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

SYNTHESIS REPORT
This evaluation was informed and enriched by the participation of 397 stakeholders, staff and partners at the global, regional and country levels, many of whom actively contributed through their participation in reference groups, focus groups and surveys throughout the evaluation process, providing critical feedback that strengthened and enhanced the relevance and utility of the report.

The evaluation was conducted by an evaluation team composed of four external evaluators (Charlotte Ørnermark/Team Leader, Kristen Sample, George Zimbizi and Andrea Azevedo) and members of the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (Shravanti Reddy/Team Leader and Alexandra Capello). The latter also provided managerial and substantive support to the process, with support from Laura Gonzales, Maria Selim, Jillian Torres, Kelli Henry, Rose-Flore Frederique, Maria Teresa Britos-Rodriguez and Soo Yeon Kim.

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We are grateful for the Internal Reference Group members for their thoughtful comments and insights and for investing significant time and effort during the inception phase to ensure that the evaluation would be of maximum value and use to the organization. The External Reference Group members also provided an invaluable external perspective. We also extend our thanks to the Senior Management Team of UN Women for its feedback and contribution to the evaluation.

The evaluation also benefited from active involvement from the UN Women offices visited. We thank the country representatives and staff of these offices for all the dedicated time they invested in supporting the evaluation process and in facilitating the engagement and inclusion of a wide range of partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries (Mexico Country Office, Egypt Country Office and Regional Office for Arab States; Democratic Republic of Congo Country Office, Malawi Country Office, Zimbabwe Country Office, and Pakistan Country Office).

Finally, we would like to thank all those who engaged or participated in this evaluation, be it through responding to a survey, making themselves available for interviews, or participating in the consultation process. We are grateful for your contributions, which have without doubt enriched this report.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ACRONYMS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY MATRIX OF EVALUATION RESULTS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. BACKGROUND</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Women’s Political Participation and Leadership</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Evaluation Background and Context</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. EVALUATION FINDINGS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Relevance</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Effectiveness</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Global Normative Mandate</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Coordination Mandate</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Operational Mandate</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Constitutional and Legislative Reform</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Parliamentary Support</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3 Inclusive Electoral Processes</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4 Violence Against Women in Politics</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.5 Local Government</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.6 Leadership</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Efficiency</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Internal Alignment of Human and Financial Resources</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Internal Communication and Knowledge Management</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Partnerships</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sustainability</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Promising Practices and Lessons Learned</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. REFLECTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTIL</td>
<td>African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Americas and the Caribbean</td>
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<td>AP</td>
<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>AS</td>
<td>Arab States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATENEA</td>
<td>Joint Regional Project “Mechanism for the Acceleration of the Political Participation of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEB</td>
<td>United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGCF</td>
<td>Commonwealth Local Government Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>UN Women Country Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>CETSAM</td>
<td>Constitutional and Legal Reform, including Temporary Special Measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSAG</td>
<td>UN Women’s Civil Society Advisory Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSW</td>
<td>Commission on the Status of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPA</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Political Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPKO</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMBs</td>
<td>Electoral Management Bodies</td>
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<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Evaluation Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ</td>
<td>Evaluation Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>East and Southern Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVAW</td>
<td>Ending Violence Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGE</td>
<td>Fund for Gender Equality</td>
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<td>FPI</td>
<td>Flagship Programme Initiatives</td>
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<td>WPEL-FPI</td>
<td>Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership/Flagship Programme Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>GExE</td>
<td>Gender equality, Environment and Marginalized voices</td>
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<tr>
<td>GExWE</td>
<td>Gender Equality and Women Empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Governance and National Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRB</td>
<td>Gender Responsive Budgeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters / New York City</td>
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<tr>
<td>IANGWE</td>
<td>Inter-agency Network on Women’s Empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>IES</td>
<td>Independent Evaluation Service (formerly Independence Evaluation Office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>INGOs</td>
<td>International NGOs</td>
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<td>IDEA</td>
<td>International IDEA</td>
</tr>
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<td>IFU</td>
<td>Inter-Parliamentary Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS4GEMs</td>
<td>Inclusive Systems Evaluation for Gender equality, Environment and Marginalized voices</td>
</tr>
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<td>IG</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQI</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and Intersex</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNNOB</td>
<td>Leave No One Behind</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>MCO</td>
<td>Multi-Country Office</td>
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<td>MPs</td>
<td>Members of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPTF</td>
<td>Multi-Partner Trust Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Member States</td>
</tr>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDI</td>
<td>National Democratic Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD-DAC</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHCR</td>
<td>Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACEC</td>
<td>Project to Support the Electoral Cycle in Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLWD</td>
<td>People living with Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>PM&amp;E</td>
<td>Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Peace and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSHA</td>
<td>Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>RBBM</td>
<td>Results Based Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>RC System</td>
<td>Resident Coordinator System of the UN at the country level</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMS</td>
<td>Results Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>UN Women Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 systems 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 and the Sustainable Development Goal 5.

