

TRANSFORM



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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 28th issue of Transform, which highlights UN Women's work on advancing women's political participation around the world.

More than half of the world's population is projected to participate in elections in 2024, making this an important year for politics and democracy. Despite overall progress in terms of more women participating in political decision-making worldwide, gender equality in political participation remains elusive. UN Women aims to strengthen women's leadership and ensure women's full and equal access to decision-making through initiatives bolstered by the Entity's alignment with and support to relevant global normative frameworks and international commitments (e.g., Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Convention on the Political Rights of Women).

This corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to women's political participation provides a summative assessment of results achieved during the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, as well as a compilation of insights that can be used to support implementation of UN Women's current Strategic Plan 2022–2025. Additionally, the evaluation dives deep into the Entity's work on women's political participation in 12 countries across six regions.

The evaluation found that UN Women's work allowed for adaptation to various country contexts, while remaining strategically focused on accelerators of women's political participation, and that the Entity's efforts have generated some progress in strengthening electoral frameworks and developing and sustaining a diverse cadre of women political leaders. Nevertheless, UN Women continues to encounter challenges to advancing women's political participation and it is recommended that the Entity should strengthen its advocacy and convening role, develop strategic and long-term programmes to support women's political participation at the country and local levels, and strengthen guidance on effectively mainstreaming considerations of leave no one behind into women's political participation. The Entity should also enhance the measurement of key results to better contextualize and demonstrate UN Women's impact.

We would like to thank the UN Women Political Participation Policy team for their excellent collaboration on this evaluation. We also received stellar support from Country Representatives and Political Participation teams in the 12 countries covered in our sample.

We hope this issue of Transform inspires each one of us to support women's political participation at community, local, and national levels.

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Think Beyond. Stay Ahead.

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ON THE COVER

Representatives of governments, civil society, the private sector, and the international community from across Europe and Central Asia gathered at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2022 roundtable.

Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy



Why evaluate UN Women's support to women's political participation?

Women's political participation is a fundamental right enshrined in international and regional human rights instruments, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952) to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), reinforced by international political commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the 2030 Agenda.

It is also a critical aspect of women's autonomy and capacity to freely make decisions that affect their lives under conditions of equality.

In line with the corporate evaluation plan for 2023, UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service conducted a corporate thematic evaluation of UN Women's support to women's political participation covering the period from January 2018 to June 2023. The evaluation included a particular focus on gathering insights from the field on UN Women's efforts to advance women's political participation across different contexts.

During the period under review (2018-2023), progress was made in women's political participation. The share of women parliamentarians in single or lower houses increased from 23.4 per cent in 2018¹ to 26.5 per cent in 2023² and at the local level, women currently hold 35.5 per cent of elected seats in deliberative bodies, up from 33.9 per cent in 2020³. Gender quotas have played a key role in such progress: on

average, women's representation is 5 per cent higher in national parliaments and 7 per cent higher in local government in countries with legislated candidate quotas⁴. However, gender parity continues to be an exception: only six countries have 50 per cent or more women in their lower/single chambers of national parliaments⁵.

Despite overall progress in terms of more women participating in political decision-making worldwide, gender equality in political participation remains elusive. Deeply entrenched discrimination persists worldwide and continues to hinder women's full participation in political and electoral processes. Common barriers include issues such as illiteracy and lack of national identity documentation, to social norms that perpetuate gender stereotypes against women in politics. For those who decide to run for office, difficulties in accessing campaign funds, visibility in the media and obtaining better positions in electoral lists adversely affect women candidates, as well as exclusion from key

decision-making spaces within their own parties and time constrains due to care work. In some cases, the design of temporary special measures and lack of enforcement mechanisms to ensure their implementation also constitute key barriers; as do political parties, who often function as the main gatekeepers to women's political participation. Similarly, violence against women in politics is an issue of growing concern that affects women in politics and is cited as having a dissuasive and negative effect on women in terms of their entry and/or permanence in politics. Therefore, in its efforts to advance women's rights and gender equality, UN Women recognizes women's political participation as a key area of focus.

