



COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

# CAMBODIA

Synthesis Report



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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This was the first Country Portfolio Evaluation of the Cambodia Country Office. The evaluation was led by Sabrina Evangelista, the regional evaluation specialist for Asia and the Pacific Region. The evaluation team comprised three team members: Lilia Ormonbekova, evaluation consultant; Truong Thi Hong Nhu, junior evaluation consultant; and Dr Sovith Sin, national consultant.

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# ACRONYMS

<b>AWP</b>	Annual Work Plan
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CO</b>	Country Office
<b>CPE</b>	Country Portfolio Evaluation
<b>CNCW</b>	Cambodia National Council for Women
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DRF</b>	Development Result Framework
<b>EVAW/G</b>	Ending Violence Against Women/ and Girls
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEEW</b>	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IB</b>	Institutional Budget
<b>IEAS</b>	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
<b>IES</b>	Independent Evaluation Service
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>LGBTIQ</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NAPVAW</b>	National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OECD/DAC</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee
<b>OEEF</b>	Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

<b>RBM</b>	Results-Based Management
<b>RES</b>	Regional Evaluation Specialist
<b>RO</b>	Regional Office
<b>ROAP</b>	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SN</b>	Strategic Note
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>VAW</b>	Violence Against Women
<b>WEE</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment
<b>XB</b>	Extra-Budgetary
<b>YLA</b>	Youth Leadership Academy



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

# CAMBODIA



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## Background

UN Women established a Country Office (CO) in Cambodia with Delegation of Authority in 2013 after a long history in the country as UNIFEM (since 2004). The CO's total budget over the CPE period 2016–2019 (including core and non-core funds) was US\$ 5.9 million.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the UN Women Change Management team identified the Cambodia CO as an office for transition due to various factors.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has continued to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in its overall development strategies. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's population experienced rapid economic growth and social change amid shrinking political space and protection of human rights:<sup>2</sup> laws instituted in Cambodia have limited the right and fundamental freedom to assembly and association of peoples and civil society organizations (CSOs); and limited freedom of the press. The 2020 Global

Gender Gap Index ranked Cambodia 89 of 127 countries. Women's political empowerment is low with only 20 per cent of seats in parliament and 9 per cent of ministerial positions held by women.<sup>3</sup> Cambodia is classified as a "Medium Human Development" country in the Human Development Index (HDI), ranking 146 of 189 countries and territories: between 1990 and 2018, the country made significant progress with the HDI value increasing to 51 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

## Evaluation purpose and intended audience

The Independent Evaluation Service (IES) primarily conducted this Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) to assess the contributions of UN Women in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in Cambodia. The CPE was designed to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience based on implementation of the CO's previous Strategic Note cycle 2016–2018.

<sup>1</sup> Data taken from the Results Management System (RMS).

<sup>2</sup> UN Women Cambodia CO, AWP Cover Note (2019)/Asian Development Bank. Asian Development Outlook 2019 Update (September 2019) <https://www.adb.org/countries/cambodia/economy>

<sup>3</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index 2020, available online: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> UNDP HDI report 2019, available online: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-index-ranking>

A secondary purpose was to provide a forward-looking perspective to support decision-making for the continuation of the current Strategic Note 2019-2022 and to provide insights on the strategic direction for the CO within the context of the changing status of the office and COVID-19.

The primary intended users of this evaluation are the country office personnel and the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The secondary intended users are UN Women headquarters, the Government of Cambodia; civil society as representatives of rights holders; and development partners, such as UN agencies and bilateral/multilateral agencies.

## Evaluation objectives and methodology

The evaluation had the following objectives:

1. Assess effectiveness and organizational efficiency in progressing towards the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women results.
2. Assess the relevance and coherence of UN Women programme vis-a-vis the UN system to identify the added value of UN Women.
3. Analyse how a human rights approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the design and implementation of UN women's work in Cambodia and contribute to sustainability of efforts.
4. Provide lessons learned and actionable recommendations to support UN Women strategic positioning moving forward.

The evaluation employed a non-experimental, theory-based design and was gender-responsive.<sup>5</sup> The evaluation focused on the previous and current Strategic Note cycles covering the period 2016–2019 and the first half of 2020, with a view to the CO's future strategy, particularly considering its transition from a CO to non-resident status. UN Women's integrated mandate was assessed, including contributions in operational (implementation of projects), UN system coordination and normative spheres. The ongoing COVID-19 global health emergency and the transition of CO personnel caused unprecedented issues for the CO and the evaluation process.

<sup>5</sup> A detailed note on the methodology can be found in Annex 7.

## Key Findings

### Relevance and coherence

The CO demonstrated a deep understanding of the country context and employed strategies that were relevant to this context. The CO was able to build trust with partners through sustained engagement, provision of technical expertise, flexibility and by listening and responding to the priorities of its partners – whether government or civil society.

The CO is recognized as the lead UNCT agency on gender equality and the empowerment of women, having made substantial technical contributions to mainstreaming gender in the UNDAF; although a noted void in gender equality and women's empowerment leadership had already been felt in 2020 as the CO transitioned to Non-resident status and therefore decreased engagement in coordination activities.

During 2019, UN Women underwent a corporate Change Management process in which the typology for country presence was reviewed. Despite the strong relationships established, if clarity on the office's vision and way forward is not provided in a timely manner, there is a risk to the impact of programming, with a loss of credibility and diminished trust in UN Women. The external stakeholders consulted as part of the evaluation, including government, donor and UN partners expressed frustration and confusion regarding the status and future of the CO.

### Effectiveness

A comprehensive strategy to build capacities at individual and institutional levels translated into empowered voices that advocated for normative change and resulted in progress for gender equality and women's empowerment. This comprehensive approach could provide inspiration to other UN Women offices and gender equality advocates around the world, particularly those operating in environments where civic space is constrained.

The CO is recognized as contributing to strengthened normative frameworks, particularly in EVAW and overall government and UNCT support to gender equality and women's empowerment. This can

be seen in the extent of national ownership to lead and respond to normative processes, such as CEDAW.

The CO has made significant contributions to advancing normative work on EAW by supporting the development of national action plans, guidelines and tools through technical expertise and convening partners. However, implementation remains a challenge due to weak capacity at subnational level and limited dedicated budgets for gender.

Although there is still much work to be done, the successful actions in Cambodia, for example, in relation to the development and implementation of the National Action Plan (I-III) on Violence Against Women must be celebrated: mechanisms for coordinating multisectoral VAWG service response have been strengthened; gender focal points have been established; and awareness of gender issues were raised by many civil servants. The evaluation identified lessons learned from the three NAPVAW processes supported by UN Women.

### Human rights and gender equality and Sustainability

The CO's strength is its ability to engage with grassroots organizations and build capacities for mobilizing and advocacy on gender equality and women's empowerment – amplifying the voices of the most marginalized groups: persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ persons, women living with HIV, women migrant workers and youth, which in some cases has contributed towards their recognition by state entities. The CO employed three main strategies that were successful in amplifying the voices of civil society and in ensuring that marginalized voices were heard:

1. Utilizing coordination mechanisms or platforms to convene stakeholders and amplify marginalized voices on policy initiatives.
2. Targeted programming to marginalized groups at community level.
3. Long-term capacity building efforts targeted at marginalized groups.

The CO's approach facilitated national ownership: for example, the Cambodia National Council for Women (CNCW) took the lead in collecting data and reporting to the CEDAW committee in 2019; and

women leaders coached by UN Women took the lead on civil society reports. The CO also inspired women and youth leaders to amplify their voices through their own platforms, such as #loveisdiversity. There is opportunity to strengthen efforts at the systemic level in tackling informal norms and exclusionary practices, such as scaling up the feminist leadership building approach and engaging men and boys.

### Organizational efficiency

The CO demonstrated dedication to learning and there were examples of good practice in measuring progress of not only the number of training participants, but also application of the knowledge received. Within the context of the changed status of the CO, continued dedication to measuring progress will be important, especially for partners that will carry forward the efforts of UN Women, to ensure lessons are learned and gains are documented.

#### DATA COLLECTED FOR THE CPE

 **DESK REVIEW**  
+70 Documents reviewed

 **2 ONLINE SURVEYS**  
18 Respondents

• 11 UN Women CO personnel

• 8 females 3 males


• 7 agencies

• 3 females 3 males

• 1 Prefer not to say

 **45 INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED**  
34 females 11 males

 **1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**  
with 5 female and 1 male Youth Leaders.

 **1 CASE STUDY**  
Case study focusing on Ending violence against women (EAW) and National action plan prevent violence against women (NAPVAW).

#### LIMITATIONS

 COVID-19 travel restrictions for core team meant majority of interviews were remote.

 2 field visits by National evaluator, but also reliance on UN Women reporting.

 Although limited number it represents key stakeholders identified by the CO and across range of stakeholder types.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

### CONCLUSION 1:

During the transition of the CO to Non-resident status, stakeholders have waited patiently for clarity on the office's future vision. Recognizing that 2020 has been a year of upheaval due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 should be used to develop the office's vision, ensuring that the strong partnerships built over the years are maintained.

### RECOMMENDATION 1:

The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to articulate a clear vision for UN Women's footprint or exit strategy in Cambodia in line with the UN Women Presence Governance Policy, Guidance and Procedure and communicate this to stakeholders.

### CONCLUSION 2:

Momentum on progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia may be stalled without a full UN Women presence on the ground. With the CO's change in status, there is a high risk that UN Women in Cambodia will not be able to meet the expectations of all stakeholders. The transition period should be used to ensure smooth partnership handover.

### RECOMMENDATION 2:

UN Women Cambodia to establish a strategy for transitioning key normative and coordination roles to UN partners or other relevant development partners and, where possible, identify linkages between ongoing programmes and government counterparts to not lose the momentum already achieved and to ensure continuity during and post transition.

### CONCLUSION 3:

Given the limited space for civil society, grassroots capacity and network building remains highly relevant. There is space for the CO to ensure these efforts are sustained through linkages with UN partners and ongoing programmes in EVAW and climate change/disaster risk management, so that they can tap into these networks and continue and scale up the successful capacity building efforts with youth, women's leaders, LGBTIQ persons, migrant workers and women living with HIV. These efforts will in turn support positive gender norm change.

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

Identify entry points within current programming efforts and those of UN partners (such as the ILO) to continue capacity building efforts at the grassroots level targeting women's leaders, youth leaders, LGBTIQ persons, women migrant workers, women with disabilities and women living with HIV to ensure the gains made are sustained and nurtured.

## 3 KEY LESSONS LEARNED



Development partners support to civil society engagement in countries where civic space is constrained, by ensuring inclusiveness in processes related to the formulation of national plans and strategies, is essential for more comprehensive policy approaches that respond to diverse needs.



A comprehensive approach to capacity building through engagement of a cohort of civil society actors in long-term training, application of knowledge and coaching efforts is an effective way of contributing to the women's movement, particularly in countries where civic space is constrained.



Building a strong joint risk management plan with partners that is continuously updated as contexts change can help to mitigate and address challenges that arise.



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# 1

# INTRODUCTION

# 1. Cambodia country context

## Background

The Royal Government of Cambodia has continued to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in its overall development strategies. The Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase IV 2019–23 and National Strategic Development Plan, 2019–2023 recognize gender equality as a key component of national development, capacity building and human resources development, highlighting the need to further improve the status of women, as the backbone of Cambodian society and economy. The government has also developed several sectoral policies and strategies to support economic growth and development, with gender equality a cross-cutting theme and key component. Government reports and policies have increasingly pointed to the importance of supporting marginalized groups to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women, specifically women migrants, women with disabilities, women from indigenous populations, women living with HIV and LGBTIQ communities.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's population experienced rapid economic growth and social change amid shrinking political space and protection of human rights:<sup>1</sup> laws instituted in Cambodia have limited the right and fundamental freedom to assembly and association of peoples and civil society organizations (CSOs); and limited freedom of the press. The 2020 Global Gender Gap Index ranked Cambodia 89 of 127 countries. Women's political empowerment is low with only 20 per cent of seats in parliament and 9 per cent of ministerial positions held by women.<sup>2</sup> Cambodia is classified as a "Medium Human Development" country in the Human Development Index (HDI), ranking 146 of 189 countries and territories: between 1990 and 2018, the country made significant progress with the HDI

value increasing to 51 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

Cambodia transitioned to a Lower Middle-Income Country in 2016 and aspires to reach the status of an Upper Middle-Income Country by 2030, reflecting consistently high growth rates of 7 per cent.<sup>4</sup> Cambodia ranks high on women's economic participation and opportunity (25 of 153 countries GGGI),<sup>5</sup> with the economy transitioning from a predominantly agricultural economy to a manufacturing and service-based economy. Although the Cambodian economy suffered during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, recent data is promising – the World Bank projects that the economy will start to recover with a 4 per cent growth rate predicted in 2021.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the World Bank projections and the fact that poverty has fallen dramatically, vulnerability to economic shocks is high.<sup>7</sup> In Cambodia, women have been disproportionately vulnerable to economic shocks caused by over-indebtedness to micro-finance institutions, with loans more than double per capita GDP and many households using their land as collateral.<sup>8</sup> The global COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a downturn in the global economy and is likely to have long-lasting effects on Cambodia, especially because of the country's heavy reliance on China for capital inflows, including to the garment, textile and footwear sector that employs over 800,000 women (almost 80 per cent of workers in the sector).<sup>9</sup> More than 150,000 garment workers were reported to have lost their jobs due to the pandemic.<sup>10</sup>

As a young population with limited skills for the increasingly competitive regional labour market, many young women migrate regionally and internally for work, primarily as domestic, construction and factory workers.

