Mid-Term Evaluation of UN Women's Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process – Building a Homegrown Constituency for Peace Programme

Final Synthesis Report

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Contents

Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil society organisation
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
KII	Key informant interview
OSE	UN Office of the Special Envoy for Syria
The programme	UN Women's Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process – Building a Homegrown Constituency for Peace Programme
SWIPD	Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy
WAB	Women's Advisory Board
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNSC 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
UNSC 2250	United Nations Security Council Resolution on youth, pace and security
UNSC 2254	United Nations Security Council Resolution on Syria
WPS	Women, Peace and Security (as outlined in UNSC 1325)
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a mid-term evaluation of UN Women's *Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process – Building a Homegrown Constituency for Peace Programme* (the programme). It was produced by Caroline Brooks and Ruth Simpson of International Alert, Rosie Aubrey and Frances Brodrick of Paperboat, and Dima al Bashar of Jouri Research and Consulting.

The programme, which was launched in 2014 and entered its fifth year in 2019, has supported Syrian women to take part in and influence decision making and political processes, through coalition building, advocacy and capacity-building. It is a collaboration between UN Women, the Governments of Finland, Norway and the Netherlands, and the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSE).

The programme is guided by the following Theory of Change (ToC) and overarching outcomes:

ToC: ***If*** (1) a cadre of Syria women leaders is built as a block of influence; and Syrian women are organised around a common agenda; ***then*** (2) Syrian women's civil society can meaningfully participate in and influence peace, reconciliation and future rebuilding processes that integrate Syrian women's perspectives, rights and needs; ***because*** (3) evidence shows that women are key peace assets and agents of change whose meaningful participation improves the peace process and its sustainability.

Outcome 1: Syrian women's civil society participates and advocates effectively in peace processes from gender and women's rights perspectives.

Outcome 2: A broad-based, diversely representative Syrian constituency for peace is mobilised to foster a strong infrastructure of support for the Women's Advisory Board (WAB), the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy (SWIPD) and the peace efforts.

Purpose and scope of evaluation

The purpose and scope of the mid-term evaluation is to assess the programme's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and to analyse how the human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the programme. The evaluation draws upon the data collected to identify and validate innovations and recommendations for future programming.

This mid-term evaluation comes at a key point in the programme and will inform UN Women's strategic approach to supporting women's engagement in the Syrian political process in the next phase of the programme. The report is, therefore, intended to be both an evaluation of the previous phase and a basis for informing and refining future phases.

Methodology

This evaluation, which was undertaken between June and September 2019, took a theory-based approach, developing an analytical framework to address the key evaluation criteria, around the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OEDC) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The analytical framework was used to guide data collection and analysis in order to evaluate the programme outcomes against expected results and objectives articulated in the ToC, and provide lessons to inform future programming.

The evaluation employed a mixed-method approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods that included a desk review of programme documentation, an online survey for programme participants, and key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholder and programme participants. In total, 20 people were interviewed one-on-one, and 13 people took the online survey. The evaluation drew on the experiences of stakeholders and programme participants, from the programme's launch in December 2014 up to the present.

Underpinning the evaluation is a gender-sensitive approach, putting women's voices and perspectives at the heart of the process of design, data collection and analysis. Particular focus has been put on ensuring conflict sensitivity and that Do No Harm principles guide the evaluation.

The evaluation report has undergone three rounds of review and comment by the UN Women programme team.

Summary of findings

The WAB and SWIPD are important innovations that contribute to upholding women's right to participate in peacebuilding processes and improving the perception of women as credible actors in the Syrian political process. **Overall, the evaluation found that the programme has made significant progress towards its expected outcomes**. With regards to *Outcome 1*, the programme has created spaces for advocacy efforts through a series of workshops and through supporting the WAB to engage the UN Special Envoy and member states engaged in the crisis, while simultaneously reaching out to broader constituencies in its efforts to influence peacemaking. Concerning *Outcome 2*, the programme has achieved significant progress in bringing together diverse political groups and made advances in increasing the participation of Syrian women who live inside Syria, and integrating Syrian women's perspectives in the peace process. Despite these achievements, the evaluation also found that the programme has limited links with grassroots groups inside Syria,[1] and that improvements could be made against each evaluation criteria. These are summarised in more detail below.

Relevance: The evaluation found that the programme was relevant to the participants and stakeholders and that the ToC was relevant to the goal of improving women's engagement in the peace process. Moreover, the programme is well aligned with international conventions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), women's rights and human rights, including: UNSC 1325, UNSC 2254, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and related documents (Sochi Outcome Document, Geneva Peace Talks). Challenges to the relevance of the programme include the conflict context and evolution of the peace talks (which are beyond the control of UN Women but nevertheless have created barriers to achieving all of the change identified in the ToC), and the ongoing need to connect different levels of participation, particularly the grassroots with the formal process. In addition, more could be done to refine topics for dialogue, via thorough consultation with stakeholders and participants.

Effectiveness: Establishing the WAB and SWIPD has been a major step forward in improving the perception of women as credible actors in the Syrian political process, and in providing potential access to the Constitutional Committee through UN Women's backing. The programme has been crucial in upholding UN Security Council resolutions on WPS, and CEDAW, as well as ensuring a gender perspective in the implementation of UNSC 2254 and in the work of the OSE. There have been successes in enabling Syrian women to advocate in the peace process from a women's rights perspective and progress has been made in building a broad-based women's constituency for peace. Despite breakdown in formal peace talks in 2016, the programme has been successful in increasing

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[1] Linking to grassroots groups is not a specific objective of the programme; however, point 2 of the ToC and the ToR for the WAB implies connection to a broad range of women, including grassroots.

opportunities for Syrian women to play a meaningful role in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. This has included WAB and SWIPD members' engagement in intra-Syria, Astana and Sochi talks (via providing advice and informal mediation between the parties on key issues) and high-level meetings with several member states, including the Netherlands, the USA, the UK, Finland, Sweden and Spain. However, the desired change as articulated in the programme ToC, for women to shape the agenda of the peace talks, has proved to be an overly ambitious task given the political context. In addition, there have been challenges in enabling the WAB to reach consensus and articulate clear Syrian women's demands, and balancing this with the aim of achieving diversity and broad representation.

Efficiency: The evaluation found that the programme has responded flexibly to the rapidly changing context; however, staff changes, moving offices, outsourcing work and dropping activities has somewhat hindered the efficiency of the programme.

Sustainability: The programme has embedded the WPS agenda within the Syrian women's movement and started to build an innovative and promising model for women's meaningful engagement, which has been replicated in Yemen and Iraq. However, there is a risk to continued engagement and momentum if the programme does not continue to produce tangible outcomes. Moreover, some aspects of the programme, particularly the selection of WAB participants, which is perceived by some to lack transparency, risks losing buy-in of Syrian women.

Future direction of the programme: The evaluation gathered feedback on the ongoing strategic direction of the programme. There is consensus that UN Women should continue to support Syrian women's voices and participation in Track I peace processes through support to the WAB, and support to women's groups to influence the peace process beyond the WAB**.** All evaluation respondents also supported the idea of continuing to support long-term dialogues between women's groups inside and outside Syria with the objective of building trust and supporting the development of strategic alliances across women's rights groups to influence the political process. Stakeholders were interested in UN Women exploring the possibility of delivering politically balanced gender analysis on the changing circumstances inside Syria, whereas programme participants thought that it was an important exercise but did not feel that it was something that UN Women should pursue in the next phase. There was a mixed response to the idea of convening partners working on women's rights in the context of the Syria response, to support alliances and coordinated action, and it is something that needs to be explored further in consultation with participants and stakeholders.

Recommendations

Based on the in-depth review, the evaluation identified the following recommendations to UN Women to assist in shaping the next phase of the programme. Recommendations have been organised into overall themes and subset recommendations.

1. Inclusion and representation

   a. Increase the number of consultations and linkages with grassroots actors inside and outside of Syria over the long term, including identifying opportunities for connection of grassroots activities, activism and opinions, with the formal peace process and other Track I and II initiatives. Utilise existing grassroots bodies, networks, and platforms to avoid duplication of efforts, ensure relevance, and build relationships and trust with actors beyond the programme.

b. Use consultations with participants and stakeholders to test the relevance of the topics that are intended to be tabled for dialogue in the WAB and SWIPD, and ensure that the programme assumptions are tested in these consultations and remain in line with participants' and stakeholder priorities.

c. Seek to add more young women, emerging grassroots leaders and underrepresented groups to the WAB and/or enable them to be connected to the activities of the WAB and SWIPD through developing methods for participation and consultation specifically for people who are unable to travel or officially participate in the WAB or SWIPD.

2. Transparency and accountability

a. Continue to increase communication and transparency around the recruitment and selection process for WAB members. Do this by updating and sharing Terms of Reference (ToR) for the WAB and the selection procedures with all relevant stakeholders on a regular basis.

b. Aim for internal clarity on the trade-offs between diversity and credibility of members and reflect these trade-offs in the design process for Phase 2 and articulate it in project documentation and Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (DMEL) frameworks.

c. Focus on developing ways to improve the relationship and communication channels between the SWIPD and WAB. Adopting some of the recommendations under the sections on 'Conflict sensitivity' and 'Do No Harm' could go towards this.

3. Conflict sensitivity

The recommendations below have been grouped under the heading of conflict sensitivity as they relate to the programme's interaction with the conflict context and will contribute to ensuring that the impact of the conflict on the programme and the impact of the programme on the conflict (including interpersonal conflicts related to the overall conflict dynamics) are understood and that programme design and implementation is adjusted accordingly.

a. Update the programme ToC to ensure that it takes into account the limitations that the structural barriers and political complexity of the operating environment impose on the programme activities and objectives; also ensure that the ToC acknowledges the difficulty in achieving a common agenda while simultaneously prioritising diversity and the need for credibility in the WAB. Consult with the WAB and SWIPD on a reworking of the ToC.

b. In programme design and implementation, explore the causes of gender inequality and structural discrimination that women encounter in the Syrian context. This activity could also potentially build solidarity between WAB and SWIPD members and raise awareness of internalised mechanisms of restricting women's power and agency.

4. Do No Harm

The recommendations below relate to mitigating the risks of women's participation in and association with the programme, including safety and security concerns.

a. Develop a clear protocol on planning conferences, events and activities to be more constructive and safe, documenting how they are responding to participants' needs, including the safety and security concerns faced by many of the Syrian women who take part in programme initiatives. Ensuring that practical and security concerns around planning of events are addressed is crucial to ensure some level of accessibility and protection for all.

b. Update, share and enforce the existing code of conduct for ensuring safe space for WAB and SWIPD participants.[2]

5. Further training and capacity-building

a. Ensure training and capacity-building focus on preparing women at all levels to participate in decision-making arenas and ensure SWIPD members are consistently included in trainings. Specific topics for training mentioned by participants included legal issues and frameworks, constitutional issues, planning and management, and decentralisation. Continue to prioritise and expand upon the training and capacity-building provided to WAB members on cross-cutting technical skills, such as mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution.

b. Deliver further training and project activity opportunities that link the WAB with interests and messages from grassroots groups. Increase investment in training and capacity-building for more women, and in building better networks and constituencies.

c. Ensure that over 50% of the participants of training workshops undergo a needs assessment prior to training and that curricula are adapted to the needs assessment and that examples and content are made directly relevant to the Syria context.

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[2] Participants in the evaluation did not mention a code of conduct, indicating that they may not be aware of it.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a mid-term evaluation of the programme. The report has been prepared by Caroline Brooks and Ruth Simpson of International Alert, Rosie Aubrey and Frances Brodrick of Paperboat consultancy, and Dima al Bashar from Jouri Research and Consulting, who were commissioned to carry out the evaluation.

1.1. Background and context

The mid-term evaluation is a UN Women-initiated evaluation for learning purposes and for guiding and validating UN Women's approach and working streams for the upcoming phase of the programme. This report illustrates the progress and impact of the programme. The evaluation is informed by data collection carried out between June and September 2019.

The programme, which was launched in 2014 and entered its fifth year in 2019, has supported Syrian women to take part in and influence decision making and political processes, through coalition building, advocacy, and capacity-building. It is a collaboration between UN Women, the Governments of Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, and the OSE.

The programme supports peacebuilding efforts at two levels. The first focuses on facilitating Syrian women's voices and participation in the peace process (Track I). As part of this track, UN Women provides technical support and advisory services to the gender adviser and the political team of the OSE. Secondly, UN Women has worked to support Syrian women to build a unified coalition around a common agenda for the advancement of the status of Syrian women inside and outside Syria (Tracks II and III).

Programme activities

The programme was initially launched in 2014 by providing support to the establishment of SWIPD coalition, to formalise women's participation and instrumentalise their role in the political process. UN Women lobbied for the creation of the WAB, and in February 2016 facilitated its creation. The WAB is composed of 12 women civil society representatives, and acts as an advisory body to the Special Envoy during peace negotiations. The OSE makes decisions over its use, membership and management. UN Women supports its delivery and responds to solicited advice. Overall responsibility and decision making around the WAB is made by the OSE. UN Women contracted an International NGO (HIVOS) to organise the first WAB meeting. To facilitate the meeting, HIVOS brought the Common Space Initiative on board, an independent Lebanese organisation with expertise in supporting national dialogues and consensus building.

The OSE initiated a rotation of the WAB in late 2018, following UN Women's recommendation to render its membership more inclusive and representative. As part of this process, UN Women produced an options paper to reflect the diversity of women's perspectives and organisations in Syria and supported the rotation through process design, defining shortlisting criteria and the selection of candidates based on a round of interviews. A total of seven new WAB members were added, and 10 of the existing 12 remained. The new members represent greater diversity in the make-up of the WAB, in terms of age, political representation and geographical representation.

UN Women has built the influence of the WAB as a body engaging with high-level political actors on gender-responsive peacemaking and political dialogues. The WAB has demanded its engagement in the future constitution-drafting process in Syria, and in 2018 Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura

committed to ensuring women's representation in the Constitutional Committee in the Security Council. The WAB also requested engagement with the Astana peace process through the production of expert papers and briefings to the Special Envoy.

Exchanges between WAB members and members of 'WAB-like' bodies for Yemen and Libya have been facilitated, and UN Women supported Syrian women to engage in high-profile international events on peace and security.

To build Track II engagement, UN Women convened a conference in May 2016 bringing together more than 130 women political and civil society activists, including five women representing the opposition, in Beirut (Beirut I) in an effort to build consensus on key issues and women's rights concerns, to end the Syrian crisis. UN Women also completed the 'One Thousand Voices' listening initiative in January and February 2018, in which 992 women inside Syria were consulted on their priorities for peace. Consultations took place in Homs, Tartous, Sweida, Aleppo, Hama and Latakia. These consultations sought to raise awareness of issues of WPS, to broker respectful dialogue around the impact of the conflict and priorities for peace moving forward. The consultations led to the identification of priority issues that could be used to help build future discussions to develop the Syrian women's movement, inside Syria. From these consultations, the following priorities were identified:

- *Restoring dignity through economic empowerment and livelihood support.*
- *Putting in place mechanisms to protect women's physical integrity, wellbeing and interests.*
- *Addressing norms and culture for more equitable gender relations and norms to emerge.*

The One Thousand Voices listening project culminated in a conference (Beirut II) in July 2018, to validate the priorities emerging from the listening project, bringing together 188 Syrian women leaders. This was UN Women's most focused effort to build consensus, but the complexity of the Syria conflict and the issues at stake stymied these attempts.

In November 2018, UN Women's capacity-building support to the WAB was expanded and institutionalised, as UN Women partnered with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to develop a fellowship for WAB members. The UNITAR fellowship aims to leverage the broad range of expertise, experience and knowledge existing within the generations of the WAB and to foster the development of a collective identity, helping WAB members to work together effectively towards creating viable options and solutions that will build towards an accommodation and consensus in the context of the Syrian peace talks.

The core modules of the fellowship are based on the stocktaking exercise with the first generation of WAB members, and include the following:

- Introduction to UN mediation and peacebuilding
- Gender-inclusive political diplomacy
- Media engagement, outreach and connectivity
- Specialised fellowship modules for selected WAB members based on pre-identified criteria (thematic priorities defined by the political process)
- Cross-cutting skills development and soft skills required for negotiations.

Women, peace and security

It has been reported that, between 1990 and 2017, women constituted only 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators and 5% of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes,[3] although evidence shows that women's participation increases the likelihood of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20%, and the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years by 35%.[4]

In the context of Syria, the external political environment has presented numerous challenges to those working on peacebuilding and reconciliation in the Syrian context, and women's inclusion in decision-making spaces has remained low against its target – reaching 27%, against a target of 50%. Direct negotiations between the parties have not taken place in the Geneva format since 2016 and there has been a downward trend in the level of women's participation in Track I delegations. Women also remain absent from the Astana talks, and during the Sochi Congress of National Dialogue it was estimated that only 10% of the 1,500 delegates were women.[5] Negotiations are underway for the establishment of a constitutional committee, and there are hopes that, if agreement is secured, the WAB will play an influencing role in this and women's participation at 30% will be secured.

United Nations Security Council resolutions on WPS were used to frame the rationale and the legal imperative for the work and the ambitions of the programme. CEDAW was also a guiding framework, along with UNSC 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, for the work of the programme to take place, and the opportunities presented by the planned Geneva Peace Talks, Sochi and Astana talks were used to plan programme activities.

1.2. Programme theory

The programme is guided by the following ToC, overarching outcomes and outputs.

Programme ToC

If (1) a cadre of Syria women leaders is built as a block of influence; and Syrian women are organised around a common agenda; ***then*** (2) Syrian women's civil society can meaningfully participate in and influence peace, reconciliation and future rebuilding processes that integrates Syrian women's perspectives, rights and needs; ***because*** (3) evidence shows that women are key peace assets and agents of change whose meaningful participation improves the peace process and its sustainability.

