CORPORATE EVALUATION ON UN WOMEN'S

POLICY ADVOCACY WORK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

Recent years have presented many opportunities for policy advocacy through galvanizing moments such as the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, Generation Equality Forum and the United Nations Climate Change conference (COP 26). At the same time, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to gender equality, and regression on key gains for women's empowerment have highlighted the continued importance of effective policy advocacy work. This evaluation provides an opportunity to take stock of UN Women's policy advocacy work, to understand what has worked well and to identify how UN Women's work can be strengthened.

Policy advocacy work is central to UN Women's mission of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 recognizes that achieving this mission requires changes within the structures that reinforce gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination, including repealing discriminatory social and legal norms. UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 includes the strengthening of global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions as one of the Entity's systemic outcomes to address the root causes of gender inequality.

This evaluation draws upon numerous policy advocacy successes, including achievements at the global level, such as UN Women's contributions to knowledge and research; at the regional level, such as UN Women's work on the care economy in Latin America and ending violence against women programming in the Pacific; and many examples at the country level as illustrated in the evaluation's case studies.

The evaluation found that UN Women is viewed as a successful policy advocacy organization, and that the Entity's integrated mandate allows it to play a strong policy advocacy role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women is able to undertake a number of critical roles to advance policy advocacy objectives at global, regional and country levels and demonstrates a comparative advantage in its ability to convene government, civil society and other stakeholders around key issues.

The evaluation also found that a more coherent and coordinated organizational approach for policy advocacy could further strengthen UN Women's work. Similarly, there is opportunity to deepen strategic partnerships that advance policy objectives. Finally, policy advocacy is inherently difficult to measure, and UN Women needs to monitor, report and evaluate not only high-level results, but also how policy change happens and how it impacts the lives of women and girls. The evaluation raises six strategic recommendations designed to support implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and to inform UN Women's work in the future.

Implementation of the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025 serves as a good opportunity to reflect on and strengthen UN Women's policy advocacy work. We are hopeful that this evaluation will serve as a key source of information and inspiration as UN Women works towards achieving the goals set out in the Strategic Plan and continues to empower women and make progress towards gender equality.

Lisa Sutton
Director, Independent Evaluation and Audit Services

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ACRONYMS

ACRO	Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office
APRO	Asia-Pacific Regional Office
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECARO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRRF	Integrated Results and Resources Framework
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
JONAP	Jordan National Action Plan
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Questioning

MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSW	National Strategy for Women
OEE	Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RMS	Results Management System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UN DPPA/DPO	United Nations Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations
UNDOC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOCT	United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WPSHA	Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action

UN WOMEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CORPORATE EVALUATION ON UN WOMEN'S
POLICY ADVOCACY WORK

The corporate evaluation of UN Women's policy advocacy work 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). This corporate evaluation covered the period from 2018 to 2021. It was initiated in May 2021 and completed in February 2022.

Background

The evaluation focused on UN Women's policy advocacy roles, initiatives and interventions, and organizational, operational and strategic structures and approaches in place to support policy advocacy. The linkages between policy advocacy work at global, regional and country levels were also examined to understand how policy successes translate into local-level action.

The evaluation team assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of UN Women's policy advocacy work to deliver high-impact and transformative results in line with the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021. The evaluation did not focus on public campaigns, gender-responsive budgeting or UN coordination as these topics have been assessed in other recent evaluations and reviews; and not all types of policy advocacy initiatives were examined (e.g. high-level policy advocacy by the Executive Leadership Team, policy advocacy partnerships with private sector and donors).

Findings from this evaluation are expected to contribute to strategic decision-making, organizational learning and accountability, and implementation of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation approach was participatory and included a combination of theory-based, appreciative inquiry and most significant change methodologies. The evaluation also incorporated the principles of gender-responsive evaluation and the "leave no one behind" perspective. The evaluation team carried out 11 in-depth case studies and 25 country portfolio analyses, yielding rich data and valuable lessons.

A combination of primary and secondary data sources was used to gather evidence to answer the evaluation questions.[1] In alignment with the UN Evaluation Group's (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise[2] was conducted, which identified a range of internal and external stakeholders directly involved, or with an interest in UN Women's policy advocacy work. In total, 262 internal and external stakeholders were engaged through semi-structured virtual interviews, focus group discussions and stakeholder surveys conducted in accordance with the recommendations for remote data collection during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.[3]

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

To what extent is UN Women's policy advocacy work **effective at contributing to policy change and relevant to country needs** and global priorities?	To what extent does UN Women have the necessary **organizational, strategic and operational approaches, and capacity in place** to efficiently and coherently perform its policy advocacy roles?	To what extent is UN Women **effective at translating normative policy advocacy successes** at the global level into regional and country-level action?	How are **human rights, gender equality and inclusion** incorporated into UN Women's policy advocacy work?

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1   Refer to Annex 2.
2   Refer to Annex 6
3   Refer to Annexes 7, 8, 9 and 11.

Context

2020 marked several galvanizing moments in the gender equality movement including the twenty-fifth anniversary of Beijing Platform for Action, five years of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the twentieth anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and UN Women's tenth anniversary. The Commission on the Status of Women adopted a political declaration in which governments welcomed the progress made, but also recognized that no country had fully achieved gender equality for all women and girls.

However, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has encountered unprecedented socio-economic challenges which have had a profound impact on the progress of gender equality. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to deepen pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems that threaten the gender equality gains made over the past decades. In response, the UN Secretary General released a policy brief which urged governments to put women and girls at the centre of their recovery efforts to ensure their policy responses to the pandemic maximized impact.

This evaluation was also timely as some of the countries and regions where UN Women works have experienced regression of and backlash against women's human rights. Therefore, working on policy advocacy in such contexts represents a pressing challenge for UN Women. Having access to systematic, evidence-based feedback on effective policy advocacy processes can help UN Women address these challenges in the future and may prove useful to the Entity and its partners.

Three ways in which UN Women contributes to developing global norms, policies and standards

Building the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to implement normative frameworks

Facilitating evidenced-based dialogue with governments and civil society

Providing knowledge and advice to support Member States and other stakeholders in intergovernmental processes

Source: 2018–2021 Strategic Plan

Policy advocacy in UN Women

UN Women's policy advocacy work is rooted in the Entity's founding resolution and key normative frameworks, particularly the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women is deeply tied to policy and requires a transformation of unequal gender relations. This involves change within the structures that underpin gender inequality and discrimination, including changes to discriminatory social and legal norms. UN Women supports Member States in addressing these structural barriers to gender equality and the empowerment of women by leveraging its integrated mandate to support change across the policy cycle.[4] UN Women provides normative support to strengthen global norms, policies and standards; UN system coordination by mainstreaming and strengthening accountability to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the work of other UN entities; and operational support to translate global norms into national policies, programmes, plans and practices.

UN Women's contribution to policy objectives around gender equality and the empowerment of women is articulated and measured through its corporate Strategic Plans.

Although there is currently no formal definition of policy advocacy within UN Women, the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan describes three ways in which UN Women contributes to developing global norms, policies and standards: 1) building the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to implement normative frameworks; 2) facilitating evidenced-based dialogue with governments and civil society; and 3) providing knowledge and advice to support Member States and other stakeholders in intergovernmental processes. Policy advocacy at UN Women is measured through the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) and the IRRF 2018–2021 has policy advocacy-related indicators within each outcome and thematic area.

The UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 once again highlights the importance of the Entity's integrated mandate and policy and programming expertise for strengthening global norms and standards and translating those norms and standards into legislation, policies and strategies at regional and country levels. Policy advocacy work at the country level is undertaken at the request of Member States and is conducted by promoting the principle of national ownership through national leadership of policy development and implementation processes.[5] Similar to the Strategic Plan 2018–2022, approximately half of development results indicators (47 of 92) in the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan relate to policy advocacy.

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4   See Annex 5

FINDINGS

Since its formation in 2010, UN Women has cultivated a strong presence and effectively influenced policy change in approximately 116 countries.[5] Policy advocacy efforts have centred around eliminating discriminatory laws; aligning national policies, laws and regulations with global normative frameworks; modifying public approaches to financing; and enacting laws and policies that offer better protection and participation for women and girls.[6]

Policy advocacy examples explored in the evaluation case studies include the agreed conclusions of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 63; labour code revisions in Viet Nam; development of the Fiji National Action Plan to prevent violence against women and girls; federal laws for Mexico's care economy and strengthened use of gender statistics; establishment of the Network of Women Peace and Mediators in Burundi; development of a risk assessment tool for responding to domestic violence cases in Georgia; participation of women in the labour market through access to care systems in Chile; and reforms in Election Law and Gender Law in Mali.

UN Women employs many and varied strategies in its policy advocacy work. Results from the survey conducted as part of this evaluation suggest that UN Women offices have effectively used a variety of policy advocacy strategies for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, including convening government leaders, civil society and other stakeholders; supporting evidence-informed policy through the production and use of high-quality evidence, research and knowledge products; capacity building, technical assistance and policy advice to duty bearers; and providing technical inputs to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment principles and priorities in intergovernmental and governmental frameworks and agreements.

UN Women's value-add and key to achieving success in policy advocacy is the Entity's strength in convening government leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders, building strategic partnerships and forming connections among relevant stakeholders. For example, UN Women was successful in convening strategic stakeholders in Latin America to advance the agenda on care work in the region, providing technical input to mainstream gender equality and the empowerment of women principles and priorities into regional frameworks.

As the secretariat for CSW, UN Women effectively supported the deliberations of Member States, actively facilitated participation of women's organizations in national and regional consultations, assisted with registration and provided training and guidance on the CSW process.

The development and use of credible, up-to-date research and knowledge products is regarded as a core component of strong policy advocacy[7] and UN Women's strategy of supporting evidence-informed policy through the production and use of high-quality evidence, research and knowledge products has been a successful approach. Of note, the Women Count Data Hub was able to offer the first set of data on COVID-19 disaggregated by age and sex for 125 countries. Many additional examples of localization and adaptation of evidence and knowledge products surfaced from the case studies conducted for this evaluation. For instance, the 2015 Progress of the World's Women report was instrumental in outlining the importance of focusing on social protection at the global and regional level.

Capacity building, technical assistance and policy advice to duty bearers were another set of effective strategies leading to policy development, improvement and implementation. For example, in Georgia, UN Women worked with law enforcement agencies to develop and implement a risk assessment tool for responding to domestic violence cases. Other successful efforts resulted in policy that guaranteed the rights of migrant workers in Mexico; strengthened the capacity of CSOs and women's networks in Burundi; trained stakeholders of accompanying policy initiatives in the Pacific; and provided technical assistance for government partners in Mali and the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Evidence from this evaluation suggests that providing technical input to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment principles and priorities in intergovernmental and governmental frameworks and agreements. was yet another highly effective policy advocacy strategy. For example, UN Women provided technical support to the Economic and Social Council in its work on a resolution to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations.[8] Creating and maintaining partnerships is critical for UN Women to have a multiplier effect, leverage resources and implement a holistic approach to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. In recent years, UN Women has engaged key partners such as governments (most often) and also civil society and other UN agencies in support of its policy advocacy work.

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5   UN Women, 2021, "UN Women achievements over ten years (short version)." Page 1.
6   Interviews, RMS review and portfolio review.
7   Patton, M.Q. (2008) Advocacy Impact Evaluation.
8   Economic and Social council resolution E/RES/2019/2; E/RES/2020/9; E/RES/2021/7.

Summary of factors influencing successes and lessons learned in policy advocacy work

FACTORS OF SUCCESS	LESSONS LEARNED
Building relationships with policymakers/decision makers is essential.	It is necessary to **understand and navigate contextual factors** for successful policy advocacy..
Multi-stakeholder approaches successfully unite diverse stakeholders around policy advocacy messages.	**Changes in the political landscape** can bolster/ hamper policy advocacy efforts.
Global and regional experts are critical to high-quality, evidence-based policy advocacy and knowledge production.	**Multiple players** in the policy advocacy ecosystem **working disjointedly** results in duplicate efforts.
Partnerships with government institutions often lead to increased uptake in knowledge products and knowledge platforms.	**Knowledge products that are not translated/ contextualized** have lower uptake and limited reach.
Long-term institutional investments and advocacy yields better support for the adoption and implementation of progressive interventions.	**Lack of established mechanisms** impedes systematic engagement with CSOs at various levels.
Flexible, smart and rapid responses to changes in the external environment (e.g. COVID-19) can provide an opportunity to uplift policy advocacy work.	**Timing plays a key role** in the probability of influencing discourse and policy.

CONCLUSIONS[9]

1

UN Women's integrated mandate enables the Entity to have a strong policy advocacy role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment priorities. However, there is an opportunity for UN Women to define policy advocacy and use the Strategic Plan to develop a coherent approach for planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy.

UN Women has contributed to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation that address gender equality and women's empowerment. The Entity's triple mandate extends policy advocacy work in multiple directions, i.e. coordinating and influencing policy change and actions within the UN system and across its network of external partners. UN Women's leadership and contributions to policy advocacy work are embedded throughout most of its programmatic work.

2

Evidence-based and credible knowledge is central to UN Women's policy advocacy work.

UN Women plays an active role as a technical expert on gender policy and convenor of knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment in intergovernmental processes. While at the global level UN Women produced high-quality authoritative knowledge products and reports, the data, evidence and knowledge produced at the country level did not always benefit from the same rigorous peer reviews and methodological consistency. The strategic dissemination of UN Women's policy advocacy knowledge is not always clearly planned when knowledge products are prepared.

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

3

Partnerships, a strength of UN Women, are critical to ensuring a multiplier effect, leveraging resources and approaching policy advocacy work holistically.

UN Women often acts as a bridge-builder between stakeholders, providing a platform for discussions between governments and local organizations. Partnering with governments ensured ownership and sustainability of policy advocacy initiatives and increased uptake of UN Women's knowledge products and platforms. Additionally, partnering with governments, especially their mechanisms for gender equality, on global normative frameworks and CSW at the regional level helped facilitate the adoption of resolutions and strengthened relationships with regional women's organizations for advocacy. CSOs also played a key role in UN Women's policy advocacy work, particularly in the Entity's community-based policy and in relation to the sustainability of the policy process and beyond. Grassroots partners/organizations, such as sports organizations, churches/faith-based organizations and local women's networks, were vital for UN Women to reach individuals and marginalized groups to change attitudes/behaviours through programming. While these partnerships have been fruitful, UN Women's siloed approach has sometimes hindered a holistic and coordinated approach to working with partners on thematic areas of policy advocacy at the country level.

4

There is need to clarify the organizational architecture for policy advocacy to form better coordination and communication linkages between headquarters, Regional and Country Offices.

The absence of a shared understanding and overarching approach to policy advocacy work has contributed to a lack of horizontal coherence and linkages among different units on policy advocacy, both within headquarters and across different levels. For example, communications for policy advocacy were fragmented with limited coordination between headquarters and field offices. Additionally, the role of communications in policy advocacy was not well established, causing communications teams to be consulted near the end of an initiative rather than engaging their expertise from the outset. Overall, greater clarity in roles and responsibilities for policy advocacy across the organization could facilitate stronger engagement and coordination between headquarters, Regional and Country Offices.

5

UN Women's monitoring and results tracking systems do not adequately capture policy advocacy results and lessons learned.

Measuring the effectiveness of key results due to UN Women's policy advocacy work has been difficult given the long-term nature of most change; the complexity of policy change; limited efforts to capture how policy change occurs; and the longer-term outcomes and impacts of those changes. While UN Women's current reporting structures capture significant information on policy advocacy, the data is largely quantitative and output-focused. There is an opportunity to enhance UN Women's monitoring and evaluation of policy advocacy work through periodic evaluations and use of innovative methodologies for assessing policy advocacy work.

6

Current resources are not always adequate to carry out policy advocacy work to the Entity's full potential, and capacity gaps exist in the availability of necessary staff and expertise.

In addition to understanding global norms and standards, expertise and knowledge of context-specific gender issues and political and social acumen is required for policy advocacy work to be effective. Regional and Country Offices undertook policy advocacy work by including policy advocacy in a variety of funding proposals, programme documents and Strategic Notes. They reported that funding often depended on the flexibility and willingness of the donor to support policy advocacy initiatives. Country Office representatives played a key role in policy advocacy with their host national governments and within United Nations Country Teams, in addition to overseeing regular work. However, most policy-related personnel were based in headquarters and relatively few thematic experts were located at regional and country levels. This imbalance in expertise was often attributed to the lack of core funding available to support thematic policy expertise in field offices.

7

UN Women's policy advocacy work contributes to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation to address gender equality and empowering women; however, it does not always clearly lead to longer-term outcomes for women and girls for a variety of reasons, such as capacity, funding and internal coherence as well as other external factors that are outside of UN Women's direct control.

UN Women's work on normative frameworks, laws and policies builds national capacity at the country level and promotes sustainability; however, there are opportunities for UN Women to increase its effectiveness by consistently and systematically utilizing its normative, coordination and programming work to support national partners in implementing laws and policies. Although achieving agreed conclusions negotiated by all Member States during CSW is a major accomplishment, UN Women lacks a strategy on the actions Regional and Country Offices can take to systematically integrate the agreed conclusions in their respective areas. A key challenge has been that integrating these agreed conclusions into each Member States' national priorities takes time.

8

UN Women is seen as an advocate for "leave no one behind," but translating these principles into practice continues to be a challenge. The process of implementing "leave no one behind" is often uneven and not systematically planned or monitored.

UN Women has played a leading role in inter-agency forums, ensuring gender equality and intersectional perspectives are included. Nevertheless, in practice, policy advocacy initiatives do not systematically identify those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Developing and implementing inclusion strategies within policy advocacy activities and interventions and monitoring/reporting on marginalized groups through disaggregated data or gender-responsive or intersectional analysis is uneven across the organization. UN Women has made considerable progress in making intersecting inequalities visible through data; however, more work is required to translate this data into policy advocacy efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS[10]

RECOMMENDATION 1: Leverage the Strategic Plan to enable coherent planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Clarify and strengthen the Entity's policy advocacy architecture, including strengthening integration of policy advocacy across the organization and ensuring meaningful participation of all divisions working directly or indirectly on policy advocacy.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Strengthen data, knowledge generation and knowledge management systems as enablers for policy advocacy work and establish UN Women as a recognized knowledge broker on gender equality in the policy advocacy sphere.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Continue to strengthen relationships with national governments, UN agencies, and feminist movements and women's organizations to support policy change and implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Strategically place policy advocacy specialists across the organization and ensure that field offices have the appropriate level of social and political acumen and adequate capacity in terms of the number of staff with technical expertise and knowledge of local context on gender issues.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Strengthen and improve mechanisms and processes within UN Women by developing guidance tools and best practices to effectively engage groups being left behind through policy advocacy work.