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 Liengsririwat
a.i. Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services

FOREWORD
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, use, 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 (A/72/124-E/2018/3).

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This evaluation adopted a systemic evaluation approach called the Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environment and 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 24 countries that 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, 537 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 frame-work’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, 5, 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 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.

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 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.

UN Women has achieved results across its normative and operational mandate. Normative results were particularly prominent in the adoption of intergovernmental 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 operational work, however, presents 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.

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

UN Women programming supported the ‘leaving no one behind’ (UNDO) 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.

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. Efforts 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.

Conclusion 7: While the long-term endurance of WPP results is a challenge, it can be balanced through scaling-up and sustainability initiatives.

Change in social norms remains a relatively under-analysed, under-developed and under-measured area of programming. Efforts 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 funding raising 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 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 and programmatic guidance notes that provide a 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 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

### Relevance

1. WPP is a highly relevant area of work and well 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.

### Efficiency

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 UWW 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 5.7.10 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.

### Sustainability

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

## CONCLUSIONS

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.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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.

## 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 should establish a clear division of labour with other UN agencies around potentially overlapping mandates.
4. UN Women’s WPP work would likely benefit from overall corporate harmonization and strengthening around cross-cutting programmatic issues.
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 as heads of state and/or government, despite their proven abilities, their positive impact for development 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. 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. ¹ Though the relationship between democratic openness ² and levels of women’s participation is variable, challenges and opportunities for gender equality are shaped in large part by the political context. ¹ While recognizing that the ideal functioning of democracy is unachievable, ² 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 contexts ³ are

³ 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/gov/pdfs/FINAL%20Guidance%20Note%20on%20Democracy.pdf. Accessed 17 May 2018.
⁷ 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.
In 2011-2017, UN Women’s response to the under-representation of women in power positions across 100 countries over the entire evaluation period demonstrated the need for stronger financing. 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 a Flagship Programme Initiative (FPI) 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 WPP 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.  

UN Women’s response to the under-representation of women in political life is defined in its two strategic plans: (i) the Women’s Power and Peace and Security Strategy (WPP) covering the period 2011-2017,8 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 million9 in 100 countries over the entire evaluation period. Despite fluctuations,10 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 a Flagship Programme Initiative (FPI) 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 WPP by leveraging its integrated mandate: 

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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 Local 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.

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.11 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 (WPP Unit) under the Leadership and Governance Section, Policy Division. At the regional level, the thematic area is supported by two dedicated regional policy advisers, covering the Americas and the Caribbean (AC) and Arab States (AS) regions, and reporting to the Programme Division.12 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)). WPP 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 groups,13 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).
2. Evaluation background and context

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).18 The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES) is a significant evaluation aimed at supporting learning, decision-making and accountability for UN Women and its partners.19

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”20 from 2011-2016, and to provide evidence from past practice to inform its future strategic planning and implementation on WPP 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)21 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 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.22 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 5.5 addressed WPP and UN Women taking on the role of custodian of the indicator related to local government, among other indicators under Goal 5.4
- The Secretary-General of the United Nations’ call to deliver on the 2030 Agenda 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 approach called the Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMs).23 It combines innovative systemic evaluation practice with intersectional analysis24 of three dimensions: gender equality, environments and marginalized voices. 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 corresponds to the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination’s 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 Evaluation26 in the UN System and UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct.27 The larger context included the challenge of increasing the representation of women in managerial positions being particularly pertinent for UN Women as a UN agency, with an executive director (ED) and four Executive Directors (EDs) of UN Women’s five regional offices (ROs). The evaluation was conducted in line with the CommonOkada’s guidance on evaluation and the UNEG guidance.28

Figure 1: Evaluation Objectives (EO)

- RELEVANCE
  - EO1: To access 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 access 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.