Programme outcomes and outputs, and relevant indicators

Outcome	Indicators	Outputs
Outcome 1: Syrian women's civil society participates and advocates effectively in	Syrian women report enhanced mechanisms, capacities and abilities to influence the peace process Target: The WAB serves as mechanism for diverse Syrian women's civil society to participate and influence the talks	1.1 Capacity of the WAB is strengthened to serve as a peace asset for the UN Special Envoy for Syria and the OSE

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[3] Coverage: Women's meaningful participation in peace—where are the barriers and what can be done?, UN Women and the Council on Foreign Relations, 24 October 2018, https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/10/news-coverage-womens-meaningful-participation-in-peace

[4] Women's participation and a better understanding of the political, UN Women, http://wps.unwomen.org/participation/, accessed 5 June 2019

[5] UN Women estimate based on calls with Sochi Conference participants

peace processes from gender and women's rights perspectives	Relevant stakeholders, such as member states, the OSE and the wider Syrian women's civil society, perceive Syrian women, particularly the WAB, influencing the talks and the overall mediation efforts. Target: % increase in perceived influence	1.2 Syrian women's civil society representatives have increased access to key decision makers and processes in peace and reconciliation processes, including the UN-led mediation process, in order to advocate for the inclusion of their demands
Outcome 2: A broad-based, diversely representative Syrian constituency for peace is mobilised to foster a strong infrastructure of support for the WAB, SWIPD and the peace efforts	Syrian women from different constituencies come together around a common agenda Target: Syrian women's charter serves as a common agenda and a framework for collaboration for diverse Syrian women, and reflects the minimum shared priorities of diverse women's groups and constituencies (including ideological, ethnic, religious, geographical and vulnerability status, such as disability)	2.1 Broad-based Syrian women's civil society coalition around a common women's agenda is strengthened and supported
		2.2 Strengthened capacities of Syrian women leaders to influence and lead key processes to safeguard and advance women's rights agenda
		2.3 The SWIPD has the expertise and support structure to expand and mobilise for peace and foster support to the WAB and the peace process

The mid-term evaluation seeks to assess programme progress against intended outcomes. During the evaluation's inception phase, and in discussion with the programme team, it was agreed that the output/indicator level of reporting would be more appropriate for the end of programme evaluation. However, where relevant and appropriate, key output as well as outcome data has been provided in this report.

1.3. Programme development

Based on extensive consultations with stakeholders and considering the evolving political context, UN Women has considered possible programme development options, based on the understanding that the programme should continue to serve this purpose:
- To support women's rights actors to influence Syria's political transition
- To support women's representation in Syria's transition
- To ensure gender equality language in key documents and processes structuring Syria's transition
- To promote human rights, accountability and justice in Syria's political process
- To support trust building across diverse women's groups inside and outside Syria.

It is envisaged that the following four potential streams could be considered for strategic development of the programme:
1. Continued support to the Track I process: support to the WAB, technical assistance to the OSE (through the gender adviser) and support to women's groups to influence the Track I process (beyond the WAB).
2. Support to long-term dialogues: (Track II/Track III) between women's groups inside and outside Syria with the objective of (a) building trust, (b) supporting the development of strategic alliances across women's rights groups inside and outside Syria, formed to influence the political process, and (c) supporting a cadre of groups/actors able to try to influence the political process (each with different points of influence and entry points).
3. Knowledge production and management: The production of balanced gender analysis on the changing circumstances inside Syria – with a focus on changing gender norms and cultures, gendered protection risks and rights.

4. Coordination: Convene partners working on women's rights in the context of the Syria response to support alliances and coordinated action.

This mid-term evaluation explores which of these options are the most viable and likely to be effective in achieving the desired programme purpose in the current context.

2. Methodological approach

2.1. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The mid-term evaluation examines the extent to which the programme has contributed to the creation of an enabling environment for implementing UNSC 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). It assesses the extent to which the programme activities uphold the WPS commitments, and identifies the key results of the programme from its launch in December 2014 up to June 2019. It aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme, as well as the strategic direction, integration of a human rights-based approach and gender equality principles.

The evaluation takes a theory-based approach and is framed around assessing four key OECD DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Underpinning the evaluation is a gender-sensitive approach putting women's voices and perspectives at the heart of the process (design, data collection and analysis). Particular focus has been given to context sensitivity and Do No Harm in guiding the enquiry approach, data collection and security and analysis.

The report attempts to balance the feedback and perception of participants (those directly involved in and benefiting from the programme, such as WAB and SWIPD members) and stakeholders (individuals and organisations with an interest in programme outcomes and indirect engagement with the programme) with programme documentation and reporting, as well as external document review and sources.

The mid-term evaluation has the following objectives to:

- Assess the extent to which the programme is relevant with respect to rights holders' (in this case, specifically Syrian women) needs and Syrian priorities
- Assess the extent to which the programme is relevant to the UN-led peace process and the Special Envoy
- Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of UN Women's interventions and progress towards achieving programme outcomes
- Assess the extent to which the programme has promoted sustainability of programme results through increased capacities of the SWIPD and WAB and institutional mechanisms in Syria
- Analyse how the human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the programme approach and implementation
- Identify and validate innovations, as well as lessons learned and good practice examples, under the programme.

This mid-term evaluation comes at a key point in the programme and will inform UN Women's strategic approach to supporting women's engagement in the Syrian political process. The anticipated audience for this report is UN Women senior management and programme staff, as well as programme partners and donors.

The evaluation was conducted in English and Arabic, with evaluation participants using their preferred language for all email and interview communication. The evaluators who conducted the interviews are Arabic speakers, and one is a Syrian national. Research took place remotely, using Skype and WhatsApp, and in person through face-to-face meetings in Gaziantep, Turkey.

All programme participants and key stakeholders were invited for an interview to give their feedback on the programme and were sent an information sheet and details of the confidentiality and consent protocol. All evaluation participants who spoke to the evaluation team gave verbal or written consent

prior to being interviewed, and those participants who wanted to see interview questions before agreeing to a conversation were sent the questions in their preferred language.

KIIs with programme stakeholders

Thirty-three stakeholders were contacted to take part in the evaluation. Out of those, nine programme stakeholders were available to be interviewed. The interviews took place via Skype and WhatsApp calls. The evaluators used quantitative and qualitative techniques to explore programme delivery against expected outcomes, looking at the intended impact of the programme, assessing how and why change has occurred, and questioning about the future direction of the programme.

Key UN Women staff were among the stakeholders approached for interview. They were interviewed first as part of the process of verifying the evaluation tools.

KIIs with women participating in the programme

Seventy-seven programme participants were contacted and invited to take part in the evaluation. Eleven of those participants were available to participate. The questions were framed to reflect the key research questions and were intended to elicit responses on both the relevance and effectiveness of the programme, enquiring how activities made progress towards intended outcomes, how intended target groups had been included or excluded, and questioning about the future direction of the programme.

Online survey

An online survey in Arabic was circulated to 77 programme participants, both WAB and SWIPD members, past and present, inside and outside Syria. The survey was completed by 13 recipients between 2 and 16 July 2019 (17% response rate). The response rate is higher than the 10% response rate anticipated by the evaluators, which was based on an understanding of the pressures and limitations on women inside Syria regarding online activities on potentially contentious issues.

It has not been possible to verify whether there is any overlap between the survey respondents and the interviewees. However, the evaluators gave the option to each participant to select their preferred method of engagement (either one-to-one interview or survey). It is therefore assumed that there is little to no overlap between the key informant interviewees and the online survey respondents.

Beyond Consultations Self-Assessment Tool

An external consultant, who ran consultations with civil society as part of the One Thousand Voices listening initiative, was supported to use the *Beyond Consultations Self-Assessment toolkit: a tool to promote more meaningful engagement of women in fragile and conflicted affected states*, to self-assess the extent to which women were meaningfully engaged in the consultation exercise. The section on 'Representation' was used to assess what best practices were used to ensure effective representation of diverse groups of women in the consultation exercise. This tool is included as Annex 1.

Data coding and analysis

Interviews were written up (in either English or Arabic) immediately following the interview. Each interview was allocated a secure code to separate identifying information from the interview data. The interview notes were analysed using a qualitative analysis research tool in Excel. The analysis grid

was designed using evaluation questions as a guide and was further expanded during a validation exercise completed by the evaluation team. The evaluation team held a data analysis workshop to conduct a thematic analysis of patterns that emerged inductively through a close reading of the interview notes, analysis of the available documentation and reflective discussions.

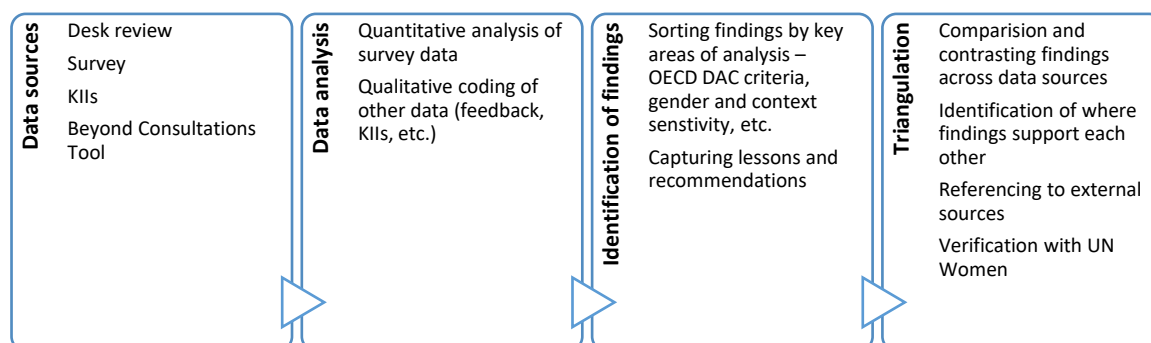*Rationale for selection and data collection methods*

Table 1: Data collection method, purpose and target audience

Data collection	Purpose	Target audience/sample
Document review	Understanding project parameters Refining lines of enquiry and evaluation participants Data triangulation with external sources of secondary data (expert reports, other evaluations, etc)	Evaluators reviewed the following: Project documents External reports
Survey	To enable programme participants to offer their insights on the programme in a confidential and accessible manner, with particular emphasis on how well the programme performs against DAC criteria	All women who have participated in the programme, with a target of 10% response rate. A range of responses across age and different levels of engagement within the project, i.e. Track I, II, III, SWIPD and WAB
KIIs with women participating in the programme	Elicit experiences of the programme and ideas for improvement and strengthening, to understand its relevance to Syrian women and also its performance against DAC criteria	20 women who participated in the programme, sampled across geographical locations and different levels of engagement within the project, i.e. Track I, II, III, SWIPD and WAB
KIIs with programme stakeholders	Elicit insights from stakeholders on what value the programme has for them, what the strategic direction should be and to provide supplementary evidence against the DAC criteria	UN Women to identify key stakeholders to be interviewed. This will include UN Women and OSE staff involved in programme management, as well as programme facilitators and wider civil society stakeholders and donors, who can give an assessment of programme impact on participants and wider communities and reflect on gender norms and barriers to women's inclusion in Syrian politics and peacebuilding

Triangulation of data

The triangulation of data employed in the evaluation (see Figure 1) involved comparing findings across data sources (survey, KIIs and Beyond Consultations Tool) and identifying where findings support each other and where they do not. It also involved review and analysis of project documentation and external sources (relevant research data and Bellwether expert discussions on related topics) as well as verification and review with project stakeholders and UN Women.

Figure 1: Data triangulation method employed

Data sources	**Data analysis**	**Identification of findings**	**Triangulation**
Desk review Survey KIIs Beyond Consultations Tool	Quantitative analysis of survey data Qualitative coding of other data (feedback, KIIs, etc.)	Sorting findings by key areas of analysis – OECD DAC criteria, gender and context sensitivity, etc. Capturing lessons and recommendations	Comparision and contrasting findings across data sources Identification of where findings support each other Referencing to external sources Verification with UN Women

2.2. Limitations (methodology and data)

The number of KIIs was slightly lower than anticipated (35 expected, 20 completed). Some of the known reasons for this include annual leave, and work and travel commitments, which meant that some people were not available for interview. Despite the lower than expected interview numbers, the evaluation team are confident that the data provided through interviews is deep and varied and has provided valuable and relevant insights to guide the evaluation.

The evaluation team did not get the opportunity to meet with the WAB when they convened for meetings. However, the one-to-one interviews conducted with both WAB and SWIPD members were of considerable value. Interview participants noted that they were able to open up and speak freely because of the assurances on anonymity.

There is a general mistrust of online data collection inside Syria and it can be challenging to get high engagement due to the sensitive nature of the subject and security risks. It was felt that the participants who complete an online survey might be disinclined to give full or candid answers, so questions were kept as politically neutral, balanced and open as possible. Evaluators were also aware that online surveys can also replicate exclusion, particularly for older women and women with limited access to the internet. It is likely that these groups have not been reached through the survey, but all of the programme participants who were invited to use the survey were also given the opportunity to attend an interview, and the majority of programme participants interviewed were women over 45 years old.

Some interview participants were reluctant to have their responses shared with UN Women, although trust was built during interviews that enabled them to speak candidly. Where individual women asked for their comments to be withheld, this has been respected and comments have been removed from the Evaluation Data sheet, which has been provided separately to UN Women.

It was anticipated that it would be hard to encourage certain groups to take part in the evaluation, for example Kurdish women, and those living under the control of Islamist groups, such as Al Nusra-affiliated groups. None of the KII participants was of Kurdish ethnicity; however, at least two of the online survey participants were Kurdish.

2.3. Ethics

The mid-term evaluation was guided by a strict ethical protocol. This was outlined in the evaluation Inception Report and communicated to evaluation participants when relevant. The following basic principles were used to frame all aspects of the evaluation:

- Evaluators must respect the rights, interests and dignity of participants and related persons in the research process.
- Both the design of evaluation and its conduct should ensure integrity and quality.
- Informed consent must be obtained from participants.
- Consent should be given freely, without force or coercion.
- Evaluators have an obligation to protect participants wherever possible from significant harm consequent upon the research ('harm' may cover physical harm, psychological stress or discomfort).
- The confidentiality of information supplied by participants and any agreement to grant anonymity to respondents must be respected.
- The evaluators must consider how they are perceived by the interviewee and note any issues that might indicate that the interviewee answered the question with bias based on the identity of the interviewer.

In addition to these basic principles, the following approach was applied to safeguarding: informed consent; General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), data protection and handling sensitive information; gender sensitivity; professionalism, integrity and objectivity; conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm.

Safeguarding

Before participating in interviews, evaluation participants were informed that any information that they shared requiring safeguarding action would result in the evaluation team taking reasonable steps to report this misconduct. Individuals were reassured that this would be done in consultation with the person making the disclosure. An example was given that, if details of a criminal or exploitative activity that has taken place was disclosed, necessary safeguarding channels would be used.

Informed consent

All participants were given information in their preferred language, to ensure that they understood the purpose of the evaluation activities, why they are involved in the evaluation, and how the findings will be used. All participants were made aware of what to expect and what they would be asked to do. Interview participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form. They were informed that they have the right to opt out at any point in the process and may withdraw their statements at any time. Due to the nature of the evaluation, with some activities delivered remotely, written or verbal consent was permitted, and evaluators kept a record of the type of consent that was given.

GDPR, data protection and handling sensitive information

A protocol for managing sensitive information was created compliant with new GDPR, and all data was stored on password-protected files. Interview transcripts were stored using codes to ensure that statements could not be tracked back to individuals. Participants were assured that their personal information would not be shared with third parties, and that personal information would be stored for the purpose and period of the project and would be deleted three months after the evaluation was completed.

Gender sensitivity

Evaluators considered issues relating to gender at all stages of the design and delivery and analysis of the mid-term evaluation, in particular structural gender inequalities that prevent women from meaningfully engaging in politics and peacebuilding in Syria, and in consultation exercises such as the mid-term evaluation. Evaluators looked at individual and collective factors that have enabled women to overcome existing barriers to increase their capacity and impact, and shifting perceptions about gender roles and social norms regarding women as leaders, peacebuilders and decision makers.

Professionalism, integrity and objectivity

The evaluation team conducted interviews with sensitivity and respect, and faithfully recorded what people said, taking account of all relevant evidence, and presenting it without omission or misrepresentation.

Conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm

Evaluators prioritised Do No Harm in the planning and delivery of the mid-term evaluation and were sensitive to the likely consequences of their study for the community at large, particular groups and categories of persons within it, respondents and/or individual women. Evaluators guarded against predictably harmful effects and regularly reviewed how the evaluation was adhering to Do No Harm principles in bi-weekly meetings. In particular, evaluators were aware of existing conflicts and took proactive steps to handle these sensitively, ensuring that they were not exacerbating tensions.

2.4. UN Women's review process of data

UN Women staff were given the opportunity to review the mid-term evaluation Inception Report and evaluation tools before they were operationalised, and they were the first evaluation participants to be interviewed using the proposed evaluation tools. They validated the interview questions and were given the opportunity for making recommendations for changing or rephrasing questions.

UN Women provided contact details of stakeholders and programme participants to include in the evaluation, and provided additional contact details, documents and introductions when requested.

The report was submitted to UN Women staff for comments and has been revised based on those comments.

3. Findings

This section provides an overview of the evaluation findings drawn from project reporting, survey data and interviews with programme participants and stakeholders. It provides an assessment of the programme's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in meeting the programme's intended outcomes, and the integration of gender equality and human rights. The evaluation also provides insights into how the programme has integrated conflict-sensitivity principles, and presents suggestions for its future strategic direction.

3.1 Programme relevance

Overall relevance: The evaluation found that the programme's objectives, approach and ToC was **highly relevant** because it is built on the understanding that supporting women's organisation and engagement in peace processes is a key factor in enabling women's voices to be heard and securing women's rights. It is also built on consultations with Syrian women and situational analysis.

Challenges to relevance include the conflict context and evolution of the talks, which created barriers to achieving all of the change identified in the ToC.

