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CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S UN SYSTEM
COORDINATION AND BROADER CONVENING ROLE IN
ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



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This report, and the overall evaluation process, was informed and enriched by the participation of more than 400 stakeholders, staff and partners – many of whom actively contributed to the development of evaluation findings and recommendations by serving as reference group members, attending focus group discussions and completing comprehensive surveys. Without the support and active participation of these individuals in the consultation process, this report would not have been possible.

The evaluation was conducted by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service (IES). The IES team included the Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service, Inga Sniukaite as Evaluation Team Leader; Tara Kaul, Evaluation Specialist; Soo Yeon Kim, Evaluation Analyst; Genevieve Quinn, Research Assistant; and Divvaakar Subramanyam Vidalur, Independent Consultant.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEB	Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary General
EVAW	End Violence Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GTG	Gender Theme Group
IANWGE	Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality
IBC	Issue Based Coalition
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
IRRF	Integrated Results and Resources Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PPID	Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RCP	Regional Collaborative Platforms
RMS	Results Management System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SP	Strategic Plan
UNCF	United Nations Cooperation Framework
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCD	UN System Coordination Division
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan
UNTF	United Nations Trust Fund
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

FOREWORD

Violence against women and girls is a significant problem globally which takes many forms and has both immediate and long term physical and mental health consequences. Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) is a key developmental outcome and focus in UN Women's current Strategic Plan (2018-2021) and the Entity's work on EVAW spans its integrated mandate of normative support, UN system coordination, and operational activities on the ground. In working towards preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, UN Women coordinates and works with partner agencies in the UN system, and also convenes and collaborates with civil society, the private sector, local governments, and women's organizations. With a view to informing this important strategic area, the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) led an evaluation to assess the contribution of UN Women's coordination and convening role to the EVAW results.

The evaluation found that UN Women's mandate to lead, promote and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality and women's empowerment is a strategic asset that enables the Entity to engage on both normative advocacy and operational support, with coordination acting as a binder for the two. With the UN-SWAP 2.0 and the SDGs, the emphasis of coordination is evolving from accountability for mainstreaming gender within systems, processes, and functions of UN entities, to transformative results in thematic areas. However, the existing accountability mechanisms are insufficient and need to be complemented with an appropriate Coordination for EVAW Results Framework. The evaluation also found that a lack of articulation of a concrete value proposition of coordination has constrained the operationalization of the coordination role in thematic areas, while other challenges include a lack of sufficient financial investments and appropriate metrics to showcase the value of UN Women's coordination work to the UN system as a whole.

Despite these challenges, there is strong evidence of the contribution of UN Women's coordination and convening role in advancing the cause of EVAW across regions - including via the Essential Services Programme, Partners for Prevention, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, and the UNiTE campaign, to name a few. UN Women's role in the UN system's COVID-19 response is another strong example that showcased UN Women's thought leadership, expeditious mobilization of evidence, and strong and cohesive advocacy for action in EVAW.

UN Women's founding resolutions enable the Entity to lead, coordinate and promote a system-wide Coordination for EVAW Results Framework, and to strengthen inter-agency mechanisms for coordinated actions in the thematic area of EVAW towards accountability for development results as envisioned in UN-SWAP 2.0 and internationally agreed goals on EVAW, especially SDG 5.2.

Internally, the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 is a timely opportunity for UN Women to recognize and reflect on its UN system coordination and convening functions in thematic areas, particularly EVAW. The recommendations in the evaluation are forward looking and suggest a reaffirming of UN Women's mandate to coordinate for results in key thematic areas, clear articulation of the value proposition of coordination to accelerate EVAW outcomes, strengthening of inter-agency and in-house coordination mechanisms, as well as systematic documenting and communication of the impact of coordination. We hope that the insights from this evaluation will contribute to strategic decision-making, including the development of UN Women's next Strategic Plan.



Lisa Sutton

Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S UN SYSTEM COORDINATION AND BROADER CONVENING ROLE IN ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Photo ©UN Women/Supasan Banyongkasena

This report presents the findings of the corporate evaluation of UN Women's UN system coordination and broader convening role with civil society, governments and other partners in ending violence against women (EVAW). This evaluation was conducted by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) as part of the revised UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan (2018–2021). The evaluation covered the period from 2018–2020. It was initiated in December 2020 and completed in April 2021.

WHAT WAS EVALUATED

The evaluation focused on UN Women's UN coordination and convening role in EVAW primarily during the period of the current Strategic Plan (2018–2021) and allowed for the inclusion of relevant historical results and mechanisms. While not a focus of this evaluation, the emerging lessons learned for coordination and convening from the Spotlight Initiative to EVAW were also considered.

Drawing on insights collected during the evaluation inception stage, the evaluation focused on five key questions:

- What is the **strategic significance** of UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening role in advancing globally agreed goals on EVAW?
- How has UN Women **operationalized** its UN system coordination and broader convening power on EVAW issues?
- What are the **results** of UN Women's UN system coordination and broader convening role on EVAW issues?
- How has UN Women's coordination and convening role contributed to EVAW during the **COVID-19 global pandemic**?
- What **lessons** emerge from programmes where UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening work has led to demonstrated impact in EVAW?

The findings from this evaluation are expected to contribute to strategic decision-making; organizational learning and accountability; and to strengthening UN Women's

UN system coordination and its broader convening role in EVAW, including through the development of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, and senior management and programme staff directly working on, or with an interest in EVAW. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors working on EVAW, including civil society, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and development partners.

HOW IT WAS EVALUATED

The key emphasis of the evaluation was on mapping and validation of UN Women's coordination work on EVAW outcomes – those reflected in the Integrated Resource and Results Framework of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021, and the targets enshrined in international commitments including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The evaluation team employed a combination of primary and secondary data sources to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions (See Annex 2 for Evaluation Matrix).

In total, over 400 stakeholders were engaged through interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys and questionnaires. The evaluation team also carried out five in-depth case studies which were considered of an appropriate scale and maturation to offer useful lessons.

DATA COLLECTION



Desk review and synthesis, portfolio analysis and review



Key informant interviews and 6 focus group discussions



Surveys conducted and 5 case studies

200+

documents reviewed

6

focus group discussions

100

stakeholders engaged

306

survey respondents

2

online surveys

5

case studies

LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

The evaluation brought to light a few key factors that influence success in any coordination and convening role. While they are potentially applicable across thematic areas, their specific importance to EAW is due to the large and overlapping footprints of EAW programming in the UN system.

LESSON 1

Having a coordination mandate is a necessary but insufficient condition for ensuring effective coordination to mainstream gender perspectives in development results. Implementing the mandate requires appropriate investment to strengthen the legitimacy vested in the coordinating entity to ‘lead, promote and coordinate’ the UN system.

At a fundamental level, while UN Women’s mandate is to lead the UN system in coordination for gender equality and women’s empowerment, it is the collective responsibility of the UN system as a whole to work together to realize this goal. Coordination is the joint action of entities coming together based on the shared and agreed benefits of coordination. Therefore, drivers, incentives and enabling factors are required for peer entities to engage in coordination of EAW, based on clear and shared understanding of its contribution to system-wide results as much as to support agency-level objectives.

LESSON 2

Coordination in thematic areas is intertwined with the normative and operational roles of UN Women’s mandate. A large part of coordination in thematic areas takes place within the context of normative work and programming: joint planning; development and dissemination of knowledge products; programme implementation; and advocacy and communications. Coordination therefore needs to be viewed in terms of the value it adds to normative and operational results and outcomes.

The averred importance of coordination’s contribution to results needs to be corroborated by due recognition in strategic plan thematic results through a theory of change; adoption of appropriate results indicators (beyond processes); elaboration of resource needs; allocations in programming budgets, and implementation of a framework of standards against which progress can be regularly aggregated, measured and reported on. A systematic documentation of coordination efforts would also enable recognition of the significant time spent in coordination for results, and the quality of the enabling environment in which coordination takes place.

LESSON 3

Coordination is as much about people skills and building trust as it is institutional arrangements. Instances of strong leadership and individual efforts to build collaborative relationships were found to result in successes. Good examples were noted in the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (the Essential Services Global Programme) and the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

At the country level, coordination responsibilities are attached to operational programme management responsibilities. However, skill sets for effective coordination can be quite different from those for effective operational programme management. Leadership, building trust, interpersonal skills and communication are important competencies for coordination, and are present to varying degrees in staff whose primary functions are in operational programme management rather than external coordination. In the absence of clearly specified and agreed coordination outputs, operational programme management often supersedes coordination as a priority, especially given the considerable amount of time involved in coordination.

COORDINATION PRACTICES

The evaluation team noted the following examples of promising practices in coordination that demonstrate the benefits of coordination, especially highlighting the costs of ‘non-coordination’.

First, from a design perspective, some elements of the Spotlight Initiative’s coordination structures could be further studied and potentially applied to joint programming in general:

- ➔ **Vesting coordination functions and oversight of implementation in the Resident Coordinator** who is accountable to the Deputy Secretary General, rather than appointing a UN funding entity as the coordinating entity, therefore enabling equidistance of agencies and promoting a more joined-up approach to UN’s work on EAW in the country.
- ➔ **Selection of agencies based on comparative advantages, experience and technical expertise in each country** (in terms of the results of the thematic pillars of the theory of change), under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.
- ➔ **Explicitly recognizing the importance of coordination at national, regional and global levels** and providing a dedicated structure and resources for programme coordination support, including a dedicated coordination resource for each agency.
- ➔ **Explicitly recognizing the importance of technical coherence** in programme planning and implementation and assigning lead responsibility to UN Women for technical coherence.

As a flagship programme of the UN’s SDG efforts and in line with the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform, the Spotlight Initiative has positioned the Resident Coordinator’s office as the location of UN system coordination for the programme. While this design is still to prove its effectiveness and efficiency, UN Women is well positioned to play the technical coherence role by supporting the Resident Coordinator’s office through in-country and

CONCLUSIONS¹

CONCLUSION 1. UN Women’s mandate to ‘lead, promote and coordinate’ mainstreaming of gender equality and women’s empowerment across the UN system is a strong, strategic asset. However, current system-wide accountability and reporting frameworks are inadequate to enable effective coordination for system-wide results in thematic areas. An accountability framework for thematic areas, including EAW, that incorporates system-wide results therefore needs to be developed.

regional office structures. UN Women’s substantial human resources and expertise in EAW is a corporate asset not matched in the UN system, and could be leveraged more effectively to counteract non-uniform country presence and capacities.

Second, UN Women’s recognition as the key counterpart UN agency on gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the Entity’s strong on-the-ground networks are UN Women’s strategic assets in its coordination role, more than the size of its operational programmes. The evaluation team also noted several instances of UN Women’s strong positioning with external actors at the country level as the ‘go-to’ agency for EAW matters. The strong constituencies built with national women’s machinery, government-led coordination structures, CSOs and women’s organizations has emanated from long-standing engagement in advocacy for a human rights-based, survivor-centred and multisectoral approach to EAW. This has enabled UN Women to play a lead role in external coordination even in countries with small programme portfolios.

Third, notwithstanding some challenges in developing an effective division of labour, both UN Women and UNFPA have made due efforts to evolve pragmatic inter-agency arrangements in joint programming, development of global knowledge products, and advocacy and communications. This was evident in the agreed division of territories in the Essential Services Global Programme and in the UNiTE Campaign in Asia and the Pacific, and also in managing joint programmes in countries where UN Women does not have a country presence. These successes are in no small measure due to the initiative shown by individuals to build a collaborative relationship within specific engagements towards common objectives. There is also mutual recognition and respect among the senior leadership in both entities of each other’s technical expertise and continuing investment in EAW capacities. This has led to current dialogue on more effective corporate arrangements for collaborative action and minimized implementation frictions on the ground, though these nonetheless still remain.

CONCLUSION 2. The lack of articulation of a concrete value proposition of UN system coordination, which clearly defines action areas, roles and responsibilities, and metrics to track contributions to development results, has constrained the operationalization of the Entity’s coordination role in thematic areas. It is within UN Women’s mandate to articulate this value proposition through consultations.

¹ Further elaboration on the results, lessons and conclusions can be found in chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the evaluation report.

CONCLUSION 3. Despite the challenges, UN Women has achieved successful results with significant linkages to its UN system coordination and collaborative actions. Although there is evidence that UN Women's coordination and convening roles have helped advance EAW across regions, the results management framework needs to be strengthened to systematically capture these results.

CONCLUSION 4. The COVID-19 response is a strong example of the power of a coordinated UN system response. Not only did the response elicit the best efforts of the entire UN system, but it also established UN Women's credentials in a system-wide coordination role, emphasizing its capacities in thought leadership, swift mobilization of evidence, and strong and cohesive advocacy for action to respond to and prevent VAWG in public and private spaces.

CONCLUSION 5. Not systematically capturing and reflecting coordination-related plans, actions, costs and contributions to EAW thematic area results does not support the acknowledged importance of coordination of UN Women and the UN system as a whole. As a result, the value and contribution of coordination to outcomes remains undetermined and underrecognized.

CONCLUSION 6. In the absence of clear institutional arrangements, enabling structures and processes for coordination in thematic areas, successes are achieved more through individual leadership, motivation, charisma and other interpersonal skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS²



RECOMMENDATION 1.

UN Women should reaffirm its UN system coordination mandate for results in key thematic areas (i.e. beyond its promotion of gender mainstreaming in UN organizations).



RECOMMENDATION 2.

UN Women should clearly articulate the value proposition of coordination to accelerate EAW outcomes and the risks and costs of non-coordination. It should also present the Entity's credentials to lead, promote and coordinate UN system accountability for thematic area results and should propose a 'coordination for EAW results' framework with clear results and indicators.



RECOMMENDATION 3.

UN Women should appropriately recognize and reflect coordination and convening functions in the thematic areas of its Strategic Plan for 2022–2025 with specific results indicators and resource requirements at the global, regional and country levels to present a full picture of actions and funding gaps.



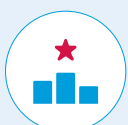
RECOMMENDATION 4.

UN Women should lead and strengthen inter-agency mechanisms for coordinated actions in the thematic area of EAW towards accountability for development results as envisioned in UN-SWAP and internationally agreed goals on EAW, especially SDG 5.2.



RECOMMENDATION 5.

UN Women should strengthen in-house coordination mechanisms to better represent thematic area highlights and coordination challenges in inter-agency mechanisms and reporting.



RECOMMENDATION 6.

UN Women should systematically document and compellingly communicate the impact of coordination to the UN system, donors and national stakeholders through high-level messaging of the value proposition of its coordination work, using metrics and case studies suitable for external audiences.

The recommendations are based on the evaluation framework, findings and conclusions. The recommendations were developed in consultation with key evaluation stakeholders, including the Evaluation Reference Group, PPID, UNSCD, SPRED and the EAW section.

² Chapter 7 provides suggested timelines, prioritization, and steps for implementation of the recommendations.



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1

BACKGROUND

1.1

OVERVIEW

This report presents the findings of the corporate evaluation of UN Women's UN system coordination and broader convening role with civil society, governments and other partners in ending violence against women (EVAW). This evaluation was conducted by UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) as part of the revised UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan (2018–2021). The evaluation was initiated in December 2020 and completed in April 2021.

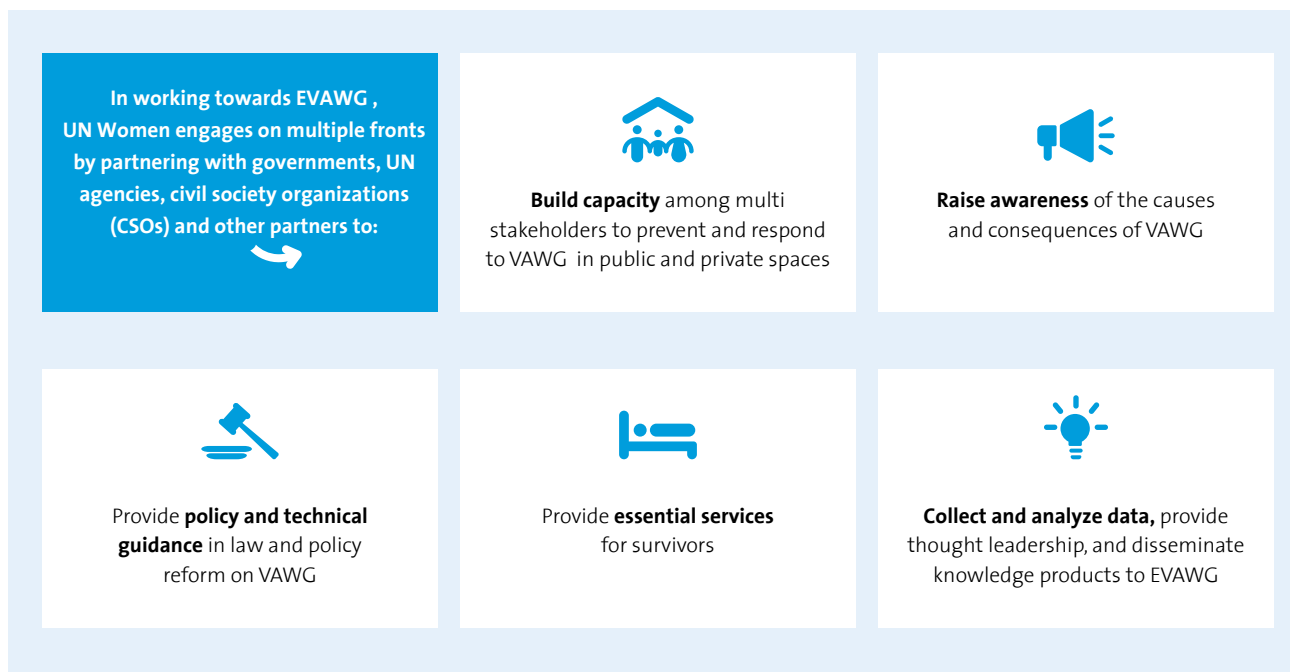
UN Women works to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG); increase access to services for survivors; and make private and public spaces safer for women and girls. In working towards EVAWG, UN Women leverages its integrated mandate by providing normative support, coordinating the UN system and through its operational activities. UN Women engages on multiple fronts by partnering with governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other partners to: (a) build capacity among multi stakeholders to prevent and respond to VAWG in public and private spaces; (b) raise awareness of the causes and consequences of

VAWG; (c) provide policy and technical guidance in law and policy reform on VAWG; (d) provide essential services for survivors; and (e) collect and analyze data, provide thought leadership, and disseminate knowledge products to EVAWG, including through established global communities of practice.