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

1

BACKGROUND

1.1 Overview

The corporate evaluation of UN Women's policy advocacy work was conducted by the 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). IES contributes to the oversight of UN Women's work through its programme of evaluations.

Corporate evaluations specifically aim to enhance accountability, inform decision-making and contribute to improving the Entity's learning and performance. This corporate evaluation covered the period from 2018 to 2021. It was initiated in May 2021 and completed in February 2022. Findings, conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation will be presented to the UN Women Executive Board during its Annual Session in 2022.

UN Women does not have a formal organizational definition of policy advocacy. Therefore, during the inception process, in consultation with UN Women personnel at global, regional and country levels and through a review of the literature and policy advocacy definitions used by diverse multilateral organizations, the evaluation team developed a working definition for the purposes of the evaluation (see Annex 1).

To establish a consistent approach to the evaluation analysis, the proposed working definition for policy advocacy used by the evaluation was:

Policy advocacy is the process of influencing and supporting decision makers, institutions and civil society to demand, adopt, develop, implement and uphold gender-responsive normative frameworks, legislation and policies; and is a process designed to foster policy change leading to improvements in the lives of women and girls and their increased access to rights.

Volume I of the report is presented in seven chapters: background, context, policy advocacy work at UN Women, findings, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations. Annexes are presented in Volume II.

EVALUATION PURPOSE

Develop an understanding and **definition of UN Women's policy advocacy work and a theory of change (ToC)** that underpinned the strategies and interventions of UN Women's policy advocacy work.

Evaluate the **effectiveness and efficiency of UN Women's role** in policy change and as a policy advocacy organization.

Identify examples of UN Women's policy advocacy **efforts that work and understand why**.

Develop **lessons learned and recommendations** that could strengthen UN Women's policy advocacy work.

1.2 Scope and key evaluation questions

This evaluation focused on UN Women's policy advocacy roles, initiatives and interventions as well as the organizational, operational and strategic structures and approaches UN Women has put in place to support policy advocacy. The evaluation examined the linkages at global, regional and country levels to understand how policy advocacy work translates into changes in the everyday lives of women and girls.

The evaluation team assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of UN Women's policy advocacy work to deliver high-impact and transformative results in line with the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (see Annex 4). The evaluation did not focus on public campaigns, gender-responsive budgeting or UN coordination as these topics have been assessed in other recent evaluations and reviews; and not all types of policy advocacy initiatives were examined (e.g. high-level policy advocacy by the Executive Leadership Team, policy advocacy partnerships with private sector and donors).

Findings from this evaluation are expected to contribute to strategic decision-making, organizational learning and accountability, and implementation of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The primary intended users of this evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, senior management and programme staff directly working on, or with an interest in, policy advocacy. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors working on policy advocacy, including CSOs, United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and development partners.

METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

To what extent is UN Women's policy advocacy work **effective at contributing to policy change and relevant to country needs** and global priorities?

To what extent does UN Women have the necessary **organizational, strategic and operational approaches, and capacity in place** to efficiently and coherently perform its policy advocacy roles?

To what extent is UN Women **effective at translating normative policy advocacy successes** at the global level into regional and country-level action?

How are **human rights, gender equality and inclusion** incorporated into UN Women's policy advocacy work?

DATA COLLECTED

DESK REVIEW

- Desk review and **synthesis**
- Portfolio analysis and review of UN Women's management systems, reports and internal assessments

INTERVIEWS

- **Semi-structured interviews** of UN Women staff and partners
- **2 surveys:** internal survey of business units (48 responses= 49%response rate); and survey with partners (71 responses = 18%response rate)
- **Focus groups** with regional policy specialists

CASE STUDIES

- **Global:** UN Women's Progress of the World's Women Series; Key Knowledge platforms; CSW
- **Regional:** Regional care work in LAC, EVAW programme in the Pacific
- **Country:** Mexico, Burundi, Jordan, Vietnam, Mali, Georgia

+350 documents reviewed	262 stakeholders engaged	11 in-depth case studies	5 focus group discussions	2 online surveys

1.3 Evaluation approach and methods

The evaluation approach was participatory and included a combination of a theory-based approach, appreciative inquiry and most significant change methodologies. The theory-based approach evaluated UN Women's policy advocacy work using a conceptual analytical framework of ToC, while the appreciative inquiry enabled assessment of the approaches that UN Women implemented well, could replicate and scale-up as a forward-looking perspective on improving policy advocacy. The most significant change methodology engaged key informants who helped identify the most significant changes that have taken place, in part due to UN Women's involvement. The evaluation also incorporated the principles of gender-responsive evaluation and the "leave no on behind" perspective.

A combination of primary and secondary data sources were used to gather evidence to answer the evaluation questions (see Annex 2). In alignment with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted (see Annex 6) which identified a range of internal and external stakeholders directly involved, or with an interest in, UN Women's policy advocacy work.

Secondary data collection efforts involved a desk review and synthesis of more than 350 documents from global, regional and country levels, which included documentation from UN Women's management systems, evaluation and audit reports, and internal assessments. Additionally, the evaluation team carried out 11 in-depth case studies and 25 country portfolio analyses.

The sampling process for the country portfolio analysis was designed to represent the diverse range of Country Offices and contexts in which UN Women works, with two to four countries selected from each region. Selection criteria, along with the full list of countries selected for the case studies and country portfolio analyses, can be found in Annex 13 and Annex 14, respectively.

In total, 262 internal and external stakeholders were engaged through semi-structured virtual interviews (104 females, 19 males), focus group discussions (21 females, 1 male), external stakeholder surveys (56 females, 15 males) and internal staff surveys (48 headquarters and field office staff).[11] All interview were conducted in accordance with the recommendations for remote data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Annexes 7, 8, 9 and 11).

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[11] Headquarters business units and field office staff were invited to participate in the online survey. The survey was distributed to the heads of headquarters business units and field offices.

The case studies (three global, two regional and six country level) were conducted to further investigate the evaluation questions and cases were selected to offer a picture of the thematic and geographic representation of UN Women's policy advocacy work. Cases were also selected from across the policy cycle to illustrate different policy advocacy strategies as found in the ToC. A summary of each case is provided below. More comprehensive descriptions can be found in Annex 13.

Global – The sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2019 engaged Member States, civil society and experts in dialogue around policy advocacy with the priority theme of "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" and resulted in a set of Agreed Conclusions.

Global – The Empower Women platform, Women Count Data Hub and The Global Knowledge Platform to End Violence Against Women have all been methods for collecting, curating and disseminating data, evidence and knowledge within UN Women and among partners, civil society and communities of practice. As knowledge hubs, these platforms can influence policy dialogues and support policy advocacy initiatives.

Global – The Progress of the World's Women reports are a flagship UN Women knowledge product used to influence policy change. The case study examines the influence of the 2015 and 2019 editions of the Progress Report and their effectiveness in framing debates around women's economic empowerment and families, and the need for structural change.

Americas and Caribbean Region – UN Women worked in partnership with other UN agencies, regional stakeholders (e.g. ECLAC) and national governments to raise awareness of the issue of unpaid care and to influence national policies on care work. The work centres around advocacy for recognition of women's care work in the household as well as its equal redistribution and reduction.

Asia and the Pacific Region – The Pacific Partnership Programme to End Violence Against Women supports implementation of national legislation to address domestic violence and violence against women in fourteen Pacific Islands Countries. Working closely with implementing partners, national governments, civil society and grassroots organizations, the programme supports implementation of these laws by promoting gender equality, changing norms and attitudes, and improving access to quality national services for women and girls.

Burundi – UN Women supported the government to create an enabling environment for the implementation of Burundi's women, peace and security commitments through the participation of governmental and civil society actors. UN Women provided capacity building to women parliamentarians; mobilized women to prevent conflicts that could impede participation in the 2020 election; and supported women's networks in revision of the electoral code.

Georgia – Following ratification of the Istanbul Convention and in line with Georgia's efforts to implement legislation on domestic violence and violence against women, UN Women collaborated with the Department of Human Rights to develop and implement a Risk Assessment tool. The tool provided an evidenced-based, standardized methodology for law enforcement responding to domestic violence cases.

Jordan – UN Women collaborated with the Government of Jordan, including women's machineries, civil society and the security sector in implementing Jordan's National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security (JONAP). UN Women then engaged with key international partners in Jordan to establish and launch a pooled fund for implementation of the JONAP.

Mali – The international community has supported Mali to reduce tensions and promote reconciliation during a time of political, social and security crises. Within this context, UN Women advocated for women's increased political participation by supporting two gender equality reforms and their application in all electoral districts; advocated for the elimination of violence against women through the Spotlight Initiative; and advocated for financing for gender equality.

Mexico – UN Women Mexico's gender statistics work continues a long tradition of work with national and regional partners that began over 20 years ago. UN Women's role in regional conferences, working groups and knowledge production contributed to awareness and capacity building in the region on the production and use of gender statistics. In particular, UN Women contributed to highlighting the importance of unpaid work through a time use study; the need to generate a national care strategy; and the rights of domestic workers.

Viet Nam – Working in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), donors and other UN agencies, UN Women supported the review and revision of the labour code in Viet Nam. The National Assembly adopted a revised Labour Code in November 2019, which included multiple provisions in support of female workers' rights, gender equality, equal parental leave and a reduction in the retirement eligibility age gap.

1.4 Ethics, gender equality and no one left behind

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with UN standards on ethical obligations to participants related to confidentiality, informed consent and treatment of sensitive data. Human rights and gender equality approaches in line with UNEG norms on human rights and gender equality were also integrated throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation team ensured that information provided by individual stakeholders remained confidential and that the data management and archiving plan developed for the evaluation was followed (see Annex 15).

In line with IES Data Management Guidance, the data management plan describes the types of personal data generated, its purposes and ways in which the data will be appropriately protected and treated during and after the evaluation. A formal ethical approval was not required as no primary data were collected from persons at risk or affected by violence.

One of the four main evaluation questions was dedicated to reviewing how UN Women's policy advocacy work integrates gender equality, human rights and inclusion approaches. The evaluation team made an effort to reach CSOs and other external stakeholders – particularly those whose mandate is disability inclusion or whose role is to address gender equality, human rights and inclusion within their own country context. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions also had a dedicated segment to reflect on this key area of enquiry.

1.5 Evaluation constraints and limitations

Given the breadth of UN Women's policy advocacy work, the evaluation team had to limit the scope of the evaluation to assess what would be the most useful and what had not been previously evaluated. No singular, well-defined policy advocacy function exists within UN Women and there was limited documentation on the different steps and processes that make up the Entity's policy cycle (see Annex 5). Closely related to these challenges is that although the UN Women staff interviewed predominantly viewed policy advocacy as a key component of much of the Entity's work occurring at all levels (global, regional and national), across its integrated mandate (normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities) and thematic areas, no standard definition of policy advocacy exists within UN Women. Given that there are multiple pathways to policy change stemming from a variety of policy advocacy strategies (convening, thought leadership, knowledge generation/evidence-building, support for monitoring and reporting, capacity building and technical assistance), the evaluation revealed that stakeholders and UN Women personnel often understood policy advocacy in different, but equally valid, ways. Therefore, during the inception process, the evaluation team developed a working definition of policy advocacy and a global ToC within the UN Women context to reference during the evaluation process (see Annex 12).

Another challenge the evaluation team encountered was in tracking budgets for policy advocacy work. As a solution, the evaluation team extracted financial data corresponding to Strategic Plan Outcome Area 1 — "A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies, and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women is strengthened and implemented" — from the Executive Dashboard. While Strategic Plan Outcome Area 1 does not capture the financial data for all UN Women's policy advocacy initiatives, the budget and delivery figures for this thematic area provided useful data for preliminary analyses of a subset of the financial resources used by UN Women to affect policy change.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented restrictions and connectivity constraints throughout the data collection process and limited access to some external stakeholders involved in UN Women-related policy advocacy, and groups of women and girls directly impacted by UN Women's policy advocacy. To minimize the impact of these constraints on the evaluation, the evaluation team used diverse remote communication and conferencing technology to reach external partners at times and places they considered safe and accessible. Additionally, the evaluation team drew on secondary data from UN Women evaluation reports and a broader literature review of policy advocacy assessments (see Annex 2) to support the findings, conclusions and proposed recommendations contained in this report.

2. EVALUATION CONTEXT

KEY NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS IN POLICY ADVOCACY AND CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)
Twenty-fifth anniversary of the BPfA

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
Five years of progress towards the SDGs

UN Women founding resolution (64/289)
UN Women's tenth anniversary

UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)
Twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 on WPS

CEDAW
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

As part of the 25th anniversary of the BPfA, the CSW adopted a political declaration in which governments recognized that **no country had fully achieved gender equality for all women and girls**.

Since the outbreak of the **global COVID-19 pandemic,** the world has encountered unprecedented socio-economic challenges which have had a profound impact on the progress of gender equality.

The evaluation also considered the significant opportunities for strengthened system-wide coordination resulting from the **UN system reform initiated in 2018**.

This evaluation was also timely as some of the countries and regions in which UN Women works have recently experienced **regression and backlash against women's human rights**.

UN Women's policy advocacy work is rooted in the Entity's Strategic Plan and several key normative frameworks including: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Additionally, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/289, which created the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), established the normative element of the Entity's triple mandate, stating "the Entity shall provide, through its normative support functions and operational activities, guidance and technical support to all Member States…on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming."

Along with these frameworks, UN Women's Strategic Plan provides UN Women with a clear foundation for its policy advocacy work. Within UN Women's thematic programming areas, policy advocacy is further shaped by relevant thematic resolutions and frameworks such as UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS); the UN Secretary General's reports on WPS; the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response; UN Economic and Social Council adopted resolutions E/RES/2012/3, E/RES/2013/6 and E/RES/2014/2; the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Paris Agreement); and the Sendai Framework. Intergovernmental forums, notably the annual Commission on the Status of Women and other platforms, such as the Generation Equality Forum, provide further policy advocacy spaces. At regional and country levels, UN Women's policy advocacy work has been shaped by national needs and priorities.

2020 marked several key moments in the gender equality movement including the twenty-fifth anniversary of BPfA, five years of progress towards achieving the SDGs, the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 on WPS, and UN Women's tenth anniversary. Policy advocacy for gender equality and the empowerment of women was a key actionable path to addressing the 12 urgent areas of concern outlined in the 1995 BPfA. As part of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the BPfA, the CSW adopted a political declaration in which governments welcomed the progress made, but also recognized that no country had fully achieved gender equality for all women and girls.

In adopting this political declaration, Member States acknowledged the importance of policy change in achieving gender equality and, among other pledges, agreed to "*take further concrete action to ensure the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including by: Eliminating all discriminatory laws and ensuring that laws, policies and programmes benefit all women and girls and that they are fully and effectively implemented and systematically evaluated to ensure their effectiveness and that they do not create and reinforce inequalities and marginalization.*"[12]

However, since the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the world has encountered unprecedented socio-economic challenges which have had a profound impact on the progress of gender equality. This has also increased challenges for related policy advocacy.

UN Women responded urgently to the pandemic's impact on women, highlighting the 'shadow pandemic' of violence against women, subsequently issuing policy guidance on this aspect of ending violence against women. The pandemic continues to deepen pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems that threaten the gender equality gains made over the past decades.

In response, the UN Secretary General released a policy brief: *The Impact of COVID-19 on Women*, which urged governments to put women and girls at the centre of their recovery efforts to ensure their policy responses to the pandemic maximized impact.[13] This evaluation also explored UN Women's role in advocating for gender-responsive COVID-19 recovery policies, one of the many pieces of work UN Women engaged on in response to the pandemic.

The evaluation also considered the significant opportunities for strengthened system-wide coordination resulting from the UN system reform initiated in 2018. The 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), which established key UN system-wide strategic policy orientations and operational modalities for development of cooperation and country-level modalities of the UN development system, called upon UN entities to "*continue to provide evidence-based and integrated policy advice and programmatic support to help countries in the implementation of, follow-up to and reporting on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly by mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into national plans, promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection and ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions.*"[14] UN Women's policy advocacy work explicitly responded to this call by leveraging the Entity's expertise in supporting governments with the implementation and monitoring of activities related to SDG 5 on gender equality.

This evaluation was also timely as some of the countries and regions in which UN Women works have recently experienced regression and backlash against women's human rights. Civic space for the women's movement has also narrowed.[15] Working on policy advocacy in such contexts therefore represents a pressing challenge for UN Women. Having access to systematic, evidence-based feedback on effective ways that policy advocacy processes can help UN Women address these challenges in the future will prove useful to the Entity and its partners.

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12   Political declaration on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, 2020
13   UN Women and UN Secretariat: "UN Secretary-General's policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women", 2022.
14   QCPR of UN system operational activities (A/RES/75/233), 2020
15   UN Women and UN Secretariat: "UN Secretary-General's policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women", 2022. Page 20.

3 POLICY ADVOCACY IN UN WOMEN

3.1 Background

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women is deeply tied to policy and requires a transformation of unequal gender relations which involves change within the structures that underpin gender inequality and discrimination, including changes to discriminatory social and legal norms.[16]

UN Women supports Member States in addressing these structural barriers to gender equality and the empowerment of women by leveraging its **integrated mandate** across the policy cycle. UN Women provides **normative support** to strengthen global norms, policies and standards; **UN system coordination** by mainstreaming and strengthening accountability to gender equality and the empowerment of women within other UN entities; and **operational support** to translate global norms into national policies, programmes, plans and practices.[17] Specifically, UN Women leverages its integrated mandate to support change across the policy cycle in the following ways:

- Setting of global norms and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women is strengthened and informed by UN Women's substantive inputs, based on research and data, policy and programming at all levels.
- Translating global norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment by Member States into national legislation, development plans and policies is supported by UN Women through technical and policy advice, advocacy and social mobilization.
- Implementing gender-responsive laws, plans and policies by Member States is supported through UN Women's targeted interventions to achieve tangible results for women and girls.
- Ensuring that country-level realities, experiences and lessons learned feed into the strengthening of global norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment, therefore completing the cycle.[18]

UN Women's contribution to policy objectives supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women is articulated through its corporate Strategic Plans. Although there is no formal definition of policy advocacy within UN Women, the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 describes three contributions by UN Women to developing global norms, policies and standards: 1) building the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to implement normative frameworks; 2) facilitating evidenced-based dialogue with governments and civil society; and 3) providing knowledge and advice to support Member States and other stakeholders in intergovernmental processes.