Relevance could be increased by ensuring links to the grassroots, which will inform topics for dialogue and increase trust in the WAB from a wider cross-section of Syrian women.

The key questions that the evaluation aimed to answer in relation to relevance were:

- To what extent has the programme addressed the needs and challenges identified in the design phase?
- Has the ToC been verified as relevant and accurate during the course of the programme?
- How might the ToC evolve in response to programme learning on how Syrian women can effectively engage in the Syrian political process?
- Are the programme goals, outcomes and outputs clearly articulated and the relationships clear and coherent?
- To what extent is the intervention aligned with international conventions (e.g. UNSC 1325, UNSC 2250, CEDAW) and related documents (Sochi Outcome Document, Geneva Peace Talks)?
- To what extent is the intervention informed by the needs and interests of Syrian women of all backgrounds affected by conflict, and the needs of the OSE?
- How were the female participants selected for inclusion in programme activities? How has this limited the demographic spread of participants?

Relevance of the ToC

The evaluation found that the theory underpinning the programme is highly relevant and important to Syrian women and the OSE. The programme ToC assumes that, if women organise around a common agenda, then women's civil society can meaningfully participate in peace and reconciliation processes. The programme was developed with the understanding that supporting women's organising is a key factor in enabling women's voices to be heard and securing women's rights. This approach built on learning of previous UN programming in Bosnia and Liberia.

There was a clear development phase to the programme, and a thorough situational analysis. There were clear goals, outcomes and outputs articulated as part of the programme log frame. The evaluation team has not seen the written record of how the ToC was developed; however, verbal feedback from UN Women indicates that extensive consultation with stakeholders and intended beneficiaries took place in the design of the ToC.

Of the 18 programme respondents who answered the survey question: "Was the programme theory of change relevant?", 16 (89%) answered 'yes' (see Figure 2). Ten of the 11 programme participants who completed an interview felt that the theory behind the programme was relevant, and the majority (eight out of nine) of interviewed stakeholders felt that the theory underpinning the programme was relevant. In addition, the relevance is evidenced by the high interest in the consultation exercises that took place inside Syria as part of the One Thousand Voices listening exercise and the clear appetite to be involved in civil engagement at this level.

Challenges to the relevance of the ToC

Despite the high relevance of the ToC, there have been several challenges to successfully implementing all aspects of it in practice. For example, the ToC does not fully consider the structural barriers and political complexity of the operating environment, or issues such as the lack of direct talks in Geneva; these factors, which are outside the control of UN Women, have made it impossible to carry out some of the activities that are linked to the peace talks.

In addition, the assumption in the ToC that, if women organise around a common agenda, then women's civil society can meaningfully participate in peace and reconciliation processes, while sound in theory, underestimates the difficulty of building consensus among a diverse group of people in a highly politicised conflict context. As one stakeholder said, "In the end, how unified can civil society be?" and another stated, "We underestimate the difficulty of building Syrian women's movement. This was the main obstacle." In practice, this has posed a challenge to relevance as, on occasion, it has meant that the more contentious and divisive issues have not been fully discussed or tackled. As one respondent said, "While trying to achieve the common agenda or purpose, women had to overlook crimes, human and women's rights violations."

Evolution of the programme's ToC could be carried out by refining the wording regarding Syrian women's ability to "organise around a common agenda". This would acknowledge the difficulty in achieving a common agenda in the current context, while showing how the programme could take steps to get there. The WAB and SWIPD could be consulted on a potential rewording "to explore common ground and to organise and build around".

The challenge of balancing diversity with building consensus and the consequences this has had for the programme is elaborated on further in the section on 'Effectiveness'.

Figure 2: Relevance of programme ToC
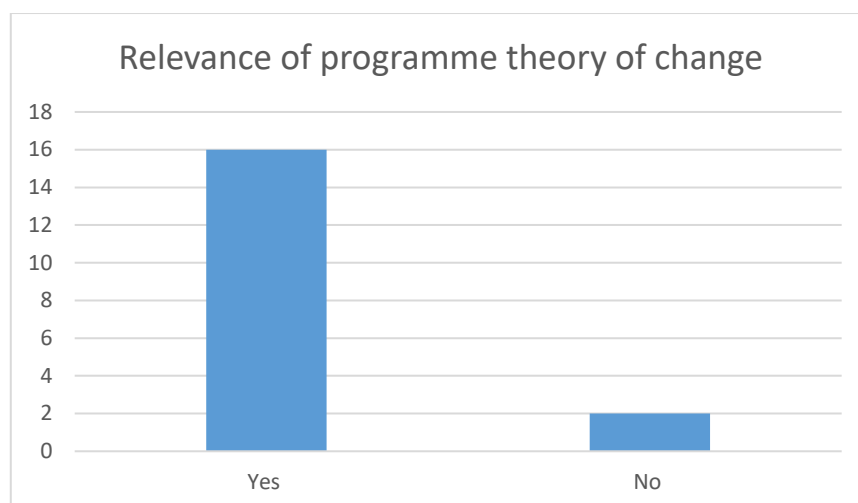
Programme informed by the needs and interests across a range of backgrounds of Syrian Women and the OSE

The programme has been informed by the Situational Analysis,[6] which was developed during the inception of the programme in 2015. In this phase, UN Women identified increased sectarianism in Syria as a result of extremist groups and sought to mitigate against this by creating a diverse, broadly representative group of Syrian women to work together to influence peacebuilding. It was further identified that Syrian women were playing an important role in peacebuilding at a local level but that this had not translated into the formal political process or women's participation in influencing at national or international levels. It was also recognised that there was a lack of coordination across Syrian women's networks. These insights clearly formed the development of the programme, in line with the needs and interest of Syrian women. The programme also responded to the fact that, at the outset of the peace process, Syrian women were largely absent in terms of representation in official delegations or as civil society representatives.

Ongoing consultations over the lifetime of the programme have focused on ensuring that it is informed by the needs and interests of a broad range of Syrian women. (See Figure 3.) UN Women stakeholders referred to numerous consultations that occurred between 2012 and 2014 upon which the programme was developed, and there is evidence of further consultation since this inception period (including the One Thousand Voices consultations).[7]

Challenges and limitations of the programme in meeting the needs and interests across a range of backgrounds of Syrian women and the OSE

Despite these consultations, feedback from some of the evaluation interviewees suggests that not all programme participants are aware of the extent of the consultations that have taken place, and some still feel "excluded from the planning"[8] of the programme. In addition, some programme participants reported that they are not aware of any formal processes to feed back to UN Women on programme delivery, nor do they know of any formal accountability mechanisms.

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[6] WAB ProDoc
[7] As evidenced by programme documents and donor reports.
[8] Interview with programme participant

Moreover, several interviewees and survey respondents highlighted that the connection of the programme's activities to local dialogue processes and developments and linking the work of the WAB to the grassroots level needed improvement. Such improvement may also help to ensure that the topics covered in dialogue sessions of the WAB are relevant at both grassroots and Track I and Track II levels. A WAB member shared an example of how this has already happened and the impact that it had: during a period of heavy shelling on Idleb, the member facilitated a meeting between the Special Envoy and a group of Syrian women based in Idleb. As a result, the Special Envoy sent out a statement describing the humanitarian situation there. According to the member, "This practice has built the trust of Syrian women [in Idlib] with the peacebuilding efforts…and resulted in accrediting WAB members as key influencers and agents of peace."

Figure 3: Programme informed by a diverse range of Syrian women's needs
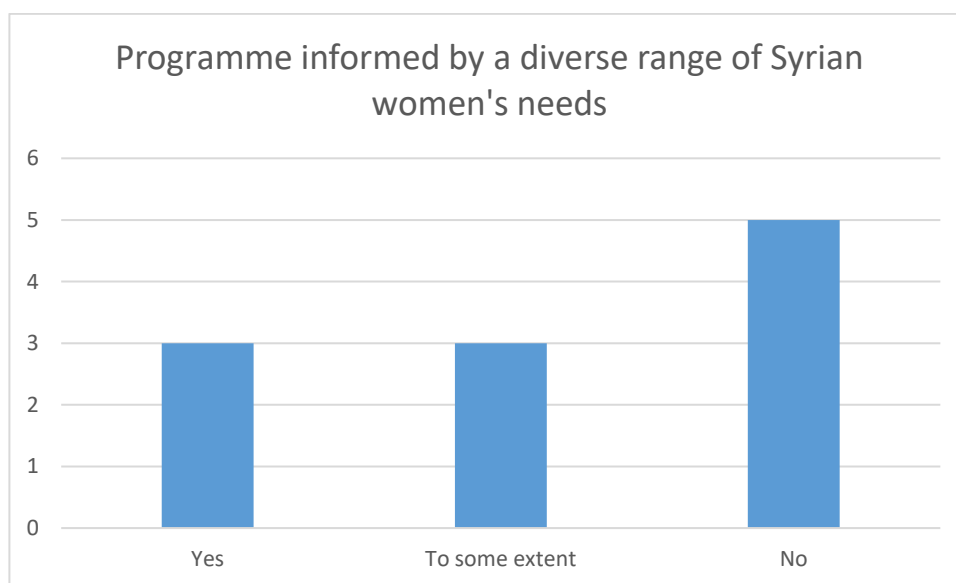
Selection of programme participants

Selection of SWIPD members was via nomination by local and international NGOs. The initial WAB members were selected from the SWIPD group. In 2017, in response to demand from Syrian women's civil society and WAB members, UN Women provided support to the OSE to rotate WAB members. This was initiated in late 2018. The process for selection for the new members of the WAB began with a call for applications. Applications were assessed against a rigorous criterion developed by the OSE with support from UN Women, based on the needs of the political process and building on lessons learned from the first iteration of the WAB. As part of this process, UN Women produced an options paper to reflect the diversity of women's perspectives and organisations in Syria and supported the rotation through process design, defining shortlisting criteria and the selection of candidates based on a round of interviews. A total of seven new WAB members were added, and 10 of the existing 12 remained.

As a result of the rotation, the current WAB members represent greater diversity in terms of age, political representation and geographical representation than the original body. The WAB is the first group to have brought together government, opposition and Islamist voices, and has been successful in convening women of diverse backgrounds. As one interviewee put it: "From my point of view, I see that UNW has achieved what no other actor could in terms of the diversity. There is definitely a room

for improvement, but I feel that we have good representation of Syrian women after the second rotation."

However, despite efforts and improvements on behalf of the OSE and UN Women, there is still a perception among some evaluation respondents that the selection criteria for the WAB lacks transparency and that the criteria are not as rigorous as they should be. Indeed, many interviewees expressed concern about this, especially WAB and SWIPD members themselves. Seven out of 11 programme participants interviewed felt that the selection process had not been clear and transparent (two of the respondents were WAB members who joined after the rotation), and the majority of survey respondents said that they were not aware of the WAB selection criteria, beyond having an active role in women's rights. (See Figure 4.)

In addition, there are mixed views among respondents on the diversity of the WAB. Some respondents perceive the prioritisation of achieving diversity as coming at the expense of the quality or credibility of the participants. As one respondent put it: "UN Women are focusing on the diversity too much, they need to focus on the quality of members. The current members can't represent Syrian women, they only represent their views." On the other hand, some respondents see the need for a greater diversity of women in terms of geographical spread, age, background and level of connection to the grassroots, and perceive there to be an agenda to "include women that speak the same tune, language [and have the same] views".

The findings on selection process and composition of the WAB highlight a clear gap between the efforts of UN Women and the OSE to ensure a rigorous selection process, and the perceptions of the programme participants. It also highlights the ongoing difficulty of balancing the need for diversity with the need for engaging with quality and credible actors. The implication of this for UN Women is that more communication and transparency around the recruitment process is required, in addition to having clarity on the trade-offs between diversity and credibility of members. This finding could be factored into ongoing programme design process (including ToR, updated ToC and communication plans).

Figure 4: Transparency of selection process

Was it a clear and transparent selection process?
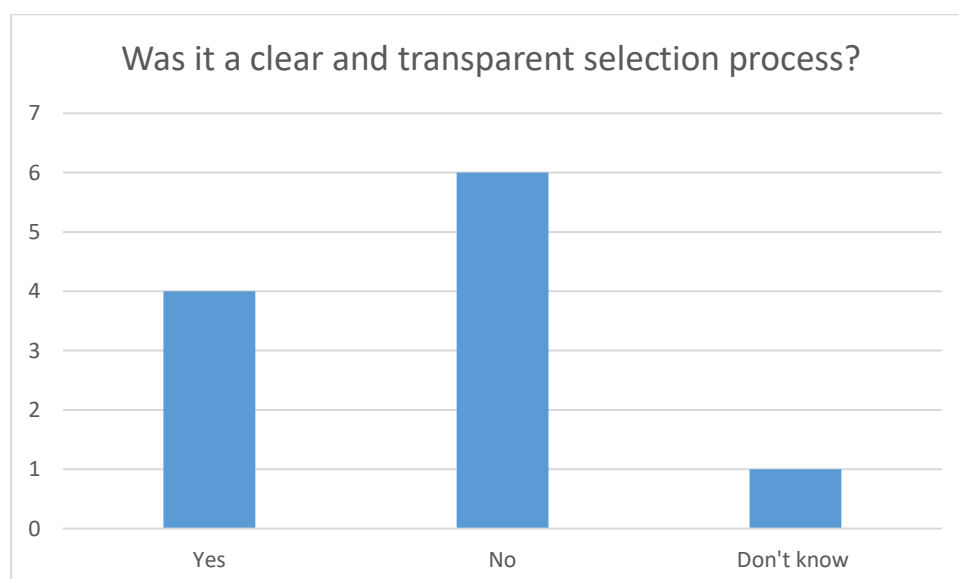
Alignment with WPS and human rights instruments

The programme is well aligned with international conventions on WPS, women's rights and human rights, including: UNSC 1325, UNSC 2254, CEDAW and related documents (Sochi Outcome Document, Geneva Peace Talks). The programme is clearly in line with CEDAW in its attempt to address marginalisation and discrimination of women by addressing the systemic barriers that exclude them from political influence. The intention to link programme activities to the Geneva Peace Talks was well aligned to the WPS agenda but has had limited success due to the breakdown of the process. Interviewees also considered the programme to be well aligned to these frameworks. For example, six out of eight stakeholders felt that the programme was well aligned with accountability frameworks.

However, the interview data also revealed a diverse interpretation of WPS across stakeholders and participants, leading to varied and inconsistent approaches and priorities. The variations could relate to understanding WPS within a faith-based framework and differing perspectives of secular and religious women. For example, one stakeholder explains, "1325 can't be one size for all. [It] needs different ways of working to fit different contexts… Whenever we are discussing 1325 and Women's Political Participation, the room usually filled with secular voices, not usually Islamic voices, which is something we cannot keep ignoring. Islamic voices are Syrian voices. It needs to be inclusive and bottom up. Every time I hear Syrian women's rights movement, I wonder – what are you talking about? I understand the challenges, but you need to include their voices. Coming up with a nice document, with nice ideas, doesn't work if you are excluding certain components."

Relevance of training and capacity-building

There is a strong commitment to capacity-building and significant investment in training for WAB members. Between 16 and 18 August 2017, UN Women organised a workshop in Beirut, bringing together 43 Syrian women's civil society leaders from Syria as well as from Syrian refugee and diaspora communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other locations. The workshop focused on the role of women's civil society in safeguarding and advancing the women's rights agenda in legislative frameworks, and provided comparative experiences from various countries. Further to this, in October 2017, UN Women organised two back-to-back meetings in Beirut. The first was a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop for 48 participants, including youth leaders, 14 participants from Rojava region and four participants from Syrian refugee communities in Lebanon. A third workshop focused on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and targeted 38 senior civil society and women's group representatives working on the issue in Syria.

In November 2018, to institutionalise the OSE's capacity-building support for WAB members, UN Women established a partnership with UNITAR to build a fellowship programme for all new and current WAB members. The core modules of the fellowship were developed based on a stocktaking exercise with the first iteration of WAB members and include the following elements: UN mediation and peacebuilding; gender-inclusive political diplomacy; media engagement, outreach and connectivity; and specialised fellowship modules for selected WAB members based on pre-identified criteria (thematic priorities defined by the political process and cross-cutting soft skills development required for negotiations).

Four out of 11 participants reported that they were consulted on their training needs. Five out of 11 participants interviewed felt that the training met their needs to some extent and seven out of 13 survey respondents felt that the training met their needs. The training, tools, research and data produced under the programme were felt to enhance advocacy efforts

3.2 Programme effectiveness

Overall effectiveness: The programme has implemented clear outputs and made good progress in achieving its outcomes. Establishing the WAB and SWIPD has improved the perception of women as credible actors in the Syrian political process and has provided members with access to some key decision makers and decision-making processes, through UN Women's backing.

Delivery under Outcome 1 significant achievements include commitment of the Special Envoy in the Security Council to ensuring 30% women's representation in the constitutional committee and first rotation of the WAB. There have been positive changes in capacities of women who participated in the programme despite the changing and complex context.

Under Outcome 2, the establishment of the WAB and SWIPD has been an important first step towards Syrian women's meaningful participation in the Syrian peace process and has achieved progress in bringing together a diverse group of women.

Challenges to effectiveness have included the limited engagement with grassroots individuals, uniting participants around a common agenda and the cessation of direct peace talks since 2016.

Programme effectiveness was assessed by evaluating the extent to which the programme has contributed to progress towards intended outcomes and benefited targeted populations.

The key questions which were asked to assess effectiveness were:

- What has been the progress made towards implementation of the outputs?
- To what extent are the different sub-groups of intended beneficiaries participating in and benefiting from the project?
- To what extent were member states able to adopt and/or operationalise accountability frameworks (e.g. UNSC 1325, UNSC 2250, CEDAW)?
- To what extent have the trainings, tools, research and data produced under the programme informed effective advocacy efforts?
- What are the changes (positive and negative) to which UN Women's work has contributed under the programme in terms of women's engagement in Syria's peacemaking process?
- What are enabling and limiting factors that have contributed to the achievement of results and what actions need to be taken to overcome any barriers that limit progress?