This evaluation studied the value and benefit that UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening role in EVAW bring to achieving collective EVAW outcomes. The overarching question of the study was:

➔ **What value and benefit does UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening role in EVAW bring to UN Women, UN entities, governments and other partners; and to the overall achievement of collective EVAW outcomes?**

The report is presented in seven chapters: background, context, background to coordination and convening, findings, lessons, conclusions and recommendations. Annexes are presented in Volume II.



1.2

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The evaluation provides an overall assessment of UN Women's UN system coordination and broader convening role in the area of EAW, examines existing mechanisms and includes a forward-looking analysis with a view to informing UN Women's new Strategic Plan (2022-2025).

Drawing on insights collected during the evaluation inception stage, the evaluation focused on five key questions:

1. What is the strategic significance of UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening role in advancing globally agreed goals on EAW?
2. How has UN Women operationalized its UN system coordination and broader convening power on EAW issues?
3. What are the results of UN Women's UN system coordination and broader convening role on EAW issues?
4. How has UN Women's coordination and convening role contributed to EAW during the COVID-19 global pandemic?
5. What lessons emerge from programmes where UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening work has led to demonstrated impact in EAW?

In terms of scope, the evaluation covered the period from 2018-2020, focusing on UN Women's UN coordination and convening role in EAW primarily during the period of the current Strategic Plan (2018-2021) and allowed for the inclusion of relevant historical results and mechanisms. While not a focus of this evaluation, the emerging lessons learned for coordination and convening from the Spotlight

Initiative to eliminate VAWG were also considered to the extent possible. In 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic exacerbated the risk factors for VAWG and called for further attention to the global "shadow pandemic" of VAWG. UN Women played an integral role in the UN system response and in raising awareness of VAWG during COVID-19. This includes leading the development of an inter-agency statement on VAWG in the context of COVID-19³, the UN Secretary-General's political engagement strategy on gender based violence (GBV); providing substantive inputs to support the inclusion of VAW in the creation of the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker⁴ in collaboration with UNDP; and the production and dissemination of a series of EAW and COVID-19 policy briefs on main thematic areas⁵ helping to inform the adaptation of policy and programmes in developed and developing countries to different stages of the pandemic.

The evaluation findings are expected to contribute to strategic decision-making; organizational learning, and accountability; and to strengthening UN Women's UN system coordination and its broader convening role in EAW including through the development of the UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, senior management and programme staff directly working on, or with an interest in, EAW. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors working on EAW, including civil society, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and development partners.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS



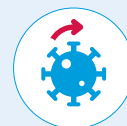
What is the **strategic significance** of UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening role in advancing globally agreed goals on EAW?



How has UN Women **operationalized** its UN system coordination and broader convening power on EAW issues?



What are the **results** of UN Women's UN system coordination and broader convening role on EAW issues?



How has UN Women's coordination and convening role contributed to EAW during the **COVID-19 global pandemic**?



What **lessons** emerge from programmes where UN Women's UN coordination and broader convening work has led to **demonstrated impact in EAW**?

³ "Inter-Agency Statement on Violence against Women and Girls in the Context of COVID-19." (2020). https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news_20and_20events/stories/2020/inter-agency-statement-vawandcovid_en.pdf?la=en&vs=1045

⁴ "Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker." <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>

⁵ UN Women. "EAW and Covid-19 policy briefs series." <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/series-evaw-covid-19-briefs>

1.3

EVALUATION APPROACH

The key emphasis of the evaluation was on mapping and validation of contributions of UN Women's coordination work on EAW outcomes – those reflected in the Integrated Resource and Results Framework of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021, and the targets enshrined in international commitments including the SDGs. To facilitate this analysis, the evaluation relied on process tracing to identify the intended outcomes of EAW initiatives and programmes; the pathways for change (identified with the UN coordinating and convening role); the activities and resources undertaken towards achievement of the outcomes; the evidence and degree of change and causal linkages to the building blocks of coordination, including leadership and advocacy, partnerships and networks, and mobilization and capacity building of national actors.

The evaluation team developed a logic model (see Annex 11) to assess various elements that construct the results contribution pathways from coordination and convening on EAW issues, e.g.: functions, enablers and drivers of UN coordination and convening of relevant stakeholders; processes and structures for coordination and convening; products and services of coordination and convening; and results at EAW output and outcome level linked to coordination and convening.

The evaluation team employed a combination of primary and secondary data sources to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions (See Annex 2 for Evaluation Matrix). In alignment with the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted (see Annex 4) which identified a range of internal and external stakeholders directly involved, or with an interest in UN Women's EAW coordination and convening role. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with United Nations standards

on ethical obligations to participants related to confidentiality, informed consent and treatment of sensitive data. In line with IES Data Management Guidance, the data management plan (See Annex 13) describes the types of personal data generated, for what purposes, and how these data will be appropriately protected and treated during and after the evaluation.

Valuable insights from key internal and external stakeholders were gathered in confidential, semi-structured virtual interviews, in accordance with the recommendations for remote data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using MS Teams and Zoom, the evaluation team interviewed 54 stakeholders (43 women and 11 men), including 17 UN Women headquarters staff; 15 UN Women regional and country-level staff; 3 donor representatives; 5 global CSO partners, and 14 UN entity partners (see Annex 9). The interviews were supplemented by online surveys of 76 UN Women staff (See Annex 7) and 230 members of country-level Gender Theme Groups (GTGs); six focus group discussions with UN Women EAW staff at the country level (30 participants); 16 questionnaire responses from country-level government and civil society partners; an extensive desk review of relevant reports, programme documents and data extracted from UN Women's RMS, DAMS, ATLAS, Executive Dashboard and external sources. Overall, 406 stakeholders were engaged through interviews, focus group discussions, surveys and questionnaires.

The evaluation sought to triangulate and validate the varied and at times divergent views on several aspects of UN Women's EAW coordination and convening work. The evaluation also carried out five in-depth case studies which were considered of an appropriate scale and maturation to offer useful lessons. The case studies were informed by a desk-based review of relevant documents from the sources described above.

DATA COLLECTION



Desk review and synthesis, portfolio analysis and review of UN Women management systems, reports and internal assessments



Key informant interviews and focus group discussions: 6 focus group discussions with country level EAW specialists in 6 regions (AC, AP, AS, ECA, ESA, WCA)



Online surveys of UN Women staff and partners. 32.5% total response rate for 2 surveys (UN Women EAW staff 34.5%, GTG members 30.6%)



Five case studies: Inter-agency mechanisms and coordination bodies, regional dialogues and conferences, Knowledge products, Joint Programmes and Advocacy, Covid-19 response

200+

documents reviewed

6

focus group discussions

100

stakeholders engaged

306

survey respondents

2

online surveys

5

case studies

1.4

ETHICS, GENDER EQUALITY AND NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and UNEG norms and standards. The evaluation applied gender and human rights principles and examined how UN Women's coordination and convening role enabled the Entity to reach the most vulnerable women and remain relevant, effective and efficient in fulfilling this goal. The evaluation was conducted in a participatory and transparent manner by providing feedback sessions to UN Women stakeholders and partners to equip key stakeholders with the knowledge they need to make positive changes for the organization.

Addressing the needs of persons with disabilities is consistent with the leave no one behind principle and warrants explicit attention to making policy, operational support and capacity development initiatives disability-inclusive. UN Women formulated a strategy for the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities: its implementation was led and coordinated by UN Women's Global Task Team on Disability and Inclusion (GTDDI), with focal points in several units at headquarters, regional and country offices. Disability inclusion was very new in UN Women at the time of the evaluation; therefore, the evaluation analysed this dimension in the context of the leave no one behind approach with a forward-looking perspective for improvement.

1.5

EVALUATION CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

The evaluation comes at an important juncture, when there is a high level of appreciation of the importance of UN Women's coordination and convening functions for UN system-wide commitments and attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The 2020 Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system (QCPR) provides added emphasis and opportunity for system-wide EAW efforts. At the same time, important assessments have shown the lacuna in UN Women's articulation of processes, intended results and metrics for its UN coordination mandate and broader convening role and highlights the need for a more systematic approach to the UN coordination function. UN Women's Strategic Plan has not yet articulated the scope and contributions of UN coordination and convening in the context of specific thematic areas such as EAW, which is among its largest programming areas.

The evaluation was cognizant of the limitations arising from an absence of definitions, workplans and systematic data validating the theory of change for coordination in the context of EAW, and much of the assessment draws from the analytical framework and logic model proposed by the evaluation itself. The evaluation aimed to test the usefulness and feasibility of several coordination-linked metrics, which could serve UN Women in formulating appropriate results indicators for its UN coordination role and convening actions in thematic areas.

The COVID-19 crisis had a specific significance for this evaluation beyond the implications of the disruptions caused to development cooperation in general. An assessment of UN system engagement on COVID-19 responses presents an interesting case study for UN Women's coordination role in terms of evidence-based advocacy and reallocation of programmatic resources to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.



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EVALUATION CONTEXT

VAWG is a significant problem globally and a serious violation of human rights. It takes many forms and has both immediate and long-term physical and mental health consequences. Before the COVID-19 global pandemic, one in three women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lives, primarily at the hands of an intimate partner. The COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated the risk factors for VAW. In particular, economic insecurity, coupled with increased social isolation and lower availability and accessibility of support services for survivors (due to stay-at-home orders) has resulted in a global “shadow pandemic” of VAWG.

The UN system’s approach to EAW is guided by a number of normative standards and frameworks. The first of these is the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with general recommendations 12, 19 and 35 clarifying that the convention includes violence against women and offers specific recommendations to address it. Additionally, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), adopted during the World Conference on Human Rights, recognized violence against women as a human rights violation and called for a Special Rapporteur to be created. That same year, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was the first international instrument explicitly addressing VAW, establishing an official global normative framework for action. Ending violence against women is one of the 12 priority areas in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which identifies specific actions for national governments to prevent and respond to VAWG. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the BPfA in 2020, a report of the Secretary General⁶ found that more than 80 per cent of 166 countries reported having taken actions to implement and enforce VAW laws in the previous five years, while 87 per cent of countries reported introducing or strengthening services for violence survivors. Furthermore, the adoption of the SDGs and specifically SDG 5 (gender equality) reflects a recognition and commitment from the UN system that gender equality and sustainable development are inextricably linked, and that ending VAW is a key component for achieving gender equality, with its own target and indicators under SDG 5.2 and SDG 11.7 to provide access to safe and inclusive green and public spaces.

Since 2018, the UN system has undergone significant change to lay the groundwork for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The aim of the reform is to reposition the UN system as a stronger partner for countries in achieving the SDGs, and to build a coordinated UN

development system that is more coherent, integrated and focused on delivery on the ground, with clearer internal and external accountability mechanisms, capacities and resources better aligned to the 2030 Agenda, specifically:

- A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system.
- Clear and more robust lines of accountability.
- A more coherent and better coordinated utilization of global and regional capacities and resources.
- A new generation of UNCTs.
- A redesigned UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), later renamed as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), that will become the main strategic instrument to respond to national needs and priorities.
- Improved support infrastructure at global, regional and country levels.
- Streamlined operating practices.
- More and better communication about the UN development system.
- Pooled funding mechanisms and the funding compact.

UN reform provides significant opportunities for the UN system to strengthen system-wide coordination and synergies, break silos and deliver integrated support to partner countries to achieve the SDGs.

As part of this reform, and through the ‘Common Chapter’, UN Women is working closely with other UN entities to promote shared methodologies and ensure that strategic plans are complementary and include explicit references and commitments to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. In terms of EAW, UN Women works with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO to develop joint EAW programming that contributes to the 2030 Agenda and specifically SDG 5 target 5.2 – “eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”. The 2020 QCPR resolution, which establishes key UN system-wide strategic policy orientation and operational modalities for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the UN development system, encourages UN entities to assist governments in taking action to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, and to support governments to adopt specific measures to protect the poor, women, youth and children from all forms of violence and discrimination. The QCPR also stresses the importance of improving coordination, collaboration, efficiency and coherence at all levels of the UN development system.

⁶ Economic and Social Council. “Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General.” (2020). Page 55.

3 UN SYSTEM COORDINATION AND CONVENING ON EVAW

3.1 EVAW THEMATIC AREA

In 2010, UN Women was created by combining previously distinct parts of the UN system which focused extensively on gender equality and women's empowerment, guided by key UN instruments, standards and legislation, including the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). UN Women was entrusted with a leading role in normative, operational and coordination work on gender equality, including EVAW. EVAW has subsequently been one of UN Women's key corporate goals, as reflected in UN Women's Strategic Plans over the years.

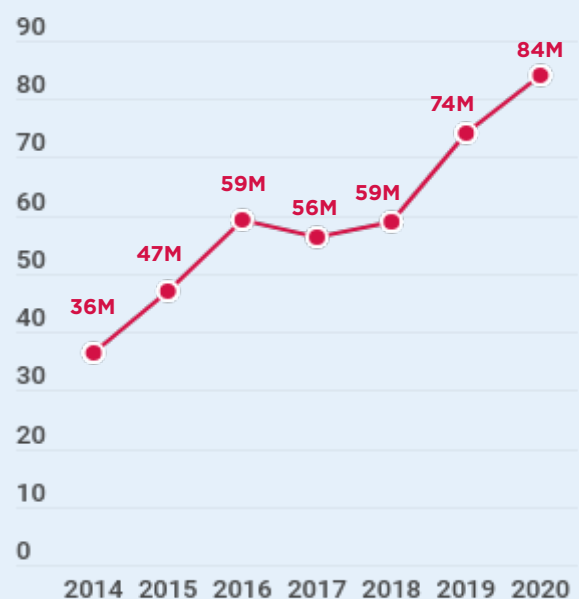
UN Women's EVAW portfolio has seen steady growth since 2014,⁷ as demonstrated in Figure 1, which reflects budgets for the Strategic Plan Impact Area 3 mapped in the Executive Dashboard.

From 2014–2020, 85 UN Women offices mapped budgets linked to the EVAW impact area in the UN Women Executive Dashboard. These 85 UN Women field offices, the six UN Women regional offices and the EVAW section at headquarters reported a combined budget of US\$ 387.1 million over this period. There was notable growth in the EVAW portfolio between the 2014–2017 and 2018–2021 Strategic Plans. The UN Women's EVAW budget for 2014–2017 was US\$ 187.93 million, while the budget for the first three years of the current Strategic Plan (2018–2020) was US\$ 199.21 million, an increase of US\$ 11.3 million (not taking into consideration the UN Women's EVAW budgets for the final year of the current Strategic Plan).

The region with the highest reported EVAW budget during 2014–2020 was Asia and the Pacific (US\$ 113.53 million), followed by East and Southern Africa (US\$ 63.41 million) and the Arab States (US\$ 54.45 million). One notable regional level change between Strategic Plans occurred in Europe

and Central Asia: this region had the lowest EVAW budget of the six regions for the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan (US\$ 13 million) but was the region with the third highest EVAW budget during the current Strategic Plan (roughly US\$ 27.2 million for the first three years [2018–2020]).

FIGURE 1.
UN Women's annual EVAW budget allocation
(2014–2020) US\$ million



Note: These yearly totals reflect budgets for Impact Area 3 as reported in the UN Women Executive Dashboard for the purpose of showing growth over time in the EVAW portfolio. The latter sections mined country and regional level EVAW budgets (SP3) for each Strategic Plan period, so the numbers may be slightly different.

Source: UN Women Executive Dashboard.

⁷ There was a slight decrease in the EVAW portfolio during 2017–2018.

Two main outputs are associated with the EVAW impact area in the current Strategic Plan (2018–2021):

- **Output 11:** More countries and stakeholders are better able to prevent violence against women and girls and deliver essential services to victims and survivors.
- **Output 12:** More cities and other settings have safe and empowering public spaces for women and girls.

The total budget for Output 11 for 2018–2020 was US\$ 150.3 million with a large amount allocated to the Spotlight Initiative, and with the highest budget in the Asia and the Pacific region, followed by East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa. The total budget for Output 12 over this period was US\$ 24.47 million, with the highest budget also in the Asia and the Pacific region, followed by the Arab States and the Americas and the Caribbean regions. Although the Strategic Plan has stand-alone EVAW thematic outputs, there are also important EVAW dimensions in other thematic outputs, especially in Women, Peace and Security and Access to Justice and Leadership and political violence.

