to stay adaptive to shifting political opportunities and contexts (e.g. the Women in Politics Fund mechanism) and longer-term national and regional level funding strategies that can help ground activities in a broader more systemic governance agenda.
- Advocate *vis-à-vis* UNDP (see Recommendation 2) for an increased share of external resources leveraged in WPP.

Recommendation 5: UN Women should consistently prioritize “Leave No One Behind (LNOB)” within its WPP programming at the global, regional and country levels and build an evidence-base that can feed into its global normative and advocacy work.

This can be pursued through:

- Strengthening and increasing partnerships and networks with marginalized groups at the country level to better enable inclusion within UN Women’s WPP work areas.
- Developing tailored strategies seeking to fill basic data gaps on marginalized voices and vulnerable groups at the country level that include both quantitative and qualitative data, such as systematically recording and using marginalized women’s voices and testimonies. These efforts should be sensitive to and engage in national data collection efforts to disaggregate gender data.
- Implementation of programming models that are particularly relevant to marginalized groups’ needs as outlined in Conclusion 5 (e.g. citizenship/voter registration, VAWP protections, dialogue with local governments and constituency engagement).
- Strengthening knowledge management and RMS systems to better plan, document and report on work with marginalized groups, as well as how best to engage and support their political empowerment.

Supporting learning on prioritization through development of strategic pilots, careful testing and scaling-up as necessary.

Recommendation 6: UN Women should invest in new programming on social norms change, which complements its WPP work and develop effective methods to monitor and report on progress in the long-term.

To do so, UN Women should:

- Select specific sub-thematic areas and activities within which to focus social norm change strategies, prioritizing those that may allow for leveraging of work in other areas for maximum effect. Possibilities include:
 - VAWP, which already has a strong social norm component and possibilities to leverage or coordinate with work in related EVAW initiatives and address new issues such as online harassment;
 - Local government, which might allow for new partnerships with civil society groups that will allow for downstream work on social norm change;
 - Parliamentarians, who can act both as targets and contributors to social norm change; and
 - Leadership work, which provides possibilities for engaging in corporate efforts that can be leveraged for WPP and other thematic areas.

- Build on existing upstream and downstream work to effect social norm change identifying the appropriate sequencing of activities for mutual reinforcement of symbolic, descriptive and substantive representation work to achieve greater effectiveness. Possibilities include:
 - Expanding work on masculinity studies and other approaches for engaging men and boys;
 - Making use of campaigns and awareness raising activities in a more programmatic and sustained way for continuous advocacy (e.g. voter registration) that is both linked to and independent of individual programming efforts in partnership with the Communications and Advocacy Section; and
 - Grant-making modalities that allow for engagement on social norms work downstream.

- Strengthen and adopt new monitoring methods that will provide evidence of the effectiveness of social norm change efforts for WPP over time. This would require training and guidance to staff and could make use of new technologies such as big data in partnership with the Innovation Facility, the Strategic Planning, Programme and Effectiveness Unit and the Research and Data Section for potential synergies or links to SDG monitoring efforts.

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TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



Planet 50-50 by 2030
Step It Up for Gender Equality

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