<sup>1</sup> UN Women Cambodia CO, AWP Cover Note (2019)/Asian Development Bank. Asian Development Outlook 2019 Update (September 2019) <https://www.adb.org/countries/cambodia/economy>

<sup>2</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index 2020, available online: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> UNDP HDI report 2019, available online: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-index-ranking>

<sup>4</sup> UN Women Cambodia CO, AWP Cover Note (2019)/Asian Development Bank. Asian Development Outlook 2019 Update (September 2019) <https://www.adb.org/countries/cambodia/economy>

<sup>5</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index 2020, available online: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The World Bank, "Cambodia Economic Update, Dec 2020"; accessible online: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/publication/cambodia-economic-update-dec-2020-cambodian-economy-hit-hard-by-pandemic-but-projected-to-recover-in-2021>

<sup>7</sup> World Bank Economic Update, May 2019, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/843251556908260855/pdf/Cambodia-Economic-Update-Recent-Economic-Developments-and-Outlook.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> UN Women Cambodia CO, AWP Cover Note (2020) <https://www.adb.org/countries/cambodia/economy>

<sup>9</sup> International Labour Organization, Cambodia Garment and Footwear Sector Bulletin, Issue 8, December 2018; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/asia/-/ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_663043.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/asia/-/ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_663043.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Khmer Times 2020. "Savagely battered Cambodia's garment industry seeks urgent help to stay alive. July 16 2020 <https://www.khmer-timeskh.com/744740/savagely-battered-cambodias-garment-industry-seeks-urgent-help-to-stay-alive/>

Outward migration is mostly undocumented, leaving these women particularly vulnerable.<sup>11</sup> Many people from Cambodia migrate to neighbouring countries such as Thailand to find work. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that approximately 100,000 migrant workers – mostly in tourism, services and construction industries – have returned to Cambodia from neighbouring countries.<sup>12</sup>

Pervasive unequal gender norms are reflected in high levels of gender-based violence; women's limited access to justice; high burdens of unpaid care work; and low representation of women in both elected and unelected leadership roles. In Cambodia, one in five women report having experienced sexual or physical violence from an intimate partner.<sup>13</sup> Recent evidence suggests that sexual harassment in the workplace and in public spaces is a prevalent yet under-reported issue.<sup>14</sup> The government has implemented several laws and policies aimed at preventing and responding to violence against women, notably the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims, three National Action Plans to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW), and the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation.<sup>15</sup> The 2014 Cambodia Demographic Health Survey identified that 10 per cent of the population age 5 and older experience some form of disability.<sup>16</sup> Persons with disabilities are more vulnerable to violence and to intersecting forms of discrimination.

Cambodia is also one of the most at-risk countries in the world for climate-related disasters. According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2020, Cambodia ranked 12 for countries most affected by climate-related disasters between 1999–2018.<sup>17</sup> The population is still largely rural with only 20 per cent of the country's 15.3 million people living in urban areas; most of its population is dependent on climate-sensitive livelihood sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries. Women are responsible for food production and food security within and beyond the family, with 80 per cent of food in Cambodia produced by women (National Institute of Statistics, 2015). In addition, due to the impacts of climate change, shortages of food, water and fuel (often based

on natural resources) increase women and girls' workload, leaving them with no time to pursue economic activities and education, consequently increasing inequalities. These vulnerabilities are compounded by socio-economic factors such as access to resources and assets, power, gender inequality and ethnicity, among others.

## Adherence to internationally agreed norms on gender equality and women's empowerment

On 15 October 1992, the government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and ratified the Optional Protocol on 13 October 2010. Accordingly, the government is obligated to implement all the provisions stipulated in the convention and submit periodic reports on its implementation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The government has made efforts to link the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with national plans, including the National Strategic Development Plan 2019–2023, the Budget Strategic Plan and the Rectangular Strategy IV. The Voluntary National Review was presented in 2019 at the global level to demonstrate the government's commitment and progress towards achieving the SDGs.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> International Labour Organization, COVID-19: Impact on Cambodian Migrant Workers, 6 August 2020; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/asia/-/ro-bangkok/-/sro-bangkok/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_752836.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/asia/-/ro-bangkok/-/sro-bangkok/documents/briefingnote/wcms_752836.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> UN Women Cambodia CO, AWP Cover Note (2020); <https://www.coffey.com/en/our-projects/ending-violence-against-women-in-cambodia/>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> UN Women Cambodia CO, SN Narrative (2019)

<sup>16</sup> Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2014, available online: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr312/fr312.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Global Climate Risk Index 2020, The Long-Term Climate Risk Index (CRI): The 10 countries most affected from 1999 to 2018 (annual averages); [https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/20-2-01e%20Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202020\\_14.pdf](https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/20-2-01e%20Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202020_14.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Annual Dialogue of the UNCT with Samdech Prime Minister, 06 May 2019, available online: <https://cambodia.un.org/en/26003-annual-dialogue-unct-samdech-prime-minister>

## 2. UN Women in Cambodia

### Background

UN Women established a Country Office (CO) in Cambodia with Delegation of Authority in 2013 after a long history in the country as UNIFEM (since 2004). In 2019, the UN Women Change Management team identified the Cambodia CO as an office for transition due to various factors. The Regional Office (RO) carried forward plans for transitioning the office, including a mission by the Regional Director to inform key stakeholders and personnel and a mission by the Regional HR Specialist to discuss implications of the transition with personnel both individually and collectively. Subsequently, in September 2020, the evaluation team was informed that the RO had decided to transition the office to “Non-resident” status due to ongoing implementation of programmes, with RO oversight.<sup>19</sup> Due to the expected transition of the office, between January 2020 and September 2020, the number of CO personnel decreased, with the Country Representative ad interim and several personnel leaving the office.<sup>20</sup>

### Strategic Note

The current Strategic Note (2019–2023) identifies the CO’s three focus areas: Normative Frameworks, Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) and gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and climate change. In line with UN Women’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021, resilience to disasters and climate change is included in the global Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Outcome. Based on reflection of the previous Strategic Note, the CO decided to discontinue short-term Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) interventions: any relevant activities would be part of the new disaster risk reduction and climate change area; WEE-EVAW interlinkages (e.g. Safe and Fair project) would be integrated into the EVAW area; and issues on women’s rights related, for instance, to sexual harassment in the workplace, would be part of the Normative area.<sup>21</sup> The CO’s work on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and climate change is a relatively new area for the office and is part of the Regional UN Joint Programme (UNEP-UN Women) EmPower: Empowering Women to Secure Climate-Resilient

Societies, which aims to support women and marginalized groups and enhance their resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change and disasters.

### Normative and coordination efforts

The CO’s normative area of work was cross-cutting throughout all thematic areas. The CO provided technical support and capacity building to the government to amend, develop and pass national plans and policies to address violence against women and girls and to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. Throughout all areas of its work, the CO has committed to strengthening women’s networks.

The CO led the following UN system coordination mechanisms: the UN Theme Group on Gender – in December 2020, the CO handed the chair over to UNFPA and UNDP; and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Results Group 4 on Accountability and Participation (2016–2018) – handing over the chair to another agency in June 2020. In its capacity as chair of the UN Theme Group on Gender, the CO led the UN Country Team (UNCT) Confidential Report to the CEDAW Committee, submitted to Pre-Sessional Working Group on CEDAW in 2019, and participated in the consultative group on participatory development of the Third NAPVAW 2019–2023. Since late 2016, the CO has been the only UN agency to support the Cambodia National Council for Women (CNCW) in engaging with the CEDAW cycle process. As a result, Cambodia submitted its National Sixth Periodic Report and participated in the CEDAW 74th Session on 29 October 2019 in Geneva.

In addition, the CO participated in several other coordination mechanisms: as a development partner lead of the Gender-Based Violence Subgroup under the Technical Working Group on Gender; Inter-ministerial Technical Working Group on Climate Change; Gender Mainstreaming Action Group under the Ministry of Economy and Finance; and UNCT Operations Management Team and its Procurement Working Group.

<sup>19</sup> The business plan is still pending submission as of 9 February 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Three personnel (Programme Officers) left the CO to move to new roles, but were replaced because their roles were to continue; five personnel were informed by letter that their roles would end on 31 December 2020; and four personnel left for new jobs before the end of year – Country Representative

a.i., Operations Manager, Administrative Assistant and Driver (the Finance Associate acted as Operations Manager until the end of 2020).

<sup>21</sup> UN Women Cambodia, Strategic Note (2019).

## Financial and human resources

The CO's total budget over the CPE period 2016–2019 (including core and non-core funds) was US\$ 5.9 million.<sup>22</sup> The total budget increased slightly from US\$ 1.7 million in 2016 to US\$ 1.9 million in 2020. Core and Institutional Budget remained constant over the period, while non-core funds reduced between 2017 and 2018, but increased in 2019 and 2020.

The total CO budget decreased between 2016 and 2018 due to low non-core funds. One contributing factor was the large decrease in funding from the Government of Australia (of 71 percent) between 2017 and 2018. In 2018, non-core funding increased through the regional programmes EmPower (funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency [SIDA]) and Safe and Fair (European Union Spotlight initiative on EVAW). Core fund allocations have slightly decreased since 2016.

During the Strategic Note period 2016–2018, the number of personnel remained constant; however, because of the transition of the CO during 2020, the number of personnel gradually decreased to seven in October 2020. The number of personnel on fixed-term contracts remained constant from 2016 to 2018, with a reduction from five personnel to four during 2019. As of January 2021, there were no fixed-term personnel at the CO due to its lack of Delegation of Authority as a Non-resident office. The CO reduced the number of Service Contractors to six personnel in 2020 (all funded through non-core funds).

**Key donors** during the CPE period included the Government of Australia, Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, National Committee of Singapore, Australia National Committee, Japan National Committee, Canadian International Development Agency, UK National Committee; Government of Japan; Government of Australia contributed the highest amounts (~US\$ 1.7 million).

## Key partners

A comprehensive human-rights based stakeholder analysis is presented in Annex 5.2. The CO worked with a diverse range of local and international partners, including UN partners, donors, government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), CSOs and was also active in mobilizing youth. Government partners were UN Women's main stakeholders across all areas of work. The CO also cultivated relationships with partners in the private sector and academia.

<sup>22</sup> Data taken from the Results Management System (RMS).

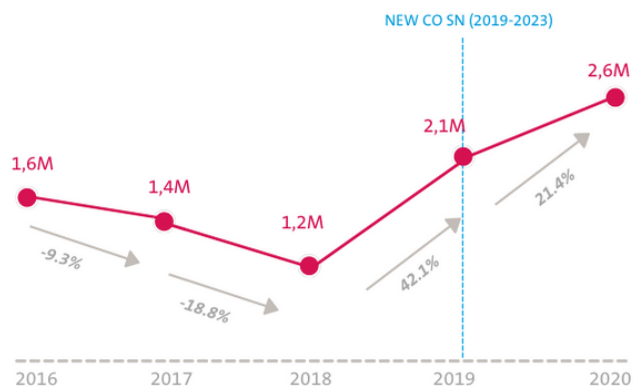
Sources:  
Annual Delivery Reports, All fund sources  
ATLAS as of March 4, 2020; updated in August 2020

# UN WOMEN IN CAMBODIA

## KEY BUDGETARY INSIGHTS

- Overall, the total CO budget experienced an increase comparing 2016 to 2020 due to **non-core funds**.
- One contributing factor to the drop between 2017 and 2018 was the large decrease in funding from the Government of Australia (71% drop).
- In 2018-2020, however, the none-core increased through the regional programmes EmPower (funded by Swedish SIDA) and Safe and Fair (European Union Spotlight initiative on EVAW); and MPTF (Joint Programme on Essential Services) and DFAT (Access).
- Core fund allocations have slightly decreased since 2016.

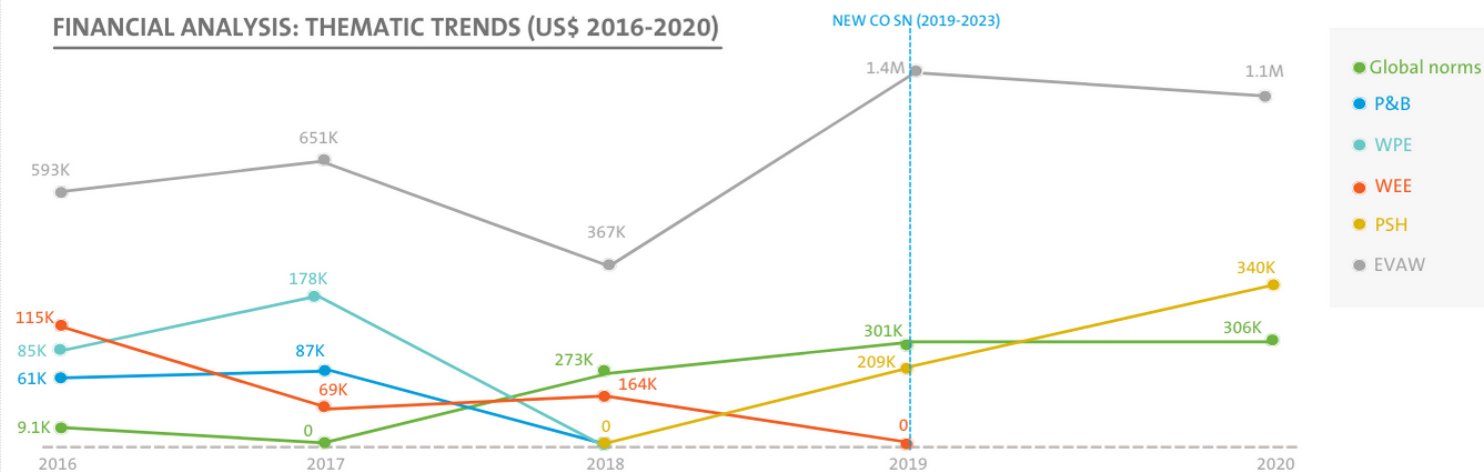
## CO TOTAL BUDGET US\$ (2016-2020)



## TOP 5 PROJECTS TOTAL BUDGET (US\$)

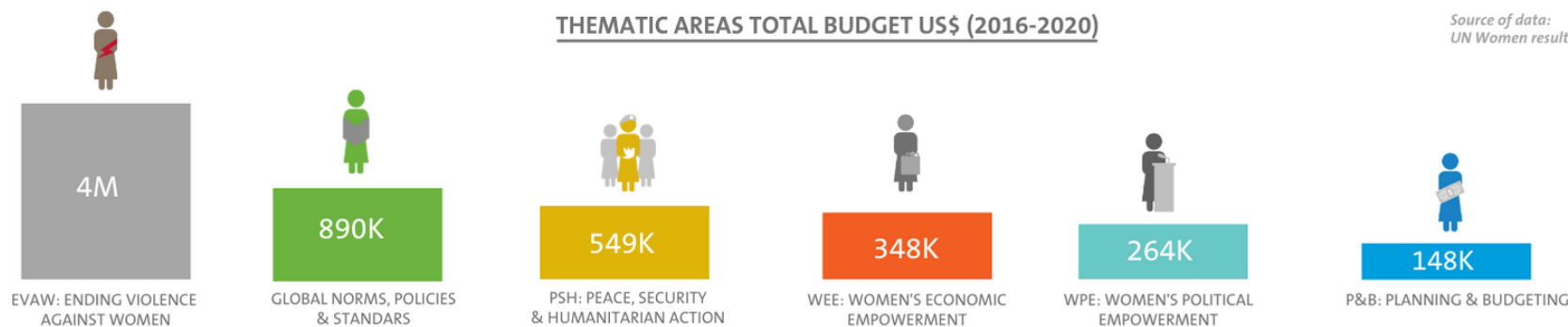
1	SAFE & FAIR (EU)	1,400,000
2	CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AND DRR (SIDA)	1,000,000
3	JOINT PROGRAMME ON ESSENTIALS SERVICES	1,000,000
4	CEDAW SEAP II	909,991
5	NAPVAW (AUS)	900,000

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS: THEMATIC TRENDS (US\$ 2016-2020)



## THEMATIC AREAS TOTAL BUDGET US\$ (2016-2020)

Source of data:  
UN Women results management system



### 3. Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope, and methodology

#### Purpose and intended users

The Independent Evaluation Service (IES) primarily conducted this CPE to assess the contributions of UN Women in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in Cambodia. The CPE was designed to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience based on implementation of the CO's previous Strategic Note cycle 2016–2018. A secondary purpose was to provide a forward-looking perspective to support decision-making for the continuation of the current Strategic Note and to identify UN Women's comparative advantage in Cambodia. The evaluation also sought to provide insights on the strategic direction for the CO within the context of the changing status of the office, COVID-19 and the repositioning of the UN development system as adopted by General Assembly resolution 72/279 on 31 May 2018.<sup>23</sup> The primary intended users of this evaluation are the country office personnel and the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The secondary intended users are the Government of Cambodia; civil society as representatives of rights holders, and development partners, such as UN agencies and bilateral/multilateral agencies.