UN Women participates in the following joint programmes and initiatives in EVAW:

- Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, a partnership between UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC.
- The EU–UN Spotlight Initiative, a partnership between the European Union (EU) and the UN to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices.
- Global programme on violence against women data (with WHO).
- The Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls Global Initiative.

While not considered a joint programme but an inter-agency initiative, UN Women administers the United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF) on EVAW. The UNTF for EVAW is a global, multilateral grant-giving mechanism that supports efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls. Grant recipients are mainly CSOs, and mostly women’s rights organizations. The UNTF has a five-year strategic plan with three strategic directions: supporting results-oriented approaches; catalysing learning from global evidence collected from grantees; and leveraging its unique mandate and convening capacity to advocate for and foster sustainable financing for national and local work. The funding of civil society through the grant giving on EVAW sets the UNTF apart from other EVAW initiatives.⁸

UN Women’s joint programmes and initiatives in EVAW



Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, a partnership between UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC



The EU–UN Spotlight Initiative, a partnership between the European Union (EU) and the UN to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices



Global programme on **violence against women data** (with WHO)



The Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls Global Initiative



INTER-AGENCY INITIATIVE: the United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF) on EVAW.

Administered by UN Women, the UNTF for EVAW is a global, multilateral grant-giving mechanism that supports efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls.

⁸ UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women. “Strategic Plan 2015–2020”, <https://untf.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/09/un-trust-fund-strategic-plan-2015-2020>

3.2 UN SYSTEM COORDINATION

UN Women's founding resolution (RES 64/289) describes one of the key elements of the Entity's mandate as "leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women" for the purpose of achieving "more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system."

The three components of UN Women's UN system coordination role as described in the founding resolution and subsequent strategic documents are:

- **Leading:** by advocating to ensure that relevant gender equality and the empowerment of women issues are on the UN system-wide agenda.
- **Promoting accountability:** by strengthening capacity, coherence, monitoring and accountability for system-wide gender equality and the empowerment of women mandates as well as individual agency and overall UN system reporting.
- **Coordinating:** by engaging in system-wide and inter-agency efforts to jointly promote and advance gender equality and the empowerment of women at global, regional and national levels.

UN Women's UN system coordination activities differ between the global, regional and country levels. While the normative agenda is set at the global/headquarters level, it is contextualized appropriately at the regional level and operationalized at the country level. At each level, UN Women interacts with a number of UN and non-UN partners towards realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women objectives.

At the global level, UN Women's UN system coordination work broadly focuses on promoting accountability for gender mainstreaming in the UN system, primarily through the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UN Women also leads or participates in inter-agency mechanisms that incorporate EAW-related work. These mechanisms include the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), CEB Task Force and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT).

At the regional and country levels, coordination on EAW is primarily focused on joint advocacy work (such as the Secretary-General's UNiTE campaigns) and implementation of joint programming and joint initiatives.

3.3 CONVENING

UN Women frequently convenes UN entities, government partners, women's rights and other CSOs, the private sector, and other stakeholders for awareness raising, knowledge sharing and capacity building and support towards the implementation of comprehensive approaches to EAW. While it is generally understood, the term 'convening' has not been formally defined, nor has it been explicitly distinguished from 'coordination'. The evaluation found that two primary elements distinguish between coordination and convening:

- Coordination in its formal sense entails UN entities only, whereas convening applies to both UN entities and non-UN entities.
- Coordination focuses on mandated UN system and inter-agency actions towards mainstreaming and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women at global, regional and national levels. Convening includes engagement with UN and non-UN entities, including national and local governments, women's rights organization's and CSOs, the private sector, and other stakeholders for awareness raising, advocacy, knowledge sharing and, in some cases, programme implementation for projects relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women and EAW.

At the global level, an emerging convening space is the Generation Equality Forum, a public platform/gathering to discuss progress and proposes concrete actions to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Within the forum, the Action Coalition on GBV mobilizes governments, civil society, international organizations and the private sector to advance coordinated global actions and implement comprehensive commitments to address VAWG.⁹

For the purposes of this evaluation, 'coordination' and 'convening' while not being interchangeable, have been conflated as both involve substantive engagement among UN entities. The primary emphasis of the evaluation was on UN system actors and how they were brought together by UN Women's UN coordination and convening role to systematically and measurably achieve common EAW results.

⁹ Gender Based Violence Action Coalition. https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/GBV_FINAL_VISUAL_EN.pdf



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FINDINGS

4.1

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UN COORDINATION AND BROADER CONVENING ROLE**FINDING 1**

UN Women’s UN system coordination mandate is a strategic asset that enables the Entity to engage with and coordinate aspects of gender equality and the empowerment of women with several larger UN entities.

UN Women’s mandate as articulated in the founding resolution (RES 64/289)¹⁰ is clear and strong: to lead, coordinate and promote the accountability of the UN system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and to devise appropriate mechanisms to assist and support the realization of the strategic objectives and actions agreed upon in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the national and international commitments stipulated in the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

UN Women’s mandate to lead promote and coordinate on EAW is further reaffirmed by the UNTF mandate (A/RES/50/166, 1996), which is the only global multi-partner trust fund dedicated to EAW. The UNTF is administered by UN Women on behalf of the UN system, which represents another dimension of UN Women’s convening and capacity development role.

FINDING 2

Existing accountability arrangements do not provide a system-wide qualitative review of investments and performance in specific thematic areas, especially EAW, which is the programming area with the largest number of UN agencies¹¹ and one of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Present accountability systems need to be complemented by appropriate accountability instruments for results in thematic areas, such as EAW.

No system-wide accountability instrument comprehensively reviews and reports on the UN system’s high-level results and progress towards SDG target 5.2 ‘Ending all forms of Violence against Women and Girls’ across countries, regions or globally. There are no specific accountability mechanisms to monitor and report on coordinated actions (planning, mobilizing, delivering and reporting) for transformative development results in this area. While UN entities have issued guidance and encourage Member States to adopt national action plans to end VAW, there is no system-wide EAW action plan, i.e., to achieve SDG 5.2.

At present, the UN Secretary-General reports on “Intensifying efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls” pursuant to various UN General Assembly resolutions (67/174, 69/147, 73/148 etc.) remains the key narrative report that provides information on measures taken by Member States and EAW activities carried out within the UN system.¹²

¹⁰ UN Women’s coordination mandate is affirmed in several specific texts of the founding resolution (Paras 52, 52, 53, 56, 57 of the General Assembly Resolution 64/289). United Nations General Assembly. “Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 2 July 2010 (RES 64/289)” (2010).

¹¹ IANWGE. “25 Years After Beijing: A review of the UN system’s support for the implementation of the Platform for Action 2015-2019” (2020). Page 19.

¹² Additionally, the second database of UN Women’s Global Knowledge platform to End Violence Against Women compiles the activities and actions undertaken by UN entities in the area of EAW. The site is administered by UN Women for the purpose of strengthening coordination by establishing systematic and timely information exchange among UN agencies in regard to EAW programmes and activities at the global, regional, and national levels. UN Women and UNDP also developed a Covid-19 Global Gender tracker to track and report on measures taken globally to respond to EAWG.

Recent UN Secretary-General reports (from 2016, 2018 and 2020)¹³ highlight several leading initiatives of UN entities and actions by selected Member States. However, there is no UN system mechanism that provides an overall review of progress made at the global level towards the objective of ‘Intensifying efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls’. Neither is there a mechanism to include systematic evidence in the form of empirical data on progress made on key areas such as: policies and legislation;¹⁴ social norms, behaviour and attitude changes; budgets and investments towards prevention and essential services provision; and filling VAW data gaps to substantiate the intensification of efforts as intended.

At IANWGE annual sessions, there has been gradual attenuation of substantive coverage on EAW and a relegation in its status from a full-fledged multi-agency task force in 2010 to a virtually discussed standing agenda item until 2015, to a near complete absence from the agenda in 2018 and 2019.

A review of annual session reports from 2008 revealed that EAW was one of the most strongly addressed themes at IANWGE, with a dedicated standing committee on EAW (co-chaired by UNFPA and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) which later became a part of UN Women) with clear terms of reference to lead generation of knowledge products, joint programmes and inventory of UN system activities to prevent and eliminate violence against women. EAW was the priority theme for the CSW 57 session in 2013 that concluded with a set of Agreed Conclusions and led to an inter-agency guidance note for UN agencies to support inter-agency collaboration, implementation of CSW 57 and other EAW obligations. Since 2014, IANWGE sessions have included EAW as one of the standing agenda items; however, it has been structured as virtual discussions that presented only the highlights of a few initiatives by agencies (mostly UN Women where EAW specialists attended the sessions), without giving an overview of progress on EAW goals or the collective efforts of the UN system. Since 2018, EAW is no longer a standing agenda item in the IANWGE annual sessions, and did not feature in the 2018 session report, although some sessions included the Spotlight Initiative.

Adoption of UN-SWAP 2.0 denotes a progressive shift in UN system-wide accountability mechanisms with the emphasis moving from accountability for gender mainstreaming in UN system initiatives to an accountability for transformative results. This has important implications for UN Women’s coordination function, requiring a redesign/

recalibration of objectives, processes and outputs and engagement modalities. Through the adoption of specific SDG 5 linked performance indicators, UN-SWAP 2.0 provides a strong entry point to introduce thematic area reviews as part of the accountability framework, which can then create, necessitate and enable systematic coordination among UN system entities at corporate and country level for greater effectiveness of results.

However, in the evaluation team’s view, the emphasis is still on the number and percentage of agencies individually meeting minimum requirements: i.e., there are no minimum requirements for system-level coordinated actions. The UN-SWAP articulates a theory of change for the overall framework, setting standards to mainstream gender equality into all functional areas of any institution. This is not, however, a theory of change applicable to thematic areas which then also must have a system-wide approach. Further, its indicators do not cover important areas relevant to monitoring and tracking of progress related to key levers of change in the context of EAW programmes. These include, for example, indicators to track:

- improvements in policy, legal and social frameworks;
- institutional and financial resources to support quality services to victims and survivors in line with minimum international standards; and
- changes in structural barriers, established social norms and stereotypes.

At the country level, the revised UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard¹⁵ has specific coordination indicators under Section 5 ‘Gender Architecture and Capacities’, with four sub indicators.¹⁶ The UN-SWAP 2019 results report¹⁷ and a selection of UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecards indicate that the emphasis of reporting is still on accountability for gender mainstreaming in the UNCF. The reports do not provide adequate qualitative insights into the outcome-level changes engendered by the UN system through engagement with external stakeholders, rights holders and duty bearers. Therefore, present accountability systems should be complemented by appropriate accountability instruments for results in thematic areas, such as EAW. This could be undertaken within UN-SWAP or a similar mechanism. It is within UN Women’s mandate to articulate this value proposition through consultations.

¹³ Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/219 (2016), A/73/294 (2018) and A/75/274 (2020)).

¹⁴ Refer to examples in footnote 12.

¹⁵ UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard Guidance, August 2018. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unct-swap-gender-equality-scorecard>.

¹⁶ This is covered in more detail under country-level coordination structures.

¹⁷ Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2020/50) & Addendum: UN-SWAP 2019 performance analysis.

FINDING 3

At both corporate and country level there is sufficient clarity on UN Women's coordination functions pertaining to accountability for gender mainstreaming within the UN system. However, what UN system coordination means, entails and is expected to achieve in specific thematic areas, including EAW is neither clearly articulated nor uniformly understood. Both within UN Women and among other UN entities there is lack of understanding or agreement as to a concrete value proposition of coordination: what value does UN Women's UN-system coordination and convening role on EAW bring to individual entities, the UN-system, Member States, other stakeholders, and to the ultimate beneficiaries – women and girls.

The founding resolution texts conferring UN Women's coordination mandate state the implicit benefits of coordination. As to what these benefits are, and how UN Women may exactly exercise this mandate in implementation is left to be a matter of interpretation.

The founding resolution requires UN Women to report annually on its normative work to the CSW and to ECOSOC (through the Executive Board) on its operational activities. An equivalent reference related to the coordination mandate is absent, potentially presenting a challenge. Consequently, in the evaluation team's view, there are no clearly articulated accountability and reporting requirements placed upon the UN system relating to UN Women's coordination role.

There are varying levels of clarity and understanding of UN Women's coordination and convening role: both between UN Women personnel at headquarters, regional and country offices, and among other UN entities. Particularly at the country level, there is a mixed understanding or lack of sufficient clarity as to what coordination means in the context of thematic areas, and how it differs at the country as opposed to the global level. The lack of clarity was also felt at the regional level. As indicated in at least one regional FGD, one of the major issues for Resident Coordinators was identifying UN Women's key EAW role (normative, coordination and/or implementation) and supporting a clear division of labour among multiple agencies that work on GBV. With gender equality part of the mandate of many agencies, overlaps (while unavoidable) are best resolved through coordination and a common understanding of programming boundaries at the country level.

The evaluation team observed that UN Women's coordination and broader convening role in the context of specific thematic areas extends beyond the UN system itself

and involves several UN Women sections in coordination responsibilities at global, regional and country level. It entails several products and services that require collective engagement (i.e., they cannot be delivered by a single entity):

- Convening stakeholders for intergovernmental processes and mechanisms for agenda setting, adoption of international commitments and standards.
- Production and dissemination of global knowledge products, methodologies and technical guidance materials for policy action – mostly global.
- Stocktaking and implementation reviews of EAW trends, investments, challenges and innovative practices.
- Awareness raising and advocacy campaigns on EAW.
- Formulation of common/concerted approaches and strategies at country/higher levels.
- Joint programming and implementation (country, multi-country level).
- Data and evidence gathering, monitoring.
- Reporting and communications on progress towards agreed development goals (SDGs).

The evaluation interviews suggested that the real case to be made for a coordination role in EAW must emanate from the value contributed towards **'transformative results to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.'** This entails a focus beyond UN system coordination and alters the way UN Women must envision, articulate and resource its coordination structures and mechanisms for EAW and change the narrative towards a collective responsibility for effective coordination, i.e., not isolating the role under a single agency's mandate.

In this regard, the evaluation team considers it important for UN Women's EAW section, PPID and the UN System Coordination Division (UNSCD) to lead the articulation of UN Women's country-level coordination and convening role and arrive at **a minimum coordination service package** for UNCTs in non-presence countries and in countries with very small EAW programming of their own. This would help clarify the coordination component of UN Women's role in thematic areas, including in contexts where the Entity has limited programme presence. The guiding principles would be to ensure that the Resident Coordinator is adequately supported so that country programming follows internationally agreed principles and benchmarks for rights-based, survivor/victim-centered approaches and practices, and UN Women has a role in joint monitoring, communications and reporting, in accordance with its coordination mandate.

Articulating the value proposition for coordination would require enlisting the ‘development benefits’ from coordination; the enabling conditions and factors; and also the ‘development price’ paid for non-coordination. It is somewhat easier to identify (although seldom realize) the benefits of coordination in the form of efficiencies: non-duplication of work; reducing transaction burdens for governments and donor partners; and sharing/optimizing human resources and administrative costs, etc. However, the real potential lies in the ‘development benefits’ of three actions: 1) **cohesive messaging**: amplification of the UN system voice for counterpart actions, e.g., enabling preventive laws, resources towards quality services, transformative behaviour changes; 2) **multisectoral programming at scale**; and 3) **evidence-based joint monitoring and review** of development results. The evaluation team noted some good examples of the UN speaking as one, for instance the removal of ‘marry the victim’ provisions in rape laws in some Arab countries. The Essential Services Package, including the Global Costing Tool are also good illustrations of international standard setting endorsed by the UN system that have been adopted by an increasing number of countries.

FINDING 4

There is no articulation of specific coordination and collaborative actions in the corporate Common Chapter mechanisms of the CEB agencies to drive a common and shared corporate understanding of coordination.

The ‘Common Chapter’ mechanisms for the four agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women) are appropriate places to address and resolve division of lead responsibilities and labour, and to set the agenda for coordination for results. The declaration of the Common Chapter is inspiring; however, the Common Chapter does not elaborate a common and shared corporate strategy, or identification of specific collaborative products, services and coordinated action areas. An explicit corporate-level articulation of a range of coordination initiatives in the new Strategic Plan would help to clarify and improve inter-agency engagements at the country level, where the environment can be competitive rather than collaborative.

The evaluation team also noted some positive examples of good practices of inter-agency initiatives at the country level: a comprehensive agency-wide mapping of comparative advantage and resources (in the Latin America and Caribbean region); cooperation between a non-resident

agency and an agency with a country presence (in Europe and Central Asia); and an equal division of countries between agencies in a regional joint programme (in Asia and the Pacific). There were also examples of good working relationships between agencies in joint programmes. However, these field illustrations more reflect the results of initiative taking by individuals in these agencies rather than operationalization of corporate inter-institutional arrangements. Again, it would be mutually beneficial if coordination were promoted and understood as the function of coordinating to ensure agreement for a common set of goals and standards towards which the partner entities of the programme collectively and/or individually work and strive. This nuance seems to be missing both in UN Women’s representation of its coordination efforts and in other entities’ understanding, who, in the absence of a set of standards to which they commonly agreed, perceive coordination efforts as an external imposition rather than an act based on mutual understanding.