- EFFECTIVENESS
  - EO3: To assess the efficiency of UN Women’s structures and informal 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 SDGs.

- EFFICIENCY
  - EO5: 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.

- SUSTAINABILITY
  - EO6: 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.

24 “Ensuring women’s full and equal 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 indicator 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 the five areas of action.
26 For more information on the evaluation approach and methodology please see Annex 6.
27 Intersexuality refers to the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination.
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 was also 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.

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 (Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Malawi, Mexico, Pakistan and Zimbabwe) covering five regions (Western and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, Americas and Caribbean, 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.

**Portfolio Review: 43**

**Field Visits: 6** (Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Mexico, Pakistan, Malawi, Zimbabwe)

**In-Depth Review Conducted: 24**

*Field lines are shown and the boundaries and names shown on the map reflect the perception of the United Nations on an approximate basis only.*

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**Synthesis Report**

**Background**

**Evaluation Findings**

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**Geographic distribution of the overall sample for the evaluation**

[Map showing the geographic distribution of the overall sample for the evaluation]
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 one cross-cutting theme selected as cases for this evaluation: (i) constitutional and legal reform, including TSM, (ii) inclusive electoral processes, (iii) parliamentary support, (iv) local government, (v) VAWP, and (vi) 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. 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;30
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The evaluation also found that the relevance of UN Women’s mandate was particularly high in terms of coordination work,64 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 a key role in 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.65 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).66

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 progress67) that are not static, but shift over time. Among the 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 organisation'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. Their 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 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 5.5.18, 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 emerging 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.69 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 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 (64 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.71

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 WPFL Flagship Programme Initiative (WPFL-PPI) mentioned developing a ‘diverse’ cadre of women leaders. Nevertheless, some SDS 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.

- 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 (FGE) that has been shown to have a comparative advantage to reach marginalized groups by supporting downstream work.72
The evidence found that both internal and external stakeholders believe that UN Women’s strategy and vision on WPP is clear. 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). 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. 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 (COs) are under constant pressure to widen their scope and that there are additional challenges for engaging ‘downstream’ at the grassroots level. 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.

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 contexts 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., GEWE policies) and symbolic representation (e.g., influence on social norms). While the WPP work is solidly grounded in human rights frameworks, the term ‘transformational leadership’ was also employed in a number of contexts 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., GEWE policies) and symbolic representation (e.g., influence on social norms). While the WPP work is solidly grounded in human rights

**Figure 2 - Stakeholder Views on the Definition of WLPP**

![Stakeholder Views on the Definition of WLPP](image)

I understand WLPP as something else.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UN WOMEN STAFF</th>
<th>EXTERNAL PARTNERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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

44 UN Women. 2016. UN Women Regional Office for Arab States Thematic Evaluation on Women’s Political Participation, pp. 20-21.
UN Women has been responsive to country contexts by successfully adapting to political opportuni-
ties 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.” 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 posi-
tive example can be found in South Sudan where UN Women conducted a comprehensive needs assess-
ment 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 county-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, generally consistent with best practices associated with men in their surroundings, higher workloads and 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 4), use of informal spaces, bridging government and CSOs, linking national groups to international forums and UN/broaden diplo-
matic community coordination.

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 TAs may face stigma, friction with men in their survival, higher workloads and security threats. However, a review of the risk regis-
ters 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 particu-
larly 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 COs 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, 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 organiza-
tion on WPP is respected and demonstrated by the decision for UN Women to act as the custodian for SDG indicator 5.5.1b. 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.

