

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This is an evaluation report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Country Portfolio on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) in Zimbabwe (2016-2020 extended to 2021).

The overall purpose of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) was to reflect on the impact of the UN Women Zimbabwe Country Office work with partners and stakeholders on the national GEWE agenda during the Strategic Note (SN) period (2016-2021). The evaluation served two purposes: i) strengthening UN Women Zimbabwe's accountability to donors, partners, and other stakeholders; and ii) provide lessons that would guide development of the next SN 2022-2026 and its implementation framework as the evaluation was conducted during the process of development of the new SN 2022-2026. The evaluation was primarily formative to provide evidence of key changes and opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of the new SN 2022-2026.

The evaluation assessed the project based on the criteria of: Relevance, Coherence Internal Coherence and External Coherence), Efficiency, Effectiveness, Sustainability, and Human Rights and Gender Equality.

The evaluation focused on aspects of the three thematic areas: Women's Participation in Politics (WPP), Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), and Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW)) in the UN Women SN 2016-2021. The evaluation team also considered evaluations that were conducted during the implementation period of UN Women SN 2016-2021 to limit duplication and make efficient use of scarce resources.

The evaluation covered the period from January 2016 to December 2022.

Methodology

The evaluation used a theory based approach to understand the validity of the SN design, and to identify outcomes. This was supported by a contribution analysis to determine UN Women's specific contribution to observed outcomes. The evaluation was guided by UN Women Evaluation Policies and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation. The following key principles also underpinned the evaluation approach: national ownership and leadership; fair power relations and empowerment; participation and inclusivity; independence and impartiality; transparency; quality and credibility; and innovation.

Data for the evaluation was collected from secondary sources: UN Women's annual report, quarterly monitoring reports, knowledge products, and outputs from interventions. Other documents included specific information on UN operations in the country, the country context, and evaluation reports of UN Women projects. Secondary data review was supported by key informant interviews. Selection of institutions was based on a stakeholder analysis undertaken at inception. Results of the selected institutions led to prioritisation of stakeholders – those with high power and influence (See Annex 6). Key informants were drawn from direct beneficiaries and indirect beneficiaries that includes government ministries and departments, chapter 12 commissions, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs),

research institutions and academia. Two districts were selected covering two projects in the thematic areas of Women Political Participation (WPP) and Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) to observe interventions of UN Women and their impact on women. The selection of districts was not to provide a representative view of UN Women's performance, but to understand the operational aspects – working through grantee and Community Based Organizations (CBOs).

Findings of the evaluation were triangulated with multiple sources and validated through two rounds of review and a stakeholder validation meeting.

All qualitative data was entered and analysed in Microsoft Excel. Inductive and deductive approaches were used for data analysis.

Findings

Relevance

UN Women positioned itself as a funder and technical adviser on GEWE with the effectiveness of its support increasing its clout and respect within Zimbabwe. UN Women used its mandate to strategically position itself as the institution of choice supporting the achievement of GEWE in Zimbabwe. This included making deliberate decisions that enhanced the institution's ability to lead on initiatives advancing GEWE in Zimbabwe. These key decisions included: (i) leveraging on joint programmes to improve funding for its country portfolio; and (ii) leveraging on the one UN approach that recognized the need for agencies to work together in areas of interest or where goals overlapped. Using joint programmes was a successful strategy as it enabled the Zimbabwe Country Office (ZCO) to not only raise resources for the country portfolio but enhancing its effectiveness through establishment of new relationships that have improved performance in targeted thematic areas. It is now recognised not only as a good performer among other UN agencies; it also strengthened its position as the go to agency for gender equality and women's empowerment related work. Its coordination of the successful Spotlight Initiative has been at the pinnacle of this performance as the programme is recognised as one of the most successful Spotlight programmes in the world. Leveraging on the one UN approach, UN Women was able to engender key sector processes and strategies: the Zimbabwe Urban and Rural Vulnerability assessment undertaken by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC); and the national HIV response and the National Development Strategy 1 2021 to 2025 (NDS1). Faced with significant funding constraints in Zimbabwe, this strategic positioning was appropriate and enabled significant implementation of the SN 2016-2021.