FINDING 5

There is broad consensus and recognition of UN Women’s UN system coordination mandate and long-standing work on EVAW; and the Entity’s relationships with CSOs, women’s rights networks and national women’s machineries being strong drivers of comparative advantage. UN Women’s legitimacy to technically lead and coordinate on EVAW issues at the UNCT and more broadly at the country level is validated by its significant and growing resource investments in EVAW.

One of UN Women’s biggest assets is the extensive network of CSOs, women’s rights organizations, including grass-roots organizations, human rights campaigners and front-line community service volunteers. This has been a strong niche in UN Women’s knowledge and thought leadership and political influence in intergovernmental processes of CSW and BPfA. Additionally, UN Women serves as the Secretariat for the UNTF on EVAW, the only global multilateral grant-making mechanism dedicated to EVAW, which consists of several UN agencies on the Global Inter-Agency Programme Advisory Committee. The UNTF further strengthens UN Women’s networks on the ground directly supporting front-line women’s organizations through capacity building and advocacy grants.

Over the years, UN Women has built a solid core of technical expertise on specific policy and programming areas of EAW. Several senior staff, especially at headquarters, are acknowledged as leading authorities and experts on EAW in different settings, including by peers at other entities. UN Women also has formidable technical knowledge products and has gained steady ground on VAW data in recent years, through the Women Count programme. With a specific mandate and demonstrated expertise on EAW, UN Women has the largest complement of EAW specialists among relevant entities. Several key respondents, including a few Resident Coordinators, stated that UN Women was often the only agency to have dedicated EAW personnel in several country offices.

4.2

OPERATIONLIZATION OF UN COORDINATION AND UN WOMEN'S BROADER CONVENING ROLE

UN Women's UN-system coordination and broader convening role in the EAW thematic area involves several headquarters sections as well as regional and country office personnel in coordinating not only with UN entities and UNCTs as part of its mandate for system-wide accountability, but also in convening governments, external partners, civil society and other stakeholder groups towards implementation of commitments, policies, action plans and awareness/advocacy campaigns for EAW. These include:

- **Overall coordination for system-wide accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment:** UNSCD and Gender Theme Groups (UNCTs), chaired by the Resident Coordinator's Offices in countries. This prong mainly focuses on the system-wide coordination through the UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP accountability tools, and guidance on the Gender Marker towards Financing for Gender Equality.
- **Coordination and convening of intergovernmental processes and inter-agency processes:** UNSCD and EAW section (CSW, BPfA, IANWGE, Secretary-General reports), UNTF on EAW; Action Coalition for Gender-Based Violence.
- **Coordination and convening for normative work, global knowledge, guidance and advocacy:** This pillar deals with the formulation of normative guidance, knowledge products, policies and strategies.

One in every seven of UN Women's occupied positions is assigned to EAW; one in seven dollars of UN Women's budget during the past six years was allocated to EAW;¹⁸ and EAW programming has significantly increased in UN Women country programmes. The survey of UN Women EAW personnel showed a clear pattern of prioritization of EAW programming at the country level. Sixty-six per cent of respondents reported that EAW represented 25 per cent or more of their annual Strategic Note/programming budget. EAW programming budgets also significantly increased at the country level, with 41 per cent of survey respondents reporting an annualized EAW budget increase of 33.3 per cent or higher.¹⁹

- **EAW results in UN Women's Strategic Plan:** EAW section, Policies and Programmes Division, UN Women Country Offices, UN Women regional offices.
- **SDG indicators and data:** Research and Data section.
- **UNTF for EAW:** The Trust Fund Secretariat is a global, multilateral grant-giving mechanism that supports efforts to prevent and end VAWG. Grant recipients are mainly CSOs and women's rights organizations.
- **Regional structures:** Regional Collaborative Platforms and Issue-Based Coalitions.
- **Country office structures:** Gender Theme Groups (GTGs), Results Group on Gender (UNDAF/UNCF outcome/outputs linked to EAW); government-led coordination structures, national committees, development partners groups, civil society advisory groups for awareness, advocacy and communications.
- **Coordination in programme implementation:** Joint programmes, advocacy initiatives, knowledge products.

Viewed from this perspective, coordination and convening responsibilities at UN Women involve various actors, including PPID, where a major role is played by regional and country offices.

¹⁸ During 2014–2020, the EAW programming budget was US\$ 387.1 million, around 14 per cent of UN Women's total programme budget for the same period. ATLAS and RMS data indicates that, as of November 2020, there were 309 EAW-related positions of which 89 per cent were funded from non-core resources, representing about 14 per cent of 2,255 occupied positions at UN Women, of which 89 per cent were funded from non-core resources.

¹⁹ From Questions 5 and 6 of the evaluation survey of UN Women EAW personnel (refer to Annex 7).

FINDING 6

UN Women’s regional offices play an important coordination role in the revamped regional architecture of the UN, connecting normative and operational elements, while also coordinating technical support to country offices with limited resources.

At the regional level, UN Women is working in three important areas, each with sizeable UN system coordination or broader convening components: system-level engagement with regional intergovernmental structures and processes; addressing regional-level challenges through Issue-based Coalitions that have concrete workplans and result areas; and providing/ coordinating guidance and programme support to Resident Coordinator’s Offices and UN Women country offices in implementing the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs).

The main goal of the Issue-based Coalitions (which replaced the regional Gender Theme Groups) is to strengthen regional engagement to promote gender equality; ensure a coordinated UN system approach; provide coherent and timely programming, policy guidance and technical support; and improve coordination, communication and information sharing on key lessons and good practices.²⁰ These regional structures of the UN reforms are seen as a step towards making the UN a more networked system. As regional structures, they find greater acceptability as system-level assets. IES noted an increasing level of engagement by UN Women regional offices with Resident Coordinator Offices in countries under their jurisdiction.²¹ The evaluation team also noted that regional offices only have one dedicated coordination position funded from core resources for these tasks.

Regional offices also support country offices in the adaptation of global and regional guidance and methodologies, as well as strengthen research–policy advocacy linkages through a number of global and regional flagship programmes. Regional initiatives have had some success in the adoption of international covenants or introducing transformative changes in legislation in ‘pilot’ countries.

²⁰ Noted from the description of IBC on gender equality by UNECE.

²¹ Interviews with at least two UN Women regional offices mentioned the use of periodic, structured consultations with Resident Coordinator Offices to address capacity gaps in UNCTs.

²² Question 6 of evaluation survey of GTG members (refer to Annex 7).

²³ Question 6 of evaluation survey of GTG members (refer to Annex 7).

FINDING 7

At the country level, coordination and broader convening tasks involve both the UN system and external stakeholders; yet, these are not systematically documented or reported.

Gender Theme Groups (GTGs) are the main UN system coordination mechanism on gender mainstreaming at the country level and are present in nearly every country. Besides GTGs, a significant number of UNCTs (63.5 per cent of respondents to the survey of GTG members)²² also confirmed the existence of Results Groups on Gender under the UNDAF/UNCF.

UN Women country offices also convene/engage with a number of country platforms that include external stakeholders: those with counterpart status at gender coordination mechanisms of the Ministry of Women (national committees); membership of SDG monitoring groups; development assistance partner groups; and civil society advisory groups, among others. In some countries, country offices also engage with and support EAW-specific platforms and participate in global and regional communities of practice.

The prevalence of EAW programming in most country programmes is invariably demonstrated in EAW-specific results in the UNCF, which supports the case for a range of coordinated/joint actions complementing individual entities’ workplans. The evaluation survey of GTG members revealed that a majority of GTGs also had dedicated communities of practice on EAW (57 per cent of GTG survey respondents);²³ therefore, mechanisms are already in place in several countries for more specific coordination on EAW issues.

In several countries, UN Women (with support of HQ and regional offices) provides UNCT training on mainstreaming gender in the context of UNCCA and UNCF preparations, as well as guidance on concrete steps towards the minimum requirements established for the UNCT-SWAP Scorecard Performance Indicators.

FINDING 8

Coordination-related efforts and the costs incurred by UN Women are not systematically captured and reflected accurately. In the absence of clear terms of reference, agreed responsibilities among GTG members, workplans and commensurate budgets, UN coordination successes at the country level tend to rely more on individual motivation, inter-personal skills and charisma rather than emanating from enabling structures and processes.

Coordination budgets for the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (as represented by Development Results Framework Outcome 1 – US\$ 29.2 million and the Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework [OEEF] Output 1 US\$ 27.2 million) were US\$ 56.4 million, merely 3.4 per cent of UN Women’s programming resources of US\$ 1.7 billion for the same period. The budgets mostly cover UNSCD workplans in servicing inter-governmental mechanisms and coordinating UN System accountability frameworks – e.g., UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard.

The Strategic Plan does not set aside coordination budgets in thematic areas even though, as illustrated above, a large part of coordination for results takes place in programming. In the current Strategic Plan, coordination is treated as a contributor to operational efficiency and not as a critical ingredient in mainstreaming gender perspectives in development results for thematic areas.

While UN Women has raised non-core resources for many aspects of EVAW (staff, seed fund allocations for data, interventions, evaluation, etc.), it has struggled to raise additional resources for its coordination work. Donors are reluctant to fund UN system coordination from voluntary contributions as it is considered a core UN Women function and is expected to be funded from the core budget. The principal reason for this is the lack of clarity over coordination for system-wide accountability and coordination for development results. The former is considered a core function linked to reporting requirements as stated in UN Women’s mandate and should therefore be primarily funded from core resources, but coordination for results is proportionate to the scale and complexity of programming and often does require a diversified funding base.

Another factor constraining the costing of UN Women’s coordination efforts is the lack of recognition in joint programmes of UN Women’s investments in coordination as a convening agency (this is the case in a majority of joint programmes). Under the UN Development Group guidelines

on joint programmes, there is no compensation for the extensively detailed convening agency role, whereas the administrative agency role receives 1 per cent of programme budgets. This places a considerable additional and uncompensated burden (and at times, understandable reluctance) on UN Women’s programme implementation staff, who must deliver on the coordination and convening role, without additional resources.²⁴

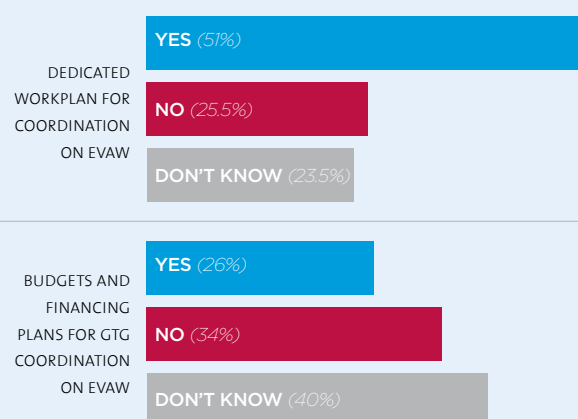
The Essential Services Global Programme, Spotlight Initiative and a few other operational programmes have supported or partially funded coordination posts at the country level; however, an overwhelming majority of country offices have not, and despite UN Women being tasked with co-chairing UNCT coordination structures and managing operational programmes as well.

For personnel with primarily operational programme implementation responsibilities, coordination tasks are considered ‘a burden’; not based on clear deliverables and resources; and in most cases, an additional responsibility over operational programme implementation tasks. While coordination entails a sizeable amount of staff time for everyone, the time effort is not systematically quantified.

The online survey of UN Women country personnel showed that coordination tasks occupied more than 50 per cent of work time for nearly 34 per cent of respondents, and between 25–50 per cent of work time for 21 per cent of respondents.²⁵ Similarly, in the online survey of GTGs between 45–55 per cent of respondents affirmed the existence of dedicated workplans for coordination on EVAW; however, only 25–30 per cent stated that budgets and financing plans were available for coordination on EVAW.²⁶

FIGURE 2
Gender Theme Group Survey Q8

Is there a **dedicated workplan and/or budget** for coordination and convening activities related to EVAW in your Gender Theme Group? (Percentage of respondents)



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (Annex 7).

²⁴ UNDG Guidance Note on Joint Programmes (2014) available [here](#)

²⁵ Question 9 of UN Women EVAW personnel survey (refer to Annex 7).

²⁶ Question 8 of GTG survey (refer to Annex 7).

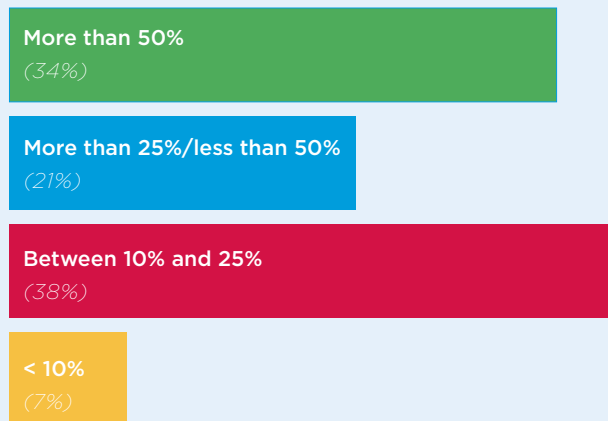
FINDING 9

There are some differences in perceptions among UN Women personnel and some GTG members over UN Women's coordination and convening role. Moreover, some stakeholders highlighted that UN Women faces challenges in establishing trust among sister agencies and resolving perceived conflicts between its coordination and operational programme implementation roles.

UN Women grapples with contradicting expectations among UN entities about the balance between its coordination and operational role: that UN Women should refrain from programming and focus on its coordination role; while at the same time, a major reason for pushback against UN Women in the GTGs is that UN Women does not have a sizeable programme footprint to be able to coordinate other entities.

FIGURE 3
UN Women EAW personnel survey Q9

Please indicate the **approximate proportion of your time** incurred for coordination and convening related to EAW (Percentage of respondents)



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team (Annex 7)

There exist significant differences between UN Women and all other stakeholders' expectations of UN Women's most important role in inter-agency contexts, especially in operational programme implementation. The evaluation

team received several first-hand accounts from UN entities that UN Women should prioritize coordination for gender mainstreaming over operational programme implementation, where its comparative advantage is weak or not consistent. However, UN Women staff view operational programming as integral to effective coordination for results.²⁷ UN Women staff tend to feel that their coordination role is not taken seriously unless UN Women has a sizeable operational programme portfolio in the country.

In the evaluation team's view, these differences emanate from three elements: (a) an overlapping, non-exclusive mandate on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which provides entry points for several sector-specialist agencies; (b) the steady increase in UN Women's programming as part of its composite mandate; compounded by (c) a deteriorating competitive environment among UN agencies for resource mobilization for programming. IES also noted concerns, including among UN Women staff, about the considerable variation in technical expertise, especially the contrast between strong headquarters-centric expertise and variable field-level expertise. The significant investments in EAW being made at other agencies and that challenges any sweeping generalization of UN Women's expertise and technical leadership on EAW issues.

IES noted some concerns (both in UN Women and other agencies) about UN Women's perceived lack of neutrality in contexts where the Entity also mobilizes resources for operational programmes, competing with other agencies. There is a perception among some entities that UN Women does not give sufficient credit to others; while, at the same time, UN Women staff noted many instances where they had carried out all the work and later placed everyone's logos on the covers. Therefore, collaborative aims are at times compounded by an environment of competition for resources and credit.

The system is not designed with mechanisms and incentives for agencies to be coordinated by UN Women. The absence of an agreed system-wide accountability framework for individual thematic areas compounds the lack of clarity and resultant reluctance or resistance to UN Women's coordination efforts for system-wide results in EAW.

²⁷ This was also echoed in the stakeholder consultation survey for UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025: survey question – key stakeholders' perspectives for UN Women's next strategic plan, UN Women (2021): UN external partners ranked the promotion of UN system accountability through UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP (76.6 per cent) and gender mainstreaming in CCA/UNSDC processes (70.2 per cent) as the most important role for UN Women in a UN inter-agency context, while UN Women staff rated joint programmes as the most important (74 per cent) followed by gender mainstreaming in CCA/UNSDCF processes (65.6 per cent); and UN system accountability through UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP (54.8 per cent).

UN Women's coordination mandate is not blindly accepted by the UN system and has to be earned through showing its added value on the ground. Where UN Women has sizeable human resource capacities and financial resources, or where the Entity has cordially agreed division of labour (such as the division of pilot countries and sector-specific work within the Essential Services Programme) coordination has worked well; otherwise, coordinating larger agencies with greater field programme capacity has often been challenging. However, the landscape is constantly evolving, and UN Women has grown over the past 10 years, building a track record in programme delivery with the inevitable failings and lessons from implementation challenge and experiences.

FINDING 10

The revamped Resident Coordinator system is a strong potential enabler for UN Women's coordination role at the country level, and an opportunity to ensure and enhance coordinated approaches in EAW programming through the Resident Coordinator and seed coordination indicators.

Recent reforms of the UN system and empowerment of the Resident Coordinator's role offer good scope to strengthen UN Women's coordination functions at the country level. The Resident Coordinator has leadership of the country cooperation framework, including the responsibility for SDG and gender equality and the empowerment of women targets. The Resident Coordinator also exercises leadership for accountability for the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, which now includes specific indicators for coordination.

This provides an opportunity to present the breadth and diversity of UN Women's global EAW programming experience, particularly in ensuring and emphasizing that: (a) programming involves victim-centered and rights-based approaches as necessary; (b) interventions covering multiple sectors are coordinated to ensure a 'whole of government' approach and address intersections that potentially compound or exacerbate violence against women; and (c) the UN system speaks in one voice through joint advocacy and communications.