One way UN Women's policy advocacy work is measured is through the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF). The 2018–2021 IRRF has policy advocacy-related indicators within each outcome and thematic area. Of the 80 indicators in the 2018–2021 IRRF, half are related to an aspect of policy advocacy. For example: measuring the number of laws, policies or regulations changed or developed with UN Women support, dialogues convened, intergovernmental processes with substantive inputs from UN Women and civil society networks supported, among others (see Annex 4). There are also Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency (OEE) indicators measuring the use of knowledge management products and civil society in policy advocacy.

The new UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 also highlights the importance of the Entity's integrated mandate and policy and programming expertise for strengthening global norms and standards and then translating those norms and standards into legislation, policies and strategies at regional and country levels. Policy advocacy work at the country level is undertaken at the request of Member States and is conducted following the principle of national ownership by promoting national leadership of policy development and implementation processes.[19]

The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 introduces seven systemic outcomes to address the root causes of gender inequality. Each systemic outcome connects with policy advocacy; however, the first systemic outcome on "*strengthening of global normative frameworks, and gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutions*" captures key elements of UN Women's policy advocacy role. Work under this outcome includes providing Member States with evidence, knowledge and policy advice to support implementation of intergovernmental normative and policy outcomes. UN Women also provides technical knowledge and capacity building to support Member States' development, adoption and implementation of gender-responsive laws and policies across the thematic areas, and to support the mainstreaming of gender equality into sectoral strategies, policies and plans.

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16   UNW-2017-6-Annex2-Development-results-theory-of-change-en.pdf. Page 4.
17   UNW-2017-6-Annex2-Development-results-theory-of-change-en.pdf. Page 4.
18   UNW-2017-6-Annex2-Development-results-theory-of-change-en.pdf. Page 6.
19   UNW/2021/6 - E - UNW/2021/6 -Desktop. Page 2.

The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 further highlights the importance of supporting public institutions, including subnational institutions, in engaging in multi-stakeholder dialogues and supporting women's participation in the formulation and implementation of laws and policies.[20]

The results structure of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 centres on four impact areas, which measure long-term results for women and girls across UN Women's four thematic areas. UN Women contributes to gender equality and the empowerment of women in these thematic areas through the seven, cross-thematic systemic outcomes. Like the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan, approximately half the indicators (47 of 92) relate to policy advocacy. In addition, 11 per cent of OEE indicators (4 of 35) relate to policy advocacy. Policy advocacy-related indicators are found across each of the systemic outcomes; however, they are concentrated within Outcome 1 (strengthening of global normative frameworks, and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions) where 15 indicators measure policy advocacy work. Baseline measurements for all outcome indicators were under way at the time of this evaluation.

Headquarters, Regional and Country Offices all have distinct but complementary roles to play in policy advocacy. As part of the change management process in 2019,[21] UN Women attempted to informally articulate the architecture and policy roles at each level. UN Women's draft policy architecture defined headquarters, regional and country office policy advocacy roles through six overarching functions: knowledge management; intergovernmental and normative support; integrated policy advice; capacity development and technical assistance; UN system coordination; and advocacy and social mobilization. Across these functions, policy advocacy was not to be viewed as a top-down endeavour but a function that would require effective action and coordination across headquarters, Regional

and Country Offices. For example, while headquarters could serve as a policy hub and curator of policy knowledge to be applied at regional and country levels, Country Offices would have a role in sharing lessons learned back to regions and headquarters. Similarly, headquarters could advance norms at the global level with direct inputs from Regional and Country Offices, while Country Offices could provide technical guidance to Member States to support their critical role of implementing global and regional norms and standards.

An analysis of financial data from Outcome Area 1 of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 illustrated the resources used by UN Women to affect policy change. While Outcome Area 1 does not capture the financial data for UN Women's policy advocacy initiatives under the other four outcome areas, it does serve to demonstrate UN Women's financial commitments to policy work. The mapping of this Strategic Plan code through the Executive Dashboard revealed a total budget of US$ 117.1 million for 2018–2021. The largest area of expenditure was Output 1: "The capacity of governments and stakeholders is strengthened to assess progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and other global normative and policy frameworks" (US$ 61.07 million); followed by Output 3: "Knowledge on gender perspectives is expanded through provision of substantive inputs and dialogues to global intergovernmental processes" (US$ 28.43 million); and Output 2: "Evidence-based dialogue is facilitated amongst government and with civil society and other relevant actors in the context of intergovernmental processes" (US$ 22.82 million). In terms of budget distribution, funding for Outcome Area 1 for the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 came largely from non-core resources (62 per cent) with core resources accounting for 13 per cent of overall funds.

3.2 Evaluation theory of change and policy cycle model

Drawing on UN Women's Strategic Plans 2018–2021 and 2022–2025, the evaluation team constructed a global ToC of UN Women's policy advocacy work to better understand the Entity's policy advocacy strategies and pathways (see Annex 12).

The ToC posits that prevalent social norms that give less value to women and girls, and the roles and work they perform, leads to legal and policy frameworks that are not in line with international and regional normative gender equality and women's empowerment frameworks; are

not implemented effectively or are missing entirely; and result in persistent discrimination and gender inequality in global and national laws and policies. To respond to this root cause and resulting detailed root causes, the evaluation team suggested that UN Women respond with eight key policy advocacy strategies, or solution levers, at the headquarters, Regional and Country Office levels. The strategies for policy advocacy illustrate the broad logic underlying the ToC.

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20   UNW/2021/6 - E - UNW/2021/6 -Desktop (undocs.org). Page 14.
21   UN Women, Draft Policy Architecture, May 2019; UN Women, Draft HQ Policy Functions to Support Implementation of the Strategic Plan, April 2019; UN Women, Functional Analysis of Policy and Programme Bureau, July 2012.

These include the assumption that *If* UN Women:

- convenes government leaders, civil society and other stakeholders to set and adopt global norms and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- provides technical input to mainstream gender equality and the empowerment of women principles and priorities into global frameworks and resolutions;
- promotes social mobilization and campaigns to build community and civil society support for policy change and implementation, and to foster social norms and behaviour change as an outcome;
- supports evidence-informed policy through the production and use of high-quality research and knowledge products;
- forms and strengthens partnerships with relevant governments, civil society, private sector organizations and UN agencies to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- provides capacity development, technical assistance and policy advice to support civil society, policy makers and duty bearers in advocating for, implementing and upholding laws and policies that advance gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- supports monitoring and reporting on international gender equality and the empowerment of women commitments; and
- promotes gender-responsive budgeting at national and local levels to ensure laws and policies on gender equality and the empowerment of women are implemented.

Then policy advocacy efforts will contribute directly to changes in legislation, policies and standards that will then contribute to transformative changes in the lives of women and girls across thematic areas.

In addition to the ToC, the evaluation team used a **policy cycle model** to further understand the different phases of UN Women's policy advocacy work.[22] The model contains six phases:

1. identifying and analysing gender equality and women's empowerment trends
2. evidence generation
3. policy dialogue
4. policy development or revision
5. policy implementation
6. monitoring and reporting on policy impact.
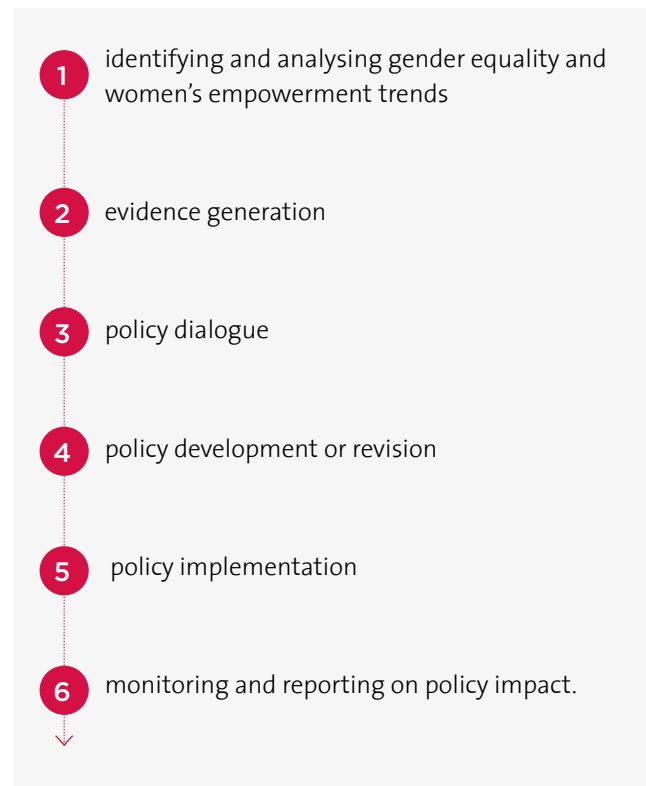
UN Women's policy advocacy work can occur at all phases or can be targeted to specific points throughout the cycle. Similarly, the policy cycle model can operate at different levels (global, regional or country) or overlap across levels (i.e. global normative processes feeding into the national level). In addition to thematic and geographic representation, the 11 case studies illustrate effective policy advocacy strategies at various points in the policy cycle (see Annex 13).

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22   Adapted from Knill and Tosun, *Policy Making*, 2008.

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4 FINDINGS

The findings in this section synthesize evidence derived from the analysis of policy advocacy literature, cases studies, country portfolio reviews, interviews, focus group discussions and surveys with internal and external stakeholders.

4.1 To what extent is UN Women's policy advocacy work effective at contributing to policy change and relevant to country needs and global priorities?
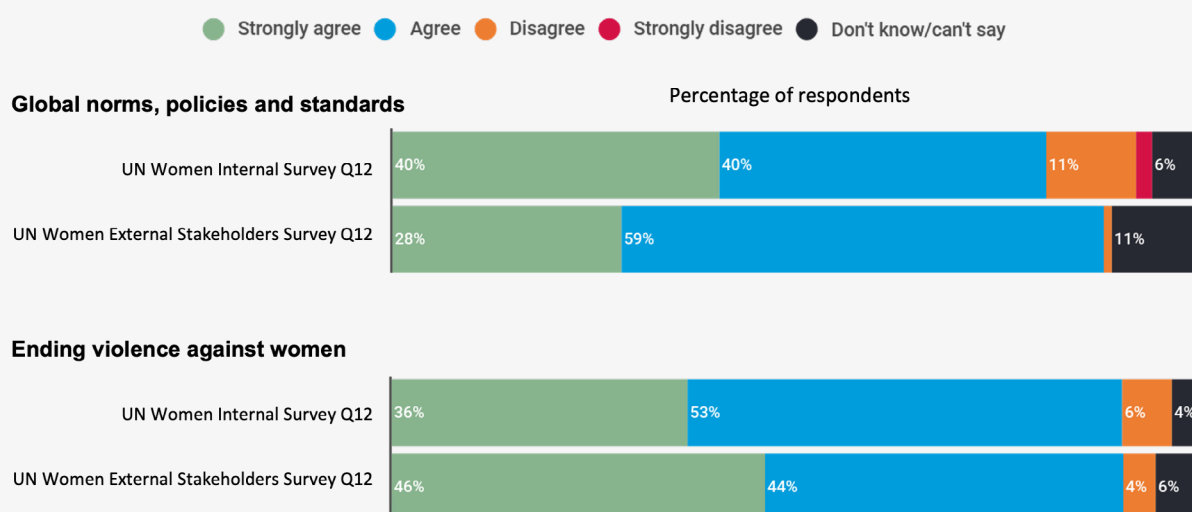
FINDING 1

UN Women is viewed as a successful policy advocacy organization and is uniquely positioned to carry out policy advocacy work due to its integrated mandate. While UN Women's policy advocacy work has been effective in contributing to policy change, in many instances, less is known about how UN Women's efforts contribute to the Entity's overall impact and outcomes. This is in part due to the lack of operationalized definitions and coherent approaches to policy advocacy, and the inherent challenges of measuring policy change.

Since its formation in 2010, UN Women has influenced policy change in approximately 116 countries by supporting and contributing to the development and/or implementation of legal initiatives, laws, policies and strategies.[23] Policy advocacy efforts have centred around eliminating discriminatory laws; aligning national policies, laws and regulations with global normative frameworks; modifying public approaches to financing; and enacting laws and policies that offer better protection and participation for women and girls.[24] When asked if they believe UN Women is a strong policy advocacy organization, 93 per cent (66/71) of government stakeholders, CSOs and personnel from other UN agencies (external stakeholders) agreed/strongly agreed.[25]

The evaluation team sought to understand whether UN Women's policy advocacy work results in concrete improvements in the everyday lives of women and girls.

Approximately 80 per cent (38/47) of headquarters and field office staff and 85 per cent (60/71) of external stakeholders who responded to a survey question agreed/strongly agreed that UN Women's policy advocacy work results in concrete improvements, particularly in the thematic areas of women, peace and security and humanitarian action (WPSHA); women's leadership and governance; ending violence against women (EVAW); and global norms, policies and standards (see Figure 1).[26] However, fewer survey respondents agreed that UN Women's policy advocacy work results in concrete improvements for women's economic empowerment (WEE; 71 per cent [33/47] of UN Women headquarters and field office staff and 83 per cent [59/71] of external stakeholders). Interestingly, most of these results mirrored evidence collected from interviews, country portfolio analyses and reviews of the results management system (RMS).

FIGURE 1. To what extent do you agree with the statement: UN Women's policy advocacy work results in concrete improvements in the everyday lives of women and girls within each thematic area?

Legend: ● Strongly agree ● Agree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree ● Don't know/can't say

Global norms, policies and standards — Percentage of respondents

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/can't say
UN Women Internal Survey Q12	40%	40%	11%		6%
UN Women External Stakeholders Survey Q12	28%	59%			11%

Ending violence against women

|	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/can't say
UN Women Internal Survey Q12	36%	53%	6%		4%
UN Women External Stakeholders Survey Q12	46%	44%	4%		6%

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23   UN Women, 2021, "UN Women achievements over ten years (short version)." Page 1.
24   Interviews, RMS review and portfolio review.
25   UN Women external survey conducted for this evaluation Question 16 (Annex 9).
26   UN Women internal survey Question 12 and external survey Question 12 conducted for this evaluation (Annex 9).
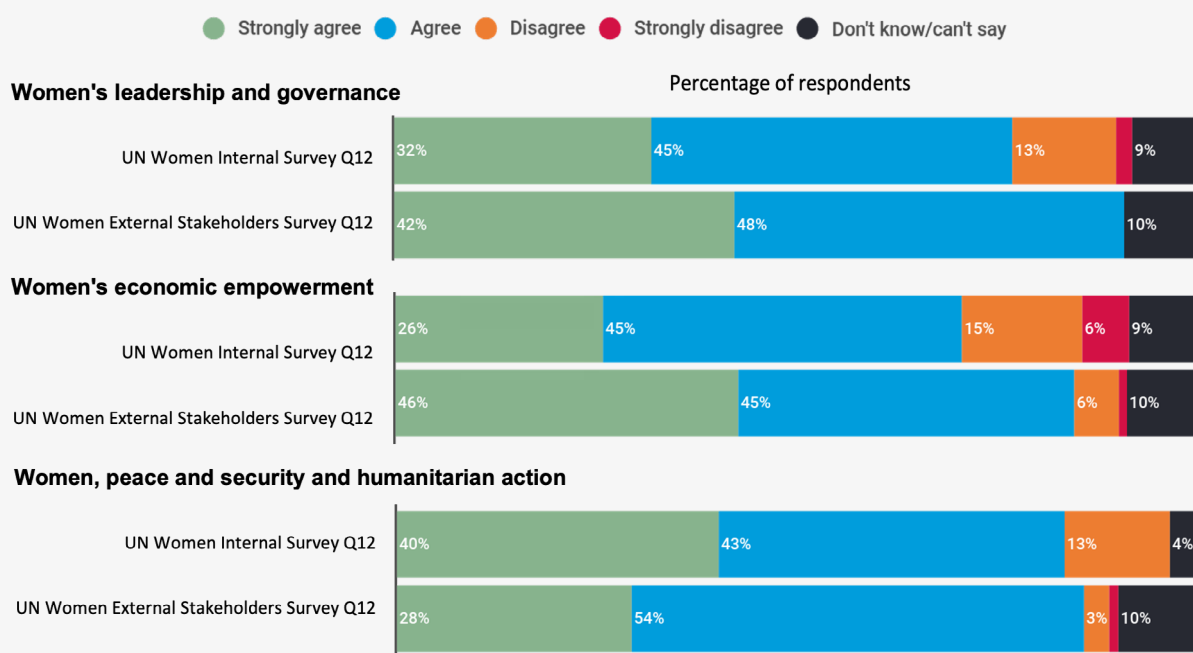
Source: UN Women online surveys for this evaluation (2021).

Key informants who helped identify the most significant changes that have taken place, in part due to UN Women's involvement, reported several examples of policy advocacy efforts leading to significant changes. The most significant changes mentioned in the case studies included the agreed conclusions at CSW 63 that resulted from the support provided to Member States; labour code revisions in Viet Nam; the development of the Fiji National Action Plan to prevent violence against women and girls; federal laws for Mexico's care economy and strengthened use of gender statistics; establishment of the Network of Women Peace and Mediators in Burundi; development of a risk assessment tool for responding to domestic violence cases in Georgia; participation of women in the labour market through access to care systems in Chile; and reforms in Election and Gender Law in Mali. Furthermore, annual reports and the portfolio analyses of 25 countries (with representation from each UN region) indicated significant changes/results relevant to country needs and global priorities due in part to UN Women's policy advocacy work (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Examples of most significant change/results in part due to UN Women's policy advocacy work

Bangladesh: Efforts resulted in the gender-responsive Standing Order on Disaster, where gender and social inclusiveness issues were integrated into all chapters and sections, and in the National Plan for Disaster Management 2021–2025.

Syria: In 2019, women assumed 30 per cent of the seats on the committee to draft the Constitution, as compared to 10 per cent in the earlier version.

Myanmar: Ensured gender-specific priorities in addition to featuring gender as a cross-cutting issue in the longer-term COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Reform Plan in 2020, as compared to an initial gender-blind plan.

Ukraine: Signing the Decree "on Urgent Measure to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence, GBV and Protect Rights of Such Violence" in 2020.

Timor Leste: Adoption of a policy framework to promote decent work for rural women.

Nepal, Uganda: Successful integration of gender and equity issues in National Development Plans.

Kenya: Budget allocation for implementation of National Action Plan 1325 in 2018.