Outcome 1: Syrian women's civil society participates and advocates effectively in peace processes from gender and women's rights perspectives

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Key achievements – Outcome 1

- Creation of the WAB as special adviser to the Special Envoy marks historic achievements and victory for implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
- Production of five technical proposals and four confidential technical papers on de-escalation, shared principles and constitutional provisions.
- Commitment of the Special Envoy in the Security Council to ensuring 30% women's representation in the constitutional committee.
- Progress towards increased representation through the first rotation of the WAB, enabling it to be a body that speaks both to the Special Envoy and to broader constituencies in its efforts to influence peacemaking.
- UN Women and the OSE's capacity-building support for WAB members institutionalised through a partnership with UNITAR to build a fellowship programme for WAB members.
- Diversified and sustained SWIPD advocacy efforts aimed at promoting Syrian women's engagement in the Track I peace process. Increased awareness of reflecting the concerns of Syrian women in negotiations as a result of high-level meetings with several member states.

Achievements under Outcome 1

Establishing the WAB and SWIPD has improved the perception of women as credible actors in the Syrian political process, and in providing potential access to the Constitutional Committee through UN Women's backing. Over the past five years, UN Women has been working closely with the Special Envoy and the mediation team to create opportunities for the participation of women in the Peace Talks, as well as lobbying the negotiating parties for women's inclusion among their delegations. As a result of these efforts, nine high-level advocacy meetings on Syria were held in 2017 in Geneva, Brussels and Vienna with member states.

UN Women has built the influence of the WAB as a body engaging with high-level political actors on gender-responsive peacemaking and political dialogues, and the WAB has become a valued adviser to the Special Envoy. One of the most significant achievements has been the commitment by the Special Envoy for 30% representation of women in the Constitutional Committee in the Security Council. As a result of advocacy efforts, the WAB model has inspired the creation of the Syrian Civil Society Support Room (CSSR), with over 40% women representation, the first formal mechanism to involve civil society in the United Nations-led Syrian political talks in Geneva. The WAB has also been replicated as a model for women's engagement in Track I processes in Yemen and Iraq.

In addition, the initiation of the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva in 2016 provided an opportunity for Syrian women to play a meaningful role in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. SWIPD members supported the Special Envoy at the intra-Syria talks (Geneva II), and the SWIPD and WAB were engaged in the following round of talks (Geneva III). While women's representation continued to fall short of the 30%, both negotiating delegations in Geneva III had close to 20% representation of women. This marked a significant increase from the first two rounds of negotiations. Importantly, two out of the three women negotiators on the opposition delegation were members of the SWIPD who had previously received UN Women support.

With the suspension of the official talks in April 2016, efforts to lobby for the resumption of the talks and continuation of the political dialogue took place, specifically with the WAB's high-level missions, as well as strengthening Track II engagement and coalition building. Throughout 2016, the SWIPD continued its advocacy efforts aimed at promoting Syrian women's engagement in the Track I peace process. Moreover, the SWIPD diversified its advocacy efforts through a series of high-level meetings with several member states, including the Netherlands, the USA, the UK, Finland, Sweden and Spain,

in which the group raised awareness on the importance of reflecting the concerns of Syrian women in all aspects of negotiations.

Figure 5: Programme increased Syrian women's access to decision makers

Programme increased Syrian women's access to decision makers

| Category	Value
Yes	7
No	4
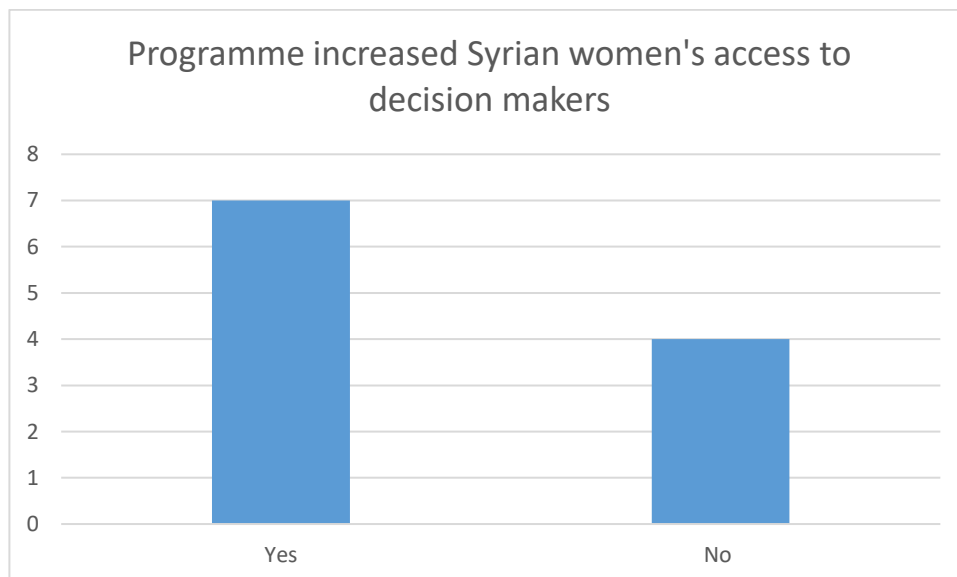
As the situation in Syria has remained volatile, and because direct talks did not take place, UN Women worked proactively to enable Syrian women's participation in the Astana and Sochi processes, which has led to preparations for the establishment of a Constitutional Committee.

In Astana, the WAB worked with the OSE to shape their engagement strategy, including elaborating key messages and recommendations about the situation on the ground and identifying potential avenues to achieve the goals of de-escalation and stabilisation. For example, the WAB recommended detainee exchanges and release of detainees as a confidence-building measure for the Astana process.
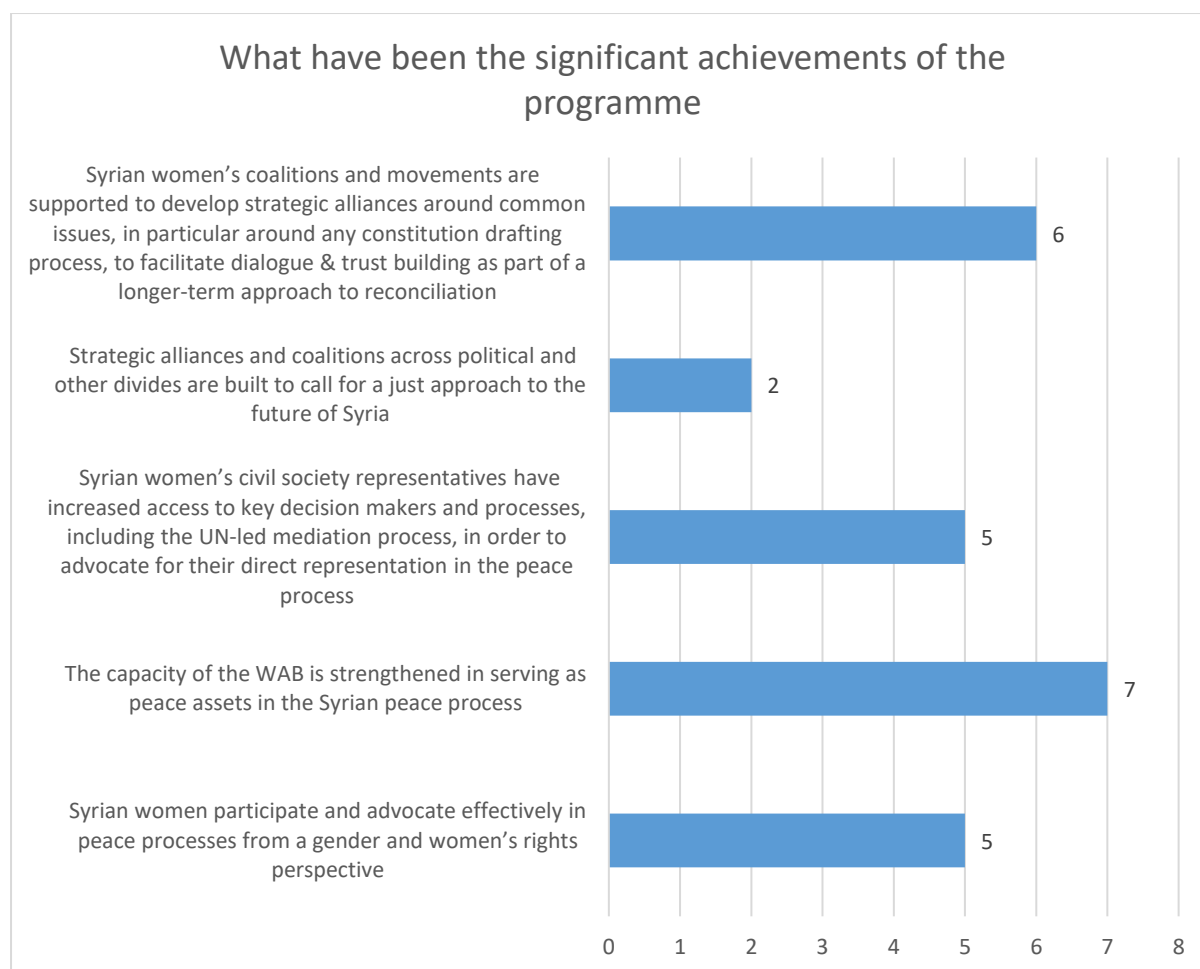
The WAB also supported the Special Envoy in the preparations for the Sochi talks on the Constitutional Committee. In 2018, one member of the WAB participated in the preparatory meeting of the Sochi discussions in Vienna.

Figure 6: The programme supported Syrian women to advocate for their priorities in Syria's peace processes

The programme supported Syrian women to advocate for their priorities in Syria's peace processes

Category	Value
Strongly disagree	1
disagree	1
agree	7
DK	3
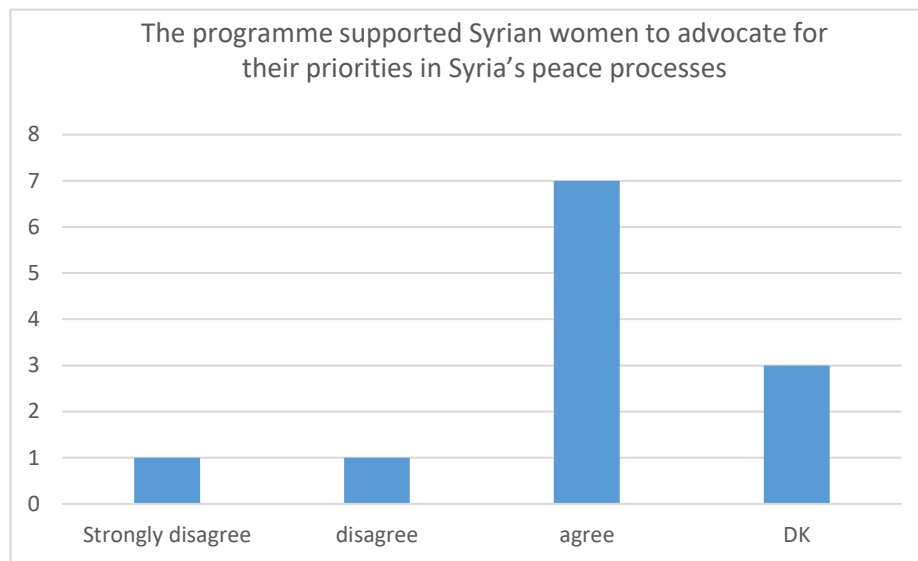
Feedback from stakeholders and programme participants also supports the fact that the programme has led to positive change in the capacities of Syrian women leaders to engage in Syria's peace process. Interviewees felt that the creation of the WAB formalised women's role in acting as an advisory body to the OSE and was ground-breaking in its approach. Seven out of 11 programme participants felt that the programme had increased access to decision makers in the OSE for Syrian women. (See Figure 5.) Six out of 13 survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that Syrian women leaders had strengthened capacities to influence and engage in Syria's peace process. As one participant explained: "Women have been supported to speak up and build their capacity to take an active role in these processes." Another remarked that the WAB is the only platform "that's formal and forces the role of women in the political process".

Figure 6: Significant achievements of the programme outlined by survey respondents

What have been the significant achievements of the programme

Achievement	Value
Syrian women's coalitions and movements are supported to develop strategic alliances around common issues, in particular around any constitution drafting process, to facilitate dialogue & trust building as part of a longer-term approach to reconciliation	6
Strategic alliances and coalitions across political and other divides are built to call for a just approach to the future of Syria	2
Syrian women's civil society representatives have increased access to key decision makers and processes, including the UN-led mediation process, in order to advocate for their direct representation in the peace process	5
The capacity of the WAB is strengthened in serving as peace assets in the Syrian peace process	7
Syrian women participate and advocate effectively in peace processes from a gender and women's rights perspective	5

There is a strong commitment to capacity-building women, and significant investment in training for WAB members. In August 2017, UN Women organised a workshop in Beirut focusing on the role of women's civil society in safeguarding and advancing the women's rights agenda, which was followed by meetings in Beirut in October 2017.

UN Women's partnership with UNITAR began in November 2018, and work to build a fellowship programme for all new and current WAB members has been a significant achievement of the programme.

In addition to programme-level achievements, capacity-building activities have resulted in significant outcomes for individual women. For example, as one stakeholder explained, "One programme participant has become a head of a political party, another SWIPD member is a spokesperson for one of the opposition groups. The WAB members - many of them go on to play significant roles within the government, or for the opposition, or as spokespersons for different NGOs."

While the trainings and capacity-building have been somewhat effective, feedback from the interviewees and survey respondents suggests that it could have been more tailored and based on a more thorough prior needs assessment. This limitation is discussed in more detail in the section on 'Challenges and limitations' below.

Gender and women's rights perspective

The SWIPD and WAB have provided important forums for Syrian women to come together to discuss and explore common beliefs and demands regarding women's rights and to develop a gender perspective in collaboration. Capacity-building training for the WAB has focused on UNSC 1325 and enshrining women's rights in legislation and constitution building. This has enabled them to articulate their women's rights perspective and demands, and strengthened the women's movement in Syria.

Programme participants and stakeholders felt that the WAB and SWIPD were able to bring a women's rights perspective to the Syrian peace process and acknowledged that there has been a significant shift in acceptance of women's involvement and commitment to upholding women's rights throughout the process, which would not have been there without the programme's involvement and ambition. Stakeholders noted that, without the WAB and SWIPD, women's voices would be severely restricted in the political process, as civil society leadership in Syria presents considerable barriers to women.

The WAB has been negotiating for gender and women's rights perspectives to be included in the process of intra-Syrian talks and negotiations. For example, this is represented in the 9th Principle of the 12 Principles Paper, which reads*:*

"Respect and protection of human rights and public freedoms, especially in times of crisis, including non-discrimination and equal rights and opportunities for all without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, cultural or linguistic identity, gender or any other distinction, with effective mechanism for their protection, which give due regard to the political and equal rights and opportunities of women, including by the taking of active measures to ensure representation and participation in institutions and decision-making structures, with mechanisms aimed to achieve a level of representation of at least 30% for women, and the goal of parity."

In 2017, a number of civil society groups and organisations accelerated their efforts, particularly around advancing the UNSC 1325 agenda inside the country. Programme participants' feedback highlighted the positive impact that the programme had had on gender and women's rights, and how significant it is that now the women's right to political participation is widely acknowledged and formalised, in a significant 'holding ground' way that would be very hard to reverse.

Challenges and limitations to effectiveness under Outcome 1

Although the programme has been crucial in enshrining the principle of women's right to involvement in the political processes, some interviewees felt that women's ability to shape and set the agenda could be further strengthened. For example, most of the participants mentioned that, although the programme has removed a huge barrier to women's meaningful participation in the political process, they sometimes feel that they are running in closed circles due to their different perceptions of the agenda they are working to achieve, and that some of these differences are fundamental. In addition, some felt that they would like to scale up their efforts and improve their effectiveness but that they were sometimes prevented from doing so by being denied the opportunity to deal with crucial and sensitive cases, such as detainees, and not having access to certain files. It should be noted that access to confidential information is outside of UN Women's control and is a decision that rests with the OSE and is influenced by many factors, some of which the participants may not be aware of.

In general, SWIPD members were more critical of the programme's effectiveness than WAB interviewees. For example, the lack of communication and information sharing between the two bodies has raised concerns among SWIPD members, several of whom reported that they had

envisioned that the WAB would share documents and include SWIPD members in their discussions. However, according to the interviewed WAB members, due to the confidentiality of the documents, these consultations did not take place. In addition, many of the interviewed SWIPD members mentioned that they are not included in the capacity-building cycle and are not meeting regularly, which has negatively impacted their ability to engage in future events and activities. As one WAB member said: "SWIPD is a great asset that is currently not being utilised, it includes group of women with great experience and connections with women's rights movement, civil society and grassroots level. I believe reviving SWIPD and engaging them with WAB activities and expanding consultations and discussions with them would maximise the programme achievements at so many levels." SWIPD members also shared the view that they were not being used to their full potential, as one said: "It is a frustration that SWIPD is not activated and we feel that we have become the human resources for providing WAB with more members."

As mentioned above, training and capacity-building workshops were generally well received; however, the majority (seven of 11 participants) reported that they were not consulted on their training needs. Less than 50% (five of 11) of interviewees felt that the training met their needs, whereas just over 50% (seven of 13) survey respondents felt that the training met their needs. Comments on the training included points that the content was very general and not contextualised and that they needed more time spent together on training activities.

Feedback from the interviewees also suggests that more could be done to prepare women at all levels to participate in decision-making arenas, particularly exploring how grassroots women could influence decision making, and be connected to WAB members as key constituents.

There have been challenges in gaining consensus on women's rights perspectives, which is related to the current conflict lines within Syria, some of which view women's rights agendas as unnecessary or as going against Islam. Evaluation participants also noted that the WAB does not have young women on the board and would benefit from emerging, grassroots leaders rather than exclusively focusing on more established, highly educated 'elite' women.