Resident Coordinators' independent assessment of UN Women's expertise and strong networks has been a factor in countering inter-agency frictions and in assigning UN Women lead roles in several EAW programmes, with Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste providing examples

in the Asia and the Pacific region. IES noted several illustrations of proactive engagement by UN Women Country Representatives with Resident Coordinator Offices, which has built relationships of trust and supported Resident Coordinators in leading the gender equality and the empowerment of women agenda at the national level. This also lightens UN Women's UN system coordination burden and engenders greater levels of agency participation and resource and work allocations under the UNCF.

FINDING 11

UN Women's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan does not include appropriate results and success indicators to capture and report contributions to its coordination pillar in the context of thematic area results. Coordination is treated as a contributor to operational efficiency and not as a critical ingredient in mainstreaming gender perspectives in development results in thematic areas.

In its 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, UN Women's coordination results are primarily measured through metrics in the Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency results. Indicators under Output 1 and Output 2 track system-wide investments in gender mainstreaming, which are based on UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP information. IES notes that these indicators are not broken down into specific thematic areas, such as EAW, which would be useful and could even be considered minimal thematic-level reporting for UN-SWAP 2.o.

In its Strategic Plan 2018-2021, UN Women includes two EAW subthemes: Essential Services and Prevention, and Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, each having its own theory of change and results indicators. Outputs 1,2,3 and 6 of the Strategic Plan have a number of thematic area entry points. However, the emphasis is almost entirely on capturing UN Women's own contributions through its own or joint programmes, rather than indicators that require a high degree of coordination with other UN entities or a broader convening role with governments, CSOs and other non-UN stakeholders.

At a minimum, the evaluation team considers it important for UN Women to systematically document and report the intangible inputs of coordination and convening to the realization of specific milestone results or agreed outputs, to build a case for the appropriate budgeting of coordination with UN and external entities, which is flexible to the levels of programming.

For example, the indicator for the number of countries undertaking the 25-year review and appraisal of BPfA implementation is a simple two-digit number: it provides no insight into how much effort UN and non-UN agencies made into convincing individual governments to undertake the review. The result indicator does not reflect the quality of effort expended in its achievement in coordinating and convening multiple actors. A way to recognize the coordination and convening components would be to highlight the following in additional narratives (illustrative):

- Twenty-four countries undertook implementation reviews in partnership with UN agencies and CSOs.
- Eight UN agencies contributed 12 staff and 1,000 hours of staff time; and undertook 16 consultations with counterpart ministries of social welfare on average per country that qualified for this result.
- In 4 of the 24 countries, there were major challenges in securing the participation of key actors that required additional, unforeseen efforts.
- In two countries, unforeseen political changes prevented the release of the review after all the work had been completed.

If systematic logging of coordination inputs is not possible, an alternate way of presenting coordination contributions would be to have a detailed narrative section titled '**UN System Coordination and Convening for Results**' under each thematic outcome area of the Integrated Resource and Results Framework, in joint programme reports and eventually in UN-SWAP 2.0 annual reports.

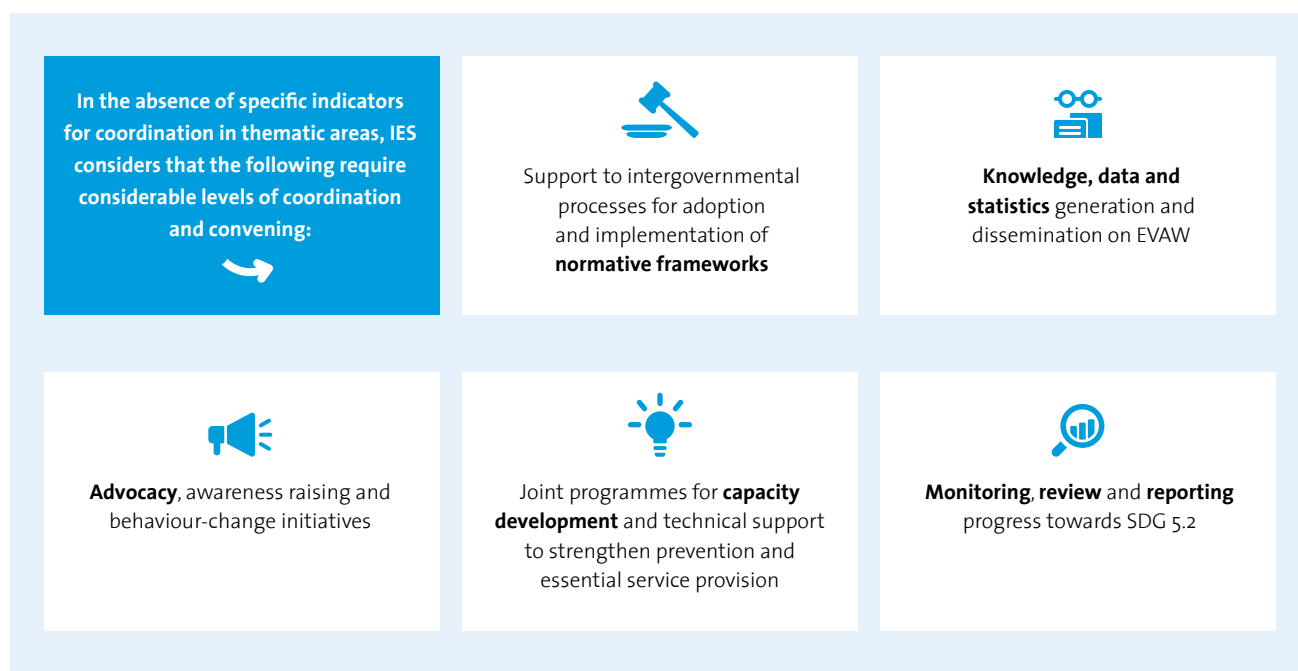
FINDING 12

The absence of objective and unambiguous coordination arrangements and metrics leads to varied perceptions within UN Women and among sister agencies as to its effectiveness.

The evaluation's online survey and key informant interviews revealed a noticeable divergence of views about the effectiveness of UN Women's coordination and convening role (see Annex 7 for details).

In the absence of specific indicators for coordination in thematic areas, IES considers that the following require considerable levels of coordination and convening:

- Support to intergovernmental processes for adoption and implementation of normative frameworks and international covenants: CSW, BPfA reviews, SDG monitoring, etc.
- Knowledge, data and statistics generation and dissemination on EVAW: VAW data and research publications, policy briefs, international standards, policy and practice handbooks.
- Advocacy, awareness raising and behaviour-change initiatives: UNiTE campaign, etc.
- Joint programmes for capacity development and technical support to strengthen prevention and essential service provision: Global Programme on Essential Services.
- Monitoring, review and reporting progress towards SDG 5.2: Voluntary National Reviews, global SDG implementation reviews.



4.3 RESULTS OF UN COORDINATION AND UN WOMEN'S BROADER CONVENING ROLE

FINDING 13

A number of joint programmes and advocacy initiatives have contributed to the advancement of global norms and standards and the creation of guidance and a steady increase in their adoption among countries. This has led to improvements in legislation, and increased investments in prevention of violence and provision of quality, multi-sectoral essential services to survivors. The UN system has also promoted several initiatives to strengthen data and statistics in the area of EAW to provide evidence of challenges and responses.

UN Women and other UN entities have contributed to several EAW results under their respective strategic plans. The UN Women Strategic Plan mapping²⁸ reports results under the following EAW outputs for 2018 and 2019:

- **Output 11:** More countries and stakeholders are better able to prevent violence against women and girls and deliver essential services to victims and survivors. For example, # of countries that have with UN Women support: 1) conducted community activities with women and men, boys and girls on gender equality and respectful relations and 2) developed national informal or formal education curricula on gender and violence against women and girls in primary and secondary schools (21 countries total) # of countries that provide information about women's rights to access quality essential services for victims and survivors of violence with UN Women support (52 countries).
- **Output 12:** More cities and other settings have safe and empowering public spaces for women and girls. For example, # of safe cities/safe public spaces partnerships in place which include women in decision-making positions (13 new partnerships in 2019); # of partners supported by UN Women whose knowledge and skills to influence legislation and

policies on sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces are improved, disaggregated by sex (10,677-15 countries in 2019).

These results emanate from a combination of joint programmes as well as programmes implemented solely by UN Women.

Coordination results from selected joint programmes on EAW

Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence

The Essential Services Global Programme, funded by Australia, Spain and the Autonomous Governments of the Basque Country and Catalonia began as a joint programme between UNFPA (administrative agency) and UN Women (convening agency) and has evolved into a multi-agency programme with the addition of WHO, UNDP and UNODC, over its two phases 2013–2017 and 2017–2020.

The key output of the first phase was the development of a **collaborative knowledge product**, the global Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence: Core Elements and Quality Guidelines were launched in 2015 and developed with support of international experts. It is accompanied by an Implementation Guide and e-learning course to assist countries in the roll-out and implementation of the Essential Services Package. The second phase consisted of testing the global guidance and tools in **10 pilot countries**: Cambodia, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Pakistan, Viet Nam, Tunisia, Mozambique, Egypt, Guatemala, Peru. Additionally, support was offered to other self-starter countries interested in rollouts through their own national budgets.

The IANGWE Beijing+25 review reported that, as of 2019, 58 countries had adopted the Essential Services Package as the standard for provision of essential services to survivors of violence²⁹. This widespread acceptance has validated the Essential Services Package as the definitive 'set of minimum standards' on provision of essential services.

²⁸ UN Women "Strategic Plan 2018–2021" <https://www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/strategic-plan/outcome-area-4>.

²⁹ IANGWE. "25 Years After Beijing: A review of the UN system's support for the implementation of the Platform for Action 2015-2019" (2020).

The final report of the Essential Services Global programme³⁰ in the five countries coordinated by UN Women noted that a major element of the second phase was to strengthen ‘coordination among national partners’ and responses across sectors, i.e., police, justice, health and social services. The evaluation team learned that the Essential Services Package and the Theory of Change of Essential Services and Prevention Flagship Programme were the foundational documents informing the Spotlight Initiative’s programmatic theory of change on EVAW, including prevention and essential services.

Partners for Prevention, Stepping Up and Blueprint for Prevention

UN Women has engaged in several interconnected programmes on prevention, including: the Pacific Partners for Prevention (UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV), Blueprint for Prevention, as a global initiative, and Stepping Up – a multi-country programme in the Asia and the Pacific region, funded by Australia and Republic of Korea. Given their strong similarities and contiguities as well as a common donor, the combined highlights of coordinated knowledge products and outcomes from these programmes are listed below:

- Working with governments of Viet Nam and Thailand, participating agencies and other partners developed “Trial of Rape: Understanding the criminal justice system in response to sexual violence in Thailand and Viet Nam” the region’s first comparative study on why survivors of rape fail to get justice. The study led Viet Nam to adopt new gender-sensitive guidelines for rape trials.
- UN Women, WHO and several other agencies (UNFPA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNODC) together contributed to developing the updated RESPECT Women: Prevent Violence against Women (2019), as well as its RESPECT Implementation Package, building on the previous UN Prevention Framework led by UN Women (2015), as a more-user friendly publication for policy makers, and disseminated it through region-wide capacity development training in Asia and Latin America. According to progress reports, these tools and training contributed to improved prevention programming, which expanded from 10 to 15 countries in the Asia and the Pacific Region during 2018–2019. The UN Prevention Framework

and RESPECT also contributed to programming of the prevention pillar in Spotlight programmes in several regions.

- Other knowledge products aimed at specific professions were developed in the Blueprint programme, such as: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through Sports, and The Big Conversation: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media: UN Women (both in partnership with UNESCO), and the Handbook Addressing Violence and Harassment against Women in the World of Work’ in partnership with ILO.

Strengthening Methodologies and Measurement and Building National Capacities for Violence against Women data 2018–2022

This joint programme with WHO aims to improve methodologies for collecting quality data on domestic violence under existing survey tools such as the Demographic and Health Survey, with emphasis on women’s experiences rather than perpetrator intent in the context of psychological abuse. It also attempts to plug knowledge gaps in prevalence survey instruments on understanding of forms and consequences of violence against older women.

According to the progress report submitted to the donor, “the Joint Programme has contributed to strengthening UN inter-agency coordination and collaboration. It brought agencies and partners together around SDGs reporting, the estimation methods, methodological work, administrative data, and capacity building on VAW prevalence. Particularly, UNFPA, UN Women, and WHO have been able to increasingly speak as one when it comes to the work on VAW prevalence. Furthermore, the Joint Programme has enhanced synergies with VAW research and data initiatives mainly the UN Women’s Women Count Programme and the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, through knowledge sharing, technical collaboration, joint advocacy and communication, and resource leveraging.”³¹

The programme supported efforts to ensure consistency across databases maintained by UN Women, UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA on elements related to violence against women and harmful practices.

³⁰ UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO. “Assessment of Pilot Countries’ Implementation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Essential Services Guidance for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (2017-2018)” (2019).

³¹ UN Women and WHO. “Joint programme on VAW Data: 2019 Annual Report” (2019).

The Safe Cities and Public Spaces for Women and Girls Global Programme

The Safe Cities and Public Spaces Programme is implemented through a Global Programme and a portfolio of self-starter branded projects. Under the programme, UN Women engaged with local, provincial/state and national governments, women's grassroots and other community groups, as well as the media, universities and the private sector for an integrated, multi-stakeholder engagement focusing on systematic and transformative actions

To prevent and respond to sexual harassment in public spaces, UN Women partnered with UN entities to ensure gender-responsive interventions on the ground. Through these efforts, UN Women was able to mainstream gender and reduce risks associated with VAWG including by working with non-traditional and male dominated sectors such as urban and transportation infrastructure and planning, agricultural commodity sectors, and making links with broader security initiatives focused on transnational criminality. These are sectors where UN Women has had very limited reach in the past, and has helped to position and support the uptake of women's safety action in these sectors. For example:

- In Egypt, Cairo's transport authority, in partnership with UN Women and UN-HABITAT designed and implemented the first gender-responsive the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in the region with an aim to make public transport more responsive to the needs of women and girls and curb congestion and CO₂ emissions.
- In Pakistan, UN Women, in partnership with UNOPS, conducted Women Safety Audits (WSAs). This resulted in a plan to use recommendations from the women safety audits to develop and design policy briefs, implementation plans and support future programme/project designs. In a bid to offer safe, reliable and hassle-free transportation to women in the busiest and most populous city of Hazara region, in collaboration with UN Women and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, UNOPS launched the women-only Sakura Bus Service in Abbottabad.
- In Colombia, linking UNODC's programme on citizenship security, UN Women worked with local government and the UN entity to address women's safety issues in the public spaces, and maximize potential synergies.

For additional evidence on results, refer to Annex 10.

FINDING 14

The evaluation team noted that several joint programmes in EVAW were designed as global, regional or multi-country programmes. This enables the use of standardized approaches (with some contextualization) based on a theory of change, drawing from global norms and standards, supported by a technical accompaniment, a global package of tools and guidance and access to good practices in order to address a set of challenges common to several countries often linked to regional economic integration or cultural similarities and proximities.

Regional and multi-country programmes have been able to address regionally sensitive issues rooted in cultural and social traditions and have galvanized political buy-in in regional, political and intergovernmental processes for particularly sensitive subjects. In all these cases, progress has been possible due to the UN speaking as one 'coordinated' voice on the issue.

Regional engagement in the UN Women Arab States Regional Office is a strong example of the results of coordinated action. Under the Gender Justice Study Initiative, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women (regional offices) and ESCWA undertook comprehensive reviews of law, policies and practice in six Arab countries, and convened a regional meeting attended by relevant stakeholders from 19 countries. Using the Arab Charter of Human Rights and CEDAW as entry points, UN agencies engaged with the League of Arab States resulting in a common position – the Arab Declaration – at CSW 63, and an announcement of intent for an Arab Convention to End Violence Against Women and Girls. The youth networks of UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women came together for a regional youth workshop on EVAWG in Arab States to promote youth empowerment and engagement for social change. In addition to these high-level convening and agenda-setting initiatives, important knowledge products were contributed by various entities.

In some instances, regional integration processes have provided the fillip to coordinated multi-country programmes. This was amply evidenced in both the Europe and Central Asia and Asia Pacific regions.

In the Western Balkans, several countries share a common European Accession agenda with specific *acquis Communautaire* commitments on several subjects, including gender equality and the empowerment of women. A preliminary assessment of gender equality and women's empowerment in Turkey and the six³² Western Balkans countries revealed that implementation of laws remains stymied by patriarchal structures; unequal power relations between women and men; and a lack of political will from governments, which is an obstacle to meeting accession requirements. This assessment has enabled common elements in the regional programme 'Implementing norms, changing minds' a UN Women–UNDP joint programme in the Western Balkans and Turkey, anchored in the Istanbul Convention, which is mandatory for EU accession and legally binding upon ratification by a member state.

Similarly, the Safe and Fair Migration joint programme (UN Women, ILO, UNODC and ASEAN institutions, under the Spotlight Initiative umbrella) in the ASEAN finds strong anchor in the regional cooperation framework which commits members to integration of trade, investments and labour markets. The programme emphasis on strengthening migration governance and safety of migrant women and access to essential services is key to the integration of labour markets to enhance regional growth and competitiveness.

In these joint programmes, the main drivers of cooperation and division of labour have been inter-agency complementarities along thematic lines (ASEAN) or geographic lines (Western Balkans).