Liberia: Adoption of the Local Government Act into Law in 2018 to provide women with the opportunity to have special seats on County Councils (two seats for women and two for youth).

Guatemala: Approval of the updated version of the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women, 2020–2029.

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team from portfolio reviews and Annual Reports.

UN Women's integrated mandate enabled the Entity and its partners to carry out policy advocacy work successfully by leveraging normative, UN system coordination and operational roles. For example, key flagship reports, such as the Progress of the World's Women report, contributed to establishing UN Women as a "thought authority" on women's human rights-based approaches and gender policies. Specifically, by utilizing the coordination and operational aspects of its mandate, UN Women linked policy recommendations from *the Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016 report: Transforming economies, realizing rights* to national government policies around care work in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The normative component of UN Women's integrated mandate supported the Entity's role in thought leadership and knowledge generation. UN Women submits reports to intergovernmental bodies on a range of gender equality issues, and UN Women's contribution to and leadership on these reports strengthened UN Women's position as a thought leader (see Box 1).

Although policy advocacy is referenced in most of UN Women's programmatic areas, evidence from the evaluation pointed to the need for standardized definitions and a consistent and coherent approach on how to approach policy advocacy at the headquarters, regional and country levels. Closely related to this issue are two monitoring and reporting challenges.

First, Strategic Plan indicators only account for the number and type of policy changes and not the ways in which policy changes are linked to transformational changes in the lives of girls and women. Second, a significant amount of policy advocacy work takes place through informal discussions or forums which often go undocumented. This makes it difficult for UN Women staff in field offices to know how well or to what extent policy changes are being implemented. These challenges, along with the lack of an operationalized definition of policy advocacy and coherent approach to policy advocacy work, impact the cohesiveness and effectiveness of UN Women's policy advocacy efforts.

BOX 1. Examples of reports prepared by UN Women to intergovernmental bodies on gender equality issues
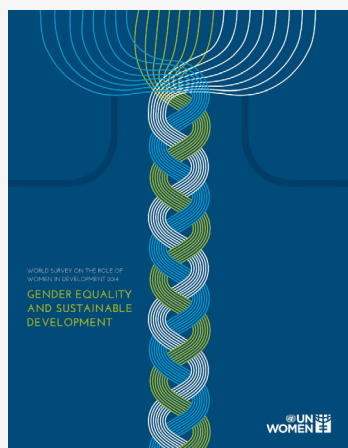
- The report of the Secretary-General on the improvement in the status of women in the UN system (A/74/220).

- The quinquennial report of the Secretary-General on the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (A/74/111).

- The report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/74/235).

- The report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas (A/74/224).

- The report of the Secretary General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2021/52).

- The report of the Secretary General on Women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS (E/CN.6/2016/9).

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

FINDING 2

UN Women's policy advocacy strategies such as convening, production and use of research and knowledge products, partnerships, capacity building and technical assistance, and technical inputs in intergovernmental processes have advanced gender equality and women's empowerment priorities.

UN Women employs many and varied strategies in its policy advocacy work. Results from the evaluation survey suggested that UN Women offices have effectively used a variety of policy advocacy strategies for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, including convening government leaders, civil society and other stakeholders; supporting evidence-informed policy through the production and use of high-quality evidence, research and knowledge products; capacity building, technical assistance and policy advice to duty bearers; and providing technical inputs to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment principles and priorities in intergovernmental and governmental frameworks and agreements.

The evaluation consistently highlighted UN Women's keen ability to create spaces and opportunities for discourse on gender equality and women's empowerment issues. These convenings enabled stakeholders to engage and develop a shared understanding of priorities. For example, as part of the Latin America and Caribbean regional efforts on unpaid care work, UN Women successfully convened key stakeholders to advance the agenda on care work in the region and provided technical input to mainstream gender equality and the empowerment of women principles and priorities into regional frameworks, such as the Consensus of Montevideo. Since 2017, UN Women has partnered with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in organizing the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the region's foremost intergovernmental forum on women's rights and gender equality. Stakeholders confirmed the strategic importance of the UN Women–ECLAC partnership and the significance of having UN Women co-organize the regional conference. UN Women's role as convener in partnership with ECLAC, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Labour Organization (ILO) has resulted the issue of unpaid care work being successfully highlighted in the region. Unpaid care work has also been selected as the central theme of the upcoming 2022 Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in Argentina.

Similarly, in Mali, UN Women demonstrated strong convening power advocating for financing of SDG 5 among UN and local partners. These efforts were made possible through the organization of high-level round tables on financing gender equality within the Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development and the SDGs. One round table, chaired by the First Lady of Mali, saw the participation of several technical and financial partners, some members of the government and resident representatives of the UN system in Mali. UN Women's role in rallying partners was effective; however, stakeholders from Mali interviewed during this evaluation stated that there were opportunities to improve the follow-up and communication of results from the convening processes.

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) highlighted in its 2017–2018 report that UN Women acts as a "bridge-builder between stakeholders, by providing a platform for discussions between governments and local women's organizations."[27] When surveyed, 94 per cent (44/47) of headquarters and field office staff and 90 per cent (64/71) of external stakeholders who responded to the survey question indicated that convening government leaders, civil society and other stakeholders was at least a somewhat effective or highly effective policy advocacy strategy for UN Women.

The evaluation findings also pointed to UN Women's strategy of supporting evidence-informed policy through the production and use of high-quality evidence, research and knowledge products as effective. The majority of headquarters and field office staff surveyed (60 per cent; 29/48) agreed that supporting evidence-informed policy through research and knowledge products was a highly effective policy advocacy strategy (see Figure 2 and Annex 9).

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27 MOPAN 2017-2018 Assessment: UN Women. Page 8.

FIGURE 2. For your office/unit, which of these strategies has been the most/least effective for achieving policy advocacy results?
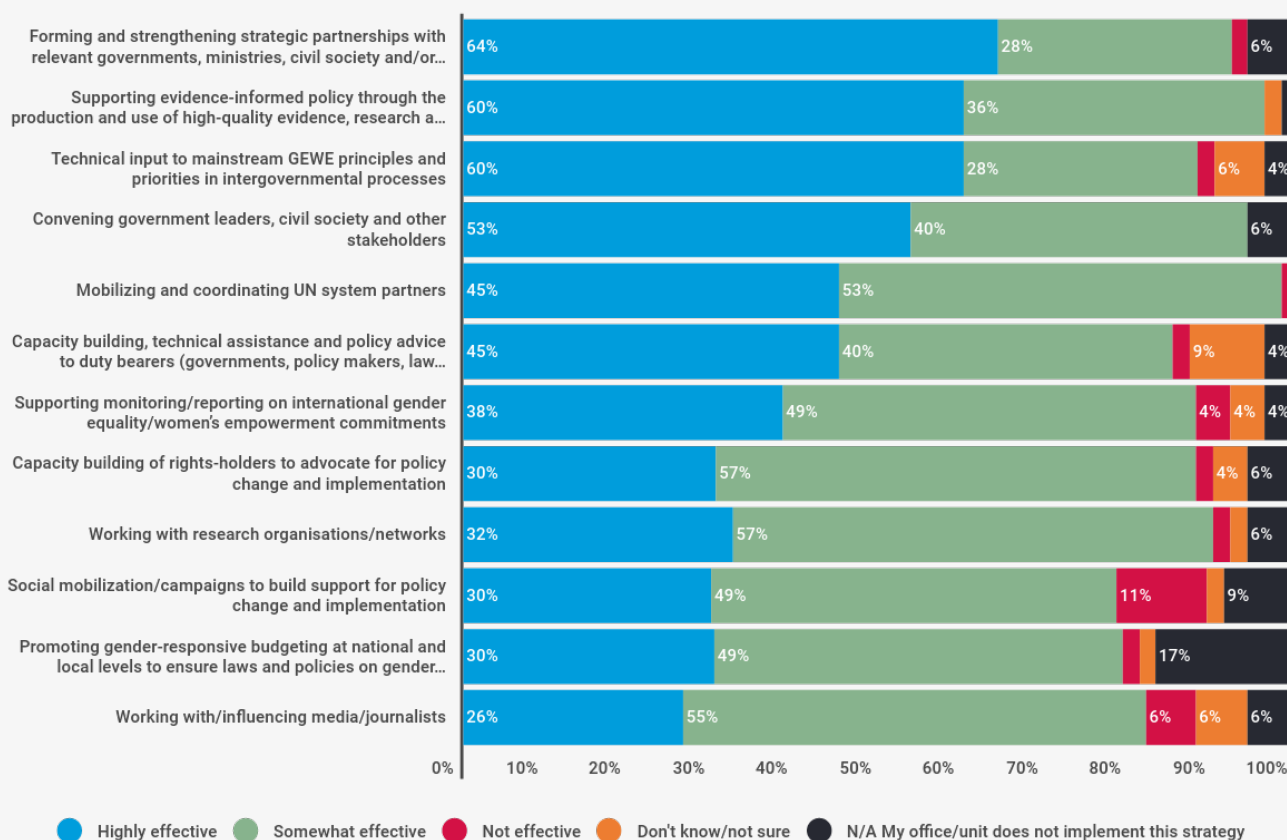
Source: UN Women online internal survey for this evaluation (2021).

Furthermore, 60 per cent (28/47) of headquarters and field office staff and 54 per cent (38/71) of external stakeholder survey respondents also considered forming/strengthening strategic partnerships with relevant governments, ministries, civil society and/private sector to be a highly effective policy advocacy strategy.

Another set of effective strategies instrumental to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment priorities involved capacity building, technical assistance and policy advice to duty bearers. Several reports cited that these strategies often led to policy development, improvement and implementation. For example, in Georgia, UN Women worked with law enforcement agencies to develop and implement a risk assessment tool when responding to domestic violence cases. Other successful efforts resulted in guaranteed rights of migrant workers in Mexico; strengthened capacities of CSO and women's networks in Burundi; trained stakeholders accompanying policy initiatives in the Pacific; and technical assistance

for government partners in Mali and the Latin America and Caribbean region. Seventy-five per cent (53/71) of external stakeholder survey respondents also agreed/strongly agreed that the technical advice and assistance they received from UN Women helped their organization's policy advocacy work.[28]

In Paraguay, in partnership with the Regional Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Women supported the adoption of Law 6338/19 on domestic work by providing capacity to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff and the media to support the establishment of a minimum legal wage for domestic work. In Cote d'Ivoire, the adoption of the 2019 Law on the Representation of Women in Elected Assemblies was supported through the organization of a workshop for parliamentarians to develop a cross-party understanding of the draft and its implications.[29]

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28   UN Women external survey for this evaluation – Question 13 (Annex 9).

29   UN Women, 2021. Shaping the Laws for Women and Girls: Experiences and Lessons from UN Women Interventions 2015-2020, p40.

UN Women Nigeria engaged the services of gender and constitutional reform experts to support the formulation and integration of gender-responsive recommendations in the constitutional process. In Ecuador, UN Women's technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour resulted, *inter-alia*, in an amendment to the Labour Justice Act in 2020 introducing protection against the dismissal of pregnant women. In Ukraine, UN Women contributed to legal reforms on women's military participation through policy advice and technical assistance to the executive and legislature. UN Women's efforts to support laws determining the minimum age of marriage (18 years) without exceptions, were successful in El Salvador, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mexico and Mozambique.[30]

Finally, evidence from this evaluation suggested that providing technical input to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment principles and priorities in intergovernmental and governmental frameworks and agreements was yet another highly effective policy advocacy strategy. For example, UN Women provided technical inputs to the Economic and Social Council on a resolution to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the UN;[31] offered technical assistance to the General Assembly to support work related to gender-specific agenda items and to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective in other Assembly resolutions;[32] contributed to the continued coordination and gender-responsive implementation of all three Rio Conventions; and collaborated on the 2019 Climate Action Summit during the high-level week at the General Assembly by working with governments and stakeholders to increase the attention given to gender equality in the context of climate action.[33]

Overall, the evaluation team's review of data in RMS related to the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 indicated that convening diverse stakeholders; supporting policy through the production and use of high-quality research and knowledge products; capacity building; technical assistance and policy advice to duty bearers; and providing technical input in intergovernmental processes were key policy advocacy strategies that enabled UN Women to effectively advance gender equality and women's empowerment priorities and to ensure the ownership and sustainability of initiatives (see Box 2).

Box 2. Examples of creating ownership through different policy advocacy strategies

- Government stakeholders stressed the importance of empowering partners/governments to take ownership of policy processes to ensure sustainability (Viet Nam).

- Working with the government as a collaborative partner rather than imposing own agenda (Georgia).

- Building on what was already in place and working to complement civil society (the Pacific EVAW programme).

- Working closely with the government, including women's machineries, CSOs and the security sector, in developing the Jordan National Action Plan (Jordan).

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

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30   Shaping the Laws for Women and Girls: Experiences and Lessons from UN Women Interventions 2015-2020, p40, 41, 43.

31   Economic and Social council resolution E/RES/2019/2.

32   UN Women, Normative aspects of the work of UN Women - Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the UN Women. December 19, 2019. Page 5.

33   UN Women, Normative aspects of the work of UN Women - Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the UN Women. December 19, 2019. Page 7.

FINDING 3

Evidence-based knowledge products are seen as key drivers of successful policy advocacy. Knowledge products are integral to UN Women's policy advocacy work and, in some cases, have contributed to establishing the Entity as a thought leader in women's human rights-based perspectives.

The development and use of credible, up-to-date research and knowledge products is regarded as a core component of strong policy advocacy[34] and is an integral part of UN Women's approach.[35] Evidence from the 2017–2018 MOPAN report highlighted that knowledge production and dissemination is central to UN Women's strategy and that "*UN Women plays an active role as a convenor of knowledge and as a knowledge hub.*"[36] Furthermore, in recent years, the number of UN Women thematic communities of practice has significantly increased. In 2018, just 14 communities of practice were active; however, this number grew exponentially to 30 in 2019 and 99 as of 2020.[37] Findings from this evaluation suggest that communities of practice were instrumental in linking cross-sectoral and cross-regional knowledge for policy advocacy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When surveyed, 83 per cent (59/71) of external stakeholder survey respondents indicated that they agreed/strongly agreed that the knowledge products UN Women shares with respective organizations positively contribute to policy advocacy work.[38] Of note, the Women Count Data Hub was the first to offer a set of data disaggregated by age and sex for 125 countries to support policy advocacy during the COVID-19 pandemic.[39]

Within the policy cycle, UN Women contributes to bridging the gaps between research and the development of policy and policy implementation by drawing on global evidence and data (produced by UN Women and other partners or external consultants/academics) and contextualizing it for various regions and countries. These knowledge products enable UN Women to leverage partnerships and networks (with government partners and CSOs) that significantly further policy development and implementation. Several examples of successful localization and adaptations of evidence and knowledge products surfaced during the evaluation case studies. For instance, *the 2015–2016 Progress of the World's Women: Transforming economies, realizing rights* report was instrumental in outlining the importance of social protections at the global and regional level, which in turn inspired publications (policy briefs, road maps and regional and country companion reports) on care work in Latin America and the Caribbean at regional and country levels.

The EVAW programme in the Pacific led to new knowledge products being developed to support practitioners and programming on prevention of and response to violence against women. For example, UN Women personnel and partners confirmed that using rapid gender assessment surveys at the country level was an effective policy advocacy strategy for EVAW, social protection and economic recovery. However, as seen in the case study from Mali, not all countries have had access to customized knowledge products and there are still opportunities for UN Women to create more contextualized products.

UN Women also contributed to methodological discussions. For example, through the nascent Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics in Mexico, UN Women developed methodological guidance for time use surveys; contributed to discussion on measuring different forms of violence against women; and has advanced gender and geospatial analysis.

Key stakeholder interviews also pointed to localization of knowledge as fundamental to uptake and use.

While many knowledge products originate at headquarters, the evaluation found that knowledge products produced by Regional Offices proved to be key drivers of policy advocacy. For example, the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) developed inputs/reviewed the Parliamentary Guide; the Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office (ACRO) created tools for women's economic empowerment and a policy brief of the regional conference of women ministers; and the West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) gathered statistics that were made available during the COVID-19 pandemic for policy advocacy.

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34   Patton, M.Q. (2008) Advocacy Impact Evaluation.

35   MOPAN 2017-2018 Assessments: UN Women (https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unwomen2017-18/). Page 37.

36   MOPAN 2017-2018 Assessments: UN Women (https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unwomen2017-18/). Page 37.

37   UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021 OEE Output indicator 3.9.

38   UN Women external stakeholder survey Question 14 (Annex 9).

39   UN Women Annual Report 2019-2020. Page 11.

A review of UN Women's evidence, data and knowledge work led by McKinsey in 2020 found considerable variability in UN Women's use of data, evidence and knowledge, particularly at the country level due to a lack of access to data, lack of support to Country Offices and lack of expectations and formal guidance.[40] Evidence from interviews concluded that the quality of research and data across field offices remains inconsistent.

Some stakeholders expressed doubts that UN Women is regarded as a thought leader within certain policy spheres, particularly among technical stakeholders. They pointed to the wide array of institutions engaged in producing rigorous and technical data, evidence and knowledge, which forms a crowded landscape of knowledge-based institutions. To be taken seriously among these stakeholders, UN Women requires the technical expertise and partnerships (e.g. with academic institutions or think tanks) to produce credible knowledge products that contribute to the priority areas included in the Entity's Strategic Plans.

The evaluation found a high demand for model policies, tools and comparative knowledge from field offices. Therefore, robust knowledge management and internal policy and communication functions must be strengthened to facilitate beneficial interactions and exchanges among UN Women personnel.

Overall, UN Women's knowledge products, particularly contextualized products, have been successful in driving policy advocacy work forward and in establishing UN Women as a thought leader in gender equality and women's empowerment. Despite these successes, there are opportunities to further strengthen UN Women's technical expertise and improve knowledge management to support policy advocacy work across the Entity.

FINDING 4

There is indicative evidence and several examples of UN Women's knowledge platforms being used effectively to enhance UN Women's policy advocacy work. However, UN Women could improve its approach to implementing and measuring how knowledge platforms contribute to achieving policy advocacy results.

UN Women develops and maintains online knowledge platforms to bring together thematic expertise and knowledge from across the organization and its partners and to strengthen its capacity to address gender issues as envisioned in the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and subsequent Knowledge Management Strategy.[41] These knowledge platforms include the Global knowledge platform to end violence against women, UN Women Data Hub – Women Count and Empower Women.

UN Women staff and partners indicated that knowledge platforms have been used to highlight good practices at the country level and have the potential to enhance UN Women's policy advocacy work (see Box 3).