While the UN Women ZCO's strategic positioning has strengthened its position in the country's gender space, more could have been done to strengthen the gender machinery. Discussions for strengthening the gender machinery only occurred in the final year of the SN, as the office faced challenges in resourcing such an initiative. Nonetheless, there were efforts made by the Government of Zimbabwe and UN Women to strengthen the gender machinery. On government's end, the main initiatives included the introduction of directors of gender in all ministries and the establishment of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC). UN Women supported development of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework. While this support is commendable, it was piece meal and not underpinned by a common visioning of the

capacity needs of the gender machinery. More could have been done by facilitating a joint analysis (UN Women ZCO and MWACSMED) of the requirements to strengthen the gender machinery, which would allow UN Women to be strategic and systematic in its approach to strengthening the gender machinery. This is an issue that has been discussed in the extended Gender Results Group (GRG) but hamstrung by lack of funding.

Misconceptions of the role and responsibilities of UN Women were prevalent in the gender sector with potential to undermine partnerships. There were concerns that the scale of programmes of UN Women were too small to make national level changes in the targeted impact areas. Others expected UN Women to play the role of fundraising for the gender sector in the country. Such sentiments and misconceptions seemed to shape some stakeholders' perceptions about UN Women's operations and performance in the country. However, such sentiments are based on inadequate knowledge of UN Women's ZCO's strategic positioning and approach in the country. Because of resource constraints, the ZCO positioned itself as catalytic and identifying opportunities for initiatives that can be brought to scale by other agents. Institutional capacity strengthening and support for policy were a big part of this approach supported by in field pilots of specific approaches.

UN Women responded to the evolution of development challenges and priorities through emphasizing and employing flexible program implementation mechanisms. The ZCO was adaptive when faced with multiple crises, such as Cyclone Idai and COVID-19 that had a profound effect on negative gender outcomes – changing interventions to support the Cyclone Idai and addressing constraints imposed by COVID-19 on programming. However, SN 2016-2021 needed to plan for the ZCO's adaptation in the face of common humanitarian crises that include drought and floods to improve the speed and quality of response. Despite significant shifts in the political context in the country, the portfolio remained aligned to national priorities.

Efficiency

The management structure for UN Women ZCO was appropriate for the context and scale of operation. The ZCO management supported efficient implementation of the country portfolio under significant resource constraints. The ZCO was led by a Country Representative (overseeing the normative and coordination mandates), and a Deputy Country Representative (overseeing the operational mandate). Such division of labour (DoL) between these two posts enabled effective oversight on the portfolio by ZCO management. However, the absence of an operations manager for three years in the SN period put a significant burden on the ZCO management. Furthermore, the turnover of Deputy Country Representatives (three Deputy Country Representatives in the SN period) affected continuity and efficiency in programmes and contributed to additional burdens on the Country Representative.

Effectiveness of the management structure can also be determined by the country office's resource mobilisation. This was a key constraint for the ZCO, with a funding gap of 38 per cent over the SN period. However, this constraint was largely attributed to constrained funding environment. The ZCO management had to be strategic and innovative in resource mobilisation as evidenced by the shift towards pushing for inclusion in UN joint programmes and targeting non-traditional funders of UN Women, such as International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

Due to inadequate funding, it has been difficult for UN Women to access the necessary skills, knowledge and capacities as relevantly required to deliver its portfolio. Not all specialists' positions could be filled, for instance M&E. Staff turnover of specialists was also a significant issue as ZCO could not offer longer term contracts for specialist positions. The ZCO management put in place measures to mitigate the effects of these challenges on business continuity through hiring volunteers and adopting collaborative working. However, this is not a sustainable arrangement for continuity as it presents risk for loss of institutional memory and dampens performance.

UN Women positioned itself well to mobilise financial resources in a constrained funding environment. The ZCO had to strategically position itself in UN joint programmes and take advantage of UN Women global or regional flagship programmes to enhance resource mobilisation. Despite these initiatives, resources mobilised (61.4 per cent of those required by the SN 2016-2021) were insufficient to meet the goals/targets of the SN. The resources available being thinly spread to support a diverse country programme resulting in delays or failure to achieve some of the intended results of the SN 2016-2021. The ZCO had to drop Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) for the period between 2018 to 2022 due to limited support of this area by development partners who viewed supporting gender mainstreaming in livelihoods programmes as a more efficient and effective way to ensure women's economic empowerment.

UN Women has financial instruments, which facilitated implementation of the country programme. The UN Women ZCO implemented different models of financial management tailored to reduce risk, improve efficiency, and ensure accountability. The main financing models used by the ZCO included: (i) direct implementation modality; and (ii) disbursement of grants through Partner Cooperation Agreements. The application of these modes minimised risk and enabled UN Women to effectively manage financial regulations in the country (retain USD value) and met the operating policy and procedural requirements while facilitating implementation of the programme. However, there is need to work on a disbursement strategy that aligns with the different types of support offered to improve efficiency in the disbursement processes. In some instances where Implementing Partners (IPs) were receiving small grants or implementing projects within a year, the disbursement process was seemingly long and distressful. There was no difference in length of disbursement for these grants as compared to longer term grants of higher value. There is need for the ZCO to explore most suitable and efficient ways of dealing with the different funding packages for IPs.