#### Evaluation scope

The evaluation focused on the previous and current Strategic Note cycles covering the period 2016–2019 and the first half of 2020, with a view to the CO's future strategy, particularly considering its transition from a CO to non-resident status. UN Women's integrated mandate was assessed, including contributions in operational (implementation of projects), UN system coordination and normative spheres. The geographic scope included Phnom Penh (where normative and coordination efforts were centred) and site visits by the national consultant to Siem Reap and Kampong Speu where activities have

been implemented under the sampled thematic area EVAW.<sup>24</sup>

#### Methodology

The evaluation employed a non-experimental, theory-based design and was gender-responsive.<sup>25</sup> A reconstructed theory of change was developed during the inception phase in collaboration with the CO and Evaluation Reference Group, which was used to ensure a common understanding of the programme of work and to guide the analysis of contributions to outcome-level change. A case study approach was the primary source of information for the assessment of contributions to outcomes in the selected thematic area (EVAW) and towards the normative and coordination mandate. Contribution analysis is an approach that recognizes the challenges with attribution in assessing performance of organizations aiming to achieve transformative goals in a complex and dynamic environment.<sup>26</sup> The Gender at Work Framework was utilized as a gender-responsive analytical tool and rights holders were engaged in a focus group discussion.

The evaluation approach and methods were discussed with the Evaluation Management Group and Evaluation Reference Group, peer reviewers and the IES Chief and IEAS Director for feedback and adapted, as appropriate.

#### Data collection and analysis

The ongoing COVID-19 global health emergency and the transition of CO personnel caused unprecedented issues for the CO and the evaluation process. This resulted in delays and reliance on primarily remote data collection using a mixed-methods approach (see Annex 11). Nevertheless, multiple sources of data were obtained: 39 stakeholders from across stakeholder groups were consulted (29 female, 10 male); the virtual focus group discussion with youth leaders included five females and 1 male; a case study, including a field visit to two locations, and two surveys were completed. The plan for adhering to ethical guidance was outlined in the inception report and is aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidance and World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines for researching violence against women (see Annex 6.8). Multiple

<sup>23</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, A/Res/72/279 (31 May 2018), available from <http://un-docs.org/a/res/72/279>

<sup>24</sup> As reported in 2019 Annual Work Plan

<sup>25</sup> A detailed note on the methodology can be found in Annex 7.

<sup>26</sup> Mayne, John *Addressing Attribution through Contribution analysis: using performance measures sensibly*, The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2001, Canadian Evaluation Society.



methods of data collection and analysis were carried out using both primary and secondary data to triangulate evidence, including desk review, quantitative and qualitative analysis (see Annexes 8–10) and by using Dedoose software (a qualitative data analysis tool). This was summarized in an evidence map (see Annex 8).

## Limitations

Travel restrictions related to COVID-19 limited the possibility of in-person data collection by evaluation team members based outside Cambodia. The national evaluation consultant conducted visits to two sites. This may have affected the representativeness of the evaluation and may have introduced bias. The evaluation team also relied on the accuracy and completeness of the documents provided by the CO. Despite this, CPE members were able to: consult with key stakeholders identified by the CO and across a range of stakeholder types; triangulate sources of data; and validate findings with the Evaluation Reference and Evaluation Management Groups.

## 4. Evaluation governance and quality assurance

UN Women evaluations follow established mechanisms to ensure high-quality evaluation processes and products as outlined in the *UN Women Evaluation Policy and Handbook*. This evaluation report will follow the standard outline as established in the *UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation Guidance* and should also follow the *United Nations Editorial Manual*. The UN Women Evaluation Report Quality Assurance (*GERAAS*) criteria was used to assure quality. Due to the dual role of the Regional Evaluation Specialist in this evaluation, as both team leader and manager of the evaluation, a peer reviewer from IES was engaged to add an objective review and ensure that the GERAAS criteria and UN Ethical Guidelines were adhered to. The IEAS Director and IES Chief provided oversight of the evaluation process and reviewed the quality of evaluation products. The Evaluation Reference and Evaluation Management Groups were engaged for their input on: inception, data collection, preliminary findings and the draft report. The groups' feedback was important to ensure the factual accuracy; accurate interpretation of contextual information; and identification of gaps in the analysis. Further details on the evaluation governance structure is outlined in Annex 2.

# DATA COLLECTED FOR THE CPE

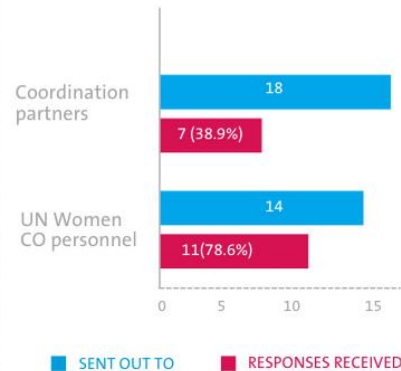


## DESK REVIEW

- ✓ Financial documents
- ✓ Annual work plans
- ✓ Project documents
- ✓ Reports
- ✓ Evaluations



## ONLINE SURVEY



## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

with **5** female and **1** male Youth Leaders.



## CASE STUDY

National Action plan to prevent violence against women (NAPVAW)



## KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

**39** INTERVIEWEES | 29 FEMALES | 10 MALES



- UN Women CO Personnel (Internal)
- Other UN agencies
- Donor
- Regional Office consultations
- Government
- CSO

**+70** Documents reviewed

**45** Individuals consulted

34 females  
11 males

**1** Focus Group discussion

**2** Online surveys

- 18 Respondents
  - 11 UN Women CO personnel
    - 8 females
    - 3 males
  - 7 agencies
    - 3 females
    - 3 males
  - 1 Prefer not to say

**1** Case study

## LIMITATIONS



COVID-19 travel restrictions for core team meant majority of interviews were remote.



2 field visits by National evaluator, but also reliance on UN Women reporting.



Although limited number it represents key stakeholders identified by the CO and across range of stakeholder types.



Photo ©UN Women Cambodia Asia and the Pacific Office

# 2 FINDINGS

## How have UN Women's contributions advanced gender equality and the empowerment of women in Cambodia?

### FINDING 1:

**During 2020, in response to the UN Women Change Management process, the Cambodia Country Office was in transition to a non-resident status. During the evaluation process, the steps for changing country presence typology were still in progress and stakeholders required further information, as the Country Office's presence could impact the results and credibility of UN Women activities in the country.**

During 2019, UN Women underwent a corporate Change Management process in which the typology for country presence was reviewed. Cambodia was subsequently identified as an office for transition by the end of 2020. The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) committed to ensure that ongoing programmes would be fully implemented through to 2022.<sup>27</sup> The Regional Director and Regional Human Resources Specialist visited Cambodia (separately) to discuss plans with the team in early 2020. ROAP advised that headquarters did not require a new business case for the office (in compliance with the UN Women Presence Governance Procedure) because the Procedure had been issued after the decision to transition the office.<sup>28</sup> ROAP shared a plan of the actions taken and arrangements for the transfer to a Non-resident presence in February 2021.

After the Change Management decision on office transitions, UN Women issued a Presence Governance Policy and guidance.<sup>29</sup> The guidance states that the smallest type of office in UN Women (Tier 3) requires a minimum annual delivery of US\$ 1.5 million in non-core funds, with a resource mobilization target above US\$ 1.8 million. As shown in Table 1, the CO did not reach this

non-core resource mobilization target between 2017–2020.

The external stakeholders consulted as part of the evaluation, including government, donor and UN partners expressed frustration and confusion regarding the status and future of the CO. Although some stakeholders noted that they had had informal discussions with various CO personnel, they remained unclear about the status of the CO and how it might affect programme implementation. ROAP noted that, at the request of the UN Women Change Management team, it had drafted a letter for the UN Women Headquarters to send to the highest ranking official in Cambodia to inform the government of the CO's change of status. However, as at the time of this report the formal letter had not been sent, which had implications for communications at lower levels of government between CO personnel and their counterparts.

<sup>27</sup> The original proposal was to establish a Multi-Country Office for the Mekong subregion; however, plans changed in mid-2020. When the Country Representative moved to fill the Deputy Regional Director position, the RO decided that she would simultaneously oversee the office during the transition, in line with RO oversight of other Non-resident status offices in the region.

<sup>28</sup> UN Women Presence Governance Procedure, October 2020.

<sup>29</sup> UN Women Presence Governance Guidance, Annex 1, October 2020: <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/manage-ment/LF/Repository/UN%20Women%20Presence%20Governance%20Guidance.pdf?CT=1610944049344&OR=Outlook-Body&CID=15251EB5-853A-43AC-A89B-8282D6F13877>

The policy identifies two types of presence: physical or non-physical presences. Physical presence includes: ROs, COs and sub-offices. Non-physical presence means that programmes or projects are implemented through implementing partners or another UN agency with no UN Women physical presence and oversight by the RO or another CO; or remote participation in the UNCT or embedded within another UN agency.

Table 1. Cambodia CO source of funding by year (in US\$)

SOURCE OF FUNDING	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Core	424,710	400,403	403,815	383,815	220,000
IB	436,788	434,035	410,108	417,541	417,541
Non-Core	746,305	662,656	402,434	780,782	791,418
XB	45,464	2,201	1,543	19,500	35,383
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,653,267</b>	<b>1,499,295</b>	<b>1,217,900</b>	<b>1,601,638</b>	<b>1,464,343</b>

Source: RMS/ One App, as of 9 Feb 2021

## FINDING 2:

**In an environment where space for civil society is limited, the Country Office employed a relevant and effective strategy in embodying the principles of a feminist approach by stimulating bottom-up change through its efforts to empower and build long-term individual capacities and networks of women and youth leaders.**

The evaluation observed that the CO demonstrated exemplary practice through its approach to capacity building and network building, both of which were necessary and complementary to its efforts at the normative level. It is estimated that approximately 112 women and men participated in the Feminist and Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) organized by the CO in 2016–2020. Overall, UN Women in Cambodia estimated that it spent over US\$ 260,000 on feminist and YLA capacity development activities, in addition to staff time ranging from 5 per cent to 35 per cent of at least three personnel (Country Representative/Deputy Representative, National Programme Officer and Programme Assistant). While this is a high per capita investment (approximately US\$ 2,321), it included the development of the curriculum for the academy, which was built upon and utilized in subsequent sessions (and the CO can continue to use it in the future); therefore the per capita

expenditure would be expected to reduce over time. For example, based on the YLA experience and adapted curriculum, the CO trained 86 women members of the Performance Improvement Consultative Committees from 25 factories participating in the ILO Better Factories Cambodia programme. The ILO later adopted the curriculum and took the approach forward. Although the benefits cannot be quantified, based on consultations with several participants, evidence of empowerment and network building among the core UN Women group of participants was identified and they had taken action to demonstrate their commitment to advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment as described in subsequent findings.

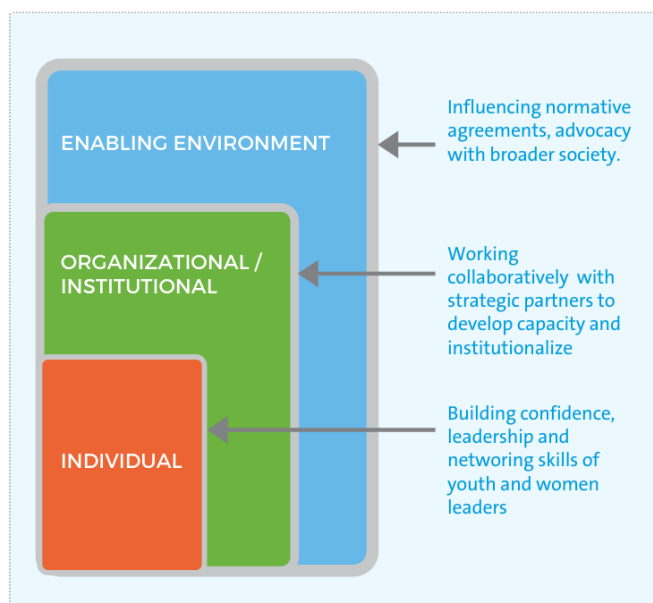
These efforts were assessed against a capacity building approach applied in a UN Women evaluation on capacity

development,<sup>30</sup> which includes: (a) the extent to which the cycle of capacity development was followed – diagnosis, design, delivery and follow-up; and (b) evidence on “two levels of change” – individual empowerment and change in an organization or institution.

## Diagnosis

Both Strategic Notes under review clearly identify the rationale for capacity building efforts with civil society, pointing to the “shrinking democratic space in Cambodia” and the need to promote coalition building, facilitating space for civil society dialogue and building skills and knowledge “to support young women, LGBTIQ persons and marginalised women to become agents of change transforming the national and local dialogues related to gender norms through building collective approaches.” The Strategic Note 2019–2023 also identified the shift in population demographics in Cambodia as an important factor justifying a programme targeting youth. Figure 1 depicts the CO’s understanding of change from the individual level moving outwards to the enabling environment through advocacy efforts for normative change. The CPE identified complementary actions at these three levels.

Figure 1: UN Women Cambodia’s strategy for capacity building



Source: Developed by CPE Team

<sup>30</sup> UN Women, Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, Regional Evaluation on Capacity Development Initiatives, <https://gate.unwomen.org/Evaluation/Details?evaluationId=10137>

<sup>31</sup> UN Women Training Centre, Transformative Leadership: Leading for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights; <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/portal/product/transformative-leadership-leading-for-gender-equality-and-womens-rights/>

## Design

The evaluation observed that the CO had consistently identified a comprehensive approach to capacity building, (despite not having a stand-alone strategy) which was captured in the Strategic Notes and specific programme concept notes. For example, in its concept note on the feminist leadership programme, the CO laid out a clear theory of change: “If we build women’s constituency, strengthen institutional capacity of duty bearers and create spaces for dialogue between duty-bearers and rights-holders, including the most marginalized, then good governance and accountability for gender equality will be strengthened because the meaningful participation of women will enhance the pluralism and diversity which feed a healthy democracy.”