It was also noted by a stakeholder that Salafist groups at the Beirut II conference challenged the notion of women's rights and their applicability in the Syrian context. These differences in opinion are important to acknowledge and work with, as they represent a real challenge to the adoption of women's rights in Syria. In Beirut II, these challenges to the women's rights approach also united opposition and loyalist parties together in collaboration to defend the women's rights agenda in Syria. A programme participant explained: "There are still parties refusing women's role… some believe that gender is part of a liberal agenda that doesn't fit Arab communities. There is a perception that women's political participation is against Syrian and Arab culture, religion and traditions. If it wasn't for WAB, I am comfortable to claim that there is no real participation of women."

Enabling and limiting factors

Table 2 shows the enabling and limiting factors that influenced the success of the programme, based on the feedback of survey respondents and document review.[9]

Table 2: Enabling and limiting factors influencing the success of programme

Enabling factors	Limiting factors
- The capacities of women themselves	**Factors outside of UN Women's control**

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[9] These documents include WAB ProDoc.

- The continuous support from the international community - The support from UN Women and supporting the WAB - Women leaders now have more clarity regarding their vision; they have overcome the political differences - The support from the Special Envoy - Women's rights provisions outlined in UNSC 1325	- Political environment/context - The male domination of the political parties and platforms - Resistance of opposition and regime to women's leadership role - No real political solution to conflict - Elite domination of the feminist movement in Syria - The negotiation process being under the Russian umbrella rather than the UN **Factors within UN Women's control** - Selection criteria of participants – more transparency and clarity of criteria requested - UN Women's deprioritising of the SWIPD - Limiting the role of women to advisory capacity - UN Women is not putting enough pressure on the negotiation delegation to include women directly in the peace process - UN Women not consulting the WAB before holding the conferences related to the Syrian women
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Outcome 2: A broad-based, diversely representative Syrian constituency for peace is mobilised to foster a strong infrastructure of support for the WAB, SWIPD and the peace efforts

Key achievements – Outcome 2

The programme has made progress in bringing together diverse political groups, but has been limited in engaging other sub-groups, grassroots and non-elite individuals. Specifically, the programme produced the following results in support of Outcome 2:

- More than 1,100 women participated in 25 consultations in Lebanon and Syria as part of the *One Thousand Voices for Peace initiative*.
- A broad coalition of 130 women leaders from diverse constituencies convened in Beirut I, resulting in an outcome statement calling for peace, demanding more representation of women in the formal peace process, and supporting the role of the WAB. There were 188 women leaders involved in Beirut II – Towards a common framework for the Syrian women's movement (2018). Building on the priorities emerging from the One Thousand Voices consultations, Beirut II resulted in the formulation of 62 priorities, 47 without reservations.
- UN Women organised a number of workshops:
  - bringing together 43 Syrian women's civil society leaders from Syria as well as from Syrian refugee and diaspora communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other locations in August 2017;
  - ToT workshop for 48 participants, including youth leaders, 14 participants from Rojava region and four participants from Syrian refugee communities in Lebanon; and
  - workshop on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and targeted 38 senior civil society and women's group representatives working on the issue in Syria.

Achievements under Outcome 2

The programme has brought together individuals from quite diverse political backgrounds. This is significant as this is the first body to have achieved this level of political diversity in Syria, an achievement that should not be underestimated.

In addition, the programme has convened women through conferences and consultation exercises, some of which have resulted in the production of outcome statements and of continued collaboration between women attendees. For example, the One Thousand Voices consultation process, which sought to raise awareness of issues of women, peace and security, and to broker respectful dialogue around the impact of the conflict, was extremely well attended with 992 women involved, and up to 140 participants at associated events. It engaged women on their priorities for peace resulting in identifying three overarching priorities regarding *women's economic empowerment, protection of women's physical integrity and more equitable gender relations.* The process was able to engage a range of diverse participants in a positive setting, even though the consultations largely took place in government-held areas. As one stakeholder described: "It was inspiring, in places like Homs where there had been very brutal sectarian fighting and atrocities, it was the first time Sunni and Alawite sat together. After the consultation, 10 women decided that they would start to meet together and discuss common needs – this was really exciting." Another stakeholder remarked: "There was such a huge appetite to attend and engage in these meetings. It was the first time something like this had happened, particularly in places like Tartous and Sweida Governorates. It was really ground-breaking, as meeting like this is not usually permitted."

In addition, the Beirut I conference resulted in an outcome statement calling for peace, demanding more representation of women in the formal peace process and supporting the role of the WAB. The Beirut II conference resulted in the formulation of 62 priorities, including 47 without reservations. According to programme documentation reviewed as part of this evaluation, the conference

succeeded in demystifying some key misconceptions and inaccurate perceptions among women participants on their respective work. The WAB's common demands were reflected in commonalities of the Special Envoy's 12 Principles Paper, which outlines a vision of a future that can be shared by all Syrians, and are consistent with UNSC 2254 (2015). In 2017, the WAB produced five technical proposals[10] and drafted four technical papers in 2018.

Challenges and limitations under Outcome 2

Despite some progress towards building and mobilising a broad-based constituency for peace and producing some outcome and position papers, there are a number of challenges and limitations to fully achieving this outcome.

One of the main limitations has been the relatively limited engagement of grassroots activists and constituencies inside Syria. This was the case despite the fact that a large number of members of the WAB run organisations inside Syria. There was also some criticism from interviewees – both stakeholders and participants – of the WAB's limited diversity in terms of geographical spread. Particular gaps in the participation of (religious) conservatives, and those from South and North East Syria were highlighted. As one stakeholder explained: "Voices from the north or north east were very limited or non-existent. We see the same women on each platform, saying same messages not reflecting changes on the ground we are seeing. For such important meetings, we need shadow meetings for women who cannot travel and participate…it is essential to hear more voices…this would give more credibility to any content which can be validated by large number of women."

As the above quote indicates, despite the progress that has been made towards ensuring the diversity of the WAB, there is still a perception that it is not as representative as it could be. Five out of eight stakeholders felt that the WAB was not representative enough of a diverse range of Syrian women's voices, and across all respondents there was an almost even split over the question of whether the body was truly representative. Feedback from interviewees suggests that this limitation jeopardises the programme objective of empowering Syrian women affected by the conflict.

The need to ensure diversity and to try to be as widely representative as possible is an issue that exists alongside another main challenge, which is the difficulty of reaching consensus and uniting around a common agenda, as outlined in the programme's current ToC. Notwithstanding the results mentioned in the 'Achievements' sections above, programme managers expressed frustration at the complexity and difficulty of the task, and there have been regular disagreements and heated discussion between participants. Although such exchanges are to be expected within the context and given the focus on dialogue, this has impaired progress towards reaching a shared agenda and building consensus on key issues among WAB and SWIPD members. There has been a number of meetings that have resulted in no outcome documents because of the internal disagreements with the WAB. Moreover, there is a vast difference of opinion between members' perspectives on women's rights and gender equality, which have made consensus decision making problematic, as individuals are starting from very different cultural reference points.

The tension between seeking to ensure diversity and the goal to build a common agenda that participants can mobilise around has a number of implications for UN Women and the programme. First, it underlines the difficulties of achieving a 'diversely representative' body, especially within a highly divided context and among a dispersed population, not all of which is easy to access and

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[10] Five technical proposals were developed in 2017. The WAB produced two confidential papers (De-escalation committees (to Astana); and Humanitarian Access). In addition, the WAB prepared four non-papers on: Shared Principles (updated in 2017); Engaging with opposition groups; Constitutional provisions; and Messages on Women, Peace, and Security.

engage, and signals the small likelihood that any single body or organisation can ever really be representative of Syrian women and consistently reflect the diversity and interests of all women. Second, it highlights the need to manage expectations of the participants, the wider group of stakeholders (such as Syrians who are not part of either the WAB or the SWIPD) and donors around the level of diversity that can be achieved within the WAB in particular, and the trade-offs that go along with that, such as reaching consensus around key topics. Third, the finding underlines the continued need for clear communication on the role of the WAB and SWPID, the selection criteria and mandate, with recognition of the limitations and challenges of its role. Fourth, it highlights the necessity to keep linking WAB and SWIPD activities to other processes and networks that are working towards similar goals at Track II, Track III and grassroots level. This could increase overall effectiveness and could be developed as part of the ToR and ToC in the next phase of programming.

Enabling and limiting factors

Survey respondents listed the following factors that have enabled or limited them in establishing strategic alliances and coalitions across political and other divides for a just approach to the future of Syria:

Enablers	Limiting
- By evolving the role from advisory to monitoring member - Increasing the civil society role - Creating a civil society common ground away from the political fault lines is complicated and difficult	- The backgrounds and connections of WAB and SWIPD members - UN Women not following up with activities to build strategic alliances - Poor coordination in the political feminist movement - The negative role played by UN Women by dominating the SWIPD and insisting on working with specific women - The severity of the political disagreements between the different parties

3.3 Programme Efficiency

Overall efficiency: UN Women has been able to deliver the programme in a timely manner, with a flexible approach, and within a challenging and evolving environment.

There was, however, a high turnover of programme management staff (four project managers within a six-year period), which may have impacted programme efficiency. This has been further impacted by moving offices and outsourcing work.

Programme efficiency was assessed according to how well available resources had been used in delivering programme activities. The following questions were asked:

- Have the outputs been delivered in a timely manner?
- Have UN Women's organisational structure, managerial support and coordination mechanisms effectively supported the delivery of the programme?
- To what extent are the inputs and outputs equally distributed between different groups of women, and have the potentials of disadvantaged women been fully utilised to realise the outcomes?
- How does the programme utilise existing local capacities of right-bearers and duty holders?

- How might the socio-political environment restrict the effective representation and participation of the diverse civic groups, despite best efforts to promote it?
- To what extent can the internal and external barriers be overcome to enable a more comprehensive and effective representation of civil society in the peace talks?

The evaluation found that UN Women has been able to deliver the programme in a timely manner, within a challenging and evolving environment. The lack of direct talks between parties in Geneva made it difficult to align programme activities with the intended peace processes; however, UN Women has acted flexibly in difficult circumstances to adapt programme activities and convene the WAB at short notice at relevant times, in line with other opportunities and processes.

Feedback from the interviewees recognised that the requirement for flexibility was well met in many instances. The WAB has been present at all talks in Geneva despite short notice.

Challenges and limitations to efficiency

During the programme cycles, there was a relatively high turnover of programme management staff (four project managers within a six-year period), which may have impacted programme efficiency. This has been further impacted by moving offices and outsourcing work. Stakeholders interviewed felt that the programme would have been strengthened by UN Women delivering more of the work itself, rather than it being delivered via contractors, as many said that they had trust in the quality of UN Women's work and insight into the context, but were less confident with contractors. Some respondents felt that outsourcing services led to increased costs and project inefficiency.

Six stakeholders felt that the UN Women's management structure supported the delivery of the programme, with two stakeholders disagreeing. The disagreements centred around the location of the project within UN Women's structure, and the movement of offices and responsibility for the programme.

The programme was given generous funding by donors, although further clarity on budget allocation and controls would strengthen overall transparency and therefore give a better understanding of financial efficiency.

Utilise existing local capacities of right-bearers and duty holders

Programme participants felt that the programme has not been able to fully utilise the local capacity of the WAB and SWIPD due to issues around confidentiality, meaning that WAB members could not communicate work to their constituents to gain consensus and buy-in.[11]

As mentioned in previous sections, there is significant potential to increase local engagement through working with grassroots women and connecting these activities with WAB and SWIPD activities. To make more effective use of the WAB and SWIPD in consensus building, UN Women should explore further training and project activity opportunities that link them with interests and messages from grassroots groups.

UN Women could invest more in SWIPD activities specifically aiming to engage diverse civic groups and overcome socio-political environment restrictions. In particular, there are geographical areas of Syria that are not fully covered by programme activities, and disabled women are not being represented.

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[11] It should be noted that the WAB are not permitted to share any information provided to them by the Special Envoy.

Enabling and limiting factors

Many of the programme activities were linked to the Geneva Peace Talks, and, had they gone ahead, the programme could have been far more efficient and impactful. However, UN Women has worked flexibly in response to the changing dynamics of the peace process and have taken a number of positive steps to best utilise the WAB despite the absence of the Geneva Peace Talks, as one respondent explained: "If the political situation didn't allow for much progress, there wouldn't be – [it's] difficult to predict, elements outside our control. But we had to plan for sessions just in case, strategise and plan ahead and jolt peace process where possible."

Enablers	Limiting
- Committed staff at UN Women - Flexibility of UN Women - Resourcefulness and adaptability of UN Women - -	- Geneva Peace Talks not going ahead - Staff turnover - Outsourcing of activities

3.4 Programme Sustainability

Overall sustainability:
The programme has effectively built momentum in galvanising the Syrian women's movement and there is a strong appetite to engage women who believe in the underlying ToC and goal of the programme. It has embedded the WPS agenda within the Syrian women's movement and started to build an innovative and promising model for women's meaningful engagement, which has been replicated in Yemen and Iraq. However, the challenges surrounding implementation (effectiveness), selection and communication may risk losing buy-in of women if not addressed.

Programme sustainability was assessed by taking into consideration the lasting contribution of the programme, and how likely the programme is to succeed in achieving its aims in the medium to long term. The following questions were used to guide the evaluation's assessment of programme sustainability:

- To what extent has the programme supported Syrian women to advocate for their priorities in Syria's peace processes?
- To what extent has the programme strengthened capacities of Syrian women leaders to influence and engage in Syria's peace process?
- To what extent has the programme ensured institutional capacity of key actors (e.g. the UN mediator) and civil society on WPS commitments?

The programme has built momentum and there is a strong appetite to engage women who believe in the underlying ToC and goal of the programme. The programme has made significant progress in supporting Syrian women to advocate for their priorities in the Syrian peace processes. The creation of the WAB and SWIPD, as coordinating mechanisms and advocacy bodies, has increased the capacity of individual women and strengthened women's organising. The advisory role of the WAB to the OSE represents a landmark success and unique achievement. The WAB has become a significant peace asset to the OSE and the political process, which has formalised women's decision-making role in Syria.

The WAB has developed significant momentum that is likely to ensure its future development. The programme has succeeded in selecting capable and politically diverse women for participation in both the SWIPD and WAB, although increased focus on communicating and championing the selected women's capacities and eligibility would help increase community buy-in, and ultimately sustainability of the programme. The second iteration of the WAB has made further progress in responding to concerns around transparency and diversity, which will help ensure the WAB is respected and valued.

Support provided by UN Women to outgoing WAB members as peace assets has widened the impact and sustainability of the programme, reinforcing UN Women's wider coalition-building efforts, Track II and Track III peace efforts. The WAB members were introduced to key decision makers, including advocacy meetings with representatives of several member states and the European Union and key member states, in which the group was able to raise awareness on the importance of reflecting the concerns of Syrian women in all aspects of negotiations. This has provided the infrastructure and connections for ongoing dialogue between women's groups and key decision makers.

The programme has significantly increased the institutional capacity of the OSE and the ability of civil society to engage with women's rights and Syrian women leaders. It has embedded the WPS agenda within the Syrian women's movement and started to build an innovative and promising model for women's meaningful engagement, which has been replicated by UN Women in Track I processes in Yemen and Iraq. One of the most significant achievements has been the commitment made by the Special Envoy for 30% representation of women in the Constitutional Committee in the Security Council, which represents a historic success in enshrining women's participation in the Syrian peace process. Furthermore, the creation of the Syrian CSSR has also significantly strengthened formal mechanisms to involve women's civil society in UN political processes.

Challenges to sustainability

There is a risk of alienating SWIPD members by prioritising or being perceived to be prioritising resources towards the WAB. It is important to improve the communication between the WAB and SWIPD, to create greater links and dialogues with grassroots organisations to ensure that the WAB is perceived as an asset and not a competitor.

Sustainability of the programme could also be undermined without continued engagement and momentum towards producing tangible outcomes.

The issues mentioned in previous sections concerning barriers to implementation, selection of participants and communication risk losing buy-in of women if they are not perceived to be effectively addressed. They also risk the continued engagement of women and momentum around the programme, due to expectations not meeting reality. Moreover, if WAB members are seen as unable to reach decisions and build consensus, this may call into question the credibility of participants as leaders and their ability to deliver.

The limited links with grassroots groups and women inside Syria prohibit the programme's reach and pose sustainability risks as the programme's activities remain focused on a small group of women without a significant multiplier effect. To be sustainable in the long term, the programme needs to increase investment in training and capacity-building more women and building better networks and constituencies. WAB members highlighted the need for further technical expertise in regard to legal, constitutional, planning and management, economic, decentralisation and a number of other thematic areas.[12]

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[12] Taken from 2018 stocktaking exercise.

Ensuring that practical and security concerns around planning of events are addressed is crucial to ensure some level of accessibility for all. Sustainability could also be improved by developing existing work to enable the WAB to discuss issues of contention and gradually build consensus so that they can more effectively advocate for these shared priorities in future processes.

There has been significant success in establishing links to high-level advocacy platforms and between women's groups in Syria and other Arab nations, but there is potential for creating greater buy-in of national and international actors around women's political participation and efforts to create similar bodies in other Arab countries.

Enablers	Limiting
- Broad buy-in to programme ToC - Capacity-building activities create a broad constituency for peace and wider women's rights movement	- External perception of the WAB's processes and representation - High level of external critique of the programme and limited recognition of achievements

3.5 Gender equality and human rights

Evaluation of gender equality and a human rights-based approach was carried out using UN Women's own guidance[13] and other good practice references in the literature.[14]

The SWIPD and WAB have provided important forums for Syrian women to come together to discuss and explore beliefs and demands regarding women's rights and develop a gender perspective in collaboration. Capacity-building training for the WAB has focused on UNSC 1325 and enshrining women's rights in legislation and constitution building. This has enabled women to further articulate a women's rights perspective and demands, and has strengthened the women's movement in Syria. The WAB has been able to influence discussions around electoral laws to safeguard and advance women's rights, and women's inclusion in the Constitutional Committee is an important achievement.