The ZCO had a clear results framework guided by the global results measurement framework. However, tenets of results-based management were weak: tools, data management systems and analysis. There were no systems for routine data collection, data storage and data analysis. However, for each project, partners were given indicators and tools for collecting data. While this is commendable, monitoring could have been improved by supporting partners with the provision of guidance on data collection and reporting on the indicators to ensure uniformity across partners. The ZCO itself had no systems for data management. For instance, there was not a single repository of monitoring data that was readily available and retrievable apart from the annual reports. This made it difficult for the evaluation team, for example, to determine the extent to which the ZCO was able to meet its SN 2016-2021 results to verify what was reported in the annual reports. This challenge reflects the lack of a monitoring system in the ZCO that allows for regular tracking of results achievement at process, output, and outcome levels.

Knowledge management and communication in the ZCO needed strengthening focusing on diversifying knowledge products and determining messaging and using multi-media channels. The ZCO invested in research by CSOs and academia with some knowledge outputs developed. This support has gone a long way to enhance the work of partners and stakeholders as some of the research done have been ground-breaking prompting further action to improve work around gender equality and women's empowerment. The Gender Equity Baseline Survey Reports conducted by Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) with the support from UN Women, for example, were a good eye opener to the commission and interested stakeholders and the work that needs to be done in relation to women's participation in electoral process. While the ZCO has a communications officer, external communication was undermined for a large period of the SN (up to 2020) by limited budgets as this depended on project financing. As a result, UN Women had a light footprint on various communication platforms. Hence, message development heavily relied on global efforts. However, since the midterm review of the SN, improvements were noted in the performance of ZCO on communications with increased presence on social media platforms. Nonetheless, the ZCO needed a communication strategy to guide knowledge products, messaging, and their channels, which was eventually developed in 2021.

Effectiveness

The programme has made key contributions to establishing a policy framework and capacities for women's participation in politics, leadership and peace and conflict resolution processes, and Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) and WEE. Results of the contribution analysis show UN Women's contribution in observed results lie in its ability to influence policy and specific intervention technical support and funding for key activities. Under thematic area 1 of Women's Participation in Politics (WPP) the ZCO was able to:

- **engender electoral planning and processes as well as contribute to women's agency and capacity to participate in politics and leadership.** About 240 aspiring women political candidates were trained under the Women Rise in Politics (WRiP) initiative implemented by the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). Election campaigns targeting women resulted in increased women voters in the 2018 election. The electoral policy was also made gender sensitive providing a platform for sustained gender inclusive electoral processes.
- **strengthen the capacity of women MPs to effectively participate in parliament and advance women's priorities.** The ZCO effectively used the Zimbabwe Parliament Women's Caucus to establish a strong voice and alliance among women across all political parties for equal gender representation in politics and political leadership.
- **strengthen the capacity of women MPs to effectively participate in parliament and advance women's priorities.** Through the support for the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), gender policy and supporting a strategy for women's participation in peace processes and structures, and the development of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, the UN Women has set the framework for advancing women's participation in peace building. Initiatives, such as Women Safe Spaces, and establishment of peace committees are improving participation of women peace and conflict resolution processes in the country.

Under the EVAW theme the ZCO was able to contribute to the following results mainly through the Spotlight Initiative:

- **High-Level Political Compact on Ending Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Harmful Practices.** Through the Spotlight Initiative (SI), the ZCO as the technical lead and coordinator, worked closely with the SI Inter-Agency team colleagues in UNDP to garner the highest-level support for addressing GBV in the country through its signing by His Excellency the President of Zimbabwe. The launch and signing of the Compact is a key milestone in Zimbabwe's journey towards the realization of gender equality and respect for the rights of women and girls. It also aims to ensure that women and girls realize their full potential in a violence-free, gender-responsive and inclusive society.
- **Through the Safe Markets Project ZCO has demonstrated the importance of addressing women's safety in public spaces.** UN Women constructed a Model Gender Responsive Safe market at Overspill Shopping Centre in Epworth. The market includes 96 secure well-lit market stalls, children's play area that accommodate about 50 children, children's resting room, separate female, and male ablution facilities, as well as clean water and sanitation facilities.
- **ZCO support has strengthened justice delivery services.** UN Women also provided the technical and financial support to the JSC for the update of the Handbook for Magistrates on Criminal Cases, known as the 'Magistrates Handbook'. In August, some 170 magistrates (94 females and 76 males) attended a virtual meeting to validate the Handbook, which had not been reviewed since 2009 when it was first developed.
- **Community activism was given a boost through the work of GBV Community Ambassadors in one of the Spotlight Provinces and building a critical mass of campaigners through the Innovators Against Gender Based Violence (IAG).** The Mashonaland West Community Gender Based Violence Ambassadors in the Spotlight districts of Hurungwe Rural, Hurungwe Urban and Zvimba districts conduct door-to-door efforts, which according to government officials in the MWACSMED have helped to create an environment where there is zero-tolerance to GBV as more cases have been identified and referred through the Spotlight programme. The GBV Ambassadors' and ministry's officials' mobility to reach more families in the district was enhanced through the support of bicycles and motorbikes. One immediate result reported has been the increase in the number of women accompanying their husbands to the tobacco floor auctions, a sign of changing attitudes among couples. In the past, more men went to the auction floors alone to sell tobacco and spent all the earnings before returning home, which led to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and in several cases, women committed suicide. The IAG initiative focused on building eradication of GBV advocates led to the IAGs making collaborative efforts to engage policy makers, traditional leaders, and communities on EVAW.
- The He4She campaign, in addition to the other initiatives in the Spotlight (including the Start, Awareness, Support, Action (SASA!)) to reach men, have enhanced male participation in initiatives for EVAW at all levels. The He4She Parliamentarians launch, and engagement of chief's council ensured EVAW was at the top of the agenda in Parliament and traditional leadership.
- **The programme has strengthened capacities of Women's organisations to advocate for reform, especially the marriage laws.** The Country Office (CO) successfully coordinated various CSOs and the Gender Results Group to analyze the gazetted Marriage Bill, which led to Women rights advocates to develop an alternative Marriage Bill. This alternative Bill

considered the gendered dimensions to ensure its gender responsiveness. The Marriage Bill has since been enacted.

In the WEE thematic area programmes the following results were achieved:

- **UN Women support through the SN revived and institutionalised Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in the country.** The CO provided capacity building to staff in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) to develop Gender Responsive Budgeting Guidelines and tracking tools. As of June 2022, the guidelines were piloted and validated in six other ministries within government. In the 2021/22 budget, the MoFED committed ZWL\$592.8 billion to be directed towards financing of gender-sensitive programmes and projects across all sectors, which may be an indication of the adoption of the capacity building provided by the CO and other partners.
- **Support for UN Women has enhanced and institutionalised the availability of data to inform enhanced gender inclusion in the financial sector.** UN Women ZCO contributed technical support to the development of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2016 – 2020, which was launched by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ). Anchored on four pillars – innovation, financial literacy, financial consumer protection and microfinance – the NFIS prioritizes addressing the constraints to the inclusion of women, among other special groups, into the financial sector. As discussed earlier, since its introduction, the Reserve Bank has provided sex disaggregated data on financial inclusion forming the basis for gender responsive planning.

While the ZCO has aimed to maintain a balance in its mandate, implementation has leaned towards operational work. At normative level the ZCO supported: i) policy development and implementation through capacity development of key institutions and development of the gender policy and its implementation strategy; ii) domestication of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and development of the GEWE M&E framework; and iii) Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise Development (MWACSMED) to complete and submit Convention on the Status of Women (CSW), and obligatory biannual reporting to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) committee and SDG Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) reports. On coordination, the ZCO led the UN GRG and the extended GRG. Through the GRG UN Women undertook joint and participatory United Nations Country Team (UNCT) SWAP Gender Scorecard annual review, and implementation of performance indicators on gender equality within the One UN Zimbabwe (e.g., gender scorecard, and United Nations Country Team (UNCT) CEDAW shadow reporting and representation). Despite these initiatives, operational work, delivered through the three impact areas (WPP, EAW and WEE) and the additional impact area 5 (gender statistics) received greater focus in the country portfolio. As the main funding was through grants mainly under the operational mandate, it inadvertently led to a country portfolio that leans towards this mandate than the others.