UN Women's support to women's political participation

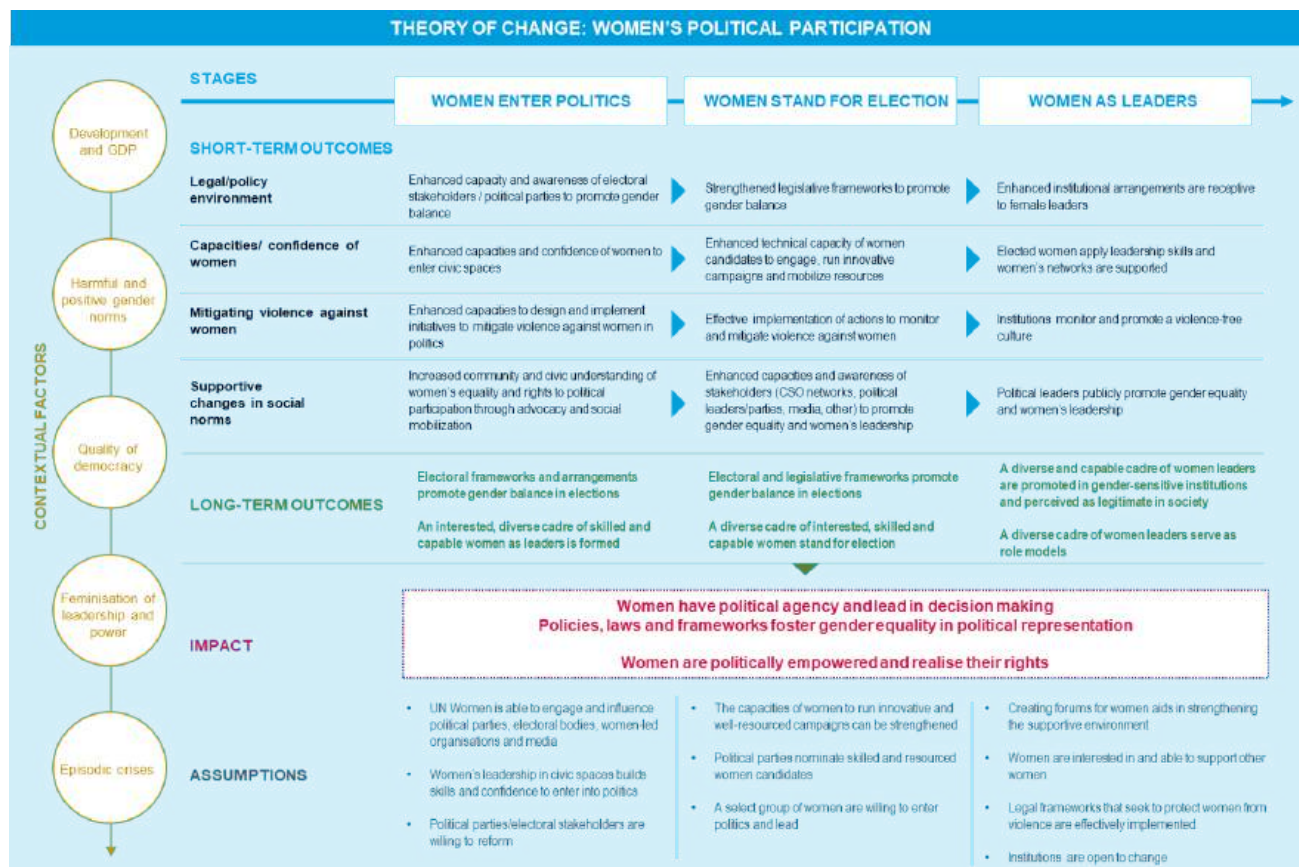
UN Women supports global, regional and country initiatives in the area of women's political participation with the aim of

strengthening women's leadership and ensuring women's full and equal access to decision-making. These initiatives include: (a) promotion of legislative and institutional reforms to ensure women's equal participation in decision-making; (b) capacity-building support for women political aspirants and leaders; (c) support to reforms and advocacy to monitor, prevent and mitigate violence against women in politics; and (d) promotion of social norms change to recognize women's political leadership. UN Women also supports the production of research, data and knowledge on women's political participation. The Entity works to advance Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and international measurement standards on key topics including violence against women in politics, women in local government, women in executive/ministerial positions and women heads of state. Additionally, UN Women participates in coordination and advocacy activities

across the UN system in this area of work.

UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 included a detailed theory of change for women's leadership in political decision-making and a Flagship Programme Initiative dedicated to women's political participation. The current UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 presents a more cross-cutting approach, while continuing to emphasize governance and participation in public life as one of four key thematic areas for UN Women. Also, Gender Equality Accelerator 1 (Women's Political Participation), developed as all ten Accelerators to drive policy coherence and programmatic results, directly aligns with women's political participation.

Adapted theory of change on UN Women's support to women's political participation



Note: This evaluation framework was adapted from UN Women's theory of change for women's political participation (output 4 under Strategic Plan 2018–2021)

1. <https://www.ipu.org/news/statements/2019-03/womens-political-leadership-striving-50-cent-balance-in-2030>
 2. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>
 3. <https://localgov.unwomen.org/data>
 4. <https://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2021/3>
 5. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>



Photo: ©UN Women/Antoine Tardy

Evaluation purpose and scope

The purpose of the independent corporate evaluation of UN Women’s support to women’s political participation was to examine its impact, effectiveness, relevance, coherence and sustainability at the country level in order to contrib-

ute to strategic decision-making, learning and accountability. The evaluation also included an equity-focused lens on gender equality and leave no one behind.

The evaluation time frame spanned from January 2018 to June 2023, combining a summative assessment of results

achieved during the previous UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021, with an exploration of insights to support implementation of the current UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The geographic scope covered UN Women’s programming across all six regions through a representative sample of Country Offices.

Key evaluation questions



In what ways has UN Women’s support been tailored to the local political context?



How well does UN Women work with its partners (UN and others) on the ground?



What aspects of equity are targeted by UN Women’s interventions (leave no one behind and gender equality)?



What is the impact of UN Women’s support to women’s political participation at country level?



How effectively is UN Women’s triple mandate (normative, UN system coordination, operational) leveraged in support of achieving results at country level?