46 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/71/294/Rev.1
48 Such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) SPF-funded Women in Politics Fund.
The HeForShe campaign is an effort across regions through civil society organizations focused on women's comparative advantage in work on social norms change. Grant making modality, FGE, is also assessed to have a gender equality agenda on inter-governmental processes and standards at the global level. Some of the key global normative achievements include ongoing active participation of male MPs. In Sierra Leone, UN Women engaged in outreach to traditional leaders (overwhelmingly male) to generate public support and engaged women and men with social norms change that targeted women and girls to counteract陋视's. 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) 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 work, it also found 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.51 Only about 50 per cent of internal and 53 per cent of external stakeholders surveyed believed (strongly or somewhat) that UN Women had effectively engaged with men 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 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.

There are a few positive examples specific to male engagement that could provide models for other CDOs. 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) to generate public support for WPP in DRC. UN Women commissioned a masculinity study and engaged with masculinity clubs.

Finding 5: 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.52

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, the Parliamentary Group on Women’s Rights, which included ongoing active participation of male MPs, 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.

52 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.

53 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.
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 the 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 its SP (2018-2021) Outcome 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, Peace and Security (2015 and 2016).

• UN Women also supported the organization of the High-Level Meeting of Women Leaders 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 VAWP. 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. 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 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 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).

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 Political Affairs (FOCA) for political 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

**Figure 3 - Perceived Effectiveness of UN Women’s Coordination Work on WLPP**

**PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF UN WOMEN’S COORDINATION WORK ON WLPP (STAFF)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very effective</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither effective nor ineffective</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
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<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UN WOMEN IS A KEY ACTOR IN COORDINATING EFFORTS ON WLPP IN MY COUNTRY (EXTERNAL PARTNERS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REGIONAL-LEVEL RESPONDENTS: 142</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOBAL-LEVEL RESPONDENTS: 144</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRY-LEVEL RESPONDENTS: 143</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey on UN Women staff for the corporate evaluation

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS: 198**

Source: Survey to external partners for the corporate evaluation
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 thematic areas. 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 coordination at the national level. There are sometimes differences of positions or nuance in understanding by entities on gender-related electoral assistance, such as TSMPs. 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 work on parliamentary support, in practice UNDP has assumed a coordination role in the area as the UN system coordinator together as part of the 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 the different agencies in the UN system support 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 the electoral assistance. There are sometimes differences of positions or nuance in understanding by entities on gender-related electoral assistance, such as TSMPs. 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.

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 (JRP) in the Western and Central Africa region. 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 to pursue coordination around programmatic work.

Moreover, in 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 engaged, 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 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 to pursue coordination around programmatic work.

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The evaluation of UN Women’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. 56

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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

### 2.3.1 Constitutional and Legislative Reform

**Finding:** 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...
**Support to constitution building and reform**

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 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. **64**

- **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 WPPs, including gender quotas (e.g., Nepal and Tunisia) and parity laws (e.g., Bolivia and Mexico).

- **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 1325, and development of the Gender Ministry's gender strategy and action plan in DRC.

Supporters 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. In the transition of the Family Code and subsequent implementation, 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 Parliamentary support

**Finding 10: UN Women has contributed to strengthening women's capacity and influence in parliament; there is scope to work with partners to increase constituency outreach capacity and shift parliamen tary 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 indicated that effectiveness was uneven among the different activities undertaken within this sub-theme. The effort to support women’s MP networks (parliamentary committees, parliamen tary 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 contrib uted by UN Women to linking parliamentarians across countries for South-South exchange or in engaging with regional networks (e.g., Parlato 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. **65** 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).

Plan indicators 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 (WKCN) 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 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 event and seminars with IPU), regional (with regional parliamentary bodies but limited to the AC – Parlatino 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 and 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).56 UN Women provided training to 505 of its 1216 participants in 2016, it is featured as a core element in all three SPs and the WPEL-FPL, but the focus has shifted from voter registration and turnout to supporting the capacity of women candidates over successive plans.

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.

UN Women’s gender mainstreaming programme was a core element of 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/turndown.