Evidence from interviews and the global case studies suggest that knowledge platforms are important depositories of knowledge. Global knowledge platforms were generally viewed as effective in fostering thematic knowledge generation and sharing that contributes to evidence-led advocacy and supports broad global communities and UN Women's personnel.

> **Box 3. Example of knowledge platforms contributing to policy advocacy work**
>
> - Raising awareness and fostering policy discussions through virtual sessions and online forums (e.g. Empower Women).
>
> - Generating accessible and timely data to influence policy development (e.g. Women Count-Data Hub/Rapid Gender Assessments and the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker).
>
> - Strengthening the capacity of UN Women stakeholders through webinars and online training modules in support of policy implementation and monitoring (e.g. EVAW virtual knowledge centre).
>
> - Knowledge platforms developed and used as complements to key intergovernmental processes, political opportunities or global programming.
>
> Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

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40   McKinsey. Improving use of Data, Evidence and Knowledge in UN Women's work. May 2020.
41   UN Women Knowledge Management Strategy 2018-2021. Page 11.

Unfortunately, identifying the effectiveness of key results attributable to UN Women's knowledge platforms has proven difficult because measurement remains ad hoc and current data analytics do not adequately capture the direct contributions of knowledge platforms with successful policy advocacy strategies. Further, these platforms are largely dependent on non-core funding and, in most cases, timebound, which often impedes their efficiency and potential relevance in the long term. The evaluation notes the limited evidence of a business continuity plan or an exit strategy to retain and update the contents of knowledge platforms when they reach the end of their funding cycle.

Survey findings suggest that there are opportunities to improve how often UN Women staff and partners use the various knowledge platforms. The UN Women Data Hub-Women Count was identified as the most frequently used knowledge platform among headquarters and field office staff; however, these numbers peaked at just 40 per cent (19/47) of survey respondents.

The Progress of the World's Women reports were the next most frequently used knowledge platform with 34 per cent (16/47) of headquarters and field office staff survey respondents indicating frequent use.

As seen in Figure 3, a majority of external stakeholders indicated that they had not used or were unaware of the various knowledge platforms.

In summary, evidence from the evaluation suggests that, when used, knowledge platforms are effective for enhancing UN Women's policy advocacy work; however, there are opportunities to raise awareness about the platforms and improve approaches to implementing and measuring how the platforms contribute to policy advocacy success.

Figure 3. **Which of the following key knowledge platforms/knowledge product are you (and your colleagues) aware of and/or have used for policy advocacy work?**
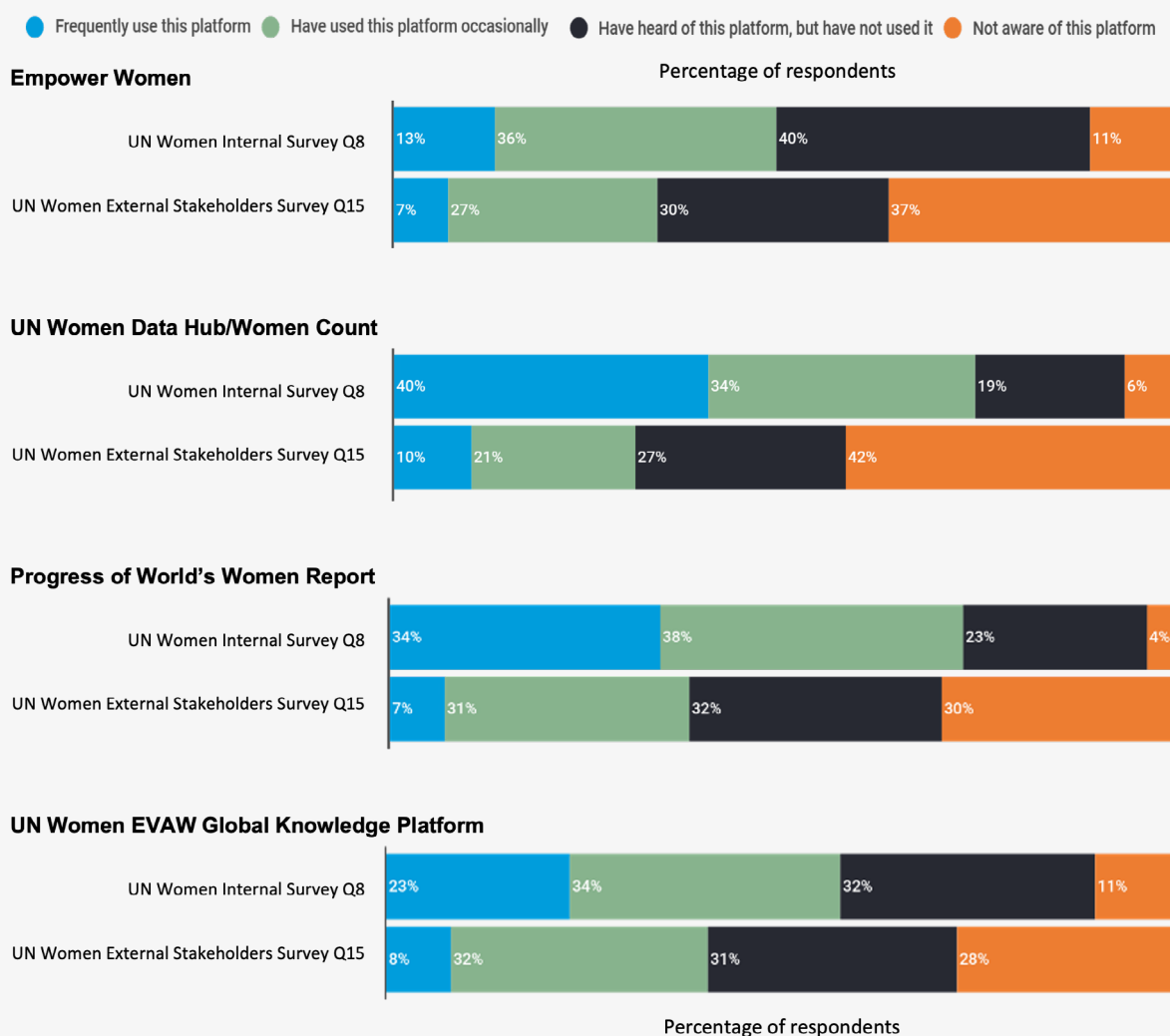
Source: Online surveys conducted for this evaluation (2021).

FINDING 5

UN Women's ability to create and maintain partnerships and relationships is considered a critical factor and a comparative advantage in its policy advocacy work. Successful policy advocacy initiatives have involved strong and strategic partnerships with government, CSOs and other UN agencies.

Multiple streams of evidence suggest that creating and maintaining partnerships and relationships was critical for UN Women to have a multiplier effect, leverage resources and implement a holistic approach to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Most headquarters and field office staff who responded to the survey indicated that they frequently engaged in policy advocacy with the UN system (94 per cent; 44/47), governments (89 per cent; 42/47) and CSO partners (84 per cent; 40/47).

To understand this better, UN Women's stakeholders in policy advocacy work, the evaluation team undertook a network mapping exercise (see Diagram 1).[42]

Diagram 1. UN Women partners in policy advocacy work

Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

The network mapping exercise attempted to reflect government, civil society, private sector and international community stakeholders and the relative frequency (shown through bubble size) with which UN Women engages with each in policy advocacy work. The mapping exercise revealed that UN Women engages governments as a key partner most often, followed by civil society and other UN agencies. Understanding government policy processes and navigating or balancing relationships between diverse stakeholders has been critical to the success of UN Women's policy advocacy work (see Table 2).

For example, partnering with government institutions increased uptake of knowledge platforms such as the UN Women Data Hub – Women Count that hosted data on the Violence Against Women Rapid Gender Assessment, conducted in partnership with line ministries and/or national statistical offices. Additionally, the West and Central Africa Regional Office had success in promoting implementation of UNSCR 1325 on WPS.

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42   The size of each bubble (circle) illustrates the frequency of engagement as assessed through portfolio analysis and survey.

In West and Central Africa, 18 countries put plans and structures in place to support implementation of UNSCR 1325, which was possible because of the close working relations and advocacy with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and regional women's organizations. Other examples of successful partnerships involved engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships through Generation Equality Forum, interfacing with Central Asian women leaders regarding gender-responsive budgeting (ECARO); hosting a regional conference of women ministers on substantive equality and parity democracy (ACRO); and working with G5 Sahel to recruit a gender adviser (WCARO). Furthermore, of the external stakeholders who responded to a survey for this evaluation, 93 per cent (66/71) agreed/strongly agreed that UN Women is a valuable partner in policy advocacy initiatives.[43]

Table 2. **Examples of understanding government policy processes and balancing relationships with diverse stakeholders**

Burundi: Political acumen to work with CSOs and women's networks and maintaining a good relationship with the Office of the First Lady and women parliamentarians in Burundi
Type of partners: CSOs, women's networks, Women parliamentarians, Office of the First Lady of the country

Viet Nam: Amending labour codes in Viet Nam by working closely with the Legal Department at the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
Type of partners: National government (ministry)

Georgia: Working with the Department of Human Rights and Ministry of Internal Affairs on EVAW
Type of partners: National government (ministry)

Mexico: Partnerships on gender statistics and organizing international meetings of experts on Time and Use of Unpaid Work Surveys
Type of partners: National Government (Ministries) – Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) and Instituto Nacional de Las Mujeres (INMUJERES) United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) [44]

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team from case studies.

Partnerships with other UN agencies have been crucial for advancing policy advocacy work and setting a strong agenda in intergovernmental processes. These successes were evident from the case studies and discussions with Regional Offices conducted during the evaluation. Examples of strong UN inter-agency partnerships include:

- Co-organizing the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean along with ECLAC.
- Successful engagement of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on peace and security – United Nations Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (UN DPPA/DPO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)/humanitarian action and gender mainstreaming – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (APRO).

- Social protection and unpaid care work in partnership with UNDP, ILO and ECLAC resulting in a significant success for advocating care work in Latin America.
- Collaboration with UNDOC's Centre of Excellence[45] on the measurement of femicide (Mexico).
- Promoting the ratification of ILO Convention 190 with ILO in ACRO.
- Supporting United Nations Country Teams through gender specialists and gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) e.g. in Mali and Cuba. In 2018, UN Women Burundi mobilized the UN Country Team and led an advocacy campaign against a discriminatory ministerial decision depriving pregnant girls and young mothers, as well as boys involved in the pregnancy, to be part of the formal education system. These actions contributed to the reversal of the ban.[46]

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43   UN Women external stakeholder survey conducted for the evaluation, Question 18, (Annex 9).
44   Inclusions v Equidad: Final Eval Report: Global Centre of Excellence on Gender statistics.
45   UNDOC_KOSTAT Centre of Excellence.
46   UN Women, 2021. Shaping the Law for Women and Girls: Experiences and Lessons from UN Women Intervention.

Additionally, UN Women engaged CSO partners (grassroots and feminist organizations) to reach marginalized communities and promote change in attitudes and behaviours. CSO partners included sports associations, churches and faith-based organizations in the Pacific; religious leaders for EVAW programmes in Mali; women's networks (e.g. National Women's Forum and Women's Peace Builders network) in Burundi; networks of national gender and youth activists in ECARO; and traditional leaders working to end child marriage in Eastern and Southern Africa.

To cast UN Women's partnership net wider, evidence from the evaluation suggested that UN Women could form stronger partnerships with academic institutions and think tanks in policy advocacy to support rigorous research and knowledge sharing. More than one third (37 per cent; 17/48) of headquarters and field office staff surveyed indicated that they rarely or never engaged with the private sector and only half (51 per cent; 24/47) indicated that they engaged with academia/think tanks on occasion (see Figure 4).

Overall, UN Women has been successful in creating and maintaining partnerships and leveraging those partnerships to improve the lives of women and girls around the world. [47]

Figure 4. UN Women Internal Survey Q5: Which partner categories does your office/unit engage with through its policy advocacy work?
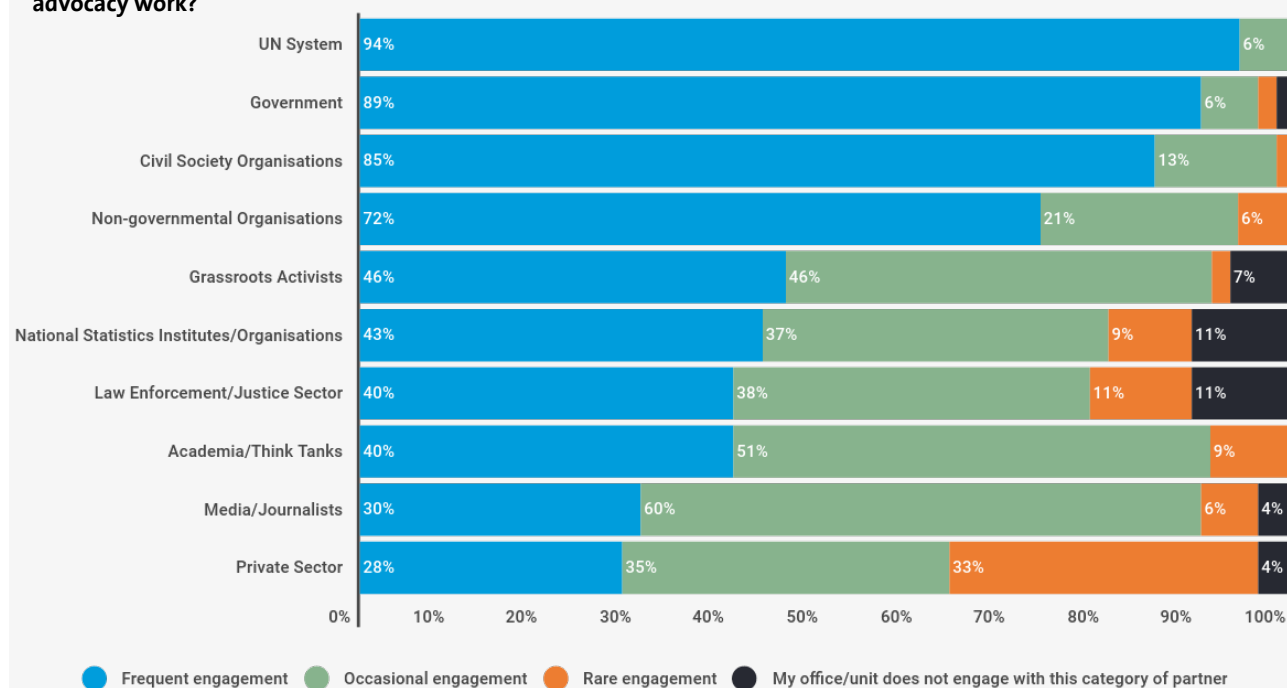
Source: Online survey for this evaluation (2021).

FINDING 6

UN Women's policy advocacy work supported and created environments that amplified the voice of women's organizations advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment.

UN Women supported local women's organizations by strengthening their institutional capacities to advocate for their gender equality-related agendas and by integrating the perspectives of local women's organizations into national sustainable development policies and plans.

In Mali, for instance, UN Women played a crucial role by providing a space for discourse; engaging women's organizations to advocate for gender equality legislative reforms; and by providing tools, evidence and knowledge on the importance of gender equality in a highly volatile and insecure context. These efforts transformed the perception of women's participation in political institutions and bodies and increased their participation in elective and nominative positions.

In Viet Nam, UN Women provided a platform for CSOs to influence key normative processes, which were critical for ensuring gender and human rights remained high on the agenda and held the government accountable. Evidence from Burundi, Mali, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Mexico all highlighted UN Women's use of gender statistics as an effective policy advocacy strategy to support women's organizations.

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47   UN Women internal stakeholder survey conducted for the evaluation, Question 5 (Annex 9).

In the context of CSW, UN Women actively facilitated the participation of women's organizations in national and regional consultations; supported their registration; and provided training and guidance on the CSW process.

Approximately 10,000 NGO/CSO representatives register for CSW annually with nearly half attending the session (e.g. 4,500 and 5,200 of registered participants attended in 2018 and 2019, respectively). While some evidence suggests that the registration process for CSW is complex to navigate, UN Women offered support to individuals and organizations. In addition, Regional Offices (responsible for organizing regional consultations) and Country Offices (responsible for developing materials to ensure that officials and organizations were well-informed about the CSW meeting) also built capacity among their staff to support registration. The evaluation found that most CSW capacity-building and advocacy meetings with civil society took place at the regional and country levels.

4.2 To what extent does UN Women have the necessary organizational, strategic and operational approaches, and capacity in place to efficiently and coherently perform its policy advocacy roles?

FINDING 7

Policy advocacy is anchored in the Strategic Note and Annual Work Plans at the country level; however, due to a lack of resources and the long-term nature of policy advocacy, some offices have had to forego cohesiveness in favour of opportunistic approaches that pursue policy advocacy. Policy advocacy implementation could be strengthened by anchoring activities in longer-term programming.

Evidence from the evaluation suggested that, while UN Women's policy advocacy work was anchored in Strategic Notes and Annual Work Plans, it often lacked a cohesive approach. At regional and country levels, for example, policy advocacy efforts were often embedded in operational programme work and incorporated into non-core projects due to a lack of dedicated personnel and core funding for the field office. Furthermore, policy advocacy takes time. Therefore, it would be optimal to embed policy advocacy in holistic longer-term programmes.

Case studies and interviews suggest that policy advocacy efforts at regional and country levels lacked a coherent strategy that could tie the various projects together under one umbrella initiative or the ToC. Additionally, focus group participants shared that thematic experts, even those within the same office, tended to work in silos, which resulted in some instances where CSOs and government leaders were approached on multiple policy advocacy initiatives, creating the impression that the office lacked cohesiveness.

Policy advocacy timelines are characteristically spread across many years. In Burundi, for example, UN Women was able to support the establishment of the National Network of Women Peace Mediators in 2014. It took another six years before the network was legally recognized as a public utility organization (see Box 4).

While it is common for policy advocacy and change to take time, the evaluation also found that, in some cases, turnover among UN Women personnel affected continuity of policy advocacy work.

Overall, the evidence highlights the need to ideally embed policy advocacy work into longer-term programmes, such as was the case with the Pacific Programme on EVAW which holistically incorporated normative, coordination and operational aspects of integrated mandate for policy change and implementation.