What is UN Women’s approach to safeguarding the sustainability of its impact and efforts in this area?

The evaluation was intended for use primarily by the UN Women Executive Board, senior management, and UN Women’s Governance and Participation section, in addition to other personnel and stakeholders directly working on or with an interest in women’s political participation.

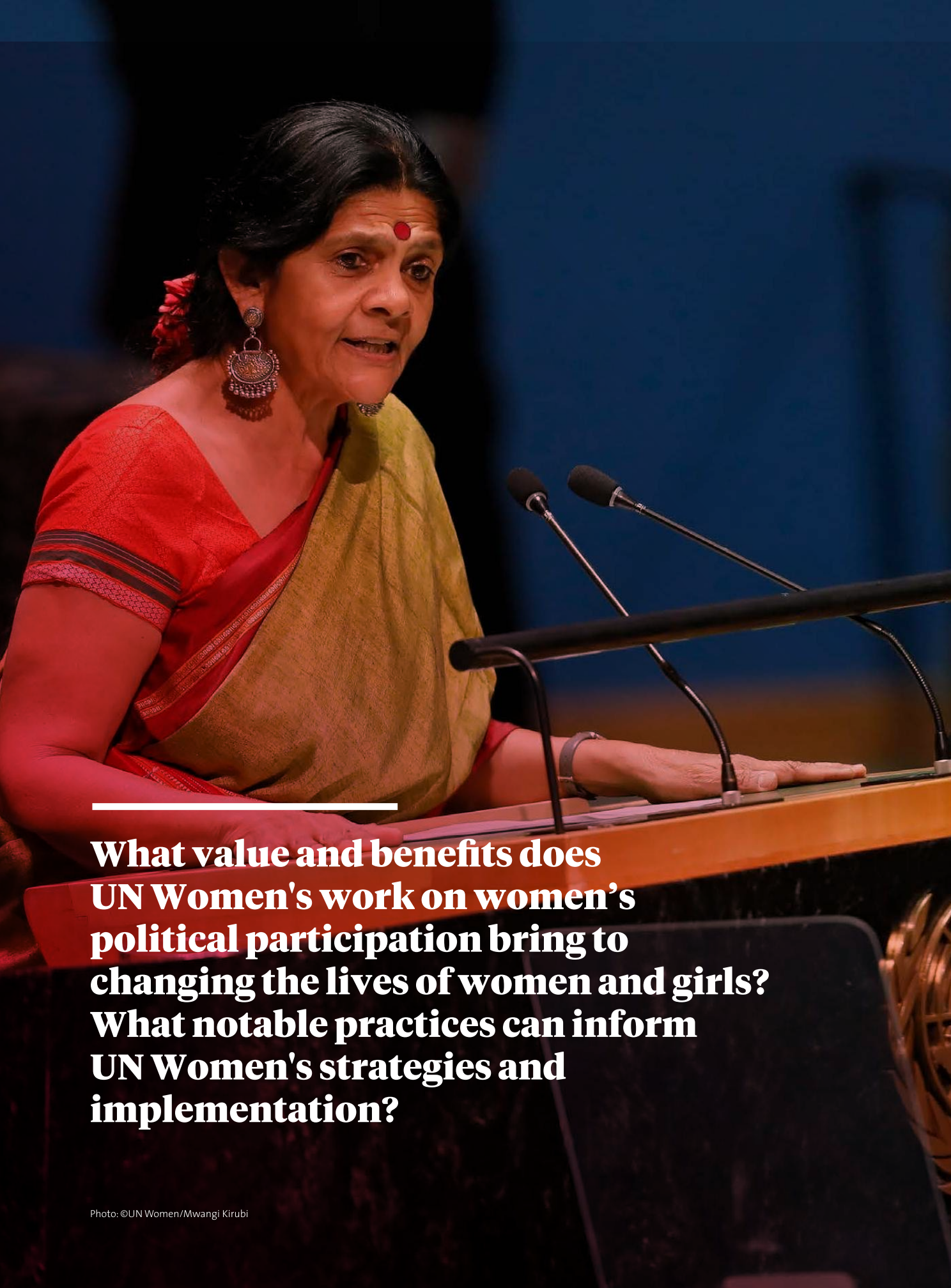


UN WOMEN'S EVALUATION HANDBOOK

How to manage gender-responsive evaluation
(2022 Edition)



Download the interactive PDF [here](#)



What value and benefits does UN Women's work on women's political participation bring to changing the lives of women and girls? What notable practices can inform UN Women's strategies and implementation?

CONCLUSION 1:

The design and approach of UN Women's work allowed for adaptation to country contexts, while remaining strategically focused on accelerators of women's political participation. UN Women has aligned well with contextual drivers and worked with political actors to build networks of influence. As programmes scale efforts to bring women into politics, particularly at the subnational level, issues arise of how to effectively respond to growing needs.

The design and approach of UN Women's programmes are strategically focused on the key drivers of improvements in women's political participation: gender-responsive legal reforms; addressing social norms; building women's confidence, knowledge and skills; and preventing and mitigating violence against women in politics. There is evidence that programmes are able to rapidly adapt to make best use of work with key political actors in each country context, particularly in mobilizing coalitions and partnerships to deliver changes in legal and policy frameworks.