UN Women has contributed to UNCT gender vision and was supporting its implementation. The ZCO played a leadership role in the development of the UN Gender Mainstreaming Strategy. Through chairing and co-chairing the GRG (for the UN and the extended group respectively), UN Women has been instrumental in ensuring implementation of the strategy through annual implementation plans for each UN agency. However, there were concerns that in some cases, selected gender focal points

in some agencies were not ideal and had insufficient capacity as well as tools and guidelines to help carry out their responsibilities within the agencies. Perhaps, the greatest challenge lies in the less focus on the role played by and responsibility of leaders of UN agencies for mainstreaming gender into their institutions and programming. This, to a certain extent, has usurped the role of UN Women in coordinating and spearheading gender mainstreaming in the UN. Therefore, the expectation that UN Women must contribute to effective gender mainstreaming has to recognise this role and responsibility of leaders of UN agencies.

Sustainability

Capacity development was a key feature of the ZCO programming during the SN but severe underfunding constrained sustainability of capacity. Significant capacities have been developed among boundary partners. The short-term nature of grants¹ available to the ZCO affected its capacity to nurture results beyond the grant period.

The evaluation found strong evidence of national ownership and the presence of champions. The Country Programme (CP) succeeded in building national ownership by government and all participating stakeholders. It also created a firm and functioning framework for stakeholders to collaborate on issues moving forward and become champions in supporting the work of UN Women. Gender champions were found in key institutions that included Parliament, and Independent Commissions (ZEC and NPRC).

UN Women ZCO focused on catalytic interventions. For example, the Women Safe Spaces initiative has now been taken up by NPRC with a view to scaling it up to more provinces. The Safe Markets initiative has also garnered significant interest in government with current measures by government to seek alternative funding for scale up. Furthermore, MoFED was already enforcing gender budgeting and funding capacity building of line ministries to be able to incorporate gender in their budgeting. There is evidence that potential agents for scale up have put initiatives in place to expand interventions. However, majority of the institutional capacity building was nascent and needed a clear plan for strengthening the initiatives. Therefore, UN Women ZCO needed to have a clear strategy for scale up and supporting measures to improve scale up by targeted agents.

Human rights and gender equality

The portfolio was implemented to address deep rooted patriarchal drivers of gender inequality in the country. The country portfolio has challenged these relationships at three levels: household, community and institutional/normative levels. For example, targeting of the Chief's Council and male parliamentarians through the He4She campaign, men champions and supporting community level gender transformative processes.

The portfolio has been implemented according to the principles of participation and empowerment, inclusion and non-discrimination and national accountability and transparency. However, it lagged on reaching women in hard-to-reach remote rural areas, women with disabilities and youths between 18 and 35 years of age, and boys and men. On the latter the ZCO, through the SASA! methodology, did reach out to them. The He4She campaign and work through the Spotlight Initiative all contributed

¹ Grants ranged from one to three years

to the portfolio reaching men and boys, including in institutions of power. However, a more systematic approach on how the portfolio would do this would have enabled greater focus on this group.

Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Partnerships work and are more effective if they are long term. The organisations must be intentional on what needs to be achieved from partnership. Defining the scope of a partnership is critical to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretation of what the intentions are, which can potentially damage relationships.

Lesson 2: Faced with the challenge of high staff turnover, Innovative operational practices (e.g., switching to team-based programming; improved knowledge management and documentation systems and practices), can help for retention of Institutional memory.

Lesson 3: The use of different modes of financial management facilities: (i) direct implementation modality; and (ii) disbursement of grants through Partner Cooperation Agreements can minimise risk and enable a United Nations Organization (UNO) to effectively manage financial regulations in the country (retain USD value and managing the risk of funding IPs in an unpredictable economic environment) and to meet the operating policy and procedural requirements while facilitating implementation of the programme against a challenging economic environment.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Improve joint support on strengthening the gender machinery in the country.

Challenge: While several initiatives were put in place to strengthen the gender machinery, it remains weak and needs strengthening.

Action: UN Women and MWACSMED need to undertake a joint analysis of the requirements to strengthen the gender machinery, including crystallising the gender architecture in the country. This analysis would allow UN Women to be strategic and systematic in its approach to strengthening the gender machinery. There is already traction for this among the donor gender forum and in the extended gender results group, providing a basis for its implementation. Results of this analysis should lead to the development of a multi-year programme for gender machinery strengthening. Such a document can be used to facilitate resource mobilisation for this initiative.

When: Immediate

Responsibility: UN Women and MWACMED

Recommendation 2: Strengthen partnership with the MWACSMED by instituting joint work plan reviews

Challenge: While joint planning is undertaken between UN Women and MWACSMED, there are concerns from the latter that this a paper process with no significant importance for partnership development. There were no systems for review of the joint planning.