Box 4. Examples of policy advocacy work timelines

BURUNDI

2014
The National Network of Women Peace Mediators was first established with support from UN Women (funded by the Peace Building Fund and Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund)

2019
International Conference of Women Leaders for Peacebuilding (hosted by the Office of the First lady) with support from UN Women

2019
Revision of the electoral code and the electoral framework to be more gender-sensitive and favourable to women's political participation

2020
National general election took place with an increased rate of women's representation in elected positions

2020
The National Network of Women Peace Mediators gained a legal identity as a public utility organization with support from UN Women

JORDAN

2016
Partnership with the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) initiated

2016 – 2018
UN Women supported the consultation and drafting process of the Jordanian National Action Plan (JONAP)

2018
JONAP (2018–2021) for advancing the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on WPS, and its subsequent resolutions adopted

2019
Four-year pooled fund programme, implementing the JONAP on WPS launched

2020
National Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the National Strategy for Women (NSW) 2020–2025 and related action plan developed and endorsed by the government

2020
JONAP Perception Survey – Gender Roles, Women in Decision Making and Violence against Women Baseline 2020

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team from case studies.

FINDING 8

There is a need to clarify UN Women's policy advocacy architecture and strengthen policy advocacy workflows among headquarters, Regional and Country Offices.

UN Women's organizational effectiveness and efficiency depends on clear linkages and workflows among headquarters, regional and country levels. Evidence suggests that these linkages and workflows could be enhanced with increased internal communication and coherence on policy work across all levels.

For example, less than one quarter (23 per cent; 11/47) of headquarters and field office staff who responded to the survey for this evaluation agreed/strongly agreed that clear and adequate linkages exist between and within headquarters divisions and field offices which would allow for efficient and coherent planning and execution of policy advocacy initiatives.[48] Additionally, the evaluation desk review and stakeholder interviews revealed that staff who work on global normative frameworks sometimes lend themselves to direct policy advocacy work between global and country levels, bypassing the regional level where greater context analysis could be added.

Furthermore, evidence from stakeholder interviews highlighted the need for more concrete guidance (such as best practices, tools and model legislation and policies) to support Regional and Country Offices in translating global-level advocacy efforts to local-level policy advocacy initiatives specific to regional and/or country needs. Participants in the focus group discussions emphasized that Country Offices need assistance from Regional Offices to strengthen technical aspects of their policy advocacy work. In tandem, Regional Offices need assistance from Country Offices to implement regional programmes and/or offer peer support. Regional Offices often require connections with headquarters to interact with intergovernmental bodies and to mobilize resources for policy advocacy. Regional Offices also expressed their dependency on headquarters for specialized expertise at times.

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48 UN Women headquarters internal survey for this evaluation, Question 14 (Annex 9).

Nevertheless, there are examples of how linkages across UN Women levels work well in policy advocacy. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean the care work initiative demonstrated an aligned and cross-nurturing process between headquarters, Regional Office and country-level work. The publication of *the Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming economies, realizing rights* stimulated the development of a regional report in Latin America and the Caribbean entitled "Progress of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean 2017 – Transforming economies, realizing rights" which in turn led to additional country reports in Brazil, Colombia and Guatemala.

This contextualization ensured a coherent approach to policy advocacy messaging in recognition of unpaid care and domestic work by women; gender-responsive social protection systems; as well as containment of the adverse effects of economic slowdown on gender equality. The process included technical support from headquarters to the Regional Office and strategic guidance from the Regional Office to take the issue further by developing joint programmes at the country level and by establishing a partnership with ECLAC to amplify regional policy advocacy work. Publication of the regional report and conceptualization of care work as part of the Strategic Note for the Latin American and Caribbean region subsequently led to the uptake of unpaid care work policies in at least seven countries and increased country capacities to fund social protection schemes as part of programmatic work primarily through joint programmes with UNDP and ILO.

FINDING 9

UN Women tracks policy advocacy efforts through the Strategic Plan results framework; however, the complexity of policy advocacy makes it difficult to assess how policy successes happen and how they contribute to long-term changes for women and girls.

UN Women recognizes that monitoring and measurement are key to understanding its contribution to policy change; however, the evaluation found opportunities to improve the way monitoring and tracking of policy advocacy work is carried out. For example, half the development result indicators (40/80) within the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 were directly related to aspects of policy advocacy (e.g. measuring the number of laws, policies and regulations changed with UN Women support).
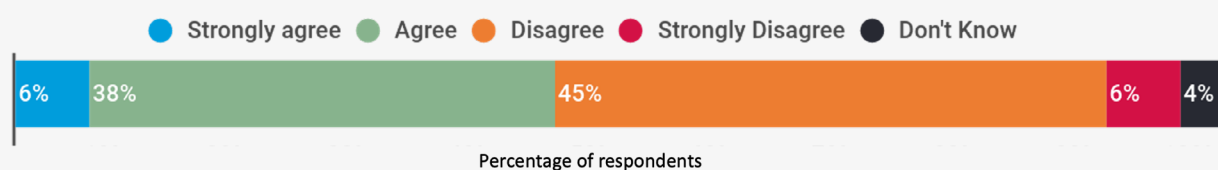
While these high-level indicators tracked quantitative changes in policy advocacy efforts, they did not provide detailed evidence on the types of policy advocacy strategies or advice provided (i.e. qualitative data). Many indicators captured policy advice and technical assistance, but relatively few indicators captured UN Women's capacity-building work, especially with CSOs and duty bearers. Similarly, while the logic between output and outcome indicators was clear, the indicators were limited in scope and only demonstrated UN Women's contribution to observed changes.

Measuring the effectiveness of key results related to UN Women's policy advocacy is difficult given the long-term nature of interventions, further compounded by the absence of a standard approach and definition to policy advocacy. Only 45 per cent (21/47) of headquarters and field office staff that work in policy advocacy and responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed that they have an adequate monitoring and evaluation system to track policy advocacy initiatives and outcomes (see Figure 5).[49]

While RMS captures the reported significant change resulting from policy advocacy, it is unclear whether this information is effectively used for knowledge sharing and/or knowledge management.

Figure 5. UN Women Internal Survey Q16: My office/unit has adequate monitoring and evaluation systems in place to track policy advocacy initiatives and their outcomes

Strongly agree · Agree · Disagree · Strongly Disagree · Don't Know

| 6% | 38% | 45% | 6% | 4% |

Percentage of respondents

Source: UN Women internal online survey for this evaluation (2021).

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[49]   UN Women headquarters internal survey for this evaluation, Question 16 (Annex 9).

> **Box 5. Examples of successful instances from field offices on monitoring**
>
> *Participants across focus group discussions highlighted the following as examples of successful policy advocacy monitoring.*
>
> - **Quantitative indicators were present in Burundi** to capture meaningful engagements led by CSOs resulting from UN Women's policy advocacy activities or UN Women's support at the subnational level (e.g. number of trained women mediators and other community leaders participating in peace and recovery processes at the local level).
>
> - **Progress of the World's Women indicators** that measure the influence of the report include influence among UN Women staff which assesses changes in staff awareness of the report and its use in key strategy and programmatic documents; influence among key non-UN Women mediators which assesses how external mediators engaged as part of the research and outreach process have disseminated key messages; influence on specific policy debates by the Research and Data team assessing how normative debates have been reframed; expanding analysis of key statistics on gender equality and supporting nationally owned knowledge products to catalyse policy dialogue; circulation on receptivity; and update of the report (with online metrics and website analytics).[50]
>
> Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

A key difference between the 2018–2021 and 2022–2025 Strategic Plans is the introduction of cross-thematic outcome and output indicators. In the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan IRRF, policy advocacy related indicators were unevenly spread across the four thematic areas with a greater number of indicators in Leadership and Governance and Women's Economic Empowerment. The 2022–2025 Strategic Plan IRRF aligns with results-based management principles and uses cross-thematic outcome and output indicators that are common across impact areas. This provides an opportunity for more even and consistent reporting on policy advocacy work across thematic areas. In particular, the first cross-cutting outcome, "global normative frameworks, and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions" can be leveraged for cohesive reporting of policy advocacy results across all thematic areas.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that the lack of monitoring and measurement and the inherent complexity of assessing the non-linear process of policy advocacy work hindered UN Women's ability to demonstrate and communicate its policy advocacy efforts. These challenges could impede the Entity's ability to mobilize resources for its policy advocacy work. Furthermore, periodic targeted evaluations of specific policy advocacy initiatives could supplement IRRF data and provide greater assessment of *how* UN Women has contributed to policy change and whether those policy changes have in turn contributed to positive outcomes in the lives of women and girls.

FINDING 10

Current human and financial resources dedicated to policy advocacy are limited and unevenly spread across field offices. Resources must combine substantive knowledge, technical expertise, effective communications, coordination, and an understanding of political dynamics and partners to carry out policy advocacy work effectively.

Evidence from multiple case studies highlighted the increasing need for sufficient human and financial resources to effectively carry out policy advocacy work. Insufficient resources often limited UN Women's potential to influence policy change.

The evaluation team analysed the job titles of more than 2,000 UN Women positions and found that only 2.7 per cent (72/2,709) of positions directly referenced the term "policy." Of these, most positions (71 per cent; 51/72) were based at headquarters and the remaining positions were distributed throughout Regional Offices. Regional policy

advisers were found to be crucial for successful policy advocacy.

However, their presence by region and by thematic area was uneven (five in the Americas and Caribbean, four in the Arab States, two in Europe and Central Asia, four in East and Southern Africa, six in West and Central Africa, and none in Asia and the Pacific).[51] This often led to personnel in various positions stepping in to offer policy support when needed. For example, in some regions support was provided by regional programme managers who were not originally hired for policy advocacy support.

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50 Final Project Grant narrative report to Open Society Foundation." 2020.

51 Based on the analysis of human resources with job titles (UN Women ATLAS HR data as of July 2021).

An analysis of job profiles revealed that policy advocacy roles were explicitly stated in the standard job profiles of UN Women's Country Representatives and policy specialists/advisers. For the Country Representative positions, core functional competencies, such as interacting with high-level decision makers with diplomatic and communications skills and identifying opportunities for UN Women's policy advocacy work in the country context, are closely related to UN Women's policy advocacy work. For the policy advisers, the standard profiles put strong emphasis on thematic knowledge, research skills, and producing policy papers and briefings. Policy advisers are also expected to advocate and provide policy advice. For programme manager positions, thematic knowledge is a required functional competency; however, there is less emphasis on research and policy support.[52] In the absence of regional policy advisers, these functions were supported by the regional programme managers, which may leave a gap in research and evidence-based policy support. In some cases, this was not aligned with the strong policy role that programme staff played as part of their core work. Standard job descriptions and functional competencies could better reflect policy advocacy needs. Additionally, the case studies revealed that capacity gaps (including both the availability of staff and lack of thematic expertise) specific to policy advocacy were particularly felt at the country level.

The lack of human resources dedicated to policy advocacy in field offices was usually linked to a lack of financial resources (i.e. core funding);[53] with policy advocacy work dependent on donor funding.

The evaluation found that another factor for policy advocacy to be successful was the presence of personnel with a combination of specific technical gender expertise, country gender context and national policy processes. Having strong gender experts with substantive knowledge and technical expertise who can translate policy work into operational work and who can position the issue within a network while communicating well to different audiences is critical for effecting policy change. For example, discussions with Regional Offices indicated that, in some cases, the conceptual complexity of gender-responsive budgeting and macro-economic policy made it difficult to advocate for gender-responsive programmes with Finance Ministries. This was partly because UN Women does not have dedicated capacity that focuses on policy advocacy and could adapt technical concepts for policy consumption at regional and country levels.

Furthermore, the perception among external stakeholders surveyed was that UN Women has adequate human and financial resources (75 per cent [53/71] and 57 per cent [40/71], respectively) to effectively deliver and manage policy.[54] When the same question was posed to headquarters and field office staff, less than one third of respondents agreed/strongly agreed (see Figure 6).[55]

Figure 6. Survey question: UN Women has the human and financial resources needed to effectively deliver and manage policy advocacy support.
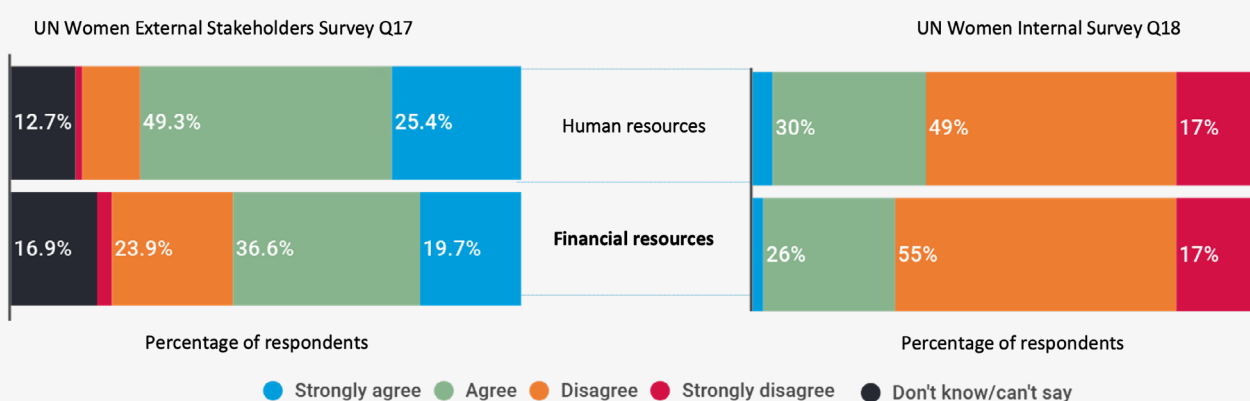
Source: UN Women online surveys conducted for this evaluation (2021).

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52 Based on UN Women Job Dictionary.

53 The analysis of budget and delivery of Strategic Impact Code: Global norms, policies and standards indicated a total budget of USD 117.1 million for 2018-2021, of which 62 per cent is from non-core resources and core budget accounts for only 13 per cent.

54 Only 34 per cent (16/47) agree/strongly agree on adequate human resources and 28 per cent (13/47) agree/strongly agree on adequate financial resource.

55 UN Women external survey (Question 17) and internal survey (Question 18) conducted for this evaluation (Annex 9).

Focus group participants raised another constraint related to the prioritization of policy work versus other work, usually programmatic. As one participant observed: "policy advocacy is the first thing that was sacrificed when there was a time constraint," and "we should be spending more than 50 per cent of the time on policy advocacy but end up spending less than 25 per cent of the time on policy advocacy." Field offices struggle with small teams of personnel having to fulfil multiple roles, and policy advocacy work usually gets subsumed relative to other programmatic priorities.

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Office hired a policy advocacy officer dedicated to strategizing all policy advocacy work for the region. Another example of good practice was in Fiji where the Multi-Country Office focused on developing a technical hub to provide integrated policy and technical support to develop UN Women's expertise, promote staff retention and reduce reliance on consultants.

FINDING 11

There is scope to strengthen UN Women's strategic use of communications in its policy advocacy work.

Following the evaluation's ToC, policy advocacy can be understood as a range of actions, where communication is an integral part of the process. UN Women's Communication Team tracks and measures activity such as the number of articles mentioning UN Women; the number of social media followers; the number of unique visitors to UN Women's website; and how many media partners the Entity has. [56]

Measuring policy advocacy activities, such as engaging stakeholders or UN coordination, is not part of the focus. In fact, the UN Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy (2016–2020) clearly states that the focus of work should be on visibility and media relations.[57]

Evidence from this evaluation found a need to strategically engage communications personnel in UN Women's policy advocacy work from the outset of planned activities. For example, at the country level, communications personnel reported regularly being asked to support initiatives at the last minute rather than being engaged during planning and inception, where their expertise may be more impactful.[58]

Successful communications can bring attention to UN Women's role as a thought leader on gender equality across thematic areas of work and intergovernmental processes. For example, while communications work on CSW was focused on increasing visibility rather than on policy advocacy per se, the strategic planning of messaging as well as engaging with the media and public during CSW was viewed as a successful method for raising awareness of the meeting's theme and UN Women's contributions.

Policy advocacy activities often require incorporating the latest data, evidence and knowledge into effective communications, contextualized for appropriate audiences. UN Women stakeholders who participated in the focus groups highlighted that UN Women does not allocate enough resources to developing concise and clear policy advocacy messages based on knowledge products and reports. In the case of the Progress of the World's Women report, stakeholders indicated that UN Women could invest more in communications resources to disseminate key messages to multiple audiences; create and raise awareness on the report's findings; and create an enabling environment for policy change as these are generally well received by stakeholders.

Evidence from a recent IAS audit found that communication functions within UN Women were fragmented. At the field level, communications were under-resourced, affecting the quality and scope of communications at country level. Although the audit found fruitful and growing support from some Regional Offices, this issue is compounded by limited coordination and support between headquarters and field offices. [59]

In addition to the challenge of producing consistent messaging, one of the risks of the current approach is the underutilization of communications and the potential missed opportunities to support policy work and bring attention to policy priorities.

Overall, the evaluation found that there is scope to clarify the role of communications at headquarters, regional and country levels within the policy advocacy process; build adequate capacity at all levels to fulfil this role; enhance coordination within the organization; and engage communications personnel strategically throughout priority policy initiatives rather than in an ad hoc manner.

56 UN Women, Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy 2016-2020.
57 UN Women, Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy 2016-2020.
58 UN Women, Internal Audit Report: Communications and Advocacy Section, 2022.
59 UN Women, Internal Audit Report: Communications and Advocacy Section, 2022.

4.3 To what extent is UN Women effective at translating normative policy advocacy successes at the global level into regional and country-level action?

FINDING 12

There is evidence of a strong link between global and regional gender equality and women's empowerment normative frameworks and country-level policy advocacy work. However, new policies and laws arising from policy advocacy efforts do not always clearly translate into concrete results in the everyday lives of women and girls for a variety of reasons, many of which are outside the direct control of UN Women.

Global normative frameworks, such as the UNSCR 1325, BPfA, Agenda 2030 of the SDGs and CEDAW have been instrumental in advancing policy work on the ground.[60] Recent corporate evaluations highlighted that UN Women showed "*strong performance in setting the global agenda for governance and national planning,*"[61] at the normative level and that UN Women added value to the WPS landscape by creating neutral spaces for dialogue, raising awareness and developing a shared national action plan agenda[62] through its convening role.

The 2017–2018 MOPAN report also highlighted that UN Women's normative work contributes to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation that address gender equality and women's empowerment.[63] The assessment found that contributing to normative results helps build institutional capacity at the country level and fosters sustainability.[64] Previous corporate evaluations also highlighted "*opportunities to deepen normative, operational and coordination work at the country level, particularly to cover the entire governance and national planning cycle, monitoring budget expenditure and reviewing policy impact,*"[65] and "*potential to become more effective by being more consistent and strategic overall and by emphasizing the complementarity and interlinkages between normative, coordination and programming work*"[66] to continue strengthening connections.