During the evaluation period, UN Women (in coordination with UN partners and national stakeholders)

advocated for and supported the passage and effective implementation of legislated quotas. In addition, there have also been intense efforts to invest in building women candidates' confidence and skills. While these efforts have been successful in raising the number of candidates standing for election and being elected, there was some evidence that a more tailored approach is needed. Women value the wider benefits of learning about political participation: mentoring, social support and developing networks with other women candidates or women-led civil society organizations. Greater attention to women's needs, motivations and experiences as they enter, participate and leave politics is needed to strengthen support.

CONCLUSION 2:

There was some evidence that knowledge and learning within UN Women's programmes at country level worked well to enable consolidation and rapid implementation of successful practices and approaches. However, further strengthening of tools to measure progress will help to strengthen programme responsiveness and engage donors in critical areas of learning.

UN Women's programmes at the country level included periods of gathering insights, standardizing approaches where relevant, reflecting on progress and providing spaces to convene relevant stakeholders to advance women's political participation. As programmes encounter persistent forms of opposition to women's political participation, such as online bullying, and continue to focus on areas such as shifting social norms, or working at subnational level, there is a need to further strengthen use of data and assessment tools, which is an area of ongoing work. Country programmes would benefit from guidance on what types of gender data in political participation to advocate for to address key gaps in information (such as sex disaggregated voter registra-

tion and turnout data) while working in collaboration with partners. Further use of evaluation and measurement tools, such as media tracking surveys, and surveys of women's participation in political parties, would help to improve the capacity of programmes to learn and focus on key areas of change. There are a few examples of such tools being used in some countries, but further consolidation would ensure a more consistent approach to measurement, where needed and appropriate.

Building on UN Women's efforts to compile quantitative measures of women's political participation, country programmes could consider context-relevant, additional measures (qualitative



and quantitative) to demonstrate impact and progress. In some countries, programmes collect data on women's confidence to participate in politics, which offers a broader view that could be strengthened. In general, feedback mechanisms need to be strengthened for women across their entrance into and out of politics.

The evaluation also found there was scope to increase donors' appreciation of the importance of longer time periods required for training women political aspirants and the importance of working between election cycles. Improved reporting of results, sharing lessons learned and demonstrating impact is a key component of supporting longer programmes.

CONCLUSION 3:

Resistance to women's political participation remains a salient issue in many countries, requiring comprehensive and sustained efforts to preserve gains. UN Women's approach at country level would benefit from developing longer-term, strategic programming that goes beyond typical election cycle-based initiatives.

UN Women's support to women's political participation included sustainable approaches such as strengthening related legal frameworks, fostering national ownership and supporting networks of women leaders. However, programmes (and funding) tended to focus on election cycles, which was a concern raised by stakeholders in many countries.

Therefore, UN Women's approach at country level needs to go beyond election cycle-based programmes, to long-term and strategic country-level

initiatives that support sustainable change. This should include a stronger emphasis on effective implementation of policies; protection against persistent forms of backlash, including violence against women in politics; support for newly elected women leaders in the post-election phase; sustained support for young women leaders; grassroots, community and media engagement for social norms change; and strategies to tackle barriers to women's participation arising from resource constraints and resistance from political parties.

CONCLUSION 4:

Partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders across government, women's networks, civil society organizations and others have been critical to support various initiatives related to women's political participation. Partnerships between UN agencies at the country level have enabled mainstreaming of women's political participation into wider electoral efforts and partners recognize UN Women's value add, and flexible ways of working. While engagement with new partners in the context of social norms change and working at subnational levels will enable reach and access, potential risks related to these partnerships should continue to be assessed.

UN Women has largely been valued, trusted and successful in working with broad coalitions. Many of the Entity's successes in legal and policy reforms have depended on building trusting partnerships, particularly with parliaments, government entities such as electoral management bodies, offices of registrar of political parties, and women's ministries and machineries. UN Women's reputation for being politically impartial, flexible and open

has enabled the Entity to build broad coalitions with political actors. UN Women's political neutrality is viewed as a critical value add, enabling the organization to play a strong convening role and brokering political access for women's civil society organizations and coalitions.

Programmes are now seizing opportunities to work at a subnational level, along with addressing social norms. Partnerships at the grassroots level



offer the opportunity to tackle patriarchal barriers to women's participation in more effective ways. However, these partnerships (including with faith-based organizations and traditional leaders) could carry

concomitant risks of being politically co-opted or of reinforcing traditional gender-based norms which may be appealing to some local audiences, but ultimately undermine women's broader political empowerment.

CONCLUSION 5:

At the global level, UN Women's triple mandate has been leveraged in support of advancing women's political participation. While the Entity's normative and operational mandates were leveraged concurrently across most countries, there is room to strengthen the coordination role at the country level, particularly in gender mainstreaming across UN programming on political participation.

At the global level, the evaluation found evidence of synergies between UN Women's normative, UN system coordination and operational mandates in the area of women's political participation. The Entity developed key UN system knowledge products and hubs (including data and guidance documents); worked with inter-agency/intergovernmental mechanisms; and developed system-wide messaging on UN priorities, including temporary special measures and violence against women in politics. This global work was an important pillar in achieving results at the country level. However, the UN system coordination mandate was somewhat unevenly applied, in the area of women's political participation, across countries and remains an area

that requires strengthening. In comparison, UN Women's normative and operational mandates were leveraged relatively strongly in many countries.