Work with EMBs 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.57 In the DRC, UN Women has provided technical support and capacity building to the Commission électorale des provinces indépendante (CEPIN)58 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).59 These initiatives were seen as closely linked to SOG 16 on legal identity for all and relevant to UN Women’s UNSC 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 Samaou) 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.60 In Chetrou 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 2011.61 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 cases. For instance, the “MPs’ Caucus” (Tanzania, Moldova and Ukraine) was perceived 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 availability of training and follow-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.62

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 (MPyW) project supported women to influence political parties through incorporating gender equality principles with political parties, registering women’s commitments within committees within parties and to stand in the elections. The MPyW 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. 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, UN Women 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.26 It 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 broadened access to ways to mobilize women to vote.27 Though not consistently used, knowledge products that were innovative, 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 EMUL 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 VAWP 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 the area. 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-FPA, 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 EMU 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 religious leaders that were estimated to reach more than 20,000 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 TVradio 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 female/PLWD candidate and 98 per cent claiming that they would vote for a qualified youth candidate.28

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 advanced 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.29

The evaluation also found the following issues 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.
- Strengthening its outreach through more concerted coordination with regional organizations — and other groups engaged in election monitoring — to instance, were used extensively and even adapted by EMBS in other countries.

26 UN Women May 2015 “Assessing the Quality of Evaluations Conducted by UN Women in Asia and the Pacific.” p. 52
27 In the context of the Evaluation of UN Women’s Strategic Partnership Framework 2011–16, a survey sent to UN Women staff canvassed respondents’ familiarity with and recent use of knowledge products supported by the SFF funding modality. Inclusive Electoral Processes, which was tied for second at 73 per cent.
28 Also see Finding 13 in regard to the Guidebook on Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections.
29 Another example reported is from Palestine where UN Women launched a wide spread campaign at the national and local level 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.


20 Regional organizations’ units dealing with marginalized groups provide another avenue for pursuing coordination such as the Organization of American States (OAS) unit that deals with access to rights and equity with a focus on marginalized populations.
21 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.
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 (WSRs). 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 (NEC) 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.

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 15 countries carried out so-called VAWP work 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 at the country level, with evidence of 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.

Advocating for and contributing to legislative reforms that would bring to bear electoral and/or penal penalties for VAWP, which has proved challenging in some countries, has not been successful in all cases. For example, in Paraguay, women politicians were brought forward specific issues related to women 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, workshops 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., accompani- ment of a case of VAWP through an amicus curiae in the Chiapas state of Mexico where as 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.87

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, marshaling 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.

- **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 legislatures or election bodies 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 EVAW 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 EMs, 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).88

### 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 WPELI-FP, 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 indicator 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 countries89 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.

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 stake-holders. As a result of UN Women’s efforts, indicator 5.5.1b was classified from Tier 3 to Tier 2 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 strategies for 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.90 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 governance.91

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

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87 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.


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

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

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

92 Tier 1: Opportunity 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’)

93 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.”
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 leader- ship 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 was built 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 EVAW 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 empha- sized 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 indi- vidual 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 machin- eries and EMIBs 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 leader- ship 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 politi- cians 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.

• 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 transforma- tive leaders (e.g., training diplomatic skills, advocacy, negotiation, public speaking, emotional intelligence, mentoring and coaching) and provide support to women 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’s leaders’ e-nomination platform was launched in 2016 that led to the nomination of 36 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 leadership positions also provides symbolic representation by acting as role models who can normalize the idea and practice of women holding power among men and women.

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 are also examples of programmes targeting people living with disabilities (PLWD) or Roma and ACTIL. There also are examples of programmes supporting women’s leadership skills (e.g., across the AS region and ACTIL). 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 leadership positions also provides symbolic representation by acting as role models who can normalize the idea and practice of women holding power among men and women.

Although the term ‘leadership’ is explicitly included in the impact and outcome statements of some WPPs, in the WPF-IPI 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.

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.95

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.96 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 (GNP)) 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.97 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 CDoS in the region. Stakeholders reported, however, that 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.98 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 11 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.

Of those sharing responsibilities with other thematic areas, WPP work was most often combined with GNP, PSHA or EVAW, areas where more synergies could be explored under the SP (2018-2021). While staff who

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

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Of those sharing responsibilities with other thematic areas, WPP work was most often combined with 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 help 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 level.134 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 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 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 level.135 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.

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.100 After a decrease in funding between 2011-15 ($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).101 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.102 Interviews with donors and partners 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.103

In the context 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

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However, funds could be complemented by the flexible ‘SU MA Initiative: Democracy is Equality in Mexico’ (SUMA Initiative: Democracia es Igualdad en Mexico).