Programme conferences have served as important fora for networking, debate and dialogue. These events have been able to highlight both the commonalities of women's priorities and needs, but also the widening divisions among Syrian actors, and the challenges associated with working to bring women's rights actors together around a common position. The discussions also highlighted the critical need to continue the dialogue among Syrian women in order to advance and safeguard the women's rights agenda in Syria.

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[13] See, for example, Gender mainstreaming, UN Women, https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming

[14] This includes International Alert's gender in peacebuilding publications (including on Syria) and on measuring gender in peacebuilding: Gender in peacebuilding, https://www.international-alert.org/projects/gender-peacebuilding; 'Measuring gender' in peacebuilding, 2016, https://www.international-alert.org/publications/measuring-gender-in-peacebuilding; Cordaid, Handbook on integrating gender in peacebuilding and statebuilding, 2016, https://www.cordaid.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/10/Cordaid-Handboek-Gender-Peacebuilding-and-Statebuilding-2016-LR.pdf; SIDA, A human rights based approach to peace building, 2015, https://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/eng/partners/human-rights-based-approach/thematic-briefs/human-rights-based-approach-peace-building.pdf.

Nine out of 11 programme participants felt that the programme was definitely helping to address gender inequality and discrimination, and two out of 11 felt that it was helping only to some extent. One stakeholder spoke highly about the One Thousand Voices listening initiative, saying that many men who had participated in programme activities were supportive of women's rights, and articulated a positive view of women's capabilities.

Despite the positives outlined above, many participants noted that only a small demographic of 'privileged' women had benefited from increased decision making and access to political arenas through the programme. The programme does not specifically address gender relations between men and women, and activities to increase women's access to decision making is limited to the WAB; even then, many programme participants expressed exasperation that their role is only advisory and not real decision making.

Without a unified women's rights agenda with the agreement of programme participants, efforts to achieve progress on gender equality will be hampered. Feedback from evaluation respondents suggests that the programme needs to be realistic about what is achievable at each stage of the programme. It is also worth noting that the programme does not explicitly set out to explore the causes of gender inequality and structural discrimination that women encounter. However, activities around this could potentially build solidarity between WAB and SWIPD members and raise awareness of internalised mechanisms of restricting women's power and agency.

3.6 Do No Harm

Considerable efforts were made to deliver the programme according to Do No Harm principles. For example, the WAB had the same support team working with them from the beginning of the programme, so a great deal of trust has been built with Syrian facilitators. However, a number of concerns were raised that conflict sensitivity and do no harm principles were not fully considered during the design of the methodology or selection of participants. Programme participants suggested that this could have been resolved by highlighting and allocating proper resources at the preparatory phase and further context reading, alongside understanding local gaps, challenges and priorities.

Programming needs to consider the risk of participating in civil engagement, and assessment of individual women's ability to safely access certain activities. For example, Syrian women located in government-held areas in Syria have access to attend events in Geneva, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt, but travel to Turkey puts them at risk of detention by Syria's security services on return to Syria. For those living in opposition-held areas, they are able to attend events held in Geneva, Jordan and Turkey, but visits to Lebanon are a great risk, due to the presence of pro-Syrian government parties such as Hezbollah. In addition, women from the opposition are less likely to have proper travelling documents, such as passports. Refugees in Turkey also usually face travelling constraints, as they are under the temporary protection ID, and if they leave Turkey to attend a meeting in Lebanon or Geneva or any other country they cannot return to Turkey without a visa. Visa restrictions are limiting women's access to programme activities, and therefore it would be beneficial to them to rotate the location of talks and events, or to have parallel meetings conducted in different countries and locations. It was also noted by stakeholders that the WAB does not currently represent disability rights groups, which is a gap to address in the future of the programme.

The evaluation found that, in some cases, safety and security management for participants could have been improved upon, such as by giving travel insurance, implementing a tracking system for participants, and ensuring that travel route risk assessments have been carried out prior to participant travel and that these are regularly updated.

In addition, it would be beneficial to uphold a clear code of conduct to support participation in programme activities, and ensure that individuals are not subject to inappropriate personal attacks, and criticisms can be raised in a safe manner.[15] Where violations of the code are apparent, a mechanism for addressing these should be established.

3.7 Future strategic direction

As part of the mid-term evaluation, stakeholders and programme participants were asked to comment on the ongoing strategic direction of the programme and whether or not they agreed with each of the following four options for development, as outlined by UN Women during the inception phase of the mid-term evaluation:

1. Continued support to the Track I process: support to the WAB, technical assistance to the OSE (through the gender adviser) and support to women's groups to influence the Track I process (beyond the WAB).
2. Support to long-term dialogues: (Track II/Track III) between women's groups inside and outside Syria with the objective of (a) building trust, (b) supporting the development of strategic alliances across women's rights groups inside and outside Syria, formed to influence the political process, and (c) supporting a cadre of groups/actors able to try to influence the political process (each with different points of influence and entry points).
3. Knowledge production and management: The production of balanced gender analysis on the changing circumstances inside Syria – with a focus on changing gender norms and cultures, gendered protection risks and rights.
4. Coordination: Convene partners working on women's rights in the context of the Syria response to support alliances and coordinated action.

1. Continuation of Track I process

All stakeholders interviewed said that UN Women should work to continue supporting the Track I process through support to the WAB, technical assistance to the OSE (through the gender adviser) and support to women's groups to influence the Track I process beyond the WAB. Ten out of 11 programme participants also supported this process continuing, with one unsure.

2. Support long-term dialogues of women's groups inside and outside Syria

All stakeholders and programme participants agree that UN Women should continue to support long-term dialogues (Track II/Track III) between women's groups inside and outside Syria with the objective of (a) building trust, (b) supporting the development of strategic alliances across women's rights groups inside and outside Syria, formed to influence the political process, and (c) supporting a cadre of groups/actors able to try to influence the political process (each with different points of influence and entry points). However, a number of caveats to this general support were offered including the need to ensure a Do No Harm and through a risk-management approach, creating safe spaces, not duplicating structures but building on existing ones, and ensuring Syrian 'ownership'.

3. Gender analysis and reporting

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[15] There is in fact a code of conduct for WAB but respondents do not seem to be aware of it.

UN Women is keen to explore the possible role it could play in producing and disseminating gender analysis on the unfolding situation inside Syria, building relationships with experts who could produce politically balanced insights on the situation for women in different contexts and regarding different issues inside Syria. Stakeholders and programme participants were asked to comment on this potential new direction for UN Women, and there was a clear division of opinion, with stakeholders seeing value, whereas programme participants either thought that it was not a suitable role for UN Women, or stating they needed more information to be reassured that it would be valuable.

4. Convening partners who work on women's rights in Syria

UN Women has convened key actors working on women's rights and the Syria crisis, and was interested to hear whether stakeholders and programme participants valued this work and wanted to see continued emphasis on it.

Five stakeholders felt that UN Women could convene partners working on women's rights in the context of the Syria response, such as civil society actors, donors, UN agencies and women's rights INGOs to support alliances and coordinate action. A further three stakeholders were unsure. Five programme participants also agreed on convening partners, with a further five saying they did not know and one disagreeing.

Stakeholders provided mixed feedback on convening partners, with some thinking that more could be done in this regard; however, it should be noted that those who supported continued work on this area were emphatic that it was greatly needed and valuable, and a good role for UN Women.

There were also stakeholder comments and suggestions on how this stream of work could be improved if it is taken forward, focusing on the process of designing these events with inclusivity, and an emphasis on bottom-up agenda setting.

4 Conclusions

Overall, the programme ToC has been valued and seen as relevant, if not entirely achievable given contextual constraints. The programme is well aligned with international conventions on WPS, women's rights and human rights as well as UNSCR 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, and there is a clear appetite for engagement in programme activities within Syria. There has been good political diversity of the WAB, and progress has been made in increasing access and skills to engage decision makers. The WAB and SWIPD have been an important first step in realising women's meaningful participation in the Syrian peace process and enshrining women's rights. This has primarily had symbolic value, but there has been recognition of progress in enabling women's seat at the table. There has been limited success, however, in enabling women's ability to shape and set the agenda and reach consensus on Syrian women's rights agenda.

Achieving a common agenda is one of the most challenging tasks for the programme, as women do not have the same cultural reference points, particularly around women's rights, and there are considerable ideological and political gaps and lines of disagreement.

The programme has been flexible in responding to the changing and complex context; however, staff changes, moving offices, outsourcing work and deprioritising certain activities have had a hindering impact. There have been high levels of disagreement and clashes between WAB members within activities, and at the same time there is a recognition that, if the programme does not produce more tangible outcomes, this could impact sustainability and lose buy-in from women.

WAB membership has good political diversity, but the demographic markers of age, educational attainment and disability status indicate that elite, privileged, older women are overrepresented, and women from the North East and the South of Syria, and those with disabilities, are excluded. The programme needs to include more grassroots perspectives. There is clear potential for developing connections and two-way communication flows between the WAB, SWIPD and local women's groups and leaders. The selection process for the WAB is perceived as being ad hoc and not transparent, which is further impacting the perception of the WAB, and jeopardising the programme objective of empowering women.

Feedback on the ongoing strategic direction of the programme highlighted that there is consensus to continue to support Syrian women's voice and participation in the Track I peace process through support to the WAB and support to women's groups to influence the peace process beyond the WAB. There is support for continued long-term dialogues on Track II and Track III, between women's groups inside and outside Syria, with the objective of building trust and supporting the development of strategic alliances to influence the political process.

5 Recommendations

Based on the in-depth review, the evaluation identified the following recommendations to UN Women to assist in shaping the next phase of the programme. Recommendations have been organised into overall themes and sub-set recommendations.

1. **Inclusion and representation**

   a. Increase the number of consultations and linkages with grassroots actors inside and outside Syria over the long term, including identifying opportunities for connection of grassroots activities, activism and opinions, with the formal peace process and other Track I and II initiatives. Utilise existing grassroots bodies, networks and platforms to avoid duplication of efforts, ensure relevance, and build relationships and trust with actors beyond the Programme.

   b. Use consultations with participants and stakeholders to test the relevance of the topics that are intended to be tabled for dialogue in the WAB and SWIPD, and ensure that the programme assumptions are tested in these consultations and remain in line with participants' and stakeholder priorities.

   c. Seek to add more young women, emerging grassroots leaders and underrepresented groups to the WAB and/or enable them to be connected to the activities of the WAB and SWIPD through developing methods for participation and consultation specifically for people who are unable to travel or officially participate in the WAB or SWIPD.

2. Transparency and accountability

   a. Continue to increase communication and transparency around the recruitment and selection process for WAB members. Do this by updating and sharing ToR for the WAB and the selection procedures with all relevant stakeholders on a regular basis.

   b. Aim for internal clarity on the trade-offs between diversity and credibility of members and reflect these trade-offs in the design process for Phase 2 and articulate it in project documentation and DMEL frameworks.

   c. Focus on developing ways to improve the relationship and communication between the SWIPD and WAB. Adopting some of the recommendations under the sections on 'Conflict sensitivity' and 'Do No Harm' could go towards this.

3. Conflict sensitivity

The following recommendations have been grouped under the heading of conflict sensitivity as they relate to the programme's interaction with the conflict context and will contribute to ensuring that the impact of the conflict on the programme and the impact of the programme on the conflict (including

interpersonal conflicts related to the overall conflict dynamics) are understood and that programme design and implementation is adjusted accordingly.

a. Update the programme ToC to ensure that it takes into account the limitations that the structural barriers and political complexity of the operating environment impose on the programme activities and objectives; also ensure that the ToC acknowledges the difficulty in achieving a common agenda while simultaneously prioritising diversity and the need for credibility in the WAB. Consult with the WAB and SWIPD on a reworking of the ToC.

b. In programme design and implementation, explore the causes of gender inequality and structural discrimination that women encounter in the Syrian context. This activity could also potentially build solidarity between WAB and SWIPD members and raise awareness of internalised mechanisms of restricting women's power and agency.

4. Do No Harm

The following recommendations relate to mitigating the risks of women's participation in and association with the programme, including safety and security concerns.

a. Develop a clear protocol on planning conferences, events and activities to be more constructive and safe, documenting how they are responding to participants' needs, including the safety and security concerns faced by many of the Syrian women who take part in programme initiatives. Ensuring that practical and security concerns around planning of events are addressed is crucial to ensure some level of accessibility and protection for all.

b. Update, share and enforce the existing code of conduct for ensuring safe space for WAB and SWIPD participants.[16]

5. Further training and capacity-building

a. Ensure training and capacity-building focus on preparing women at all levels to participate in decision-making arenas. Specific topics for training mentioned by participants included legal issues and frameworks, constitutional issues, planning and management, and decentralisation. Continue to prioritise and expand upon the training and capacity-building provided to WAB members on cross-cutting technical skills, such as mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution

b. Deliver further training and project activity opportunities that link the WAB with interests and messages from grassroots groups. Increase investment in training and capacity-building more women and building better networks and constituencies.

c. Ensure that over 50% of the participants of training workshops undergo a needs assessment prior to training and that curricula are adapted to the needs assessment and that examples and content are made directly relevant to the Syria context.

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[16] Participants in the evaluation did not mention a code of conduct, indicating that they may not be aware of it.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: Beyond Consultations Tool

5. REPRESENTATION

Category objective: A fully representative range of women and women's organisations are actively identified and engaged in the consultation process

Criteria	Red Score = 1	Amber Score = 2	Yellow Score = 3	Green Score = 4
To what extent are:				
5.1 A diverse range of women and women's organisations identified?				
5.2 A diverse range of women and women's organisations proactively involved and engaged – with particular care taken to include those who are often excluded?				
5.3 Transparent consultation processes developed and used for working with women and women's organisations?				
5.4 Women and women's organisations given fair and equal opportunity to contribute, including in relation to time and status?				
SUBTOTAL				

SCORING GUIDE

5.1 To what extent are **a diverse range of women and women's organisations identified?**

Green:
- A diverse range of women are identified to be included and represented in the consultation, including: women from a range of different: ages, ethnicities, races, religions, SOGI, literacy levels, relationship statuses, socio-economic backgrounds, locations of a country or region, rural and urban areas and women living with disabilities
- Contextual analysis used to identify those specifically and/or traditionally excluded in a range of different contexts
- Often-excluded groups are identified rather than only engaging with the 'usual suspects'
- Mapping and inclusion of both formally registered organisations and NGOs, as well as grassroots and unregistered groups
- Each consultation is approached with a fresh look at who needs to be involved

Yellow:
- Women and women's organisations are not viewed as a homogenous group, and a broad range of women are identified
- Plans made to engage them, including through numerous consortium groups

Amber:
- A national-level consortium or umbrella organisation that represent a range of women's voices engaged
- Efforts made to identify umbrella organisations with a broad membership and/or representation of women and/or women's organisations

Red:
- The same women or representatives from the same women's organisations are repeatedly consulted
- Limited diversity and demographic representation

Annex 2: Documents that were reviewed

Documents that were reviewed include:
- UN Women Strategic Notes of ROAS
- Syria Programme Cover Notes (2014–2019)
- Syria Project Documents (the Netherlands, Norway and Finland)
- Syria Programme Annual Reports
- Monitoring/reporting information, including donor reports
- Research produced by the Syria Programme
- Intergovernmental mandates
- Normative frameworks guide UN Women's work on WPS
- Terms of Reference for Women Advisory Board (WAB)

Annex 3: Terms of Reference (ToR)

Mid-term Evaluation of UN Women's Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process – Building a Homegrown Constituency for Peace Programme

Background

In the past 20 years, there has been increasing global awareness on the gender impact of conflict. The UN Security Council has adopted eight resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), namely Security Council Resolutions: 1325 (2000), 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2010), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015). Together, they demonstrate a strong, collective commitment to supporting the empowerment of women and gender equality in international peace and security efforts through, *inter alia*, more equitable representation of women and men in peace processes, enhancing the physical and legal protection of women and girls, and putting an end to impunity by strengthening the rule of law. Other important global frameworks informing WPS include the Beijing Platform for Action and the Secretary General's Seven Point Action Plan on gender-responsive peacebuilding. As the UN continues to convene talks in Geneva under the framework of UNSC 2254 (2015), it recognises the importance of a fully inclusive process to ensure that the voices and views of Syrian women are heard, consistent with the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012 and UNSC 2122 and UNSC 1325.

Since 2013, UN Women has supported Syrian women's civil society to take part in and influence decision-making and political processes through coalition building, advocacy and capacity development, in addition to its humanitarian efforts with Syrian refugees and IDPs. UN Women supports peace and reconciliation efforts at two levels. The first focuses on facilitating Syrian women's voice and participation in the Geneva peace process through the Women's Advisory Board (WAB) (Track I). As part of this track, UN Women also provides technical support and advisory services to the gender adviser and the political team of the United Nations Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSE). Secondly, UN Women focuses on supporting Syrian women to build a unified coalition around a common agenda for the advancement of the status of Syrian women inside and outside Syria (Tracks II and III).

Syria programme overview

Since the inception of the Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process – Building a Homegrown Constituency for Peace Programme in 2014, UN Women has supported Syrian women to come together around common positions to form strategic alliances for partnership and engagement. The programme, a collaboration between UN Women, the Governments of Finland, Norway and the Netherlands and the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSE), entered its fourth year in 2018..The first iteration of such a coalition was the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy (SWIPD), which was launched in 2014 as a coalition to formalise women's participation and role in the political process. Over the years, it successfully advocated for a number of important priorities of the women's movement, including by presenting options to the Special Envoy and serving as a leader in calling for the creation of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB).