While some challenges persist in coordinating efforts with other UN entities, UN Women is well-respected by UN partners and acknowledged as a leader on women's political participation due to its technical strength; the expertise of its staff; and its long-term and effective engagement with civil society organizations, women's organizations and governments. Therefore, UN Women is well positioned to play a stronger role in gender mainstreaming across UN programming on women's political participation.

CONCLUSION 6:

UN Women has worked to ensure that the 'leave no one behind' principle and the needs of marginalized groups were included in its programming by improving access to resources such as training and building more equitable representation. While committed to the principle of equity, less well-funded programmes would benefit from further guidance on the trade-offs between working inclusively versus reaching more women at scale.

The 'leave no one behind' principle was a core concern of country programmes working on women's political participation, and there were several examples of work with specific marginalized groups, including a deep intersectional approach. There was evidence that, in some contexts, UN Women's support resulted in these groups having a strong voice and influence in political spaces. There was also evidence that UN Women's support pushed diverse actors (government and non-government) to consider the needs and work inclusively with groups such as younger women, people living with disabilities, poor, rural,

indigenous and afro-descendant women. However, both the survey results and country case studies showed that programmes needed to make difficult trade-offs. Some groups were difficult to include given the contextual environment and some programmes with fewer resources could not invest in reaching marginalized groups at the community level. This suggested that further guidance and sharing of good practices could support country programmes on ways to work inclusively, without having to reduce their reach to women political aspirants.

CONCLUSION 7:

UN Women's programmes have contributed to positive impacts on the legal and policy environment, and movement-building and capacity-building across various contexts. Legal reform, particularly legislated quotas, have been key drivers of higher numbers of women in political positions. Evidence from case studies showed that in some countries this was translating into gender-responsive policymaking. However, there was also evidence of gains stagnating or reversing in other countries, driven by a number of factors.

There has been strong progress to date in legal and policy reforms that have substantially facilitated women's access to political positions, and across several other long and short-term outcomes such as building women's skills and confidence and developing means to address and mitigate violence against women in politics. There were strong examples where UN Women's programmes have contributed to wider impact. For instance, in Moldova, UN Women played a significant role in supporting legislation for a 40 per cent quota for women in national and local government, and advocating for placement provisions to ensure successful implementation of the quota. In addition to supporting comprehensive training for women candidates and aspirants, UN

Women also brought together parliamentarians and women mayors on policy issues such as the refugee crisis and COVID-19 response. UN Women's support to women mayors, particularly newly elected mayors, was impactful and helped "set them up for success" and to serve as role models for other women.

The evaluation also validated evidence of improvements in gender-responsive law and policymaking in other contexts as a result of working with diverse stakeholders, including electoral bodies, parliaments and women's caucuses.

Data from country case studies suggested that progress in getting women elected has been relatively slow, particularly for countries that do not use legislat-

ed quotas. Even where legislated quotas were implemented, further increases in women's political participation were slow or stagnant, or, in a few cases, reversed. While contextual factors played a strong role in preventing women's progress, often the experience, threat, or fear of violence against women in politics (and other forms of harassment) dissuaded many women to engage in political and public affairs, pursue or continue a political career. In other cases, the targets set by quotas were not achieved, given a lack of quota enforcement mechanisms and effective implementation as well as other contextual and socioeconomic factors such as levels of insecurity or women's lack of resources.