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.

Figure 6 - Regional Thematic Distribution of WLPP Programme Expenses (US$ MILLION)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Americas and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Europe and Central Asia</th>
<th>Asia Pacific</th>
<th>Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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$ 28.3m and 20.0m, respectively.

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 EMIs.

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 (66/150) on Women’s Political Participation; and elaboration of the first Secretary-General’s Report on the implementation of the GA Resolution 66/150 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 fact sheets, 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 systematic 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 interviewed 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, regional, and thematic perspectives.

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 Poltics’ 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

Finding 18: Closing corporate gaps identified in reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems would allow for better assessment of WPP results.

UN Women has made considerable investments in its monitoring and reporting systems10, 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 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 Official Development Assistance (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 need 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 time-frame 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 evaluation did not find evidence of tracking commitments made by these male politicians). For example, the DRC has made initial investments in ‘programmatic 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 EndVW – 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.

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10 UN Women September 2019 "What can we learn from UN Women evaluations? A meta-analysis of UN women evaluations in 2016.”
3.4 Partnerships

At the global level, UN Women has conducted joint activities with partners, such as the IFU, 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 SDG indicator 5.5.10 on local government (Finding 14). UN Women could potentially lead similar dialogue and learning processes on other emerging issues such as VAWP (Finding 15). 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 consistently been leveraged for WPP work. Although 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 always 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 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.

• Regional and sub-regional organizations have also had an important strategic normative role to play in building consensus around political participation in other targets. UN Women has had positive experiences with Parlatino and, more recently, the African Union. 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.

Finding 15: 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.
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.” While it strives to achieve sustainable results, defining and tracking sustainability has been a corporate challenge. 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 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, many of the long-term changes sought might not take hold for a number of years after programmes close. Sustainability systems have not been designed to assess the results of this work, particularly in the long-term. 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 R&M 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 parities). 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 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.

Some other examples of sustainability include:

- In India, a strategy of working with women-only assemblies (Panchayats) 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.

Sustainability 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 Parliamentary Group in El Salvador, where support was perceived to have contributed to sustainable increases in capacity and influence (Finding 4). It should be noted, however, that the sustainability of capacity building results might also be limited by political turnover and environment. Though context 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.

See also: Finding 6 and 18.

The three dimensions are: social, economic and environmental.
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.11

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 MPs 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.

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.

SUSTAINABILITY

Support for gender sensitization at an institutional level that influences policies and the overall parliamentary (or EMB) structure. For instance, in Moldova, including 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 5.1.b) 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 (2018-2021) 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 UN Women 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).

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. 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.

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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View</th>
<th>UN Women Staff Respondents: 211</th>
<th>External Partners: 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey to UN women staff and External partners for corporate evaluation
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. One of the core functions identified for UN Development System (UNDS) 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.”

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 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) its SP’s outcome areas; (ii) cross-cutting areas for GEWE (e.g., social norms, transformative leadership and marginalization); and (iii) its integrated and universal mandate to coordinate work on GEWE, as well as undertake normative and operational work.

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. 

117 CEB report, UN Reform, SDGs and Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCP). 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/qcpr2018-sg-report-advis.pdf
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.

Most significantly, gaps in terms of thematic policy expertise and variations in the skills of country leaders 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 given its specialized GEWE mandate.

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 19)

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 for GEWE and highlighting the key connections that could be leveraged not only internally, but also leading the way for partners to better understand, think and act systemically in their own WPP efforts.

(Findings 11, 19)

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Most significantly, gaps in terms of thematic policy expertise and variations in the skills of country leaders 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 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 SWAV, WE and PSHA) that remain at the outcome level may further exacerbate resource shortages.

UN Women has achieved results across its normative and operational work. 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.

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, 9, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15 and 20)

UN Women has achieved results across its normative and operational mandatemarked. 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.

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;
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, WAPP, 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 EMIs 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.

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

Social norms work underscores all WPP sub-thematic areas, is included in the WPLU-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 political office 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 analyzed 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);
  - VAWP protocols developed with EMBs and other;
  - 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 SF’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 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 identify 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 subject matter 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.

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 § (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.

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.

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  - 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.

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 § (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.
UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED 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.