Insights on coordination from the Spotlight Initiative

A specific assessment of the Spotlight Initiative was not within the scope of this evaluation. However, the evaluation focused on insights into coordination arrangements and their implementation shared by a number of key informants involved in the programme at regional and national level.

The evaluation team notes these salient coordination elements in the Spotlight Initiative:

- Overall programme coordination is vested with the UN Secretary-General and Resident Coordinator Office network and not with any individual UN

agency. At the level of country offices, the EU delegation and the Resident Coordinator are at the helm, therefore all participating agencies are equidistant.

- The selection of core and implementing UN agencies was made pillar by pillar, based on mandates, comparative advantage, technical expertise and in-country assets under each of the six thematic pillars of the theory of change. This has created a logical justification of the resultant division of labour and resource allocation to agencies. The Resident Coordinator has had a key role in selecting the implementing agencies.
- Coordination resources were provisioned from the outset. A dedicated programme coordination team with a full-time programme coordinator and coordination support analyst are housed in the Resident Coordinator's Office to oversee programme delivery, which enabled clear lines of command and accountability among the UN funding agencies and reduced inter-agency dynamics – a recurrent issue in several other joint programmes.
- At each implementing agency, the programme budget supports at least one post for coordination and focal point roles vis-à-vis other implementing agencies.

A unique element of the Spotlight Initiative is the distinction between the overall programme coordination function (vested with the Resident Coordinator) and UN Women's technical coherence role, served by a dedicated technical coherence position funded by the Spotlight Initiative, which is a technical assurance function as opposed to programme coordination. UN Women's securing of the technical coordination role was in good measure due to the Entity's experience in building and operationalizing theories of change in EAW in UN Women's Strategic Plan, which informed the design of the Spotlight Initiative's theory of change.

Despite the well-articulated coordination elements, the recently concluded Mid-term Assessments of Spotlight in a few countries revealed a mix of observations on coordination-related aspects. The major coordination insights showed how different Resident Coordinator Offices were operationalizing the technical coordination function, i.e., through full delegation to UN Women; through co-location within the Resident Coordinator's Office; or directly under the Resident Coordinator's Office.

³² Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo (All references to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)), North Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. Center of Women's Rights, Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Is justice failing women survivors of violence? Action oriented recommendations for effective prevention, protection, and prosecution in the Western Balkans and Turkey" (2019).

The evaluation team noted concerns that the Spotlight Initiative has led to a parallel coordination structure outside the established Gender Theme Groups in countries and, at the global level, a secretariat with a Technical Unit hosted at UN Women with a dual line of reporting to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) and equipped with significant resources. The continuity of these coordination structures is not guaranteed after the Spotlight Initiative. More importantly, the opportunities to institutionalize knowledge from the largest current EAW programme may be more effectively pursued within an implementing agency rather than the EOSG which is not set up to manage programmes per se.

Collaborative knowledge products

FINDING 15

The development and dissemination of knowledge products relating to EAW was an area commonly cited by external stakeholders as a key strength and added value of UN Women in the EAW space, and UN Women's coordination role in this area is recognized by other agencies and partners.

UN Women frequently convenes and partners with other UN agencies, civil society, governments and thematic experts to develop knowledge products on EAW: a key purpose of several of UN Women's global knowledge products is to improve coordination between stakeholders in the EAW space to achieve greater results for women and girls.

Global knowledge products

Recently, UN Women developed or coordinated four major global knowledge products with partners that were repeatedly cited as high quality, standout products which stakeholders in the area of EAW frequently draw upon in their own roles: the Essential Services package, the Global Knowledge Platform, the COVID-19 EAW policy brief series, the first-ever UN EAW Prevention Framework and the RESPECT framework (described in detail in Annex 10 along with an overview of global knowledge products

produced or updated by UN Women during the time frame of the current Strategic Plan and their links to EAW Outputs 11 and 12).

The Global Knowledge Platform comprises three separate databases: the Global Database on Violence Against Women (which compiles the measures and efforts undertaken by Member States to address violence against women); Inventory of United Nations Activities to End Violence against Women (which compiles the activities and actions undertaken by UN entities in the area of EAW); and the Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence Against Women and Girls (provides programming and policy guidance to practitioners dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls). The second website in particular was developed to enhance UN system coordination on EAW by establishing systematic and timely information exchange among UN agencies in regard to EAW programmes and activities at the global, regional and national levels. While civil society, governments, and other actors report using the first and third databases of the Global Knowledge Platform in their own work, the extent to which UN agency actors use the second database to maximize results and avoid duplication of efforts is unclear.

The overall importance of UN Women's coordination role for the development of EAW knowledge products was further emphasized by the findings of the global stakeholder survey for the Strategic Plan 2022–2025,³³ which indicated that development of joint data products was identified by stakeholders as the third most important role for UN Women in a UN inter-agency context (behind partnering/leading joint programmes and promoting gender mainstreaming in Common Country Analysis/UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework processes).

At the country level, UN Women's role in coordinating the development and dissemination of EAW knowledge products is recognized by other agencies. The survey of Gender Theme Group members found that over half (53 per cent) reported that the development of guidance on EAW was an activity undertaken in their Gender Theme Group which UN Women leads. In terms of effectiveness, the response was positive – only 3.4 per cent responded that UN Women was ineffective in coordinating the development of EAW guidance in their Gender Theme Group.³⁴

³³ UN Women, "Key stakeholders' perspectives for UN Women's next strategic plan" (2021).

³⁴ Questions 7 and 11 of evaluation survey of GTG members.

Collaborative advocacy campaigns

UNiTE Campaign

UN Women manages the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence Against Women campaign (UNiTE Campaign), which aims to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls around the world. Launched in 2008, the UNiTE Campaign is a multi-year effort, calling on governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire UN system to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of VAWG. The campaign builds on existing international legal and policy frameworks and works to synergize the efforts of all UN offices and agencies working to EVAWG.

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual civil society initiative which commences on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on 10 December, Human Rights Day. In support of this initiative, the UNiTE Campaign marks the 16 Days of Activism and calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts and share knowledge and innovations.

In 2020, along with other UN agencies, UN Women funds and programmes, called on governments around the world to act in support of the UN Secretary-General's Political Engagement Strategy on Gender-based Violence in the context of COVID-19. UN Women's campaign and advocacy around the world leveraged the COVID-19 lens to highlight the spike in domestic violence and generated 5,800 media articles and saw an 86 per cent increase in website visits (compared to 2019).³⁵

Internally (within UN Women) and among external partners, the UNiTE Campaign is widely seen as one of the more **successful and effective forms of coordinated advocacy** on ending violence against women undertaken by UN Women. The 16 Days of Activism, marked by the UNiTE Campaign, serves as an annual event for UN Women to coordinate efforts among UN agencies; **streamline communications** on the issue; collate and share information; and create opportunities for peer-learning through relevant events. UN Women's leadership of the campaign was highlighted by several respondents to the survey conducted by the evaluation team among external country-level Gender Theme Group members. One of the key success factors is the **buy-in from the very top of the UN system** for the campaign, as well as **UN Women's leadership** of coordinating efforts.

Leave no-one behind and disability inclusion

FINDING 16

UN Women's role in UN coordination and broader convening of EVAW incorporates the leave no-one behind principle in different ways at the global, regional and country levels and disability inclusion is an emerging area of work. The key global EVAW initiatives maintain a focus on intersectionality and disability inclusion in programming, knowledge products and inclusive representation from stakeholders.

In alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Leaving No-One Behind, UN Women has a strong commitment to intersectional approaches and promoting an understanding of women's experiences at the intersection of factors such as race, class, caste, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status, geographical location and/or religion. Addressing the needs of persons with disabilities is consistent with the leave no-one behind principle and warrants explicit attention to making policy, operational support and capacity development initiatives disability inclusive.

While all women can experience sexual harassment and violence, women with disabilities often face additional risks. Key global EVAW initiatives, including the UNTF EVAW, joint programmes, Spotlight Initiative and the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative, maintain a focus on intersectionality and disability inclusion in programming, ensuring inclusive representation from stakeholders. For instance, in 2019 the UNTF EVAW awarded new grants for projects in 12 countries focusing on violence against women and girls living with disabilities. The key lessons from the thematic funding window for women and girls living with disabilities stressed the importance of building absorptive management capacity; fostering partnerships between women's and disabled persons' organizations; and ensuring that the UNTF EVAW reaches marginalized groups through accessible calls for proposals, inclusive budgets, targeting and mainstreaming. For additional information on UN Women's work on disability and EVAW, refer to Annex 12.

³⁵ [Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect! Concept Note for Engagement 2020](#).

4.4

UN COORDINATION AND CONVENING ON EVAW IN THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

FINDING 17

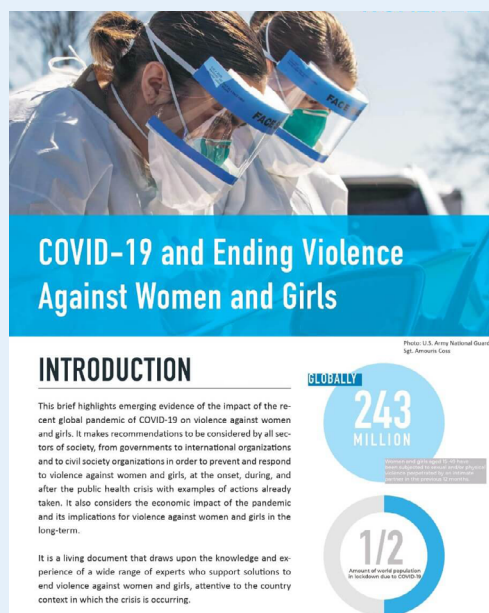
UN Women was early to spot the shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls and drive a cohesive UN system response.

UN Women demonstrated perspicacity in spotting the gender dimensions of COVID-19, especially its adverse impacts on gender-based violence at a very early stage of the pandemic. With the support of on the ground networks across countries, UN Women conducted rapid assessments in several countries. Coordinated violence against women data collection in a large number of countries enabled compelling evidence of the perceptible increase in VAWG and also the considerable challenges women already faced in accessing essential services and revealed the imminence of a ‘shadow pandemic’.

Early evidence-based advocacy: this compelling evidence was instrumental in the articulation of the need for a system-wide response. Key in this regard were the interagency statement on VAWG in the context of COVID-19; contributions from several agencies to COVID-19 policy briefs; a 10-point check list for governments for a gender-responsive COVID-19 response;³⁶ the UN Secretary-General’s Policy Brief “The Impact of COVID-19 on Women;” and the UN Framework for immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.³⁷ UN Women integrated gender equality in the framework’s five streams of work through the inclusion of awareness of gender-based violence; support to women’s employment and women-owned enterprises; unpaid care; gender-responsive fiscal packages; health; inclusion of women’s groups and voices; and sex-disaggregated data.³⁸

FIGURE 4

Selection of policy briefs and guidance products in the early phases of the COVID-19 response



- UN Women Executive Director’s Call to Action ([link](#))
- 10-point checklist ([link](#))
- Inter-Agency statement on VAWG in the context of COVID-19 ([link](#))
- Inter-Agency Group note: COVID-19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together ([link](#))
- Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 ([link](#))
- Five Policy Briefs: economic fallout, care economy, violence against women, women’s leadership and women’s role in post conflict ceasefire and peace processes ([link](#))
- IANWGE Compendium on Integrating Gender considerations in the response to COVID-19: key messages and actions from UN entities ([link](#))
- COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker ([link](#))
- A series of policy briefs on VAW and COVID-19 ([link](#))
- UN SG Policy Brief on COVID-19 and Cities. Covid in an Urban World ([link](#))

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team from desk reviews and the Report on UN Women’s Global Response to COVID-19.

³⁶ UN Women, Executive Director’s Call To Action, 20 March 2020 and Deputy Executive Director Asa Regner ten-point check list.

³⁷ United Nations. “Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19” (2020). <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/un-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>

³⁸ UN Women. “UN Women Global Response to COVID 19” (2021), page 3.

Political Engagement Strategy: The UN Secretary-General's Policy Brief "The Impact of COVID-19 on Women" influenced a UN Executive Committee meeting in June 2020 that led to the adoption of three actions:

- **Political Engagement Strategy:** to engage influencers at all levels and mobilize social and cultural shifts to tackle gender-based violence.
- **Evidence-based Advocacy:** ensure advocacy is evidence-based through greater engagement of big data and rapid assessment surveys.
- **Strengthening Women CSOs:** as full partners in response and recovery work

On behalf of the Secretary-General, UN Women led the development of a political engagement strategy, which called for specific commitments from government leaders on how Member States are funding, preventing, responding and collecting data on EAW during the pandemic.

Coordinated System-wide Action Plan: UN Women from the onset of the pandemic convened the other UN agencies in order to respond to VAW in a coordinated manner. As a result, the group issued an inter-agency statement³⁹ on responding to VAWG in the context of COVID 19, highlighting six critical areas of action on the part of the UN system. A Coordinated System-wide Action Plan was also put in place covering the period September 2020–March 2021, composed of four pillars:

- **Fund:** include EAW in COVID-19 response and recovery plans, allocate funding to EAW and autonomous women's organizations.
- **Prevent:** public awareness raising.
- **Respond:** maintain services to survivors as essential ones and support to services, helplines, shelters, access to justice.
- **Collect:** data on incidents of violence and capacity of service providers to respond.

The strategy and activation plan enlisted five elements: identification of champions; curated regional dialogues; global campaign platforms; Secretary-General interactions with global traditional and faith-based leaders; and civil society engagement. UN Women and other agencies were given the task of validating the selection of champions,

as well as the identification of political opportunities. Champion countries were to be identified based on a set of criteria.⁴⁰

Financing: The UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (COVID-19 MPTF) was launched in July 2020 to support low and middle-income programme countries (based on the UN Framework mentioned in paragraph 128). Programming under the fund was through global calls for proposals, guided by Socio-Economic Response Plans (SERPs) prepared by member states and endorsed by Resident Coordinators. By end of 2020, the Solutions Catalogue,⁴¹ a compendium of these proposals, consisted of 206 programmes from 104 countries. Against the needs estimate of US\$ 252 million, the COVID-19 MPTF mobilized US\$ 82 million, and disbursements of US\$ 75 million were made to 80 programmes in 67 countries⁴².

UN Women is an ex officio member of the fund's Steering Committee, as well as being an important recipient organization for a number of proposals. According to key informants, UN Women's key contributions included ensuring the gender responsiveness of responses through the mandatory assignment of gender markers for all proposals in the catalogue, and successfully advocating in the second call of action for a 30 per cent earmarking of funds for proposals whose focus was on the gender dimensions of the response.

UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF EAW). The UNTF EAW's civil society networks played a key role in highlighting the evidence of a shadow pandemic, through efficient mobilization of rapid assessment surveys and strong advocacy that frontline service providers needed to be supported as official machinery was not in place. Following a virtual meeting of 280 global stakeholders on "Impact of COVID-19 on the ecosystem of ending violence against women", the UNTF EAW announced a five-point action plan to ensure continuity of project activities; raised US\$ 20 million (US\$ 11 million through the fund and US\$ 9 million from the EU–UN Spotlight Initiative); and supported 54 CSOs with financial assistance to improve health and safety measures and PPE.

³⁹ United Nations. "Inter-agency statement on Violence against Women and Girls in the context of Covid-19." (2020) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/statement-inter-agency-statement-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-COVID-19-June-24>, (2020) https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news_20and_20events/stories/2020/inter-agency-statement-vawandcovid_en.pdf?la=en&vs=1045

⁴⁰ Details can be found in the presentation 'Political Engagement Strategy Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19 Response', September 2020.

⁴¹ United Nations. "About the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund - #RecoverBetterTogether" (2021) <http://un.org/recoverbetter>.

⁴² United Nations. "About the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund - #RecoverBetterTogether" (2021) <http://un.org/recoverbetter> (mobilized US\$ 66 million in assistance to 47 countries in its first round of allocations (May 2020) and US\$ 16 million in its second round (August 2020)).

FINDING 18**UN Women reallocated resources across its EAW programme portfolio to incorporate COVID-19 responses at regional and country level, through strengthening data collection and analysis, and support to strengthening access to services during the lockdown.**

UN Women leveraged existing programmes⁴³ to provide a comprehensive and rapid response to the impact of the pandemic on violence against women at the country level and to ensure that prevention and response strategies to address violence against women were informed by evidence of the impact on the safety of women and girls and adapted to the context of quarantines and social distancing policies.

UN Women also reallocated its programme resources under the Spotlight Initiative. Overall, US\$ 21 million across participating UN agencies was mobilized to support COVID-19 plans in beneficiary country programmes.⁴⁴ Similarly, the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative was adapted by local partners in consultation with the COVID-19 Policy Brief recommendations in diverse areas such as urban planning, transportation, data, and essential services. The UNTF on EAW provided US\$ 20 million to support community service organization (CSO) grantees to facilitate essential services to victims and survivors.

Actions were taken in the following areas:

- Data collection and analysis on violence against women and on needs and the capacity of support services to inform evidence-based responses.
- Strengthening services provided by national and local governments and women's rights groups and organizations and adaptation to the COVID-19 context, while advocating that these groups and organizations be considered essential services for continued availability, access, funding and safety.

- Support for women's organizations as the centre of policy change, recovery and solutions, ensuring that no one is left behind.
- Media campaigns, awareness raising and stakeholder engagement.