Assessment of progress across various domains of change

DOMAINS OF CHANGE	ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS	AREAS TO STRENGTHEN
<p>POLICY/LEGAL ENVIRONMENT</p> 	<p>EMBEDDED PROGRESS</p> <p>Gains in legal reforms, evidenced in the temporary special measures implemented, including legislated quotas; enhanced capacity and gender awareness of electoral stakeholders; removal of barriers to women's participation; and promotion of gender balance in women's political participation, especially through electoral management bodies.</p> <p>In some countries, evidence of legislative frameworks (constitutional reforms, ratification of legislated quotas, strengthening policies around gender equity for electoral management bodies) fostering gender inclusion and greater political representation.</p> <p>Validated in 11 of 12 country case studies (Brazil, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Samoa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).</p>	<p>Strengthen legal accountability mechanisms, especially monitoring of political party compliance with commitments/legal provisions on gender equality.</p> <p>Strengthen legislative frameworks for women as leaders, for instance, work with electoral bodies to address equitable funding mechanisms.</p>
<p>BUILDING WOMEN'S CAPACITIES, CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS</p> 	<p>EMBEDDED PROGRESS</p> <p>Investments in building women's capacities and strong take up across diverse settings. In many countries, targets for supporting women political aspirants/leaders standing for election, were exceeded. Women leaders were supported directly (training, media profiles) and by working with women's caucuses.</p> <p>Evidence of women political aspirants and leaders being supported to apply leadership skills and to serve as role models. However, in some cases, negative perceptions of women leaders may have dissuaded other women from standing for election.</p> <p>Validated in 11 of 12 country cases (Brazil, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).</p>	<p>Strengthen support to women's networks and movements and employ deeper engagement on a tiered basis (aspirants, leaders, unsuccessful candidates) to develop women's confidence and skills.</p> <p>Strengthen communications and advocacy strategies to support women as leaders (including countering negative perceptions of the political legitimacy of women appointed in quota-based systems in some countries).</p>
<p>VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS</p> 	<p>CONSOLIDATING PROGRESS</p> <p>Examples of gains in policy/legal reforms, institutional strengthening of key actors, awareness raising and clarification of pathways to report incidents.</p> <p>Evidence in some countries of reporting mechanisms being strengthened, women using means of redress and violence against women in politics being tracked and monitored to some extent.</p> <p>Validated in 8 of 12 country case studies (Brazil, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).</p>	<p>Strengthen community-based social norms work to support prevention of violence against women in politics.</p> <p>Strengthen engagement with political actors and wider stakeholders to actively support a violence-free culture.</p> <p>In fragile settings, strengthen the approach to addressing violence against women in politics and elections (e.g. conceptual clarity, sanctioning and/or reparatory mechanisms, etc.)</p>
<p>SOCIAL NORMS</p> 	<p>CONSOLIDATING PROGRESS</p> <p>Examples of improved civic understanding of women's right to engage with politics, including through grassroots engagement and work with the media. Support from wider stakeholders, such as male allies, political agencies and faith-based networks in challenging damaging gender norms.</p> <p>Evidence in some countries of women being promoted to higher leadership positions, either within political parties, or in government institutions.</p> <p>Validated in 11 of 12 country cases (Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).</p>	<p>Strengthen work with male champions/allies, media houses and women's organizations to support women's rights as legitimate leaders at all stages of their paths into and out of politics.</p> <p>Identify and strengthen concerted messaging on women's right to be politically active.</p> <p>Improve metrics and monitoring of community partners working on social norms.</p>

Note: Areas of progress were assessed as being 'Embedded' where there was longer-term and more sustained change which had in some cases also translated into higher-level outcomes (either longer-term or impact level changes). The evaluation used a detailed theory of change that enabled this more robust assessment of levels of change. This was combined with evidence ranking to assess the strength of claim for each outcome. Areas of progress were assessed as 'consolidating' if there was well validated evidence of work in each domain being programmed with evidence of some short or long-term outcomes being achieved, but with issues of scale or design issues still to be addressed. For instance, social norms programming often achieved some short-term outcomes, but there was limited evidence of scaling or impact.





CONCLUSION 8:

While progress has been made in areas of legal and policy reforms, support to women's participation from political parties remains a key challenge.

UN Women has made a strong contribution to legal and policy reforms which now include many provisions for gender equality, e.g. updates to constitutions, improved gender strategies for the management of electoral processes and improved mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of gender equality by political parties. Across the country case studies, a wide range of stakeholders indicated that political parties were the main barrier to women's inclusion in political participation, with interventions such as voluntary legislated quotas largely ineffective.

There was strong consensus among stakeholders that new ways of working to influence political parties need to be found. This requires partnering with key national stakeholders such as the office of the registrar of political

parties, multi-party international foundations, UN entities leading the work with political parties (e.g. UNDP) and donors to open up new areas of work. Promising practices were emerging in this area, such as working with non-governmental organizations that focus on political actors, women's political wings and with male allies. There were also examples of UN Women working directly with the executive branch and leaders in government to support messaging and advocacy on women's political participation.

Where inclusion of women is seen as a zero-sum game, meaning that men will lose power, further investments are needed to change wider political perceptions of women's inclusion, and on agreeing key advocacy messages to be endorsed beyond UN Women.



CONCLUSION 9:

Support from headquarters was well-tailored to country-level needs and contributed to the effectiveness of programmes. Technical support was responsive, learning was accessible and work on data and in developing standard models (e.g. for training) were also widely applied. However, regional-level collaboration could be strengthened in some areas.

The evaluation found evidence that UN Women's support was well-tailored to the needs of programme personnel at the country level. Consolidation of learning, responsive technical support – especially in complex areas of legal reform and advocacy – and deployment of toolkits for training enabled programmes to rapidly hone their approaches. Work on research and data, such as Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.1b, enabled programmes to advocate for better representation at local levels.

There were some examples of cross-re-

gional learning which were beneficial, such as the adoption of specific training curriculums. Some stakeholders indicated the need to strengthen regional-level technical support. Regional mechanisms and organizations had a strong influence on national stakeholders (e.g. the African Union and the African Women Leaders Network) and UN Women has already leveraged these organizations for support and influence. However, some stakeholders advocated for stronger learning and collaboration within and across regions, particularly in countries where results were lagging behind regional counterparts.

CORPORATE EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWEREMENT

EVALUATION REPORT AND BRIEF (2023)



Read the full report and brief [here](#)

Moving forward: Five ways to strengthen UN Women's work on advancing women's political participation.

The evaluation offers five recommendations that are critical for UN Women to advance its work on women's political participation.

RECOMMENDATION 1

UN Women should continue to address key barriers to women's political participation, while including a focus on persistent constraints and forms of backlash, such as violence against women in politics.