The evaluation survey indicated that 86 per cent (40/47) of stakeholders responding from headquarters and field offices and 77 per cent (55/71) of external stakeholders responding agree/strongly agree that UN Women effectively translates global commitments to national-level legislation and policy. At the same time, 70 per cent (50/71) of external stakeholders responding agree/strongly agree that UN Women ensures that country-level realities, experiences and lessons learned feed into global policy advocacy initiatives, but only 55 per cent (26/47) of headquarters and field office respondents shared the same view.[67]

The Mali case study, for example revealed evidence of strong links between global and regional gender equality and women's empowerment normative frameworks and policy advocacy work happening at the country level. In Fiji, a recommendation from CEDAW served as one of the drivers behind the development of a national action plan on gender-based violence. Stakeholder interviews and desk reviews confirmed that global normative frameworks have been instrumental in advancing policy work in countries such as Mali and Jordan. In Viet Nam, policy advocacy work that used normative and policy frameworks on women's participation and gender-responsive budgeting cut across thematic areas yielding greater impact. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UN Women advocated for regional normative frameworks related to women's empowerment and gender equality and, more recently, care work initiatives, which were further strengthened by advocacy efforts at the country level. UN Women also developed a joint work programme with ASEAN that cut across key sectoral priorities in Asia and the Pacific, including WPS; gender-responsive climate change and disaster management; WEE; and gender statistics.

Intergovernmental normative frameworks, such as the Istanbul Convention in Georgia, have created the conditions necessary to move policy advocacy initiatives into legislative changes. The international framework developed through the Pacific Partnership influenced the review of the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration. In addition, the Gender Equality Forum is an example of a regional-level success and the care agenda in Mexico a country-level success. The evaluation highlighted the difficulties of attributing causality to policy advocacy efforts as intergovernmental commitments and policy changes might be more expressions of political will. Nevertheless, it was evident that global and regional normative frameworks paired well with country-level policy advocacy efforts results often led to success.

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60 In 2018, 44 laws adopted or reformed in 25 countries to strengthen women's rights (Annual Report 2018-2019) and 82 laws and policies in 40 countries to empower women in the economy in 2019 (Annual Report 2019-2020).
61 UN Women, 2019, Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning. Page 15.
62 UN Women, 2021, Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Support to National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security. Page 51.
63 MOPAN 2017-2018 Assessments: UN Women (https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unwomen2017-18/). Page 43.
64 MOPAN 2017-2018 Assessments: UN Women. Page 46.
65 UN Women, 2019, Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning. Page 14.
66 UN Women, 2019, Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action. Page 51.
67 UN Women internal survey (Question 19) and external survey (Question 19) conducted for this evaluation (Annex 9).

FINDING 13

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is instrumental in shaping global standards on gender equality and women's empowerment, but there is a need for systematic processes to follow up on the agreed conclusions with Regional and Country Offices to support implementation.

UN Women serves as substantive secretariat to CSW, which is the principal intergovernmental policymaking body that sets global standards and formulates policy recommendations to promote gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, and their human rights worldwide. The annual CSW meeting is one of UN Women's flagship policy advocacy platforms, during which Member States convene and negotiate a set of agreed conclusions. UN Women staff are involved in preparations for the CSW meeting, including supporting the CSW Bureau and intergovernmental consultations, managing documentation, facilitating NGO participation, offering support at the national level and while in-session, as well as in shaping global standards on gender equality and women's empowerment.

CSW is one of UN Women's institutional processes with clear steps; however, there is no clear strategy on how to follow-up on the conclusions agreed upon during the CSW meeting at regional and country levels to support implementation. Participants in focus group discussions for this evaluation highlighted the challenges in directly linking the agreed conclusions with local level needs and priorities.

The evaluation also noted timeliness as a key factor to success in translating policy advocacy commitments into practice. For example, the conclusions agreed upon during the CSW meeting must be aligned with and integrated into each Member State's national priorities, which can take time. The evaluation revealed the need for a more thorough follow-up process after the CSW meeting, as it remains unclear whether or to what extent agreed conclusions are eventually integrated at regional and country levels.

Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation agreed that UN Women, through its convening role, contributed to making the CSW meeting more inclusive. For instance, in 2019, the Youth Forum supported by UN Women took place alongside the CSW 63 meeting and allowed young people to engage with Member States and women's organizations on the priority theme. In addition, UN Women's work with youth groups before and during the sessions increased its visibility and collaboration with youth organizations at regional, national and local levels, amplifying UN Women's advocacy role during the CSW meeting.

4.4 How are human rights, gender equality and inclusion incorporated into UN Women's policy advocacy work?

FINDING 14

"Leave no one behind" is a core principle of UN Women and personnel are aware of its importance, but translating the principle into practice is a challenge. While UN Women strives to include marginalized groups in its policy advocacy initiatives, the process is often unsystematically planned and monitored.

UN Women applies a human rights-based approach to its programming in line with international norms and standards and is guided by the principle of "leave no one behind." By mandate, UN Women aims to reach vulnerable populations (particularly women and girls) and, as seen in the case studies and portfolio review, many policy advocacy initiatives incorporate marginalized groups in some way. However, it is common to find that policy advocacy initiatives do not approach identifying those experiencing multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities in a systematic way.

Some stakeholders stated that they understood the principle of "leave no one behind" well but lacked guidance on how to implement the principle in practice. Others faced challenges in navigating political sensitivities around acknowledging and addressing the needs of marginalized groups (e.g. LGBTIQ+ groups). Developing and implementing inclusion strategies within policy advocacy activities/interventions and monitoring and reporting on marginalized groups through disaggregated data or gender-responsive or intersectional analysis has also proven to be challenging.

The evaluation uncovered some promising approaches to incorporating the "leave no one behind" principle. In Latin America, efforts were made to include people with disabilities and the elderly in care work advocacy initiatives. Similarly, people living with disabilities were incorporated into the revision of the labour code in Viet Nam. In Georgia, special efforts were made to engage rural women in the development of the domestic violence risk assessment tool given that their experiences with violence may differ from those in urban areas.

The evaluation also found examples of incorporating marginalized groups through partnership and engagement with civil society and grassroots organizations. For example, in the Pacific Partnership programme, civil society was engaged to reach rural coastal women. Rural women were also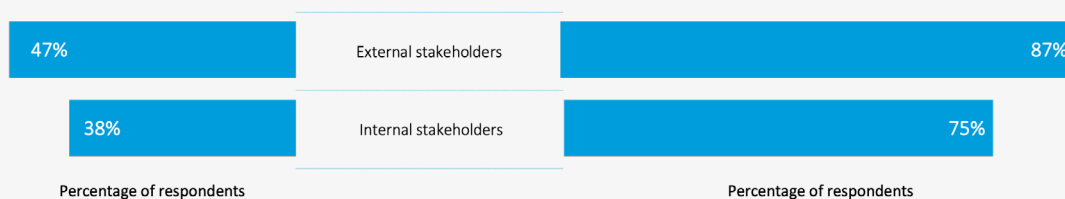 engaged through partnerships with civil society organizations in Mali. Despite these successes, marginalized groups continue to be underrepresented in most policy advocacy efforts.

Evaluation survey results indicated that while 75 per cent of internal stakeholder respondents (35/47) and 87 per cent (62/71) of external stakeholder respondents perceive UN Women's policy advocacy work to be relevant to the needs of marginalized groups, less than half of stakeholder survey respondents (38 per cent [18/47] of headquarters and field office staff and 47 per cent [34/71] of external stakeholder respondents) agree that UN Women takes the special circumstances and needs of people living with disabilities into account when designing and disseminating policy advocacy knowledge products (see Figure 7).[68]

Figure 7. Relevance of policy advocacy work to the needs of marginalized groups.

Q27 Internal/Q24 External - UN Women takes into account the special circumstances and needs of people living with disabilities in the design and dissemination of policy advocacy knowledge products and relevant information.

Q26 Internal/Q23 External - UN Women's policy advocacy work is relevant to the needs of marginalized groups including those most at risk of being left behind.

	External stakeholders	
47%		87%

	Internal stakeholders	
38%		75%

Percentage of respondents   Percentage of respondents

Source: Online internal and external surveys for this evaluation (2021).

UN Women has played a leading role in inter-agency forums that promote gender equality and intersectional perspectives. Approximately 67 UN Women offices supported initiatives to empower women and girls with disabilities by providing normative guidance, integrated policy advice, operational support and capacity development. UN Women also facilitated access to HIV services for women living in 35 countries.[69] The reluctance of some national stakeholders to discuss intersectionality or certain marginalized groups is a significant barrier to inclusion and the principle of "leaving no one behind".

The 2022–2025 Strategic Plan focuses on addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including age, sex, race, ethnicity, location, disability, migration and displacement, and indigenous, socio-economic and other status[70] to increase the number of marginalized groups benefitting from putting the "leave no one behind" principle into practice.

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68   UN Women internal survey (Questions 26 and 27) and external survey (Questions 23 and 24) conducted for this evaluation.

69   Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the UN Women on progress made on the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (April 16, 2021). Page 12.

70   UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (UNW/2021/6). Page 7.

FINDING 15

Data, evidence and knowledge are necessary components for identifying marginalized groups and for understanding their needs when conducting policy advocacy work.

Having quality data, evidence and knowledge is critical to identifying marginalized groups; understanding their needs; and monitoring and evaluating impact. For the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan, UN Women collected data disaggregated by age, sex, migratory status, disability and urban/rural population for eight indicators; however, the evaluation found that more investments are needed to enhance the types of data collected for planning and monitoring purposes and to inform interventions that "leave no one behind."[71] Evidence from stakeholder interviews highlighted that reporting on "leave no one behind" indicators was incorporated into UN Women's annual reporting cycle and that tracking is improving. In the Pacific Partnership programme, for example, efforts were made to integrate disability inclusion across programme interventions despite not having a dedicated disability output indicator.

UN Women has made progress in developing tools and platforms that are relevant and user-friendly for and about marginalized groups. For instance, Women Count has made disaggregated gender statistics and sub-populations available to stakeholders and produced guidance through the Counted and Visible Toolkit, albeit that some data is still difficult to find and disaggregate at the country or group level. At the country level, UN Women Mexico is working to give visibility to women experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination in its data work. Specifically, disaggregated

poverty metrics and statistics on indigenous and rural women were made available.

There are several opportunities for UN Women to improve the data available and its usage. For instance, increasing awareness of knowledge platforms and their accessibility, and strengthening the capacity for proper use of online tools and resources/technology by these groups.[72]

Additionally, translating data, evidence and knowledge into other languages, issues common to other knowledge platforms (e.g. EVAW platform, Visible Toolkit),[73] could make the information more accessible and appealing to users. Although UN Women has made significant progress with using and sharing data to make intersectional inequalities visible, the data still needs to be translated into meaningful policy advocacy. The evaluation found it is essential to aggregate and demonstrate how inequalities play out at the intersections and to plan how data will translate into policies that improve the situation of marginalized groups.

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71 Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (May 17, 2019. Page 10.

72 Women Peace and Security and Human Rights in the Digital Age: Opportunities and risk to advance women's meaningful participation and protect their rights, GNWP (2021).

73 https://data.unwomen.org/resources/counted-and-visible-toolkit

5. FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND LESSONS LEARNED

FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Building relationships with policymakers/decision makers is essential.

Multi-stakeholder approaches successfully unite diverse stakeholders around policy advocacy messages.

Global and regional experts are critical to high-quality, evidence-based policy advocacy and knowledge production.

Partnerships with government institutions often lead to increased uptake in knowledge products and knowledge platforms.

Long-term institutional investments and advocacy yields better support for the adoption and implementation of progressive interventions.

Flexible, smart and rapid responses to changes in the external environment (e.g. COVID-19) can provide an opportunity to uplift policy advocacy work.

LESSONS LEARNED

It is necessary to **understand and navigate contextual factors** for successful policy advocacy..

Changes in the political landscape can bolster/hamper policy advocacy efforts.

Multiple players in the policy advocacy ecosystem **working disjointedly** results in duplicate efforts.

Knowledge products that are not translated/contextualized have lower uptake and limited reach.

Lack of established mechanisms impedes systematic engagement with CSOs at various levels.

Timing plays a key role in the probability of influencing discourse and policy.

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team.

1

It is important to understand the political momentum, context and dynamics between different stakeholders.

Policy advocacy is inherently political and dependent on contextual factors that UN Women must understand and navigate (i.e. the political landscape, how government operates and how key actors influence policy change). Staff who had experience working with government agencies and interacting with policymakers/decision makers were an asset for relationship building and for understanding the context, including creating unity and consensus among stakeholders. Sustaining attitudes and practices that promote gender equality in patriarchal societies requires longer-term institutional investments and advocacy to support the adoption and implementation of progressive interventions. A true commitment within public institutions was an essential prerequisite for effective implementation of strategies and policies. Changes in the political context (e.g. elections, signing of international treaties and new political regimes) sometimes bolstered and other times hampered policy advocacy efforts.

2

Consistent institutional buy-in across the Entity is essential to successfully use knowledge products (e.g. Progress of the World's Women reports) as a policy advocacy tool.

Coherence on policy advocacy priorities and issues across the organization is essential, especially with the limited resources in field offices. Translation of knowledge products and local contextualization enhanced their uptake at the country level. Developing regionally contextualized knowledge products (e.g. regional compendium to the global knowledge product) increased their use and roll out of knowledge products in the regions. For example, the Latin America and Caribbean region produced a regional compendium in 2017 utilizing the 2015–2016 Progress of World's Women global report. Similarly, the Arab States region published a regional companion to the 2019–2020 Progress of World's Women global report. These are good practices that UN Women should continue to replicate to ensure the reach and use of its flagship knowledge products.

3

Knowledge platforms should be developed based on a thorough needs assessment to ensure continuity in aiding policy advocacy work.

The value proposition and long-term sustainability and/or exit plan for these platforms should be made much clearer. Given the heavy initial investment, mainly through non-core resources, ongoing resource requirements must be considered for updating and maintaining knowledge platforms in the initial stages. Knowledge platforms should not be seen as a one-time product. They must be seen as an ongoing source of information for policy advocacy work and therefore should be continuously updated and maintained.

4

Technical capacities in headquarters, Regional and Country Offices are essential to produce robust evidence and data to support advocacy efforts.

Technical expertise at the regional level, including retainers (e.g. Latin America and the Caribbean's care economy work), enabled knowledge generation and evidence-based policy advocacy. Headquarters technical support is needed to produce good authoritative knowledge products. As confirmed by the evaluation, high-quality information and policy advice shared by headquarters and regionally on COVID-19 gave more visibility to UN Women Country Offices.

5

A multi-level partnership strategy that includes government, civil society and other UN agencies is fundamental to sustain progress on gender equality.

Country Offices often identified the need for collaboration with the highest levels (President/Prime Minister's office) and partnerships with key line ministries and civil society to achieve recommended policy changes. This approach ensured that national commitments retained visibility with leadership and enabled institutional ownership. Positive results were often achieved when UN Women played a convening role by bringing women's organizations to policy discussions or when leveraging inter-agency partnerships with other UN organizations to facilitate policy advocacy work.

6

A tailored contextualized approach is critical for effective policy advocacy work. A nationally driven approach with a "locally owned process" ensured government engagement at the macro and micro levels.

Diversity of population within a country requires highly localized approaches calling for contextual analysis of gender (e.g. by age, sex, ethnicity, location, disability, migration and displacement, indigenous, socioeconomic status, other parameters of intersectionality). Working with the highest levels of government alone did not necessarily enable inclusive outreach to the most marginalized communities. In conflict areas, it is crucial to conduct conflict-sensitivity analysis in advance.

7

Flexibility, adaptability and timeliness are important to increase the chances of influencing policies/policy dialogues.

Providing data and information at a time of great need increases the possibility of influencing policy dialogue and shaping the response, as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid gender assessments conducted by UN Women in early 2020 substantially influenced government responses and recovery policies. The timing was vital to highlight gender equality issues prevalent during the pandemic.

8

Greater coherence and focus on UN Women's approach to policy advocacy could help organize Country Office policy advocacy approaches/efforts more systematically and ensure efforts and resources are not spread too thinly.

A well-designed tailored plan would help Country Offices engage with partners for sustainable results, increase national ownership and provide better value for the resources invested. While a coherent and common vision is critical, it should also be sufficiently pragmatic for field offices to implement and flexible enough to allow offices to seize relevant policy advocacy opportunities as they arise.

6 CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1:

UN Women's integrated mandate enables the Entity to have a strong policy advocacy role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment priorities. However, there is an opportunity for UN Women to define policy advocacy and use the Strategic Plan to develop a coherent approach for planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy.

UN Women's policy advocacy work is rooted in the Entity's Strategic Plan and several global normative frameworks. The Entity has contributed to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation to address gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women's triple mandate also extends policy advocacy work in multiple directions, such as when coordinating and influencing policy change and actions within the UN system and across its network of external partners, and through its regional and country offices that influence policy change.

UN Women's leadership and contributions to policy advocacy work are embedded throughout most of its programmatic work. The Entity has multiple pathways to policy advocacy and employs several strategies to advocate for policy change at the various levels in which UN Women operates.

One of UN Women's key strategies for effective policy advocacy is convening. UN Women provides a platform for governments and local women's organizations to engage in discourse. Another effective policy advocacy strategy involves intergovernmental processes that facilitate the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment principles and priorities in global norms and standards.

Despite all of these actions, there is no standard definition or shared understanding guiding what policy advocacy is within UN Women. The absence of a high-level ToC and an overall cohesive approach to policy advocacy work has impacted UN Women's ability to measure its contributions related to policy advocacy and report on UN Women's contribution to policy advocacy outcomes. The operationalization of the 2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan through the development of thematic theories of change and Signature Interventions offers an opportunity to define policy advocacy and develop coherent policy advocacy approaches and reporting mechanisms.

CONCLUSION 2:

Evidence-based and credible knowledge is central to UN Women's policy advocacy work.

UN Women plays an active role as a technical expert on gender policy and a convenor of knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment in intergovernmental processes. The Entity's role in knowledge generation and thought leadership is supported by its mandate to submit reports to intergovernmental bodies on a range of gender equality issues.

Knowledge production and dissemination are integral to UN Women's policy advocacy strategy. Knowledge products and research are produced at headquarters, regional and country levels. While at the global level UN Women produced high-quality authoritative knowledge products and reports, the data, evidence and knowledge produced at the country level did not always benefit from the same rigorous peer reviews and methodological consistency. Strategic dissemination of UN Women knowledge in support of policy advocacy is not always clearly planned when knowledge products are prepared. Furthermore, effective knowledge management systems for exchanging lessons, model policies, and tools need to be improved across all levels.