Action: Undertake joint quarterly and annual review of the joint workplan.

When: Immediate

Responsibility: UN Women and MWACSMED.

Recommendation 3: UN Women should strengthen communication with stakeholders on its strategic approach to avoid misconceptions about its performance.

Challenge: There are significant misconceptions about UN Women, its role and mandate within the country, which have the potential to negatively affect partnerships. Such misconceptions may point to inadequate appraisal or communication with stakeholders on the UN Women's strategic approach in the country.

Action: UN Women needs to develop and implement a communication plan for stakeholders to ensure there is adequate awareness of its strategic approach, and its role and space in the gender sector.

When: Immediate (development of communication plan) and on-going (implementation)

Responsibility: UN Women

Recommendation 4: Strengthen the ZCO's response to humanitarian crises with significant gender concern.

Challenge: The absence of a strategy that recognises the intersectionality between crises and women's rights and the response options for UN Women in the SN 2016-2021 undermined the speed and quality of response to crises by the ZCO. This challenge is important in the context of more frequent crises because of climate change.

Action: UN Women should include, in its new Strategic Note, intersectionality between humanitarian crises and women's rights and strategic approaches by UN Women in those circumstances.

When: Immediate.

Responsibility: UN Women

Recommendation 5: Strengthening partnerships with CBOs to enhance reach of women (in conjunction with Recommendation 8)

Challenge: There have been concerns about national level CSOs not efficient in reaching women, sustaining the interventions at local level and ability to reach women in remote areas. CBOs provide the ZCO opportunities to efficiently reach women in communities as well as support sustainability of community level work. While the ZCO has, in the process of implementing the SN, reached to CBOs through the Spotlight Initiative and IAGs, support for CBOs could have benefited from a clear strategy of engagement from the design of the SN.

Action: The ZCO needs to do the following: i) develop an engagement strategy for CBOs in the new strategic note. This should also address the risks associated with supporting start up and small CBOs and structures; and ii) undertake a national mapping of CBOs, possibly jointly with the MWACSMED, to identify CBOs that have the potential for partnership.

When: Immediate for (i) and 1-2 years for (ii).

Responsibility: UN Women

Recommendation 6: Strengthen quality of technical support by experts to partners.

Challenge: The ZCO enhanced its efficiency through outsourcing external expertise, such as consultancies to support implementation of the CP. While this strategy ensured the availability of the appropriate level of expertise required for effective implementation of interventions, it is not a

sustainable solution for partners. This is due to generally limited capacity transfer to the host institution because of the absence of key performance indicators to measure capacity development in the host institution (individual, organisational and institutional capacities). In the majority of cases UN Women excluded the partner in the recruitment and placement of the technical expert. This approach reduced ownership of the technical support among recipient partners. In other cases, the technical support was viewed as not relevant or not of the required quality resulting in limited engagement by the partner. Such approaches were undermining ownership by beneficiaries of the support.

Action: Capacity development or institutional strengthening is a key feature of UN Women's strategic approach. The ZCO needs to develop conceptualisation document of its institutional strengthening approach that ensures: i) clarity on the institutional development objectives; ii) approach to achieving institutional objectives that allows for ownership of the support by recipients; and iii) clarity of the measurement of the institutional support to the recipient as part of performance measurement for the technical support.

When: Immediate as part of the new SN.

Responsibility: UN Women

Recommendation 7: Strengthen partnerships and continuity of initiatives in key institutions

Challenge: Support to key institutions has been short term and directed by grants available. While this has helped to achieve short term objectives, long term objectives are difficult to achieve with such an approach.

Action: UN Women needs to identify key institutions it will support in the new strategic plan building on outstanding actions in the SN 2016-2021. With each of these institutions, the ZCO needs to develop joint long-term plans of how it will support them over the course of the new SN. This will allow for more coherent support that enhances sustainability.

When: 1-2 years.

Responsibility: UN Women

Recommendation 8: Improve reach of women with disabilities, women in hard-to-reach rural areas and men.

Challenge: The evaluation noted that women in hard-to-reach areas, those with disabilities and men were not extensively reached by the portfolio. Strengthening men and boys' role in transforming power dynamics that still perpetuate gender inequality at all levels is important to balance power dynamics between men and women.

Action: The ZCO, as part of the new strategic note, needs to develop a Leave no One Behind Strategy and how it can reach men to transform power dynamics. This will guide all projects in mainstreaming these dimensions.

When: Immediate

Responsibility: UN Women