UN Women should develop knowledge products focused on strategies to address financial and resource barriers for women, and advocacy for alternative funding mechanisms. The Entity should continue to support women's networks for political aspirants and leaders and strengthen focus on social norms work to oppose

resistance to women's political participation. UN Women should also strengthen linkages with broader work on ending violence against women in politics, particularly in the emerging area of online violence and technology facilitated gender-based violence.

RECOMMENDATION 2

UN Women should strengthen its advocacy and convening role by providing further guidance on navigating and communicating with diverse coalitions of partners in support of women's political participation.

UN Women should consider creating technical communications resources to support Regional and Country Offices to develop regional and/or country-specific technical communication and advocacy plans. This could also include an overarching communications plan outlining key messaging on women's right to political participation for all levels of the UN.

with political parties, donors, new groups of partners (male allies, traditional leaders) etc. The Entity should undertake regional level analyses and synthesize lessons on advocacy related to legislated quotas, legislative changes for increasing women's political participation, introducing legislation related to violence against women in politics, etc. UN Women should also draw on its technical expertise and leverage its coordination role to further strengthen gender mainstreaming across UN programming in this area of political participation.

UN Women should further develop specific advocacy and engagement approaches for stakeholders including entities (government and non-government) mandated to work

RECOMMENDATION 3

UN Women should aim to develop strategic and long-term programmes to support women's political participation at the country level.

UN Women should develop donor outreach approaches to position women's political participation programming at the country level at a strategic, long-term level as opposed to being based on election cycles. This would respond to the strong demand from diverse stakeholders across countries for the Entity to

continue and strengthen its longer-term support in this area of work. The approach should include a renewed focus on the implementation of laws and policies; sustainability of support (including to young women leaders); and protection against backlash, including violence against women in politics.

RECOMMENDATION 4

UN Women should strengthen guidance on effectively mainstreaming considerations of leave no one behind into women's political participation, particularly as programmes scale and work with new partnerships for social norms change.

UN Women should consult with country programmes to synthesize lessons from diverse approaches to leave no one behind and working with marginalized groups. The Entity should develop specific guidance for country programmes seeking to broaden work at subnational levels and on community-level social norms change.

UN Women should also develop guidelines on working inclusively across different types of activities, such as technical support; advocacy to different levels of the political system; and finding and working with coalitions of civil society and women's organizations.

RECOMMENDATION 5

UN Women should enhance measurement of key results on women's political participation to better contextualize and demonstrate the impact of its work at country level.

UN Women should map and support country-level data gaps and needs, including the availability of key statistics for women's political participation and the representativeness of elected/appointed officials (with suitable disaggregation from the perspective of leave no one behind).

The Entity should develop tools that can be adapted for rapid assessments (e.g. on women in political parties, representation of women leaders in traditional and social media) and consider the feasibility of using qualitative tools.



Perspectives from Management

The following section was authored by UN Women management, based on the management response to this evaluation.

UN Women expresses its appreciation for the Corporate Evaluation on UN Women's Contribution to Women's Political Participation: Insights from the field, which assesses the entity's cumulative contribution to women's political participation (WPP), and results achieved during the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period, and additional insights beyond.

The evaluation considers the impact, relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and sustainability of UN-Women's work on WPP, with a focus on insights from the country level, based on document review and consultation with stakeholders, partner agencies and UN Women staff.

The evaluation arrives within the second year of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, affording an opportunity to address its conclusions and recommendations in the new Strategic Plan's implementation.

The evaluation's drafting also overlapped with the finalization of the Gender Equality Accelerator on WPP and a new global programme on women's political participation, launched in March 2024, which in parallel address some of the recommendations in this report. In addition to those listed in the evaluation Report, UN Women also wishes to acknowledge the support of the Political Participation Policy team throughout the evaluation process.

UN Women's efforts to advance women's political participation include promoting supportive legislative and institutional reforms; building the capacity of women political aspirants and leaders; monitoring, preventing and mitigating violence against women in politics; and encouraging social norms change to recognize women's political leadership. UN Women is also actively engaged in promoting women's political participation through coordination and advocacy efforts across the UN system, including with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Temporary Special Measures and the Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism on Electoral Assistance. UN Women is pleased that the evaluation viewed UN Women's work well adapted to various country contexts, while remaining strategically

focused on accelerators of WPP in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders across government, women's networks, UN partners and civil society organizations to support the Entity's initiatives related to women's political participation. Overall, UN Women's efforts related to women's political participation have generated progress in strengthening electoral frameworks and developing and sustaining a diverse cadre of women political leaders. This impact is largely due to sustained investments in legal reforms, advocacy and strengthening of women's skills as office holders and leaders and increasing capacities at all stages of their path into politics. UN Women's country-level programmes have also received useful and timely support from headquarters and several Regional Offices on matters related to women's political participation. Nevertheless, UN Women continues to encounter challenges to advancing women's political participation and the evaluation presents recommendations that the Entity could consider, including: strengthening its advocacy and communications and UN coordination at country level including through gender mainstreaming in UN programming on political participation; strengthening guidance on effectively mainstreaming considerations of leave no one behind; and improving measurement of key results to better contextualize and demonstrate UN Women's impact. As UN Women strives to enhance its structure, capacity, and capability to impact on the lives of women and girls who are left behind, it takes note of the challenges cited in the evaluation and will seek to address them. These considerations, and the evaluation's recommendations and observations, will inform UN Women's WPP work and assessment of its impact on women's lives around the world.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted using a theory-based approach, which included the development of an evaluation framework to map changes in key outcomes and impact across various stages of women's entry into the political sphere. The framework also highlighted contextual factors that have enabled or hindered women's political participation in different countries.