The design of the programme took into consideration the need for an iterative approach and follow-up. The CO engaged the consultant who had developed the UN Women Women’s Transformative Leadership programme,<sup>31</sup> a face-to-face course that comes with an associated cost, to adapt the programme for implementation in Cambodia to various target audiences: Young Women’s Leadership Network (YWLN);<sup>32</sup> Gender and Leadership Programme (GLP); Youth Leadership Academy; and influenced ILO’s “Better Factories” programme to adopt the transformative leadership programme promoting women’s leadership in the garment sector.

Figure 2: Capacity building process



<sup>32</sup> The Young Women’s Leadership Network (YWLN) was established in 2011 by UN Women Cambodia: <https://youngfeministfund.org/grantees/new-waves-young-womens-leadership-network/>

## Delivery

As depicted in Figure 2, the approach combined workshop-based learning with “action learning” in small groups in between workshops for participants to apply new knowledge and skills with the aim that the participants themselves become facilitators. The CO collected pre- and post-assessments by participants and received updates from contracted mentors regarding the quality of delivery and progress of the individuals. The CPE consultations and focus group discussions confirmed that programme participants increased their knowledge and awareness of gender issues, and that the programme helped to establish strong bonds and trust between participants. This enabled the groups to continue and confirmed that the networks of women and youth leaders continued to support each other.

## Follow-up

Participants received mentorship for a period after the workshops which helped to solidify learning and provide space for further reflection. The CO monitored the “Percentage of Youth Leadership Academy core group that reported actions taken to integrate feminist leadership principles into their work” as a contribution towards the CO output: **“KHM\_D\_6.1.3 Young women and marginalised women, as well as LGBTIQ persons, have the capacity, networks and space to hold duty bearers to account on GE&WE commitments.”**

The CPE team consulted several participants of the women leader’s programme and conducted a focus group with the youth leaders and confirmed changes at the individual level: participants clearly articulated that they felt empowered by the CO’s programme and shared how they had applied the learning in their own work (See Box 2). See Finding 8 for more details on how participants applied their new knowledge.

Overall, the capacity building approach allowed the CO to demonstrate practically what women’s empowerment meant and supported participants in their journey as women leaders and agents of change, ultimately strengthening the women’s movement in Cambodia. Findings 3 and 4 explain how these individual capacity building efforts were built upon to influence institutional and normative change.

### BOX 1: THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (YLA). A LONG-TERM, GOOD PRACTICE APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING

The YLA is a year-long programme over 8 to 10 months that aims to build feminist leadership and networks to support long-term activism to address gender and social norms that devalue women and girls and limit their potential to actively participate in socioeconomic development. The aim is for the group to continue working together and supporting each other for at least another six months after the programme closes, ultimately becoming facilitators themselves.<sup>33</sup>

### BOX 2: FEEDBACK FROM YLA PARTICIPANTS



“We laughed, cried and really built solidarity.”

- *Women’s leadership participant*



“The power of decision making, it starts from men and women’s role in the family, and it affects many things ... from small challenges to larger problems.”

- *Youth leadership participant*

<sup>33</sup> UN Women, Observation Note on the Implementation of YLA, March 2020

## FINDING 3:

**The Country Office's approach to supporting normative processes facilitated national ownership: the Cambodia National Council for Women (CNCW) took the lead in collecting data and reporting to the CEDAW committee in 2019; and women leaders coached by UN Women took the lead on civil society reports.**

Support to the CEDAW process is one of UN Women's fundamental normative roles and is embedded in its theory of change. The CO proactively worked with Cambodia National Council for Women (CNCW)<sup>34</sup>, civil society and the UNCT to prepare for the reporting cycle and respond to the concluding observations. The CEDAW process was identified by stakeholders as a key entry point for UNCT to support action and accountability on human rights concerns in Cambodia.

Stakeholders noted the increasing ownership of CEDAW processes by the government thanks to the CO's contributions over the years: the government is now directing its national budget towards compliance with the CEDAW Periodic Report Process. Stakeholders identified UN Women's technical contributions as moving from hiring a consultant to draft the report on behalf of the government, to building the capacity and empowering members of the CNCW, which is the mechanism for coordinating and providing advice to the government on women's affairs, to lead the coordination and response to CEDAW processes. For example, the CO reported that the CNCW had conducted a discussion with members from line ministries to analyse the concluding observations and identify progress and actions needed. The CO facilitated coordination among CNCW members through the development of an action plan for CEDAW implementation. The CNCW's new five-year strategic plan and the CEDAW monitoring and evaluation guidelines represent the key frameworks to monitor implementation of the CEDAW Convention. The CO reported that national ownership and strengthened capacity is also demonstrated by the enhanced integration of gender concerns in sectoral plans and policies and allocation of budgets to support their implementation – it is reported that up to 3 per cent of the country's national budget will be allocated to gender activities.

This progress has been achieved as a result of the trust the CO has built and its partnerships with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and CNCW. Strong coordination from the UNCT was another contributing factor towards national ownership of the CEDAW and Universal Periodic Review processes. Stakeholders confirmed that the CO had worked closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) to develop joint advocacy priorities on human rights issues, including advocacy to implement recommendations of the Universal Periodic Report on Human Rights and CEDAW reports.

The CO's approach for engaging civil society actors was identified by stakeholders as another factor contributing to national ownership. The CO has dedicated itself to building strong relationships over the years with women leaders and civil society, through capacity building efforts and coaching, such as the women's leadership training (see Finding 2). These were recognized by partners as building national ownership and bringing credibility to normative processes resulting in civil society taking active leadership in human rights normative processes and giving voice to rights holders.

<sup>34</sup> While the secretariat of CNCW is housed at Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), and the MoWA Minister is in a leadership role, the CNCW is an inter-ministerial body with scope beyond MoWA.

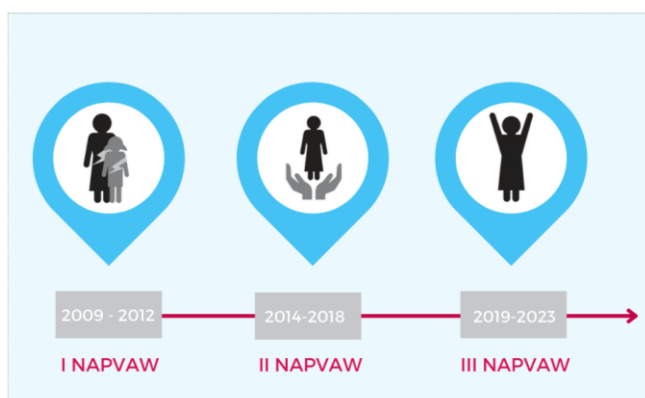


## FINDING 4:

**The Country Office has made significant contributions to advancing normative work on EVAW by supporting the development of national action plans, guidelines and tools through technical expertise and convening partners. However, implementation remains a challenge due to weak capacity at subnational level and limited dedicated budgets for gender.**

In 2012, the CO, with financial contributions from the Government of Australia, began its support to the government in designing and implementing the key policy framework to end violence against women and girls (EVAWG) – the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW), specifically the second NAPVAW 2014-2018 and formulation of the third NAPVAW 2019-2023.

*Figure 3: Timeline of NAPVAW in Cambodia (2009–2012, 2014–2018, 2019–2023)*



Another example is how LGBTIQ persons were engaged in the Universal Periodic Review process with UN Women’s support. However, more needs to be done to protect the ability of civil society to freely organize and express itself, as identified by CEDAW and the Universal Periodic Report (see Finding 8).

The CO’s support to the NAPVAW has been one of its thematic and financial focuses during the Strategic Note periods 2016–2018 and 2019–2023. Overall, it is estimated that the financial resources the CO allocated to supporting the development and implementation of the NAPVAW (US\$ 2.7 million) constituted over one third (35 per cent) of all CO resources in 2016–2020 (US\$ 7.9 million).<sup>35</sup> Within the CPE time frame, the CO also implemented several projects supporting implementation of the NAPVAW – Bridging the Gap: Driving NAPVAW Implementation from the National to the Subnational Level (2016–2017) aimed at ensuring access to a core set of services for women and girls subject to violence; during 2017–2019, as part of the Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence,<sup>36</sup> the pilot in Cambodia focused on further improving legislative and policy frameworks on VAWG and access to services for survivors of violence.

The CO has also been part of the regional Safe and Fair programme which focuses on women migrant workers (ILO, UN Women). Through a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) funded programme on Promoting Disability Inclusion and Quality Services for Gender-Based Violence Victims (also known as the ACCESS programme),<sup>37</sup> launched in early 2019, the CO has been cooperating with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and UNFPA on the improvement of multisectoral coordination on gender-based violence, in line with NAPVAW.

Since 2016, several policy documents have been developed with UN Women and partners’ support to accompany the NAPVAW, namely:

<sup>35</sup> Based on data aggregated from UN Women Annual Delivery Reports and corporate reporting platforms ATLAS and DAMS, as of March 2020.

<sup>36</sup> In Cambodia, the active agencies were UNFPA and UN Women; however, this is a global joint programme which also includes WHO, UNODC and UNDP.

<sup>37</sup> Australia-Cambodia Cooperation for Equitable Sustainable Services (ACCESS) joint programme with UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA, in which the UN Women project is focused on the GBV stream; also called Programme to Promote Disability Inclusion and Quality Services for Gender Based Violence (GBV) Victims.

- The Strategy for Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls 2014–2018<sup>38</sup>
- Minimum Standards for Mediation as a Response to VAW
- Minimum Standards for Judges and Prosecutors for Responding to VAW
- Minimum Standards for Essential Services for Women and Girl Survivors of Gender-Based Violence<sup>39</sup>

From the stakeholders consulted and the reviews completed by the CO, IES notes that there is more work to be done at the subnational level to ensure clarity on roles and responsibilities, and in building capacity, particularly in the ability to monitor NAPVAW progress.

This is also in line with the CEDAW observations issued in 2019,<sup>40</sup> “the monitoring and evaluation of policies and action plans on gender equality are weak, particularly at the district and commune levels”, which concluded that Cambodia needs “to establish effective evaluation and monitoring mechanisms for all action plans, strategies and measures adopted to advance gender equality in order to measure progress and impact”. Another key issue identified by stakeholders as impeding progress at subnational level was the allocation of sufficient budget for implementation of the action plan and specific services such as legal aid, which was also highlighted in the 2019 CEDAW report.

**BOX 3: CPE CASE STUDY FINDINGS ON UN WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION TO CAMBODIA’S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (NAPVAW)**

According to the stakeholders consulted, and supported by IES desk review analysis, the design and implementation of Cambodia’s second and third NAPVAW has five distinctive features in which the CO’s contribution was pivotal, including: evidence, inclusiveness, coordination and convening, capacity development, and monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 4: Lessons learned from the second and third NAPVAW identified by the CPE team



<sup>38</sup>The strategy aimed at providing a nation-wide approach to preventing violence against women and girls by identifying the risks and protective factors (accessed at [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1uN-9Guh4NmawSsg\\_lyMnw7YTTf-jbBb1](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1uN-9Guh4NmawSsg_lyMnw7YTTf-jbBb1), p.2).

<sup>39</sup>The standards have not been finalized as of CPE data collection. See Finding 8 (on sustainability).

<sup>40</sup>Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Cambodia, November 2019; CEDAW/C/KHM/CO/6.

### EXAMPLES OF NAPVAW-RELATED EVIDENCE THAT UN WOMEN CONTRIBUTED TO IN 2016-2019:



National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences in Cambodia (2015)



Costing study on multisectoral coordination on gender-based violence (2016)



Interviews with stakeholders and rights holders in eight provinces to inform development of the third NAPVAW (2019)



## EVIDENCE

The CO strategy consistently included a focus on generating evidence that could be used for advocacy. Given the importance of understanding the baseline situation, and considering the limited availability of data in this area, the CO, together with WHO and UNFPA, supported the government in conducting the first National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences in Cambodia (2015), which informed implementation of the second NAPVAW. The fieldwork for the next nation-wide survey – Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) – started in 2020, and is expected to provide data on the prevalence of gender-based violence in the country. According to a consulted stakeholder, the CO provided suggestions on CDHS questions, especially on VAW, which were integrated into the survey (see the box for other examples of evidence that the CO contributed to).



## INCLUSIVENESS

Formulation of the second and third NAPVAWs was highly inclusive (confirmed by most interviewees). Fifteen line ministries, 10 development partners and 30 CSOs took part in designing the second NAPVAW.<sup>41</sup> As reported by the CO, members of Technical Working Group on Gender-GBV, 18 line ministries, 26 CSOs and UN agencies, gender-based violence survivors and relevant stakeholders from seven provinces, took part in the third NAPVAW formulation process.<sup>42</sup> Stakeholders noted that the CO, as co-chair of the Technical Working Group on Gender-GBV, contributed to the inclusiveness in the formulation of the second and third NAPVAW by co-coordinating the work of the group; co-facilitating meetings; and empowering CSOs to participate and make suggestions.

<sup>41</sup> Mid-term Review of NAPVAW 2014-2018. 2017. p.9.

<sup>42</sup> Final Report. Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence. 2019. p.7.



## COORDINATION AND CONVENING

One of the key steps in NAPVAW processes was the establishment in 2014 (during formulation of the second NAPVAW) of the subgroup on gender-based violence under the Technical Working Group on Gender – TWGG-GBV. The subgroup is the main multisectoral body overseeing prevention and response to gender-based violence in Cambodia, with a dedicated Secretariat placed within the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. Some interviewed stakeholders noted that key government members of the Technical Working Group on Gender-GBV (e.g. Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice) increasingly recognized their “niche” in NAPVAW. Nevertheless, some interviewees urged the Technical Working Group on Gender-GBV to “have a voice” in NAPVAW implementation, and not only act as the coordinating body. In the Cambodia country context, as in many cases, the gender machinery within the government system (Ministry of Women’s Affairs) requires additional resources and clout to successfully advocate for enhanced gender programming among its peers.<sup>43</sup>

Establishing a coordinated response mechanism at provincial level, with engagement of government bodies, gender-based violence service providers, and civil society actors, was among the priorities in the second NAPVAW.<sup>44</sup> According to the stakeholders consulted, in line with this priority, the CO contributed to improvement of service coordination among the subnational working groups on multisectoral service response to VAWG in four districts of Kampong Speu and Preah Sihanouk provinces.<sup>45</sup> However, despite improvements at provincial level, gaps remain: namely in working groups’ terms of reference and standard operating procedures; sustaining budgetary allocations; capacity development; and provision of support to gender-based violence victims.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, as noted by some interviewed stakeholders (as of September 2020), there is an ongoing redistribution of roles among government actors working on gender-based violence at the provincial level.



## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

As noted by the consulted stakeholders, another important contribution of the CO has been its capacity building activities with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and other actors engaged in NAPVAW design and implementation, e.g. increasing understanding of Results-based Management (RBM), gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), NAPVAW linkages with CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325; and to empower the Ministry to fulfil its coordination and leadership role on the NAPVAW. As reported by the CO, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs’ coordination and leading of the Technical Working Group on Gender-GBV mechanism significantly strengthened in 2016–2017, as demonstrated by its ability to set agendas, lead meetings, follow up on Technical Working Group on Gender-GBV decisions and provide technical support to the group’s members, with support required from the CO reducing over time.<sup>47</sup> However, many stakeholders noted the need to continue building capacity at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, its provincial departments (PDoWA), and with other key stakeholders, especially taking into account rotation among civil servants, and the fact that the CPE field visit revealed a degree of dissatisfaction with

<sup>43</sup> This has also been noted in 2019 Final Evaluation of UNDP in Cambodia Country Programme Action Plan (2016-2018). p.92.

<sup>44</sup> As of 2017, 9 of 25 provinces had set up a coordinated response mechanism (Mid-term Review of the 2nd NAPVAW, p.14).

<sup>45</sup> UN Women’s activities under the Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence focused on these two

provinces, whereas UNFPA worked in nine other provinces. Some joint UNFPA-UN Women activities were conducted in the provinces, including in Siem Riep.

<sup>46</sup> Community of Practice. GBV Working Group Assessment. December 2019. p.8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

communication of NAPVAW roles, responsibilities and workplans among different actors. Moreover, evidence of a holistic approach to capacity development at national and subnational levels were not identified.<sup>48</sup> while it appears that diagnosis of partners' capacity is undertaken, and training is designed and delivered, there is no reporting on follow-up of the knowledge received or a plan for refresher training (except for post-training assessments undertaken on completion of capacity development events).



## MONITORING & EVALUATION

In addition to coordination and capacity development, the CO's continuous mentoring and coaching and the technical expertise of its staff and consultants, contributed to the development of NAPVAW monitoring system, namely the Annual Operational Plan and Performance Monitoring Framework, which not only served to keep track of progress, but also as a framework for coordination and cooperation among actors.<sup>49</sup> The Mid-Term Review of the second NAPVAW noted, "members of the TWGG-GBV learned and understood the system of data entry on their respective activities" and, as a result, in 2017 the Annual Operational Plan was completed in the first quarter, with clear budget allocations of around US\$ 3.7 million. The Mid-Term Review, however, emphasized that "on the whole, PDoWA or CRM members were not familiar with the Annual Operational Plan and regarded it as overly complicated and non-user friendly,<sup>50</sup> and that it was essential for the Annual Operational Plan to be introduced to subnational level for the practical usage<sup>51</sup>." Furthermore, stakeholders interviewed during CPE data collection stated that, due to rotation within the CO, M&E had become somewhat overlooked during 2018–2019, and only in 2020 was there a request from the Ministry of Women's Affairs to resume the Annual Operational Plan through the ACCESS programme. Moreover, a lesson learned from the second NAPVAW was that due to the involvement of external expertise, a considerable number of Annual Operational Plan indicators had been developed, which was not practical. The sense of government ownership over the M&E framework was not strong; therefore, the monitoring framework for the third NAPVAW was led and developed by government entities, with support from development actors. A stakeholder consulted also noted that the Ministry of Women's Affairs database contains administrative data and was not connected to that of the National Institute of Statistics, which collects prevalence data. There is an opportunity for joint efforts to monitor progress towards the SDGs, in particular, SDG 5.

<sup>48</sup> The CO's capacity development strategy could focus on: 1. Extent to which the cycle of capacity development is followed: diagnosis, design, delivery and follow-up; and 2. Evidence on "two levels of change": individual empowerment and change in the organization or institution. See UN Women. Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office. Regional Evaluation on Capacity Development Initiatives during 2014–17. p.16.

<sup>49</sup> The Ministry of Women's Affairs of Cambodia. Mid-term Review of the 2<sup>nd</sup> NAPVAW. 2017. p.24

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p.24.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p.27.

## FINDING 5:

**The Country Office has made contributions to enhancing knowledge of key government personnel on gender and climate change; however, partnerships have not been formalized and are rather ad hoc, which may put at risk the Country Office's ability to contribute to long-term change.**

The work on gender-responsive disaster risk management and climate change has been a relatively new area for the CO and is currently implemented through the regional SIDA-funded UN Joint Programme (UNEP-UN Women) EmPower. In line with its theory of change, the CO has been working towards achievement of Strategic Note Outcome 4: National and subnational responses to climate change and disaster risk reduction incorporate and address the priorities and needs of all women in Cambodia. Since 2016, approximately US\$ 490,000 has been spent in related outcome areas.<sup>52</sup> The 2019 Annual Work Plan noted that, in addition, the CO would focus on supporting implementation of the Common Chapter to the Strategic Plans of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women, in coordination with the UNCT on climate change (Global UN Women SP Output 15).<sup>53</sup>

Stakeholders familiar with UN Women's work on climate change pointed out that while various actors were working on climate change and disaster risk management issues in Cambodia, UN Women's added value is its technical capacity on gender, which is largely absent from the field. In the area of normative and policy support, as reported by UN Women, in 2019 the CO provided technical expertise to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the inter-ministerial Technical Working Group on Climate Change in the Mid-Term Review of the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2013–2023, contributing to the development of the next phase of the plan. Moreover, because of the CO's capacity development support, key ministries working on climate change and disaster risk management conducted

gender reviews of their policy frameworks and plans to identify gaps; and subsequently integrated gender

analysis into the Mid-Term Review of the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan (2014–2023) and into the Nationally Determined Contributions.<sup>54</sup> While an important step in the right direction, the mid-term review states that gender did not receive adequate attention in the strategy, noting that while some sectors have recognized gender issues resulting from climate change in their strategies of there are no “supporting activities, indicators and resources to translate these gender objectives into actions”.<sup>55</sup> Together with CSOs and other actors, in 2019 the CO participated in the first workshop organized by the National Committee on Disaster Management (NCDM) on the identification of gender inequalities in humanitarian preparedness and response. While the CPE team did not review reports on the follow-up to the workshop, there is the potential the workshops could lead to improved gender-responsiveness and multi-actor coordination in this area.

Building on its links with civil society throughout the above-mentioned processes, and as reported by the CO and confirmed by the stakeholders concerned, in 2019 field visits were conducted to hear women's voices on the ways climate change impacted their lives; and partnerships were established with CSOs to support women's participation in subnational decision-making and planning relating to climate change and disaster risk management. In addition, UN Women conducted a mapping and capacity needs assessment of national and local level CSOs working in climate change and disaster risk reduction, gender equality and human rights.

<sup>52</sup> Based on UN Women Annual Report in Results Management System (18 February 2021).

<sup>53</sup> UN Women Cambodia CO. Strategic Note 2019. p.12.

<sup>54</sup> The main strategic objectives are to: Promote climate resilience through improving food, water and energy security; and reduce sectoral, regional, gender vulnerability and health risks to climate change impacts, among other objectives.

<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Cambodia%20First/Cambodia%27s%20INDC%20to%20the%20UNFCCC.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> General Secretariat of the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCS), with support from Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA) programme and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Cambodia, Mid-term Review Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014–2023, July 2019: [https://ncsd.moe.gov.kh/sites/default/files/2019-08/CCCS%20MTR\\_Final%20Evaluation%20Report\\_final\\_cleared.pdf](https://ncsd.moe.gov.kh/sites/default/files/2019-08/CCCS%20MTR_Final%20Evaluation%20Report_final_cleared.pdf)

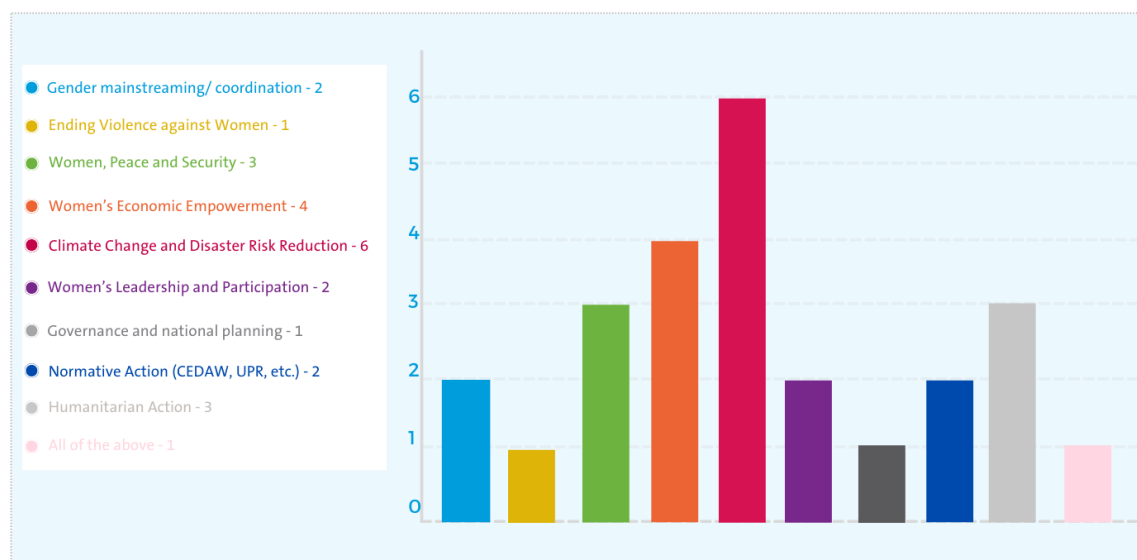
According to the CO, capacity development support to CSOs was planned for 2020.

Among the CO’s contributions mentioned by consulted stakeholders was its hands-on capacity development (jointly with UNEP and UNDP) for gender focal points and other personnel of key central and provincial government bodies working on climate and disaster risks, transport and rural development. According to the stakeholders concerned, this training led to improved understanding among participants on the interlinkages between gender, climate change and development financing; establishment of a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) group; and resulted in the integration of gender concerns in some provincial action plans.<sup>56</sup> As a result of a CO-led training course, core members of ministries’ Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups and the Ministry of Environment initiated planning and consultation with key stakeholders on the development of a gender mainstreaming action plan in the environment sector (2021–2025). Furthermore, while it cannot be directly attributed to the CO’s results, the partners also noted that the capacity development activities contributed to an increase in the number of gender focal points at provincial level. However, recent CO consultations with stakeholders showed that negative norms and attitudes towards women’s leadership roles in climate change and disaster risk management persist, and the CO is planning to continue its work on addressing them.<sup>57</sup>

Overall, the partners characterized cooperation with UN Women as rather ad hoc, due to the absence of a joint project or memorandum of understanding, and advocated for further CO support, particularly at community level (e.g. to increase the number of women rangers; and to focus on groups that are most vulnerable in the context of climate change). However, the CO noted that as funding for this area currently comes from a regional programme, funds were very limited and restricted in how they could be spent, limiting the possibility of establishing projects with partners which had a sufficient duration. Nevertheless, opportunities could be explored with joint programme partners (e.g. UNEP) to strengthen these relationships.

It should be recognized that the CO was able to accomplish its plans in the areas of climate change and disaster risk management with only two dedicated personnel managing the EmPower project: a Programme Analyst who as well as climate change and disaster risk management also worked on WEE issues, and a Programme Officer on climate change.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the personnel survey conducted during CPE data collection, revealed that climate change and disaster risk management were the areas where it was felt the CO required the most technical support (6 of 11 respondents, see Figure 5). CO personnel stated that UN Women needed to enhance its technical expertise in these areas, in addition to building partnerships with respective actors.

**Figure 5: Areas where the CO requires additional technical support (number of personnel answering “yes” in the CPE survey of personnel)**



Data source: CPE led UN Women CO Personnel Survey

<sup>56</sup> The CPE team has not verified this information.

<sup>57</sup> UN Women. EmPower Programme. Strengthening Women’s Leadership on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Findings of Consultations. 2020. p.2

<sup>58</sup> Data on human resources was available as of March 2020.

## FINDING 6:

**The Country Office is recognized as the lead United Nations Country Team agency on gender equality and the empowerment of women, having made substantial technical contributions to mainstreaming gender in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework; although a noted void in gender equality and women’s empowerment leadership had already been felt in 2020 as the Country Office transitioned to Non-resident status and therefore decreased engagement in coordination activities.**

UN Women is mandated to lead, promote and coordinate UNCT efforts to advance the full realization of women’s rights and opportunities, as embedded in its theory of change. The CO exercised this role through leading the UN Gender Theme Group; participating in several UN and non-UN groups and networks; providing technical advice on mainstreaming gender in the UNDAF; and facilitating and following up on the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard Assessments.

Between 2016 and early 2020, the Country Representative and a Junior Professional Officer took the lead on coordination efforts, given that there were no dedicated human resources. Since 2016, the CO delivered a total of US\$ 16,204 (excluding personnel time) in support of Strategic Note organizational effectiveness and efficiency Output Area 1: UN Women Cambodia leads UN System coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women.<sup>59</sup> Despite investing relatively small resources in coordination, stakeholders consulted identified the CO as the lead agency on gender equality and women’s empowerment, especially in EVAW. The CO’s technical support to development of different policies, strategies and actions were highlighted, such as the 2nd and 3rd NAPVAWs, National Programme for Promotion of Women’s Leadership in the Civil Service, Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change Gender Policy, which contributed to the UNCT’s work on UNDAF Outcomes aimed at promotion of social and economic opportunities and participation and accountability.

While some UN stakeholders identified the CO’s efforts in mainstreaming gender perspectives in the UNDAF and specific efforts of UNCT members as a key achievement, four of seven CPE coordination survey respondents<sup>60</sup> rated the extent to which gender was mainstreamed into the UNDAF less positively. The 2020 UN-SWAP Scorecard assessment validates this, as it found that there is still opportunity for the UNCT to enhance mainstreaming of gender equality and women’s empowerment in UNDAF Outcomes. Although it cannot be entirely attributed to the CO’s efforts, the 2020 Scorecard assessment found, however, that 45.5 per cent of UNDAF indicators were gender-sensitive and tracked progress against gender equality and women’s empowerment. The UNCT therefore meets the minimum requirements on gender-responsive UNDAF M&E (it should be noted that gender mainstreaming in the UNDAF is not entirely under UN Women’s control).