In collaboration with UN Women and the OSE, the WAB was established in February 2016. The WAB is composed of civil society representatives from diverse backgrounds and opinions and acts as an advisory body to the Special Envoy during peace negotiations. In building Track II engagement, UN Women convened a conference in May 2016 bringing together more than 130 women political and civil society activists in Beirut (Beirut I) in an effort to build consensus to end the Syrian crisis. After

three days of exchanges, the conference participants issued a unified statement for peace, demanding more representation of women in the formal peace process and supporting the role of the WAB. UN Women has based its engagement on the networks and priorities emerging from Beirut I.

In 2018, UN Women continued to build the influence of the WAB as a body engaging with high-level political actors on gender-responsive peacemaking and political dialogues, while supporting broad-based dialogues across women inside and outside Syria. Major achievements included support to the WAB to demand its engagement in any future constitution-drafting process in Syria (resulting in a commitment from the Special Envoy in the Security Council to ensuring women's representation in the Constitutional Committee) and in seeking to engage with and influence the Astana process (through the production of expert papers and briefings to the Special Envoy). From a process standpoint, a major achievement in 2018 was the first rotation of the WAB, as part of greater efforts to build a more representative body of Syrian women, and a body that speaks both to the Special Envoy and to broader constituencies in its efforts to influence peacemaking. To institutionalise UN Women and the OSE's capacity-building support for WAB members, a partnership with UNITAR was developed to build a fellowship programme for all new and current WAB members, to be rolled out in 2019.

In building a common agenda for peace, UN Women completed the One Thousand Voices listening initiative, in which 992 women inside Syria were engaged on their priorities for peace. This culminated in the Beirut II conference, gathering more than 180 women from diverse backgrounds to discuss priorities for peace in Syria, and to develop strategic alliances across groups. Moreover, exchanges between WAB members and members of 'WAB-like' bodies for Yemen and Libya were facilitated, and UN Women supported Syrian women to engage in high-profile international events on peace and security, in an effort to ensure that a resolution to the Syria crisis is rooted in accountability for gender equality, and women and girls.

The situation in Syria remains volatile, and women and girls continue to suffer from a grave humanitarian situation and violations of their basic human rights. Direct talks did not take place in Geneva in 2018, although the Astana/Sochi track has led to preparations for the establishment of a Constitutional Committee.

In 2019, the WAB will continue to provide its support to the OSE, while also reaching out to key political actors beyond the OSE (e.g. Astana/Sochi actors) to call for just peace and the meaningful representation of women in Track I delegations. In seeking to build dialogue and demands for gender-responsive peacemaking, Track II work will continue inside and outside Syria with women's rights actors. This will have an increased focus on the participation of young Syrians in line with UNSC 2250 on youth, peace and security.

The programme consists of two outcomes and five outputs:

Outcome 1: Syrian women's civil society participates and advocates effectively in peace processes from gender and women's rights perspectives:

Outputs:
1.1 Capacity of the WAB is strengthened to serve as a peace asset for the UN Special Envoy for Syria; and
1.2 Syrian women's civil society representatives have increased access to key decision makers and processes in peace and reconciliation processes, including the UN-led mediation process, in order to advocate for the inclusion of their demands.

Outcome 2: A broad-based, diversely representative Syrian constituency for peace is mobilised to foster a strong infrastructure of support for the WAB, SWIPD and the peace efforts:

Outputs:
2.1 Broad-based Syrian women's civil society coalition around a common women's agenda is strengthened and supported;
2.2 Strengthened capacities of Syrian women leaders to influence and lead key processes to safeguard and advance women's rights agenda; and
2.3 The SWIPD has the expertise and support structure to expand and mobilise for peace and foster support to the WAB and the peace process.

Key partners in the Syria programme include: (i) the OSE; (ii) the WAB; (iii) the SWIPD; (iv) Syrian women's civil society organisations (CSOs); and (v) other actors working on the Syria Programme (UN agencies, donors).

Purpose, scope and objectives

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation of the programme is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme, as well as the integration of a human rights-based approach and gender equality principles. The findings will be used for further development and design of the programme in order to guide future interventions and will inform UN Women's approach to women's peace and security at regional and national levels as it expands work in this area. The primary intended users of the mid-term evaluation are UN Women's Women, Peace and Security programme staff at the Regional Office and donor agencies, namely the Governments of Netherlands, Norway and Finland.

The mid-term evaluation will examine the extent to which the programme has contributed to the creation of an enabling environment for implementation of WPS commitments with respect to policy, political will and additional resources, and assess some of the key results to date. Given that the programme has entered its fifth year, the temporal scope will focus on the programme since its launch in December 2014 to December 2018. The geographical scope of the mid-term evaluation will be broad, reflecting the geographical spread of the Syrian diaspora. Given the spread of beneficiaries, data collection will be undertaken remotely, leveraging technology. Skype calls with former and current UN Women staff members who have been involved with the programme will be required. One field visit to a country in the region to meet with stakeholders may also be required. The mid-term evaluation will include an assessment of all components of the programme.

The mid-term evaluation has the following objectives:

1) Assess the extent to which the programme is relevant with respect to right-holders' (beneficiaries) needs and country priorities;

2) Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of UN Women's interventions and progress towards achieving programme outcomes and outputs;

3) Assess the extent to which the programme has promoted sustainability of programme results through increased capacities of the SWIPD and WAB and institutional mechanisms in Syria;

4) Analyse how the human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the programme approach and implementation; and

5) Identify and validate innovations, as well as lessons learned and good practice examples, under the programme.

Key criteria and questions

The mid-term evaluation should be guided but not limited to the scope of the evaluation questions listed below:

Relevance: To what extent has the programme addressed the needs and challenges identified in the design phase?

Specific questions could include:
1) Does the programme's ToC as articulated adequately reflect the pathways of change?
2) Are the goals, outcomes and outputs clearly articulated and the relationships clear and coherent?
3) To what extent is the intervention aligned with international conventions (e.g. UNSC 1325, UNSC 2250, CEDAW) and related documents (SOCHI Outcome Document, Geneva Peace Talks)?
4) To what extent is the intervention informed by needs and interests of Syrian women and the needs of the OSE?

Effectiveness: To what extent has the programme contributed to progress towards intended outcomes and benefited targeted populations – whether individuals, communities or institutions?

Specific questions could include:
1) What has been the progress made towards implementation of the outputs?
2) To what extent are the different sub-groups of intended beneficiaries participating in and benefiting from the project? To what extent were member states able to adopt and/or operationalise accountability frameworks? Are there good practices and innovative approaches that could be replicated or scaled up?
3) To what extent have women affected by conflict been able to use programme outputs to influence authority, contribute to the adoption of accountability frameworks, and increase women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes related to the prevention, management and resolution of conflict?
4) What are the changes (positive and negative) to which UN Women's work has contributed under the programme in terms of women's engagement in Syria's peacemaking process?
5) How successful has the programme been in strengthening accountability frameworks and mechanisms?
6) To what extent have the trainings, tools, research and data produced under the programme informed effective advocacy efforts?
7) What are enabling and limiting factors that have contributed to the achievement of results and what actions need to be taken to overcome any barriers that limit progress?
8) To what extent do the intended and unintended benefits meet the needs of disadvantaged women?

Efficiency: To what extent was the programme efficiently implemented and did it deliver quality outputs as planned?

Specific questions could include:

1) Have the outputs been delivered in a timely manner?
2) Have UN Women's organisational structure, managerial support and coordination mechanisms effectively supported the delivery of the programme?

3) To what extent are the inputs and outputs equally distributed between different groups of women, and have the potentials of disadvantaged women (poor, racial, ethnic, sexual and disabled groups) been fully utilised to realise the outcomes?

4) How does the programme utilise existing local capacities of right-bearers and duty holders?

Sustainability: To what extent has UN Women supported Syrian women and international mediators to act on and own WPS commitments?

Specific questions could include:

1) To what extent has the programme supported Syrian women to advocate for their priorities in Syria's peace processes?

2) To what extent has the programme strengthened capacities of Syrian women leaders to influence and engage in Syria's peace process?

3) To what extent has the programme ensured institutional capacity key actors (e.g. the UN mediator) and civil society on WPS commitments?

Gender equality and human rights

Specific questions could include:

1) To what extent has the programme addressed the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination, and women's engagement modality in peace processes?

2) How inclusive has the programme been in terms of participation of different sub-groups of women across Track I traditional diplomatic efforts, Track II peacebuilding efforts with involvement of civil society groups and Track III?

Annex 4: WAB case study

Background

Since the start of the conflict in Syria nine years ago, CSOs have spread widely to respond to the escalating needs of the conflict-affected Syrians. Before the conflict, civil activism was weak and constrained, as it was perceived as anti-government. Although Syrian women's presence has always been strong within civil activism, this has not been the case for organised political work. UNSC 1325 on Women, Peace and Security created the environment for women's participation, as it reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction, and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. In January 2014, UN Women held a meeting in Amman, Jordan to explore how Syrian women's rights could be advocated, and to activate women's role in the political process. The outcome of the meeting was the formation of the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy (SWIPD), which had 40 female members of different socio-political, ethnic, demographic and religious backgrounds whose vision was shaped to foster the Geneva Communiqué.

"For the first time, I am sitting at the same table with women of completely different political views whom I never thought I could ever sit with and discuss, my journey in WAB taught me how to listen, respect and accept the other."

In February 2016, the United Nations Special Envoy (SE) to Syria, Staffan de Mistura convened an unprecedented women's board, called the Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB). The WAB consisted of 12 independent women representatives from various backgrounds, political affiliations and geographical areas of Syria. The role of the WAB as requested by the SE is to act as an advisory body to him during and between peace negotiations. In addition, the WAB were expected to relay the concerns and demands of Syrian women to the negotiators in Geneva, and to consult directly with the SE as the talks evolve. This was seen as a ground-breaking step towards formally engaging women in peace talks: *"WAB is a necessity since women's rights usually fall during and after conflicts,"* said a WAB participant.

WAB formation

In 2016, the WAB was formally established and included 12 women, half of which were SWIPD members. The selection of participants was based on consensus reached by the SWIPD coordination committee. The remaining six members were nominated in coordination between the SE and UN Women. Since its establishment, the WAB has been through two phases. The first WAB comprised of 12 Syrian women, which, to some extent, represented diverse Syrian women. This phase included one Kurdish representative and one representative of the communities who uphold conservative Islamic values in Syria. There were concerns that the WAB was not representative enough, so in 2018 Syrian women were invited to nominate themselves to participate in the WAB. Around 180 women applied and seven were accepted and became WAB members. In this extension, the representation of Syrian women was improved.

"It is impossible for us (WAB) to represent all Syrian women; however, we are trying to. I believe that the extension of WAB is addressing this issue and there's always a room for improvement."

Following these two phases, the WAB continues to act as a key actor to ensure Syrian women's participation in the peace process, and in advancing a gender equality and the women's empowerment agenda within the mediation efforts for Syria. To facilitate the WAB's role, UN Women

is acting as the secretariat, and is providing the technical support to the WAB's activities and process. It supports coalition-building efforts among women's groups and provides capacity support and consensus building among the WAB members.

Capacity-building

Since the WAB's role is to advise the SE, WAB members have received capacity-building support on mediation, conflict resolution and other various topics that the SE was focusing on and were seen to be most relevant to the peace talks.

"Three female experts in constitution (sic) has brought their impressive experiences from Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia which was of a great value as it has served us an important source of information in this area for many of us."

Although the capacity-building component was considered relevant and effective, some members highlighted that some of the trainings were not well informed of the different needs, interests and experiences of different WAB members. Moreover, several members stated that there could be a gap in knowledge and experiences between WAB members from Phase 1 and 2 of the programme, which needs to be considered in future training.

WAB achievements

The WAB is an advisory board, not a decision-making entity in its own right. However, almost all members of the WAB, SWIPD and the programme stakeholders asserted in the 2019 mid-term evaluation of the programme that bringing such diverse women to participate in the political process is a great achievement in itself. The inclusion of women from different backgrounds who have influence and credibility at a local level is reinforcing the efforts towards reaching a Syrian-led political process. As a WAB member explains: *"Syrian women in my community have now – more than ever – faith in the UN-led peace efforts as a result of having one of their own as a WAB member who connects them and ensures that their rights and needs are communicated."* Another member noted that "*WAB is the only international platform where Muslim conservatives are invited and heard".*

WAB members were proud that most of their position papers and opinions were used by the SE. In addition, the WAB has created channels for its members to have influence or access to the decision makers. The 30% quota demanded by the SE was heavily influenced by the WAB. As the Constitution Committee's members are being selected, WAB members envisage that their inclusion in such committees would be one of the greatest achievements, as this would ensure that women's rights are on the table.

Challenges

WAB members are working on sensitive cases and issues, and consequently their papers and meeting outcomes are not widely shared further than UN Women and the SE. Some members see this as a necessity and as something that protects them; however, others argued that this has limited the WAB's credibility and legitimacy at different levels, specifically the local and national levels. Moreover, the limited outreach of the WAB to the grassroots level has been identified as challenging for them in their pursuit to include and represent Syrian women and to improve their outcomes, reach more consensuses and involve women inside Syria. The majority of the WAB are based outside Syria. *"In order to ensure that our papers are well informed of Syrian women's needs and interests, dialogues or parallel bodies need to be supported to unload the heavy burden on WAB's shoulder as we can't under the current capacity represent all Syrian women's views. This will also better inform the SE efforts."*

The SE requested that WAB members work on cases of detainees. Working on such sensitive and vital papers is of importance for all the conflicted parties in Syria, and WAB members considered this a valuable contribution. However, due to the sensitive nature of this work, they were not granted access to all the relevant files to be reviewed, and all were kept confidentially by the SE. *"We [raise] the efforts towards increasing participation of women in the peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts; however, our work is hampered as we feel this is about increasing the number of women rather than achieving their meaningful participation."*

WAB members are facing challenges in reaching their potential due to the limited, advisory role that they are given. This was highlighted by all the WAB members who participated in the 2019 mid-term evaluation. They felt their efforts and papers are rejected by the High Negotiation Committee. They sometimes feel sceptical of their role and suggest that their presence during meetings with ambassadors of western countries is to demonstrate that women of diverse backgrounds are participating.

Staffan de Mistura stated: *"Women are important to us, because they have many ideas about the future of Syria. We will meet with them separately."*

WAB members are concerned that their current advisory role will disempower them in the long term if it does not evolve in the future to a more decision-making body.

Conclusion

WAB and SWIPD members acknowledge the historic achievement of establishing the WAB, and stakeholders to UN Women's programme are hopeful that the work on the WAB can continue and evolve to ensure women's meaningful participation in Syria's peacebuilding process, and to provide a model for peace processes around the world.

Annex 5: Evaluation matrix

The following table provide an overview of the evaluation process and what will be evaluated and how.

Evaluation criteria	Key questions	Sub-question(s)	Collection method(s)	Data source	Assumptions
Relevance	To what extent has the programme addressed the needs and challenges identified in the design phase?	- **Has the ToC been verified as relevant and accurate during the course of the programme?** - How might the ToC evolve in response to programme learning on how Syrian women can effectively engage in the Syrian political process? - Are the programme goals, outcomes and outputs clearly articulated and the relationships clear and coherent? - To what extent is the intervention aligned with international conventions? - To what extent is the intervention informed by needs and interests of Syrian women?	- Literature review - Participant KII - Stakeholder KII - Survey - Toolkit	- Programme documents - Programme staff - Programme participants - All key stakeholders	Information available. Baseline data has been collected. All programme participants and stakeholders are aware of the ToC. All programme participants and stakeholders are aware of the relevant conventions. The needs and interests of all Syrian women can be articulated and spoken for by research participants.