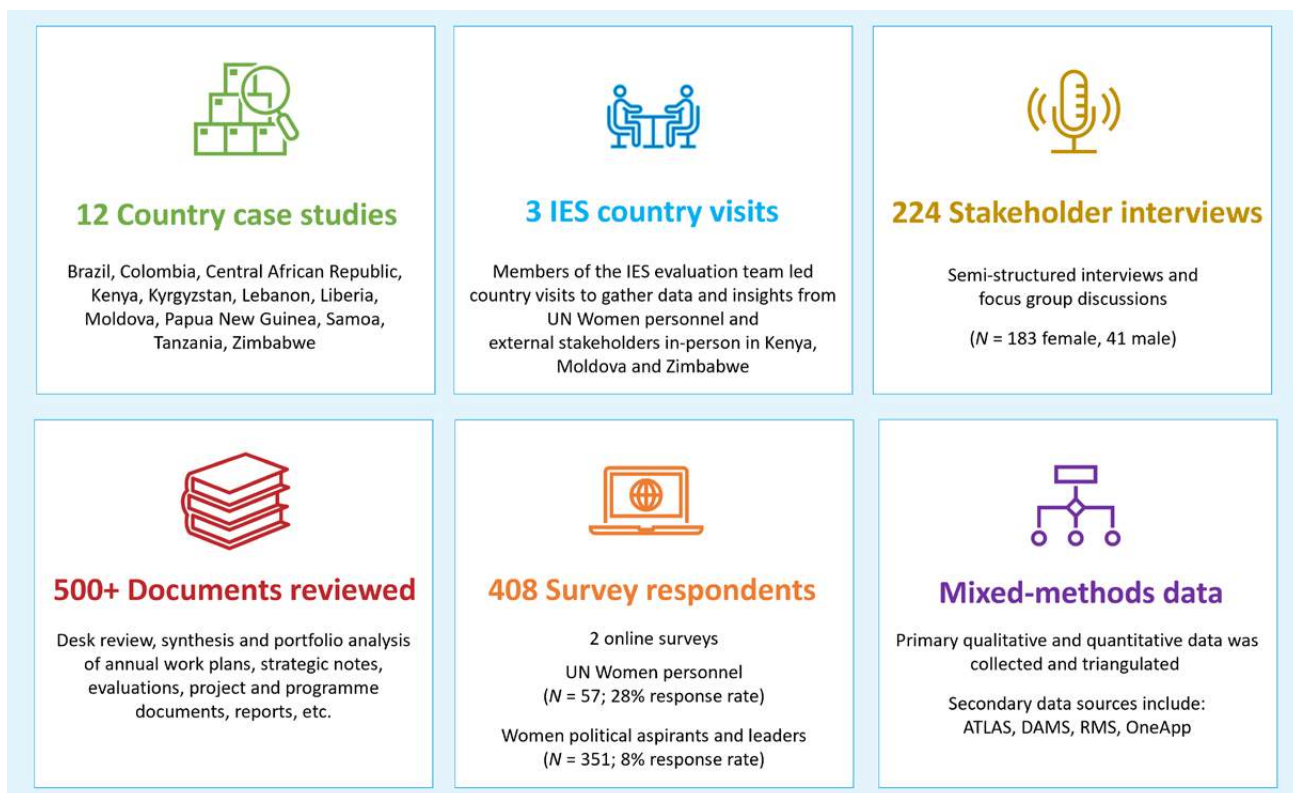
Given the focus on country-level impact, the evaluation team, in consultation with

key stakeholders, identified a representative sample of 12 countries across all six regions for a cross-comparative case-study approach using a robust combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools and methods. Contribution analysis and qualitative comparative analysis were employed to analyse UN Women's key initiatives/approaches and related results for each of the country case studies.

The evaluation incorporated a gender-re-

sponsive and human rights-based approach that aligned with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards. The evaluation aligned with the UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, UNEG Ethical Guidelines, UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system and UNEG guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluation.

Sources and Methodology for data collection



Notes.

1 The team collaborated with an ongoing IES data collection visit to Samoa to gather relevant data from stakeholders of mutual interest.

2 An IES field visit to Lebanon planned for October 2023 had to be cancelled due to the situation in the region.

3 Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in English, French, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish.

4 The Women Political Aspirants and Leaders survey was fielded in English, French, Kyrgyz, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish and Swahili.

UN Women personnel at the global, regional and country level (26 per cent) made up the largest category of stakeholders interviewed, followed closely by partners from civil society organizations/women's organizations/non-governmental organizations (21 per cent) and women political aspirants and leaders (17 per cent)

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