Data collection and analysis on violence against women to inform evidence-based responses

The evaluation team noted UN Women's engagement in data collection and analysis in several countries to address the large gaps in data for several relevant indicators. Primary among these were the **rapid gender assessment surveys** in 37 countries undertaken with national and UN partners on the impacts of COVID-19. UN Women's 'Women Count' Flagship Programme Initiative supported collection of VAW data in over 20 countries. The results confirmed the emergence of a "shadow pandemic" and informed government and UN system responses, including Socio-Economic Response Plans.

COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker: To monitor policy responses by governments, UNDP and UN Women also developed a tracking system⁴⁵ which highlights gender-responsive actions and good practices through country fact-sheets, featuring country examples, best practices and gaps in the COVID-19 policy response. The data accessed from the tracker indicated a total of over 2,500 measures across regions, of which there were 702 specific measures relating to VAW, the majority being in Europe, the Americas and Asia.

UN Women's Data Hub also features a **COVID-19 and gender monitor dashboard** with several indicators such as: COVID-19 cases and deaths, macroeconomic impact, poverty, health system vulnerability, labour markets, gender equality, among others, linked to the SDGs. The COVID-19 and Gender Monitor is a collaborative effort of several agencies.⁴⁶

⁴³ Including Spotlight Initiative, UNTF EAW, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme Global Initiative, Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls, Implementing norms, changing minds: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in the Western Balkans and Turkey regional programme, and other bilateral programmes.

⁴⁴ "Spotlight Initiative response to Covid-19." <https://sites.google.com/spotlightinitiative.org/cosi/home-cosi/covid-19-response>. 2020.

⁴⁵ UNDP and UN Women. "Covid-19 Global Gender response tracker." <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>




⁴⁶ International Labour Organization (ILO), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and many others.

Strengthening services during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Country offices supported initiatives to maintain or enhance access to services, including through remote service delivery mechanisms such as helplines, where legal services, online counselling and referral to other service providers can take place. For women who could not safely

make phone calls, UN Women partners in many countries set up alternatives including email, SMS, WhatsApp and social media messenger applications (apps) with the necessary data protection, safety precautions and staff training.

TABLE 1**Some examples of UN Women's support at the country level during the COVID-19 pandemic**




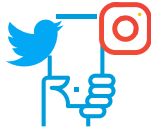

 HELPLINES, ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS	
Argentina and Chile	WhatsApp, government and CSOs: upgraded existing national helplines for access by women in lockdown with abusers
Serbia and Kosovo	Mobile app featuring access to chat, SOS and panic buttons
North Macedonia	Online legal counselling by Women Forum
Ukraine	Virtual safe spaces on social media platforms in conflict-affected areas in east Ukraine
DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Eswatini, Zimbabwe	UNTF supported CSOs in setting up new helplines or expanding existing ones to handle increased caseloads
Ethiopia, Uganda, South Sudan	Toll-free helplines and hotlines sustained during COVID-19
Pakistan	Online psychological counselling, therapy and legal aid for survivors
India	National hotline network with multiple language assistance
 SHELTERS, PPE AND SUPPLIES	
Ethiopia	Transitional shelters/safe houses, provision of dignity kits and services, food and hygiene materials for HIV-positive women
Malawi, Mozambique, South Sudan, Tanzania	Face masks and kits, washing buckets
Zimbabwe	Emergency care packages and PPE kits
Iraq, Somalia, Bangladesh	PPE, cash transfers and hygiene kits for women in camps
Guatemala	Protective suits for personnel – for crime scenes of femicide and for returnees and quarantined women in shelters
 SURVEILLANCE AND PREVENTION	
Nigeria	Community surveillance groups for monitoring and referral of case
Uganda	Uganda Police Force dedicated toll-free hotline
Kyrgyzstan	Training sessions including online dialogue to monitor violence against women
Jordan, Pakistan, Senegal, Uganda and Caribbean	Training of law enforcement officials to respond remotely

Source: compiled from information in Report on UN Women Global Response and evaluation interviews

Media engagement: UN Women had effective media engagement, spanning social media and conventional media channels, with a wide reach which drew significant engagement from target audiences. Partnerships with Google and Facebook helped expand the campaign reach to more than 2 million people worldwide.⁴⁷

The COVID-19 response brought out the strength of the UN system in its coordination efforts, and UN Women did not experience the usual inter-agency dynamics in the COVID-19 response, due both to the seriousness of the issue – which brought out the best collective efforts of agencies – and UN Women’s first-mover advantage in mobilizing data and evidence gathering and leadership in highlighting the VAWG dimensions of the COVID-19 response.

TABLE 2
UN Women’s media engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic

	<p>GOOGLE Ad grants US\$ 1.5 million, 5 million views, 600,000 visits to UN Women’s page</p>	<p>5M views</p>
	<p>FACEBOOK 305 million impressions, 18 million interactions, 700,000 visits to UN Women’s page</p>	<p>18M interactions</p>
	<p>COVID-19 WEB PAGE 100,000 unique page views</p>	<p>100K page views</p>
	<p>UN WOMEN SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS 2,000 posts, 138 million impressions, 3.7 million interactions</p>	<p>3.7M interactions</p>
	<p>EARNED MEDIA ARTICLES 5,000 articles, several goodwill ambassador endorsements and statements</p>	<p>5K articles</p>

Source: compiled from information in Report on UN Women Global Response (UN Women. “UN Women Global Response to COVID 19” (2021) and evaluation interviews.

⁴⁷ UN Women. “UN Women Global Response to COVID 19” (2021).



Photo ©UN Women/ Long Duong

5

LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

The evaluation brought to light a few key factors that influence success in any coordination and convening role. While they are potentially applicable across thematic areas, their specific importance to ERAW is due to the large and overlapping footprints of ERAW programming in the UN system.

LESSON 1

Having a coordination mandate is a necessary but insufficient condition for ensuring effective coordination to mainstream gender perspectives in development results. Implementing the mandate requires appropriate investment to strengthen the legitimacy vested in the coordinating entity to ‘lead, promote and coordinate’ the UN system.

At a fundamental level, while UN Women’s mandate is to lead the UN system in coordination for gender equality and women’s empowerment, it is the collective responsibility of the UN system as a whole to work together to realize this goal. Coordination is the joint action of entities coming together based on the shared and agreed benefits of coordination. Therefore, drivers, incentives and enabling factors are required for peer entities to engage in coordination of ERAW, based on clear and shared understanding of its contribution to system-wide results as much as to support agency-level objectives.

Such recognition has been impeded by the absence in thematic programming of an accountability framework such as for mainstreaming gender equality into institutional functions UN-SWAP 1.0 and its successor UN-SWAP 2.0 which was expanded and elevated to include reporting on results and greater rigour in several standards. Accountability for results for thematic areas such as ERAW would strengthen coordination towards development results through coherence, coordinated actions and partnerships for creation of knowledge, capacities, technical support and advocacy (as is better emphasized in UN SWAP 2.0).

The value of coordination should be articulated by its benefits to participating agencies, in terms of the intended advantages (in achievement of results) of working together as well as the counterfactual: what cannot be achieved without coordination with other actors? Reflecting these in UN agencies’ strategic plans can create the right inter-agency institutional arrangements for effective coordination.

LESSON 2

Coordination in thematic areas is intertwined with the normative and operational roles of UN Women’s mandate. A large part of coordination in thematic areas takes place within the context of normative work and programming: joint planning; development and dissemination of knowledge products; programme implementation; and advocacy and communications. Coordination therefore needs to be viewed in terms of the value it adds to normative and operational results and outcomes.

The averred importance of coordination’s contribution to results needs to be corroborated by due recognition in strategic plan thematic results through a theory of change; adoption of appropriate results indicators (beyond processes); elaboration of resource needs; allocations in programming budgets, and implementation of a framework of standards against which progress can be regularly aggregated, measured and reported on. A systematic documentation of coordination efforts would also enable recognition of the significant time spent in coordination for results, and the quality of the enabling environment in which coordination takes place.

LESSON 3

Coordination is as much about people skills and building trust as it is institutional arrangements. Instances of strong leadership and individual efforts to build collaborative relationships were found to result in successes. Good examples were noted in the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (the Essential Services Global Programme) and the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

At the country level, coordination responsibilities are attached to operational programme management responsibilities. However, skill sets for effective coordination can be quite different from those for effective operational programme management. Leadership, building trust, interpersonal skills and communication are important competencies for coordination, and are present to varying degrees in staff whose primary functions are in operational programme management. The absence of clearly specified and agreed coordination outputs, operational programme management often supersedes coordination as a priority, especially given the considerable amount of time involved in coordination.

The IANWGE standing committee on EAW is the long-standing inter-agency mechanism for coordination, where issues of leadership can be resolved through rotating chairs or co-chairing coordination structures rather than pressing a mandate that is not wholeheartedly welcomed but seen as an imposition.

Coordination practices

The evaluation team noted the following examples of promising practices in coordination that demonstrate the benefits of coordination, especially highlighting the costs of 'non-coordination'.

First, from a design perspective, some elements of the Spotlight Initiative's coordination structures could be further studied and potentially applied to joint programming in general:

- Vesting coordination functions and oversight of implementation in the Resident Coordinator who is accountable to the Deputy Secretary General, rather than appointing a UN funding entity as the coordinating entity, therefore enabling equidistance of agencies and promoting a more joined-up approach to UN's work on EAW in the country.
- Selection of agencies based on comparative advantages, experience and technical expertise in each country (in terms of the results of the thematic pillars of the theory of change), under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.
- Explicitly recognizing the importance of coordination at national, regional and global levels and providing a dedicated structure and resources for programme coordination support, including a dedicated coordination resource for each agency.
- Explicitly recognizing the importance of technical coherence in programme planning and implementation and assigning lead responsibility to UN Women for technical coherence.

As a flagship programme of the UN's SDG efforts and in line with the UNDS reform, the Spotlight Initiative positioned the Resident Coordinator's office as the location of UN system coordination for the programme. While assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the

arrangement was not part of this evaluation, UN Women is well positioned to play the technical coherence role by supporting the Resident Coordinator's office through in-country and regional office structures. UN Women's substantial human resources and expertise in EAW is a corporate asset not matched in the UN system, and could be leveraged more effectively to counteract non-uniform country presence and capacities.

Second, UN Women's recognition as the key counterpart UN agency on gender equality and women's empowerment, and the Entity's strong on-the-ground networks are UN Women's strategic assets in its coordination role. The evaluation team also noted several instances of UN Women's strong positioning with external actors at the country level as the 'go-to' agency for EAW matters. The strong constituencies built with national women's machinery, government-led coordination structures, CSOs and women's organizations has emanated from long-standing engagement in advocacy in its approach to EAW. This has enabled UN Women to play a lead role in external coordination even in countries with small programme portfolios.

Third, notwithstanding some challenges in developing an effective division of labour, both UN Women and UNFPA have made efforts to evolve pragmatic inter-agency arrangements in joint programming, development of global knowledge products, and advocacy and communications. This was evident in the agreed division of areas of responsibility in the Essential Services Global Programme and in the UNiTE Campaign in Asia and Pacific, and also in managing joint programmes in countries where UN Women does not have a country presence. These successes are in no small measure due to the initiative shown by individuals to build a collaborative relationship within specific engagements towards common objectives. There is also mutual recognition and respect among the senior leadership in both entities of each other's technical expertise and continuing investment in EAW capacities. This has led to current dialogue on more effective corporate arrangements for collaborative actions.

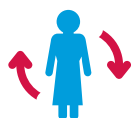


6

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1



UN Women’s mandate to ‘lead, promote and coordinate’ mainstreaming of gender equality and women’s empowerment across the United Nations system is a strong, strategic asset. However, current system-wide accountability and reporting frameworks are inadequate to enable effective coordination for system-wide results in thematic areas. An accountability framework for thematic areas, including ERAW, that incorporates system-wide results therefore needs to be developed.

UN Women’s founding resolution clearly empowers the Entity to lead effective coherence, coordination, and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system at the global and also country level, and to establish appropriate mechanisms to assist and support the realization of the strategic objectives and actions agreed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the national and international commitments stipulated in the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. UN Women’s coordination mandate is a strategic asset to enable the Entity to engage and coordinate with several larger UN agencies.

In its initial 5-year phase 2012-2017, the UN system coordination and accountability has focused on the achievement of minimum standards in mainstreaming gender perspectives within processes and functions of individual agencies. Accountability to harness the potential for coordinated actions (planning, mobilizing, delivering and

reporting) for transformative development results, was incorporated only in the second phase starting 2018 of the UN-SWAP and the UNCT-SWAP. In the case of ERAW, present accountability systems need to be complemented by appropriate accountability instruments for results. A system-wide accountability instrument is required that comprehensively reviews and reports on the UN system’s high-level results and progress towards SDG target 5.2 ‘Ending all forms of Violence against Women’ across countries, regions and globally.

The adoption of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) 2.0 in 2018 constitutes an evolution in emphasis to accountability for transformative results. This has important implications for system-wide coordination and broader convening mechanisms in thematic areas, with a redesign/recalibration of objectives, processes and outputs and engagement modalities.

CONCLUSION 2



The lack of articulation of a concrete value proposition of United Nations system coordination, which clearly defines action areas, roles and responsibilities, and metrics to track contributions to development results, has constrained the operationalization of the Entity’s coordination role in thematic areas. It is within UN Women’s mandate to articulate this value proposition through consultations.

While there is sufficient clarity on the UN system coordination functions pertaining to accountability for gender mainstreaming in UN entities, what UN system coordination means, entails and is expected to achieve in the specific thematic areas, including ERAW, is neither explicitly stated nor uniformly understood among UN agencies.

Promoting, leading and coordination of the UN system for performance and results in thematic area such as ERAW entails coordination and convening beyond global inter-governmental processes and engagement within and outside the UN system at both regional and country levels.

Such coordination and convening requires collective engagement (which cannot be delivered by a single entity) in the following areas:

- Convening stakeholders for intergovernmental processes and mechanisms for agenda setting, adoption of international commitments and standards.
- Production and dissemination of global knowledge products, methodologies and technical guidance materials for policy action – mostly global.
- Stocktaking and implementation reviews of EAW trends, investments, challenges and innovative practices.
- Awareness raising and advocacy campaigns on EAW.
- Formulation of common/concerted approaches and strategies at country/higher levels.
- Joint programming and implementation (country, multi-country level).
- Data and evidence gathering, monitoring.
- Reporting and communications on progress towards agreed development goals (SDGs).

The lack of a system-wide accountability framework and periodic reporting present challenges in operationalizing a coordination framework for results through collaborative actions. As a result, coordination largely remains voluntary for UN entities, with no sanctions or incentives.

At the country level, coordination and broader convening tasks involve both UN system and external stakeholders. UN coordination mechanisms at the country level (Gender

Theme Groups) often do not include specific workplans and budgets linked to coordination-specific actions and deliverables in EAW.

UN Women has struggled to raise resources for its coordination mandate : donors are reluctant to fund UN coordination activities from non-core/earmarked contributions, where UN Women has seen the largest growth in recent years, as they expect UN coordination activities to be funded from assessed contributions or voluntary contributions in regular (core) resources donors are reluctant to fund UN coordination from voluntary contributions as coordination is considered a core UN Women function and is expected to be funded from the core budget. However, this logic would appear not to hold necessarily for coordination in thematic areas where significant UN coordination and broader convening elements are found in the implementation of joint programmes; support to national governments for implementation of normative commitments; and communications and advocacy. These actions take place more at regional and country-level, and the human and financial resource costs entailed are not explicitly delineated.

Another lacuna in building the case for coordination is the lack of recognition of the resources expended by UN Women as a convening agency (this being the case in a majority of joint programmes). Whereas the administrative agency receives 1 per cent of programme budgets, the convening agency is expected deliver on the convening role, without additional resources. This places a considerable additional burden on UN Women's programme staff.

CONCLUSION 3



Despite the challenges, UN Women has achieved successful results with significant linkages to its United Nations system coordination and collaborative actions. Although there is evidence that UN Women's coordination and convening roles have helped advance EAW across regions, the results management framework needs to be strengthened to systematically capture these results.

Joint programmes and advocacy initiatives are the most visible illustrations of coordination for results: a number of joint EAW programmes and advocacy initiatives have contributed to the creation of international standards and guidance, with a steady increase in their adoption among countries (i.e. Essential Services packages and the UN joint prevention framework). This has led to improvements in legislation, as well as increased investments in prevention of violence and provision of quality essential services to survivors. The UN system has promoted several initiatives to strengthen data and statistics to provide evidence of challenges and responses.

Several joint EAW programmes have been designed as global, regional or multi-country programmes. This enables the use of standardized approaches (with some contextualization) based on a theory of change, drawing from internationally accepted standards and good practices, to a set of challenges common to several countries linked to regional economic integration or cultural similarities and proximities.

Some programmes have clearly elaborated coordination elements and allocated human and financial resources for UN coordination. In some programmes, UN Women and sister agencies have made efforts to evolve pragmatic

inter-agency arrangements in joint programming, development of global knowledge products, and advocacy and communications.

CONCLUSION 4



The COVID-19 response is a strong example of the power of a coordinated United Nations system response. Not only did the response elicit the best efforts of the entire United Nations system, but it also established UN Women's credentials in a system-wide coordination role, emphasizing its capacities in thought leadership, swift mobilization of evidence, and strong and cohesive advocacy for action to respond to and prevent VAWG in public and private spaces.