Effectiveness	To what extent has the programme contributed to progress towards intended outcomes and benefited targeted populations – whether individuals, communities or institutions?	- **What has been the progress made towards implementation of the outputs?** - To what extent are the different sub-groups of intended beneficiaries participating in and benefiting from the project? - To what extent were member states able to adopt and/or operationalise accountability frameworks? How successful has the programme been in strengthening accountability frameworks and mechanisms? Are there good practices and innovative approaches that could be replicated or scaled up? - To what extent have the trainings, tools, research and data produced under the programme informed effective advocacy efforts? - What are the changes (positive and negative) to which UN Women's work has contributed under the programme in terms of women's engagement in Syria's peacemaking process? - What are enabling and limiting factors that have contributed to the achievement of results and what actions need to be taken to overcome any barriers that limit progress?	- Literature review - Participant KII - Stakeholder KII - Survey - Toolkit	- Programme documents - Programme staff - Programme participants - All key stakeholders	Research participants report on progress towards intended outcomes. The needs and interests of all Syrian women can be articulated and spoken for by research participants. Stakeholders are aware of the accountability frameworks and are able to comment on them. Causal benefits between the programme and advocacy efforts have been recorded. Research participants comfortable to talk about the limiting factors of the programme.

| **Efficiency** | To what extent was the programme efficiently implemented and did it deliver quality outputs as planned? | - **Have the outputs been delivered in a timely manner?**
- Have UN Women's organisational structure, managerial support and coordination mechanisms effectively supported the delivery of the programme?
- To what extent are the inputs and outputs equally distributed between different groups of women, and have the potentials of disadvantaged women been fully utilised to realise the outcomes?
- How does the programme utilise existing local capacities of right-bearers and duty holders?
- How might the socio-political environment restrict the effective representation and participation of the diverse civic groups, despite best efforts to promote it?
- To what extent can the internal and external barriers be overcome to enable a more comprehensive and effective representation of civil society in the peace talks? | - Literature review
- Participant KII
- Stakeholder KII
- Toolkit | - Programme documents
- Programme participants
- All key stakeholders | Information is available. Research participants comfortable to share opinions on the coordinating mechanisms. The needs and interests of all Syrian women can be articulated and spoken for by research participants. Capacities and accessibility of local right-bearers and duty holders are known. Research participants comfortable to share opinions on the political climate. Research participants able to offer solutions. |

Sustainability	To what extent has UN Women supported Syrian women and international mediators to act on and own WPS commitments?	- **To what extent has the programme supported Syrian women to advocate for their priorities in Syria's peace processes?** - To what extent has the programme strengthened capacities of Syrian women leaders to influence and engage in Syria's peace process? - To what extent has the programme ensured institutional capacity of key actors (e.g. the UN mediator) and civil society on WPS commitments?	- Literature review - Survey - Participant KII - Stakeholder KII	- Programme documents - Programme staff - Programme participants - All key stakeholders	Availability of documents. Good survey response rate. Research participants are able to comment on change of capacity of women leaders. Research participants are able to comment on change of capacity in institutions.
Strategic direction	Consider the strategic development of the programme and assess the merit of the four potential streams outlined in the programme theory.	- How might we do this, given the challenges?	- Participant KII - Stakeholder KII	- Programme participants - All key stakeholders	Research participants are able to comment on UN Women's role, the four potential streams and the ongoing strategic development of the programme.
Gender equality and human rights	To what extent has the programme addressed the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination, and women's engagement modality in peace processes?	- **How inclusive has the programme been in terms of participation of different sub-groups of women across Track I, Track II and Track III?** - To what extent has the programme been able to engage and include hitherto underrepresented or marginalised women and men across Track I, Track II and Track III?	- Participant KII - Stakeholder KII - Survey - Literature review - Toolkit	- All key stakeholders - Programme documents - Programme participants	Causal benefits between the programme and addressing underlying causes of gender inequality are understood. Availability of demographic data in programme documents and completed toolkits.

| **Conflict sensitivity** | To what extent and how has conflict and conflict analysis informed design and ongoing implementation of the project? | - **How has this been updated based on evolving conflict context?**
- To what extent and how have principles of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity been integrated into design, implementation and monitoring of the programme?
- How has planning integrated an understanding of conflict risks and integrated strategies to mitigate these? | - Literature review
- Participant KII
- Stakeholder KII | - Programme documents
- Programme staff
- Programme participants
- All key stakeholders | Availability of documents. Understanding of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity. |

Information sheet and consent form
Mid-Term Evaluation of Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process

UN Women has commissioned International Alert and independent consultants Paperboat and Jouri to undertake a mid-term evaluation of the Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process Programme. The evaluation will analyse the impacts and benefits of the programme and identify the most effective ways to develop and improve the programme. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme, as well as the integration of a human rights-based approach and gender equality principles. UN Women is really interested in your thoughts about how it can improve on the programme and inform the strategic approach going forward.

The programme is guided by the following theory of change, overarching outcomes and outputs.

Programme theory of change (ToC):
*If (1) a cadre of Syria women leaders is built as a block of influence; and Syrian women are organised around a common agenda; **then** (2) Syrian women's civil society can meaningfully participate in and influence peace, reconciliation and future rebuilding processes that integrates Syrian women's perspectives, rights and needs; **because** (3) evidence shows that women are key peace assets and agents of change whose meaningful participation improves the peace process and its sustainability.*

Outcome	Outputs
Outcome 1: Syrian women's civil society participates and advocates effectively in peace processes from gender and women's rights perspectives:	1.1 Capacity of the Women's Advisory Board (WAB) is strengthened to serve as a peace asset for the UN Special Envoy for Syria
	1.2 Syrian women's civil society representatives have increased access to key decision makers and processes in peace and reconciliation processes, including the UN-led mediation process, in order to advocate for the inclusion of their demands
Outcome 2: A broad-based, diversely representative Syrian constituency for peace is mobilised to foster a strong infrastructure of support for the WAB, SWIPD and the peace efforts:	2.1 Broad-based Syrian women's civil society coalition around a common women's agenda is strengthened and supported
	2.2 Strengthened capacities of Syrian women leaders to influence and lead key processes to safeguard and advance women's rights agenda
	2.3 The SWIPD has the expertise and support structure to expand and mobilise for peace and foster support to the WAB and the peace process

UN Women would like to hear your views about the possible future strategic direction of the programme. To assist in thinking around this, it has identified the following possible future objectives:
- To support women's rights actors to influence Syria's political transition
- To support women's representation in Syria's transition
- To ensure gender equality language in key documents and processes structuring Syria's transition
- To promote human rights, accountability and justice in Syria's political process
- To support trust building across diverse women's groups inside and outside Syria.

All of your comments will be used anonymously, brought together to create an overall picture of people's views. You will not be expected to share information you do not feel comfortable with, and all information shared will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. The results of the evaluation will be compiled into a report presented to UN Women.

Please note that, if you share information that requires safeguarding action, for example if you disclose details of a criminal or exploitative activity that has taken place, evaluators will need to take all reasonable steps to report this misconduct. This will be done in consultation with the person making the disclosure.

Thank you for taking time to read this information. We really value your assistance with the evaluation. If you have any questions or would like to receive more information about the evaluation, please contact the Lead Evaluator, Frances Brodrick at frances@paperboat.org.uk.

Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement Evaluation Consent Form

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above evaluation.

☐

(please tick)

I am happy to participate in the study and share my views about the project

☐

(please tick)

Signed …..………………………………………………….

Name …..…………………………………………………….

Organisation (if applicable) …..……………………………….

Date …..……………………………………………………….

For evaluation team only:

Type of consent gained: …..………………………………………………………….

Online survey

Online Survey questions

Gender:	Age:
Level of engagement (Track I, II, II, SWIPD, WAB)	
Geographical location	

About yourself (only to be completed if respondent indicates they were part of WAB or SWIPD in the question above)

- Please tell us about your involvement with the programme – were you part of WAB/SWIPD? Please also tell us the dates of your involvement.
- If you were part of WAB or SWIPD, how were you selected? Do you know why? Are you aware of selection criteria?
- Please explain the role you have played and how you have been involved in WAB/ SWIPD?

Relevance

1. The UN programme has been based on the assumption that a strong civil society of women working towards a common purpose will result in the meaningful participation of women in the Syrian peace process and result in better outcomes. How relevant do you think this approach has been?

Highly relevant	Relevant	Somewhat relevant	Not relevant	Do not know
Please explain your answer				

2. Have you done any training as part of the UN Women programme?

Yes	No
If yes, please provide details	

3. Were you consulted on the type of training offered to you?

Yes	No
If yes, please provide details	

4. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: The training topics were relevant and met your needs.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
Please add comments to explain your answer (optional?)				

5. In your opinion, was the programme informed by needs and interests of Syrian women of all backgrounds affected by conflict? If so, how? If not, why?

Yes	No	Don't know
Please explain your answer		

6. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: Women of different backgrounds affected by conflict have been able to use programme outputs to influence authority, contribute to the adoption of accountability frameworks, and increase women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes related to the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please explain your answer				

7. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: The selected WAB/SWIPD members are credible actors and have influence at the local and/or national levels.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please explain your answer				

Effectiveness

8. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: Your involvement in the programme activities and trainings increased your capacity and informed your advocacy efforts to influence peace and reconciliation processes in Syria.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please explain your answer				

9. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: As a result of your participation in the programme, you are now connected to new channels of communication that can assist your contribution to the peacemaking efforts.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please add comments to explain your answer				

10. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: Your participation has increased your involvement in coalition building across women's organising.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please add comments to explain your answer				

11. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: The programme has been delivered in a way that felt safe for you and other participants.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please add comments to explain your answer				

12. What have been the significant achievements of the programme?

Please tick any that apply:

-   Syrian women participate and advocate effectively in peace processes from a gender and women's rights perspective
-   The capacity of the WAB is strengthened in serving as peace assets in the Syrian peace process
-   Syrian women's civil society representatives have increased access to key decision makers and processes, including the UN-led mediation process, in order to advocate for their direct representation in the peace process
-   Strategic alliances and coalitions across political and other divides are built to call for a just approach to the future of Syria
-   Syrian women's coalitions and movements are supported to develop strategic alliances around common issues, in particular around any constitution-drafting process, to facilitate dialogue and trust building as part of a longer-term approach to reconciliation
-   Any other achievements, please specify

13. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no change in ability to influence and 5 = significant change in ability to influence), how much has the programme increased your capacity to influence peace processes?

14. Can you provide an example on how your participation in the programme activities enabled you to contribute to Track I/II/III processes?

15. In your assessment, what were the factors that facilitated or hindered the effective participation and advocacy efforts of the Syrian women in peace and reconciliation processes from a gender and women's rights perspective?

16. What were the factors that helped or hampered establishing of strategic alliances and coalitions across political and other divides for a just approach to the future of Syria?

Efficiency

17. How might the socio-political environment restrict the effective representation and participation of the diverse civic groups, despite best efforts to promote it?

18. To what extent can the internal and external barriers be overcome to enable a more comprehensive and effective representation of civil society in the peace talks?

Sustainability

19. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: The programme strengthened capacities of Syrian women leaders to influence and engage in Syria's peace process.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please add comments to explain your answer				

20. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: The programme supported Syrian women to advocate for their priorities in Syria's peace processes.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please add comments to explain your answer				

Gender equality and human rights

21. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: The programme addressed the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination, and the way women have been able to engage in peace processes?

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know

Please add comments to explain your answer

22. Please indicate how much you agree with this statement: The programme has been able to engage and include underrepresented or marginalised women of different ages, backgrounds and experiences of conflict across Track I traditional diplomatic efforts, Track II peacebuilding efforts with involvement of civil society groups and Track III.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Do not know
Please add comments to explain your answer				

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.
UN Women will communicate the results and findings in the next six months.

Key Informant Interviews with women participating in the programme

About yourself

Please tell us about yourself and your involvement with the programme. How long have you been engaged in WAB/SWIPD? How were you selected? Why?

Prompt: Job Title, Organisation. At what level were you involved (Track I, II, II, SWIPD, WAB)?

1. The UN programme has been based on the assumption that a strong civil society of women working towards a common purpose will result in the meaningful participation of women in the Syrian peace process and result in better outcomes. How relevant do you think this approach has been?

   Prompt: Do you think this is a realistic approach? What other factors need to be considered? How could the project logic be strengthened?

2. What alternative direction do you think UN Women could take to strengthen women's participation in Syrian politics, given UN Women's remit and purpose?

3. Do you think UN Women should continue to support the Track I process through support to the WAB? Yes/No. Why?

4. Do you think UN Women should continue to support long-term dialogues between women's groups inside and outside Syria? Yes/No. Why?

5. Do you think UN Women has a role in knowledge production and management, providing neutral gender analysis on the changing circumstances inside Syria, with a focus on gendered protection risks and rights? Yes/No. Why?

6. Do you think UN Women should convene partners working on women's rights in the context of the Syrian response to support alliances and coordinated action? Yes/No. Why?

Representation

7. Have you been consulted on your needs and interests in the planning of the programme? What about other Board members? Do you feel the intervention is well informed by needs and interests of Syrian women across a range of backgrounds affected by conflict?

8. How effectively has the programme engaged with women from different backgrounds? Are there any groups that are not involved? Probe: How representative is the WAB group itself? Are there any ethnic socio-economic groups that aren't engaged? Were women of all ages easily reached? And women with disabilities? Do these women have constraints/concerns that were not addressed or were not reached to during the programme? If so, why not and how could they better engage with wider stakeholders?

9. How comprehensively representative of civil society can the peace process be? What are the challenges and limitations and how could a more diverse group of women be reached?

Capacity-building

10. Have you done any training as part of the UN Women programme? If yes, were you consulted on the type of training you need? Has the training met your needs? If yes, how (provide an example)? If not, why? What are the areas for improvement? If so, has your involvement in the programme trainings increased your capacity and informed your advocacy efforts to influence peace and reconciliation processes in Syria?

    Prompt: tools, research and data produced

11. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no change in ability to influence and 5 = significant change in ability to influence), how much has the programme increased your capacity to influence peace processes? Please explain your answer (provide an example).

Coalition building for Syrian Women's Peace Movement

12. Has involvement in the programme increased your networking with other organisations and women's groups? As a result of your participation in the programme's activities, were you connected to new communication channels that are relevant to the WAB's mandate? How has your involvement in coalition building increased? If so, how?

    Prompt: Which bodies/groups? Have you been able to develop collective objectives/group actions?

    On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no change and 5 = significant change), how much has the programme increased your involvement in coalition building?

13. How has the capacity of the WAB been strengthened to serve as a peace asset to the UN Special Envoy for Syria? Please provide an example.

    Prompt: What have been the biggest achievements, key challenges?

14. To what extent has the Syrian Women's Charter served as a common agenda and a framework for collaboration for diverse Syrian women?

    Prompt: Does it reflects the minimum shared priorities of diverse women's groups and constituencies (including ideological, ethnic, religious, geographical and vulnerability status, such as disability)?

Advocacy

15. Has your involvement in the programme increased your access to and influence over key decision makers in peace and reconciliation processes? If yes, please provide an example [how? Can you tell me about these processes? How were you involved? Were you able to advocate for the inclusion of your demands/priorities? Were your priorities met? What about others'] If not, why? What about other members in the WAB?

    Prompts: Which bodies/groups, at what levels (Track I, II, III, UN-led mediation process), contribute to technical proposals?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no access or influence and 5 = significant access or influence), how has your access and influence over key decision makers increased?

Impact

16. Have you seen any evidence of the programme increasing institutional capacity of key actors (e.g. the UN mediator) and civil society on WPS commitments? Please explain your answer.

17. To what extent has the programme addressed the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination? Can you provide an example? Was this approach effective? Why?

18. Has the programme been delivered in a way that felt safe for you? Have you or other participants faced any security challenges? Could anything else have been done to strengthen/mitigate this? Do you think that any of the intended outcomes weren't achieved due to safety and security issues?

    Prompt: Have any specific risk assessments or strategies been implemented?

19. Overall, what impact (positive and negative, direct or indirect) do you feel the programme has had in terms of women's engagement in Syria's peace-making process? How effective do you think the work has been in building women's ability to participate?

    Prompts: What have been the significant achievements? What have been the key challenges/limitations to progress?

20. What other productive role could UN Women play in increasing women's engagement in Syria's peacemaking process?

    Prompt: What are the gaps? What else would you like to see UN Women doing?

Stakeholder Key Informant Interview Schedule

About yourself

Please tell us about your job title, role and contact with the programme?

Prompt: Job Title, Organisation

Theory of Change

1. The UN programme has been based on the assumption that a strong civil society of women working towards a common purpose will result in the meaningful participation of women in the Syrian peace process and result in better outcomes. How relevant do you think this approach has been?

    Prompt: Do you think this is a realistic approach? What other factors need to be considered? How could the project logic be strengthened?

2. To what extent do you think the programme activities are aligned with international conventions (e.g. UNSC 1325, UNSC 2250, CEDAW) and related documents (SOCHI Outcome Document, Geneva Peace Talks)? How could they be better aligned?

   Prompt: How successful has the programme been in strengthening accountability frameworks and mechanisms?

3. Do you think UN Women's organisational structure, managerial support and coordination mechanisms effectively supported the delivery of the programme? How could the programme have been delivered better?

4. What alternative direction do you think UN Women could take to strengthen women's participation in Syrian politics, given UN Women's remit and purpose?

5. Do you think UN Women should continue to support the Track I process through support to the WAB? Yes/No. Why?

6. Do you think UN Women should continue to support long-term dialogues between women's groups inside and outside Syria? Yes/No. Why?

7. Do you think UN Women has a role in knowledge production and management, providing neutral gender analysis on the changing circumstances inside Syria, with a focus on gendered protection risks and rights? Yes/No. Why?

8. Do you think UN Women should convene partners working on women's rights in the context of the Syrian response to support alliances and coordinated action? Yes/No. Why?

9. What synergies does this programme have with your work? How could these synergies be strengthened?

Representation

10. Have the programme activities been informed by needs and interests of Syrian women of all backgrounds affected by conflict, and the needs of the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria? What else could be done on this?

11. To what extent are the different sub-groups of intended beneficiaries participating in and benefiting from the project? How effectively has the programme utilised existing local capacities of right-bearers and duty holders?

12. How comprehensively representative of civil society can the peace process be?

    Prompt: What are the socio-political factors that restrict effect representation? How might a more diverse range of women benefit? How might a more diverse range of women participate?

13. To what extent do you think the intended and unintended benefits meet the needs of disadvantaged women?

Capacity-building

14. Has the programme increased the perceived influence of Syrian women on the Peace Talks? How could it have further increased the perceived influence and the actual influence?

    Prompt: Who perceives Syrian women as having more influence? Member states? The OSE? Syrian women's civil society? Syrian men's civil society?

15. Has the programme increased the capacity of key actors, such as the UN mediator, and civil society on Women, Peace and Security commitments? Yes/No. How?

16. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no change in ability to influence and 5 = significant change in ability to influence), how much has the programme strengthened capacities of Syrian women leaders to influence and engage in Syria's peace process?

Advocacy

17. If you have been involved in training and capacity-building, do you think these activities and their products have informed effective advocacy efforts? How? How could these efforts have been more effective?

18. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no access or influence and 5 = significant access or influence), how have programme activities provided women with access to and influence over key decision makers?

    Prompt: How much do you think Syrian women were able to advocate for their particular priorities in Syria's peace process?

Impact

19. Have you seen any evidence of the programme increasing institutional capacity of key actors (e.g. the UN mediator) and civil society on WPS commitments? Please explain you answer.

20. To what extent has the programme addressed the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination?

21. Has the programme been delivered in a way that felt safe, that followed a 'Do No Harm' approach? Could anything else have been done to strengthen this?

    Prompt: Have any specific risk assessments or strategies been implemented?

22. Overall, what impact (positive and negative) do you feel the programme has had in terms of women's engagement in Syria's peacemaking process? How effective do you think the work has been in building women's ability to participate?

    Prompt: What have been the significant achievements? What have been the key challenges/limitations to progress?

23. What other productive role could UN Women play in increasing women's engagement in Syria's peacemaking process?

    Prompt: What are the gaps? What else would you like to see UN Women doing