**“UN Women was instrumental in mainstreaming gender throughout the UNDAF”**

*-UN Stakeholder consulted-*

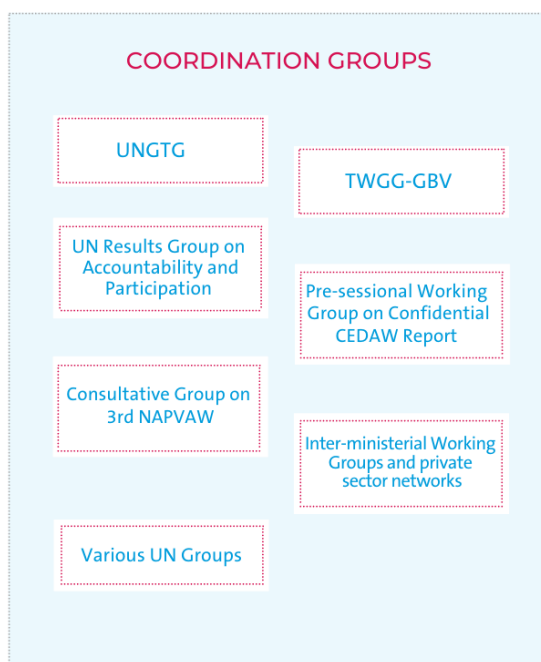
<sup>59</sup> Source of delivery RMS. Annual delivery: 2016: US\$ 0; 2017: US\$ 899; 2018: US\$ 1,560; 2019: US\$ 10,231; 2020: US\$ 3,514. Accessed 10 February 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Despite a low response rate from UN partners (38.89 per cent [7 of 18 agencies]), the participants represented key partner agencies (UNDP, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNOPS, ILO, UNHCR, WFP).



While the UN stakeholders consulted recognized the CO’s contributions to various coordination efforts, namely technical expertise, facilitation, convening and advocacy, and introducing international standards (see Figure 6 below), several stakeholders identified the need for enhanced personnel capacities, noting that while the CO had good technical expertise in the past, due to the CO transition the office may have lost key technical expertise, networks and leadership capacity and could be overloaded.

Figure 6: CO’s engagement in coordination groups



As for the UN Gender Theme Group, the survey of UN coordination partners completed for this CPE (see Figure 7) revealed that all respondents felt that the group “somewhat” achieved its objective in driving more

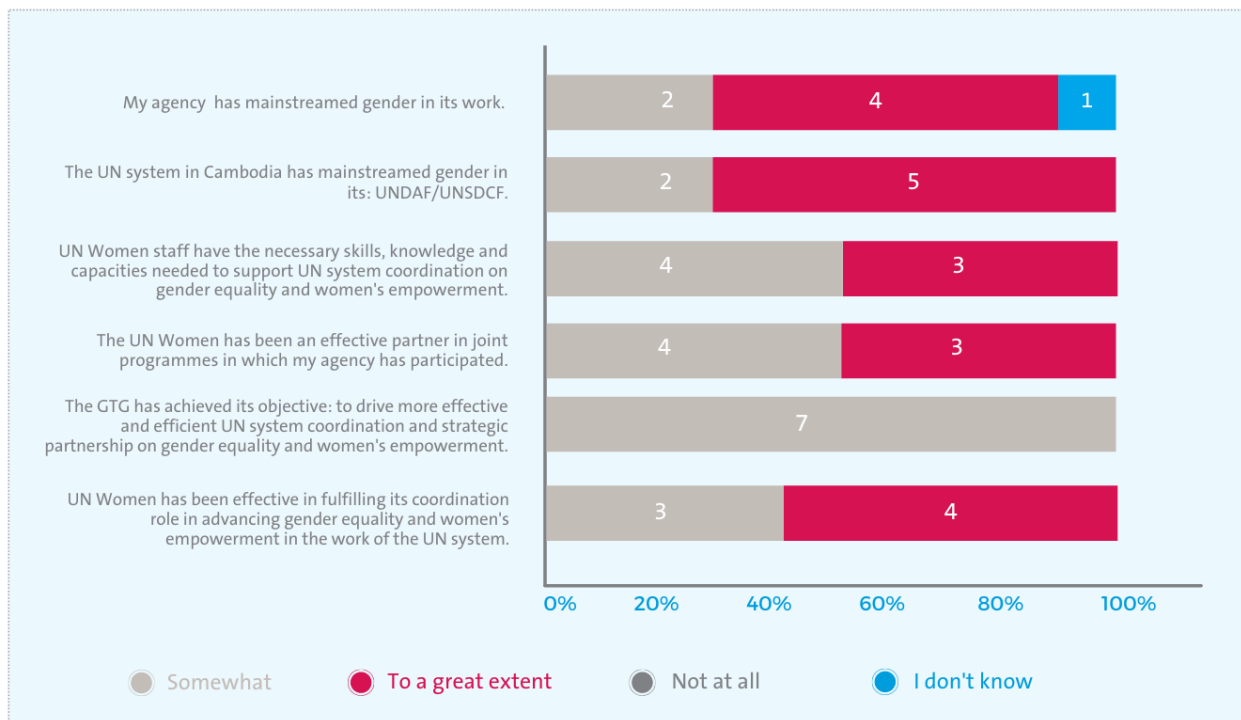
efficient and effective UN system coordination and strategic partnership on gender equality and women’s empowerment – this was the only question that did not receive responses in the “to a great extent” category. The UN partners consulted identified the need for the UN Gender Theme Group to have a clear strategy to coordinate gender equality and women’s empowerment issues within the UNCT and a clear action plan with objectives that could be operationalized. One stakeholder noted that the approach could be issue-based to ensure the UNCT presents a common voice on policy advocacy. The stakeholders consulted (UN partners, donors and UN Women personnel) expressed concern about the CO’s decreased capacity in these forums from early 2020 and pointed to a void already felt. The CO reported that during the annual work planning session in 2020 as a result of the office transition, it had formally stepped down from co-leading the UN Gender Theme Group, and in February 2021 reported that other roles were being handed over to relevant UNCT counterparts.

The UN stakeholders consulted appreciated UN Women’s facilitation of the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard exercises. The 2017 Scorecard Report highlighted that without a dedicated UNDAF Outcome on gender, UN initiatives on gender equality and women’s empowerment were less visible in 2016–2018 than in the 2011–2015 UNDAF cycle where there was a specific gender outcome.<sup>61</sup> The 2017 Scorecard Report recommended consolidation of joint UN efforts to promote the use of disaggregated data and gender budget tracking, while an interviewee consulted during the CPE noted that, despite the current UNDAF having a stronger integration of gender than that previously, the extent to which UNDAF reporting will capture a gender perspective remains to be seen.

It also remains to be seen how the transition of the CO to Non-resident status, including the change in leadership of the UN Gender Theme Group, will affect the gender responsiveness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and gender mainstreaming and advocacy within the UN system in Cambodia.

<sup>61</sup> UNCT in Cambodia. UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. 2017.

Figure 7: Extent to which UN coordination partners agree with the following statements:



Data source: CPE led CO Personnel Survey

**FINDING 7:**

**The Country Office's efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 were not visible to its partners; however, despite losing key staff during the office transition, the Country Office continued to work behind the scenes and contribute a gender perspective to the response.**

Cambodia's needs in the context of COVID-19 were described in the UN Cambodia Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 issued in August 2020.<sup>62</sup> Most consulted stakeholders noted that, although the CO's contribution to the COVID-19 response was not visible, the CO had worked behind the scenes, mainly by ensuring the gender-responsiveness of UN and partners' joint efforts. The CO managed to do this with a small team during the office transition. For example, UN Women joined the UN Working Group on Health and Protection in its support to the Ministry of Interior, which had to react to the mass return of

migrant workers who had left neighbouring countries due to COVID-19 business closures. In addition, the UN partners consulted noted that the CO provided a gender lens for UN COVID-19 communications. At an individual level, CO personnel stated that, where possible, they integrated COVID-19 related actions into existing activities. The CO hosted a session with women leaders to reflect on how the pandemic was affecting their lives, allowing them to reconnect and hear how others were coping and build solidarity, which was highly

<sup>62</sup> United Nations in Cambodia. UN Cambodia Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19. August 2020. pp. 20-38. The Framework focused on five pillars: 1) Health First: Protecting Health Services and Systems During the Crisis; 2) Protecting People: Leaving No One Behind; 3)

Economic Response and Recovery; 4) the Macroeconomic Response; and 5) Promoting Social Cohesion and Investing in Community-Led Resilience and Response

appreciated by the women leaders consulted. The CO also adapted and translated into Khmer the guidelines on ensuring safety of women and girls during quarantine, which were originally developed by the neighbouring UN Women Viet Nam CO. The CO also translated and adapted “Dos and Don’ts” guidance for gender-based violence counsellors developed by UN Women Fiji and, through EAW networks, distributed copies to over 500 gender-based violence service

providers who offered phone counselling services (police contacts in all 25 provinces, local authorities and CSOs). Overall, stakeholders stated that the CO’s communication strategy was strong and helped raise awareness of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and violence against women.

The CO also assessed COVID-19 related needs and priorities from the perspective of rights holders through the UN Women-UNEP WeEmpower study: “The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Women and Enterprises” published in October 2020;<sup>63</sup> and worked with UNICEF and CARE to complete a rapid regional (Mekong delta) gender analysis, as summarized in a joint report.<sup>64</sup> In

addition, the CO participated in the rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on CSOs conducted by ROAP. ROAP also worked in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia to collect data through a mobile company on the impact of COVID-19, which led to the regional report, “Unlocking the lockdown: the gendered effects of COVID-19 on achieving the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific.”<sup>65</sup>

These recent studies highlight the potential impact that a loss of income may have on women. For example, the EmPower study noted an expected decline in women’s income and employment<sup>66</sup> and another study pointed towards the fact that decision-making power in a Cambodian household is strongly linked to household income contribution.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> UN Women and UNEP. The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Women and Enterprises. A Rapid Socio-economic Assessment in Cambodia by the EmPower Project. 2020. p.3. Accessed at <https://reliefweb.int/report/cambodia/impact-covid-19-rural-women-and-enterprises-rapid-socio-economic-assessment-cambodia>

<sup>64</sup> UN Women, UNICEF and CARE. Rapid Gender Analysis during COVID-19 Pandemic. Mekong Sub-regional Report. Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. September 2020. Accessed at <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/6871/file/Rapid%20Gender%20Analysis%20during%20COVID-19%20Pandemic.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> UN Women, Unlocking the lockdown: the gendered effects of COVID-19 on achieving the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, July 2020.

<https://data.unwomen.org/publications/unlocking-lockdown-gendered-effects-covid-19-achieving-sdgs-asia-and-pacific>

<sup>66</sup> UN Women and UNEP. The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Women and Enterprises. A Rapid Socio-economic Assessment in Cambodia by the EmPower Project. 2020. p.3. <https://reliefweb.int/report/cambodia/impact-covid-19-rural-women-and-enterprises-rapid-socio-economic-assessment-cambodia>

<sup>67</sup> UN Women, UNICEF and CARE. Rapid Gender Analysis during COVID-19 Pandemic. Mekong Sub-regional Report. Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. September 2020. p.5

*Has the portfolio been designed and implemented according to human rights and development effectiveness principles (ensuring national ownership and sustainability of programming efforts)?*

## FINDING 8:

**The Country Office's strength is its ability to engage with grassroots organizations and build capacities for mobilizing and advocacy on gender equality and women's empowerment – amplifying the voices of the most marginalized groups: persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ persons, women living with HIV, women migrant workers and youth, which in some cases has contributed towards their recognition by state entities.**

In line with the CEDAW report's concluding observations<sup>68</sup> and the guiding principles of UN Women's Strategic Plan (which include a human rights-based approach in line with international standards and leaving no one behind),<sup>69</sup> the CO has focused on supporting the full and effective participation of CSOs, including women's rights organizations in national normative processes. The theory of change reconstructed by the CPE team included a focus on women migrant workers, youth, LGBTIQ persons and the inclusion of disability concerns as some of the CO's programming principles (see Annex 12).

Both the previous and current Strategic Note provided an in-depth analysis of the constraints faced by civil society and marginalized groups in organizing and freedom of expression, and the opportunities for pushing a human rights agenda through certain angles. This solid understanding of the dynamics in the country facilitated a comprehensive approach that underlies the CO's efforts. Although not documented as a separate CO strategy, as outlined under Finding 3, the CO has focused on building capacity and mobilizing civil society despite the narrowing of civic space. The critical importance of UN Women's convening role was clear during the period under review, as noted by stakeholders, given the rise in political tensions since 2016 and the narrowing of civic

space. Despite progress, the UN system is continuing its advocacy for the establishment of an independent national human rights institution in line with the CEDAW and Universal Periodic Review concluding observations.

The CO employed three main strategies that were successful in amplifying the voices of civil society and in ensuring that marginalized voices were heard:

1. **Utilizing coordination mechanisms or platforms to convene stakeholders and amplify marginalized voices on policy initiatives:** for example, through the Technical Working Group on Gender led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs with technical support from development partners, including UN Women.<sup>70</sup> With regards to women with disabilities, the CO reported concerted efforts to engage women with disabilities in advocacy through dialogue on policy initiatives. Through its Fund for Gender Equality project, the CO reported<sup>71</sup> that it was able to engage women living with HIV to influence local plans and budgets to address gendered HIV-related needs. The UN Trust Fund EVAWG project implemented by the Cambodia Women's Crisis Center in partnership with Action on Disability and Development International (ADD), specifically targeted women with disabilities; and, as a

<sup>68</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Cambodia, November 2019; CEDAW/C/KHM/CO/6.

<sup>69</sup> UN Women SP 2018–2021, p.12

<sup>70</sup> UN Women Annual Report 2016.

<sup>71</sup> UN Women Annual Report 2017.

result of the project, disability rights organizations participated in national and gender-based violence consultations, which led to references to women and girls with disabilities in the new NAPVAW.<sup>72</sup> In 2018, the CO along with other partners contributed to organization of the National Advocacy Dialogue on LGBTQI Rights which was followed by a second dialogue in 2019.<sup>73</sup> UN Women also contributed to a CSO Dialogue with Cambodian Human Rights Commission on LGBTQI Rights. Although direct attribution cannot be made, UN Women’s contributions to advocacy have contributed to the recognition of the rights of LGBTIQ persons: in 2019, the government accepted 173 Universal Periodic Review recommendations with 11 focusing on LGBTIQ rights.<sup>74</sup>

**2. Targeted programming to marginalized groups at community level:** The UN Trust Fund EVAWG project referred to above reported in 2018 that of 612 survivors of violence against women that received essential services through the project, 123 were women with disabilities. The project evaluation reported that: 90 per cent of women and girls with disabilities said they were fully respected by family, community members and service providers; the project improved inclusive access to legal and multi-sectoral services and the responses to survivors of violence, including women and girls with disabilities.<sup>75</sup>

**3. Long-term capacity building efforts targeted at marginalized groups:** The CO supported the development of a Toolkit on Gender Responsive HIV programming for use at local level in Cambodia with collaboration of HIV affected women, community organizations, CSOs and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. The CO supported LGBTIQ activists who had taken part in the leadership training (see Finding 2) to co-create #loveisdiversity, a social media and university outreach campaign targeting youth.