UN Women's engagement on the UN system's COVID-19 response spanned several dimensions: the Entity demonstrated perspicacity in spotting the gender dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis, especially its adverse impacts on gender-based violence at a very early stage. Early evidence-based advocacy was instrumental in the articulation of the need for a system-wide response. Key in this regard were policy briefs from several agencies and a 10-point check list for governments for a gender-responsive COVID-19 response.

UN Women made a useful contribution in the formulation and roll out of a political engagement strategy for the UN Secretary-General and other principals on COVID-19 response, in particular leveraging interagency mechanisms

such as the Secretary-General's Executive Committee; and also reallocated resources across its ERAW programme portfolio to incorporate COVID-19 responses at regional and country level through strengthening data collection and analysis, and support to strengthening access to services during individual countries' pandemic-response measures. UN Women collaborated with UNDP in developing the COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker to monitor policy responses by governments. UN Women had effective media engagement, highlighted by partnerships with Google and Facebook that helped expand the Shadow Pandemic Awareness campaign reach to more than 2 million people worldwide.

CONCLUSION 5



Not systematically capturing and reflecting coordination-related plans, actions, costs and contributions to ERAW thematic area results does not support the acknowledged importance of coordination of UN Women and the UN system as a whole. As a result, the value and contribution of coordination to outcomes remains undetermined and underrecognized.

UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 did not set aside coordination budgets in thematic areas, even though a large part of coordination for results takes place in programming. ERAW (a major area of programming for UN Women) was the most prioritized thematic area within the UN system during 2014-2019, finding place in programme priorities of 57 per cent of reporting UN agencies.⁴⁸

Noting the complexity of the undertaking and several UN Women efforts, the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan did not include optimal results and success indicators to capture and report the contributions of its coordination pillar in the context of thematic area results. Coordination was treated as a contributor to operational efficiency and not as a critical ingredient in mainstreaming gender perspectives

in development results in thematic areas. Therefore, coordination workplans were not systematically outlined, budgeted, documented or reported to showcase their benefits and value to participants and beneficiaries.

There was no articulation of specific areas of coordination and collaborative actions in the Chief Executives Board for Coordination agencies' Common Chapter mechanisms to drive a common and shared corporate understanding on coordination and minimize inter-agency dynamics. As a result, insights on the effectiveness of UN Women's coordination and broader convening role are based on a mix of perceptions by UN Women staff and other actors, rather than on objective and agreed measures.

⁴⁸ As reported in '25 Years after Beijing' IANWGE's review of UN system support for implementation of BPFA during 2014-2019, 25 of 44 (57 per cent) reporting entities cited ERAW among their priorities in programming.

Coordination responsibilities are intensive and take up a considerable amount of staff time. Senior staff at headquarters interviewed for the evaluation estimated that over a third of their time is spent coordinating (which is often reduced to “following up” due to poor responses to calls for coordination) with counterparts. Yet, coordination and broader convening are perceived by many key

stakeholders as abstract and conflated with other tasks. For staff with primarily programme implementation responsibilities, coordination tasks may be considered an added responsibility, as coordination is not based on clear deliverables and resources, and in most cases, it is an additional responsibility over programme implementation tasks.

CONCLUSION 6



In the absence of clear institutional arrangements, enabling structures and processes for coordination in thematic areas, successes are achieved more through individual leadership, motivation, charisma and other interpersonal skills.

UN Women faces challenges in fully operationalizing its UN system coordination role and faces challenges in managing expectations among UN entities: the biggest challenge being the balance between its coordination and operational role. A major reason for some pushback against UN Women within Gender Theme Groups is that UN Women does not generally have a sizeable field programme footprint to be able to coordinate other entities. There are some concerns over the considerable variation in technical expertise across UN Women field offices and regions. There are also some perceptions about the contrast between headquarters expertise and field-level expertise and a lack of neutrality among UN agencies in contexts when UN Women also mobilizes resources for programmes, competing with other agencies.

At the same time, UN Women’s convening role is not assertively defended by some country office staff: it neither attracts additional core and non-core resources, nor provides dedicated posts and often places an additional

workload on staff with programme implementation tasks. A practical problem in this regard is the different seniority levels of programme staff in UN Country Team (UNCT) structures and decision-making bodies, with lower ranking personnel usually facing more senior counterparts in key meetings.

Therefore, UN Women’s mandate is not automatically accepted by all UN actors but has to be earned through showing added value on the ground. Where UN Women has sizeable human resource capacities and financial resources, or where it has cordially agreed the division of labour (such as the division of pilot countries and respective sector engagements within the Essential Services Global Programme) this has worked well; however, coordination between entities with greater capacity has sometimes been challenging. Successes have often resulted from individual leadership rather than institutional arrangements.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the evaluation framework, findings and conclusions. The recommendations were developed in consultation with key evaluation stakeholders, including the Evaluation Reference Group, PPID, UNSCD, SPRED and the EAW section. To ensure the clarity of the proposed actions, the recommendations identify priority, timeline, responsible actors, impact, difficulty and what will happen if they are not implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 1

UN Women should reaffirm its UN system coordination mandate for results in key thematic areas (i.e. beyond its promotion of gender mainstreaming in UN organizations).

Priority

HIGH

Timeline

SHORT-TERM

before the adoption of Strategic Plan 2022–25

DIFFICULTY:

This is within UN Women's remit and control. Whether the relevant sections would require additional capacity to be able to achieve the above actions needs to be clearly ascertained.

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Reaffirm the coordination mandate as a mandate to lead, promote and coordinate towards meeting minimum standards in the UN system and similarly to maximize collective effort to achieve agreed thematic area results, i.e. EAW goals and outcomes (SDG 5.2).
- Present the need for an appropriate accountability instrument for EAW, complementing existing accountability instruments but also responding more specifically to the mandate on EAW.
- Work with partners to change the narrative: coordination for results is not the exclusive responsibility of one entity but a collective responsibility of all actors in the system. Coordination is to be exercised not only by UN Women but throughout the UN system and also requires further engagement outside the UN system (with governments and other key stakeholders) for the purpose of achieving EAW results.

To be led by:

- The PPID/EAW section should spearhead reaffirmation of the coordination mandate for results with support from the Executive Leadership Team, including through the TOC/TOA (currently under development) of the new UN Women Strategic Plan.

Impact: It will clarify the coordination mandate for results and address current gaps in articulating, tracking and measuring UN system coordination in thematic areas in addition to gender mainstreaming.

If not implemented: Status quo will prevail, and there is a risk that SDG 5.2 will not be achieved to its fullest extent possible.

RECOMMENDATION 2

UN Women should clearly articulate the value proposition of coordination to accelerate EAW outcomes and the risks and costs of non-coordination. It should also present the Entity's credentials to lead, promote and coordinate UN system accountability for thematic area results and should propose a 'coordination for EAW results' framework with clear results and indicators.

Priority

HIGH

Timeline

SHORT-TERM

before the adoption of Strategic Plan 2022–25

Suggested steps to be taken:

- UN Women (EAW section and UNSCD) should undertake a review of the gaps in existing mechanisms, including through the currently under development SP TOC/TOA, in respect of system-wide accountability for transformative results, comparable to accountability for mainstreaming gender within the UN system.
- UN Women (UNSCD and EAW section) should itemize in detail the coordination tasks specific to EAW (with UN and other stakeholders) carried out at headquarters, regional and country level by various sections, including an estimation of (human, time and financial) resources entailed in these tasks.

DIFFICULTY:

This is within UN Women's control. If Recommendation 1 is accepted, this is a logical consequence.

- UN Women should highlight evidence from case studies demonstrating EAW results that could only have been attained through effective coordination and also highlight challenges or lost opportunities from lack of coordination.
- Based on the above assessment, UN Women should articulate a 'Coordination for EAW results' Package/Menu/Compact which lists:
 - outputs, products and services; and
 - structures, mechanisms, partners and alliances.
- Contents of the package could include (illustrative):
 - **Minimum package global (Executive Director –Secretary-General):**
 - state of violence against women flagship review report as annex to Secretary-General biennial report (funded from core budget, plus anchor donor) and
 - annual dialogue with Office of Special Rapporteur on VAW on implementation of CEDAW by State parties.
 - standardized EAW guidance
 - **Minimum package regional (UN Women Regional Director-Regional Collaborative Platforms [RCP]):**
 - EAW state of play review of regional processes and mechanisms; and
 - UN Women regional office support to the Resident Coordinator's Office in non-presence countries.
 - **Minimum Package programme countries (UN Women Country Representative-Resident Coordinator):**
 - Gender Theme Group – formulation of EAW results in United Nations Cooperation Framework based on national EAW action plans and targets; and
 - Gender Theme Group – coordinated actions: participating as 'one UN' in national coordination and EAW review mechanisms; joint communications and advocacy actions; joint monitoring and reporting on EAW initiatives and results.

To be led by: Articulation could be jointly led by EAW section and UNSCD

Impact: It will clarify the UN system coordination for results actions, partners and results in EAW.

If not implemented: It will perpetuate the lack of clarity on UN Women's coordination role particularly in thematic areas; what it delivers and what it is expected to contribute to development results, including risking achieving as much for SDG 5.2 as possible.

RECOMMENDATION 3

UN Women should appropriately recognize and reflect coordination and convening functions in the thematic areas of its Strategic Plan for 2022–2025 with specific results indicators and resource requirements at the global, regional and country levels to present a full picture of actions and funding gaps.

Priority

HIGH

Timeline

SHORT-TERM

before the adoption of Strategic Plan 2022–25

DIFFICULTY:

This is possible within existing resources and needs to be built into the Strategic Plan 2022–2025

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Improve the theory of change in the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 to highlight the results and outputs that cannot be achieved without strong coordination by UN Women and the UN system and itemize all mechanisms and processes that call for coordinated actions to achieve EAW goals and targets.
- Formulate and include coordination results and indicators in the EAW development results of the Strategic Plan, using the Coordination for EAW Results Package as the basis.
- Include relevant metrics for substantive qualitative outcomes of coordination in the EAW thematic area Development Results Framework (coordination within UN system and coordination with external stakeholders).

- Prepare a breakdown of coordination resources (human, time and financial) at headquarters, regional and national level, linked to UN coordination and broader convening actions for accountability and (EVAW) development results, with targets for financing:
 - Clearly specify coordination elements and coordination minimum package costs in Strategic Plan thematic areas/Strategic Notes at country level.
 - Include budgets for system-wide EVAW reviews and stocktaking as part of costs to support Secretary-General biennial reports.
 - Include coordination costs for minimum packages as budget items in donor agreements.
 - Include costs of all tasks of a convening agency in joint programmes (and show any funding gaps).

To be led by: SPRED and PPID, with support from EVAW section and UNSCD

Impact: Clear documentation in the Strategic Plan will highlight the true value of coordination in the context of the EVAW thematic area and its intertwining with programming resources (non-core voluntary contributions) and build better understanding of funding needs and gaps.

If not implemented: It will be a lost opportunity as the next Strategic Plan will begin in 2026.

RECOMMENDATION 4

UN Women should lead and strengthen inter-agency mechanisms for coordinated actions in the thematic area of EVAW towards accountability for development results as envisioned in UN-SWAP and internationally agreed goals on EVAW, especially SDG 5.2.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeline

MEDIUM-TERM

during Strategic Plan
2022–25

DIFFICULTY:

It is possible for UN Women to lead and propose. Even if there is insufficient system-wide traction, there are options for individual agencies to evolve coordinated response plans with UN Women.

Suggested steps to be taken:

- UN Women should present the case to UN agencies and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, as appropriate, for reconstituting an official inter-agency mechanism for coordinated reviews of system-wide EVAW initiatives and results as part of accountability for development results in UN-SWAP 2.0 and Secretary-General reports on EVAW. Propose/establish an inter-agency or multi-stakeholder coordination subcommittee to lead a periodic, comprehensive global report of EVAW progress and attainment of SDG 5.2 to inform the SG biennial report and SDG progress reports and seek funding as a UN system collaborative knowledge product on EVAW.
- UN Women should propose a coordinated response framework for EVAW based on a system-wide agenda on EVAW. This should include system-level diagnosis and coordinated actions.
 - **Do we as the UN system have a common and shared agreement on the following?**
 - What will it take to end violence against women? What are the transformative levers to focus on for the next 10 years?
 - What will it cost to end violence against women? Where will the financing come from?
 - **What will it take to have better coordination of UN system-wide plans, programmes and initiatives – globally, regionally and nationally?**
 - What is the distribution of effort required between the UN system, governments, development partners and other stakeholders?
 - How can we better serve Member States that have already made commitments, national action plans and set aside resources for EVAW?
 - How can we map competencies and agree to lead responsibilities in specific countries and sub thematic areas? How can this be better articulated in the terms of reference for staff?

- **The coordination aspects of the framework could include:**
 - Monitoring and evaluation of EAW results: globally through an EAW system-wide agenda, and other complementing mechanisms; regionally through issue-based coalitions; and at country level under UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard and UNCFs.
 - Mutual accountability frameworks (governments, UNCT, and other stakeholders) under SDG and CEDAW reviews.
 - Collaborative knowledge products and guidance.
 - Joint programmes and multi-partner initiatives.
 - Joint advocacy and communications (speaking in one voice).
- Explore with CEB agencies interest in articulating a collaborative areas section for SDG 5.2 in the Strategic Plans using principles of engagement under a coordinated response framework for EAW, including common coordination success indicators and metrics.
- And/or work with interested agencies to pilot a coordinated response framework in some countries under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.
- Design a ‘coordination, agency dynamics and interpersonal skills: principles and good practices’ training course for Gender Theme Group members and all UN Women staff with coordination responsibilities in their Terms of References.
- Build trust through neutrality and establish a credible distinction between its UN coordination function and implementation of its operational activities.

To be led by: PPID/EAW in collaboration with UNSCD.

Impact: This will be a transformative change in the UN system-wide response on EAW and the entry points are well identified. UN Women needs to assert clear and authoritative leadership to achieve it.

If not implemented: The status quo in interagency coordination on EAW will continue.

RECOMMENDATION 5

UN Women should strengthen in-house coordination mechanisms to better represent thematic area highlights and coordination challenges in inter-agency mechanisms and reporting.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeline

MEDIUM-TERM

during Strategic Plan
2022–25

DIFFICULTY:

This is achievable based on mutual interest and commitment.

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Review work processes to enhance coherence around coordination between UNSCD, PPID/EAW and UNTF on EAW to better compile, review and report on coordination-related initiatives results in EAW thematic area.
- Inculcate coordination into the corporate programming culture, including make more explicit the coordination in tasks of all UN Women programme personnel.

To be led by: Jointly by PPID/EAW, UNSCD, and UNTF

Impact: This will strengthen coordination processes and accountability in EAW within UN Women.

If not implemented: There will be a continuing disconnect in coordination processes and accountability mechanisms for EAW.

RECOMMENDATION 6

UN Women should systematically document and compellingly communicate the impact of coordination to the UN system, donors and national stakeholders through high-level messaging of the value proposition of its coordination work, using metrics and case studies suitable for external audiences.

Priority

MEDIUM

Timeline

MEDIUM-TERM

during Strategic Plan
2022–25

DIFFICULTY:

Some challenges can be expected in formulating coordination actions. It is in UN Women's mandate and interest to propose and test the CEB agencies' commitment to such coordinated actions. In addition, formal narrative reporting in key reports can influence a culture of coordinated actions.

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Consider the use of the Resident Coordinator's Office, UNCF and UNCT-SWAP structures to promote and report on coordinated actions and programmes at country level.
- Systematically document coordination 'impact' stories, i.e. results that could not have been achieved without coordination, using metrics and case studies suitable for external audiences.
- Highlight the real costs and challenges entailed, compared to the insufficient resources budgeted and assigned for coordination.
- Suggested quantitative EVAW metrics:
 - Number of agencies implementing EVAW programmes by subdomains.
 - Number of countries in which UN entities are implementing EVAW programmes.
 - Development assistance flows dedicated to EVAW by subdomains and country.
 - Government expenditure on EVAW by country.
 - UN system programme expenditure on EVAW by country and by UN entity.
 - Number and outlay of joint programmes on EVAW.
 - Number of partnerships formed with women in key decision-making roles.
 - Highlights of EVAW results achieved by subdomains and country.
- Suggested qualitative narratives on impact of strengthened coordination:
 - Processes and mechanisms: multisector stakeholder partnerships, advocacy and knowledge networks.
 - Nature of high-level and transformative results targeted by country and UN entity.
 - (Coordination processes and mechanisms within and across outcome areas in the achievement of results- e.g. data gaps addressed, comprehensive laws and policies, transformative changes in attitudes and behaviour, safe and economic viability of public spaces, accessible and quality essential services, etc.).
 - Development outcomes and impacts (SDG 5.2 indicator).
 - Good practices of coordination.
 - System-level challenges in coordination.

To be led by: Content led by EVAW section, dissemination by UNSCD, PPID at EB, CEB, ECOSOC and other reporting forums.

Impact: It will build due appreciation of the importance of articulating, resourcing and monitoring coordination for results, and build constituencies within UN agencies, donors and other stakeholders.

If not implemented: The function and potential of coordination will continue to be under-valued and under-realized.

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The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit Service under the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service. The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service's main purpose is to enhance accountability, inform decision-making, and contribute to learning about the best ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the organization's mandate, including its normative, operational, and coordination work. The Independent Evaluation Service also works to strengthen capacities for gender-responsive evaluation within UN entities, governments, and civil society organizations.

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TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

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



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