Localization of knowledge and context-specific evidence is fundamental to supporting policy advocacy at the regional and country levels. UN Women draws upon global knowledge and data and contextualized it at the regional and country level, leveraging its partnerships and networks for further policy development and implementation.

However, the absence of substantial guidance from UN Women on country-level knowledge generation has led to a lack of consistency in format, data quality and evidence.

Although, UN Women's knowledge platforms have proven to be important depositories of information and data, their governance and business continuity due to funding uncertainty needs to be reviewed and strengthened. In general, knowledge platforms have fostered thematic knowledge generation and sharing that contributed to evidence-led advocacy. However, it has been difficult to measure how UN Women's knowledge platforms directly contribute to the effectiveness of policy advocacy efforts due to the lack of a ToC and standardized approaches to results monitoring.

CONCLUSION 3:

Partnerships, a strength of UN Women, are critical to ensuring a multiplier effect, leveraging resources and approaching policy advocacy work holistically.

The evaluation found that UN Women often acts as a bridge-builder among stakeholders by providing a platform for discussions between governments and local women's organizations. UN Women's partnerships with other agencies have contributed to setting a strong agenda in intergovernmental processes across all regions, for initiatives such as peace and security, unpaid care work and measurement of femicide. At times, partners working in silos on different outcome/thematic areas impeded a comprehensive approach to policy advocacy efforts by competing for the same resources, time with decision makers and support from CSOs.

UN Women has been a valuable partner in policy advocacy initiatives. Partnering with governments ensures ownership and sustainability of policy advocacy initiatives and increases uptake of UN Women's knowledge products and platforms. Similarly, partnering with national governments, particularly their national mechanisms for gender equality, on global normative frameworks and CSW at the regional level helps to facilitate the adoption of resolutions and strengthened relationships with regional women's organizations for advocacy.

CSOs played a key role in UN Women's policy advocacy work, particularly in its community-based policy and sustainability of the policy process and beyond. Grassroots partners/organizations, such as sports organizations, churches/faith-based organizations and local women's networks, have been vital for UN Women to reach individuals and marginalized groups to change attitudes/behaviours through programming. While these partnerships have been fruitful, UN Women's siloed efforts sometimes hindered a holistic and coordinated approach of working with partners on thematic areas of policy advocacy issues at the country level. Also, there is potential to better leverage and learn from the experience and skills of grassroots organizations working with marginalized groups.

CONCLUSION 4:

There is need to clarify the organizational architecture for policy advocacy to form better coordination and communication linkages between headquarters, Regional and Country Offices.

UN Women's structure and organizational presence at regional and country level provides great opportunity for coordination, support and information sharing but can also lead to fragmented policy advocacy work.

The absence of a shared understanding and overarching approach for policy advocacy work has contributed to a lack of horizontal coherence and linkages among different units on policy advocacy even within headquarters but also among different levels. For example, communications for policy advocacy were fragmented with limited coordination between headquarters and field offices. Clear linkages between UN Women's communications and advocacy work are not always made and opportunities are lost as key advocacy messages are not always amplified through corporate communications products. There were also opportunities to bring communications into policy advocacy initiatives in a more coordinated and timely manner.

At the Regional and Country Offices, regional programme managers and other personnel undertook varying levels of policy advocacy, despite being outside the scope of their jobs. Stakeholders identified the need for more guidance, such as best practices, tools and model legislation, and data, evidence and knowledge that headquarters is well placed to develop, compile and curate. Stakeholders noted that Regional Offices were also in a strong position to provide greater context analysis to support country offices while also highlighting the important role for country offices to provide lessons and guidance of their own, especially for the contextualization and implementation of policy work in their countries.

Overall, greater clarity in roles and responsibilities for policy advocacy across the organization could facilitate stronger engagement and coordination between headquarters, Regional and Country Offices.

CONCLUSION 5:

UN Women's monitoring and results tracking systems do not adequately capture policy advocacy results and lessons learned.

Measuring the effectiveness of key results due to UN Women's policy advocacy work was also difficult given the long-term nature of most change. While the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan included many indicators related to different aspects of policy advocacy, the indicators were not consistent across thematic area, were presented at a high level and provided mostly quantitative output data on policy change. UN Women could enhance its monitoring and evaluation of policy advocacy to better understand how UN Women contributed to change and to what extent (not just that the change occurred). There is also an opportunity to evaluate the longer-term outcomes and impact of policy changes on the lives of women and girls. To do this, UN Women could utilize innovative methodologies for evaluating policy advocacy, such as the bellwether methodology[74] and conduct periodic evaluations of specific policy advocacy initiatives to complement the development results framework data. In addition, the introduction of cross-cutting outcome areas under the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan provides an opportunity for more consistent reporting on policy advocacy results across thematic areas, particularly under the first cross-cutting outcomes, "global normative frameworks, and gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutions."

CONCLUSION 6:

Current resources are not always adequate to carry out policy advocacy work to the Entity's full potential, and capacity gaps exist in the availability of necessary staff and expertise.

In addition to understanding global norms and standards, it is necessary that UN Women staff have expertise and knowledge of context-specific gender issues and political and social acumen to effectively carry out policy advocacy work. Regional and country offices undertook policy advocacy work by including policy advocacy in a variety of funding proposals, programme documents and Strategic Notes. They reported that funding often depended on the flexibility and willingness of donors to support policy advocacy initiatives and many programmes lacked the necessary resources for policy advocacy work. Due to UN Women's limited capacity, programme managers often took on additional roles such as resource mobilization, coordination and monitoring, and had to navigate the social and political dynamics to identify policy advocacy opportunities.

The evaluation noted that most policy-related personnel were based in headquarters and relatively few thematic experts were located at regional and country levels. In the field, country office representatives played a key role in policy advocacy with their host national governments and within the UNCT in addition to overseeing regular work. This imbalance in expertise was often attributed to a lack of core funding available to support thematic policy expertise in field offices. Current resources are not always adequate to carry out policy advocacy work to the full potential in organization.

CONCLUSION 7:

UN Women's policy advocacy work contributes to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation to address gender equality and empowering women; however, it does not always clearly lead to longer-term outcomes for women and girls for a variety of reasons, such as capacity, funding and internal coherence as well as other external factors that are outside of UN Women's direct control.

UN Women's work on normative frameworks, laws and policies builds national capacity at the country level and enables sustainability. Nevertheless, the evaluation concluded that there are opportunities for UN Women to increase its effectiveness by consistently and systematically utilizing its normative, coordination and programming work to support national partners in implementing laws and policies.

Global normative frameworks have been instrumental in advancing policy work on the ground. The provision of normative support to intergovernmental processes and bodies has remained a high priority for UN Women. Intergovernmental normative frameworks created the conditions to move policy advocacy initiatives as was noted in the evaluation case studies in Jordan, Viet Nam, Burundi and Mali. Nonetheless, while UN Women's coordination and convening work has contributed to improved policy and normative frameworks at the country level, this has not always translated into positive changes in the everyday lives of women and girls. The evaluation concluded that a stronger evidence base, strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships, and more linkages across sectors would help UN Women improve coherence, consistency and coordination between its normative and operational efforts to deliver policy results for women and girls.

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74   Julia Coffman and Ehren Reed (n.d.), *Unique Methods in Advocacy Evaluation*. Harvard Family Research Project, Innovation Network.

The CSW annual meeting has been one of UN Women's policy advocacy platforms. Although achieving agreed conclusions negotiated by all Member States during CSW is a major accomplishment, UN Women is missing a strategy on what actions Regional and Country Offices can take to systematically integrate the agreed conclusions in their respective spaces. A key challenge has been that integrating the agreed conclusions into each Member States' national priorities takes time.

CONCLUSION 8:

UN Women is seen as an advocate for "leave no one behind," but translating these principles into practice continues to be a challenge. The process of implementing "leave no one behind" is often uneven and not systematically planned or monitored.

Consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Women has a strong commitment to "leave no one behind" and to promoting an understanding of women and girls' experiences at the intersection of age, sex, race, ethnicity, location, disability, migration and displacement, indigenous, socio-economic and other statuses. While UN Women's mandate aims to reach vulnerable populations (particularly women and girls) through most policy advocacy efforts, there is scope for improvement to identify those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination when implementing policy advocacy initiatives.

UN Women has played a leading role in inter-agency forums, ensuring gender equality and intersectional perspectives are included. For instance, 67 UN Women offices supported initiatives to empower women and girls with disabilities and UN Women facilitated access to HIV services for women living with HIV in 35 countries.

Nevertheless, in practice, policy advocacy initiatives do not systematically identify and include all marginalized groups or those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Developing and implementing inclusion strategies within policy advocacy activities and interventions and monitoring/reporting on marginalized groups through disaggregated data or gender-responsive or intersectional analysis is uneven across policy advocacy efforts.

UN Women has made considerable progress in making intersecting inequalities visible through data; however, more work is required to translate the data into policy advocacy efforts. Of note is the Women Count Programme which has introduced tools related to "leave no one behind" and gender-responsive data collection (e.g. Counted and Visible Toolkit).

CONCLUSION 1 : UN Women's integrated mandate enables the Entity to have a strong policy advocacy role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment priorities. However, there is an opportunity for UN Women to define policy advocacy and use the Strategic Plan to develop a coherent approach for planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy.

CONCLUSION 2 : Evidence-based and credible knowledge is central to UN Women's policy advocacy work.

CONCLUSION 3: Partnerships, a strength of UN Women, are critical to ensuring a multiplier effect, leveraging resources and approaching policy advocacy work holistically.

CONCLUSION 4: There is need to clarify the organizational architecture for policy advocacy to form better coordination and communication linkages between headquarters, Regional and Country Offices.

CONCLUSION 5: UN Women's monitoring and results tracking systems do not adequately capture policy advocacy results and lessons learned.

CONCLUSION 6: Current resources are not always adequate to carry out policy advocacy work to the Entity's full potential, and capacity gaps exist in the availability of necessary staff and expertise.

CONCLUSION 7 : UN Women's policy advocacy work contributes to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation to address gender equality and empowering women; however, it does not always clearly lead to longer-term outcomes for women and girls.

CONCLUSION 8 : UN Women is seen as an advocate for "leave no one behind," but translating these principles into practice continues to be a challenge. The process of implementing "leave no one behind" is often uneven and not systematically planned or monitored.

7.RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the evaluation framework, findings and conclusions. To ensure the clarity of proposed actions, the recommendations identify priority, timeline, responsible actors, impact, perceived difficulty and what could happen if the recommendations are not implemented. The recommendations were discussed with reference group members and senior management, and subsequent changes were integrated where appropriate. The suggested key actions should be determined based on their feasibility within the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and available resources.

RECOMMENDATION 1.

Leverage the Strategic Plan to enable coherent planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of policy advocacy priorities.

Priority
HIGH

Timeframe
SHORT-TERM

Based on FIndings
1, 7, 9 & 12

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Develop a clear definition of policy advocacy which includes a high-level ToC and monitoring mechanisms for policy advocacy work.

- Establish global policy advocacy priorities through the operationalization of the Strategic Plan.

- Utilize cross-cutting Outcome 1 of the Strategic Plan on gender-responsive normative frameworks and institutions to build cohesive policy advocacy approaches, monitoring and reporting.

- Develop policy advocacy strategies and measurement mechanisms through the development of thematic Theories of Action and Signature Interventions.

- Contextualize the policy advocacy priorities for Regional and Country Offices through Strategic Notes and workplans.

- Align policy advocacy priorities with communications and knowledge, data and evidence production.

To be led by: PPID, in close collaboration with SPRED, should lead development of the policy advocacy priorities and implementation plans and their operationalization through the Strategic Plan, with inputs from the SPD/ Communications and Advocacy team, Civil Society Division and field offices. Regional and Country Offices should adapt the global policy advocacy plans to local contexts.

Impact: The policy advocacy definition and high-level approaches will support implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 by clarifying policy advocacy work; establishing priorities; and addressing reporting, monitoring and measurement gaps in current planning and results tracking systems.

Difficulty: This recommendation is within UN Women's control; however, it will require additional time, capacity and consultation to be implemented.

If not implemented: UN Women's ability to grow as an effective and efficient organization for policy advocacy will be negatively affected. The Entity's policy advocacy work and its results will continue to be undefined, insufficiently tracked and underreported.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

Clarify and strengthen the Entity's policy advocacy architecture, including strengthening integration of policy advocacy across the organization and ensuring meaningful participation of all divisions working directly or indirectly on policy advocacy.

Priority
HIGH

Timeframe
Short - medium

Based on FIndings
7, 8, 11 & 12

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Map and clarify the key actors and roles of different divisions, Regional and Country Offices involved in policy advocacy.
- Strengthen synergies between divisions through joint planning and matrix management.
- Strengthen networked management of Regional Offices (policy regional advisers) as the link between headquarters and Country Offices.
- Strengthen linkages between UN Women communication and advocacy efforts at all levels of the organization so that communication products and messages can directly support policy advocacy.
- Develop headquarters/Regional Office/Country Office annual strategic communications plans and key messages to improve focus, consistency and efficiency.

To be led by: PPID, in collaboration with the Executive Director's Office, SPD/Communications and Advocacy team, as well as inputs from Regional and Country Offices.

Impact: Effectiveness and efficiency will improve by clarifying the leadership and roles of different UN Women teams.

Difficulty: This is within UN Women's control. If UN Women develops policy advocacy priorities, their implementation would require clarification of roles within the organization.

If not implemented: It will perpetuate the lack of clarity on direction and roles of different offices, divisions and teams. Ultimately this will affect efficient delivery of UN Women's development results.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

Strengthen data, knowledge generation and knowledge management systems as enablers for policy advocacy work and establish UN Women as a recognized knowledge broker on gender equality in the policy advocacy sphere.

Priority
Medium

Timeframe
Medium term

Based on FIndings
2, 3, 4 & 15

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Develop effective data and knowledge generation systems based on UN Women's policy advocacy priorities and evidence from gap analysis on policy development.
- Identify which data and knowledge will be produced by UN Women, jointly with partners and by partners separately.
- Invest in strengthening knowledge management systems for policy advocacy work across global, regional and country levels.
- Compile model policies, laws, tools within the established policy advocacy priorities to support the work of UN Women personnel.
- Ensure that policy guidance, key messages and training/capacity building tools in support of policy advocacy are effectively disseminated across the organization.
- Establish a corporate communication plan to systematically disseminate knowledge products to Regional and Country Offices and partners.

To be led by: PPID/Policy Sections in collaboration with SPRED, SPD/Communications and Advocacy team and field offices.

Impact: UN Women's role in thought leadership will be strengthened.

Difficulty: This needs to be systematically built into implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025. Data, evidence and knowledge systems will require additional capacities and resources to develop and implement the plan.

If not implemented: The current situation will prevail, knowledge products will continue not to be optimally used, communicated and their impact measured.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

Continue to strengthen relationships with national governments, UN agencies, and feminist movements and women's organizations to support policy change and implementation.

Priority
Medium

Timeframe
Medium term

Based on FIndings
2, 5 & 6

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Prioritize and leverage partnerships to obtain the best impact appropriate to each context.

- Collaborate with national governments to increase buy-in and ownership of policy change and implementation.

- Leverage partnerships with feminist movements and women's organizations at global, regional and country levels to support policy change and implementation.

- Leverage UN reform, the Resident Coordinator's Office and partnerships with UN agencies to enhance coordination, scale up of policy advocacy work and to foster support for implementation.

- Leverage partnerships with academia, research institutions and think thanks for research-based knowledge generation and sharing.

To be led by: PPID, in collaboration with the Civil Society Division, UNCD and Strategic Partnership Division. Field offices will lead on developing and/or adapting and leveraging partnerships in local contexts.

Impact: UN Women will promote implementation of laws and policies leveraging the power of partnerships.

Difficulty: It is within UN Women's control to develop partnerships and achieve results based on mutual interest and commitment of partners.

If not implemented: Partnerships will not be fully utilized for policy advocacy work.

RECOMMENDATION 5.

Strategically place policy advocacy specialists across the organization and ensure that field offices have the appropriate level of social and political acumen and adequate capacity in terms of the number of staff with technical expertise and knowledge of local context on gender issues.

Priority
Medium

Timeframe
Medium term

Based on FIndings
8 & 10

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Strategically locate thought leaders and policy experts throughout the organization, including at the regional and country level, to better support policy advocacy priorities.

- Recruit world class talent on gender policy to bolster UN Women's role as a "thought leader".

- Develop capacity and expertise for policy advocacy work in field offices.

- Provide policy advocacy training to country and regional representatives, and programme managers.

- Review Country Office job descriptions and titles to ensure policy advocacy work is adequately reflected to aid in the recruitment of staff with required policy experience

To be led by: PPID in collaboration with Human Resources and field offices.

Impact: UN Women's capacity will be strengthened to undertake policy advocacy work.

Difficulty: It is possible for UN Women to provide training and strengthen the recruitment process for policy advocacy talent; however, increasing policy advocacy capacity in terms of staff on the ground will be dependent on additional funding.

If not implemented: Policy advocacy work will continue to be under-valued and under-realized.

RECOMMENDATION 6.

Strengthen and improve mechanisms and processes within UN Women by developing guidance tools and best practices to effectively engage groups being left behind through policy advocacy work.

Priority
HIGH

Timeframe
Medium-term

Based on FIndings
7, 8, 11 & 12

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Identify or develop approaches for integrating "leave no one behind" in policy advocacy work, including approaches for integrating the needs of "leave no one behind" within legislation, policies and standards; identify when and how to share policy advocacy products with those at risk of being left behind; and monitor and evaluate "leave no one behind" in policy advocacy work.

- Develop minimum standards for integrating "leave no one behind" in policy advocacy that balance best practices and expectations with resource and time constraints.

- Leverage partnerships with grassroots organizations, women's organizations and networks to identify and ensure sustained reach to groups being left behind, particularly to support implementation of legislation, policies and standards.

To be led by: PPID in collaboration with the Civil Society Division and field offices.

Impact: UN Women's policy advocacy efforts will lead to the systematic integration of the "leave no one behind" principle in global and national gender equality and women's empowerment frameworks, policies and laws and their subsequent implementation.

Difficulty: The development of tools is within UN Women's remit and control; however, their implementation and adaptation require resources and time, as well as national ownership and buy-in of national stakeholders.

If not implemented: The "leave no one behind" principle will not be fully incorporated in UN Women's policy advocacy efforts and opportunities will be missed to include the groups left behind at the centre of gender equality frameworks, policies and laws.

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

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