As of 9 January 2021, the Facebook page<sup>76</sup> had reached 10,000 followers. Videos in the Khmer language posted by the group on the page have reached as many as 113k views. The video with the highest number of views is titled, “Can my human rights be taken away?”. UN Women also worked with the group to organize poster campaigns inviting the audience to share their messages on gender-based violence and EVAWG.



Source: #loveisdiversity Facebook Page

<sup>72</sup> UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls, Final Project Evaluation Promoting Women’s dignity Cambodia, 2020; <https://unfpa.org/en/learning-hub/evaluations/2020/08/final-evaluation--promoting-womens-dignity-cambodia>

<sup>73</sup> Cambodian Center for Human Rights, Press Release June 2019: [https://cchr.org/index\\_old.php?url=project\\_page/project\\_page.php&p=press\\_detail.php&pro=SOGI&pro\\_id=7&prid=716&id=3](https://cchr.org/index_old.php?url=project_page/project_page.php&p=press_detail.php&pro=SOGI&pro_id=7&prid=716&id=3)

<sup>74</sup> OHCHR, Universal Periodic Review, Cambodia January 2019: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/KHindex.aspx>

<sup>75</sup> UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls, Final Project Evaluation Promoting Women’s dignity Cambodia, 2020; <https://unfpa.org/en/learning-hub/evaluations/2020/08/final-evaluation--promoting-womens-dignity-cambodia>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/loveisdiversity/>

**FINDING 9:**

**Civil society partners experienced a tension between the role of UN Women as an entity advocating for human rights while at the same time being a member of the UN system necessitating a neutral stance with the government.**

Women human rights defenders in Cambodia face pressures that the UN system has not been able to adequately address. Civil society representatives experienced violation of their rights and constraints to their organizing as reported in the CEDAW report, “reports of harassment and intimidation of women human rights defenders ... women have not been able to organize and participate in International Women’s Day marches since 2015 and that women human rights defenders have reportedly been subjected to increasing scrutiny and restrictions on their rights by the authorities, including arbitrary detention for their legitimate activities, which has created an environment of fear and self-censorship.”<sup>77</sup>

Although the CO explicitly states in its Strategic Note that it will work with the UNCT to support women human rights defenders, civil society sought support from the CO and the UN system, which it was not always able to deliver or meet their expectations. Given the necessity to act as a UN system, action is often reliant on the Resident Coordinator, and while there are ways in which UN Women can step up, the CO’s actions must also be carefully maneuvered so they do not cause tensions with national partners.

In December 2020, the Executive Director of UN Women shared the Secretary-General’s Guidance Note on Civic Space<sup>78</sup> and UN Women’s Guidance Note on supporting Women Human Rights Defenders. These documents outline the importance of UN support to the three P’s: participation, protection and promotion; which will be critical for supporting UN Women’s continuing efforts to advocate for strengthened support to civil society and women human rights defenders in line with human rights obligations.

**BOX 4: CEDAW CONCLUDING OBSERVATION 2019**

“The Committee recommends that the State party fully guarantee the rights of women human rights defenders, trade union leaders, land and environmental activists and members of the political opposition party, particularly their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, without harassment, surveillance or other undue restrictions.”

<sup>77</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Cambodia, November 2019; CEDAW/C/KHM/CO/6.

<sup>78</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN\\_Guidance\\_Note.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN_Guidance_Note.pdf)

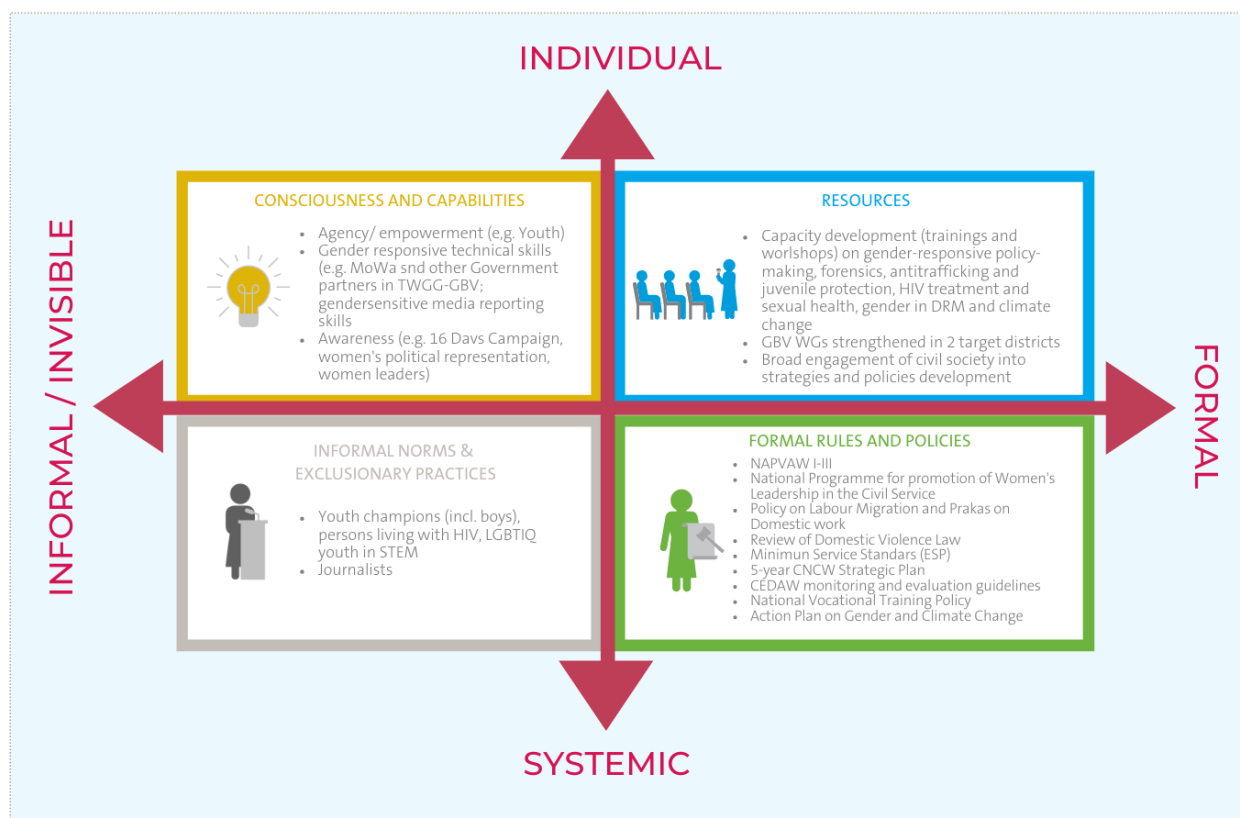
**FINDING 10:**

**The Country Office has concentrated on formal efforts which have led to improved institutional, policy and normative frameworks for gender equality and women’s empowerment. While much has been done on the informal side, there is opportunity to strengthen efforts at the systemic level in tackling informal norms and exclusionary practices, such as scaling up the feminist leadership building approach and engaging men and boys.**

Efforts at various levels – individual, systemic, formal and informal – are required to ensure long-lasting positive changes for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. Although there was no standard approach to definitively measure gender transformative change, Figure 8 provides a snapshot of the CO’s operational and normative efforts during the Strategic Notes period. The assumption is that if the CO

is adopting transformative programming aimed at achieving gender equality, efforts will be present in each quadrant, and the interlinkages between the quadrants will also be recognized. A holistic approach to actions across all quadrants will contribute to the realization of human rights and gender equality in Cambodia.

*Figure 8: CPE analysis of CO areas of work based on document review and evaluation evidence against the Gender @Work Framework <sup>79</sup>*



Data source: Desk review, interviews; developed by CPE team

<sup>79</sup> Developed by the international feminist knowledge network, the Gender at Work Framework provides an analytical lens for organizations and communities to map specific opportunities and barriers for gender equality and

assess the extent to which their work has contributed to shifting gendered power relations: [www.genderatwork.org](http://www.genderatwork.org)

Most of the CO's efforts were found to be focused on "formal/systemic" and "individual/resources" quadrants. As stipulated in its current Strategic Note<sup>80</sup> theory of change, strengthening of strategic partnerships for transformation of gender social norms was one of the factors for achievement of the Strategic Note's intended Outcomes. UN Women aimed to "significantly deepen investment in support to partners seeking to challenge gender norms as part of all programme work, including in the areas of EVAW, migration, climate change action and disaster risk reduction, as well as focusing on supporting long-term transformative change through the Youth Leadership Academy and Feminist Jurisprudence core group."<sup>81</sup> The CO's technical expertise, convening power and advocacy vis-à-vis its strategic government partners contributed to improved gender-responsiveness of normative and policy frameworks which is expected to lead to transformative changes in the lives of women and girls. Various groups of rights holders and partners benefitted from the resources provided by the CO in the form of capacity building, awareness raising and networking, among others.

The CPE team found some evidence of changes occurring at the "individual consciousness and capabilities" level. For example, youth increasingly act as gender champions, and participants of the feminist leadership academy have become more resilient in the context of Cambodia's political situation. However, the evidence also shows that, in some instances, more work is needed to change negative gender stereotypes, including among civil servants and law enforcement agents, and to scale up CO efforts. Moreover, it is difficult to estimate the extent of change across programme interventions as no large-scale post-implementation attitude/behaviour change surveys or assessments have been undertaken by the CO.

As can be seen from Figure 8 and Annex 11, more limited efforts were made on "informal norms and exclusionary practices", which is also the more challenging quadrant to make progress in. Therefore, there is room for the CO to work on tackling negative social norms persisting at various levels, including within government structures and among implementing partners. The CO could also leverage its position within the UN system to influence UNCT members to scale up these efforts in the context of the UNDAF. Overall, interventions that are designed to take into consideration desired changes across all four quadrants and examine the interlinkages between quadrants have more potential for the kind of transformative change required to achieve gender equality.

<sup>80</sup> UN Women Cambodia. Strategic Note 2019. p.9.

<sup>81</sup> The Feminist Jurisprudence core group is comprised of trainers from formal and informal justice sectors at national and subnational level, who

participated in UN Women-organized training in 2017 on women's rights and EVAW.



## Does UN Women Cambodia employ good practice in results-based management to ensure good use of resources to deliver results?

This evaluation question was modified during the evaluation given the transition of the Country Office to Non-resident status. This section focuses on the Country Office's results-based management practices, while other findings have identified issues related to the capacity of the office within this transition phase.

### FINDING 11:

**The Country Office demonstrated dedication to learning and applied good practice in defining how to measure progress, whereas formulation of outcomes, outputs and indicators could be enhanced.**

As noted in Finding 2, the CO has undertaken many capacity building efforts and applied results-based management (RBM) by measuring not only the number of training participants but also application of the knowledge received (see Box 5).

While there were some good practice examples, an evaluability assessment conducted by the CPE team during the inception phase, found that the overall rating of the Strategic Note Development Results Framework (DRF) Outcomes, Outputs and Indicators was “weak” (see Table 2). Most outcome statements lacked specificity on key actors and time frame, and many had more than one focus area. As for outputs, many had multiple focus, lacked time frames and were beyond UN Women's control. The evaluability assessment also revealed that the overwhelming majority of DRF indicators were numeric (e.g. number, percentage); multi-focused; and there was opportunity to specify measurement values further (e.g. lead actor(s)/ rural or urban). Overall, the presence of DRF baselines and target decreased during 2017–2018 compared to 2016, and slightly increased in 2019 (see Table 3).

#### BOX 5: EXAMPLES OF GOOD QUALITY CO INDICATORS

*Results of a post training survey:* “A post training survey of participants was completed to measure the level of actions taken to integrate Feminist Jurisprudence principles, including CEDAW, into their practice: 77.8 per cent of participants stated that they use it in their daily work/life; 61.1 per cent confirmed using it in their project/programme implementation; and 67.7 per cent sharing GRJ knowledge in training/workshops.<sup>82</sup>”

*Strategic Note output indicator and respective result:* Output indicator (6.1.3 A): Percentage of Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) core group reported actions taken to integrate feminist leadership principles into their work.

YLA core members who co-founded #LovelsDiversity were invited to conduct a TedTalk on LGBTIQ rights for all Plan International programme staff in Cambodia.

Data source: CPE desk review and evaluability assess-

<sup>82</sup> UN Women Cambodia. Gender Responsive Jurisprudence Training Evaluation Results. 2018

**Table 2: Quality of Performance indicators in DRF/OEEF**

Measure	Quality assessment highlights	Overall rating as assessed by the evaluation team
DRF Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes more than one focus area</li> <li>Scope of impact commonly too high-level</li> <li>Inconsistently includes SMART attributes</li> </ul>	Weak
DRF Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes more than one focus area</li> <li>Lacking adequate specificity and clarity</li> <li>Outside the control of UN Women or partners</li> </ul>	Weak
DRF Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes more than one focus area</li> <li>Key aspects of output not addressed</li> <li>Potential issue with data reliability or validity</li> </ul>	Weak
DRF Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scope of impact commonly too high-level</li> <li>Somewhat lacking specificity and clarity</li> <li>Lacking precise measure for success</li> </ul>	Adequate/Weak
DRF Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent quality across indicators</li> <li>Key aspects of output not addressed</li> <li>Includes more than one focus area</li> <li>Somewhat lacking specificity and clarity.</li> </ul>	Adequate

Data source: Desk review, interviews; developed by CPE team

**Table 3: Completeness of DRF**

DRF year	Presence of baselines	Presence of targets	DRF completeness as assessed by the evaluation team
SN DRF 2016	85%	85%	Strong
SN DRF 2017	80%	80%	Strong
SN DRF 2018	66%	66%	Strong
SN DRF 2019	73%	73%	Adequate/Strong

Data Source: CPE evaluability assessment the Cambodia CO SN AWP

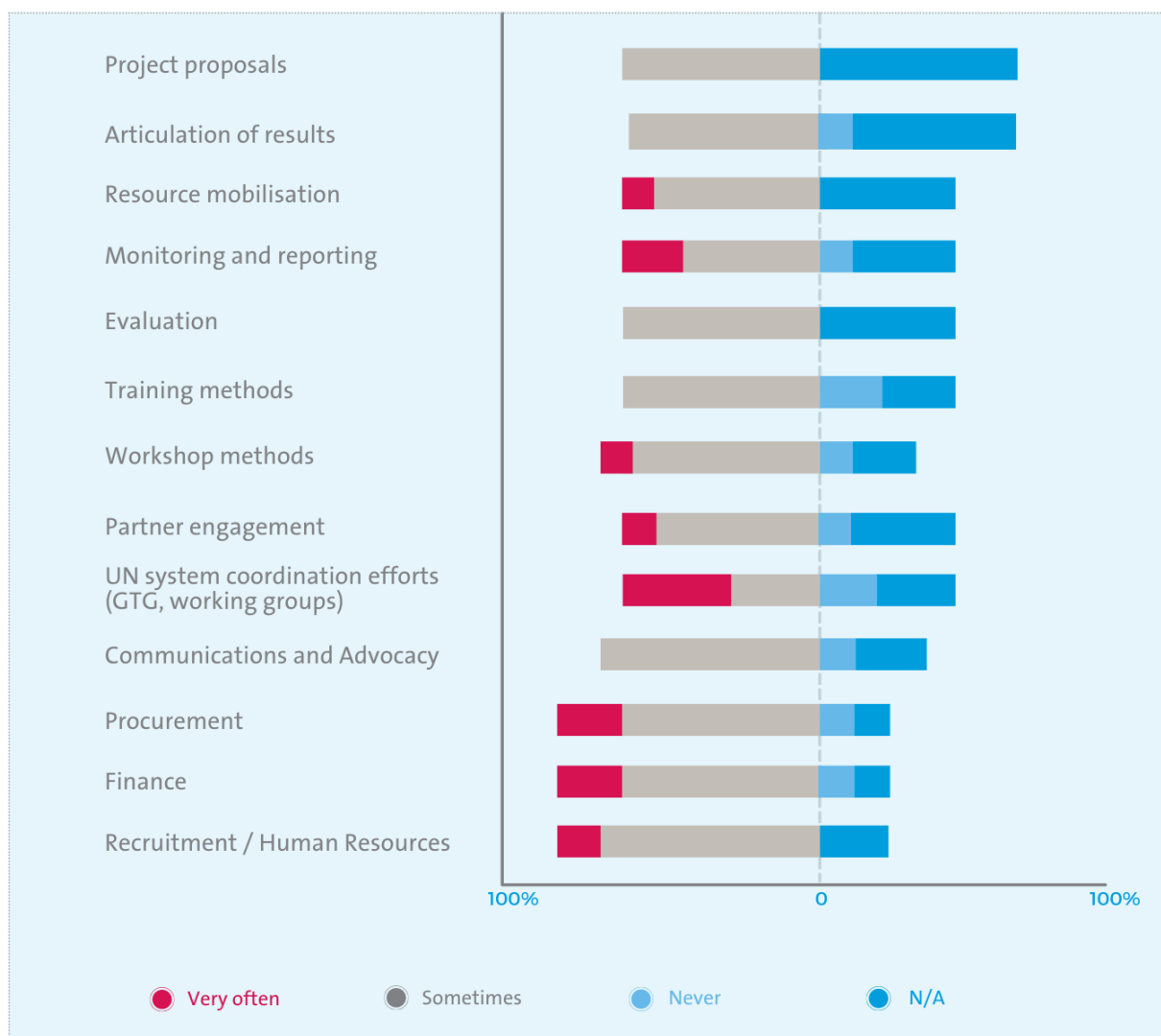
The CO conducted one evaluation in the CPE period and participated in a few regional and UN evaluations. As reported by the CO,<sup>83</sup> respective recommendations and lessons learned were applied from these evaluations.

Recognizing the importance of personnel and partners' results-based management skills, the CO included the following indicators in the Strategic Note 2019–2023 Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework (OEEF): Indicator 3.1A: Number of RBM training and coaching sessions provided to partners; and Indicator 3.1B: % of partner reports demonstrating results using RBM principles and meeting minimum quality reporting requirements. For Indicator 3.1A, in 2019, the CO

systematically provided training on results-based project management, FACE, and results-based reporting to all new CSO partners; and for Indicator 3.1B, as reported by the CO, all relevant reports were of the required quality.

Interviews and the CPE-led survey of CO personnel identified a shortage of dedicated M&E staff, which caused related tasks to be performed by focal points who were project managers (e.g. EVAW, climate change/disaster risk management) or who were managing several areas in parallel. The survey showed that M&E was the main area where respondents often sought assistance (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Frequency of CO personnel seeking support in operational areas of work



Data source: CPE led CO Personnel Survey

<sup>83</sup> UN Women Cambodia. Annual Report 2018.



Photo ©UN Women Cambodia Asia and the Pacific Office

# 3 LESSONS LEARNED

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED



***Development partners support to civil society engagement in countries where civic space is constrained, by ensuring inclusiveness in processes related to the formulation of national plans and strategies, is essential for more comprehensive policy approaches that respond to diverse needs.***

This approach would contribute to development of documents that include the perspectives and needs of diverse target groups, especially the most marginalized, and would contribute to government officials' understanding of the importance of their inclusion to overall country progress. For example, the formulation of the second and third NAPVAWs was built on a wide range of consultation with different stakeholder groups including gender-based violence survivors, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV, and LGBTIQ persons. This contributed to a much more comprehensive document and underlined the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to ending violence against women.



***A comprehensive approach to capacity building through engagement of a cohort of civil society actors in long-term training, application of knowledge and coaching efforts is an effective way of contributing to the women's movement, particularly in countries where civic space is constrained.***

The CO's dedication to its feminist leadership programme exemplified feminist principles by bringing meaning to gender equality and women's empowerment advocacy efforts; empowered women and youth leaders; built networks; and facilitated the development of a coherent approach among civil society actors. This cohort of civil society leaders now have effective tools and knowledge and are bringing these to their own networks, facilitating a multiplying effect and thereby strengthening the overall capacity of civil society to ensure their demands are heard, respected and acted upon by duty bearers.



***Building a strong joint risk management plan with partners that is continuously updated as contexts change can help to mitigate and address challenges that arise.***

For example, the NAPVAW monitoring and reporting tool – the Annual Operational Plan – was only used for one year (2017). As UN Women's personnel rotation occurred shortly after the introduction of this new tool, partner capacities had not been strengthened and they required continuous support to ensure effective implementation.



***Development of tools and guidance should be conducted with partners to ensure indicators and processes are feasible for national counterparts to lead.***

Ensuring national ownership and partners' capacity/understanding of a new tool/guidance are of critical importance, particularly when linked with policy implementation as the government bears primary responsibility for implementation of national policies and strategies. For example, the M&E framework of the second NAPVAW was developed by an external consultant, which hampered the initial sense of ownership by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the framework was deemed too difficult to implement.



***Production and effective sharing of evidence is important for advocacy vis-à-vis government entities that are empowered to make decisions on budget allocations.***

As such, to encourage the Ministry of Finance to allocate funds to NAPVAW, the CO worked on building the capacity of government focal points on women's affairs on gender-responsive budgeting and developing evidence-based indicators and targets.



***To sustain gains and ensure lasting effects, addressing negative social norms on gender, especially among decision makers, should be a priority for development actors.***

Only once existing power dynamics and perceptions of the role of women (for example in leadership) are broken down will lasting change be achieved. There are cases when the CO has been able to contribute to changes in negative attitudes by closely engaging stakeholders in data generation (e.g. policy gaps related to gender and climate change) and development of knowledge products. These efforts must be accelerated and scaled up to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.



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# 4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The presentation of the preliminary CPE findings and discussion on the way forward took place with members of the Evaluation Reference Group in December 2020 and fed into the final recommendations presented below. The recommendations were reviewed by the Evaluation Management and Reference Groups and subsequent changes were integrated as appropriate. The bullet points below the recommendations represent potential key actions for consideration by the Cambodia CO and ROAP, based on

feasibility within its current programme of work and available resources. Some of the suggested actions were already under way given the time lag between the issuance of the preliminary findings and finalization of the report. The level of priority and suggested time frame for implementation are indicated below each recommendation. The feedback from the Evaluation Management and Reference Groups on factual errors in the evaluation report were tracked for transparency.

## RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

### Conclusion 1

***The CO has made great strides in Cambodia by building long-term strategic partnerships with national stakeholders through a comprehensive strategy for building national capacity to lead on the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. Despite the strong relationships established, if clarity on the office's vision and way forward is not provided in a timely manner, there is a risk to the impact of programming, with a loss of credibility and diminished trust in UN Women.***

#### Based on findings:

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- The CO demonstrated a deep understanding of the country context and employed strategies that were relevant to this context. The CO was able to build trust with partners through sustained engagement, provision of technical expertise, flexibility and by listening and responding to the priorities of its partners – whether government or civil society. A comprehensive strategy to build capacities at individual and institutional levels translated into empowered voices that advocated for normative change and resulted in progress for gender equality and women's empowerment. This comprehensive approach could provide inspiration to other UN Women offices and gender equality advocates around the world, particularly those operating in environments where civic space is constrained.
- The CO is recognized as contributing to strengthened normative frameworks, particularly in ERAW and overall government and UNCT support to gender equality and women's empowerment. This can be seen in the extent of national ownership to lead and respond to normative processes, such as CEDAW. As in most countries, progress at the normative level is not always followed by action. Although there is still much work to be done, the successful actions in Cambodia, for example, in relation to the development and implementation of the NAPVAW must be celebrated: mechanisms for coordinating multisectoral VAWG service response have been strengthened; gender focal points have been established; and awareness of gender issues were raised by many civil servants.
- During the transition of the CO to Non-resident status, stakeholders have waited patiently for clarity on the office's future vision. Recognizing that 2020 has been a year of upheaval due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 should be used to develop the office's vision, ensuring that the strong partnerships built over the years are maintained.

## Recommendation 1

*The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to articulate a clear vision for UN Women's footprint or exit strategy in Cambodia in line with the UN Women Presence Governance Policy, Guidance and Procedure and communicate this to stakeholders.*

## Priority:

High

Medium

Low

## Time frame:



## Relevant to:

*RO senior management and operations and headquarters*

The following key actions could be considered by ROAP and the CO:

- Elaborate and continuously update the plan for the office in the immediate and medium term (through 2022 and beyond). This should be based a whole-of-region assessment to identify and communicate UN Women's vision for country presence in the future, as recommended by the Programme Presence Portfolio Evaluation completed in 2018.
- Hold a stakeholder meeting or individual consultations with stakeholders regarding the vision to seek their input and to build an understanding of the situation. This may be a follow-up to previous discussions to clarify the final decision about the way forward.
- Build on the plans shared in late February 2021 ("UN Women Cambodia Presence Transition: Updated Plans and Actions") focusing on a realistic and prioritized operationalization plan and regularly monitor it to ensure the transition is working effectively.

## EFFECTIVENESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY

## Conclusion 2

*Momentum on progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia may be stalled without a full UN Women presence on the ground. With the CO's change in status, there is a high risk that UN Women in Cambodia will not be able to meet the expectations of all stakeholders. The transition period should be used to ensure smooth partnership handover.*

## Based on findings:

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- The CPE identified many contributions that the CO had made in coordinating and convening actors in the gender equality and women's empowerment space in Cambodia. Stakeholders identified the technical expertise and advocacy efforts of the office as key for the stronger focus on gender by the UNCT and noted that without UN Women's presence there is a risk that the gains made may be stalled.
- Coordination and convening in Cambodia requires a high-level manager to engage directly with UNCT and government counterparts. To not lose the gains made, UN Women would benefit from engaging the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, United Nations Gender Theme Group and key UN partners to identify focal points for key aspects within its current programme that are at risk of losing momentum. For example, support to the Cambodia National Council of Women, Technical Working Groups on Gender and climate change and gender-based violence, and Ministry of Women's Affairs. By moving responsibility to other organizations within the UN system, accountability for ensuring a gender focus may be assured. Lessons from this transition process may be important for headquarters and other UN Women offices to take note of. ROAP reported that since the draft evaluation was shared in January 2021, actions have been taken.



- The CO demonstrated dedication to learning and there were examples of good practice in measuring progress of not only the number of training participants, but also application of the knowledge received. Within the context of the changed status of the CO, continued dedication to measuring progress will be important for partners, especially those that will carry forward the efforts of UN Women, to ensure lessons are learned and gains are documented.

## Recommendation 2

**UN Women Cambodia to establish a strategy for transitioning key normative and coordination roles to UN partners or other relevant development partners and, where possible, identify linkages between ongoing programmes and government counterparts to not lose the momentum already achieved and to ensure continuity and continuous learning during and post transition.**

### Priority:

High

Medium

Low

### Time frame:



### Relevant to:

RO senior management country programme staff

The following key actions could be considered by the CO:

- In line with plans to transfer the chair of the Gender Theme Group to another agency, UN Women should proactively work with agencies to ensure smooth support to the government counterparts working in the gender equality and women's empowerment space.
- UN Women to work with UN agencies, especially those with leadership roles in gender equality and women's empowerment, to ensure continuous support to NAPVAW and other key policy areas beyond the current programming time frame.
- ROAP to identify a staff member to regularly check in with the United Nations Gender Theme Group and other key partners during the transition period.
- Continue measuring progress to document and learn from progress made in Cambodia for GEWE and share with partners.

## HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

### Conclusion 3

**Given the limited space for civil society, grassroots capacity and network building remains highly relevant. There is space for the CO to ensure these efforts are sustained through linkages with UN partners and ongoing programmes in EAW and climate change/disaster risk management, so that they can tap into these networks and continue and scale up the successful capacity building efforts with youth, women's leaders, LGBTQI persons, migrant workers and women living with HIV. These efforts will in turn support positive gender norm change.**

### Based on findings:

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As has been noted throughout the report, the CO's efforts to build a cadre of women and youth leaders has paid dividends in the constrained environment for civil society: it has built their confidence, trust in each other and sense of empowerment. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to ensure that these leaders and networks continue and can be supported by the UN and other development partners to continue fostering the connections between civil society and the government, thereby facilitating informed policy development and implementation. Strengthening civil society and the women's movement is critical for holding duty bearers to account and ensuring the rights of the people, with a focus on the most marginalized, are protected and promoted.

In the past, these efforts were funded through core resources. Moving forward, UN Women has opportunities through its current (non-core funded) efforts to identify entry points for continuing its successful capacity building approach; however, it should also ensure that UN partners are consulted on a potential UNCT strategy for civil society engagement.

**Recommendation 3**

*Identify entry points within current programming efforts and those of UN partners (such as the ILO) to continue capacity building efforts at the grassroots level targeting women’s leaders, youth leaders, LGBTIQ persons, women migrant workers, women with disabilities and women living with HIV to ensure the gains made are sustained and nurtured.*

**Priority:**

- High
- Medium**
- Low

The following key actions could be considered by the CO:

- Map potential linkages with UN partners and hold consultations between stakeholders to identify how the UNCT can support civil society in the future.
- Advocate for and support a UNCT-wide strategy for building civil society capacities, ensuring the leave no-one behind and feminist principles are carried forward by engaging, empowering and building the capacities of the most marginalized groups in Cambodian society and measuring progress.

**Time frame:**



**Relevant to:**

*RO senior management and country programme staff*

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UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and



220 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10017, USA

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